

JACOB A. MOSER, FARMER AND GUNSMITH

WAYNE COUNTY & ALLEN COUNTY, OHIO

COMPILED BY TOM McCULLOUGH- PANDORA, OHIO

Jacob A. Moser was born on 21 Oct. 1839 in Dalton, Wayne County, Ohio. His parents were Abraham Moser (1819-1881) and Mary (Hofstetter) Moser (1820-1872). Jacob enlisted in the Army on 20 April 1861 and discharged 4 Sept. 1861. He married Anna Luginbuhl (1838-1925) at the Old Swiss Church on 23 Feb. 1865. They had 9 children in 14 years (Fanny, Magdelana, Mattie, Theophilus Phillip, Noah, Elizabeth, Elizabeth, Amos, and John Q.) They moved from Wayne County to Allen County Ohio in about 1872. Jacob was a farmer by occupation and also a gunsmith. His farm house still stands at 8450 Napoleon Road, 2 miles north of Beavertown, Allen County, Ohio. He died on 31 Mar. 1912 at the age of 72 in Bluffton, Allen County, Ohio and is buried at Ebenezer Mennonite Cemetery, Bluffton, Ohio. Four signed rifles are known.

1st Rifle located:

- Percussion curly maple half stock with a fish belly shaped stock. Standard shaped panel cheekpiece. Back

action lock marked-Dayton. Brass mounted with handmade cap box. Barrel with engraved signature - Jacob A. Moser No. 20. Wrist repairs with plate on left side, plates under lock, and screws. Rifle located in Arizona in 2011 and was sold at a gun show in the Phoenix area.

2nd Rifle located:

- Percussion curly maple half stock with a fish belly shaped stock. Standard shaped panel cheekpiece. Back action lock marked-G. Goulcher. Brass mounted with no cap box. 40 caliber barrel with engraved signature - Jacob A. Moser No. 12. Four square brass inlays for barrel pins. Stock was finished with drawknife, scrappers, and file. Stock crack above side plate. Wood loss around drum. Brass ramrod and 3-ramrod thimbles. Rifle located in Bowling Green, Ohio at the Don Rose Auction and sold at their on-line auction March 14th, 2020.



“WM RIFE”: PICKAWAY AND FAIRFIELD COUNTIES

BY MARK BENDER

A heavy barreled, double-keyed, percussion rifle with the name “Wm Rife” engraved in block letters on the barrel recently surfaced in Westerville, Ohio. The Rife rifle was paired with an unmarked percussion rifle which appears to be restocked around an older .51 cal. barrel and early 19th trigger guard. It has an interesting brass repair around the lock which also serves as a flash protector from corrosive percussion caps. The two guns were said to have been in the same family for several generations and when found were in untouched condition. The rifles have similar back action percussion locks, butt plates, curly maple stocks, tobacco brown/black finishes, and cast pewter nose caps.

Hutslar and other sources list a William Rife (1830-?) working in Pickaway County around 1850 (1973:316). Oral tradition mentions a tiny place called East Ringgold, in Walnut Township, which is in a triangle between Ashville and Circleville in Pickaway County, and Lancaster, Fairfield County (site of gunsmith William Bodenheimer’s workplace). Spiker and Whisker (2013:193) note that a 20-year-old William Rife was living with gunsmith Conrad A. King in Lancaster, Fairfield County around 1860, making it that Rife was an apprentice. They list several other

Rife gunmakers, though it is unclear of relations, if any, between them (Spiker and Whisker 2013: 193). Hutslar also notes the existence of a “half-stock hunting rifle with patch box and inlays, engraved “Wm Rife” though no photos are in print (1973:316). The present rifle under discussion may be only the second known marked “Wm Rife” rifle.

The marked Rife rifle has a .38 cal., 36” by 1 1/8” octagon barrel with a worn ring around the muzzle, as was the fashion of the day for many dual-purpose target and hunting arms in central Ohio, including Charles Seibert who was active in Circleville when Rife was making. The heavy-wristed, slightly fish-bellied curly maple stock (which has unique blends of black, tobacco brown, and yellows in the finish, indicating long years of use), has pronounced lock panels forward of the lock, that complement the four rectangular escutcheons with rounded off corners that surround the pin slots/holes of the two key pins holding the heavy barrel to the stock. It is interesting that there are slots on the lock side for the wide end of the keys,



Full length view (lock side) of the Wm Rife rifle and the unmarked rifle associated with Pickaway County



Full length view (obverse) of the Wm Rife rifle and the unmarked rifle associated with Pickaway County



Signature, tang, and rear sight of Wm Rife rifle.



Lock and trigger guard area of Wm Rife rifle.



Side plate, trigger guard area, and molding of Wm Rife rifle.