

Grace  
Dee May

MUSEUM &  
LIBRARY

# ILLUMINATIONS

MAY / JUNE 2025

Looking Down  
the Barrel of History



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ILLUMINATING THE LEGACY OF THE WEST

# Grace Dee May

MUSEUM &  
LIBRARY

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### Audrey Marie Stein

In 2004, Audrey Marie Stein established the Grace Dee May Museum. Audrey believed that she had been richly blessed by the **Grace** of God.

Audrey's nickname was **Dee** and she had been born in the month of **May**. So, as Director of the Foundation, she named the Museum the **Grace Dee May**.



## MAY / JUNE 2025 ILLUMINATIONS



*"Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes!"*

– Attributed to Col. William Prescott,  
at the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775

### Looking Down the Barrel of History

While the earliest known portable firearms with a smooth bore barrel first appeared in Italy in the 14th century, "hand cannons" were in use during the 15th century across Europe and then in common use in American colonies. Of course, it was the Chinese during the 10th century who had invented gunpowder fueled projectiles that literally began the "shots heard round the world" more than seven centuries before American revolutionaries took up their flintlock muskets on April 19, 1775 at the battles at Lexington and Concord.

When the Corps of Discovery left St. Louis to explore the lands within the Louisiana Purchase, Freemasons Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were confident that the unique firearm known as the Girandoni air rifle would establish the eminence of the expeditionary force during their more than 8,000 mile trek during 1804 to 1896. The .46-caliber, four-foot long air gun was capable of firing 22 lead balls with a thunderous roar. The "Captains", during council meetings with tribal leaders of the Shoshone, Otoe-Missouria, Lakota, Mandan, Arikara, Hidatsa, Chinook, Sioux nations, demonstrated the superior power of the U.S. forces. Along with Lewis and Clark, most of their fellow explorers had served in the U.S. Army where Model 1795 Musket was the most common long gun which were used extensively to provide game and to protect their lives from attacks by fierce grizzly bears.

While soldiers from the Revolutionary War through the conflicts of the Civil War, two World Wars, and more recently conflicts in the Middle East have taken up arms, the majority of Americans have a more vicarious knowledge of guns gained mainly from reading books, watching Westerns on the silver screen and TV, and from streaming series on our phones.

In 1917's silent film, "The Gunfighter", actor William S. Hart, believed to be a Freemason, fiercely gazed down the barrel of his blazing guns. Tom Mix, known as the "King of the Cowboys", appeared as a huge star of the silver screen performing daredevil stunts, riding his famous horse, Tony, and taking down bad guys with a Colt single action Army revolver or his .22 bolt-action rifle.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Illuminations as we shine a light on historic firearms and the Freemasons who helped to bring law and order to the West.

Sean Foran, Curator and Board President

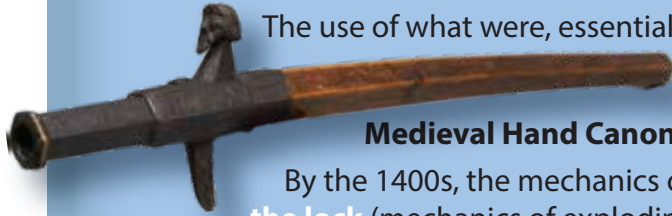




# Lock, Stock, and Barrel!

## Tracing the History of Personal Firearms

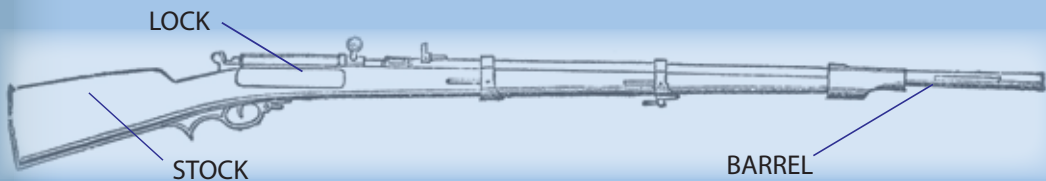
Human evolution from using rocks to break open nuts, to grind grains or to use as weapons provided our ancient ancestors with ways to overcome challenges. Harnessing fire, concocting the magic of gunpowder, and packing a metal tube with projectiles provided food and protection from enemies.



The use of what were, essentially, miniature hand-held cannons were eventually in use by bands of soldiers in Asia and Europe.

### Medieval Hand Canon

By the 1400s, the mechanics of firearms evolved to include three elements: **the lock** (mechanics of exploding gunpowder) **the stock** (where and how the gun could be held), and **the barrel** (the tube where the bullets travel toward the target).



Design improvements led from the matchlock, to the wheel lock, it was the flintlock used in the mid 1600's that would become the choice for long guns and pistols. Later, notches or sights on the rear of the barrel and a small post on the front which could be aligned to allow the gunman to more accurately aim the weapon.

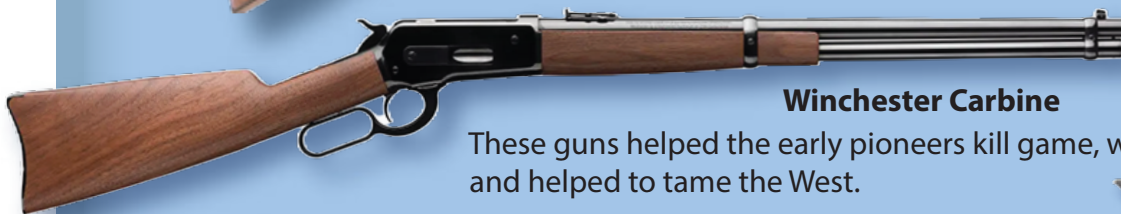


**Flintlocks** • *Flintlock rifles could fail to ignite and were ineffective in rainy weather leading to phrases commonly used to this day – "A flash in the pan" and "keep your powder dry"*

While the Pilgrims used matchlock guns, later immigrants to America would bring a variety of European guns from their homelands. Those firearms led to the very American styles of rifles including the Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Ohio long rifles.



• *By cutting twisting grooves on the interior of gun barrels (known as rifling) improved the accuracy over the distance of shots – and long guns became known as "rifles"*



### Winchester Carbine

These guns helped the early pioneers kill game, ward off enemies and helped to tame the West.



### Deringer

• *John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln with a .44-caliber "pocket cannon" manufactured in Philadelphia by Deringer*



### Colt Revolver

# Freemasons and Firearms



**"I felt only as a man can feel who is roaming over the prairies of the far West, well armed, and mounted on a fleet and gallant steed."**

– "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Marksman, Showman, and Freemason (member of Platte Valley Lodge No. 32, Nebraska)

**William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody** (1846 - 1917)

Cody earned the nickname "Buffalo Bill" when he was under contract to supply meat to the railroad workers. Cody often

used a Springfield Model 1886 rifle that he dubbed "Lucretia Borgia". He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery.



**Audie Leon Murphy** (1925 - 1971)

The most decorated U.S. soldier of World War II.

**"A life not lived for others is not a life"**

– Audie Murphy, American soldier, actor, and Freemason (member of North Hollywood Lodge No. 542, California)



**"Let your tongue speak what your heart thinks."**

– David Crockett, Politician, Frontiersman, and Freemason

**Davy Crockett** (1786 - 1836)

Crockett's rifle, known as "Old Betsy" was a gift recognizing his work in the State Assembly.

He served on the U. S. House of Representatives.

Crockett died defending the Alamo.



**Dr. Richard Jordan Gatling** (1818 - 1903)

Holder of 48 patents. Best known for inventing a hand-cranked revolving battery gun firing 120 shots per minute.

**"It occurred to me that if I could invent a machine gun which could by its rapidity of fire, enable one man to do as much battle duty as a hundred, that it would, to a large extent supersede the necessity of large armies, and consequently, exposure to battle and disease would be greatly diminished."**

– Dr. Richard Jordan Gatling, Medical doctor, inventor, and Freemason (member of Center Lodge No. 23, Indianapolis, Indiana)



**ITHACA SOUSA SHOTGUN**



**John Philip Sousa** (1854 - 1932)

Band Composer and Conductor. Competitive Trapshooter and Chairman of the National Shotgun Association.

An inductee to the Trapshooters Hall of Fame.

He had a special line of weapons – Ithaca Sousa Shotguns.

Life's best gifts:

**"A Horse, a Dog, a Gun, and a Girl— with Music on the Side."**

– John Philip Sousa, Musician and Freemason (member of Hiram Lodge No. 10, Washington, D.C.)



**"It isn't how you die. It's what you live for."**

– Daniel Boone, American pioneer, frontiersman, and considered to be a Freemason.

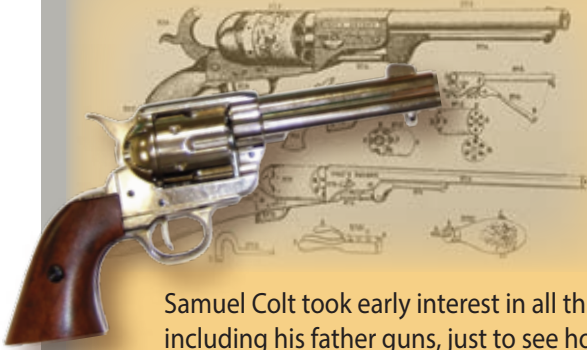
**Daniel Boone** (1734 - 1820)

Remarkable explorer, skilled hunter and marksman who guided settlers, including the grandfather of future President Abraham Lincoln, through the Appalachian Mountains along treacherous wilderness roads of the Cumberland Gap to Kentucky.

Boone's military service during the Revolutionary War was under George Rogers Clark, older brother of William Clark of the Corps of Discovery.



# Peacemaker & Trail-blazer



Among American handguns, the Colt "Peacemaker" single-action revolver is the most famous, most legendary, and most important weapon of the West



**"God made men,  
Col. Colt made them equal"**

Samuel Colt took early interest in all things mechanical and dismantled machinery, including his father guns, just to see how they worked.

When he was expelled from school for mischievous pranks, his father sent him to sea on a year long voyage to study navigation.

The workings of the ships wheel, captivated Colt especially the way the wheel could alternately spin freely or be locked by a clutch system.

Based on this concept, Colt created a hand carved wooden model of a pistol with a rotating cylinder to allow multiple shots without having to stop and reload after each firing.

On his return to "dry land", Samuel put his promotional skills to work with a traveling road show to earn enough money to develop, patent and launch his innovative "revolver" business.

Colt approached the U. S. Secretary of War hoping to secure orders of his new gun but the weapon was rejected as being "too innovative and therefore potentially unreliable".

Samuel Colt put his "revolver" aside and began development of an underwater mine to help defend harbors from attack. To fire his submerged explosive required a waterproof cable. Colt developed a cable based on an earlier design by his Masonic Brother, Samuel F. B. Morse. This opened the door for the two inventors to collaborate on an underwater telegraph cabling venture connecting New York to New Jersey.

James Polk's Presidential election presented another opportunity for Colt to promote his unique revolver. Colt was rewarded with an order for 1,000 weapons.

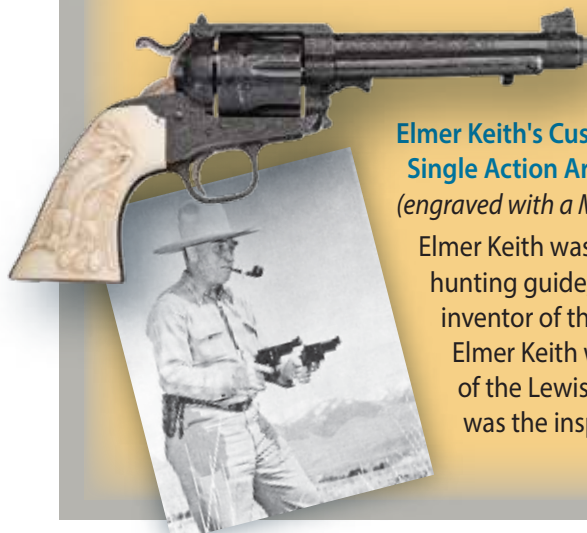
The western expansion and the Civil War guaranteed that Colt weapons, especially the iconic six-shooter called the "Peace Maker", would become the most recognized weapon in American history.

**Samuel Colt (1814-1862)**

American inventor and businessman from Hartford, Connecticut.

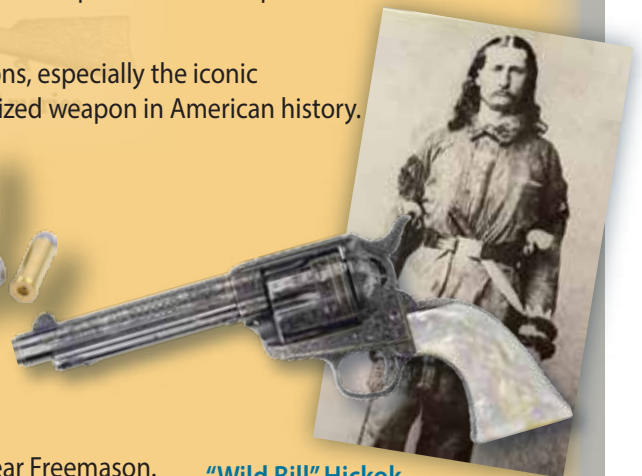
Colt invented and mass-produced the revolver which changed the West.

Samuel Colt was an active Freemason in Hartford. He was a member of St. John's Masonic Lodge No. 4, Pythagoras Chapter No. 17, and Washington Commandery No. 1.



**Elmer Keith's Custom Colt  
Single Action Army Target Revolver**  
(engraved with a Masonic Emblem on top)

Elmer Keith was a cowboy, rancher, hunting guide, author of shooting books, inventor of the 357 Magnum, and a 50 year Freemason. Elmer Keith was the great grandson of William Clark of the Lewis & Clark expedition. It is said that Keith was the inspiration for "Yosemite Sam".



**"Wild Bill" Hickok**  
shown with a Bowie knife  
and a pair of pearl-handled  
Colt revolvers in his belt.



## Six shooters to Ray-Guns



*"The Old West is not a certain place  
in a certain time, it's a state of mind. It's whatever you want it to be."*

– Tom Mix, Cowboy star and Freemason (Utopia Lodge No. 537, Los Angeles)

### The Lore & Legends of the West

From dime store Western novels to early cowboy film stars like Tom Mix who thrilled audiences with guns blazing and fancy lariat tricks, to singing cowboy stars like Tex Ritter, Gene Autry, Dick Foran and Roy Rogers – the heroes wearing white 10-gallon hats always got the bad guys.

John Wayne epitomized the Western hero long before television cowboys were cheered on by families sitting in their living rooms watching The Cisco Kid, Sky King, Wild Bill Hickok, Yancy Derringer, Gunsmoke, Maverick, and Have Gun Will Travel.

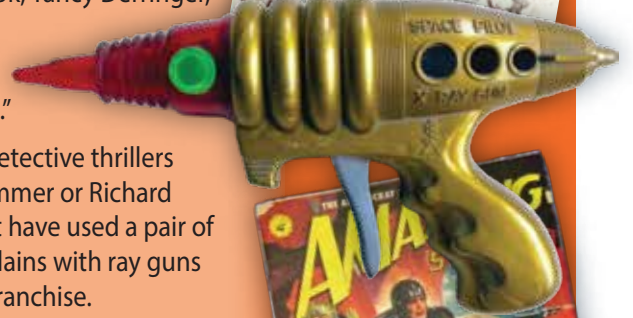
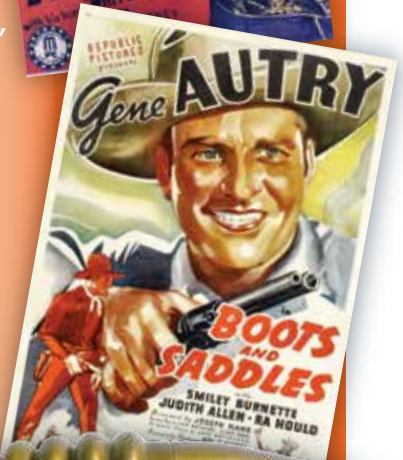
Cowboy star, Tom Mix once quipped,  
"The Old West... it's whatever you want it to be."

So, let's not forget the popular gunslingers in detective thrillers including 77 Sunset Strip, Dirty Harry, Mike Hammer or Richard Diamond or the fictional heroes who might not have used a pair of pearl-handled revolvers but took care of the villains with ray guns and blasters in Buck Rogers and the Star Wars franchise.

From James Bond's Beretta to the sawed-off shotgun used in The Rifleman – let's remember the fictional heroes as  
*a blast from the past!*

*"Nobody should come to the movies  
unless he believes in heroes."*

– John Wayne, Actor and Freemason  
(Marion McDaniel Lodge No. 56, Tucson, Arizona)





## For your safety and the safety of others

### SAFETY FIRST!

Whether you are a collector, a hunter, or a marksman your prime responsibility as a gun owner is to keep your weapons secure and follow all firearm safety rules.

Everyone needs to study and know the basic safety precautions. The following rules should be committed to memory and followed as if your life or the lives of others depends on them — *because they do!*



### “CARVED-IN-STONE RULES”

- 1** Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.
- 2** Never point a weapon at anything you are not willing to see destroyed.
- 3** Do not touch the trigger until your sights are on target and you are prepared to fire.
- 4** Be sure of your target, and what is nearby, in front, and beyond it. Bullets can travel long distances, and will penetrate many visual barriers.
- 5** Keep your firearms secure so they are not accessible to minors, unauthorized, untrained, or irresponsible individuals.
- 6** Be certain children, even if you choose not to own guns, understand basic gun safety and memorize this simple plan.

*“Sequence for Safety”: If you see a weapon,*

#### • STOP!

- Don't touch.
- Leave the area.
- Tell an adult.



## Educating and Entertaining.

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- Free bi-monthly newsletters



## CONSIDER A FREE POWER POINT PRESENTATION FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT.

Talk with Museum Curator, Sean Foran about scheduling a short historic, educational and entertaining program for your fraternal or business meeting.

Contact Sean at: 818-620-2058 or by email at: [info@gracedeemay.org](mailto:info@gracedeemay.org)

### ***Our Vision:***

The Grace Dee May Museum will seek to present a thematic look at the American West by utilizing its extensive collection of Western Art, and incorporate California history to broaden and deepen the public knowledge and appreciation of the men and women that settled the western part of the United States.

### ***Our Mission:***

The Grace Dee May Museum is committed to advancing the public knowledge and understanding of the American West and the contributions that Freemasonry has played in its development.

Grace Dee May Inc.  
(EIN: 03-0591428)  
is a qualified tax exempt  
entity under Section 501(c)(3)  
of the Internal Revenue Code

Sean Foran, BOARD PRESIDENT AND CURATOR  
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