

EDITOR'S NOTES

In this issue we include the story of an "E. Bird" rifle by Ron Yerian, in which the author gives some insights into the mysteries and motivations behind collecting antique Ohio rifles and the often complicated lives of Ohio gunsmiths of earlier times, which often corresponded with the periods of great Western migrations of the 19th century. Another article by Bob Statler explores the work of Stephen Prescott Dyer of Richland County, one of an unknown number of Ohio gunsmiths who has escaped being recorded in volumes such as Donald Hutslar's monumental *Gunsmiths of Ohio, 18th and 19th Centuries* (Hutslar 1973). An article by this editor examines a rifle stamped William Stalter which is attributed to the Logan area of Hocking County – an Appalachian Ohio county with relatively few known makers. A major feature of this issue is an article that offers information on a newly discovered "missing link" rifle by James Ross of early Steubenville, Jefferson County. Also included are photos of the Sp 2022 Marietta Show (held despite the Pandemic) which visually help tell our organization's story, and a report from the Ladies' Auxiliary.

I would like to take this moment to thank all the contributors to this issue who have helped compile more information that fill in much needed details of the history,

culture, and art of the early Ohio rifles and related firearms and accoutrements. Special thanks go to a "longtime and knowledgeable collector of Ohio rifles," as well as Mark Barnhill, Barb Harwood, Alyse Wagner, and Judy Yerian. I would also like to thank the team at Carlisle Printing Company in Walnut Creek, Ohio, for their efforts in producing this newsletter.

I would also encourage you to send me an article – with nice pictures – detailing any of the interesting rifles you own. Or articles on history of a particular gunsmith – or group of gunsmiths. Personal anecdotes and family memories of the old-time rifles are also interesting, as are accounts of current shoots, displays, museum exhibits, or shows (such as they are yet held). I would love to see articles on contemporary makers in Ohio, who will someday be the subject of future generations interest as the story of Ohio antique guns continues. Leafing through our back issues on the aolrc.com website will give you some ideas. Details for submitting an article (don't be shy) are explained in the box below.

Yours truly, Mark Bender
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GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION

1. The preferred format for articles is a Word document. Please use size 12 font, single or double space, 1 inch margins.
2. Printed photographs, drawings, and typed or handwritten manuscripts can be mailed to:
Mark Bender
5716 Desmond Ct., Dublin, Ohio 43017 USA
3. Articles in Word (or compatible system), photos (j-pegs or other formats), and correspondence can be emailed to this address: mabgogo@yahoo.com
4. Please put "AOLRCfile" in the subject line of the email.
5. Please run a spelling and grammar check on your e-files and otherwise proofread them.
6. Please put the **title and author's name** at the top of the article; use the same font size for the whole article.
7. **Photographs** can be color or black and white. If you are not a professional, good results can be obtained by taking photos of objects in soft, outdoor light.
8. Lay the object on a non-reflective black background (blanket, etc.) with no background clutter. Please keep in mind how a color image might look if presented in black and white. Photos should be clear and sharp. (Professionals will, of course, have their own protocols.)
9. Use **past issues as a guideline** to content. Ideas for articles include local or family histories of pre-1900 Ohio gunsmiths and the use of muzzle-loading arms; detailed descriptions of representative or unique rifles (in terms of features or level of craftsmanship); accoutrements; short interviews with AOLRC members relating to collecting and appreciation of the Ohio long rifle as a folk art; accounts of early shooting clubs, shoots, tales, etc.
9. The newsletter is normally published twice a year. Submissions are always welcome, however timely notices for the Spring or Fall shows need to be received **at least 6 weeks** in advance.

FACEBOOK LINK ANNOUNCEMENT

Visit the site at <http://www.aolrc.com/> to find dates of upcoming shows, articles, and even items for sale. Please check out the new Facebook link. This promises to be an exciting place to post current news and photos. Both the AOLRC website and Facebook page make communication much faster and more convenient to access than the newsletter you are holding. Find them online and enhance your AOLRC experience.

STEPHEN PRESCOTT DYER: UNLISTED OHIO GUNSMITH

BY BOB STATLER

In the last few years, two rifles have surfaced that are stamped on the barrel with the mark of S.P. Dyer. This name would not be found in any reference material for known gunsmiths in Ohio or any other state. But an internet search of this name would yield some information about an individual from Richland County, Ohio. Two advertisements for a gunsmith in an Ohio newspaper, THE BELLVILLE WEEKLY (Bellville, Ohio) were found from 1875 and 1876.

Stephen Prescott Dyer was born on March 4th, 1823 in Perry township, Richland County Ohio to Brackett and Sarah Prescott Dyer. The Dyer family moved from New Hampshire to Licking County Ohio in 1819, then to Richland County in 1822. Dyer was married to Ann Geddis {b. 1833 in Ireland} in Richland County in 1849. They had 6 children.

Dyer is listed in all the federal census' from 1850 to 1880 and interestingly he has a different occupation recorded in each one. In 1850, he is residing in Perry Twp. Richland County with the occupation of a shoemaker. His older brother Orrin is also a shoemaker. The 1860 census does list him as a gunsmith, but residing in Berlin Twp. Knox County, Ohio. The exact location of his gun shop at this specific date is not known. Bellville still could have been the closest town to his residence and his shop may have there.

In 1870, he is listed now in Jefferson Twp. Bellville, Ohio. The handwritten listing of his occupation is a little hard to decipher, but definitely does not say "gunsmith." In comparing other entries on the same page, it appears to say farm laborer. One wonders if this is a mistake made by the writer or maybe he was involved in both occupations. Also in 1870, another marriage record was recorded in Richland County for Mr. Dyer. He married a widow with 6 children named Susan Leedy Garber. She was born in Knox County, Ohio in 1830. Oddly, no death, burial or any other records has been found about his first wife Ann. Their last child born to Stephen and Ann was in 1865.

No other information on Dyer specifically being involved in gunsmithing could be found after the 1876 advertisement. The ad states his shop was located above Wagener's shoe store. This structure was reportedly

burned in a fire sometime prior to 1880.

The 1880 census interestingly lists his occupation as a botanic physician, still residing in Bellville. A newspaper article found in THE BELLVILLE INDEPENDENT from June, 1895 tells of a local citizen, Henry Fehse, who underwent a successful surgery at the hand of Dr. S. Dyer, to remove a fibrous cancer from the nose of Mr. Fehse. The article stated he was very satisfied with the results of the operation!

Stephen Dyer passed away on April 29th, 1898 and is buried in the Bellville cemetery. His obituary states he was involved in the practice of medicine for 25 years with the treatment of cancers being his specialty. There is no mention of him being a gunsmith in the obituary. Based on this information, it can be concluded Mr. Dyer was involved in the gunsmithing trade possibly for twenty years, give or take, from at least 1860 to 1876.

A shoemaker, a gunsmith, possibly a farmer, and a practicing physician actually performing successful surgeries makes it apparent this was a man of many talents. I cannot help but wonder of the possibility of his gunsmithing activities and his medical practice possibly overlapped a few years. 25 years of practicing medicine from the time of his death predates the gunsmith advertisements from 1875-76. An interesting thought indeed!

I would like to thank Mr. Larry Von Blon of Bellville, Ohio for sharing the biographical information he had gathered on S.P. Dyer. Pictured here is one of the rifles made by Dyer, which includes a marked mold also.

FOR SALE — A house and lot in Bellville.
FOR RENT — A stable in Bellville.

GUNSMITH SHOP
OVER WAGENER'S SHOE STORE.
S. P. DYER,
IS now prepared to manufacture and repair
Guns. Also repairing of Sewing Machines
and Clocks. Reasonable rates. All work war-
ranted one year. (v4u10-tf)

J. SWANK & SON,
Dealers in

Advertisement of Dyer products (photo by Bob Statler)