

Design Your Own Powder Horn

During the American Revolution, soldiers had to reload their muskets with gunpowder and musket balls every time they wanted to fire. Powder horns were an important tool because they held extra gun powder and kept it safe and dry.

Soldiers used the narrow opening at the tip of the horn like a funnel to pour small amounts of gunpowder into their musket. A strap would be attached to the horn so that a soldier could wear it easily.



Courtesy, Concord
Museum

Look closely at the shape of this powder horn.

Powder horns were made from cow or bull horns (To feel the surface, feel your fingernails. They feel the same!). Trimming animal horns does not hurt the animal when done right.

Think about the challenges of trying to carry gunpowder on foot in all kinds of weather. Why might an animal horn be a good container for gunpowder?



Courtesy, Concord Museum



Courtesy, Concord Museum

Looking Closely

1. What do you notice about the words and designs on this powder horn?
Describe what you see.

2. In Boston in 1776, this powder horn was carved with the words: “Jonathan Gardner: His Horn 1776. Liberty and Property or Death.” What clues does the carving give us about how colonists felt at the beginning of the Revolution?

3. What do you carry your belongings in to keep them safe and dry? Do you decorate it with what’s important to you? How?

Create!

Design your own powder horn with words, dates, or symbols that are important to you.

