



Simpson Livasy Ohio and Missouri Gunsmith



by Paul L. Zeiher

According to the 1850 Census of Aid Township, Lawrence County, Ohio, Simpson was born in Ohio on December 16, 1825. He is listed in census as blacksmith. His father was born in Virginia and his mother in Canada. There is no record of their names or how many children they had.

In 1847 in one of the few marriages performed in Gallia County, Ohio by Alfred Leonard Westerfelt of Franklin County, Ohio, he married Caroline M. Smith. She was the daughter of David and Nancy (Wray) Smith.

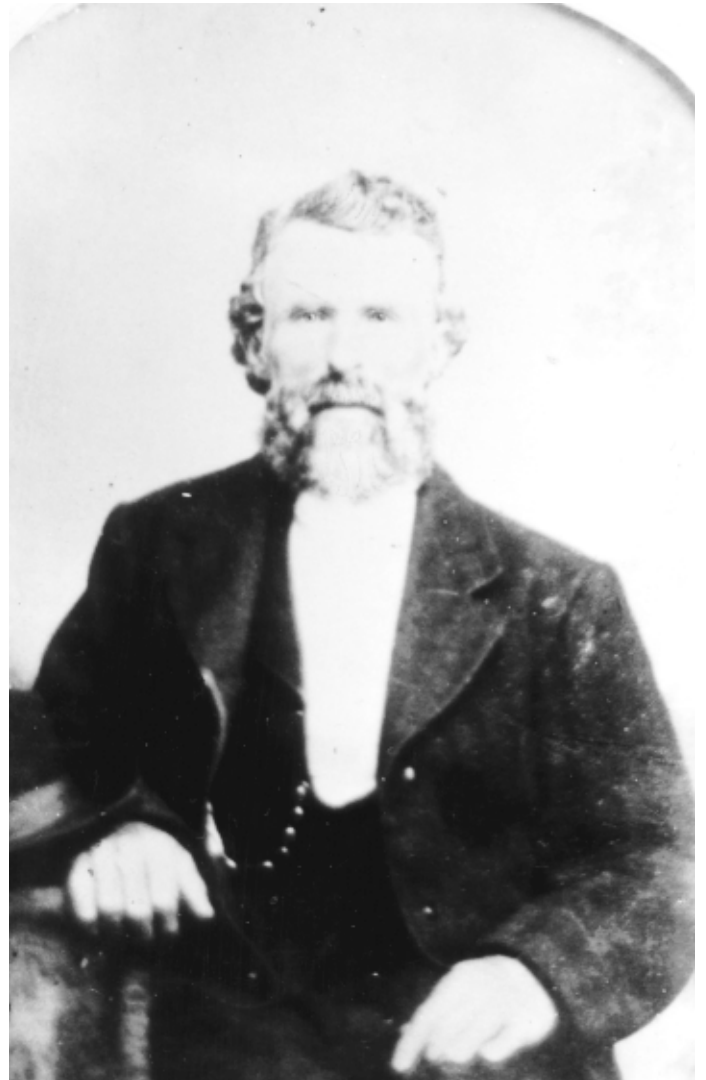
In 1855 with the Neal, Wray, Wiseman, Garten, Sturgill and several other families, they moved to Nodaway County, Missouri.

In the 1860 census he is listed as living in the village of Xenia, Union Township, Nodaway County, Missouri, and is listed as gunsmith. The village of Xenia, Nodaway County, no longer exists.

Between 1861 and 1863, he served in Captain Josiah Coleman's Company A, Nodaway County Home Guard and Company I of the 36th Enrolled Missouri Militia.

In 1873 Simpson's daughter, Lydia married the Captain's son, Robison Cruso Coleman.

He was a partner in a shop with W. E. Johnston. He was probably a partner with a blacksmith whose name was Oliver Norman. They had purchased a lot together in Xenia in 1860. I expect this was for a shop they were going to operate together.



The 1870 and 1880 census list his occupation as gunsmith.

Simpson Livasy died of congestive chills on the 27th day of October 1882 at the age of 56 years, 9 months and 11 days leaving his wife and eight children. His obituary in the Nodaway Democrat reads "He was a very fine gunsmith and worked at his trade up to his sickness."

He signed his name S. Livasy.

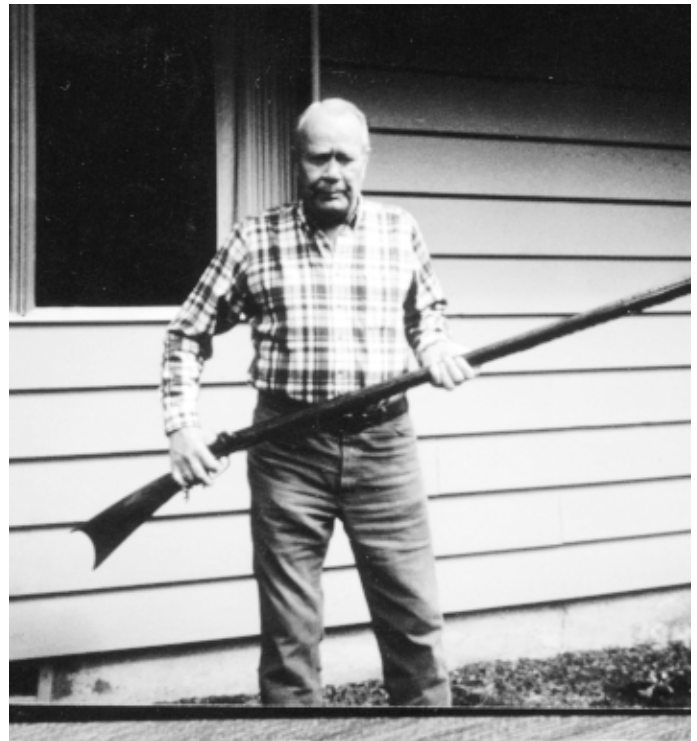
There were blacksmith and gunsmith tools mentioned in the inventory of his estate settlement. In the inventory of his estate his anvil was appraised at \$2.00 and his blacksmith and gunsmith tools at \$5.00 each.

He was known to all his friends and neighbors as Sim.

In a letter written in 1972 by his great grandson, Carl Coleman, he states that Simpson Livasy was a gunsmith in Xenia, Missouri, also a locksmith and did blacksmithing of all kinds including the making of nails when he had no other work to do.

Simpson's name has been spelled many different ways; however, according to family members LIVASY is correct.

Information for this article was furnished by heirs of Simpson Livasy and Captain Josiah Coleman.



Kermit Coleman with a rifle made by Simpson Livasy.

Early Craftsmen made Spinning Wheels and Guns

Spinning wheels were in great demand in Fairfield County, Ohio in the early days; and Lancaster boasted of a first rate spinning wheel manufactory, operated by Mr. Matlack and William Bodenheimer, in a shop located at the foot of Main Street.

A Mr. Spogle also manufactured spinning wheels in the village about the same time. He occupied the shop of Henry Miers, a cabinet maker, on West Main Street a little west of the American Hotel. William Tong likewise made spinning wheels, in addition to numerous styles of chairs, between 1817 and 1820. The business was then continued by Jacob Grubb from the same stand.

Thomas Sturgeon, silversmith, had a shop in Sturgeon's row on the north side of Main Street. While John Townsend had a silversmith shop near the canal, James Gates succeeded Sturgeon in his business. Among the early gunsmiths were John Beeman and Colonel George Seits, Samuel B. Thompson, George W. Claspill, John Gibbs and William Bodenheimer. (Lancaster was long noted as a Gun Powder Manufacturing Center.) Herman Peter, a gunsmith, invented a new breach loading gun, which loaded at the breach or muzzle, at will. In conjunction with William Kling both men devised a bung and spile.



Moses Clinton Levisay Gunsmith 1827-1895



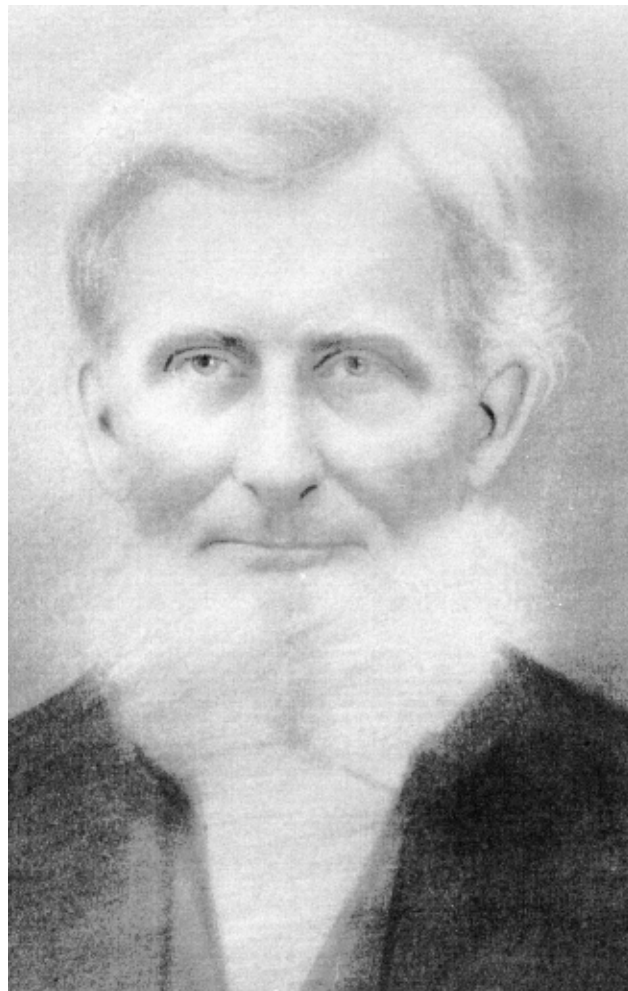
Joel S. Poetker, PhD

The gunsmith Moses Clinton Levisay was born on 18 December 1828 at Grassy Meadows, Greenbrier, Virginia. The Levisay family roots have been traced to Anglo-Saxon England where they became gentry of Lancashire County. The ancestors of Moses came to Virginia about 1758 where many settled in the area around Lewisburg and where a number were blacksmiths and several were gunsmiths. It is most likely Moses learned about gunsmithing from his grandfather, John Levisay, or his uncles Joseph and Charles Levisay, all being blacksmiths. The 1850 census for Greenbrier County list four Livesays as being blacksmiths.

By 1850 Moses had left home to live with his uncle George Levisay a physician living in Gallipolis, Ohio. For several years Moses worked on the river boats working along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers until he had saved enough money to establish a general store at Winchester, a hamlet between Gallia and Jackson counties.

For approximately thirty years Moses was a busy man. In 1858 he married Delilah Frazier, the daughter of Joel and Cynthia (George) Frazier of Winchester. He operated his general store, dealt in real estate, accumulated gas royalties and with his son Joel started a logging mill and a planing mill - all in addition to his gunsmithing.

Gun enthusiasts say his guns were of fine workmanship. They were muzzle loading rifles, made of Remington octagon barrels and maple stocks. The name M. Levisay was stamped on the barrels and some times the name G. Goucher was stamped on the locks. It is said Moses was the last gunsmith in Jackson County, Ohio.



In 1880 Moses sold all of his businesses except for land in Franklin Township on the edge of the town of Jackson, Ohio. Here he had a farm and with his son Joel had log and planing mills. He played a leading role in Joel's founding of the Jackson mill and Lumber Company. In 1888 Moses suffered several strokes that left him with paralyzed legs. He sold his farm and lived to his death with his son Joel. When Moses died in 1895 he was a very well to do man for his time and area. None of the sons of Moses followed him in to the craft of gunsmithing.

Abraham Johnson. (1793-1866). There are several superb guns known marked, "A. Johnson," including a box-lock, pill-lock gun.

The 1850 Census showed Abraham Johnson in Nottingham Township, Harrison County, age 57, born in Maryland, gunsmith, with real estate valued at \$3000. The estate of Abraham Johnson was appraised on 25 June 1866 by James Ross and others inventory Book J, p.13 . It showed:

- 1 Draw knife & Auger, \$1.25
- 1 Hand saw & Square, \$.50
- 1 Anvil, \$2.00
- 2 carpenter's planes, \$.40
- 1 Force drill & bits, \$.50
- 2 blacksmith's hammers, \$1.00
- 1 Hand Vice & Compasses, \$1.00
- 7 large Chisels, \$.50
- 2 iron saws, 1 screwdriver, 2 awls, \$.25
- 1 hand guide & brace bit, \$.10
- 2 chisels, \$.37; 2 augers, \$.50
- 1 screwplate & wrench, \$2.00
- 1 blacksmith vice, \$5.00
- 1 smoothing plane, \$.10
- pair pincers, chisel, scribe awl, \$.40

Edward Arn. gunsmith. 1862-66, Marietta, Washington County tax . 1870-75, southwest corner of 5th and Chestnut streets, Boonville, Missouri, Census of 1870; Directory of Boonville, 1875 . Ferdinand E. Arn, gunsmith, a son of Edward Arn, was listed at the same address in directories of 1891 and 1898.

James McCamant. The first member of the McCamant family to work at the gunsmithing trade was James, whose name was on tax rolls of Washington Boro from 1797 through 1807. He was noted as a gunsmith, also, in Crumrine's History of Washington County. On 2 May 1797 James McCamant ran an advertisement in the Western Telegraph, saying that he, "Respectfully informs the public that he has commenced the gunsmithing business in the Town of Washington, in the house occupied by William McCamant, where any work in the above line will be done on the shortest notice and most reasonable terms."

James McCamant sold his property in Washington County on 12 December 1807 (Deed Box 4, p.168). By that time he had acquired an interest, with a John McCamant, in a brass foundry in Brooke County, West Virginia, then Ohio Co. . James owned lots 29, 74 and 74 in Wellsburg, Virginia originally called Charlestown, but changed in 1816 . He continued to operate the brass foundry and make guns. At least some of his rifles entered the western trade, for in the Brooke County Historical Society library are bills of lading showing guns McCamant shipped to Tarr & Curran in New Orleans, valued at \$90, sent 23 May 1834. He was a contractor for Virginia militia muskets between 1811 and 1813.

About 1838 James McCamant moved from Wellsburg and went to Perry County, Ohio, and then to Coshocton County, Ohio, and back to Perry County, where he was located in the 1850 Census. He gave his age as 73, consistent with his having been listed on the tax rolls of Washington first in 1797. We then lose James McCamant in public records, but we do not believe he engaged in gunsmithing long after 1850.

Ned Negro slave . "\$50 Reward! Ran away from the Subscriber sometime in November last, a Negro woman called Kitty, yellow complexion, thick lips, walks slow and of a clumsy form; about 5 feet, six or seven inches high. She was enticed away by a Mulatto man called NED, tall and well made, an artful cunning fellow, owned conjunctly by a Mr. Estell and Charles Quirey of Beargrass. He procured for himself and Kitty forged passes of Freedom, from a person not prudent now to mention. Plays upon the violin, and is an excellent Black and Gun Smith. Took with him a black mare, the owner unknown. A reward of FIFTY DOLLARS, half in property and half in cash, will be paid for her delivery at my farm on Beargrass in Jefferson County. RICHARD DICKINSON The Fredonian, 2 May 1807 .



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Valentine Shuler
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A newly discovered rifle
by Valentine Shuler
of Licking and Tuscarawas
County, Ohio.
See Vol. V, Number 1, Feb 1983
AOLRC Newsletter for more
on Valentine Shuler.
Photos by Jim Whisker.

