



African-American Gunsmiths



by

James B. Whisker

There are only a few documented African-American gunsmiths. While we know that many men of African heritage were engaged in trades, especially on southern plantations, the relative scarcity of gunsmiths is not surprising. Few Southerners would have wanted those in bondage to have learned the gun making trade out of fear of slave rebellions.

In 1729 an African-American slave was bound to a gunsmith in Princess Anne, Virginia. "David James' free Negro was bound to James Todel, who is to teach him to read the Bible distinctly; also the trade of gunsmith." (Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (1895), p.429). Prince, a black slave, was named as a gunsmith in the will of well-known Charleston, South Carolina, gunsmith John Milnor, Sr., in 1749 (Kauffman, Early American Gunsmiths, p.67).

Ephraim Goosley was a gunsmith in Yorktown, Virginia. When he died in 1751 his wife Martha carried on the trade with the assistance of African-American slaves. She finally disposed of the tools under pressure from her neighbors who feared armed slaves. (Virginia Genealogist, I, 3 1957, p. 109; Virginia Gazette, 6 June 1751 and 11 and 17 July 1755).

Caesar was an African-American slave owned by Captain Lloyd Thomas in Charleston, South Carolina. Caesar was a trained gunsmith and Captain Thomas assigned him to clean and repair

the arms belonging to the South Carolina militia and stored in Charleston harbor. On the night of March 1, 1742, a William Bill or Bull discovered that Caesar had the master keys to the public magazine in his possession. Apparently, Caesar had duplicated Captain Thomas' keys. Caesar was arrested. After much deliberation, the local courts ordered Caesar to be deported and Captain Thomas compensated for the fair market value of his slave. Apparently, the court decided that while Caesar had not actually committed any crime of violence, he was too dangerous to keep in Charleston (1 South Carolina Colonial Records 3 at 449-50).

Cannon, cannon shot, explosive shells and large ordnance were made at iron manufactories. Most of these facilities were located in eastern Pennsylvania in the early years of the nation. Even in the North black workers in the iron and related heavy gun and cannon industries were treated poorly. "It is nevertheless true that the owners were almost feudal lords to whom their workmen and their workmen's families looked for counsel and guidance in all the affairs of life as well as employment; whose word was law; who often literally owned their black laborers ..." (Swank, Iron in All Ages, p.189).

During the Revolution, slaves owned by the Durham Furnace, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, fled to the British, seeking freedom from their involuntary servitude.



Rifle By Negro Gunsmith Selwyn Peters

Durham Furnace was owned by General Daniel Morgan and leased by George Taylor, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. It cast cannon shot and iron cannon for the patriot cause during the American Revolution. (Swank, p.169) Green Lane Furnace on Perkiomen Creek, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, was built in 1733 by Thomas Mayburry. "The workmen once employed here were chiefly negro slaves." (Swank, p.170). In 1773 and 1775 David Jenkins purchased the two halves of a property on Conestoga Creek, Caenarvon Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, for \$4900. In addition to 400 acres of land were the iron blast furnace and the black slaves who worked the forge and furnace. The furnace was built in 1742 and abandoned about 1848. During both the Revolution and the War of 1812 it made cannon, shells and shot for the armed forces. (Swank, p.173).

During the American War for Independence, Robert Coleman (1748-1825) hired a number of black workmen to make cannon and cannon shot at the Elizabeth Forge near Brickersville on Middle Creek, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Coleman had huts erected for the workmen and these remained in use long after Coleman's death. Most of the laborers and some of the craftsmen were free blacks. Continental Congress sold to Coleman seventy Hessian prisoners of war for \$30 each, to work at the furnace. (Swank, History of Iron and Steel, pp.179-80).

Tower Adams is the best documented black gunsmith known. (Henry J. Kauffman, The Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle 1960, p. 169) listed Tower Adams in Washington Township, Washington County, in 1826, 1834 and 1859. On 3 March 1824 Adams advertised in the Washington Reporter, offering a reward for the return of his runaway apprentice, Lucas Livers. This is the earliest date we can

assign to Adams in western Pennsylvania. He advertised his services as a gunsmith in the Directory of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Valleys, 1859.

The U.S. Census of 1850 listed Adams (age 62) in South Strabane Township, Washington County. The record showed he was born in Maryland. There was a notation that he was a "convict." Perhaps this meant that he was an escaped slave. The U.S. Census of 1860 showed Tower Adams, age 74, a gunsmith, value \$100. Tower and Nancy, his wife, and a number of other black persons were living in the east ward of Washington. The U.S. Census of 1870 listed Tower Adams, age 85, a gunsmith, and his wife Nancy. He had an apprentice in the gunsmith's trade named Samuel Sharp, age 22. They were living in Cannonsburg boro. In 1870 Tower said that he had been born in Virginia.

The underground railroad was especially active in parts of Washington County. "Engaged in the work on the Underground were a number of free negroes who gave great aid to members of their race on the road to Canada. One of these was Tar Adams, who lived in Washington many long years before the Civil War. Even before the Underground was established he aided negroes to escape, in which connection he has been mentioned in the account of the murder of Robert Carlyle in 1828. He was a wonderful runner, but he often went around on crutches as a blind to slave hunters. The story is told that on one occasion he was standing in a blacksmith shop in West Chestnut Street, leaning on his crutches, when he saw some slave hunters ride past with the sheriff. Some slaves were concealed at West Middletown at that time and Tar Adams immediately dropped his crutches and sped over the hills to that place, where he gave the warning.

After the slave hunters had ridden past the shop, the sheriff informed them that it was useless to proceed farther as the old darky leaning on the crutches would reach West Middletown before they could. The Southerners laughed at him, but when they reached their destination they found that the slaves had escaped." (Earle R. Forrest, History of Washington County, I, 425).

The murder of Robert Carlyle, to which Forrest referred, occurred on 31 January or 1 February 1828. Carlyle was a slave holder and "Negro drover" from Woodford, Kentucky. His runaway slave Christian "Kit" Sharp was accused of the murder. Christian claimed three men, including a powerful black man, had murdered Carlyle. Christian was brought to trial of 25 June and was defended by leading abolitionists, including Attorneys Samuel McFarland, William Baird and John Kennedy. The jury found Christian to be guilty and was hanged on 21 November. "There was living in Washington at that time a free Negro named Tar Adams, the first name being given on account of his black skin. He was a powerful man, and was never accused of doing anything except to help runaway slaves on their way to Canada. In this business he was a past master, and many a Negro from the Southland owed his freedom to Tar Adams... Many remarkable stories are told of his exploits in aiding members of his race on the road to freedom. Many of the people of that day believed that Tar Adams was one of the three men whom "Kit" claimed attacked his master. This version is firmly believed by the older colored residents, who knew the man when they were children, and they well remember the stories of him and the Carlyle murder ..." (Forrest, pp. 377-89).

We located no estate papers or will for Tower Adams in the

Washington Court House. We assume that he owned virtually nothing, and that in the 1870's none of the public record keepers cared much about the death of a poor black man. We have never seen any of his work.

Joseph R. Winters (1828-1916) represented the diametrical opposite of Tower Adams. Winters was a talented man who invented a portable ladder to help get people out of burning buildings. It was a forerunner of today's aerial ladder fire truck. He also invented a new type of accordion. He was a general repairman and jack of all trades. In his younger years he augmented his income by selling runaway slaves to bounty hunters. Winters would locate a runaway slave and win his trust, which was accomplished easily since he was black. He would invite the slave to hide in a specially prepared room in the basement of his home. Winters would hold the runaway there until he could locate a slave hunter and sell the unfortunate man or woman for bounty money. (Cooper, Recollections of Chambersburg).

The manufacture of gun barrels was labor intensive until a way was devised to bore a hole through a solid piece of metal. Early gun barrel makers wrapped a piece of iron or steel called a skelp around a pattern called a mandrel. Leonard Snider was a gun barrel maker on the Little Antietam Creek in Washington County, Maryland, from about 1799 through 1816. He owned a black slave named Richard Simes who assisted in the manufacture of gun barrels. When Snider decided to move to Warren Township, Franklin County, Pennsylvania, he decided on a novel way of retaining his hold on Simes. Slavery was illegal, but the legal bond of apprenticeship was upheld in the law. In May 1816 he bound Simes "a man of color" to him as an

apprentice in the gun barrel making trade, to serve seven years. Snider died on 24 November 1824 and Simes continued to make gun barrels in Franklin County for many years thereafter as a free man. (William S. Bowers, Gunsmiths of Pen-Mar-Va, p.27; H. E. Forman, History of the Little Cove, p.114).

There were several well-known African-American gunsmiths who worked in Ohio. There are several of these craftsmen about we know very little. John Brown was a black gunsmith in Athens, Athens County, Ohio, in the post-Civil War period. (Hutslar, p.43). A man named Frost, reportedly of African-American and Amerindian ancestry, made guns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Sulphur Springs, Crawford County, Ohio. He supposedly used scrap parts, including old automobile springs from which he forged gun barrels. (Hutslar, p. 85). An African-American named Stanley Sunders was reportedly a gunsmith in Gallipolis, Gallia County, Ohio. (Hutslar, p.138).

Selwyn Peters was of mixed racial heritage. He was half African-American and half French-Canadian. In the late 1890's he worked in Gateway, Union Township, Lawrence County, Ohio. Reportedly, Peters died in the very early twentieth century at the age of 100 years. A number of Peters' guns have been reported. He decorated his more expensive guns with bold, deep cut engraving. (Donald Hutslar, Gunsmiths of Ohio, p.230). Henry Lewis was a similar mixed racial heritage. He was a crack shot. In 1906 he participated in a shooting match in Gallia County. He was a gunsmith, c.1900, in Burlington, Lawrence County, Ohio. (Hutslar, p.230).

A black man named Moxley was reportedly a gunsmith in Spring-

field, Clark County, Ohio, before 1880. In 1883 a Nannie Moxley, an African-American widow, lived at 158 N. Yellow Springs. (Hutslar, p.68). Meshal Moxley (1809-) was a gunsmith in Bellefontaine, Logan County, Ohio, from 1853 until at least 1860. His son William reported in the U.S. Census of 1860 that he had been born in Ohio, so Meshal had been living somewhere in the state as early as 1830. He may have worked in Ross County, Ohio, at some point. In the U.S. Census of 1860 Moxley gave his age as 51 years, and his place of birth as Virginia. A half-stock rifle, dated 1866, and carrying the signature of "M. Moxley" has been reported. (Hutslar, pp.26, 238 and 341).

William P. Moxley (1830-) was a son of Meshal Moxley. In the U.S. Census of 1860 he was listed as a gunsmith, age 30 years, working in Bellefontaine. He was active as a gunsmith there through 1881. (Hutslar, p. 238).

A Samuel Sharp was listed as a gunsmith on the southeast corner of 4th and Walker Sts., Upper Sandusky, Wyandot Co., Ohio, 1876-90. (Hutslar, Gunsmiths of Ohio, p. 408). This African-American gunsmith may have been the apprentice of Tower Adams noted in the U.S. Census of 1870 in Washington County, Pennsylvania.

There is oral tradition in Roane County, West Virginia, of a general handyman and gunsmith named John Briggs. He is said to have worked in or near the county seat, Spencer. Briggs allegedly worked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. □



Jacob Saylor (1737-1800)

Jacob Saylor (1737-1800). gunsmith and amouner. A son of Henry Saylor, Jacob Saylor, was born in Berks County, Pennsylvania. He moved to Bedford County, Pennsylvania, about 1765. He purchased 100 acres of land about 4 miles north of Bedford Town by warrant in 1767. He operated a saw mill and a grist mill. He was also a harness maker.

In 1776 he purchased lot 149 in Bedford. The lot had an excellent spring on it. During the war it is said that he supplied clean water from it to the troops that marched by. He was a private first class in Captain Samuel Davidson's Company, Bedford County Associators, during the Revolution. His name appeared on a militia roster in Davidson's company dated 22 March 1776. He also served in Captain William McCall's company, Third Battalion, Bedford County Militia. Jacob and Elizabeth Saylor had issue: Jacob (1778-); John (1780-); Henry (1782-); Micah (1787-); David (1788-); Elizabeth Whetzel; Catherine Herring; Mary Lutz; and Sarah Lutz.

Jacob Saylor was first located as a gunsmith in what is today Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. On 11 September 1775 Jacob Saylor, gunsmith, bought a parcel of land in Pittsburgh under a Virginia deed, from Andrew Robinson, a tailor, for £ 47/7/1 R. W. Lovell, ed. (Records of the District of West Augusta, Virginia (1970), pp. 313-14.) He may have been working as an armourer at Ft. Pitt. At the opening of the Revolution, Saylor moved to Bedford boro. In 1776 he was taxed 6¢ as a gunsmith, with 1 lot and 1 cow. In 1779 he owned 4 cows, 1 house, 2 horses and 1 sheep. In 1782 he was called a gunsmith again. He owned 2 lots, 2 horses, 2 cows and 5 sheep and paid a county tax of £ 0/2/6 and a state tax £ 1/6/6.

In 1785 he was appointed to serve as a county auditor and was called "Jacob Saylor, Esquire" on the tax list. He then owned 300 acres of land. In 1788, the last year he was listed on the tax roll of Bedford County, he owned a tract of 100 acres.

During the Revolution The Philadelphia Committee of Public Safety assigned each Pennsylvania county a number of arms to be made by a local gunsmith. The assessors and Commissioners of Bedford County wrote to the Committee saying that there was only one local gunsmith and that he had been unable to procure trained help and the county could not make its quota. While the gunsmith was not named, there is little doubt that it was Saylor. On 21 May 1780 the state paid Saylor £ 22/8/16 for repairing local militia arms (3 Pa Arch 7 at 25)

Saylor moved to Pickaway Township, Pickaway County, Ohio, about 1788. He died there on 21 September 1800. He was buried at the Boggs Cemetery. (Ohio D.A.R. Official Roster of the Soldiers of the American Revolution Buried in the State of Ohio 1938, 11, p. 305) □

Jacob Lindamood (1788-1874)

Jacob Lindamood was born on 22 April 1788, in Shenandoah Co., Virginia. He was apprenticed to Henry Spitzer of New Market, Virginia. He was one of the contractors for M-1812 U.S. pattern muskets. He served in the War of 1812, enlisting as a private in March 1814. He was discharged on 1 July 1814 in Norfolk, Virginia. He was six feet tall with fair complexion, black hair and blue eyes. At the time of his enlistment he was a gunsmith by trade. He married Christina Fultz (1797-1887) on 5 June 1815. He died in Monroe County, Ohio, on 19 August 1874. □

Sheets Gunsmiths Of Ohio

Andrew Sheets (1844). "Andrew Sheets was a gunsmith by trade. His grandfather was a soldier in the war of 1776, and he, Andrew, was old enough to perform guard duty in the same war. He moved with his family in 1806 to Wilson Co., Tenn., where he remained 6 years, a neighbor to Andrew Jackson. In September 1812 he pioneered his way to Miami Valley, and located in Elizabeth Township, in this Miami County, where he passed the remainder of his active life, dying in 1843 in Clark Co." (Beers' History of Miami County, Ohio 1880, p. 647.) Beers said that Andrew's daughter, Sarah Sheets(1801-) was the second wife of James Fuller of Tippecanoe City, Ohio, and that she was from Bedford County, Pennsylvania. This Andrew Sheets was born in Bedford County on 25 December 1768 and died in Clark County on 27 March 1844. He married Catherine Sill (1770-1840). They had 6 daughters and sons Michael, Isaac (1799-1876), Andrew, Henry and John. Reportedly, several children died in Tennessee as late as 1810. He and his wife were buried at McKendree Cemetery on the Dayton-Brandt Road. (Troy Historical Society.)

One Andrew Sheets from North Carolina and his brother Martin were from Rowan County, North Carolina. In the U.S. Census of 1790 a Jacob and a Martin Sheets lived in Salisbury district, Rowan County. This Andrew Sheets married Catherine (1740), daughter of John Master, Sr., who was born in Switzerland. His will, dated 29 May 1809, named sons Jacob and Martin. The land assessment list of Ashe County, North Carolina, for 1815 showed an Andrew Sheets, Sr., on South Fork and an Andrew Sheets, Jr. on Dog Creek. An Andrew Sheats was listed in the

U.S. census of 1800 in Ashe County, N. C.; another Andrew Sheets was in Rowan Co.; and a third Andrew Sheets was in Randolph Co.

Another Andrew Sheets was born c.1774 and died c.1855. About 1794 he married Mary Sherrier in North Carolina.

Martin Sheets. from the obituary of Mary "Mollie" Sheets, Dayton Journal, March 15, 1894, "Mary Hoover was born February 13, 1793, near Shepherd Mountain, North Carolina, and moved with her parents in the fall of 1801 to Montgomery Co. Ohio, about 4 miles south of Dayton, remaining there until the spring of 1802. They then moved on the bank of the Stilwater, 12 miles north of Dayton, near Union. . . . She married Martin Sheets February 16, 1812. He was a gunsmith, trading considerably with the Indians. The Sheets gunshop stood north of the brick house which Martin built in the year 1820, for a home. The building is still standing 1894; still standing in 1944, also. Here he and his wife died. The Sheets family came to Union from North Carolina. . . .The result of the union of Mollie and Martin Sheets were eleven children; seven boys and 4 girls. Two died in infancy. Three boys still survive: Henry, the eldest, is 81 years of age; Jacob and John, all residents of Union. . . .Her husband Martin departed this life on September 9, 1850, at the age of 62, and she remained a widow, residing on the old home place north of Union. . . .Martin Sheets was a son of Andrew and Catherine Mast Sheets. He was born December 5, 1788 and died September 9, 1850." He was buried at Minnich Cemetery.

The sons of Martin and Mollie Sheets were: Henry Sheets, was born on 19 March 1813 in Montgomery Co., Ohio, and married Susan Sinks on 22 August 1833. He died on 15 April 1896. Andrew Sheets was born on 2 October 1814 and died on 9 September 1888. He was twice married, first to Rosannah Sinks and, second, to Sarah Coover. Jacob Sheets was born on 27 March 1816, and died on 14 October 1902. He married Corentha Ann Cisco. Daniel Sheets was born on 11 May 1820, and died on 30 May 1899. John Sheets was born on 4 October 1825 and died in 1913.

Martin Sheets reportedly was a Revolutionary War soldier although his grave is not marked with DAR/SAR Markers. The 1799 Randolph County, North Carolina, tax list showed a Martin Sheets. The U.S. Census of 1800 showed a Martin Sheets in Rowan Co., N.C. Reportedly, he married Margaret Snyder. Martin and Margaret had a son David who brought his parents to Ohio about 1812. David was married to Rebecca, daughter of David and Nancy Ware Mast. Violet M. Bohnert. A David Sheets was born in 1788 and died in 1837 in North Carolina. That David Sheets reportedly married Nancy Orrell. (Cleo Turner McBride.) Reportedly, this family was also involved in the gunsmith's trade in Ohio.

Martin Sheets (1789-). Martin Sheets was born in Randolph Co., N.C. He married Mary Hoover (1793-1894), daughter of Daniel and Hannah Mast/ Most Hoover. He was age 61, a gunsmith, born in North Carolina, value \$100, lived in Randolph township, Montgomery Co., Ohio, according to the U.S. Census of 1850. With him was Mary (57), his wife, born in N.C.; son John (21), a gunsmith; and Sarah (20). The children were both born in Ohio. The Census of 1830 showed a Martin Sheets in Randolph Township.

Henry Sheets (1813-1896). Henry Sheets was a son of Martin and Mary (Hoover) Sheets. U.S. Census of 1850: Henry Sheets, gunsmith, age 37, born in Ohio, value \$2800; Susan, age 32, his wife; and these children: Caroline (15); Oliver (13); Asher (11); Sarah (9); and Mary (7), all living in Randolph township, Montgomery Co., Ohio. Henry was born on 19 March 1813 in Randolph Co., N.C., and died on 15 April 1896 in Montgomery Co., Ohio. He married Susan Sinks. (Mormon Temple Ordinance data.)

Otho Sheets (-1833). Otho Sheets was a gunsmith in Hampshire County, West Virginia, before 1824. On 6 September 1811, he bought lot 8 at Frankfort Fort Ashby, Hampshire County Deed Book 17, p.94. In the Census of Industry of 1820 he reported that he had a "rifle manufactory" where made 90 guns valued at \$18 each, using 3 employees, in the previous 12 months. In 1824 he bought land in Flushing Township, Belmont County, Ohio. He died there in early 1833 and an inventory was made on 9 March 1833, and sale was held on 25 March:

6 gun barrels @ \$3, \$18.00
 1 Shot gun, \$10.00
 Lot of planes, \$.75
 Screw Vice, \$2.50
 screwplate, hand vice, etc, \$1.25
 6 gun flints, \$.28
 plains, beveling vice & c., \$1.00
 1 Tumbler Grinder & c., \$.75
 pair of shears, oil stone, triggers, \$1
 lot of patterns & flasks, \$1.25
 3 draw boring rods, \$1.00
 1 Lot of Cherrys, punches & c., \$1.50
 1 Lot of Patterns, \$.37
 1 Bottle of Acqua Fortis, \$.62
 1 Drill & Bow, \$.12
 14 Chisels & 2 drawing knives, \$1.75
 1 Screw Vice, \$2.50
 2 sledges, 2 hammers, 4 tons, \$3.50
 19 Gunstocks, \$2.37
 1 Crucible & brass, \$18
 29 new Files, \$2.50
 6 pounds of sheet brass, \$1.50
 Total value of estate, \$939.96

Charles M. Siebert

by Paul Zeiher

Charles M. Siebert was the son of Henry Siebert and Susan Dollinger Siebert. They came to America from Germany in December of 1832. They settled in Somerset, Ohio (Perry County) where Henry went into the bakery business. In 1836 they moved to Columbus, Ohio (Franklin County) where Charles was born September 25, 1839. Charles was the youngest of ten children born to Henry and Susan Siebert.

In 1851 at the age of twelve, Charles went to work for his brother, Christian. He only remained with him for four years. In 1855 he went to Indianapolis, Indiana where he worked his trade for two years. He then left Indianapolis and went to Cincinnati, Ohio (Hamilton County) where he went to work for his brother Henry.

In 1857 he started to go down the Ohio River on a trading boat, but had to turn back at Hickman, Kentucky due to high water. He returned to Cincinnati and then on to Columbus where he again went to work for his brother, Christian. After a short time he went to Loudenville, Ohio (Ashland County) where he spent one year working for P. A. Reinhard.

In 1861 he was back in Indianapolis and in 1862 he was in St. Louis, Missouri. Here he was working at the United States Arsenal.

In May of 1864 he enlisted in the One Hundred and Thirty-third Regiment of Ohio Volunteers. His regiment was attached to the Tenth Army Corps. From that time

on he participated in all the important engagements that occurred in the Virginia, West Virginia area. He took part in the hotly contested battle of Weldon Railroad south of Petersburg, Virginia. After this battle, his regiment was stationed in a fort on the James River near City Point, Virginia.

When his enlistment was up in 1866, Charles was twenty-seven years old. He returned to Columbus where he married Harriett Valentine and moved to Circleville, Ohio (Pickaway County). He rented a shop in the old National House Hotel on Court Street and went into business. Why he went to Circleville is unknown. One reason may be that he did not want to stay in Columbus and be in competition with his brother, Christian who was a well established gunsmith at this time.

The Civil War and marriage to Harriett seemed to have cured the restlessness and wandering which was so apparent during his teens and early twenties. Charles and his family remained in Circleville for twenty-four years. Six children were born to the Charles Sieberts in the ten years between 1866 and 1876.

In the history of Franklin and Pickaway Counties, Ohio published in 1880 by Williams Bros, they state "One gun shop, by Charles M. Siebert, manufacturing the woodwork of guns and rifles."

It was 1906 when the Honorable Aaron R. VanCleaf in his history of Pickaway County, Ohio and

Representative Citizens had this to say. "In 1879 Charles M. Siebert was engaged in the manufacture of woodwork for guns and rifles, having been there at that date for some time and subsequently continuing for quite a period."

Neither of these descriptions seem fitting, for we know he was a fine gunsmith and many of his guns are in collectors' hands today.

CHAS. SIEBERT

-MANUFACTURER OF-

Guns, Revolvers, Pistols!

-AND DEALER IN-

FISHING TACKLE, AMMUNITION,

And every article pertaining to the sporting circle. Repairing done in the best manner. All work warranted. Sign of the Big Gun, Court Street, Circleville, Ohio.

Charles Siebert.

MANUFACTURER OF

Guns, Rifles,
Revolvers, Pistols,

AND DEALER IN

Fishing Tackle, Ammunition,

And every article pertaining to the Sporting Circle. Court Street, Sign of the Big Gun. Circleville, Ohio. Repairing done in the best manner. All work warranted. April 3, 1868.

The above advertisements appeared in the local newspapers. The earlier ad dated April 3, 1868 appeared from 1868 through the early 1870's; the other in the 1880's. They

both seem to contradict that he only did the woodwork.

The industrial census of 1880 lists Charles Siebert as gunsmith with \$2,500 invested and no employees. Year ending 31st May 1880 bought materials at \$250.00 and produced firearms valued at \$750.00.

All apparently went well for Sieberts until 1886. During this year Charles seemed to have run into financial problems. He sold his home to his brother, John and his shop to his brother, Louis. Since we cannot question the quality of his work, we must assume that the demand for the Ohio long rifle had begun to decrease. Cartridge guns were replacing the percussion guns and perhaps Charles did not like or want to work on the more complicated guns.

With a family to support and only 51 years old, he turned to a new career, the printing, publishing, and bookbinding business. Hutslar's Gunsmiths of Ohio, Vol. 1 has Charles M. Siebert working for M. C. Lilley at Columbus, Ohio in 1888.

In 1842 Charles's older brother, William, started in partnership with M. C. Lilley and formed the firm Siebert & Lilley bookbinders and publishers. Even though William later moved to Paris, Illinois and was associated with the First National Bank, several other members of the Siebert family were employed by M. C. Lilley.

Charles was 6'2" tall and weighed around 200 lbs. He had an agreeable nature. One of his sayings were, "Use rifle, not shotgun, on all game." He was a staunch Republican having voted in his first presidential election for Lincoln in 1864. His rifles were stamped on the barrel, Charles M. Siebert - Circleville, Ohio, sometimes with the date beside the

name. He was also known to have used a stamp CMS. Charles was 76 years old when he died in 1915.

We can only hope that more of his guns will continue to surface and end up in the hands of AOLRC members.

Reference:

Pickaway Quarterly, Summer 1977,
Bob Ely
Gunsmiths of Ohio, Vol. 1, Hutslar
Notes of William Boggs

Joel M. Johnson (1822-1882)

According to the Census of 1850, Joel was a son of Abram Johnson, and was a gunsmith in Nottingham Township, Harrison County. His estate was appraised on 19 May 1882:

rasp, 15¢; 16 files, 40¢
drawing knife, 10; hand vise, 25¢
lot of shoemaker's tools, 10¢
3 small screw plates, 35¢;
large screw plate, 40¢
anvil, \$1; vise & bench, \$1;
bellows, 10¢
chisels & punches, 5¢; large
shears, 10¢

Christian Herr (-1807)

On 6 October 1806 Christian Herr bought lots 75 and 76 in Steubenville from Jacob Miller of New Lisbon, Columbiana County, Ohio. (Deed Book B, p. 162.) The estate of Christian Herr, gunsmith, was inventoried on 30 December 1807 in Steubenville, Jefferson County Inventory Book 1. It showed:

1 set of gun stock planes, 75¢
1 Gun Stock auger, 50¢
1 Vice, \$9; 1 Anvil, \$15
pair of smith's tongs, 50¢
lot of sheet brass, \$3
screwplate, files, chisel, \$1.50
soldering box, iron, lancet &c. \$2.12
carpenter's tools, 75¢; crucibles, 50¢
spring pincers &c., 50¢; 3 augers, \$1
2 small vices, \$1; turkey stone, 75¢
fly stone, old pewter & brass, 25¢