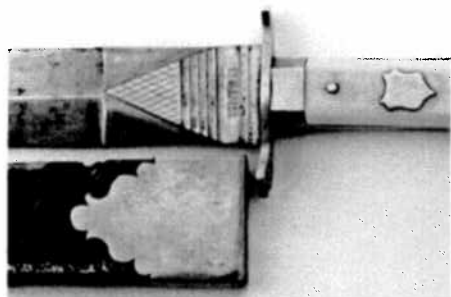
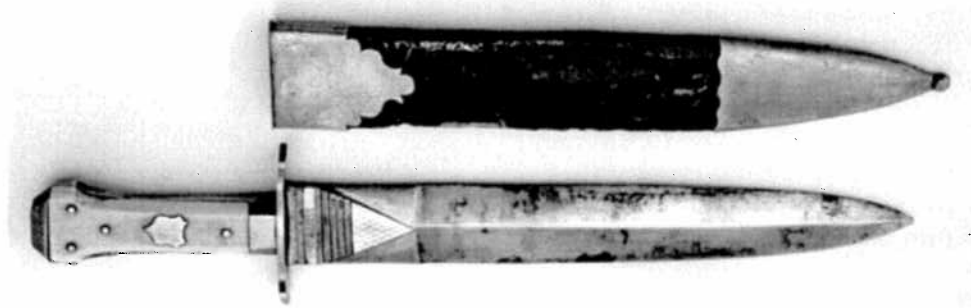


# A Big Congreve from East Tennessee

## by Wayne McNeese



**The Bowie is a large Congreve, and is marked C. Congreve, Sheffield in 2 lines on both sides of the blade in the ricasso area.**



This big, early Sheffield Bowie is fresh out of upper East Tennessee. It is my latest acquisition. Although I knew of it prior to the ABKA 2000 Show, it was after I returned home that I was able to make a deal on it.

Born and raised in East Tennessee, I have always returned there to beat the bushes for the good old things. Whether knocking on doors in the countryside or attending estate auctions there, I have come upon some really great items: longrifles, Confederate items, and Bowies. However; I missed this one, when it first came out of the woodwork, only to get it soon afterwards.

Last year, I was traveling through the Tri Cities area with a friend, stopping at antique malls, and catching up with some of my contacts. I stopped at a gunshop that I knew carried both modern and antique weapons. I introduced my friend, who was traveling with me, to the owner, and we both did some trading that day. On a subsequent visit, my friend traded for the Bowie, which, the owner had forgotten about on my previous trips. Since my friend is more of a dealer than a

collector, I was able to obtain it for my collection. The Bowie is a large Congreve, and is marked C. Congreve, Sheffield in 2 lines on both sides of the blade in the ricasso area. The dimensions on the DESP blade is 11 3/4" blade length, with a width of 1 1/2" and an overall length of 16 1/4". The handle is dog-bone shaped of cast silver, with ivory scales. The guard is German silver and is 3" long. Each end on the guard is shaped like a crown.

Fortunately, the original scabbard is with the knife. It has a file-decorated, German silver throat with belt loop, and tip. One naturally focuses attention on the ricasso of this particular Bowie. The ricasso is very unique in its design and file treatment. The ricasso area extends 2 3/8" from the guard, and the front area is triangle-shaped and crosshatched. There are 5 round bottom grooves filed across the blade. Next is a flat area with the maker's name, followed by 2 more grooves. Blade thickness in this area is 5/16".

Overall, the blade has some discoloration, but no pitting. It still has most on the original polish, and its original edges.

Unique about this Bowie knife is that the blade and all silver mounts including scabbard mounts were gilded. The blade retains about 15 - 20% gild, all in the ricasso area. The guard has about 80% gild, and the other mounts have varying percentages. The scabbard mounts have about 50% gild remaining. The gild treatment would make me believe the Bowie was owned by a person of some prominence. I refer to this knife as being a fresh find, because it surfaced when a family brought it into the gun shop and sold it to the owner.

I welcome any information about this Bowie that member collectors may have to share. Please pass your thoughts and comments on to me. How accurately can this piece be dated? What thoughts might you have on the gilded feature? Is there another Bowie out there like this one?

As a postscript to this story: in August of 2000, just at store closing, someone came into this same shop with only one employee working there at that time. He stabbed the employee in the throat with a knife killing him, and stealing about 25 modern handguns. The owner found him lying in a pool of blood the next morning.

## A BIG CONGREVE FROM EAST TENNESSEE

This big, early Sheffield Bowie is fresh out of upper East Tennessee. It is my latest acquisition. Although I knew of it prior to the ABKA 2000 Show, it was after I returned home that I was able to make a deal on it.

Born and raised in East Tennessee, I have always returned there to beat the bushes for the good old things. Whether knocking on doors in the countryside or attending estate auctions there, I have come upon some really great items: longrifles, confederate items, and bowies. However I missed this one, when it first came out of the woodwork, only to get it soon afterwards.

Last year, I was traveling through the Tri Cities area with a friend, stopping at antique malls, and catching up with some of my contacts. I stopped at a gunshop that I knew carried both modern and antique weapons. I introduced my friend, who was traveling with me, to the owner, and we both did some trading that day. On a subsequent visit, my friend traded for the Bowie, which, the owner had forgotten about on my previous trips. Since my friend is more of a dealer than a collector, I was able to obtain it for my collection. The Bowie is a large Congreve, and is marked C. Congreve, Sheffield in 2 lines on both sides of the blade in the ricasso area. The dimensions on the DESP blade is 11 3/4" blade length, with a width of 1 1/2" and an overall length of 16 1/4". The handle is dog-bone shaped of cast silver, with ivory scales. The guard is german silver and is 3" long. Each end on the guard is shaped like a crown.

Fortunately, the original scabbard is with the knife. It has a file- decorated, german silver throat with belt loop, and tip. One naturally focuses attention on the ricasso of this particular Bowie. The ricasso is very unique in its design and file treatment. The ricasso area extends 2 3/8" from the guard, and the front area is triangle-shaped and crosshatched. There are 5 round bottom grooves filed across the blade. Next is a flat area with the maker's name, followed by 2 more grooves. Blade thickness in this area is 5/16".

Overall, the blade has some discoloration, but no pitting. It still has most on the original polish, and its original edges.

Unique about this bowie knife is that the blade and all silver mounts including scabbard mounts were gilded. The blade retains about 15 – 20% gild, all in the ricasso area. The guard has about 80% gild, and the other mounts have varying percentages. The scabbard mounts have about 50% gilt remaining. The gild treatment would make me believe the Bowie was owned by a person of some prominence. I refer to this knife as being a fresh find, because it surfaced when a family brought it into the gun shop and sold it to the owner.

I welcome any information about this Bowie that member collectors may have to share. Please pass your thoughts and comments on to me. How accurately can this piece be dated? What thoughts might you have on the gilded feature?

As a postscript to this story; in August of 2000, just at closing, someone came into this same shop with one employee working there at that time. He stabbed the employee in the front on the throat with a knife killing him, and stealing about 25 modern handguns. The owner found him lying in a pool of blood the next morning

. Thank you. Wayne McNeese

## C. Congreve Bowie Knife

This big Congreve Bowie came out of upper, East Tennessee during the year 2000. It retains its original scabbard. It was sold by a family to a local gun shop. The bowie appears to have been completely gilded, along with the scabbard mounts. This feature indicates that its owner was most likely someone of prominence. Dimensions of the bowie are:  $11 \frac{3}{4}"$  x  $1 \frac{1}{2}"$  x  $\frac{5}{16}"$  thk, blade.

Overall it is  $16 \frac{1}{4}"$ .

The elaborate ricasso treatment has a lot of eye appeal.

C. Congreve is stamped on both sides of the blade.

Wayne McNeese

