

FIREARM INFORMATION SHEET

COLLECTION NUMBER:

TYPE: *Kentucky rifle. relief carved*IGNITION SYSTEM: *Flint*DATE OF MANUFACTURE: *c. 1800*PLACE OF MANUFACTURE: *Wolmesdorf Town (Womlesdorf PA) Near Reading PA.*MAKER: *John Bonewitz*LENGTH OVERALL: *57 7/8"*BARREL LENGTH: *41 5/8"*CALIBER: *.59*WOOD TYPE: *Carley Maple - very fine stripes in butt stock*MOUNTINGS: *Bronze exception of silver escutcheon @ wrist. Patchbox typical Bonewitz style and iconography (see enclosed)*

BARREL MARKINGS/DECORATION:

Barrel marked at breech I.B.STOCK MARKINGS/DECORATION: *Fully relief carved in typical Bonewitz style - see #80 in Kentucky - I.B. also has "signature" ruffel below cheek piece*REPAIRS/RESTORATION: *Restored splinters to forend.*HISTORICAL/ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE: *John Bonewitz was one of the ^{great} Kentucky rifle makers but he rarely signed his work. This is one of the few signed Bonewitz rifles. The patchbox is pictured*PROVENANCE: *in Figure 6 in "John Bonewitz's Primer of Sophia" by Janetzky Kofkin article. (enclosed).*

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JOHN BONEWITZ'S PRIMER OF SOPHIA

BY LORENTZ KAFKA, KRA

Sophia represents sophistry in Christian literature which in modern times is considered spurious, but earlier, even in the Colonial period was thought by some an accepted way to explain the unknown and greater reality. Just as a ship is called "she" by practical scholars, wisdom had a grammatical feminine gender; but the Gnostics, mindful of Athene, the goddess born of the mind of Zeus, created an Anthropomorphised diety and wisdom became, from the Greek, "sophistry", Sophia. During the early Pennsylvania colonial period some thought her real. Such is the state of Gnostic reality, as it embodies a belief in religious truths which may be directly revealed in an epiphany or found in texts that were not accepted by the established church or scholars of the dominant culture of Europe. Church doctrine is imposed on the public to control it. Myths like Sophia are born in the individual mind to survive that unnatural restriction which limits the understanding of reality. John Bonewitz may not have believed Sophia would knock at his door, but his thoughts about her sustained his faith and ability to direct his actions in his community.

The riflesmith of Pennsylvania was forced to look at religion with a Gnostic point of view. His occupation was not approved by the church so he justified his faith by searching texts that were not favored, to find hidden answers for his beliefs, and, in a cathartic act, released his insight by engraving and carving symbols of what he or his customer believed on the long rifle. Many of the symbols of God on the guns have a feminine characteristic. For Bonewitz, this attribute was Sophia. He easily found Sophia in Solomon's Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha, which was often to be found in the center of Colonial Bibles

The sigil of Sophia is the pomegranate. In its classical form it is a round globe growing upward into a simple fluer de lis or Flower of Light. In early Mesopotamia the fruit is depicted growing on the Tree of Life very much like the apple. It stood for two meanings, as a glyph for Ramman, a god of supreme Justice, its

innumerable seeds stood for the many edicts of law under the Light; as a folk symbol, the red color of the fruit stood for fertility, as blood was then considered progenerative. Here the seeds were thought the seeds of life. The ripe fruit, thrown on the ground, exposed a number of seeds which represented the number of children a Persian bride might expect to bear. In Europe, as early as 100 AD, the pomegranate began to be a symbol for re-generation and eternal life. It appears on early Christian tombs in the catacombs. For Gnostics it became a secret symbol for Sophia and combined with the effigy of the Dutch Tulip to hide a microcosim of knowledge in its bulbular base. The established church used a similar symbol for their domain, a globe surmounted by a cross. Unlike the apple, the pomegranate did not carry the stigma of the Fall but signified earlier and perhaps more important wisdom that the dictatorial church had ignored. Just as a transversely sliced apple reveals Solomon's five pointed star, a symbol respected by Washington, the pomegranate contained seeds of Solomon's wisdom.

The glyph can be seen on Stiegel stove plates as a bulb containing a heart with a tulip growing from the top. It appears on several Pennsylvania long rifles. Because of the repeated use of this form in Penn's state during the mid and late 1700's, Sophia must have been well known to Bonewitz's customers and a popular subject for his patchboxes. To the Gnostics in this colony, Sophia was alive and in the heavens; in Ephrata they drew a picture of her hovering in the air over a baptismal. Bonewitz displays his effigy of her as a standing figure covering three quarters of his patchbox finial. A rebirth symbol, an untied knot frames her head like hair and in her foliate hands he placed a pomegranate and other symbols of her knowledge. Wisdom 7:11 had told him, "All good things together came to lie with her (Sophia) and innumerable riches in her hands."

Figure 1 shows Bonewitz's Sophia holding a pomegranate in her foliate hands above a woven splint basket. A similar basket for planting tubers

was depicted in a Colonial periodical. Below the basket there are six waves emanating the known attributes of her diety: wisdom, power, majesty, love, mercy and justice. The crests fall toward the outline of the earth at her feet. This work may be one of his earliest rifles, or a summary of his other finials by a riflemith in his school who knew Bonewitz's philosophy.

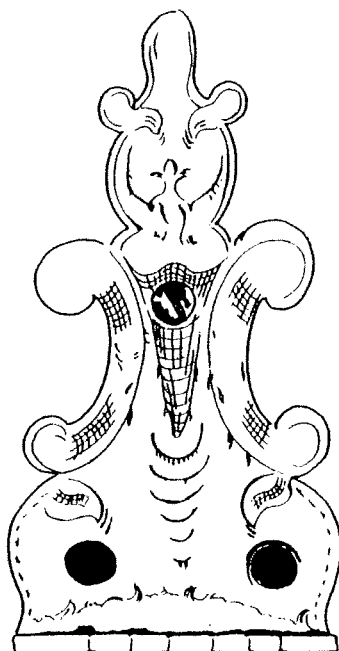


Figure 1

In figure 2 Sophia's foliate hands are held open sharing the wealth which can be almost envisioned as a round globe in front of her torso, particularly on a polished brass rifle. This is similar to the symbol of agape which appears on several other guns with a floral head. There the foliate arms and hands are relaxed by the side with the palms held loosely upward to receive grace, but Sophia's hands offer grace and wisdom, again recalling Wisdom 7:11 and also 8:18, "and in the works of her hands are great riches."

What is this wealth? Bonewitz creates another finial in answer. The third version of Sophia, figure 3, displays a visable globe supported underneath by her right foliate hand and stabilized by her left hand on top. The hands seem to impart a swirling motion and the Yin and Yang could be interpreted as a coincident

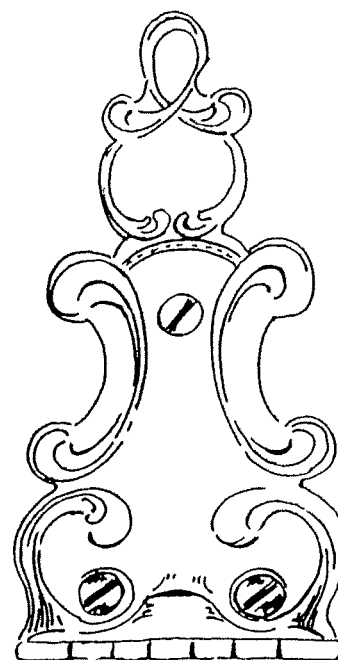


Figure 2

symbol. At the center of the concept of Yin and Yang is the perception of this world as duality, the beginning and end, and at its epi-center, the secret way out of the religious spiral maze. In Ecclesiasticus 7:17-18 Wisdoms knowledge is echoed for this globe. "For he has given me certain knowledge of things that are - the beginning, ending and the midst of times: the alteration of the turning of the Sun, and the change of the Seasons: the circuits of the years, the position of the stars." The saying, "-the position of the stars" implies that she knew the turing of the wheel of incarnation and this symbol turns for that reason as well. This sphere also represents the theme of evolution and involution.

On the fourth finial the "hands" become trifid and the index fingers thrust upward and downward in a loose manner as if permeating the orb of knowledge or the cosmos. Ecclesiasticus 7:24 says, "For Wisdom is more than any motion. She passeth and goeth through all things." Here the rebirth symbol, possibly also a Masonic cable tow, which in a sense is another glyph for rebirth, becomes involved in the activity of the sphere, as the line carries down and circles into the design. The index fingers also high light the belief that as the word of God governs above, so it does below as in, "As above so below."

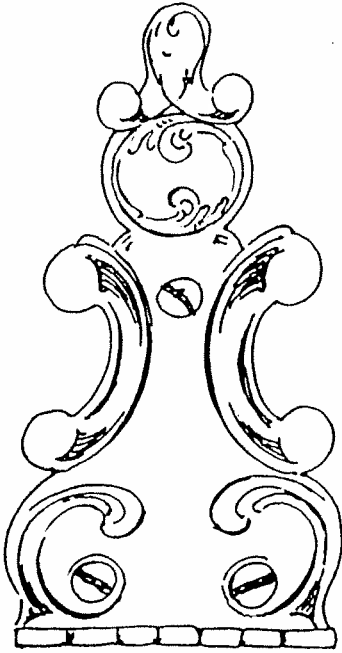


Figure 3

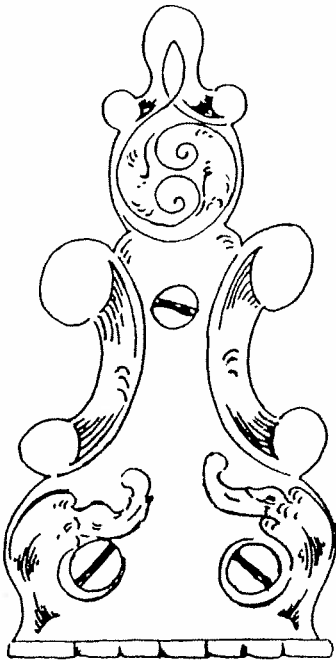


Figure 4

A fifth design depicts the figure of Sophia opening her hands in front of her womb. The position of her hands is like an arabic dancer with the palms out and thumbs down, framing her navel, which appears as a shocking bright star or spark of light. Wisdom 7:12 reads, "For she is more beautiful than the Sun and above all other stars." The Christian church's graces

in Solomon's Song are described in 7:2 as "Thy navel is like a round goblet - thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies." Wheat is a light symbol as it grows toward the light.

Classical literature refers to the "center of the earth shrines", the Omphalos, the navel of the world, as a source of the life force of the world. In the 1700's an umbilical cord was still being sewn into shooting jackets and uniforms as a life amulet. In Pistus Sophia, Jesus said he found the soul of Elias and gave it to Sophia, the Virgin of Light, who reincarnated it to be reborn as John the Baptist. Again, the symbol of rebirth or reincarnation may be inferred as in the third patchbox design. According to Gnostic tradition only if a soul were judged and approved by the Virgin Sophia could it be admitted to the treasury of light.

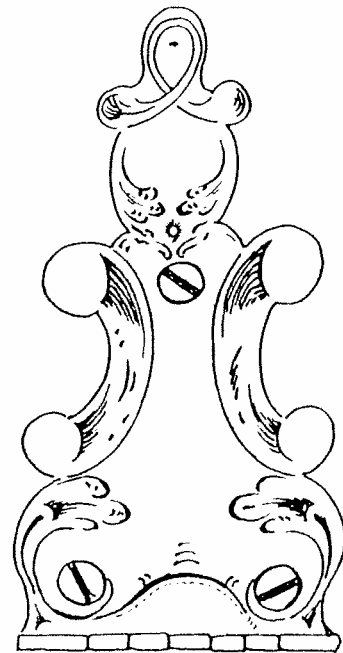


Figure 5

The last patchbox finial #6 pictures Sophia with her trifid hands gently supporting a diamond. In German Echstein means "genuine stone" and Eckstien means "corner stone"; both mean diamond. The diamond is the symbol for the Logos, God's Word in the beginning, and is the German sigil for Christ and Light. Sophia was considered by some Gnostics the sister of Christ. The diamond in the symbol appears at

the level of her heart. While there are references in the accepted Bible for much of the above symbolism, again it is in the Apocrypha that the strongest support occurs for Sophia representing the Logos. In Ecclesiasticus 24:3 at the creation, Wisdom, or Sophia "came out of the mouth of the Lord and covered the earth as a cloud." and 24:9, "He created me from the beginning before the world and I shall never fail." And, finally, Wisdom 7:25, "For she is the breath of the power of God."

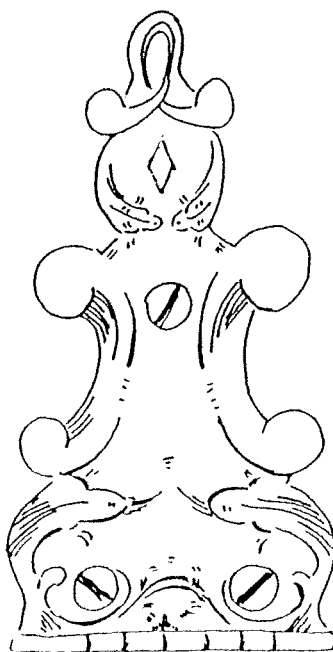


Figure 6

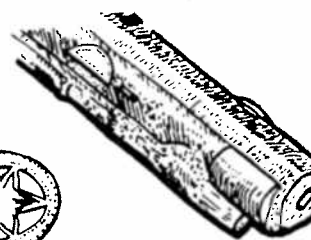
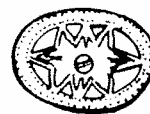
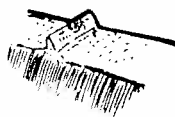
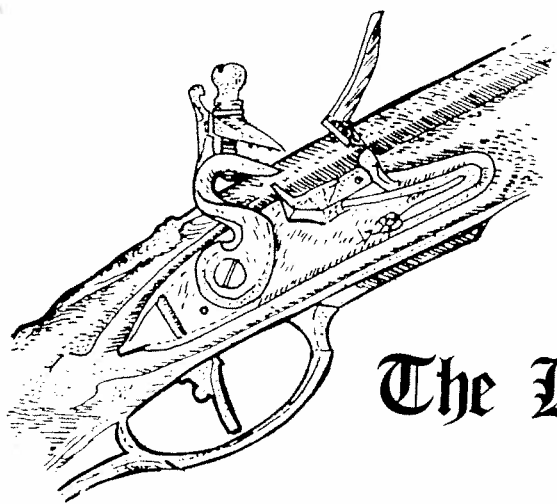
Three of the finials use a single dolphin to support Sophia. While dolphins are used in academic art as decoration, Bonewitz may have known that a dolphin alone symbolizes salvation. This may be particularly true as his use of folk numerology appears to reinforce the themes of his finials. In fig. #5, the hands about Sophia's navel contain six dots. According to St. Augustine the world was created in six days. Below the Logos there are four strokes surrounding the hands symbolizing the four cardinal directions or the world, or the total may be read as eight. In the eighth sepiroth of the Kabala, Hod is a classical symbol of praise and glory. If Bonewitz was even a casual student of the classical languages of the Colonial period, Greek Latin, and Hebrew, he may have known this; and he would have been driven toward this subject as he sought the truth of the Bible.

He also would have found supporting evidence for the theme of praise in the same book of Ecclesiasticus, as 24:1 reads, "Wisdom shall praise herself and shall glory in the midst of her people." Finally there are five dots in the hands that hold the Logos; five is the Masonic equivalent of Light and as Plutarch believed, five stood for man at the end of biological and spiritual evolution. Then the duality of beginning and end are also within this finial. Duality was a popular subject for the riflesmith as the vast majority of these men were deeply religious but created an instrument of death.

While the main thrust of Bonewitz's imagery is religious, there is the possibility that some of his designs were intended to be Masonic, as that organization has always been dedicated to religious freedom as long as a member was willing to have a fundamental belief in a Supreme Deity of Light. Bonewitz may have respected the Masonic requirement of silence regarding Masonic symbols, which was more strictly enforced in the Colonial

period. Macoy refers to Masonry as the "Diamond of the desert." Bonewitz prominently displays the diamond on at least one finial and does use the cable tow, a symbol of Masonic obligation; but his supporting symbolic elements do not reinforce this interpretation. There is enough mutual evidence in this series of finials to strongly imply Bonewitz understood and believed that the imagery of Sophia was worth contemplating. Never-the-less one wonders about his Masonic ties. In finial #3 an astute Mason may spot the inverse use of the "due guard" by a feminine symbol, a possible play on opposites. Are there more?

The appearance of a foliate single eye in Fig. #3 and 5, as the only features of her face, stresses the importance of viewing his finials carefully again and again, for this is the single eye of Matthew 6:22 which hints at the eye of God, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Traditionally, this has been interpreted for centuries as, "he who sees with one eye knows all." The body may have been Sophia's, but the eye was God's and the eye that Bonewitz expected us to view his art with was the single eye of meditation.



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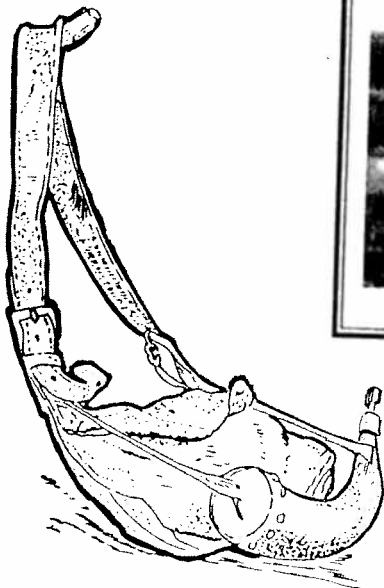
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JOHN BONEWITZ MASTER GUNSMITH Womelsdorf, Pennsylvania



JOHANNES BONEWITZ MASTER GUNSMITH WOMELSDORF, PA.

by Henry I. Bishop, KRA

By all definitions of the word, John Bonewitz was truly a master of his trade. His work spanned an entire era of gun making in the United States from the American Revolution to the War of 1812. He was there when the "Golden Age" of rifle making started and he was there as the era began its decline. Design, execution, excellence and consistency were the basic principles of his success and long career. The flintlock Pennsylvania rifles made by John Bonewitz provide the viewer and the collector with a terrific example of early American functional art. Functional—as a means of defense, providing food for the table and enjoying a day of competition at the local beef shoots. An art form—by its beautiful carving and engraving designs and unique combination of wood, iron and brass. A pleasure to behold as well as use.

This is the second of a three part series designed to provide the collector and student with new information regarding the life and times of Master Gunsmiths John Bonewitz, Leonard Reedy and Andrew Fichthorn Jr. The first of this series, the study of Andrew Fichthorn Sr & Jr., was completed and presented last year, 2001, and is available in *KRA bulletin Vol. 28, No. 1*.

Shortly after Joe Kindig Jr. published what he had gathered together on John Bonewitz in *'Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age'* several Bonewitz descendants started a genealogical review of the family on their own. I doubt they even knew about Kindig's work and I'm certain Joe didn't know about theirs. A few family members shared in the general outline and other than a regional reference to John Bonewitz in 1977 by Earl Ibach in his book *'The Hub of the Tulpehocken'* the information has basically sat unused at the Tulpehocken Historical Society since 1968. The families work was shown to me several years ago on a visit when the Fichthorn family research was just getting under way. A real lucky find!!!

The family genealogy provides an overview of the early Bonewitz descendants and continues with a brief account of each member. The families supporting files led to several original documents used in preparing the initial segments of this study. These interesting documents and a number of new important papers were located at the Berks County Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans Court and County Register of Deeds.

The family genealogy shows John Bonewitz served in the York Co. militia during the summer of 1781.² They describe his duty but not the source of their information. It took several days in the Pennsylvania archives before the original payroll muster was found and the names of the addi-

tional 91 members of the militia detail were known. The significance of this will be obvious once the reader ventures through the text of this study.

The family genealogy also reveals John Bonewitz moved to Pine Grove in 1809.³ When John Bonewitz disappeared from the Heidelberg tax rolls in 1810 most early collectors and historians thought he had found eternal rest. As we shall see this was not the case. Why he picked up and left Womelsdorf and moved his entire family to Pine Grove is the subject of several thoughts found well along in this study. KRA member Richard Heess verified Bonewitz's move while reviewing the Pine Grove Townships 1810 & 1811 tax records in preparation for his article on the gunsmith Henry Eckler. He also found Leonard Reedy on the 1811 Pine Grove tax list.⁴ A close look at the 1810 Pine Grove census on a recent visit to the Pennsylvania Archives shows Bonewitz and Reedy as neighbors.⁵ A hands on review of the superb Henry Eckler rifle shows a lot of Bonewitz and Reedy influence. Definite fuel for future thought!!!

Luck and timing have always played an important role in research. It certainly is true throughout this entire study. No more so, however, than when one of the most important and last documents uncovered surfaced during an interview with a Bonewitz descendant at the Pine Grove Historical Society. He had a photo copy of the first page of an article published by a member of the Schuylkill County Historical Society in 1910. The title—*'Account of Sales at the Public Vendue of John Bonawitz's, Pinegrove Twp., Oct . . . , 1828.'*⁶ Since I had discovered the estate inventory of John Bonewitz the previous year in the Schuylkill County Archives this 1828 summary of the estate sale had special meaning. The rest of the 1910 article was found in the Schuylkill County Historical Society Library. The estate inventory is a great read all by itself, add the estate sale information and a unique view of Bonewitz's life is complete.

The family name is most often spelled Bonawitz or Bonewitz, however, no less than nine different variations were encountered during this study. Boneywits was the most unusual, but when trying to understand the phonetic interpretations of the times it is understandable. The families' religious background is Protestant and it is believed the original members of the family arrived in America from an area near Dresden, Germany in the 1750 time frame. The small town of Bonnewitz has existed there since 1378 according to the family genealogy.⁷

JOHANNES BONEWITZ 1758 - 9/22/1828

Citizen & Soldier

John Bonewitz's tombstone would have us believe he was born in 1754. However, a Berks County Orphans Court document [Exhibit A] signed by his mother in 1765, seeking

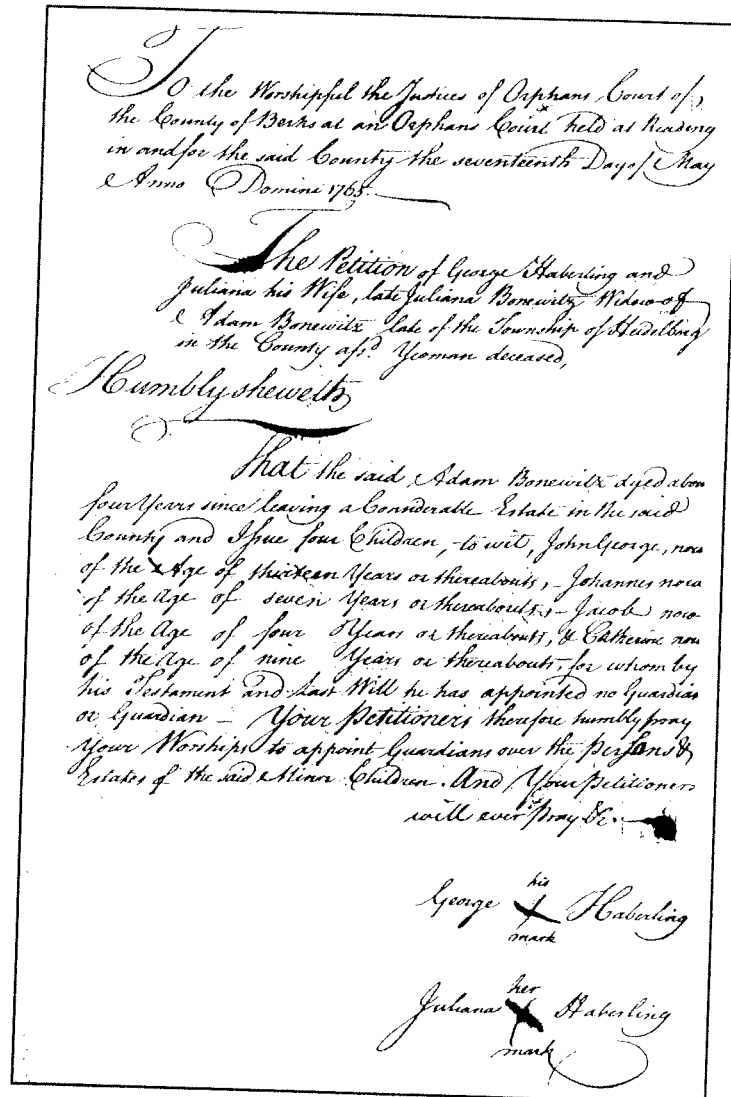


Exhibit A

guardians for her children, describe his age as '7 or thereabouts.'⁸ Easy math gets us back to 1758. This is the date the family genealogy uses as well, probably using the same 1765 document as support. Left alone the 1754/1758 mystery would still be a puzzle. Making the 1758 date a little easier to accept, however, was a search through the 1800 census. It lists one free white male in the Bonewitz household age 26-44 and none over the age of 45.⁹ A 1754 birth date would have John Bonewitz age 46 in 1800. A 1758 birth date would have him at 42. 1758 prevails!!

Johann Bonewitz was the third child born to Johannes Adam and Juliana Bonawitz. John George, his older brother, was born in 1752. John George was a farmer, a weaver and a laborer according to the family genealogy. John George died in 1793. An older sister, Catharine, was born in 1756 and a younger brother, Jacob, was born in 1761 the same year in which Johannes Adam, the father, died.¹⁰ It was very common for the German family to use

John, Johannes or Johann as a preface to a male child's given name. This was a respectful tribute to the many saints named John in the Lutheran religion. Our subjects' given name was simply John and written the three different ways on the documents available. In keeping with the tradition and to avoid everyone in the family responding to the name John, Johann Adam was known as Adam and John George as George.

The exact birth place of John Bonewitz is not known. However, when he was two years old, or thereabouts, his father, Adam, purchased 386 acres and 88 perches from Conrad Weiser.¹¹ The 1760 indenture and record of the purchase describes the land and its location near present day Robesonia, a small community several miles east of Womelsdorf. A 1758 Heidelberg tax¹² list shows Adam Bonawitz living in the area so it is safe to assume John was born in the vicinity.

Womelsdorf, known in 1758 as Middletown,¹³ and Robesonia were close to the western frontier of an expanding Pennsylvania. There were only a handful of settlers west of the area near the Susquehanna river and even fewer to the north beyond the Blue Mountain range. The main trail providing access to Middletown from the east started in Philadelphia and ran west thru Pottstown, Reading and Robesonia. From Womelsdorf [Middletown] the path extended west to Fort Harris [Harrisburg] and north to Fort Henry. The Indian trail leading north from the region, thru Fort Henry, extended all the way to Fort Augusta, today's Sunbury.¹⁴ Early Pennsylvania history is full of grizzly stories of Indian depredations and attacks on the white settlers less than half a days travel from the area. The most serious during the French and Indian war and the last of any consequence in 1759.¹⁵

Middletown and Robesonia were a part of Heidelberg Township which in turn was a part of northwestern Berks County. The most famous resident of the area and the one person who stands out the most in the 1750's was Conrad Weiser. His efforts, both as an Indian agent and leader of men, contributed greatly to the safety and development of the township where John Bonewitz grew up. A great deal has been written about Conrad Weiser and it is suggested students explore more knowledge regarding this important man.

John Bonewitz was only 3 years old when his father passed away. Adam Bonawitz's will¹⁶ written May 2, 1761, several weeks before he died, is a classic example of the times. Originally written in German it has been translated into English. He allows for the settlement of his debts and provides for the needs of his wife and children. His estate consists mainly of livestock, farm tools, household items and a gun, two cartridge boxes & powder horn.¹⁷ And the 386 acres of land he had purchased from Conrad Weiser in January the year before. Three hundred and eighty six acres was a sizable spread in 1761 and Adam intended for it to remain in control of his children. He wrote in his will;

"Thirdly—Of my place situate here in Heidelberg whereon I now live it is my Will that my wife with the children live and remain, and to maintain herself and the children on the place till my eldest Son

arrive at the full age of eighteen years, then my eldest Son Johann George shall enter upon the place and manage the same till my youngest child is of age then the place shall be appraised by discreet & indifferent persons, and according to the appraisal the youngest son shall have and shall pay to each of the other children their shares; but if the youngest son will not have it, afterwards one of the other children may have the place as the youngest child might have held it."¹⁸

Literally translated, George would inherit the 'place' in 1770 and manage it until 1779. In 1779 Jacob would take over if he wanted to. John and Catharine were included in the plan but not specifically as owners or managers, their shares coming due whenever or however Jacob made his decision. It is unclear what happened in 1779 but George is still listed on the Township tax roles for the year.¹⁹ We do know, however, in 1783 George, John and their sister Catharine deeded 186 acres and 88 perches over to their brother Jacob.²⁰ It is assumed the remaining 200 acres were sold at sometime before or after 1783 and the proceeds divided equally between George, John and Catharine.

It is interesting to note that not all land sales or business transactions were recorded in the early days. Contracts or indentures as they were called were written but whether or not a copy found its way to the county court house was another matter. Many simply remained in the hands of the parties involved and have been lost over time. Others have been filed but destroyed in fires or floods or misplaced.

Prior to 1783 we have little reference to John Bonewitz other than his mothers 1765 guardianship petition to the Berks County Orphans Court resulting in the Court appointing Fredrick Weiser and John George Lauck his guardians;²¹ a 1780 Berks County, Heidelberg Township, tax record listing him as a Single Freeman;²² and his 1781 Revolutionary War record found in the Pennsylvania Archives. A search thru the records of Mr. Weiser and Mr. Lauck could very well provide useful information on John Bonewitz's development and interest in the gunsmith trade.

We do not know where Bonewitz was or what he was doing at the beginning of the American struggle for indepen-

dence. Many State documents show gunsmiths at the start of the war were involved in appraising, purchasing or confiscating local weapons for use by the Committee of Safety²³ and during the early years of the war required to manufacture muskets and bayonets for the Continental Army and local militia units.²⁴ At age 18 he could have easily been involved in these activities. We do find him, however, listed as a 'single freeman' in the 1780 Heidelberg Township tax records [which includes Womelsdorf] and then in the summer of the very next year, 1781, in York, Pa. as a member of the local county militia. Bonewitz, now 23, may have traveled to York to visit with old friends or he could have been looking for work. Regardless, Bonewitz served along side York County gunsmiths: Conrad Welshantz [Welshans], Ignatius Lightner [Leitner] and Jacob Leder [Ledder, Leather, etc.] and several members from other York Co. gunsmith families [Long and Heckert] in 'a detachment of York County Militia guarding prisoners of war from York Town [York, Pa.] to Reading, in Berks County; commanded by Col. Henry Miller, from June 12th to the 20th, both inclusive.'²⁵ [Exhibit B] This is the only Revolutionary War record we have for him which lends support to the theory he may have been working as a gunsmith and exempt from military service up until this time. It is interesting for us to know,

'Payroll of a detachment of York County Militia Guarding Prisoners of war, from York Town to Reading, in Berks County; Commanded by Colonel Henry Miller, from June 12th to the 20th both inclusive. 1781'

Captain John Ehrman				
Adjutant William Wall	Lieutenants Charles Barnett Christian Sinn	Ensign Charles Spangler	Sergt. Major Ignatius Lightner	Sergeants Ludwig Sheib William Lanius John Ernst
Corporals John Collins John Coho Simon Ford Adam Stayer	Fifer Jacob Strohman	Drummers Jacob Spangler John Mian	Esqr. Lt. Horse Thoms. Hartley Christian Stake Daniel Spangler Matthias Zimmer Jacob Kauffeld	Otr. Mastr. Lt. Horse Jno. Scott Peter Ickes Jacob Steward
Privates				
John Frey Benedict Funk Jacob Bley Meyer David Welshantz Conrad Welshantz Jacob Frankeberger Adam Wolf George Mock Jacob Leder Francis Kuntz William Long Vincence Imfeld John Probst Jacob Kramer	John Stop Henry Buser Andrew Honey John Engelbrecht Frederick Woer John Woer John Weldy Levi McClean Ludwig Michael James McCalmon John Newman George Spangel Philip Hasselbach	Marlin Cronmiller Henry Bringman John Brencison Philip Spangler George Heckert Frederick Elsberry John Seffrens Henry Marshall John Davis John Lawman Jacob Shram Frederick Shetty Frederick Shanck	George Zumwald Philip Werntz John Leissner Joseph Woodward Peter Wolf William Clayton Adam Frey John Rush John Wagner Matthias Ritz James Murray Joseph Cooper George Kraft	Philip Herman Conrad Michael John Oldham Robert Bailey George Emig George Miles Jacob Bott Joseph Zimmer George Eisenhart John Haller John Fisher John Bonewitz Jacob Correl Andrew Hawk, Sgt.

however, that he knew these three York Co. gunsmiths, two who were most likely his contemporaries and the third older. How long he stayed in York is uncertain. His presence at the division of his fathers estate, however, places him back near Womelsdorf in 1783.

We know for sure Bonewitz was back in Womelsdorf as a gunsmith and consistent tax payer in Heidelberg Township from 1784 until 1809. In May of 1786 he purchased lot 42, present day 145 West High street, from Christian and Veronica Heckenthorn.²⁶ The Stouch Tavern, established in 1785 and still operating today, was directly across the street from lot 42 and a regular stop for the stagecoach operating between Harrisburg and Reading.²⁷ His rifle making production in Womelsdorf spanned the course of 25 years and was without a doubt his most active time frame. In 1809 John Bonewitz moved his family and presumably his business 15 miles North West of Womelsdorf to Pine Grove, a small community bordering the Swatara Creek in present day Schuylkill County.

While living in Womelsdorf John Bonewitz was busy raising a family as well as building rifles. The Christ Lutheran Church of Tulpehocken records indicate John Bonewitz married Katharine Laubinger on April 19, 1789. Katharine was the daughter of George and Dorothea Laubinger. At the time of their marriage John was 31 and Katharine was 25. John and Katharine had five children;²⁸

Benjamin	Born 1791	Married Sarah Weiser
John Jr.	Born 1794	Married Magdalena Faust
Margaret	Born 1797	Married Daniel Angst
Mary	Born 1800	Married Peter Keiser
George	Born 1805	Married Mary Koons

Benjamin and John Jr. served in the War of 1812 during the threat to Baltimore by the British from Sept. 2, 1814 thru March 5, 1815. Benjamin was a Lieutenant in the 2nd Regt.—1st Brigade Penna. Militia commanded by Capt. Peter Snyder²⁹ and John Jr. was a private in the 1st Regt.—1st Brigade commanded by Capt. John Elder.³⁰ Both units contained men from Schuylkill Co. but were formed and mustered out of York a distance of 60 to 65 miles from Pine Grove. For a long time several references listed John Sr. as having served with his sons during this 1814 campaign. All War of 1812 records referring to John Bonawitz, however, are to Junior who was 20 in 1814. John Sr. was 56 at the time and most likely exempt from service. Leonard Reedy and Henry Eckler also served during this exact same period [Eckler as a private with Benjamin in the 2nd Regt.—1st Brigade].³¹ And so it can be imagined and is very probable Benjamin, John Jr., Henry Eckler and Leonard Reedy along with a number of their Pine Grove neighbors marched to York in 1814, enlisted in the army together and answered their countries call to arms. You know—these boys were carrying rifles!!!!

When John Bonewitz moved his family and gunsmith business 'over the Blue mountains' to Pine Grove in 1809 he left behind a well established farming community and a good deal of competition to the West in Lebanon and to the East in the Borough of Reading. Pine Grove, on the other hand,

was a growth area with the resulting opportunities. The enormous stands of pine and hemlock in the mountains surrounding Pine Grove had fueled a thriving lumber industry since the 1790's that was still going strong in 1810.³² Anthracite [hard coal] was just starting to be mined in significant quantities and its use was gaining acceptance,³³ albeit slowly. Early accounts of the Swatara creek, which runs thru Pine Grove, describe it as an excellent source for the power needed to drive the newest water driven technology being introduced in the country. Drop hammer forges, mills and tanneries required this powerful resource to operate this new technology efficiently and several were established in Pine Grove in the 1810/1811 time frame.³⁴ Of course, John Bonewitz could have retired and moved to Pine Grove seeking the easy life of a gentleman farmer. This is not likely, however, when you consider Leonard Reedy was there as well and the remnants of an active career were evident in Bonewitz's estate inventory. At 51 years of age he may have slowed down a little but my guess is this move was economically driven and well thought out.

According to the Schuylkill County Historical Society article published in 1910 regarding the estate sale of John Bonewitz 'he settled a short distance north of Pinegrove, on the farm now owned by Mr. John C. Hikes.'³⁵ Mrs. Kreichbaum, a local historian who lives nearby, told me this property had a large barn, a log house and blacksmith shop situated close to the north road out of town. The house and barn were on the west side of the road and the blacksmith shop on the east side a short distance away. The Swatara Creek ran in a southerly direction 100 yards or so behind the shop. The barn and blacksmith shop are gone now, but Mrs. Kreichbaum pointed out where they use to be. The house is still there, however, and the location today of the Pine Grove Historical Society. The house sits nicely on a small rise and at one time must have had a wonderful view of the Swatara Creek. Presently the view is blocked by route 125, trees, heavy under growth and an abandoned car repair garage where the blacksmith shop once was.

When the Pine Grove Historical Society first moved into the house they undertook a major restoration of the structure. Mr. Kenneth Lehman, President of the Society, explained it was during this project that one of the original outside log walls was exposed and someone in the group recognized the logs on the first course were a different wood than those on the second level [oak was used on the first level and pine on the second]. An architectural restoration expert and an associate were consulted and the Historical Society learned the house was originally built around 1780 using an English floor plan. Sometime between 1800 and 1820 a second story was added and the homes' configuration was changed to a layout popular among the German community.³⁶ Bonewitz moved to Pine Grove in 1809.

Everything seems to fit for a good discussion in favor of this parcel of land and buildings being John Bonewitz's Pine Grove homestead, gunshop and the location of the estate sale held October, 29th & 30th, 1828.

John Bonewitz died on September 22, 1828. He is

buried in an old cemetery directly across the street from St. Peter's Lutheran Church on the main road into Pine Grove from the south. His stone is weathered somewhat but at high noon when the shadows are right it is distinctly readable. Rudy Gleichman and I had trouble finding it in the morning light and I completely missed it on my first visit during a major downpour. Go at noon, however, follow a little ways in from the south edge of the grounds and about a third of the way back you will find him. His wife's grave is nowhere near but can be found in the far left corner near the back. Her stone is weathered as well but in the right light leaves no doubt—Catharina, wife of Johannes Bonawitz, died 16 March 1843, aged 79y 6m —.

St. Peter's Lutheran church played a major role in the development of the Pine Grove community³⁷ and from 1810 on John Bonewitz must have contributed also for at one time he was a Deacon and at another an Elder of the church.³⁸ If a man held these positions in the church he was usually well respected and a leader in the community as well.

John Bonewitz died intestate [without a will]. On September 29th Samuel Hain and Abraham Kieffer [Kieser] appraised the inventory of his estate.³⁹ One week later, on Oct. 6th, sons Benjamin and John Jr. signed an oath [Exhibit C] agreeing to: 'truly comply with the provi-

Schuykill County Pa.
We Benjamin Bonawitz and John Bonawitz
Administrators of all and singular the goods & chattels
rights and credits which were of John Bonawitz late of
Pine Grove Township in Schuykill County german
and do swear, that we will diligently and faithfully
regard and well and truly comply with the provisions
of the Act Entitled an Act relating to Collateral Inheritance
passed the 6th day of April A.D. 1826
Sworn & subscribed before } Benjamin Bonawitz
me the 6th day of October 1828 } John Bonawitz
Orville Register

Exhibit C

sions of the Act Entitled an Act relating to Collateral Inheritance passed the 6th day of April AD 1826.⁴⁰ On October 25th, a little over a month after John's passing, Catharina signed a statement [Exhibit D] in which she declares 'I have released and hereby release all my right and title to the administration of the said estate.'⁴¹

The estate inventory prepared by Samuel Hain and Abraham Kieffer is most interesting. [Exhibit E] The family genealogy states 'he had a collection of books.' This information in no way prepared me for what I found in the Archives section of the Schuykill County Court House. Most estate inventories of the time would list books and pamphlets in lots i.e; lot of books—\$.50, lot of books & lot of pamphlets—\$1.25, or 2 books—\$.50. In John Bone-

To Peter Fraley Esq. Register of the probate of Wills
and Granting Letters of Administration in and for the
County of Schuykill —
Whereas my late Husband John Bonawitz died intestate
whereby the right of the Administration of the Estate of the
said deceased did devolve upon me Catharina Bonawitz
widow and relic of the said deceased NOW KNOWING
that for divers good causes and considerations therein
unto moving I have released and hereby do release all
my right and title to the administration of the said Estate
from my hand and seal the twenty fifth day of
October in the year of our Lord One thousand eight
hundred and Twenty eight
Signed and delivered } Catharina Bonawitz
In the presence of us }
John Bonawitz

Exhibit D

witz's case over 20 books were listed individually with their titles. Example:

Geographical Lexicon—\$3.00; Life of Napoleon—\$1.00; Letters on Helvetia—\$0.75; German Atlas—\$0.75; History of Rome 3 vol.—\$1.50; History of England in French—\$0.50; Life of Fredk. king of Prussia 5 vol.—\$2.50; Carpenters Astronomy—\$1.00; Christian on the Sabbath—\$2.00; German Psalms 6 books—\$2.00

These ten books and another group just like them are

Inventory of all and singular the goods & chattels
rights and credits which were of John Bonawitz
late of Pine Grove Township Schuykill County
also as appraised this 20th day of September 1828
by Samuel Hain & Abraham Kieffer appraisers

Books

Geographical Lexicon 3 vol. German Helvetia \$0.75	3.75
History of Rome 3 vol. \$1.50 German Atlas \$0.75	2.25
History of King David 1 vol. \$0.25 a quantity of pamphlets	1.50
Life of Frederick King of Prussia 5 vol. \$2.50 History of England in French	3.11
Christian on the Sabbath \$2.00 Life of Fredk \$1.00	2.50
Swiss chronicle 1 vol. \$2.50 Life of Napoleon \$1.00	1.50
Christianization Geographical \$0.50 Holy Quran \$0.50 Lot of Books	1.75
Index of Books & Dictionary \$0.25 Travel in Spain & Catalonia	1.00
Carpenters Astronomy \$1.00 2 Portraits of Kings \$0.50	2.00
American Revolution german \$0.75 Life of Luther \$0.25	1.50

Exhibit E

the first items on the inventory followed by Gunsmith tools valued at \$50.00, two double gun tiggers [triggers] at \$2.00 and one new gun lock at \$1.00. Gunstocks and Planks are listed for \$3.00, four pair Spectacles @ \$0.50, four sheets of sandpaper @ \$0.06 1/4 and an item no respectable gunsmith should be without—1 Cork Screw—\$0.25. The list is 3 pages long and includes numerous household and personal items as well as livestock and farm tools. The total value of the items listed came to \$772.48 3/4.⁴² It is extremely difficult to compare 1828 dollars to the value of money today. When you look at the number and type of items listed, however, you get the feeling the Bonewitz family lacked for very little and certainly would be considered today as solid members of the community.

The sale of John Bonewitz's personal property, published in the 1910 Schuylkill County Historical Society pamphlet, was held the 29th & 30th of October, 1828. [Exhibit F]

lime and 1 glass bottle. A fellow named John Brown bought ten gun stocks, a saw and lamp, 1 ramrod bar and the other double trigger. Two pistols and an old shotgun appear on the list. The pistols brought \$0.12 1/2 and \$0.08 and the shotgun \$1.08. Daniel Angst bought a gun barrel and cow bell [1 lot] for \$0.13 and several of the books and various tools. John Buechler paid \$0.21 for an old gun barrel and \$0.30 for a kugelbohrer [bullet extractor]. The gun lock valued in the inventory at \$1.00 sold over estimate for \$1.38!!!

The most expensive lot sold was no. 98, a wagon sold to Benjamin Bonewitz for \$38.50. The second highest item was a blacksmith's outfit sold for \$32.00. A foal sold for \$30.50 and a ladies saddle brought \$11.62 1/2. A cow brought \$13.00 and a windmill and several beds sold for \$10.00 each. The book *Geographical Lexicon* raised \$6.50 and the 5 vols. of Frederick the Great—\$3.62 1/2.⁴⁴ A person can spend hours reviewing information like this. If you are so inclined copies are included with this study.

JOHN BONEWITZ Gunsmith

We have learned much of what we know about the 18th century apprentice system from the early works of Henry Kauffman, Joe Kindig Jr. and Capt. John Dillin. Like today, very little was cast in stone but the basic workings of the system followed many of the traditions brought to the new world from Europe. Generally, a young man would enter a trade at 12 to 14 years of age and depending on the degree of difficulty his apprenticeship would last from 4 to 8 years. The silversmith and gunsmith trades were considered among the most difficult in Europe and it can be supposed the same held true in America.⁴⁵

John Bonewitz was born in 1758. If we follow conventional wisdom we can guess he entered his apprenticeship somewhere near 1770/1772. If he spent 6 or 7 years as an apprentice he was ready to go on his own or work as a journeyman around 1776, 1777, 1778 or 1779 [18, 19, 20 and 21 years old respectively]. This would put him either at the beginning or in the middle of the American Revolution. Since his military service was limited to 9 days in the York County Militia in 1781 we can legitimately speculate most of his time during the war was spent making and repairing muskets and rifles for use by the Continental Army and local Militia. Where and if he performed this required service is pure guess work. Although the war years most likely limited his early production he conceivably could have made rifles as an apprentice or journeyman before the war reached full pace, during the Revolution and certainly on a full time basis after the fighting stopped in the fall of 1782. Definitely after the cessation of hostilities was signed by the British and U.S. in January 1783. Whether he made rifles before or during the American Revolution is, again, guess work. Supporting the argument, however, are 4 early rifles, one signed, that could have come from this

Account of Sales of the Public Vendue of John Bonewitz's, Pinegrove Twp., Oct., 1828.

1. John Bonewitz, war musket, (w/stock)	10	16. John Bonewitz, box and tools	37	31. Michael Haber, Jr. sundries	1.00	46. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	61. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
2. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	17. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	32. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	47. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	62. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
3. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	18. Benjamin Bonewitz, pistol	125	33. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	48. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	63. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
4. George Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	19. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	34. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	49. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	64. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
5. Daniel Angst, gun barrel and cow bell	1.08	20. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	35. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	50. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	65. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
6. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	21. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	36. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	51. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	66. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
7. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	22. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	37. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	52. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	67. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
8. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	23. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	38. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	53. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	68. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
9. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	24. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	39. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	54. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	69. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
10. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	25. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	40. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	55. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	70. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
11. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	26. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	41. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	56. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	71. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
12. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	27. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	42. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	57. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	72. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
13. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	28. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	43. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	58. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	73. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
14. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	29. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	44. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	59. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	74. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
15. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	30. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	45. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	60. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	75. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
16. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	31. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	46. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	61. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	76. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
17. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	32. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	47. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	62. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	77. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
18. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	33. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	48. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	63. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	78. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
19. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	34. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	49. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	64. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	79. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
20. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	35. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	50. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	65. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	80. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
21. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	36. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	51. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	66. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	81. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
22. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	37. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	52. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	67. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	82. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
23. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	38. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	53. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	68. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	83. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
24. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	39. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	54. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	69. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	84. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
25. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	40. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	55. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	70. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	85. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
26. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	41. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	56. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	71. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	86. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
27. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	42. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	57. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	72. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	87. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
28. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	43. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	58. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	73. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	88. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
29. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	44. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	59. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	74. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	89. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
30. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	45. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	60. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	75. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	90. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
31. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	46. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	61. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	76. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	91. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
32. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	47. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	62. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	77. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	92. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
33. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	48. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	63. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	78. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	93. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
34. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	49. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	64. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	79. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	94. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
35. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	50. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	65. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	80. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	95. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
36. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	51. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	66. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	81. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	96. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
37. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	52. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	67. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	82. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	97. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
38. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	53. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	68. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	83. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	98. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
39. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	54. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	69. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	84. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	99. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
40. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	55. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	70. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	85. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74	100. John Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74
41. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	56. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	71. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	86. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
42. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	57. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	72. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	87. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
43. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	58. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	73. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	88. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
44. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	59. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	74. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	89. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
45. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	60. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	75. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	90. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
46. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	61. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	76. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	91. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
47. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	62. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	77. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	92. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
48. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	63. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	78. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	93. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
49. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	64. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	79. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	94. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
50. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	65. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	80. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	95. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
51. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	66. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	81. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	96. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
52. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	67. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	82. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	97. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
53. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	68. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	83. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	98. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
54. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	69. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	84. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	99. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
55. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	70. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	85. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00	100. George Bonewitz, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	74		
56. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	71. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	86. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
57. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	72. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	87. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
58. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	73. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	88. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
59. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	74. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	89. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
60. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	75. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	90. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
61. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	76. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	91. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
62. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	77. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	92. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
63. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	78. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	93. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
64. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	79. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	94. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
65. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	80. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	95. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
66. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	81. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	96. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
67. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	82. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	97. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
68. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	83. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	98. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
69. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	84. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	99. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				
70. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	15	85. John Bonewitz, 1 box and tools	37	100. Jacob Wagner, 1 box with tools, (Grasshopper)	1.00				

Exhibit F

It had the typical rules of the day;

"the highest bidder shall be the purchaser. Each sale not over a dollar shall be paid in cash; all else sold above this sum shall have credit until the next 31st of December [60 days]. However, the purchaser must give a note with sufficient security, and this condition must be observed without respect to person. Each bidder shall be bound to his bid, and the damage resulting from a second sale shall fall back on him."

Benj. Bonawitz, John Bonewitz, Administrators.⁴³

The sale moved 161 lots the first day and 121 the second. Members of the Bonawitz family bought nearly half of the items sold, primarily farming tools, a number of the books, household furniture, kitchen utensils and related sundry items. Henry Eckler bought—a spinning wheel, 3 gun stocks, 2 buckets, a vise, shears to cut iron, 1 lot iron, 1 bullet extractor, 2 tin plates, old iron, 1 draw knife, 1 double trigger, two pommice stones, 1 piece steel, 1 kettle with

period. The signed example is number 78 in Kindig's *'Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age'*.⁴⁶ It is the earliest signed Bonewitz [I B] this author is aware of.

There are close to 30 rifles in collections across the country identified as the work of John Bonewitz. A good number have the initials I B along with a rampant lion [Cover Photo] stamped near the breech on the oblique barrel flat opposite the lock. One is signed John Bonewitz in script with the patch box engraved Wommelsdorf Town.⁴⁷ There are another 5 or 6 rifles that could have been made by Bonewitz as they exhibit the signature characteristics he established early and consistently used throughout his career. A signature characteristic is a basic pattern, hardware mold, engraving style or carving style that allows immediate recognition of a gunsmiths work or, at the least, heads the viewer in the right direction. The characteristics may not be unique to the gunsmith but when used in combination help identify his work. This study results from the hands on examination of 18 Bonewitz rifles and the close-up photo study of another five [23]. In addition, five rifles in the 'could be' category have been handled and examined as well. I am certain time will produce more examples as the interest in John Bonewitz becomes more wide spread.

The signature characteristics John Bonewitz used consistently on the rifles examined include the following:

Metal Work

- A specific wedding band molding found at the end of the butt plate extension. Even though the curve in the butt plate profile change thru the years this molding remained

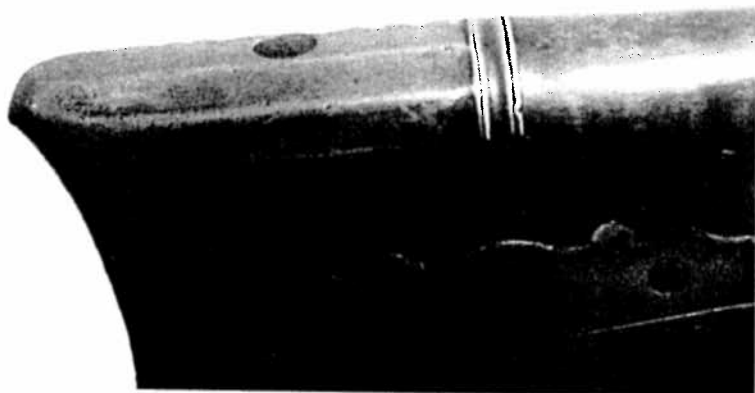


Exhibit H

constant. [Exhibit H]

- A full hinge across the patch box. [Exhibit I] Although not uncommon, the gunsmiths in the two closest schools, Lebanon and Reading, generally used a partial hinge.
- Two rivets used to secure the patch box release stud to the underside of the cover combined with the cover release button located in the middle of the butt plate. [Exhibit J]
- The use of 3 raised platforms, in the design of 1/2 octagon, molded in the trigger guard. [Exhibit K]

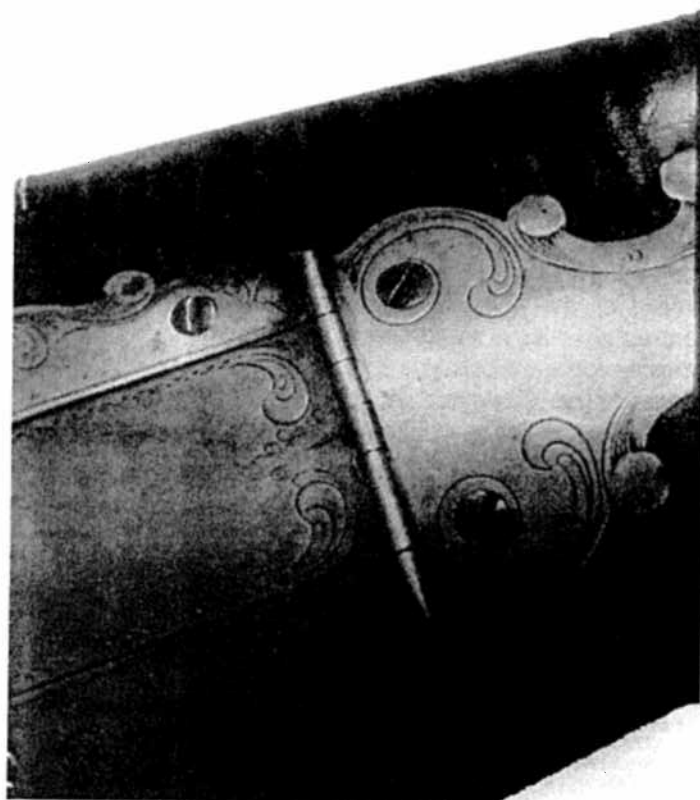


Exhibit I

- This same 1/2 octagon molding used on the rear ramrod pipe extension. [Exhibit L]
- A flat ledge and raised molding at the forward lock bolt on the beveled side plate. [Exhibit M]

Carving Style

- Beautiful carving forward of the patch box finial that kept the same basic theme throughout with the addition of a v shaped gouge added early on. [Exhibit N]



Exhibit J

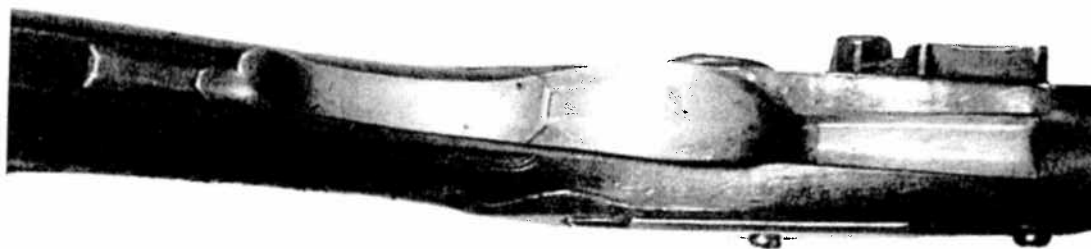


Exhibit K

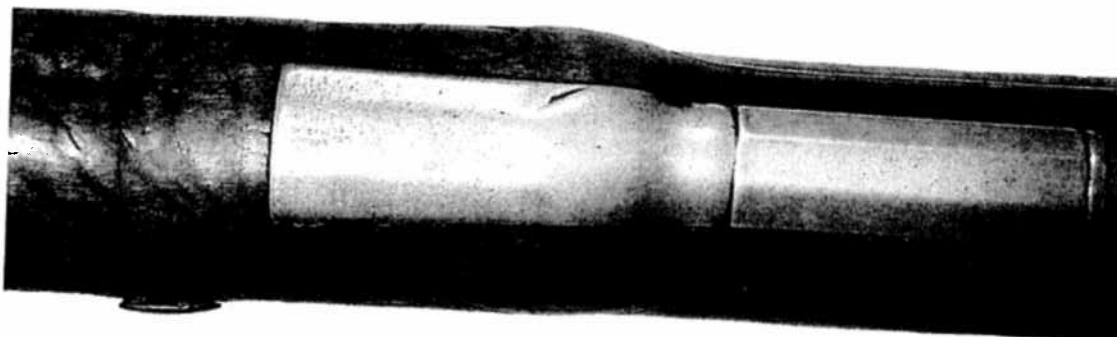


Exhibit L

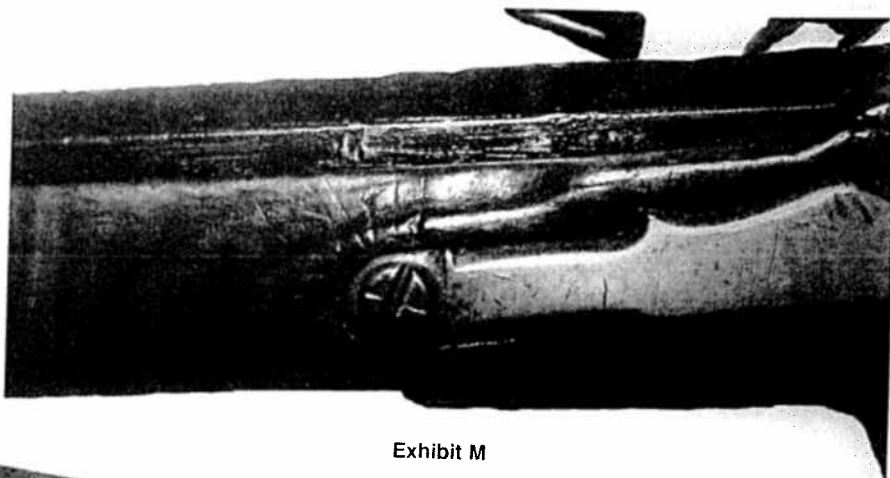


Exhibit M

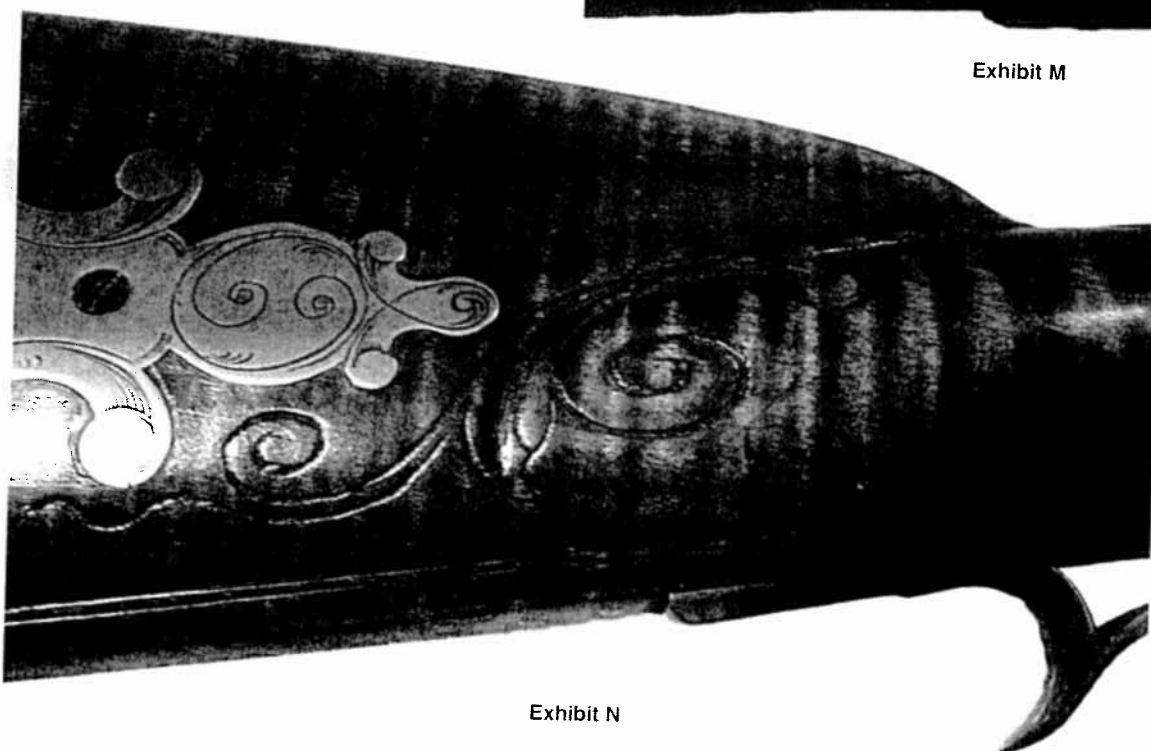


Exhibit N

- An interesting scallop design carved under the cheek rest. This design varied in number from five to ten scallops and some are not as deep as others but the theme is always the same. [Exhibit O]
- A well executed and consistent raised carving design forward of the cheek rest. [Exhibit P]
- Raised carving behind the cheek rest unique to John Bonewitz. The basic design is consistent and makes up 85% of the pattern. Each rifle has minor additions and changes that make each carving unique but identifiable as Bonewitz. [Exhibit Q]
- The sweeping feather or leaf carving found at the barrel tang and rear ram rod pipe [Exhibit R] is the signature design found most often, however, there

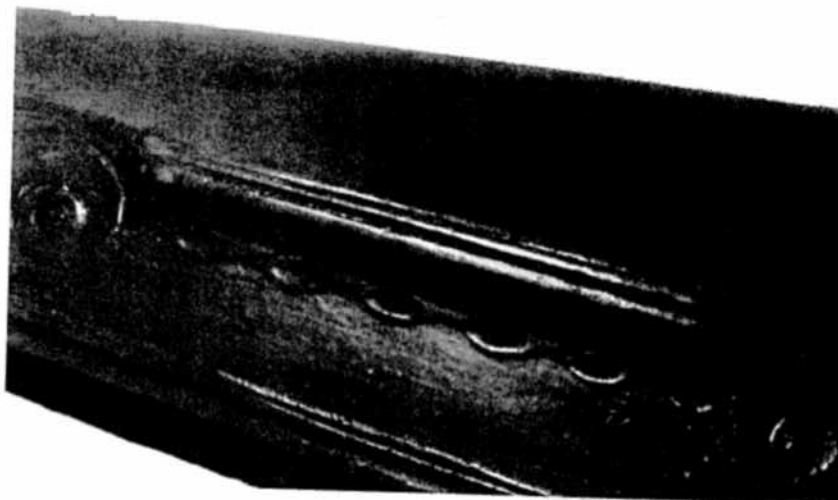


Exhibit O

- Flame or Emerging Flower. [Exhibit V]—This design is most often associated with Leonard Reedy, however, Bonewitz used it on 3 of the 23 rifles examined. We will never know who came up with the idea but Reedy, Bonewitz and Fichthorn Jr. all used this pattern.

During the time frame Bonewitz was developing his style, variations of his butt plate extension molding were in use in Lancaster, York and Reading, although none are exactly the same. The four raised 1/2 oct. platforms found on the trigger guard [3] and rear ram rod pipe [1] have been seen on a Lancaster and York

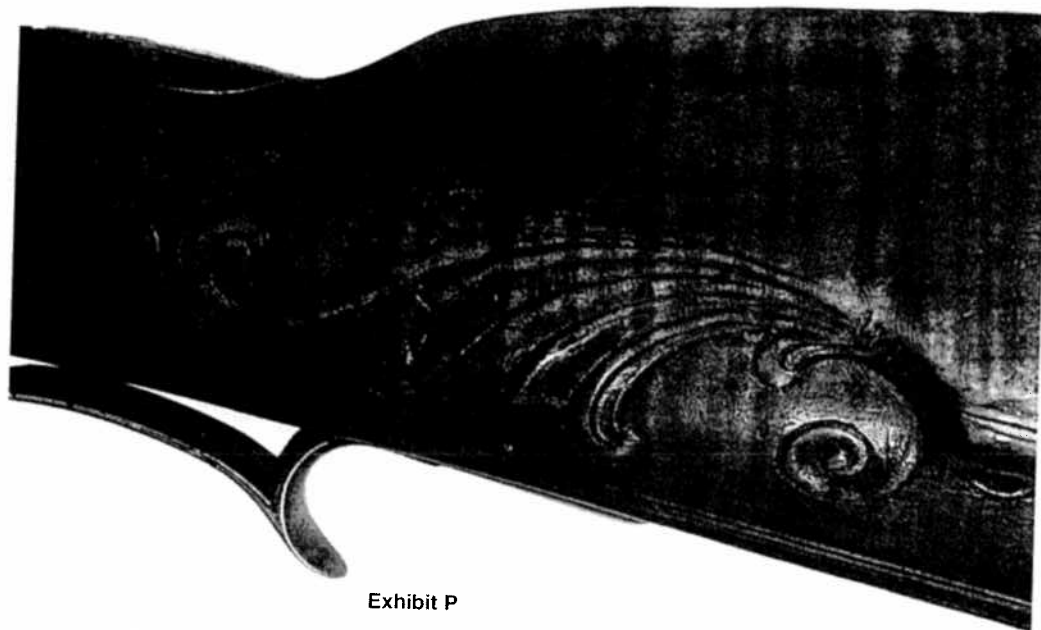


Exhibit P

are at least 6 early rifles with a design at the rear pipe more like that found on early Reading rifles and the tang of an early Wm. Antes rifle.

- Early rifles have a one or two line address from the toe of the butt to the trigger guard. These lines evolved into a distinct molded edge on later rifles. [Exhibit S]

Patch Box Design

- Devil humiliated by Mary, Mad Rooster or Bird Creature. [Exhibit T]—The first description of this design is by far the most interesting and the subject of an ancient old world legend. This design is found on most of Bonewitz's earliest rifles.
- Sophia⁴⁸ or Snowman. [Exhibit U]—Once again, the first description is far and away the best. This is the pattern most often used by John Bonewitz during his lengthy career.

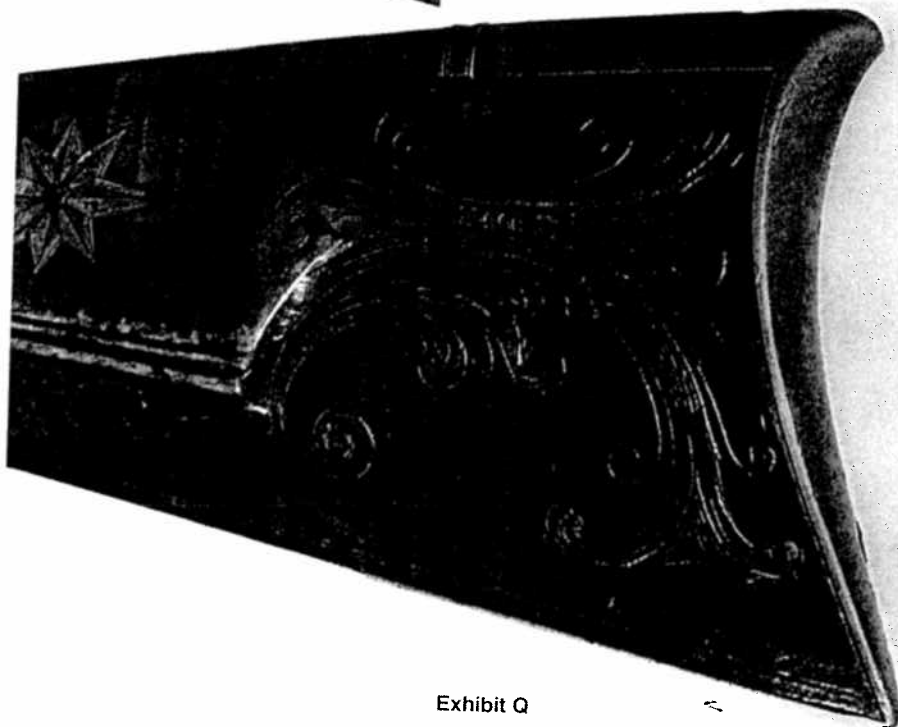


Exhibit Q

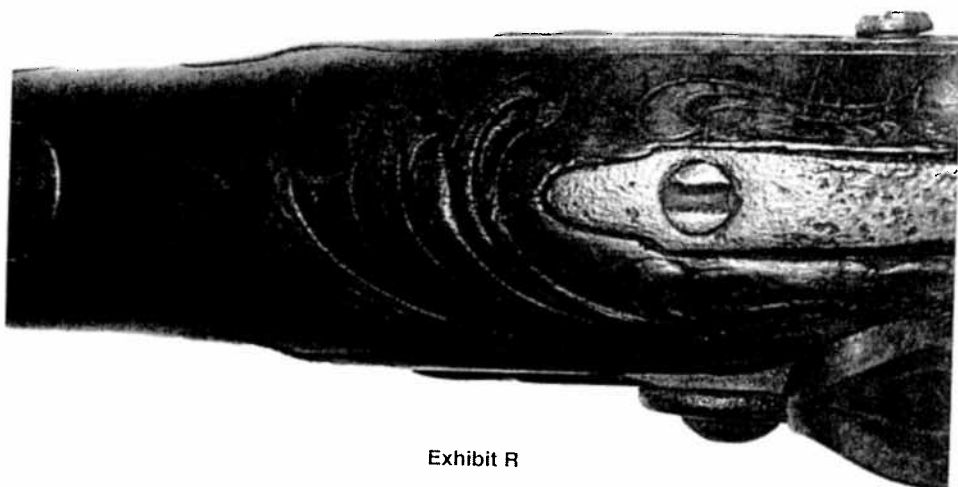


Exhibit R

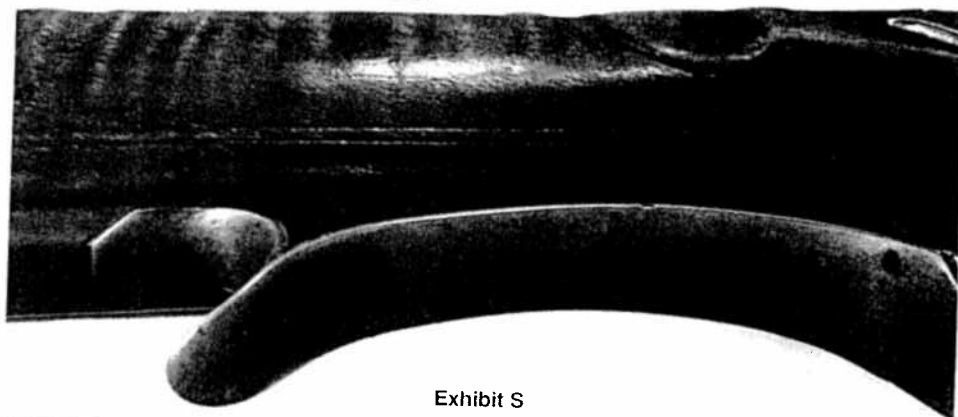


Exhibit S

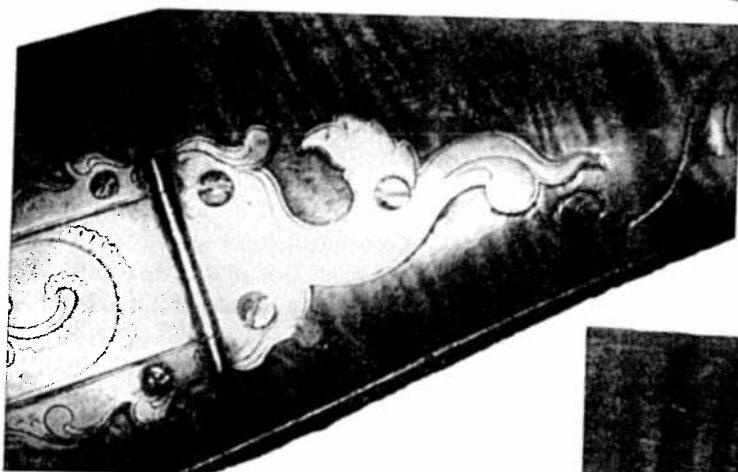


Exhibit T





Exhibit V

rifle but neither example appears to pre-date Bonewitz. And the side plate design in use in Reading is a close variation of the one used early on by Bonewitz and throughout his career. The full patch box hinge used by Bonewitz was commonly found in both Lancaster and York but not in Reading and Lebanon the two gunsmithing schools closest to Womelsdorf. Bonewitz' use of the patch box cover release button centered on the butt plate may have come from rifles he saw by J.P. Beck or be an old concept from the wooden patch box cover. The two rivet catch release may be his own innovation although one rifle attributed to the Welshans family using this reinforced design does exist. This rifle, however, does not appear to pre-date Bonewitz' earliest use of this technique. The two patch designs most commonly associated with Bonewitz are either his originals or those of his unknown master.

Bonewitz's raised carving behind the cheek rest seems to favor the early Christian Springs and Lancaster makers and with the exception of the Reading and Wm. Antes style carving found at the rear ram pipe on his earliest rifles all else appears to be his original well executed designs.

Keep in mind, Bonewitz established the majority of his signature characteristics early in his career. With so many similarities to each of the schools that existed in his development years [1770-1779] you start to wonder how all this came about. There is no shortage of speculative answers but the three strongest possibilities generally agreed on by knowledgeable collectors and students are as follows;

- The master gunsmith who taught John Bonewitz the trade was a highly skilled craftsman from the old world who had a direct influence on many gunsmiths of the area.

- John Bonewitz traveled from school to school as an apprentice or journeyman working for several different masters, taking the best of what he learned to develop his own style.
- The gunshop in which John Bonewitz apprenticed and or worked as a journeyman had a lively business of repair and refurbishing of other makers work. This could have occurred during the early years of the Revolution when all types of weapons were prepared for use against the British.

This last scenario explains a lot of things. As a journeyman or apprentice working under the restrictions and edicts set forth by the Committee of Safety Bonewitz would have seen a lot of different styles, patterns and examples of the early makers work. Even more so if he actually worked in each school as suggested in the second example. If he took the best of what he saw it would lead to the type of rifle he produced; a little

Christian Springs, a little Lancaster, a little York, a little Reading and a lot of original Bonewitz.

Regardless of where John Bonewitz learned his skills he learned them well. Many consider Bonewitz among the best and his work fits nicely in the category of Pennsylvania rifles Joe Kindig III calls "quite possibly our only native American art form."⁴⁹

When used all together the Bonewitz signature characteristics are pretty much limited to him and those to whom he taught the trade. Namely Leonard Reedy and Andrew Fichthorn Jr. A strong argument can be made that John Bonewitz developed a distinct school of gunsmithing in Womelsdorf and someday his work and that of his apprentices may be recognized as such.

Henry I Bishop, August 7, 2002

REFERENCE MATERIAL

- Artistic Ingredients of the Longrifle*, Joe Kindig III, published 1989
- Long Rifles of North Carolina*, John Bivins Jr., published 1968
- Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*, Joe Kindig Jr., published 1960
- Kentucky Rifles & Pistols 1750-1850*, James R. Johnston, published 1976
- The Kentucky Rifle, A True American Heritage in Pictures*, KRA, published 1967
- The Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle*, Henry Kauffman, published 1960
- The Kentucky Rifle*, Capt. John G.W. Dillin, published 1924
- The Hub of the Tulpehocken*, Earl Ibach, published 1977
- History of Pine Grove*, Judge George B. Haas, published 1935

The Book of Bonewitz, Private work of several Bonewitz family members, 1963 thru 1968

Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania 1895, State Printer of Penna., 1896

K R A bulletins: Vol.20, No.3, Vol.25, No.3, Vol.28, No.1

Numerous Documents From: Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.; Pine Grove Historical Society, Pine Grove, Pa.; Schuylkill County Historical Society, Pottsville, Pa.; Berks County Historical Society, Reading, Pa.; Tulpehocken Settlement Historical Society, Womelsdorf, Pa.; Berks County Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans Court, Reading, Pa.; Schuylkill County Court House, Archives Section, Pottsville, Pa.

Note: Specific location of any document of interest available from author.

Special thanks to Dan Eicker and KRA members Rudy Gleichman, Ron Gabel and Tim Lubenesky and those collectors who graciously allowed me to review their Bonewitz rifles.

NOTES

1. A 25 to 30 year period of time following the American Revolution. Joe Kindig, Jr. first used this term in his famous book *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*, [Wilmington, Del.: George N. Hyatt, 1960]
2. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*. Private publication with numerous contributors. [1960's], p.13.
3. Ibid. p. 13
4. Richard Heess, *Henry Eckler, Gunsmith, of Pine Grove Township 1791 to 1862*. KRA Bulletin, Vol.25, No.3. [Spring 1999]
5. Bureau of the census. Pennsylvania 1810. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa. Reedy's name is spelled Lennert Rudy by the census taker.
6. *Account of Sales at the Public Vendue of John Bonawitz's, Pinegrove Twp., Oct., 1828*. Schuylkill County Historical Society. Vol. 2, No. 2, [1910], p.168-176
7. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*, p.1.
8. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document. Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans' Court, Berks County, Pennsylvania.
9. Bureau of the census. Pennsylvania 1800. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
10. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*, p.1.
11. Berks County Deed Book, Vol. A2, p. 170.
12. Berks County Tax Records, 1758, Heidelberg Township. Microfilm roll 520. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
13. This information has been gathered from several sources in the Pennsylvania State Archives and a number of books concerning the early days of the region. [see 14]
14. There are several early maps of this region located in the Pennsylvania State Archives and the Pennsylvania Museum in Harrisburg. A Map entitled *Philadelphia, Printed by James Nevil, 1770* is a good example. Earl Ibach published a book on the region in 1977 called *The Hub of the Tulpehocken* it contains a good deal of information on the development of Womelsdorf and the Tulpehocken valley.
15. *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*. Vol. 1, [Clarence M. Busch, State Printer of Pennsylvania, 1896] The Indian Forts of The Blue Mountains, by H.M.M. Richards
16. Adam Bonnowitz folder. Original Document Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans Court, Berks County, Pennsylvania.
17. Adam Bonnowitz folder. Original Document
18. Adam Bonnowitz folder. Original Document
19. Berks County Tax Records, 1779, Heidelberg Township, Berks County Historical Society, microfilm dept.
20. Berks County Deed Book Vol.16, p.503. This Indenture is dated 4/11/1796 and records the sale of 92 acres and 131 perches to George Ege Esquire by Jacob Bonewitz. The Indenture also documents the April 23rd, 1783 transfer of 186 acres and 88 perches to Jacob from his brothers, John and George and his sister Catharine. The Original Document was examined after the microfilm proved difficult to read.
21. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document
22. Berks County Tax Records, 1780, Heidelberg Township. Microfilm roll 520. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
23. John Bivens Jr. in his book *Longrifles of North Carolina* published by George Shumway in 1968 provides a good example of N.C.'s attempt to gather guns from the locals on pg.15. The entire chapter on Committee of Safety Gunsmiths is a great source of understanding.
24. The original document from the Continental Congress initiating this action in November, 1775 and various local Committee of Safety documents following up on the resolution exist. *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789* edited by Worthington C. Ford, 1904-1909, references the original resolution in volume III. The Lancaster Historical Society has a similar document dated Nov. 13, 1775 pertaining to Lancaster County and specific county gunsmiths. John Bivens Jr. found North Carolinas order dated Nov.28, 1775 in *The Colonia Records of North Carolina*, vol.10, p. 338.
25. Pennsylvania State Archives—Series VI, Vol. II, p. 628, transcribed from the original. Microfilm of the original on roll with numerous Misc. entries. The original is available by special request only.
26. The Tulpehocken Historical Society has a set of deeds for lot 42 in Womelsdorf. These deeds record the ownership of lot 42 from 1739 until 1988. A remarkable history of one piece of land!!
27. The Stouch Tavern was the second public house of note in the pre-revolutionary settlement of Womelsdorf, and the original structure may have been built during the 1730's. Conrad Stouch purchased the property from Jacob Seltzer in 1785. The tavern served as the hub for the Stouch-Calder Stagecoach lines for nearly a century.
28. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*, p.13
29. Pennsylvania State Archives, Series VI, Vol. VIII, p.1022
30. Ibid, p.873
31. Ibid, p.978
32. *HISTORY of PINE GROVE*, Judge George B. Haas, First printing 1935, Chapter IV and other chapters related to the history of Pine Grove Township from the 1750's until 1900.
33. Ibid

34. Ibid

35. This article in the 1910 Schuylkill County Historical Society publication is a comparison to the value of John Bonewitz's estate in 1828 to that of Henry Boyer who died 71 years earlier in 1757. The article is signed D.G.L. At present we do not know who this is.

36. This survey conducted by Ross, Keyser and Moraux in 1999 is kept in the Pine Grove Historical Society files and available for public review.

37. *HISTORY of PINE GROVE*, Haas, chapter XXVIII. The Lutheran Church archives also contain this information.

38. Ibid.

39. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document

40. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document

41. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document

42. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document

43. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document

44. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document

45. There are several documents that exist confirming a gunsmith apprentice ended his obligation to his master at age 21. Without definite proof of each individual situation, however, the conclusion is somewhat vague. This assumption is based on the writings of the aforementioned authors and at least gives us a time frame to get close to reasonable dates of initial activity + or - a couple of years.

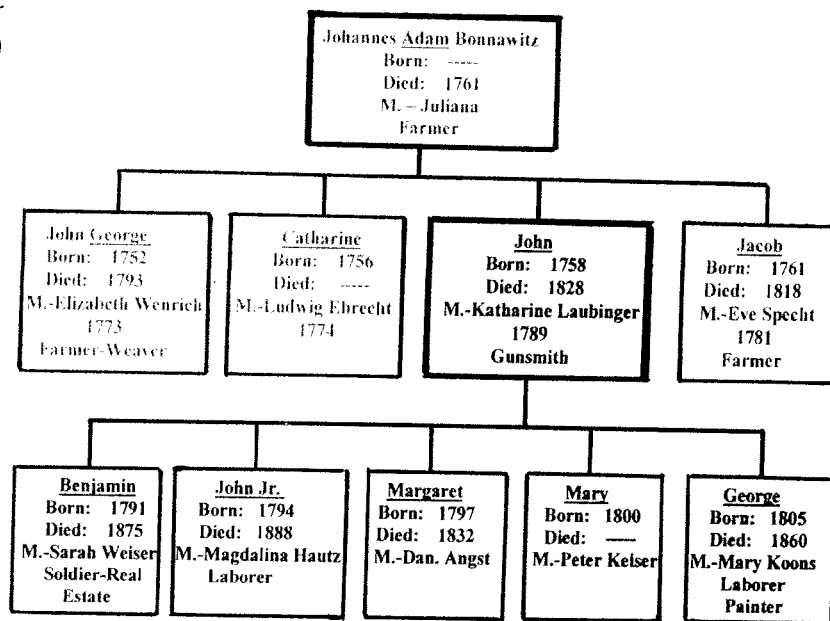
46. *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden*

Age, Joe Kindig Jr., 1960, George N. Hyatt Publisher, Wilmington Del., No. 78, p.209.

47. Ibid. No.80, p.211. Note: There are several other Bonewitz patch box covers engraved Womelsdorf or a similar variation known to the author.

48. KRA bulletin Vol.20, No.3. Lorentz Kafka.

49. *Artistic Ingredients of the Longrifle*, Joe Kindig III, 1989, George Shumway Publisher, York, Pa., p.101.



Welcome New Members

The following candidates for membership were listed in a previous newsletter. No adverse comments having been received from the membership-at-large, they have been invited, and have accepted our invitation to join. We extend our congratulations and a hearty welcome to these, our new KRA members.

Candidate	State
Thomas A. Foster	New Jersey
David R. Geiger	Pennsylvania
John Grata	Maryland
Bruce Jakum	Pennsylvania
Eric Kettenburg	Pennsylvania
Christopher Jon Laubach	Pennsylvania
Gerald Otterbein	Pennsylvania
Allen Samuels	Arizona
Douglas Smith	Ontario, Canada
Loring Smith	Virginia
Henry A. Truslow	Pennsylvania
Kerry K. Wetterstrom	Pennsylvania

Prospective New Members

In accordance with our membership requirements, names of prospective members must be circulated via the newsletter to the membership-at-large for comments.

If no adverse comment is received within 30 days after their circulation, the secretary will automatically send the candidates an invitation to join our association.

Potential members who have been invited to join shall have 30 days to accept, after which time the invitation will be considered withdrawn.

I am pleased to list the following new candidates for membership along with the names of their sponsors.

Candidate	Sponsor
David Y. Cook	William A. Irons
Lyle Gage Jr.	James R. Melchor
Patrick E. Hallam	Thomas E. Ames
Fred J. Miller	Paul N. Allison Jr.
Lori A. Muhlenberg	Joseph R. Flemish Jr.