

rifles or shotguns that were reportedly used in the Civil War. Might some of these have been carried by the squirrel hunters? Some records do exist of the 15,700-some officially recognized participants and many more are said to have participated, yet unrecognized. If each brought one firearm, that would potentially mean that a minimum of 15,700 were carried in that venture (not including the government muskets, if issued). Certainly, some of the thousands of surviving guns in the hands of collectors and other individuals and families were carried by the squirrel hunters of 1862. That is, this realization may help shed light on at least some of the tales of squirrel rifles, old muskets (even flintlocks), or shotguns that were “carried in the Civil War.” I suggest that, if there is interest AOLRC start a feed on our Facebook page devoted to family anecdotes of persons who participated in the Squirrel Hunters of Ohio events in 1862, and if any guns can be identified as being possible carries, then photos be made available along with the attributions and stories. This would certainly be a way to generate interest in the legacy of these unique material objects and related items such as the lithographed certificates and newspaper items. (See Fig. 3.)



Fig. 3. This 19th century arm was made up of a recycled fowler or trade musket barrel and 1817 Harper's Ferry rifle lock, and restocked in half stock configuration in curly maple with a trigger guard and butt plate made of flat iron, a brass wear plate underside the fore stock, and pewter nose cap. It was recently obtained from a sale in Sydney, not far from the Johnston Farm and Indian Agency Museum near Piqua (the museum has a nice collection of early excavated flintlock parts). The arm would fit into the descriptions of the miscellaneous rifles, pistols, “blunderbusses,” and old muskets that the squirrel hunters of 1862 were reputed to have carried. But, unfortunately, this piece is silent on its history of use. (Mark Bender photo)

* Although that shotgun did account for a ruffed grouse and a grey squirrel or two, it was eventually traded in a deal with the late frontier crafts artist/blacksmith Mark Bokenkamp [1952-2016] while he was working as the first blacksmith hired by Ohio Village at

the Ohio Historical Society, in Columbus. The trade was for an Indian trade musket made by Mark – for which he had traveled to the Museum of the Fur Trade in Chadron, Nebraska to measure an original. Since suitable barrels and locks were not commonly available at the time, he hand-filed a 20 gauge smokeless shotgun barrel and reworked a reproduction Brown Bess lock, adding brass tacks, a cast dragon side-plate, and period-style varnish to the project. The one-eared shotgun and a huge 400-pound anvil, flat on both ends made up the other side of the trade.)

Open access (free) link to the Squirrel Hunters of Ohio

https://archive.org/stream/squirrelhunterso00jone/squirrelhunterso00jone_djvu.txt

Other links:

Donegan, Richard (2012). The Squirrel Hunters of Ohio: Citizen Soldiers and the Defense of Ohio in the Civil War. Oberlin Heritage Center. <https://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/squirrelhunters>

Ohio's “Minute Men”: Squirrel Hunters and the Defense of Cincinnati. Ohio Memory.

<https://ohiomemory.ohiohistory.org/archives/4021>

https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Squirrel_Hunters

Much useful info here: <https://www.ohiomemory.org/digital/search/searchterm/Squirrel%20Hunters/mode/exact/page/1>

HENRY BURNS AND RELATED GUNSMITHS: A FAMILY AFFAIR

BY FRED SCHREEL

This isn't about me but about my interest in Henry Clay Burns our local gunsmith in Lewisburg, Ohio in Preble County. This all started when I was about 13 years old. The rifle was given to me by a friend of my father who was remodeling a building in town. It was found in between the ceiling and the floor. This was where the gun shop used to be before Henry died in 1888. It was missing a side lock but otherwise complete. With it was another rifle that was given to Pat Bunger's grandson who still owns it. It took quite a while for us to find a lock that fit it pretty well. I shot it a lot after that. This would have been about 1959. My rifle is a .31 caliber percussion side lock curly maple half stock example of Henry's work. The other rifle was a .36 caliber percussion side lock curly maple half stock. Steve shot his rifle quite a lot also. (See Fig. 1)



Fig. 1. Henry Burns rifle found in his old gun shop.

But now the seed was planted and I was hooked on Henry Burns history and information. It wasn't easy to find out much about Henry Burns until the last 35 years or so. Now with the search engine Ancestry.com it has been a lot easier for me to do. I already knew about Burns because my father had one of his rifles that he bought in the late 1940's. It was owned by Martin I. Gates our local undertaker who died in 1950. When he bought the rifle it had been bored out to a smoothbore. Mr. Gates hired Henry to re-barrel it to its original state. It is now a .31 caliber percussion back action lock curly maple half stock. The agreed upon price was two cords of wood and two chickens. My father gave it to my sister and she calls it "her Squirrel Gun" and she lets me display it at functions. (See Fig. 2)



Fig. 2. Back action lock area and trigger guard of a H. Burns rifle once owned by the author's father.

About 25 years ago I was at the Kramer & Kramer Firearms Auction and I purchased a .31 caliber percussion back action lock walnut half stock rifle signed "H. Burns". Later while standing in line to pay for it a little old lady said, "You bought my Daddy's gun." She then said, "When he was 8 years old a whitehaired and bearded old man gave it to her [my] father." At the October 2022 Fall Show in Hilliard I bought a Henry Burns rifle from Mark Bender. It's the rifle that he wrote about in the February 2018 AOLRC Newsletter. It is a .31 caliber percussion back action lock curly maple half stock [a trade from a man in a pickup truck at the Kenton Coon Dog Trials in the early 2000s, ed.]. (See Fig. 3)



Fig. 3. Stamp appearing on some Henry Burns; others have a signature in script.

I have now located 19 Henry Burns rifles, which is pretty amazing, considering I only knew of five examples when I started out in the beginning. It has been very interesting. When I began researching Henry's family genealogy, I discovered that his mother was Elizabeth Marker, the daughter of Daniel marker Sr of Frederick