

Gibbs 111 and the three chain spikes

While sitting in a room while in the Motel 6 at Sidney during this 2019 Swap Meet, Fred Precht, Brad Cords, Dan Skelly, Ross Palmer and I were discussing the reason why the Gibbs 111 had three tree spikes on the chain from the factory. Two of the spikes were attached at the end of the chain and one was in the middle.

I said that they were used in setting the trap. Brad said that was what he had heard as well. Fred asked where I had heard that, in a very inquisitive manner. I was somewhat surprised by Fred's question as he was the one who had told me that. I pointed that out to Fred. He was silent for a second and said that the information must be right as it came from a credible source.

I asked Fred if I could investigate the theory on a 111 he had in his room. He gave it a thumbs up, so I proceeded. The 111 has two sets of jaws, one set larger than the other. Each set was powered by its own underspring.

I compressed the larger underspring and wedged the middle tree spike between the spring and the ends of the jaws where they extend through the holes in the base. I then compressed the smaller underspring and did the same thing with the tree spike closed to the trap. So now both springs were held compressed with the jaws in the open position without the dog being latched under the pan. The theory was tested and proven.

There were only 1,200 of these traps ever made. They were developed under Gibbs' Patent #1,186,569. In the spring of 1916, Oneida Community Limited (OCL) agreed to make the 1,200 traps for Walter. He was going to use them in the marsh he owned in Dorchester County, Maryland.

OCL was to make another 5,000 for Gibbs to give away and use as experimental traps. The 5,000 extra traps were never made.

There was controversy with the business agreement, carrying out of the business agreement, and the way that OCL acted in connection with the matter afterwards. OCL discussed going to a Mr. Dennison, a patent attorney, in Syracuse because they claimed they had designed the trap before Gibbs did.

Gibbs originally refused to pay for the 1,200 traps because OCL would not agree to manufacture the 5,000 additional traps. He finally did pay for them in the spring of 1917. He gave a check to P.B. Herrick while in the Manhattan Hotel in New York.

Frequently, traps are not made exactly

ly anchored trap chain tight and dislodge the "C" apparatus.

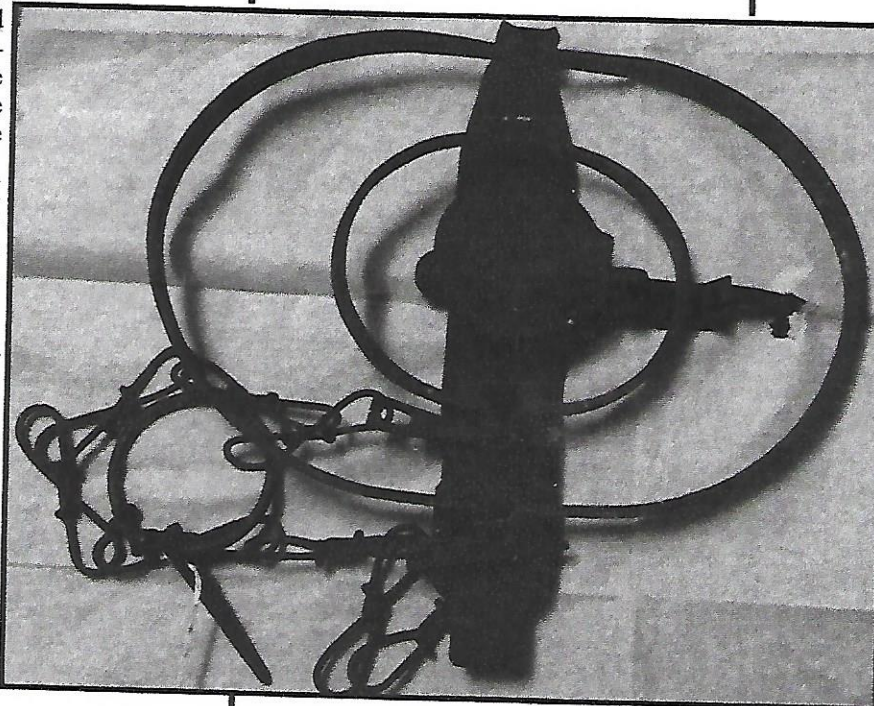
Instead of manufacturing the apparatus, either OCL or Gibbs found that the trap could be manufactured less expensively by using the tree spikes to hold both sets of jaws open while setting or delaying the action of the second set of jaws by leaving the tree spike holding the larger spring compressed. When the animal got caught in the first set of jaws, it would pull on the trap and chain. The force of the chain being pulled against a solid stake would dislodge the tree spike holding the second set of jaws open just like the "C" apparatus.

Throughout Gibbs' life, he was obsessed with developing and improving traps with two independent sets of jaws. This was mainly due to the muskrat losses he had from single jaw traps. While experimenting with traps with two sets of jaws, Gibbs also obsessed with delaying the action of the second set of jaws. He often commented about the second set closing too soon as the first set had not fully closed on the animal's foot. One glaring flaw this caused was the animal's foot being knocked out of the first set of jaws by the second set closing too soon.

If you decide to do some experimenting on antique traps to see why they are made the way they are, be sure to be careful when com-

pressing the springs and wedging components. Although they were designed to function that way, the age of the trap could have weakened parts of it making it more susceptible to breakage. It is better to find low grade traps of the same design, cheaply bought, to carry out the experiments.

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the way they are pictured in the patent drawings. The 111, as shown in the patent drawings, was to have an additional base plate that ran perpendicular to the main base. This along with a metal apparatus in the form of a "C" which was to be used to hold the larger set of jaws open to make setting the trap easier. The top part of the "C" was positioned over the jaw and the bottom part of the "C" was positioned under the additional base plate. This apparatus could have also been used to delay the closing of the second set of jaws if it was left in place when the trap was set. The interior set of jaws would still close. The "C" apparatus was attached to the chain. When the animal struggled while in the trap, it would pull the solid-