Richard Jordan Gatling Encyclopedia Article

Richard Jordan Gatling

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Richard Jordan Gatling

1818-1903

American inventor best known for his invention of the Gatling gun, a crank-operated rapid-fire machine gun that he patented in 1862. Working at the outbreak of the Civil War, Gatling believed a gun that could quickly fire large numbers of cartridges without stopping would reduce the number of soldiers required on the battlefield. The son of a wealthy planter, he also invented seed-sowing machines that did much to revolutionize the agricultural system in America.