

Fine Wine and Cartridges!

by Mark Tully and John White

No, I'm not condoning consumption of alcoholic beverages while shooting black powder -- merely pointing out that there are at least two things the French really know how to do right!

No matter what your impression -- Rebel, British, French, German, Loyalist, militia -- when it comes to making-up your rounds for the NWTAs "battle demonstrations" the fastest, easiest way to roll cartridges is in the French style.



French-style cartridges offer several advantages: they are less finicky and time-consuming to make than the tied-off and twisted British style (left), they don't "leak" as easily because the bottom seal is better, and the little "tail" helps keep them from falling out of your cartridge pouch (see "Cartridges" article in the August issue).

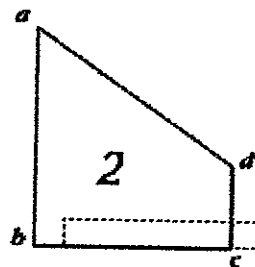
Since nobody sees your cartridges anyway (at least they're not SUPPOSED to -- you ARE picking up your empties, aren't you?) it really doesn't matter what style you make them in. I personally keep one or two "live" rounds (substituting pencil shavings for the powder) made-up in the British style for public demonstration purposes. However, when it comes to "battle" rounds, I roll my blanks in the French style.

John White of Avalon Forge¹ was good enough to send in the following instructions for making French-style cartridges -- complete with the very nice illustrations reproduced below.

TO MAKE A FRENCH STYLE MUSKET CARTRIDGE:

Materials Needed:

- Proper size cartridge paper.²
- Former (make from 5/8 inch dowel, 6 inches long, round one end for blanks, concave other for ball).
- Musket balls (if loading live rounds).
- Clear stationery glue or glue stick.
- 2F or 3F black powder.
- Powder measure, funnel, etc.



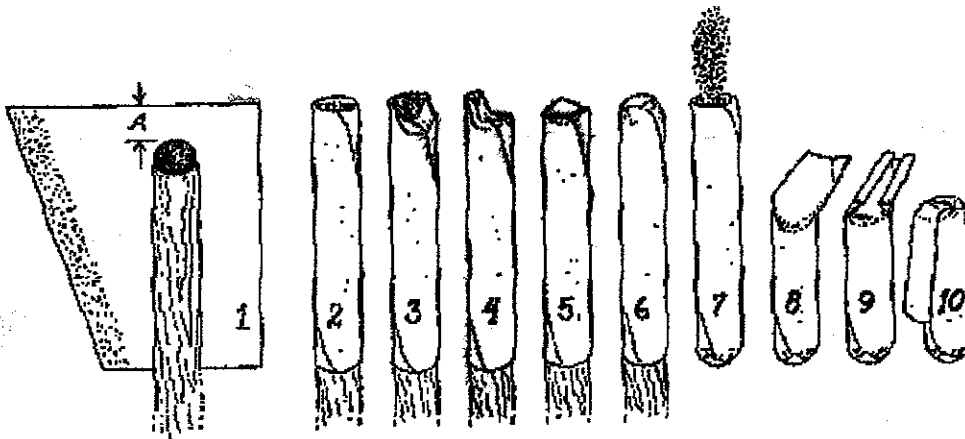
Pickering's cartridge paper pattern.

1) Lay former on paper as shown. glue should be put on slanted edge (dotted area) use rounded end of former for blank cartridges. Distance "A" should be approximate diameter of the former (or ball) if loading live rounds. Roll paper around former starting with straight edge of the paper.

2) This is how a properly rolled paper should appear at this point.

- 3) Fold top of paper at the side seam over the ball or former. put a small amount of glue on top of the seam. too much glue will stick paper to ball or former.
- 4) Fold again over ball or former. Put glue on top of this fold as well.
- 5) Fold final portion over.
- 6) Smooth edges over ball or former with the palm of your hand to achieve rounded appearance. Insure that glue is properly set, then remove former.
- 7) Load open end with desired charge of black powder only.
- 8) Flatten top portion of paper and fold over at a 90 degree angle, forming a trough over the powder.
- 9) Fold both edges of the "tail" toward the center.
- 10) Bring the tail toward the front and fold along side powder charge. You shouldn't need to glue this tail, but you can if you want to.

Voilà! A French cartridge!



NOTES:

1) John White is the Proprietor of Avalon Forge, 409 Gun Road, Baltimore, Maryland, 21227. Avalon Forge offers an excellent line of quality products for the re-enactor. Call 410-242-8431 for a current price list.

2) Timothy Pickering offers dimensions for a former: "... side a - b measures about six inches, b - c about five inches and a half, and c - d about two inches." Pickering, Timothy, *An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia*, Second Edition, Boston, 1776, part I, page 3.



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