

HUGH WEAVER, ASHLAND COUNTY GUNSMITH

BY BOB STATLER

Hugh Weaver was born March 1830, in Haines Twp. Centre County, Pennsylvania. He was one of 8 children born to Thomas and Julia Ann Weaver. Hugh's father was a silversmith by trade. The seed for Hugh to becoming a gunsmith may have been planted at a young age while living in Pennsylvania. In 1840, Thomas Weaver was the co-executor of the will of Jacob Albright Sr., an established gunsmith located in Centre Co. PA. One can assume Hugh's father was close friends with Mr. Albright. It's easy to picture a young boy visiting Albright's gun shop on many occasions with his father! Jacob Albright Sr. was also the father of Ohio gunsmith, Jacob Albright Jr.

The Weaver family moved to Perry Twp. Ashland County Ohio in 1842, purchasing a 75 1/2 acre farm near Rowsburg, east of Ashland, Ohio. Most of the information in print on Weaver to date comes from the census records of 1850 through 1880. There was an article published in the AOLRC newsletter of February 1991 that comes from an article in the ASHLAND TIMES GAZETTE newspaper in 1936. This can be found on the AOLRC website (menu/newsletters/ Feb. 1991).

In 1850, Weaver's occupation is listed as a farmer, living with his parents. Then the 1860 census lists him as a gunsmith. One question while researching Weaver is who did he learn the trade from? There is one theory that seems to make sense. H.G. Hood was an established gunsmith, first in business in Columbus, Ohio then moving to the city of Ashland, Ohio sometime in the mid 1850's. Pictured (Fig.1) are rifles made by Weaver (top) and Hood (bottom). Note the similarities in these rifles. It appears Weaver was, at least, influenced by Hood, if not working as an apprentice under him. I have been unable to document this connection other than closely comparing their work side by side and considering the fact that Hood was the nearest gunsmith working to the Weaver farm.

Weaver's gunsmith business was interrupted by the civil war. Hugh enlisted in the union army at Camp

Mansfield in August 1862, being assigned to the 120th O.V.I., company F. Specific information on Weaver's service is not known. His discharge is listed as "lost", which would have shown his rank, length of service, date of discharge, wounded or captured, etc. We can look at the records of the 120th during the war. This regiment was first assigned to General Sherman's army and later to Grant's command, fighting at Vicksburg, then later further south into Arkansas and Louisiana. Weaver is listed in the 1890 census of union veterans and widows of the civil war, which shows he did apply for and was granted a pension for his service.

Returning to the Ashland area after the war, the 1870 census shows him as a gunsmith, still located on his parent's farm. On April 10th, 1879, Weaver married Christina Morr Chambers, who coincidentally was also born in Centre County, Pennsylvania in 1830. One child, a daughter Nellie, was born in April 1880, but sadly passed away 2 months later. The 1880 census still shows Weaver's occupation as a gunsmith, but now living in Montgomery Twp. Ashland County.

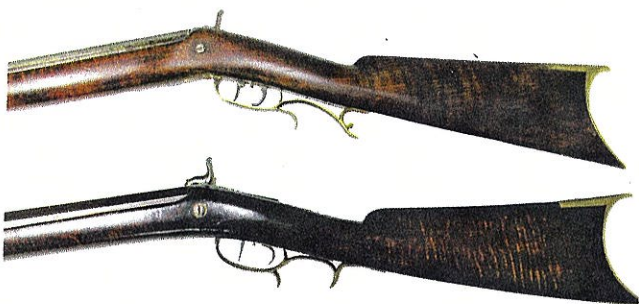
The only specific information after 1880 still tying Hugh Weaver to Ashland County is the death of his wife in 1883. The 1890 veteran census mentioned earlier lists his residence as Marion Twp., Jasper County, Missouri. When his departure from Ohio took is not exactly known. But, in a span of five years while still residing in Ashland County, both of Hugh's parents, brother William, his wife and daughter all past away. This could have been one reason for his decision to leave the area. An 1895 plat map of Jasper County Missouri shows a 40-acre section with 2 dwellings under the names of Weaver and Dell as owners. Hugh's younger sister, Mary, had married Alexander Dell in Ashland County in 1879 and at some point moved to Missouri and purchased the land mentioned. It is possible both Hugh and Mary's family moved here at the same time. The 1900 census shows him still residing on the same land but now his nephew Milton Hugh Dell, age 15 is living with him. His occupation is listed as a farmer.

Hugh Ira Weaver died April, 1904. A search yielded no official death record, but the records of Park cemetery, located in the city of Carthage, Jasper County Missouri, lists Hugh, his sister Mary and her husband Alexander all being buried there as well.

Weaver's guns show a consistent style throughout his career. His guns were half stocked with back action locks. Cap boxes and inlays are not uncommon. He used a stamp marking his guns, H. Weaver. A heavy barreled target rifle and several swivel- breeched guns are known to exist. As noted, Fig. 1 shows the similarity in an early Weaver (top) and a Hood (bottom) rifle. Figs. 2-6 shows examples of Weaver's later works. Fig. 4 shows one of his swivel- breeched rifles.

Sources;

FindAGrave.com.; FamilySearch.com.; Ancestry.com; Hutslar, Donald, Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen Vol. I; Official Roster of Ohio Volunteer Infantry 1861-1865.; USGarchives.net/oh/Ashland/military/otherwarhistory.txt; Ohio County Marriages 1789-1994; The History of Ashland County ,Ohio: 1909 by Abraham J. Baughman; HistoricMapWorks.com/Map/US/Marion/Township/Jasper/Missouri; USGArchives.net/oh/Ashland/cemeteries/umchurch.txt;



Close-up of design.



Example of Hugh Weaver rifle with typical large inlay.



Early Hugh Weaver (top) and H.G. Hood (bottom) rifles.



Close-up of swivel-breeched Weaver gun.



Detail of later Hugh Weaver rifles, including the swivel breech.



Back sights of Weaver rifles.