Simeon North Biography

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Biography

A native of Berlin, Connecticut, Simeon North was a successful manufacturer of scythes before he turned to gun making, eventually becoming one of the major suppliers of firearms to the United States military before the Civil War. In 1799, North secured his first contract with the army, who ordered 500 of his flintlock pistols; the next year the order was increased to 1500. Following the outbreak of the War of 1812, North expanded his plant in order to meet the government's orders. He was the first to use the principle of interchangeable parts when he filled an order for 20,000 flintlock pistols. After the war, North continued to create pistols that incorporated minor changes: an addition of a swivel ramrod, a safety catch slide on the hammer, and a brass foresight on the barrel.

North was better known for the rifle s he produced. In 1823, he won a government contract in which he supplied the army with standard breech-loading rifles. These initially were flintlock arms, but in 1843 North submitted a new design for governmental approval. His revamped model was christened "North's Improvement" for its improved method of working the breech mechanism. Until then, breech-loading rifles were flawed with loose seams between the chamber and the barrel, causing flames to spurt out the back and losing some velocity because of this gas leakage. North's design made the breech mechanism fit more closely to the barrel, thus reducing the loss of velocity. His adaptation of the Hall percussion breechloader was a success with the army, and he continued filling orders until his death in 1852.