



Armaments on Sultana

Sultana sailed along the Atlantic Coast from 1768 to 1772 enforcing the Townshend Duties in the thirteen colonies. Because these taxes were so unpopular, many captains didn't cooperate when they were given orders to let Sultana's crew members come aboard their ships to search for smuggled goods. In order to deal with this problem, Sultana carried several weapons including flintlock muskets, pistols, swords and swivel guns.

Swivel guns were the largest of Sultana's armaments. The schooner carried eight of these small cannons on gun posts that were positioned along the sides of the ship. Each gun could fire 1/2 pound of lead balls or "grape shot". After being fired these balls would spread out over a large area, taking out anything in their path (much like a modern shotgun). While swivel guns were not large enough to sink enemy ships, they were very effective for tearing large holes in the other vessel's sails and rigging. They were also deadly weapons for killing members of the other ship's crew. For this reason, they were nicknamed "murder guns"! Sultana's commander often used these guns to fire warning shots at colonial ships to convince their captains to cooperate with Sultana's search parties.



Sultana crewmembers firing one of the 1/2 pound swivel guns.

When Sultana pulled up alongside a ship to conduct a search, the crew members often boarded the vessel at gunpoint to make sure that everything went smoothly. The weapons they carried included flintlock muskets, flintlock pistols, cutlasses and swords. Once, after Sultana made a seizure on the Delaware Bay, a fire fight broke out when angry sailors from the captured ship tried to retake their vessel. In another dangerous incident, angry rebels in Rhode Island had to be held off at gun point when they threatened to burn Sultana to the water line after their ship had been seized. In both situations, Sultana's armaments helped the crew members escape with their lives.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Read the text on the previous page, then answer the following questions in complete sentences. Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. Why was it necessary for Sultana to carry armaments on board?

2. What is a swivel gun, and how were these guns used aboard Sultana?

3. What were some of the small arms used aboard Sultana?

4. Describe two situations where Sultana's small arms saved the lives of the sailors on board.
