

THE SO CALLED "KENTUCKY RIFLE," AS MADE IN LANCASTER COUNTY

By D. F. Magee.

It is the purpose of the author of this paper to give to Lancaster County the credit which is rightly hers for the production of this famous rifle, and though in the minds of the public the name "Kentucky" is the correct one, it should by all rules of nomenclature be "LANCASTER" instead, for there is no question that here within the borders of this county of Lancaster, it was first invented, developed, used and eventually manufactured in large quantities, sold and shipped to all parts of the Union. Although it is conceded that the makers of it slowly spread their activities to the westward and southwest as emigration flowed down the Shenandoah Valley across the Virginias, Carolinas into the "dark and bloody ground" as Kentucky and Tennessee were called, the sons and apprentices who had learned the art of rifle making from the original makers here, in our old County years before that, made the guns in comparatively small numbers as compared with the hundreds and thousands that carried the "Lancaster County" stamp on the barrel.

Daniel Boone throughout his life established his name as a wonderful marksman, pioneer and Indian fighter by the use of a "Henry."

Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory" loved as the apple of his eye, a "Yumans" which he owned throughout his life, and his name became immortal when he won the battle of New Orleans and the war of 1812, by arming his soldiers exclusively with Lancaster County rifles.

There is no longer any question in the minds of those who have made the matter of the "Kentucky Rifle" a study, but that to Lancaster County alone it owes its origin. Yet it seems to the author hereof strange that our own people have heretofore only given a passing thought to this fact and left it to others far without our borders to lay the laurels at our feet, but we are met with the word "Kentucky" we fear, irrevocably stamped upon it for a name.

In the course of our researches for the true story of the "Kentucky" we have come across a definition and condensed story of this rifle which in few more than a hundred words, gives it so concisely, clear and true, that we use it here in its entirety, as follows:

"From a flat bar of iron, hand forged into a gun barrel, laboriously bored and rifled with crude tools; fitted with a stock hewn from a maple tree in the neighboring forest, and supplied with a lock hammered to shape on the anvil, an unknown smith, in a shop long since silent fashioned a rifle which changed the whole course of world history, made possible the settlement of a continent and ultimately freed our country from foreign domination.

Light in weight; graceful in line; economical in consumption of powder and lead; fatally precise; distinctly American, it sprang into immediate popularity, and for a hundred years was a model often slightly varied but never radically changed.

"Legends regarding this rifle which never have been confirmed have drifted out of the dusty past; inaccuracies have passed for facts.

"JOHN G. W. DILLIN."

This writer, Dillin, is recognized as an outstanding authority on the rifle, and is so recognized by the National Rifle Association of America, which has

published a book written by Dillin, in which he gives most exhaustive history of the Kentucky, and in addition he quotes extensively from Horace Kephart ("Justice") who is probably the best authority we have in Pennsylvania on this subject.

I take the liberty of quoting these two men as my leading authority for the following facts establishing Lancaster County's claim to the Rifle: and I herewith acknowledge our indebtedness in this behalf to them, for giving to Lancaster County her just-dues.

WHERE AND BY WHOM THE KENTUCKY RIFLE WAS MADE.

The most careful research has established beyond doubt, that Pennsylvania was not only the birth place of the American rifle, but that for many years thereafter it had a practical monopoly of the rifle industry.

The location of the first rifle shop is a matter of argument and will doubtless remain legendary due to the loosely kept records of the early days and the destruction of family papers which would today be invaluable.

"Philadelphia has a claim of priority of manufacture, but there is nothing of record to support the theory, in fact the first reference the author has found, is of a gun smith having been located in Water Street. The fact that the rifle industry did not flourish in Philadelphia may be accounted for by reason of its being a Quaker settlement, whose people had little sympathy with fire arms, and little or no use for them."

DILLIN.

Another theory is that, while the Swiss and German emigrants were steadily pushing westward, a number of them preferred going up the Schuylkill to the Reading District, and still others at the same time were on their way up the Delaware river to the Lehigh regions.

Later on, both of these Districts became famous for their rifles, but all known facts point to Lancaster as the great early rifle centre, as it was also the schooling point for the skilled apprentices who later followed the emigrant trail south to the Carolinas and west of the Ohio River Country.

The Swiss emigrants who entered the wilderness of Pennsylvania, and settled where the City of Lancaster now stands, were riflemen, and Rupp in his history of Lancaster County at page seventy-four and five, mentions that one of the emigrants, Martin Meylan, erected in 1719 what Rupp calls a boring mill to bore out gun barrels.

Phillip LeFevre was another early gun smith whose shop was located at Big Spring, Beaver Valley about four miles from Lancaster, where he made guns (or rifles) from 1731 to 1766.

Mathew Roesser was making rifles in Lancaster before 1744 and Henry Albrecht was another rifle smith of the same period.

It is fortunate for the students of the history of Kentucky rifles that Kephart and other such enthusiasts recorded their conclusions on such vital questions as the place and date of origin of the essentially American weapon. These discussions in an attempt at this late date to isolate such facts, become evidence of importance whether corroborative or otherwise, of the conclusions of present day students which have been reached independently and lacking definite and indisputable historical record, the concensus of opinion among intelligent investigators who have considered the question from all angles becomes the deciding factor.

More testimony as to the place where the first Kentuckys were made comes from Cora A. Weber Lindsay, who however, while naming Lancaster as the birth place of the American rifle, identifies the French Huguenot as the originators of the arm. "In Shooting and Fishing" in 1897, she says. "The history of Pennsylvania's early settlers has been to some extent written

up. Its German, Swiss, Dutch, Irish, Welsh and French settlers given their respective places in her annals.

"The Pennsylvania German outnumbering all other nationalities, has gained a world renowned reputation to the detriment of other nationalities which were in the minority, especially that of the French Huguenot colony whose history became almost obliterated, submerged, interwoven with that of a German with whom they mingled ere the exodus, and when colonized within the Pequea valley, speaking that language as fluently as the native born German. To separate the two one cannot depend upon the names, which have changed. Hence that which belonged to the French Huguenot was attributed to a German gun-smith family by those not versed in the intricate histories of those different nationalities whose industry has made this State, aided by her natural resources, one of the wealthiest in the Union.

The honor of having manufactured guns, which contributed in the supply of the entire Appalachian border with fire arms, belongs also to the French Huguenots, who were the first to form a colony in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Of them it is said they were the best and thriftiest of the entire French, and whose emigration into other countries enriched those who welcomed them, and impoverished the land from which they fled.

A people who for centuries suffered from persecution under the tyranny of monarchical and popish despotism ("the paiteint de hugenot") whose enemies are said to have admitted their simple, pure and noble lives.

Isaac LeFevre purchased 1500 acres of land in Strasburgh Township, Lancaster County. On this land, four miles from Lancaster City, at a place called Big Spring, in Beaver valley, Phillip LeFevre, son of Isaac, made guns or rifles from 1731 to 1766, (Rupp's History p. 98).

Joel Ferree, son of Phillip Ferree and Leah Dubois, born in 1731 in the Huguenot colony, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, undoubtedly learned his trade with his relative, Phillip LeFevre. He was a gun smith who manufactured guns in Leacock Township, Lancaster County, a few miles from the City of Lancaster. His shop was on the land granted his father by Wm. Penn. In 1777 when the united colonies called for more arms, he extended his works, employed a large force of men, and turned guns out for the government at the rate of from forty to fifty per week. (Penna. Archives, 2—D Series, page 583, Vol. 1). Gun locks were said to have been first imported into Lancaster by a German.

Other members of this family, Ferrees and LeFevres, not engaged in making guns or rifles erected gun powder mills and manufactured gun powder. Prior to the Revolutionary War, Isaac LeFevre, son of Joel LeFevre, had a mill on Wiconisco creek in Lykens valley, Dauphin County, Pa. In 1777, Jacob Ferree, born August 8th, 1750, son of Isaac Ferree, made gun powder on the French Creek in the employ of the government, (Vol. 1 Pa. Arch. p. 535) where their magazines were located.

To the Huguenot colony in Pequea Valley, Lancaster County, America is indebted for the gun maker the celebrated William Henry, of that place, whom Horace Kephart mentioned in his article, published in this journal. The progenitor of the Henry family was a Robert Henry, a Scotchman, who emigrated to America in 1722 with his wife, May, and three sons, John, Robert, and James. They first settled on a tract of 300 acres of land located on Doe Run, a tributary to the Brandywine in Chester County, some four miles over the Lancaster County line.

There is much corroborative facts which point conclusively to the region around Lancaster as the birth place of the Kentucky rifle.

Horace Kephart, who has given years of study and thought to the subject, writing in 1897, said: "Your contributor is on the right track but I fear some of his conclusions need revision. He says, for example;" "the rifle came

to America from the Austro-German Tyrol, about 1730, or possibly a year or two earlier. The first we knew of the rifle, it was being made in Philadelphia by two gun smiths, named Decherd and Leman, about 1732. Decherd and Leman were both of Lancaster County."

"Now, the Swiss imigrants who entered the wilderness of Pennsylvania in 1709 and settled where the City of Lancaster subsequently arose, were riflemen. One of these, Martin Meylan, erected in 1719 what Rupp calls a boring mill to bore out gun barrels, (History Lancaster County, page 74-75). Lancaster soon became noted for its rifles and supplied the whole Appalachian border." The oldest rifle still preserved in America, of which I have heard—probably there are others older—is that used by Edward Marshall, who made the **great walk**, for the Penns in 1737.

The following description of this venerable piece is taken from Davis History of Bucks County, Penna., 1876, pp. 507-508.

There was a famous rifle maker named Decherd or Dechard at Lancaster during the revolution. According to Ramseys annals of Tennessee p., 228, the tran-Allegheny backwoodsmen who defeated Ferguson at King's Mountain were mostly armed with the Dechard rifle. He says in a foot note "This rifle was remarkable for the precision and distance of its shot. It was generally three feet six inches long, weighed about seven lbs., and ran about seventy bullets to the pound of lead. It was so called from Dechard, the maker, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. One of them is now in the hands of the writer. (DILLIN.)

Daniel Boone made the Kentucky rifle famous as he was a great shot, and though his rifle was made in Lancaster County he used it principally in Kentucky where he was the first pioneer and opened up that magnificent land to settlement and civilization; hence the name, Boone went into Kentucky in 1770.

Bogart the historian wrote, concerning Boone and his early pioneers: "No doubt they felt fearless as their rifles gave them a power which the Indians dreaded."

The rifles in use before the Kentucky came into use were about 57 inches long over all, and used balls 40 to the pound.

The Edward Marshall rifle is the true hybrid German Penna. arm which links the old European weapon with the Kentucky rifle. It is 59 in. over all 45 in. barrel and uses 60 balls to the pound.

Among the earliest beginning the development of the Kentucky type was the D. Boyer. It was 58" over all, 42" barrel, 60 balls to the pound, had seven rifle groves, weighed 14 pounds. Was made in 1728 and is believed to be the first complete Kentucky rifle. It is 100% American.

Cuts of 244 Kentucky rifles are shown in the "Kentucky Rifle" by Dillin, of these 240 different makes are given. There were 335 makers prior to 1840 that had been in the business and this does not include all it is believed. Dillin remarks, "If these Kentucky rifles could only talk what a story they might tell."

In 1735 the "Indian Walk" was held. The Edward Marshall rifle was carried on that walk.

The Flint lock made its appearance in Holland in the 30 years war, and gradually displaced the wheel lock which was in use up to that time.

William Walker the famous Tennessee gun smith and counted the greatest hunter of his day used a Leman rifle. (Lancaster make.)

Dillin says in page 12 of his book: "Just when or by whom this superb American rifle was first developed may never be known; but all authorities agree it was produced somewhere in Eastern Penna. Some writers are explicit and name Lancaster County as its birth place and this theory seems more than conjecture."

"By reason of late developments it is only fair to assume that these same gun smiths were in reality skilled in the art of rifle making, and from many records we find that they were not long in establishing themselves in the village of Lancaster or its environs." Dillin p. 12-15.

Included among these artisans were Roesers, Lemans, Ferrees, Stengel, Albright, Follecht, Lefevre and doubtless others. (Dillin.)

The exact dates of their arrival are not known to a certainty, but by the year 1730 rifle making was a recognized industry; and it seems to be a well authenticated fact that Peter Leman, the Swiss, was making rifles at the Leman place a few miles east of Lancaster as early as 1721" (Dillin p. 12.)

Early patrons included hunters, explorers, rangers and all sorts of adventurers usually found in a frontier town; and it is hardly necessary to add that they carried guns wherever they went.

These sturdy pioneers found a congenial meeting place at the log cabin rifle shops of Lancaster; and long discussions arose as to the advantages of the new Kentucky rifle over the old European makes.

The new rifle had a longer barrel and a third less diameter of bore, and the ball was small in comparison to the bore. The rifle buck-skin patch was brought into use smeared with tallow, first in Lancaster.

There came a great rivalry among the various gun smiths of Lancaster to produce a better rifle than his neighbor; and no two Kentucky rifles made were an exact reproduction of any other in all particulars; and finally the perfect rifle was produced. It is doubtful if the accuracy for short range work has ever been surpassed, and for a hundred years it held its claim for superiority over any rifle that was made. Dillin.

The outline of the rifle was very graceful, the workmanship superb, it was strong without clumsiness. The barrel was full octagon, about 42 inches long and about a 45 calibre; stock was curly maple, mountings silver, neatly fitted.

On the left side of the stock was a small well formed cheek piece in which was sunk a brass star. On the right side a box five inches long by one and a half wide covered with a polished brass hinged lid and brass trimmings.

"Whoever first applied a patch to the ball will probably never be known but it was a master stroke, the last link which forged a chain in evolution which brought forth a distinctly American Arm so different from the rifle of central Europe as to carry but a trace of similarity, a rifle of graceful lines and deadly precision."

"Later this rifle contributed enormously to the success of American arms in our wars with Indians and foreign nations and was a mighty factor in the shaping of the destinies of our great American Republic." Dillin.

J. & W. Henry were some of the rifle makers of the earliest times. James Henry thrived in and about 1836 as among the later Henrys.

Martin Mylin, a Swiss, erected a boring mill as early as 1719, and was located on a small stream of water near the Big Spring by the pike road of that name.

Phillip LeFevre, John Vondersmith, were gun smiths of about the same period near Lancaster believed to be south or east of the City. Martin Roeser was making guns in Lancaster in 1744, and Henry Albright or Albrecht about the same time. Plenty of others were engaged in the same business in Lancaster town before the Revolution.

Justice Horace Kephart, p. 24.

"All historians have ascribed the makers of the rifle to the German speaking emigrants, and this fact is based upon evidence." Kephart.

The following are a few of the outstanding facts that this story tells:

1. Why the American rifle, first made in Pennsylvania, was known as "The Kentucky Rifle," was this. The explorations of Daniel Boone, the resultant flood of emigrants into the Dark and Bloody ground, the need for a weapon of the high standard which marked the work of the Lancaster smiths, all tended unmistakably to identify the Lancaster County made rifle with that little known land to the westward, called "Kentucky."

2. The rifle of the American pioneer is the transitional link between the products of early European gun smiths and modern American weapons. This genealogy is definitely traced and the relations born by the "Kentucky Rifle" to its foreign forbearer is made evident.

3. The European type of rifle was found unfitted to the needs of the early American settler; accordingly to the gun smiths in and about Lancaster the pioneers took their problem. A satisfactory solution was found only when there had been produced a distinctly American product, radically at variance with previous European types and models.

4. The Lancaster district of Pennsylvania is indicated by the preponderance of evidence as having been the birth place of the Kentucky Rifle, and among the many gun smiths whose shops clustered about this gateway to the frontier, was one whose name is now forgotten but who fashioned the first distinctly American Rifle.

5. Iron smelted from virgin ore deposits supplied barrel material for the early American smith; curly maple and sometimes, apple, cherry or walnut, the wood for the stock. The barrel boring and rifling machinery—crude but effective contrivance—made the question of whether the rifle was a good or a poor weapon, dependant principally upon the skill of the smith.

6. Practical weapons, devoid largely of ornamentation excepting the characteristic cheek piece and star on same, which was a birth-mark of the "Kentucky rifle" were the arms of the early pioneer. Study of the early specimens renders easy the task of attributing rifles to their proper period.

7. As a means of defense, as a meat getter, even as a fire-lighter, the American pioneer depended upon his flint lock, Kentucky rifle, and the eighteenth century backwoodsman was most adept in handling his weapon; he could not fire his shots so rapidly but he made up for it in his deadly aim, and unerring accuracy of his gun.

8. The triggers and sights of the "Kentucky Rifle" possessed the same ruggedly practical features which characterized the weapon itself. In fact the set-trigger and the sunshade tube, forerunner of the present telescope sight contributed largely to the high accuracy displayed in this early American rifle.

9. Backwoodsmen armed with "Kentucky Rifles," commanded by such historic leaders as Morgan, and Cressap, Steels, Longs, etc., marched to the scene of hostilities and joined the Continental forces.

Participating in most of the major engagements of the Revolution their skill with the long American hunting rifle frequently was the deciding factor in British defeats.

This new type was substantially uniform, though there were minor variations in it to suit the whims or fancy of the purchaser, in the length and bore of the barrel. The standard was forty inches long for barrel and fifty-five over all; calibre forty-five spherical bullets to the pound, weight eight to nine pounds, some ten; barrels octagon and of uniform diameter their full length. All of the flint lock type as against the old wheel lock of the old country, and the set trigger or hair trigger came gradually into use but never became universal; especially in the gun made for the Continental army in quantities.

The New England people never took to the rifle and it was scarcely known east of the Hudson river until after Lexington and Bunker Hill when it first appeared carried by our own Lancaster County soldiers, the Steels, Henry, Longs, Cressap and others of their command.

The Rifle Makers of the revolutionary period and later who are named by Hensel or Diffenderfer were: Gaspard, Dechert, Busch, Lehman, Loder, Youmans, Riddle, Sneider, Stengel, Franck, Follechet, Dreppard, Grescheim, and Leonard; all of which names smack of the Swiss.

Later and before the revolution the Scotch-Irish and English took up the craft and there appeared according to these authors Hawkins, Bosworth, Bartlett, Luddington, Best, Starr, Reynolds.

(This Reynolds was the grand-father of General John F. Reynolds who was killed by a rifle sharp shooter ball at Gettysburg.)

The manufacture of Kentucky rifles in Lancaster County had become so important by the time of the breaking out of the Revolution in 1775 that the Continental Congress in 1776 took virtual possession of the industry in Lancaster, fixed a standard price of four pound six shillings per gun, and required the makers to deliver all their product to the government. Among the old Congressional Records of the period their appears an order made upon the firm of Low & Michael for disregarding the ordinance of the Secret Committee on Arms.

Andrew Jackson, Old Hickory was the proud possessor of a Youmans rifle, a Lancaster make; and as the Tennessee and Kentucky riflemen made Jackson's fame immortal at New Orleans with the Lancaster County invented Kentucky rifle. We may well ponder what might have been the fate of the Louisiana purchase with the Kentucky rifle left out and only muskets and cannon to defend this purchase. But the rifle was there, and there was the scene of its crowning glory, when its fame and the name of Jackson were interlinked in immortality; and the great western empire was made safe within our Union by this weapon which we are so proud to have invented, developed and made.

It will be remembered that the supply of this rifle used at that memorable battle was largely augmented by the seizure of the government of a Mississippi boat load shipped by Henry of Lancaster to some of the far outlying western posts, which the U. S. forces confiscated and distributed among soldiers of Jackson's army.

The fact that Lancaster was depended upon at all times to supply this gun to pioneers, soldiers or government expeditions by the following items in a letter by Thomas Jefferson himself, written from Monticello under date of August 18th, 1813, speaking of the Lewis & Clark expedition to the great Northwest he says of Lewis: "While attending at Lancaster to the fabrication of the arms with which he chose that his men should be provided, he had the benefit of the daily communication with Mr. Andrew Elliott whose experience in astronomical observations, etc., enabled him to apprise Capt. Lewis of the wants and difficulties he would encounter and the substitutes and resources afforded by a woodland and uninhabited country."

The Andrew Elliott referred to in this letter was in his day and generation one of the most notable men of the country and one of Lancasters most notable citizens. His home was here. He was Surveyor General of the United States for a long period; and to him was entrusted the settlement and boundaries of the vast territory gained by the U. S. from the Spanish Government beyond the Mississippi.

Notes from Articles of W. U. Hensel and F. R. Diffenderfer.

The art of making rifles was brought to this country in 1721, when a small colony of Swiss mountaineers fled from religious persecution in Switzerland and settled in what was called "the Conestoga country" of Pennsylvania, but now Lancaster.

It was a singular disposition of providence that brought this colony of rifle makers to our soil under the auspices of the peaceful and non-combatant Proprietor, William Penn and his progeny.

The Quakers of Penn and his progeny were supposed to be the supreme architects of all that was patient and pacific if not pusillanimous. And yet this regime gave shelter to a little Swiss colony that in its time produced the most murderous weapon known to the annals of war.

The origin of the weapon or system it embodied is lost in obscurity. The most the writers on the development of this rifle, Blane, Griener, Whitsoney, Wilcox and Loder have been able to do is to trace the original principles of the grooved bore and rotary bullets to the sources of the Rhine, and its earliest manufacture to the Alps mountain of Switzerland.

The Swiss colony that settled at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1721, came from the Canton of Basle or Basel. They were all mountaineers and most of them gun smiths. Prior to their advent the only fire arms known to the Americans were smooth bore muskets and fowling pieces. At first the Swiss at Lancaster made rifles only on the models of their own from the old country, that carried ounce balls and were smooth bore. The barrels were from thirty-two to thirty-five inches long, and were rifled to a twist of only one-half revolution in the length of the bore.

The frontiersmen immediately saw the superiority of these rifled guns in accuracy and in range. The frontiersmen demanded a lighter and longer barrel and smaller bullets. The Swiss protested but the demand soon created the supply. The gun smith laid aside the old Swiss Yager model and the distinctly American Rifle took its place in Lancaster County and Eastern Pennsylvania, thenceforth. In fact Lancaster County was a veritable bee-hive of rifle making for more than one hundred years, and an idea of its importance can be formed from the claim, well authenticated, that, in the year 1815, there were in that County sixty gun smiths.

Lancaster was not only the rifle making centre, however. The trade flourished wherever the German and Swiss tide of emigration spread.

Jacob Ferree, a son of Isaac Ferree, moved his family to Allegheny County about 1784, and took up a vast tract of land on Peters Creek, about twenty-four miles up the Monongahela river from Pittsburgh.

There he erected a powder mill and gun smith shop where his son, Joel, worked with him. Their rifles found a ready market in Doddridge, Virginia, and in Kentucky and N. Carolina. The wife of Jacob Ferree was a fine shot, and at that early time had no rival in Allegheny County. It was she who tested the guns and powder which the skill of her husband produced.

As time passed and new settlements sprang up further to the South and West, the apprentices of the celebrated old rifle smiths, their period of service ended, drifted away from the Pennsylvania settlements and established their own shops nearer to the Frontiers, where the demand for rifles still persisted.

The Carolinas, Virginia, the Ohio river country, Kentucky, Tennessee and St. Louis all had their rifle smiths and some of the old shops and mills stand to this day in almost the same condition as when the smith was patiently working at a long forgotten trade.

The deadly precision of the Kentucky Rifle in the hands of the American Soldiers in war.

On the 14th of June, 1775, the Continental Congress facing actual war, issued its first call for troops. It is interesting to note the class of men to which America turned in her hour of extreme peril. Congress having resolved itself into a Committee of the whole passed the following resolution:

“Resolved, That six companies of expert riflemen be immediately raised in Pennsylvania, two in Maryland, and two in Virginia, that each company consist of a Captain, three Lieutenants, four Sergeants, four Corporals, a Drummer or Trumpeter, and sixty-eight privates.

That each Company as soon as completed march and join the Army near

Boston, to be employed as light Infantry, under the command of the Chief Officer of that Army."

Such was the beginning of the United States Army; for these were the first troops ever levied on this continent by authority of a Central Government. On the following day George Washington was appointed Commander in Chief by the same body.

It may seem strange the first men called into service should be those furthest away from the scene and hardest to reach, the nomadic hunters on the frontier. When hostilities were so imminent (remember Gage was already penned up in Boston, and Bunker Hill was but three days off) why did Congress send hundred of miles into the wilderness, when sea-board towns were alive with men eager to enlist?

Certainly this action was due to a subtler policy than appears on the surface, and that it was suggested by the only man in Congress who knew the backwoodsmen like a brother; who had marched with them and camped with them, fought side by side with them—**George Washington himself.**

It was plain enough that a corps of these incomparable sharpshooters hardy, indomitable, experienced in war; armed with the Kentucky rifle and skilled beyond measure in its use, would be the right stuff to meet the British regulars.

As a Surveyor in the back country, as scout and Diplomat in his long winters march through the wilderness to the French outpost in the Ohio country, and especially with his Virginians in Braddocks fatal expedition, Washington had formed the acquaintance of a set of men whose like was to be found nowhere on earth. These were the hunters, Indian fighters and pioneers of the frontiers and Alleghenies, each armed with the "Kentucky rifle."

We see then Washington's fondness for the hunting shirt and cap, too. In his eyes it was an emblem of liberty, which never in the history of man were worn by an enslaved people; it was distinctive and meant **We are Americans.** Here were Americans. Original in all things, they were not to be confounded with this or that province, or with any European race. Their freedom needed no proclamation, it showed in every movement and looked straight from their eyes.

Within one week after the first call on June 14 Congress made another call for two more Companies from Pennsylvania; and at this call two Companies were raised in Lancaster County and went to the front under Captains Ross and Smith, each man of the Company carrying a Kentucky rifle made by a Lancaster County rifle maker.

We quote the following to show what these men could do with their Kentucky rifles.

In a letter written from Lancaster to Philadelphia under date of August 7th, 1775, speaking of several Companies of riflemen who stopped in Lancaster on their way to join Washington at Boston, the writer says:

"On Friday evening last arrived here on their way to the American Camp, Captain Cresap's Company of riflemen, consisting of 130 active, brave young fellows, many of whom had been in Lord Dunsmore's command against the Indians. You will not much wonder at these men when I mention a fact which can be fully attested by several reputable citizens of the town. Two brothers in the Company took a piece of board five inches broad and seven inches long with a bit of white paper about the size of a dollar nailed in the centre; and while one of them supported this board perpendicular between his knees, the other at the distance of upward of sixty yards and without any kind of rest shot eight bullets successively through the board and spared his brother's legs.

Another of the Company held a barrel stave perpendicular in his hand with one edge close to his side, while one of his comrades at the same dis-

tance and in the manner before stated shot several bullets through it without any apprehension on either part.

The spectators amazed at these feats, were told that there were upwards of fifty persons in the Company that could do the same thing and there was not one who could not plug nineteen bullets out of twenty within an inch of the head of a ten penny nail. Some of them proposed to stand with apples on their heads while others shot them off at sixty yards; but the citizens who had seen the other performances declined to stay to witness such a dangerous feat.

From the "Dunlaps Pennsylvania Packet, dated Monday, August 28, 1775.

As the riflemen moved swiftly towards Cambridge there was rejoicing all along the line of march. The Brothers Bradford, Printers of Philadelphia, wrote to a London publisher: "This Province has raised one thousand riflemen, the worst of whom will put a ball into a man's head at 150 to 200 yards, therefore advise your officers who shall hereafter come out to America to settle their affairs in England before their departure."

London Chronicle, August 19th, 1775, p. 174.

"Maryland, December 20, 1775." Rifles infinitely better than those imported are daily made in many places in Pennsylvania, and all the gun smiths everywhere constantly employed. The great quantities of game, the many kinds and great privilege of killing making the Americans the greatest marksmen in the world. In marching through the woods one thousand of these riflemen would cut to pieces ten thousand of your best troops." Niles "Principles and Acts of the Revolution," page 265. 2nd Edition.

These and many other similar items were promptly published in England showing the deadly effect of the fire from the riflemen, and excited wrath among the British. In the British camp the riflemen were called shirt tail with their cursed twisted guns, the most fatal and orphan makers in the world. "Drakes Old land marks of Middlesex."

No discussion of the Kentucky rifle in war would be complete without giving some of the salient facts attending the repulse of the British at New Orleans in which the deciding factor was admittedly the marksmanship of Carrolls Tennesseans, Adairs Veterans of the Old Kentucky Rifle Brigade, Hinds Mississippi Rifles, and Jugcats Choctaws.

These riflemen were altogether armed with the American frontier weapon, The Kentucky Rifle.

In addition such a reliable source as "Buell's History of Andrew Jackson" states that some militia contingents were equipped with weapons made by the best American gun smiths from Lancaster, Penna. to Camden, S. C., which came about in this wise.

Upon the declaration of war (1812) the government at Washington very wisely curtailed the trading of weapons to Indians, and this tied up some 400 first class weapons (Kentucky rifles made in Lancaster County). They were purchased by the government for \$15.00 each and "the voice of every rifle in the four hundred was afterwards heard at Talladega, Tohopeka, and New Orleans." Buell's History of Andrew Jackson, Scribners 1873, p. g. 259.

Now recalling the deadly work done there by the Kentucky Rifle we would briefly give a resume of the losses of the British and of the American forces as follows:

The British Army Official returns give their losses as follows: 381 killed on the field, 487 died of wounds, 1,251 wounded and permanently disabled; and 1,217 wounded and temporarily disabled or total casualties of 3,336.

American casualties were: 8 killed and 13 wounded.

The battle of King's Mountain.

Another striking example of the power of the Kentucky rifle in war was

shown at King's Mountain in which Major Ferguson of the British Army on the 6th of October chose a strong position on a hill known as King's Mountain and turned at bay. The ground was strewn with huge boulders while on one side it was rendered absolutely inaccessible by a steep precipice; and Ferguson seemed never to have dreamed that he could not hold it forever.

On the following afternoon the advance party of the backwoodsmen arrived about a thousand strong and having tied up their horses and divided themselves into three bodies, began to ascend the hill from three sides.

Creeping in silence, every man confident of his skill as a stalker and a marksman the central division made its way up to the crest, where Ferguson met them with a volley and a charge with the bayonet.

The backwoodsmen fell back slowly keeping their pursuers in check by a biting fire from behind trees and boulders, until a storm of bullets in Ferguson's flank showed that a second division of his enemies was lying in wait for him.

Turning at once upon them Ferguson found that the third division of backwoodsmen which had been hidden on the opposite flank was firing steadily into his rear.

Thus entrapped, the Militia found the odds too many against them.

Still they fought hard until Ferguson fell, and nearly four hundred of them had fallen killed and wounded before the remainder, rather more than seven hundred, laid down their arms.

The whole loss of the backwoodsmen was eighty-eight killed and wounded, and the only marvel is that it should have been so great, for their exploit was as fine an example as can be found of the power of woodcraft, marksmanship and sportsmanship in war.

This battle was fought October 7th, 1778, between British soldiers assisted by a number of Tories of that section who were organized as Militia on the side of the British Regulars.

The above account is from **The History of the British Army**, by Hon. J. W. Fortescue.

The most celebrated rifle maker of revolutionary times was William Henry, of Lancaster. In 1744, when fifteen years of age, he was apprenticed to a Lancaster gun smith named Martin Roeser, with whom he continued to the end of his term, in 1750, and commenced making rifles on his own account. Upon the breaking out of the French and Indian war he was appointed armorer to Braddock's Expedition and ordered to Va.

After the defeat of the expedition he returned to Lancaster and continued to supply the frontier and Indian trade with weapons.

His son, William Henry, Jr., followed the same business, and executed contracts with the government during the revolution for many thousands stands of arms. In 1809, a younger Henry erected a gun factory near Nazareth, Penna., in which the business is still continued by his great-grandson, (or was in 1890, when I obtained these particulars from John W. Jordan, a member of the family).

The Henry rifle was famous throughout the western frontier down to 1860, sharing with the Hawkin, the esteem of the mountain men.

The most prominent and extensive rifle makers of Lancaster County as also probably the last to regularly follow the business was Henry E. Leman, of Lancaster City, who began manufacturing in 1832 and after following it pretty much all his life died in Lancaster in 1887. The original shop in which he learned his trade is still standing a short distance below Oregon, formerly known as Catfish.

He afterwards moved to Lancaster City and his works were located at E. Walnut near Duke and on E. James between Duke and Queen. He owned

at one time the land on which our Historical Building now stands, and his home was next door in the Dr. Appel house where most of his family were born. James E. Lemman, Miss Adele Lemman and Henry E. Lemman are his surviving children, all well known to our Society members.

The Lemman rifle was sold throughout the United States prior to the Civil War and he had large contracts with U. S. Government at various times prior to and during the Civil War.

At the Eshelman Mill site on the Pequea southeasterly from the Media Heights Golf Course the Meylin boring mill was located, in 1719 that being among the very earliest if not the earliest such mill in the County.

An old rifle factory and boring mill is still standing on the Pequea a short distance southwesterly from Paradise near road towards Strasburg. At Pannabaecker's Mill some two miles north of Clay the Pannabaecker rifles were made, as there was also several makers by the name through that section about Adamstown.

The following are among the list of Rifle Makers of Lancaster County prior to 1840. Some of these were located outside of the present boundaries of the County but were within the boundaries of Lancaster County prior to the dates of the remaking of the lines when Chester County, York County and Lebanon County were erected into Counties by themselves.

The greater part of them however were located at Lancaster or within a ten mile circuit thereof, many being in the Pequea Valley extending from Blue Ball southwestward and especially in the neighborhood of Leaman Place, Strasburg and Willow Street.

Listing them alphabetically as they have come to hand we have:

- 1 M. Aldenderfer, Lancaster City, was working in 1817, his rifles were highly decorated.
- 2 J. Albright, Manheim, Penna.
- 3 John Baer, Lancaster, famed for his straight cut rifles.
- 4 John Baker, of Lancaster City, among the earliest makers.
- 5 Bartlett, Lancaster City, early maker, an excellent workman.
- 6 George Bauer, Lancaster. A very early maker.
- 7 Bellis, Lancaster, among the very first makers.
- 8 Samuel Boone, a nephew of Daniel Boone, was in Berks Co., 1768.
- 9 Bosworth. Early maker in Lancaster, Pa.
- 10 John Brong, Lancaster, Pa.
- 11 Peter Brong, Lancaster, Pa., 1880, No. 700 N. Queen Street. Late maker.
- 12 F. B. Brown, Lancaster, Pa.
- 13 Charles Bulow, Lancaster, Pa., 1797.
- 14 Busch, Lancaster, Pa. An early maker.
- 15 John Butler, Lancaster Pa. An early maker.
- 16 Nathaniel Beyers, believed to have been of Lancaster County, a very extensive maker about 1780 to 1800. Made his rifles without patch boxes.
- 17 D. Christ, Lancaster, Pa. Produced excellent work.
- 18 John Cryth, Lancaster, Pa.
- 19 Jacob Dechard or Dechert. Extensive maker, period before 1750.
- 20 Henry DeHuff, Lancaster, Pa., was operating in 1802.
- 21 Dereiner, Lancaster, Pa. Little known.
- 22 Adam Deterer, Lancaster, Pa.
- 23 John Doyle, Lancaster, Pa. About 1784.
- 24 Henry Dreppard, Lancaster Pa. An early maker and one of the few who put their names on lock-plates.
- 25 Jacob Doll or Dull. Period 1802.
- 26 ——— Eberly, Lancaster, Pa.
- 27 Eicholtz & Bro., Lancaster, Pa. Late flint lock period and continued in business until about 1888.
- 28 Jacob Ferree, Lancaster, Pa., 1785. Moved with his son, Joel, north of Pittsburgh, on Monongahela river.

- 29 Joel Ferree, son of Jacob. Their works were along Pequea Creek, 1750.
30 Fondersmith & Son, John. In 1749 were located at Strasburg, Pa. Were
in business late as 1802.
- 31 Melchior Fordney, Lancaster, Pa. Very early and extensive maker. Was
also an Isaac Fordney, possibly a son.
- 32 ——— Frank, Lancaster, Pa., among the early makers.
- 33 ——— Gaspard, Lancaster. An early maker.
- H. Gibbs, Lancaster, Pa., 1824 period. Made a very plain rifle.
- 34 Peter Gontec, Lancaster, Pa. An early maker—1780.
- 35 Peter Gonter, Sr., Lancaster, Pa. An early maker.
- 36 Peter Gonter, Jr., N. Queen Street. Died in 1818. Also spelled Gonder.
- 37 John Graef, Lancaster, Pa. Very fine workman. Time 1798.
- 38 William Graef, Lancaster, Pa. Prior to 1751.
- 39 Greshem ———, Lancaster, Pa. An early maker.
- 40 Christopher Gumpf. Made some very long rifles. Made flint lock 1888.
- 41 Chas. Hall, Lancaster, Pa. Died in 1887.
- 42 William Henry, First. Born in Chester County at that time, 1729. Died,
1786. Apprenticed to M. Roeser, Lancaster, Pa., started business as
Simons & Henry. Partnership dissolved 1759. Progenitor of famous
Henry family who were rifle makers for three generations and made
many rifles.
- 43 William Henry, Second. Known as William Henry, Jr. Son of foregoing.
Born and learned his trade in Lancaster County. Started in business
for himself in Nazareth, Penna., in 1778. In 1800 operated rifle forge
in Jacobsburg, Pa. Built the Henry rifle works at Boulton, three miles
northeast of Nazareth.
- 44 William Henry third, son of William Henry, Jr. Started business for
himself in Philadelphia, about in 1822, afterwards sold out to John
Joseph Henry. Manufactured rifle parts as well as rifles and employed
forty or fifty men. They left descendants who also engaged in rifle
making but not in Lancaster County.
- 45 John Henry, Lancaster, Pa., made rifles in the County prior to 1762.
John Henry and Peter Lane bought a property jointly on East King
Street, near the Square. He died in 1770 and his wife, Eliza, carried on
the business on E. King Street. It is not known whether he was related
to the famous William Henry, Sr.
- 46 Abraham Henry, Lancaster, Pa. In 1798 in company with John Graef
contracted to make 2000 rifles for the Commonwealth.
An Abraham Henry was in the family of William Henry, of Lancaster,
but proof is lacking as to whether he was this Abraham Henry.
- 47 Stephen Horn, Lancaster, Pa.
- 48 ——— Hutz. Was a maker in Lancaster, 1803.
- 49 Christian Isch, Lancaster, Pa. Little known.
- 50 Charles Jones, Lancaster, Pa. Little known.
- 51 Jacob Keffer, Lancaster, Pa. Was here in 1802.
- 52 Phillip LeFevre, Beaver Valley, Lancaster County, 1731 to 1756.
- 53 Henry E. Leman. Began manufacturing in 1832. Died in 1887. Exten-
sive maker and sent many rifles to Pittsburgh over the Pittsburgh
wagon trail.
- 54 Peter Leman, of Lancaster, Pa. Was an early maker.
- 55 ——— Mayesch. An early maker.
- 56 John Messersmith. Was making rifles in Lancaster, 1777.
- 57 Martin Mylan, Lancaster, Pa., 1719. Had a boring mill at "Big Springs"
and is believed to have made rifles there.
- 58 John Miller, Lancaster, Pa.
- 59 Henry Myer, Lancaster, Pa.
- 60 ——— Oberholtzer, Lancaster, Pa.
- 61 John Palm, Lancaster, Pa.
- 62 Jefferson Pannabaecker, Hopeland, Lancaster County, Pa. Period 1800.

John Pannabecker, near Adamstown, Lancaster County, brother of Jefferson; a skilled artisan who made rifles and also shot guns in the "percussion period. Still resides at the same place and is the last of the gun smiths of the County.

- 64 Jesse Pannabecker, near Adamstown, Lancaster County. He was a fine maker.
- 65 S. Pannabecker, Muddy Run, Lancaster County. Time about 1780.
- 66 William Pannabecker, Sr., Mohnstown, Berks County. Was a later maker, was born 1818, extensive operator for the government. This is close to Lancaster County line at Adamstown.
- 67 William Pannabecker, Jr. A rifle maker for the government and was in the business also near Mohnstown. Just over the Lancaster County line.
- 68 Henry Pickle. In Lancaster, Pa., 1802.
- 69 George Rathfong. Was making rifles in Lancaster, Pa., 1774. Was known to have made a nine grooved rifle.
- 70 David Reasor. Was a gun smith in Lancaster, Pa., in 1749.
- 71 ——— Redfan in Lancaster, Pa., possibly a Rathfong. Early maker.
- 72 Joseph Reed, Lancaster, Pa. An early maker.
- 73 Michael Riner, Lancaster, Pa.
- 74 ——— Reynolds, of Lancaster, Pa. An early maker.
- 75 ——— Riddle, of Lancaster, Pa. An early maker.
- 76 Peter Reigart or Rigert. One of Lancaster's early makers.
- 77 Mathew or Mathias Roeser, Lancaster, Pa., before 1744. His rifles are very beautiful in outline and finish.
- 78 Peter Roeser. Time before and after 1780. Lancaster City.
- 79 William Rupert, Lancaster, Pa. Period about 1777.
- 80 Jacob Rusilly, Lancaster, Pa. Little known.
- 81 Michael Rhynes. His shop was on Pequea Creek, Lancaster County, during the revolution, not far from Paradise. The ruins are still visible.
- 82 Anthony Sneider, Lancaster, Pa. Little known.
- 83 Snyder, John, Henry, George and Adam, representing several generations. They were in Providence Township, this County, not far from Refton. It was from this family that Governor Snyder, first Governor of Pennsylvania, came.
- 84 ——— Starr, of Lancaster County. Early maker.
- 85 ——— Stenzel or Stengel. Early maker.
- 86 Daniel Switzer & Co., on Millersville Road, Lancaster County.
- 87 Volvert or Volkert. Early maker of the County.
- 88 Michael Withers, Lancaster County. Period, 1778.
- 89 ——— Youmans, Lancaster, Pa. An early maker. Members of this family migrated to North Carolina and became famous as rifle smiths down there.
- 90 Best, Leonard, 92. Loderer, 93, Luddington, 94. Follecht.

Besides the above known to have been Makers of Rifles in this County there are many others who made rifles at the same period but only marked their guns with name and "Pennsylvania;" so that it is hard to determine to a certainty that they were of this County. Then there is another class of makers for which Lancaster County can claim much credit, and that is sons and apprentices of the above named makers, who learned the business and craft and graduating from a Lancaster County shop they took up the trail down through the Shenandoah Valley into the Carolinas and Tennessee and the great Southwest and made their rifles in Kentucky and Tennessee for the pioneers of that country when and where rifles were needed, and most effectively used.

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