

## Horace E. Dimick, Master St. Louis Gunsmith

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When we think of 19<sup>th</sup> century St. Louis arms makers, our thoughts immediately turn to Jake and Sam Hawken. This is logical because the Hawken shop provided quality arms to the early trappers and developers of the West. The mystic of the Hawken rifle will always be recognized.

At the time Sam Hawken was almost finished with his work and J.P. Gemmer was taking over the operation of the shop, Horace E. Dimick came on the St. Louis scene.<sup>1</sup> A very complete article on Dimick was written by Herschel C. Logan and appeared in the 1958 *American Rifleman*.

Dimick moved to St. Louis in 1849 and established his first store at 38 North Main Street.<sup>2</sup> Early in December 1861, Dimick and Company opened a branch store at 97 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street which in January 1862 became the home of the company.<sup>3</sup> The latter address continued to be his place of business until Horace E. Dimick passed away on August 27, 1873.

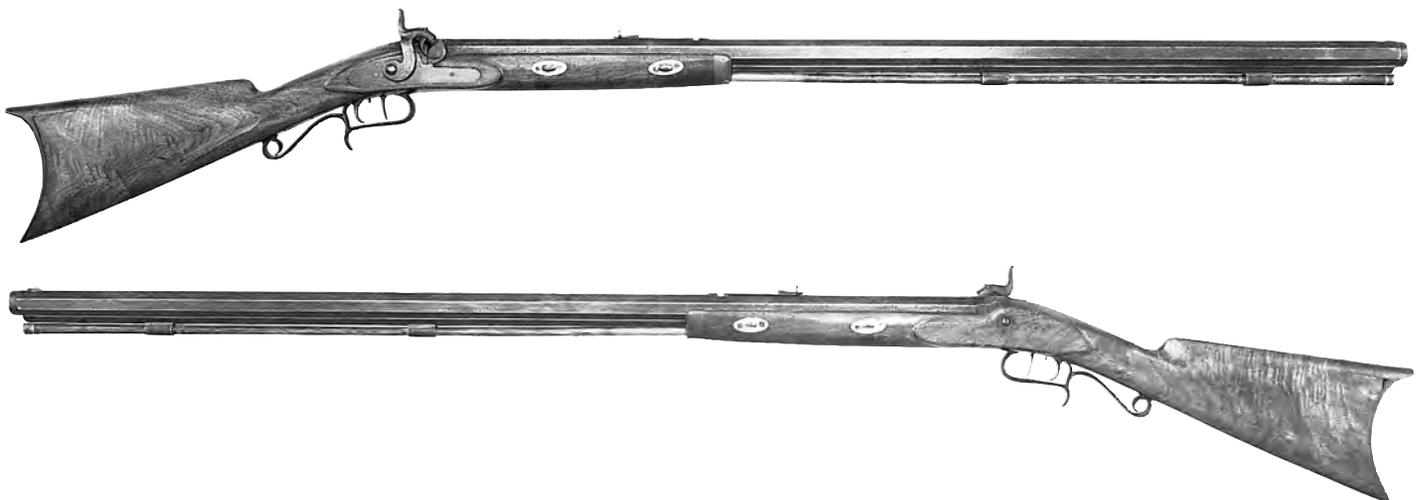
Dimick marked his arms in various ways. Initially he used Horace E. Dimick and Co. or H.E. Dimick and Co. These markings were used into the civil war.<sup>4</sup> Dimick's later work was generally marked H.E. Dimick in small letters. Also, I have observed pieces being marked Dimick and Folsom St. Louis and Eaton and Dimick St. Louis.

Dimick employed a number of gunsmiths. Among them were A.E. Linzel, H.C. Palmer, Christian A. Wirsing, J.P. Lower, and J.C. Kersey.<sup>5</sup> You will find some of these names on various parts of Dimick pieces. They may be exposed or



can only be observed after disassembly of the piece. In addition, Dimick used locks from T. Gibbons, who also made locks for the Hawken shop.

Turning to the arms produced and handled by Dimick, we find that Dimick was a purveyor of arms as well as a maker of fine arms. Dimick made a variety of long arms and pistols. They include the classic double keyed plains rifles, target rifles, combination pieces (rifle/rifle, rifle/shotgun, and over and under), Civil War type sniper rifles, derringers and single shot pistols. The workmanship in these pieces, in the writer's opinion, reflects some of the best work to be found among arms makers. Dimick was recognized for his



A Horace Dimick Half-Stock

excellence by receiving Grand Silver Medals at the St. Louis 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fair held in 1858.<sup>6</sup>

Characteristics of Dimick rifles were iron furniture, walnut stocks without a cheek piece and a scroll type trigger guard—patch boxes were used in some cases. The rifles were simple in design and were either all iron, iron and silver, or all silver (figure).

Dimick was a purveyor of revolvers which were marked by Dimick or were devoid of markings except for serial numbers. W.E. Nutter's research as published in the *Gun Report* of August 1967 presented a strong case for the fact that these revolvers were made by the Metropolitan Arms Company. These numbers are known to be in the serial range of 1174 to 1748.<sup>7</sup>

These pieces may be marked as follows<sup>8</sup>:

- 1) H.E. DIMICK St. Louis
- 2) Made for H.E. Dimick St. Louis

The signing appeared in these different styles:

"The "Made for H.E. Dimick St. Louis" signing was hand engraved, using a combination of script and Old English lettering; the "H.E. DIMICK St. Louis" signing is found in hand-engraved Old English letters and in block letters, the latter resembling a die-stamped signing."<sup>9</sup>

Missouri was a hot bed of Union and Southern sentiments at the start of the Civil War. Obviously, a premium was placed on obtaining arms. This has led to speculation that Dimick provided firearms and ammunition to Confederate sympathizers. This was done without obtaining proper permits from the Provost Marshall in St. Louis.<sup>10</sup> His actions prompted a review in 1864 by the Adjutant General under the command of Major General Rosecrans. Upon completion of the proceedings, Horace E. Dimick was found not guilty on all charges as reflected in General Order 102 issued on June 22, 1864.<sup>11</sup> He was exonerated on the basis that a clerk made the sales without being properly informed of the need for permits to make arms sales. Dimick was released from custody upon giving bond in the sum of two thousand dollars, and with his assurance that he would observe all military rules and regulations.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the arms activity centered around members of "The Order of American Knights" which was known to have aided in the supplying of arms and supplies to Confederate sympathizers in Missouri. The membership rosters were secret; however, some membership names are on record. In reviewing available material Dimick's name did not appear on any of the documents. A complete report of this group was made by the Judge Advocate General and released in Washington, D.C. on October 8, 1864.

Prior to the incident, Dimick obtained a federal contract for providing 1,000 rifles.<sup>13</sup> This contract was filled with a variety of arms produced by Dimick and in part with rifles from other gunsmiths. An excellent article was written by Dan Fagan and appeared in the March 1996 *Gun Report*. As noted in this article, Dimick serialized those pieces by numbering the muzzle end.<sup>14</sup>

In summary, Horace E. Dimick made superior arms that are recognized for their high quality and should take their place alongside Hawken as prized pieces in the development of the west.

#### NOTES

1. Dates shown in Gateway Gunsmiths, p. 4, 6, and 7
2. Information provided on p. 29 of the H.E. Dimick article that appeared in *The American Rifleman*
3. Ibid, p. 29
4. Ibid, p. 32, also, from personal observation of various pieces
5. Ibid, p. 31
6. Ibid, p. 30, 31
7. Information provided on page 16 of the *Metropolitan Arms Company New York* article that appeared in the *Gun Report*
8. Ibid, p. 16
9. Ibid, quoted from p. 16
10. General Orders Number 102, p. 4 and 5
11. Ibid, p. 5 and 6
12. Ibid, p. 6
13. Ibid Logan, p. 32
14. Information provided on p. 17 of *The Dimick Rifles of the Illinois Infantry*

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