

# WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF THE CANNONS USED DURING THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES?

By William Speir

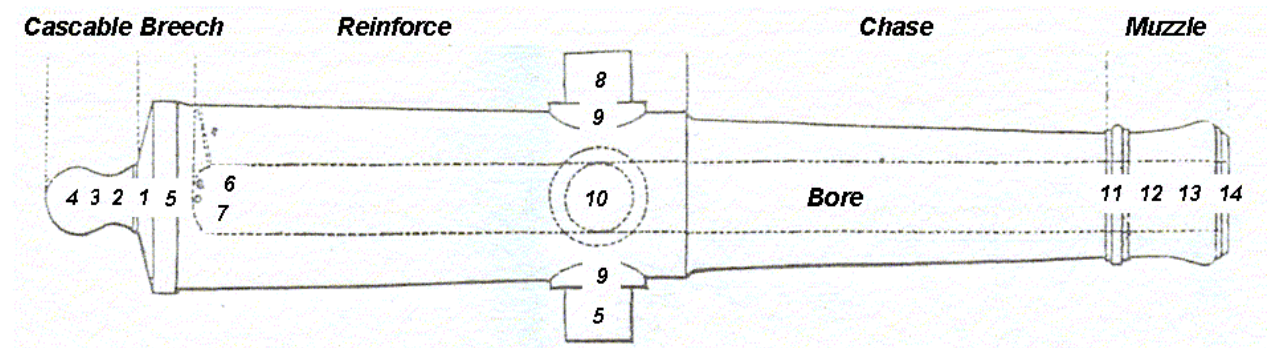
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This article focuses on components of the most commonly used, full scale cannon barrels used during the War Between the States: smoothbore guns, smoothbore howitzers, and rifled guns.

## *Nomenclature of the Gun:*



### **Breech:**

1. Base of Breech
2. Fillet
3. Neck
4. Knob
5. Base Ring

### **Reinforce:**

6. Bottom of the Bore
7. Horizontal and vertical projections of vent and vent pieces
8. Horizontal projection of Trunnions
9. Horizontal projection of Rimbrases
10. Vertical projection of Trunnions and Rimbrases

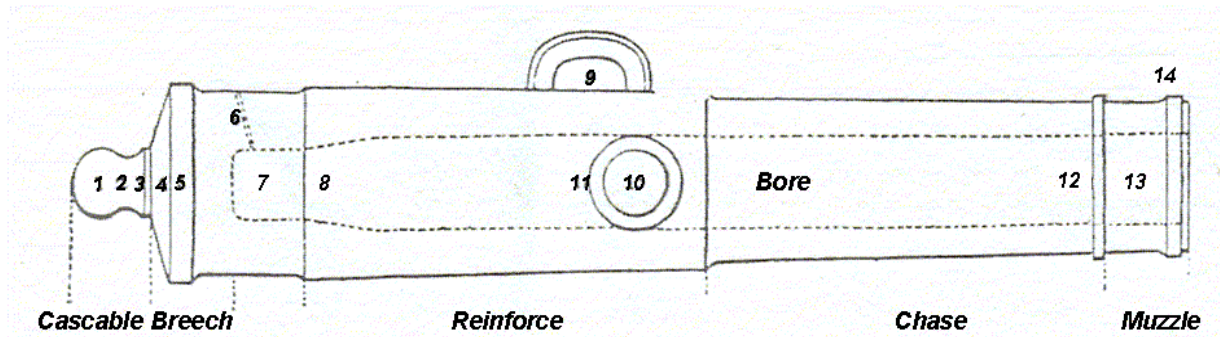
### **Cascable:**

3. Neck
4. Knob
2. Fillet

### **Muzzle:**

11. Astragal and Fillets
12. Neck
13. Swell of Muzzle
14. Muzzle mouldings (lip, fillet)  
Face

## *Nomenclature of the Howitzer:*



### **Cascable:**

1. Knob
2. Neck
3. Fillet

### **Breech:**

4. Base of Breech
5. Base Ring

### **Reinforce:**

6. Vent and Vent-Piece
7. Chamber
8. Slope, or conical junction of the cylinder and chamber
9. Handles
10. Trunnions
11. Rombases

### **Muzzle:**

12. Chase-Ring
13. Neck
14. Muzzle band and Muzzle fillet.  
Bore-Chamber, slope, and cylinder

## *Naming of Cannons*

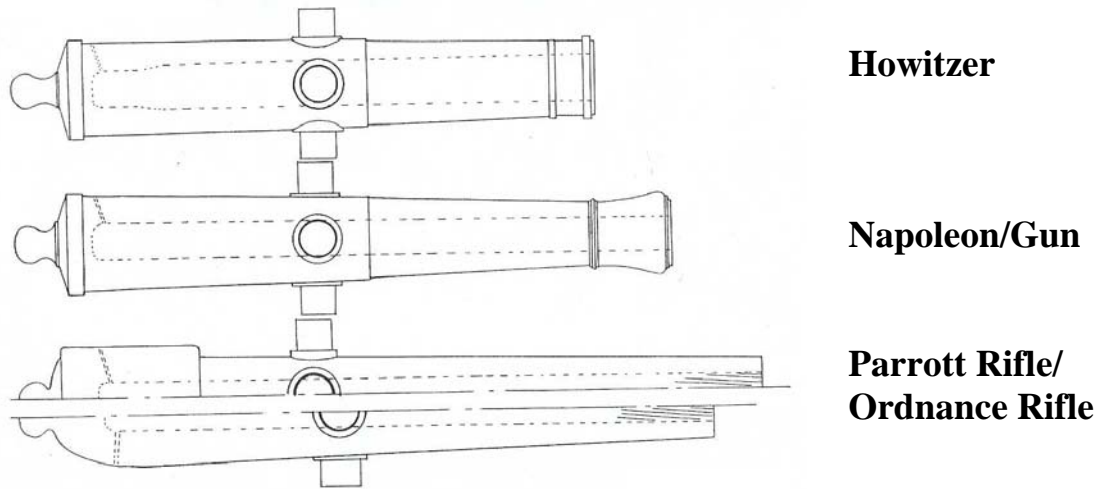
By the early nineteenth century, Muzzle Loading artilleryists in most western countries had settled on a standard method of naming cannon based on the weight of the solid shot used with the piece. Since all shot was spherical, and typically made of iron, this weight corresponded with the bore size of the piece. Any cannon with a 3.67-inch bore would use a shot weighing six pounds, and would be known as a six-pounder; a cannon with a 4.62-inch bore would be a 12-pounder. A cannon with a 7-inch bore would be a 42-pounder.

Rifled cannons changed this system. Typical rifled ammunition is not a sphere but a cylinder with a pointed nose. Because the rifle "bolt" can vary in length, there was no longer any direct correspondence between the gun's bore size and the weight of its solid shot. These new guns were

identified by their bore diameter, although there were inconsistencies in this approach.

The system of rifled ordnance designed by Robert Parker Parrott is the best example of these inconsistencies. His rifled gun with a 2.9-inch bore was designated a 10-pounder Parrott, his 3.67-inch rifle a 20-pounder Parrott, and so forth. However, depending upon the type of ammunition used, these pounder designations were not exactly accurate. Another example of inconsistencies stems from the attempts to rifle existing weapons, particularly the six-pounders. Their 3.67-inch bores meant that the weight of their rifled ammunition could be somewhere between two and three times their original nominal weight.

Generally speaking, the “pounder” name usually refers to smoothbores, while rifles are usually named by their bore diameter. However, references in historical and other texts are not consistent. For example, the “3-inch rifle” might be a reference to the wrought iron ordnance rifle, or to any rifle with a bore of three inches, including the M1863 10-pounder Parrott.



Ready to learn more about operating muzzle-loading artillery? The LTAC-USFAA teaches the safe operation of canons from the War Between the States to all students who attend the Artillery Schools, and the manuals can be purchased online at <http://artillerypublications.com/>.