Bulletin
Kentucky Rifle Association
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In Search of History

The Clark Family of Gunsmiths

JOHN KOLAR, KRA

When most people visit Lebanon today they are impressed by the number of ninth century buildings that still exist in this quaint Ohio town.Lebanon is also home to the Warren County Historical Society and the nationally known Golden Lamb Inn and Restaurant. This local historical society is unique in its exhibits and collections reflecting the early years of Ohio history and the Golden Lamb is recognized as the oldest continuously operating business in the State of Ohio. It has been serving the public since December 23, 1803 when its original proprietor, Jonas Seaman spent $4 for a license to operate a “house of Public Entertainment”. Lebanon lies midway between the Old National Road US

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The Kentucky Rifle Association
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Rifle # 1

40 and Cincinnati. As such it was ideally located to profit from early western expansion.

Almost exactly 200 years ago, in 1811, James Clark moved to Lebanon and established his gun shop. The Clark family was destined to become the most prolific gunsmiths of Ohio and they were a generation earlier than the Vincent's of Washington County who worked in the 1850's.



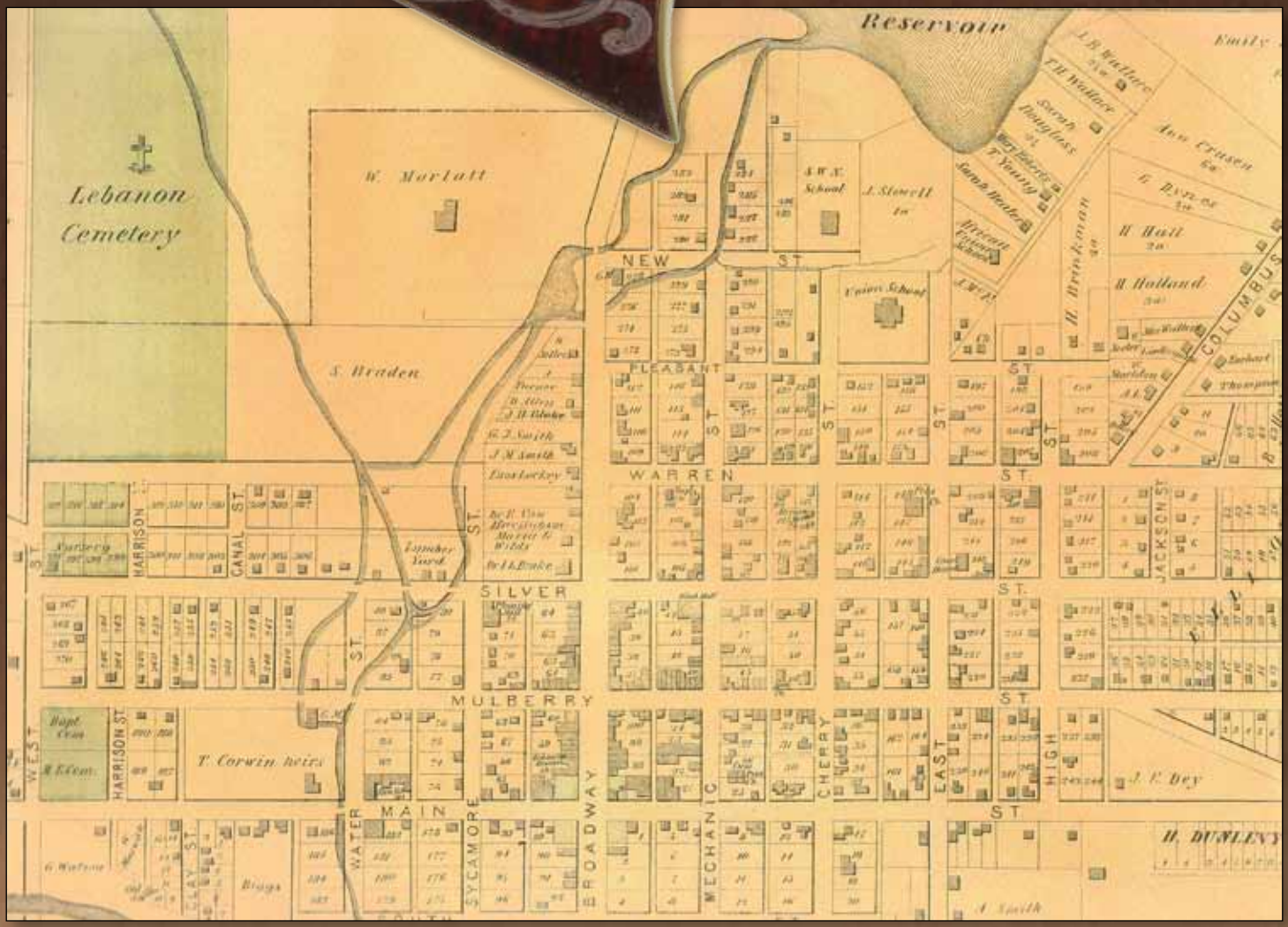
Rifle # 2

James Clark was born on January 11, 1784 near Cumberland, Maryland. His father was Jacob Clark a Revolutionary War Soldier and his mother was Tabitha Dennis. The elder Clark had settled in western Maryland around 1780. Both James and his younger brother Hiram were apprenticed to gun smith George Rizer of Cumberland. George and Martin Rizer are discussed by Kindig on page 470 of "Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age." He shows a rifle signed M. Rizer, (no. 218). Kindig also propose the possible relationship of the Rizer's to Mathias Roesser of Lancaster. A complete accounting of James' apprenticeship is given on pages 67 and 68 of volume five of "Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesman" by Donald Hutslar. If you study the work of both Hiram and James it is apparent that at some point they worked together and they had the same teacher.

Before moving to Lebanon it is probable that James and his other brother Jacob had a gun shop in Cincinnati. This was after James Clark completed his apprenticeship with Rizer in 1805. The US Census and Tax List has James residing in Anderson Township in Hamilton County in 1810. This is now the eastern side of Cincinnati along the Ohio River.

James probably moved to Lebanon because of its location and because his father, Jacob had already established himself as a wood worker and had a shop there. He initially rented or purchased a house/shop on Silver Street.

In 1818 he purchased two lots 50 and 52 from the Alter family. The 1875 map of Lebanon (picture # 1) shows two structures on lot 52 which is on the corner of Silver and Cherry Streets. This is only two blocks from Broadway the north-south thoroughfare connecting the National Road and Cincinnati. Although lot 52 is vacant today, one of the two structures shown on the 1875 map could have been Clark's shop. We know that it was destroyed by fire in January of 1831but by April first it was rebuilt and the boring mill was back in operation. The maps also shows that lot 50 were vacant in 1875. Today there is a residential structure on it. Silver Street must have been a busy place in the early 19th century. The first jail was constructed in 1820 one block east of Cherry Street on the north side of Silver Street. In addition the first court house was constructed in 1835 in the



Picture # 1

Greek revival style at a cost of $25,000 next to the jail.

James and three of his sons, James Jr., Charles, and William were all involved in the manufacture of guns. The business itself, in the 1810-1830 period was precarious at best. It was subject to the vicissitudes of western expansion and the volatile economics of a new nation.

However The Clarks were resilient. The economic turn down beginning in 1818 saw James moving to and working in the Federal Armory at Harpers Ferry. This is probably when he collaborated with one of the Sheets of Shepards Town. The "Sheets and Clark Rifle" in the Kindig Collection has the identical and unique fore stock molding as shown on the rifle on rifle number 3.

James Clark was among the first gunsmiths to offer the new ignition system. He was manufacturing and selling percussion rifles as early as 1828.

With the economic recession of 1829 the gunsmithing business had stagnated again. The market had left Ohio. The Clark's, James Jr., Charles, and later James Sr. continued to manufacture rifles in Lebanon and haul them to markets in the south such as Natchez, Mississippi. William, the youngest son ran the gun shop while his siblings and father were away selling their rifles in active markets.

By 1831, James Jr. quit the gunsmithing trade and with the financial help of his father became a dentist.



Rifle # 2

Rifle # 2



Rifle # 2





Rifle # 2



Rifle # 2



Rifle # 3



Rifle # 3



Rifle # 3

But he was still involved in the family business. As late as July 1833 James Sr., wrote to Charles advising him to protect the rifle against rust. Charles was selling guns so quickly that James Sr. sent James Jr., the dentist, to truck down another load of brass mounted percussion rifles. These rifles sold for $25 each.

By the mid 1830's all the Clark family with the exception of James Jr. left Ohio and gun manufacture had moved to Jefferson County Mississippi. James Sr. established a successful cotton plantation, Hawthordon. He died in 1859 in Bolivar County Mississippi before the onset of the Civil War.

It would be interesting to speculate how a northern manufacturing family could move from an abolitionist Ohio to the antebellum agrarian south. Did they move south for strictly economic reasons?

The surviving examples of rifles manufactured by the Clark family whether signed by James, Hiram, or William show the work of master tradesman. All the rifles have graceful architecture, with long slender octagonal barrels. Most are 40 to 45 caliber, flint locks with double set triggers. With out exception, the more



Rifle # 3

Rifle # 3

ornate the rifle, the finer the curly maple that was used for the stock.

The two rifles accompanying the article are both masterpieces of the gunsmithing art. Rifle number 2 was probably manufactured in the 1810 to 1815 period. It has an overall length of 62". The octagonal 44 caliber rifled barrel is 45" long. It is original flint with double set triggers. The butt is 1 ½" wide and 4 ½" high. It has a Pittsburgh or "National Road" style of patch box and a Philadelphia water proof lock. Instead of carving, it is covered with a very finely, engraved, silver vine and floral overlay in a rococo pattern. It is signed in silver on the top flat of the barrel, "J. Clark Lebanon Ohio".

Rifle number 3 was probably manufactured a few years later. Its 25 silver inlays and silver wire decoration scream "Manifest Destiny". The early 1820's concept conceived from the Monroe Doctrine of westward expansion. Many of the decorative elements such as the patriotic shield and dagger reflect this. This rifle has an overall length of 60". The octagonal 40 caliber rifled barrel is 43 1/2" long. The Philadelphia lock by Longstreet and Cook



Rifle # 3



Rifle # 3

Rifle # 3

was originally flint; it was probably converted to percussion in the 1840 - 1850's. The butt is 4 ½" high and 1 3/8" wide. Its patch box, carving and decoration are closely related to the work of John Armstrong. Signed in silver on the top flat of the barrel "James Clark" and on the silver side plate "William Clark", it is the only Kentucky Rifle signed by two gunsmiths from the same family.

When you look at these two rifles or the other signed by Hiram, the two words that come to mind are quality and versatility. The Clark's in addition to being fine craftsmen created rifles that reflect changing times and customs.



Rifle # 3



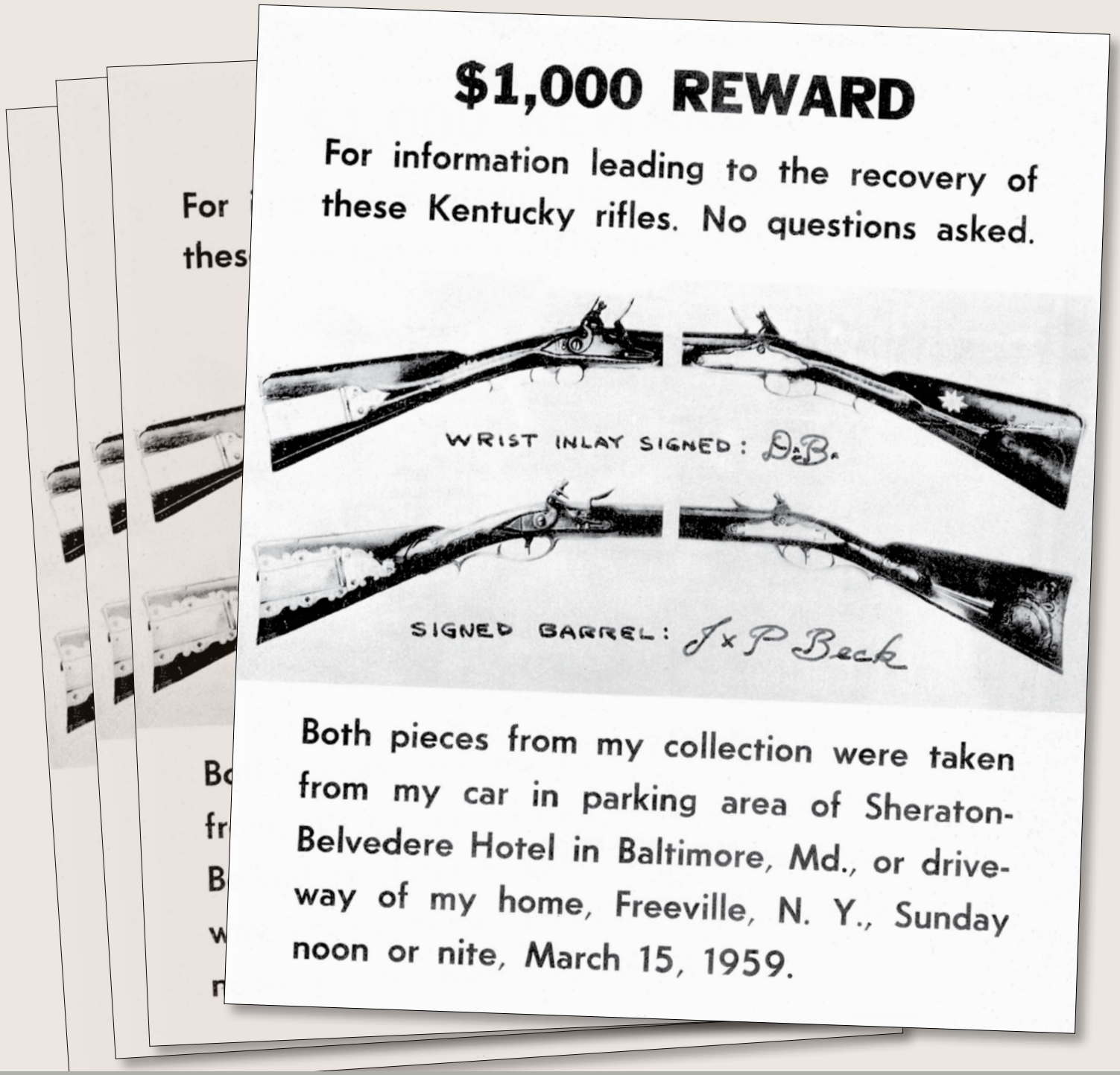
Rifle # 3

The author wishes to acknowledge that this article reflects the prior work of Donald A. Hutslar "Ohio Gunsmiths and Allied Tradesmen," Warren Offenberger and research provided by John Zimkus of the Warren County Historical Society, Lebanon, Ohio. ❖

Lest We Forget

Below is reward information for missing Kentucky rifles that is still in effect. The late Wes White, a KRA founding member, put together this flyer in 1959 when his two rifles were stolen. The rifles have yet to be recovered. KRA member Walter O'Connor, requested we include this reward information in our Bulletin to refresh our memories. Wes's son Ron, is a current KRA member and we have updated the contact information to reflect this. By infoming new members of the loss, we can help a fellow KRA member possibly recover these two Kentucky Rifles.

Wes White - Ronald A. White (his son) 200 Irish Settlement Road, Freeville, New York 13068
Home Phone: **607-844-8062** Email: ***raw5@cornell.edu***



AN INTIMATE LOOK AT *The American Longrifle*

IT'S ART AND EVOLUTION



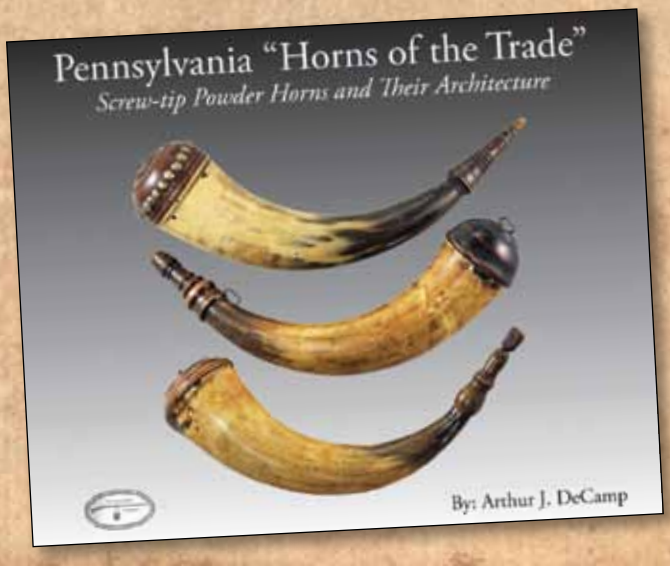
This outstanding book may well be the finest book ever published concerning the art and history of the American Kentucky Rifle. The 204 page book, available mid-June in time for the Annual KRA meeting, contains over 800 full color photographs. These photos show the minute details and measurements of many of the finest surviving examples of our early gunsmith's artistry. The thirty-three included rifles represent all the major gunsmithing schools with examples ranging from the pre-Revolutionary War period to 1850. This important book will be marketed and distributed by the *Kentucky Rifle Foundation* with a portion of the proceeds going to the Foundation.

Copies of the book can be reserved by sending $125 plus (Media Mail Delivery $7.00 / Standard Mail Delivery $15.00) S&H to:

Kentucky Rifle Foundation
P.O. Box 768532-B
Roswell, GA 30076

If checks are received for advance orders prior to June 13, 2013 the book can be picked up at the annual meeting excluding the S&H charge.

Pennsylvania "Horns of the Trade" Screw-tip Powder Horns and Their Architecture



Art DeCamp's book currently retails for $89 plus $11 shipping and Handling. However, the *Kentucky Rifle Foundation* is extending its offer of $74 to KRA members in good standing. This offer applies thru the last day of the 2013 annual KRA show, 6/24/13. If unable to attend the show send mail orders and $11 Shipping and Handling to:

Kentucky Rifle Foundation
P.O. Box 768532-KR
Roswell, Ga. 30076

Please check the Kentucky Rifle Foundation website, www.kentuckyriflefoundation.org, for additional product offerings.



51st ANNUAL MEETING OF KRA

Thursday, June 20, 2013

2:00 p.m. Any KRA member can bring their guns and accoutrements into the gun room Thursday between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. for secure storage only. DO NOT UNPACK. No set-up or trading will be allowed on Thursday. Security will be in place from 6 p.m. through the end of the show. NOTICE! EDUCATIONAL DISPLAYS ONLY MAY SET UP BEFORE 6PM!!!

6:00 p.m. Show security begins, show room is closed.

Friday, June 21, 2013

10:00 a.m. Showroom opens for registration, placement of table displays and educational displays. Admission by 2013 membership card Blue (or Red – new member), guest pass or family pass only. Registration of educational displays begins.

Members who forget their card will be required to wait until there is no line for Registration. No early admittance.

THE DOORS WILL OPEN FOR PLACEMENT OF DISPLAYS PROMPTLY AT 10:00 A.M., NO EARLIER. BADGES WILL BE REQUIRED FOR ADMITTANCE.

2:00 p.m. Seminar Program – Speaker: Bill Ivey, KRA.
North Carolina Schools of Longrifles 1765-1865

4:30 p.m. New Members Orientation Program (All new members, and spouses, from 2012, 2013 are invited as well as any new members attending the Annual Meeting for the first time).

5:00 p.m. Registration Desk Closes till after 8:00 p.m.

12 midnight Showroom closes. (*Members may cover tables AFTER 10 p.m.*)

Saturday, June 22, 2013

8:00 a.m. Members register, show opens. Register educational exhibits for awards competition. Coffee and pastries served.

8:30 a.m. Pre-registered Ladies only meet in the lobby to board their Deluxe Motor Coach for a trip to the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History.

10:00 a.m. Display registration ends.

2:00 p.m. Seminar Program - Speaker: Mel Hankla, KRA
Up the Valley and Through the Gap — Following the Migration of Kentucky Rifle Smiths

5:00 p.m. (no removals whatsoever from showroom after 5:00 p.m. Saturday).

5:45 p.m. Cash Bar and social hour.

6:30 p.m. Banquet and Awards Presentations, gun room stays open.

10:00 p.m. Tables may be covered.

12 midnight Showroom closes

Four Points Sheraton Pittsburgh North
910 Sheraton Drive
Mars, Pennsylvania 16046
United States
Phone: **(724) 776-6900**
Fax: **(724) 776-1115**

Sunday, June 23, 2013

8:00 a.m. Showroom opens. Coffee and pastries provided.

10:00 a.m. Annual Business Meeting after which show ends.

The KRA Ladies are Cordially Invited to a Special Tour

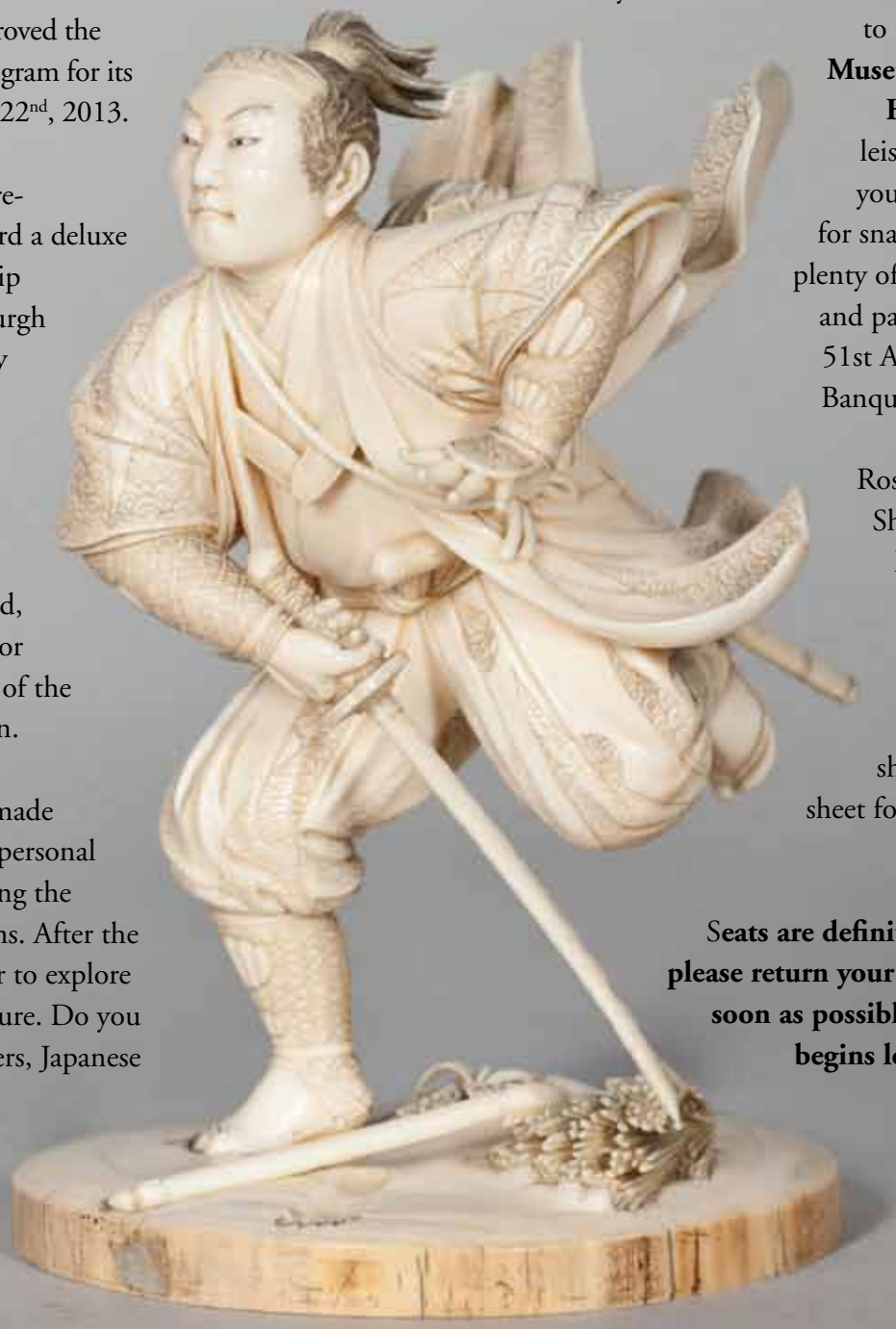
OF THE CARNEGIE MUSEUM OF ART *and* The Museum of Natural History

The KRA Board of Directors has unanimously approved the Special Ladies Program for its 51st Annual Meeting, June22nd, 2013.

On Saturday June 22nd, Pre-Registered Ladies will board a deluxe motor coach for a short trip back to the City of Pittsburgh touring the Internationally recognized **Carnegie Museum of Art**.

The Carnegie Museum of Art Is looking forward to hosting a, docent guided, tour of the Museum's Major Collections for the Ladies of the Kentucky Rifle Association.

Arrangements have been made with the Museum so that personal attention is given to viewing the Major Museum Collections. After the tour you will have an hour to explore the Museum at your pleasure. Do you prefer Impressionist Masters, Japanese Ivory, Modern Art, or the famous Architecture Hall?



If not, then your KRA admission allows you access to the **Pittsburgh Museum of Natural History** at your leisure! Of course you will have time for snacks/lunch with plenty of time to return and participate in the 51st Annual Meeting Banquet and Awards.

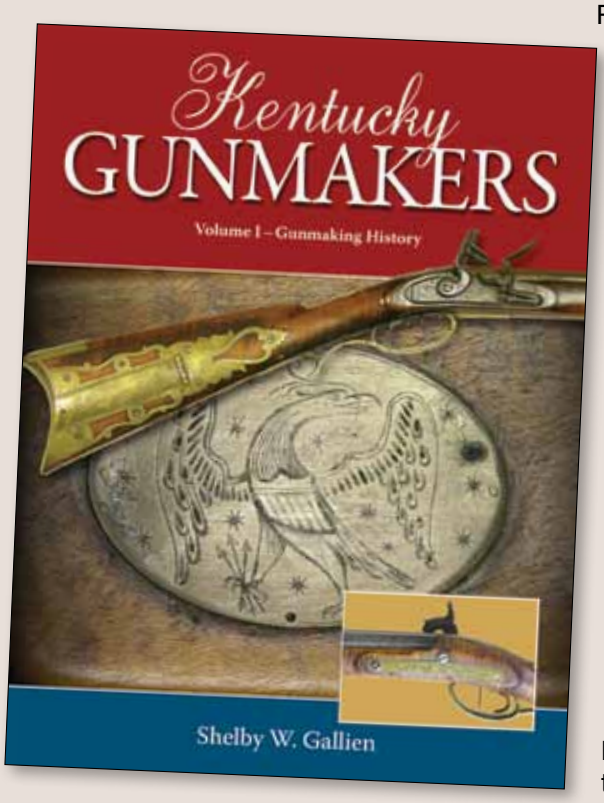
Rose Donharl and Sharon DeCamp have graciously volunteered to be leading the day, so please sign up on the show reservation sheet for a Day-at-the-Museum.

Seats are definitely limited so please return your reservation as soon as possible. The Coach begins loading at 8:30 A.M. at the Hotel lobby.

New Book Release:

Kentucky Gunmakers *of the* Muzzle Loading Era 1775-1900

Printed in a two-volume set: Volume I is "Gunmaking History" in 289 pages, and Volume II is "Biographies" in 322 pages. Pages are large format size 9x12 printed on premium 105 lb. coated paper with matt finish. Bindings and covers are high quality and each volume has an attractive dust jacket. The publication is a massive, thorough study of early gunmaking in Kentucky. It documents the gunmakers who shaped Kentucky's gunmaking traditions and the fascinating "southern" guns they made. Many never-before seen rifles are illustrated as the story of Kentucky's gunmaking is told…from Kentucky's earliest gunmakers to its last holdouts who clung to the "old ways" in the state's southeastern hill county area until the end of the nineteenth century.



Volume I… is a highly illustrated narrative of Kentucky's gunmaking that begins with the first pioneer gunsmiths to walk on Kentucky soil. The state's early rifles were "working guns" with limited furniture that was often a mixture of iron and brass. The "golden age" of Kentucky gunmaking appeared about 1800. It has seven identified schools of gunmaking that includes the outstanding Lexington, Bardstown, Louisville, and Ohio River Schools. The percussion years from 1835 to 1900 saw a gunmaking industry blossom in Louisville and elsewhere that sold thousands of rifles to settlers heading west in America's "Manifest Destiny" or great western expansion era. Superb target rifles appeared during Kentucky's percussion era, with Benjamin Mills' rifles being among the best not only in Kentucky, but in the nation.

Volume II… contains over 1,100 biographies of gunsmiths who worked in Kentucky during the muzzle loading era. Within its pages the lives of Kentucky's most noted makers are documented, along with their training and early migration patterns that help explain the final styles found in Kentucky's major gunmaking schools. Readers will learn about the Bryan and West families of Lexington, Jacob Rizer and David Weller of Bardstown, Moses Dickson and Joseph Griffith of Louisville, Benjamin Mills of Harrodsburg, John Shell and Pleasant Wilson of the southeastern hill county, and others whose high quality work is becoming admired and sought after today.

For years Kentucky's gunmaking was often ignored by collectors and researchers due to the assumption that its guns were, for the most part, lesser quality "hog rifles." Better rifles were often attributed to "southeastern Virginia" during that era that today can be identified as Kentucky products. Collectors, researchers, and historians can now identify Kentucky's early rifles and avoid the injustice of calling them "southwestern Virginia" guns. More importantly, Kentucky can now appreciate its early arms-making heritage and take its rightful place among states where early gunmaking became highly developed, artistic, and an important economic factor for the state.

Price: $149.95 for the two-volume set. Mail orders add $14 for shipping and handling.

Available at KRA, CLA and other "splinter" longrifle shows in 2013. **Contact:** *sgallien@comcast.net*

Welcome New Members

The following candidates for membership were listed in a previous newsletter. No adverse comments having been received from the membership-at-large, they have been invited, and have accepted our invitation to join. We extend our congratulations and a hearty welcome to these, our new KRA members.

Candidate	State
Hilary Stanhope	Maryland
Ronald Campbell	Virginia
Steve Hilberg	Pennsylvania

Prospective New Members

In accordance with our membership requirements, names of prospective members must be circulated via the newsletter to the membership-at-large for comments.

If no adverse comment is received within 30 days after their circulation, the secretary will automatically send the candidates an invitation to join our association.

Potential members who have been invited to join shall have 30 days to accept, after which time the invitation will be considered withdrawn.

I am pleased to list the following new candidates for membership along with the names of their sponsors.

Candidate	Sponsor
W. Robert Bizzell	Mike Briggs
Rebecca Brooks	Terry Murphy
Walter T. Crutcher	Arnie Dowd
Richard B. Schreiber	Richard Gadler

Necrology

We are sorry to report the passing of several KRA members: Jan Sorgenfrei from Ohio who joined in 2001 and was the owner of the Old Barn Auctions; Gary Brumfield from Williamsburg, Virginia who joined in 1976; and James Spears from Indianapolis, IN who joined in 2000. We offer our sincere condolences to their friends and families.

With the Regional Shows

The Kentucky Rifle Association is not affiliated in any way with the planning or presentation of any regional longrifle gun show. Neither the name Kentucky Rifle Association nor any of that association's logos may be used in any form in connection with any regional show.

PRARIE STATE LONGRIFLE SHOW – will be held at the Days Inn, Princeton, Illinois on August 2 and 3, 3013. As usual all KRA & Ohio Longrifle Collectors are invited, as well as anyone with a genuine interest in Kentucky Rifles. If you have a musical instrument – bring it along for some pickin 'n' grinning sessions. Contact Curt Johnson at 1-815-699-7790 or ilgunmkr@comcast.net.

ANNUAL TENNESSEE KENTUCKY RIFLE SHOW – was held April 19th and 20th, 2013 at the Museum of Appalachia in Clinton, Tennessee. Muzzleloaders and related Accouterments only. Contact Wayne Elliott 1-770-823-2970 or welaw@mindspring.com for details concerning their next show date.

Buy, Sell, Trade

In answer to a number of requests from our members we include this BUY, SELL, TRADE column to our bulletin. Until the volume of these items becomes a problem, we will include them free of charge. This column can not accept ads for items you would not be allowed to display or trade at our Annual Meeting.

WANTED: A Pennsylvania Longrifle signed by the gunsmith "Troutman", any condition. Call Allen 610-533-3530 (Cell) 610-866-2063 (Home) 510-866-7115 (Work).

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Baltimore Gun Show

At the Baltimore Gun Show March 16-17, 2013, Richard Hujsa, Dennis Donharl and Carl Landis represented the KRA with a great display of Kentucky Rifles.

KRA

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