

Marietta Show Raffle Rifle

PHOTOS BY MARK BENDER

One of the AOLRC senior members has generously donated a mid-19th century cap-lock muzzle-loading rifle for an AOLRC fund-raising auction at the Spring show. The rifle is marked "A.P. Sherman" on the top barrel flat between the breech and rear sight. The barrel is approximately 38 $\frac{1}{10}$ " long by $\frac{7}{8}$ " in width; around .38 caliber. The length between the front of the nose-cap on the stock to end of the upper butt plate point is 31". The rifle has a small brass cap-box, a modest small cheek piece, and a decorative pewter nose cap. The ornate side-plate appears to be of German silver; the fancy trigger-guard is brass. There are a few minor

wear marks on the stock, some uneven spots on the finish of the barrel, and solder present on the forward ramrod pipe. Overall, a nice example of a mid-19th century Ohio rifle by a known maker. Hutslar (1973: 396) lists an "A.P. Sherman" as active in Portsmouth, Scioto county, and Belpre, Washington county c. 1850.

Please see the pictures of the "A. P. Sherman" marked rifle that will be auctioned at the Newark show (available for inspection on-site before the auction) and consider making a bid. (Courtesy of Log Cabin Shop, Lodi, Ohio.)



Right profile of the muzzle-loading rifle marked "A.P. Sherman."



Left profile of the muzzle-loading rifle marked "A.P. Sherman."



Ornate side-plate of the muzzle-loading rifle marked "A.P. Sherman."

A Small Ohio Powder Horn

MARK BENDER

Many of our members collect Ohio-related antique guns and accoutrements. Containers for holding black powder, made of cow or ox horns, and known as “powder horns” are a highly collectable item. Each horn has its own unique character, and can be appreciated for the architecture, style, and craftsmanship.

It was usual on the frontier and in late settled times for a rifle or smoothbore gun to have a kit consisting of a powder horn (or a metal flask or gourd container), shooting pouch, and possibly a bullet mold. Other items needed to fire and maintain the gun included a knife for cutting cloth or buckskin patching material (used to hold the ball within the barrel), flints or percussion caps, lead round balls or shot, and small tools for disassembling and cleaning the gun.

Horn is a desirable material for storing and carrying black powder as it is sturdy, yet light weight and quite waterproof. The natural container is easily work-able with sharp rasps, knives, scrapers, and drills. Since black powder can explode when exposed to a spark, the light horn material would do less damage than metal powder flasks in the case of an accidental explosion. In some cases small horns were also used to hold lead bird shot or percussion caps.

Powder horns could be large or small and were often artistically shaped by the maker. Although some horns are quite thick and study, others were scraped very thin in the crafting process. Some horns survive from as early as the French and Indian War that exhibit intricate maps and drawings of colonial and frontier life. Such engraving might have been done by professional “horners” in shops in Philadelphia, Boston, or other eastern cities, or around the campfire or on ship as a pastime.

Horns for flintlock muskets were often large, as the big bores required a lot of powder. These larger

horns were sometimes paired with smaller ones to hold finer grained priming powder. Small bore rifles required less powder and smaller horns were convenient for daily use. Or, powder was stored in a large horn or can, and a smaller horn was carried on short hunting trips or other forays.

In Ohio powder horns were sometimes made by gunsmiths to accompany a customer’s rifle. Many horns were likely homemade in workshops on farmsteads. Many horns recovered in Ohio are small, with enough powder for a day of hunting with a rifle of .29 to .38 caliber or so. Many could be slipped in a pocket, or were strung on the straps of leather hunting pouches. The weight of larger horns could help hold down the flap on the pouch. Such horns are found in many collections in Ohio and occasionally turn up in flea markets, antique shops, online sites, and gun shows (such as the fabulous “Newark show” held each fall by this organization).

A horn I recovered from a local flea market in October 2018 showed recent abuse – two portions of the rear end around the wooden plug had been damaged, either by dropping on a hard surface or an attempt to pry off the end cap – which is held in place with small wooden pins. Although the horn is damaged, it still had a nice patina of mellow yellow shades that transition into dark brown near the spout. (Many horns of this era have a slightly greenish tinge from dye made from walnut or butternut hulls.) This damage, however, created an opportunity to examine the thickness and inner contour (flat) of the horn. Although some smaller horns have screws, hand cut nails, or bent wire staples for attachment to leather or textile straps, this horn has only a plain wooden plug that curves out slightly from the base of the horn (as in the photos below). There are the remnants of a small wooden stopper in the spout. Since some collectors or reenactors enjoy making contemporary versions of guns and accoutrements, I

have included the dimensions of the horn as follows:

Outer curvature length: 8 ¼ in.

Inner curvature length: 6 in.

Horizontal width of wooden plug: 2 in.

Vertical width of wooden plug: 1 ⅞ in.

Length of spout: ⅝ in.

Circumference of wooden plug: 6 ⅜ in.

Circumference of base of spout: 1 ⅝ in.

Thickness of wooden plug at outer edge: ⅙ in.
(the plug raises just tad above ⅙ in the middle)

Depth of spout lower end: ⅙ in.

Width of spout aperture: about ⅛ in. (the area around the aperture is about ⅙ in. thick)

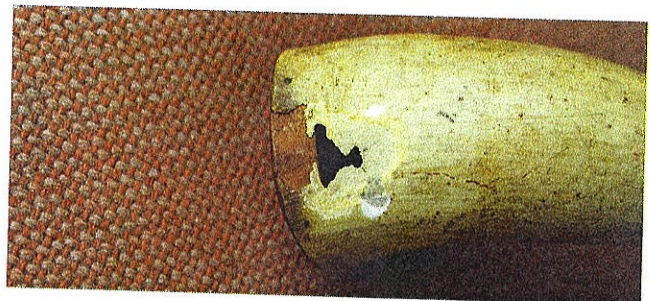
Space between 5 tiny wooden pins in base: 2 ⅜ in.
(more or less; somewhat irregularly spaced).



Powder horns recovered in central and southwest Ohio; the small horn on the right with the wide spout is a musket or fowler priming horn from eastern Maine. The top horn was filled with homemade lead shot (Mark Bender).



The powder horn recovered in north central Ohio described in the article (Mark Bender).



Broken end of small powder horn described in article that reveals the thickness of the wooden plug (Mark Bender).

The 41th Annual Marietta AOLRC Show, Lafayette Hotel, Marietta

DATE

April 6-7, 2019

EXHIBITORS SET UP

April 5

EXHIBITION TIMES

Saturday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Sunday: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

PLACE

Lafayette Hotel

101 Front Street

Marietta, OH 45750

Contact Information for tables, etc.: Jim Claggett 740-344-8476; Rod Fraser 614-837-1591

See the aolrc website and facebook page for more information: <http://www.aolrc.com/>

Note: Please take time to renew your membership at the door. Bring along friends and relatives.

A kind "Thank you" to everyone helping with the show!