

BLACK POWDER GUN DIGEST



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■ A Complete Guide to Muzzleloading Guns and Shooting ■ Black Powder Shooting Today — how to choose and use ■ Collecting — how to get the most for your money ■ Rifles, Handguns, Shotguns — characteristics, ballistics, accuracy of each ■ Do-It-Yourself Projects ■ Where-To-Buy-It Directory ■ Catalog of All U.S. & Import Muzzleloading Guns and Accessories

AUCTION TO ARMORY





Centennial Arms' Beginnings Were Almost Accidental, Resulting From Sale Of A Collection!

Part D: Rebirth Of An Era

"IT WAS ALL A MISTAKE."

Sig Shore, behind his desk at Centennial Arms Corporation, was referring to his entry into the antique and later the replica firearms business, that has made him one of the nation's leading dealers in the field.

Auctioneering has been the Shore's family business for three generations. Sig Shore's father and grandfather before him were auctioneers in the Chicago area and founded Shore Galleries in Lincolnwood, Illinois, which is also the home of Centennial Arms.

Entering the firearms business was a result of Shore Galleries auctioning a large estate that included a fine antique firearms collection.

"The response was so amazing and people so fervent in their enthusiasm that I decided the gun business was for me," Shore recalls. "After that auction in 1958, I went out looking for antique firearms. We found that collectors are much more enthusiastic over their purchases than the average person buying daily needs. The fever in collectors is high enough that many sacrifice a necessity so that they can buy that particular gun, coin or what have you, to add to a collection."

Shore became fascinated with the business of buying and selling antique guns both at auction and through the gallery. As time passed and money became more plentiful with today's affluent society, Shore found that most of the larger collectors were not selling their priceless antiques, but there still was a growing demand for the guns of our country's historic past.

During 1960, the company started selling replicas to fill the demand from collectors and a growing public to own a firearm related to America's history.

Centennial's first replica was the 1860 Army Colt, a .44

cap and ball revolver. The pistol featured an engraved cylinder eight-inch barrel, walnut grips, blue finish, round cylinder mounted on a steel frame. This gun was a copy of the famous Civil War issue revolver used by both the North and South. Surprisingly, this same 1860 Colt replica still is one of the biggest sellers at Centennial Arms.

Shore points out that the Civil War and the nostalgia of the Old Wild West are really our only heritage in the antique firearms field. The Revolution was fought with European-made arms and it wasn't until the Civil War that American-made guns became prominent, being used by both the Union and Confederate forces. The guns of that era stretched across the wild western frontiers of the United States and became more famous than the men who carried them.

The collecting of American pioneer items such as firearms has become a booming business even in Europe. Our movies have played a large part in bringing that era of history to the masses and countless millions seem to want to be a part of this saga of the early days of the Wild West.

Sam Colt patented and manufactured the first revolvers in 1836 and, by the time of the Mexican War in 1849, the gun was a standard of the U.S. Army. These first cap and ball revolvers were American-made and not a heritage from the old country, allegedly the reason for their continued popularity today.

Shore sells his replica arms to a wide section of the population. The collectors and shooters come from every walk of life: blue collar workers, plumbers, carpenters, electricians and, at the other end of the spectrum, company presidents and board chairmen of some of the largest corporations in the country. Even women are becoming interested in collecting and shooting the black powder arms, Shore has found.

Another reason for the growth and popularity of black powder arms is that there are no federal restrictions for the purchase of these replicas and they can be shipped to the customer and ordered by mail without a Federal firearms permit. However, it is recommended that one check with local officials to insure there is no local law preventing the



Sig Shore, founder and president of Centennial Arms, with early bladed fighting instrument; a part of his collection.



The showcases at the Lincolnwood, Illinois, firm are packed full of various modern made black powder replicas and reproduction guns.

Personnel at Centennial Arms find the arms trade a fast moving business, working hard to meet and fill orders from all over U.S.



use or shipment into your area. Centennial Arms also makes it mandatory that all customers submit a statement that they are over 21 years of age and no local laws prohibit black powder guns.

The replicas are manufactured in Europe for Centennial Arms. The first were produced in Belgium, but because of devaluation of the dollar, Shore has shifted most of the firm's business to Italy where prices are still reasonable enough to meet the competitive market.

Under Shore's guidance, Centennial has sold thousands of real antique guns and, in recent years, developed a long line of the replicas. The company also carries a line of powder flasks and bullet moulds.

Replicas sold by Centennial range from thirty bucks to more than \$100. They are fairly accurate, considering the design and type of firearm. Many have used these modern replicas for hunting with great success in states where there is a special black powder season. The effective range for a black powder pistol is twenty-five yards. The rifles are good up to about one hundred and twenty-five yards.

The future of replicas is unlimited, according to Shore. "It is one of the fastest developing businesses in the nation. Not only are they sought by the avid collector and shooter, but many people just like to decorate their homes with a piece of Americana from the nostalgic past."

The Centennial folks come out with a new model each year, sometimes replacing one of the less popular guns. Many of these have been replicas of Civil War era guns but some have also been "firearms that could have been," dreamed up by Shore and his staff.

Even to the casual observer visiting the Shore Galleries in Lincolnwood, Shore's statement that "it was all a mistake" seems pretty far from the truth. What once housed a successful auction business now is a complete sporting goods store. The stock includes guns, fishing equipment, camping gear, tennis and golf equipment and, of course, the line of Centennial replicas.

The firm still is in the auction business and Shore may hop a plane tomorrow to globe trot and bid on a collection of fine antique arms or visit the factory in Italy to start things going on the next replica model. — Chuck Tyler