

RESTING HUNTER AND DOG FLASK

BY MARK BENDER

Besides muzzleloading rifles, smoothbore guns in the form of single- and double-barrel shotguns, older fowling pieces, and cut down military muskets were in common use in 19th century Ohio. Many shotguns were imported from England, Belgium, and elsewhere on the continent, and others were brought by immigrants in storage trunks. Other pieces were made in the States, including Ohio. In some cases, English craftsmen worked in the New England enterprises, which may account for the Old-World flavor of some pieces made in the US.

Every smoothbore needed a powder horn or flask to supply the often-generous loads of black powder in the field. As small game hunting became popular with the retreat of large prey in the wake of settler fields and farmsteads a market developed for brass, copper, and zinc gun powder flasks to accompany the percussion shotguns and black powder pistols and revolvers, both of which were used widely in Ohio and points West. Like the shotguns, some were imports and others were manufactured in the US. The light flasks, consisting of two thin metal halves soldered together lengthwise, a cap, a spout, and maybe mounting rings, could hold powder as well as a traditional powder horn, and like the thinly shaved horns, were easy to carry and would do less damage if they blew up than heavier gauge flasks. Some flasks, which ranged from small to large, had spouts which measured and regulated charges, while others threw only one set charge. Many were embossed with various floral or geometric designs, as well as scenes of the hunt or other topics.

The accompanying photo (Figure 1) is of one mid-century flask collected in Ohio that features a hunter in a top hat, early hunting coat, drinking something while resting under a tree, a large hunting horn and powder flask dangle from a limb above him. On the other side of the trunk is the long barrel of his gun, and a large woven hunting bag hangs on a limb above a freshly killed stag, a dog curls in repose in the middle of the scene beneath the towering, leafy tree. This flask

is one of many of the designs handled by the American Flask and Cap Company located in New York City (but with connections to Connecticut) in the late 1850s to around 1870. One can imagine its owner sitting under a tree in the field admiring a projection of himself in the flask accompanied by a faithful hound.

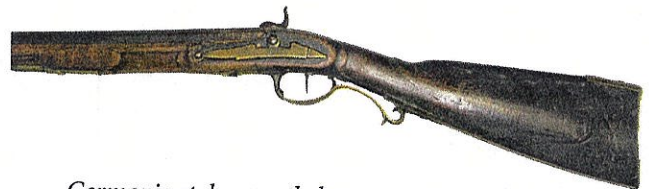
The Germanic-style smoothbore gun, which may have been converted from flintlock, in the accompanying photo (Fig. 2) was found, along with a few similar ones over the years, in a flea market in central Ohio. Such guns may have been brought over by early German immigrants or otherwise made their way to Ohio and elsewhere. The octagon to round barrel is 27 inches long and about .72 cal. The flat butt plate, trigger guard, ramrod pipes, and side plate seem similar to those on some Jaeger rifles. The cheekpiece is barely noticeable and much of the original checkering has worn off the grip.

Source:

Coopernail, George P. (2009). The Metal Flask: Successor to the Powder Horn. *Collectors Weekly*, March 19. <https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/the-metal-flask-successor-to-the-powder-horn/>



American Flask and Cap Company brass flask with hunting scene



Germanic-style smoothbore gun recovered from a Central Ohio flea market.

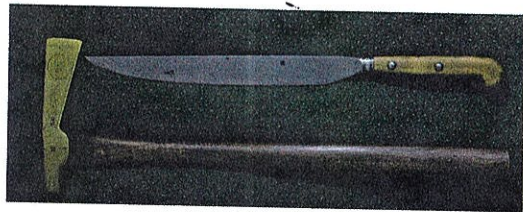
CONTEMPORARY BAG AXE AND TRADE KNIFE

BY MARK BENDER

Ohio rich in collectible 18th-19th century muzzleloaders – and a large number of collectors. There also are (and have been) several major enterprises catering to reenactors and artists who carry on the frontier traditions of crafting period items of material culture. Many of these contemporary artisans create firearms and accoutrements of the frontier era which are of increasing interest to collectors.

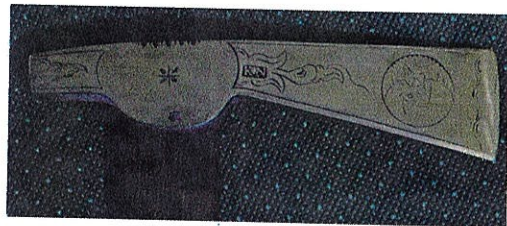
Featured here are two items produced by contemporary Ohio artisans. The first is a bag axe or rifleman's hatchet made by Ken Netting. A resident of Columbus, Ohio, Netting has been known for decades for his interpretations of firearms that were used in the Old Northwest, especially smoothbore fusils and trade muskets – all with his distinctive style of frontier engraving influenced by period designs. The small axe head is made of brass – which might indicate it would have as much ceremonial value as actual use in daily activities. The cast and polished head, which measures 5 ½" in length, with a blade width of 1 3/8", is skillfully engraved with a simultaneous full and crescent moon – with whimsical faces, as well as floral motifs that hint of rococo influence, and a simple "snowflake" echoing patterns seen on the trigger guards of some 18th-early 19th century smoothbores and pistols. The curly maple handle is 15 ¾" inches long and the eye of the head is 1" by ¼". The hatchet also features a tiny mild steel pin, holding the head in place.

The second item is an early French style trade knife, in a butcher or "skelping" (skinning), style created by Daniel Aubhil. Dan volunteered in the blacksmith shop in the Ohio Village (adjacent to the Ohio Historical Society) under the late Mark Bokenkamp ("Jessie") in the mid-1970s and later built a two-story forge and rifle shop out of original barn timbers in Wyandot County, Ohio, where he crafts an array of frontier items. The 14 1/8" knife is forged of one piece of steel, including the 9 ½" blade, neatly filed bolster, and tang. The historically accurate boxwood handle, with the distinctly French grip is held in place with two iron rivets set in minutely filed sheet brass stars as escutcheons around the rivets.

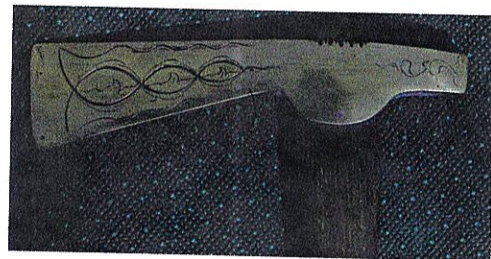


Brass Bag Axe by Ken Netting, engraved with cosmological motifs and designs often seen on early long rifles and French style 18th century frontier trade knife (a "skelping" knife for handling game) with boxwood handle by Daniel Aubhil.

Note: Aubhil's touchmark.



Close up of moon phases on Netting hatchet. Note: Netting's touchmark.



Obverse of Netting hatchet with period style patterns.



"Snowflake"/converging arrows motif on trigger guard of brass-barreled Ketland flintlock pistol, c. War of 1812.