



The U.S. Model 1841 12 Pounder Mountain Howitzer

Mobility at its Finest



The Model 1841 Mountain Howitzer was the most versatile piece of weaponry of its kind during the 19th century. The Army used it for 50 years, mostly on the western plains. Lightweight and rugged, its size made all the difference in any engagement this little workhorse participated in.

Development

Sometime in the early 1830s the Army realized the need for a smaller, lighter, more versatile cannon that would still have almost the same range as a larger cannon. Their answer to this problem was to shorten the tube (barrel) and shape the breech like a funnel. The resulting gun was called a Howitzer, a name taken from the Prussians (Germans) and pronounced, “Haubitze”, which means sling or basket.



The U.S. began producing Howitzers in the 1830s. The two models made during the 1830s were short lived but the third time was a charm with the final product: The Model 1841 Mountain Howitzer.

Standardization

All the Mountain Howitzers used the same bronze tube, but it took some experimentation to get the carriage just right. The first version of the M-1841, was the Pack Model, which could be transported on three horses after being taken apart. The second version mounted the tube on what was called the Prairie Carriage, which could be pulled by horses into the field. Its wider axel was more stable than the narrow axel of the pack model. The last model was called the Second Prairie Carriage and differed slightly from the first. It became the mainstay of the Indian Wars until replaced by breech loading guns like the Hotchkiss Mountain Gun.



This is the type most often seen in museums and National Parks throughout the U.S.

Nicknames for Everyone

Most of the military posts in the west had Mountain Howitzers; Fort Larned had four on their inventory in 1868. Because few of these remote posts had trained artillerymen assigned to them, Infantry and Cavalry personnel were crosstrained to operate the Howitzer. This earned them the colorful moniker “instant artillery” a term not meant to be flattering.

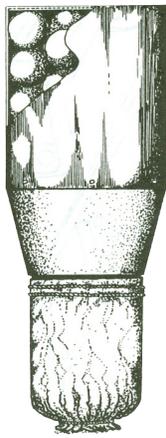
During the Civil War the Howitzer earned the nickname of the Bulldog, giving the impression it would not back down from a fight. The Indians also had a nickname for it: “The Gun that Booms Twice,” referring to the fact that Spherical Case shot exploded a certain distance after it was fired, causing another explosion after the initial one which launched the round. Think of it as a hand grenade you could throw approximately seven hundred yards.

Ammunition for the Mountain Howitzer

Ammunition for Howitzers was the same as for other artillery pieces in the 19th century. The designation of the piece itself was determined by the weight of the solid shot, or what most people think of as a "cannon ball". A 12-pound Mountain Howitzer is so named because the solid shot weighs 12 pounds.

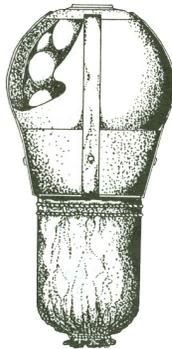
Types of Fixed Rounds

Canister, circa 1848



Large can the size of the cannon bore filled with .69 caliber lead balls, placed in tiers and padded with sawdust. Turns the howitzer into a huge shotgun.

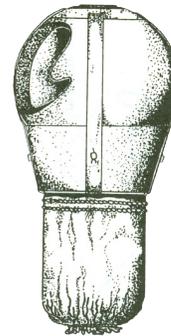
Spherical Case Shot



A hollow ball with .69 caliber lead balls inside.

Used mostly for anti-personnel purposes.

Shell



A hollow ball with powder inside to start fires.

Use mostly against structures.

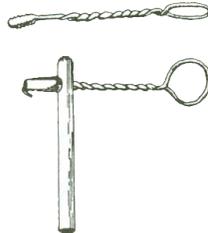
Secondary Projectiles

.69 caliber, for canister and spherical case shot.



Friction Primer

Used to ignite the powder bag.



Boreman Fuze

Secondary fuze for both spherical case shot and shell set to ignite the interior charge at a certain distance after the initial firing.

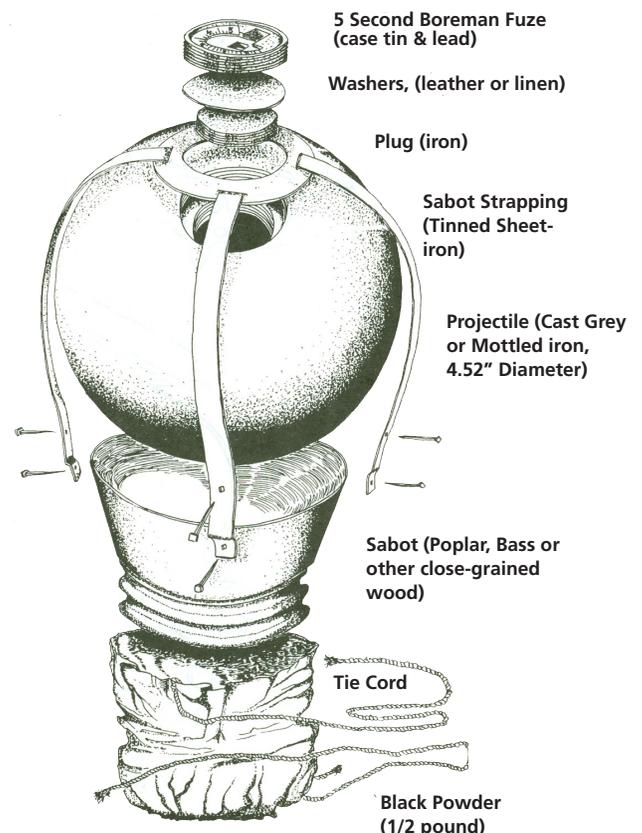


Initial Velocities	
Spherical Case Shot	953 FPS
Canister	1015 FPS
Shell	1054 FPS

Table of Ranges				
Elevation	Shell	Time	Sph'l Case	Time
0°	179 Yards		150 yards	
1°	300 "			
2°	390 "			
2°30'	500 "	2 Sec's	450 "	2 Sec's
3°	635 "		500 "	
4°	785 "	3 "	700 "	2.75 "
5°	1005 "		800 "	3 "

Maximum range of Canister: 200 yards

Fixed Round of Spherical Case Shot (Exploded View)



Not shown are Solid Shot, which would be used to demolish structures, and Stand of Grape, nine large iron balls in a cage used against naval targets. Both of these were rarely used in the frontier Indian Wars.