[**Red\_Dawn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11384-red_dawn/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 120 posts
* Gender:Polly Wanna Cracker
* Location:Southern AZ
* Interests:A bit varied.

[Posted August 27, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402497) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402497)

This is more out of curiosity than anything, but you've seen those ball and chains in the cartoons, on prisoner costumes, wedding cakes,etc. Were they used in our era anywhere?

Thanks!

[**Louisiana Jeff**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/19589-louisiana-jeff/)

* Deck Swabber
* 
* 
* Member
* 45 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Louisiana, USA
* Interests:Honest merchant sailor looking for fortune.

[Posted August 27, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402498) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402498)

 Quote

The only punishments were the dark cells for inmates who broke prison regulations, and the ball and chain for those who tried to escape.

Arizona prison built in 1876. [**LINK**](http://www.pr.state.az.us/parks/yute/index.html)

[**Jas. Hook**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11157-jas-hook/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,650 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Long Island NY
* Interests:Fishing & Piracy

[Posted August 27, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402499) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402499)

*"A* ***ball and chain*** *is a physical restraint device historically used on prisoners, from the 1880s to the 1940s."*

Interesting... Wiki dates them as much later than the GAoP.

1880's on, maybe they were trying to use up left over stocks of cannonballs from the Civil War, a sort of an antebellum recycling program. 

Jas. Hook 

[**Red\_Dawn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11384-red_dawn/)

* Ship's Master
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* Member
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[Posted August 28, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402521) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402521)

So the consesus is ball and chains aren't period. Thanks, guys!

 Louisiana Jeff said:

Arizona prison built in 1876. [**LINK**](http://www.pr.state.az.us/parks/yute/index.html)

I live in Arizona. You definitely wouldn't want to try dragging a ball and chain across the desert. 

 Jas. Hook said:

1880's on, maybe they were trying to use up left over stocks of cannonballs from the Civil War, a sort of an antebellum recycling program. 



Well, we only fought one Civil War battle here.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted August 29, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402532) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402532)

The notion that they were made from unused cannonballs seems as likely as any explanation - you need something to make it tough for someone to escape, but still allow them to to have some mobility. A heavy spherical object is ideal. So it could easily have been someone had a problem, looked at a stack of currently unused cannonballs and decided to weld a chain on one and see how it worked.

Once an idea is successfully used, word-of-mouth spreads. Soon the concept outgrows the initial inspiration and the thing is being tailored to the need rather than being cobbled together from spare parts. That *may* be how how they wound up in Arizona if they didn't originally come from there. We can't really date the first one, so we can't say the first one did or didn't come from Arizona. (I'm just guessing without doing any research, but the pattern of successful idea adoption has a definite pattern which is seen repeatedly throughout history.)

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* Ship's Master
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* Member
* 120 posts
* Gender:Polly Wanna Cracker
* Location:Southern AZ
* Interests:A bit varied.

[Posted August 29, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402549) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402549)

 On 8/29/2011 at 8:26 AM, Mission said:

That *may* be how how they wound up in Arizona if they didn't originally come from there. We can't really date the first one, so we can't say the first one did or didn't come from Arizona. (I'm just guessing without doing any research, but the pattern of successful idea adoption has a definite pattern which is seen repeatedly throughout history.)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply the ball and chain was invented in Arizona; I was playing off Jas. Hook's comment about cannonball recycling.

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
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* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted August 30, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402561) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402561)

 On 8/29/2011 at 6:47 PM, Red\_Dawn said:

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply the ball and chain was invented in Arizona; I was playing off Jas. Hook's comment about cannonball recycling.

The Arizona comment predated the Wiki estimated dates, so I thought it was the earliest example in this discussion.

This is the sort of thing that was probably an invention of convenience and thus the first person to do it/place it was done may forever be unknown. (That and most people probably don't care enough to try and track the original source of the idea down.)

[**Jas. Hook**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11157-jas-hook/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,650 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Long Island NY
* Interests:Fishing & Piracy

[Posted August 30, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402565) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402565)

 On 8/29/2011 at 6:47 PM, Red\_Dawn said:

 On 8/29/2011 at 8:26 AM, Mission said:

That *may* be how how they wound up in Arizona if they didn't originally come from there. We can't really date the first one, so we can't say the first one did or didn't come from Arizona. (I'm just guessing without doing any research, but the pattern of successful idea adoption has a definite pattern which is seen repeatedly throughout history.)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to imply the ball and chain was invented in Arizona; I was playing off Jas. Hook's comment about cannonball recycling.

Red Dawn -

Don't know who came up with the idea first or where but the ball and chain restraint shown in the AZ Parks clip has what looks like what might be a fuse hole in it.

Whether it is original or a later dated prop for display, who knows, maybe the device was invented by Sheriff Joe Arpaio's great great granddad . 

Jas. Hook 

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

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* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
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[Posted September 3, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402699) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402699)

OK, this is off-topic, but ball and chain reminded me of it. I was entering Dionis' description of Bleeding from his book *A Course of Chirurgical Operations Demonstrated in the Royal Garden at Paris*. He says this,

"I have observed, that when I have bled married Men before their Wives, these Ladies would never allow me to draw much Blood and on the other side, when I have bled Women in the Presence of their Husbands, the Men never thought that I took away enough: Both of them have their Reasons, which are not very hard to be guessed." (Dionis, p. 373)

Personally, I'm not very sure I can guess at their reasons, but it sounds funny. (Bleeding too much could made you weak or make you faint.)

[**MarkG**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10527-markg/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 587 posts
* Location:Ohio

[Posted September 3, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402703) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402703)

They are period. One was found in the Thames that was dated to the 17th or 18th century. It is believed to have been locked on a prisoner who tried to escape.

See [here](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1209405/First-intact-ball-chain-drowned-prisoner-mud-Thames.html).

[**Jas. Hook**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11157-jas-hook/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,650 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Long Island NY
* Interests:Fishing & Piracy

[Posted September 4, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402704) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402704)

MarkG -

Interesting, now that looks like it'll blows Wiki's description/date out of the water. 

Good find!

Jas. Hook 

[**Red\_Dawn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11384-red_dawn/)

* Ship's Master
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* 
* Member
* 120 posts
* Gender:Polly Wanna Cracker
* Location:Southern AZ
* Interests:A bit varied.

[Posted September 4, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402711) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402711)

 On 9/3/2011 at 11:33 PM, MarkG said:

They are period. One was found in the Thames that was dated to the 17th or 18th century. It is believed to have been locked on a prisoner who tried to escape.

See [here](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1209405/First-intact-ball-chain-drowned-prisoner-mud-Thames.html).

Cool! And ow, that spike looks wicked!

 Jas. Hook said:

Whether it is original or a later dated prop for display, who knows, maybe the device was invented by Sheriff Joe Arpaio's great great granddad . 

Looks like it wasn't after all. Sheriff Arpaio would've made 'em wear pink bloomers under their stripey suits, though. 

[**Littleneckhalfshell**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4-littleneckhalfshell/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 390 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Hudson Valley, NY
* Interests:Blacksmithing, hunting, fishing, stuff.......

[Posted September 5, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=findComment&comment=402733) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/18238-ball-and-chain/&do=reportComment&comment=402733)

one of the comments on the ball & chain from the Thames was that there was something fishy about the 'chain'

The 'chain' was of the 'curb chain' type rather than 'cable chain'. The curb chain is a style that lays flat, due to the twist of the individual links, (think of how a dog choke collar chain is made). Cable patterned chain is where you have links that are flat, but are alternatly 90% in relation to each other. I tried to do a search on when curb chain came into use for utilitarian items (outside of jewelry that is) and was unable to come up with any information. The chain in the picture of the Thames ball & chain was curb chain. Does anyone know of depictions of, or other dated artifacts showing 'curb chain'?