
Peter Reinhard

by F. A. Reinhard

The story of Peter A. Reinhard, gunsmith, of Loudonville, Ohio, where he lived from 1842 to 1889.

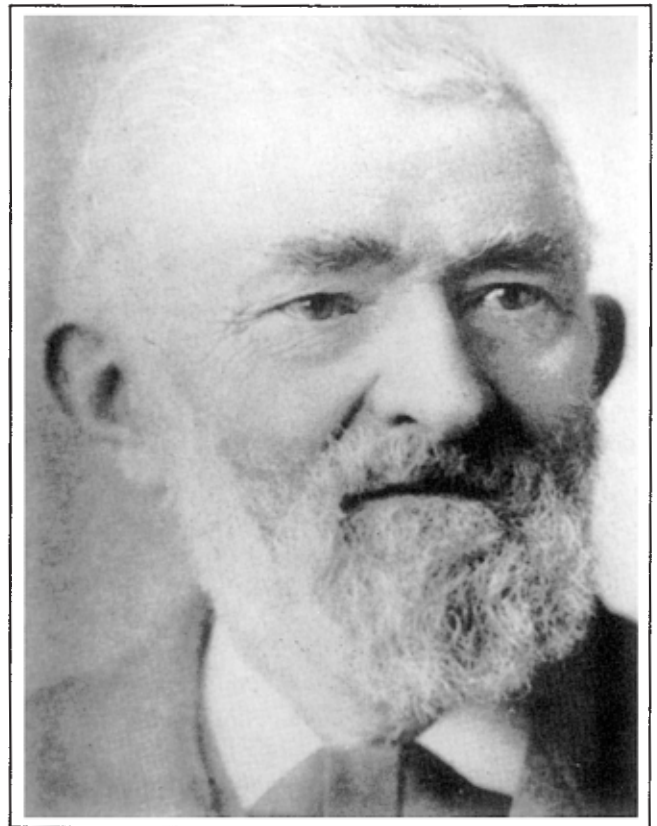
The beginning of his life carries one back to the early years of the last century. His parents and uncles, with their numerous children, including young Peter then aged about five years, arrived in Columbus, Ohio in the year 1832 from Neiderberg, Bavaria, Germany. They settled on land that was then well out of town, but which is now within the city limits. Father often talked of the hard struggle they had in getting started and making a living in the years that followed. Of a necessity some of the children eventually got employment in town and trudged back and forth to work.

As soon as Peter was able he learned to shoot and so helped at supplying the meat for the family by hunting. I recall one thrilling experience. When he was out hunting he met up with a deer and a wild cat. He had to make up his mind--quick! He killed the wild cat and then got the deer the next day. In the later years of his life he never killed any kind of animal or bird.

As time went on there soon was too much help on the farm. So it was decided that Peter should be apprenticed to a boat maker, but his active spirit soon rebelled at that close confinement. They next tried wagon making. This was better; tools and mechanical work and action. But as he spent so much time at a gunsmith shop up the street and caused so much trouble, his father finally consented to let him change to the gunsmith trade and the change was engineered by Peter himself. The gun shop was run by Cornelius Jacobs. Father very often talked of his work and experience in that shop. Jacobs was a very capable mechanic. They did many kinds of work besides gunsmithing.

Gun making then required a great skill in blacksmithing and wood work; blacksmith-

ing especially, as all the parts of a gun were forged and the closer the forgings were to the finished dimensions the less filing or turning was needed to finish the piece. So they took great pride in their skill as blacksmiths. Father spoke of one of Jacob's men who was a artist in fine



Peter Reinhard in later years

ornamental iron work. In the early days of his apprenticeship, they forged and cut their own files, so it was natural that he ding-donged it into the youngsters to learn to forge.

Father was a very vigorous and ambitious young man and soon wanted to have his own shop. He was helped by Jacobs to make up tools and, after

working out his apprentice time, he opened up a shop in Delaware, Ohio. This apparently did not prove successful and, having heard of Loudonville, on investigation he decided to go there. But first he went back to Columbus where he and Jacobs got together more stock, such as gun barrels (all rifled), several guns complete, many parts and forgings, iron and steel, a blacksmith forge, also some household goods, as he was going to take a bride from Delaware. With all this on a springless wagon they began the great adventure. His bride-to-be from Delaware met him at Danville where they were married.

Father being the baby and last of the family of eight children, mother often told over and over the story of the ride on that solid axle wagon over the terrible rough and, at times muddy, hill roads. The sight of the little town of Loudonville down in the valley, across the creek from

Schawakers hill, was like a view of paradise after that strenuous trip.

She tried to tell of their feelings and emotions as they arrived in the town with everybody looking on and talking. They were strangers in a strange place, and alone. Many of the people were from the East and were so different from themselves. Father soon opened up a shop on Main Street and then later bought a house and lot on North Water Street. In this house and home all of their children were born and raised. On this same lot and separated from the house, he built his shop building, which was about twenty feet wide and forty feet long. The store or shop had a regular store front with a good size show window. The front entrance door opened right out on to the sidewalk. There was a side door with a walk between the two buildings that led to the back lot where a short gun range was located. However, this description would not be complete



P. A Reinhard offhand rifle

unless I mentioned the sign he had at one time in front of the shop. On a post about sixteen feet high he had mounted a wonderful set of elk antlers. These antlers had many prongs and the antlers seemed to be the cause of endless discussions and arguments as to their age and where they came from and who had killed the elk. There also was a gun made of wood, a splendid imitation, which was supported between the antlers. A sign with his name was hung from a cross piece. Also on top of the store front he had boxes or houses for those happy, sociable purple martins, which we looked for as expectantly as for Spring itself.

In the shop, on the north side, was the long work bench; Dad's bench was nearest the front entrance. Then came the side door, then the rest of the benches nearly to the rear of the shop. There were four vises; those old vises with the bottom side going down and anchored to the floor. At each vise were one or two of those old many-jointed candle holders with the jointed part slideable up and down on a rod, that could be driven in the bench anywhere. On the wall by each vise were fastened the racks for all the different files used for wood or steel or brass, of which they were very careful.

Then the racks for all the different wood chisels, engraving tools and dies. They seemed to like to stand the bow-drill in the corner of the window with the bow hanging over it. Near the drill stock was the tray of flat drills which were so precious and carefully kept, being so time consuming to make and so easily broken.

Each of the gunsmiths had copper or brass pads for the vise jaws, as well as leather pads and props to hold up the ends of the gun while being worked on. The leather pads were glued on thin springy wood which was fastened to the end that rested on the floor.

On the opposite wall was the gun rack case with sliding glass frames, holding many, many guns. In front of the gun rack was the counter with scales and a show case with a flat glass top, on which all of dad's correspondence was written. All of this correspondence was by dictation, as he had secured no schooling, and his children, from the earliest to the last, all concluded that no one ever could dic-

tate more letters than he.

To illustrate how a bullet (a long bullet) would fly through the air straight, instead of going aimlessly, he would have me spin one "just like a top" on the glass top of the show case. This was to show that if the bullet received the proper rotating motion by the twist in the bore, there need be no limit to the length of the bullet, within reason.

There was a long wood stove in the center of the shop for which we boys had to lug cords and cords of wood, accompanied by much grumbling. Over the stove was a big, long drum that sent out heat which kept the room piping hot.

Next came the two rifling leads, and over them on the ceiling was the rack for holding rods for rifling and hand rods for finishing or re-rifling the repair jobs. At the back end of the shop was the lathe which was the most used tool in the place, and the most indispensable. In the corner by the back door stood the rack of ram rods; big and little, and in all stages of completion.

It's quite a trick to split down the small square of hickory and keep it the same size for the full length and not have short kinks and bends; then round it up and get the right size and still not have kinks. Then, often, he would get great planks for gun stocks, of maple, walnut, and cherry; birds-eye pieces were kept for special jobs and brought good prices. A plank would be marked off with a pattern and the blanks sawed out by hand with the bracket saw--and a job it was. This saw he made in Columbus. Sawing those blanks was a job that was shirked by all.

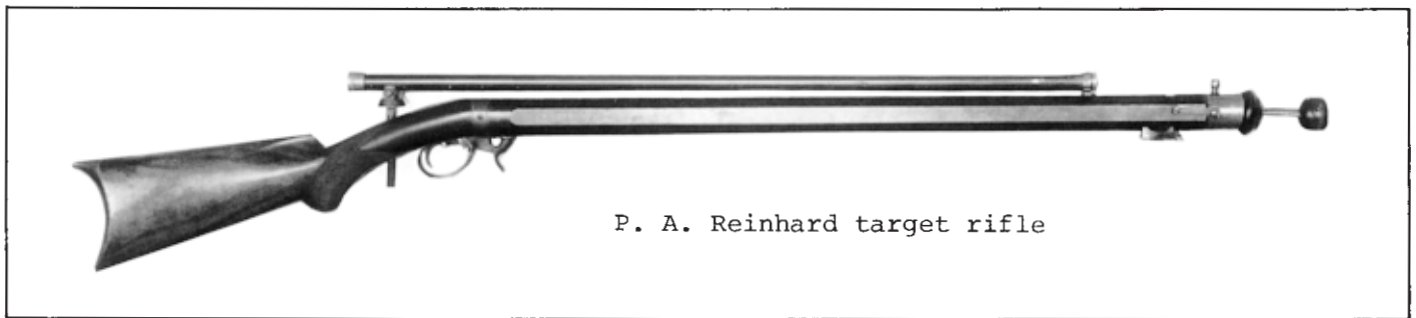
There were quite a number of men who had learned their trade with father. However, when he first arrived in Loudenville he met a man there by the name of Sprague, who did all kinds of jobs, as well as repair guns. He came to work for father and was with him for some time, but seems to have passed out of the picture without leaving a record. Among the first to learn the trade with father was John Pyers, a skilled blacksmith and quite expert at gun work. He helped father until dad left Loudonville. One Dan McClary finished his trade and went to California. Then there was William Bournan, or "Billie", as we knew him for years. He was dad's standby and expert.

He had fixed up his own little shop out on his farm but would come help dad when he was needed.

The short range was used for trying out the guns; first to set the sights or see that the gun was working all right. This range was right out of the blacksmith's door and the back stop was a big box of sand on the rear end of the lot, at about thirty yards. In the early days they must have made a lot of guns and every man who bought one or had one fixed could try it out there at the short range, or on the long range, to his own satisfaction. Many a social bet was settled there with lots of bantering and big talk among the shooters, especially when any of them thought he could outshoot Pete.

ily used, but the other he had made just to see how a fixed rest would function. This rest was made so the gun could slide back but could not lift up, and the cross of a telescope sight would be exactly on the same spot on the target at any part of the slide rest. However, it was more sportsmanlike and exciting with the regular shoulder and muzzle rest. Dad could shoot as steadily with the old muzzle rest as could be done with the special type, although the latter was wonderful.

Dad often talked of the difference between the old way of finishing the bore and the way we were doing it then. The making of the long combination bullet was very interesting to develop. The size and length was, of course, determined by



P. A. Reinhard target rifle

Dad seemed to have changed the kind of guns he made after he came back from a trip to Rochester, New York, in 1855 to 1858. There he visited William Billinghamurst and learned the new Billinghamurst method of making the bore of the barrel perfectly true. This does not mean that it was highly polished, but that the bore was perfectly round and the same diameter from end to end, a perfection unable to be obtained by the reaming operation. Each groove of the rifling had to be the same depth all around, contrasted with the inequality of the old procedure. By this new method he could make the bore perfectly true from end to end right out to, and including, the muzzle-- which was of utmost importance, as can be easily proved.

To test these long range target rifles he had a shooting range up to three hundred yards along the Pennsylvania Railroad track. This was along the road embankment of from fifteen to twenty feet high, well protected from cross winds, though he used wind flags for occasions. There were two rests to shoot from. One was a plain shoulder and muzzle rest which was ordinar-

the bore and twist of the rifling. In the combination bullet the size and shape of the two parts had to be developed so that when the two parts were put together and swedged the result would be exactly right. The making of this combination bullet required a swedge, a piece of metal which was drilled and reamed by a tool that was the exact shape of the bullet. The front end of the bullet was made of hardened lead and was swedged to condense it to size. The butt end was then serrated or made rough then the two parts put back in a swedge and again swedged into a complete and finished bullet with a finishing plunger. The bullet would drop out of the swedge with a finish like a new coin. This hard pointed combination bullet would not "upset" or get out of shape such as a lead bullet of like size and length would do if made of soft metal.

Another factor that had a big part in the perfect shooting of a gun was the ball starter. Also important was the turning of the muzzle of the barrel on which the starter was to fit. If for any reason he thought the starter was not starting the

bullet true in the bore, father would not be satisfied until he had tested it, which he did by simply starting the bullet in the barrel, letting the bullet extend out a little. Then by putting the barrel back in the lathe and revolving the barrel with the muzzle resting in the steady rest, this would show the bullet either running true or out.

He made two heavy barreled guns weighing about eighteen or twenty pounds each; one he kept for his own use and experiments, the other was on an order. He made arrangements with the Mansfield Brass Works to make the starters for them and sent me to see them made. The workman, being a sociable fellow, took great interest in the job and the result of his work; he afterwards became an enthusiastic shooting fan. At one time he bought dad's gun which he had named Big Susie. Susie was sold and traded back a number of times, the weight and care in the upkeep being too much for the owners. It was a wonderful shooting gun, especially so when dad handled it.

About 1878 father came back from Billinghamurst's, his last trip there, with the cross patch, which was made of both cloth and parchment paper. This created quite a stir in target gun circles and dad made the most of it by changing over old rifles and selling new ones. It was quite a trick in developing and making the cutter used to cut the four sections of the patch so that when they were folded around a bullet and an impression taken of the grooves they would not lap or leave an opening for the gas to escape. There was always a question as to whether there was a real marked improvement with the cross patch or whether it was because the gun was carefully gone over and the starter and muzzle checked. From 1880 to 1885 muzzleloading target rifle shooting matches dropped off to practically none at all and the work at the shop dropped off accordingly, so that all the work was carried on by father, brother Will and John Payers. Finally Will left the shop for other work which left the place to dad and me. There was always quite a lot of repair work to do and light target rifles to make besides many squirrel rifles which the young farmers would use.

Then, in 1885, not seeing any future in the gun business, I left. Dad got along with the help of Payers. The very last guns

father made there in Loudonville were those he made for brother Will and me. My gun is a beautiful piece of work, a light target rifle of about eight pounds, .30 calibre, under hammer, pistol grip stop, patch box--all nicely engraved. A typical Reinhard design. Mother being dead, he moved to Dayton about 1889. He brought most of his tools with him and spent the rest of his life in his own shop. Death came in 1895 and he was buried in Loudonville.

One of the matches he took part in and in which he won his first money was a national shoot at South Vernon, Vermont, where twenty-eight states were represented. At Dayton, in 1877, he won first prize, also at Fort Wayne the same year. At Tiffin and at Warren, Ohio, in the 1878 national shoot, ten shots, forty rods, he won with string measure of ten and one-quarter inches center to center. In a personal match with J. N. Adams at Wheeling West Virginia, for one hundred dollars, he won with a string of ten shots, forty rods, of eleven and one-quarter inches center to center.

This match was originally for one thousand yards, but because of the weather was compromised at forty rods. I can remember what a time we boys had to trace the first bullets when he tried out his gun at one thousand yards. He attended innumerable shooting matches in the different towns of Ohio and Indiana, which accounted for the great number of prizes he possessed.

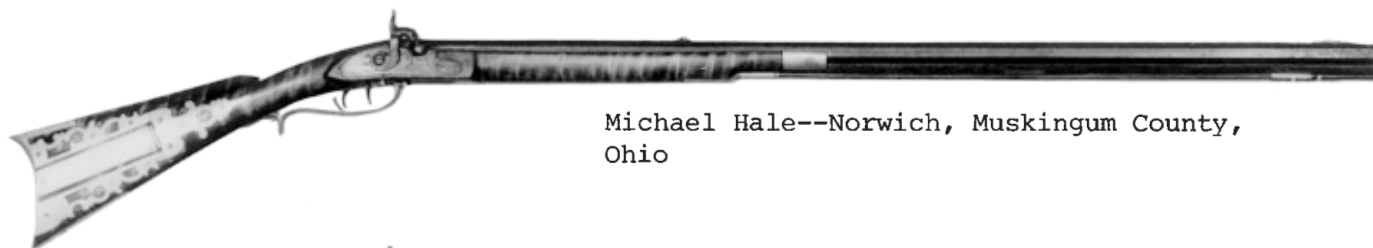
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I cannot make myself realize that it is about sixty years since I left that shop and home and all thought of guns. What a flood of recollections crowd my mind as I visualize the happenings in the lives of the different men who frequented that shop.

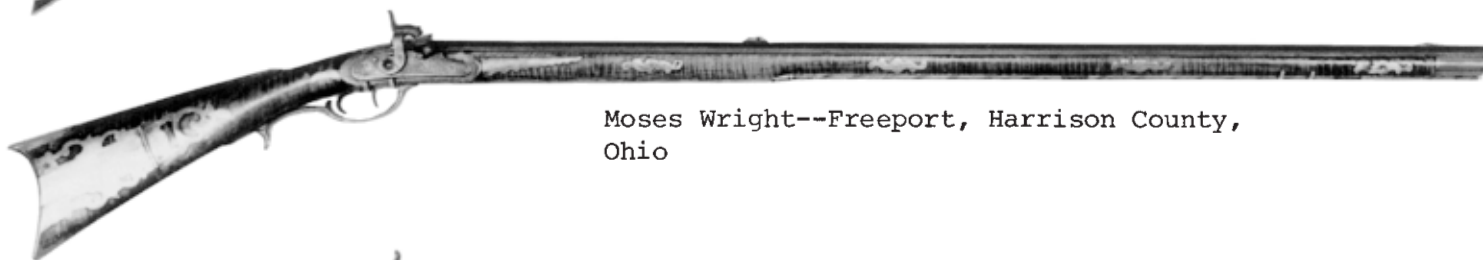
On dad's last trip to see William Billinghamurst, he brought back a bow drill stock that Mr. Billinghamurst had always personally used; it was for me! Father could wish nothing better than that I would grow up to be a great and successful gunsmith! □

--from Muzzle Blasts, Vol. 6, No. 8, April, 1945.

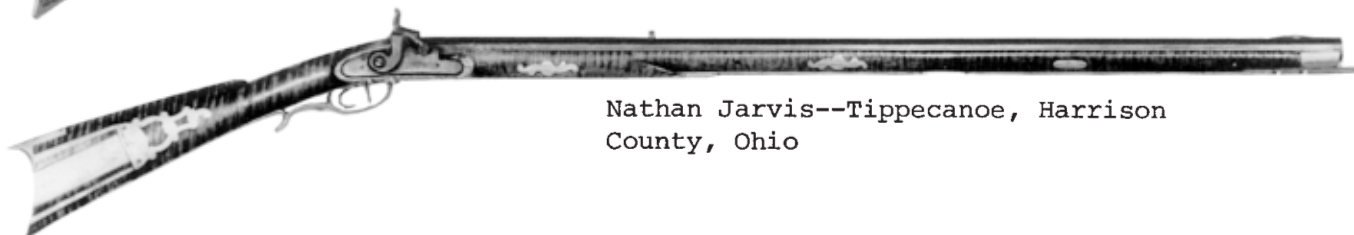
Illustrated are 7 fine Ohio rifles from
the AOLRC Research information/photo file.
We'll publish more as space permits. WEO



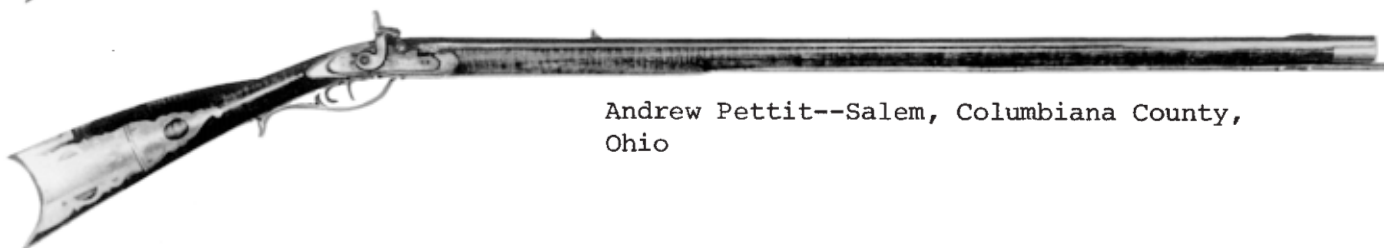
Michael Hale--Norwich, Muskingum County,
Ohio



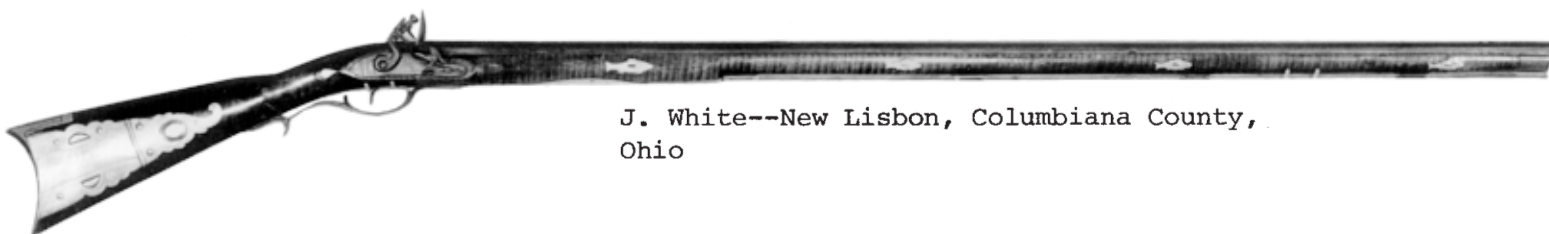
Moses Wright--Freeport, Harrison County,
Ohio



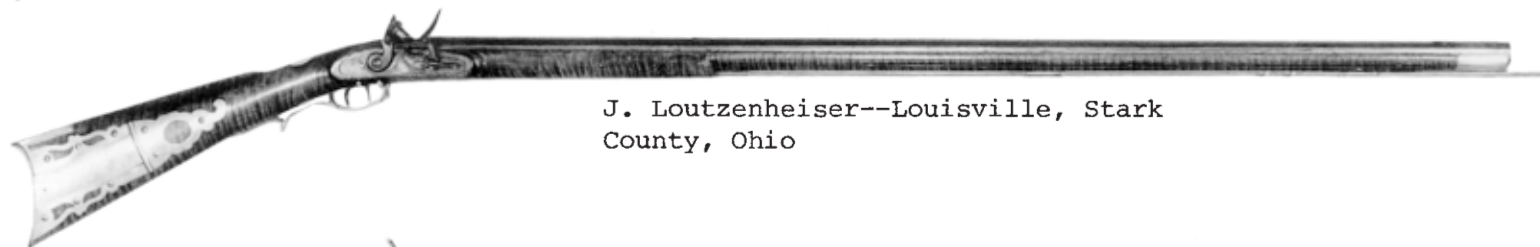
Nathan Jarvis--Tippecanoe, Harrison
County, Ohio



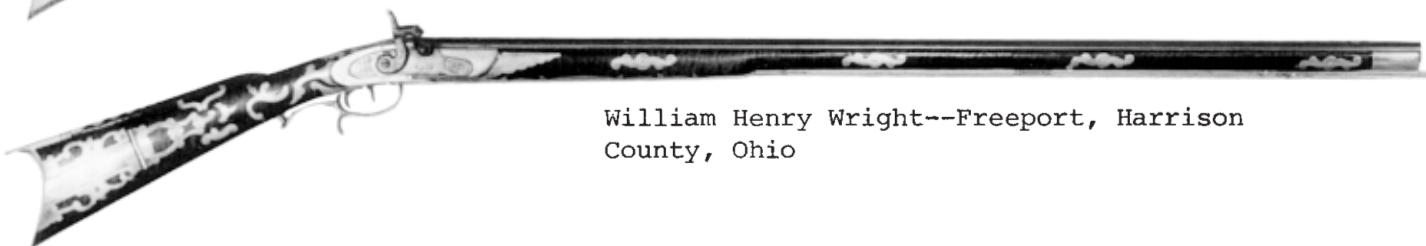
Andrew Pettit--Salem, Columbiana County,
Ohio



J. White--New Lisbon, Columbiana County,
Ohio



J. Loutzenheiser--Louisville, Stark
County, Ohio



William Henry Wright--Freeport, Harrison
County, Ohio