



J. YOUNG

Ohio or West Virginia Maker?

By Arthur Hock

Recently several rifles bearing the stamp J. Young have surfaced. Several of these rifles have been seen at the annual show of The Association of Ohio Longrifle Collectors which is held in Marietta, Ohio each April. These rifles have all been attributed to John Young of Stark County, Ohio and Hutslar in his book "Gunsmiths of Ohio" lists a John Young working in Sugar Creek Township in Stark County in 1850 and also in the village of Milton in Stark County. Is this the same Young that built the rifles seen at the show and the one pictured in this article?

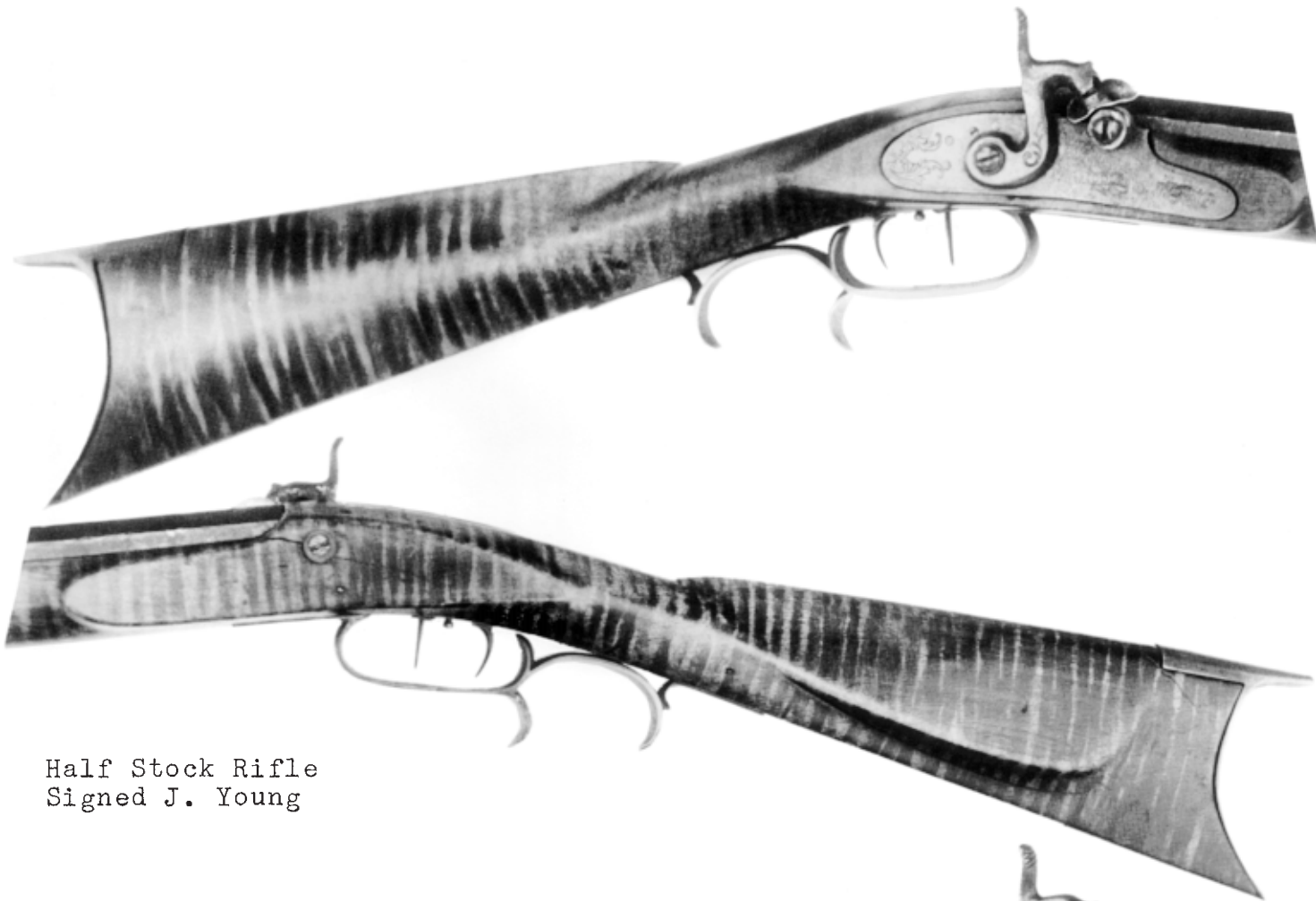
There is another Young that built muzzleloading rifles and this Young also stamped his rifles J. Young. I believe this is the Young that built the rifles in question!

Allow me to build my case and to introduce another gunsmith J. W. Stackhouse. Hutslar lists a Joshue W. Stackhouse working in Beallsville, Monroe County, Ohio in the 1850's and later in 1859 he shows Stackhouse located in Powhattan Point, Ohio. Some unpublished sources say that Stackhouse moved to Proctor, West Virginia in 1870 and that he is buried there. Dr. James Whisker says that Stackhouse worked in the Hanes Run area of Wetzel County West Virginia which is very near the town of Proctor. Mr. Stackhouse apparently worked both sides of the Ohio River and can genuinely be

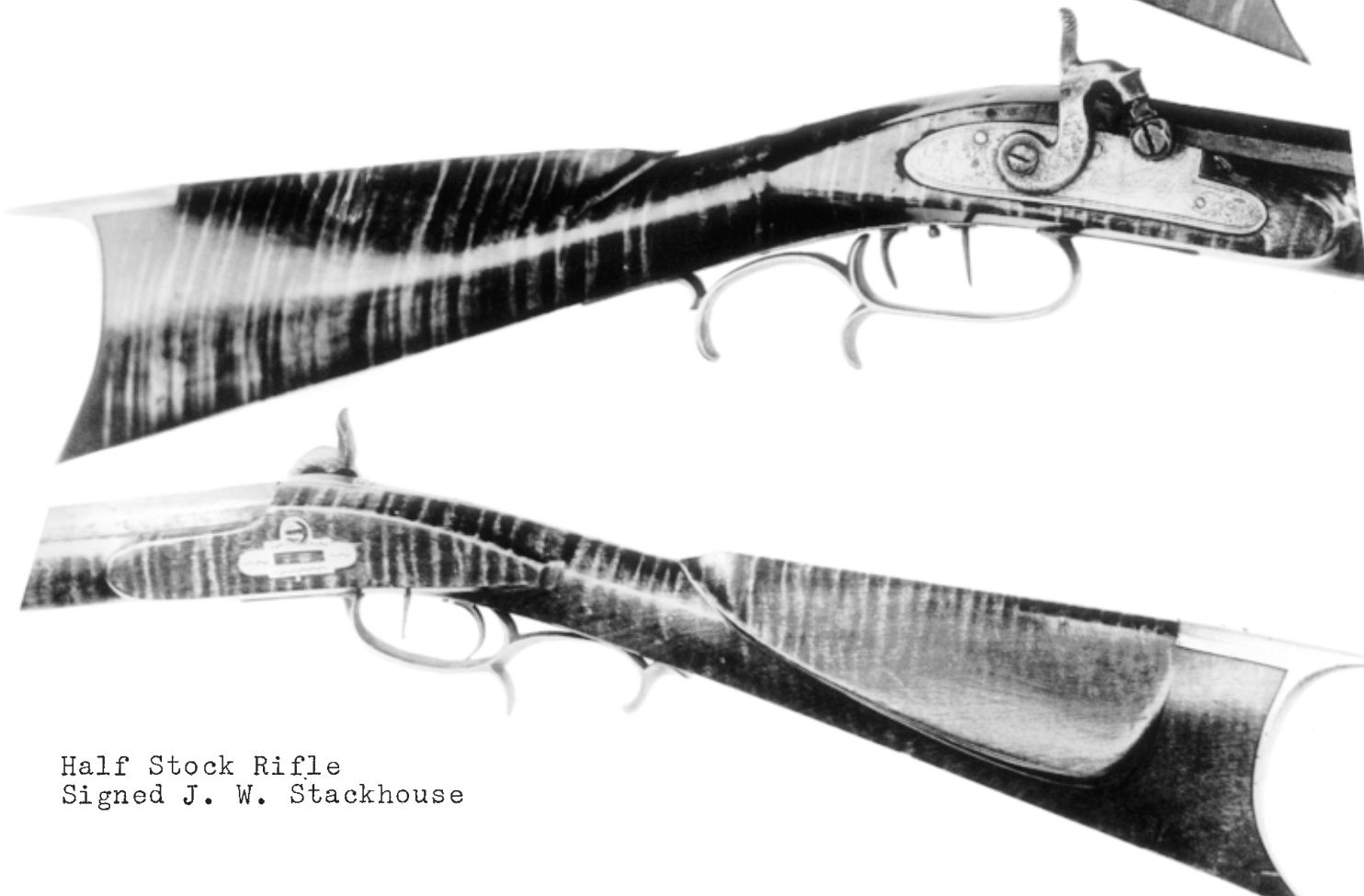
called an Ohio gunsmith as well as a West Virginia gunsmith.

Now back to Mr. Young. A Mr. Young also worked in the Hanes Run area. Young was an apprentice of Mr. Stackhouse. This Young was born in Connellsville, Fayette County, Pennsylvania and he came to Wetzel County around 1883 which would be later than Stackhouse. We now have our Mr. Young and Mr. Stackhouse working in the same general geographic area and the legend or rumor that Young was an apprentice of Stackhouse!

An examination of their work shows without any doubt the two men worked together at some time. Compare the rifles pictured in this article both of which are halfstocks. Both pieces have the same molding around the lock mortise which extends far to the front and far to the rear of the lock. On both rifles there is a slight line incised where the comb of the butt meets the wrist and the outline of the butt is the same on both rifles. Look at the cheekpieces! Both have the identical beavertail shape instead of the traditional "Kentucky" straight line style and both are double panelled or double outlined. Although not major identifying characteristics, the triggers, trigger guards, and the butt plates are the same. Lastly, both rifles have poured nose caps that have a pointed finial in the



Half Stock Rifle
Signed J. Young



Half Stock Rifle
Signed J. W. Stackhouse

center of the bottom of the stock.

Although we do not have pictures let me describe two other rifles, one by Stackhouse and the other by Young.

On page 113 of the book "The Kentucky Rifle Hunting Pouch" by Madison Grant is a picture of a gorgeous Stackhouse rifle. Mr. Grant gives the following description of this fine piece. "The rifle is one of the finest to come from the bench of any of the 19th century gunsmiths that plied their trade on either bank of the Ohio River. Of pronounced curly maple, the half stock is stained so dark that it is almost black which helps to accentuate the ornate silver inlays and furniture. There are 26 such inlays with some of them being fish and eagles.

A feature of the gun is that the sides are duplicates in construction and ornamentation. That is the usual cheek rest occurs on both faces of the butt stock. An additional pleasant oddity is that both cheekpieces are outlined in silver."
(double outlined)

Mr. Grant tells us that this rifle has cheekpieces on both sides of the stock and the picture in his book shows the cheekpieces to be double outlined in silver. I also know of a J. Young rifle with two cheekpieces and they are also double outlined. The same large lock molding is evident in the picture of the Stackhouse rifle as is shown on the rifles pictured in this article.

Yes, Mr. Stackhouse and Mr. Young knew each other and without a doubt they worked side by side in a shop in West Virginia and used the same worn hand tools, exchanged ideas and techniques



Joe Young, Riflesmith

and maybe built a rifle or two as a joint project. In fact, rifles made by these two men are so similar that one could not determine which gun was made by which man without a signature on the barrel. The builder of the J. Young rifle in this article and other J. Young rifles that I have seen was the Young from West Virginia and his name was Joe or Jose Young not John Young. It seems highly unlikely that this is the John Young that worked in Stark County. Unless...Joe and John Young are the same Young and that this man stopped in Stark County in the 1850's after leaving Pennsylvania but before moving to West Virginia. Also the Young rifles are patterned exactly in the Stack-

house style which should be the case if Young was an apprentice of Stackhouse. So if the two Youngs are the same man and this man was building guns in Stark County and he had any style of his own he certainly lost it on his way to West Virginia and copied Stackhouse line for line. This too seems unlikely. But anything is possible.

For now, I think the rifles in question are Joe Young rifles from Proctor, West Virginia. However; it certainly would be informative if someone would come forth with a J. Young rifle that is documented as being made in Stark County by J. Young. This would settle the issue. □

Valentine Libeau

James B. Whisker

In his deposition for citizenship made in early 1819 Valentine Libeau said that he was 29 years old, suggesting that he was born in 1789 or 1790. He also said that he was a subject of William, the ruler (landsgrave) of Hesse Castle, Darmstadt, Prussia (now in communist occupied east Germany). It is likely that he had learned his craft under one of the many gunsmiths of that area, beginning about 1805.

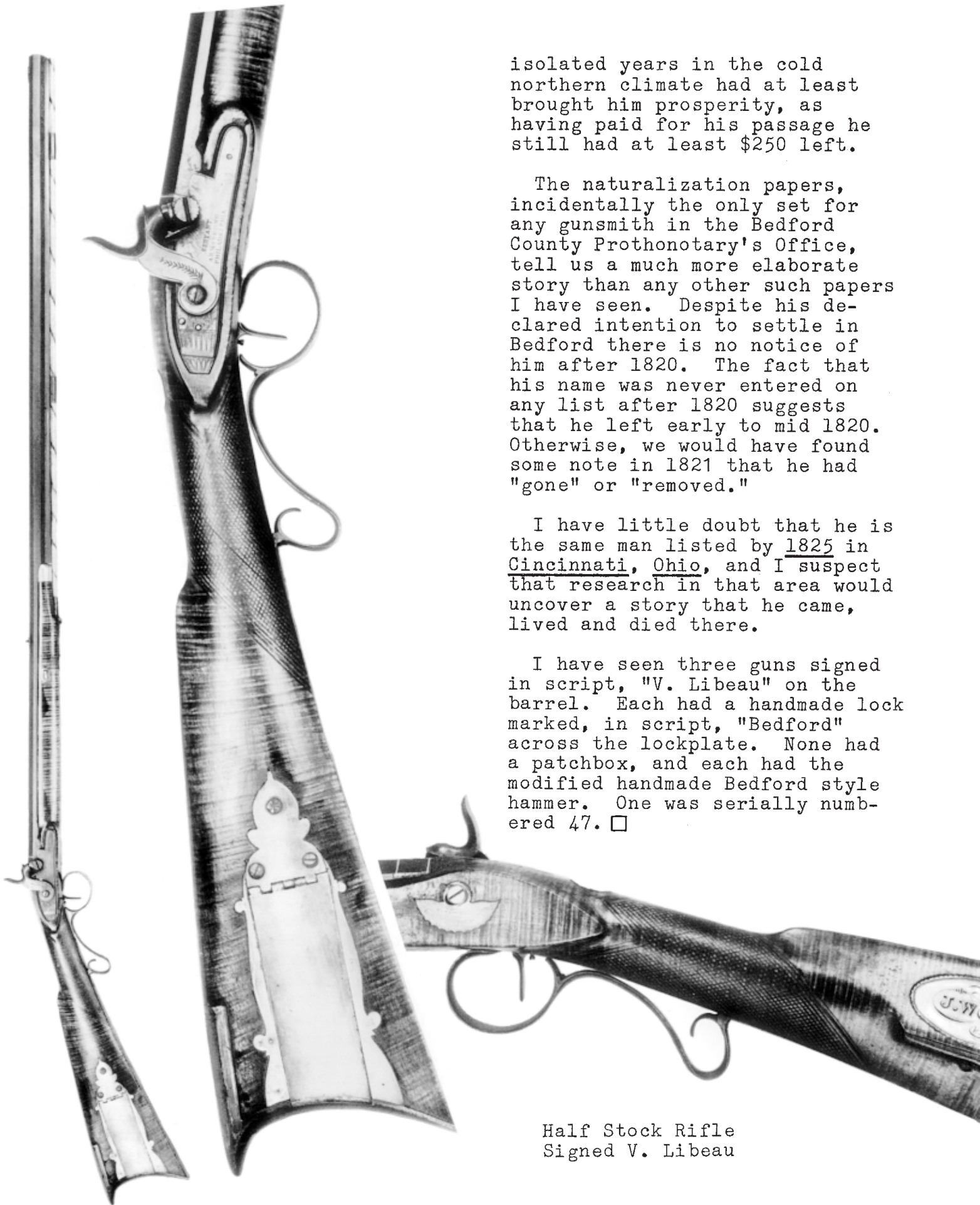
Judging from the several guns I have seen that bore his mark, my guess is that he never progressed beyond the apprenticeship stage in Germany. Even mediocre talent brought high prices in talent hungry Russia. Libeau would not have been the first nor the last young middle or western European to move to Russia to make a fortune that would have

eluded him long in Germany (and especially if one had only a little talent).

Libeau probably worked in Russia about 5 years. By 1816 he had saved enough to pay his passage across the Atlantic, avoiding the subsequent indenture that caught so many of his impoverished countrymen. He arrived at Bristol, Rhode Island on 12 November 1816 from Petersburg (Petrograd, now Leningrad).

Libeau appears on the tax rolls of Bedford boro only in 1819 and 1820. He paid the usual single man's tax of \$1.00, although his declared value was well above most single men (and most married men, too!) \$250.00, doubtless money brought with him from Russia.

We can conclude that the long,



isolated years in the cold northern climate had at least brought him prosperity, as having paid for his passage he still had at least \$250 left.

The naturalization papers, incidentally the only set for any gunsmith in the Bedford County Prothonotary's Office, tell us a much more elaborate story than any other such papers I have seen. Despite his declared intention to settle in Bedford there is no notice of him after 1820. The fact that his name was never entered on any list after 1820 suggests that he left early to mid 1820. Otherwise, we would have found some note in 1821 that he had "gone" or "removed."

I have little doubt that he is the same man listed by 1825 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I suspect that research in that area would uncover a story that he came, lived and died there.

I have seen three guns signed in script, "V. Libeau" on the barrel. Each had a handmade lock marked, in script, "Bedford" across the lockplate. None had a patchbox, and each had the modified handmade Bedford style hammer. One was serially numbered 47. □

Half Stock Rifle
Signed V. Libeau

To the honorable Court of
Common Pleas of Bedford County
in State of Pennsylvania.

Valentine Libeau gunsmith late
a subject of William Landsgrave of
Hesse Castle in the Empire of
Germany being desirous to be
naturalized and being of full age
reports himself for registry to
the Court of Common Pleas of the
said County and states that he
was born in Hesse Castle wither
the territories of William
Landsgrave of Castle Hesse in the
German Empire and under the
allegiance of said William Lands-
grave as aforesaid and of Frances
the First Emperor of Germany,
that he is of the age of 29 years,
that he migrated from Petersburg
in the Empire of Russia, that he
arrived at Bristol in the State
of Rhodesisland (Rhode Island),
wither the territories of the
United States on the 1st November
1816, that his intended place of
settlement is in the County of
Bedford in State of Pennsylvania.

Bedford, 9th January 1819

Fullstock Rifle
Signed G. LeBeau

