



Fig. 5. Close-up of side plate, recently discovered "fourth" M. Beeman rifle.

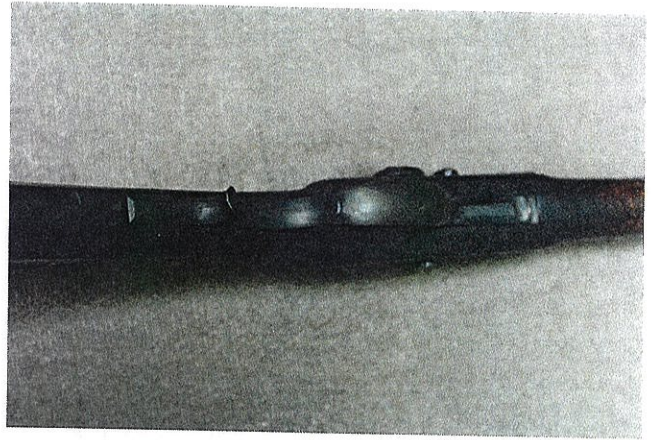


Fig. 6. Close-up of trigger guard, recently discovered "fourth" M. Beeman rifle.



Fig. 7. Side plate side of buttstock, recently "fourth" discovered M. Beeman rifle.

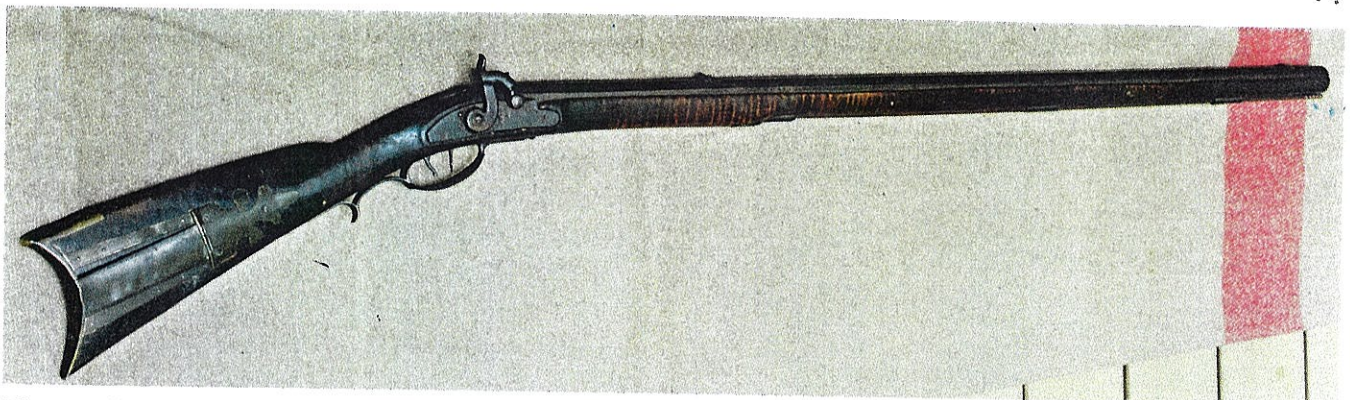


Fig. 8. Full-length, lock side of recently discovered "fourth" M Beeman rifle.

A "J GATSCHET" RIFLE

BY MARK BENDER

There seem to have been a number of Gatchets in Tuscarawas, Ohio by the mid-to late 19th century. For instance, Henry Gatchet (1848-1817) and his wife Maria Gaschen Gatsht of Ins. Canton, Bern Switzerland, arrived in Tuscarawas county, Ohio in the late 19th century, and lived there for 25 years before moving to Moniteau county in central Missouri. According to FindAGrave.com, a grave marker, with dates, for Henry Gatchet, stands in the Pleasant Grove Methodist Cemetery, Prairie Home, Cooper county, Missouri. Of the greatest relevance to this article may be one John Gatchet, listed in the 1870 census as being 33 years old and living in Union township, Tuscarawas county, Ohio – probably born in 1837.

An anonymous member of AOLRC supplied information regarding the Gatchets (and similar names), and color xeroxes (see figures 1-4) of a rifle bearing the script signature "J. Gatschet" (spelled with an additional "s" than in the records) that was once posted on Gunsinternational.com. The rifle is not unlike many half-stock rifles made by makers such as Levi Biddle and Adam Stilgenbauer in Holmes and Tuscarawas counties – or by many other makers of the era in Ohio and Pennsylvania. In fact, an oral tradition says that one John Gotchet (possibly a variation on Gatchet or Gatschet) worked with Levi Biddle, and may have also been a coal miner. According to materials supplied to this author, in the 1870 census Levi Biddle would have been 27 years old and was employed as a school teacher, making him five years younger than Gotchet/Gatchet.

The Rifle

From examining the xeroxed photos, the half-stock rifle is stocked in reddish stained curly maple, and sports a small trapezoidal cheekpiece. The stock has been cracked from the lock area well into the comb, and thus the trigger guard and lock show slight gaps at their anterior areas – a common phenomenon on repaired old rifles. The lock, which has machined scroll work decoration, is marked: LEMAN LANCTR. PA

This, of course, is a common brand of lock used

on rifles of the 1840s-1870s and was used by known makers in this part of Ohio (and elsewhere in the state). The brass hardware is also of patterns common in the same period. The trigger guard, held on by two wood screws (rather than pins) has only a rear finger rest and the deeply incurvate butt plate has no facets on the comb – these details suggest a somewhat later production date. (see Fig. 1-5 for features of the rifle.)

According to the website description, the trigger plate is marked "J.P. LOWER" – which the description claims was a gunsmith and large retailer in Denver Colorado. As the rifle was being sold out of Missouri, this may have been a replacement set of triggers – maybe after the stock broke – if, indeed the rifle was made in Ohio, and not by a Missouri Gatschet. A more outlandish theory would be that some sojourner from the 1849 Gold Rush brought the triggers back to Ohio. The front set trigger is straight and the rear is curved.

The brass toe plate is held on by 3 wood screws, and possibly a pin at the very bottom end. The brass flash protector plate between the lock and tang seemed held in place by metal pins. There is also a flash cup on the percussion tube. From the website description, the .33 caliber barrel is 33 ½ inches long and has an under rib with two ramrod ferrules, and a rear ferrule about 1¼ inches behind the cast pewter nose cap, which seems about a ½ inch in length. The middle and rear ramrod ferrules have double rings engraved near each end. An oval circle escutcheon of silver (or German silver) engraved with what seems to be an eye pattern around the pin hole surrounds the pin holding on each side of the fore stock. Sights are plain iron.

The pattern of the brass cap box (held on by 4 wood screws) is common to many trade rifles produced by Pennsylvania manufacturers of the day and utilized on many Ohio rifles. Some rifles made by Levi Biddle of Sugarcreek (Shanesville), on the border of Tuscarawas and Holmes county have such cap boxes. The pattern, in an outline suggesting the reproductive parts of a flower (see the article in this issue on the powder horn) is competently engraved in a combination of rocker