



# The Teaff Family

By Warren Offenberger



Much research has been done over the years documenting the work of James Teaff Sr. who worked at the gunsmithing trade in Pennsylvania and Ohio for forty-seven years and taught the trade to his sons William, James Jr., Matthew and Nimrod. Much of this information can be found in our A.O.L.R.C. newsletters and in the five volume set of books titled "Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen."

Recently I had the opportunity to make the acquaintance of Vernon Teaff of Russellville, Arkansas. Vernon is a direct descendant of the Teaff family and is the family genealogist, having spent many years researching the Teaff family. Vernon has traveled many miles to Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C. and California in search of military, census and family documents. He has been kind enough to share his research with me and I can now add more to the gunsmithing business of the Teaff family.

Henry Teaff (1757-1810) was the father of James Teaff Sr. He was born in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania the son of Michael and Anna Hockley Teaff. He married Mary (Moore?) in 1793 in Pennsylvania. Henry was the only Teaff in the 1800 census of Fayette County, Pennsylvania. He is listed as a gunsmith/silversmith in Fayette County tax records at Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Henry had two sons who were also gunsmiths, James Teaff Sr. and Nimrod, both born in Pennsylvania.

Henry was a Veteran of the Revolutionary War serving as private, Pines's 4<sup>th</sup> Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bat'l. 1777 MM, 4<sup>th</sup> Bat'l. 8CL, enlisted in Con'l Army Schaffers Co. Henry's widow Mary applied for a Revolutionary War Pension in 1850, the application reads as follows:

On this 5<sup>th</sup> day of October A.D. 1850 personally appeared before the Subscriber President Judge of the Several Courts of Fayette County. Mary Teaf a resident of Wharton Township in said county aged seventy five past who being first duly sworn according to law doth in her oath depose and make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefit of an Act of Congress passed July 7<sup>th</sup> 1838 entitled An Act Granting Half Pay and Pensions to certain widows. That she is the widow of Henry Teaf a soldier of the Revolutionary War in the service of the United States. His service she cannot precisely recollect but she had heard him speak of the suffering at VALLEY FORGE and has heard him speak of the BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE and GERMANTOWN. She does not know the officers under whom he served but has heard him say he served in Proctors Artillery and have since recollect of hearing him speak of Gen. Wayne. She says also that he lived in Lancaster County Pennsylvania at the time he entered the service. That he served until the end of the war and that he belonged the army several years. She further declared that she was married to the said Henry Teaf the month of October in Seventeen Hundred and Ninety Three and that there is no record either public or private of the marriage and that her husband died in the month of September Eighteen Hundred and Ten that she was not married previous to the last period of his service but that the marriage took place previous to Seventeen hundred and ninety four viz at the time above stated. She further states that she did not know until lately that she was entitled to a pension is the reason she had not applied before, that she lives in a mountainous district and was unable to attend to this for her and she was disabled herself. Her mark; Mary X Teaf Sworn to and subscribed this 5<sup>th</sup> day of October 1850; Samuel A. Gilmore P.J.



Fullstock Percussion Rifle  
By James Teaff Sr.  
Photo By Jim Whisker

Nimrod Teaff was born in 1803. He was the son of Henry and brother of James Teaff Sr. He worked at gunsmithing in Pennsylvania and Steubenville, Ohio. He then removed to Marion County, Arkansas where he is listed in the 1850 Census as Gunsmith/Blacksmith/Farmer.

James Teaff Sr., son of Henry Teaff and brother of Nimrod was born in 1796 in Pennsylvania and worked as a gunsmith there before removing to Steubenville, Jefferson County, Ohio around 1816. Asa McClelland the gunsmith of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania advertised a six cent reward for his run-away apprentice James Teaff, Aug. 1814.

Vernon Teaff tells me that his research shows that James Teaff Sr. served in the War of 1812 for Asa McClelland. He served with Cap't John Brown's Company of Infantry, 1<sup>st</sup> Reg't, Pennsylvania. James would have been around 16 – 18 years old at this time and must have had an agreement with McClelland to be removed from his indenture. According to researcher Richard Rosenberger "the ad that was placed by McClelland Aug. 22, 1814 in the newspaper for run-away James Teaff was probably just a formality to satisfy the laws concerning an indenture or apprenticeship. By only offering a six cent reward it is clear that McClelland didn't want Teaff back otherwise he would have offered several dollars. Maybe this was a way to break the contract so Teaff could enter the military for McClelland."

James Sr. was just 14 years old when his father Henry died, old enough to be initiated into the trade prior to his association with McClelland. James married Eleanor Mahan on June 24, 1821 in Brooke County, Virginia. They had the following children: William, born 1822; Nimrod, born 1824; James Jr., born 1826; Mary, born 1828; Nancy, born 1830; Henry, born 1833; Matthew, born 1836. William, Nimrod, James Jr. and Matthew were taught the gunsmith trade by their father.

James Teaff Sr. died in 1860 and his estate inventory shows various gunsmithing tools. He

is buried in the Union Cemetery, Steubenville, Ohio. The widow Eleanor Teaff died on April 21, 1875 in Steubenville.

William, Nimrod, James Jr. and Matthew all worked in their father's shop then they all worked independently.

Obituary for William Teaff: Died July 23, 1895 Carnegie, Allegheny Co. Pennsylvania.

William M. Teaff, foreman of roundhouse, Pan Handle Railroad Company, Dennison, was born in Jefferson County, Ohio, May 26, 1822. He is a son of James and Eleanor (Mahon) Teaff, the former of English and Dutch descent and a native of Pennsylvania, the latter a native of Maryland, of Irish lineage. Mr. William M. Teaff's father was a gunsmith by trade, and emigrated to Ohio in 1803, settling in Jefferson County, Ohio where he raised a family of nine children, our subject being the eldest. William received the rudiments of his education in the district school of his township, when he took a course in the academy at Steubenville, Ohio, under Prof. J. W. Scott. He selected the occupation of a machinist, and at the age of nineteen went into the shops of A. M. Phillips. Also worked with the latter in Wheeling, being employed by him in all six years. He went on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers as an engineer on a steamboat for ten years more. Was then employed for three years in the cotton mill in Steubenville, Ohio. He was five years in Pennsylvania, helping to make new machinery for cotton works. For sixteen years he was in the motive department of the Pan Handle Railroad, part of the time being foreman. In 1867, he came to Dennison, where he was foreman of the rotary shop. Was subsequently appointed foreman of the tool shop, serving in this capacity five years. He then went to Pittsburgh, where for eight years he had charge of the shops. On returning to Dennison, he became foreman of the roundhouse, in charge of eighteen engines and has since faithfully discharged the duties of that office. He was married in 1844, to Ludinda B. Thomas, daughter of Alexander Thomas, a prominent wagon maker. She is a native of



Halfstock Flintlock Rifle By James Teaff Jr. Photo By Jim Whisker

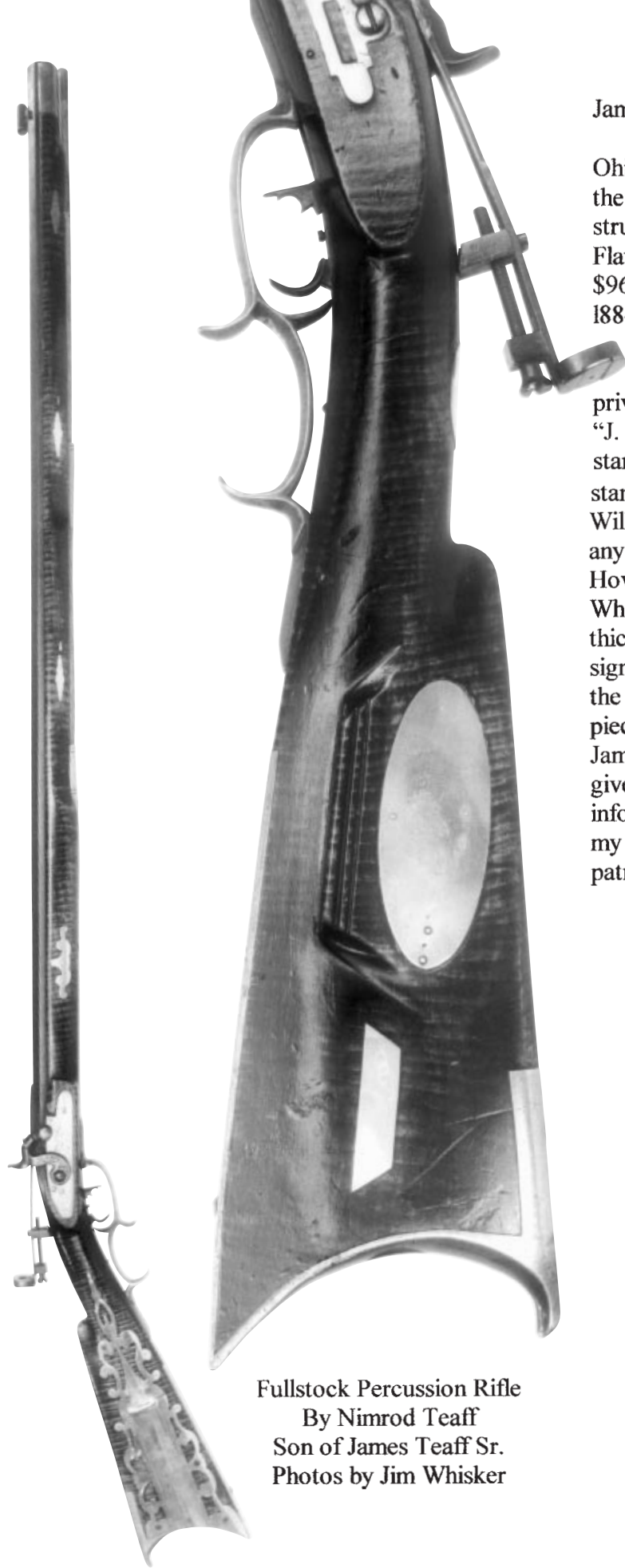
Jefferson County, Ohio, and of German and Welsh descent. Mr. and Mrs. Teaff are the parents of two children, named James A., a machinist, married and residing in Mount Vernon, Ohio, and Maggie, wife of James Devine, engineer on the Pan Handle Railroad. Mrs. Teaff is a member of the Episcopal Church. In politics, Mr. Teaff is a Republican. He is a member of the Town Council of Dennison, of the Knights of Pythias, and has taken the Uniform Degree in that order. In 1864, he enlisted in the artillery in Knapp Battery. Was with Sherman in the grand march to the sea. He was on detached duty and had ninety men under his charge while on the march. He served till the close of the war.  
(Taken from History of Tuscarawas Co. OH. 1884)

Obituary for Nimrod Teaff: Died June 18, 1916  
Ashland Co. Ohio

NIMROD TEAFF, Obituary; Word was received here Monday of the death of Nimrod Teaff, aged 93 years, at the home of his daughter, Mrs. J.H. Moreton at Ashland. Mr. Teaff has been in failing health for the past three months. He was born in Steubenville, March 29, 1824, his parents being pioneer settlers and prominent in the early history of Ohio. The deceased was a veteran of both the Mexican and Civil Wars, having fought at Monteray under General Taylor, having enlisted in company H., First Ohio volunteers. When a boy Mr. Teaff attended school with Edwin McMasters Stanton, Secretary of War in President Lincoln's Cabinet. He married Miss Anna Elizabeth Osborne, of Holliday's Cove, who with three children, Henry, George and Frank, preceded him to the grave. He is survived by one sister, Mrs. Ella Christy, of this city, and the following Children; Namrod, of Toronto; J. E. (James Edgar) of Columbus; and Mrs. H. H. Moreton, of Ashland, R. W. (Raymond Wilford) Teaff and Mrs. M.F. (Matthew Frank) Weaver, of this city. The remains will be brought to the home of M. F. Weaver, Monday evening on the 8:10 train. Age 92 years, 2 months, 19 days. (From the Steubenville Daily Herald 22 June. 1916. Page 5.)

Obituary for Matthew Teaff: Died June 30, 1913  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Matthew Teaff, machinist (and gang boss) for the Pan Handle Railroad Company, Dennison, was born in Steubenville, Ohio, April 15, 1836. His parents, James and Eleanor (Mahon) Teaff, were natives of Pennsylvania and Maryland respectively, the former of English, the latter of Irish descent; and his father James Teaff, was a gunsmith, and settled in Steubenville at an early day; was in the war under Gen. Harrison. Of the family of ten children, nine were reared to manhood, our subject being the seventh child; the latter obtained a fair education at the graded school at Steubenville, where he graduated with honors. He chose as his business that of machinist, and commenced to work in the Pittsburgh Railroad shops, where he continued for ten years, was gang boss four years. In 1861, he enlisted in the Second Ohio Volunteer Infantry, Company C, and served three years, and in the last was first Duty-Sergeant. He served his full time, and was a faithful soldier. At the close of the war in 1865, he worked at his trade for the Pittsburgh Railroad Company, and in 1871 was appointed gang boss, which position he has since occupied. He is a genial, sociable man, and was manager of the Olympic Theatrical Troup in Dennison; he was married in 1861 to Mary E. Handlon, a native of Pennsylvania. This union was blessed with two children, both of whom are deceased. Mr. and Mrs. Teaff are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church of which the former was Sunday School Superintendent for two years. In politics, he was a Republican, and has been Trustee of Mill Township two terms, and a member of School Board of Dennison. He is a prominent member of the I.O.O.F., of the subordinates and the encampment; and of the K. of P. He was Captain of the Tuscarawas Zouave Home Militia for two years. He is a whole-souled, generous-hearted gentleman; has been successful financially, and is highly respected by those who know him well. (Taken from History of Tuscarawas Co. OH. 1884)



James Teaff Jr.

We lose James Jr. in the 1850 census of Ohio. The reason for this is now clear, he left the state for the Gold Rush in California and struck it rich. He had two gold claims in Dutch Flat, California. He later sold the claims for \$96,000.00 cash and gold coin. He died Oct. 5, 1884 in Oakland, California.

There are several fine Ohio rifles now in private collections by James Sr. marked in script "J. Teaff"; James Teaff Jr. marked with a die stamp "J. Teaff"; and Nimrod marked with a die stamp "N. Teaff". I have never seen a rifle by William or Matthew Teaff. Nor have I ever seen any engraved rifles by Nimrod or James Jr. However, many years ago at a gun show around Wheeling, near Steubenville, Ohio, I saw an early thick butted well worn original flintlock rifle signed "Teaff" in large chiseled block letters on the barrel. At that time I thought it was an early piece by James Teaff Sr. Knowing now that James Sr. always signed his rifles in script and given the age of the piece plus the new information we now have, I believe what I had in my hands was an early rifle made by the patriarch, Henry Teaff.

Fullstock Percussion Rifle  
By Nimrod Teaff  
Son of James Teaff Sr.  
Photos by Jim Whisker



# John Lowmaster Master Gunsmith

By Warren Offenberger

Wendel Laumeister was the first of this family to arrive in America settling in York County, Pennsylvania. He was born in the Margraves of Baden, Germany about 1726. The name can be found spelled as Lowmaster, Lawmaster, Lawmeister and Leinmeister in census and church records. Wendell and his wife Magdalena had several children before his death in August, 1797. One of these was Frederick who was born in 1754 and died in York County, PA. in 1798.

Frederick and his wife Maria also had several children including our subject John Lowmaster. John was born April 2, 1783 in York, York Co. PA. He was Christened on April 27, 1783 at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in York and was married in 1808 to Ann Amelia Schultz.

John probably learned the gunsmithing trade from Martin Fry, who was working in York in 1800, or had an association with him. There is enough similarity in the early rifles of Fry and Lowmaster to suggest that they spent some time together.

Lowmaster worked in York to around 1810 more or less then migrated to Virginia. A deed recorded in York in May 1816 was witnessed by John Lowmaster of Berkeley County, Virginia (now West Virginia).

In 1816 John and Ann Lowmaster moved to Fairfield County, Ohio where they purchased 93 acres of land (section 17, range 17) for the sum of \$665.00. Here nine of their thirteen children were born including Anna, John, Sarah, Susanna, Eleanor, Alexander, Rebecca, Ruben, Henry, Jefferson, William, Ann and Jacob.

John Lowmaster the master gunsmith died intestate in 1832. He was forty-nine years old. In 1839 the widow petitioned the court to partition thirty-three acres of the homestead for the sum of \$700.00. The entire family by 1845 had moved to Wyandott County, Ohio where three of John's sons bought land. Ann Amelia Shultz Lowmaster died on June 19 or 20, 1871 in Eden twp. Wyandott Co., Ohio and was buried in Eden Church Cemetery.

John Lowmaster rifles are rather scarce. I have only seen a half dozen or so. There are two in the Kindig Collection and are illustrated in his book "Thoughts On The Kentucky Rifle In Its Golden Age", pages 332-333. I am illustrating these two rifles plus two pieces made in Ohio.

## **PUBLIC SALE.**

**T**O BE SOLD AT PUBLIC SALE, on *Friday the 21st of September, inst.*, at the house of the Subscriber, in Richland township, 1 of a mile east of Rushville, the following property, viz:

### **1 set of Gunsmiths Tools,**

1 bellows, 1 vice, 1 anville, 1 jack-screw, 1 gun half finished, 4 gun barrels, 1 shot gun, 3 bed-steads, (1 a French post); 1 wagon body, several cows, two ploughs, some plank, and one iron kettle.

Sale to commence at 9 o'clock A. M., and to continue until all is sold. Nine months credit will be given on all sums over two dollars, by giving note with good security.

**JOHN LOWMASTER.**

Sept. 1, 1832.—p.

This ad was placed in the "Ohio Eagle and Fairfield Advertiser" by John Lowmaster's son John shortly after his father's death in 1832.

(Text continued on pg 14)



Illustration No. 1 Photos by Bluford W. Muir



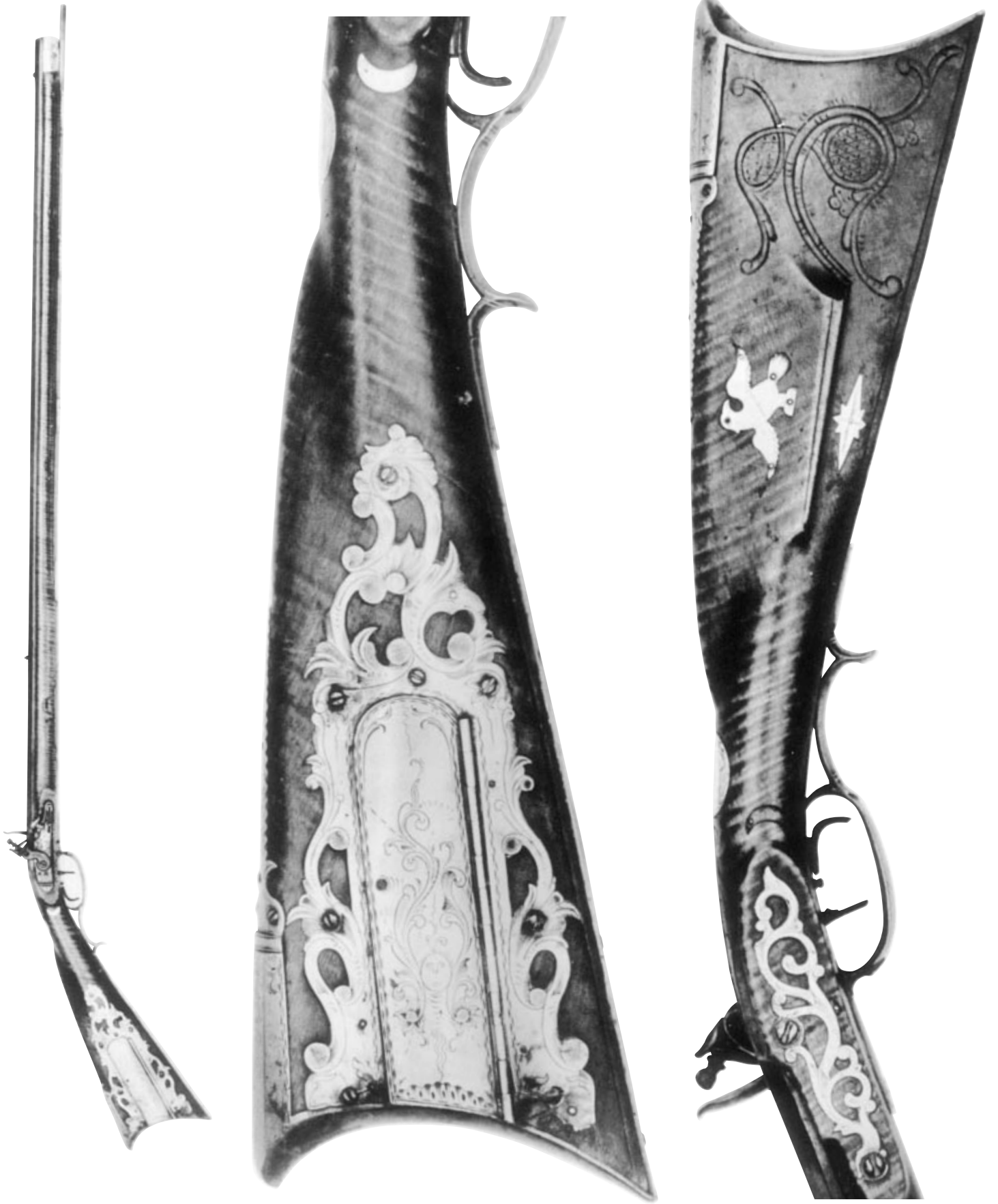


Illustration No. 2 Photos By Bluford W. Muir

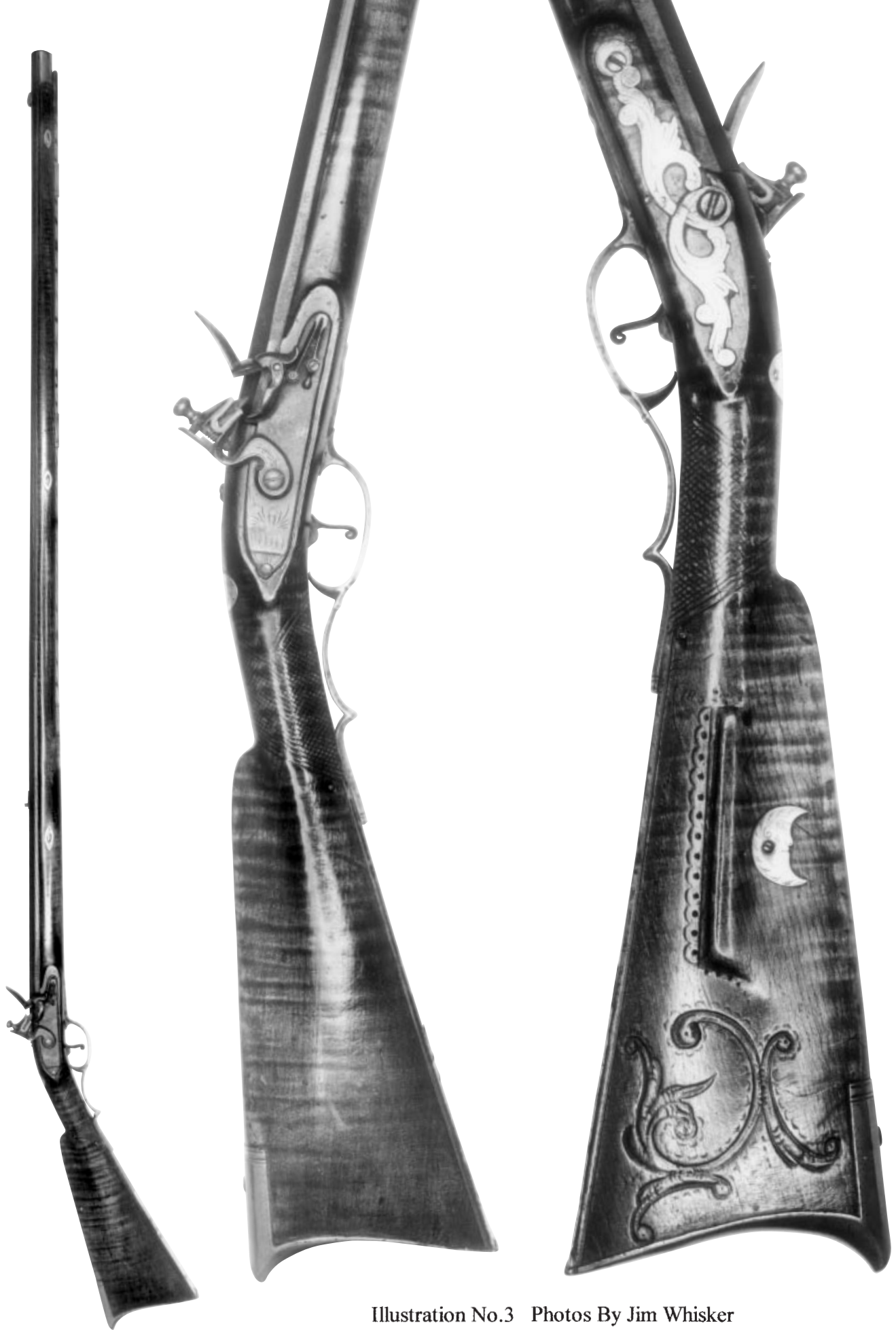


Illustration No.3 Photos By Jim Whisker



Illustration No.4 Photos By Jim Whisker

Illustration No 1 is from the Kindig Collection and is a fine Lowmaster rifle made in York Co., Pa. It has a finely engraved patch box, some nice incised carving on the buttstock and a 40 ½" barrel signed "J. Lowmaster".

Illustration No 2 is also from the Kindig Collection. It featured a grand fully engraved side open patchbox, a nice outline eagle in the cheekpiece and a lacy sideplate with 6 piercings. It is incised carved at the buttstock and the entire piece has superior engraving. The barrel is 40". Signed "J. Lowmaster".

Illustration No 3 is an Ohio made fullstock flintlock with an octagon to round barrel 42" long. It is stocked in curly maple and has 8 coin silver mounts including a nice inverted moon in the cheekpiece. The rifle also has a nice pierced sideplate fully engraved and a checkered wrist. The barrel is signed in script "J. Lowmaster".

Illustration No 4. This late percussion rifle is signed "J. Lowmaster" and was probably made shortly before his death in 1832. It features a full brass patchbox, silver eagle in the cheekpiece and a fancy tulip shaped pierced side plate.

Kindig comments in his book that John Lowmaster was an extremely superior workman who was virtually unexcelled in brasswork. I agree!

## OBITUARY.

Near Rushville, on Friday night last, Mr. JOHN LOWMASTER, aged about 55 yrs, leaving a wife and 11 children to mourn his loss. On Sunday his remains were conveyed to the silent mansions of the dead, attended by a large concourse of weeping relatives and friends, on which occasion the Rev. Mr. WAGNER delivered a very pathetic address. Mr. L. was a highly esteemed citizen.

I would be remiss if I did not give credit to Deward Watts of Amanda, Ohio who helped me with this article. Deward kindly sent me the Lowmaster auction notice, obituary and the petition for the land transaction.

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