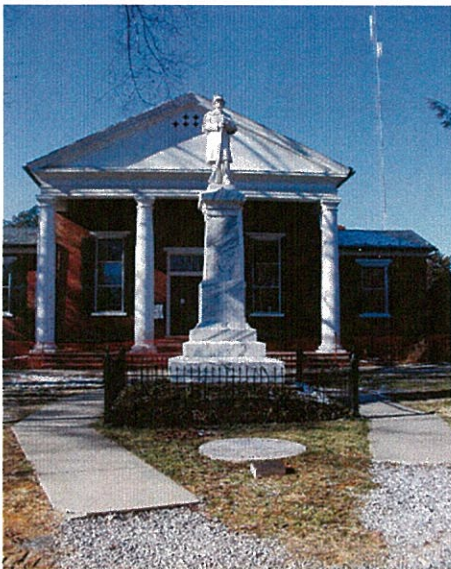


Keen, Walker Confederate Carbine
of R.H. Harris

This composition relates to a carbine that has been in my collection from June, 2000. The carbine was made by the firm of Keen, Walker & Co. in Danville, Virginia, during the Civil War on Confederate contract. The total quantity of manufacture was not known precisely but estimates put it around 300. The carbine is in "attic condition," dark, tarnished with heavy patina. The name "R H Harris" has been carved in the wooden stock in two places. This carving was done in a manner consistent with the manner that many Confederate soldiers identified their weapons, with the patina of the carving matching that of the rest of the weapon, indicating that the carving was done in a time contemporaneous with its period of use.



The carbine was previously owned by Bill Harris of Montrose, MO. Mr. Harris provided a letter upon sale of the carbine which provided the extent of his knowledge about the family history of the carbine. It had been acquired by his father long ago when living in the Petersburg, Virginia, area. Mr. Harris relates that he grew up in Petersburg. His father was from Claremont, Surry County, Virginia. Mr. Harris was certain that the carbine was not an ancestor's gun, that his father collected an odd assortment of guns and that there was no R.H. Harris in his ancestry.

A search of the Confederate roster turns up a number of individuals with variations of the name "R H Harris." Several individuals show up in infantry commands or from the Northern or Western Virginia areas. None of these seem likely given the gun is a

cavalry carbine with origins in the Petersburg area. Only one soldier seems likely to be the name on the carbine: Lt. R.H. Harris of Nottoway County, Virginia. Lt. Harris' name appears in the Confederate records and on Nottoway's Confederate monument in the identical manner as it was carved on the stock. Further, Harris was from the Petersburg area. But the most interesting bit of information is that Lt. Harris was in the "Nottoway Reserves," Company F, 1st Regiment Virginia Reserves under the command of Captain Benjamin L. Farinholt. Farinholt's reserves were positioned at the Staunton River Bridge, a railroad crossing between Richmond and Danville, Virginia. Staunton River Bridge was the objective of Federal General James



Wilson's raid of June, 1864. Farinholt was the Confederate commander during the battle of "old men and young boys" of June 25, 1864, in which the bridge was successfully defended from Wilson's raiders. In the days preceding the battle, the troops were supplied with manpower, arms and ammunition from the Danville Arsenal under Captain E.S. Hutter. The Danville Arsenal had been in charge of coordinating the manufacture, inspection and acceptance of carbines made in the Danville area throughout the war, including those made by the firm of Keen, Walker & Co.



According to published sources and Dr. James F. Harris of Blackstone, Virginia, Lt. R.H. Harris of the "Nottoway Reserves" was Richard Herbert Harris, M.D., (1847-1876), a great uncle of his. Dr. Harris was the son of a physician from Powhatan, Virginia, who married an Epes,

moved to what is now the Blackstone area, and raised his family on an estate called "Epeston." Dr. R.H. Harris after the war received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and practiced medicine for a time in Norfolk, Virginia. His patients to a large degree consisted of sailors in from the ships. Dr. Harris never married, contracted tuberculosis and died young in Norfolk. He was buried in the town cemetery in Blackstone, Virginia, next to his sister who died prematurely as well.

Dr. R.H. Harris' brother, Peter Epes Harris, was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute, serving with the Corps of Cadets in their various duties during the Civil War.



Keen, Walker & Co. Carbine

The Keen, Walker carbine, also known as a Perry or Maynard was acquired by myself from my father in 1976 as part of my inheritance.

Little is known about how my father came across the gun but more than likely he acquired it through a trade or bought it from an individual. Dad was always trading work for guns, Indian relics, swords, knives, or other items of interest.

We lived in Virginia around civil war battlefields and would search plowed fields for relics, civilwar or Indian. Dad even had some of his Indian finds in the Smithsonian.

We moved out west from Virginia in 1959, living in Wyoming and Montana. In the mid 60's we moved to Missouri and my parents later moved to North Dakota, Kentucky, and finally settling in Pennsylvania. I stayed in Missouri when they moved to North Dakota attending college. I later joined the military and married a local girl. We settled in Missouri in her hometown after discharge from the service. I was given part of my dad's gun collection in 1976, which included the carbine.

I have had the guns stored in my attic until recently when my son took them out during the winter and put them up in his room. The guns were given to him and we decided to sell some of them so he could buy a new shot gun and deer rifle.

We discovered the rarity of the carbine after taking it to a gun show in Cole Camp, Mo. We were only trying to find out the value so we could sell it. We took it to the Tulsa gun show to find out how rare it was. A very interesting gun and hate to part with it now that we know some of its origin in U S history.

April, 2000
Bill Harris
Montrose, Mo.