

along what may be a pontoon bridge, with crowds of women in long skirts and bonnets on the bank. An outline article about participants from Oberlin, Lorain County, notes that the morning after arrival, “the Lorain County men began to sing and were soon serenaded by a group of young ladies themselves.” Food was at times a bit worse, as the men subsisted mostly on “crackers and bacon” (Donegon 2012). Despite fears about poor training and the characterization by one Cincinnati observer that the squirrel hunters were a “crude, unorganized swarm,” word of the militia crowd seems to have gotten across enemy lines, as the Confederate troops soon re-routed and by September 17th, the threat of invasion had wholly abated (Donegon 2012). According to legend, a Confederate scout remarked that a factor in the withdrawal was “They call them Squirrel Hunters; farm boys that never had to shoot at the same squirrel twice,” acknowledging the shooting prowess of the home grown Ohio marksmen (Ohio Memory). It is notable that the state government issued lithographed discharge papers to over 15,000 of the Squirrel Hunters and in 1908 made a payment of \$13 to survivors and their descendants for their service.

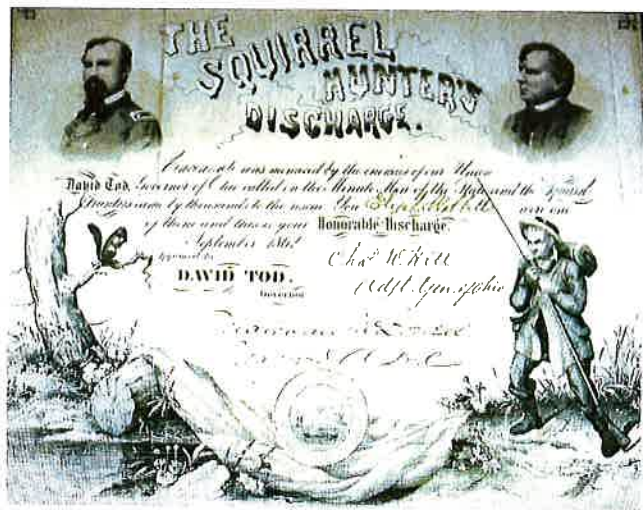


Fig. 2. Discharge papers were later granted to many of the “squirrel hunters” of 1862.

### The Squirrel Hunters of Ohio, Published in 1898

A source chronologically closer to the events of 1862 is described in detail in an 1898 volume by N.E. Jones, M.D., entitled *The Squirrel Hunters of Ohio; or Glimpses of Pioneer Life*. Before recounting the events of 1862, the author introduces (in a very circuitous

manner) a wealth of information, which seems a mix of fact, legend, and opinion, on life in early Ohio up through the end of the 19th century, with most emphasis being on the use and exploitation of natural resources, with many references to carving homesteads out of the forests and the amazing amounts of game and wild flora that was gradually depleted.

The volume gives accounts of early settlers from the East who sought better livelihoods farther west in the decades after the Revolutionary War. Several pages describe settlers in the High Banks area of Chillicothe, some arriving with little more than a gun, a dog, and the clothes on their backs. Although written decades after the early settlement period, the volume contains detailed descriptions of building log houses, making frontier clothing of animal hides or weaving, hunting and foraging for wild fruit, frontier entertainments like shooting matches and bear, deer, and fox chases with dogs, house-raising, turkey trapping in “pens,” etc. Several pages are devoted to making of sugar from “black maple” trees (with notes on making “spiles” from sumac stems and softwood troughs to catch the “sugar-water” made from “white walnut” that were lightly charred inside and did not affect the flavor, and which were sometimes used as cradles for human infants (pp. 23-24). Several lines describe the gradual clearing of land for a house site and erecting a log dwelling include details on fireplace structure. There is much information on both squirrels and many incidental mentions of muzzleloading firearms and related frontier Ohio activities. A few examples will suffice.

### Wooden Pins and Antlers

(pp. 16-17) “Numerous auger holes were bored in the logs, and pins driven in to hang articles of apparel and cooking utensils on. Two pins were always so arranged as to receive the gun, and perhaps under which might be seen a pair of deer antlers to honor the powder horn and bullet pouch.”

### Don’t Try This at Home

(p. 115) A local doctor reported on the “dual character of odd occurrences,” noting two cases of “stuck balls,” injuries that happened to “two squirrel hunters in the same neighborhood. A young man after squirrels, became confused in regard to the order in which the loading materials should be used, and put the ball down first. The ramrod, however, was

provided with a remedy for such loss of memory, and the screw in the end of the rod was firmly fixed in the body of the ball; but no adequate force seemed at hand to withdraw the ramrod, as the end projecting beyond the muzzle was so short the operator was obliged to apply force by means of the teeth. After making many unsuccessful efforts a happy thought seemed born with the necessity, and he felt assured if he had the ball once started it could be withdrawn. On this theory he worked just enough powder in at the 'touch-hole' of the 'priming-pan' as he judged, to give the ball a slight impetus in the right direction. And with the end of the ramrod between the teeth, and great toe, which to his surprise, lost the ramrod and left an ugly looking hole in the neck at the base of the skull. Treatment for gunshot wound – recovered.”

#### **Or this**

The author continues to the other “stuck ball” incident of less sanguinary consequence, narrating that, “a lad of German extraction failing to close the ‘priming pan’ to his flint-lock before loading, and consequently the powder nearly all went out at the touch hole,” as the ball was pushed down the barrel. Enough, however, remained with the “priming” to drive the ball about half way out. At this point the gunner could neither get it out or push it down. Like a dutiful son, reverencing parental wisdom, returned to the house with the gun, and gave a statement of the facts. After being equally unsuccessful in the removal of the obstruction, the father looked carefully over the make of the gun, and said, in bad English: ‘Shon, oh, Shon! Did you cshoot do gunne mid a zingle drigger ur mid de double drigger?’ John replied that it was shot with a single trigger, which so enraged the father that he dismembered the commandments, and with irreligious prefixes declared any fool might know, to shoot a double-triggered gun ‘mid a xingle drigger, the ball would go only half way out.” These two anecdotes suggest that flintlock arms were still being used well into the 19th century and that some were very well used, to the point of having large, burnt out touch holes. The second story reflects the multi-ethnic composition of the State of Ohio from the earliest times.

#### **Squirrels and Squirrel Hunters**

(p. 167 ) “Of the various wild animals in Ohio, no one species has ever shown greater numerical strength than the gray squirrel. In the early settlements, he

often annoyed his new neighbors with his mischievous habits and petty larcenies; nevertheless, the pioneer was generally pleased to see him, as at all seasons he was good for a savory meal. At times these little creatures became so numerous and destructive of crops ... settlers were obliged to guard their fields when planted with corn, or droves of foraging bands (of squirrels) would dig up the hills and eat the growing grains; when the crops matured they were still more destructive, and boys quite young were taught to handle the rifle, and when employed as guards became expert marksmen. Most every one old enough to use a gun could put a ball through the head of a squirrel three times in five or better on the topmost boughs of the lofty hardwood timber which covered the face of the country. The author also notes one famous event that took place in Franklin County on August 20, 1822, on a day “not very good day for squirrels to be out, either” in which in comparison to the massive turn out in the defense of Cincinnati in 1862, “a less number of guns killed nineteen thousand, six hundred, and sixty” of the “grey bandits.”

#### **The 1862 Gathering in Cincinnati**

Once the author had provided ample historical and sociological context, he proceeded to describe the events of 1862. Here is one example: (p. 337) “From morning till night the streets resounded with the tramp of armed men, marching to the defense of the city. From every quarter of the state they came, in every form of organization, with various species of arms. The ‘Squirrel Hunters,’ in their homespun, with powder-horn and buckskin pouch, ... all poured out of the railroad depots and down toward the pontoon bridge. The ladies of the city furnished provisions by the wagon load; the Fifth-street market-house was converted into a vast free eating saloon for the ‘Squirrel Hunters,’ Halls and warehouses were used as barracks. As soon as it was known the city was under martial law, the sounds of hammers and saws came up from the river, and in a few hours a pontoon bridge was stretched across to Covington, and streams of wagons loaded with lumber and other materials for fortifications were passing over...”

#### **Where are the Rifles?**

So, all of this raises the question. Where are the rifles and other guns that were brought to Cincinnati by the “Squirrel Hunters’ of 1862. As noted, I have seen several