

## **FIREARM INFORMATION SHEET**

**COLLECTION NUMBER:** 9130

**TYPE:** Kentucky Rifle

**IGNITION SYSTEM:** Percussion

**LOCK MARKINGS/DECORATIONS:** Lock signed "JA", in script. Lock made by John Armstrong.

**DATE OF MANUFACTURE:** November, 1936 (signed and dated by John Armstrong on the wood of the butt under the butt plate).

**PLACE OF MANUFACTURE:** Emmitsburg, Maryland

**MAKER:** John Armstrong

**LENGTH OVERALL:** 59 inches

**BARREL LENGTH:** 42 1/2 inches

**CALIBER:** .42

**WOOD TYPE:** Curly Maple

**MOUNTINGS:** Brass with silver oval on cheekpiece, at wrist and silver hearts on beaver tails. Inside of trigger guard marked "JA", cast into the metal.

**BARREL MARKINGS/DECORATION:** Inlaid brass plate engraved with "John Armstrong", in script. This is a particularly slender and light weight rifle.

**STOCK MARKINGS/DECORATION:** Relief carved in the best John Armstrong manner including ruffle in front of lock panel on both sides.

**REPAIRS/RESTORATION:** None

**HISTORICAL/ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE:** The only **dated** John Armstrong rifle and one of a handful of dated Kentucky rifles by any maker.

**PROVENANCE:** Ex-Collection Albert M. Sullivan, Jr. - who acquired it from an antique dealer in Baltimore, Maryland.

James Milton Collection, Rancho Santa Fe, California

**PUBLICATIONS:** Pictured in "Arms Makers of Maryland" by Daniel D. Hartzler, George Shumway Publisher, page 46.

Pictured in KRA Newsletter, Volume III, No. 2, "John Armstrong of Emmitsburg & His Rifles", page 11.

**COST:**

**ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE AND DATE:**



## ITEM FOR SALE

Al Sullivan, Jr. is offering for sale his percussion "John Armstrong" rifle. For those of you not familiar with the piece, it is pictured on page 58 of Jim Johnstons book **Kentucky Rifles and Pistols 1750-1850** and as #53 on page 43 of Roy Chanders **Patchbox Book**.

The rifle is signed and dated on the wood in ink and script under the buttplate "John Armstrong November 1838".

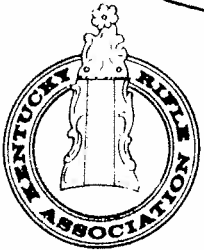
Phone Al at (home) 805-498-8473 or (office) 213-869-2211 if interested in details.

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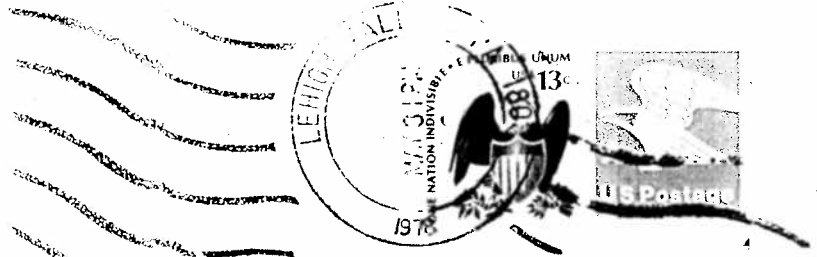
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# KRA

THE KENTUCKY RIFLE ASSOCIATION

158 W. Unionville St.  
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RICHARD H. ZESCHKE  
941 ESCARPMENT DRIVE  
LEWISTON, N.Y.

14092

*I secondarily  
noticed this on the  
back of the Spring 1978  
issue!!!*

**FIRST CLASS**

# John Armstrong of Emmitsburg & His Rifles

*by Albert Sullivan, Sr., KRA*

*Thanks are again due KRA's past president Al Sullivan, Sr. The following article, printed in its entirety, was written by Al at the request of the Town of Emmitsburg and Mt. St. Mary's College, who were jointly preparing a salute to the Bicentennial.*

*Al agreed to do the article on the condition that after it appeared in their book, it could be published in the KRA Newsletter, and thereafter became the property of the KRA.*

*It is well to remember that the article was written to please a community in which Armstrong lived, not primarily for Kentucky Rifle Collectors.*

*The Epilogue was written after the book was published. The information therein was not available before that time to the author.*

*We think the article will be of interest to our membership.*

The town of Emmitsburg, in the State of Maryland, is cozily nestled at the foot of the Catoctin Mountain, just a few miles north of the beautiful Cunningham Falls.

It presents to the world, in its scenic setting, a calm and peaceful image. Its quiet serenity seems an integral part of the town's make-up, and suggests that to change this mood would be difficult.

Yet this tranquil dignity was abruptly shattered one Sunday last summer, as 35,000 visitors descended upon the startled little city.

They had come to see the Shrine of Mother Seton, who had that very day, been canonized in far away Rome, and had become America's first and only native-born Saint.

Elizabeth Ann Seton had wrought her magic mostly in Emmitsburg, and these visitors - pilgrims if you wish, probably felt they were achieving a sort of celestial "first-day cover" by visiting her work bench on the same day on which she was canonized.

Elizabeth Ann had focused the whole world's attention on Emmitsburg - but it is probable that only a small percentage of all the visitors who had jammed the highways leading into Emmitsburg on that Sunday, realized that the little mountain town they were visiting was the home of another famous citizen - one whose fame has spread not throughout the world, as Mother Seton's, but certainly throughout most of America.

John Armstrong, Maryland's finest and perhaps America's finest antique gunsmith, also lived and worked in Emmitsburg.

So, in its early days, Emmitsburg had a famous son, as well as a famous daughter.

And at the same time.

John was born in 1772 - Elizabeth in 1773 - and there are other interesting parallels in the lives of these two outstanding Emmitsburg residents.

As shown, they were just about the same age.

Secondly, they began their Emmitsburg careers at just about the same time - John in 1808, at least as far as documentation shows, and Elizabeth in 1809.

Then, they were practically neighbors in that they each lived in a relatively small social community.

Also, they were each beginning new enterprises at almost the same time.

Again, they were each outstanding personalities - each tops in their fields. They almost had to know each other, and knowing each other, they probably were friends.

Speculation, the friendship part, but at least with a solid foundation for support.

Then there was the fact that of the three daughters of the Armstrongs, one was named Elizabeth and one was named Ann.

Was this pure coincidence? Or was it because of respect and admiration for Mother Seton by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong?

One more thing. Earlier in her career, Elizabeth Ann Seton opened a school for girls in the then frontier-like community, where such schools must have been rare.

The writer sometimes wonders where the Armstrong girls went to school.

Speculation or not, it is an interesting thought for an Armstrong admirer to feel that his pet gunsmith had a Saint for a friend. This certainly has to be unique.

But enough of Saint and Sinner.

Researchers have spent many hours delving for information about John Armstrong. In general, the results have been disappointing, although more has been learned about him in the last five or six years, then ever before. One basic thing that never had been documented was his birth date - until last year.

A document, now a happy part of the author's Armstrong collection, was recently discovered among some old papers at a farm, that establishes his exact birth date. This is a legal paper, part of a court record, in which John Armstrong made a deposition before a magistrate, to verify the age of one Samuel Loudon.

In the process, he tells the magistrate his birth date.

The outside of the document, when folded, states: ►

Opened, the document states: ▼

John Armstrong  
Deposition  
S. Loudon  
1828

N<sup>o</sup> 2 Fred County Court  
On the 22<sup>d</sup> day of August 1828  
Personally appeared John Armstrong before me the Sub Judge &  
Justice of the Peace in and for Fred County aforesaid - and made  
the following Oath and declarations - depose & sayeth that he  
is perfectly well acquainted - with a certain Samuel Loudon a  
Citizen of Liberty Township Adams County D<sup>c</sup> - that he  
does think to the best of his Opinion that the said Samuel  
Loudon was born in the year 1776 - or before that year - and that  
he has good reason for forming ~~that~~ that Opinion respecting the  
Age of the said Samuel Loudon - they being boys together - but  
the said deponent - being somewhat the eldest - being born in  
the year 1772 the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September - therefore does make  
Oath and declare that the said Samuel Loudon is at least  
fifty two years of age - and further sayeth not -

Sworn before

William Henry

So here is John himself giving his birth date as September 5, 1772, to a Justice of the Peace in Frederick County, in August of 1828. This piece fits the puzzle precisely, and gives us a firm starting date. It also places him in Frederick County in 1828. But most of the pieces of the puzzle are still missing.

He does not, for instance, say **where** he was born. But he does give us a hint. He says he was a "boy together" with Samuel Loudon and he names Sam as a citizen of Liberty Township. The writer has not yet researched the exact location of Liberty Township, but feels it will be in the lower middle or lower western part of Adams County, Pennsylvania. This suggests that he was born there - and that, in turn, fits another slot in the puzzle, at least in the writer's mind.

If Armstrong was born in Liberty Township, it would mean he would have been nearer to Hanover, Pennsylvania, than if, for instance, he had been born in Emmitsburg, Maryland. And it is important to the writer's mental equanimity that he should be close to Hanover during his boyhood. The writer, and especially the writer's son (I dare not withhold this credit) have long felt that John Armstrong was apprenticed to and learned his gunsmithing from George Schroyer of Hanover.

There are at least five valid reasons for this belief.

Schroyer, one of America's oldest documented gunsmiths, and one of the truly great ones, used five different features in his guns, some of them frequently, some infrequently, which appear in Armstrong's rifles. And significantly, of two of them used frequently by Schroyer, Armstrong used one **all** the time and the second most of the time.

Since this is being prepared not entirely for antique gun buffs, the nature of the features will not be elaborated upon. Anyone interested further may consult the writer for additional information.

So we do not believe that Armstrong was born in Emmitsburg. We think he moved there about 1793. This would be after becoming an apprentice to Schroyer in 1786, at age 14, and completing his training seven years later in 1793. He would then have become a "journeyman" and the name itself suggests that he moved away from his master and set up shop on his own - almost certainly in Emmitsburg.

Full apprenticeships in those days were normally for seven years, but not all. Some were for five years and some for only three.

If John's tenure was shorter than seven years, then he probably moved to Emmitsburg that much earlier.

One thing is certain - some of his rifles are 18th century. The writer is often asked - "If Armstrong was born when you think he was (1770 - I had thought), then where are his 18th century rifles?" The answer (clearer now that his birth date is pin-pointed) is that **any** of his flint-lock rifles could be 18th century. We have no way of telling which were

made first. We only know of four that were made as original percussions. The point is that John developed a style early in his career - in the late 18th century that pleased him - and pleased his customers, and he did not change that basic design with the passage of time.

**Neither did Rolls Royce!**

This is sometimes charged as a detraction against Armstrong, but the writer (admittedly biased) feels this to be an attraction, rather than a detraction.

If one spends all the money necessary to buy a Rolls Royce - or an Armstrong - one wants it, at first glance to look like a Rolls Royce - or an Armstrong.

Incidentally, that style pleases today's collectors too!

If you don't think so - try to buy one of his rifles.

But let's get back to origins. John's father, originally from England, was also named John, and apparently settled at first in the Cumberland Valley section of Pennsylvania, moving his family later (the writer hopes to uncover) to somewhere in Liberty Township. We speculate that John, Jr. could have been born there. This could fit in with John "being boys together" with his friend Sam Loudon, and would place him in close proximity to George Schroyer in Hanover. Schroyer was a generation older than Armstrong. He appears in the court records, listed as a gunsmith, as early as 1767. (But not, at that time, in Hanover)

Schroyer's age, Armstrong's nearness to him at the age boys normally began apprenticeship (John was 14 in 1786 and Schroyer was settled in Hanover at that time) and Armstrong's consistent use later of five of Schroyer's details, one of which is very conclusive, all suggest that John learned his trade from Schroyer.

John (Junior) married a Miss James. They had seven children - four sons, William, Robert, Samuel and James - and three daughters, Elizabeth, Ann and Jane.

The court records show that John bought lots 1 and 2 in the Emmitsburg plat in 1808. These are the first of a relatively long series of real estate transactions that are recorded to John.

The presumption of the writer is that Armstrong came to Emmitsburg about 1793, set himself up in the gunsmith business and by 1808 was able to buy some property, probably for a house, as well as a business and permanently established his roots. It is known that he was still in Emmitsburg as late as 1841.

Armstrong must have made a success of his business, because he enjoyed a long period of production. We are not sure just when he started but, as stated earlier, it must have been around 1793. We do know from statements made by his last apprentice, Nathaniel Rowe, that he was still in the gunsmithing business in Emmitsburg in 1840. Since he drops from sight in 1841, it seems safe to assume that his production span was from 1793 to 1840. Forty-seven years. Time enough to make a great many rifles.

The question naturally arises - and is often asked - "How many rifles did he make?"

A good question! One that cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. We can only guess. But as more is learned about the man, and about some of the factors that affect production, the guessing becomes a little easier - or rather, a little less difficult. For instance, research by Mr. Daniel Hartzler of New Windsor, Maryland, has revealed that Armstrong had a long string of apprentices. A master worker who might also be a good administrator and teacher, working with two apprentices, could naturally produce considerably more than the master working by himself. It is reasonable to suppose that Armstrong normally employed two apprentices. This is, of course, a factor which would speed-up production. But with Armstrong, there were three important factors which definitely slowed production down - and slowed it down substantially. One of these factors we are positive was always present. We are less certain of the other two, but one or both of them could also have always been present.

We are sure, for instance, that Armstrong always made his own locks. This is a slow and tedious process and would add to a rifle's completion time. Most gunsmiths of that period bought their locks from lock manufacturers. They

were cheaper and increased production. This saved the gunsmith money in two ways. Then, these locks were probably better than the average gunsmith could make himself.

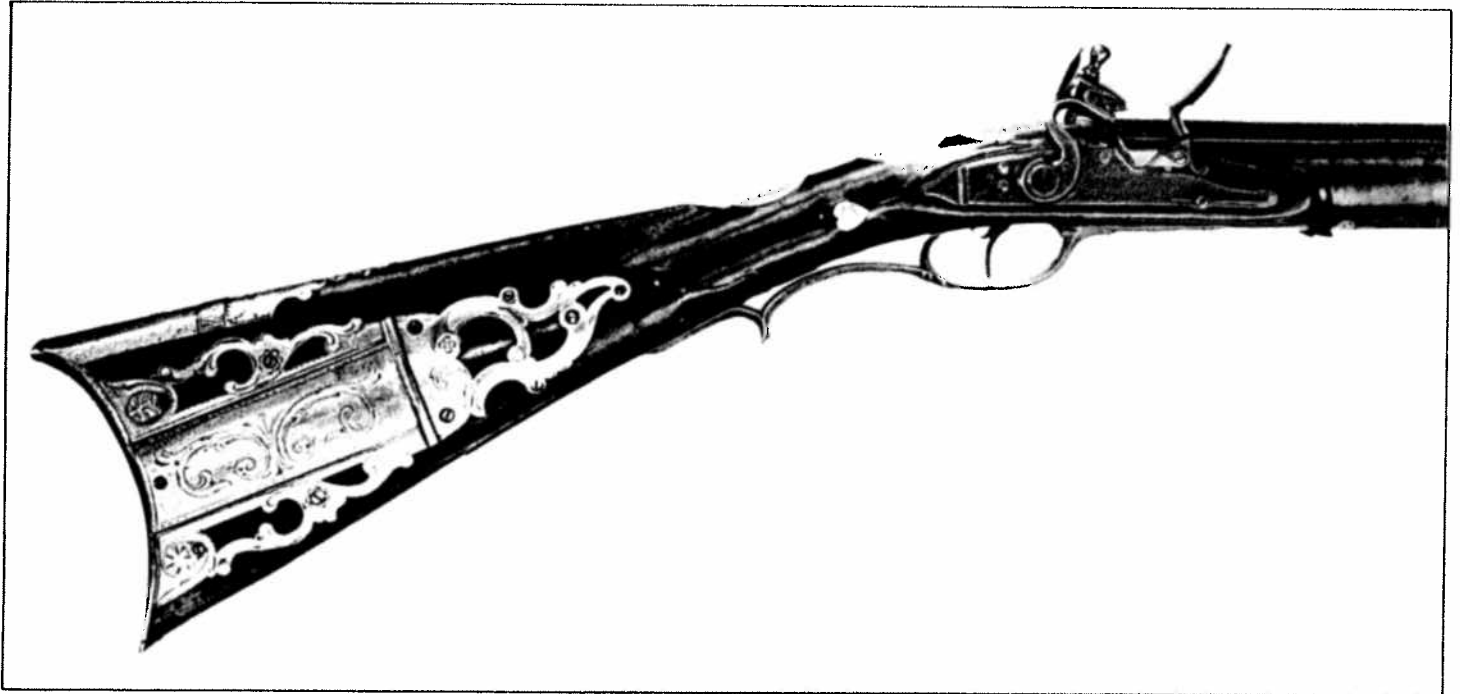
But none of these suited Armstrong. Not John Armstrong, the perfectionist! The store-bought locks were not good enough to go on his excellent products, so he made his own locks. Locks of a quality compatible with the high quality of everything else on his truly excellent rifles.

Love that man!

The locks he made are slender, graceful and beautifully proportioned. They blend perfectly into the architectural balance of the gun. It is easy to see why he would not be satisfied with anything less. Everything he did had to come up to the standards he carried in his head and in his heart, and these standards were at summit level.

In addition to their beauty, the locks functioned efficiently. The springs of the Armstrong locks in the Sullivan collection, are as crisp and sharp today as they were when they were made 150 odd years ago.

We should begin here to understand some of the reasons Armstrong is so highly regarded by collectors, and why his rifles are so eagerly sought after.



## THE "SILVER" ARMSTRONG

John Armstrong's masterpiece.

This rifle has thirteen attractive features, none of which have ever appeared on any other Armstrong.

The gun is thought to have been made for a wealthy iron-monger from the Carlisle area, who was reputed to have been related to Armstrong by marriage.

At the risk of boring our non-Armstrong buffs, we must describe one of the thirteen features, since it tells a lot about Armstrong's nature, and illustrates one of the reasons collectors regard him and his rifles so highly.

The patch box release is "concealed" in the upper patch box plate - that is, it is made to look like the matching silver inlay on the bottom plate. This bottom inlay is solid. The one on the top when depressed, releases the latch which secures the patch box lid. In order to make this release work smoothly, Armstrong made a complex arrangement on the under side of the upper patch box plate, consisting of a brass cylinder, a piston, a stop and a spring. As a result, the release has a smooth positive action.

This arrangement is not present on any other Armstrong rifle. In fact, I have never known it to be on any other Kentucky rifle.

But the crowning touch is that the workmanship, which is entirely unseen, and would only be known by another gunsmith who might be working on the gun (which is how it was discovered), is just as meticulously made and beautifully crafted as any of the parts that are visible.

Incidentally, there is a feeling, a very sensible one, in the Kentucky rifle fraternity, that the absence of the original lock in a Kentucky rifle is not too important. This is because the lock was almost never made by the gunsmith and so did not represent his handiwork. Also, locks were expendable. They wore out and they were replaced, so they seldom related to the gunsmith who made the rifle.

But this does not hold with Armstrong. Because he made and signed his own locks, and because they were so special and were so appropriate to his guns, this absence of an Armstrong lock in an Armstrong rifle is a very serious flaw.

So hand-made locks slow production.

The other two factors that would seriously affect the gunsmith's out-put are the barrel, if self-made, and the brass castings.

There were a number of barrelsmiths who did nothing but make barrels for use by various gunsmiths. Most craftsmen of that period purchased and used such barrels.

But not Armstrong!

The writer believes he made his own barrels. This would, of course, have limited his production. But Armstrong was more interested in perfection than he was in production. This is attested by the fact that he never made a poor rifle. Some of the other rifle-makers who could rival him for the top-spot, did make rifles of lesser quality - adjusted, no doubt, to suit what the customer could afford to pay. But not our hero. He never removed the suit of shining armor - never got down off the white horse.

Of the twenty-eight surviving Armstrong rifles known to the writer, the least of them is an excellent example of design and execution. It is a truly fine rifle - one that any discerning collector would be proud to own.

The barrel played such an important role in accuracy, that Armstrong would never have been satisfied to leave control of this vital function to someone else.

The writer has examined a number of these barrels with this particular question in mind, and has concluded, at least to his own satisfaction, that Armstrong made his own barrels.

Again, a production lag.

As to casting his own brass fittings, we are not quite so sure. The brass furniture affected the efficiency of the gun only in that it had to be comfortable to the marksman. This was much less important to the gun's ultimate purpose - accuracy - than the barrel. Its principle contribution - besides comfort, was to please the eye, so you may conclude he did leave the castings to someone else. But our boy was an artist - a true artist. His devotion to beauty is proven by what he has left behind. It is doubtful that he regarded appearance as being of secondary importance. So the writer thinks he made his castings himself.

Another indication that he made his own castings is the fact that a number of his trigger guards have the initials

"J.A." cast into the metal on the inside of the bow. This does not prove he made them, but it certainly proves they were made exclusively for him, and to his strict specifications.

But we have begged the question long enough.

How many rifles did John Armstrong make?

Considering all the above, plus the engraving, carving and finishing, and assuming he used two apprentices most of the time, we believe he could not produce his type of gun in anything less than three weeks. This is only seventeen rifles per year. If this seems low, consider this - only twenty-eight Armstrong rifles are known to exist! Perhaps there are another six or eight around that have not surfaced, so let's say there are thirty-six remaining.

If full production was seventeen per year, then forty-seven years of production would result in - say eight hundred rifles. But no manufacturer that ever lived, then or now, has ever achieved full production over a forty-seven year span. Assuming that his chief occupation during that span was making rifles (which we don't really know), it would appear reasonable to reduce the production rate by at least 25%. This would then give a total of six hundred rifles in his lifetime.

But we do not believe he made that many. If he had, more of them would have survived. Thirty-six represents a survival rate of only 6%. It may be argued that the Kentucky rifle is a very fragile object and that a survival rate of 6% over a one hundred fifty year span is reasonable.

And normally we would agree. But Armstrong rifles are not normal. They are at the top of the heap and fine objects usually receive better care than the ordinary. Consequently, the survival rate is higher. Perhaps 50% higher. If so, the thirty-six survivors would then represent 9% of the total production. This would make Armstrong's life-time production about four hundred rifles.

This is a long answer to the question, and we are not at all sure we have answered it. The only thing really sure is that any answer will be contested.

At any rate, this is our thinking - four hundred rifles!

We mentioned the fact that Armstrong took in apprentices.

It was known for a long time that Nathaniel Rowe, also of Emmitsburg, was an apprentice to Armstrong. But it has only recently come to light that he was Armstrong's last apprentice. Ed and Helen Flanagan of nearby Thurmont, profound scholars and indefatigable researchers, have discovered Rowe's tombstone. Fortunately, the stone gives his birth date, and this fact alone solves a number of puzzles.

Before this discovery, collectors felt there were two Nathaniel Rowes - possibly Senior and Junior. This was because of the marked difference in two styles of Rowe rifles. The first was of 18th century styling and followed almost exactly the makeup of Armstrong's guns. This was con-

sidered natural, since he was apprenticed to the master and would make guns that resembled those of his teacher. These were thought to be the work of the Senior Rowe.

The second style, also signed by Nathaniel Rowe, was of a much later vintage - around the middle 1800's. This, then, would be the work of Junior. But the Flanagans have discovered that this is not the case. Their research has turned up only one Nathaniel Rowe, despite the large size of the Rowe clan in that area.

The important thing they learned was that Rowe was born late and lived a long time.

He was born in 1821 and died in 1915. He became an apprentice in 1836, when he was fifteen years old. By Rowe's own words, he began with Armstrong when he was fifteen, and stated that his tenure was for five years. This would have made Armstrong sixty-nine years of age when Rowe completed his training, and the year would be 1841 - very close to the end of Armstrong's career.

So the obvious facts are that Rowe only made a small number of the early Armstrong-type rifles - the writer knows of only five - and then switched to the style which was at that time fashionable. Perhaps he made these few Armstrong-type rifles during the short space between his becoming a journeyman and Armstrong's death.

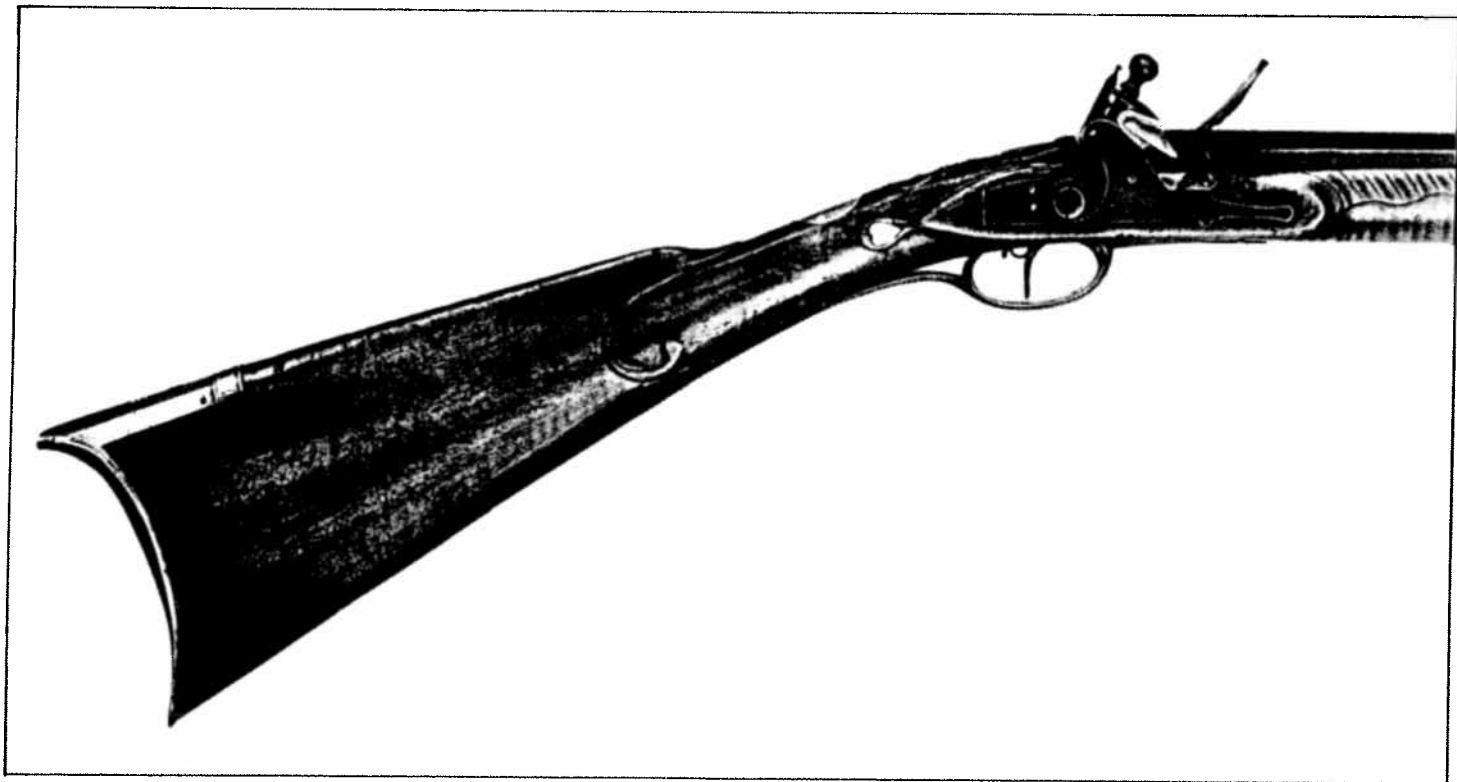
The Flanagans have also discovered that one George Piper was apprenticed to Armstrong in 1801.

This could very well have been Armstrong's first apprentice. The writer has seen one rifle made by George Piper. It bears but little resemblance to John's style.

Another puzzle concerning the early apprentices of Armstrong has been cleared up because of the research of Dr. George Shumway.

Four or five rifles were known that were signed Wickham & Matthews. The rifles, from their styling, were obviously Maryland rifles. One of them, owned by a friend of the writer, is an extremely fine rifle of great beauty. The rifle has so much of Armstrong in it that it was almost a certainty that the makers knew, or were associated with Armstrong. But who was Wickham - who was Matthews? No one seemed to know. Nothing appeared in the records. Then Dr. Shumway, in his systematic research, found evidence that Wickham was Marine Tyler Wickham, who is well known in antique militaria and for whom the "Wickham Band" is named. The document shows that he was one of Armstrong's very early apprentices. After leaving Armstrong, Wickham became U.S. Inspector of Arms during the War of 1812 and later, under contract, manufactured Model 1821 muskets for the Army.

Between these early and last apprentices, Armstrong must have had a constant stream of young men in training. It is said that all four of his sons were apprentices at one time or other. Some evidence of this is shown in a rifle, examined by the writer, which is signed "Samuel Armstrong". It is a



#### ARMSTRONG FOWLER

A rare piece. One of only three known and the only one actually seen by the writer.

This shot gun is very different from Armstrong's rifles. However, he has managed to retain the same grace, balance and beauty that characterize his rifles.



rather mediocre copy of the master's style. Another rifle is said to be signed by "Robert Armstrong", and is thought to be made by another of Armstrong's sons. Apparently the boys did not follow in the master's footsteps for any length of time.

The two Armstrong apprentices who did prove to be great gunsmiths in their own right were, of course, Marine Tyler Wickham and Nathaniel Rowe.

There has been a general feeling that Armstrong was a poor business man and lived a hand-to-mouth existence.

This was probably true of many gunsmiths, and the tag was likely applied to John because of the sale of some gunsmithing tools and equipment in 1822. Most researchers and many collectors are aware of this recorded sale, and some think he went out of business at that time. We now know the latter is not true. For one thing, the writer's son has an Armstrong that is dated - the only one known - November 1826.

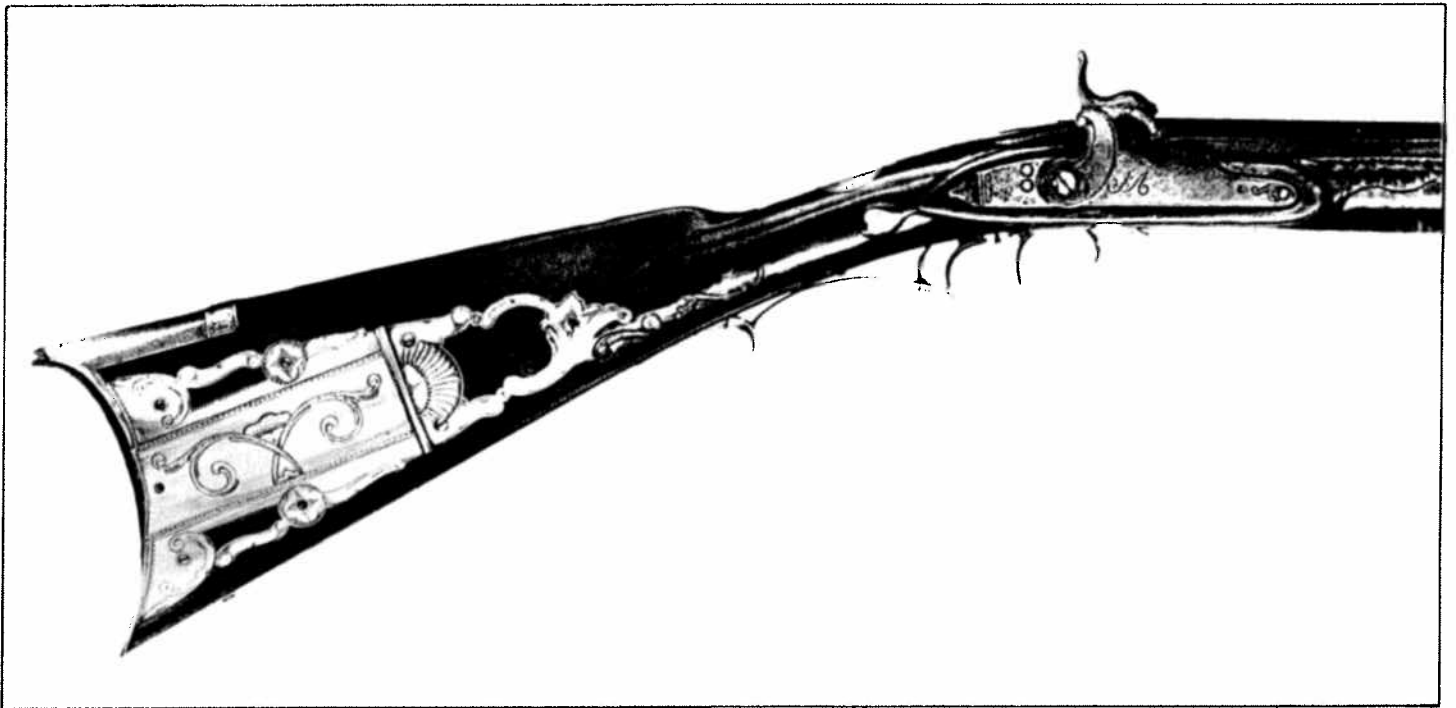
Nor do we think the sale was made because he was hard-up and desperately needed cash. It is more likely he had an over-supply of tools and was selling them to help someone else get started in business. Not to Jacob Harner, to whom the sale is recorded, but possibly for one of his graduated apprentices. Perhaps Harner himself was an earlier apprentice.

It is not likely that a gunsmith that employed a long continuous string of apprentices would be having a bad time economically. Taking on an apprentice in those days was somewhat like adopting another son - and with four of his own, Armstrong certainly did not need another son. The master was charged not only with teaching the lad his trade, but also in supplying his material needs. Very often the apprentice lived in the master's house as one of the family.

Moreover, again thanks to the research of Dr. Shumway, some of the real estate deals that are recorded are in four digit figures. This at a time when most ordinary transactions were in the low three digit range. According to Dr. Shumway, several of these real estate deals were made with Samuel Loudon, John's boyhood friend.

It is reasonably certain that John Armstrong took adequate care of his family, and lived comfortably.

Armstrong's rifles are among the very finest of the Kentucky's "Golden Age". This ran from about 1790 to 1820, a period following the Revolution, when the Country was glutted with gunmakers, but shy of gun-buyers. To stay in business, a gunsmith had to build finer and finer rifles to attract his share of the dwindled demand.



## PERCUSSION ARMSTRONG

This rifle is interesting to Armstrong buffs for several reasons. One, it is dated, the only one ever found. The date - November 1836, tells us that Armstrong was still making rifles at that time. Two, the gun was made in percussion (one of four known), and shows that Armstrong did make percussion rifles. Three, it proves that he was mentally flexible, and had adjusted to the new-fangled ignition.

And more important, it shows that Armstrong did not lower his standards one iota with advanced age and the coming of the machine age.

Indeed, this piece is fully up to his flint-lock standards and even contains several refinements that are not present on many of his flint-lock rifles.

Armstrong learned his trade and then started his business in this atmosphere of excellence, motivated by the grim certainty that gunsmiths either made a superior rifle or their business perished.

It was first-rate training, but it is doubtful that Armstrong needed such a push. With his tremendous talent, his innate artistry and his desire for perfection, he probably would have made a superb rifle under any circumstances.

One way or another, his products were among the very best. His rifles were long, slender and graceful. Their architectural balance is excellent. His guns hang together - they please the eye - at first glance they start the acquisitive juices flowing. This quality is difficult to put into words, but it has a slam-bang effect on the beholder. A gut reaction.

Not many gunsmiths had this magic, but all students of the Kentucky rifle will agree that Armstrong had more than his share.

The late Joe Kindig, Jr., dean of all Kentucky collectors, in his remarkable book "Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in Its Golden Age", says of Armstrong -

"John Armstrong's workmanship is magnificent and his designs are just about perfection.

I cannot over-emphasize the beauty of his rifles."

Emmitsburg, especially during the Bicentennial Year can be proud of her talented son, who began life just four years before the period started. ●

## EPILOGUE

In the foregoing article, the writer concludes from logical deductions, that John Armstrong and Mother Seton must have known each other.

Documentation of the fact was furnished, unknown to the author, at the same time the Armstrong article was published - and in the same book.

The book, a salute to the Bicentennial by the City of Emmitsburg and the Mt. St. Mary's College, is entitled "Emmitsburg: History and Society."

In the book appears an article by Sister John Mary Crumlish, D.C., entitled "Mother Seton And Her Neighbors." Sister John Mary is the Archivist for St. Joseph's Provincial House in Emmitsburg.

At one point she states - "While responsible for maintaining a free school and boarding academy, a sisterhood and a farm, Mother Seton had much business contact with her neighbors, male and female, slave and free. Her receipt book, still preserved at St. Joseph's Provincial House, witnesses transactions with John Armstrong, the master of the Emmitsburg Rifle School, etc."

Needless to say, this documentary confirmation of the writer's supposition was joyfully received.

Sister John Mary, in response to a letter from this scribe, has kindly furnished us with additional information concerning business documentation between Mother Seton and John Armstrong.

The receipt referred to was written directly into the receipt book by Armstrong himself - giving us only the second known example of his handwriting and signature.

This example lends further support to the belief that those gunsmiths who were skilled engravers, duplicated their handwriting when they engraved their signature on the barrel of their rifles.

From the photocopy, one sees that Armstrong's engraved signature is almost identical to his handwriting.

This gracious lady, Sister John Mary, has furnished us with five other references to John Armstrong which appear in the account books of the religious community:

May 20, 1825. He placed a cast steel eye in a shuttle, and replaced a door lock.

October 21, 1835. His bill cites repairing a lock and mending a key.

October 1, 1838. He charged for repairing screws for a guitar and a key for a piano.

August 12, 1839. He submitted a bill for mending a key.

March 13, 1841. John Armstrong charged for mending a key for a chest lock.

Still another account book contains transaction with John Armstrong.

On June 19, 1828, he receipted a bill for repairing a door lock. He duplicated this on October 14, 1835.

For a period of 28 years, Armstrong seemed to have been the locksmith and machinist who met the needs of the St. Joseph's religious establishment.

This documentation of Armstrong's activities in fields unrelated to gun-making, supplies further evidence of the belief that gunsmiths, especially those who remained in one locality for a long period, became, aside from making rifles and fowlers, sort of local blacksmiths and mechanical repair men who took care of any community needs for which their talents were suited.

The writer has in his collection, two reaping hooks made and signed by well-known gunsmiths, and knows of a beautifully made pancake spatula, also made by an ancient riflemaker.

One other thing I must repeat from Sister John Mary's letter.

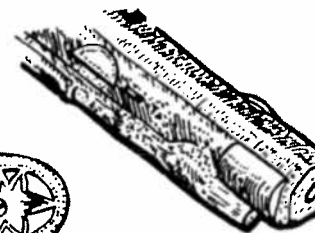
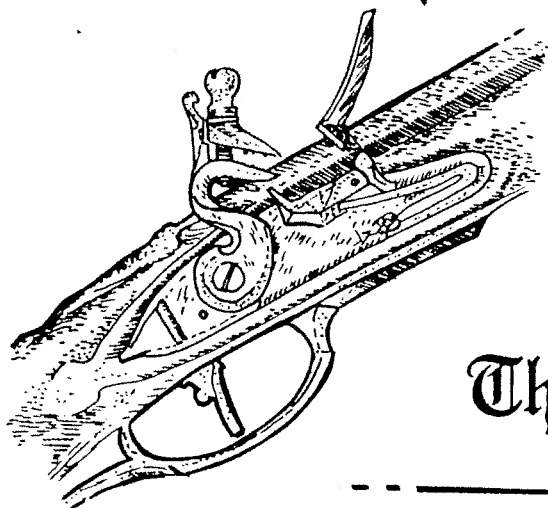
In one place she says - and I quote:

"The utter esthetic quality of John Armstrong's rifles has always captivated me ...."

I can't think of a better ending.

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Small Arms Makers	Col. Robert E. Gardner



# The Kentucky Rifle Association

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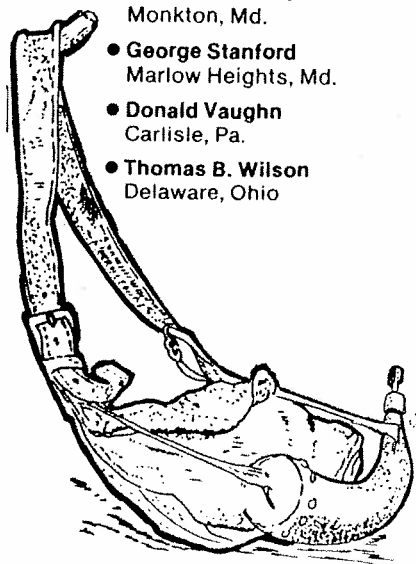
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## KRA Remembers ..... George N. Hyatt



Present at the autograph signing party for Kindig's book at The Yorktown Hotel, York, Pa., October 23, 1960, were (left to right) Mary Ann Cresswell, Joe Kindig, Jr., Sam Dyke, and George Hyatt.

In 1924 Captain John G. W. Dillon wrote his famous book **The Kentucky Rifle**, the first comprehensive and authoritative work on the subject. In compiling material for his book, Captain Dillon developed close friendships with many early members of the Kentucky rifle collecting fraternity.

Among this group was George N. Hyatt of Wilmington, Delaware, a man who was to further Dillon's early initiative by creating a permanent organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the Kentucky rifle as "A True American Heritage". For it was George Hyatt who conceived the idea of the Kentucky Rifle Association, and provided the inspiration that brought it into being.

Mr. Hyatt was a member of the Delaware Antique Gun Collectors Association, The Ohio Gun Collectors Association, The Pennsylvania Gun Collectors, and was President Emeritus of the Kentucky Rifle Association.

He was also a life member of the National Rifle Association, The Arms and Armour Club of New York City, and the American Society of Arms Collectors. He was a member of the Order of Cincinnati, an organization including only descendants from George Washington's Revolutionary officers.

George died in 1976 at the age of 69.

1976



# John Armstrong of Emmitsburg & His Rifles

*by Albert Sullivan, Sr., KRA*

*Thanks are again due KRA's past president Al Sullivan, Sr. The following article, printed in its entirety, was written by Al at the request of the Town of Emmitsburg and Mt. St. Mary's College, who were jointly preparing a salute to the Bicentennial.*

*Al agreed to do the article on the condition that after it appeared in their book, it could be published in the KRA Newsletter, and thereafter became the property of the KRA.*

*It is well to remember that the article was written to please a community in which Armstrong lived, not primarily for Kentucky Rifle Collectors.*

*The Epilogue was written after the book was published. The information therein was not available before that time to the author.*

*We think the article will be of interest to our membership.*

The town of Emmitsburg, in the State of Maryland, is cozily nestled at the foot of the Catocin Mountain, just a few miles north of the beautiful Cunningham Falls.

It presents to the world, in its scenic setting, a calm and peaceful image. Its quiet serenity seems an integral part of the town's make-up, and suggests that to change this mood would be difficult.

Yet this tranquil dignity was abruptly shattered one Sunday last summer, as 35,000 visitors descended upon the startled little city.

They had come to see the Shrine of Mother Seton, who had that very day, been canonized in far away Rome, and had become America's first and only native-born Saint.

Elizabeth Ann Seton had wrought her magic mostly in Emmitsburg, and these visitors - pilgrims if you wish, probably felt they were achieving a sort of celestial "first-day cover" by visiting her work bench on the same day on which she was canonized.

Elizabeth Ann had focused the whole world's attention on Emmitsburg - but it is probable that only a small percentage of all the visitors who had jammed the highways leading into Emmitsburg on that Sunday, realized that the little mountain town they were visiting was the home of another famous citizen - one whose fame has spread not throughout the world, as Mother Seton's, but certainly throughout most of America.

John Armstrong, Maryland's finest and perhaps America's finest antique gunsmith, also lived and worked in Emmitsburg.

So, in its early days, Emmitsburg had a famous son, as well as a famous daughter.

And at the same time.

John was born in 1772 - Elizabeth in 1773 - and there are other interesting parallels in the lives of these two outstanding Emmitsburg residents.

As shown, they were just about the same age.

Secondly, they began their Emmitsburg careers at just about the same time - John in 1808, at least as far as documentation shows, and Elizabeth in 1809.

Then, they were practically neighbors in that they each lived in a relatively small social community.

Also, they were each beginning new enterprises at almost the same time.

Again, they were each outstanding personalities - each tops in their fields. They almost had to know each other, and knowing each other, they probably were friends.

Speculation, the friendship part, but at least with a solid foundation for support.

Then there was the fact that of the three daughters of the Armstrongs, one was named Elizabeth and one was named Ann.

Was this pure coincidence? Or was it because of respect and admiration for Mother Seton by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong?

One more thing. Earlier in her career, Elizabeth Ann Seton opened a school for girls in the then frontier-like community, where such schools must have been rare.

The writer sometimes wonders where the Armstrong girls went to school.

Speculation or not, it is an interesting thought for an Armstrong admirer to feel that his pet gunsmith had a Saint for a friend. This certainly has to be unique.

But enough of Saint and Sinner.

Researchers have spent many hours delving for information about John Armstrong. In general, the results have been disappointing, although more has been learned about him in the last five or six years, then ever before. One basic thing that never had been documented was his birth date - until last year.

A document, now a happy part of the author's Armstrong collection, was recently discovered among some old papers at a farm, that establishes his exact birth date. This is a legal paper, part of a court record, in which John Armstrong made a deposition before a magistrate, to verify the age of one Samuel Louden.

In the process, he tells the magistrate his birth date.

The outside of the document, when folded, states: ►

Opened, the document states: ▼

John Armstrong  
Deposition  
S. Loudens  
ccg

N<sup>o</sup> 2 Fred County, Iowa  
On this 22<sup>d</sup> day of August 1828  
Personally appeared John Armstrong before me the Sub Judge in  
Court of the Peace in and for Fred County aforesaid - and made  
the following Oath and declarations - Deposition & sayeth that he  
is perfectly well acquainted - with a certain Samuel Louden a  
citizen of Liberty Township Adams County I<sup>o</sup> W - that he  
does think to the best of his Opinion that the said Samuel  
Louden was born in the year 1776 - or before that year - and that  
he has good reason for forming ~~that~~ that Opinion respecting the  
Age of the said Samuel Loudens - they being boys together - but  
the said deponent - being somewhat the eldest - being born in  
the year 1772 the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September - therefore does make  
Oath and declare that the said Samuel Loudens is at least  
fifty two years of age - and further sayeth not -

Sworn before

William Henry

So here is John himself giving his birth date as September 5, 1772, to a Justice of the Peace in Frederick County, in August of 1828. This piece fits the puzzle precisely, and gives us a firm starting date. It also places him in Frederick County in 1828. But most of the pieces of the puzzle are still missing.

He does not, for instance, say **where** he was born. But he does give us a hint. He says he was a "boy together" with Samuel Loudon and he names Sam as a citizen of Liberty Township. The writer has not yet researched the exact location of Liberty Township, but feels it will be in the lower middle or lower western part of Adams County, Pennsylvania. This suggests that he was born there - and that, in turn, fits another slot in the puzzle, at least in the writer's mind.

If Armstrong was born in Liberty Township, it would mean he would have been nearer to Hanover, Pennsylvania, than if, for instance, he had been born in Emmitsburg, Maryland. And it is important to the writer's mental equanimity that he should be close to Hanover during his boyhood. The writer, and especially the writer's son (I dare not withhold this credit) have long felt that John Armstrong was apprenticed to and learned his gunsmithing from George Schroyer of Hanover.

There are at least five valid reasons for this belief.

Schroyer, one of America's oldest documented gunsmiths, and one of the truly great ones, used five different features in his guns, some of them frequently, some infrequently, which appear in Armstrong's rifles. And significantly, of two of them used frequently by Schroyer, Armstrong used one all the time and the second most of the time.

Since this is being prepared not entirely for antique gun buffs, the nature of the features will not be elaborated upon. Anyone interested further may consult the writer for additional information.

So we do not believe that Armstrong was born in Emmitsburg. We think he moved there about 1793. This would be after becoming an apprentice to Schroyer in 1786, at age 14, and completing his training seven years later in 1793. He would then have become a "journeyman" and the name itself suggests that he moved away from his master and set up shop on his own - almost certainly in Emmitsburg.

Full apprenticeships in those days were normally for seven years, but not all. Some were for five years and some for only three.

If John's tenure was shorter than seven years, then he probably moved to Emmitsburg that much earlier.

One thing is certain - some of his rifles are 18th century. The writer is often asked - "If Armstrong was born when you think he was (1770 - I had thought), then where are his 18th century rifles?" The answer (clearer now that his birth date is pin-pointed) is that **any** of his flint-lock rifles could be 18th century. We have no way of telling which were

made first. We only know of four that were made as original percussions. The point is that John developed a style early in his career - in the late 18th century that pleased him - and pleased his customers, and he did not change that basic design with the passage of time.

**Neither did Rolls Royce!**

This is sometimes charged as a detraction against Armstrong, but the writer (admittedly biased) feels this to be an attraction, rather than a detraction.

If one spends all the money necessary to buy a Rolls Royce - or an Armstrong - one wants it, at first glance to look like a Rolls Royce - or an Armstrong.

Incidentally, that style pleases today's collectors too!

If you don't think so - try to buy one of his rifles.

But let's get back to origins. John's father, originally from England, was also named John, and apparently settled at first in the Cumberland Valley section of Pennsylvania, moving his family later (the writer hopes to uncover) to somewhere in Liberty Township. We speculate that John, Jr. could have been born there. This could fit in with John "being boys together" with his friend Sam Loudon, and would place him in close proximity to George Schroyer in Hanover. Schroyer was a generation older than Armstrong. He appears in the court records, listed as a gunsmith, as early as 1767. (But not, at that time, in Hanover)

Schroyer's age, Armstrong's nearness to him at the age boys normally began apprenticeship (John was 14 in 1786 and Schroyer was settled in Hanover at that time) and Armstrong's consistent use later of five of Schroyer's details, one of which is very conclusive, all suggest that John learned his trade from Schroyer.

John (Junior) married a Miss James. They had seven children - four sons, William, Robert, Samuel and James - and three daughters, Elizabeth, Ann and Jane.

The court records show that John bought lots 1 and 2 in the Emmitsburg plat in 1808. These are the first of a relatively long series of real estate transactions that are recorded to John.

The presumption of the writer is that Armstrong came to Emmitsburg about 1793, set himself up in the gunsmith business and by 1808 was able to buy some property, probably for a house, as well as a business and permanently established his roots. It is known that he was still in Emmitsburg as late as 1841.

Armstrong must have made a success of his business, because he enjoyed a long period of production. We are not sure just when he started but, as stated earlier, it must have been around 1793. We do know from statements made by his last apprentice, Nathaniel Rowe, that he was still in the gunsmithing business in Emmitsburg in 1840. Since he drops from sight in 1841, it seems safe to assume that his production span was from 1793 to 1840. Forty-seven years. Time enough to make a great many rifles.

The question naturally arises - and is often asked - "How many rifles did he make?"

A good question! One that cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. We can only guess. But as more is learned about the man, and about some of the factors that affect production, the guessing becomes a little easier - or rather, a little less difficult. For instance, research by Mr. Daniel Hartzler of New Windsor, Maryland, has revealed that Armstrong had a long string of apprentices. A master worker who might also be a good administrator and teacher, working with two apprentices, could naturally produce considerably more than the master working by himself. It is reasonable to suppose that Armstrong normally employed two apprentices. This is, of course, a factor which would speed-up production. But with Armstrong, there were three important factors which definitely slowed production down - and slowed it down substantially. One of these factors we are positive was always present. We are less certain of the other two, but one or both of them could also have always been present.

We are sure, for instance, that Armstrong always made his own locks. This is a slow and tedious process and would add to a rifle's completion time. Most gunsmiths of that period bought their locks from lock manufacturers. They

were cheaper and increased production. This saved the gunsmith money in two ways. Then, these locks were probably better than the average gunsmith could make himself.

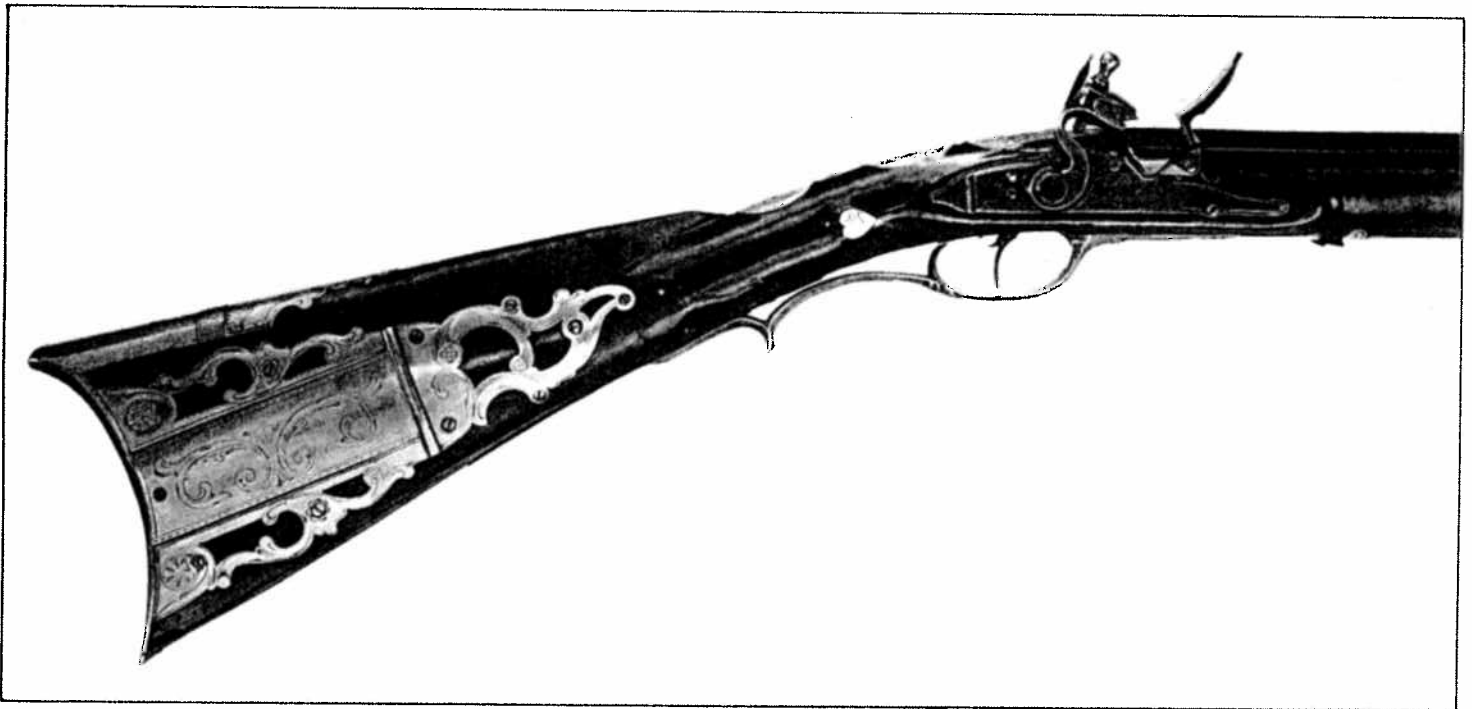
But none of these suited Armstrong. Not John Armstrong, the perfectionist! The store-bought locks were not good enough to go on his excellent products, so he made his own locks. Locks of a quality compatible with the high quality of everything else on his truly excellent rifles.

Love that man!

The locks he made are slender, graceful and beautifully proportioned. They blend perfectly into the architectural balance of the gun. It is easy to see why he would not be satisfied with anything less. Everything he did had to come up to the standards he carried in his head and in his heart, and these standards were at summit level.

In addition to their beauty, the locks functioned efficiently. The springs of the Armstrong locks in the Sullivan collection, are as crisp and sharp today as they were when they were made 150 odd years ago.

We should begin here to understand some of the reasons Armstrong is so highly regarded by collectors, and why his rifles are so eagerly sought after.



## THE "SILVER" ARMSTRONG

John Armstrong's masterpiece.

This rifle has thirteen attractive features, none of which have ever appeared on any other Armstrong.

The gun is thought to have been made for a wealthy iron-monger from the Carlisle area, who was reputed to have been related to Armstrong by marriage.

At the risk of boring our non-Armstrong buffs, we must describe one of the thirteen features, since it tells a lot about Armstrong's nature, and illustrates one of the reasons collectors regard him and his rifles so highly.

The patch box release is "concealed" in the upper patch box plate - that is, it is made to look like the matching silver inlay on the bottom plate. This bottom inlay is solid. The one on the top when depressed, releases the latch which secures the patch box lid. In order to make this release work smoothly, Armstrong made a complex arrangement on the under side of the upper patch box plate, consisting of a brass cylinder, a piston, a stop and a spring. As a result, the release has a smooth positive action.

This arrangement is not present on any other Armstrong rifle. In fact, I have never known it to be on any other Kentucky rifle.

But the crowning touch is that the workmanship, which is entirely unseen, and would only be known by another gunsmith who might be working on the gun (which is how it was discovered), is just as meticulously made and beautifully crafted as any of the parts that are visible.



Incidentally, there is a feeling, a very sensible one, in the Kentucky rifle fraternity, that the absence of the original lock in a Kentucky rifle is not too important. This is because the lock was almost never made by the gunsmith and so did not represent his handiwork. Also, locks were expendable. They wore out and they were replaced, so they seldom related to the gunsmith who made the rifle.

But this does not hold with Armstrong. Because he made and signed his own locks, and because they were so special and were so appropriate to his guns, this absence of an Armstrong lock in an Armstrong rifle is a very serious flaw.

So hand-made locks slow production.

The other two factors that would seriously affect the gunsmith's out-put are the barrel, if self-made, and the brass castings.

There were a number of barrelsmiths who did nothing but make barrels for use by various gunsmiths. Most craftsmen of that period purchased and used such barrels.

But not Armstrong!

The writer believes he made his own barrels. This would, of course, have limited his production. But Armstrong was more interested in perfection than he was in production. This is attested by the fact that he never made a poor rifle. Some of the other rifle-makers who could rival him for the top-spot, did make rifles of lesser quality - adjusted, no doubt, to suit what the customer could afford to pay. But not our hero. He never removed the suit of shining armor - never got down off the white horse.

Of the twenty-eight surviving Armstrong rifles known to the writer, the least of them is an excellent example of design and execution. It is a truly fine rifle - one that any discerning collector would be proud to own.

The barrel played such an important role in accuracy, that Armstrong would never have been satisfied to leave control of this vital function to someone else.

The writer has examined a number of these barrels with this particular question in mind, and has concluded, at least to his own satisfaction, that Armstrong made his own barrels.

Again, a production lag.

As to casting his own brass fittings, we are not quite so sure. The brass furniture affected the efficiency of the gun only in that it had to be comfortable to the marksman. This was much less important to the gun's ultimate purpose - accuracy - than the barrel. Its principle contribution - besides comfort, was to please the eye, so you may conclude he did leave the castings to someone else. But our boy was an artist - a true artist. His devotion to beauty is proven by what he has left behind. It is doubtful that he regarded appearance as being of secondary importance. So the writer thinks he made his castings himself.

Another indication that he made his own castings is the fact that a number of his trigger guards have the initials

"J.A." cast into the metal on the inside of the bow. This does not prove he made them, but it certainly proves they were made exclusively for him, and to his strict specifications.

**But we have begged the question long enough.**

**How many rifles did John Armstrong make?**

Considering all the above, plus the engraving, carving and finishing, and assuming he used two apprentices most of the time, we believe he could not produce his type of gun in anything less than three weeks. This is only seventeen rifles per year. If this seems low, consider this - only twenty-eight Armstrong rifles are known to exist! Perhaps there are another six or eight around that have not surfaced, so let's say there are thirty-six remaining.

If full production was seventeen per year, then forty-seven years of production would result in - say eight hundred rifles. But no manufacturer that ever lived, then or now, has ever achieved full production over a forty-seven year span. Assuming that his chief occupation during that span was making rifles (which we don't really know), it would appear reasonable to reduce the production rate by at least 25%. This would then give a total of six hundred rifles in his lifetime.

But we do not believe he made that many. If he had, more of them would have survived. Thirty-six represents a survival rate of only 6%. It may be argued that the Kentucky rifle is a very fragile object and that a survival rate of 6% over a one hundred fifty year span is reasonable.

And normally we would agree. But Armstrong rifles are not normal. They are at the top of the heap and fine objects usually receive better care than the ordinary. Consequently, the survival rate is higher. Perhaps 50% higher. If so, the thirty-six survivors would then represent 9% of the total production. This would make Armstrong's life-time production about four hundred rifles.

This is a long answer to the question, and we are not at all sure we have answered it. The only thing really sure is that any answer will be contested.

At any rate, this is our thinking - four hundred rifles!

We mentioned the fact that Armstrong took in apprentices.

It was known for a long time that Nathaniel Rowe, also of Emmitsburg, was an apprentice to Armstrong. But it has only recently come to light that he was Armstrong's last apprentice. Ed and Helen Flanagan of nearby Thurmont, profound scholars and indefatigable researchers, have discovered Rowe's tombstone. Fortunately, the stone gives his birth date, and this fact alone solves a number of puzzles.

Before this discovery, collectors felt there were two Nathaniel Rowes - possibly Senior and Junior. This was because of the marked difference in two styles of Rowe rifles. The first was of 18th century styling and followed almost exactly the make-up of Armstrong's guns. This was con-



sidered natural, since he was apprenticed to the master and would make guns that resembled those of his teacher. These were thought to be the work of the Senior Rowe.

The second style, also signed by Nathaniel Rowe, was of a much later vintage - around the middle 1800's. This, then, would be the work of Junior. But the Flanagans have discovered that this is not the case. Their research has turned up only one Nathaniel Rowe, despite the large size of the Rowe clan in that area.

The important thing they learned was that Rowe was born late and lived a long time.

He was born in 1821 and died in 1915. He became an apprentice in 1836, when he was fifteen years old. By Rowe's own words, he began with Armstrong when he was fifteen, and stated that his tenure was for five years. This would have made Armstrong sixty-nine years of age when Rowe completed his training, and the year would be 1841 - very close to the end of Armstrong's career.

So the obvious facts are that Rowe only made a small number of the early Armstrong-type rifles - the writer knows of only five - and then switched to the style which was at that time fashionable. Perhaps he made these few Armstrong-type rifles during the short space between his becoming a journeyman and Armstrong's death.

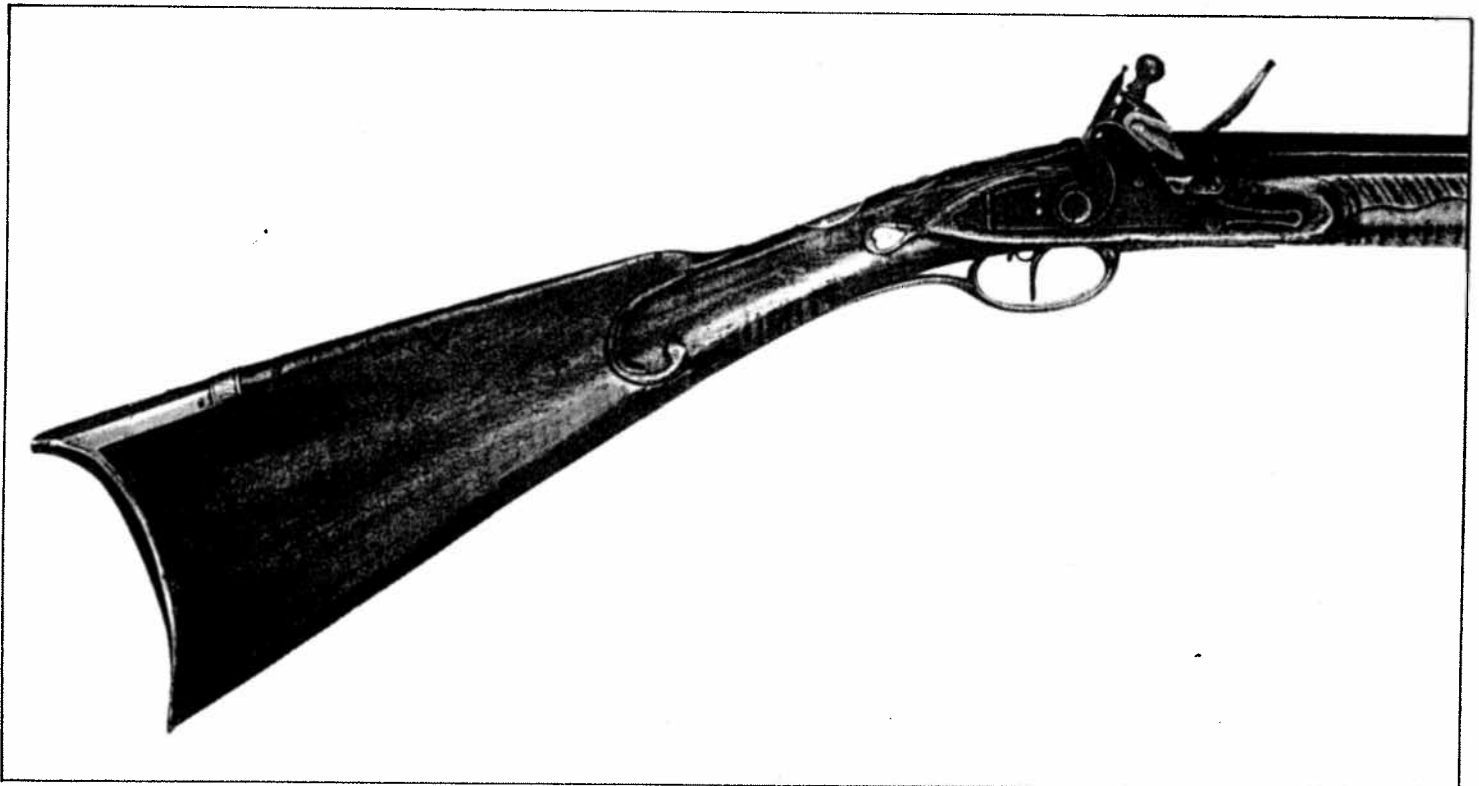
The Flanagans have also discovered that one George Piper was apprenticed to Armstrong in 1801.

This could very well have been Armstrong's first apprentice. The writer has seen one rifle made by George Piper. It bears but little resemblance to John's style.

Another puzzle concerning the early apprentices of Armstrong has been cleared up because of the research of Dr. George Shumway.

Four or five rifles were known that were signed Wickham & Matthews. The rifles, from their styling, were obviously Maryland rifles. One of them, owned by a friend of the writer, is an extremely fine rifle of great beauty. The rifle has so much of Armstrong in it that it was almost a certainty that the makers knew, or were associated with Armstrong. But who was Wickham - who was Matthews? No one seemed to know. Nothing appeared in the records. Then Dr. Shumway, in his systematic research, found evidence that Wickham was Marine Tyler Wickham, who is well known in antique militaria and for whom the "Wickham Band" is named. The document shows that he was one of Armstrong's very early apprentices. After leaving Armstrong, Wickham became U.S. Inspector of Arms during the War of 1812 and later, under contract, manufactured Model 1821 muskets for the Army.

Between these early and last apprentices, Armstrong must have had a constant stream of young men in training. It is said that all four of his sons were apprentices at one time or other. Some evidence of this is shown in a rifle, examined by the writer, which is signed "Samuel Armstrong". It is a



### ARMSTRONG FOWLER

A rare piece. One of only three known and the only one actually seen by the writer.

This shot gun is very different from Armstrong's rifles. However, he has managed to retain the same grace, balance and beauty that characterize his rifles.

rather mediocre copy of the master's style. Another rifle is said to be signed by "Robert Armstrong", and is thought to be made by another of Armstrong's sons. Apparently the boys did not follow in the master's footsteps for any length of time.

The two Armstrong apprentices who did prove to be great gunsmiths in their own right were, of course, Marine Tyler Wickham and Nathaniel Rowe.

There has been a general feeling that Armstrong was a poor business man and lived a hand-to-mouth existence.

This was probably true of many gunsmiths, and the tag was likely applied to John because of the sale of some gunsmithing tools and equipment in 1822. Most researchers and many collectors are aware of this recorded sale, and some think he went out of business at that time. We now know the latter is not true. For one thing, the writer's son has an Armstrong that is dated - the only one known - November 1826.

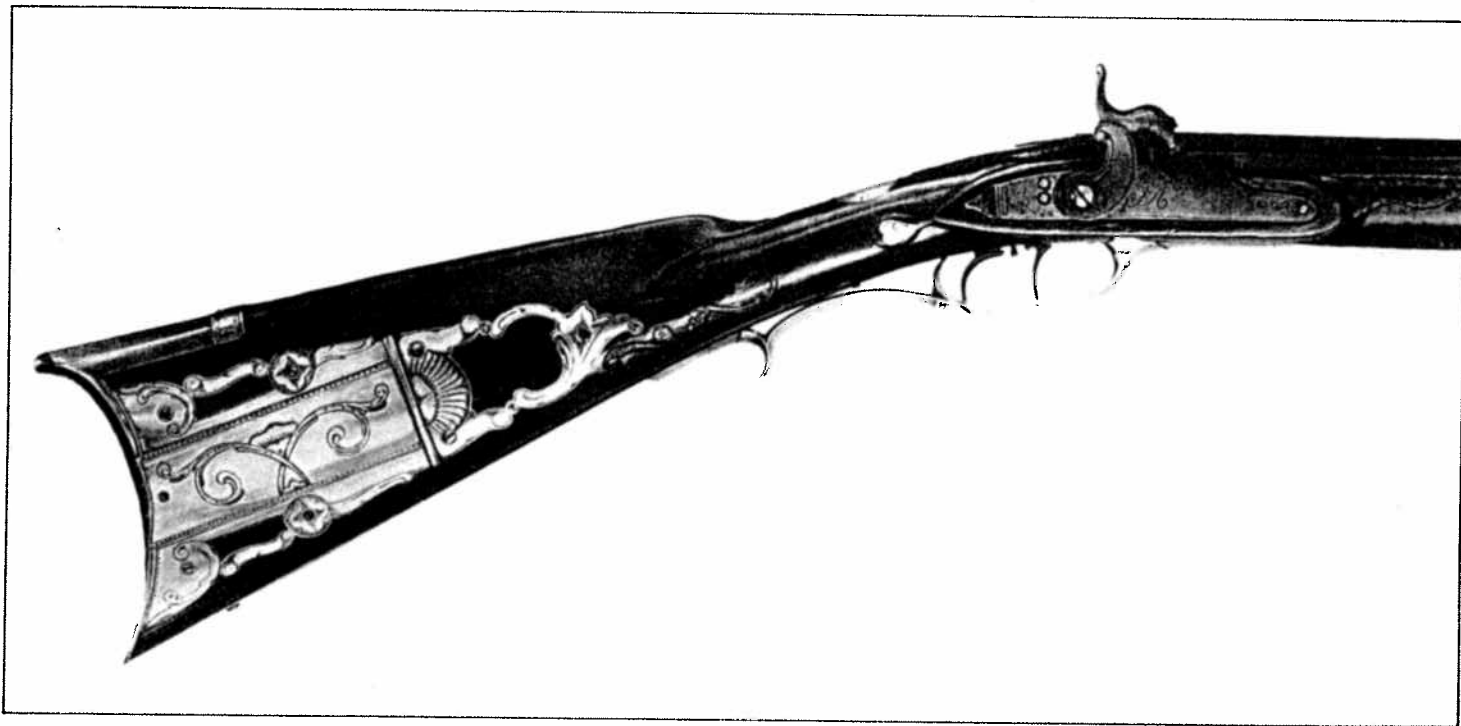
Nor do we think the sale was made because he was hard-up and desperately needed cash. It is more likely he had an over-supply of tools and was selling them to help someone else get started in business. Not to Jacob Harner, to whom the sale is recorded, but possibly for one of his graduated apprentices. Perhaps Harner himself was an earlier apprentice.

It is not likely that a gunsmith that employed a long continuous string of apprentices would be having a bad time economically. Taking on an apprentice in those days was somewhat like adopting another son - and with four of his own, Armstrong certainly did not need another son. The master was charged not only with teaching the lad his trade, but also in supplying his material needs. Very often the apprentice lived in the master's house as one of the family.

Moreover, again thanks to the research of Dr. Shumway, some of the real estate deals that are recorded are in four digit figures. This at a time when most ordinary transactions were in the low three digit range. According to Dr. Shumway, several of these real estate deals were made with Samuel Loudon, John's boyhood friend.

It is reasonably certain that John Armstrong took adequate care of his family, and lived comfortably.

Armstrong's rifles are among the very finest of the Kentucky's "Golden Age". This ran from about 1790 to 1820, a period following the Revolution, when the Country was glutted with gunmakers, but shy of gun-buyers. To stay in business, a gunsmith had to build finer and finer rifles to attract his share of the dwindled demand.



## PERCUSSION ARMSTRONG

This rifle is interesting to Armstrong buffs for several reasons. One, it is dated, the only one ever found. The date - November 1836, tells us that Armstrong was still making rifles at that time. Two, the gun was made in percussion (one of four known), and shows that Armstrong did make percussion rifles. Three, it proves that he was mentally flexible, and had adjusted to the new-fangled ignition.

And more important, it shows that Armstrong did not lower his standards one iota with advanced age and the coming of the machine age.

Indeed, this piece is fully up to his flint-lock standards and even contains several refinements that are not present on many of his flint-lock rifles.

Armstrong learned his trade and then started his business in this atmosphere of excellence, motivated by the grim certainty that gunsmiths either made a superior rifle or their business perished.

It was first-rate training, but it is doubtful that Armstrong needed such a push. With his tremendous talent, his innate artistry and his desire for perfection, he probably would have made a superb rifle under any circumstances.

One way or another, his products were among the very best. His rifles were long, slender and graceful. Their architectural balance is excellent. His guns hang together - they please the eye - at first glance they start the acquisitive juices flowing. This quality is difficult to put into words, but it has a slam-bang effect on the beholder. A gut reaction.

Not many gunsmiths had this magic, but all students of the Kentucky rifle will agree that Armstrong had more than his share.

The late Joe Kindig, Jr., dean of all Kentucky collectors, in his remarkable book "Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in Its Golden Age", says of Armstrong -

**"John Armstrong's workmanship is magnificent and his designs are just about perfection.**

**I cannot over-emphasize the beauty of his rifles."**

Emmitsburg, especially during the Bicentennial Year can be proud of her talented son, who began life just four years before the period started. ●

## EPILOGUE

In the foregoing article, the writer concludes from logical deductions, that John Armstrong and Mother Seton must have known each other.

Documentation of the fact was furnished, unknown to the author, at the same time the Armstrong article was published - and in the same book.

The book, a salute to the Bicentennial by the City of Emmitsburg and the Mt. St. Mary's College, is entitled "Emmitsburg: History and Society."

In the book appears an article by Sister John Mary Crumlish, D.C., entitled "Mother Seton And Her Neighbors." Sister John Mary is the Archivist for St. Joseph's Provincial House in Emmitsburg.

At one point she states - "While responsible for maintaining a free school and boarding academy, a sisterhood and a farm, Mother Seton had much business contact with her neighbors, male and female, slave and free. Her receipt book, still preserved at St. Joseph's Provincial House, witnesses transactions with John Armstrong, the master of the Emmitsburg Rifle School, etc."

Needless to say, this documentary confirmation of the writer's supposition was joyfully received.

Sister John Mary, in response to a letter from this scribe, has kindly furnished us with additional information concerning business documentation between Mother Seton and John Armstrong.

The receipt referred to was written directly into the receipt book by Armstrong himself - giving us only the second known example of his handwriting and signature.

This example lends further support to the belief that those gunsmiths who were skilled engravers, duplicated their handwriting when they engraved their signature on the barrel of their rifles.

From the photocopy, one sees that Armstrong's engraved signature is almost identical to his handwriting.

This gracious lady, Sister John Mary, has furnished us with five other references to John Armstrong which appear in the account books of the religious community:

May 20, 1825. He placed a cast steel eye in a shuttle, and replaced a door lock.

October 21, 1835. His bill cites repairing a lock and mending a key.

October 1, 1838. He charged for repairing screws for a guitar and a key for a piano.

August 12, 1839. He submitted a bill for mending a key.

March 13, 1841. John Armstrong charged for mending a key for a chest lock.

Still another account book contains transaction with John Armstrong.

On June 19, 1828, he receipted a bill for repairing a door lock. He duplicated this on October 14, 1835.

For a period of 28 years, Armstrong seemed to have been the locksmith and machinist who met the needs of the St. Joseph's religious establishment.

This documentation of Armstrong's activities in fields unrelated to gun-making, supplies further evidence of the belief that gunsmiths, especially those who remained in one locality for a long period, became, aside from making rifles and fowlers, sort of local blacksmiths and mechanical repair men who took care of any community needs for which their talents were suited.

The writer has in his collection, two reaping hooks made and signed by well-known gunsmiths, and knows of a beautifully made pancake spatula, also made by an ancient riflemaker.

One other thing I must repeat from Sister John Mary's letter.

In one place she says - and I quote:

"The utter esthetic quality of John Armstrong's rifles has always captivated me ...."

I can't think of a better ending.

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Firearms in American History	Charles Winthrop Sawyer
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Old-Time Smoky Mountain Rifles and Riflemen	Robert Lindsay Mason
American Arms and Arms Makers	Col. Robert E. Gardner
American Firearms Makers	A. Merwyn Carey
Pennsylvania German Folklore Society - Vol. IX	
Small Arms Makers	Col. Robert E. Gardner



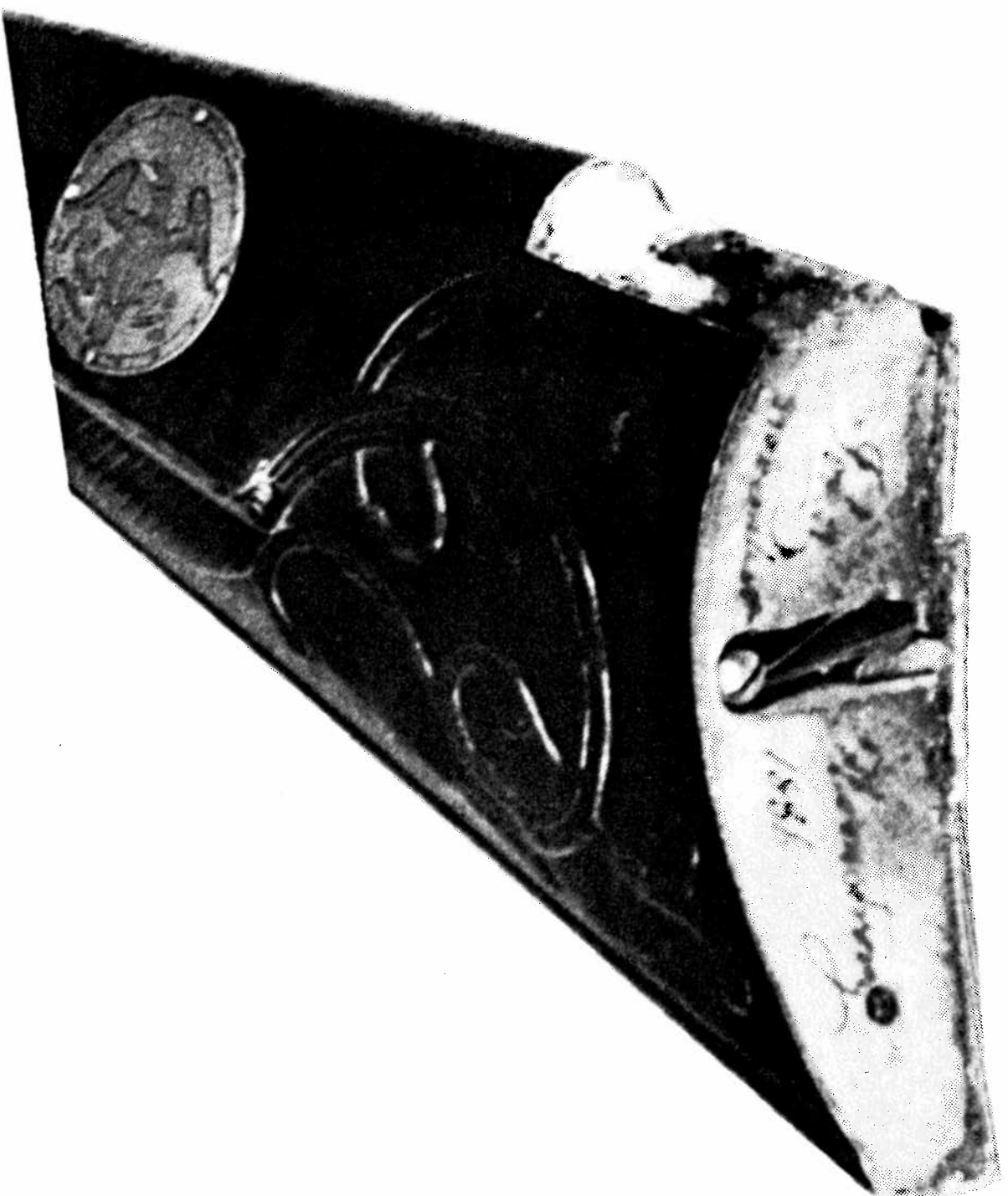


Figure 32.  
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in 1837 an  
Albert M. Si



Figure 32. Buttstock of percussion rifle with buttplate removed, showing signature of John Armstrong of Emmitsburg, and date of 1836. This is the only known rifle by Armstrong that bears a date, and it proves that he made rifles late in his life. Additional proof that Armstrong made rifles very late in his life comes from a newspaper interview that Armstrong's apprentice, Nathaniel Rowe, gave in 1908. He mentioned beginning his apprenticeship in gunsmithing in 1837 and told a few details about rifle-making. Albert M. Sullivan, Jr., collection.

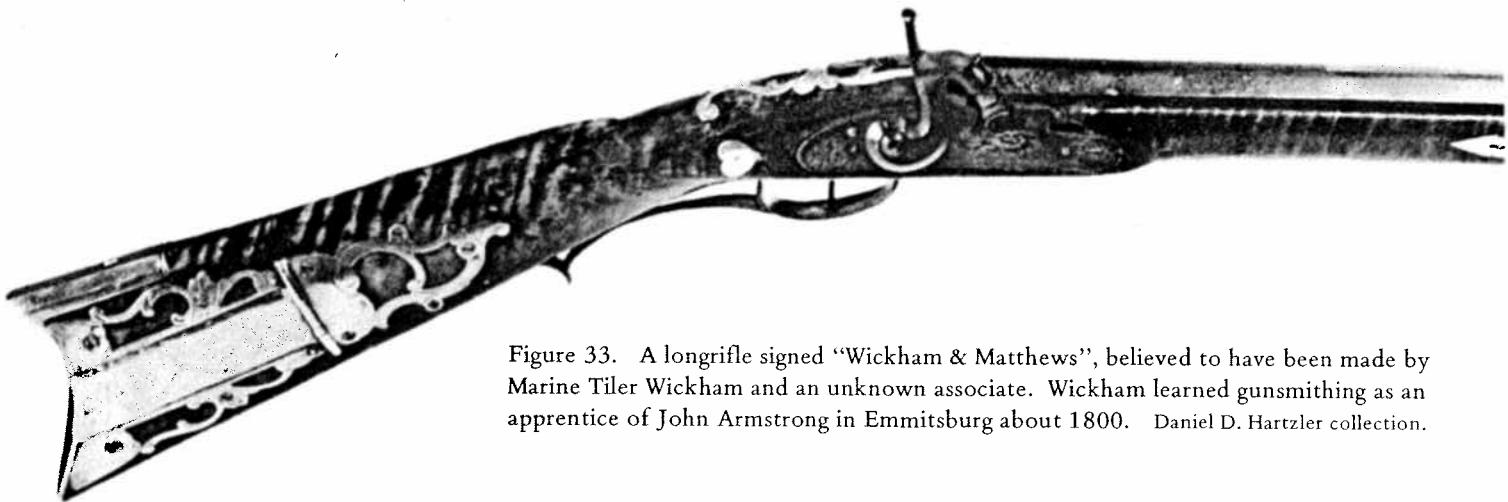


Figure 33. A longrifle signed "Wickham & Matthews", believed to have been made by Marine Tiler Wickham and an unknown associate. Wickham learned gunsmithing as an apprentice of John Armstrong in Emmitsburg about 1800. Daniel D. Hartzler collection.



Figure 34. Nathaniel Rowe, who apprenticed with John Armstrong late in the master's life, signed his name, "N. Rowe", in script on this percussion rifle. The barrel is  $36\frac{1}{4}$  inches long and of .38 caliber. It is equipped with a peep sight as well as an open sight. Both are stationary and, depending on the target distance, either can be used without interfering with the other. Daniel D. Hartzler collection.

the only son who married, was a Master Armorer at the Marine Barracks in the Navy Yard at Washington, D. C., in 1822, and later may have been an inspector of arms at Harpers Ferry.

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Peter White was an outstanding craftsman who is best known for his rifle-building in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, and later in Uniontown. It is probable that he spent his early working years in Emmitsburg and perhaps learned the trade there also. Peter White was born in late 1777 or during the first eight months of 1778, according to information on his tombstone in Uniontown. The federal census for Frederick County lists a Peter White as the head of a household in Emmitsburg in the year 1800. The name appears on the same page as that of John Armstrong and there are only three or four other names separating the two. Peter White's age is given as being less than 26. Peter White, the gunsmith, had a son, John, who was a gunsmith and who was born in Maryland in 1800 according to the 1860 federal census concerning John.

Two outstanding rifles made by Peter White have survived which fit with the Emmitsburg school and suggest that the maker worked in Emmitsburg. One of these, illustrated by Hetrick (1959),<sup>13</sup> is dated 1794. The other piece was illustrated by Kindig (1960).<sup>14</sup> If the date of 1794 is correct, then this rifle was made by White when he was 16 years of age. Though an apprentice usually did not sign rifles while serving as an apprentice, it is not impossible that he made this piece at an early age. The apprenticeship system was not rigidly controlled by a guild, and a lenient master might very well allow an apprentice to sign a rifle, perhaps for his own personal use.

Peter White did not own any property while in Emmitsburg, if indeed he was there, nor did he own property later in Bedford or Uniontown. White arrived in Colerain Township, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, in 1806, and immediately went to work at gunsmithing. It is reasonable to suppose that he worked in Emmitsburg until moving to Bedford.

Little is known about two of John Armstrong's apprentices, John Blackburn and George Piper. A beautiful relief carved longrifle is known bearing the signature of Jacob Sell, the younger, of Littlestown, Pennsylvania, on the barrel, and the name "G. Piper" on the lockplate. The work is done in a style similar to that of Armstrong and does not appear to be by the hand of Sell. What happened to Blackburn after he finished his apprenticeship is unknown.



# ARMS MAKERS *of* MARYLAND

by DANIEL D. HARTZLER

*Longrifle Series*

GEORGE SHUMWAY PUBLISHER  
YORK • PENNSYLVANIA





*Beautifully engraved silver inlay of design usually carved at barrel tang by J. Armstrong*

## John Armstrong

From the history of Emmitsburg, Maryland, we read that John Armstrong was a gunsmith in Emmitsburg in 1808. He owned lots #1 and #2 in the town at that date. The Frederick County Courthouse records that on September 9, 1822, John Armstrong took a mortgage on a plot of land in Shields, an addition to Emmitsburg. This was lot #12 on the town platt. On November 6, 1822, John Armstrong sold Jacob Harner "forty gun stocks, one pair of smith bellows, one anvil, two vises, one large pair of shears, three directors for rifling, together with all the other tools and implements necessary for carrying on the gunsmith trade, all of which goods and implements are now in my possession" for twenty-eight dollars. This suggests that John Armstrong discontinued gunsmithing in 1822, but I do not know this to be the case. In 1838 he bought lot #7 on the town platt in Shields for \$300, and on October 5 of that year he took a \$300 mortgage on this lot which by then had a one-story brick house and a wooden shed on it. In 1841 he took another \$100 mortgage on the property.

In Williams *History of Frederick County, Maryland*, we find the following information concerning John Armstrong. There is no reason to doubt any of this information, but we should remember that it is not contemporary. His father, John Sr., came from England and settled in the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania. John Jr. was a gunsmith, a whitesmith, and a master mechanic who settled near Emmitsburg, Maryland. He married a Miss James. They had four sons—William, Robert, Samuel, and James—all of whom are supposed to have been gunsmiths. William was an inspector of arms at the Harper's Ferry Arsenal. I have seen one rifle signed "Samuel Armstrong." John Armstrong also had three daughters—Anna, Jane, and Elizabeth. It would be very interesting if we could prove that one of these girls married one of her father's apprentices. I have one later rifle signed "P. Lapold" that is very similar to John Armstrong's work.

John Armstrong was a fine gunsmith. He was a very good carver, and he made beautiful inlays and large patch boxes. His engraving is very good. He was, however, one of the makers who developed a design and then made many guns prac-

tically the same. When he did change a detail, it was only a minor detail. Then he used the new version for a very long time before making another change.

We are studying nine guns by this man; four are illustrated. All nine are signed on the barrel in script "John Armstrong," and five of these signatures appear on a brass plate let into the barrel. In addition, seven of the locks are signed "J A," and one gun is signed in full on the lock. This detail which was also used by Andrew Kopp is one of many indications of a close association between the two men. I believe that Andrew Kopp was a somewhat earlier maker than John Armstrong, and I suspect that John Armstrong learned the trade from Andrew Kopp who, as I have said before, probably learned the trade from George Eister. There are also definite similarities in John Armstrong's rifles and rifles by Nathaniel Rowe and Daniel Marker which we will discuss with the work of these men.

John Armstrong made beautiful patch boxes. They do not have many piercings—generally three—although two of these rifles have five piercings each. He made a rather large stock and a very large patch box that nearly covers the side of the stock. His patch boxes are beautifully designed with the outline formed by the engraved details. John Armstrong was a master engraver in both design and execution. The four patch boxes illustrated are very similar in engraved design. Four others have heads like Nos. 205 and 208. Rifle No. 206 is the only one of the nine that has this type of head. One other has a head like No. 207. Four other patch box lids are engraved similarly to Nos. 205, 206, and 208; and all of these are engraved similarly to the Kopp Rifle No. 203. One other lid is engraved like No. 207 which is somewhat similar to the Kopp gun No. 201. Five others have upper and lower plates like Nos. 205 and 206; and rifle No. 208 is identical to these except that it has two more piercings in the plates. The upper and lower plates on No. 207 are similar to those by Andrew Kopp. The engraving on all of these elements is very good but very much the same.

All nine side plates are very similar in outline, and all are held fast to the stock by a screw near the rear. In outline these side plates are very similar to those on most Andrew Kopp guns, although Andrew Kopp's are broader. One side plate not shown displays engraving similar to Nos. 205, 206, and 208. Number 207 is the only side plate with that particular type of engraving. Three guns not illustrated have side plates engraved almost exactly like Andrew Kopp's guns Nos. 202 and 203.

John Armstrong designed and engraved very beautiful, although somewhat standardized, inlays and brass mounts. All nine guns have nicely engraved toe plates, and two of these are pierced. Four of these nine guns have twelve or more silver inlays. Like the patch boxes, all of these inlays are beautifully engraved. The four guns that have twelve or more inlays have eight-pointed stars as rear key plates. Another design is utilized for the three forward key plates on each of these stocks, but the design is the same from gun to gun. Six of the guns have little heart inlays to the rear of the lock and side plates—the same inlay in the same place as Andrew Kopp's. Seven guns also have a large silver oval inlaid on the cheek piece. These ovals are extremely broad—in fact, almost round. Most gunsmiths inlaid an elongated oval here if they used an oval at all. John Armstrong engraved a beautiful American Eagle on this oval. The eagles on Nos. 205,

206, and 208 are very similar in design and engraving. Two of these eagles have "Liberty" engraved on them like on No. 205. Two rifles have large silver inlays to the rear of the barrel tang of basically the same design as the carving at this position on seven others. Two guns not shown have engraving on the butt plate that is very similar to Nos. 205 and 208. Six of the nine rifles have a piece of iron keyed into the heel of the butt plate to retard wear. This shows best in the photograph of No. 208.

John Armstrong was just as good a stocker and carver as he was a metal worker. He used good to extremely fine curly maple in all his guns. In fact, he was one of the gunsmiths who used the best curly maple at times. He made a long slender gun with the slenderness accentuated by very fine forestock molding and a pronounced comb. The carved detail extending back from the front of the comb on both sides of the stock accentuates the high comb and carries the wrist down toward the butt. The very fine relief carving forward of the cheek piece and forward of the patch box is practically identical on all nine guns. It shows best in the photographs of gun No. 208. This carving and the little detail above it which accentuates the high comb are quite beautifully executed. Seven of these guns have good relief carving to the rear of the rear ramrod pipe in one of two types of design. Three others also have a carved detail in front of the side and lock plates adjacent to the barrel as on Nos. 205 and 208. All nine guns have a nice high cheek piece with a simple molding on the edge. All nine also have a segment of an oval under the cheek piece, and eight of them have cross-hatching in this segment. His carving to the rear of the cheek piece is always very similar in design. It is beautifully executed in high relief and consists of nicely flowing C-scrolls. All nine rifles are well covered with carving in this area. Two others are carved like No. 206, and No. 208 is identical with just a slight addition. Two carved details in this area are identical to No. 205. Rifle No. 207 varies slightly here, and one other gun is very similar to it but also slightly different. John Armstrong was a master carver. His beautifully designed and extremely well executed carving flows in unusually graceful curves standing in high relief.

I definitely consider John Armstrong one of the high quality makers of the Golden Age even though I prefer the fine gunsmiths who changed their designs more frequently. Most men who did not vary their designs were not superb workmen, and their designs are usually stilted. John Armstrong's workmanship is magnificent, and his designs are just about perfection. I cannot overemphasize the beauty of his rifles.

No. 205 has unusually fine curly maple in the stock. It has thirteen beautifully designed and engraved silver inlays including an eagle on the cheek piece with the word "Liberty" above it. There are three piercings in the toe plate. This is a beautiful Kentucky from every aspect.

No. 206 is another fine Armstrong gun even though it has only two silver inlays and not as fine curly maple as the last gun we discussed.

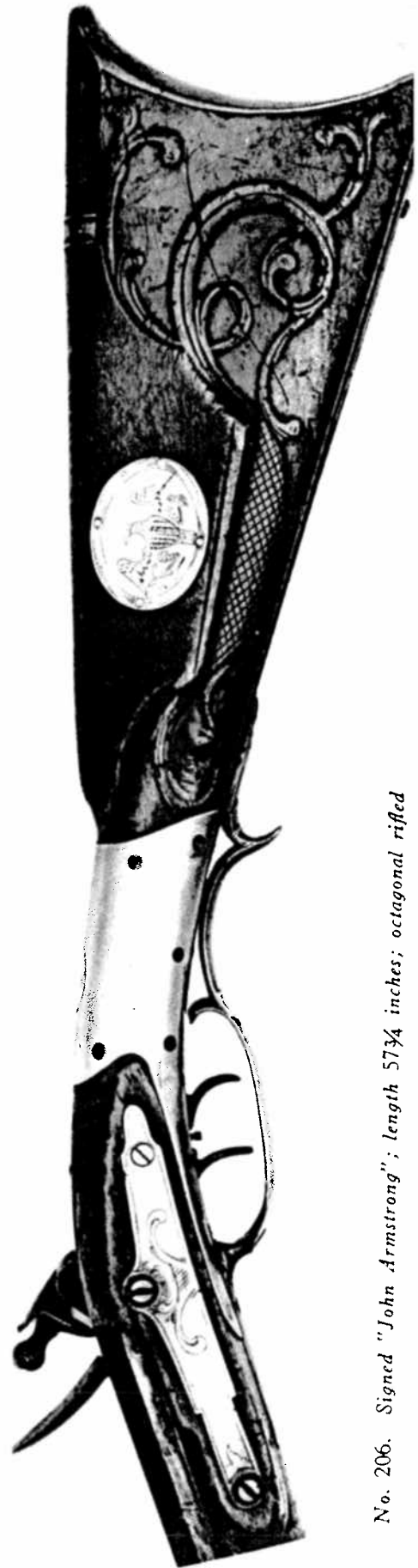
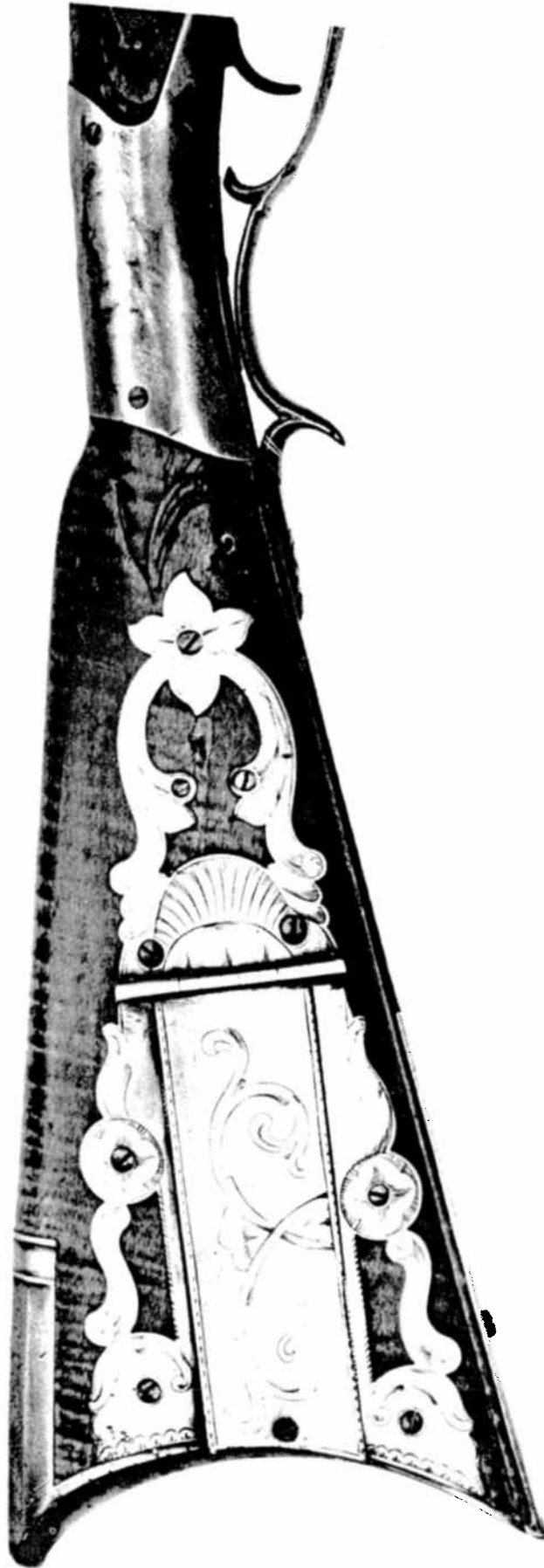
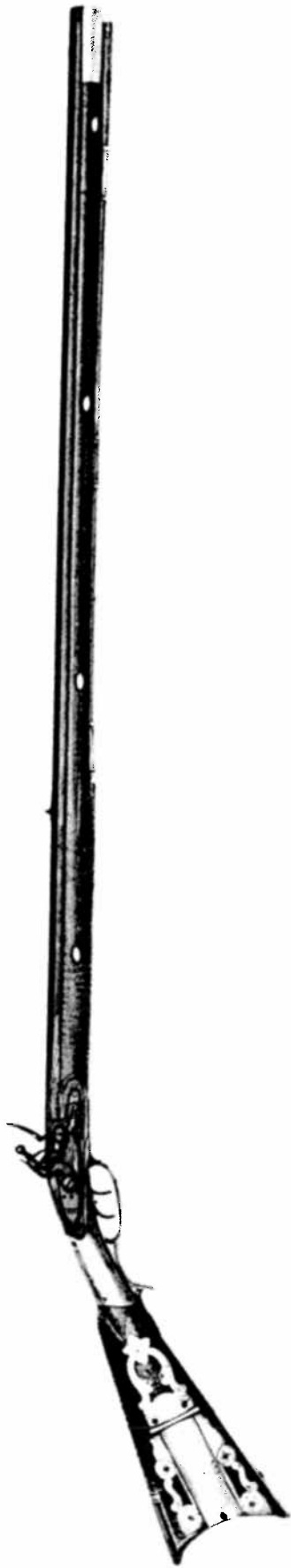
No. 207 is one of the plainer Armstrong guns with an unusual head to the patch

box. It has no silver inlays. The side plate is entirely different from the rest in engraved treatment. This is a good gun although not as good as either of the previous two.

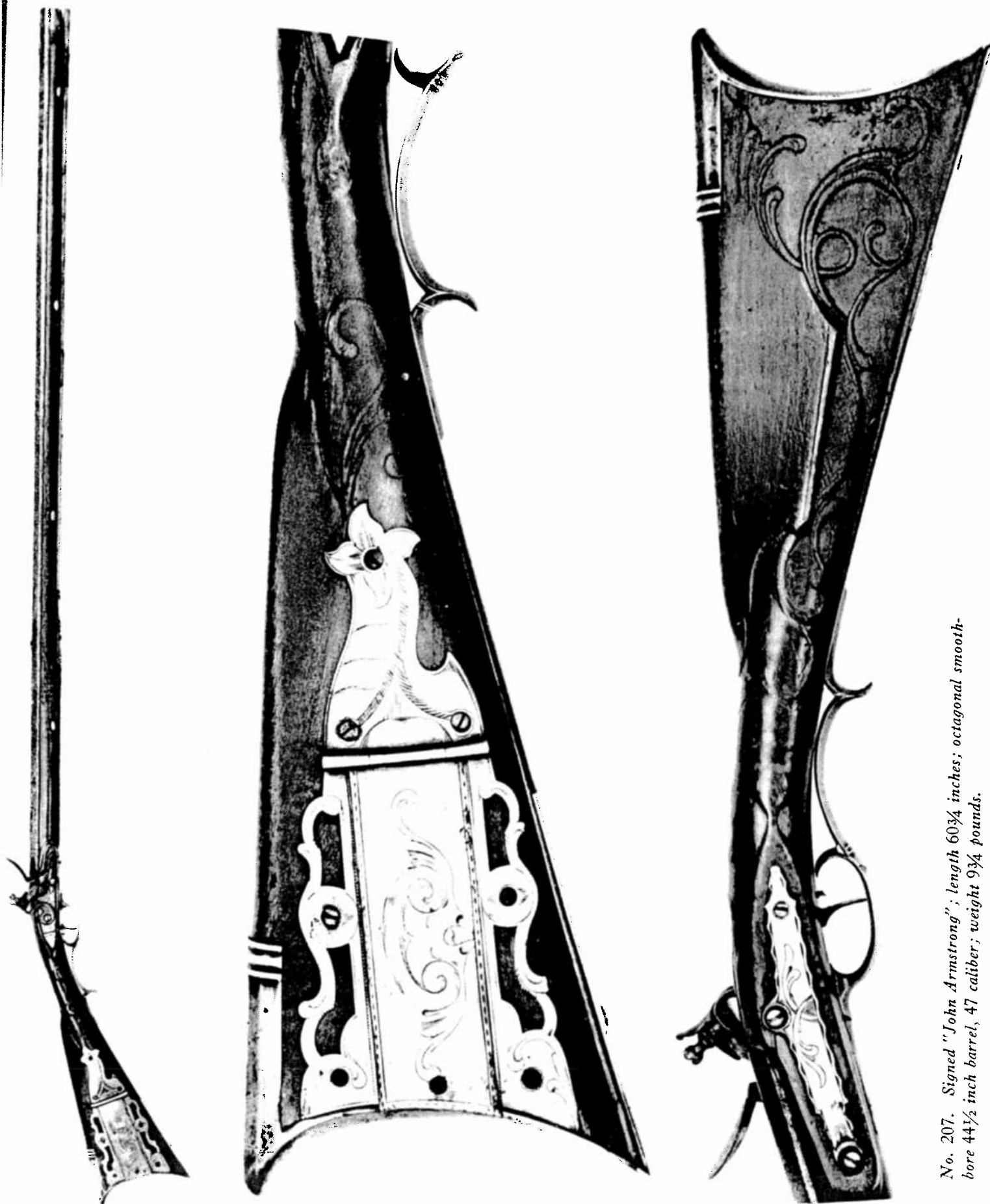
No. 208 is quite a glorious Armstrong gun with magnificent curly maple in the stock. It has twelve beautifully designed and engraved silver inlays. The carving is as crisp as the day it left the hand of the maker. In fact, this rifle is in surprisingly fine condition for a gun of this period. One could search a long time before finding a more beautiful Kentucky rifle.



No. 205. Signed "John Armstrong"; length 59 inches; octagonal rifled  $42\frac{3}{4}$  inch barrel, 53 caliber; weight  $11\frac{1}{2}$  pounds.

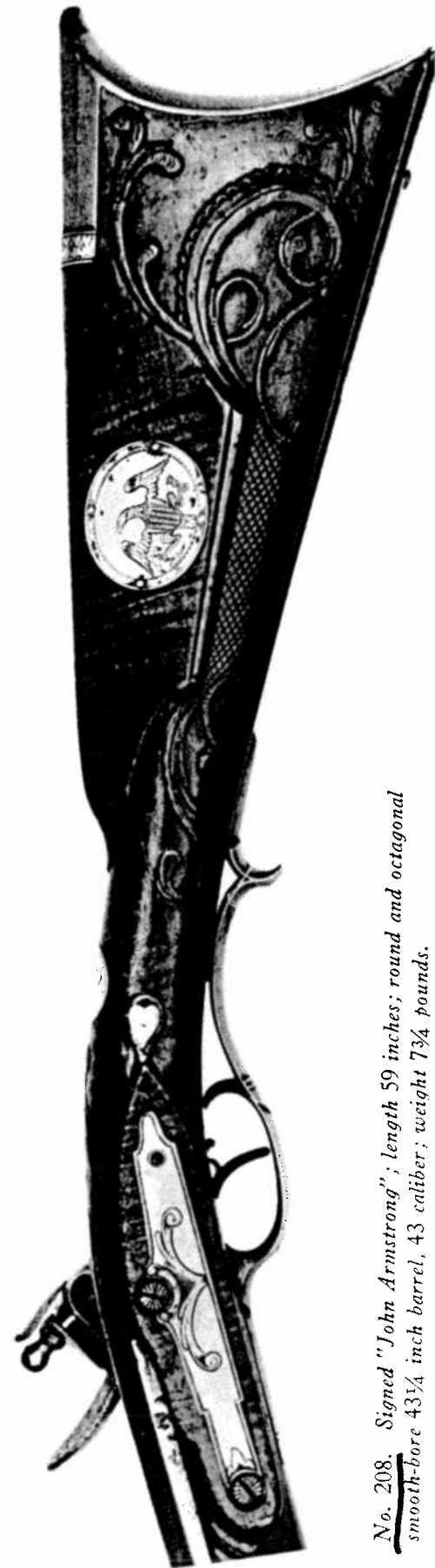


No. 206. Signed "John Armstrong"; length  $57\frac{3}{4}$  inches; octagonal rifled



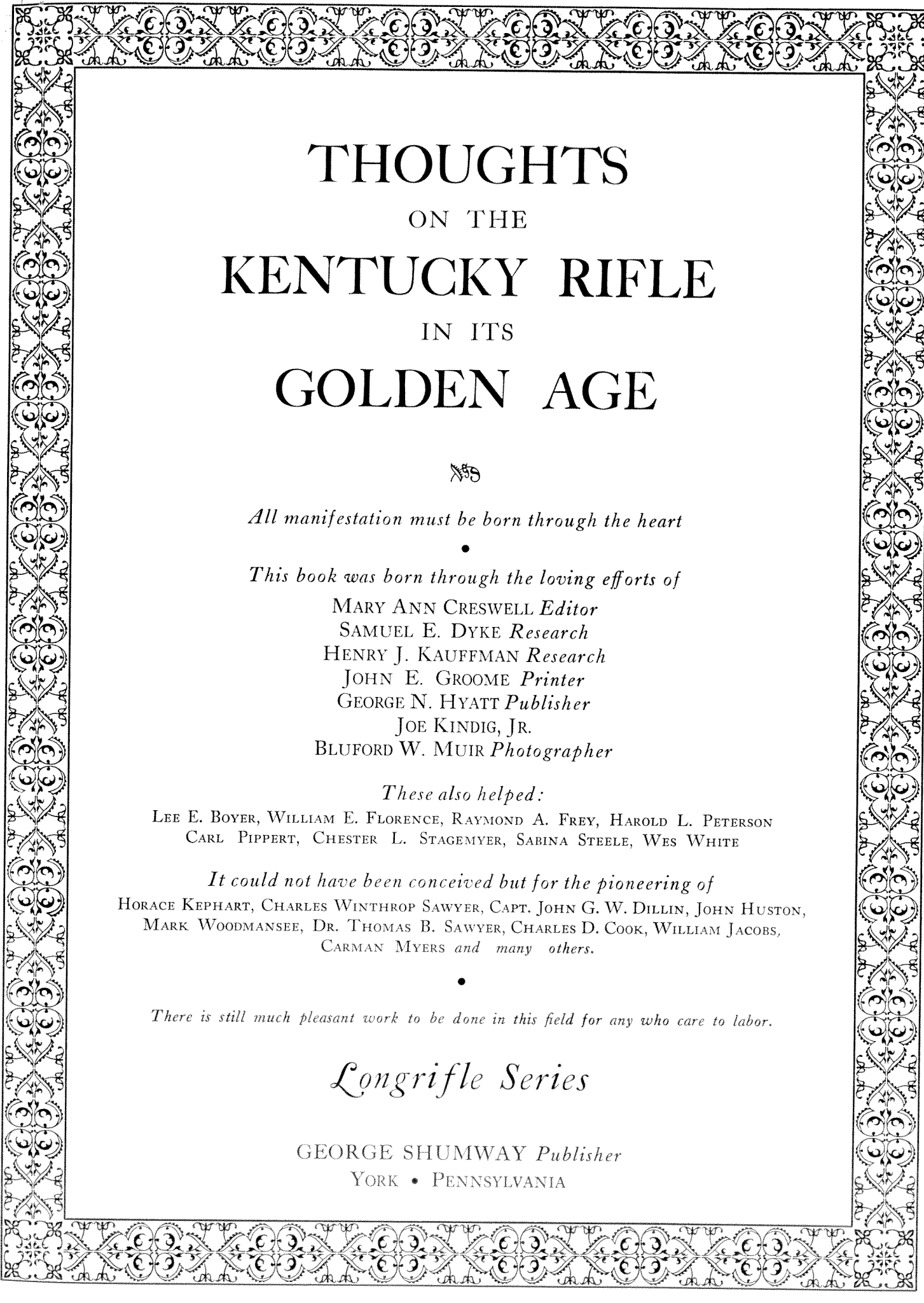
No. 207. Signed "John Armstrong"; length  $60\frac{3}{4}$  inches; octagonal smooth-bore  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inch barrel, 47 caliber; weight  $9\frac{3}{4}$  pounds.





No. 208. Signed "John Armstrong"; length 59 inches; round and octagonal smooth-bore  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inch barrel, 43 caliber; weight  $7\frac{3}{4}$  pounds.





# THOUGHTS ON THE KENTUCKY RIFLE IN ITS GOLDEN AGE



*All manifestation must be born through the heart*



*This book was born through the loving efforts of*

MARY ANN CRESWELL *Editor*  
SAMUEL E. DYKE *Research*  
HENRY J. KAUFFMAN *Research*  
JOHN E. GROOME *Printer*  
GEORGE N. HYATT *Publisher*  
JOE KINDIG, JR.  
BLUFORD W. MUIR *Photographer*

*These also helped:*

LEE E. BOYER, WILLIAM E. FLORENCE, RAYMOND A. FREY, HAROLD L. PETERSON  
CARL PIPPERT, CHESTER L. STAGEMYER, SABINA STEELE, WES WHITE

*It could not have been conceived but for the pioneering of*

HORACE KEPHART, CHARLES WINTHROP SAWYER, CAPT. JOHN G. W. DILLIN, JOHN HUSTON,  
MARK WOODMANSEE, DR. THOMAS B. SAWYER, CHARLES D. COOK, WILLIAM JACOBS,  
CARMAN MYERS and many others.



*There is still much pleasant work to be done in this field for any who care to labor.*

*Longrifle Series*

GEORGE SHUMWAY *Publisher*  
YORK • PENNSYLVANIA

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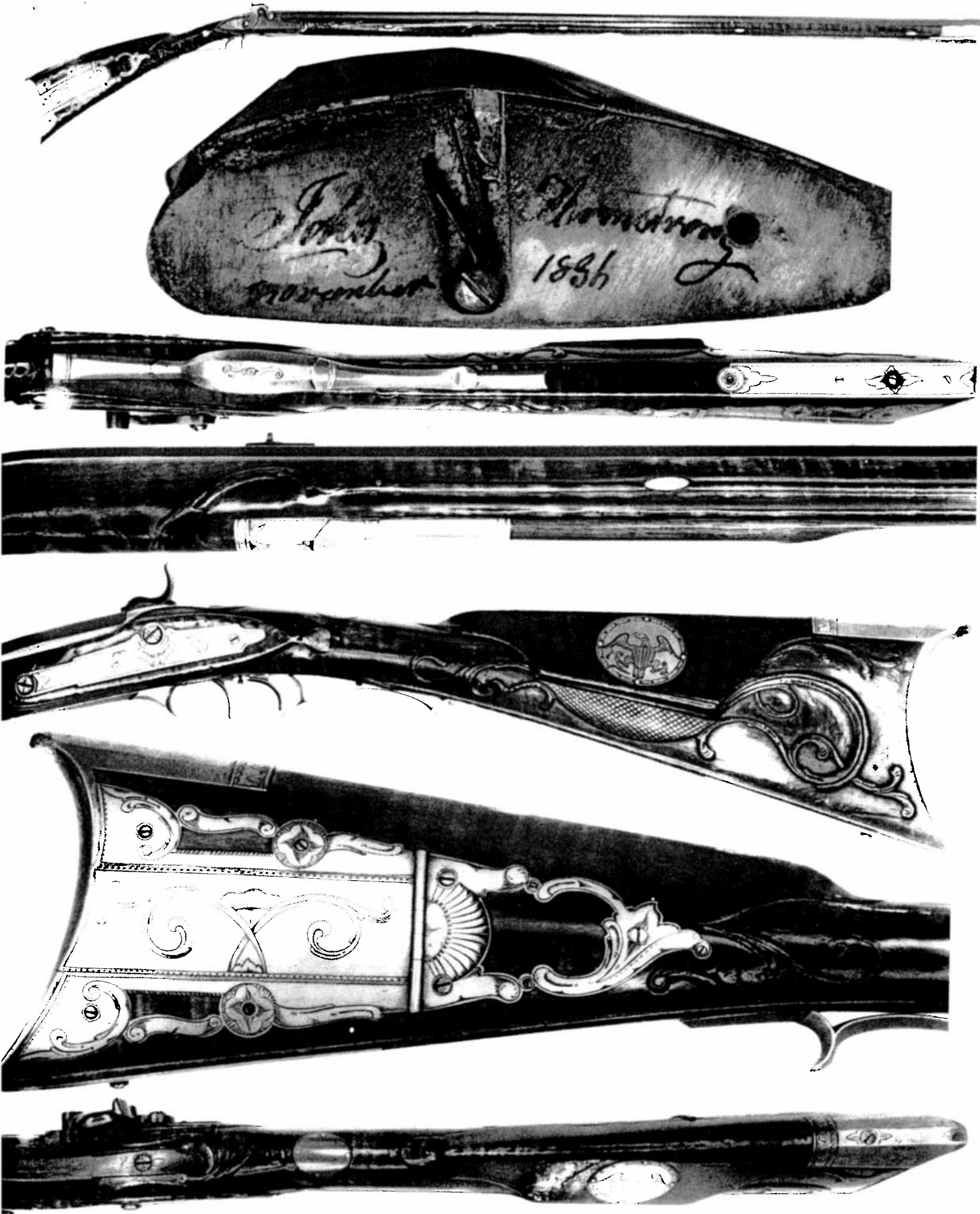
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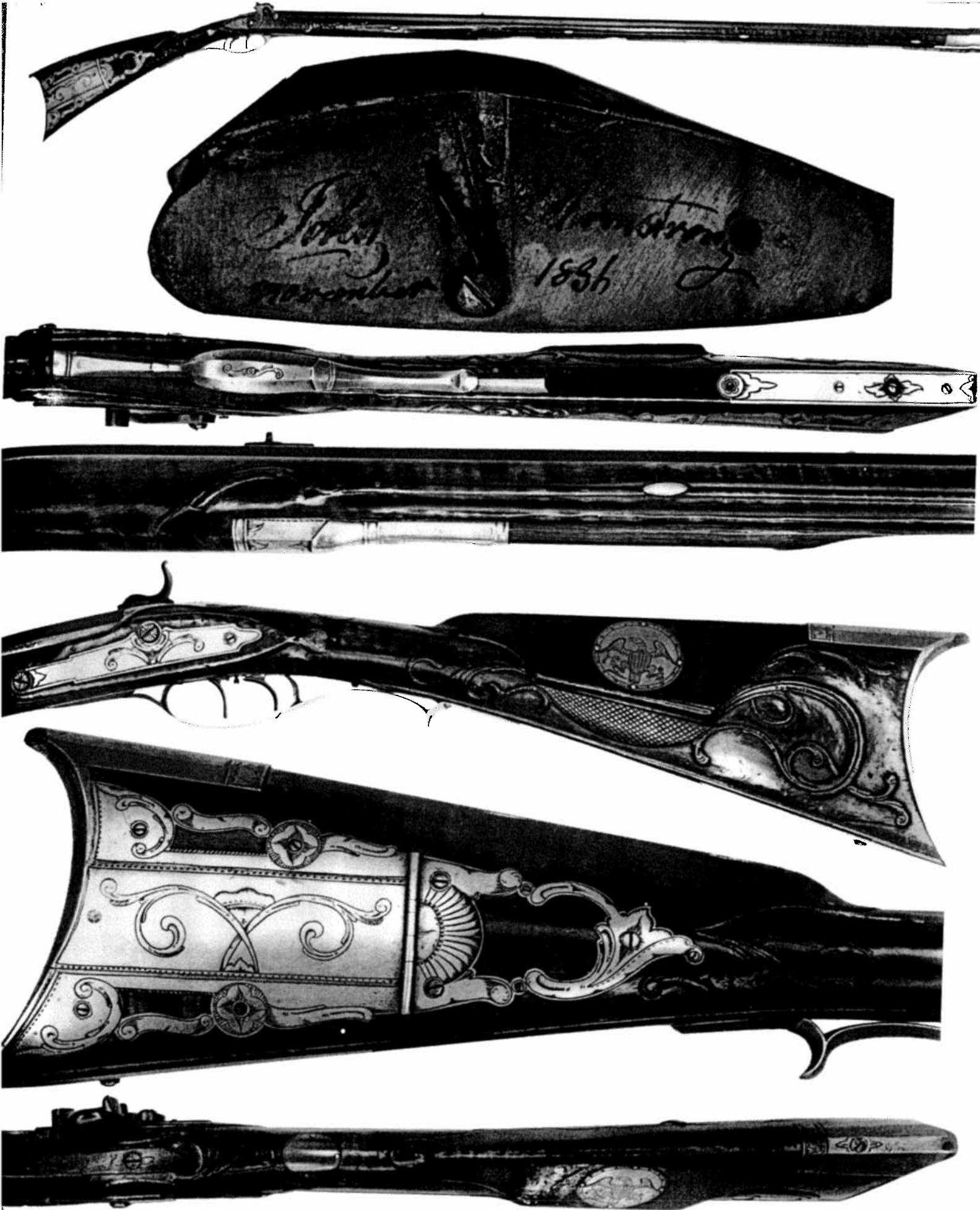
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John Armstrong, Emmitsburg



John Armstrong, Emmitsburg

GUNSMITHS OF MARYLAND  
FIRELOCK COLONIAL PERIOD  
THROUGH THE  
BREECH-LOADING PATENT MODELS  
FEATURING LONGRIFLES

BY:

DANIEL D. HARTZLER  
&  
JAMES B. WHISKER

OLD BEDFORD VILLAGE PRESS

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## FIREARM INFORMATION SHEET

COLLECTION NUMBER:

TYPE: *Kentucky Rifle*IGNITION SYSTEM: *Percussion - Lock certainly made by and signed JA*DATE OF MANUFACTURE: *Nov 1836 (Signed + Dated under butt cap)*PLACE OF MANUFACTURE: *~~Nagerstown~~ MD. EMMITS BERG, MD*MAKER: *John Armstrong*LENGTH OVERALL: *59"*BARREL LENGTH: *42 1/2*CALIBER: *.42*WOOD TYPE: *Curly Maple*MOUNTINGS: *Bronze & silver oval on cheekpiece, at wrist and silver hearts on levers. Inside of trigger guard stamped "JA" or*BARREL MARKINGS/DECORATION: *Engraved brass plate - John Armstrong*  
*This is a particularly slender and lightweight rifle.*STOCK MARKINGS/DECORATION: *Relieved in the best John Armstrong manner including relief around of lock panel both sides in front*

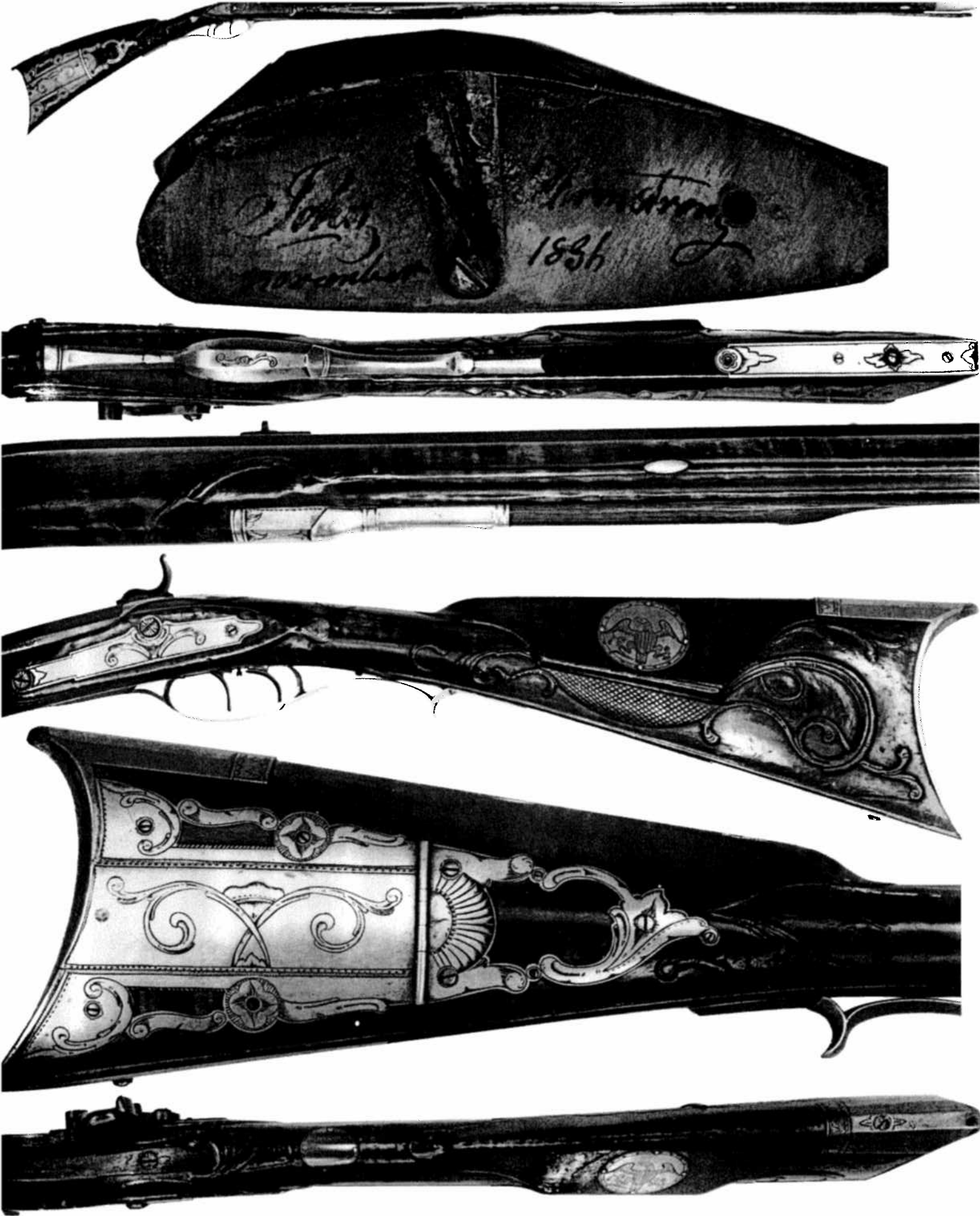
REPAIRS/RESTORATION: ✓

HISTORICAL/ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE: *The only dated John Armstrong rifle and one of a handful of dated Antietam of any type*PROVENANCE: *Original collector Al Sudbom - acquired from antique dealer in Baltimore MD*PUBLICATIONS: *Pictured in Armsmaker of Maryland by Harizer p. 46*  
*Pictured in KRA Newsletter Vol III No 2 p 11.*

COST:

ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE AND DATE:





John Armstrong, Emmitsburg

GUNSMITHS OF MARYLAND  
FIRELOCK COLONIAL PERIOD  
THROUGH THE  
BREECH-LOADING PATENT MODELS  
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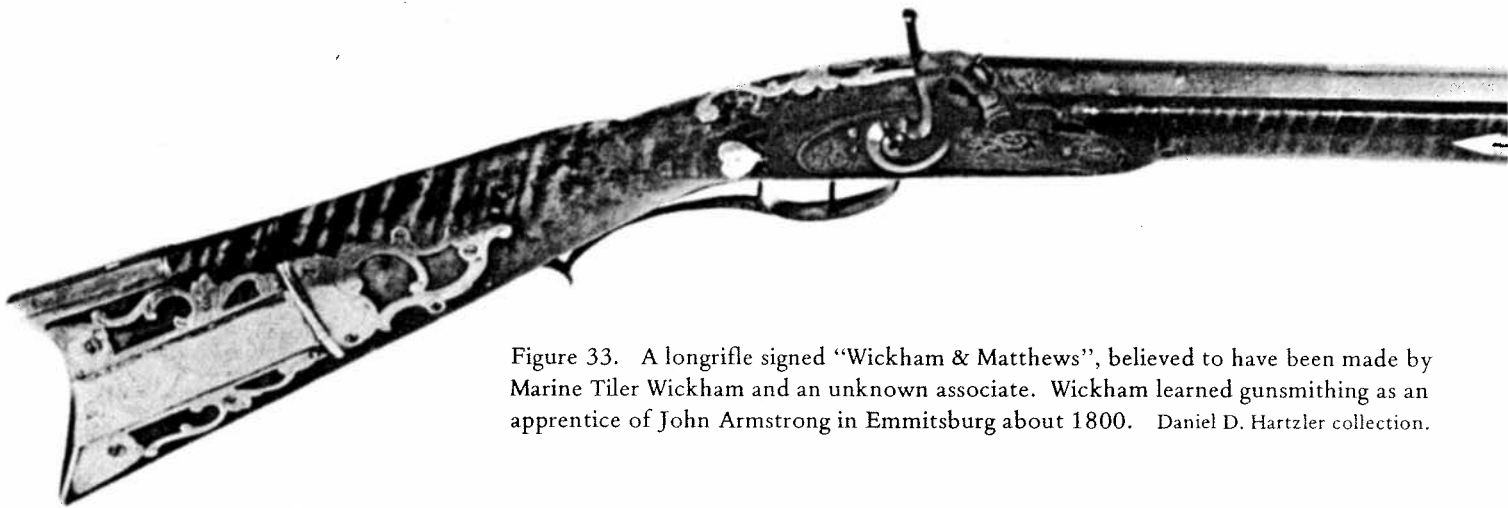


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Nathaniel Rowe's early rifles resemble those of his master. A few surviving specimens exhibit relief carving, patchbox design, furniture, and stock architecture similar to the work of Armstrong. On signed specimens the last name is spelled "Row" though the preferred spelling apparently is "Rowe." As time went on, N. Rowe made rifles more in keeping with the styles of the mid-nineteenth century. The relief and incised carving was dropped, the butt stocks became thinner and smaller in dimension from toe to heel, and when patchboxes were used they were of simpler design. Rowe lived to be 94 years of age and died in Emmitsburg in 1915. Thus master and apprentice together lived and worked in three centuries.

Peter White was an outstanding craftsman who is best known for his rifle-building in Bedford County, Pennsylvania, and later in Uniontown. It is probable that he spent his early working years in Emmitsburg and perhaps learned the trade there also. Peter White was born in late 1777 or during the first eight months of 1778, according to information on his tombstone in Uniontown. The federal census for Frederick County lists a Peter White as the head of a household in Emmitsburg in the year 1800. The name appears on the same page as that of John Armstrong and there are only three or four other names separating the two. Peter White's age is given as being less than 26. Peter White, the gunsmith, had a son, John, who was a gunsmith and who was born in Maryland in 1800 according to the 1860 federal census concerning John.

Two outstanding rifles made by Peter White have survived which fit with the Emmitsburg school and suggest that the maker worked in Emmitsburg. One of these, illustrated by Hetrick (1959),<sup>13</sup> is dated 1794. The other piece was illustrated by Kindig (1960).<sup>14</sup> If the date of 1794 is correct, then this rifle was made by White when he was 16 years of age. Though an apprentice usually did not sign rifles while serving as an apprentice, it is not impossible that he made this piece at an early age. The apprenticeship system was not rigidly controlled by a guild, and a lenient master might very well allow an apprentice to sign a rifle, perhaps for his own personal use.

Peter White did not own any property while in Emmitsburg, if indeed he was there, nor did he own property later in Bedford or Uniontown. White arrived in Colerain Township, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, in 1806, and immediately went to work at gunsmithing. It is reasonable to suppose that he worked in Emmitsburg until moving to Bedford.

Little is known about two of John Armstrong's apprentices, John Blackburn and George Piper. A beautiful relief-carved longrifle is known bearing the signature of Jacob Sell, the younger, of Littlestown, Pennsylvania, on the barrel, and the name "G. Piper" on the lockplate. The work is done in a style similar to that of Armstrong and does not appear to be by the hand of Sell. What happened to Blackburn after he finished his apprenticeship is unknown.



# ARMS MAKERS *of* MARYLAND

by DANIEL D. HARTZLER

*Longrifle Series*

GEORGE SHUMWAY PUBLISHER  
YORK • PENNSYLVANIA

November 15, 1978

Dear Freddie,

I am really sorry to have taken so long to answer your letter. But I'm delighted you are enjoying the Armstrong---I am glad it has found such a good home! As for the articles Dad or I have written on Armstrong, there is really only one, and that is the one which appeared in the KRA Newsletter a year or so back. If you don't have a copy of that newsletter I imagine Ron Gabel could get you one.

Most of the photographs of this rifle and others we have were taken either by Dad or myself. I am not sure what specific photographs you were asking about; if you let me know the type of view you are referring to I will see if I can find some copies around my place. Since Dad is now traveling about the country in a travel trailer, he has cut down on most of the photographs he has and probably doesn't have the negatives. Nevertheless, tell me what you are looking for and I will see if we have anything available.

As for the refinements on percussion Armstrongs as opposed to flintlocks, there is no hard and fast rule. The refinements present on your rifle which are not present on many of the flintlocks, are, to the best of my memory, the Gadroon or "Wave" carving ahead of the lock and lockbolt panels, the engraving on the underside of the trigger guard and initials J.A. on the inside, the engraving of the screwhead in the tang and the screwhead in the forward extension of the butt plate, as well as the engraving on the forward extension; that is about all I can remember just offhand. Of course the major feature of this rifle, as you know, is the signature and date on the wood underneath the butt plate.

I almost forgot. Although there is only the one article that I know of, there are several pictures and several references to your specific rifle in Don Hartzler's book on Maryland Gunsmiths. This book also has a considerable amount of general information on John Armstrong.

Again I am very, very sorry I have not written before. I have meant to a number of times and have just not gotten to it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sallie".

A. M. Sullivan, Jr.  
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