

Moses Wright

By Warren Offenberger



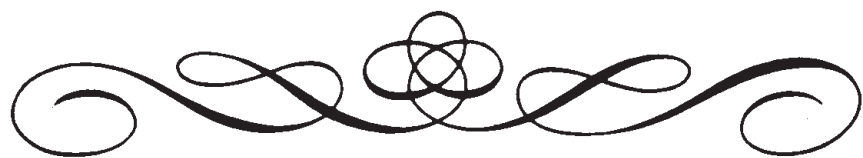
Shortly after our last newsletter, containing an article about Moses Wright, went to press, I happen to be at a gun show in Marshalltown, Iowa. Several nice longrifles showed up there but the cream of the crop was a fine fullstock by Moses Wright. After talking to the owner at some length, he asked me to take the rifle back to Ohio for some needed repair. This gave me the opportunity to examine and fondle a fine, rare Ohio rifle for a couple weeks. Before the piece was crated for shipping back to Iowa, several photos were taken and are illustrated herein.

Architecture wise, this is about as fine as you'll find in an old Ohio rifle. The curly maple stock

is long, slim and delicate. The barrel measures 13/16 x 41" and is of approx. .32 cal. Inlet into the top barrel flat is a piece of brass with the script signature "Moses Wright 1848".

This rifle is all silver mounted including a fine engraved patchbox. The butt plate and trigger guard are of brass. In all there are a total of 15 nicely executed inlays. The rifle is in excellent condition.

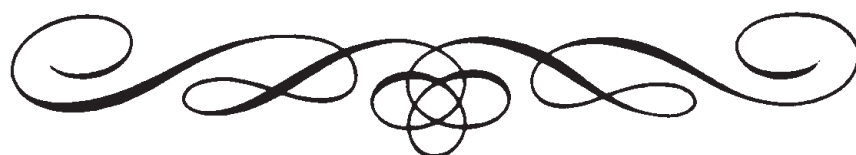
Moses would have been 56 years old when he made this rifle and he had another 6 years before his death on June 2, 1854. Although he worked in Ohio for 38 years, his surviving rifles are rather scarce. □



OHIO GUNSMITH

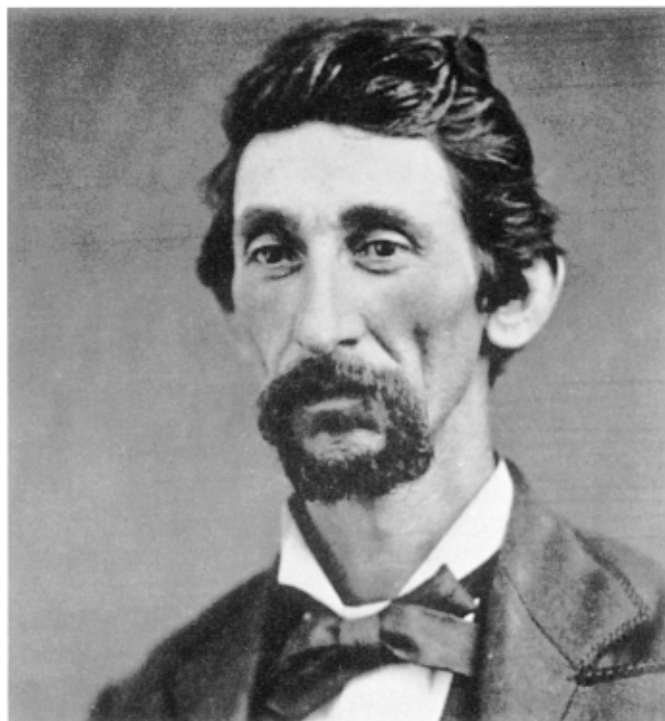
Frederick Yerian

Sharon, Noble Co., Ohio



By F. G. Tilton

Frederick Yerian, eldest son of Gunsmith John Yerian, was born on 16 March 1837 and died in Sharon, Noble Co. on 7 December 1910. He learned the Gunsmith trade from his father John Yerian. He operated a combination Drug Store - Dry goods store and Gunshop in adjoining rooms, located in the Village of Sharon, Noble County. He used the almost identical patch-box pattern as used by his father and often used the small silver fish inlay on the fore-stock, except the fish was slightly different in form and quite differently engraved. The shape of the stock and style of work is distinctly "Yerian", and can be readily identified by a student or collector of Ohio Rifles. His work was neat and well done. He marked his guns in two different ways "F.Y." and F. Yerian. He also used the long 3 screw barrel tang that was quite typical of his father and his half brother Thomas.



The Noble County Centennial Atlas of 1876 locates him in Sharon as operating a drug & drygoods store. No mention is made of him being a gunsmith. □



Peter Slack and Sons Gunsmiths of Clark County

By Almeda Jane Clippinger

Peter Slack was one of the more unusual Gunsmiths who came to Ohio in the mid 19th century. The unusual part being that instead of coming from Germany or Penn. as the vast majority of the Ohio Gunsmith's of this time period did, he came from England.

Peter Slack was born in Peterborough, Lincolnshire, England in 1820. His father John Slack was born in 1769 and his mother Catherine was born in 1805 somewhere in England. It is reported that she died in Springfield, Ohio on Oct. 23, 1871. There was quite a few years difference between their ages. This was quite common in England. The men had to work longer to make a nest egg or to learn a trade and to apply the skill before marrying.

Peter Slack apprentenced to an unknown gunsmith in England at the age of 15 yrs. (1835). He received board and clothing for 7 years, learning how to make guns, keep books and please the customers. Peter's home was in an area where lots of guns were used. Just north of his home is the famous fox hunting grounds of England and the Sherwood Forest of Robin Hood fame. Listed below are Gunsmith's within 30 miles of his home:

SPALDING

L. Dalton ---1828-1832

STAMFORD

J. Bailey ---1832

Edeson ---Before and after 1830

I. Monck ---Before and after 1832

BOSTON

R. Chapman ---Before and after 1832

T. Hattersley ---Before and after 1832

Luke Parkinson ---Before and after 1832

GRANTHAM

Wilkins ---1821-1832

At the end of his apprenticeship Peter opened a Gunshop in the town of March, Cambridgeshire, England. He maintained his shop for about ten years (1841-1851).

In 1849 or 1850 he married a Marie Manton of Spalding, Lincolnshire, England. I have been trying to find positive proof that Marie Manton may have been a daughter or relative of Manton the famous Gunsmith of this period. The letters I have received from England seem to discourage the idea. Marie was the daughter of James and Sarah Manton.

In the year 1851, for some reason, either 1. Patote famine, 2. Religious problems, or 3. relatives or friends were already in the United States, Peter Slack imigrated to this country and went directly to Cincinnati, Ohio and found work as a journeyman in the Gunsmith Trade. You must remember, at that period of time, 1850, Cincinnati was the largest and most industrialized city west of the Allegheny Mts. History records that Peter had \$100.00 dollars in his pocket when he landed on the shores of the U.S.

Two and one half years later he moved to Springfield, Ohio and opened a Gunsmith Shop on the east side of Market St. (later South Fountain Ave.) between High and Main Streets. One account says he had accumulated another \$100.00 dollars. This gave him a total of \$200.00 dollars, which at that time was a considerable sum of money. The man he worked for gave him \$400.00 dollars credit for supplies. Peter stayed at the above address for five years. Listed below are the locations of his business over a period of 99 years.

1st. 1854-1859 -- Peter Slack was located on Market Street -----5Yrs.

2nd. 1859-1865 -- Peter Slack East Main below Spring St. -----6Yrs.

3rd. 1865-1890 --Slack and Sons 62 East Main St.--25Yrs. (1874 Changed the name to P. Slack and Sons)

4th. 1890-1953 --P. Slack and Sons 122 East Main Street -----63Yrs.

99Yrs.

The Springfield City Directory lists his home as the same address. In this period of time, 1859-1865, the family lived in the back or upstairs over the business for economical reasons and to better service the customer.

Peter Slack became a Citizen of the United States of America on April 27, 1857, five years after coming to this country.

Peter Slack was not only a gunsmith, he also was a fine business manager. Along with other commodities, wool and grain were two of the early products he handled. He prob-

ably started trading grain for repairs of guns or the making of a new gun. In 1868 the store was known as Slack and Cooper. In addition to the other items mentioned, they also sold hardware and cutlery.

In 1860 the cartridge gun, as we know it today, was coming into its own. The market was not for hand made guns, but repairs of the long rifle was still needed. Ammunition for the new gun was a little hard to obtain, and quite expensive.

When P. Slack and Sons had their Auction Sale, the collectors came to get the early cartridge boards. I can remember at least two boards. They were 3' x 3' with the samples in a half circle across the top of the boards, a camping picture and more samples below.

Beers History of Clark County 1881 records the year 1879 as being very profitable for Peter Slack.

\$20,000--Guns, pistols and ammo.
 \$26,000--Furs
 \$50,000--Wool (Peter was one of the leading dealers in the commodity.)

His astute business mind gave him the foresight to deal in buying and selling property. He purchased and erected several houses in the city of Springfield, Ohio, and built his home at 279 South Fountain Ave.

My husband and I have been in the P. Slack and Sons store many times. I can remember the hides stretched on holders, hanging in the back room. Slack was one of the only stores in downtown Springfield that keep sticks of dynamite so the farmers could blow stumps. The fire department made Slack keep the dynamite right inside the front door. In case of a fire it could

be retrieved or watered down. The caps were keep in the rear of the store.

Peter and Marie Slack had four living children and two died in infancy:

1. Alfred 1-10-1852 Cinn., Ohio
2. Lucy 1855 Springfield, Ohio
3. Charles 1860 Springfield, Ohio
4. Laura 1866 Springfield, Ohio

Alfred the older son started working in the store at the age of 16 years, in 1868. Peter taught him the gunsmith trade. In the Springfield City Directory of 1871-1872, Alfred is listed as a full fledged gunsmith. When he became 21 years old (1873) Peter Slack made him a partner in the store and changed the name to P. Slack and Son's.

Charles the younger son of Peter was born 1860 in Springfield, Ohio. He started at the age of 15 years (1875) working in the store learning the gun business, along with new types of merchandise being introduced into the store. An example is that in 1880, a big 60" High Wheeler Cycle came to the store. After Charles graduated from high school he also became a partner. There is no written evidence that he learned the gunsmithing trade. He only spent little over 20 years (1878-1898) with the business.

At the age of 38 years in 1898 he died of Typhod Fever, leaving a wife and 2 children. Alfred purchased Charles interest in the store. Later Charles wife Lillian and 2 children moved to the east.

The two daughters of P. Slack, Lucy and Laura were also silent partners in the business.

In the census of 1860 it listed as follows:

Slack, Peter	40Yrs.-M.
Marie	38Yrs.-F.
Alfred	8Yrs.-M.
Lucy	5Yrs.-F.
Laura	3Yrs.-F.
Charles	1/2 Yr.-M.
Catherine	60Yrs.-F.
Sophia	22Yrs.-F.

Gunsmith--Value of Real Estate--
\$375.00
Value of Personal
Estate--\$700.00

I feel that P. Slack brought his wife Marie, Catherine his mother and Sophia a sister to the U.S. (1851). Sister Sophia would have been 12 yrs. old at this time. They could have come later, but I do not believe so, for below are the dates of their births and deaths.

Catherine --B. 1805-England
-----Died Oct.23,1871
Sophia -----B. 1838-England
-----Died March 24,1891

Both are buried in Ferncliff Cemetary, Springfield, Ohio in the family plot. It seems that 1851 would have been the reasonable time considering all dates listed. Sophia married an Emanuel Meek, on Dec. 29, 1863. In the 1863 Springfield City Directory they list Emanuel Meek Flouring Mill as East Side Mill between Harrison and Washington Street.

Their home was on the Northwest corner of Mulberry and Mill. This could have been the mill where P. Slack had his grain processed into flour and shipped to market.

Mr. P. Slack, wife Marie and his whole family were active members in the Central Methodist Church for many years. Marie died in 1872 of a lung problem.

In 1877 Peter married a Jane P.



Home of Peter Slack

Farrar of London, Ohio. A year later at age 52 she died.

Peter Slack was active in republican politics in Springfield, Ohio. He served two terms on the council in 1887 as a republican from the 3rd. ward. On a fall day in mid Sept 1891 he meet with a deplorable accident, and died shortly thereafter.

Peter had no will. Alfred Slack was appointed executor. Two insurance polices were divided among the four heirs.

Alfreds only son, John Edward, born 1883 was beginning to help his father in the store. At age 17 he began learning the art of gun repair. It was not long before he was a fulltime employee.

Alfred died June 7, 1907 of a stroke. At which time young J. Edward Slack carried on the tradition of repairing guns and selling sporting goods.

Frank Burdett, whose wife Leona was a sister to J. Edward Slack, worked in the store until his death in 1952.

Ed Slack worked the store by himself, and about a year later closed the P. Slack Sons Store with an Auction in 1953. In a newspaper article he said he was going to enjoy the fishing life, that he had heard so many tales about over the years. J. Edward died in 1961. J. Edward's only daughter, Marjorie, is still alive and living in Springfield, Ohio. She helped me varify some of the facts in this article.

One of Alfreds granddaughters, Betty Burdett Bushemeyer also gave me considerable information.

I wish to thank these people for helping me give the gun collectors this information. This helps the collectors to know the kind of problems the early Gunsmiths had and what may or may not have influenced the making and design of their guns. Plus the fact that the Gunsmith had to change his occupation as the handmaking of guns gave way to mass production.

A known rifle by Peter Slack is a fullstock of good English lines. Most of the guns made by Gunsmiths with English teaching seem to be of straight lines, blocky and stiff, where Penn. or Germans have more flowing lines and softer pleasing design. While the English people are more prim and proper in both dress and manners and furniture, this style is carried over to their guns.

A known halfstock is a little more rough. It appears to be made by a person not as experienced in the art of Gunsmithing. We know this was made for a man by the name of Joseph Rhodes. He owned a farm in Champaign County on the Vance Road. The halfstock was made about 1870. When Rhodes retired he moved to Tremont City, Ohio. Living until his death in June 23, 1939. The halfstock, powder horn

and mould was purchased from his nephew, Onie Rhodes, who also resided in Tremont City. The nephew sold it to a friend. We eventually became the proud owners of the two Slack guns. I strongly feel Alfred Slack made the half-stock, for it fits the period of time he was learning the trade.

Richard Beebe was an early Gunsmith in Clark Co. about the period of Slack. The last time I find him listed is in 1868 in Springfield, Ohio. I found an ad in one of the Springfield City Directory's that R. Beebe was in the baking and confectionary business. I found in the property records of Springfield, Ohio where an Albert Beebe, son of Richard Beebe the Gunsmith, sold a piece of land to Peter Slack in 1873. This may account for the rifle which is doubled stamped on the barrel with Beebe and P. Slack and Sons. Peter Slack may have bought all of Beebe's equipment.

So many collectors both in Ohio and Penn. want to put emphasis on how fancy a gun they can own. But to me the plain gun was what won this country for us. I love to look at a gun all carved and silver inlaid and marval at the craftsmanship. These were not the working gun though. The plain gun with good lines and good fit for its owner was what put meat on the table, plus securing the land for us to enjoy today.

I hope we never lose the artistry of the beautiful old art that goes into our showpieces, but I hope we also preserve the function and solididity of the working guns and the working Gunsmiths. □

A DEPLORABLE ACCIDENT CAUSED BY HIS HORSE BEING FRIGHTENED AT AN ELECTRIC CAR.

He Never Recovers Consciousness From The Frightful Injuries Sustained Monday.

At about one o'clock this afternoon as Peter Slack the well known excouncilman, was driving along South Center Street with a boy named Geo. Meek, his horse became frightened at the electric-car and in an instant the buggy was overturned and Mr. Slack and his companion thrown violently to the ground.

Mr. Meek's collar bone was broken and he sustained other injuries.

The accident happened near the Little Miami crossing on Jefferson Street. Mr. Slack was knocked unconscious, his hand and arm cut badly, the face lacerated frightfully and the skull crushed. The injuries caused death, which resulted soon after the accident.

Mr. Slack had been actively identified with public affairs in the city for years and was one of the best known pioneer citizens of the county. His loss will be regretfully, keenly and permanently felt throughout the entire community, and the family have the heart-felt sympathy of a community which held him in the highest esteem.

Mr. Slack was 71 years of age and was born in Peterborough England in 1820. In 1850 he came to this city and established a constantly increasing business as a dealer in firearms, furs, wool etc. When he was fifteen years old he became apprenticed to a gunsmith and served for five years after which he carried on a business for

himself in England for ten years. Before leaving England he was married in 1849 to Miss Maria Manton to whom six children were born, four of whom are living. viz. Alfred J, Charles M, Lucy M, Laura H, all residing in the city. The sons have practically carried on the large business for the past few years. Mr. Slack himself merely giving general direction to the business. The Slack boys are known as among the most energetic and prominent business men of the city. Lucy M. is the wife of M.D. Johnson of this city. Miss Laura resides at the family residence on South Fountain Avenue.

Mr. Slack, although starting in life a poor boy, had by his perseverance and honorable dealings, accumulated a comfortable fortune.

He was a consistent prominent member of Central M. E. Church and has held different official positions in that church for the past 20 years.

The deceased took a prominent part in local politics and in 1887 was elected to the city council as a Republican. At the expiration of his term in 1889, he was re-elected and during his incumbency of office he held important placed committees particularly as chairman of the committee on streets and highways in which he rendered valuable services to the city.

His death is mourned by all who knew him. He was an honest, charitable man, closely connected with the business interest to the city, and always endeavoring to further the city's prosperity.

THE SPRINGFIELD WEEKLY REPUBLIC
THUR. SEPT. 24, 1891

Moses Wright Gunsmith

By Jim Whisker

The article on Moses Wright prompted a response from members of the Wright family from Ohio. A correction on the origins of that family is in order. Moses was a son of Nathan Wright (30 November 1762 - 15 June 1851) not John. John Wright (1790-1859) was a brother of Moses, not a father.

Nathan Wright was married on August 29, 1786, to Hannah Worley of Cumberland Valley Township, Bedford County. She was a daughter of Achor Worley and his first wife, Judith Harris Worley. She was a daughter of Thomas Harris of Frederick County, Maryland, who died in 1757. Hannah Worley Wright was born on November 4, 1766 and died on April 5, 1847. Nathan and Hannah had 15 children, including a still-born child. Moses was their fifth child.

Nathan and Hannah moved to Coshocton County, Ohio, in 1814, but Moses was keeping company with a young lady here in Bedford County, and so did not move west until 1816. According to family records, the area to which Nathan moved was Bedford Township, Coshocton County, Ohio, Acquiring a farm near West Bedford. I wonder if this means that others from Bedford County, Pennsylvania, had moved there, naming the location after their home area. I note, too, that Joseph Mills, another Bedford County, Pennsylvania, gunsmith moved to Coshocton County. Mills might have come to Coshocton County as a result of contact with the Wrights or others from Bedford County then living in Ohio. □



George L. Wickline

Gallia County

By Art Hock



One of the joys of collecting Ohio long rifles is studying and learning the style and architecture used by the various gunsmiths. Some traits are so peculiar to a particular gunsmith that they are practically as good as a signature. Some "signatures" that come to mind are the stock of the Vincents, the eagle and wearplate of Biddle, or the clean out plug found on Meissner rifles. Most gunsmiths developed a distinctive style or certain characteristics that can be easily identified with them. The above is not always true as this article will show.

The following paragraphs discuss two rifles built by George L. Wickline of Gallia County and these two rifles are very different. They were built by the same hand but the stock architecture is so different that if the pieces were not signed it would be difficult to associate the two with one craftsman.

George L. Wickline was born in Monroe County, Virginia in 1820. He worked as a gunsmith in Cadmus, Ohio near Gallipolis and eventually died in Cadmus in 1903. Another Wickline (George H.) worked in adjoining Lawrence County and there are still several Wickline families in the area.

Both of these pieces are fine examples of the craftsmanship associated with the early gunsmith trade in Ohio. Let us first look at the differences between the two rifles and then the similarities.

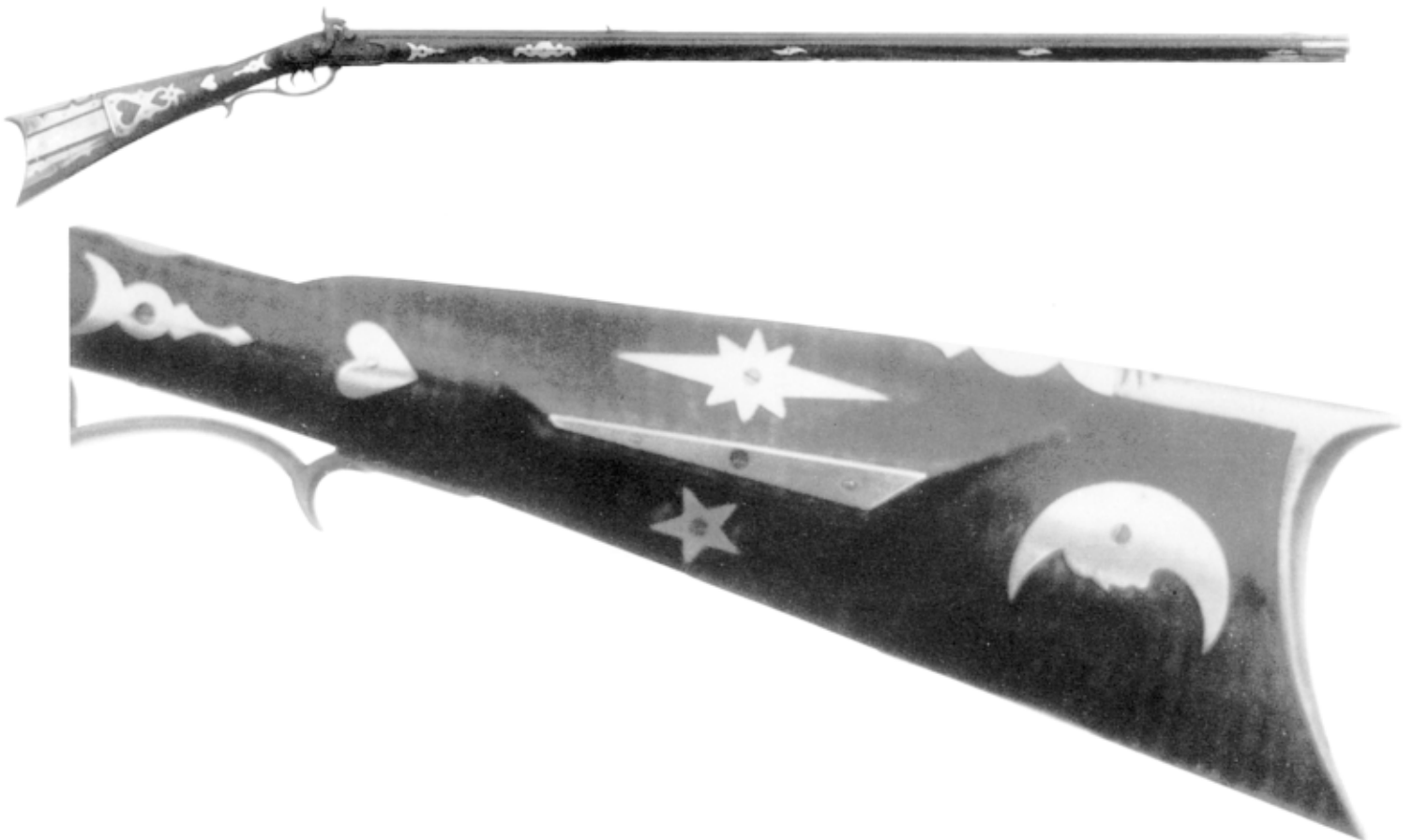
The most obvious difference is in the outline of the stocks, especially in the wrist area and where the comb meets the wrist. (See photos.) On one gun the comb drops sharply to the wrist area while on the other the comb joins the wrist in a much more subtle manner. Also the lock moulding on one rifle is a narrow band all around the lock, like a

Vincent, whereas the other moulding is much wider especially in front of and behind the lock in the wrist area. Look at the cheek pieces! One is the more traditional, straight, narrow cheek piece which is the common style found on most "Kentuckies" while the other is the rounded beaver tail style. This is a striking difference.

What are the similarities? Both bear the stamp G. L. WICKLINE on the top flat of the barrel and one has the same stamp on the sideplate opposite the lock. Both sideplates are similar and both are attached with two screws. Although barrel lengths is not an identifying characteristic of a particular gunsmith, both guns have long barrels. One is 46 inches and the other is 43 inches and both have a similar rear sight and

exactly the same pattern of punch marks decorating the muzzles. The longer gun has 22 silver inlays plus a full patchbox and the shorter gun has 10 silver inlays. None of the inlays or the patchbox are engraved. Apparently G. L. Wickline did not like to engrave. Both guns have a similar heart inlay and both have the same eight pointed star inlaid in the cheekpiece. Both guns have wear plates.

Bill Large the famous barrel maker at Coal Grove Ohio owns some of Wickline's tools. Bill has the brace and cherries that Wickline used to make bullet molds as well as his anvil, rifling guide, and cutters. Bill says that the barrels made by Wickline had a patent breech instead of a drum and nipple. Both of the barrels on these guns had the patent breech originally although one now has



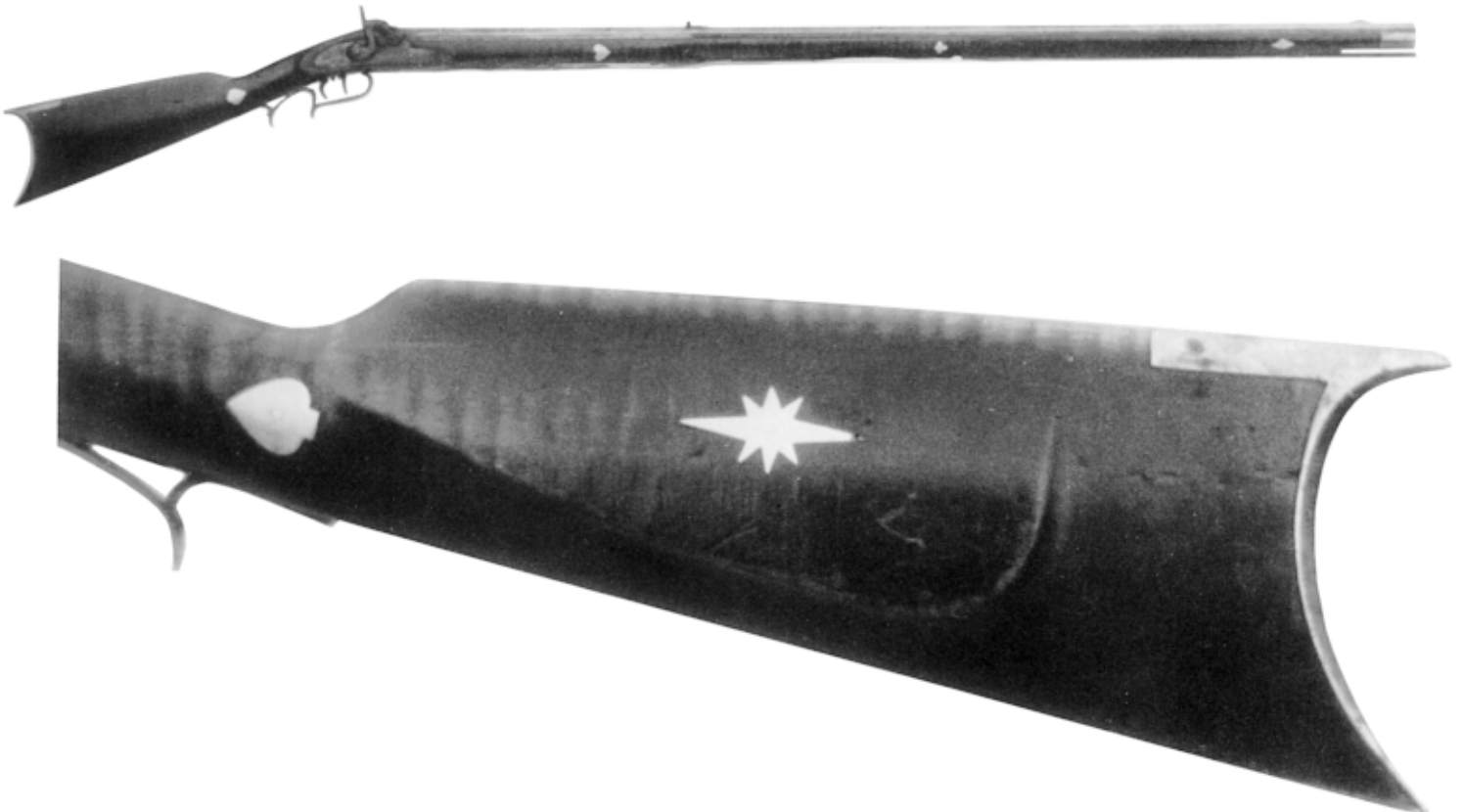
a drum and nipple. Bill explained that the patent breeches were brazed onto the barrel in a blacksmith forge and that they could come loose. Maybe that is why one of these was replaced! Wickline got some of his barrels from the Great Western Gun Works in Pennsylvania. The barrels would be shipped down the river to Gallipolis and then Wickline would ride his horse to Gallipolis and get the barrels. Wickline rifled the barrels himself and was considered to be one of the finest at rifling or freshing out a barrel. He produced some fine target rifles.

The following story is about one of his rifles. In 1888 Wickline made a rifle for Dan Wetrock of Wilgus, Ohio in Lawrence County. The rifle had a barrel that was 1 inch across the flats and 48 inches long. The entire rifle weighed 12 pounds and cost 18

dollars. It was the custom to shoot for a beef in the local matches and the beef was divided among the winners by giving out the hide, the tallow, and the quarters. Wetrock shot in five matches one month and he led five steers home on the hoof!

One other similarity in the two guns is in the nose caps. Instead of having brass ends in the nose caps both are poured full of lead.

Studying the old guns and their makers is part of the fun of collecting. Wickline was an excellent craftsman and superb barrel-maker, and we have two guns built by him that are very different from each other. There is a point here. Although we become "experts" at identifying the beautiful old long guns nothing is as certain as an untouched, original rifle bearing a name. □



More On Carpenter

Among the others engaged in this gun business, was Nicholas Carpenter, a native of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, who had been among the first settlers of this remote district. He was a man of great energy and activity, and took the lead in all business transactions, having not only a large farm with eighty or one hundred acres under cultivation, but a small store of dry goods. He carried on a smithy and gun-making, at which he worked himself; and also employed a hatter, shoemaker, and clothier, all on his own premises; and for so remote a spot, and so early a day, he may well be considered a man of importance to society. He was not only a business man, but also in the strictest sense, a pious man. At the period of the event about to be described, he was the father of 11 children all by the same mother. In those days such families were not uncommon. Everything was in its prime; the virgin earth brought forth by handfuls, and mankind multiplied rapidly, from their simple food and active lives; and none the less so from the dangers to which they were exposed. As a sample of the fecundity of the climate, there were living about

thirty years since, a little below the mouth of Fish Creek, on the Ohio, two brothers, whose united progeny amounted to forty-seven, one having 24, the other 23 children. The two families filled a schoolhouse. They, however, had each of them a second wife.

Mr. Carpenter, although lame, having had his ankle joint shattered by a rifle shot many years before.

Settlement of Belville Virginia,
1785-1795 By Samuel P. Hildreth-
Pub. in American Pioneer 1842-3
Submitted by Dan Augenstein;
Courtesy Ray Swick



Burglary — Last Sunday night, a burglar entered the gunsmith shop of Edward Arn, on Front street, and took therefrom one revolver, one pistol, a powder flask, and several thousand cartridges — amounting in the whole to about fifty dollars. An entrance was effected by carefully removing a pane of glass from the window in the rear of the building. No clue as to who the perpetrator is has yet been discovered.

The Marietta Times, July 13, 1865
Submitted by Bill Reynolds;
Courtesy Jerry Devol