

The McCamant family of gunsmiths produced some of the most attractive guns made in northwest West Virginia and eastern Ohio. Their guns commonly used the "National Road" pointed and multiple-pierced patch-boxes. The guns were rarely relief carved, but were engraved with superior patterns and techniques.

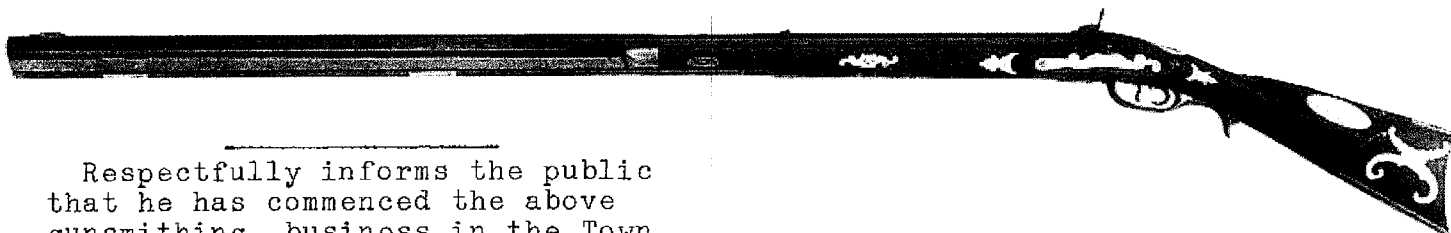
James McCamant. The first member of the McCamant family to work at the gunsmithing trade was James, whose name was on tax rolls of Washington boro from 1797 through 1807. He was noted as a gunsmith, also, in Crumrine's History of Washington County. On 2 May 1797 James McCamant ran an advertisement in The Western Telegraph, saying that he,

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,



The McCamant Family



Respectfully informs the public that he has commenced the above 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 Co. 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 an 74 in Wellsburg, Virginia originally called Charlestown, but changed in 1816. He continued to operate the brass

but we do not believe he engaged in gunsmithing long after 1850.

John McCamant (-1869). John McCamant was a son of James McCamant and he married into one of the first families of Wellsburg, to Ruth Prather. She brought considerable land holdings into the marriage, although most transactions show them selling off these properties: on 1 May 1838 they sold land to Adam Kuhn Deed Book 12, p. 196 ; on 9 April 1838 they sold land to Clark Prather, Ruth's brother DB 12, p.220; and on 7 April 1840 to another of

Ruth's brothers, John DB 13,p.195; and on 29 March 1851 to John Tweed DB 17,p.14 . On March 19, 1853, Ruth Prather McCamant sold land that belonged to her alone to Absalom Wells DB 17,p.316 .

The Wellsburg Gazette of 25 April 1833, carried the following notice,

GUNSMITHING. J. McCamant, respectfully informs the Citizens of Wellsburg and the Public generally that he has commenced the GUNSMITHING BUSINESS in the town of Wellsburg, in all its variety; and where he will manufacture and repair RIFLES, FLOWLING PIECES, HOLSTER-PISTOLS, &c. From his experience in the business, he flatters himself that he will give entire satisfaction to such as may favor him with their custom. His Shop is opposite the late residence of Mr. Reeves, deceased, and is the same lately used as a pottery by Mr. J. Berry.

In 1841 John McCamant advertied his gunsmithing and brass founding service in Wellsburg in Harris' General Business Directory of Pittsburgh. Sometime between the censuses of 1850 and 1860 John and Ruth McCamant moved from Wellsburg to Fulton County, Illinois. Perhaps this was in 1854, just after they had sold their last property in Wellsburg. John McCamant was next listed in the Illinois state census of 1865 in Montgomery County. John died there on 29 September 1869 of bilious fever. His gunsmith's tools were sold at auction for \$18.20, showing that he had remained active in the trade in Illinois.

Samuel McCamant (1820-1896). gunsmith. Samuel McCamant may have been a son of James McCamant. He was listed in the 1850 census in Harrison Township, Perry County, Ohio, age 30, born in Virginia, gunsmith. He died in Fulton County, Illinois, on 11 February 1896.

Jacob McCamant (1824-). Jacob

McCamant (or McCamont) was listed by Donald Hutslar in Gunsmiths of Ohio (1973; I, 83-84) as a gunsmith in Lafayette Township, Coshocton County, Ohio, from 1850 through 1881. He was probably a son of James McCamant, and, according to Hutslar, was born on 25 October 1824 in Brooke County, West Virginia. He was also listed in Coshocton County, Ohio, by Schneider in Muskingum Valley Gunsmiths (1961). Both Hutslar and Schneider reported that Jacob McCamant moved, first, to Perry County, Ohio, c. 1837; then to Muskingum County, c.1839; and to Coshocton County, c.1840. He learned the carpenter's trade and after 1881 no longer made or repaired guns, being then a full time carpenter.

The several signed guns we have seen are marked, "J.McCamant" and one cannot tell if they were made by James, John or Jacob McCamant. There is considerable variety, suggesting each may have signed his work with the first initial only. We have never seen a Samuel McCamant rifle. There ought to be many more McCamant guns in collections than seems to be the case. □

George Fisher (-1821)

From 1800 through 1806 George Fisher, gunsmith, was listed on tax rolls of Washington boro. We lose him for over a decade, but in 1819 we locate George Fisher in Cadiz, Harrison Co., Ohio. The will of George Fisher, late of Archer Twp., Harrison Co., was dated 15 March 1821, and entered for probate on 31 July 1821. The Harrison Telegraph of 29 August 1821 carried a notice to the creditors of George Fisher, placed by his executor. His vendue sale was held on August 1, 1821. A box of gunsmith's tools sold for only \$.25. Other items sold included: Blacksmith's tools, \$52; 1 gun barrel, \$.62; set of screw rods, \$.40; and a lot of wagon maker's tools, \$.55. □

Christian Siebert 1822-1886

by Paul L. Zeiher

Christian was the son of Heinrich (Henry) Siebert and Susan Dollinger Siebert. He was born November 9, 1822 at Frankfort-on-the-Main in Buckingham Germany. From notes that I have, it is believed that it was his mother's idea to come to America. His father had been in the German army and had served in the Napoleonic wars. Due to the political unrest of the late 1820's and early 1830's she did not want her sons going into the army. The system at that time demanded military requirements from all young men.

Henry, with his wife and six children sailed from Bremen Germany on October 2, 1832. After a long trip they landed at Baltimore, Maryland on December 12, 1832. He purchased two teams of horses and two covered wagons, then headed west. After a stopover at Wheeling, West Virginia for a rest and to replenish their supplies, they crossed the Ohio River and headed for Zanesville, Ohio. From there they went on to Somerset, Ohio (Perry County). Henry went into the bakery business after settling in Somerset. The family stayed four years in Somerset and moved on to Columbus, Ohio in 1836.

Christian was the second son of Henry and Susan Siebert. He was self educated and started to learn the gunsmith trade in Columbus. At the age of eighteen he was apprenticed to John Griffiths at Cincinnati, Ohio. While in Cincinnati he married Sarah McKimm. This marriage resulted in four children, however only one child survived - a daughter Mary.

Christian left Cincinnati and went to Louisville, Kentucky. He

was only there for a short time and returned to Cincinnati in 1846. Sometime after the death of his wife he moved to Columbus, Ohio with his daughter. He opened a gun store on South High Street around 1850-1851. The Columbus directory of 1853 lists:

Christian Siebert, Guns, Rifles
and Pistol Manufacturing
225 High Street
Columbus, Ohio
Gain Twist Patent Rifles with Globe
sights. Double and single shotguns.

In 1851 Christian's younger brother, Charles, was working with him. Charles stayed with him for four years and then went to Indianapolis.

In 1859 Christian married Amelia Brown of Columbus. This union produced six children, however, only three survived.

Around 1861 he moved his gun store to 253 South High Street. Charles Carl Cullmann came to work for him around 1861.

The 1870 industrial census lists Christian Siebert as gunsmith with \$500.00 invested in "a gunsmith and gun manufactory" one employee at \$800.00 a year. Year ending June 1, 1870 he purchased lumber and metal materials in the amount of \$300.00 and produced guns valued at \$1800.00 We must assume this was for only the new guns he made. This would not account for the guns he bought and the trade ins he resold on his repair and accessories business.

In 1871 while Cullmann was still working for him, they moved the business to 217 South High Street.

He stayed at this location until his death.

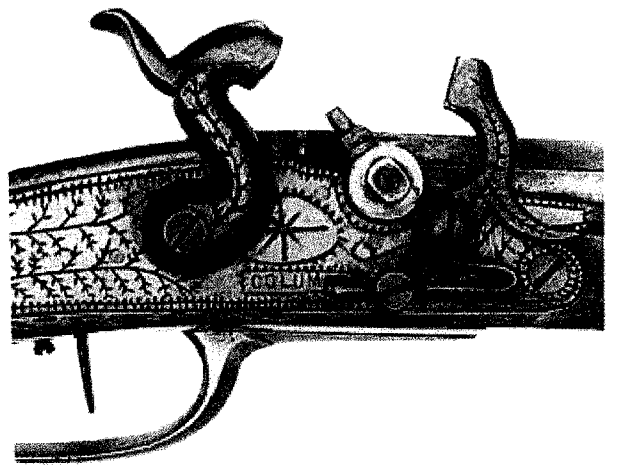
The industrial census of 1880 reports he had \$1,500.00 invested with three employees and produced guns and pistols valued at three thousand dollars. His business went by the name "Old Reliable Gun Store".

Christian's son, Frank, was working with him in 1881. It is possible with Christian's age and health, he had come to help his father with the business.

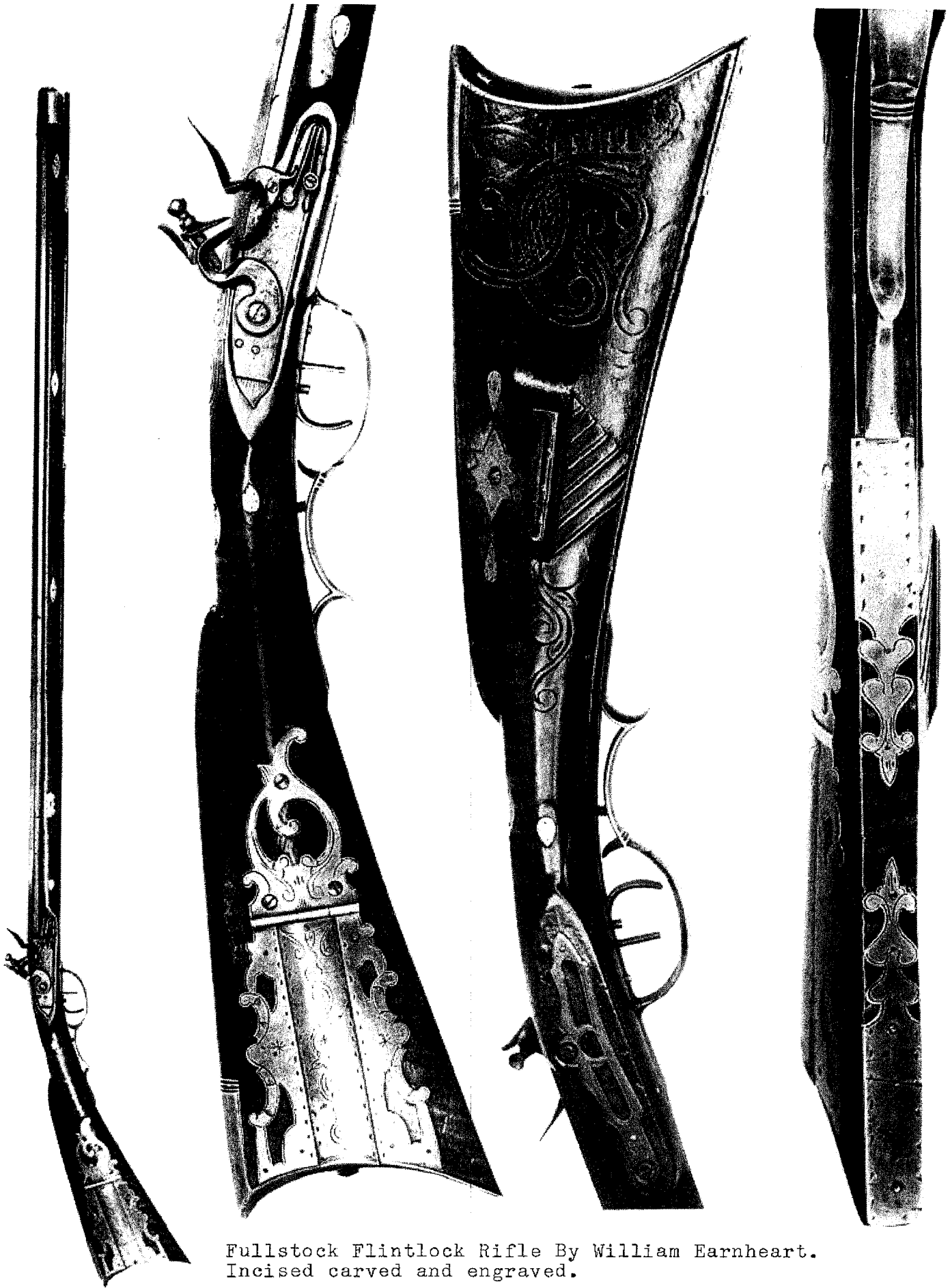
Christian was the largest one of the family - 6' 6" tall and weighing 240 pounds. He was enormously talented and generous to charity. He was big hearted and kind with a very agreeable nature. He was recognized throughout Ohio as a fine gunsmith. His private life had a lot of distress and sorrow with the loss of his first wife and six children. Yet he was successful as he had large real estate interests in Columbus. He was one of the founders of the Columbus Maennerchor and an exclusive German shooting club. With all his interest in guns, he was not a shooter or hunter to any great degree.

Two-thirds of his store was salesroom. He sold the general line of guns, fishing tackle, clothes and accessories. He used two brass tags when guns were left for repair. One stayed with the gun and the customer retained the other. He purchased about all his rifle hardware and always marked the lock with his name. The back action lock was his favorite. Christian's guns were plain, but very well made.

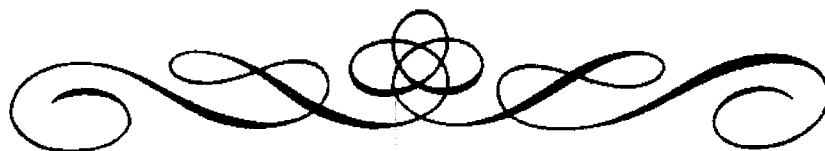
Christian Siebert died in Columbus, Ohio on September 18, 1886 at the age of sixty-four. □



Christian Siebert fullstock with unusual back action lock featuring unique safety devise.



Fullstock Flintlock Rifle By William Earnheart.
Incised carved and engraved.



William Earnheart (-1843)

by Jim Whisker

For many years fine guns have been included in Ohio collections that bear the signature and/or the distinctive hand of William Earnheart. When I first saw a William Earnhart signature I thought it was William Barnhart, a well known Ohio gunsmith. Even the unsigned guns are clearly identified by those familiar with his signed work.

A few years ago our good friend, the late Forrest Tilton, met a man who claimed two of his progenitors, William and John Earnheart, had made guns in Pickaway County, Ohio. I recently acquired a fine Earnheart gun and began to research him with the very cooperative aid of the Pickaway County Historical and Genealogical Society.

The U.S. Censuses of 1810 and 1820 included a Jacob Earnheart in Washington Township, Pickaway County, Ohio, with two males and three females in the household. One male was the right age to have been William Earnheart. Jacob was probably the father of William Earnheart. There was no will or estate in the name of Jacob Earnheart in Pickaway County.

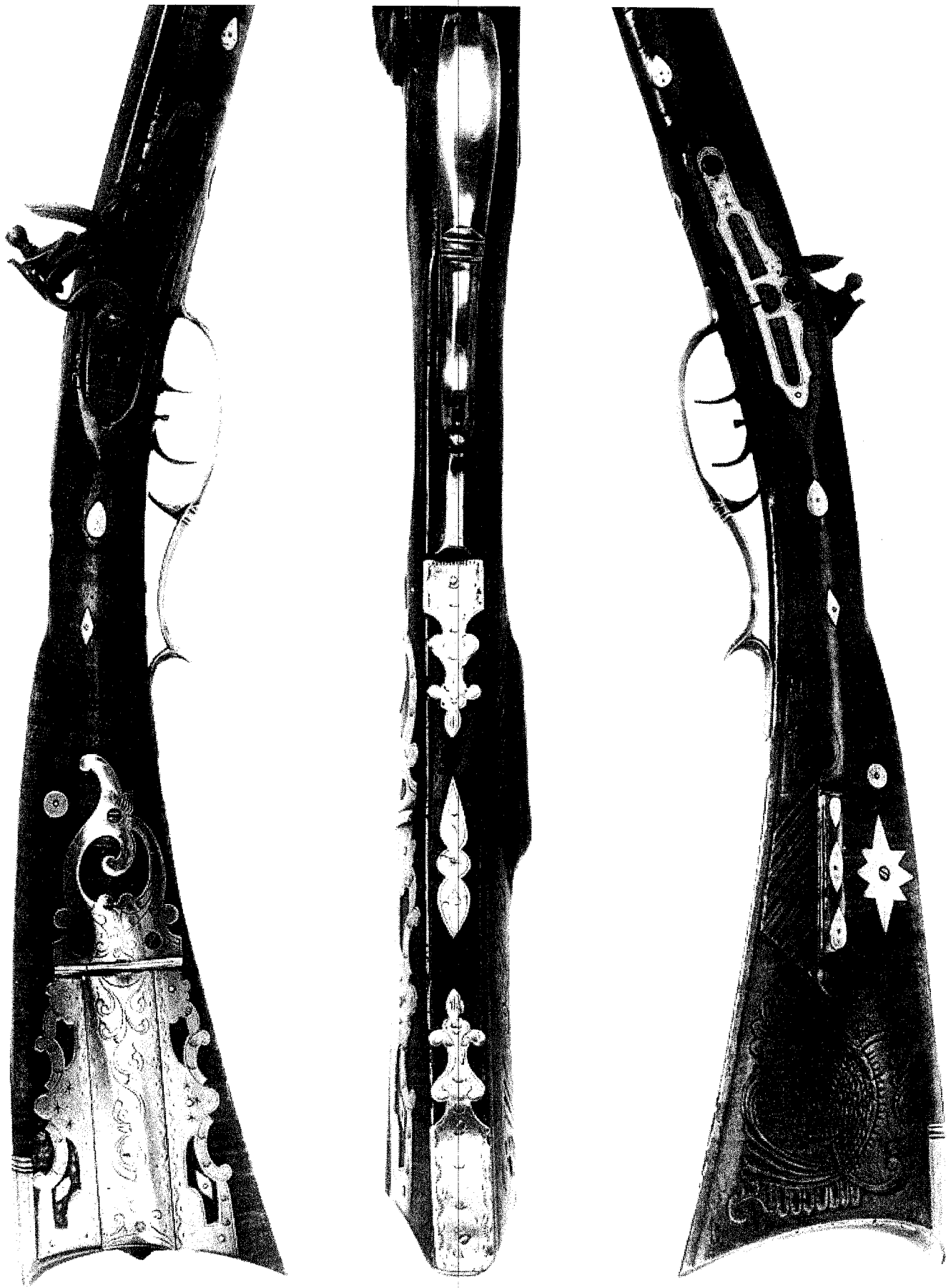
The U.S. Census of 1830 showed William Earnheart with one male under 10; 2 males 15 to 20; 1 male age 40 to 50; 1 female under 5 years; 2 females under 10; 1 female 10 to 15; 1 female 15 to 20; and 1 female age 30 to 40, in Washington Township, Pickaway County. The 1840 U.S. Census showed William Earnheart in Washington County with 1 male age 5 to 10; 1 male 15 to 20; 1 male 50 to 60; 1 female 10 to 15; 2 females 15 to 20; and 1 female 40 to 50. We do not know exactly when William arrived in Ohio. How-

ever, his son John was born in Pickaway Co. in 1811.

The other major gunsmith in Pickaway County was Samuel Dreisbach. His son William married Margaret, daughter of William Earnheart. Dreisbach's work shows the "Roman nose" comb style. It is possible that Samuel Dreisbach and William Earnheart knew one another in northeastern Pennsylvania before moving to Ohio.

William's will was written on 9 January and proved on 31 January 1843. It named his wife Anne and these children: Harriet, John, James, Margaret, Sarah, Catherine and Robert. He named as executors his son John and son-in-law William Driesbach Will Book 3, p.73; Estates 0-793, Doc. 1-32 . The appraisal showed \$1361.09 in outstanding debts owed to Earnheart; and personal items valued at \$345.73. The sale of William's estate was held on 5 March 1843. The estate showed principally farming tools, household furniture and farm animals. The vendue sale showed the following items of the gunsmith's trade being sold.

item	price
Gun Smith Tools	\$10
2 gun barrels	\$5.50
lot of old iron	34¢
Gun Stock	50¢
lot of Old Brass	50¢
Gun Lock	50¢
Stoves & pipe	\$9.00
Gun Barrel Guide	\$2.00
Gun boring apparatus	57¢
One Set Black Smith Tools	\$15.00
Cutting Knife	\$1.82
4 gun Stock planks	75¢

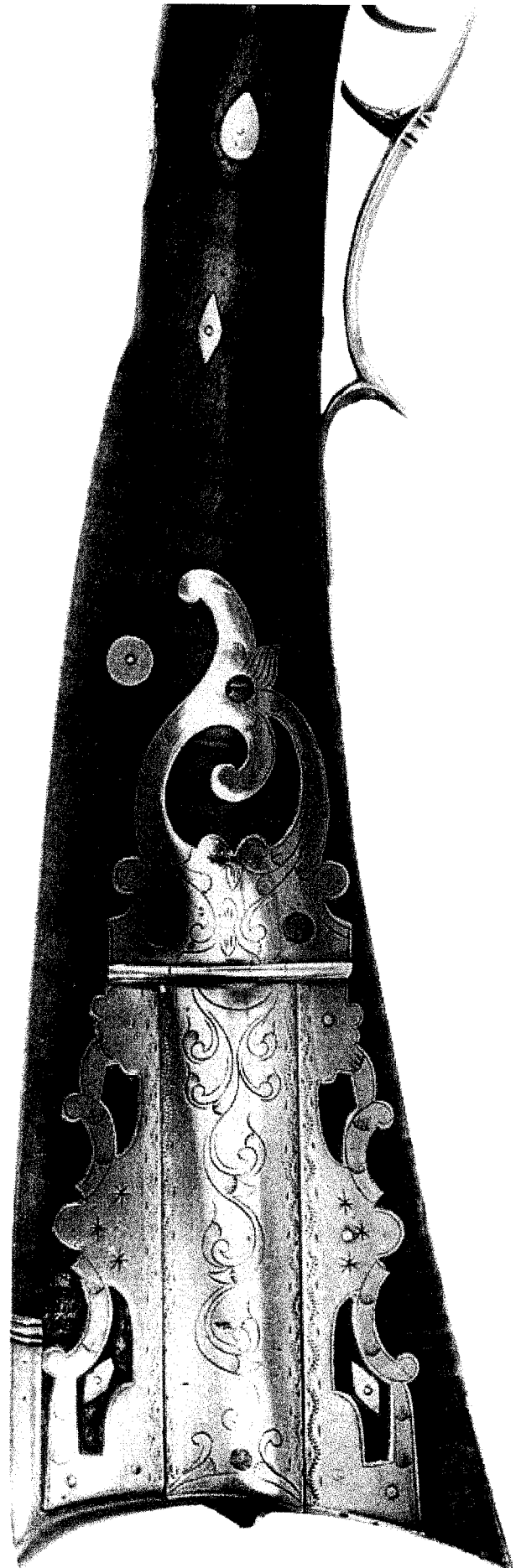


Fullstock Rifle By William Earnheart.
Incised carved and engraved.

John Earnheart (1811-) was a son of William and Jane (Patterson) Earnheart, and was born on 12 August 1811. He was the subject of a biographical sketch in The History of Knox County, Indiana (p.451).

John Earnheart was born in Pickaway County, Ohio, August 12, 1811, the son of William and Jane Earnheart, and one of a family of eight children. His father was a gunsmith and followed this occupation in Circleville, Ohio. When he was about 18 years old, John commenced to learn this trade of his father, at which he continued to work. March 12, 1833, he was married to Mary Hitler. They removed to this county in 1843, arriving in September. He purchased a farm of 240 acres from Isaac Spencer, with 5 acres improved. The land was situated upon Section 22 in this Sparta township. Upon this he settled and commenced clearing, hiring some of his chopping done but rolled logs and built fence himself. Mr. Earnheart also worked at gunsmithing more or less for fifteen years after coming to Indiana. They have had born to them twelve children....Mr. Earnheart is a Democrat, and has filled the offices of Trustee, Assessor and Justice of the Peace, each a term of four years, and is a worthy citizen of the township. Though healthy and strong himself, he has had much sickness in his family, and has seen the rough side of life. He now owns 400 acres of land and has six children married.

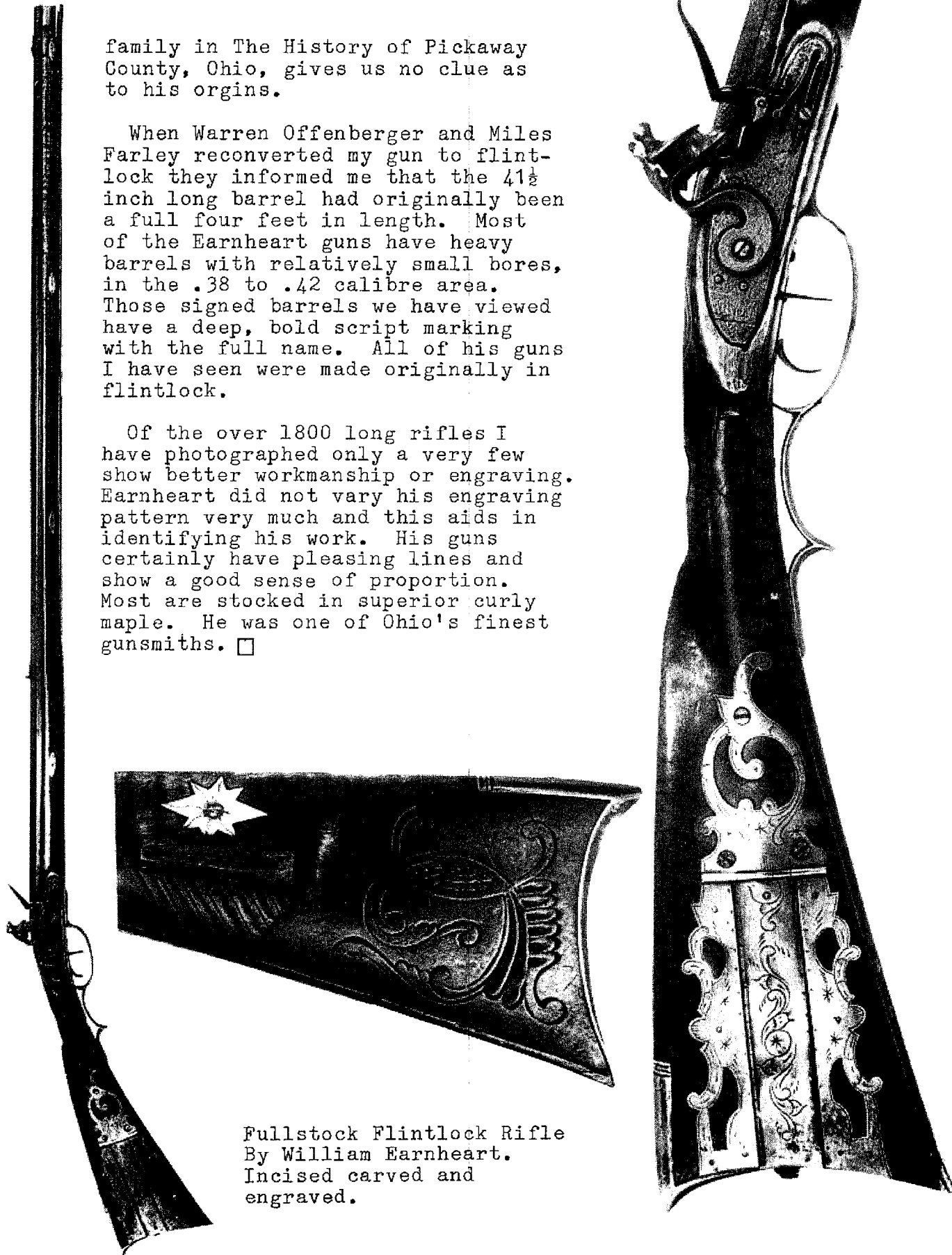
I have never seen a gun made by John Earnheart. I have seen a half-dozen William Earnheart rifles and one gun mounted with metal parts he made which had been restocked. Four of the guns were incise-carved. His style certainly suggests that he was trained in northeastern Pennsylvania, in the area of Reading or knew a gunsmith in Ohio from that area. We have located no concrete evidence that suggests that either is true. The brief note on the Earnheart



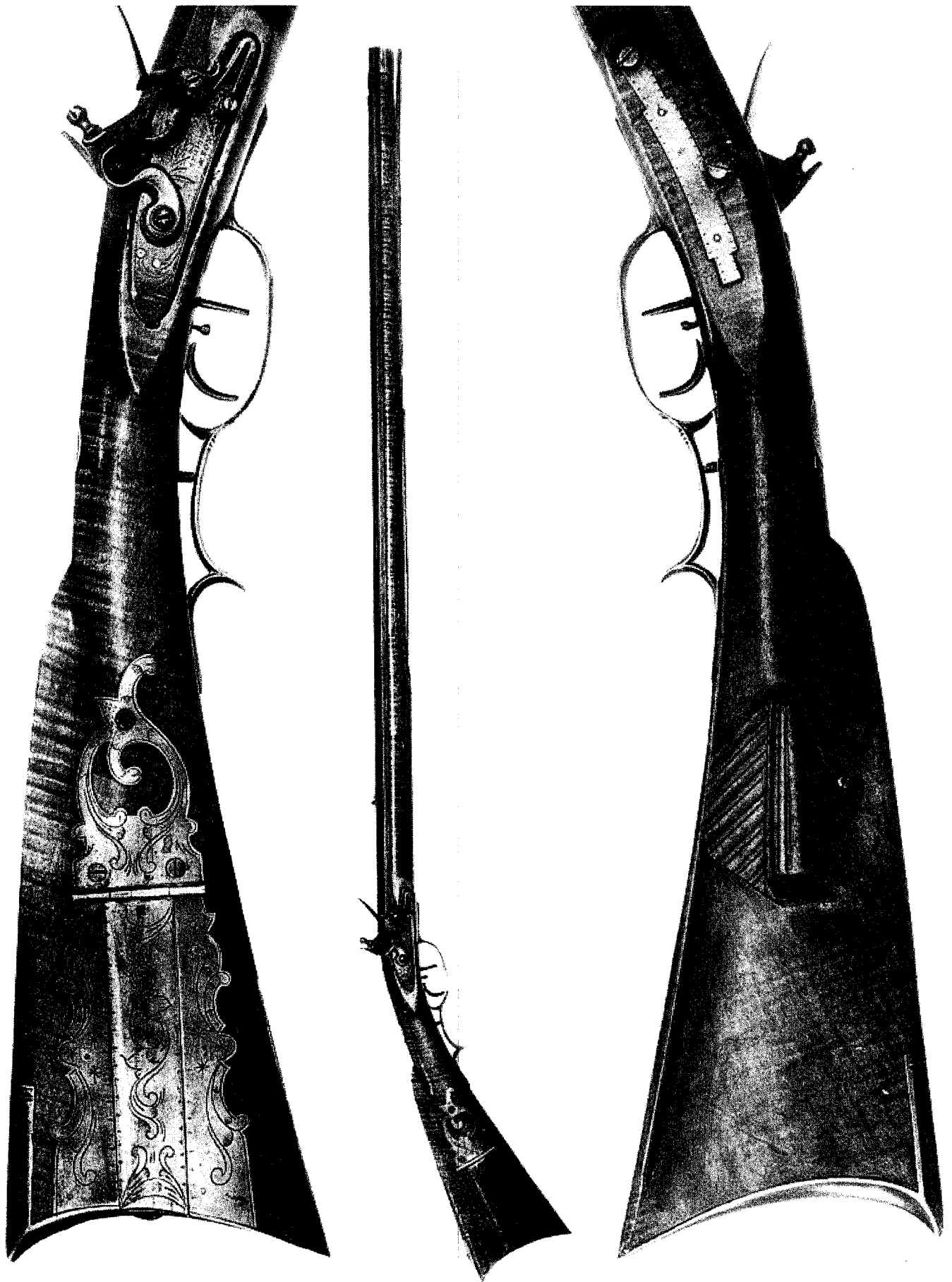
family in The History of Pickaway County, Ohio, gives us no clue as to his origins.

When Warren Offenberger and Miles Farley reconverted my gun to flintlock they informed me that the 41½ inch long barrel had originally been a full four feet in length. Most of the Earnheart guns have heavy barrels with relatively small bores, in the .38 to .42 calibre area. Those signed barrels we have viewed have a deep, bold script marking with the full name. All of his guns I have seen were made originally in flintlock.

Of the over 1800 long rifles I have photographed only a very few show better workmanship or engraving. Earnheart did not vary his engraving pattern very much and this aids in identifying his work. His guns certainly have pleasing lines and show a good sense of proportion. Most are stocked in superior curly maple. He was one of Ohio's finest gunsmiths. □



Fullstock Flintlock Rifle
By William Earnheart.
Incised carved and
engraved.



Fullstock Flintlock Rifle with beautiful engraved patchbox By William Earnheart.