

# FIREARM INFORMATION SHEET

COLLECTION NUMBER: 9233

TYPE: Pair holster pistols

IGNITION SYSTEM: Flint - French locks & bridges to frizzen

DATE OF MANUFACTURE: 1730-50

PLACE OF MANUFACTURE: France or by Huguenot gunsmith working  
out of Country possibly England.

MAKER: ?

LENGTH OVERALL: 19"

BARREL LENGTH: 12 1/8"

CALIBER: .50 smooth

WOOD TYPE: Finest tiger walnut.

MOUNTINGS: Brass

BARREL MARKINGS/DECORATION: Unmarked

STOCK MARKINGS/DECORATION: Elegantly relief carved around tang and  
to rear of rear ramrod thimble

REPAIRS/RESTORATION: None.

HISTORICAL/ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE: See attached sheet.

PROVENANCE:

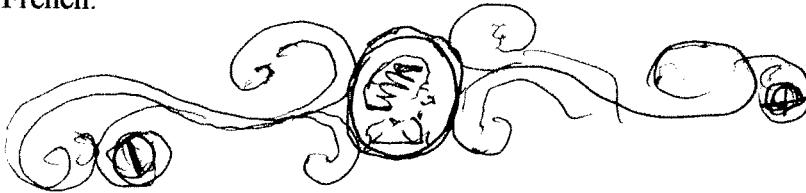
PUBLICATIONS:

COST:

ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE AND DATE:

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: FRENCH HOLSTER PISTOLS

Besides having a typical French flint lock, the side plates of these pistols are typically French.



This style of side plate-plate 85,5; plate 87,3; plate 124,1; plate 129,1-the flint lock by Torsten Lenk obviously originated in France in the late 17th century - early 18th century.

This is well seen in the part of pistols plate 25a and 25b. vol. II Hayward, The Art of the Gunmaker. These pistols, although signed Diema London, are typically French in conception with side plates.

Also note plate 48c which shows this style of side plate was copied outside of France, but easily recognized as non-French.

In, European Arms & Swedish Castles page 79 is an excellent illustration of a comparable French pistol with typical French lock and side plate by Bertrand Piraube who probably was most responsible for this style of side plate not only through his work but also through his design book.

Finally, pages 35, 39, 43, 45 additionally show such side plates on French firearms of the last half of the 17th century and first half of the 18th century.

It is interesting to note that in all the Netherland pistol pictures in the Visser Collection, none have this style of side plate.

NB: This style of French sideplate was so  
pervasive on French guns that it even  
puttered down to the lowest decorative  
level - the trade gun

# EARLY INDIAN TRADE GUNS: 1625-1775

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## TRADE GUNS LISTED BY TYPE

**TYPE A:** Figure 1

**DATE:** 1680-1730.

**AFFILIATION:** French.

**DESCRIPTION:**

*Stock:* Full stocked, barrel pinned to stock.

*Furniture:* All iron. Tailpipe (C) formed in one piece. Buttplate (D), round and formed with extremely long finial (E). Buttplate held to stock with two wood screws. Trigger guard (B), flat; tangs missing because of rust.

*Lock:* Lockplate (A), moderately curved with teat on tail. Two side-screws, tumbler and frizzen unbridled. Cock, goosenecked with comb 7/16 in. wide. Vise screw slotted. A beeswax "Dutch" gunflint is still held between the jaws of the vise.

*Barrel:* Forty-seven inches long. Front sight forged from barrel and placed one and one-half inch from muzzle. Breech section fully octagonal and about ten inches long, measuring 1-5/16 in. across the flats at breech. One inch diameter where the breech and muzzle section merge and 7/8 in. diameter at muzzle.

*Bore:* Now measures about .69 in.

*Comments:* This gun was excavated by James A. Ford at the Angola site from Burial 84 and is briefly referred to in his report (Ford, 1936, 136). The gun is now located in the museum of Louisiana State University; catalogue #462. The catalogue mentions only the barrel and the lock, but it appears that this furniture belongs with it.

**TYPE B:** Figure 2.

**DATE:** 1680-1730.

**AFFILIATION:** French.

**DESCRIPTION:**

*Stock:* Full stocked, barrel pinned to stock.

*Furniture:* All iron, except for sideplate. Buttplate (C and D) held to stock with three screws; one well forward on the tang, one just below the heel and one near the toe. Trigger guard (B) well made but details obscured by rust. Bow is 1-1/8 in. wide.

*Lock:* Lockplate (A) moderately curved.

Frizzen unbridled. Tumbler covered with rust. Cock has broad comb, with beeswax "Nordic" gunflint still between jaws of vise.

*Barrel:* Front of barrel rusted away. Barrel now measures 19 in. long. 1 1/2 in. across the flats at breech. The breech section is nine to ten inches long.

*Bore:* About .56 in.

*Sideplate:* This gun has a foliated brass sideplate with a monster's head exactly like that used on the Type C guns. Look under Figure 3 for discussion on these sideplates.

*Comments:* Gun was excavated by Ford at the Angola site from Burial B1 and is briefly referred to by him in his report (Ford, 1936, 136). The gun is in the museum of Louisiana State University, catalogue #463.

I believe this gun is closely related to Type C because they use the same sideplate. The finials on this specimen are so deeply encrusted with rust that details cannot be determined. The University of Chicago excavated an iron trigger guard with a "potted plant" front finial at Fort St. Louis on Starved Rock, catalogue #11277. That guard is ten and one-half inches long overall, with a bow measuring 15/16 in. wide and is now located at the Illinois State Museum, Springfield.

**TYPE B AND C SIDEPLATE:** Figure 3.

This sideplate with a monster's head and a filigreed body—a style widely used on French guns of the early 18th Century—distinguishes both the Type B and C guns. Thorsten Lenk (1965: 113, Plate 87), illustrates a similar sideplate on a pistol by Dutreuil of Paris to which he assigns a date of about 1720. On Plate 124, Lenk shows two variations of this same design taken from a pattern book by Geurard, who died in 1719 (Lenk, 1965: 109). Figure 3, A, is one of these sideplates on a pistol, Catalogue #648-306, now in the Texas Memorial Museum, Austin. The barrel bears the date 1732.

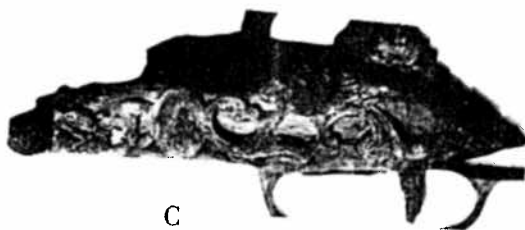
Figure 3, B, was found with a gun excavated by Miss Diana Baker from a mound at the Natchez village, St. Catherine's Creek, Natchez,



A



B



C



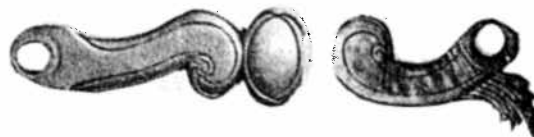
D



E



F



G

Figure 3. Type B or C French sideplates used on Type B and C.

A. From collector's gun, Texas Memorial Museum, Austin, catalogue #648-306. Neg. #97-3.

B. From Fatherland site, collection of Diana Baker, Natchez, Neg. #2A-10.

C. From complete gun found by DeJarnette at Childersburg site (1960: 52) and now at Moundville, Alabama. Neg. #105-17.

D. Excavated at Michilimackinac by Michigan State University, East Lansing. Neg. #116-12.

E. Same as above.

F. Surface collected by Bert Moore on Arkansas River near Deer Creek and now in Oklahoma Historical Society. Neg. #90-17.

G. A simplified form. From Michilimackinac. Neg. #116-12.

Mississippi. The Natchez were driven from here by the French in 1729.

Figure 3, C, is the sideplate of the Type C gun excavated by DeJarnette (1960: 46 and 48) on the Childersburg site.

Figure 3, D, E, and F, illustrates variations of the monster's head and are probably all from higher grade guns. In 3, D, the monster's head is merely suggested. Figures 3, D and E, are from Michilimackinac, excavated by Michigan State University and are to be seen in its collection. Figure 3, F, is from the Bert Moore Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.

From the archaeological evidence it appears that guns featuring this sideplate were in the American fur trade immediately after its introduction to the carriage trade in Europe. The sideplate from the Grand Village of the Natchez definitely determines its presence in Louisiana before 1730.

Figure 3, G, represents two sideplate fragments from Michilimackinac placed in their original order. These two fragments do not appear to have come from the same piece, but belong to the same form of sideplate. The relationship in design to the Type B and C sideplate is obvious.

**TYPE C:** Figures 4 and 5.

**DATE:** 1685-1730.

**AFFILIATION:** French.

**DESCRIPTION:**

**Furniture:** Bright brass with "potted plant" finials on tang of buttplate and front tang of trigger guard as shown in Figure 4, A and B, and in Figure 5, F. Rear trigger guard tang terminates in a plain but gracefully curved point. The bottom of the trigger guard bow is often decorated with a simple "Chevrolet" design, as shown in 4, E, and this is sometimes also found on the buttplate tang. This gun was made in at least two known grades (see *Comments*), but even in the cheapest grade the trigger guard is carefully cast and has two mounting lugs.

**Sideplates:** Brass with a foliated body, a medallion in the center and a monster head, exactly like that used on the Type B, (Figure 3). It is not certain that the sideplate was always present.

**Sights:** Only the gun from the Childersburg site still has front and rear sights; which are of brass. The rear sight is large and flat and could easily be knocked off, Figure 5, G, which may account for its not being present on the other

three guns. On the Childersburg gun the rear sight is placed 3-7/16 in. from the breech, and the front sight is located 4 3/8 in. back from the muzzle.

**Barrels:** Four complete guns have been found. Barrels range from 36 3/4 to 48 in. in length and are pinned to the stock. Breech section is fully octagonal measuring about nine inches long and from 1 1/8 to 1 1/4 in. across the flats. Where the octagonal breech section and the muzzle section merge the barrels are 7/8 to one inch in diameter while the outside diameters at the muzzle range from 3/4 to 7/8 in.

**Bore:** About .50 in.

**Lock:** Locks on these guns are so badly encrusted with rust, little can be determined. None have bridles on the frizzen and the three which could be examined on the backside did not have bridles on the tumbler.

**Comments:** This Type is based on four excavated specimens and over 40 fragments found primarily in the valley of the Mississippi or its tributaries from the Canadian border to Alabama. No fragments have been found in areas dominated by English or Dutch trade such as in New York, Pennsylvania, or Virginia.

This gun was made in at least two grades, maybe three. One of the excavated guns (Figure 4, C, D, and E) is of very cheap manufacture with light brass trigger guard and buttplate, while the remaining three are well made. However, both grades are distinguished by relatively crude casting of the "potted plant" finials. Collector's guns have also been seen having this same type of finial, but the castings are invariably of higher quality with the "plant" spread out and showing more detail. At present, I am not certain whether these finials and sideplates of better quality found on Indian sites are from actual trade guns or from Bourgeois' guns.

**The Childersburg Gun:** The most complete example of Type C was excavated by David L. DeJarnette (1960) at the Childersburg site near the junction of Coosa River and Talladega Creek in Alabama. This gun, now at Moundville, Alabama, is illustrated in Figure 5. It has a filigreed sideplate with a monster's head (Figure 5, A). The lock still holds a "Dutch" gunflint. Trigger guard is a typical Type C, complete with a "potted plant" front finial. The bottom of the bow is decorated with a sharp pointed "Chevrolet" design and has a small dot or circle immediately opposite each point—a detail often observed in simple "Chevrolet" designs on both Type C and D trigger guards. The finial, Figure 5, E, has been broken off at the buttplate tang, a common occurrence.

The buttplate tang with finial, Figure 5, F, is from the Angola site, LSU catalogue #461, and belongs with the trigger guard shown in Figure 4, A.

2. The term "Chevrolet", to distinguish the peculiar decoration found on the bottom of the trigger guard of all four of the recovered guns, as shown in Figure 4, E, was first used by Jay Blaine of Dallas, Texas, because of its similarity to the automobile trademark.