

THE  
ASSOCIATION  
OF OHIO  
LONGRIFLE  
COLLECTORS



FOR THE STUDY AND PRESERVATION  
OF THE OHIO MUZZLELOADING RIFLE

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**36th A.O.L.R.C.  
Marietta Exhibit  
April 1, 2, 3, 2011**



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# President's Letter



First, I would like to start this letter with the issue of buy-sell-trade at the Marietta show. This topic was brought up in my last newsletter, and at that time, I asked for guidance and opinions from past board members and presidents. Those members who contacted me were adamant that this issue has been brought up at different times throughout the years with the same result. This association was formed by a group of long rifle collectors as an exhibit to study and preserve the art of the gunsmiths. We also cannot forget that the AOLRC is incorporated as a nonprofit organization. At the recent Board of Directors meeting, it was easy for us to vote the same as at past board meetings and keep the Marietta show an exhibit of Ohio long rifles. Please note, however, that the Friday night set-up has always been, and will continue to be, a time when guns can have a price tag on them. Please keep in mind though, that the only people permitted to attend the Friday set-up are members of the association. The two tables at the rear of the exhibit hall will still be reserved for sale items.

In addition to our Marietta show, our Newark show has also become a great success. Our most recent one had the largest attendance to date. We can thank Jim Claggett for his hard work in making this show so successful. However, after 35 years of doing business and spending our dollars as wisely as we can, the ever-rising costs have caught up with us. For the last few years, our expenses have been more than our income. Therefore, it was decided at the Newark show that we must raise our membership fee from \$15.00 to \$25.00 a year (\$45.00 for two years, \$65.00 for three years). This is the first time we have raised

our fee in 35 years, and we will continue to do our best to spend your money wisely.

As in the past, members wishing to have display tables at the Marietta exhibit must contact either Rod Frazer at 614-837-1591 or Jim Claggett at 740-344-8476. It helps to make our job easier if we have a rough estimate of the number of tables needed for the Friday night set-up. But as always, we will do our best to handle any last minute arrivals.

We will be having an election for the Board of Directors at the April Meeting. Please submit your nominations to Dan Smith.

Finally, I would like to announce that the featured gunsmith for this year's exhibit is Alexander Ager of New Rumley, Harrison County. Any members wishing to display an Ager rifle at the exhibit should contact Tom Oakes at 330-264-3419 or e-mail him at [landsandgrooves@yahoo.com](mailto:landsandgrooves@yahoo.com).

Hope to see you in Marietta,

Bob Poch



# 36<sup>th</sup> Marietta Exhibit



As in the past we are inviting anyone who has documented Ohio made rifles produced prior to 1900 to display them. In order to avoid any confusion as far as space allotment is concerned, we are asking interested parties to please let us know how many tables they will need. In doing this the association will be able to provide adequate table accommodations on a first come basis. So, please be prompt. Mail table requests to Rod Frazer, 11815 Streamside Drive, Pickerington, OH 43147.

Remember the major portion of your display must consist of antique Ohio made rifles and accessories. Ohio made contemporary rifles must not exceed more than 10% of your total display. This rule will be strictly enforced and all contemporary rifles must be so marked.

Set up of exhibits will begin on Friday, April 1.

## Banquet

Our annual membership meeting and banquet will be held April 2 at 8:00 p.m. in the LaFayette Hotel. This meeting will be preceded by a hospitality hour at 6:00p.m. and a banquet at 7:00 p.m. Dinner will consist of prime rib, stuffed chicken breast, or maple glazed pork loin and all the trimmings with tickets costing \$20.00 each payable to the secretary no later than March 25. Banquet space is limited and will be on a first come first serve basis. Please get your reservation in early. The Board has decided not to have entertainment following the Banquet this year, but to keep the room open for an hour or two for members to socialize.

## Lodging and accommodations

The LaFayette Motor Hotel has been generous enough to provide exhibit space for our show. They have also offered our membership a generous discount on their room accommodations. We strongly urge our membership to take advantage of this special rate and the fact that the show, the banquet, and the membership meeting will be held in the same location. For reservations telephone 740/373-5522. Be sure to mention that you are coming to the AOLRC Exhibit.

For security reasons, no rifles may be brought into the exhibit hall after 9:00 a.m. Saturday, or leave before 3:00 p.m. Sunday, unless prior arrangements have been made with the sergeant-at-arms.

Also, no rifle(s) may be brought into the exhibit hall by a non-member without first signing in with the sergeant-at-arms during public hours.

## Friday, April 1

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Set up for exhibit
7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Reception for all exhibitors and members. Cash bar and hors d'oeuvres.

## Saturday, April 2

8:00 a.m.	Exhibit hall opens to exhibitors and members only.
9:00 a.m.	Show opens to public.
5:00 p.m.	Exhibit closes.
6:00 p.m.	Hospitality hour.
7:00 p.m.	Banquet.
8:00 p.m.	Membership meeting. Social hour.

## Sunday, April 3

9:00 a.m.	Exhibit hall opens to the public.
3:00 p.m.	Exhibit closes.

## **PLEASE NOTE**

Our featured gunsmith this year will be Alexander Ager who worked primarily in New Rumley, Harrison County. The hotel will be providing glass cases for this exhibit. Please bring your Ager rifles this year for the public to see. For more information please contact Tom Oakes at 330-264-3419.

# Alexander Ager

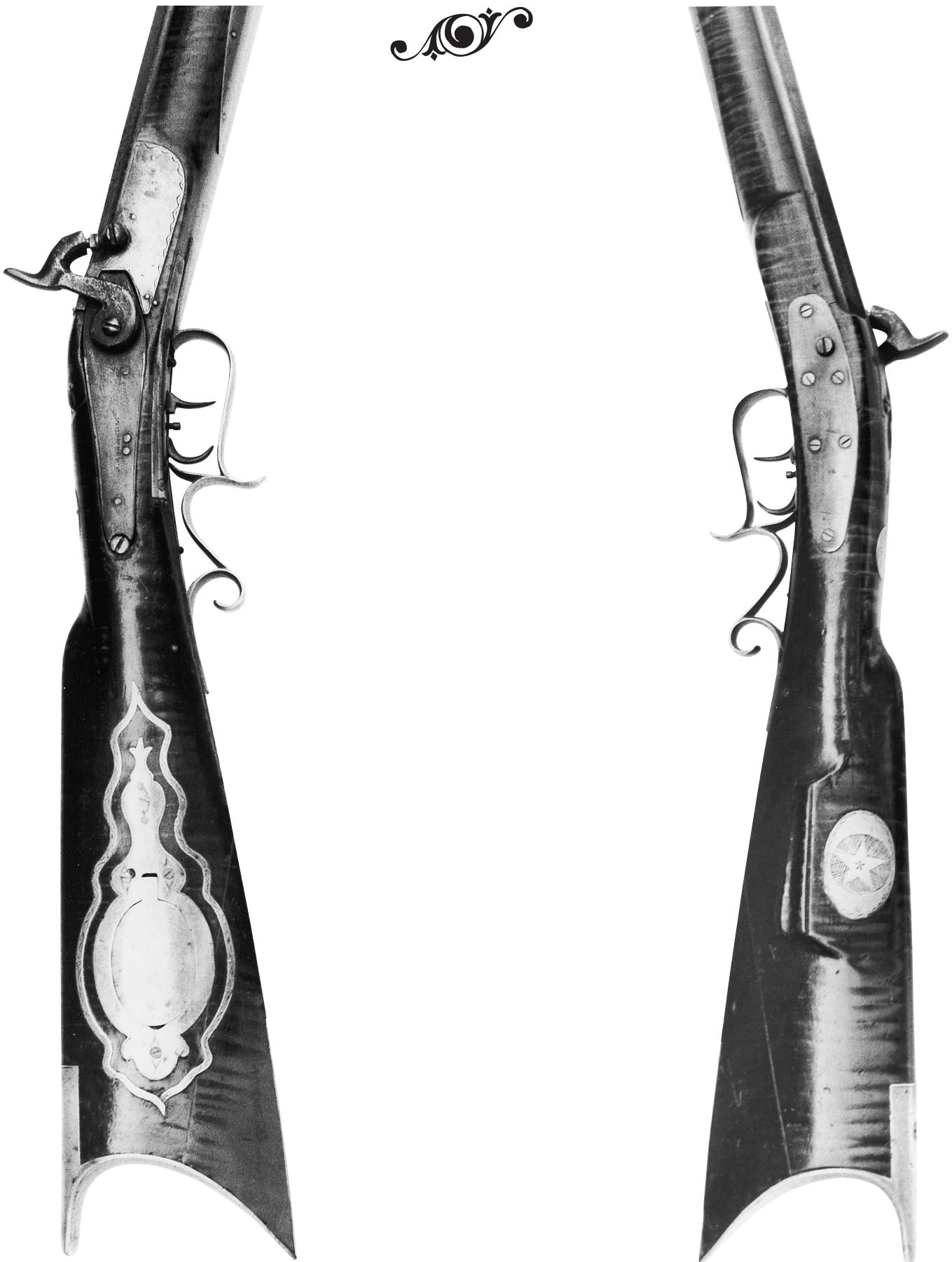
New Rumley, Harrison Co., Ohio

Alexander Ager (1821 – 1898) was the first Ohio gunsmith featured in our organization's AOLRC Newsletter (Volume I Number 1). Additional information concerning Mr. Ager and his rifles, including photographs of his work, can be found in Ohio Long Rifles, Volumes I and II, by Dr. James B. Whisker; Kentucky Rifle Patchboxes, Volume 2, by Chandler & Whisker; and Volume II, Ohio Gunsmiths & Allied Tradesmen by Donald Hutslar, published by the AOLRC.

Alexander Ager will be the featured gunsmith at our Annual Exhibit in Marietta this year, and anyone with an Ager rifle is invited to include it in our display. The rifle pictured here is similar to many other Ager rifles.

Photographs by Dr. James B. Whisker





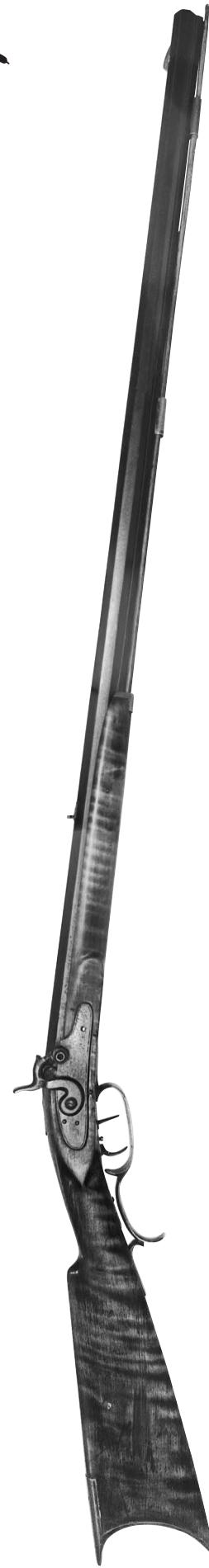
# Charles Caton

White Eyes Township, Coshocton County

Volume I of our Ohio Gunsmiths & Allied Tradesmen contains an entry for Charles Caton at page 143. Information is incomplete, but the available information suggests that either of two Charles Catons could be the maker of this rifle.

The elder Charles was born in 1808 in Pennsylvania but was in Coshocton County by 1833. His son Charles was born that year. Three numbered rifles are reported, numbers 16, 53, and 60. The rifle presented here is numbered 52.

Photos by Dr. James B. Whisker





# Samuel B. Thompson

## Fairfield County and Columbus

Samuel B. Thompson, born in Maryland in 1785, was in Hocking Township, Fairfield County, by 1806 and was listed as a gunsmith "around Lancaster, Ohio" in 1826. By 1850 he is listed as a gunsmith in the 3rd Ward, Columbus, Ohio (Volume I, pages 214 and 247, Ohio Gunsmiths & Allied Tradesmen).

The rifle presented here is from our file photos, and no picture of the signature can be found. The pictures were taken by Dr. James B. Whisker. The Editor has a few qualms about presenting a rifle attributed to a "Sam Thompson" with so little documentation.





# Artistic Elements of a Late Delaware County Rifle

Mark Bender (Part 2) *Continued from last issue.*

The question of aesthetic appeal of the more common sporting rifles cannot be fully answered here on the basis of one rifle. However, as a “case study” from which certain information can be extrapolated, I would like to offer some observations about the possible aesthetic effects of form and style of the guileless, “unadorned” guns of the late percussion period. The rifle under examination is from Delaware County Ohio and has all the “typical” features of the type as described above. Although it is always difficult to enter the imaginations of generations past, there is something in the artistic composition of these rifles that still causes interest in them today, an interest that goes beyond that of a particular maker’s name or county of origin.

## The A.Barnes Late Percussion Rifle

According to Hutsler (n.d. Vol. I, p. 199), Abner Barnes (b. 1836), aged 24, was listed in 1860 census records as a laborer in Delaware, Ohio. (He shares the distinction of being a resident of Delaware with Rutherford B. Hayes, who was born in 1822 and served as U.S. president from 1877-1881.) By 1870, Barnes was listed in the local Manufacturer’s Index, and his name appeared until 1888. His investment in gun parts for 1870 was \$200, a portion of which he used to purchase “two gun barrels, two stocks, two mountings, etc., for a total of \$32.00.” Moreover, he built two rifles and did repair work (assumedly on guns – though possibly some other items) for which he was paid \$480. Barnes had a wife named Esther, who was a year his senior, and a child, Viola, who was two in 1860. Hutsler notes that one Barnes rifle is known to exist, and describes it as: “halfstock percussion rifle, die-stamped A. Barnes; back-action lock; muzzle turned.” The present location of that gun is unknown to this author. Other gunsmiths active in Delaware during Barnes’ dates are Daniel Born, John H. Heck, Cornelius W. Scott, and Philip Weiser (Hutsler n.d.: Vol. I, pp. 199-201).

The rifle introduced below is an example of Barnes’ work that has only recently come to light. The author obtained it in October 2008, by the graces of an anonymous local agent who was handling it and the remnants of a Ross Co. gun on behalf of an area family. Thus, this is the first documentation of this signed gun in print.

## Description

Overall the gun is in very good condition, in that there are only a few very minor handling marks in the wood and the only signs of metal erosion are on the hammer where the metal is somewhat thin and rough from the salts of percussion cap residue. The overall color of the steel parts, however, is a dull grey – as if at some point the metal was cleaned. There are also remnants of white powder in several of the screw slots on the screws holding in the brass trigger guard and butt plate, suggesting some sort of polishing attempt years ago.

The lock is a front action lock with rounded ends. No name appears on the lock, though roller engraved floral patterns appear at the front and back of the lock plate and a line is inscribed about a 16<sup>th</sup> of an inch from the edge of the plate all the way around except for the area just before and behind the notch for the percussion drum. There are two rows of shallow notches like reptilian scales on each side of

the top of the hammer (thus four rows in all). This hammer decoration is seen on other percussion rifles of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and seems to have been cut with some sort of roller device, or possibly cast and filed or otherwise shaped. On the front of the top of the hammer there is cross-hatching within a leaf-shaped pattern bordered by a line. This would seem to allow for better purchase on the hammer when cocking. The lock is held in place by a bolt that runs laterally through the stock. There is no screw plate (side plate) of any kind to protect the wood from the bolt.

The dimensions of the octagonal barrel are 7/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch in width and 36 and 9/16<sup>th</sup> inches in length. The tang (“strap”) of the breech plug (“pin”), is 2 and 1/16<sup>th</sup> inches in length and held in place with a screw located 1 and 1/8<sup>th</sup> inches from the rear of the barrel that extends down through the trigger plate. The end of the tang is a slightly tapered and rounded point. Approximately 3/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch on the end of the muzzle is round. The barrel rib is approximately 23 and 15/16<sup>th</sup> in length (the terminal end flush with the beginning of the round portion of the barrel) and 3/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in height, 5/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in width at the base against and 3/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in width on the slightly concaved ramrod channel. Two brass ramrod pipes (“thimbles”) are slightly inlet into the surface of the rib and neatly soldered in place. Rifling is present in the .36 caliber barrel, though shallow just inside of the muzzle.

The rear sight, located 6 and 1/4 inches from the rear of the barrel is a deep buckhorn style a hair over 5/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in height, with a slight dimple directly in front where the sight was “set” in place with a punch. The base of the sight is 1/4 inch on the lateral sides. There is a very fine notch in the sight and the front is dished out to gather light. The edge of the front sight base is 1 and 5/16<sup>th</sup> inches from the muzzle. The thin German silver “knife-blade” front sight (used for hunting or match shooting, as opposed to what Roberts [1940:7] calls a “pin-head” target sight) is 1 and 1/16<sup>th</sup> inches in length and a bit over 3/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in height. The brass site base, which is barely under 5/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch on the lateral edge, extends slightly over each side of the barrel. The “A.” of the signature “A. Barnes” is located 3 and 7/8<sup>th</sup> inches from the rear end of the barrel.

The deep crescent butt plate and trigger guard (which has two finger rests) are both of plain, cast brass. Both pieces are of a style quite similar to those seen on many rifles made by Caleb Vincent of Washington County (though no direct influence is implied by this observation, as many rifles of the era used similar furniture). The butt plate, which is 1 and 1/16<sup>th</sup> inches at its widest point, is held in place by three steel screws, the edge (not center) of the one on the upper return is located a 1/2 inch from the anterior end. Another screw (the same size as the one in the top of the butt plate return) is located 1 inch below the top line of the butt plate. The third, slightly smaller screw is located a 1/2 inch from a 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch radius filed at a 70 degree angle on the very end of the lower end of the butt plate (to neatly make the bottom of the butt plate – which is 5/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch wide -- flush with the stock). The butt plate itself is 4 inches from the terminus of the rear point to the very end of the lower butt plate. The well-filed and finished 8 inch trigger guard is attached by two screws (which may be brass-plated steel): the front screw

is located 5/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch from the anterior end, the rear one located a 1/2 inch from the distal end. The triggers are plain double-set and held within a steel trigger plate about 4 and 1/2 inches in length and 3/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch in width. The front trigger has a nearly straight profile, while the rear is noticeably curved. The percussion drum (or “cylinder”) is about 9/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch in diameter and 9/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch long. The nipple (or “tube”) is a typical rifle size.

The stock is made of walnut with little figure. The finish seems to have been only oil – and for dense walnut, probably all that was needed. The barrel is held on to the stock by the tang screw and a 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch diameter brass wire that passes laterally through the stock 2 and 1/4<sup>th</sup> inches from the front of the cast metal fore-end tip. The grayish tip seems to be made of cast and polished tin, possibly with some sort of alloy such as antimony. The tip is about 7/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch in length, though a crescent has been formed on each side, so that there is a point 7/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch in length on the bottom of the stock. The length of the trigger pull from the front trigger to the upper screw in the butt plate is 12½ inches, indicating it was built for a shooter of smaller stature. On the other hand, it must be remembered that these rifles were often shot off of the upper bicep and not off the shoulder as with modern ones. The stock measures 27 ¾ inches from the toe of the butt plate to the end of the end cap. It is 1 and 5/16<sup>th</sup> inches wide at the breech. The panel around the lock measures 5 and 3/8<sup>th</sup> inches, with the panel pointed in the rear and rounded in the front. The barrel extends 24 and 1/8<sup>th</sup> inches forward of the end cap. The wrist blends into the stock smoothly, with a gradual pinched and rounded taper along the nose of the stock. Finally, the rifle has a plain hickory ram rod (no metal tips) measuring 37 and 1/16<sup>th</sup> inches in length.

#### Discussion

The rifle made by Abner Barnes in Delaware County Ohio, was likely made in the post-Civil War era – possibly in the later 1860s or early 1870s. The plain rifle is clearly a “purer” form of the late percussion sporting rifles of Category 2 (described above), with all the defining characteristics of clean, modernistic lines, and ergonomic feel. Aside from some perfunctory engraving on the lock, the gun succeeds artistically on the basis of its architecture and the blend of brass, steel, and walnut. The outstanding architectural features that defines the gun is the mix of a rather long, thin barrel with a reddish walnut stock that has a slight “fish belly” – the lines of the lower butt stock are gently cantilevered from the rear of the trigger guard and moving in a straight line back to the heel of the butt plate. The upper line of the comb is straight, beginning with the pronounced nose of the comb which rises over half an inch above the small of the stock in the wrist. The nose of the stock is in about a 70 degree angle in line with the rear spur of the trigger guard. The lock plate is surrounded by very clean lock panel that extends in an elongated rounded point backwards into the lines of the wrist in a line that converges with the line from the nose to trigger guard. Another compositional line is that from the toe of the butt plate to the rear trigger spur, and the scalloped effect of the trigger guard hanging below the stock. This scalloping is reflected to some extent in the profile of the poured end cap, the curve of the butt plate, the profile curve of the hammer, lock plate ends, and front sight. The rounded profile of the percussion cylinder is also echoed in the turned muzzle of the barrel.

Thus, in its own way, the rifle uses principles of artistic composition not unlike the “golden mean” that has been postulated as a key ingredient of the artistry of earlier Golden Age rifles. The traditional long rifle was in one dimension an exercise in linear forms – the long lines of the barrel and butt stock reinforced by scratched lines, longish trigger guards and long wrists, trapezoidal cheek pieces, and flattish sides and butts. In contrast the shorter, half-stocked, percussion sporting rifles were more a study in curves in relation to a relatively short linear plane, a blending of form and function anticipating a more Modernist “form follows function,” unadorned aesthetic. Thus, this discussion suggests that the artistic features of late percussion rifles must be appreciated on their own terms in the spirit of the dynamic of change and continuity in tradition.

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# Ladies Auxiliary News



April 1, 2011 will be the start of our Marietta Show. That's right – April Fool's Day! We do have some practical jokers in this organization so beware!

Our Friday will not include an auction this year so we will have the afternoon to set up tables and displays. Members only then will socialize beginning around 6:30 with the carving station, salads and the birthday cake. This birthday cake tradition is in celebration of everyone's yearly birthday.

Last year's lunch at DaVinci's was enjoyed by all so we will begin our Saturday activity for the ladies with lunch at the DaVinci Restaurant located across the river in Williamstown. The cost of the lunch will be \$13 which will include dessert, tax, drink, and gratuity. We will carpool and leave the hotel around 11:00 for lunch at 11:30. After lunch and a short meeting we will return to Marietta and journey to Campus Martius, Museum of the Northwest Territory. Our AOLRC April Show had its beginning in the museum back in the late 70's. Bill Reynolds has arranged the museum tour. There is no admission fee to us but a free will donation would be appreciated as the museum is struggling to meet budget.

Everyone will be free to tour at their leisure and return to the hotel on their own time.

We will continue with the evening dinner as it has been in the past. Dress will again be casual so our men can leave those suits at home if they prefer. Again this year there will not be a speaker or entertainment after the dinner, however, there will be a short business meeting. The rest of the evening will be social time for visiting and chatting.

The activity book continues to be distributed and will be available at the meeting for children in attendance and for any organizations. We need to start thinking of our next project. What can we do to educate the public on the history of the Ohio long rifle? Bring your ideas to the luncheon for discussion.

I am looking forward to our reunion and seeing you in Marietta. Please email me at [ronjudyyerian@gmail.com](mailto:ronjudyyerian@gmail.com), or phone me 740-746-8965 or send mail to me at 3321 West Point Rd. SE, Lancaster, OH 43130 with your reservation for the ladies' luncheon. I need to give the number attending the luncheon to DaVinci's the week before.

See you soon. Judy Yerian



**P.S. A REMINDER** - Mark your calendars for Saturday, August 6, 2011. This is the date for our annual Picnic and Shoot. This has proven to be a very popular and fun activity. Last year we had children and ladies shooting. Prizes are given and it proves to be great fun for all. Hope you can join us in August. More details will be sent to you this summer.

