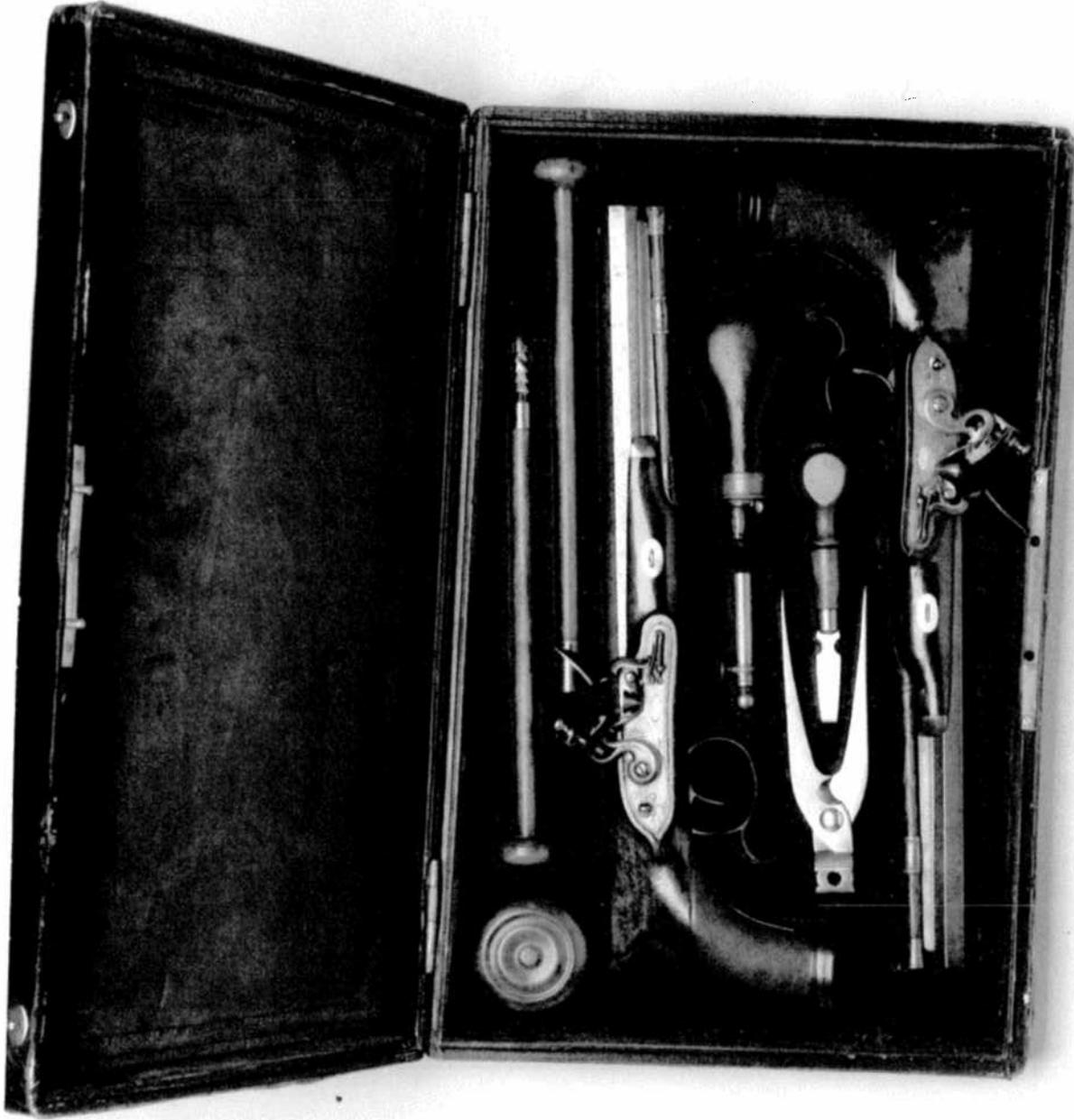


## **Provenance of the James Haslett Dueling Pistol Set**

**The set was consigned to The Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland by the descendants of the original owner sometime during the 1970s. They sold the set to collector/dealer Tom Seymour who also owned the Renwick/Haslett set of dueling pistols. Mr Seymour sold this set to renowned collector Charles Dupont on September 16, 1978 as noted on his inventory card. In 2009 he consigned the set along with several other guns to John Gangel for private sale only who subsequently sold this set to collector Greg Lampe.**



Meber ~~~ Das Huzlett Ballo 1713



## **James Haslett, Baltimore, Maryland Gunmaker**

**1773 - 1833**

James Haslett is considered one of the finest American makers of flintlock guns of all types and examples of his dueling pistols are very rare. He was born in Ireland in 1773, the son of a Presbyterian family. He was a man of twenty- five when he came to U.S. and had presumably finished his apprenticeship in London as he had come over from Ireland. He was apprenticed to a gunsmith, whom he termed “one of the finest gun makers in Europe” which is felt could be H.W. Mortimer as his workmanship shows a similar style.

Little is known about Haslett’s early life. He came to the U.S. with his wife, Mary about 1798 and originally settled in Philadelphia, PA. They were to have three daughters and one son who was his namesake. Haslett was apparently brought over from Europe to work as superintendent of the arms factory of Robert McCormick of Philadelphia who was producing muskets for the state of Virginia and who was likely was a relative. McCormick went bankrupt in 1801. Haslett went to the gentleman who purchased the equipment and offered to finish the contract , he was hired and after its completion was hired by the state as an inspector of arms for Pennsylvania. He first set up a gun business in Philadelphia for a short time but due to the established competition decided to move to Baltimore for better opportunities.

By 1803 had moved to Baltimore, here he set up his own shop first on North Gay Street, then moved to No. 4 Light Street and in 1805 purchased his first property at 28 Water Street where he was to dwell and work for the rest of his life. In November of that year he placed his 3<sup>rd</sup> ad in the” Federal Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser” advising to the public he had opened his shop at the “Sign of the Golden Gun.” Haslett, who advertised dueling pistols, both imported and of his own manufacture, lived and worked in an area where dueling was all too often a “rational” response from a gentleman. Though Baltimore could not compare to the duelling fever found in New Orleans, Charleston, Georgia or Alabama, he probably had ample local business. The city doubled from 1790 to 1800 and nearly doubled again by 1810 giving Haslett many new customers for his growing business.

The quality of his workmanship soon earned him an excellent reputation in both Baltimore and Philadelphia and he continued to make military arms for the state of Pennsylvania and Maryland as well as all types of high quality arms for the civilian market. By 1810 he was able to list the governor of Maryland and Virginia as well as state senators as customers. His dueling pistols not only displayed gold inlays and elaborate engraving but had two new features, the Damascus twist barrel and the lockplate of carbon steel. Both were progressive innovations and he was quick to point these out in his advertisements and to prominent customers. During the War of 1812 he was instrumental in purchasing arms for the state of Maryland while serving as a major of the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Maryland Militia and was thereafter always referred to as Major Haslett in the local newspapers.

He purchased several properties in the downtown section of the city over the years and many times turned them for a quick profit. By 1822 he had helped his son start a successful grocery business as his son did apparently not wish to follow in the gun trade.

In later years he retired to his estate at Drum Point, Calvert County, Maryland. He died a very wealthy man on August 15, 1833 at age 60. His wife, Mary had died on May 17, 1825 and they are buried together at the local cemetery.

BY RICHARD H. RANDALL, JR.

*Englewood, New Jersey*

## BALTIMORE GUNSMITH

### *Part I—His Life*

In spite of the vast number of records concerning early American gunsmiths, few have emerged as personalities in the scattered publications. Few enough, indeed, have had even the characteristics of their work summarized. James Haslett of Baltimore is one instance where existing documents throw interesting light both on his gun business and on the personality of the man, who came to this country specifically to make arms. He was well educated, though probably at home, well trained in his profession, and led a very successful life. Yet in his later years, Haslett gave up his chosen profession to try his luck in other spheres.

James Haslett was born in 1773 in Ireland, the son of a Presbyterian family. We know nothing of the family except that his brother William S. Haslett was also in this country in 1833.<sup>1</sup> James came to America in about 1798 with his wife, Mary, and settled in Philadelphia. He was then a man of twenty-five and had presumably finished his apprenticeship in gunsmithing in England a few years earlier, because he came to America from Ireland.

Haslett was apprenticed to a gunsmith, whom he termed "one of the first gun makers in Europe," in the art of producing both "military and birding guns." Though it is possible that his apprenticeship was in Ireland, it seems for several reasons more likely that it was in England. The phrase "one of the first gun makers in Europe" could hardly be applied to any Irish gunsmith working in the last years of the eighteenth century, while it most surely could have applied to London makers like John Manton, Durs Egg, or H. W.

Mortimer. The striking similarity between Haslett's work and that turned out in London shops allows one to surmise, in the dearth of any documentation, that his training was in that city.

Haslett came to America to become superintendent of the arms factory run by Robert McCormick in Philadelphia. McCormick's first contract for 3,000 muskets was let in 1798,<sup>2</sup> and since a letter of 1801 states that Haslett made the model for the McCormick arms "with his own hands" and superintended the making of all arms delivered by McCormick, it is probable that he arrived in this country in 1798 or earlier. Between May and July, 1801, McCormick had been put in jail for bankruptcy, and his factory and tools sold. The muskets turned out under Haslett's direction at the McCormick works were standard 1798 contract muskets of good quality. The specimen illustrated (*Fig. 1*) is from the collection of Joseph Kindig, Jr., and bears the date 1800 on the face of the lock as well as the name *McCormick*.

After McCormick failed, Haslett was not idle as a letter from John Clarke to the Governor of Virginia of July 23, 1801, shows:

"In my route through Maryland, I went to Tanney Town [*sic*], had an interview with Mr. Thos. Gibson and examined the arms he offered for sale to our Executive. They are of indifferent quality, considerably inferior to those furnished by Mr. McCormick. He informed me that his lowest price for them was twelve dollars per stand. . . . Having travelled in quest of workmen to every place in Maryland and Pennsylvania

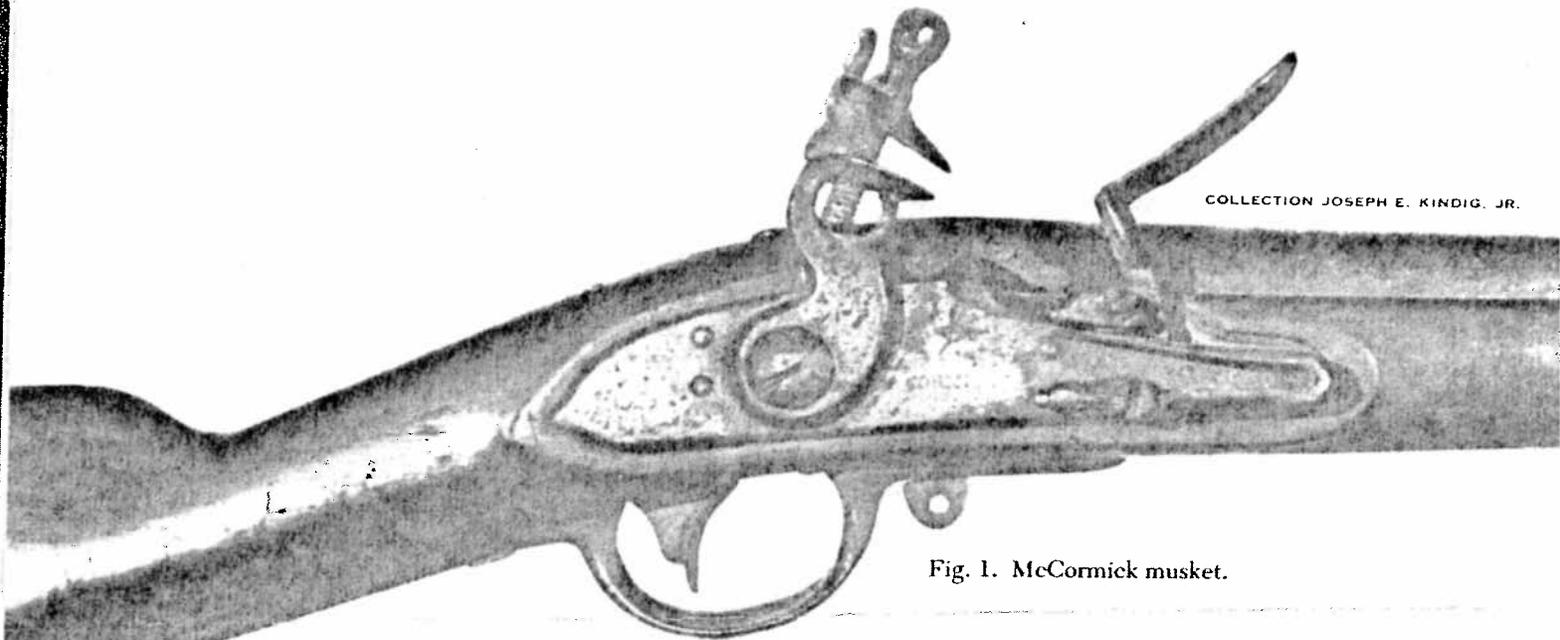


Fig. 1. McCormick musket.

where I understood arms were manufactured, I had an opportunity of seeing specimens of their workmanship, and find that the arms manufactured in and about this city [Philadelphia] are generally of a quality superior to those I have seen elsewhere, the artists being generally more skillful. A Mr. Miles, of this city, who purchased McCormick's implements, materials, and unfinished work at a very low price, I understand, is now with you. There is a man here by the name of Haslett who was brought by McCormick from Ireland. He has had the chief management of McCormick's manufactory, and wishes to be employed at the Virginia Manufactory as under Master Armourer. He showed me some specimens of his work, with which I was much pleased. General Shee recommended him highly, both as a skillful artist and a good citizen. The workmen who formerly worked at McCormick's Manufactory are much attached to him. Mr. Haslett's terms are \$15 per week and his rations found. In the hope of being employed in our manufactory he wishes to make 600 stands of arms for our State, to keep him employed until our works are ready for operation. He has spoken to General Shee and myself on the subject, and General Shee requests me to write to you for information whether, if Mr. Haslett will make 600 stands, which he proposes to do on the same terms upon which you contract for all the rest advertised for, he might not be employed to make them. He promises in the event of being employed to make them, that not a stand shall be inferior to the model for the McCormick arms, which model was made by his own hands. If he gets that employment we may hereafter have it in our power to employ him, if his assistance shall be required. On this subject you will please inform General Shee, as I do not expect to return here in less than three or four weeks.

"Should you think proper to give Mr. Haslett the employment he desires, he will afford employment to workmen lately discharged from McCormick's works, who for want of employment may soon be widely dispersed and so engaged by the person who undertakes the supply of arms advertised by our State, in which case they perhaps could not leave that employment until the completion of the contract made by them. I have seen those artificers; they are willing to go immediately to Richmond on the terms on which they were employed by McCormick, but having at present no employment, they cannot remain here without it until our works are ready for them. I have made no other promise to them than if I could not get other workmen in the Eastern States equally skillful on lowest terms, I would contract with them on my return to this city."<sup>3</sup>

The immediate results of Clarke's letter are apparent in a second letter of September 25, 1801:

"I found the wages of such men lower in Massachusetts and Rhode Island than in any other of the States. I therefore engaged in those states all the workmen of the desired description I could, and on my return back again to the works I first visited, the workmen were induced to fall in their prices rather than not be employed when I informed them of the low terms on which I had already engaged similar artists, in the two states above mentioned. Nineteen of the above 68 workmen are now employed by Mr. Haslett at Philadelphia in the manufacture of 600 stand of arms undertaken by him for this state at the works which were formerly Mr. McCormick's. The greater number of these men are natives of Ireland; some of them are Pennsylvanians. I engaged them at the same rates which Mr. Haslett is now giving them which are rather lower than the wages formerly given to them by

Mr. McCormick. All the others of the 68 I engaged in the New England States; they are native Americans and their wages are rather lower than those I engaged in and about Philadelphia. About half the number of the New England artificers served apprenticeship in the Springfield manufactory of arms, and about half of who are natives of Connecticut."<sup>4</sup>

The work on the Virginia contract must have occupied Haslett into the following year, and it was probably at this time that he was appointed Inspector of Arms to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by Governor McKean.<sup>5</sup> In 1803 we find him listed for the first time in the Philadelphia Directory as "Haslett, James, gunmaker above 511 N. Second." There is no known work of Haslett's marked *Philadelphia*, and we can assume, since he moved to Baltimore in June of 1803, that he did not find private gunsmithing very satisfactory in Philadelphia, probably because of the established competition.

During his five year's residence in Philadelphia, Haslett's family had grown with the addition of his eldest daughter Mary and his son James, Jr. This family of four travelled to Baltimore and after finding a house and shop at 64 North Gay Street, Haslett placed his first advertisement in the *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser* on June 3, 1803. The ad is typical of the times and reviews the gunsmith's background concisely for his patrons (*Fig. 2*). His statement that his work was equal to any imported was hardly an idle boast, and his patronage soon included men like Edward Lloyd, the Governor of Maryland, who was used to importing his arms from London directly.<sup>6</sup>

In 1804 (April 20, 23 and 27; May 1 and 3) Haslett placed this second ad in the Baltimore papers: "Gun-Maker—James Haslett, Gun-Maker, begs leave to inform the public, that he has removed from No. 64, North Gay Street to No. 4, Light Street, nearly opposite Mr. Bryden's coffee house, where he requests continuance of that liberal encouragement he has received from the spirited citizens of Baltimore, since his commencement in this city, and assures them that he will endeavor to merit a continuance of their favors."

His name appears also for the first time in the *Baltimore Directory* for 1804, where the address is incorrectly given as "Light Street, West side—144."

On October 25, 1805, Haslett purchased his first property in the city, a plot 17 by 95 feet on Water Street, and in November of the following year his third advertisement appeared in the *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser* advising the public that he had opened his shop at the "Sign of the Golden Gun" (*Fig. 3*). When Haslett was established on Water Street, where he was to dwell and work for the rest of his life, Baltimore was a city of between 29,000 and 33,000 inhabitants. It was rapidly expanding, for the

population had doubled between 1790 and 1800 and nearly doubled again by 1810. A glance at the city directories for the early years of the century shows, however, surprisingly few entries for gunsmiths. In 1802 only five firms advertised, and by 1810 only nine other names had been added to the list. Some gunsmiths undoubtedly never placed ads in the newspapers or had themselves listed in the directories. But the majority of good quality gun-makers, like John Stewart and Michael Lenz, who worked in the same block as Haslett on Light Street, could be counted in this small number. The major competition was from hardware importers like John Walraven, of Baltimore Street, who continually advertised "from London and Liverpool—fowling pieces, double and single barreled in cases complete from 50 to 90 dollars. Single ditto common and good from 5 to 55 dollars highly finished."<sup>7</sup>

There is little documentation for the years 1806-1810 to throw light on Haslett's gun business. In that time, however, three more daughters, Sarah, Emily, and Eliza, had been added to the family. In 1810 Haslett was still considering the manufacture of military fire-arms, though he had long since stopped advertising to make them in Baltimore, as the need in the intervening years was not great. On December 29, 1810, he addressed a letter to the Governor of Virginia with proposals for taking over the Virginia Manufactory. The letter indicates an earlier similar proposal and also reveals Haslett's sound business sense:

"I had the honor of addressing a Letter to you on the 11th of January ult., with propositions for the manufacturing of Arms for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"Understanding that a Law was passed the last session of the Legislature authorizing you to receive proposals for the leasing of the Armory, I have taken the liberty of renewing my propositions.

"I will engage to supply the Commonwealth with as many Arms as they require, provided I may have the use of the buildings and Machinery of the Armory, rent free, which I will engage to keep in good repair during the term of the contract, decay, use and accidents excepted, on the same terms as the United States give to individuals for manufacturing different kinds of Arms. I will receive all the Stocks and unfinished parts of work that are now on hand at their proper value, provided I am permitted to work them in as part of the contract, I agree that the Commonwealth may deduct on delivery of each hundred Muskets, Pistols, or other arms the amount for the materials so purchased that have been wrought in said Guns, or Pistols, &c. The balance I will require immediate payment of, however, if there are an over proportion of any one particular part of work now on hand that I may not be obliged to discharge the person or persons employed in such works. I will require the indulgence

Mr. McCormick. All the others of the 68 I engaged in the New England States; they are native Americans and their wages are rather lower than those I engaged in and about Philadelphia. About half the number of the New England artificers served apprenticeship in the Springfield manufactory of arms, and about half of who are natives of Connecticut."<sup>4</sup>

The work on the Virginia contract must have occupied Haslett into the following year, and it was probably at this time that he was appointed Inspector of Arms to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by Governor McKean.<sup>5</sup> In 1803 we find him listed for the first time in the Philadelphia Directory as "Haslett, James, gunmaker above 511 N. Second." There is no known work of Haslett's marked *Philadelphia*, and we can assume, since he moved to Baltimore in June of 1803, that he did not find private gunsmithing very satisfactory in Philadelphia, probably because of the established competition.

During his five year's residence in Philadelphia, Haslett's family had grown with the addition of his eldest daughter Mary and his son James, Jr. This family of four travelled to Baltimore and after finding a house and shop at 64 North Gay Street, Haslett placed his first advertisement in the *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser* on June 3, 1803. The ad is typical of the times and reviews the gunsmith's background concisely for his patrons (*Fig. 2*). His statement that his work was equal to any imported was hardly an idle boast, and his patronage soon included men like Edward Lloyd, the Governor of Maryland, who was used to importing his arms from London directly.<sup>6</sup>

In 1804 (April 20, 23 and 27; May 1 and 3) Haslett placed this second ad in the Baltimore papers: "Gun-Maker—James Haslett, Gun-Maker, begs leave to inform the public, that he has removed from No. 64, North Gay Street to No. 4, Light Street, nearly opposite Mr. Bryden's coffee house, where he requests continuance of that liberal encouragement he has received from the spirited citizens of Baltimore, since his commencement in this city, and assures them that he will endeavor to merit a continuance of their favors."

His name appears also for the first time in the *Baltimore Directory* for 1804, where the address is incorrectly given as "Light Street, West side—144."

On October 25, 1805, Haslett purchased his first property in the city, a plot 17 by 95 feet on Water Street, and in November of the following year his third advertisement appeared in the *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser* advising the public that he had opened his shop at the "Sign of the Golden Gun" (*Fig. 3*). When Haslett was established on Water Street, where he was to dwell and work for the rest of his life, Baltimore was a city of between 29,000 and 33,000 inhabitants. It was rapidly expanding, for the

population had doubled between 1790 and 1800 and nearly doubled again by 1810. A glance at the city directories for the early years of the century shows, however, surprisingly few entries for gunsmiths. In 1802 only five firms advertised, and by 1810 only nine other names had been added to the list. Some gunsmiths undoubtedly never placed ads in the newspapers or had themselves listed in the directories. But the majority of good quality gun-makers, like John Stewart and Michael Lenz, who worked in the same block as Haslett on Light Street, could be counted in this small number. The major competition was from hardware importers like John Walraven, of Baltimore Street, who continually advertised "from London and Liverpool—fowling pieces, double and single barreled in cases complete from 50 to 90 dollars. Single ditto common and good from 5 to 55 dollars highly finished."<sup>7</sup>

There is little documentation for the years 1806-1810 to throw light on Haslett's gun business. In that time, however, three more daughters, Sarah, Emily, and Eliza, had been added to the family. In 1810 Haslett was still considering the manufacture of military fire-arms, though he had long since stopped advertising to make them in Baltimore, as the need in the intervening years was not great. On December 29, 1810, he addressed a letter to the Governor of Virginia with proposals for taking over the Virginia Manufactory. The letter indicates an earlier similar proposal and also reveals Haslett's sound business sense:

"I had the honor of addressing a Letter to you on the 11th of January ult., with propositions for the manufacturing of Arms for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"Understanding that a Law was passed the last session of the Legislature authorizing you to receive proposals for the leasing of the Armory, I have taken the liberty of renewing my propositions.

"I will engage to supply the Commonwealth with as many Arms as they require, provided I may have the use of the buildings and Machinery of the Armory, rent free, which I will engage to keep in good repair during the term of the contract, decay, use and accidents excepted, on the same terms as the United States give to individuals for manufacturing different kinds of Arms. I will receive all the Stocks and unfinished parts of work that are now on hand at their proper value, provided I am permitted to work them in as part of the contract, I agree that the Commonwealth may deduct on delivery of each hundred Muskets, Pistols, or other arms the amount for the materials so purchased that have been wrought in said Guns, or Pistols, &c. The balance I will require immediate payment of, however, if there are an over proportion of any one particular part of work now on hand that I may not be obliged to discharge the person or persons employed in such works. I will require the indulgence

served in the Baltimore archives is dated October 6, 1814, and is addressed to Samuel Hollingsworth Esq.:

"Dear Sir—Colonel Ragan of Genl. Stansburys Brigade can furnish the Committee of Vigilance & Safety with 600 Men for one day, to labour on the works for the defense of the City of Baltimore. James Haslett, *Brigade Major, 11th Brigade Milit.*"

In the same year, Haslett's listing in the directory at 28 Water Street reappeared and continued in all directories up to 1827. In 1814 he was a man of 41 years, apparently much respected in the city, and called "Major Haslett," as later newspaper references show. His gun business must still have been profitable, judging from his various investments in real estate. He purchased one lot in 1815, leased or mortgaged four in 1821, and bought two others in 1831 and 1833. In this period he also sold one lot and rented two others.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1822 directory there appears the following entry: "Haslett, James, gunsmith, 22 Water Street, and grocer, 82 Pratt dw. 22 Water." His apparent dissatisfaction with the remuneration of the gun business, in addition to his advance in years, had perhaps prompted Haslett to turn in a new direction. Possibly he felt that gunsmithing was not the ideal life for a city dweller in America, for his son did not follow in his footsteps in the arms trade. The double entries under Commerce or Grocer and Gunsmith continue in the directories of 1824 and 1827. In the later, an extra entry—"Haslett Jas. & Son, grocers 82 E. Pratt"—shows that young James Haslett probably had been running the grocery since its opening in 1822, while his father advised him and continued gunsmithing. In the next directory, 1829, there no longer appears a listing under gunsmith, and the lot on Water Street, formerly the Sign of the Golden Gun, is listed as a dwelling.

In 1825, 1827, and 1828 Haslett and his son signed petitions to the city fathers regarding weights, and in 1829 the firm of James Haslett and Son obtained a retail license.<sup>12</sup> The most interesting document of the period for the characterization of James Haslett is a letter to one of the Mayor's Committee written in 1830

"The Honbl. Jacob Small—Sir: The bearer Thomas Moore has been in the habit of selling Oranges and Lemons opposite my Store in Pratt Street. I believe him to be a quiet industrious Citizen, and if it is not contrary to the City Ordinances I have no objection to his continuing to sell for any time you may think proper. Respectfully your obed't Servt. James Haslett."

A new experiment was undertaken in 1831, and

James Haslett opened a clothing store at Pratt and South Streets, while James, Jr., continued in the grocery business. In 1832 "Major" Haslett received the honor of being appointed judge of the Sixth Election District of Baltimore during the debated reelection of Andrew Jackson.<sup>13</sup> His last daughter, Eliza, was married in 1833 to Andrew Meyer, about whom nothing is known except that he was a Catholic. In that same year James Haslett is listed merely as dwelling at 28 Water Street. He died on August 15, 1833, at his "Estate at Drum Point, Calvert County, Maryland."

Haslett was sixty when he died at his country estate. He was a man who had been trained by the best of his profession in England, manufactured arms for the State of Virginia, tried his skill in two of the east coast's largest cities, making all types of arms from pocket pistols to duellers and Kentucky rifles, and yet retired from gunsmithing to become a grocer and clothing merchant. Throughout he was an able man and a respected citizen, and apparently he died in affluence, if one were to judge by the properties he owned.

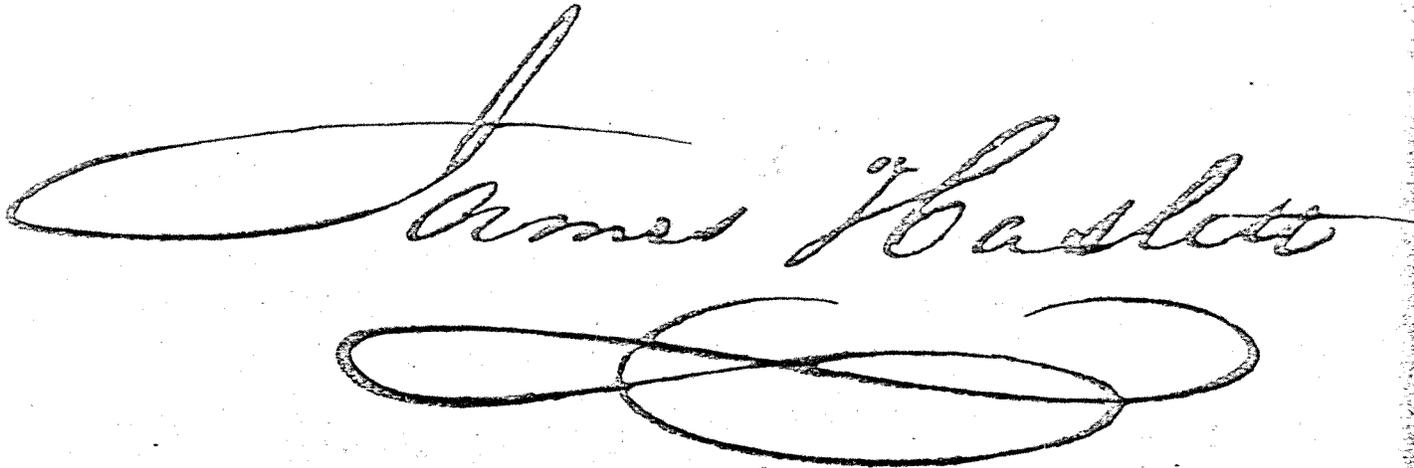
#### REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. William S. Haslett was his executor in 1833. He cannot have been identical with the merchant of Philadelphia, William Haslett, who came from Dumnicey, Ireland, and was also a Presbyterian, because he died in 1821. It is possible that they were cousins, however, and that William Haslett of Philadelphia arranged for James Haslett to come to Philadelphia to work with McCormick.
2. Major James E. Hicks, *Notes on United States Ordnance, Vol. I, Small Arms, 1776-1940* (Mount Vernon, N. Y., Published by the Author, 1946), p. 20. For a further discussion of McCormick, see: Harry C. Knode, "McCormick Pistols?" *Texas Gun Collector*, No. 48 (July, 1954).
3. L. D. Satterlee, *Hobbies Magazine* (January, 1935) (from *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, p. 236).
4. Satterlee, *op cit.*, p. 243.
5. See below, ad of June 3, 1803, and letter of 1810.
6. In the Lloyd papers at the Maryland Historical Society are several gunsmith's bills, including one from John Manton.
7. *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser* (November 24, 1803).
8. H. W. Flourmoy, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers, Vol. X* (Richmond, 1892).
9. *Baltimore Courthouse Archives*, W.G. 101,388 and W.G. 131,274.
10. *Ibid.*, W.G. 103,238 and W.G. 114,115.
11. *Ibid.*, W.G. 135,466; 160,426; 162,174; 162,176; 162,182; 211,325; T.K. 228,498; W.G. 160,416; 171,527; 182,49; 190,49; and T.K. 235,366.
12. *Ibid.*, 1825, No. 183; 1827, No. 523; 1828, No. 364; and 1829, No. 1603.
13. *Ibid.*, 1832, No. 1253.

ED. NOTE: *The second part of this article will appear the July issue.*

BY RICHARD H. RANDALL, JR.

Englewood, New Jersey



## BALTIMORE GUNSMITH

### Part II - His Work

The quality of James Haslett's firearms must have attracted considerable attention in Baltimore. In 1810, for instance, he was not only able to list the Governor of the state, Edward Lloyd, and a senator, Robert Wright, among his customers, but also to count on their friendship for references to the Governor of Virginia.<sup>1</sup> These gentlemen most likely bought hunting guns from Haslett, such as those he advertised to supply in 1806,<sup>2</sup> and Edward Lloyd's taste in fine fowling pieces is attested by his purchases from John Manton in London and from Haslett's contemporary, John Stewart of Baltimore. A fine shotgun by the latter is still at the Lloyd home, *Wye House*. To date, none of Haslett's long fowling pieces have come to light, though a short shotgun (*Fig. 1*) either for coach defense or to be carried on horseback in a boot, is in the collection of the author.

The shotgun is 32-5/8 inches over-all with a 17-1/8-inch barrel, or roughly the size of the normal English coaching blunderbuss. The lock (*Fig. 2*) resembles those in use in London about the turn of the century. It has a squared plate tip, a safety catch, a roller on the frizzen spring, and a gold-lined pan with a separate fence. It bears usual engraved motifs—palms, a sunburst, a trophy of musical instruments, and a tiny landscape with a flying bird, foliage, and a jump. In the center of the plate is a silver inset with the raised inscription *HASLETT/BALTIMORE*.

The heavily-built barrel is sixteen-sided for half its length and round to the muzzle. It notches into the separate tang with a wide-sighting notch, the borders

of which are engraved with fruits and leaves. Aside from the thin silver band set in at the breech and a platinum vent, the decoration consists solely of the amusing front sight. The sight is formed as a silver spider with its eight legs inlaid in the barrel and its body acting as the bead front sight. On top of the barrel (*Fig. 3*) is stamped in large letters *BALTIMORE*, and on the side at the breech is the enigmatic Eagle Head proof mark in an oval (*Fig. 4*). This mark does not appear on any other Haslett arms to my knowledge, and though it could have been a private proof that he used at the time he made the shotgun, it might also bear some connection with his inspectorship of arms in Philadelphia. The mark appears on other American arms, but no satisfactory explanation has yet been put forward for its use.<sup>3</sup> On the underside of the barrel is a half rib with a steel ramrod pipe to which is attached a swivelled steel rod.

The stock of the shotgun is dark, figured walnut with a cheekpiece and a checkered grip, nearly obliterated through use. Its minor mounts are undecorated silver, but the butt cap and scroll trigger guard are finely engraved. On the strap of the butt cap in a landscape-filled with small plants and a proud stag looking over his shoulder (*Fig. 5*). The scroll-end of the trigger guard is engraved with the same motifs as the steel tang, and the forward finial is a pineapple. The bow of the guard bears a musical trophy composed of horn, drum, and music book below a hunting horn through which protrudes a boar's head (*Fig. 6*). Above the horn are a globe and a burgonet with a plume crest.

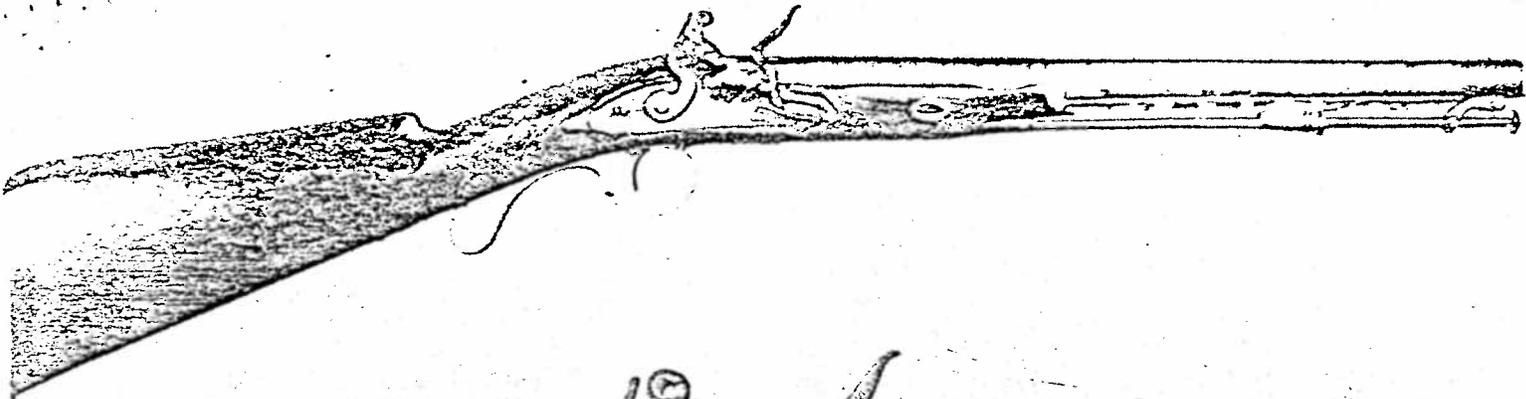


Fig. 1.

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

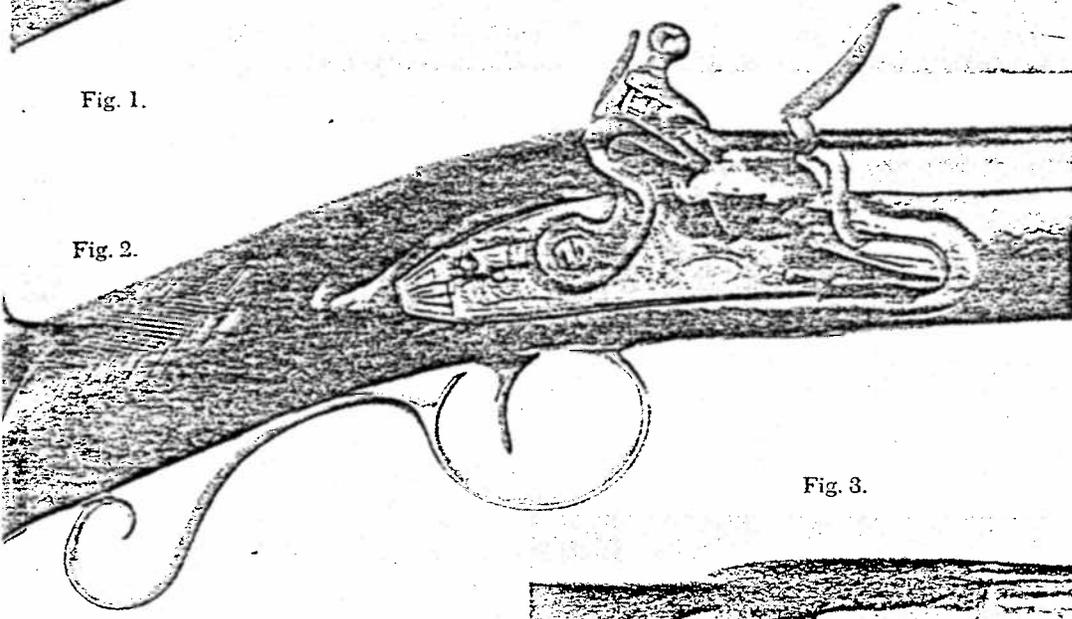


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

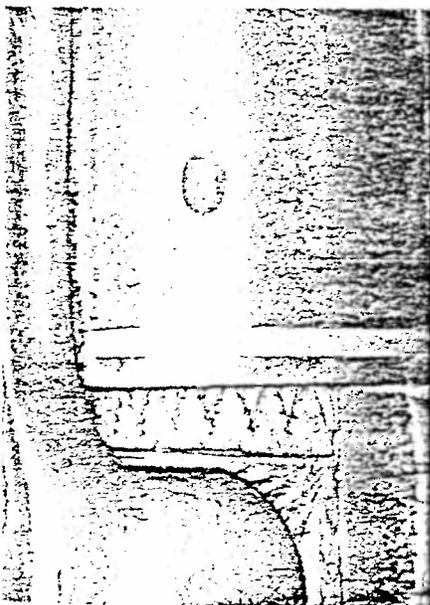


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

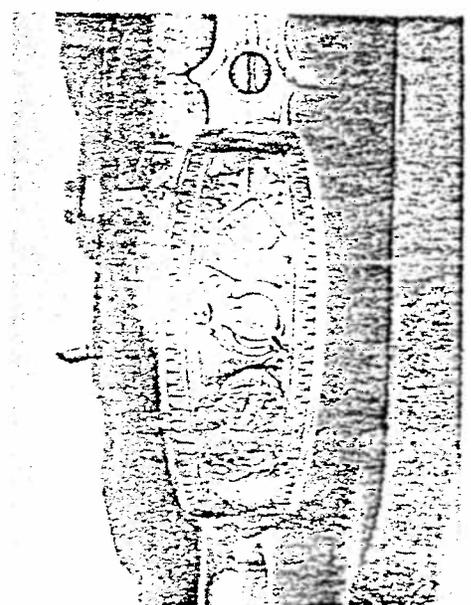


Fig. 7.

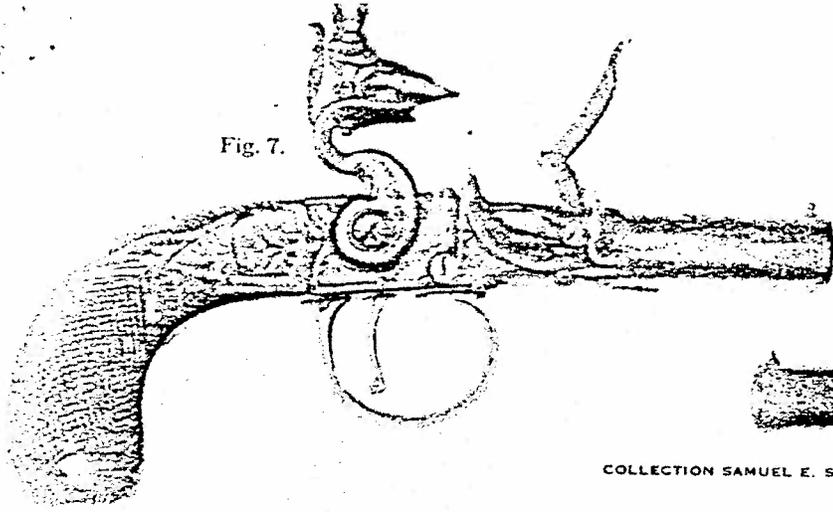
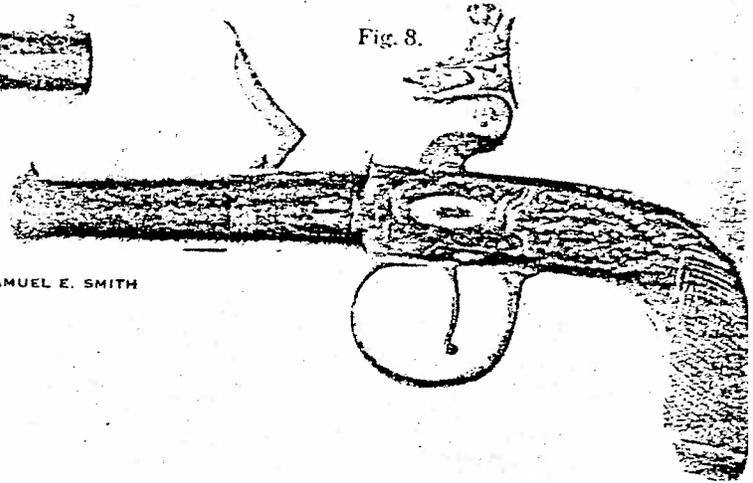
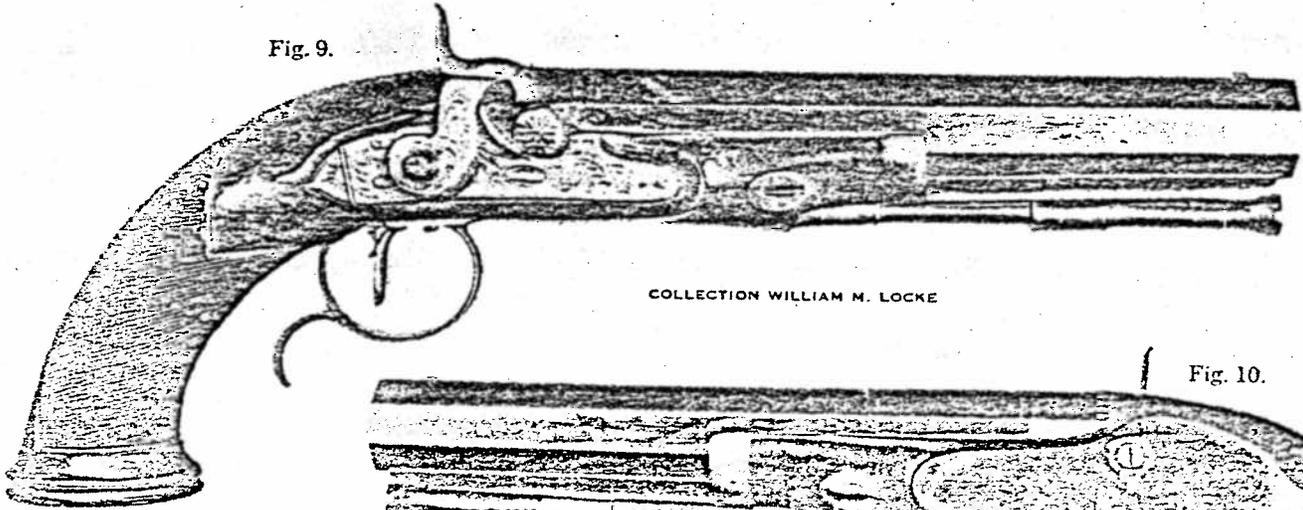


Fig. 8.



COLLECTION SAMUEL E. SMITH

Fig. 9.



COLLECTION WILLIAM M. LOCKE

Fig. 10.

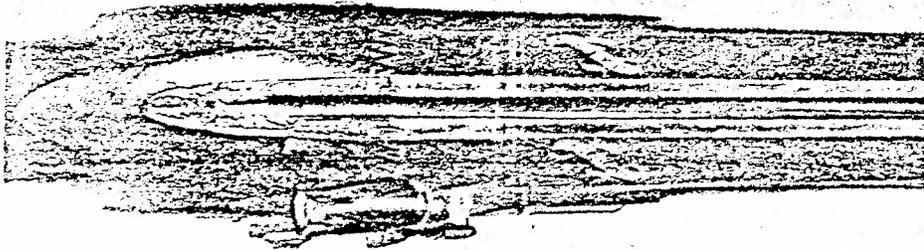
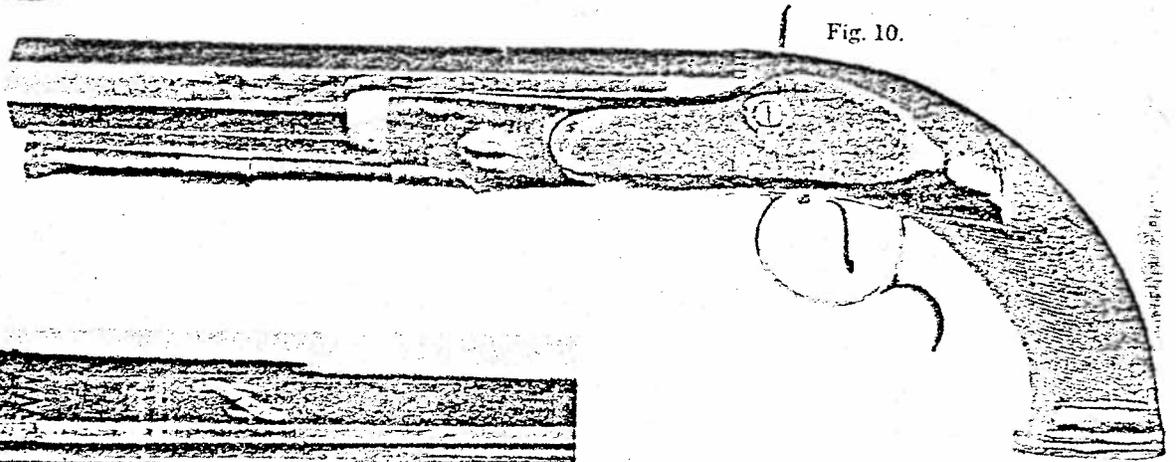
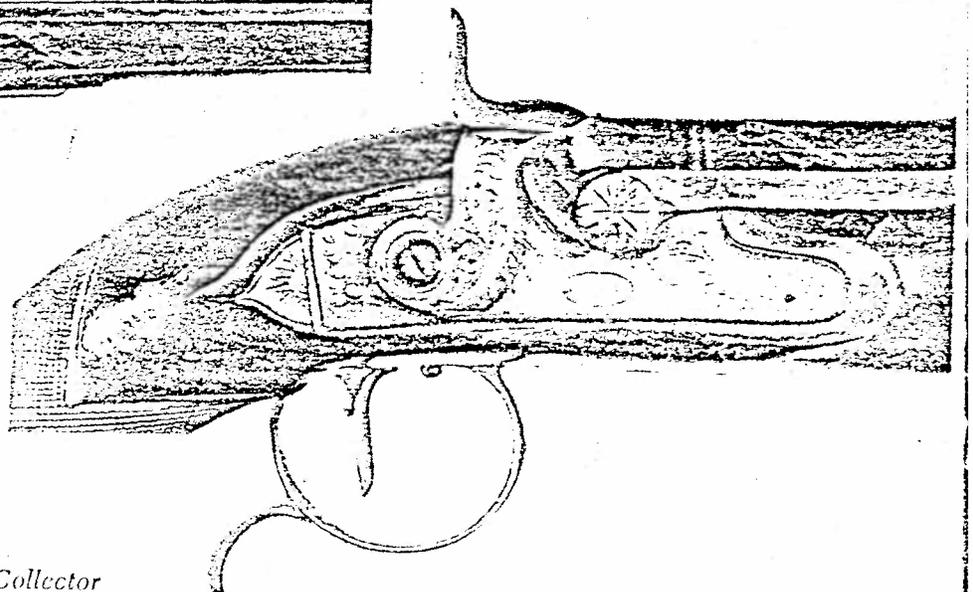


Fig. 11.

Fig. 12.



The motifs attest Haslett's dependence on his English training, and probably also on an English pattern book. The homogeneous quality of the engraving on both steel and silver parts shows that Haslett engraved all the parts himself rather than farming the mounts out to a silversmith.

The second arm that has come to us from Haslett's shop is a very fine little pocket pistol in the Samuel E. Smith collection (Figs. 7-8). It was previously published, but I shall take the liberty of illustrating it again, as it is unusual in many respects for an American-made weapon.<sup>4</sup> It is but 5-9/15 inches long with a 1-9/16-inch barrel. The barrel is engraved at each end with a leaf pattern and is .36 caliber, smoothbore. It has a side hammer and the trigger guard pushes forward as the safety. There is also a rear sight on a raised rib at the breech, a button front sight, and a gold-lined pan. It is engraved very much like the shotgun, with sunbursts and a spray of flowers on top of the frame, a trophy of arms on the trigger guard, and on the left side a second trophy of banners, drums, and cannon balls surrounding a gold oval with the raised inscription *HASLETT/BALTIMORE*. The walnut butt is checkered, inlaid with patterns in silver wire and a blank escutcheon, and fitted with an engraved silver cap. The barrel and frame are both numbered *I*.

The third and fourth examples of Haslett's work that I am able to illustrate are a pair of converted duclers (Figs. 9-10), formerly in the Richard D. Steuart collection, and now, I believe, in the William M. Locke collection. Each is 14-7/8 inches over-all with a 9-3/16-inch barrel. The barrel is octagonal, of russeted twist steel, and extremely heavy, each pistol weighing four pounds and a half ounce, with a .62 caliber bore. On the underside is a half rib to carry a brass-tipped oak rod, and the top of the barrel is channelled with a long sighting groove and has a small silver leaf front sight. The barrel is fitted with Nock's Patent breech or a slight variation of it, and on top of the breech are inlaid ribbons of gold with the words *HASLETT* and *BALTIMORE* stamped on them respectively (Fig. 11). On the underside, each barrel is again stamped *HASLETT/BALTIMORE*. The tang is separate, as in the shotgun, and is inlaid in gold with bolts of lightning stemming from three engraved clouds. Each tang is stamped *No. 17*.

The lockplate, of blued steel, is engraved with a sunburst on the toe and in front of the hammer, and with a series of acanthus leaves which appear to date from the conversion. In the center of the plate, an inset of gold bears the stamped name *HASLET* [sic] (Fig. 12). The heavy fences are made as integral parts of the plate and were retained when the conversion was effected by adding a percussion drum. The plates are

secured by only one screw, the fore-end being fitted with a lug which notches behind a fixed screw in the stock.

Each stock is dark walnut and has a flattened butt inset with an oval steel plate engraved with leaves. The butt is finely checkered and the mitring of high quality. The small mounts are again plain silver, and the spur trigger guard is blued steel inlaid in silver and gold with a trophy of flags, spears, a drum, and a shield. There is a set trigger.

This pair of pistols seems typical of Haslett's work. A second pair of flints sold through Clapp and Graham in 1929 have many similar features: the heavy octagonal barrels with a half rib underneath, spur trigger guards and flattened butts with a vase engraved inset; they were described as "having superb gold inlay and . . . finely chased."<sup>5</sup> A third pair of pistols was sold in Denver in 1941. They were saw-handled flints in somewhat worn condition, and described as being "in the English style."<sup>6</sup>

There is a final piece I cannot illustrate, unfortunately. It is a flintlock Kentucky rifle by James Haslett. It is in a private collection, and I have only a meagre description. The rifle is in mint condition, signed in gold on the barrel *HASLETT/BALTIMORE*. It is entirely silver mounted, and the mounts are engraved with motifs similar to the pieces here illustrated.

As far as date order is concerned, I see no way of dating the existing nine examples by Haslett except between 1803 when he arrived in Baltimore and 1827, the last year in which the entry in the Baltimore directory lists him as a gunsmith. The proof mark on the shotgun perhaps indicates a date prior to about 1816. Haslett's production must have been relatively large, if his modest fortune at his death was the result of his smithing, as it seems to have been, judging from the existing records.

#### REFERENCE AND NOTES

1. In this connection, the Haslett family's social position is interesting. The children all married after Haslett was well established in Baltimore. His second daughter, Sarah, married George Gillingham, the clerk of the Baltimore Shot Tower, in 1822 or, so to speak, married in the trade. His eldest, Mary, was married to a merchant Thomas Wilson in 1818, and his son James, Jr., to Margaret J. Turner, about whom nothing is known, in 1823. However, the third daughter, Emily, married one of Baltimore's more prominent citizens, Dr. Adolphus Dunan, in 1824.
2. See Part I of this article, Fig. 3.
3. C. Meade Patterson stated in a letter that he did not feel the eagle proof was either a U.S. or a state mark. It was used mainly between 1798 and 1816.
4. Calvin Hetrick, "A Rare Type of Pistol," *Hobbies*, Vol. -- (June, 1938), p. --.
5. "----," *Antiquarian*, Vol. -- (October, 1929), p. 37.
6. Thus described in a letter by W. Keith Neal.

From Newspaper Clipping dated December 4, 1932.

Since writing about James Haslett, who was one of the most famous gunsmiths of Baltimore, I have learned more about this fine artisan. Haslett started business at 4 Light Street about 1803. In the Federal Gazette of November 12, 1806, appears this card: "SIGN OF THE GOLDEN GUN, JAMES HASLETT, GUN-MAKER" Respectfully informs the public that he has removed from No. 4 Light St. to No. 28 Water St., within a few doors of Market Space; where he has at present an elegant assortment of double and single guns, and duelling pistols, both of his own and London manufacture, which he can afford to sell lower than any of the same finish ever offered for sale in Baltimore.

He begs leave to return his sincere thanks to the citizens of Baltimore, and the public generally, for the liberal encouragement he has received since his commencement in Baltimore, and assures them that he will endeavor to merit a continuance of it.

Haslett served in the War of 1812 as brigade major of the Eleventh Brigade, comprising the Seventh, Fifteenth, Thirty-sixth, Forty-first and Forty-sixth Baltimore county regiments. He seems to have retired from the gun business about 1830, because his name does not appear in the city directory of 1831. He died at his country residence at Drum Point, Calvert county, August 15, 1833.

OV R.

1. NAME OF EMPLOYEE AND NAME OF BENEFICIARY SHOULD BE PRINTED.
2. NAME OF EMPLOYEE SHOULD BE SHOWN: SMITH, JOHN A., NOT SMITH, J. A.
3. NAME OF BENEFICIARY SHOULD BE SHOWN: SMITH, MARY W., NOT SMITH, MRS. JOHN ASA, NOR SMITH, MRS. J. A.
4. DATES OF BIRTH AND EMPLOYMENT SHOULD BE IN ORDER OF MONTH, DAY, YEAR, AS 4-28-'88.
5. SEX, USE M FOR MALE, F FOR FEMALE. RACE, USE W FOR WHITE, C FOR COLORED.

DATE CARD IS SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_  
 SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT**

X

His wife, Mary Haslett, died May 17, 1825. One of his daughters, Emily, married Dr. Adolphus Dunan of Baltimore in 1824. Haslett was a master craftsman and his pistols compare well with the work of the finest European armorers. Today there is only one gunsmith in the Baltimore telephone directory.

NAME OF EMPLOYEE		ADDRESS OF BENEFICIARY	
NAME OF EMPLOYEE (PLEASE PRINT)		RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYEE	
LAST		NAME OF BENEFICIARY—THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THE BENEFICIARY IS RESERVED	
FIRST		(Complete only when plan includes Group Life and/or Group Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance)	
MIDDLE INITIAL		BENEFICIARY (PLEASE PRINT)	
INSURANCE CLASS		MONTH DAY YEAR	
DATE EMPLOYED		MONTH DAY YEAR	
SEX		RACE	
PAYROLL NO. OR DEPT.		(SEE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW)	

CASED MASLET F/L PISTOLS  
ILLUSTRATED IN SERJEN'S  
ARTICLE "DM - F/L PISTOLS  
VS FOREIGN INFLUENCES"  
GR APRIL '69 PG 8 PG 11

ALSO SEE

ARMS GAZETTE APRIL 1974 PG 24  
ARTICLE BY SAM SMITH