

in the style of an abbreviated “fleur-de-lis” (a French herald symbol in the form of a lily or iris, with many meanings accumulated over time) or even a “Tree of Life” pattern that dates back to early Germanic and other ancient mythologies. The finial is held on with three steel screws and three brass pins; the two side plates attached with 4 brass pins on each side; steel spring attached to bottom of patch box cover with two steel rivets, no release. Patch box 6 inches in length; finial 3 inch long, 1 ½” wide at base; patch box bottom side plate, just shy of 3 inches. The inlet seems to have been made with augur bits and dressed up with chisels; the depth is a bit or ½” and is about a 1/16th inch narrower than the lid. Inlays: Besides the geometrically artistic pattern of the brass patch box, the rifle is adorned with eight white metal (likely German silver) inlays, the largest an oval in the cheek piece at 2 1/8” in length by 9/16” wide, held on by 6 silver pins. Two horizontal elliptical inlays with pointed ends are inlet into the short fore stock extension (one on each side) and another two on the fore stock (1/2” and 8” behind pewter nose cap, respectively). These inlays measure 1 ¾” by 3/8” each, held on by two silver pins. Located ½” from the rear lock panels, on each side of the wrist, is a ½” teardrop silver inlay, with the sharp point facing forward and held by town silver pins.

Finally, there is a simple silver rectangle 5/16” by 1 11/16” held by two silver pins inlaid on the side plate side of the rifle, ½” from the forward end of the lock panel (Fig. 11). It contrasts sharply with the oval and elliptical inlays on the stock, and invites questions such as, “Why?” “Was this for a name that was never engraved?” or “Is there a deeper meaning?” “Is some sort of aesthetic trick being played by juxtaposing incoherent forms?” Such puzzling features add to the allure of Ohio rifles and challenge us in appreciating the mid-19th century mindset of makers. That said, I suggest that the rectangle may be a design element calculated to utilize empty space on the side-plate panel by creating an eye-catching detail. The placement is nearly identical to that of an inlay in the form of an arrow piercing two hearts on an unusually ornate, silver-inlaid Jacob and Samuel Hawken rifle (with a National Road style patch box), once belonging to a steamboat captain named George W. Atchison (which may stand for George Washington Atchison). The Atchison Hawken (which recently sold on the Rock

Island auction house for \$86,250 and may pre-date the Hatcher rifle) has overall quite similar lines (though not exactly in the wrist area) and features. These similarities include cheekpiece design, placement of wrist and fore stock inlays, and extended fore-end. Although Hatcher’s rectangle is simpler than the fancy Hawken arrow-hearts pattern, both inlays enhance the blank space of the anterior portion of the moulding.



*Fig. 11. Side plate area.*

Thus, are presented some details of a robust, well-made sporting percussion rifle of the mid-19th century Belmont County by one Commodore Perry Hatcher. This example of his work features clean stock architecture and moderate but pleasing inlay ornamentation of a kind typical of the era and local Tri-State area, but with features that circulated in many combinations farther West, in decorated rifles having their own pleasing effects and idiosyncrasies.

(Photos by Mark Bender, unless otherwise noted.)

Sources:

Hutslar, Donald A. (no date). *Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen. Volume I.* Association of Ohio Long Rifle Collectors. State College, Pennsylvania: Josten's Printing.

Smith, Mark, John R. Coe, James Biser Whisker (2018). *Arms Makers of West Virginia.* Create Space Amazon: Bedford Village Press.

# NOTES ON AARON VAUGHN

BY JAMES WHISKER

Vaughn, Aaron C. (1836-1919). Dentist and patent holder. On 27 May 1862 Aaron C. Vaughn of Bedford borough received U.S. patent number 35,404 for a percussion revolver (Fig. 1). This pistol had two sets of holes drilled through the cylinder constituting two concentric rings. Each was fired by its own hammer. Flayderman's guide gives a price for these pistols so apparently some were produced, but I do not know who

the contractor was. Vaughn was a dentist and physician by profession. Vaughan was born on 11 July 1836. He became Assistant Surgeon/ Acting Surgeon in F & S Company, 105th Pennsylvania Infantry. He married Elizabeth A. Campbell (1833-1911). Aaron died on 16 July 1919, aged 83 years and was buried in Riverside Cemetery, Rockford, Mercer County, Ohio, where he had moved after the war [Find-a-Grave 86267811].

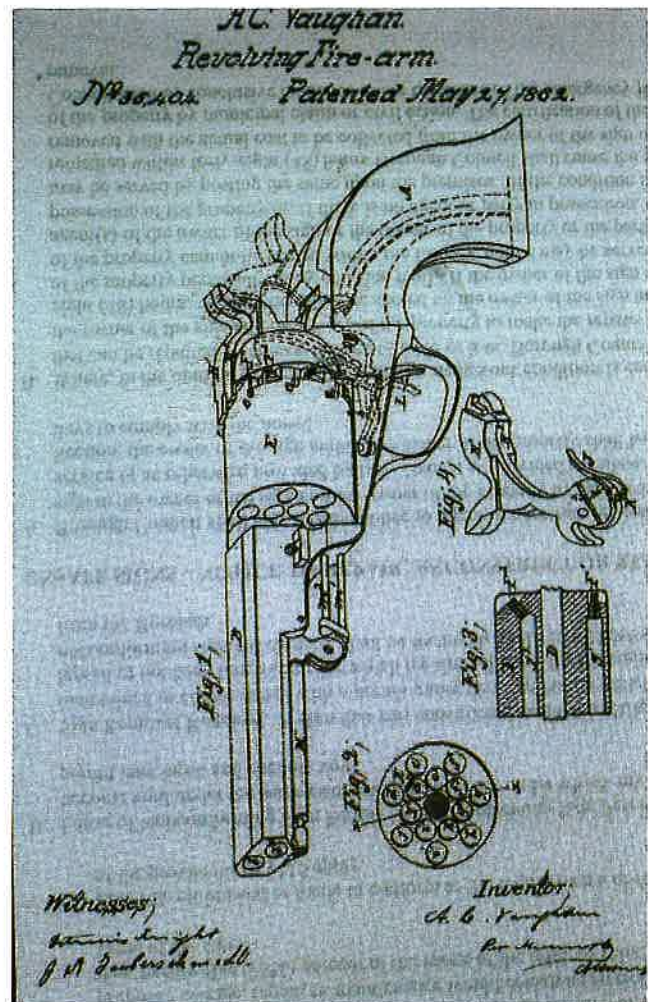


Fig. 1. Sketch of Aaron Vaughn revolver patent. (James B. Whisker photo)