




Some Notes On The Small Family Rifle Shop, New Lisbon, Ohio. 1806-1900

by Tom Pike



Photos By Jim Whisker

New Lisbon second oldest town in Ohio was platted and settled in 1803. It was the gateway to the newly opened western lands. This attracted many craftsmen and tradesmen to the newly opened opportunities this land offered. One of the early craftsmen was John Small, rifle maker who came from Fayette County, Pa. Some accounts say 1804 but 1806 may be the correct date. Small set up a shop on what is now North Market Street and it was in continuous service until 1900.

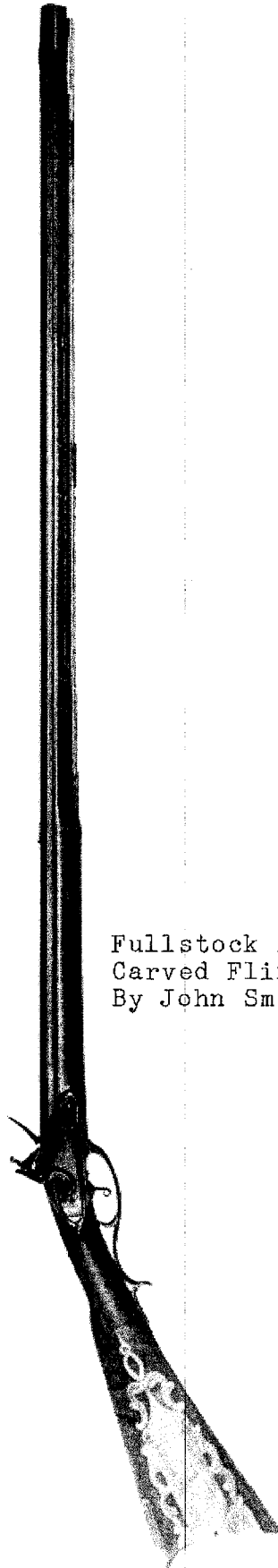
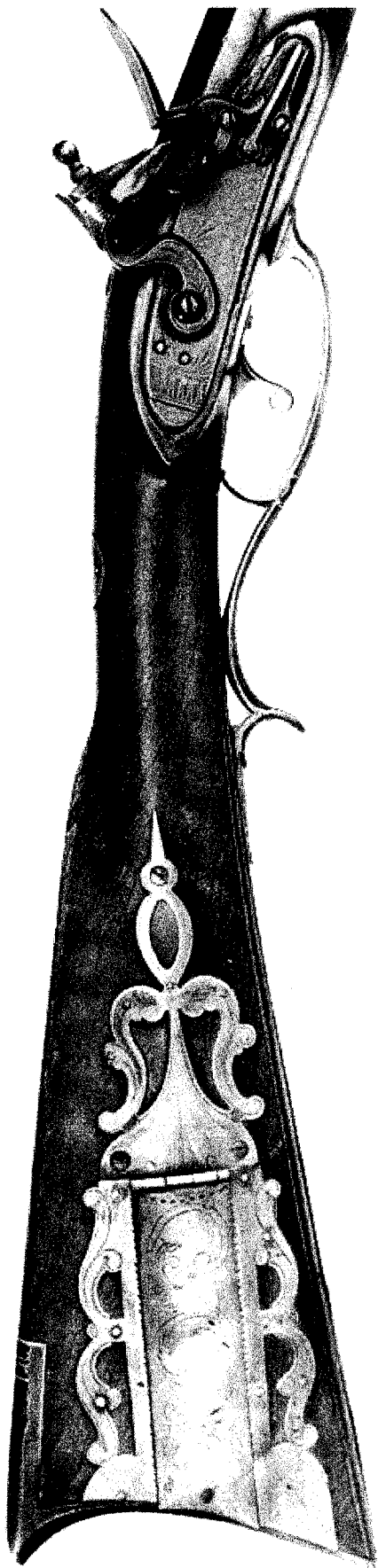
John Small was born in 1772 and died in 1825. He was apparently associated with a Henry Walter and perhaps related by marriage, as they were buried in the same cemetery plot in the Old German Cemetery lot on Chestnut Street. David Small, son of John was born in 1808 and died in 1840. Samuel Small son of John Small was born in 1814 and died in 1902.

John White, son of Peter White apparently apprenticed to John Small about 1820. He moved to New Philadelphia, Ohio about 1823, as he advertised as a gun maker there. John Small died in 1825 and John White returned to New Lisbon as a partner of David Small, who was operating the shop at that time. I think that Henry Walter must have been around the Small Shop

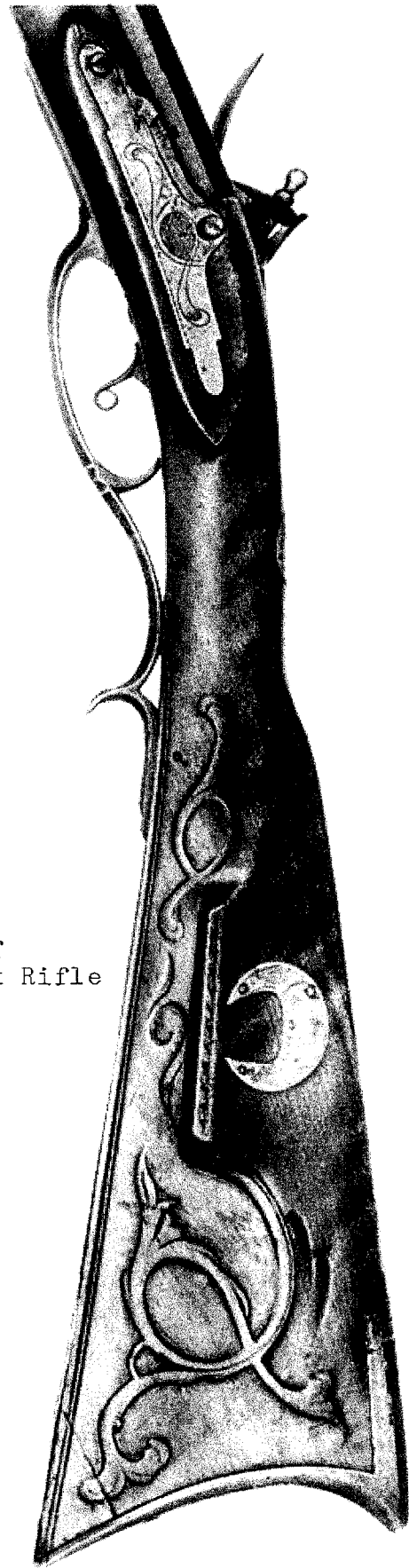
as I have a John White rifle that has many exact features of a Henry Walter Rifle, such as butt plate, trigger guard, side plate and a silver eagle in the cheek piece. These were cut from the same patterns that I have never seen on another rifle. There had to be some contact between them.

David Small and John White were partners until 1829 when White apparently returned to New Philadelphia, Ohio as he advertised here at that time. Samuel Small became David's partner and bought the shop outright in 1836 as David was of poor health. David had become a lawyer and banker and settled many estates. About this time the Sandy and Beaver Canal, to link the Ohio River and Tuscarawas River was being developed, and New Lisbon was a booming town. David Small apparently could do better, healthwise as a legal and developer advisor than in the rifle shop. He died in 1840.

Samuel Small continued in the rifle shop until 1900, though he also became active in the estate settling and legal business. Failing eyesight caused him to retire in 1900. He died in 1902. During the 1840-1880 period Sam Small had several apprentices. Among them were Alexander Noble,



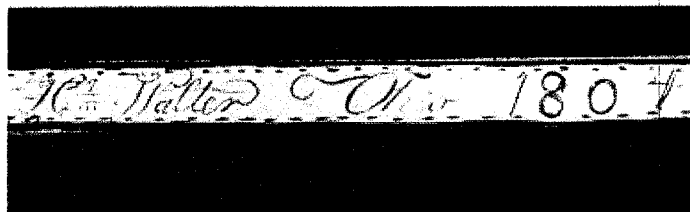
Fullstock Relief
Carved Flintlock Rifle
By John Small



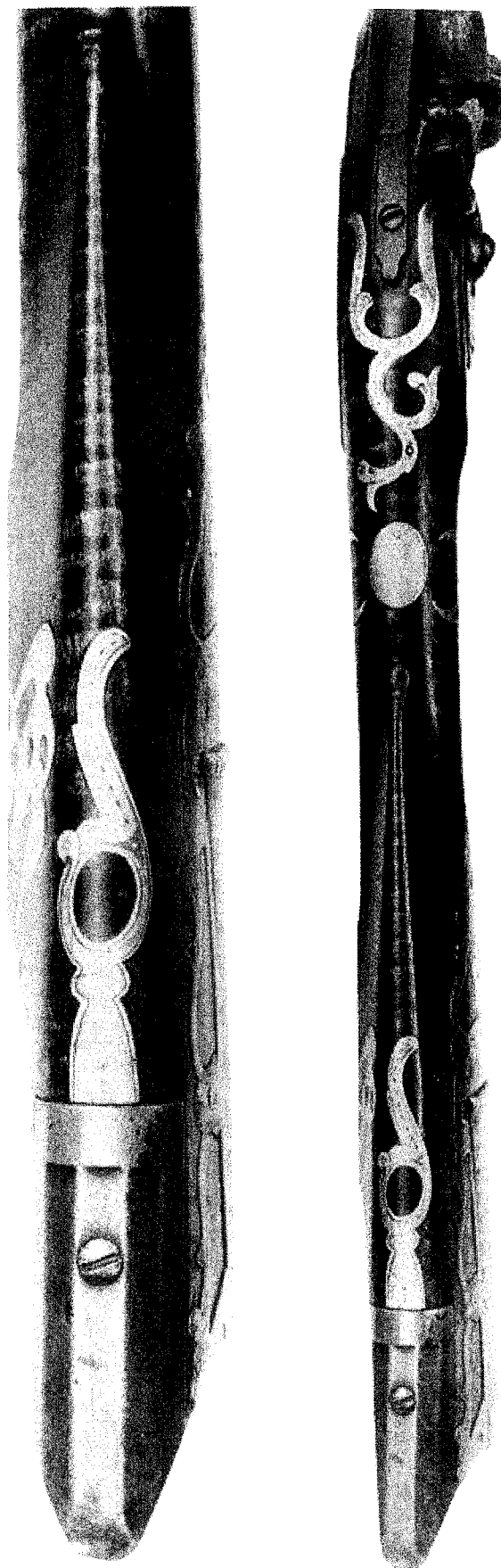
G. Barns, Wm. Smith, the Satterwaittes, John Roger, L. McGee and perhaps others.

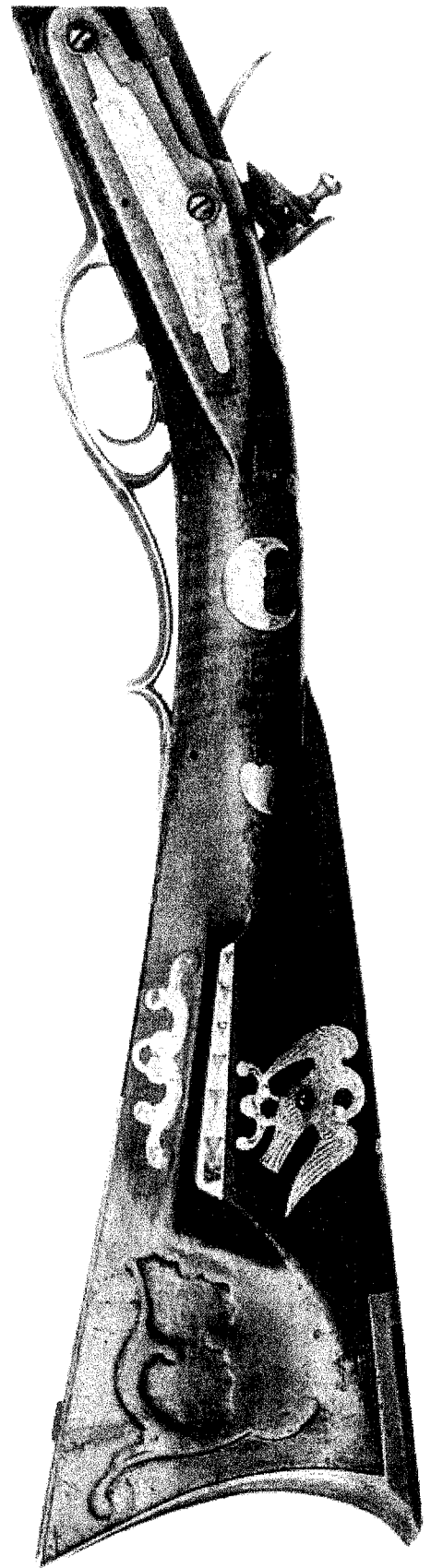
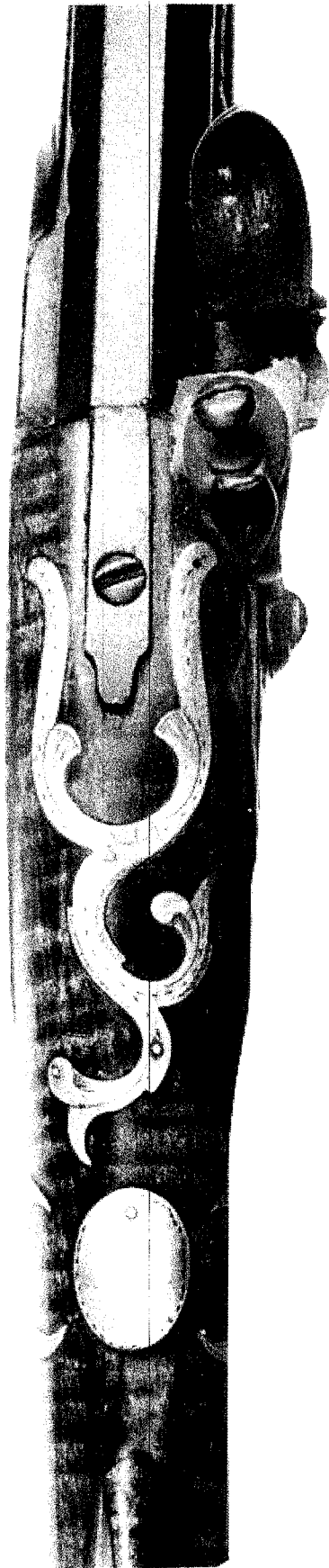
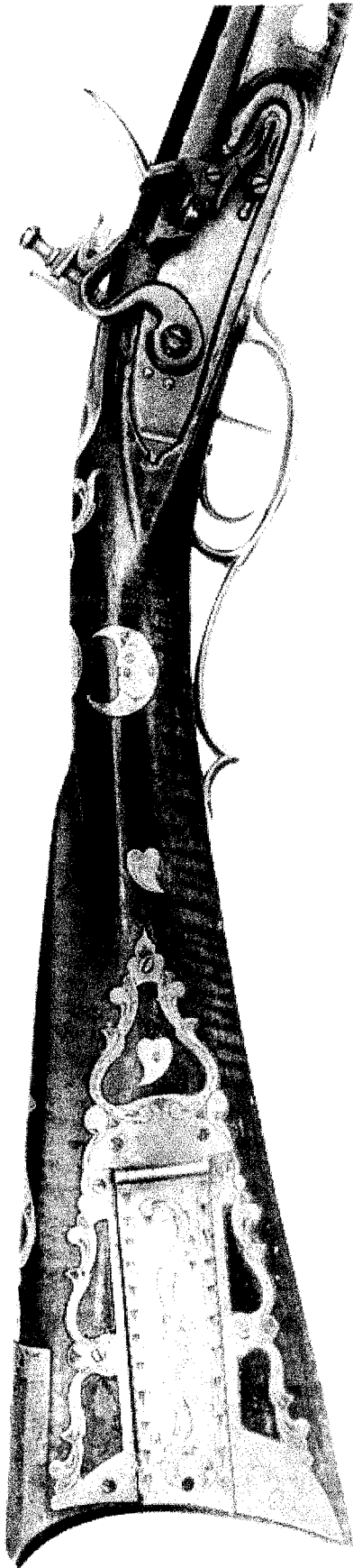
As New Lisbon was the gateway to the west many settlers going that way probably carried the earlier Smalls of John and David west. I have only seen or heard of three Johns and about a dozen David Smalls. I recently bought a rifle with a David Small barrel that had been a fullstock and had been restocked as a half stock by Sam Small. Samuel Small was a prolific maker. I have seen at least a hundred rifles by Sam. I have seen rifles that were light and 32 cal. and heavy target rifles in 50 cal. Small's apparently made the rifles to order as some were nicely inlaid and engraved and others plainly made. I have seen only a few without patch or cap boxes. Fifty years ago many farmers had a S. Small rifle stuck away some place and they were not to hard to find.

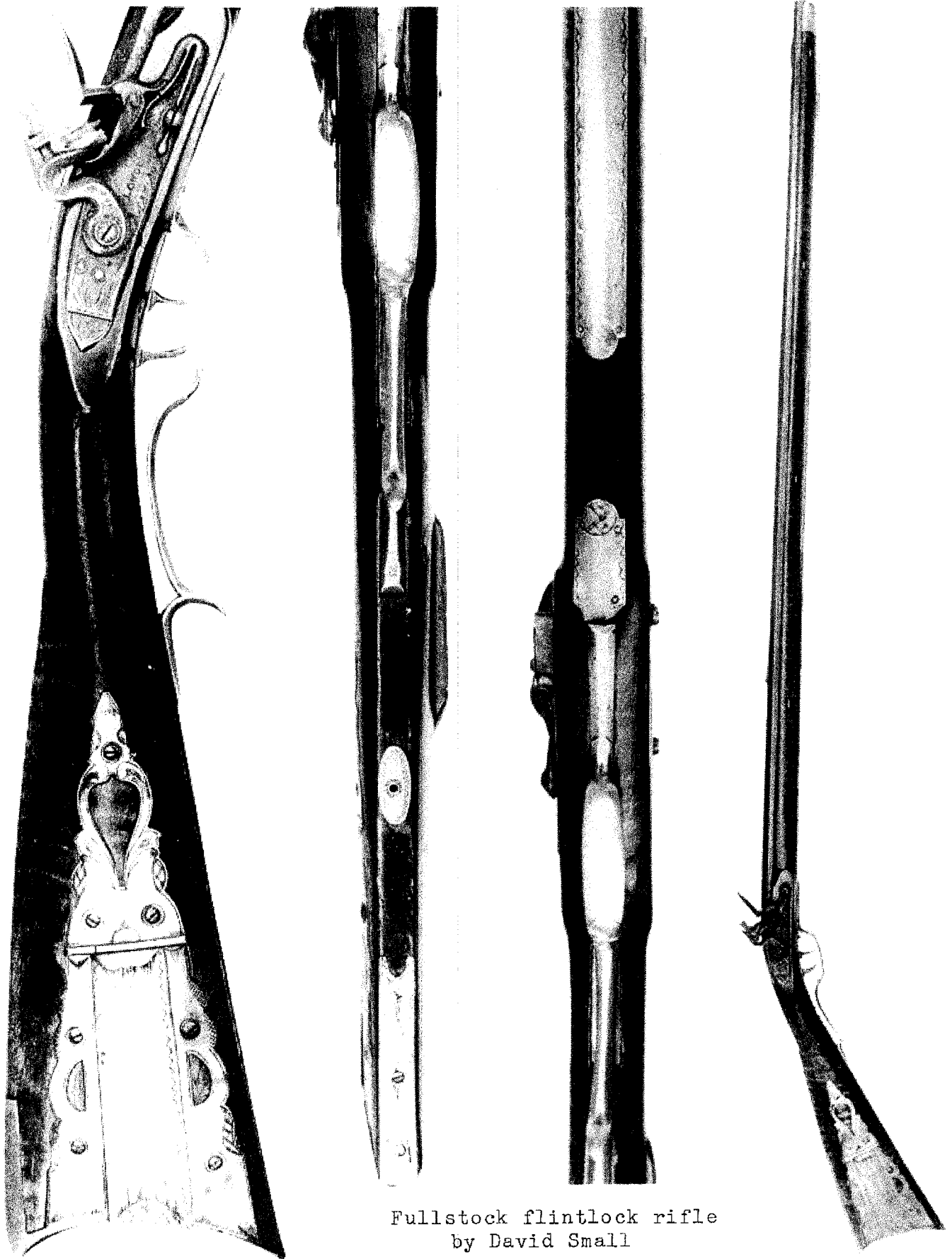
There were people living then who remembered S. Small. I talked to old men then who said Sam would go to Pittsburgh with two pack mules in the early days for supplies. One day going, one day to buy, and load up and one day to return home.



Six views of a fullstock flintlock Rifle by Henry Walter.







Fullstock flintlock rifle
by David Small

Many years ago I was fortunate enough to obtain many of the gunsmith tools and rifling guide of the Small rifle shop. These were sold at a barn auction within one block of the original Small shop where they had been used for 90 years. The Small shop produced some top quality guns and I believe in some cases used parts from other older broken guns in a rebuild that made it hard to identify its original maker. At any rate the lure and excitement of what may turn up takes us back to the founding of our great nation when your very life depended upon having a rifle to defend yourself, supply you with food and clothing, and the sport of competition in shooting. May it survive forever. □

Notice

THE subscriber informs the public, that he continues the **GUNSMITH'S BUSINESS**, in the shop lately occupied by the firm of WHITE & SMALL, (now dissolved) on Market-street, north of the court-house; where all work in his line of business will be punctually attended to.— He invites their former customers to give him a call.

David Small.

New Lisbon, Feb. 7, 1829.—543

GUNSMITHING.

THE Subscriber informs the public that he has taken the shop on Market street, lately occupied by David Small, where he will make and repair guns, to order, at the shortest notice, and in the best manner.

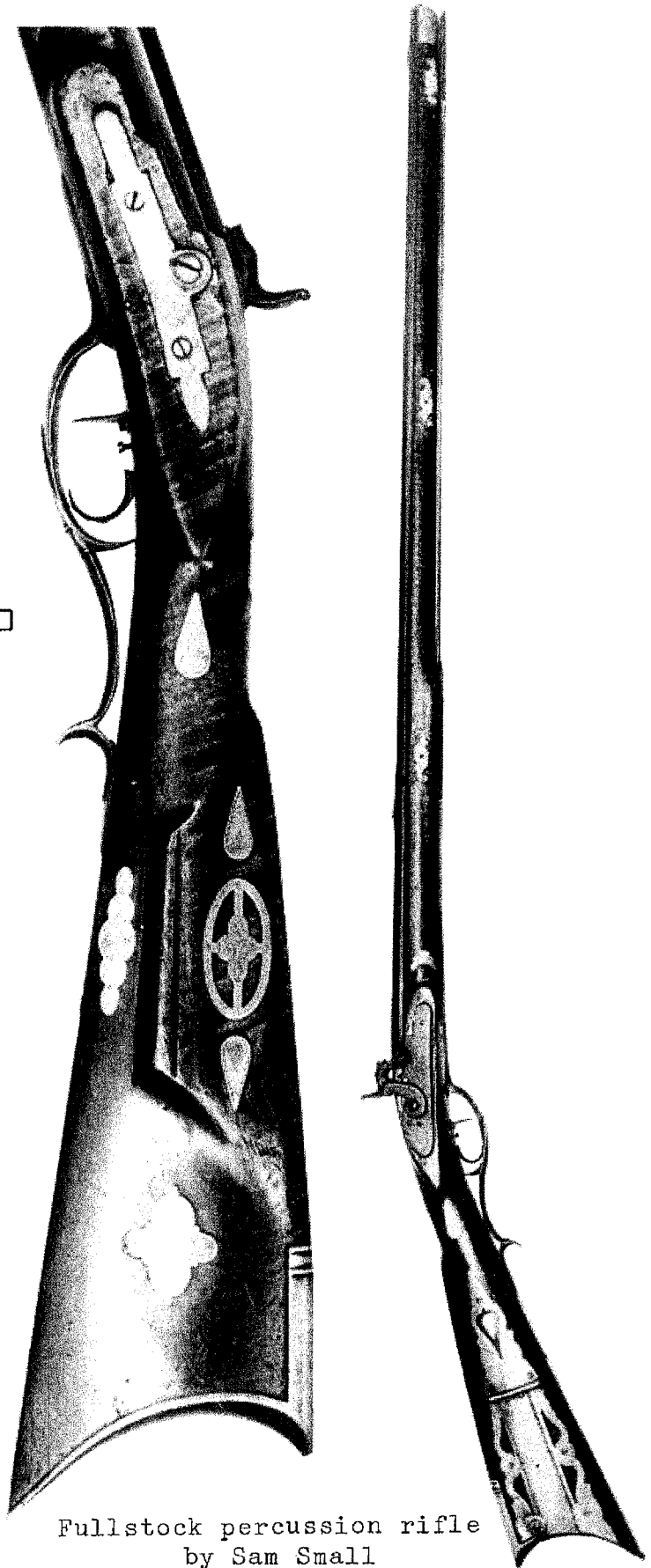
He will constantly keep on hand,

NEW RIFLES, and PISTOLS, GUN-LOCKS, PERCUSSION CAPS, &c. &c.

which he will sell low for cash.

SAMUEL SMALL.

New Lisbon, Jan. 15th, 1836. if



Fullstock percussion rifle
by Sam Small



The Art And Mystery Of Ohio Gunsmith John Young



By Shelby W. Gallien

Photos By Jim Whisker and Shelby W. Gallien

Overview: For years it has been known that gunsmith John Young worked in Stark County, Ohio in the mid 1800's, but no specific examples of his work have been identified with proper attribution until James Whisker's Ohio Long Rifles, Volume I was published and illustrated one of the writer's "J. Young" pieces. Much of the difficulty in identifying the Ohio John Young's work has been due to the fact that several "John Young" or "J. Young" gunsmiths have worked at different times and in different locations during the longrifle era. Fortunately, at least for collectors and students interested in Ohio pieces, the writer has acquired two "J. Young" stamped longrifles, both coming out of Ohio and one carrying a "Cincinnati" marked lock plate, which can now help define and clarify the work of the Stark County, Ohio gunsmith John Young.

These two rifles by John Young are the basis for this study, and the examples upon which conclusions about the man and his work are drawn. The two guns therefore deserve a proper introduction. They are affectionately called the "full stock" and the "half stock" by the writer, and were acquired separately at local gun shows in the Ft. Wayne, In. area during the last two years. The full stock has fine flame curl maple and is most noteworthy for its 14 elaborate coin silver inlays, engraving around the front and rear sights and barrel tang, and exceptional engraving on the brass mounts including the toe plate and trigger guard. The half stock had gone almost unnoticed on a dealer's table until it was turned

over, displaying a very elaborate and distinctive cheek inlay that was identical to the one on the full stock. The half stock has fine curly maple, five silver inlays (only the cheek inlay is elaborate), well engraved brass mounts including the patchbox and toe plate, and a checkered wrist. Close inspection of the half stock shows that it was a full stock originally, probably with inlays at the barrel keys. Both guns have almost identical barrels in length, width, and bore...and in finish which, when the barrels are removed, appears to have been "in the white" originally. The guns are well made mid-1850's pieces, with the full stock having exceptional silver decoration. The full stock is shown in Illustrations Nos. 1, 2, and 3, the half stock in Illustrations Nos. 4, 5, and 6, and specific details in other illustrations throughout the article.

The initial intent of this study was to illustrate and describe the work of Ohio's John Young, so that it might help others identify similar or related pieces and in the process expand the knowledge of Ohio guns and gunsmiths. But during the detailed study of these two pieces several interesting side issues came to light, and it is the discussion of these issues and their ramifications for other guns and gun makers that make these Ohio-made Kentuckies worthy of a closer look.... perhaps even by the "Golden Age only" collectors.

Issues Raised By The John Young Rifles; While lesser issues certainly also exist, there were five (5) primary issues that arose

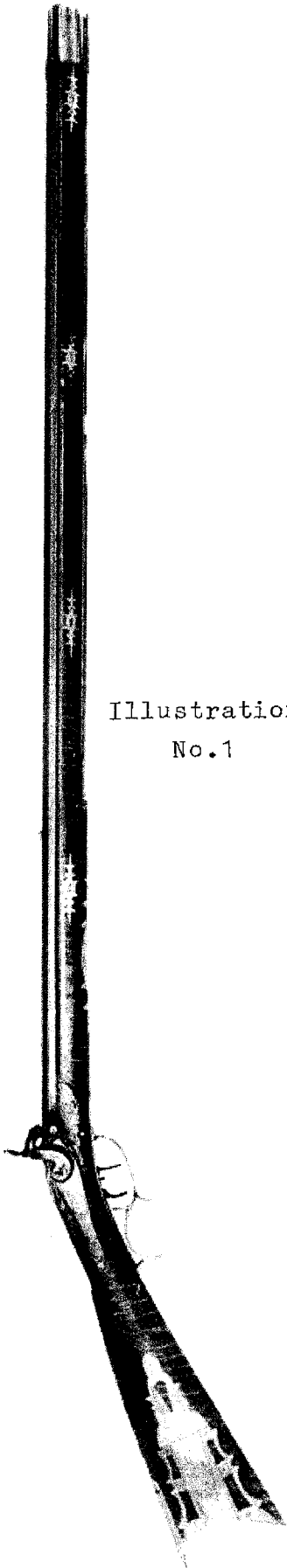


Illustration
No. 1

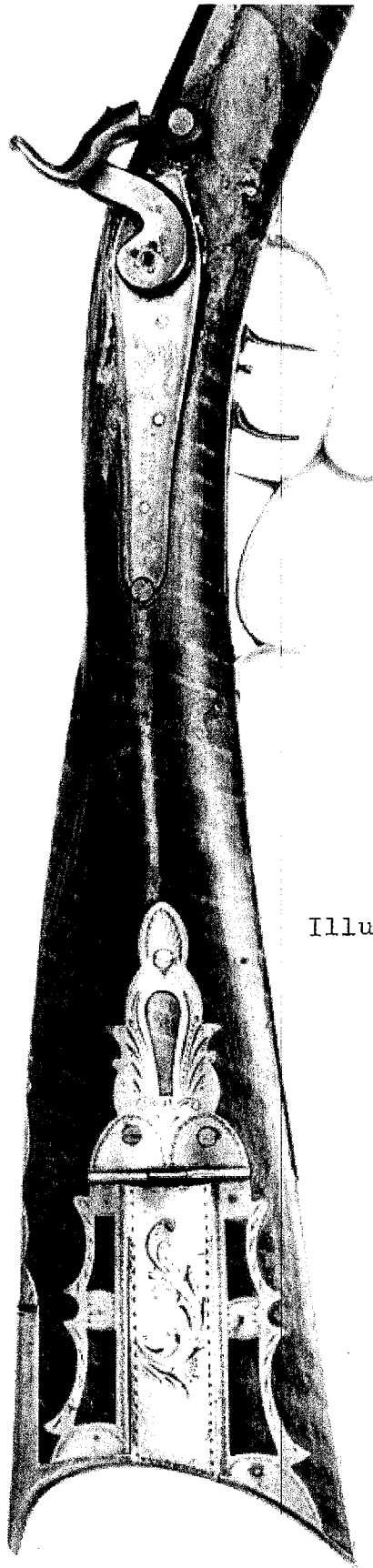


Illustration
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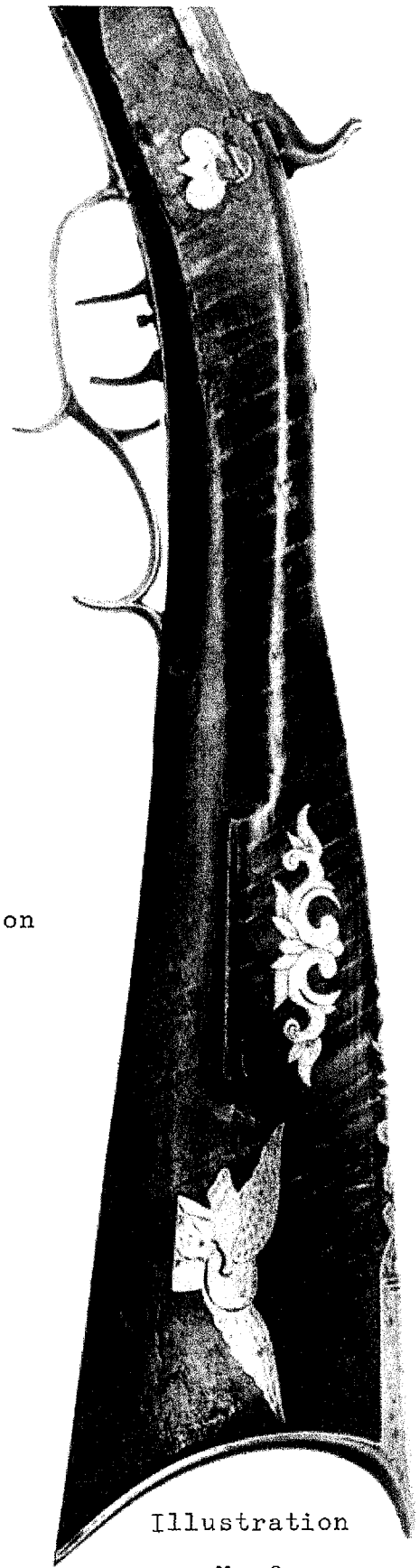


Illustration
No. 3

Fullstock rifle by John Young

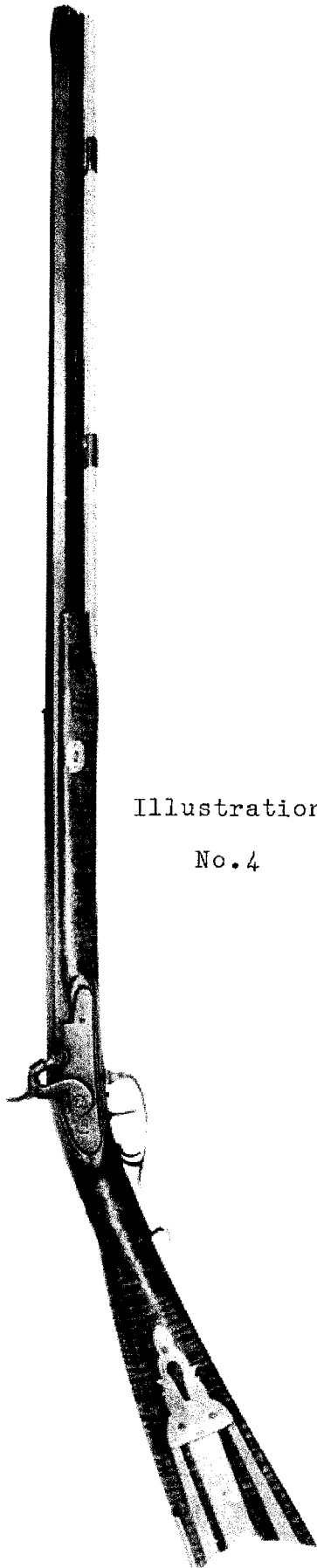


Illustration
No. 4



Illustration
No. 5



Illustration
No. 6

Halfstock rifle by John Young

during the study of the two John Young rifles. These issues, in the writer's order of priority and interest, were:

1. What are the identifying characteristics by which rifles made by the Stark County, Ohio gunsmith John Young may be identified?
2. The two study rifles appear to demonstrate two different hands, or men, doing the decorative engraving, one working on the brass mounts and the other the silver inlays. How should this be interpreted, and which man was the gunsmith himself? Can any conclusions be drawn as to who the other engraver might have been?
3. What was the relationship between John Young of Ohio and the earlier Allentown-Bethlehem School gunsmith John Young, or with other Pennsylvania Youngs?
4. The two guns studied show conflicting characteristics among those often used to date longrifles, or at least the relative age between two pieces. How should these guns be sequenced with regard to date of manufacture, i.e. which is older?
5. A set, or suite, of elaborate silver gun inlays was displayed at the 1988 Ohio Longrifle Collectors Show (A.O.L.R.C.) in Marietta, Ohio, and appeared to have been made for (or taken from) a well decorated John Young longrifle. How do these inlays relate or compare to those on the two John Young rifles detailed here, and are they in fact additional examples of John Young's artistic abilities?

Identifying Characteristics Of Ohio John Young's Longrifles:
John Young varied his rifles in several respects, such as lock

style, wrist treatment, decoration, trigger guard shape, and caliber. But his guns also carry some strong similarities that facilitate identification of his work from other "John Young" or "J. Young" makers. The primary identifying characteristics, when present, include:

"J. Young" signature stamp on the barrel.... all known guns are stamped in neat capital letters with a period after the "J" and are struck moderately rather than boldly into the metal. Young's stamp can be distinguished from similar stamps used by other makers by his letter "N," whose second vertical line, or stroke, rather than being parallel to the first tends to curve slightly out at the top toward the final "G." See Illustration No. 7.



Illustration No.7: John Young's signature stamp with peculiarly shaped "N", full stock rifle.

Patchbox finial outline and engraving.... Young repeatedly used a key hole finial with distinctive engraved patterns, including wobble engraving that periodically opened up one or more cuts to give it a thicker, jumbled appearance for some borders. See Illustration No.8.

Patchbox hinge composed of three segments.... this hinge was used by other eastern Pennsylvania makers. Young appears consistent in its use, and perhaps purchased his brass mounts from eastern