

BHM 2019 021 41

Ft Independence Sept 18th

My dear Callender,

You may have heard that last year the Founders, when they thought they were Making the best of Cannon, & had every thing all right, were surprised by their guns beauty in Proof: what was the Cause-. Rodman's hollow gun & one cast solid at same time had burst with a first. & a 10 " Columbiad made by C.A. & Co Boston in 1846 burst at trials made by Georges at Fort Monroe in 1850, as the 94 since changes (did?). After much investigation I found what I have no doubt is the cause of all these failures. They used the Greenwood iron, a very strong refracting iron, and it shrank in Cooling so as to Strain the gun, and tho" the iron by every list appeared to be & was Very strong, the gun was weak. When a lot _____ 600/ here in June 1855, I reported to the Col of Ordnc (Ordnance): My suspicions of those Cast just before & after – & thought it probable that tho" they had stood the prescribed proof they might fail soon afterward, & recommended they should be tested, further, to be satisfied that they were safe guns this before issuing them for service- but ___ to quite a number had been sent to California, and my recommendation lay, until this summer, when on again Calling attention to it, I was directed to have these guns I Considered _____ had further,. I sent Lt McAllister here & we have already fired one 10" – no 24 _____ the 10" fire with 20 pounder & 1 shot, & 8" No. 43 it burst at the 3 fire 12# & 1 shot.

I will tomorrow try No 51 (38 is your last No from this Foundry) – there will not be time to send you the result by this steamer.

One reason of the failure of the guns at this foundry, was that during the latter parley Mr Algiers like his workmen took the guns out of the flask to soon, & rapid Cooling occurred the Curcliuention(?) this was contrary to MV A (Mt Vernon Arsenal?) rule, but the Old gentleman was inpire(?) & could not allowd pucsalalley(?).

Of the West Point guns I have more confidence the only ones that I can indicate as best not to use until further trials are Made are – 8" Columbiad. Nos 56 & 64 W.P.F. (*West Point Foundry*) Now I send you this information that you May Review(?) – It is fact - & you ought to know it, but there is no sense saying anything about it-. For most persons would not repeat the facts Correctly(?), & all sorts of stories would be manufactured at _____. So I recommend you to say little – If you do keep a O_C of a think_____.

Mrs Huger was here with me for a week & has now gone with Puck & Lilly to New Park, - The spent a couple of weeks at WcPurly, to see Lawk, during the latter part of August.

I was at Walutrun(?) this morning & saw Capt Wainright & Symmes (they think he is insane) – and Capt Luther Leonard – M.S.K. (*Military Storekeeper*). I am staying a few days with Maj I.B. Scott at this Frt: he & all the 4th Artily, except the Capt Galherns, are around to Florida Also 5th Infr & 4 companies of the 1st Arty. Gen Harvey is to Commd.

No news among the ordnance. The Board to meet in Washington Oct 8. When I hope to get something out of our Crimean Heroes. I have not been able to hear a word from them yet.

Remember me to Col Rilely. Tell him I was at Duchisten a few days _____ and saw Mr & Mrs Hooper, & those 5 grand children all able. Remember me to Stone when you see him. 

Yours Trly

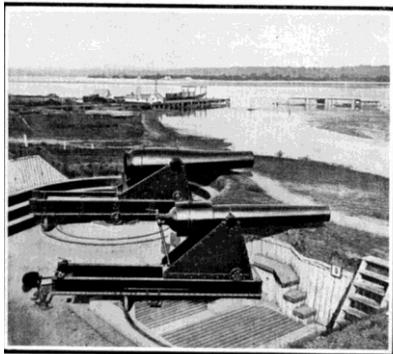
Written in the margins:

Page 1: Some of the first of these NOS, may not been of the same metal as those that failed. I will give you details when further trials have been made.

Page 3:  I ___ spend a day with his Sister & ___ her & his three Nephews, the eldest 4 years old – all well

----- Explanations -----

The Rodman gun is any of a series of American Civil War–era columbiads designed by Union artilleryman Thomas Jackson Rodman[1] (1815–1871). The guns were designed to fire both shot and shell. These heavy guns were intended to be mounted in seacoast fortifications. They were built in 8-inch, 10-inch, 13-inch, 15-inch, and 20-inch bore. Other than size, the guns were all nearly identical in design, with a curving bottle shape, large flat cascabels with ratchets or sockets for the elevating mechanism. Rodman guns were true guns that did not have a howitzer-like powder chamber, as did many earlier columbiads. Rodman guns differed from all previous artillery because they were hollow cast, a new technology that Rodman developed that resulted in cast-iron guns that were much stronger than their predecessors.



AN 8-INCH PARROTT AND A RODMAN GUN

----- Fort Monroe -----

The site of Fort Monroe was first garrisoned in June 1823 by Battery G of the 3rd U.S. Artillery Regiment commanded by Captain Mann P. Lomax.

As a young first lieutenant and engineer in the U.S. Army, Robert E. Lee was stationed at the fort from 1831 to 1834 and played a major role in its final construction and its opposite, Fort Calhoun (later named Fort Wool).

Since 1824 Fort Monroe was the site of a series of schools of artillery. The first was the Artillery School of Practice. The school was closed in 1834 but was revived during the period 1858–61. It was succeeded by the Artillery School of the U.S. Army, which existed from 1867 until its redesignation in 1907 as the Coast Artillery School. Fort Monroe also hosted the Old Point Comfort Proving Ground for testing

artillery and ammunition from the 1830s to 1861; after the Civil War this function relocated to the Sandy Hook Proving Ground in New Jersey

----- Cyrus Algers cannon mfg. -----

Cyrus Alger: founder of Cyrus Alger & Col. (q.v.).

Cyrus Alger & Co.: Cyrus Alger, who during the War of 1812 furnished the government with shot and shell, in 1817 started South Boston Iron company which at an early date was known locally as Alger's Foundry and later became Cyrus Alger & Co. The Massachusetts firm was a leading cannon manufacturer and when Cyrus died in 1856, leadership was assumed by his son, Francis, who piloted the company until his death in 1864. During the war, both Army and Navy were supplied with large numbers of weapons. The initials "S.B.F." (South Boston Foundry) occasionally may be found on cannon, but the signature is traditionally "C.A. & Co., Boston, Mass." or, rarely, "C. Alger & Co., Boston, Mass."

Francis Alger: President, Cyrus Alger & Co. (q.v.) 1856-64.

----- West Point Foundry -----

West Point Foundry: Cold Spring, N.Y., establishment operated by Robert Parker Parrott 1836-67. The company produced most types of iron ordnance until the war, then concentrated primarily on production of Parrott Rifles invented by the owner. Most canon are plainly marked with the foundry initials "W.P.F." and also the owner's "R.P.P."