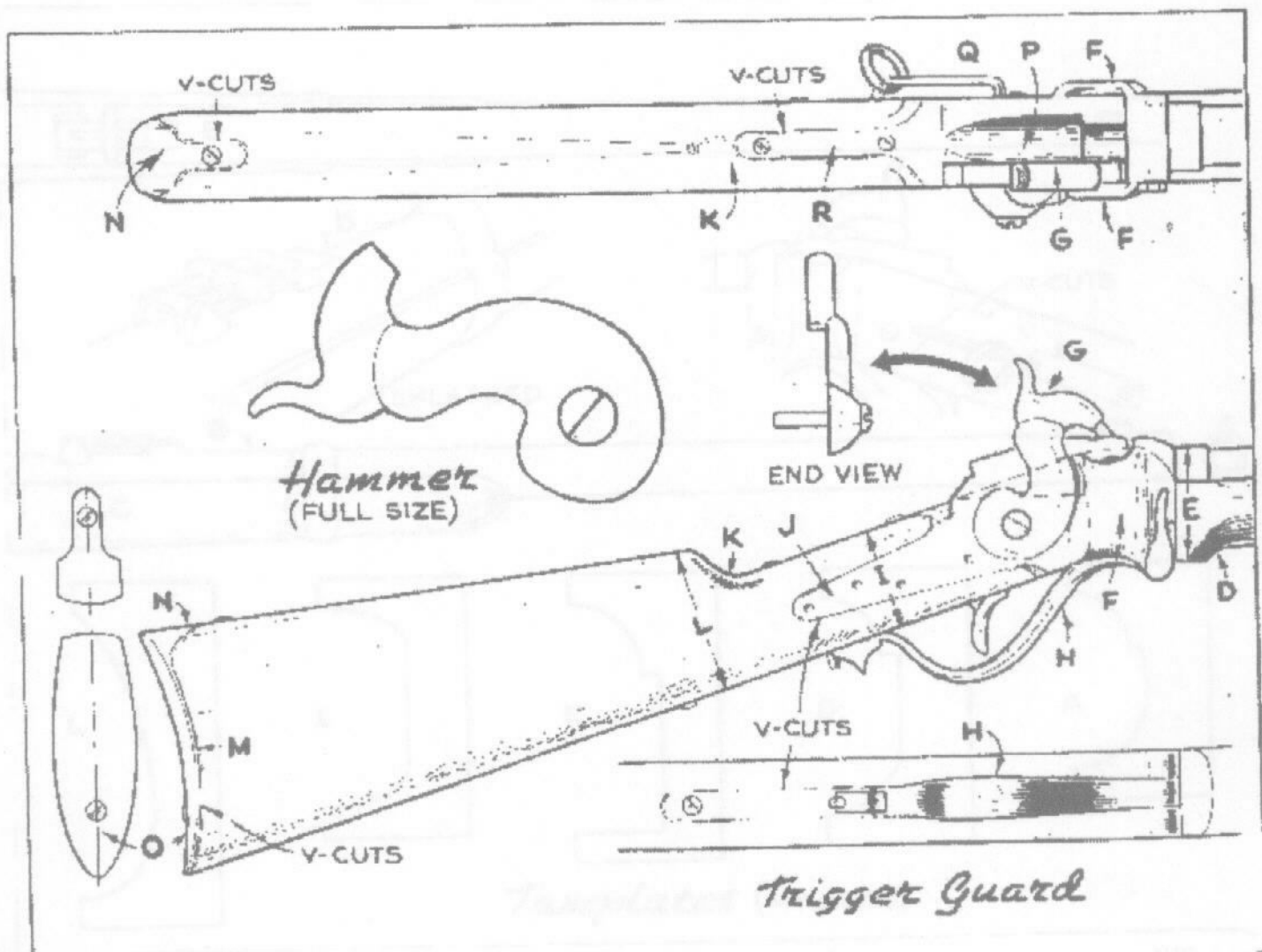


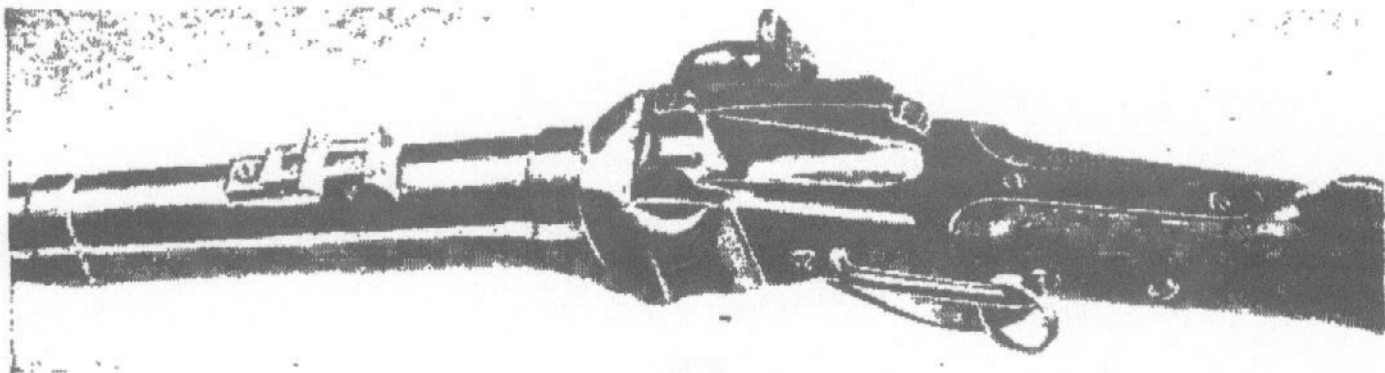
Wooden Model of a SHARPS BREECH LOADER

The Gun That Changed the Habits of American Riflemen

WARBS and weapons have changed enormously in the last century, and the Sharps rifle has not only seen most of the change, but has played an important part in the process. Christian Sharps patented his first breech loader in 1818, then waited many years for recognition which finally came from unexpected quarters.

Although Sharps made constant improvements and refinements on his original design, some influential military men scoffed at the gun as an unreliable toy, and clung to their old muzzle loaders. Civilian fighters, however—and there were many in those days—had no qualms about adopting a new weapon. The Kansas Territory, where many





After alteration, the carbine's breechblock looked like this. Photo also shows the adjustable rear sight.

battles were fought before the Civil War, bristled with firearms; a sizable proportion bore the Sharps imprint. John Brown's men carried them in their Harper's Ferry raid; their popularity among the fighting abolitionists won them the nickname "Beecher's Bibles." The model shown here is of slightly later vintage. Thousands were made after 1859, and were used widely and effectively in the Civil War.

Following the war, in 1860, the government returned large quantities of these carbines to Sharps to be altered from percussion to cartridge fire. At that time the origi-

nal of this half-size model was also reloaded to take .50-70-cal. government ammunition. In their new dress these guns traveled with the settlers of the West.

To make your model of this famous arm, enlarge the half-size drawings and trace them onto a 5" by 4" by 19 1/2" piece of white pine or similar stock. The projecting plates F, and the hammer are cut separately to avoid using thicker wood. For the sling, Q, use 3/32" wire and a 1/2"-diameter ring. Carving and finishing techniques are similar to those described in previous articles in this series.—CARL G. ERICAT.

