

Fox aged 15 from Germany, and Ezra Hudson from Maryland, though it is unclear if either pursued the gunsmithing trade in later life. He was a contemporary of Peter and James Kane (erroneously spelled "Cain" in some documents), gunsmiths who worked in Perry Township of the county (Hutslar 1996: 186-187). A number of marked and unmarked Kane rifles survive, and several are illustrated in Volume 2 of *Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen*. The illustrated rifles have very low stock combs and one has an elaborate curved cheekpiece and large unpierced patch box. The hardware and styling suggest little if any influences between the Kanes and Stalter. Hutslar mentions the existence of at least one half stock rifle with a back action lock and a full stock with silver inlays in .38 caliber with a back action lock. Hutslar also notes that in 1870 Stalter is listed as having "two hands" in employ and "purchased gun materials at \$400 and produced guns and miscellaneous articles valued at \$1050 and repairs at \$300" (Hutslar 1996:188). This suggests that Stalter was a well-established local gunsmith who maintained his trade before, during, and after the Civil War.

Other Hocking County gunsmiths listed in Hutslar 1996 include Simeon and John Henry Bright (also cabinet makers) and Jackson Logan (who carried on their business), Joel A. Ferree and Joel Thornton Ferree (Hutslar notes that the family makeup is complicated and extends back to Pennsylvania), William Floyd and John Tilton, who took out a patent in 1857 for a portable single-shot pocket pistol, and John White, who operated a gunpowder mill in Laurel Township during the War of 1812, at which his son was killed in an explosion (Hutslar 1996:186-188).

Characteristics of the "W. Stalter" Marked Rifle

The rifle is what some old timers called a "hog rifle" used for practical purposes like preparing hogs for butchering or dropping ones left to freely forage. Such rifles, also used for general hunting and target matches, are distinguished from more fancy guns with highly figured wood, inlays, and carving and or incising in the wood, by their stark, but often aesthetically pleasing, simplicity. Whatever the Stalter rifle may have been called in its day, it seems to have been a well-used hunting gun that likely took plenty of game in the craggy hillsides and forested ravines of Hocking County. A mystery is the two sets of scratched

in initials – one set on each side of the nose of the comb – which may have been???

Barrel length 35¾"; width approx. 1" (the barrel may have been slightly filed down for several inches behind the muzzle to reduce weight)

Caliber: approx. .38 cal.

13" from front set trigger to middle of buttplate

52" overall length, from posterior upper tip of buttplate to muzzle

Iron rear sight and low brass front sight in iron base

Iron set triggers, triggerplate and longish ¾" tang (see photo)

Lock: 4½" back action percussion lock, unmarked

Hardware: brass triggerguard, buttplate, ramrod pipes, nose cap, simple toeplate and small sideplate.

Stock: Slightly curled maple; had a dark finish, now worn light in many areas from hard use; slight incised lines on each side of nose of stock.

Lightly carved initials on nose of comb (lock side) "VHW" and reverse side "JM"

Sources:

(https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Hocking_County)

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logan_\(Iroquois_leader\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logan_(Iroquois_leader)))

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/84884671/william-stalter?_gl=1*17roqv0*_ga*NDQ3MDE4ODAzLjE2NTkyMTY1MzQ.*_ga_4QT8FMEX30*MTY1OTIxNjUzNC4xLjEuMTY1OTIxODgyNC4w

Hutslar, Donald A. (1996). *Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen, 1750-1950. Volume 2*. Association of Ohio Longrifles.

_____. (1973). *Gunsmiths of Ohio, 18th and 19th Centuries, Volume 1*. York, Pennsylvania, George Shumway Publisher.



Stalter rifle, Hocking County (photo by Mark Bender)



Sideplate of Stalter rifle (photo by Mark Bender)



Carved initials "JM" on Stalter (photo by Mark Bender)



Detail of tang (photo by Mark Bender)



Stamped "S. STALTER" and sight (photo by Mark Bender)



*Lock side profile (crude "VHW" initials on nose of comb)
(photo by Mark Bender)*