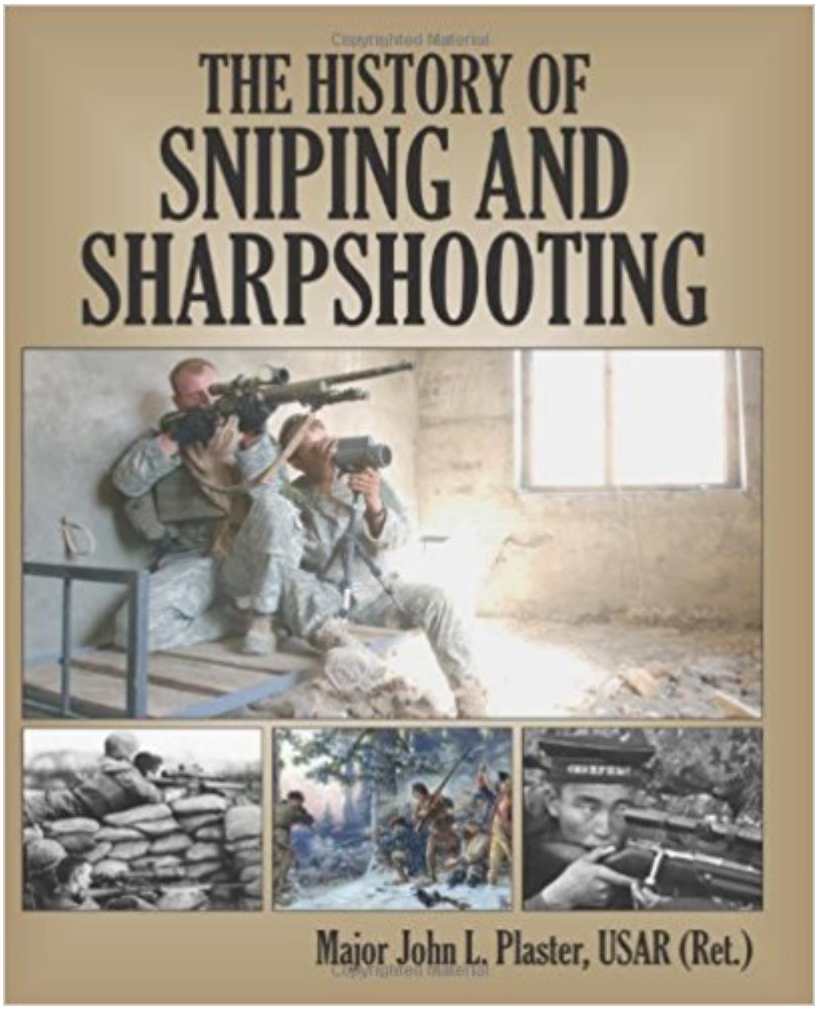
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The History Of Sniping And Sharpshooting



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Synopsis

Thirty-six months in combat. Twenty-four years as a sniping instructor. Twenty years of exhaustive research, including decades spent seeking out hundreds of historic volumes long out of print, test-firing historic firearms, walking Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields with a laser rangefinder, and visiting military museums in the United States and Europe. Only Major John Plaster, author of the highly acclaimed The Ultimate Sniper, has the background and knowledge to bring you this authoritative history of sniping and sharpshooting Ã¢â ¬â œ the first such book from a combat rifleman's unique perspective.In The History of Sniping and Sharpshooting, John Plaster has assembled the most comprehensive combat history ever published on the subject. It begins in the 15th century, with the first use of "precision" musket fire in Europe and continues into the 21st century with the significant role sniping is playing the Iraq and Afghanistan and the global War on Terror. Detailing major engagements and minor skirmishes over five centuries of warfare, Plaster has unearthed hundreds of incidents where calculated precision rifle fire has changed the course of battles Ã¢â ¬â œ and, sometimes, history. He fittingly addresses well-known sharpshooters and snipers Ã¢â ¬â œ Hiram Berdan, Vasili Zaitsev, Carlos Hathcock Ã¢â ¬â œ but also pays tribute to forgotten riflemen such as John Burns, Benjamin Forsyth and Arthur Wermuth, to name but a few. He also explains how the evolution of firearms and optical technology has intertwined with sniping on the battlefield and how it has influenced tactics, organizations, and capabilities Ã¢â ¬â œ a subject that has never before been address adequately.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

PlasterÃ¢ ¬â„¢s sprawling, copiously illustrated history of sniping as a military strategy pays special attention to the requisite skills involved. Starting with the advent of shoulder arms, Plaster describes technological innovations that allowed for ever-greater accuracy and distance, noting, for instance, an early reference to rifling in a 1476 Italian armory inventory that mentions Ã¢â ¬Å“spiral grooved barrelsÃ¢â ¬Â• and discoursing lovingly on the development and use of the flintlock firing mechanism. Among the historical nuggets unearthed is the fact that according to a U.S. Army study, Ã¢â ¬Å“not a single German general was lost to a sniper in the West during World War II, but three generals were killed on the Eastern Front by Russian snipers,Ã¢â ¬Â• which attests to Red Army marksmanship but also the Ã¢â ¬Å“wide red stripe on the pants legsÃ¢â ¬Â• of the German generalsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ uniformsÃ¢â ¬â •shades of Yankees picking off Red Coats in the American Revolution! Consider this powerful, well-researched work an essential resource on one mainstay of military science and a lavish picture book sure to please ordnance fans. --Mike Tribby

Major John L. Plaster served three tours in the top-secret unconventional warfare group, Studies and Observations Group, in Vietnam. As a long-range reconnaissance leader, he led tiny intelligence-gathering teams behind enemy lines in Laos and Cambodia before leaving SOG in late 1971. He was decorated for heroism four times and retired from the U.S. Army as a major.

Very well written history by a respected and famous retired officer who both fought with and taught the skills and science of marksmanship and especially sniping. The hardback is large with voluminous photos and illustrations. While these are a compliment to the book I personally would have been satisfied with more in depth written content on a subject rarely covered in such detail. Over all a great book.

I am still reading it as there is a lot on the subject. The research must have been extensive as I am running across material I have not heard of before and I used to own many of the great classics on the subject. But concerning the non-American forces there is less material, the book has more of a USA slant in balance. The book uses stories and technical data to help explain the history of the equipment and the people involved. Overall, it is an excellent book to have in my collection.

from one of our greatest american heroes and military leaders m- all unsung

An exceptional history of how Sniping and sharpshooters came to be. An exceptional historical read

as well.

From the Revolutionary War to the Current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, this is the tell all book on the history of sniping.

A well written history plus short vignettes of documented instances of this type of shooting. An excellent read. A word of caution, it is a large book and it weighs in at 5 1/2 pounds. So you will need a rack of some type to hold the book or have very strong arms.

I got _The_History_of_Sniping_And_Sharpshooting for my father for Father's Day -- and wound up stealing it back for a month to read it myself. It's a wonderful & fascinating read.The book is organized chronologically. There is a section about sharpshooting prior to the 1700s, but it is very brief. As Plaster explains, sharpshooting and sniping are not really possible without a rifled barrel, as smooth-bore barrels are not accurate much past 60 yards. The book is broken up into six parts:- Early Wars in the New World and On the Continent- The American Civil War- Sharpshooting in Transition- The Two World Wars- The Asian Wars- Sniping into the 21st CenturyPlaster has struck a good balance between technical details of the firearms vs. personal details of the shooters and officers. This made for a very readable book (truthfully, far more readable than I was expecting for a book that's almost 700 pages long). There are also a lot of short one-, two- or three-page sections when he wants to highlight a particular weapon, person, battle, or other area of interest. So the book is not only readable & interesting, but it is also easy to read in short sections without having to spend 15 minutes remembering what was going on every time you pick up the book.Plaster does not focus exclusively on American sharpshooters. For instance, he talks about British sharpshooters in the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, Russian and British sharpshooters in the Crimean War, Mexican sharpshooters in the War for Texan Independence, British and Boer sharpshooters in the Boer War, Canadian, British, French, German and Russian sharpshooters in World Wars I & II, and Vietnamese sharpshooters in the Vietnam War. However, he readily admits there are times when information is hard to come by. For instance, there is a dearth of information about Russian and German sharpshooters on the Eastern European front during World War II, but this is more likely due to the destruction of records and a reticence on the part of snipers and sharpshooters who survived the war than an actual lack of shooters; both Germany & Russia were running regular training classes for snipers and sharpshooters by the end of the war.There are many things about history and historians that Plaster criticizes, one of them being the practice of the

American military and many other nations' militaries of abandoning all research & training on sniping & sharpshooting almost as soon as any particular war was over. As he documents time & again, the same lessons about deploying snipers & sharpshooters effectively, training them, training all troops on how to accurately estimate distances, etc. had to be re-learned all over again during the next war. The only reason that pattern changed after the Vietnam War was because of the efforts of Major Jim Land who made it a personal mission to talk to anyone & everyone within the U.S. Marine Corps about re-establishing regular sniper schools, sniper designations, and continuing research on sniper weapons and optics. I say re-establish because all those programs had been mothballed the instant the Vietnam War was over.The other thing Plaster is frequently (and justifiably, in my opinion) critical of is the re-writing of history by modern day "experts" who may not know what they are talking about. One example is a famous 7/8 mile shot taken by Billy Dixon in 1874. Plaster explains that a U.S. government physicist published an article saying his calculations showed such a shot would not have been possible given the powder & bullets of the day, only to have that promptly disproven by firearms industry writers & black powder enthusiasts who proved with actual shots that yes, it was possible to shoot that far accurately (just very very difficult, which is why the shot is so famous)(pgs. 258-260).When Plaster does get into technical details -- which is often -- he doesn't numb the reader with endless recitations of numbers. He cites numbers and also explains what the numbers actually mean, such as why increased bullet velocity means snipers can shoot farther because an error in range estimation with faster bullets might result in a height error of a couple inches at far ranges, instead of 30 inches. I also learned a lot personally about sighting in rifles at a particular range & how that affects the hold-over & hold-under at closer & farther ranges by reading this book.The only quibble I have (and it is a very minor one) is that the American Civil War section seemed to take a long time to get through. However, I can also understand why Plaster spends a lot of time on it, as it was one of the first wars where almost every soldier showed up with an actual rifled barrel, so theoretically all soldiers would be able to shoot better & it became a matter of unit training & the commanders actually understanding what aimed fire could do as opposed to older styles of warfare where everyone lined up and pointed their weapons in the same general direction. The American Civil War also saw advancements in bullet shapes and some of the first optics for firearms. Plaster also spends a lot of time on the American Civil War because he is of the opinion that while carefully aimed rifle fire from snipers & sharpshooters might have contributed to only 3% of the casualties, a large amount of those casualties were officers on both sides of the war as many officers in both the Union & Confederate armies had not fully grasped what advances in firearms technology meant for commanders who still wanted to lead from the front & stand on top of

a hill to wave their soldiers on.Also, the bibliography is limited to printed books. Plaster writes that he was able to find a large amount of information from other sources such as award citations andonline archives of newspapers & magazines, etc. So much information that it takes up 16 crates in his basement, so after discussing the matter with his publisher he decided to limit the bibliography to printed books, otherwise the book would have been half bibliography and twice as big.

In November 2007 I got an email from Greg Nichols at Paladin Press, asking whether I would be interested in reviewing Maj. John Plaster's latest book, "The History of Sniping and Sharpshooting", to come out early in 2008. Of course I would. What a question to ask of somebody from a site called Sniper Country.Shortly before Christmas 2007 the book arrived, and I was immediately impressed. Due to their prices I don't have valuables such as the Chandlers' series (Death from Afar) on the US Marine Corps' sniping, nor Peter Senich's books on sniping in specific wars (WWI, WWII, Vietnam, etc.) - though I would love to still get them. Thus I don't have anything to compare this volume with, but then, quality shows and need not be compared to be appreciated. And this book shows quality from start to finish.A large book, coffee-table quality, with lots of drawings, illustrations, photos and facsimiles of brochures - all black-and-white - it is an excellent read. Its 670-odd pages are crammed with information, and the bibliography alone is a veritable treasure trove.It is divided into six parts, namely:* Early Wars in the New World and on the Continent* The American Civil War* Sharpshooting in Transition* The Two World Wars* The Asian Wars* Sniping into the 21st CenturyEach of these parts is further divided into chapters covering specific periods of interest, for example The Asian Wars is divided into two chapters, one each on Korea and Vietnam.The book starts at the beginning of it all, in essence the first rifled-barreled rifles appearing around 1450. And it ends with sniping in Afghanistan and Iraq as late as 2007.And basically every page I said to myself "I have to remember this" only to repeat it later on the same page, or on the next page. The book does not go into all the technical detail of every firearm discussed, neither is that the intention. It discusses the different developments and how it evolved through the ages, and how these developments affected the wars they were used in, from being new in one and the standard in the next, leading to new innovations. And around every war or era it also goes into more details on specific inventors, shooters and shots, and their influences on it all.An incredible revelation is that, after EVERY war, right from the start until after Vietnam, that which was just learned at the cost of much blood and many lives, were just discarded, and all training stopped. All the lessons learned regarding musketry, accurate shooting, sharpshooting, sniping - all just swept under the carpet. And after Vietnam it may have well happened again, had it not been for Major Jim Land, who bullied

Marine HQ until the Marine Corps started a sniper school. Thus he ensured that with Desert Storm invasion of Iraq in the early 1990's, the US Armed Forces were for the first time ready in terms of their sniper capability when going into a war.And that is my one beef with this book, albeit a small and understandable one - it is written very US-centric. Other countries are mentioned almost as a matter of fact, or merely because they are part of the same war as the US - most often on the other side. In those cases Plaster does not neglect them, not at all, but other than the US conflicts he barely touches anything else. Being a South African I would obviously have wanted to see more on the Anglo-Boer War, but that is only very briefly mentioned. But then, there's not necessarily all that comprehensive documentation available on specific shooters and techniques employed in all these other countries and conflicts.This is almost a lifetime of work, being the result of Plaster's own research, originally just done in order to be able to better teach his sniper students, later to ensure that the information is not lost - in all the work of almost three decades. Drawing on his 36-month combat experience as a operative with the top-secret MACV-SOG in Vietnam and later 24 years as a sniper instructor, Plaster combines this with his writing skills to put together a very definitive work.This book is a must on the shelves of anybody who is serious about precision shooting, or who is in any way interested in the development and influence of firearms over the centuries. At more than $90US it is not cheap, especially if one has to multiply that by eight or more to get it into South Africa, but it is well worth the money.

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