

An E-Z Guide to Cthulhu Weaponry

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Although weapons of various sorts do not appear frequently in the works of Lovecraft, they are generally considered indispensable for the average 1920s occult investigator. This article will look at most of the important historical weapons of the 1920s and their use in Cthulhoid situations. The second part of this article will look more specifically at the tricky question of the use of weapons in CTHULHU LIVES.

To begin with, historically, the "Twenties came right in the aftermath of World War I. The military discovered new and horrible ways of destroying enemies. The Great War saw the first important use of tanks, airplanes, flamethrowers, dropped bombs, and poisonous gases. However, effective as these may be against a Spawn of Cthulhu, they are quite beyond the grasp of the average gumshoe or professor. The war also saw the advent of many new makes and types of firearms, which were largely unavailable in America. The specifics of these weapons generally will have little influence on Cthulhoid situations, but here is a look at the most important weapons of the period.

The single most important sidearm was the Colt M1911A1 automatic pistol. It is the classic pistol used by the military, the mob, and other malice makers. It fires .45 caliber bullets (the largest standard type of pistol ammunition), and although it is terribly powerful, it is also grossly inaccurate. It holds up to seven rounds and can fire roughly two rounds per second. It has been the indispensable high power pistol for the last sixty years. It won't stop a Shoggoth, but it'll certainly give a Deep One pause.

Another classic weapon commonly associated with the 1920s was the gangster's friend, the Thompson .45 submachine gun, or Tommy Gun. It is fairly small and light and could shoot more larger bullets faster than nearly any personal firearm of the era. The Tommy Gun is usually fitted with a vertical grip toward the end of the barrel to facilitate hip shooting rather than aiming. In this manner, the Tommy Gun could be used to "spray" rounds at targets. The 100-round drum clip frequently seen on the Tommy Gun in mafia movies was seldom used because it added nearly fifteen pounds of weight to the gun. It comes highly recommended for scattering cultists by Professor Nathaniel Ward.

Many makes of pistols, especially revolvers, were available in the "Twenties. The general citizenry tended towards smaller calibers for firearms due to cost of ammunition and ease of use. The .22 was considered appropriate for women (although ladies would have no need for such weapons). The .38, .44, and .45 caliber revolvers were among the most common "pieces" of the time. The revolver was known to be slightly more dependable than the automatic. However, the sound of an empty revolver cylinder clicking is among the most horrible ever heard in the catacombs of San Francisco.

Similarly, there were numerous makes and styles of rifles available. Rifles tended to be either military or for hunting purposes. Again, the most "classic" rifles of the period were: the bolt action .30-06 (thirty-aught-six), the lever action Winchester .3030 (the cowboy's rifle), and the .22 varmint hunting rifle. While they don't fire quickly and are nearly impossible to hide, rifles pack a strong punch at long ranges. Certain investigators have been known to hit targets all the way across the necropolis at Gizeh.

Shotguns were also fairly common, as gentlemen used them for hunting fowl. Shotguns fire a large cartridge filled with BB-like projectiles called shot. Despite their tremendous force, shotguns have a range problem. A 12-gauge that would blow a large hole in a wooden door at 10 feet would only scratch it from 100 feet. The highly effective and illegal sawed-off shotgun epitomized this problem with range. Shotgun blasts spray in a conical shape away from the barrel, so chances of hitting something are far better than they are with rifles and pistols. Unlike bullet calibers, shotgun gauges have more power as they decrease in number, from 410 to 12. Sam Buchanan was the all-time great proponent of shotguns against the servants of the Mythos.

Other weapons were available in the "Twenties, some highly dangerous, some illegal. Crude versions of flamethrowers existed in the military and could potentially be procured, although using one would normally attract the attention of the authorities. Likewise, the first grenades were also being used in the military and they occasionally found their way into the private sector. Most conveniently, however, dynamite could be legally purchased for mining use in the 1920s. TNT is remarkably effective, generally stable enough for transportation, and small enough to find its way into numerous non-industrial situations. Numerous Cthulhoid investigators have used this handy explosive to curtail unwholesome activities.

Those are most of the common weapons of the "Twenties, excluding obvious ones such as knives, axes, clubs, potato peelers, etc.... In part two, I will examine the replication and safe use of these weapon types in the game of CTHULHU LIVES.

