

**Euroarms R&S Match revolver**



# Too late for the party

**Derek Landers** looks at a Euroarms reproduction of the Rogers & Spencer percussion revolver, a pistol which arrived a little too late to make its mark in the American Civil War

**I**n 1837 Amos Rogers and his partner, Julius Spencer, became partners in a farm machinery business, making guns as a sideline. In 1859 they began the manufacture of .31 and .34 calibre revolvers, based on C.S. Pettengill's 1856 patent. When the initial backers ran out of cash they took over the patent and the production themselves,

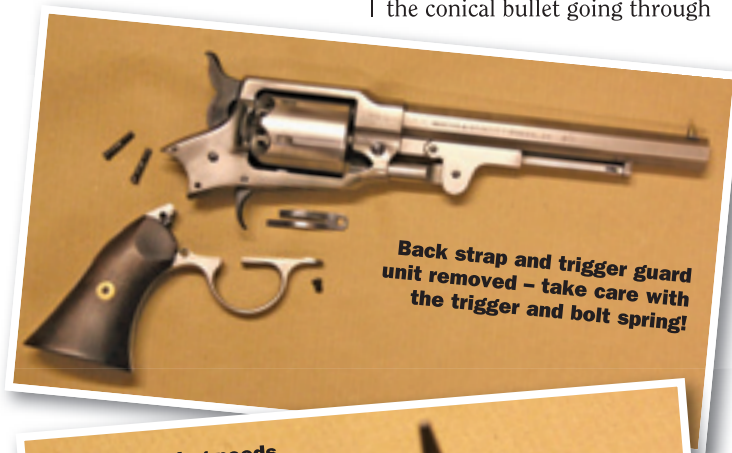
becoming Rogers, Spencer & Co. The Pettengill was a self-cocking revolver with an enclosed hammer, and the military ordered 5,000 examples in .44 calibre at \$20 each including appendages (driver, nipple wrench and mould). The sample revolver sent to Springfield Armoury was found to be accurate with good penetration, the conical bullet going through

three 1" pine boards and embedding itself in the fourth at a distance of fifty yards but it became very difficult to cock as the fouling increased. The result was that the revolvers were found unsuitable and the contract was cancelled. The company couldn't afford this setback and offered to make modifications to the design and accept a reduced contract for 2,000 pistols. This was accepted and they were delivered between October, 1862 and January, 1863. Some 15% of these pistols were rejected by government inspectors due to poor workmanship or materials.

Colt and Remington, were both single action models, in the summer of 1864 Rogers and Spencer began development of their own pistol to challenge the market leaders. Using the barrel and loading lever assembly from the Pettengill they sent two of their new pistols to the Ordnance Department in September, 1864, and offered to produce five thousand examples at \$12.00 each. The offer was initially rejected but later that year a contract was signed on the same terms, all five thousand revolvers being delivered by September 26th 1865. There are no records of any of these revolvers being issued to the troops as the War was formerly ended with Lee's surrender on April 9th of that year, and the total shipment was put into storage where they remained until 1901 when they were purchased by New York military goods dealer Francis Bannerman for a little over twenty five cents each! By 1907 he was listing them in his military surplus catalogue for \$3.85 each. The history of these pistols accounts for the fact that some examples can still be found today in near mint condition.

## A revolver for a 'quarter'

As the "big two" percussion military revolvers of the day,



Back strap and trigger guard unit removed - take care with the trigger and bolt spring!



The mainspring needs to be compressed to refit the guard



The extra large recesses allow for easy capping

## The Euroarms reproduction

Probably swayed by the popularity of the original models, today's shooters, when choosing a .44 calibre percussion revolver, seem inclined to opt for either

the Colt 1860 or the Remington 1858, no doubt influenced by the variety of these models in the reproduction market. Both of these pistols have their merits and prospective followers but I would suggest that anyone looking for their first pistol in this class should give the Euroarms 'Rogers and Spencer' more than a cursory glance. Maybe not a winner in the good looks stakes, it has one or two advantages over its counterparts.

It's a six-shot revolver with a 7½" barrel and overall length is just under fourteen inches, it weighs in as tested at 1.25kg. The test gun is fitted with a Lothar Walther barrel plus a front sight – a conical brass post on a flat, black base - which is dovetailed into the top barrel flat, allowing for some lateral adjustment. The rear sight consists of a groove along the top strap (a nice touch here is a copy of the original R&S markings) culminating in a sharp v-notch towards the rear end. This version is aimed at the more serious target shooter who still wants to shoot in the spirit of the original without resorting to fully adjustable sights. The original nineteenth century version had a case-hardened hammer and loading lever with the rest of the pistol blue. Euroarms offer a full blue version as well as the model tested here which is in their rust resilient 'London Grey' finish, a not-too-highly-polished stainless steel. Not for the purists, stainless steel does have advantages when it comes to resisting the attack from black powder residue. The hammer, trigger and all of the screws are black and the pistol has two-piece walnut grips. Fit and finish could be improved a little in some areas but overall this is a very nice pistol.

## Never mind the looks, feel the grips!

Although, in my opinion, this revolver is not as attractive as either the Colt or Remington offerings, pick it up and it instantly feels right in your hand. It has a size and shape of grip – they are flared more than most other pistols - that will suit all but the largest or smallest of hands and it points very well. The tip of the upswept hammer is higher than both of the other two,

but can still be cocked quite easily with the shooting hand as the pistol rises under recoil. It has a wide, smooth trigger which broke quite crisply albeit at a rather heavy six-plus pounds. Fore and aft lockup was excellent with a minute amount of side-to-side play, probably due to a slightly undersized locking bolt. This example favoured a .454" lead ball and the powder charge was 25 grains of Henry Krank black powder.

I used the pistol at a CAS shoot so did not really get the chance to test the quality of the Walther barrel. I used Remington No. 11 caps and lost one or two unfired caps under recoil but a change to No. 10 size cured the problem. Recoil is very manageable and apart from the cap problem the pistol performed faultlessly. The loading lever latch uses the same pin arrangement as the Starr revolver, inferior to the Colt and Remington, but on this occasion the spring was not too strong and there were no sore fingers after a shooting session.

Where this pistol scores heavily over its two main rivals is in the capping process. A look at the photographs will show you the large cut out around each nipple, making capping by hand extremely easy. Another point I liked was the method for fastening the loading lever, cylinder arbour and rammer into the frame. Taking a leaf out of the Whitney Navy Revolver's book (which preceded the original R&S by some seven years), the whole assembly is held in the frame by a screw, a quarter turn of which allows the unit to be removed, making cleaning very easy. The screw can be turned with your thumb nail but is not loose enough to move on its own. The arbour has a slight rebated section where it fits into the

cylinder and the cylinder itself has a spiral groove running down its centre. Presumably a little grease or Vaseline in this area will keep the pistol running a bit longer before the dreaded fouling takes hold. Removing and replacing the cylinder requires the same rotating operation as previously mentioned for the Remington revolver.

The back strap and trigger guard are one piece and can be removed from the frame by taking out the two screws just above the wood grips and the one in front of the guard itself. Take care when carrying out this operation as the latter screw also holds the trigger and bolt spring in place and this will fall out as the parts are separated. The unit can be removed with the grips in place but they will have to be taken off to replace it, as the main spring needs to be compressed to get it under the roller on the base of the hammer.

## Check it out

There are a number of variations of this pistol in the Euroarms line-up, including standard barrels and fully adjustable rear sights. Prices start at £375 for the standard blue version. The Union Army missed out on a great piece of kit in the mid-nineteenth century. Make sure you don't overlook it in your search for a .44 calibre percussion revolver.



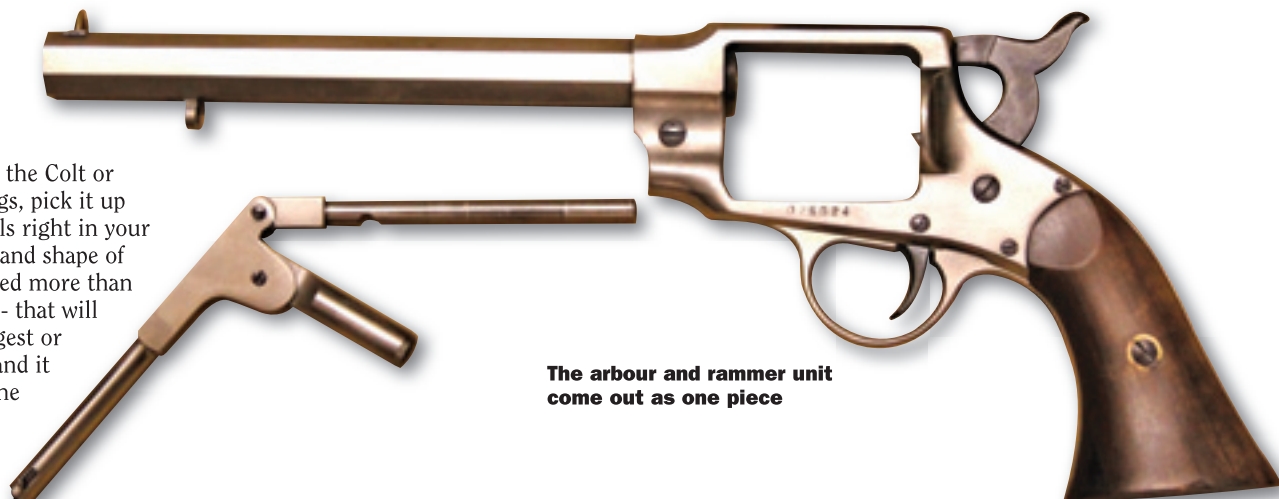
### Technical Specification (as tested)

Make	Euroarms
Model	Rogers & Spencer Match
Calibre	.44
No. of shots	6
Barrel length	7½"
Overall length	14"
Weight	1.25kg
Trigger pull	6+lbs
Price	£712
Contact	Henry Krank (0113 2565167) www.henrykrank.com



(Top)  
With the screw in this position the arbour is locked in place, but a quarter turn allows the unit to be removed

(Above)  
The laterally adjustable front sight



The arbour and rammer unit come out as one piece