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THE  
ASSOCIATION  
OF OHIO  
LONGRIFLE  
COLLECTORS



FOR THE STUDY AND PRESERVATION  
OF THE OHIO MUZZLELOADING RIFLE

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Vol. XLVIV Number 1, Spring 2026

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ANNUAL  
ANTIQUÉ GUN  
& ARMS SHOW

51st Annual AOLRC Marietta Show

“Buy-Sell-Trade”

April 11-12, 2026 at Historic Lafayette Hotel, Marietta, Ohio

(see page 3 for details)



**CONTENTS**

President’s Message, *by Liza Kindig* . . . . . 2

President Liza Kindig Honored with Prestigious CLA Award  
. . . . . 3

Editor’s Notes, *by Mark Bender* . . . . . 4

Founding Member, Editor, Artist: Warren Offenberger, *by*  
*William Reynolds* . . . . . 5

Unmarked: “Slim” Pike County Sourced Rifle, *by Mark Bender* . 8

Montana Guild Talk: What is an Ohio Rifle? *by Mark Bender* . . 6

A Vincent Fullstock Rifle and a Lady’s Rifle, *by Danny Coler*. . . 9

Kit Carson/David Leonard Rifle: Fact or Fiction? *by Kenneth*  
*Leonard* . . . . . 12

Details of a J.W. Vanmeter Rifle, *by Mark Bender*. . . . . 16

Two Repurposed Hunting Swords, *by Mark Bender* . . . . . 17

Thoughts on Shooting at the Annual Picnic, *by Ron Yerian*. . . 20

Recent AOLRC Shows and Related Activities: Photo Essay 22

Ladies Auxillary, *by Barb Hardwood and Alys Wagner* . . . . Back Cover

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings A.O.L.R.C. Friends!

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the association for awarding me the F.G. Tilton service award, I am truly honored and humbled. It is a pleasure to be part of such a wonderful organization.

I can hardly believe we will be back in Marietta for our 51st annual meeting in a few short weeks! We are on track for a great show again this year. Tables are \$35.00 each and will go fast so get your registration in as soon as possible. We have a nice casual dinner planned after set up on Friday to go along with the silent auction. Friday night dinner is \$20.00 per person payable at dinner. This is a fun way to spend some time together with food and fellowship and the auction brings the club a good deal of funds so think about what you would like to donate. We look forward to seeing you there. The show will be open to the public Saturday from 9-5 and Sunday from 9-2. The banquet will be Saturday night as usual. The ticket information is in the newsletter. Please send your reservation and payment to Jim Clippinger.

There has been some exciting progress made on the new website [www.aolrc.com](http://www.aolrc.com) Check out this beautiful

new showcase for our organization if you haven't already. I am sure you will be impressed and there is still more to come so check back often. A huge thank you to Ken and Daniel Leonard for all their work to get us a new site! The Facebook page is back up and running as it should be so we are getting a lot of attention there as well.

The election of directors will be held at the annual meeting. Anyone interested in sitting on the board please contact John Reinbolt ([jreinbolt24@bright.net](mailto:jreinbolt24@bright.net)) to be placed on the ballot. Being a director is a great way to support the club, all members are eligible.

The Offenberger Family will be hosting a public memorial reception to celebrate Warren's life. Saturday April 11, 2026 from 1-5 in the Rufus Putnam room of the Lafayette Hotel.

If you are in need of a room at the Lafayette, please call 740-373-5522 and let them know you are with AOLRC when making your reservation. We have a block of rooms reserved for the show.

I look forward to seeing you all very soon!

Liza Kindig

*President ALORC*

## NOTICE

Everything seems to be getting more expensive – and most organizations have raised their membership dues. AOLRC appreciates your membership. None of our organization officers, directors, or editors of the newsletter, website, and Facebook page are paid – it is all volunteer work driven by a passion for early Ohio rifles and accoutrements, and a desire to make spaces where members can interact and to educate the public about this aspect of Ohio's past (and present). Dues help facilitate the printing of the newsletter, maintenance of website and Facebook page, postage, and holding events (Marietta show in Spring, summer picnic/shoot in August, and Autumn show).

Here is the updated membership dues pricing:

\$35 / 1yr      \$65 / 2yr      \$90 / 3yr

Other updates:

If you are interested in running for the Board of Directors please contact our Secretary, John Reinbolt: [jreinbolt24@bright.net](mailto:jreinbolt24@bright.net)

The featured maker at the Spring 2026 Marietta show is Adam Stilgenbauer, Holmes County. Please bring your rifles for display

QR Code for Marietta,  
Spring 2026 Show:



# LIZA KINDIG HONORED WITH PRESTIGIOUS CLA AWARD



Liza Kindig, AOLRC president was presented the 2025 with an Education Award by the Contemporary Longrifle Association for “her dedication to sharing knowledge, fostering understanding, and promoting the artistry and history of the longrifle tradition continues to make a lasting impact on makers, collectors, and enthusiasts alike. Liza’s enthusiasm for education strengthens the heart of our mission—preserving skills, stories, and craftsmanship for generations to come (WomenOfTheCLA posting).

“Winning the Education award was a complete surprise and a truly humbling experience. There are so many great craftspeople and educators in that organization, I am honored to be included in such a group.” (Liza Kindig, January 2026)

This photo is of Liza Kindig in “living history” garb at the Sons of Liberty annual event, Cantor Caves, generations to come, January 2026.

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SPRING 2026 SHOW

### 51st Annual Marietta Show

“BUY - SELL - TRADE”

**April 11-12, 2026**

Saturday: 9am–5pm; Sunday: 9am–2pm

*Historic Lafayette Hotel*

*101 Front St, Marietta, OH 45750*

**Admission:** \$8.00 per person (*children under 12 free with paying adult*)

Ohio/Kentucky style rifles, fowlers, pistols, powder horns, and accoutrements of 18th-19th century era and contemporary reproductions. No cartridge firearms or smokeless powder firearms.

**Tables \$35.00 For reservations, please contact Jim Clippinger at [jgcpst6@yahoo.com](mailto:jgcpst6@yahoo.com) or John Reinbolt at [jreinbolt24@bright.net](mailto:jreinbolt24@bright.net)**

*Please see Facebook page for more details on table reservations, set up times, etc.*

### FACEBOOK LINK ANNOUNCEMENT

Visit the site at <http://www.aolrc.com/> to find dates of upcoming shows, articles, and even items for sale. Please check out the new Facebook link. This promises to be an exciting place to post current news and photos. Both the AOLRC website and Facebook page make communication much faster and more convenient to access than the newsletter you are holding. Find them online and enhance your AOLRC experience.

# EDITOR'S NOTES

The snow is still deep, and the groundhog has just seen his shadow as I write. This issue continues to show the vitality of those interested in collecting, researching, and creating muzzleloading firearms and related accoutrements from the late 18th to early 20th century in Ohio. Kenneth Leonard has written an intriguing article on the possible connection between a rifle attributed to late 19th century Ohio gunsmith Daniel Leonard and the doughty frontiersman Kit Carson. There is also a detailed photo spread on two outstanding rifles of the Vincent clan by Danny Coler. It is notable that both articles were assembled by descendants—by blood or marriage—of the featured gunsmiths.

Carrying on the Western theme, yours truly relates the adventure of presenting an invited talk on “What Is an Ohio Rifle?” to the Montana Historical Gunmakers Guild in Bozeman, Montana. This issue also includes an article on the bladed accoutrements of two contemporary makers and a photo essay on

recent AOLRC events. William Reynolds has supplied a short tribute to the late Owen Offenberger, a founding member of both the AOLRC and the AOLRC Newsletter. Additional notices include recognition of our President, Liza Kindig, the new dues structure, the upcoming Marietta meeting, and the featured maker at the show. Barb Harwood (now a Board Member) and Alys Wagner have contributed a detailed report on the Ladies’ Auxiliary activities.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the making of this issue, including Mark Barnhill, Nathan E. Bender, Danny Coler, Barb Harwood, Kevin Haney, Liza Kindig, Kenneth Leonard, William Madden, James Mast, Brooklyn Pierce, John Reinbolt, William Reynolds, Alys Wagner, and Ron Yerian, as well as others who have shown support in various ways.

If you have an idea for an article—short or long—for an upcoming issue, please see the information in the box below.

—Mark Bender

## GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION

1. The preferred format for articles is a Word document. Please use size 12 font, single or double space, 1 inch margins.
2. In rare cases, handwritten materials (and/or non-digital photos, illustrations, etc.) can be submitted. Please contact the editor by email.
3. Articles in Word (or compatible system), photos (j-pegs or other formats), and correspondence can be emailed to this address: mabgogo@yahoo.com
4. Please put “AOLRCfile” in the subject line of the email.
5. Please run a spelling and grammar check on your e-files and otherwise proofread them.
6. Please put the **title and author’s name** at the top of the article; use the same font size for the whole article.
7. **Photographs** can be color or black and white. If you are not a professional, good results can be obtained by taking photos of objects in soft, outdoor light. Lay the object on a non-reflective gray background (blanket, etc.) with no background clutter. Please keep in mind how a color image might look if presented in black and white. Photos should be clear and sharp. (Professionals will, of course, have their own protocols.)
8. Use **past issues as a guideline** to content. Ideas for articles include local or family histories of pre-1900 Ohio gunsmiths and the use of muzzle-loading arms; detailed descriptions of representative or unique rifles (in terms of features or level of craftsmanship); accoutrements; short interviews with AOLRC members relating to collecting and appreciation of the Ohio long rifle as a folk art; accounts of early shooting clubs, shoots, tales, etc.
9. The newsletter is normally published twice a year. Submissions are always welcome, however timely notices for the Spring or Fall shows need to be received **at least 6 weeks** in advance.
10. Authors retain copyright.

# FOUNDING MEMBER, EDITOR, ARTIST: WARREN OFFENBERGER

BY WILLIAM REYNOLDS

Shortly after we celebrated our 50th year as an Association of Ohio Longrifle Collectors we lost one of our greatest supporters. Warren Offenberger passed away on April 22, 2025 from the awful effects of Alzheimer's disease. Our association wouldn't be what it is today if it wasn't for Warren's many contributions. I remember the day when I was sitting with him in his shop and mentioned I was considering doing an exhibit of Ohio rifles at the museum and asked if he thought it could be successful. Could we find enough rifles and would it draw enough public interest to make it worthwhile. Warren in his typical

style was nothing more but encouraging. That first exhibit displayed about 90 rifles from several sources and had about that many visitors. It seemed to be a success and was repeated the next year when the concept of forming and association of collectors was discussed. The following year our organization was founded. Through all this Warren was there with advice and worthy suggestions. Shortly after he suggested starting a newsletter. I remember asking who could do that? Warren was a graphic artist and the question was answered. For many years Warren would lay out the newsletter using the old-fashioned cut and paste method. Yes, scissors and glue and artist board before going to the printer. He realized that a newsletter was import to helping us expand the important history of the Ohio rifle and their makers. Truly a visionary. It's hard to imagine today the hours Warren, Miles Farley and I spent hand addressing our many mailings. His contributions over many long years are why we exist today.

Warren Offenberger, charter member, artist, gunmaker, champion archer, veteran, Distinguished Service award recipient and good friend to all of us will be missed. Raise a glass to his honor.



*Warren Offenberger with several of his rifles at the Spring 2024 Marietta Show.*



*Detail of a fancy rifle by Warren Offenberger displayed at the Spring 2024 Marietta Show.*

# MONTANA HISTORICAL GUNMAKERS GUILD: WHAT IS AN OHIO RIFE?

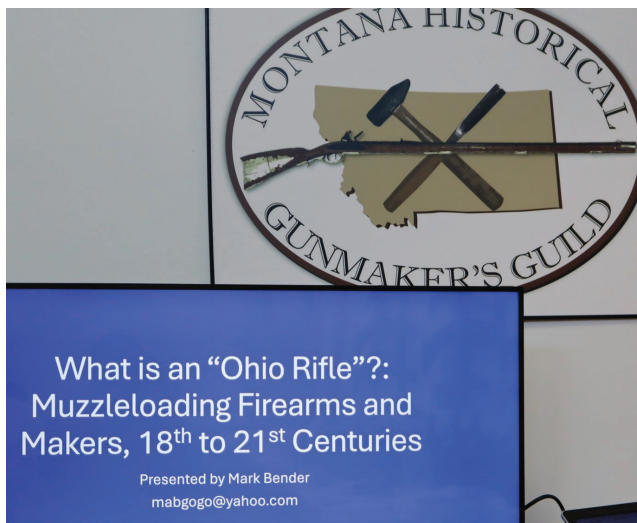
BY MARK BENDER

Early in 2025, I received an invitation to be the first nonmember to present a talk at the Montana Historical Gunmakers Guild in Bozeman, Montana. The presentation was scheduled for late August. Before long, I found myself stepping off a flight from Columbus (via Denver) at Logan Airport in Billings, Montana, where I was met by my brother, Nathan E. Bender, an archivist at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming. Nathan, a member of the Guild, had convinced Guild founder and president William “Bill” Madden that I might have something worthwhile to say about that elusive subject: Ohio muzzleloading rifles.

We loaded my bags into Nathan’s wellworn Ford F150 (275,000 miles and still running fairly strong) and set off for Cody, where we would spend the night with his family. Along the way, we stopped in the tiny town of Bridger, Montana—named after mountain man Jim Bridger—and spent a few minutes in the Bridger Fur Company. There I picked up a nicely tanned beaver

pelt for my wife’s collection, a couple of bison caps (horns), and several pairs of elk and buckskin gloves. As we were leaving, I noticed a horsedrawn open carriage coming down the street carrying two women in traditional long dresses who were likely from the local Hutterite community.

The miles of sage and mountain passed quickly. We ended the day with a pleasant evening walk around Cody and some time in my brother’s home office—more accurately, his collection room. The next morning, after a quick breakfast of eggs, bacon, and toast, we set out early. After many more miles of sage and mountains along Route 90, we took a short break in Big Timber, Montana, to visit Shiloh Rifle Manufacturing, with its exquisite displays of original 1874 Sharps singleshot rifles and their remarkable recreations. Back on the road, we passed Prairie Dog Town State Park (we stopped there on the return trip and actually saw some of the critters), and eventually rolled into Bozeman—a quiet college town flanked by five scenic mountain ranges: the Bridger, Gallatin, Madison, Absaroka, and Crazy ranges. We checked into a small hotel and then headed to the outskirts of



*Screen with the title of Mark Bender’s talk to the Montana Historical Gunmakers Guild, August 2025. (Courtesy of Nathan Bender)*



*Mark Bender (left) talking with Hawken rifle expert and accomplished long rifle builder Dan Pharris in the workshop at the gathering. (Courtesy of Nathan E. Bender)*

town to meet with Bill Madden.

Bill Madden is the driving force behind the Montana Historical Gunmakers Guild, an organization devoted to the study and re-creation of historical muzzleloading firearms. The Guild maintains high standards for membership (though it is welcoming to interested parties) and includes many highly accomplished makers. Each August for the past twentyfive years, the Guild has held a workshop focused on building historical muzzleloading rifles, smoothbores, and related accoutrements. The talks and demonstrations take place in two areas: a tent area filled with tables and folding chairs—where this year’s participants were learning about antler powdermeasure making and metallurgy—and a rather amazing barnlike workshop (with every imaginable tool) displaying both contemporary creations by Guild members and historical firearms. Vendors were also present, including Ryan and Terry Jo Roberts, very active Guild members who often teach gun making classes and are owners of Muzzleloader Builder’s Supply in Aberdeen, Idaho.

The next morning, I began my talk by stating clearly that I was no expert on Ohio rifles, but that I had gathered information over the years from longtime AOLRC members, related publications, and my own collecting activities. The title of the talk was “What Is an Ohio Rifle?” I also posed the question: Why ask this question? The answer, I suggested, lies in understanding how Ohio became a state and how it was settled and developed from the late eighteenth century through the post–Civil War era.

I noted that stylistic influences on Ohio rifles came from both outside (national and international) and inside the state. There were numerous local styles and clusters of makers, but also considerable movement of both gunmakers and stylistic features. The result was great variety—some of it idiosyncratic or even “quirky.” The takeaway: there is no single, fixed “Ohio style” rifle. However, time period, geographic location, and clusters of gunmakers—determined through signed rifles, historical documents, and oral tradition—help clarify the picture.

The talk continued with a brief overview of Ohio

history and the development of transportation routes from the late 1700s through the late 1800s. I then discussed the Vincent family of gunmakers in Washington County, since the “Vincent” name is often nationally associated with Ohio rifles. I highlighted several other makers, from early to late periods, including William West, Daniel Marker, John Lowmaster, Abner Barnes, Alexander McGirr, Daniel Leonard, Valentine Shuler, D. T. Hawken, Mesheck Moxley, Levi Biddle, Christian Siebert, William Bodenheimer, and others. One section—“Ohio Rifles Out West”—was of particular interest to the audience. I also introduced the history and recent shows of the AOLRC, along with research by Donald Hutslar, James B. Whisker, and others.



*William “Bill” Madden (right), longtime president of the Montana Historical Gunmakers Guild holding a copy of AOLRC Newsletter shakes hands with newsletter editor, Mark Bender. (Courtesy of Nathan E. Bender)*

In the second hour of the talk, I shifted to several notable twentieth and twenty-first century makers. I began with the famous barrelmaker William “Bill” Large of Ironton, Ohio, followed by the renowned flintlock maker Cecil Brooks of Belpre, Ohio, whose rifles were presented to various leaders and dignitaries. I then discussed Warren Offenberger of Marietta, Ohio, a founding member of the AOLRC; trade musket innovator Curly Gostomski of Dayton, Ohio; well-known AOLRC member Larry Brynner of Newark, Ohio; and the superb blacksmith Mark Bokenkamp, formerly of Powell, Ohio. I also noted the work of several contemporary makers, including Vincent rifle historian Dr. William “Bill” Reynolds of Marietta, Ohio; the masterful Ken Netting of New Albany, Ohio; Larry Cordray of Morgan County, Ohio, known for solid, fineshooting muzzleloaders; and Daniel Aubhil, folk artist and blacksmith of Sycamore, Ohio. There were many more I could have featured. It was striking how many Ohio names the Montanans already knew or had heard about.

I also highlighted the many muzzleloader supply houses with deep roots in Ohio, including James Johnston’s Golden Age Arms; the Kindig family’s Log Cabin Shop in Lodi and its museum of Ohio rifles; the Mold and Gun Shop in Jackson; the R. E. Davis Company in northwest Ohio; and the more

recent rising star, Kibler Longrifles. All were well known to the audience, who clearly recognized Ohio’s significant contributions to the world of contemporary muzzleloading.

All told, it was a rewarding experience to share knowledge about Ohio rifles, make new friends, and reconnect with several Guild members who have Ohio roots. The hospitality (including great spreads of food), enthusiasm, and craftsmanship on display in Montana made the trip especially memorable.



*Randy Chochran (left), a guild member from Kentucky to the Guild workshop chewing the fat with Mark Bender. Note the antler powder measures under construction. (Courtesy of Nathan E. Bender)*



*Unmarked “Slim” Pike County Sourced Rifle*

Waverly, Pike County Provenance, unmarked. This slim or gracile percussion full stock rifle has a silver name plate inlet in the top of the barrel, but the signature is not present. Silver hunter’s star on very

flat cheekpiece. Seems to have a mix of early and mid-19th century features. Recovered from a well-known bait store in Pike County, Ohio. Note the curves in the design of the lock panel. (Mark Bender photo)

# A VINCENT FULLSTOCK RIFLE

BY DANNY COLER

## History and Provenance

I purchased this rifle from Jim Mast in April 2024. Jim had acquired it from the Ted Dixon family, who in turn purchased it from Warren Offenberger. Warren obtained the rifle from James Winan Laflin.

The story of this rifle traces back to John Vincent, who built it for his son, John Caleb Vincent. After Caleb's passing in 1918, the rifle was inherited by his daughter, Gretta Elizabeth Vincent, who was married to James Laflin. They had a son named James Vincent Laflin, who married Ruth Hutchinson. John and Ruth had a son, who was named James Winan Laflin. He resided in Marietta, Ohio until he passed in 2015

Warren Offenberger purchased the rifle from James Winan Laflin sometime before his death. This is how the rifle eventually left the possession of the Vincent family.

## Description of the Rifle

The rifle features a curly maple stock with an overall length of 55 7/34 inches. It has an 8 inch drop from the top of the barrel to the tip of the toe plate. The rifle is adorned with 15 German silver inlays, each engraved intricately. The patch box is brass with engravings, and the toe plate, trigger guard, and lock plate are also made of brass. The barrel is octagonal, measuring 40 inches from muzzle to breech, with seven rifling grooves.

The front site is a blade of German silver mounted in a brass dovetail. The rear site is made of iron. The rifle also includes three brass ramrod thimbles and a brass nose piece. The lock is stamped with wild birds, and letters "TRUITT" from what can be discerned. The lock is 4.5 inches long by 1 inch tall with an engraved lock plate of brass.

## Personal Reflection

I became interested in Vincent rifles about 15 years ago and have been collecting them ever since. I have to say this is the most decorated and elaborate original fullstock Vincent rifle I have ever seen.

My wife, Susan Vincent Coler, is a descendant of the Vincent family. I would like to thank Jim Mast for selling us this John Vincent rifle, giving us the opportunity to put it back in the Vincent family.



*Danny Coler family with Vincent rifles. (Courtesy of Danny Coler)*



*Patch box detail, John Vincent rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Full-length view, John Vincent full stock. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Danny Coler holding the fullstock Vincent. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Rear ramrod pipe and inlays, John Vincent rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Cheek piece, John Vincent rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Nose cap, John Vincent rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Tang, John Vincent rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Lock and patch box, John Vincent full stock. (Mark Bender photo)*

### **A Lady's Rifle by Caleb Vincent**

This gracile half stock has been described as a "lady's rifle." The maple half stock has an overall length of 45 ½" inches in length. It has brass and silver inlays, brass butt plate and trigger guard, and a "Vincent style" patch box. The .32 caliber barrel measures 29 ½" in length and 7/8" across the flats. The curly maple stock has a 7 ½" drop, measured from the top of barrel to the top of the butt plate.



*Vincent descendant Susan (Vincent) Coler holding the Lady's rifle. (Photo by Brooklyn Pierce)*



*Detail of gracile half stock patch box by Caleb Vincent, Washington Co. (Photo by Brooklyn Pierce)*



*Gracile half stock, cheek piece side, by Caleb Vincent, Washington Co. (Photo by Brooklyn Pierce)*



*Gracile half stock rifle, lock side, by Caleb Vincent, Washington Co. (Photo by Brooklyn Pierce)*

# KIT CARSON/DAVID LEONARD RIFLE: FACT OR FICTION?

BY KENNETH LEONARD

In April of 2022, I received a call from two fellow AOLRC members informing me that a rifle made by my great-great-grandfather, David Leonard, was going to be featured in Rock Island Auction Company's May 2022 Premier Sale. I was thrilled at the opportunity to see another Leonard rifle come to market.

During the auction preview, the rifle was described as having been presented to Kit Carson. Mounted on the underside of the forearm of the rifle was a silver plate engraved with the following inscription: "PRESENTED TO KIT CARSON BY HIS FRIENDS IN LES VEGAS N.M. JULY 14TH 1852."

I immediately began searching for more information on this rifle. After nearly two weeks of research, I finally found the first significant and only piece of information. The rifle had previously sold as part of a two-rifle lot at a Christie's auction in London, England, on December 16, 2015. The hammer price for both rifles was £9,375, or approximately \$14,329 USD. (See Fig. 1)



DETAILS

AN AMERICAN 100-BORE PERCUSSION PENNSYLVANIA RIFLE, AND AN AMERICAN 40-BORE FLINTLOCK PLAINS RIFLE  
THE FIRST R. & W.C. BIDDLE & CO., PHILADELPHIA, CIRCA 1840, THE SECOND LECHLER, EARLY 19TH CENTURY

The first with heavy 32 in. (81.5 cm.) octagonal barrel, engraved lock, maple half-stock, and white metal mounts including a plate on the underside of the fore-end engraved with apparently spurious dedication "PRESENTED TO KIT CARSON / BY HIS / FRIENDS IN LES VEGAS N.M. / JULY 14TH 1852." Iron parts and mounts with varnished or lacquered protective coating; the second with heavy smooth-bored 44 1/2 in. (113 cm.) signed octagonal barrel, flat bevelled lock, walnut full stock, and brass mounts including hinged patchbox-cover

Christie's catalog description identified the rifle as an "R. & W.C. Biddle Co., Philadelphia, circa 1840", and included a notable comment. The description stated that the presentation plate carried an "apparently SPURIOUS dedication." I looked up the word spurious, which was defined as "not being what it purports to be; false or fake." This raised an immediate and important question: why would a world-class auction house such as Christie's describe the inscription in this manner?

The Christie's auction catalog also noted that the rifle came from the Selden Collection of Antique Arms and Armour. After additional research, I learned that the collector was Percy Selden Straus Jr., whose father was one of the founders of Macy's department store. Following considerable hours of research I came across the Straus Family Historical Society and spoke with Joan Adler, its executive director. After consulting with family members, she informed me that no living family member had any knowledge of this rifle.

The rifle itself is not signed, which initially left the maker unidentified. However, Rock Island Auction's description included a letter from well-known gunsmith Brian LaMaster, who had been hired by an

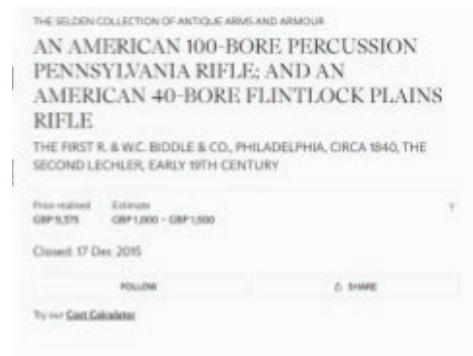


Fig. 1. Christie's Auction, December 16, 2015 description with "spurious" notation.

owner to clean and identify the rifle. In his letter dated July 13, 2016, Mr. LaMaster stated that “although the rifle is unsigned, it is clearly the work of David Leonard of Ohio.” He cited the double cheek rest, eagle inlay, cap box, and overall architecture as features consistent with Leonard’s known work. I personally agree completely with Mr. LaMaster’s assessment that there’s no doubt that the rifle was made by David Leonard, my great-great-grandfather.

At this point, however, the story takes an interesting turn. After carefully studying Rock Island Auction’s sale catalog photographs, I began to question the timeline suggested by the presentation plate. I have



**Fig. 2 David Leonard, (1855 Rifle #1) Overall Early Style Architecture**



**Fig. 3 David Leonard, (1855 Rifle #1) Wood contour follows the front of the lock, with a screw in Breech Drum**



**Fig. 4 David Leonard, (1855 Rifle #2) Overall Early Style Architecture**

studied David Leonard rifles for over forty years, and our family currently owns sixteen examples dated between 1855 and 1900.

The earliest rifles in our collection, two dated 1855 and one dated 1859 share several distinct characteristics that are not shared with the Carson/ Leonard rifle. These rifles feature full patch boxes, screw-in nipple drums, single cheek rest and wood that wraps around the contour of the front of the lock. (See Fig. 2-7)



**Fig. 5 David Leonard, (1855 Rifle #2) Wood contour follows the front of the lock, with a screw in Breech Drum**



**Fig. 6 David Leonard, (1859 Rifle) Overall Early Style Architecture**



**Fig. 7 David Leonard, (1859 Rifle) Wood contour follows the front of the lock, with a screw in Breech Drum**



*Fig. 8 David Leonard, (1870 Rifle #1) Overall later Style Architecture*



*Fig. 9 David Leonard, (1870 Rifle #1) With a unique Snail design (Not seen in earlier pictures)*



*Fig. 10 David Leonard, (1870 Rifle #2) Overall later Style Architecture*



*Fig. 11 David Leonard, (1870 Rifle #2) With a unique Snail design (Not seen in earlier pictures)*

In contrast, Leonard rifles made between approximately 1870 and 1900 exhibit very different features. These later rifles do not have full patch boxes, instead use small cap boxes. They also feature cheek rests on both sides, unique snail design, as used on the Carson/Leonard rifle and wood that does not follow the contour of the lock. (See Fig. 8-13)



*Fig. 12 David Leonard, (1900 Rifle) Overall later Architecture*



*Fig. 13 David Leonard, (1900 Rifle) Wood contour turns straight upward with a unique Snail design (Not seen in earlier pictures)*

The Kit Carson / Leonard rifle clearly fits the later category, consistent with rifles made between 1870 and 1900. This seems to create a significant problem with the stated presentation date of 1852. (See Fig. 14-15)



*Fig. 14 Kit Carson/David Leonard Rifle, Consistant with later Architecture style*



*Fig. 15 Kit Carson/David Leonard Rifle, Consistant with the straight upward Wood contour and unique Snail design of the later guns*

According to the inscription, the rifle was presented to Kit Carson on July 14, 1852—three years before the earliest dated Leonard rifles in our collection. Given the fact that the rifle’s features are from David Leonard’s 1870 through 1900 architectural styling, the timeline simply does appear to align.

Rock Island Auction initially estimated the value of the rifle at \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Prior to the auction, I presented my findings and concerns to Rock Island Auction’s (RIA) president, Kevin Hogan. After reviewing the information, he informed me that the rifle would either be removed from the auction or re-estimated at \$60,000 to \$100,000 at the owner’s discretion. I was very impressed with Rock Island Auction’s handling of the unique situation, which demonstrated their integrity and professionalism.

My son and I attended the May 2022 auction in person. The rifle opened with a \$50,000 bid and received one additional bid at \$55,000, with bidding increments set at \$5,000. When no \$60,000 bid materialized, the hammer fell and the rifle went unsold. With buyer’s premium and sales tax, a successful \$60,000 bid would have resulted in a total cost of approximately \$75,000.

David Leonard was born in 1825, which would have made him 27 years old at the time of the alleged 1852 presentation. This raises another question. How many years prior to the presentation date of 1852 would the rifle have to have been made in order for it to travel to New Mexico from Ohio? Kit Carson passed away on May 23, 1868, leaving no opportunity to resolve the matter directly.

I cannot explain how or why the presentation plate came to be affixed to this rifle. Given the fact that we own 16 Leonard rifles and have studied David’s work for 40 plus years, I am completely confident that the rifle itself is the work of David Leonard. With that being said, I believe the Kit Carson presentation inscription is, in fact, spurious. As for the rifle’s current whereabouts, I do not know. Through hours of searching, I do know the identity of the broker involved, a very well-known antique arms dealer. When I spoke with him, he indicated that the owner intended to “hang the rifle on the wall, and that his son might attempt to sell it again in thirty years or so.”

So, what do YOU think—fact or fiction? Was THIS RIFLE truly presented to Kit Carson on July 14, 1852?

If the present owner of this rifle should ever consider parting with it, our family would be honored to have the opportunity to bring it home and add it to the Leonard family collection. The story surrounding the inscription is intriguing, but far more meaningful to us is that this rifle was built by our ancestor and represents a tangible piece of our family’s craftsmanship and legacy. We would welcome a private conversation at any time to discuss its future. Ken Leonard Great-Great-Grandson of David Leonard, Gunsmith

# DETAILS OF A J.W. VANMETER RIFLE

BY MARK BENDER

According to Volume IV of Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen (Hutslar c. 1999:159-160) J.W. Vanmeter (or as suggested below, "Van Meter") was located in the whereabouts of Chillicothe, Ross County, Ohio, around 1850. Other sources place him (or someone with a similar name) in Piketon or Scioto Co., which Hutslar suggests could have been earlier areas of residence, as his sources point to the Chillicothe area. This author has seen two or three rifles with the Vanmeter stamp kept as heirlooms by an old family in Chillicothe with definite Vanmeter roots.

An 1850 census of Richmond Dale, Ohio (in Jefferson Twp., Ross County, southwest of Chillicothe), notes James W. Vanmeter was born in Virginia and married an Ohio woman named Editha (nee Dawson). A gunsmith named George Vanmeter listed in an 1860 census in the J.W. Vanmeter residence appears to be a son. A J.W. Vanmeter wrote up the history of Jefferson Twp. for a historical publication in 1871. Hutslar notes a full stock rifle stamped "J. W. Van Meter" and a half stock in poor condition. An online search has turned up several other existing rifles with features similar to the one described herein. An online source by a relative (Anne Van Meter) describes recovering a Van Meter rifle that made its way to Norway, indicates the full name is John William Van Meter, and includes more genealogical information: <https://www.muzzleloadingforum.com/threads/j-w-vanmeter-rifle.90814/>

The pictured rifle has a curly maple stock with a rather dark finish. The inlays and engraving are similar to other known Vanmeter/VanMeter rifles, as is the stamp. Another feature on some rifles is the raised skirt around the tang. This rifle is notable for the double cheekpiece and the longish nickel silver ramrod pipes. The rifle holds well, despite its weight and barrel length. Vanmeter/Van Meter seems to be

one of several outstanding 19th century gunsmiths from Ross County.

Basic measurements (approximate):

Overall length: 52 ½" from toe of butt plate to muzzle flat

Barrel: 37 1/8" in length

Caliber: .38

5/8" breech extension

2 3/8" ramrod pipes (nickel silver)

2 7/8" pointed tang (engraved)

3 ¾" brass toeplate

2 7/8" butt plate (brass) tang

1" width butt plate, 4 ¼" height

7 5/8" trigger guard (brass), ½" width at bow

30" stock, from toe to front of nose cap

6" engraved nickel silver belly plate (elliptical)

1" engraved nickel silver inlays on fore stock (barrel pin in middle)

4 3/8" cheekpieces (right and left)

2 7/8" x 1 ¼" engraved nickel silver cheek inlays (2)

2 ½" triangular brass side plate, x ¾"

4 ½" x 1" percussion lock plate, machine engraved with birds

Rear of low brass front sight 2" from muzzle

Iron rear site 11" from breech



*Full length J.W. Vanmeter rifle (lock side). Note long ramrod pipes. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Full length J.W. Vanmeter rifle, side plate side. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Double cheekpiece with large, nickel silver inlay. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Belly plate of nickel silver, J.W. Vanmeter rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Note skirt around tang; "J.W. Vanmeter" discernible on barrel. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Side plate and unique breech of J.W. Vanmeter rifle. (Mark Bender photo)*

# TWO REPURPOSED HUNTING SWORDS

BY MARK BENDER

Large knives or small swords were part of the early Ohio frontier accoutrements of some frontiersmen and military men. Some were imported European hunting swords (or versions made here), used in the Old World for dispatching wounded deer or boars, or other tasks requiring a sharp tool. Names such as “hanger” and “cuttoe” were used for actual military or militia swords in the Colonies, made with short blades (often 18-24 inches) in the 17th -18th centuries, while terms such as “rifleman’s knife” date to the late 18th and early 19th centuries in the U.S. Long hunters were known to carry longish hunting knives, and later the massive “Bowie” style emerged in the southern states, as well as swords and large knives with “stirrup” knuckle guards and “d-guards” which date back in the French and Indian War (1754-1753) or earlier, and found local

expressions up through the Civil War, especially in the South.

Madison Grant’s well-known *The Knife in Homespun America* has many examples of various blades, some with Ohio provenance. The *Accoutrements* series by James R. Johnston also has sharp illustrations of many frontier blades (2016:172-247). An excellent, well-illustrated resource for knives, hangers, battle swords, etc. is George C. Neuman’s *Battle Weapons of the American Revolution*. Some of the blades illustrated in these books were made from broken or worn swords, scythes, files, bayonets, and other repurposed sources of ferrous metal. Numerous other texts on the Revolutionary War era and fur trade have illustrations for those interested in re-creating such implements. Collectors in the AOLRC sometimes display blades

along with their antique firearms at the annual shows. Although blades can sometimes be accurately dated historically, some patterns continued over centuries, and individual pieces could be handed down and used through the generations. Associating any blade with a particular place is often difficult, unless good historical provenance is available, as blades of any size (and other accoutrements) are very portable.

Illustrated here are two knives by contemporary Ohio makers who follow the frontier ethos of using what is at hand. One is a hunting sword or short hanger with a stirrup-shaped knuckle guard created by renown maker Ken Netting recalls the French and Indian War period. The blade is a repurposed old scythe blade with a laterally fluted wooden grip and sheet iron guard, pommel, and ferrule (strengthening the area where the blade enters the guard and handle).

The grip is held in place by a square nut screwed onto the end of the tang. The sheath is made of hand stitched leather with a metal tip. The blade is 10", with overall length of 14", making it short for a hunting sword or hanger. The style of the knife is very similar to one with a 16 ½" blade, overall 21 ½" length, and leather shoulder harness ("baldric and strap") featured on the Contemporary Makers website entitled "Short Sword by Ken Netting." The outfit is described as c. 1750's, though could certainly have been carried in military campaigns and expeditions decades earlier or later. There are also images of Ken's long hunter knives online, including one with a longish blade and a simple deer antler handle.

The second knife was made by Daniel Aubhil who was mentored by the late Mark Bokenkamp at the blacksmith shop in the Ohio Village (a living history museum in Columbus) during the Sesquicentennial in the mid-1970's. Dan built his own blockhouse-like shop with a forge in the lower section and a rifle shop above. The illustrated blade is a second repurposing. When Dan found the blade – which seems to have been part of a broken military sword -- in a flea market in north central Ohio it was part of a "corn knife,"

machete-type knives used by settlers and later rural folk to cut corn stalks at harvest time (and still offered by some tool companies today).

Anything long and sharp, including broken sword blades could serve as a corn knives – and not a few old corn knives have been repurposed by contemporary makers into small swords or long hunter knives. Sometime in the distant past, the blade was given a new tang, forged from the broken end of the blade and it was given a wooden handle to make a utilitarian corn knife. (This action aligns with the principle of "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" Isaiah 2:3-4 – a Biblical phrase which seems to refer to the knife called a "coulter" situated ahead of the actual plough blade.)

Dan replaced the original handle with an elk tine grip and iron guard and fittings: 4 ½" wide s-shaped hilt, 5/16" ferrule, and a pommel of thin sheet iron. The elk tine grip is 5", held in place with the tang neatly peened on the thin iron end plate. Overall specifications: length 21 ¼", 15 ¼" blade, 1 1/16" wide at the hilt. The blade has one groove (fuller) running along the length just below the top flat.

It is inviting to speculate (i.e., let the imagination run wild) on the history of the old blade, as it was found near the area of the ill-fated Crawford Campaign in 1782. There is a legend associated with Broken Sword Creek in Wyandot and Crawford counties, Ohio, that says, "William Crawford broke his sword at the creek bank to render it useless to Native Americans who were pursuing him" (Wikipedia).

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*(top) Repurposed sword blade by Dan Aubhil. (bottom) Repurposed scythe blade and sheath by Ken Netting.*



*Blacksmith Daniel Aubhil holds the repurposed sword blade with elk antler handle.*



*Detail of Aubhil re-purposed sword handle.*



*Kraig Lawson, of the Grassy Run Historical Arts Committee in Williamsburg, Ohio, holds a Brown Bess bayonet replica with an antler handle he crafted. The item is based on a creative story by T.C. Albert about a campaign to the Forks of the Ohio in the "Seven Years War" (1756-1763), published in the May-June 2023 issue of Muzzleloader. Such a tool could have been carried on later campaigns in Ohio. What was it used for? "Hunting sword," "hanger" or "cuttoe"? Roasting/toasting implement? Root digging or trenching tool? Photo taken at Sons of Liberty annual event in Canter Caves, near Jackson, Ohio in January 2026.*

# THOUGHTS ON SHOOTING AT THE ANNUAL PICNIC

BY RON YERIAN

The Annual AOLRC Picnic had something for everyone this year – a few trade tables, a great club house, great food as usual, and a rifle range for shooters who wished to compete in a friendly “blanket shoot”.

When the smoke cleared and the prizes were selected, I took a quick look at the various rifles that were used by both our Club members and those used by the hosting Club. All black powder shooters have their favorite rifle, of course, but the dozen or so participants used a wide range of calibers – ranging from a .54 caliber flintlock to a .25 caliber percussion. As an aside, the original .25 caliber made by D. L. Ackley and used by one of our members took second place. I do not know where the .54 caliber ended up, but the gentleman who used it woke up the members still in the club house.

Which begs the question – if this shoot had been held a hundred and fifty years or so ago, what would have been the caliber of the off-hand rifles used in such a match? To start to answer this for myself, I decided to conduct a check of the Ohio rifles I had access to.

I did a “quick check” of twenty-one Ohio rifles from approximately 1850 to 1900 (only two are dated). Using plugs, I measured the bores at approximately one-half inch from the muzzle and separated them into three groups – less than .34, .34 to .38, and .38 to .40.

Such a check is not precise, of course, but gives a range of bore sizes that were used by makers of percussion muzzle loading rifles during that time period. The results – fourteen barrels measured less than .34 caliber, six were over .34 but less than .38, and only one was over .38 and less than .40. As noted, only two were dated, but based on configuration it would seem that the older rifles had larger bores.

Hopefully, some of you will take a quick look at the bore sizes of some of your original muzzle loaders. The deer were mostly gone from Ohio prior to 1850, and

the term “squirrel rifle” comes to mind. Maybe our frugal ancestors saw no need for anything larger than a .38 caliber rifle.

One further random thought. When Ohio established its first muzzle loader deer season, they selected .38 caliber as the smallest size that could be used. I asked a few Game Wardens and conservation workers back then why a .38? The opinions ranged from “a desire to see original Ohio-made rifles used” to “virtually every Game Warden at that time carried a .38 Special handgun, and a quick field check of inserting a .38 Special cartridge into a muzzle loading rifle barrel would decide if it was over .38 caliber”. I never did get a definitive answer, but it might be a good topic around a campfire.



*“Old timers” in a display at the August 2025, AOLRC Picnic, Ashland Wildlife Conservation League, Ashland County, Ohio.*



*“Waiting for results” at the shooting range, AOLRC Picnic, Ashland Wildlife Conservation League, Ashland County. Shooters include AOLRC members and members of the New Frontiersmen Muzzleloading Club. (Mark Bender photo)*



*The “shooting match” at the August 2025, AOLRC Picnic, Ashland Wildlife Conservation League Ashland County. Shooters include AOLRC members and members of the new Frontiersmen Muzzleloading Club. (Mark Bender photo)*



*“Loading up” at the shooting range, AOLRC Picnic, Ashland Wildlife Conservation League, Ashland County. Shooters include AOLRC members and members of the New Frontiersmen Muzzleloading Club. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Crocks of delicious food at the August 2025, AOLRC Picnic, Ashland Wildlife Conservation League, Ashland County, Ohio. (photo courtesy of Bard Harwood)*



*Display tables at August 2025, AOLRC Picnic, Ashland Wildlife Conservation League, Ashland County. (photo courtesy of Barb Harwood)*

# RECENT AOLRC SHOW AND RELATED ACTIVITIES: A PHOTO ESSAY

BY MARK BENDER



*Members conversing over rifle displays at Marietta Show, Spring 2025. (Mark Bender photo)*



*John Reinbolt, AOLRC treasurer, manning the cap and T-shirt booth, Marietta, 2025. (Mark Bender photo)*



*John Schultz with a J. Gibbs rifle. John makes the long drive from Iowa each year to share his Ohio rifles that went West; Marietta, 2025. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Kevin Haney, AOLRC board member, with a nice display of beautifully crafted Alexander Ager, Harrison County, rifles, Marietta, 2025. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Some of the 40+ display tables at the November 2025 AOLRC buy, sell, trade show in Hilliard, Ohio. (Mark Bender photo)*



*A lively scene at the November 2025 AOLRC buy, sell, trade show in Hilliard, Ohio. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Nate Moore, leather-artist, cutting out an Ohio-style hunting pouch, Marietta, 2025. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Bill Reynolds, AOLRC vice-president, at Log Cabin Shop frontier crafts event, 2024. (Mark Bender photo)*



*All sorts of antique muzzleloaders and accoutrements at the November 2025 AOLRC buy, sell, trade show in Hilliard, Ohio. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Former AOLRC president, Bob Poch and a table of Ohio Valley rifles, recent Marietta Show. (Mark Bender photo)*



*Barrel-maker Ed Rayl (left) and an AOLRC member conversing over powder horns at a recent Marietta Show. (Mark Bender photo)*

# AOLRC LADIES AUXILIARY NEWS SPRING 2026

BY BARB HARWOOD & ALYS WAGNER

We plan to have a great celebration for the 250th Anniversary of our Country and hoping you are keeping warm in this historic winter weather.

The picnic in Aug. was well attended. Food covered all the countertops and then some with a nice variety of main dishes, sides, deserts satisfying all appetites. I want to thank all that helped set up and clean up. The members of the sporting club was impressed how clean the room was in such a short time with our members putting away tables, chairs, cleaning floors, kitchen and all looking forward to next year.

Friday will be our silent auction. When you come in to set up we will be ready to accept items and have bidding sheets ready. We have several real nice items: handmade powder horn, pouch, knives. Any items are welcomed. We gain more and more every year. I had many tries to contact the lady in charge of the events at the hotel about the homemade baked goods for the auction. She was not hopeful and was to contact the general manager that day. She didn't get back to me before the newsletter deadline so I take it was a no. We will only hope that the items coming in will make up the difference. If you can sew the microwave cozies, gun sleeves or themed baskets have been popular in the past. Alys Wagner will get the birthday cake and provide the serving utensils etc. Anyone wanting to help serve is welcomed.

Alys has made arrangements for our luncheon on Sat. morning at the Castle with a tour and light lunch. It's a local historic house/museum built in 1855. The cost is \$20 for tour including lunch with a selection of 3 savory and 3 sweet items with hot tea. We will leave the hotel at 10:45 returning by 1:30. Anyone that can drive for a carpool please let me know the night before if possible. Checks need to be made out to Alys Wagner and mailed to Alys Wagner 2505 Brownrigg Rd. Waterford Oh 45786 before March 25th.

We reserved for minimum of 12 but an exact count is needed. Any questions please contact Alys. Our last tour about 12 years ago was amazing.

Co Presidents:

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*Kit Carson (1809-1868) Frontiersman, trapper, soldier, Indian agent, scout, and legend of the Great West Era. See related article by Ken Leonard in this issue. (Photo by James Wallace Black, 1868; Wikipedia Commons, Rebecca04 public domain.)*