

farmer; Martha, 51; Elma, 15; Rachel, 13; and Ellis, 7. Rock Island County, Illinois. [Census; Noble; Dirs]. Curt Johnson in *Gunmakers of Illinois*, discusses a signed gun made by Eph Terrill for William Irwin, his brother-in-law. He married Mary Irwin in NY. Ephraim died on 19 November 1913 in Pierpont, Astabula County, Ohio, and was buried in Monroe Township Cemetery, Kelloggsville, Astabula County [Ancestry; Find-a-Grave]. (*Whisker*)

**Yutzy, Isaac** (1847-1915) gunsmith & hardware merchant. Issac Yutzy was born 15 March, 1847 in Holmes County, Ohio to the parents of Rueben Yutzy (1820-1899) and Susanna (Weaver) Yutzy (1824-1899) of Winesburg. Isaac married Mary Kendle on 9 Feb. 1869. In 1880 living in Paint Twp., Holmes County, Ohio. Census of 1880: Isaac Yutzy 33, gunsmith, Mary 35, John R. 5, Daniel F., 2, and Menola, 7 months. Isaac died on 21 November, 1915 in Mortimer, Hancock County, Ohio and was buried at Prairie Chapel Cemetery, Oakwood, Paulding County, Ohio.

[Census, Ancestry; Find-a-Grave]. (*McCullough*)

## REDEMPTION: A TWO-PIECE GARDNER RIFLE

BY MARK BENDER

A long, slim rifle walked into the 2019 Newark show. After making a few rounds of the tables and displaying its unusual configuration to looker after looker, it wound up in the hands of a new owner who took a chance on its unusual form and unfamiliar name stamp. Catching a moment in the morning madness, the new owner quickly paged the index of Volume V of *Ohio Gunsmiths & Allied Tradesmen* looking for the name stamped on the top barrel flat two inches behind the back sight: W M Gardner. Unfortunately, there were half a dozen Gardners from different parts of the state listed and no time to mull over which one. Not long after placing the rifle on his table with a tag stating the name, an older member wandered by and said, "W.M. Gardner. Ada, Ohio. Yes, and I had one—somewhat fancier—that had a similar two-piece stock." (See Figure 1)

### *Hand-wringing Over Two-Pieced Stocks*

Two-piece stock? That may have been one of the things that put off other potential buyers—that and the fact the dark finish covered an intricate wrist repair. But for me, the two-piece stock brought back intense memories of my first muzzle-loader, which I bought in kit form from the late Charles Henning of Henning's Barbershop in the square in Woodsfield, Monroe County, Ohio. I vividly recall, back in the summer of 1972, sitting amidst the mounted deer racks, critter

parts, shooting paraphernalia, and bits and pieces of old muzzle-loading rifles and fowlers, that competed with the barber chairs for room in the shop. Chuck, under the watchful eye of his father Art, instructed me how to put together the short-barrel .45 caliber percussion rifle, and give it a hand-rubbed linseed oil finish. The gun had a two-piece stock, with a brass spacer at the joint between the fore-stock and buttstock, and an internal horizontal metal tube hidden between the pieces for strength. The barrel was only 20 inches in length. (My brother Nathan got the longer, 32 inch barrel version—also in two pieces.)

I have fond memories of that first rifle—including one in which I leveled the sights on a forkhorn buck at fifteen yards, pulled the trigger, snapped a cap and watched the ball spit out the end of the barrel onto the ground. I had pre-loaded early that morning with a spring-loaded copper powder flask—something I thereafter did not do while hunting—as the spring must have stuck and prevented the powder from flowing. But the gun could shoot. I recall winning an impromptu match against a .22 rifle, cutting apart ½ inch sticks stuck straight up in the ground at 15 yards off-hand. I am sure many members have memories of these two-piece rifles.

Looking back, the barbershop rifles my brother and I used seem to have been clones of Jukar or CVA rifles,



and were possibly being produced on a pattern makers lathe somewhere in the Ohio River valley (though we never got the whole story on their origins). As I recall, the two-pieced stocks of the day sold at a price point lower than the Thompson Center Hawken production muzzleloaders that were riding high in the 1970s after the appearance of the movie *Jeremiah Johnson*, about the adventures of a true-life mountain man. Such two-piece stock guns are still sold in kit form by major outdoor suppliers under various names. In form, they are quite similar to many of the trade rifles made in Pennsylvania that were produced and marketed for use on the western frontier by Leman, Henry, Tryon, Gibbs, Conestoga Rifle Works, Enterprise Rifle Works, Truitt Brothers & Co., etc. (See Figure 2 & 3)

At the time, however, it never really sat right with me that the guns had two pieces. I can remember feverishly looking through all the limited sources I could get my hands on (long before the magic of the internet) looking for muzzleloaders with two-piece stocks to justify the “historical” artifact that was fueling my nascent frontier fantasies. Eventually I did find several examples of two-pieced fowling pieces, some trade fowlers (many had spliced fore stocks), officer’s fusils, and rifles, some in the form of fine European guns.

In one well-documented frontier example, mountain man Joe Meek carried a short, back-action percussion rifle with a two-piece stock (and a noticeable metal spacer) in the Oregon Territory (Hanson 1978:115). A Ketland fowler with a floral dragon sideplate recently went to auction on a major gun auction site. The gun had a 48 inch barrel and the fore stock was made in two pieces that fit together as cones. A well-engineered brass coupler, which included the second ramrod pipe held the two, unglued pieces together. There are but two examples.

Most two-piecers seemed to have been made for the needs of production or convenience. They could easily be stored (or hidden) in trunks, ship’s cabins, wagons, carriages, etc. And, of course, there were the stories of the many guns brought back by veterans of overseas wars or immigrant’s luggage that had been intentionally cut into pieces after-the-fact. The lower band of many 19th century military muskets hide an intentionally severed stock. Half-stock percussion sporting rifles, as well as plains rifles and some trade rifles, became popular by mid-19th century, as was certainly so in

Ohio. It seems that Industrial Revolution technology made the production of barrels and metal under-ribs easy, though a shop had to be properly set up to make half stocks, which involved certain steps such as riveting on ribs and casting pewter nose caps. These shorter guns, with easy take-down foreshadowed today’s sporting rifles, also offering alternatives to cutting down long full stocks for sake of convenience (aside from concerns over weight), or making two-piece guns to the same end.

So yes, historically, there were guns made with two-piece stocks —and it seems that for whatever reasons —W.M. Gardner made at least two of them.

### *The Two-piece Gardner Stock*

The two-piece stock of the Gardner rifle is halved 7 inches and a hair forward of the breech end of the barrel. Sitting atop the end of the buttstock cut is a 1/8” thick band of pewter, something like a thin nose cap. Sitting on top of the pewter band is a 1/16” in. shim of sheet brass—very similar in configuration to that on the rifle of my youth. The stock is pierced for a barrel pin just over an inch below the pewter band (see photo). 2½’ above the brass shim is another pin hole. Thus, the stock is held well in place, with no wiggle. (See Figure 4)

### *A Well-done Repair*

The shape of the buttstock is just the sort of thing that makes the variety of Ohio rifles interesting. It is graceful, and lively with an almost birdlike elegance, yet simple and direct in form. But this elegance was once smashed out of shape in some now unknown incident. The repair (assuming the gun was not originally made from scraps), is masterful in that pieces were dovetailed on the top and bottom of the wrist all the while preserving the integrity of the core. Beneath the dark nitric acid finish one can discern the heads of two wooden pegs and the careful piecing of wood. Whether the repair was done by the maker of the gun, or later hands in unclear. But in any case, it is a repair worth contemplating. (Figure 5)

### *William McKinley Gardner*

As noted, of the several gunsmiths named Gardner listed in Volume V, only one has the initials W.K. (Hutslar 1996:151). According to Ohio History Central ([https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Hardin\\_County](https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Hardin_County)),