

The Morris Collection

Catalog no.

Description

C111

Costen Cast Steel Lifesaving Cannon

Markings: Muzzle: "2062"

Carriage: "COSTEN SIGNAL CO
NEW YORK
USA

X-528-1 "

This lifesaving cannon functioned in the same manner as cat. nos. C72 and C83 except that it was made before the percussion firing locks came into common use for these pieces (1930's). It was fired by means of a friction primer, just as cannon were fired during the Civil War. Although Costen production records have not been located, this piece was probably made between 1910 and 1930. Like no. C72, it was intended primarily for shipboard use, and was sold commercially for that purpose. Maritime regulations of the period required most oceangoing vessels to carry such cannon to be prepared for emergency rescues.

The basic function of lifesaving cannon was to fire a heavy cylindrical shot (17 lbs!) to which was attached one end of a strong, light line, which was rigged so as to pay out quickly without fouling. The gun was aimed so the shot went over a distressed ship, laying the line across the deck. The light messenger line was attached to heavier lines, which were hauled aboard the distressed ship and made fast. A "breeches buoy" was then rigged, whereby personnel could be conveyed to the rescuing ship or the beach, one at a time.

These small cannon were the most important equipment of the government (U.S. Lifesaving Service) Lifesaving Stations along the coasts of the U.S. during the late 19th. and early 20th. centuries. No. C83 is an official U.S. government "Lyle" gun, named after their inventor, Lt. David Lyle, USA. See reference J. Lt. Lyle's original commissioning certificate from West Point is on file in the Collection.

C113

Civil War Brass Gunner's Level by Green

Markings: JAS GREEN
NEW YORK

Standard U.S. Army ~~pattern~~ device for finding the highest point of the gun breech. This point was marked with chalk for use as sight placement reference. This would ensure use of the proper sighting, which would be in error if the gun wheels were on unlevel ground any other point on the breech was used. See pp. 225, reference C.