



# George Wareham, an Indiana Gunmaker from Ohio



By Shelby Gallien

**Overview:** Many northern Indiana gunsmiths working in the mid-1800's originally came from Ohio. During the 1840's the northern sections of Indiana were opened up, it's forests cut and swamps drained. The development was driven by new railroads running east to west, connecting northern Ohio with Illinois and providing improved access to markets. Two early gunsmiths of significance in northeastern Indiana were Henry Humberger, from the Humberger family of gunsmiths in Perry County, Ohio, and Jacob S. Paulmer from Stark County, Ohio. A close associate of Jacob Paulmer in Stark County, Ohio, based on similarities in their work, later married Paulmer's oldest daughter while still in Ohio, and finally followed Palmer to Dekalb County, Indiana in the 1850's. Wareham worked slightly later and did not reach the same consistent level of excellence as Paulmer, but he did produce fine rifles with several of his earlier ones rivaling Paulmer's in design and appearance.

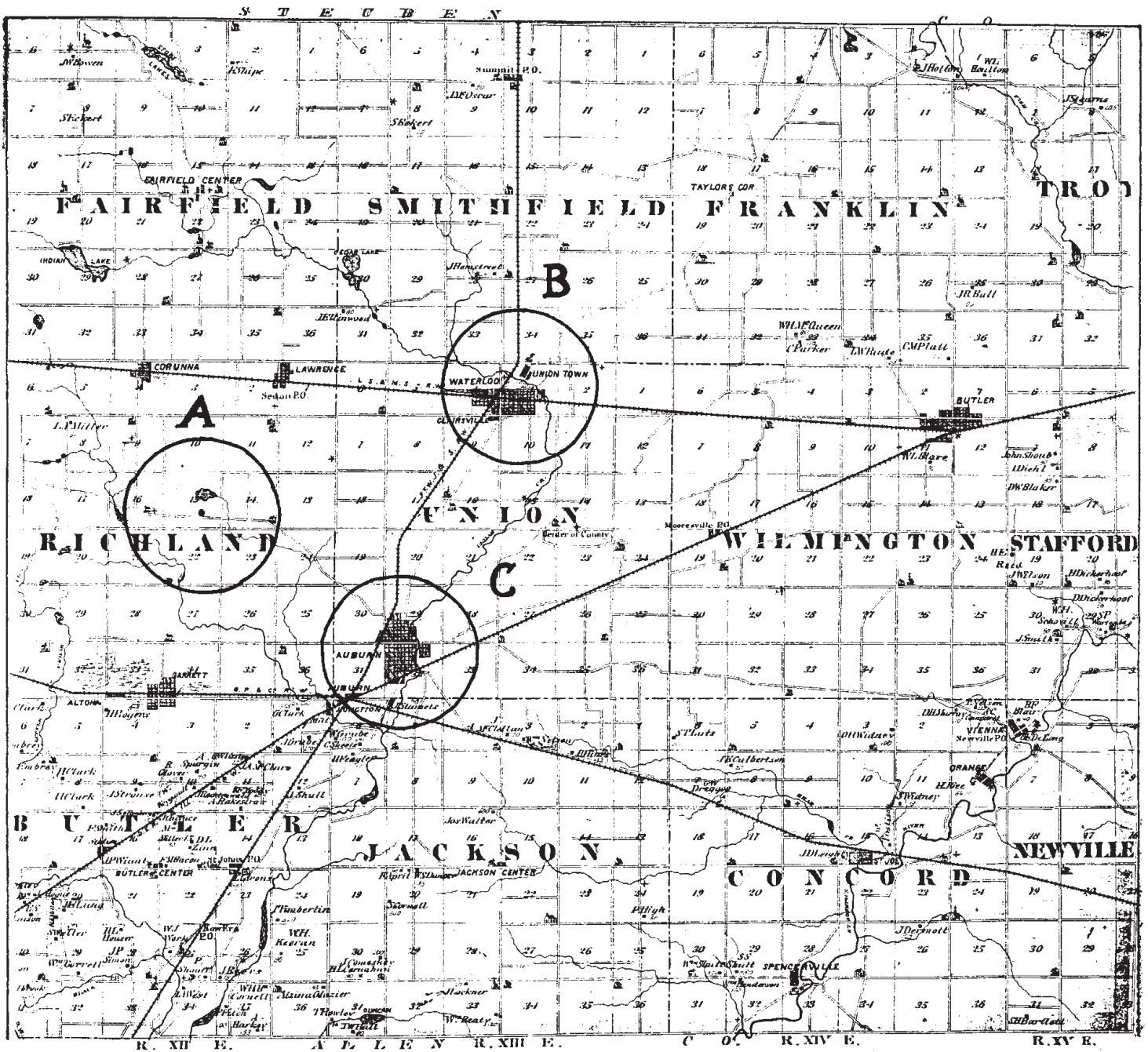
**Wareham's Ohio Beginnings:** George F. Wareham was born in Canton of Plain Township, Stark County, Ohio on December 16, 1826. His parents appear to be Henry and Nancy Wareham, who married in Stark County on January 5, 1826. Very little is known of the Warehams as George grew up. If George followed the normal practices of the day in learning the gunsmith's trade, he would have apprenticed under an established gunsmith for four to five years, probably during his 16th to 21st years which would be about 1843 through 1848. The strong design similarities between Jacob Paulmer's work and the early guns of George Wareham indicate that Paulmer must have been Wareham's teacher. Other links between the two men also support this presumption. On May 12th, 1850 Wareham

married the oldest child and daughter of Jacob Paulmer, Margaret Paulmer/Palmer, in Stark County. Interestingly, late in 1850 Paulmer left Stark County and moved to Dekalb County, Indiana. Perhaps his departure date coincided with the marriage of his oldest daughter, after seeing her married off and reasonably secure in her future with the gunsmith as a husband.

**Indiana Days:** Wareham continued to work as a gunsmith in Canton in Stark County until 1859. That year he moved with his family to Dekalb County, Indiana, where Paulmer had gone in 1850. The family ties and coincidence of going to the same Indiana county where Paulmer had earlier settled, tends to indicate that he may have again worked with or been assisted by Paulmer when reaching Indiana, during his first years there between 1859 and 1861. Paulmer was located in Fairfield Township in the western part of Dekalb County at that time. Wareham's whereabouts are unclear during those first two years in Dekalb County. On July 27th, 1861 he purchased town lot #10 for \$250 in Uniontown, now a northern subdivision of Waterloo in Union Township, Indiana, about ten miles east of Paulmer's farm. The purchase is recorded in *Dekalb County Deed Book R*, p. 492. He purchased a second one acre piece of land on the east edge of Waterloo in September of 1883, as recorded in *Dekalb County Grantee Deed Book JJ*, p. 572., but resold it to an Abigail Frick in 1887. An early history recalls the beginning of Uniontown, before today's larger town of Waterloo was there:

"The first Improvement in this vicinity was made near the Cedar Creek, northeast of Waterloo, and was called Uniontown. It is now a mere appendage, or "suburb" to the town (of Waterloo). Wesley Park, Sheriff of the county,

# MAP OF DE KALB COUNTY.



Locations within Dekalb County, Indiana showing: "A" home and shop of gunsmith Jacob S. Paulmer in Richland Twp.; "B" home and shop of gunsmith George Wareham; "C" is Auburn, county seat.

# MAP OF WATERLOO

De Kalb Co. Ind.

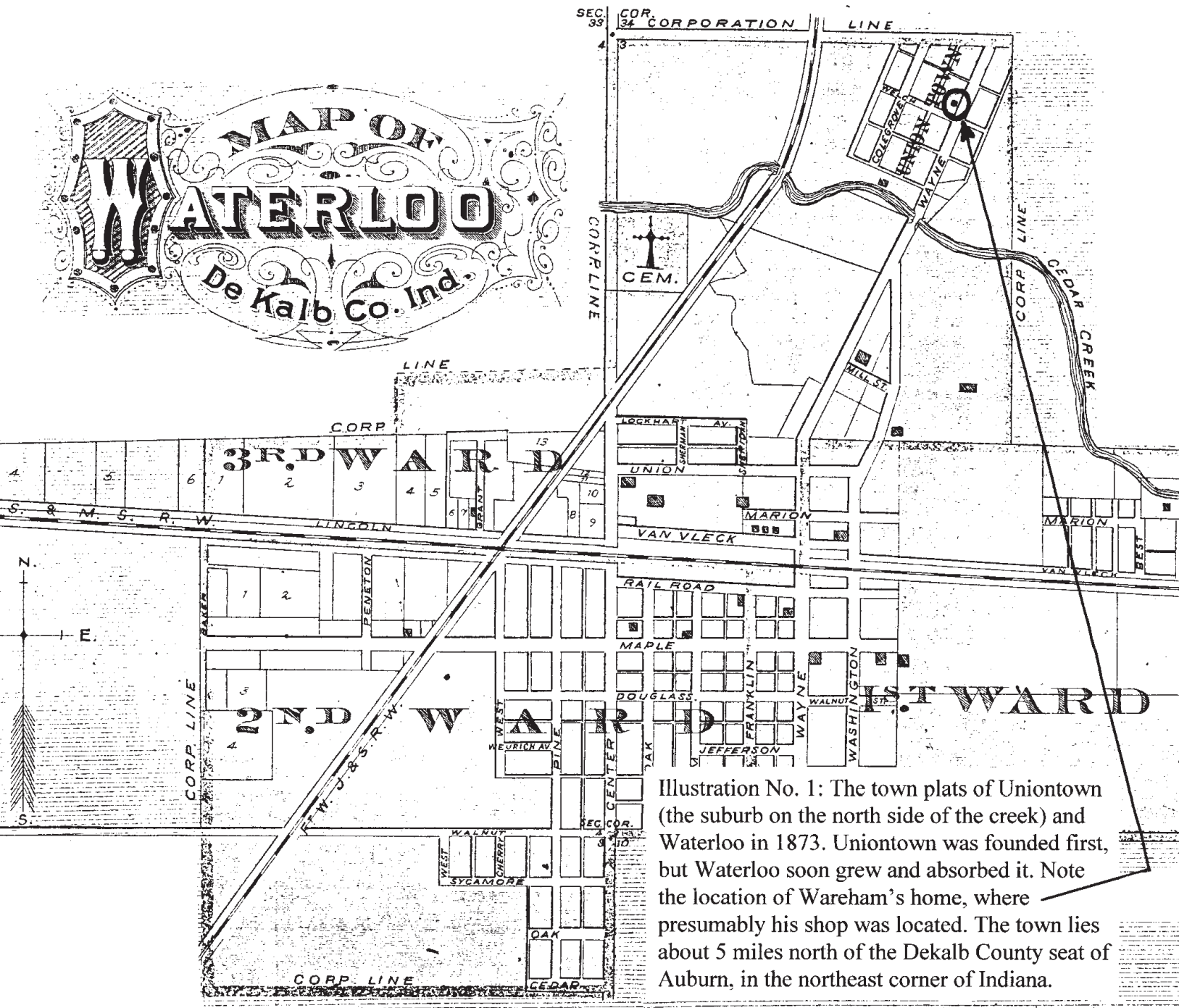


Illustration No. 1: The town plats of Uniontown (the suburb on the north side of the creek) and Waterloo in 1873. Uniontown was founded first, but Waterloo soon grew and absorbed it. Note the location of Wareham's home, where presumably his shop was located. The town lies about 5 miles north of the Dekalb County seat of Auburn, in the northeast corner of Indiana.

put up a board shanty on the site of Uniontown in 1838 as a shelter for two men employed to build a bridge over the Cedar at this point... Being on the line of the State road from Fort Wayne north through Angola, and sufficiently remote from the other settlements, this was thought a good site for a town, and a plat was accordingly made by Frederick Krum. A store building was put up, and a trading point established by George Trout. The firm of M. & A. Hale was the next to engage in the mercantile

business at Uniontown. James Bowman erected a water-powered saw-mill. School was started at an early day. Richard Burnistin was the village blacksmith, and bodily infirmities were cared for by Dr. Jones. Wareham was a gun-smith, and Smith kept a cabinet shop." *History of Dekalb County, Interstate Publishing, 1885, p.830.*

There in Uniontown, later called Waterloo, George Wareham spent the rest of his life

Illustration No. 2a: An early Wareham rifle, probably made in Stark County, Ohio ca. 1848-1850. This rifle strongly resembles the work of Jacob S. Paulmer, his teacher, both in stock architecture as well as carving and engraving details. It is particularly noteworthy for its relief carving at this late date in the percussion period. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.



Illustration No. 2c: Rear side of butt on early ca 1848-1850 Wareham rifle, showing extensive relief carving, oval cheek inlay with wavy engraved border, small heart inlays on side facing, and small, high cheek piece, all found on Jacob Paulmer's work. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.

Illustration No 2b: Patchbox side of early Wareham rifle from Ohio. Note the relieved wrist carving, as well as the patchbox engraving, and compare their details to the related work on the Paulmer rifle. Also note the high wrist and long, low comb found on Paulmer rifles of the same vintage. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.

working as a gunsmith, until he died in May of 1891. His obituary read:

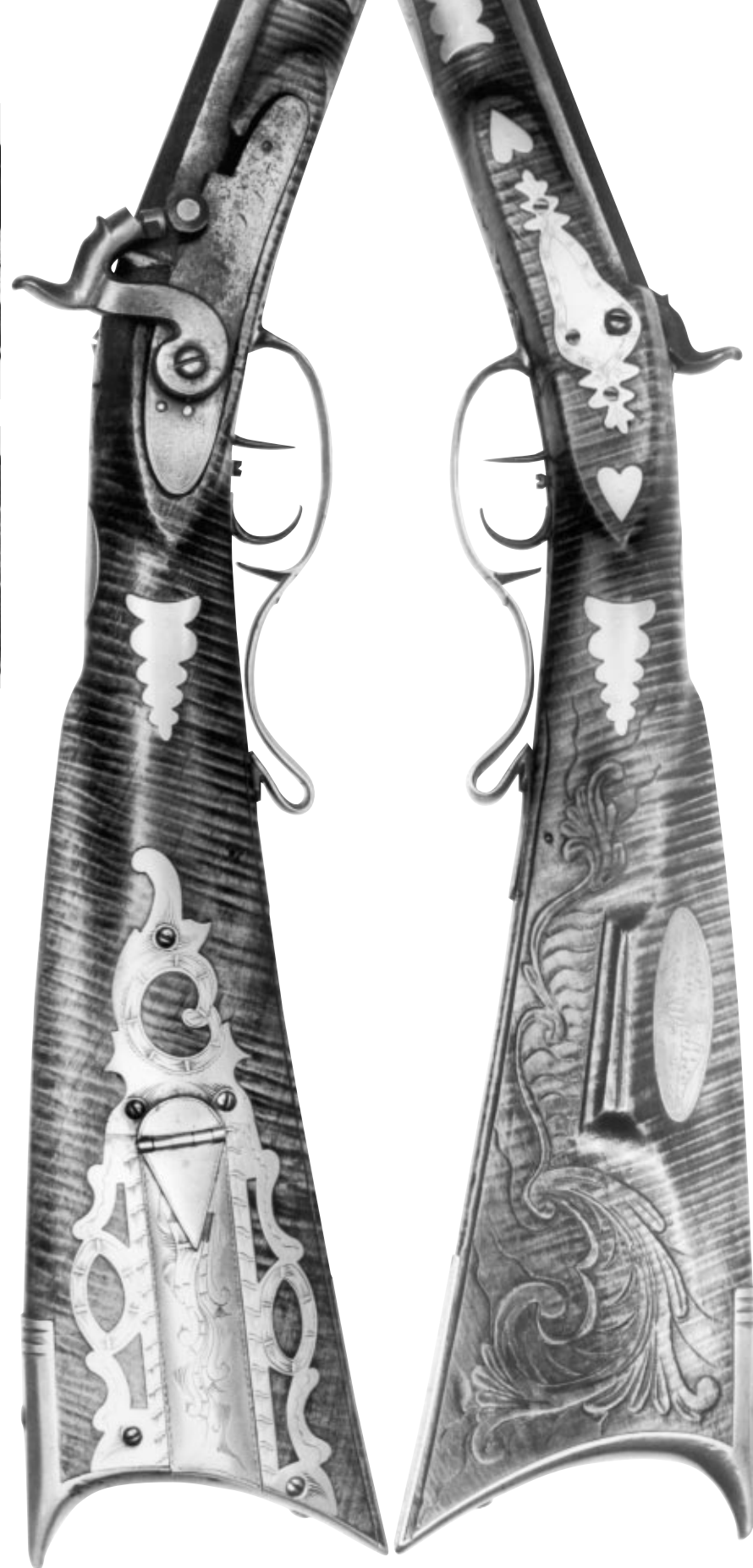
“Mr. George F. Wareham was born in Canton, Stark Co., Ohio Dec. 16, 1826, and died at his residence in Waterloo, Ind. May 9, 1891 after illness of 11 weeks; ages 65 yrs., 4 mos., and 28 days. Mr. Wareham came to Indiana in 1859 and settled in Waterloo in 1861, and has been a citizen of the place since that period. He followed the occupation of a gunsmith, and was an industrious, quiet citizen. In 1850 he was married to Margaret Palmer and to them were born eight children, seven sons and one daughter, of whom two sons, Harley and Edward, with mother survive him. The funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. this Thursday morning from the U.B. church, Rev. Klotz officiating. Interment occurs in Waterloo cemetery.”

Perhaps a key understanding of why so little public information exists about Wareham is the comments in his obituary that he “was an industrious, quiet citizen.” He did not get involved in local government, fraternal organizations of law suites, or other recorded events that might have left more enlightening details about his personal life. He apparently went about his business without creating public notice. However, his remaining guns indicate he was a good craftsman, efficient at his work and always striving to produce a quality product. The Wareham family burial plot in the Waterloo Cemetery is undoubtedly where George Wareham was buried, but no marker carries his name. However, one family grave is marked by the base section of what was, or should have been, a fancy two piece grave stone, cut in the form of a tree base with ferns. The trunk section of the marker where the names and dates would be carved is not present. The base section is identical in shape, carving and stone color to the monument marking Jacob S. Paulmer’s grave about 10 miles away. The coincidence is too great, and indicated the base section of the uncompleted monument undoubtedly marks where George Wareham was laid to rest.

Wareham’s two son’s Edward and Hiram, bought town lots #21 and #23 in Waterloo, close to George’s, in 1885 and 1886, respectively. Later records tend to indicate that neither son was a gunsmith, with Hiram (or Harley) becoming a local barber. On November 30, 1893, son Hiram sold George Wareham’s Uniontown/Waterloo lot #10 to John Palmer for \$450. While not verified, this John Palmer was probably Jacob Paulmer’s oldest son John. The sale is recorded in *Dekalb County Grantee Deed Book ZZ*, p 145.

**The Wareham Rifles:** The earliest known, and best, George Wareham rifle dates from his early Ohio period while he was closely associated with Jacob Paulmer, perhaps working in Paulmer’s shop as a journeyman during the 1848-1849 period. It is shown in Illustrations No. 2a, 2b and 2c. The rifle is noteworthy for its relief carving and full, well engraved patchbox at such a late date. But this should not be surprising to anyone familiar with the work of Jacob Paulmer, Wareham’s teacher, who did fine relief carving well into the late 1850’s. Wareham’s rifle should be closely compared to a similar work by Jacob Paulmer shown in Illustrations No. 3a and 3b, with particular emphasis on the patchbox engraving, small heart inlays, and the relief carving on the rear of the butt. Other Paulmer rifles show the same patchbox finial, the wrist carving, and even the smallish beaver tails at the rear of the side facings. The small wavy engraved border seen on the oval cheek inlays is also common to both men. The similarities are striking and undeniable. One difference, perhaps a key in identifying early unsigned guns, is Paulmer’s use of screws to attach both the patchbox’s finial side leaves, while Wareham used screws only for the finial and small nails for the side leaves.

The next Wareham rifle in age sequence is shown in Illustrations No 4a, 4b and 4c, and represents Wareham’s later Ohio years after Paulmer had left for Indiana, probably ca. 1850-1855. Dating is influenced by the use of a



patchbox outline not used by Paulmer, as well as less attention to detail, something Paulmer would not tolerate. The cheek piece changed to the later oval style so often preferred in the Midwest, something the author has not seen on any Paulmer rifles of this or later periods. However, the engraving, while overall degenerated from his first rifle, still has strong Paulmer details on the lid, borders and screw head shading. Many of the inlay shapes were also used by Paulmer. The rifle has a weak script signature on a somewhat roughly finished barrel still showing some hammer marks, indicating the barrel may have been made in Wareham's shop. A somewhat similar rifle, perhaps a few years later based on the trigger guard and shorter barrel, but probably still from Ohio, is the well-made fullstock with similar patchbox illustrated in *Gunmakers of Indiana*, by Albert Lindert in his section on George Wareham.

The next illustrated Wareham gun is a well made short fullstock that came out of a family in Waterloo, Dekalb County, Indiana, where Wareham worked after 1861. It is shown in Illustrations No. 6a and 6b. The gun has fine wood and typical Wareham low comb architecture, and a small rectangular side opening patchbox with the usual wavy engraved borders. Wareham's common tear drop shaped lock washer is present, along with a finely engraved toe plate with dashed borders and 8 point stars between the 5 attachment screws that run from the lower butt plate to the rear trigger guard extension. It is Wareham's later style rounded cheek, and "Indiana style" trigger

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Illustration No. 3a: Patchbox side of Paulmer rifle probably dating to ca. 1845. Note similarities in engraved details to Wareham rifle, as well as the long, low comb line. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.

Illustration No. 3b: Back side of 1845 Paulmer rifle, showing similarities to Wareham's work in relief carving, small heart inlays, and elongated cheek inlay. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.

guard, a neatly stamped signature, and overall is a neatly made rifle dating to his earlier years in Indiana, ca. 1861-1863.

The last illustrated rifle is an Indiana product with somewhat similar architecture to the previous short fullstock in the butt, comb and side facings outline, but a slightly higher comb and of later manufacture. It probably dates ca. 1865 due to its later style trigger guard, total lack of engraving, and oval capbox as opposed to earlier patchboxes. The gun is well made, as shown in Illustrations No. 7a and 7b, and still displays Wareham's characteristic late architecture.

A final study piece not illustrated here can be seen in Albert Lindert's book *Gunmakers of Indiana*, under the section on "Wareham." It is a typical Indiana halfstock with visible Midwestern "fishbelly" to the lower butt line and the typical "Indiana style" trigger guard extended rear spur. The gun would not be recognized as a Wareham except for the stamped barrel signature. The author has seen one other curly maple halfstock with the barrel stamped "G. Wareham," a pewter nose cap and conventional trigger guard, in no way indicative of a Wareham product other than the stamp. It is a completely original gun probably dating to the mid-1860's, and demonstrates the slow loss of identifying characteristics as muzzleloaders began to reach the end of their era.

**Conclusions:** It is difficult if not impossible to define Wareham's gunsmithing abilities without comparisons to Jacob Paulmer's efforts. The similarities are unmistakable in Wareham's early pieces, giving evidence of the close early working relationship of teacher and student. Their similar relocation patterns, from Stark County, Ohio to Dekalb County, Indiana, and the inter-marriage of Wareham to Paulmer's oldest daughter give further testimony of their close relationship. Paulmer was somehow driven to continue crafting highly decorated rifles until very late into the percussion period,

when most other gunmakers were making standardized, unadorned halfstocks of good workmanship but little or no artistic merit. His motivation will never be fully understood; in nearby northern Indiana cities such as Fort Wayne the local gunmakers who were his peers sold into almost the same region market and were producing plain rifles more common to the period. Perhaps Paulmer had an internal drive for excellence, preferring to buck trends and not give in to changes that he thought inferior. He kept his surname of "Paulmer" long after the rest of his family had altered it to the easier "Palmer" spelling; he apparently wouldn't give in to modernization.

George Wareham had much of the same drive to maintain earlier levels of design excellence, but as is true today, he was the younger generation and the motivation was weaker. He did his best work when closest to Paulmer, and changed more rapidly when working independently. Wareham's work tended to be of good quality, but never quite matched Paulmer's in detail and execution. His final years were more in tune with the universal demand for basic rifles with minimal decoration. Both men closed out the muzzle loading era in northeast Indiana, with Wareham dying a year before Paulmer in 1891 from an extended illness. Indiana had few gunmakers that contributed significantly to the development of, or design excellence in, rifles from the muzzle loading era. While both Wareham and Paulmer had their roots in Ohio, the majority of their working years were spent in northern Indiana, where they did in fact have a significant impact on Indiana gunmaking by maintaining design and quality excellence long after their counterparts had given it up. There may have been a few other isolated pockets of excellence in gunmaking during the late percussion period, but Paulmer's and Wareham's combined work stands out as one of the best small regional areas of gunmaking in the United States during the declining days of the muzzle loading rifle. And while their names may not appear in history books, the quality of their guns has earned them a small but

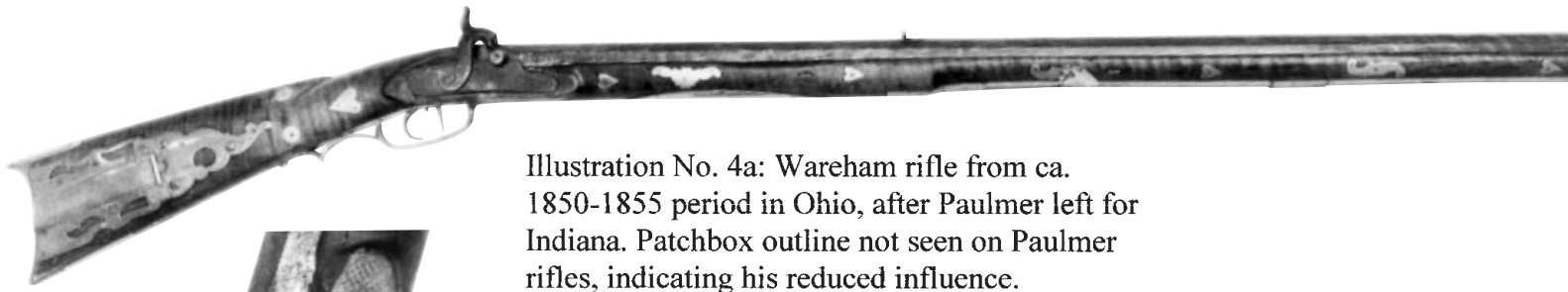


Illustration No. 4a: Wareham rifle from ca. 1850-1855 period in Ohio, after Paulmer left for Indiana. Patchbox outline not seen on Paulmer rifles, indicating his reduced influence. However, note engraved patterns, several inlay shapes and stock architecture still carry Paulmer influences. Wareham's engraving seems weaker than on prior guns. Also note large elongated oval wear plate under forestock grip area, common to most fullstock Paulmer and Wareham rifles, and having their wavy border engraving. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.



Illustration No. 4b: Patchbox on later Ohio period Wareham rifle, showing less precise, more random engraving. However, shaded triangles on lid ends plus screw head treatment still similar to earlier guns. Wareham used small nails to attach side leaves, while Paulmer used at least a rear screw, if not all screws to attach side leaves on his patchboxes. Photo by Dr. J. Whisker.

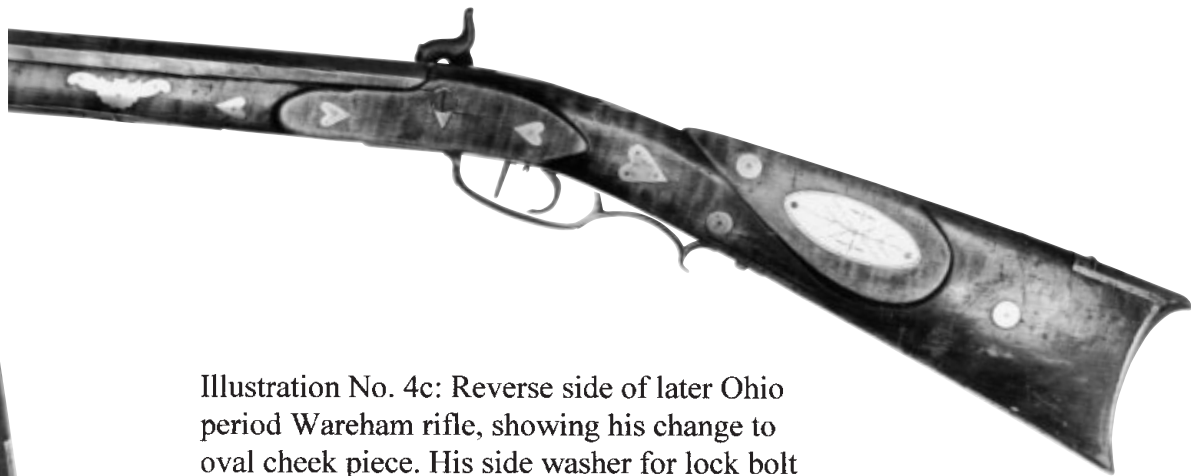


Illustration No. 4c: Reverse side of later Ohio period Wareham rifle, showing his change to oval cheek piece. His side washer for lock bolt was usually a tear drop shape pointing down, while Paulmer's was normally horn shaped pointing forward. Photo by J. Jeager.



permanent place in the annals of American gunmaking.

### FOOTNOTES ON JACOB S. PAULMER

Since the first publication on the life and works of Jacob S. Paulmer in the Association of the Ohio Longrifle Collectors Bulletin, and subsequently in *The Gun Report* magazine, March of 1994, additional information on Paulmer's life and family members has come to light during research on George Wareham.

1. Paulmer's oldest daughter, Margaret Paulmer/Palmer, was born in Pennsylvania ca. 1830. She married George Wareham on May 12th, 1850 in Stark County, Ohio. *Stark Co. Marriage Book*, p. 163 & 358.

2. Christian or Christopher Palmer, Jacob Paulmer's grandfather, moved to Plain Township, Stark County, Ohio in 1806. "The tide of immigration from Pennsylvania to Ohio was quite strong in 1806. During that year there settled in Plain Township, besides those already mentioned, ..... Christopher Palmer .... grandfather (sic - should state "father") of John Palmer and wife Margaret (Swinehart) Palmer." *Old Landmarks of Canton & Stark County, Ohio*, John Danner Ed., B.F. Bowen Pub., Logansport, IN, 1904, pp. 44-45.

3. Mrs. Elizabeth (Palmer) Speelman (Jacob Paulmer's sister) - "a representative of one of the earliest pioneer families of the county (Stark) where she was born... She was born on the farm where she now lives, in Plain township, on the 27th of August, 1810... She is the daughter of John and Margaret (Swinehart) Palmer) Palmer, who were natives of Pennsylvania, to which state they returned soon after the birth of the subject of this sketch but her father died shortly afterward, and her mother then returned to Stark county, where she remained for a long term, passing the closing days of her life in Crawford county, Ohio. Mrs. Elizabeth (Palmer) Speelman was thus reared in Stark, Co., where she grew up in the home of her paternal grandfather Christopher Palmer, receiving such educational advantages as were afforded in the primitive schools of the pioneer epoch in this section. With the exception of a



Illustration No. 5: Two George Wareham barrel signatures, the first a somewhat awkward script signature from his ca. 1851-1855 fullstock made in Ohio. The second signature, stamped into the barrel, is from a later Indiana halfstock rifle. Photos by J. Jeager.

period of a few years she has consecutively retained her residence in Plain Township." *Ibid.*, p. 628.

4. A fascinating glimpse into young Jacob Paulmer's life and personality is told in the following story: "The history of the township (Canton, Stark County, Ohio) would be incomplete without mention being made of Jacob Gaskins, a colored man, generally known among the settlers as "Schwartz Jake." He was born in Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, of slave parents, but manumitted at the age of twenty-one, and came to Plain township in 1817. He commenced an improvement on a section of land belonging to John Haines of which he had a lease of five years. At the expiration of that time, with what he made and the sale of a little property owned in Pennsylvania, he purchased twenty-five acres. Without any capital except the natural endowment of industry and economy he accumulated a large property, and although he confided too much in the representations of

white men, in going security and making unprofitable investments, his estate at his decease was valued at over twenty thousand dollars. He had great muscular power and the tales told of his feats of strength are truly marvelous. He was always an important adjunct at "raisings" and "huskings." At the time of his coming into the state there was a law in force requiring black men to give a bond with approved security for good behavior and that he would not become a county charge. His bondsman was Jacob Funk, a church member and a man of peace. At a "raising" Jacob S. Palmer, a stout man somewhat given to display of physical strength, undertook to make a butt of Gaskins. The latter finally lost his temper and appealed to his bondsman who was present, to give him permission to thrash Palmer. This being refused, Palmer became overbearing. Meanwhile Funk left the ground, when Gaskins, unable to bear it any longer, picked Palmer up as he would a child and threw him over a stake-and-rider fence. Palmer subsided and the Negro was never afterward molested." *Ibid.*, p.48.

5. *Dekalb County Court Book D* has the following references to Jacob S. Paulmer:

- a) In 1859 "Jacob S. Paulmer was allowed the sum of one dollar for services as overseer of the poor of Richland Township as per bill." Page 128.
- b) "J.B. Palmer" (sic) was listed as providing a service to the country. Page 215.
- c) "J.S. Palmer" was involved in the local road project. Page 18.

6. Lawlessness by bands of outlaws, or "blacklegs," during the 1850's in northern Indiana counties could not be controlled by local sheriffs; the state passed laws allowing the formation of vigilante groups to fight the blackleggers. "On February 20, 1858, the Richland Rangers were formed... for the protection of property and the bringing to justice all Backlegs... and for our own protection and for the furtherance of justice." J. Goetshius and Job Treesh were Chairman and Secretary respectively. Membership was limited to any white male citizen over the age of twenty-one who was duly elected and admitted by the



Illustration No. 6a: Patchbox side of a later Indiana fullstock rifle, ca. 1860's, by Wareham. Note the "Indiana style" trigger guard with drooping rear spur. Wareham used his characteristic wavy border engraving on the little patchbox, and low comb line. The exceptionally fine curly maple is unexpected for a later rifle. The gun came out of a family in Waterloo, Indiana where Wareham worked. Photo by Author.



Illustration No. 6b: Rear side of Indiana fullstock by Wareham, showing his oval cheek piece. Barely visible under the lower edge of the butt is his long toe plate, extending from butt plate to the trigger guard rear extension. Such long toe plates are frequently seen on Wareham rifles, and often decorated. Paulmer used shorter, more conventional toe plates, which he engraved nicely. Photo by Author.



Illustration No. 7a: Front side of late Indiana halfstock by Wareham. Gun has clean lines and good workmanship. It's comb is slightly higher than earlier guns, although it retains the expected Paulmer/Wareham height in the wrist. The cap box is fancier than normally found on the late post-1865 Midwest halfstock guns. Photo by J. Jeager.



Illustration No. 7b: Rear side of Wareham's late halfstock, showing somewhat better than average decoration with cheek star in oval cheek piece enlarged lock bolt washer/plate, and large oval forestock inlay. Photo by J. Jeager.

society and will (sic) to pay fifty cents to the Treasurer. The By Laws provided that, in the event of the death of a member, his widow... "shall receive the benefits arising from said society" but did not specify what those benefits were. Any member who was "detected in not being true to our cause... shall be fined in any sum not less than fifty not more than one thousand dollars... and otherwise dealt with as other traitors fellow thieves & counterfeiters are." Any member who was guilty of getting intoxicated while in the discharge of his duties was to be expelled for the society. The members of the Richland Rangers were listed, and included Jacob S. Palmer and John Palmer (Jacob's oldest son). *Dekalb County 1837-1987*, John Martin Ed., Dekalb Sesquicentennial, Inc., Auburn, IN, Vol. 1A, p.310.

7. Census Data: The most probable listings that locate Jacob S. Paulmer in Ohio while a gunsmith are given below. Some uncertainty

exists due to spelling differences, Paulmer vs. Palmer, in various records. He appears to be listed as:

- 1840 Census* - Jacob Palmer, Stark Co., Canton Twp., page 126. (although there is Jacob Palmer also listed in Wayne Co., Cannon Twp., p.061)
- 1850 Census* - Jacob Palmer, Wayne Co., Congress Twp., p. 620, with wife listed as: Susan (correct first name) Palmer, Wayne, Co., Congress Twp., p 619. (although there is a J.S. Palmer in Futon Co., Gorham Twp., p. 352)

NOTE: An Ohio Longrifle Collector member living close by needs to check these census references out against actual local records to determine by ages, family members, and place of birth which are the correct listings, so his actual location can be verified.