

# MR. BURGESS' FOLDING GUN

ONE OF THE MOST prolific firearm inventors of the late 19th century was Andrew Burgess, a quiet New Yorker who had been a Civil War photographer. But photography was only a profitable sideline to a man like Burgess, who filed over 600 patents before 1881.

A notable firearm resulting from these patents was the Burgess Folding Gun, designed for police service, express messengers, prisons and banks. Claimed to be nearly semi-automatic in operation, the Folding Gun had a sliding pistol grip assembly that moved backward under recoil and could be quickly shoved forward again by the shooter. While able to fire its six shots in less than three seconds, most users appreciated its attribute of compact storage in two hinged-together sections. These two components could be quickly rejoined, allowing the Folding Gun to be carried under a coat in a belt holster and drawn much like an oversized handgun. While primarily manufactured as a shotgun, a few were also made in rifle calibers.

The Burgess Folding Gun was a popular choice for law enforcement agencies seeking a compact arm. One prime reason for ready police acceptance may have been its consistent three-foot pattern with buckshot at 40 yards.

While he had gained renown as an arms inventor, Burgess was also remembered for his unique style of conducting his research and, during later years, would frequently go to St. Augustine, Fla., where he had set up a floating workshop adjacent to a beachside bungalow. When stress onshore became too great, the solitary Burgess would pull up anchor to float away on the currents, playing his favorite violin and periodically firing a shotgun to ward off seagulls. *For National Firearms Museum information and hours, please call (703) 267-1600. Admission to the galleries is free (donations are encouraged), and children are welcome.* 

