

*Illustration from A Complete History of Fairfield County, shows a somewhat fanciful illustration of Captain Joseph Hunter, said to be the earliest settler in the Lancaster area, cradling some sort of muzzle-loading gun beside a log house on the Hocking River.*

their base of operations for the Western gun trade. As Reynolds amply details in his article, Beeman had the makings of a complete gunsmithing shop when he died five years later in 1847.

Very few rifles by M. Beeman are known to exist, and at least one was built as a flintlock, as illustrated on p. 5 of the February 1981 AOLRC Newsletter. The finely made rifle has an overall cast (more drop of the stock and slight nose on the wrist transition) and the patch box differs from the other rifle illustrated in this article (which raises some questions of attribution). The flintlock's patch box finial has certain similarities with to other patch boxes found on some rifles in eastern Pennsylvania on the New York border. The patch box of a percussion rifle illustrated in Reynold's article (and on p. 216 of Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen, Vol. 1), is a design that Beeman may have favored, as evidenced below. As of the 2001 Reynolds article, these were the two "known" examples of M. Beeman's work. However, I discovered unpublished photos (attributed to James Whisker) of a third rifle in the AOLRC Archives, which I include here – making at least four known rifles (figures 2-3).

#### ***A Fourth Beeman Rifle: Characteristics***

At the May 2021 Civil War Show at the Richland County, Ohio Fairgrounds, another "M. Beeman" marked rifle came to light. Though differing in buttstock configuration, the rifle shares some characteristics with the example illustrated in Reynold's article. These similarities include similar butt plate, cheek piece, and trigger guard configurations. The patch box is the same basic pattern as the one Reynold's illustrates, but the engraving seems somewhat hastily done. The stock profile of the rifle in the AOLRC Archives and this rifle are very similar. Certain features of these "third" and "fourth" M. Beeman rifle also suggest connections farther east in the 1820s and 1830s, especially the overall "Lancaster" Pennsylvania profile of the stock, the patch box finial, side plates, and the butt plate and trigger guard (Figs. 4-8). Given Beeman's dates in Lancaster, Ohio, the growing popularity of the percussion system by the early 1830's, and the fact the fourth rifle was recovered in Ohio, suggest it was made in Fairfield County sometime in the later 1820s to later 1830s. Although the rifle is in percussion, given its overall configuration, it could just as easily have been made

in flintlock. At some point some restoration work was done in the lock area and a barrel lug may have been damaged and replaced at some point. For whatever reasons, the lower patch box panel has no engraving (the top panel has slash marks similar to those on the rifle illustrated by Reynolds and the third rifle from the archives – though seemingly made in haste). A close-up of the patch box and select measurements of the fourth rifle, recovered at the 2021 Civil War show, are provided here for those interested in dimensions of early Ohio rifles and for builders hankering to make a good early 19th-century Ohio hunting rifle.

Overall length (muzzle to top end of butt plate):

Barrel: 41 1/2"; 7/8" width; hand-rifled 41-42 cal.; front site, 1 5/8" back from muzzle; rear sight, 33 1/8" from muzzle; barrel pins spaced at 3 7/8" from muzzle; 15" from muzzle; 22 5/16" from muzzle; and 25" from muzzle (this pipe may be a later addition)

Barrel pin placements: 1st, 3 7/8" from muzzle; 2nd 15 7/8" from front of muzzle cap; 3rd, 22 5/16" from muzzle cap

Ramrod pipes: 2 forward pipes, 1 11/16" – 2 engraved lines on each end; 7/8" flat on bottom flat of five flats on each pipe; rear pipe 2 3/4"; rear pipe skirt 1/2" wide

Muzzle cap: 1 5/8"; set back 1/16" from muzzle; pin hole 1" from anterior of cap  
 Tang: 2 7/8"; 3/8" wide  
 Lock plate: 4 3/4" by 1"  
 Side plate: 4 1/8" long, by 9/16" high; screws 3/4" from each end.  
 Trigger guard: 8 1/2" length; 6/16" wide at bow.  
 Butt plate: 4 1/4" high; 1" wide  
 Toeplate: in two stages, 5" total, step at 3 3/4"; 1/2" wide at base  
 Cheek piece: 4 1/4" at bottom line; 3 1/4" at top line.  
 Set triggers: 12 3/4" length of pull from front trigger to middle of butt plate.

Patch box: total length 7 3/4" anterior finial to middle of patch box cover; top panel 3 3/4" long (anterior 1/4" wide, posterior 1/2" wide); bottom panel 4" long (widths same as top panel); cover 1" wide; finial 1 7/8" wide at base (by screws), and 1 12/16" at top of base – first cut in; overall final length 3 1/4"; three screws on finial; panels held on by 5 brass pins each

Sources:

Hervey, Scott (1877). *A Complete History of Fairfield County: 1795-1876*. Columbus: Siebert and Lilly Printers.

Hutsler, Donald (n.d.). *Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen, 1750-1950, Vol IV*. State College, Pennsylvania: Josten's Printing (for the Association of Ohio Long Rifle Collectors).

Reynolds, William (2000). Martin Beeman Gunsmith Lancaster Fairfield Co., Ohio Kirksville Adair Co. Missouri. *AOLRC Newsletter*. Vol. XXII (February): 4-7.

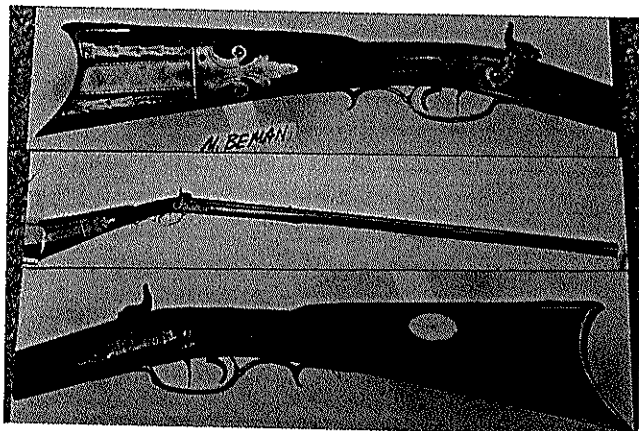


Fig. 2 The "third" "M. Beeman" marked rifle from AOLRC Archives, both sides. (James Whisker photo)

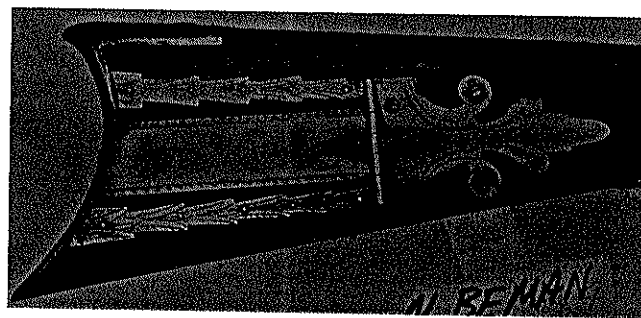


Fig. 3 The "third" "M. Beeman" marked rifle from AOLRC Archives; patch box close up. (James Whisker photo)

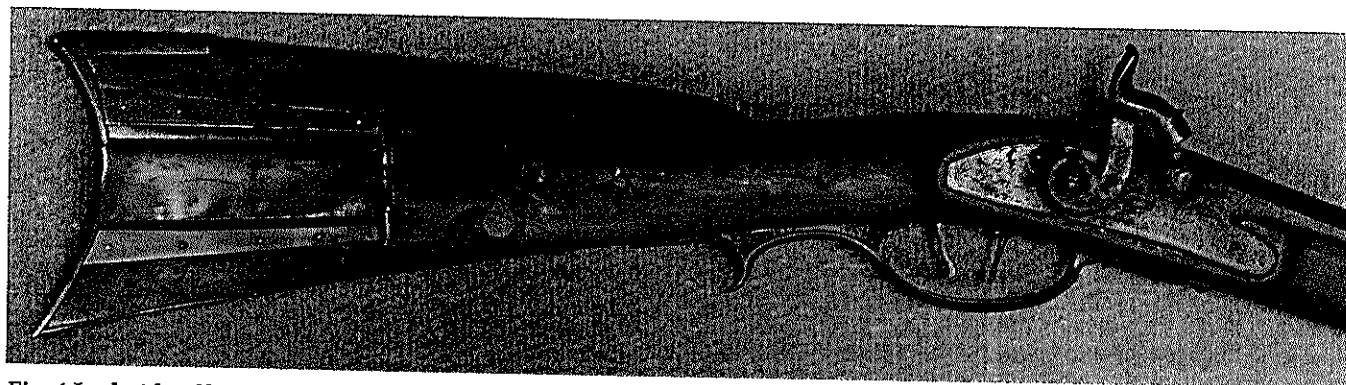


Fig. 4 Lock side of buttstock, recently discovered "fourth" M. Beeman rifle. (photos 4-8, Mark Bender)