

There are also estate papers for a Jacob Humbarger who died on July 18, 1859, in Whitley County. His papers contain references to guns and give insight into family connections among Humbargers who had moved to Whitley County, Indiana. One document shows Jacob to be the younger brother of Henry Humbarger. Another note states that "Jacob had neither wife or children, or father or mother living, and the following brothers and sisters survive him: Adam Humbarger, Benjamin Humbarger, Susan Humbarger, Hannah Humbarger, Mary (Sivits - married name), Katharine King (widow)." Jacob's estate funds were distributed to the following relatives: "Adam Humbarger, brother of deceased; Ruben (Henry's oldest son of legal age); Sara (Henry's widow), guardian of minor heirs of Henry Humbarger deceased; Jeremiah Egolf, guardian of Susan Humbarger, sister of decedent; Jacob Ramsey, guardian of Hannah Humbarger a sister of deceased; E. Strong - assignee of David Humbarger deceased; Katharine King, sister of decedent; Mary Ann Humbarger (widow of John, Jacob's brother) guardian of minor children of John Humbarger deceased; Frederick Humbarger retains own distribution share (as son of Jacob's brother John, and as administrator of estate)."

The heirs of Jacob Humbarger are important because they help clarify the relationships among the early Humbargers. The listings of Jacob's brothers and sisters establish him as a son of Peter Sr. and Mary Humbarger of Perry County, Ohio. The estate also lists the children of Henry Humbarger (deceased) as Ruben, Socasis (sic) (name was Loren or Lauren), and Henry, Jr. But one family line is confused, that of Peter

II. The estate listed his heirs as "children of Peter Humbarger deceased, David B, Frederick, Peter, John, George, W. Henry, and Benjamin." Based on other sources, this listing appears to be the children of John Humbarger (1803-1846), and not Peter II. Other papers and notes also provide insights regarding family members. Benjamin, brother to Jacob, was living in Sandusky, Ohio, at the time Jacob's estate was settled. Samuel Humbarger, gunsmith and son of deceased Peter II, received a settlement share that was witnessed by Adam Humbarger; this implies that Samuel was living with or working for, Somerset gunsmith Adam Humbarger at the time, i. e. 1860. Another note states that "Adam Humbarger of Perry County, Ohio, one of the brothers and next heirs of Jacob Humbarger, gives power of attorney to Frederick Humbarger in Whitley County, Indiana." Peter III of Perry County, Ohio also received a share of the estate. Hopefully such information can help others complete a "family tree" of the Ohio/Indiana Humbargers.

Jacob Humbarger's estate contained several guns and related items. His personal property was sold at public auction on November 12, 1859. The estate inventory listed 99 items, most being household or farm-related in nature. However, Jacob had three guns and several tools that might indicate he did gunsmithing work, or perhaps stocking, from time to time. The items included a rifle gun valued at \$14.00, a rifle gun valued at \$10.30, a shot gun valued at \$1.30, a shot pouch valued at \$.64, a crosscut saw, brace and bits, chisalls (sic), a carpenter's work bench, and a grind stone.

The information on Jacob Humbarger digresses from Henry Humbarger's story, but is important to better understand the Humbarger family of gun-makers. It establishes Jacob as a son of gunsmith Peter I and brother to gunsmiths Adam, Peter II, and Henry, and lists the other brothers and sisters that were children of Peter I. Secondly, the items in Jacob's estate included guns and related tools that might indicate limited efforts at gunsmithing, even if not sufficient to establish him as a gunsmith. The strong Humbarger family tradition of gunmaking probably enticed most male members to try their hands at it, if only infrequently or on their personal weapons. While that does not make them gunsmiths in the full sense of the word, it helps to better understand the family ties and love for the trade that existed among them and so many other early American gunsmithing families.

PART THREE: The Guns of Henry Humbarger

Several rifles made by Henry Humbarger are known, with most coming from his Ohio working period ca. 1832-1849. His rifles all carry neat script signatures of "H. Humberger," or "H. Humbarger" if on Indiana work. The author is unaware of any existing Henry Humbarger revolving rifles or pistols, despite evidence that such guns were made. Three rifles by Henry are illustrated; the first is his earliest known gun, a full stock with an Ohio National Road style patchbox dating to about 1835. It can be compared to rifles by his brothers Peter II and Adam Humberger from the same time period. The second rifle illustrated is a full stock with a Humberger style patchbox and trigger guard typical of later Ohio period work around 1845.

The final rifle illustrated is from his Indiana period; it is a half stock with typical Humbarger mounts, but stocked is walnut with a poured pewter nose cap. A fourth Indiana rifle not illustrated will be described; it came out of an old Whitley County, Indiana, family in 1990, and was a typical Humbarger halfstock carrying the signature "H. Humbarger."

The earliest rifle known by Henry Humbarger is shown in Illustrations Nos. 6a, 6b and 6c, and should be compared with similar period rifles by older brother Peter II in Illustrations Nos. 7a, 7b and 7c, and Adam in Illustrations Nos. 8a, 8b and 8c. All three guns have common features that include the Humberger style butt plate, trigger guard with heavy front post, and Ohio National Road patchboxes of similar outline and engraved patterns. But there are also distinctive differences in each brother's work. The Adam Humberger rifle has the best stock architecture, particularly through the comb and wrist, and most elaborate decoration. It carries 26 silver inlays, in addition to incised butt carving. Carving is virtually nonexistent on Humberger rifles, making this rifle exceptional. The rifle also carries an elaborate side plate with two piercings. Overall, this well designed and decorated rifle is the most artistic Humberger product yet discovered.

Peter Humberger II's rifle has an Ohio National Road patchbox and fish inlays along the forestock similar to Adam's work, plus the typical Humberger trigger guard, butt plate and fine set triggers. Its architecture is somewhat stiff through the wrist, and the butt curvature and pointed toe suggest a slightly later date. The patchbox is outstanding in quality

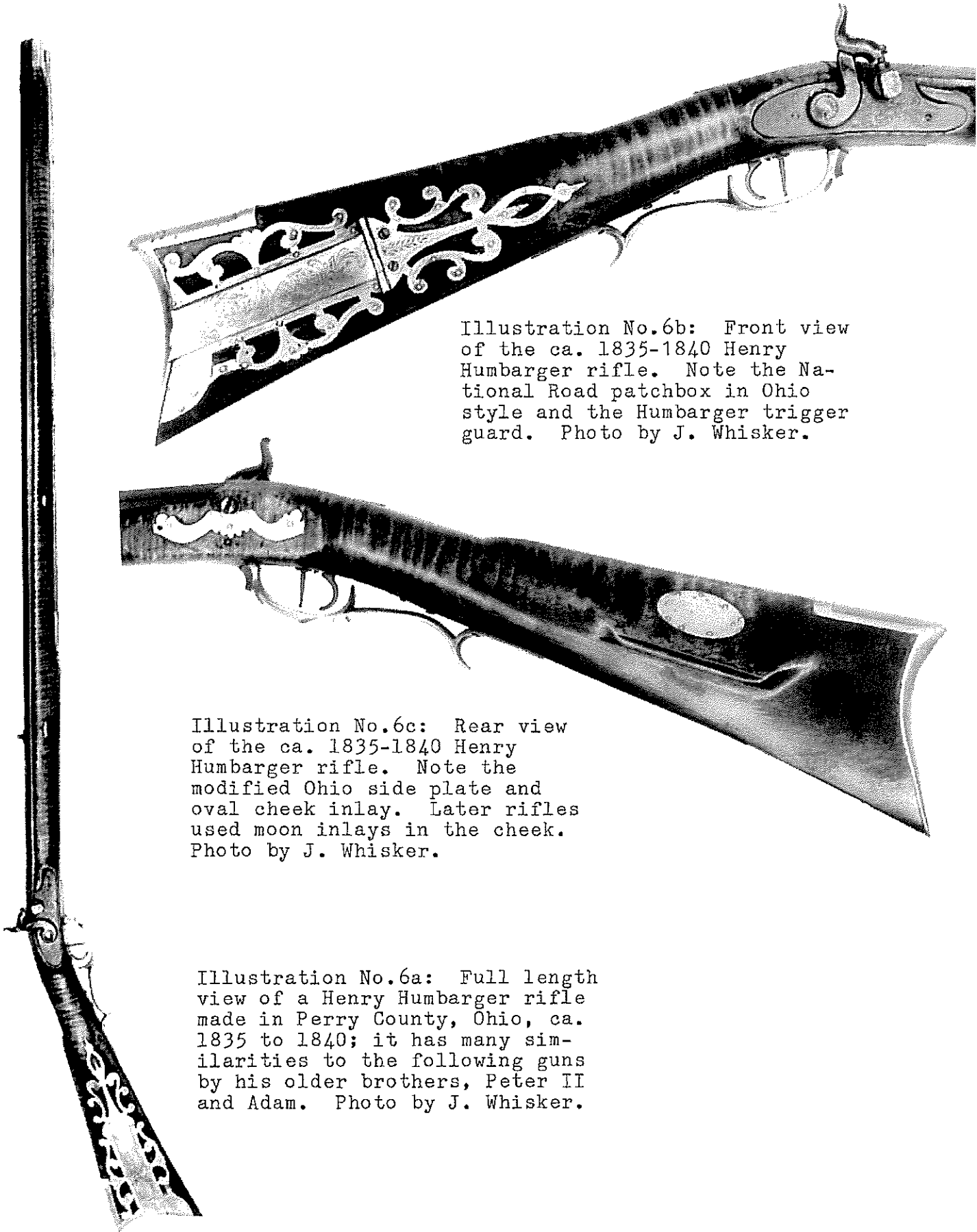


Illustration No.6b: Front view of the ca. 1835-1840 Henry Humbarger rifle. Note the National Road patchbox in Ohio style and the Humbarger trigger guard. Photo by J. Whisker.

Illustration No.6c: Rear view of the ca. 1835-1840 Henry Humbarger rifle. Note the modified Ohio side plate and oval cheek inlay. Later rifles used moon inlays in the cheek. Photo by J. Whisker.

Illustration No.6a: Full length view of a Henry Humbarger rifle made in Perry County, Ohio, ca. 1835 to 1840; it has many similarities to the following guns by his older brothers, Peter II and Adam. Photo by J. Whisker.

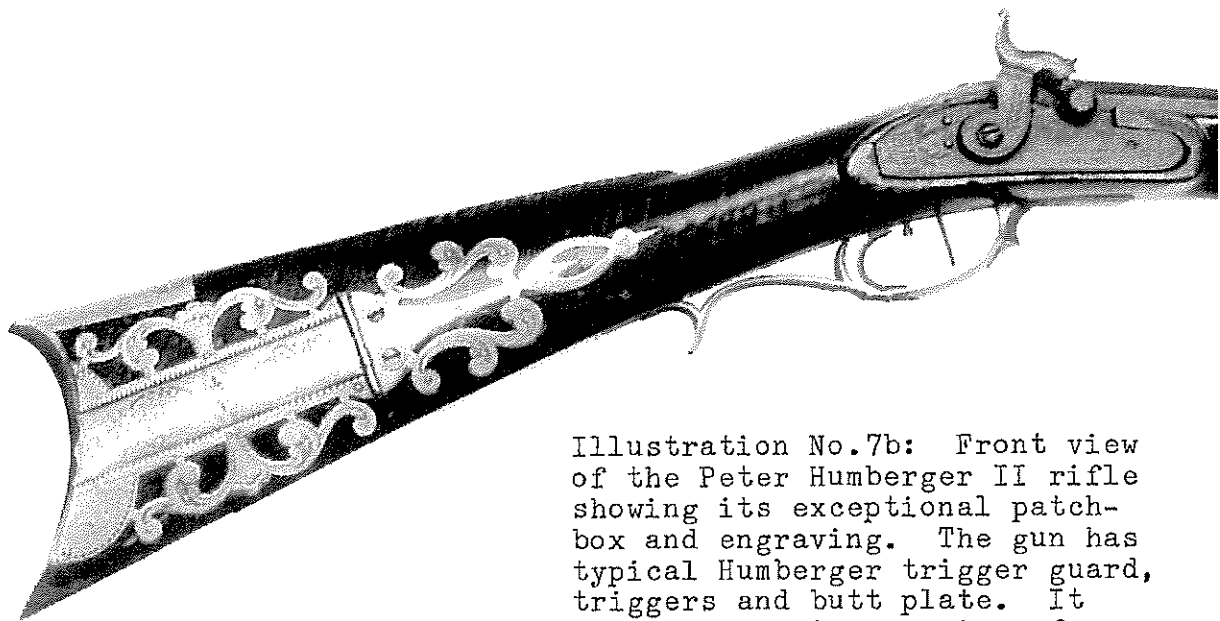


Illustration No.7b: Front view of the Peter Humberger II rifle showing its exceptional patch-box and engraving. The gun has typical Humberger trigger guard, triggers and butt plate. It has the finest engraving of any known Humberger rifle. Photo by J. Whisker.

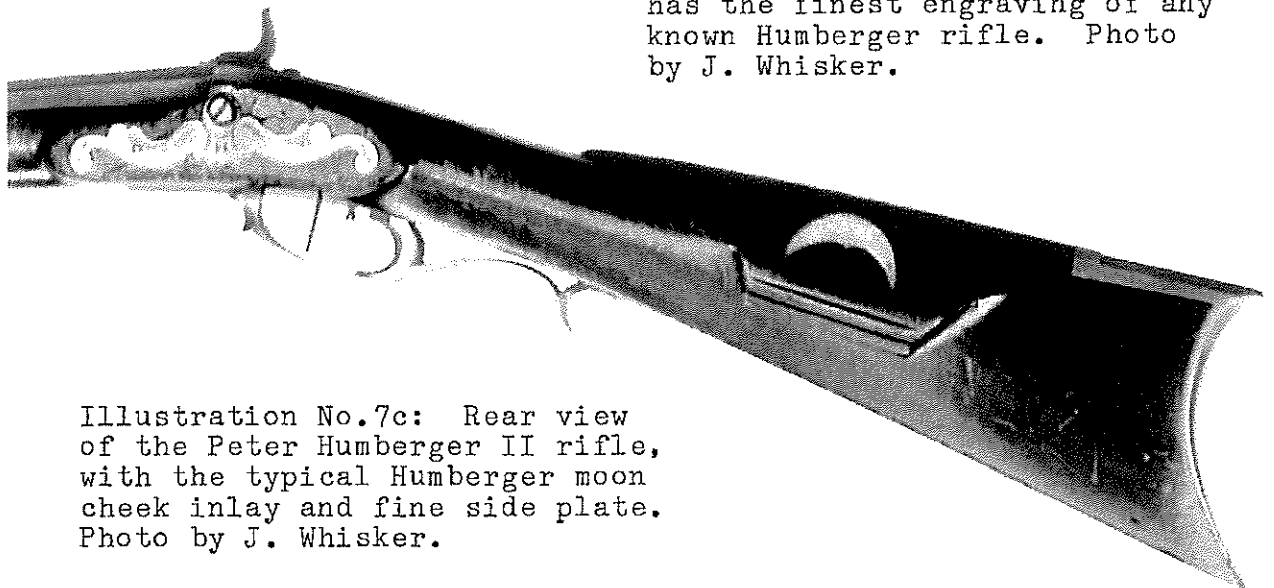


Illustration No.7c: Rear view of the Peter Humberger II rifle, with the typical Humberger moon cheek inlay and fine side plate. Photo by J. Whisker.

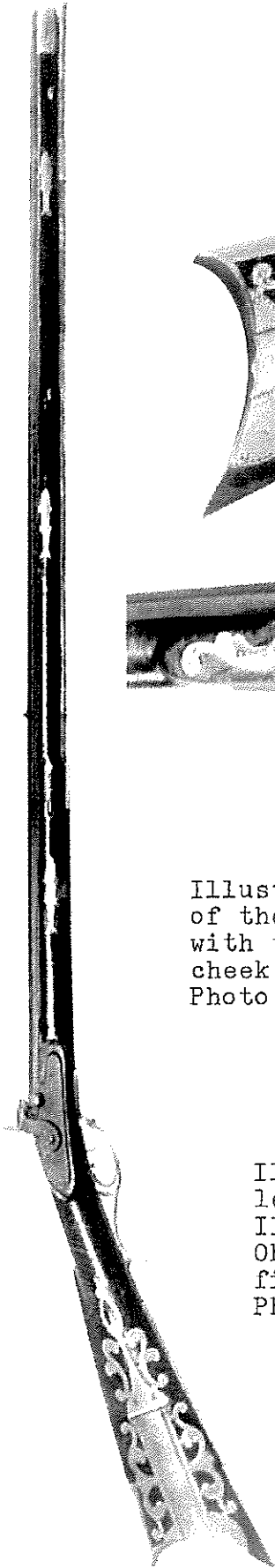


Illustration No. 7a: Full length view of a Peter Humberger II rifle from Perry County, Ohio, ca. 1835. Note the large fish inlays along the forestock. Photo by J. Whisker.

of shaping and engraving. The delicately engraved patterns with fine shading mark Peter II as the best engraver among the Humbergers, and perhaps the most artistic metal worker.

The concurrent rifle by Henry Humberger, shown in Illustrations Nos. 6a thru c, does not achieve the artistic levels of either Adam's or Peter II's work, yet still is a significant rifle despite its hard use. It carries the typical Humberger butt plate, triggers and trigger guard, although the trigger guard bow is smaller as if made for a single trigger, therefore making the triggers appear close together. The Ohio National Road patchbox is the major decoration. While not cut and shaped as finely as Peter II's work, it is engraved in a somewhat similar pattern minus some of Peter's finer details. The engraving is better in quality and complexity than that on Adam's rifle, but not to the level achieved by Peter. Its appearance suffers from shorter side facings, and its side plate appears to be a less attractive, truncated version of the early style used by Peter II. Henry's rifle has the least amount of butt curvature among the three guns, suggesting a slightly earlier date. Overall, the three early Humberger rifles show similar traits, but also demonstrate key differences by the three brothers who made them.

The later Ohio period rifle by Henry Humberger, made ca 1845, is shown in Illustration No. 9. It is a well-made full stock with typical Humberger mounts and later style patchbox. The gun has greater butt curvature and heel extension than his earlier rifle, and the trigger guard's front post, while still of pronounced Humberger style, is less massive. The gun carries a brass lock plate with a more pointed tail and longer side fac-

ings than expected for this time, but still dates as a later product based on other key characteristics.

Henry's 1851 to 1857 working period in Whitley County, Indiana, is represented by a half-stock rifle of the period shown in Illustrations Nos. 10a, 10b and 10c. The clean little rifle carries typical Humberger triggers, trigger guard, butt plate and crescent moon inlay in the cheek area. Its later date is indicated by the poured pewter nose cap, walnut stock and lack of a cheek piece. The barrel is pinned by the late Humberger innovation of drilling a hole through the lower portion of the barrel, rather than using a barrel loop; this method of barrel pinning was also used by Peter III. The side plate is not typical Humberger style, and appears a throwback to an earlier pattern. The lock plate has a large "H" engraved on it, possibly indicating a Humberger product. Overall, the gun represents a well-made squirrel rifle from Henry's Indiana shop around 1855.

One last Indiana rifle by Henry Humberger deserves comment, but is not illustrated. Humberger rifles have not been found in Whitley County to the extent expected, based on his level of gunsmithing activity. One half-stock in the Whitley County Historical Society is unsigned, but may be a late Henry, or perhaps Adam II, Humberger rifle. However, a signed "H. Humberger" halfstock sold at an estate auction in Whitley County in 1990; it had been in the local Lawrence family for many years. The rifle had traditional Humberger architecture, triggers, trigger guard and butt plate, and was stocked in good curly maple with a cheek piece and crescent moon inlay. The gun was so typically a Humberger/Humberger

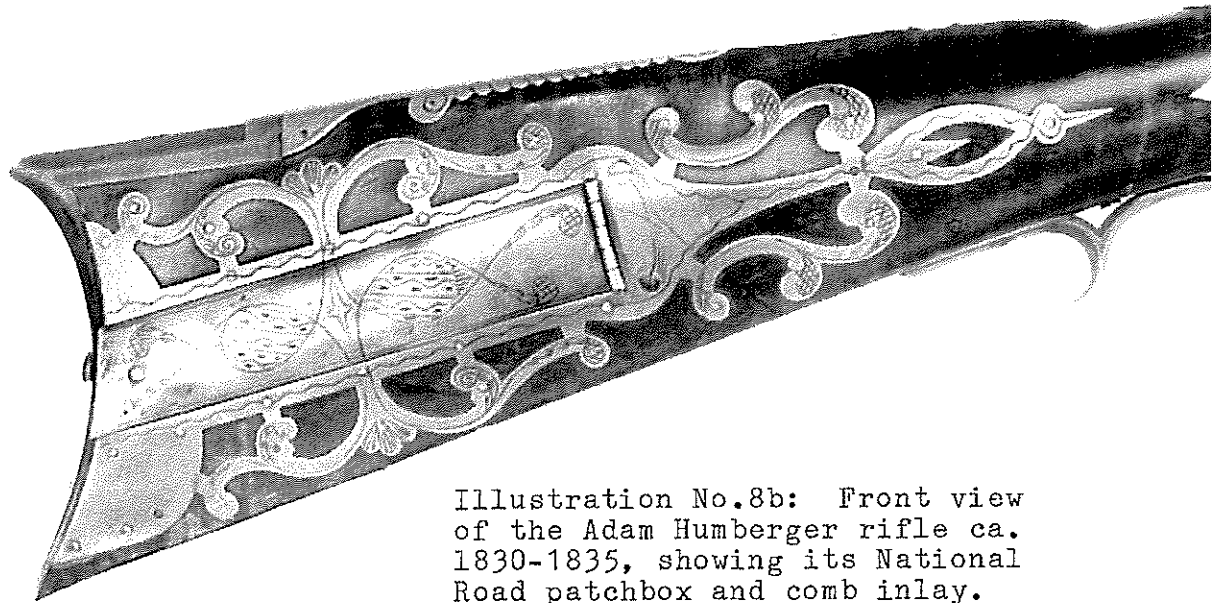


Illustration No.8b: Front view of the Adam Humberger rifle ca. 1830-1835, showing its National Road patchbox and comb inlay. Adam's stocking and inlay work was very good, and engraving average. Photo by J. Whisker.

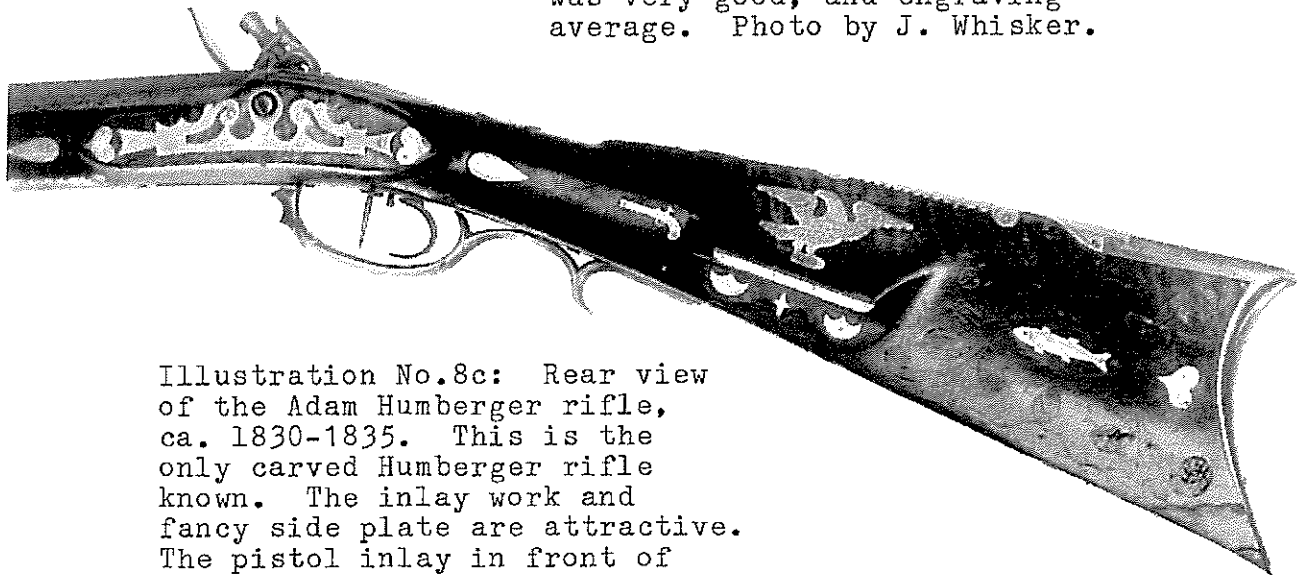


Illustration No.8c: Rear view of the Adam Humberger rifle, ca. 1830-1835. This is the only carved Humberger rifle known. The inlay work and fancy side plate are attractive. The pistol inlay in front of the cheek is percussion, helping to date the rifle. Photo by J. Whisker.

Illustration No.8a: Full length view of fine Adam Humberger rifle from Perry County, Ohio, ca. 1830-1835. This rifle is noteworthy for its fine architecture and decoration. It is the finest Humberger rifle known. Photo by J. Whisker.

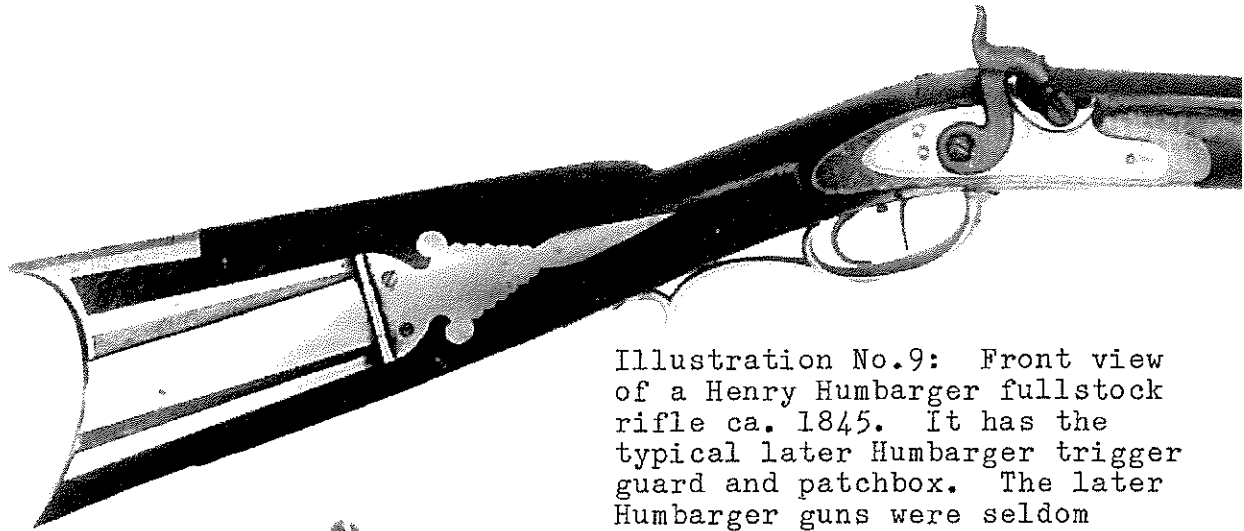


Illustration No.9: Front view of a Henry Humbarger fullstock rifle ca. 1845. It has the typical later Humbarger trigger guard and patchbox. The later Humbarger guns were seldom engraved, although workmanship was high quality. Photo by J. Whisker.

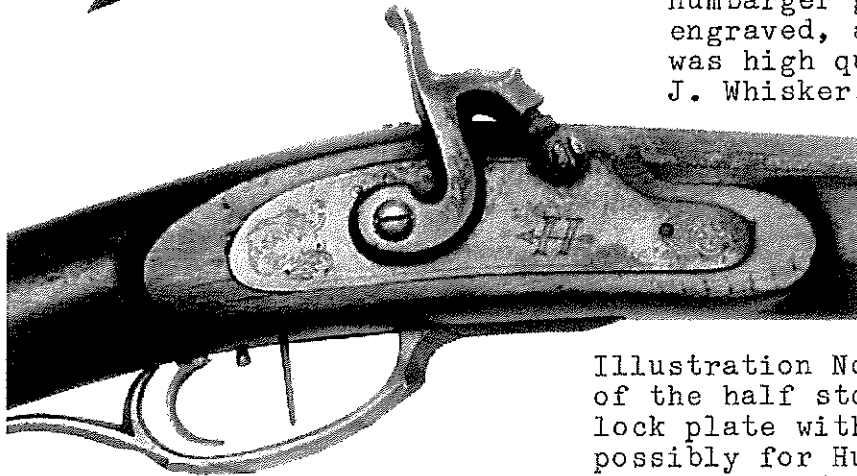


Illustration No.10b: Front view of the half stock rifle's lock plate with large "H" initial, possibly for Humbarger. The trigger guard is a typical Humbarger product, as are the triggers. Photo by J. Whisker.

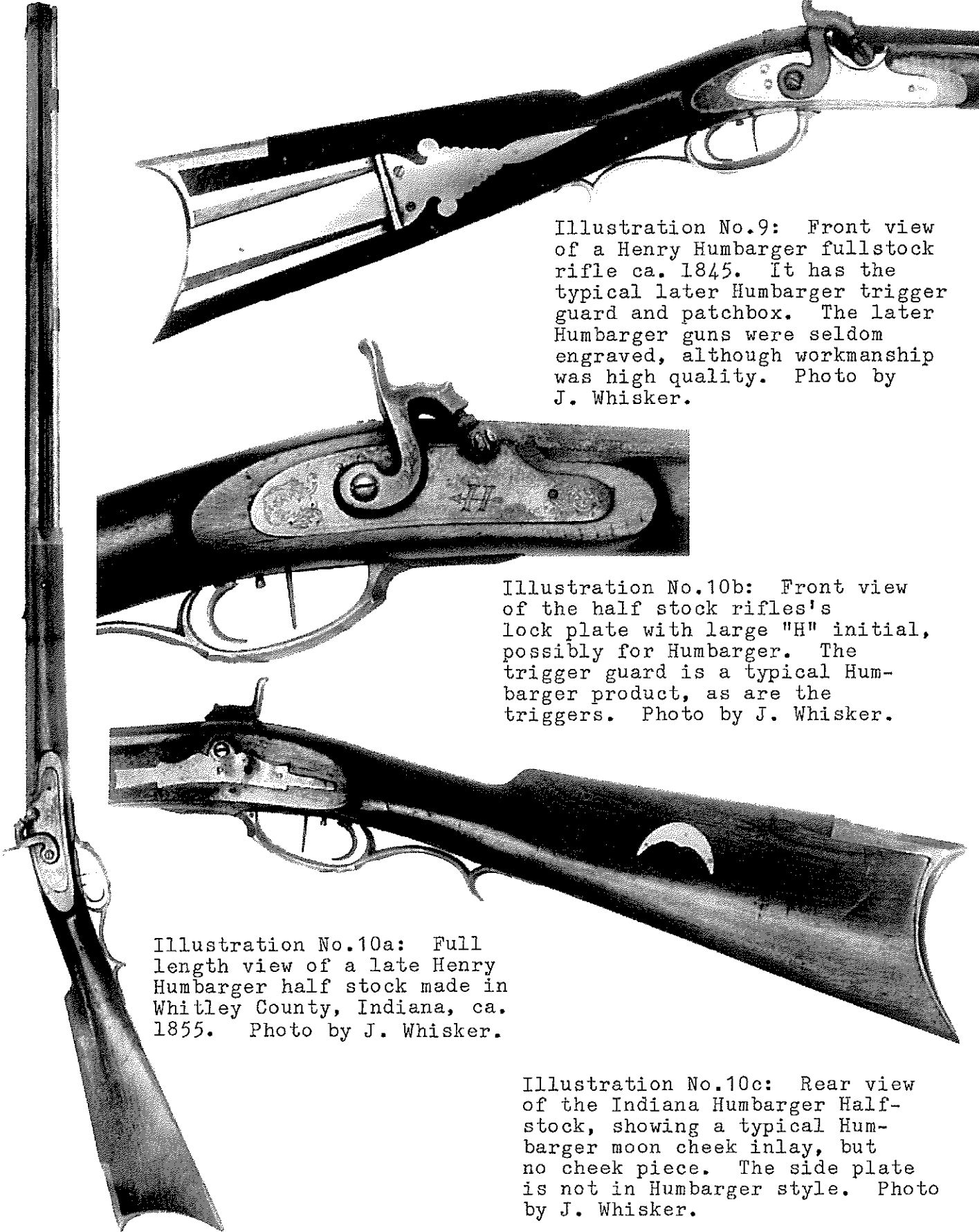


Illustration No.10a: Full length view of a late Henry Humbarger half stock made in Whitley County, Indiana, ca. 1855. Photo by J. Whisker.

Illustration No.10c: Rear view of the Indiana Humbarger Half-stock, showing a typical Humbarger moon cheek inlay, but no cheek piece. The side plate is not in Humbarger style. Photo by J. Whisker.

product that is could just as easily been made in Perry County, Ohio. Up to the end, Henry produced rifles strongly in Humbarger tradition.

Summary: Henry Humbarger was apparently closely associated with his father, Peter I, and brothers Peter II and Adam while working in Ohio. After removing to Indiana in 1851, he established his own shop, apparently large in size based on his extensive inventory of gunsmithing, blacksmithing and wood working equipment. Estate documents verify that he was doing cabinet work and blacksmithing in addition to gunsmithing at the time of his death. Two important estate lots, #42 and 44, were "old brass" and "molding flasks and patern." These items prove that Henry was casting brass gun mounts based on his "paterns," thereby explaining the continued use of trigger guards and butt plates with the distinctive Ohio "Humbarger" shape during his Indiana years.

In addition to many blacksmithing tools, the estate inventory listed several vises, hammers, metal files, "six mechanic chizles," and "one pair of screw plates: that all attest to Henry's mechanical work. He was known as the best mechanic among the Humbargers, and is documented as having made many of the fine set triggers used on Humbarger rifles. Also in his inventory was "one rifle guide," used to cut rifling or freshen barrels. Examining the rifling in his known guns might prove enlightening. As an expert mechanic with an inventive mind, he may have experimented with rifling, perhaps trying gain twist over the course of his career.

Henry's estate papers left evidence that several other Indiana Humbargers may have

tried their hand at gunsmithing from time to time. Adam Humbarger II is now documented as a gunsmith in Indiana, and Henry's oldest son Reuben, nephew Frederick and brother Jacob may have all experimented with gunsmithing. And finally, Henry's estate papers make specific mention of a "six shooting rifle" and "revolver" pistol being sold at his estate auction in 1858, both probably his products. Will they ever show up again? The question is intriguing; the fact that they once existed leaves the possibility that someday one or both might reappear. If so, they would help determine the true mechanical ability of Henry Humbarger, and better establish the role he played in the development of American firearms.



Peter Humbarger II



The Douglass Family



by
Jim Whisker

A discussion of the Douglass family of gunsmiths must begin with Joseph Douglass, Senior (-1841). Joseph Douglass, Senior, was noted as a gunsmith as early as 1813 in Juniata Township, Huntingdon County. J. Simpson Africa's History of Huntingdon County, p.303, reported that,

_____ on the Raystown branch...Joseph Douglass settled in 1813. He moved from there to Alexandria (also in Huntingdon County), and, being a blacksmith, put up a shop on his farm, in which he worked until his death in 1841. He had sons named Thomas, who moved from McConnellstown to Ohio; Joseph, a merchant, who died recently at McConnellstown; David, a machinist at Altoona; and daughters....

Thomas Douglass (1815-1880) was the oldest son of Joseph Douglass, Senior. Thomas (or Thompson) Douglass was an apprentice to Nicholas Shennefelt in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, where Thomas was listed as a gunsmith from 1833 through 1840 (Africa, History of Huntingdon County, p. 384). Africa (p.303) said that ----

_____ Nicholas Shennefelt was the pioneer gunsmith of (McConnellstown) and was reckoned a very good workman. Thomas and Joseph Douglass (Senior) were his apprentices and afterward carried on the trade.

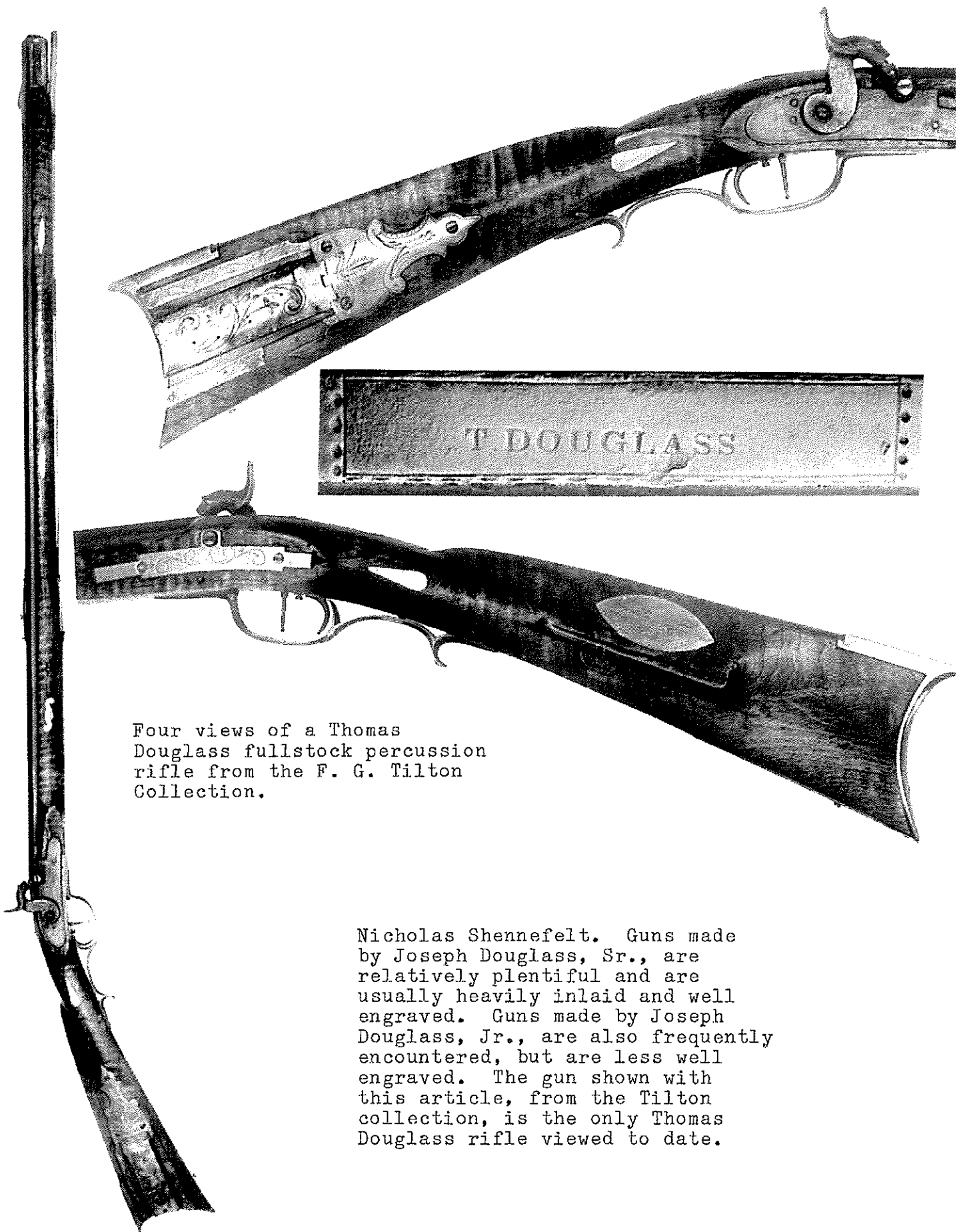
_____ Africa reported that Thomas went to Ohio. In the U. S. Census of 1850 he was a gunsmith

in East Springfield, Salem Township, Jefferson County, Ohio. On 2 July 1845 Thomas (called on Deeds, Thompson) Douglass purchased lot 22 in the town of Richmond from John R. Cunningham, for \$235 (Deed Book Z, p.275). On 8 November 1849 Douglass and his wife Rebecca sold lot 22 on Main Street, Richmond (Deed Book B-2, p.540). On 6 September 1850 Douglass bought 41 acres of land in section 11, township 10, range 3, Jefferson County, Ohio, from Moses Percival, for \$1000 (Deed Book B-2, p.680). On 2 December 1850 he bought 61 acres on the waters of Island Creek in the north west section of Section 34, Township 7, Range 2, from Samuel Beebout for \$1000 (Deed Book B-2, p.540).

Thompson's estate was appraised on 23 October 1880 (Jefferson County Appraisement Book 14). His widow was allowed to choose household goods valued at \$133.33. Nothing in his estate suggested his trade.

We thus find that the Douglass family was associated with three other major gunsmiths. Nicholas Shennefelt came from Centre County, Pennsylvania, and worked in Huntingdon County, and later was a gunsmith in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. Joseph Douglass, Sr., was a major gunsmith whose guns are among the very best of the Huntingdon style. The father-in-law of his brother Joseph, Junior, J. S. Johnston, was another important gunsmith who contributed to the creation of the Huntingdon County style of gunmaking.

There is one known heavily inlaid rifle by the master teacher,



Four views of a Thomas Douglass fullstock percussion rifle from the F. G. Tilton Collection.

Nicholas Shenefelt. Guns made by Joseph Douglass, Sr., are relatively plentiful and are usually heavily inlaid and well engraved. Guns made by Joseph Douglass, Jr., are also frequently encountered, but are less well engraved. The gun shown with this article, from the Tilton collection, is the only Thomas Douglass rifle viewed to date.



**Aaron Channel
Gunsmith
Utica, Ohio**



After the conclusion of the Civil War almost every town, large or small, had a G. A. R. (Grand Army of the Republic) Post. Utica was represented by Post No. 188.

Each G. A. R. Post was given a number and also given a name, usually named after a local hero or famous officer. Post No. 188 was named after Capt. Aaron Channel, Co. E, 12th O. V. I.

Aaron Channel migrated to Ohio from Virginia. He settled in the Licking County area and was living in Utica when he married Adaline Holler in Knox County on April 1, 1844. They had four children; John, Joel, Wilson Henry, and Mary Jane. Aaron, father, and John and Joel, sons, all fought in the Civil War.

As early as the 1850's Aaron Channel was known for his workmanship as a gunsmith. After a gunsmith had completed a weapon, he would stamp his name or initials on the gun barrel. The earliest record is a gun

reported in the "Ohio Gunmakers" as being built by A. Channel, Utica, 1851. In 1859 Channel is listed in the Gazetteer as a gunsmith and residing in Utica. A check of the 1865 plat map shows that he owned the brick house on Mechanics Street, (now Central Avenue,) which was torn down in 1991, just south of Dr. Ramsayer's.

Aaron, with his sons John and Joel, served in Co. E of the 12th O.V. I. Aaron and John mustered into service on June 22nd, 1861, Aaron being 44 and John 18 years of age. Joel had to wait until Aug. 29, 1862 after he had turned 18, to join his father and brother in Co. E. The 12th O. V. I. did not receive the recognition it deserved, fighting mostly in West Virginia. Aaron mustered into the service as a 1st Sgt., promoted to 1st Lieutenant on Dec. 6, 1861, and promoted to the rank of Captain on Aug. 30, 1862. John mustered in as a private and was promoted to 1st Sgt. Jan. 31, 1864.

Aaron is cited for his bravery in his military records and was

highly regarded by his superiors. During times of inactivity, he was detailed to serve with artillery units. He even spent some time back in Licking County as a recruiter.

The Channels were in several engagements, the most famous were Antietam and Second Bull Run, but the most costly was the Battle of Cloyds Mountain. In the spring of 1864, Shenandoah Valley was included in the military department of West Virginia, commanded by Major-General Franz Sigel. Grant instructed Sigel to form his troops into two columns with one column under the command of Brigadier-General George Crook. Crook's command was to break the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and destroy the salt works at Saltville.

Crook, with 6,000 men, left Fayette County, West Virginia, on May 3 and headed southeast. On the night of May 8 he was in Pulaski County, Virginia, and the enemy in force commanded the road in front of him at Cloyd Mountain.

Crook's command was: 1st Brigade, Colonel R. B. Hays, (later to become president,) commanded the 23rd, 34th, and 36th Ohio; 2nd Brigade, Colonel Carr B. White, commanded the 12th and 91st Ohio, the 9th and 14th Virginia; 3rd Brigade, Colonel Sickel, 3rd and 4th Pennsylvania, and the 11th and 15th Virginia. The Confederates' force of several thousand men were commanded by generals, W. E. Jones and A. G. Jenkins.

On the morning of May 9, 1864, Crook formed his men in a belt of woods, sent White with his brigade and part of Sickel's around to strike the enemy's right flank, and when they went into action, charged the Rebel

front and carried their works. The losses of the 2nd Brigade were listed at 600, the Confederate losses much heavier, among them was the mortally wounded Gen. Jenkins. It was during this engagement that Aaron Channel was seriously wounded in the chest and back. Sixty-eight wounded men, nineteen men left behind to care for the wounded, and a surgeon named Graham were captured, one of them was Joel Channel. Joel, knowing that his father was dying and capture likely, stayed to care for his father as the rest of the regiment continued in pursuit of the enemy. Aaron died from his wounds May 13, 1864, and Joel was captured and sent to Andersonville where he also died Jan. 31, 1864. Aaron lies buried in West Virginia although there are those who believe he is buried in the Owl Creek Cemetery.

After the war ended the Civil War veterans would swap stories of their adventures, hardships, and bravery. In 1882, when it came time to select a name for the Utica G. A. R. Post, the members were unanimous in their choice. Because of his dedication, bravery and the loss of a son in the line of duty, the members of Channel Post No. 188 chose to honor their fallen comrade, Captain Aaron Channel.

Darrel (Jud) Breckler

Submitted by Jim Rice.



Betz Slain In Shooting

Phillip Betz, proprietor of the Betz House, was shot and killed on November 17, 1881 on West Main Street here by Herman Peter, a gunsmith.

The Lancaster, Ohio press of that day reported three shots were heard and Betz was found lying on the pavement with Mr. Peter's son standing in the doorway, apparently very much excited.

Young Peter said Betz had called his mother and sister a bad name, and that his father shot Betz before he could intercede.

Peter, Sr., surrendered at the jail voluntarily, telling Turnkey Frank Vandemark that he wanted to be locked up because he had just killed Philip Betz after Betz called his daughter a bad name. Peter also turned in his new .38 cal pistol to Vandemark.

Peter described briefly to press representatives the incidents leading up to and the affray itself:

He said Betz had passed his shop a week before with a new

hatchet, and brandished it at him, and that he had sued Betz two years back and that they had not been friends since.

At the time of shooting Betz was going home from up street and Peter was standing in his door as he passed. He said Betz looked at him in the face and then called his daughter a bad name.

Peter said he replied that he (Betz) was a liar, but when the assertion was repeated, Peter pulled his revolver and shot three times, two of the bullets taking effect on the right side of Betz's head, not over one inch apart. The other shot missed. Peter started immediately to jail, and gave himself up.

Betz died 24 hours later.

The difficulty, no doubt, grew out of an old feud, and an uncontrollable passion was reported as the prime cause.

Herman Peter was admitted to the Ohio Penitentiary in 1882, to the Columbus State Hospital in 1912 and died in the Lima State Hospital in 1920. He served 38 years for the death of Betz.
