

FIREARM INFORMATION SHEET

COLLECTION NUMBER: 9114

TYPE: Originally Flint Bedford County Kentucky Rifle by Jacob Stoudenour

IGNITION SYSTEM: Percussion conversion from Flint.

LOCK MARKINGS/DECORATIONS: Lock marked "J.S." in script, for Jacob Stoudenour

DATE OF MANUFACTURE: Circa 1825-1830

PLACE OF MANUFACTURE: Colerain~~x~~ Township, Bedford County, Pennsylvania

MAKER: Jacob Stoudenour

LENGTH OVERALL: 53 1/4 inches

BARREL LENGTH: 38 inches

CALIBER: .50, shot smooth

WOOD TYPE: Fine Fiddle back Maple (fine grain curly Maple)

MOUNTINGS: Brass. Toeplate, sideplate, patchbox and extension of butt plate are engraved.

BARREL MARKINGS/DECORATION: Marked "J.S." in script.

STOCK MARKINGS/DECORATION: Relief carved for, aft, and under cheekpiece and around patchbox finial and forward of lock and lock bolt panels. Silver inlay in beaver tails, at wrist, and engraved oval on cheekpiece - large American eagle.

REPAIRS/RESTORATION: Converted to percussion-probably by maker as percussion hammer is distinctive Bedford County type.

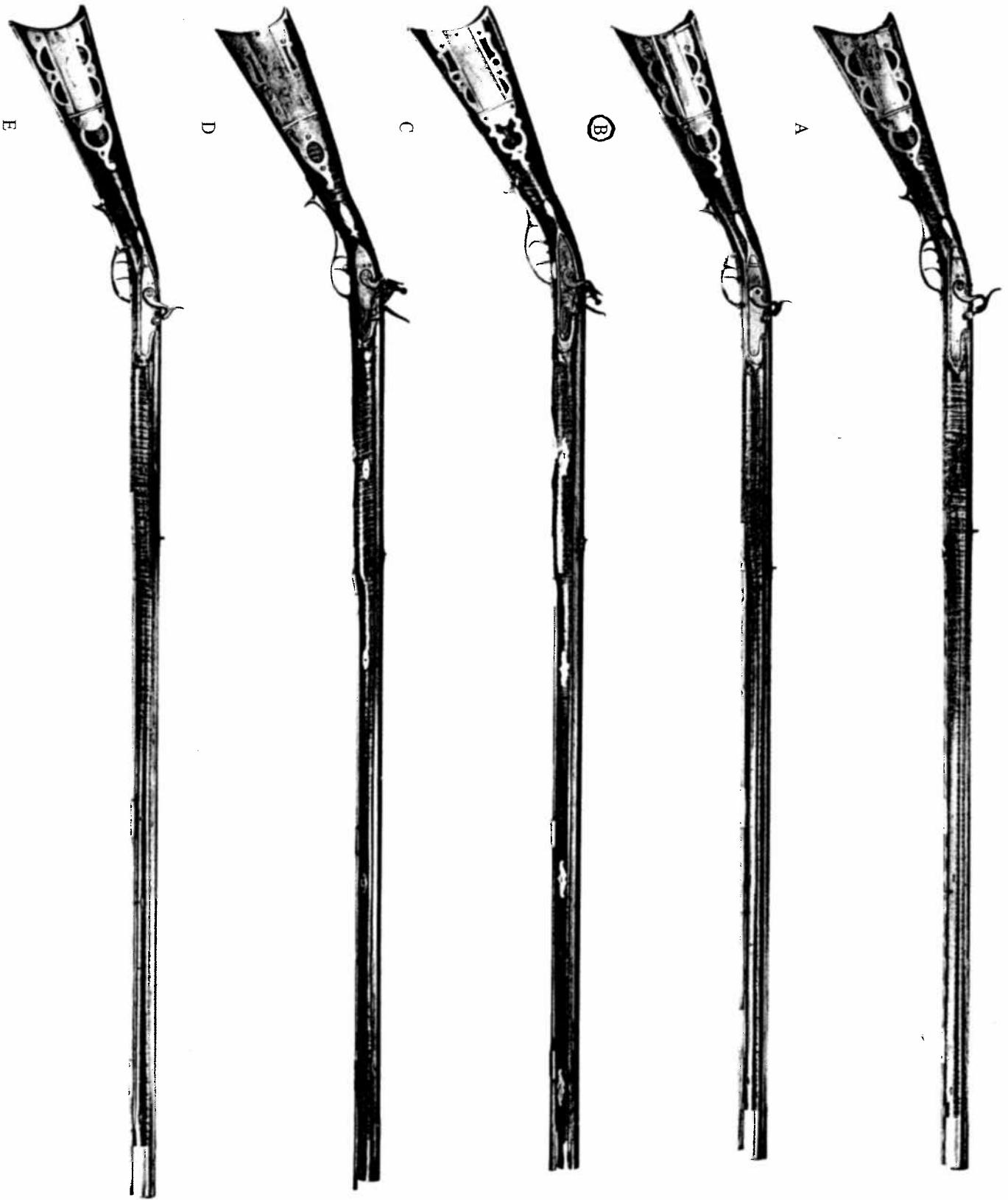
HISTORICAL/ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE:

PROVENANCE: Al Sullivan, Sr. Collection
Ex-Collection William S. Bowers
Ex-Collection Roy McKnight

PUBLICATIONS: Illustrated in "Kentucky Rifles and Pistols 1750-1850", KRA, page 34-35
Exhibited: York County, Pennsylvania Historical Society Exhibit, 1971.

COST:

ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE AND DATE:



A Bedford School. Made by Amos & Border. Ca. 1843-1850. Bedford Co., Pennsylvania. Relief-carved curly maple stock. (York Co., Pennsylvania Historical Society Exhibit).

B Bedford School. Signed J.S. (Jacob Stoudenour). Ca. 1825-1861. Colerain Twp., Bedford Co., Pennsylvania. Relief-carved curly maple stock. (York Co., Pennsylvania Historical Society Exhibit).

C Bedford School. Signed Peter White. Ca. 1835-1840. Bedford Co., Pennsylvania. Length 59 inches. Octagonal barrel 44 inches long. .45 cal. rifled. Butt plate 1-3/8 inches. Relief-carved curly maple stock. 20 inlays.

William S. Bowers collection

D Bedford School. Signed John White. Ca. 1835-1840. Union Twp., Fayette Co., Pennsylvania. Length 59-1/2 inches. Octagonal-swamped barrel 44-5/8 inches long. .41 cal. rifled. Butt plate 1-3/8 inches. Incised-carved curly maple stock with 14 inlays. Union Town Pa. engraved on side plate.

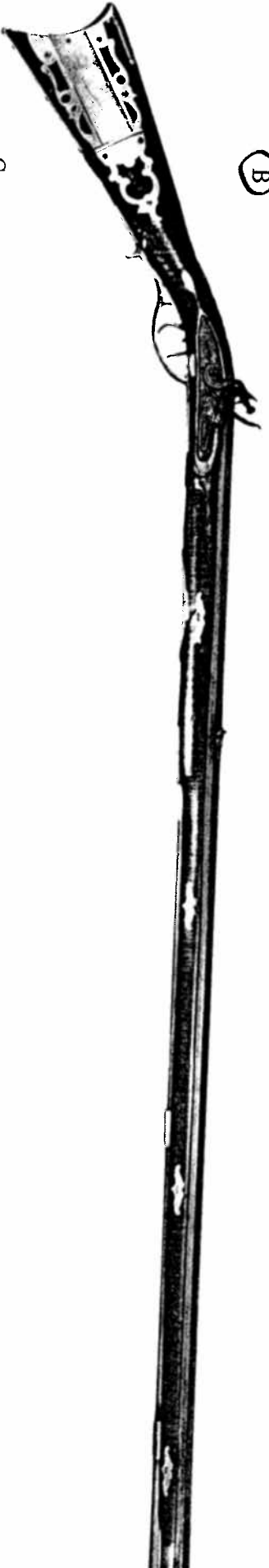
William Myers collection

E Bedford School. Signed William Diefenbaugh. Ca. 1850-1852. Monroe Twp., Bedford Co., Pennsylvania. Relief-carved curly maple stock. (York Co., Pennsylvania Historical Society Exhibit).

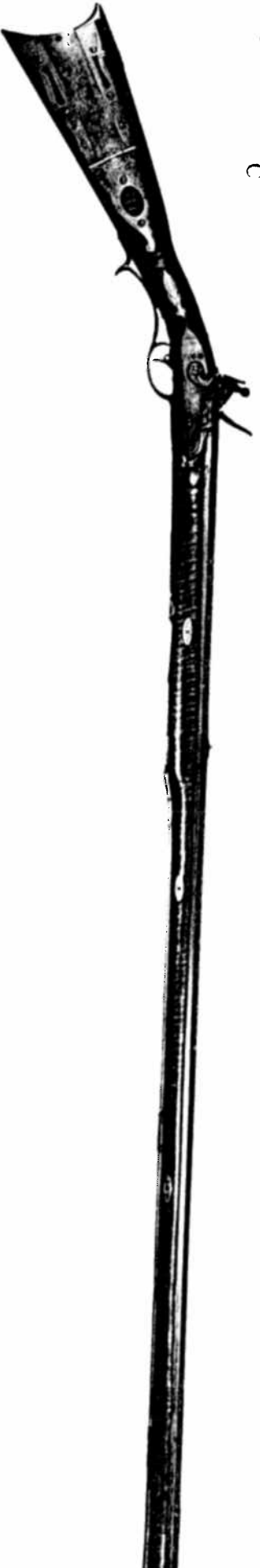
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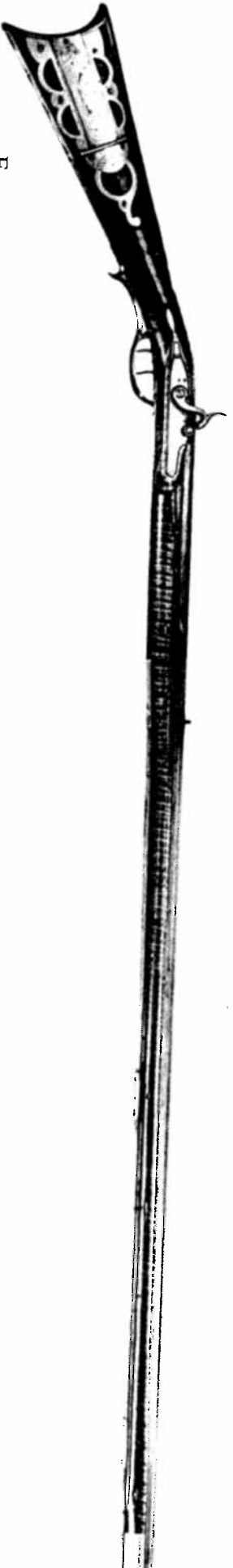
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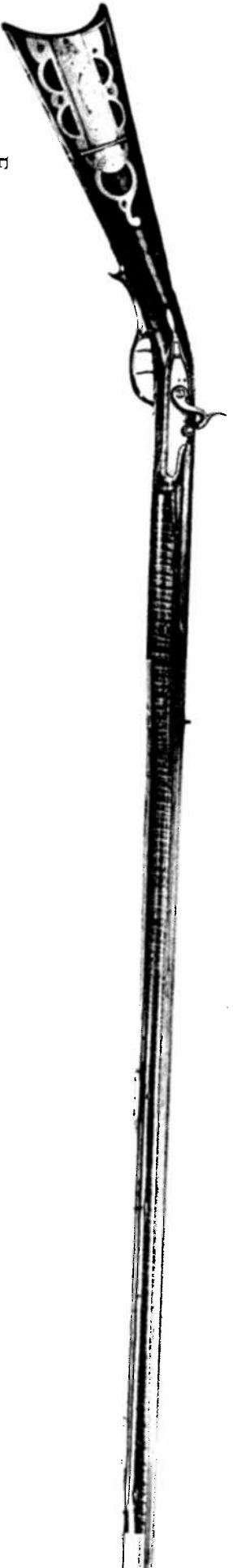
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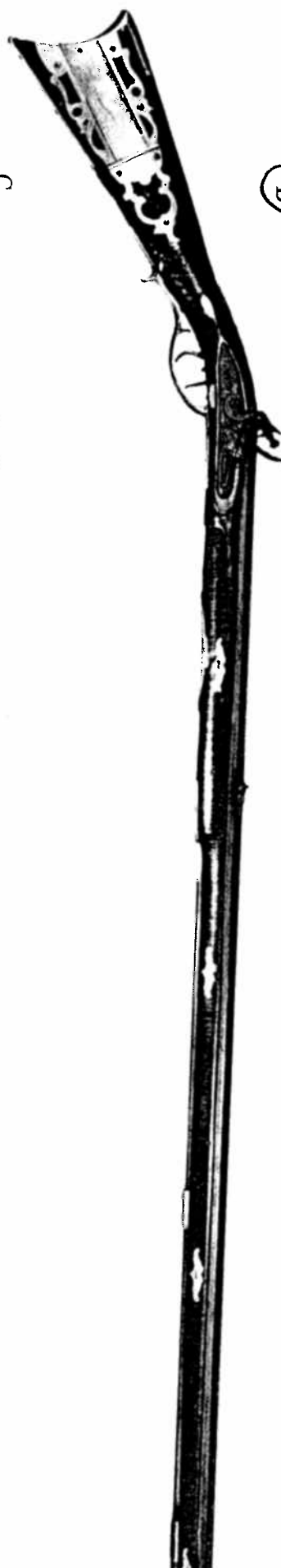
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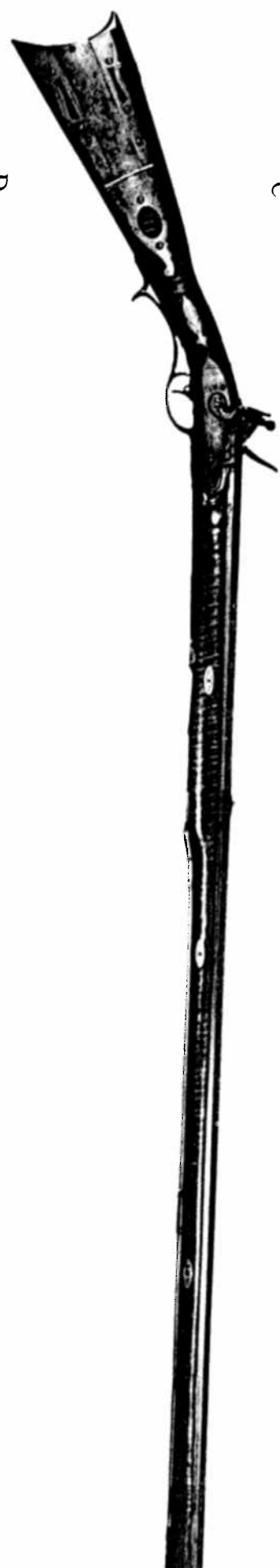
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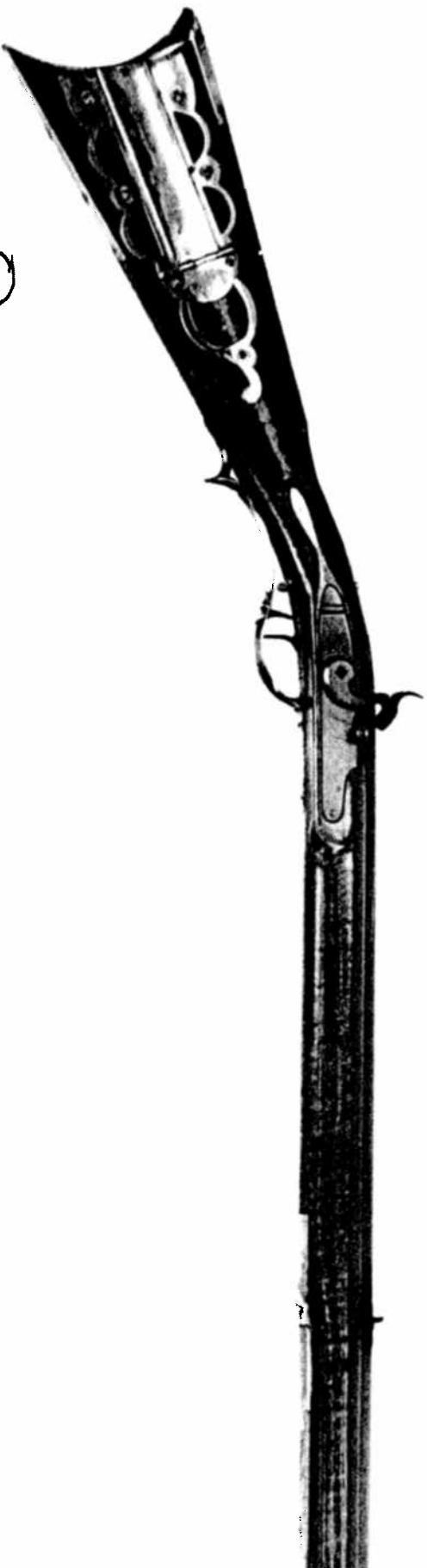
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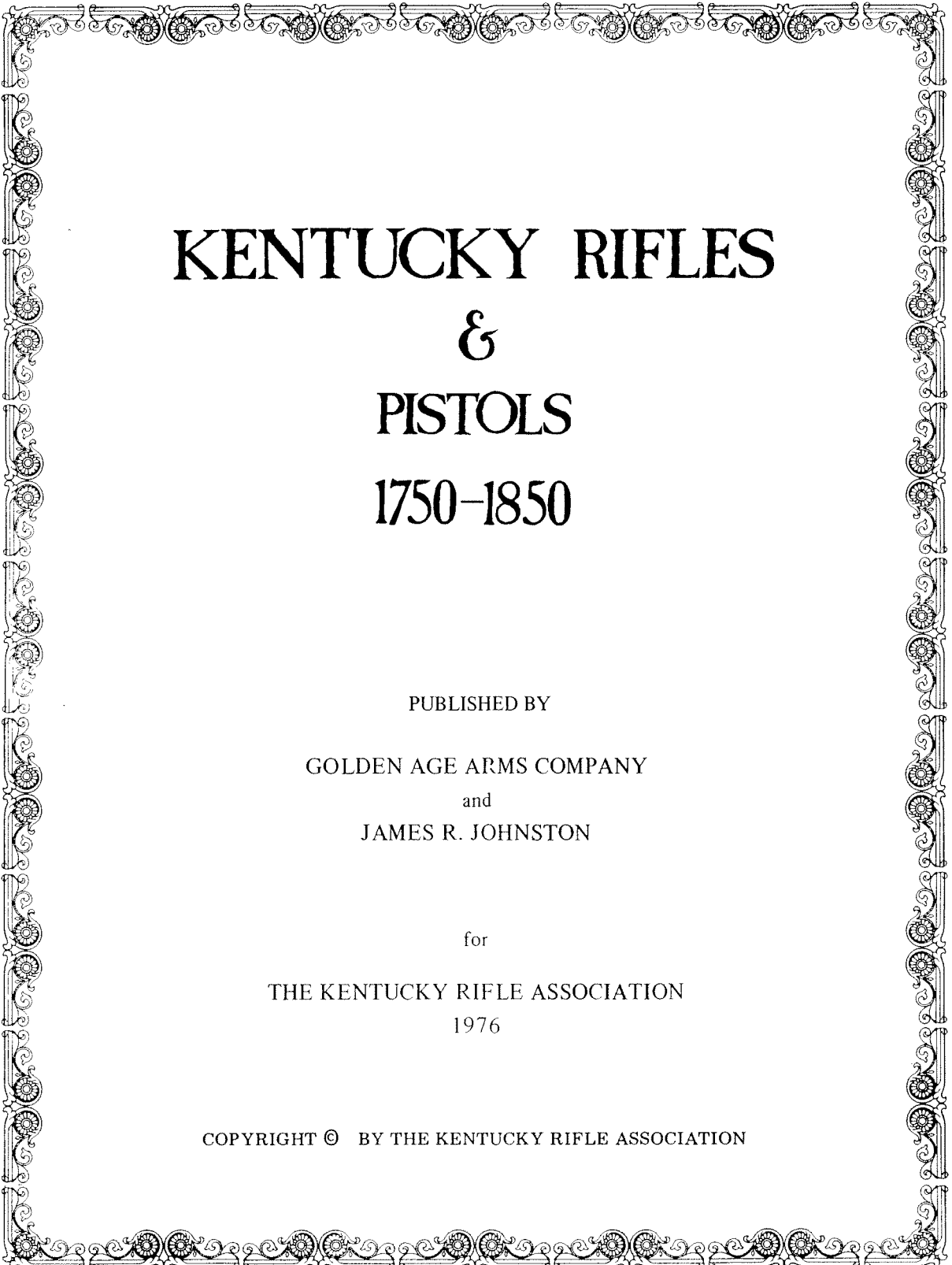
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KENTUCKY RIFLES & PISTOLS 1750-1850

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1976

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The
BEDFORD
COUNTY
RIFLE
and Its Makers



by *Calvin Hetrick*

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FOREWORD

Calvin Hetrick's study of the graceful and distinctive muzzle-loading rifles made in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, stands as a milestone on the long path to the understanding of America's longrifles. It was first published in 1959 as an addition to the Fourth Edition of J. G. W. Dillin's book *THE KENTUCKY RIFLE*. This book was out of print by 1966 and Hetrick's work was unavailable until 1973 when we first produced this reprint. The reason for this was that a more extensive study of the longrifles of Bedford County was planned as one of the books of *The Longrifle Series*. However, it will be a number of years yet before this more extensive study can be made and published. In the meantime it is desirable to have Hetrick's preliminary study available in print.

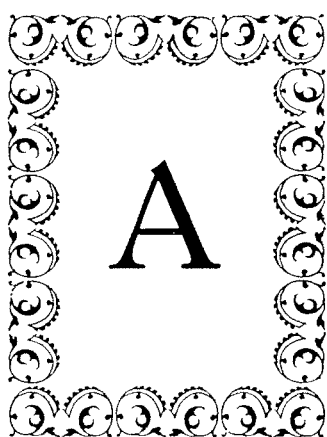
Calvin Hetrick's study is a milestone because it was the first formally published work that recognized and treated in detail the longrifles and gunsmiths of one particular school of longrifle gunsmithing. Kindig's monumental work *THOUGHTS ON THE KENTUCKY RIFLE IN ITS GOLDEN AGE* was published a year later, in 1960; it made the important synthesis by treating many (but not all) of the important schools of gunsmithing of early Pennsylvania and their interrelationships. But it was Calvin Hetrick who called attention to the fact that a particularly slender and graceful type of rifle was made in Bedford County, and it was he who first assembled an important collection of Bedford rifles. It also was he who first bothered to look at the old records of Bedford County to dig out information about the old-time gunsmiths.

In the fourteen years that elapsed between the first publication of Hetrick's work in 1959 and the reprint in 1973 a great deal more has been learned about the longrifles of Pennsylvania and surrounding states. We now can understand much better how the rifles of Bedford County relate to the rifles made in surrounding counties and to counties still farther away. We know more about the gunsmiths of Bedford County and we know of a lot more fine Bedford rifles. But still more information on Bedford rifles and gunsmiths is needed. I would appreciate correspondence from readers who have or who know of "primary source" information about any of the Bedford gunsmiths. Also, I would appreciate knowing about the location of Bedford rifles of artistic merit for possible use in illustrating a more formal book in the future; carved, inlaid, and signed specimens being of particular interest. Unsigned rifles without carving, patchbox, or inlays are common enough to be of little help in furthering the study.

In reprinting this work we have added illustrations of two more Bedford rifles and of one additional rifle by Peter White, probably made after he left Bedford and moved to Uniontown. This publication is not the place to add numerous bits and pieces of information about the gunsmiths and rifles of Bedford, but because of the way books are put together, we take advantage of a few extra pages at the back of the book to add some information about Peter White. As Calvin Hetrick comments in his study, Peter White apparently was the founding father of Bedford County gunsmithing. Robert McAfee and I have separately made extensive searches of the public records in Bedford County and Fayette County (Uniontown) for information about Peter White. In addition, I have searched diligently for what scraps of information could be found in Maryland relating to White's residence there prior to 1806.

George Shumway
1 May 1975

The Bedford County Rifle and Its Makers

 **A**SIDE from the very early flintlock Kentucky rifles, few of these weapons have created the interest among collectors as have the rifles made in Bedford County, Pennsylvania. The unique characteristics of the Bedford rifles have excited the admiration of all who appreciate fine workmanship and artistic proportions.

Many theories have been advanced as to why the Bedford County makers continued to make their distinctive locks by hand long after the gunsmiths of other sections used commercial locks exclusively, one of the most common held by those outside the County being that the Bedford makers formed a guild and that one man made the locks, another the barrels and still another the stocks. We in Bedford County know that this theory is not supported by facts.

Exactly why the Bedford hand wrought locks so closely resemble each other no one can determine with any certainty. Many makers served an apprenticeship under another gunsmith and naturally adopted the style of his mentor. Conservatism may have had something to do with the fact that hand forging of locks continued late into the percussion period. In this writer's opinion, it was pride of workmanship that could be expressed in the gunsmith's own skill that induced him to make his locks by hand rather than purchase the products of the Philadelphia and Lancaster lock makers. Then too it is entirely possible that the public demanded the type of lock they knew to be reliable. At any rate most of the Bedford rifle smiths continued to use the locks that they themselves laboriously forged, filed and fitted with extreme care.

The peculiar long, narrow lock plate with "rat tail" ending and vertical slash across the tail have aroused the interest of collectors because of their uniqueness. As will be shown by my account of an interview with D. M. Drake, Everett, Pa. some years ago, one of the reasons why the lock plates were so narrow was that

more slender stocks were possible than if the usual wide locks were employed. For this we lovers of the Bedford rifle can be thankful. To any gentleman who appreciates a well turned, slender ankle, the slim, rounded wrist of a Bedford rifle will appeal to his artistic eye.

Among our best Bedford County makers, the components of their hand made locks fitted together with the precision of a fine watch, and the lock plate itself, together with the artistically curved hammers, received a final filing and polishing so carefully executed that one is made to wonder that human hands could function so proficiently. By comparison, the commercial locks are ugly and cumbersome.

Aside from their hand wrought locks, the Bedford County rifles usually have another distinguishing characteristic. In the majority of cases, the finial of the patch box is a cut out circle or oval with a characteristic hook, as the illustrations will show. Peter White, the dean of Bedford makers, used a different type of lock plate in most instances as did Stoudenour, Amos, and Daniel Border on occasion. But the patch box described above was standard.

It is also interesting to note that the Bedford County gunsmiths almost never made a barrel shorter than 40 inches and many ran to 44 inches and longer in contrast to the 39 and 40 inch barrels of the makers of other counties adjacent to Bedford.

It is a matter of some interest that many of the Bedford County makers continued to decorate their stocks with relief carving long after the makers of other sections had discontinued this form of ornamentation. The designs of the carving, however, were much simpler than on the earlier rifles of the flintlock period. The era of the silver inlay superseded that of wood carving but many of the better rifles made in this county have both. Good examples of the latter are the rifles made by our better makers, Peter White, Jacob Stoudenour, John Amos and William Defibaugh, many of which are illustrated herewith. Daniel Border, who learned his trade late, did not carve his rifles.

A characteristic of the Bedford County maker was his indifference to trends or fashions in rifle making that he felt would detract from the beauty and effectiveness of his weapons. When the gunsmiths of neighboring counties turned out rifles with shorter barrels, thinner, shorter and more narrow butt stocks, the Bedford makers continued to fabricate their rifles with long barrels, and full length generously wide and relatively thick butt stocks so well proportioned that they attract the artistic eye at first glance.

It is most extraordinary that a group of gunsmiths should continue to make their weapons one hundred percent by hand long after the smiths of other sections purchased barrels by Remington and other barrel makers and used commercial locks which at that time were readily obtainable. Mass production has

done wonders in bringing us comforts and luxuries that we need and crave, but it has reduced mechanical processes to a monotonous deadliness that robs men of their natural urge to create with their own hands that which their brain has conceived and upon which they can stamp their own individuality. The Bedford County gunsmiths produced with their own crude tools weapons of grace and beauty, coupled with deadly precision, that could not have been produced by precision machinery. It is for those who have a deep admiration for the products of their forges and work benches to cherish that which their genius wrought.

THE LEADING MAKERS OF BEDFORD COUNTY

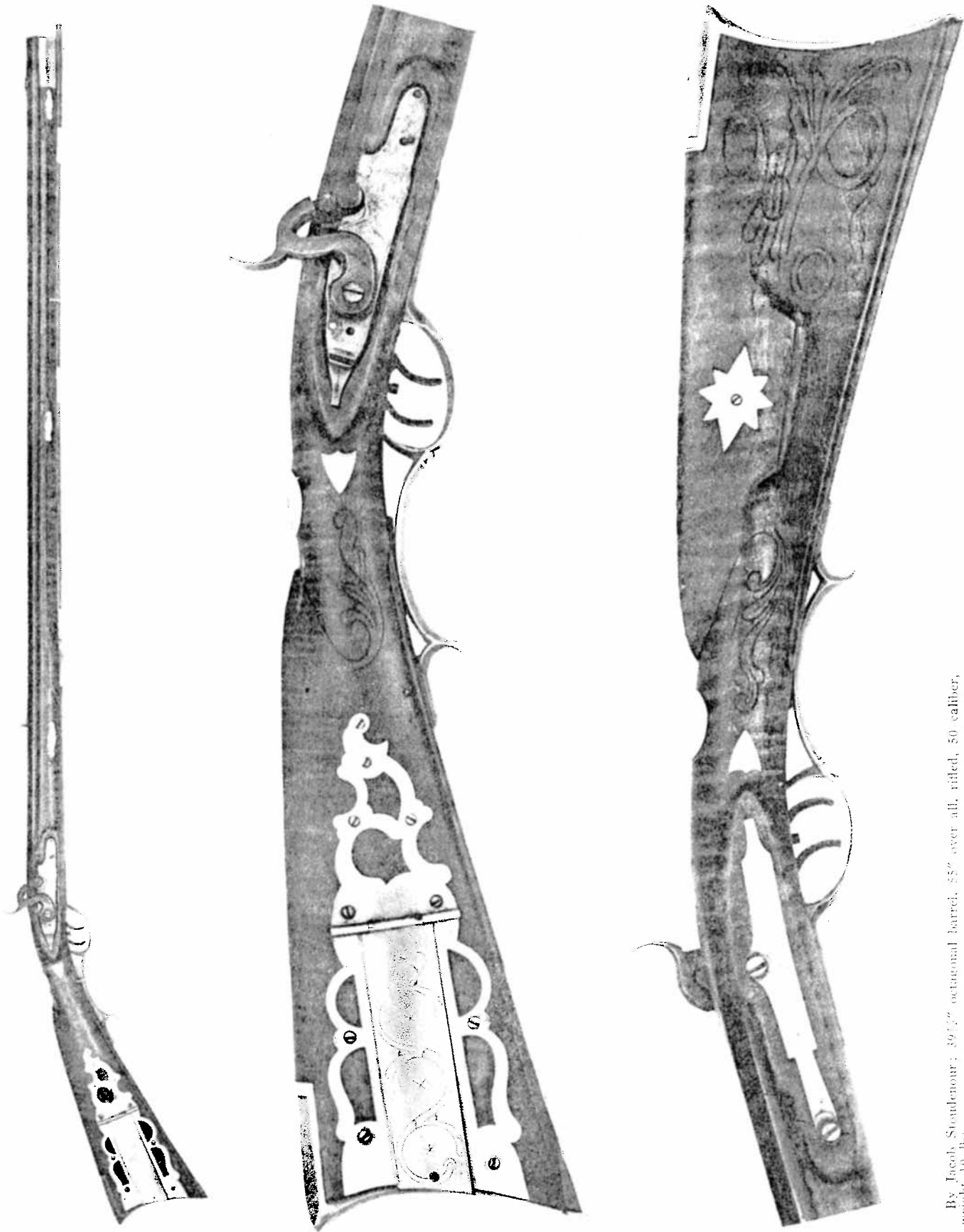
The first known Bedford County gunsmith was John Frazier who came to Bedford from the Monongahela country where he knew George Washington. Frazier was known to have repaired guns as the Pennsylvania archives reveal, but if he made any weapons the fact has been lost to history. Jacob Saylor was a Committee of Safety maker during the Revolution but our knowledge of him ends there. Later makers were: Henry Sides, 1796, Conrad Atley, 1800, Valentine Leban, 1820. No rifles by these makers are known.

PETER WHITE (-1835) *

The man who might be called the dean of the Bedford County gunsmiths was Peter White. Certainly his work is outstanding and his influence on the eventual Bedford County type is considerable. Just where he was born and from whom he learned his trade is to date a mystery; we only know that he first appears on the tax lists of Bedford County in 1807. In 1812 (?) he placed an advertisement in THE TRUE AMERICAN, a weekly published for some years in Bedford, advising that he was desirous of securing "a bright young man as apprentice to learn the gunsmith trade." This bright young man might well have been Jacob Stoudenour of Colerain Township where White was located and who at that time was seventeen years old, a likely age as boys were apprenticed young in those days. At any rate Stoudenour could not have had a better mentor.

The first of the Peter White rifles, Plate No. 127, has a very interesting history. It was first owned by Johannes Snowberger who came to America from Switzerland and settled in Franklin Co., Pa. at Snow Hill where there was a settlement of Seventh Day Baptists, a religious sect to which Snowberger belonged. The White rifle, which, until recently had been in the Snowberger family descent for many generations, is of outstanding workmanship. Its relief carving is of an extremely high order although greatly worn by the usage to which the weapon was put by Snowbergers who were a family of mighty hunters. In the line of descent it came into possession of "Yuckel" (Jacob) Snowberger, the greatest hunter of them all. who came to Bedford County and

*Much additional biographical information about Peter White has been located since 1959. This is presented on pages 39, 40, 41.



By Jacob Stoulenour; 39 1/2" octagonal barrel, .55" over all, rifled, 50 caliber, weight 10 lbs.

(Plate 130)

settled near Woodbury. The bridal plate, of the early beveled edge type is engraved in script in a half circle with the numerals seventeen ninety-four. The lock plate is engraved and marked in script P.W. This rifle in my opinion is the beginning of the Bedford line.

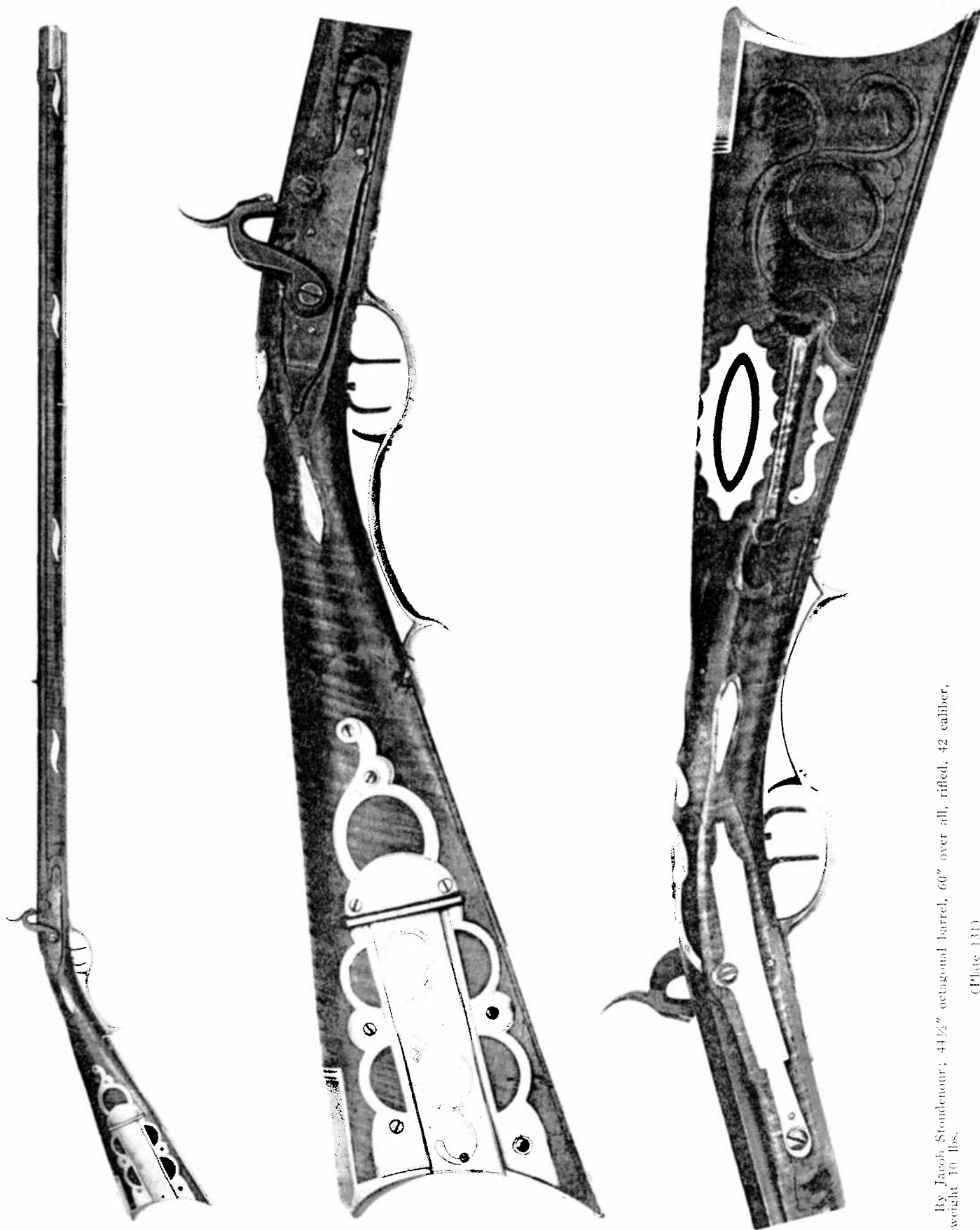
Plate No. 128 depicts a rifle of later date by this maker showing the transition from the earlier heavy butt stock to a slimmer more graceful stock. It is stocked in beautiful curly maple with an extremely fine curl. There are six engraved silver inlays and eight silver escutcheons for the wedges. The carving to the rear and forward of the cheek piece, behind the tang and ahead of the lock mortice is of better quality than on the later rifles. The engraved patch box while different shows the trend to the conventional Bedford County style.

Plate No. 129 is probably the finest Bedford County rifle ever turned out. Still in remarkable condition it represents the climax of Peter White's workmanship. The probable date of manufacture is 1810. The fine curly maple wood is inlaid with 30 coin silver inlays among which is a silver cut out side plate, most unusual, and a large horseshoe shaped inlay back of the breech tang. The relief carving on the buttstock is not so elaborate as on earlier White pieces illustrating the declining importance of this feature in Kentucky rifle architecture as silver ornamentation superseded carving, although in Bedford County, in a less elaborate form, relief carving persisted long after makers of other sections had discarded this form of ornamentation.

This fine specimen of Peter White's work bears a silver inlay on top of the barrel inscribed with the name "Moses Wright" for whom the rifle was made. It appears that a dispute arose between the maker and Wright with the result that the rifle was later sold to a man named Crissman, an outstanding hunter of his day who killed forty-two deer with it. By line of descent, the weapon finally came into possession of Elwood Ferry of New Enterprise, Bedford County. Peter White moved from Bedford County to Uniontown in 1815 and died there in 1835. At Uniontown he is known to have made several extremely fine Kentucky pistols. A beautiful pair are illustrated in the pistol section of this book.

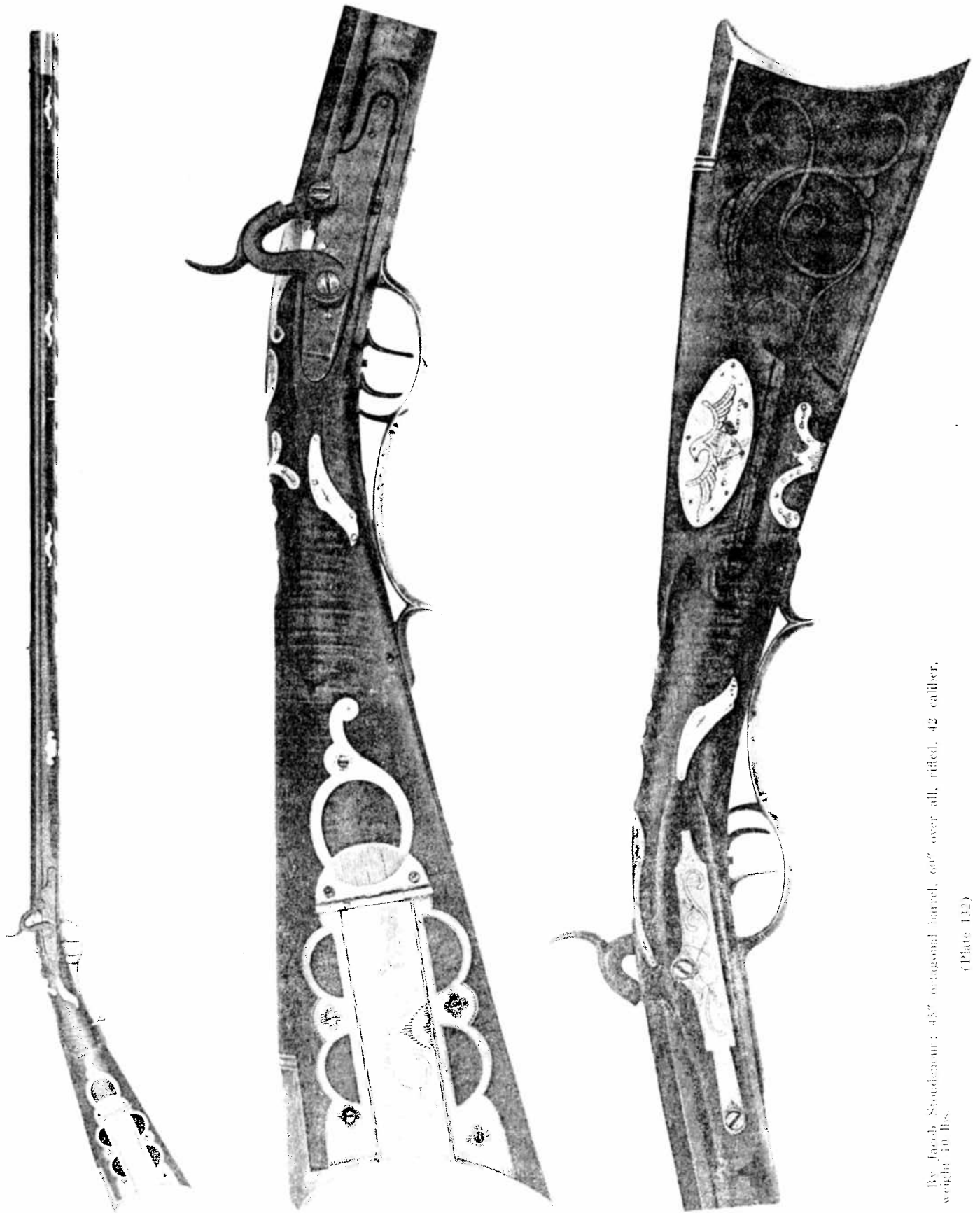
JACOB SToudenOUR (1795-1863)

Stoudenour was the most prolific maker of rifles in Bedford County. Perhaps more of his arms turn up than those of any other County maker, a surprising number of which were originally flint. Stoudenour may have been the "bright young man" for whom Peter White advertised as they were both located in Colerain Township. Because of the fact that so many Stoudenour rifles have been converted from flint might suggest that Stoudenour employed a number of apprentices during his early gunsmithing days. Some of Stoudenour's best specimens are highly decorated with silver and many show relief carving of a high order. Stoudenour's will contained a clause directing that his shop and



By Jacob Stondenour; 44½" octagonal barrel, 60" over all, rifled, 42 caliber, weight 16 lbs.

(Plate 131)



By Jacob Stouffer: 48" octagonal barrel, 60" over all, rifled, .42 caliber, weight 10 lbs.

(Plate 132)

accuracy. His greatest weakness was in his engraving ability which was not equal to that of some of his contemporaries. But he excelled all the others in the exquisite grace of his hammers and the slender lines of his stocks are outstanding. He had two sons who were gunsmiths. His best known specimen is illustrated herewith.

Plate No. 134 depicts perhaps the finest William Defibaugh rifle ever turned out by that prolific maker. This arm is extremely slender and graceful and may well have been a lady's rifle. 15 coin silver inlays and a peculiar geometrical design similar to the "hex" markings on the barns of the Pennsylvania Dutch on the cheek piece. Engraved typical Defibaugh brass patch box. Marked "W. Defibaugh" on barrel and "W. D." on lock plate. Brass side plate with cut outs. Fine curly maple stock.

Plate No. 135 shows another very fine Defibaugh rifle. Carving in high relief to rear of cheek piece and forward of cheek piece. Checkered relief carving in front of lock. Marked "W. Defibaugh" on barrel; "W.D." on lock plate. The hand forged lock has the extremely delicately curved hammer found on this maker's locks. Fine violin finish.

Plate No. 136 shows a fine and slender rifle which has a more pronounced drop to the stock than the usual Bedford Rifle. Stocked in beautiful curly maple, with fine quality carving to the rear and ahead of the cheek piece, behind the tang, ahead of the lock mortice and under the fore arm. There are eight engraved silver inlays and on wrist there is an engraved brass plate covering a repair to the stock. I cannot emphasize too highly the quality, grace and beauty of this exceptional rifle. The marking in script on the rounded lock plate is illegible and I cannot name the maker.

Plate No. 137 shows an extremely fine and graceful rifle by Elias Crissey. Stocked in beautiful curly maple this rifle was made in 1875 for the purpose of exhibition at the State Fair held in Harrisburg that year where it was awarded first consideration. Later it was exhibited at the Centennial 1876 by Captain John Hite of Stoyestown, Pa. and won first prize \$25.00. Weighing only five pounds it very likely was intended for a boy or girl.

Joseph Mills of Colerain Township produced rifles of superior workmanship. There is almost nothing known concerning this maker except that he worked about 1820, probably before and after. All specimens known to this writer were originally flint.

Thomas Oldham of East St. Clair Township made rifles in the 1850's. He then went West. He made more double barrel side-by-side rifles than any other Bedford County maker. At least six are known to this writer.



By Jacob Stoudenour; 43½" octagonal barrel, 59" over all, rifled, 42 caliber, weight 10 lbs.

(Plate 133)