

small “teardrops” on the wrist, just behind the lock mouldings (Fig 3).



Fig. 3. Commodore Perry half stock rifle, cheek piece side.

The lock bolt inlay is a brass in a popsicle shape. The four-piece brass patch box seems handmade and is similar in pattern to the one mentioned above on the Old Barn Auction site. The finial is a simple fleur-de-lis, reminding this author of forms used on some rifles made in Pennsylvania for the Western trade. The modestly curved butt plate and typical mid-19th century percussion trigger guard are of brass. The rifle shares certain architectural characteristics with known rifles of other area gunsmiths, including J. W. Stackhouse and J.S. Fowler (both close contemporaries); in particular, the overall lines, the shape of certain inlays, and the treatment of the fore end, with its four inches of stock extending past the rear ramrod pipe (the rear tail pipe is brass, the two forward pipes on the iron rib are of ferrous material). The nose of the present piece seems of cast pewter and is relieved on the anterior faces in a fashion somewhat similar to that seen on Vincent rifles in Marietta, Washington County. Other Belmont County gunsmiths include Otho Sheetz (who conceivably could have been a teacher of Hatcher, given a James Hatcher bought tools from him as described above), as well as N. Jany, William Folger (whose fancy inlays resemble those on the fancy Hatcher rifle in Vol. 1), George Neal, and C.W. Howell – the latter all with rifles illustrated in Vol. I. These and other regional makers were likely in all sorts of networks of sharing, influence, and competition for market share. (See Figs. 4 and 5)



Fig. 4. Comparison of J.S. Fowler (top) and Commodore Perry Hatcher cheek pieces, both Belmont County gunsmiths.

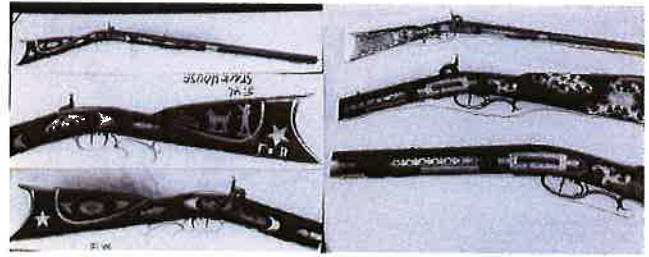


Fig. 5. Fancy rifles by Belmont County gunsmiths, J. W. Stackhouse (left) and William Folger (right) (James B. Whisker photos)

Specifics:

Stock: The rifle is 32” from front of nose cap to end of upper butt plate point; the maple shows moderate curl and has a dark, rich amber finish (which may be a shellac finish like the one Whisker noted above); a small, dull section on the right side of the tang may indicate some sort of repair; the brass patch box on the lock side, has a geometrically appearing “fleur-de-lis” type finial; the robust and sharply curved cheekpiece is 7 ½” in length and 2 1/2” from bottom of rear curvature to the stock comb, and is set with a German silver oval, one of the several white metal inlays described below. (See Fig. 6 and 7)



Fig. 6. Fleur de lis style patch box finial.



Fig. 7. Cheek piece detail.

The curved line of the cheekpiece passes around the nose of the stock (front of comb) into the lock side of the stock (Fig. 8). Lock and side plate panels are 6" by 1 7/16" (at widest); a line running from the toe of the lower buttstock straight to the front trigger is 13" 1/2", in which the lock panels and upper line of stock cants down slightly allowing for a good sight plane (as seen on many percussion rifles of the era). Other makers in Belmont County and vicinity (such as J.S. Fowler) sometimes used a similar pattern cheek piece.



Fig. 8. Tang and nose of stock showing rolled over of cheek piece.

The fore stock extends about 4 1/4" past where the center of rear ramrod pipe meets the stock, making for an aesthetically pleasing combination of pewter endcap, curly maple fore stock and brass tailpipe – as well as being a practical handhold when carrying and sighting (Fig. 9). Although probably made as a half stock, the configuration is the same as many cut-down full stocks. The brass rear ramrod pipe is 3 3/16" in length, and 1/2" wide at base; the pewter nose cap is 7/16" in length, with concave indents on the forward edges (much like seen on many Vincent rifles). The well-shaped oval wrist is quite substantial (as justified on a gun with a long heavy barrel) and the width of the stock at the tang screw is slightly over 1 1/2".



Fig. 9. Configuration of rear ramrod pipe, cast nose cap, and two inlays.

Lock and triggers: Lock is attached by a single bolt through the lock plate and cushioned by a small "lollipop" side plate of brass. Nicely dressed but plain double set triggers; trigger plate about 4" in length by 1/2". Trigger pull is 12 3/4" from the front trigger to the center of the butt plate. No name is discernable on the

lock plate, which has been degraded by percussion cap residue. Some roll-type floral engraving remains, as well as some floral engraving on the hammer. A small square of brass has been formed into a well-worn flash guard around the percussion nipple (sometimes "tube" in 19th century parlance) and squared shank of the drum.

Barrel: About .41 caliber, with eight grooves and eight lands, and a thin line inscribed around the bore, just outside the rifling. Just over 36 1/2" in length; 1" wide at muzzle; iron rib 19 3/4" from nose cap to muzzle; well-finished, dark brown barrel with slight corrosion near breech; breech plug tang 2 1/2" in length, 1/2" wide, end of tang pointed at about 45 degree angles; two ferrous metal ramrod pipes attached to rib, 1 9/16" in length, front pipe set back 2 3/4" from end of rib (which is about 1/32" back from the muzzle); second pipe 14 1/16" from front of pipe to end of rib at muzzle. The barrel is stamped "P. Hatcher" (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Stamp of P. Hatcher.

Sights: Small cast, white metal front sight, the front of the base 1 1/2" from muzzle; rear sight of iron is fine and low, placed 25" from muzzle. The rear sight was moved forward several inches during period of use and the original slot was almost indiscernibly filled with an iron shim.

Brass hardware: Trigger guard has two finger spurs, common period type, about 8 1/2" in length; butt plate is moderately curved (for the later percussion era), 4" wide at rear, upper 2 5/8" return in length, with a single decorative line filed 1/16th from anterior; held on with two steel screws and a rivet of brass rod (toe was cracked and repaired); the toeplate is 3 1/2" by 1/2" inches and attached with two steel screws (1/8" and 2 1/2" from upper end of plate) and the brass rivet.

Patch box: Four pieces of cut out brass sheet; symmetrical style finial (with diamond shaped point)