

SAMUEL BIEGH: ANOTHER UNLISTED OHIO GUNSMITH

BY BOB STATLER

The story behind this article started probably more than 20 years ago. Back then, I had a list of specific websites I would keep tabs on from time to time searching for an antique muzzleloading rifle of interest. One evening, I came across one such possible rifle. The description of that rifle stated it was stamped on the barrel with the name of "S. Biegh."

Not being familiar with this maker's name, I made some notes in a notebook that I kept on the desk in order to search for this name in my books later. Doing so, it appeared this rifle was not made by an Ohio maker. So, I moved on, not keeping an eye on this listing nor did I print any pictures of the rifle as I sometimes would of a particular rifle of interest. The two things I can remember about that rifle are it was percussion and thinking to myself how nice it appeared to be.

Fast forward a few years later. While doing some research on the U.S. Library of Congress website,

looking at a list of digitized Ohio newspapers from the 19th century, I came across an advertisement placed in the TIFFIN TRIBUNE on August 27th, 1867 by a gunsmith in the town of Republic, Ohio by the name of Samuel Biegh.

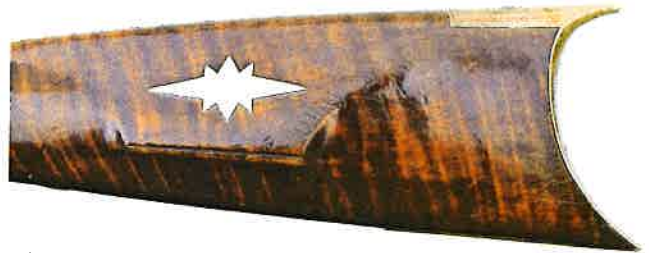
Something triggered my memory when seeing this name. I thought I had seen his name before, I searched my books, but nothing. Then I started going back through the pages of my notebook. Thankfully, I never erased or tore out any pages -- I would just start a new page when needed. After flipping back through several pages, there was my brief notes on a rifle marked S. Biegh. Too much time had past to find any information from that listing from years before. But now I knew of other websites, such as FamilySearch. Com, where I could now search this specific name for



Lock detail of the S. Biegh stamped rifle described in the article. (photo by Mark Bender)



Patchbox of the S. Biegh stamped rifle described in the article. (photo by Mark Bender)



Cheekpiece of the S. Biegh stamped rifle described in the article. (photo by Mark Bender)



Toeplate of the S. Biegh stamped rifle described in the article. (photo by Mark Bender)



Tang of the S. Biegh stamped rifle described in the article. (photo by Mark Bender)

more information.

Samuel Biegh was born in Union County Pennsylvania in 1803. He is found in the 1850 and 1870 U.S. Census in Seneca County, Scipio Township with the occupation of a gunsmith. The 1860 U.S. Census lists him in the same location, but as a farmer.

He was married twice, first to Margaret [maiden name unknown] in Pennsylvania sometime in or prior to 1830. The 1830 Pennsylvania census lists Samuel Biegh, age 20-30, also in the household one female, age 20-30 and 3 persons under 5. The census records before 1850 are a little less detailed. Margaret passed away in 1850 and in 1852, Samuel married Lucy Lampkin and she passed away in 1863. The exact date when Samuel came to Ohio is unclear, but he does appear in the tax records for Scipio Township, first in 1841.

The newspaper ad states, "Mr. Biegh is a gunsmith with 30 years of experience and he has returned to the town of Republic, Ohio." So, going back 30 years from the placement of the ad, Samuel likely learned the trade of a gunsmith in Pennsylvania based on the 1837 birth record of his daughter Amanda, who is shown to be born in that state in the Census' after 1850. But where did he return from as the ad states? Where exactly and from whom did he learn his trade? Pennsylvania records give almost no information on families named Biegh, but I did find a listing online, a website titled Database of USA Gunmakers, of a known swivel breeched flintlock, presumed built in Pennsylvania in the late 1700's that is marked S. Biegh. If the date of this rifle is correct, could that be Samuel's father? Uncle? Grandfather? Is the name hard to decipher on that gun and it is actually Biegh? It seems more times than not there are always unanswered questions about an early Ohio gunsmith. One thing is certain, Samuel's newspaper ad shows he was an established Ohio gunsmith.

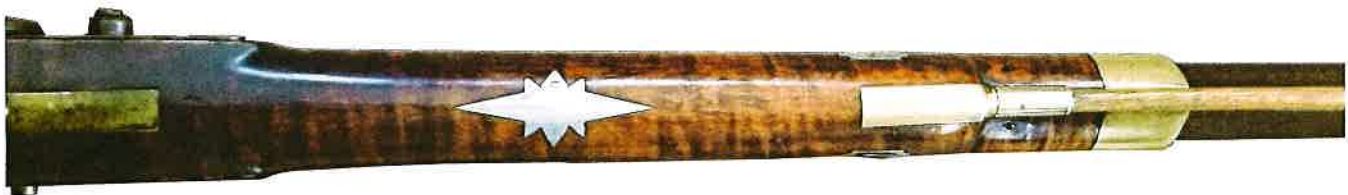
Also, I feel it is worth mentioning many different

spellings of Samuel's last name are encountered in the Ohio records. When typing his name on most web searches, it comes back as Beigh. The 1850 Census shows up as Bugh, but this appears to be a misinterpretation of the handwritten record. The original 1860 Census spells his name as Bee. The 1870 Census spells his name Biegh, but clearly shows his daughter Amanda's name, directly below Samuel's name, as Biegh. I have obtained photos from FindAGrave.Com of both Margaret and Lucy's grave markers. Both stones are marked and spelled identically, both women being the wife of Samuel Biegh. And we have the newspaper advertisement's spelling as Biegh as well and of course, now a rifle! A picture does not exist online of Samuel's marker, so I guess sometime when warmer weather comes, a road trip will made to the cemetery.

Samuel died on October 25th, 1875 in Republic, Ohio and he is buried, as are Margaret and Lucy, at the Farewell Retreat Cemetery, located on the east edge of town on State Route 162. His obituary states his funeral was largely attended. The rifle pictured was listed at an auction house in Pennsylvania. It was described as an unknown maker, but the listing stated this name has been seen before.



Stamped signature on the S. Biegh stamped rifle described in the article. (photo by Mark Bender)



Forestock and rear ramrod entry pipe of S. Biegh stamped rifle in the article. (photo by Bob Statler)