

STALCOP NOTES



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HEAVY WEAPONS OF NEW SWEDEN

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These are brief, condensed notes. More information is available.

The New Sweden Colony eventually had four large forts. Three of the forts were armed with heavy cannons. Eventually New Sweden was armed with seventeen 12-pound Swedish manufactured naval cannons, four captured 14-pound Danish naval cannons, one mortar, five large shotguns and one small shotgun. As impressive as this sounds it should be remembered that a single invading Dutch warship out-gunned all of the New Sweden forts combined.

Cannons were sized by the weight of the ball they fired. A 12-pound naval cannon, for example, fired a ball weighing 12 pounds. Put another way the shot was 123 mm or slightly under 5-inches in diameter. It had a nominal range of two thousand yards or one nautical mile. This range could be extended if necessary. This is the heavy weapon Stålkofsta was trained to fire. The South Company obtained the 12- pound weapons for the Colony as “war surplus” because the Swedish Navy was upgrading their standard shipboard cannons to 24 pound.

Photo: Larry S. Stallcup



12-pound cannon barrel. The barrel itself is twelve feet long plus the recoil checking knob. This one is bronze and weights 4008 pounds. An iron cannon barrel weighed more, about 4800 pounds. The weight of the carriage adds to the overall weight. This is the weapon Johan Anderson Stålkofsta was trained to fire.

Fort Christina was armed with nine 12-pound naval cannons. Fort Elfsborg was armed with eight 12-pound naval cannons plus one mortar. Accounts vary if the Elfsborg weapons were all bronze or if half were iron and half were bronze. The mortar was bronze. Fort Korsholm was a trading fort, not a defensive fort, so only had small arms. It had five large Skjutvapen or big shotguns and one small shotgun. It is believed these shotguns may have been the only flintlock weapons in New Sweden. Fort Trinity was fitted with four captured 14-pound Danish naval cannons but two of these were destroyed before the Dutch invasion.

The twelve Dutch cannons Governor Risingh captured in Fort Cassimir were all inoperative. They were merely props to give the illusion that Cassimir was armed and make the Dutch trap seem credible. Four captured odd size 14 pound Danish naval cannons and a small amount of gunpowder and a few 14 pound shot were offloaded from the ship Eagle just prior to it's departure to provide some defensive armament to Fort Trinity. Two of these weapons were mounted up on the Gun deck of Governor Risingh's timber bulwark called Fort Trinity. When one was test fired the recoil pushed over a large section of the stacked log back wall which collapsed a part of the Gun Deck with it. The two cannons were destroyed when they plunged about 24 feet through the wreckage to the ground.



Bronze Gun on Naval Gun Carriage



Iron 12-lb Gun on Naval Carriage, Fort mounted



Skjutvapen or Eldhandvapen (Shotguns or Hand fired weapons)

These huge shotguns are mounted in a wall display in Lincoln Castle, England. They could be the New Sweden weapons that first went to New Netherlands and later were captured and removed by the English.

All photos by Larry S. Stallcup

Governor Printz is believed to have employed the shotguns when he intervened in the War between two Indian tribes. They were about the only portable weapons in the New Sweden Colony outside of matchlock muskets. The shotguns disappeared from sight apparently as part of the secret sale of New Sweden weapons made by Governor Risingh to Dutch Governor Stuyvesant. The four Danish cannons from Fort Trinity, two damaged, were the only weapons returned to Sweden.

Governor Printz is believed to have hid the eight 12 pound cannons and the mortar of Fort Elfsborg by burying them when he was forced to abandon the fort. There are likely still buried there. Governor Risingh sold all of the Fort Christina weapons to the Dutch by a secret treaty article that appears only in the Dutch copy of the treaty. The sale is disguised as a loan with an impossibly short pay-back date. Risingh is believed to have pocketed the money from the sale. The huge sum of cash disappears immediately after he cashed the draft in London. There is no record of the money arriving in Sweden.