

gerguard and hammer of the cavalry An 9 (1800-01) type were adopted, both very similar to the 1779.

The barrel band of the Model 1786 is of considerable interest. It indicates the continuing concern of the Navy for a firmly-held barrel as well as a solidly-affixed barrel band. It also displays the spirit of innovation at the Tulle Manufactory and highlights naval insistence on having weapons of its own design.

In fact, the new barrel band was adopted by the land forces as represented in the An 13 (1804-05) cavalry/dragoon pistol, following the abandonment of the short-lived An 9 pistol furnished with the already archaic side-spring-held double barrel band.

The 1786 pistol was produced only at Tulle. In addition to the usual inspection marks and date, the inscription on the lockplate may indicate the Tulle Manufactory as Royal, National or Imperial corresponding to the period during which it was produced.

The 1786 pistol of the French Navy marked the end of the specifically naval flintlock pistol. An Imperial Decree of April 1804 transferred the Navy-controlled Tulle Manufactory to the War Ministry. Emperor Napoleon could not visualize the need for individual weapons to be other than standardized throughout the entire French military establishment. Flint pistols thereafter were of a single design for both land and sea use. The only difference was that regulation pistols of the period—and until the end of the flint era—were furnished with belthooks for naval use, as were pistols for dragoons. All four French imperial—and subsequently royal—manufactories supplied both the army and the navy in their production of flint models An 9, An 13, 1816 and 1822 pistols.

The firm insistence of the Navy, however, in not adopting the Model An 9 and in retaining instead a pistol with a more securely-held barrel band was instrumental in the modification of the full-stocked An 9 cavalry model and the adoption, so to speak, in mid-stream, of the half-stocked Model An 13. Thus the emergency of the excellent and famous An 13 cavalry pistol of the Napoleonic Wars may be considered the result of a happy and promising marriage between the otherwise robust and efficient An 9 basic design with the excellent aspects of the Model 1786.

The outstanding performance of the French Navy's Tulle Manufactory over many decades constituted a distinct contribution to the war-making and civilizing capabilities of pre-republican France. Its innovative ideas, moreover, placed it at the head of all other manufactories. Evidence of its innovations persisted in the pistols of many important countries as long as 70 years later.

---

THANKS: I have had considerable recourse to valuable archival research conducted by Jean Boudriot of France (ARMES REGEMENTAIRES FRANCAISES) and by Russel Bouchard of Canada (LES FUSILS DE TULLE EN NOUVELLE FRANCE) and herewith express my gratitude to both. My appreciation is also due Robert Brooker Jr. for the excellent photos of items in his collection.

---

(Col. Katsainos was scheduled to give this talk Thursday at the Williamsburg meeting, but his time was inexplicably taken by another speaker. He found it necessary to return home that afternoon to attend his wife, who was ill. En route, he was seriously injured in an automobile accident. We are happy to report that he is making an excellent recovery and has been able to assist in preparing this text of the talk for publication here.)

---

**SHOOTING  
MATCH!**

-----  
THERE WILL BE 75 PRIME  
**TURKEYS**  
AND OVER  
**100 HENS,**



**SET up to be shot for, near  
the Hotel of D. G. SPERRY, East Windsor  
Hill, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Nov. 23  
and 24.**

**DISTANCE, --- 30 Rods for the TURKEYS, at 12½ cts. per Shot --- and eight Rods for the HENS, at 4 cents a Shot.**

**CHRISTOPHER B. PELTON.**

Shooting match broadside from Windsor, Conn. Ca-1840.

**GUNS!**  
**RIFLES!**  
**REVOLVERS AND PISTOLS.**

**J. HAPGOOD,**  
FROM BOSTON,  
Manufacturer and Importer of GUNS,  
Will offer for sale, during the Fair at  
**BOSTON PRICES,**  
AT

a good assortment of Double and Single Barreled Guns and Rifles, Allen's, Colt's and other Revolvers, Double and Single Barreled Pistols, Powder Flasks, Shot Pouches, Game Bags, Fish Baskets, Water Proof and other Percussion Caps, Hunters' Knives and Flasks, Gun Wads, Dog Collars, Bird Whistles, &c., embracing a general assortment of Sportsmen's Goods.

Joab Hapgood advertising broadside. Ca-1845.

# Worcester County Gunsmiths 1760-1830

By F. Allen Thompson

Ladies and gentlemen, today I would like to share with you the facts I have discovered concerning a group of fine flintlock gunmakers living in and around Worcester, Massachusetts, during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These gunsmiths developed an architectural style of gunmaking which was distinctive and remained peculiar to this area for many years. They made magnificent, smoothbore fowlers with thick-walled barrels which could shoot either buckshot or solid ball. Later, they made fine rifles in the Pennsylvania-Kentucky manner.

The great majority of guns in early New England were European in origin, and most were imported from France and England. In early New England there were a few real gunsmiths building complete guns, and most listed gunsmiths were woodworkers or blacksmiths who repaired or altered imported guns. Those who did make guns seldom signed them because they feared prosecution under the strict British import laws.

From these imported French and English fowlers the Worcester County style developed. A brief general description of one of these guns follows: it is gracefully stocked in cherry, maple, or American walnut, with a full Roman nose butt stock profile. The barrel is long, about 48-60"; on the top of the barrel there is a long flat section from the breech to the silver or copper front sight. This sight is set back from the muzzle 3-6". It has a full stock, pin fastened, with no nose cap. Some of the better guns have fine moldings running along the edge of the barrel, from in front of the lock to the muzzle, and along the ramrod channel from the rear ramrod thimble to the muzzle. Occasionally *acanthus* leaves or a *fan* is carved into the stock behind the barrel tang and behind the lower ramrod thimble. Thomas Holbrook of Sherborn, Mass., carved many of his guns in this manner. Most of the better guns have convex silver escutcheons on the wrist. These are engraved in floral style or have the owner's initials and a date on them. As time passed, these convex escutcheons tended to flatten out and were replaced with flat escutcheons with a little silver wire inlaid around them.

The brass hardware on these guns is remarkably similar on all specimens. Most of these guns had brass side plates, butt plates, trigger guards, and other furniture. I have seen only two or three iron-mounted guns, but their style is similar to the

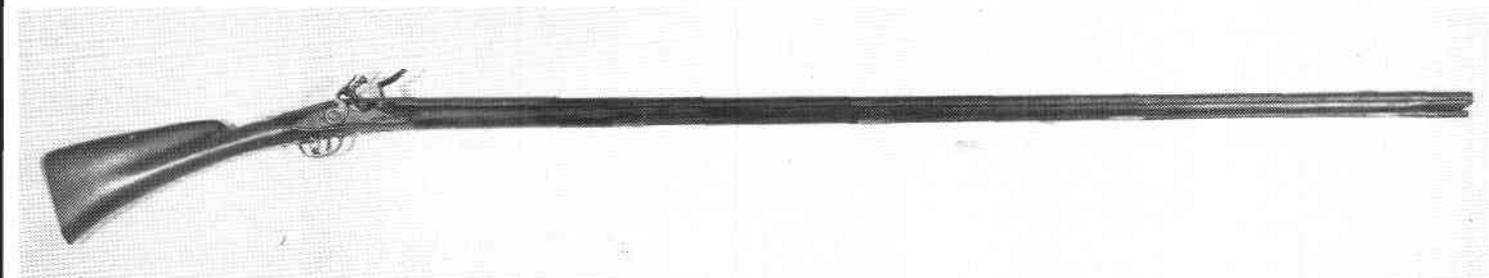


brass-mounted ones. The furniture is definitely French in style; however, I have not been able to find out where it actually came from. Most of the barrels were imported from England and Spain, so perhaps the furniture came from these countries as well.

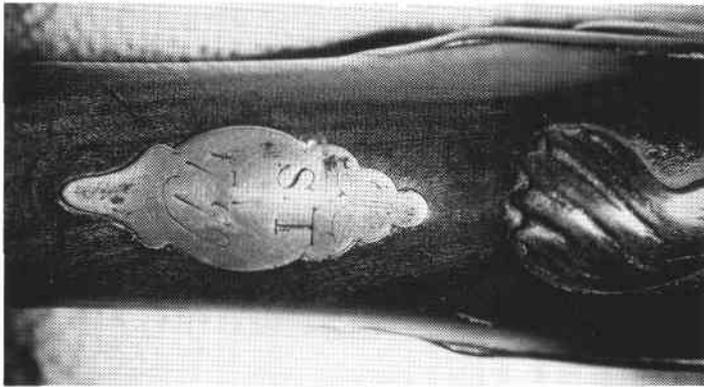
Most of the signed guns were signed on the top of the barrel, but I found a few — such as those made by Phineas Sawyer of Harvard, Mass. — signed on the lock. I also found guns signed both on the lock and on the barrel. Joel White of Sutton, Mass., (b. 1747) signed his guns this way.

At this point I would like to caution you concerning the purchase of any early, signed New England guns. In the early 1930's and 40's, a dealer just outside of Boston, Mass., discovered he could sell these fine early fowlers much more easily if there were names on them. He referred to names in some of the early books on American gunmakers and employed a talented engraver to sign the barrels of many of them, so be very careful in purchasing any of these early signed New England fowlers.

One of the early Worcester gunmakers was Ross Wyman (1716-1808). Probably the first gunsmith in Shrewsbury, Mass., he made guns for the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. Another was Joseph Weatherbee (1725-1809) from Harvard, just north of Worcester, Mass. He also made Committee of Safety muskets for Massachusetts. Josiah Meriam (1726-1809) from Concord, Mass., was a combination gunsmith-blacksmith



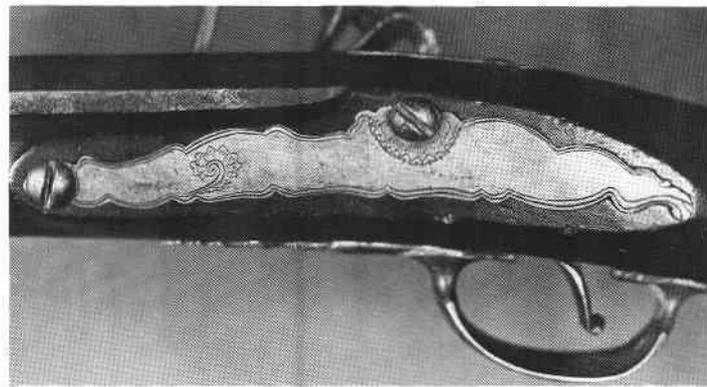
Joel White buck & ball gun made in Sutton, Mass. Ca-1790.



Escutcheon and carving of Thomas Holbrook buck & ball gun.

who made sporting guns for the townspeople and Committee of Safety muskets for the state during the Revolution. Samuel Barrett (1749-1804) from Concord signed his guns on the barrel. He also made Committee of Safety muskets. One of the finest gunsmiths of the early period was Phineas Sawyer (1746-1820), who worked in Harvard, Mass. He made wonderful, long-barreled fowlers, signed them on the lock, carved beautiful fans in the wood behind the barrel tang, and engraved the brass furniture. Just west of Worcester in the little town of Leicester, Mass., Thomas Earle worked from 1767-1819. He made superb guns with deep carving behind the barrel tang, behind the lower ramrod thimble, and engraved the brass furniture and silver escutcheons. He also made at least one magnificent rifle, of which I have seen only a picture. Ruben Earle, whom I think was either Thomas' brother or son, made at least one very fine gun, very similar in style to those of Thomas Earle. Ambrose Peck, circa 1770, worked in Swansea, Mass., and made fine guns during this early period. I have seen one officer's style fusil by Peck, beautifully made with a bayonet trap in the butt stock. He signed this gun under the barrel, and he also put his initials at the rear of the trigger guard. He also made Committee of Safety muskets which he signed *A. Peck* in the wood behind the trigger guard.

Asa Waters, Sr. of Sutton, Mass., appears to have been the first gunsmith in this great gunmaking town. He came from a long line of gunsmiths, and his family moved to Sutton early in the 18th century. I know he made Committee of Safety muskets for Sutton in 1775. Waters probably had as apprentices Joel White, W. Allen, and his sons Asa, Jr. and Elijah. Joel White and W. Allen both worked in Sutton and made fine buck and ball guns and rifles, but that is about all I know about them. I



Cloud shaped side plate of Joel White gun.

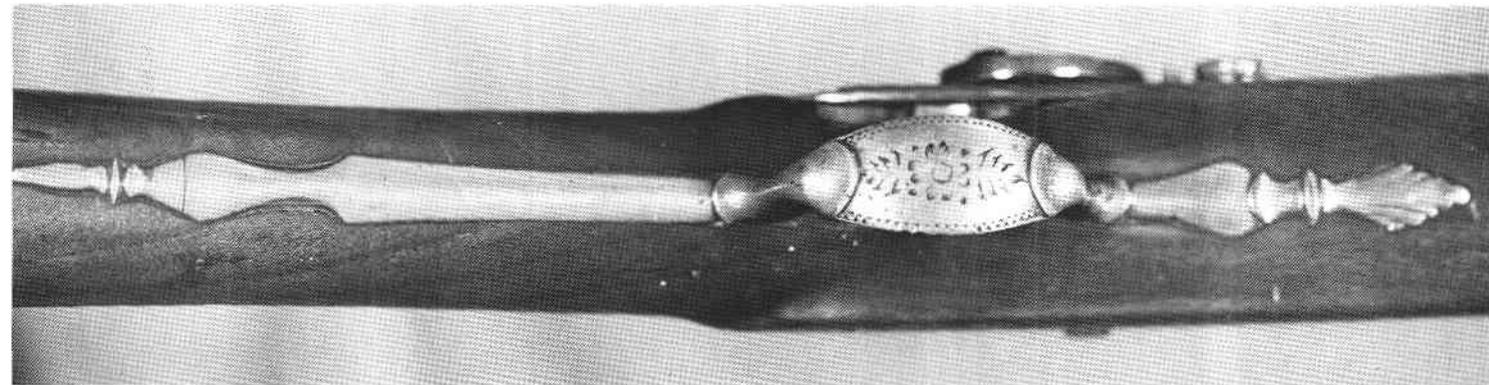
did find that Joel White was born in Sutton in 1747. Asa Waters, Jr. and his brother Elijah erected an armory in Sutton and took United States contracts for muskets in 1808, 1812, and 1816. Many of the later fine New England gunsmiths apprenticed in this armory. Nathaniel Whitmore was associated with Asa Waters, Jr. in one of his early contracts and later founded a gunworks himself in Sutton.

Welcome Mathewson of Sutton, whose account book for 1805-7 has been found, worked from about 1800-1830 making smoothbore guns and rifles. Probably the son of G. Mathewson of nearby Burrillville, R.I. (which is just south of Sutton), he made many high quality rifles, some with fine engraved horsehead patch boxes. I believe the most important gunsmith and probably the most influential in this area was Thomas Holbrook (1747-1810) of Sherborn, Mass. He made fowlers, buck and ball guns, and at least one brass-barreled pistol. His workmanship is flawless. Two other gunsmiths that came from Sherborn and probably apprenticed with Holbrook were Lemuel Leland (1786-1851) and John Mason (1775-1843). Both men made smoothbore guns and rifles. About 1797 John Mason moved to Shrewsbury, Mass., and set up his gun shop.

It is my opinion that Silas Allen apprenticed with John Mason around 1800 and then set up his own gun shop sometime before 1806. Silas Allen is probably the best known of the Worcester County gunsmiths. Silas was born in Medfield, Mass., on February 12, 1785, the son of Silas and Priscilla Allen. Silas Allen, Sr. was a cooper and farmer in Medfield; I find no record of any gunsmithing activity by him. In 1791 Silas Allen, Sr. sold his farm in Medfield and moved to the Elijah Rawson home in Shrewsbury. I believe that after apprentic-



Joel White name on lockplate of buck & ball gun.



Typical trigger guard of a Worcester County buck & ball gun.

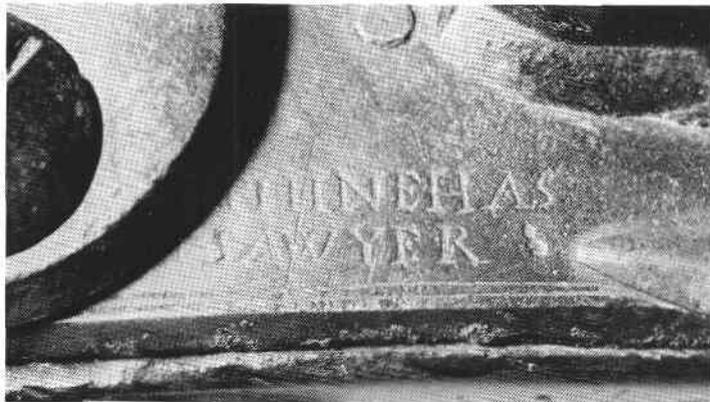
ing with John Mason for approximately five years, Silas Allen, Jr. opened his own shop in Shrewsbury and commenced making 1798-type militia muskets for Massachusetts. In my collection I have a fine flintlock militia musket of this pattern, signed *Silas Allen* on the lock and dated 1806 on the barrel, along with Massachusetts inspectors' marks. He made many high quality militia rifles and muskets for the local volunteer militia companies, but he is best known for the high quality rifles which he made for the target shooters and hunters of the surrounding area. Allen made his rifles in both half stock and full stock models. His silver inlays and silver wire inlay around the barrel tang and along the wrist are of very high quality. He also made fowling guns and beautiful pistols for the gentlemen and officers of New England. Allen's rifles and pistols are artistically executed, and the quality of craftsmanship reflects the overall skill of this maker. He died March 6, 1868, in Shrewsbury.

Until the end of the Revolution there were almost no rifled guns made in the Worcester County area. New England men, after seeing the accuracy displayed by the Pennsylvania and Virginia riflemen during the war, wanted similar rifles for their own use. The militia formed rifle companies, and this created a large demand for rifles from the local gunsmiths. What developed in Worcester County was a trim, sturdy rifle of surprisingly uniform appearance. Fifteen to twenty gunsmiths began turning out the New England long rifle.

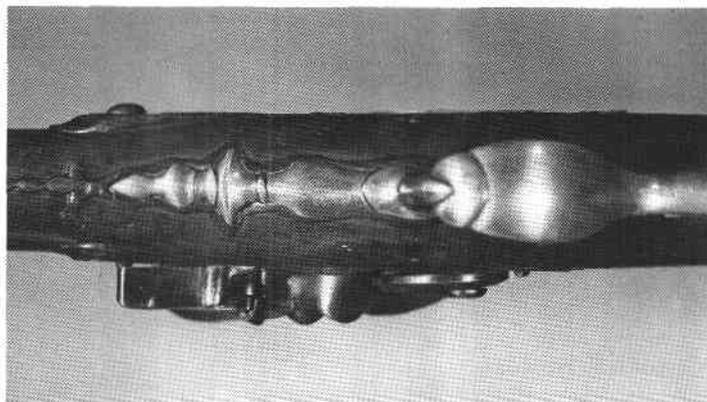
The New England style rifle was designed for hunting big game, target shooting, turkey shoots, and also for use by the local militia companies. The stocks were made of cherry, American walnut, and occasionally curly maple. They were never carved, but on the better rifles inlaid silver wire and a few silver inlays were conservatively used. These rifles had a long

plain patch box with a ball-and-spire or urn-shaped finial. The use of side plates alongside the patch box cover was unusual except on a high grade gun, and those with horsehead or eagle finials. The furniture was always brass with a two-piece lock plate of a distinctive pattern. The trigger guard had a small projection on its forward end. The barrels were full octagonal, occasionally round, and were signed on the top flat in either script or block letters. I believe that the ones signed in script were made by the master smith, and those signed in block letters were made by one of the apprentices in his shop. The half stock guns were always double-keyed to attach the barrel to the stock, had a horn fore-end cap and a wooden underrib attached beneath the barrel to hold the ramrod pipes. The barrels were all of large caliber (.40 to .55), and those with good bores still shoot very well. These rifles were well made and the fit of wood to metal is excellent. The only source for the brass furniture on these rifles is one trigger guard which I found marked *I Drury*. The only listing for this company is Liverpool, England, circa 1790.

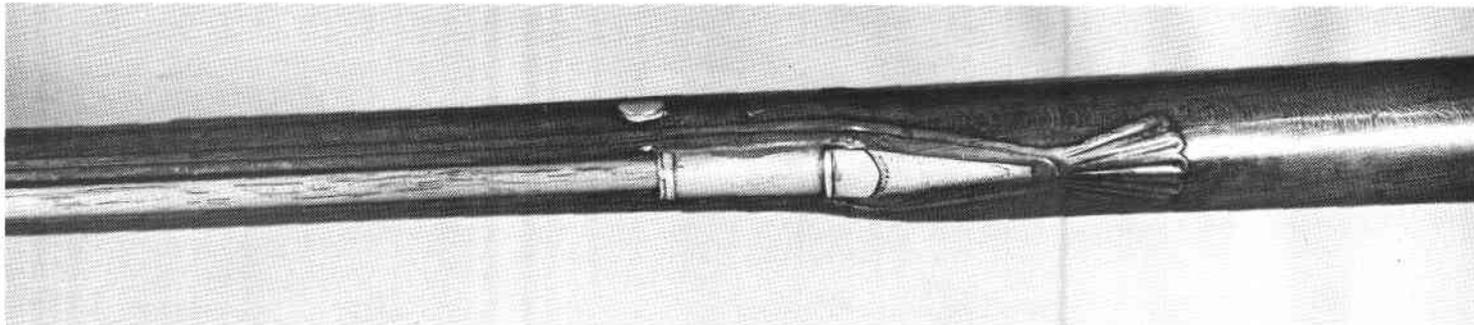
The New England rifles were made by the following gunsmiths working in Shrewsbury and Sutton and by their many apprentices who moved to other localities in the state to open their own shops. Martin Smith was born in Shrewsbury, Mass., in 1797. Smith was apprenticed to Silas Allen, Jr. when he was fourteen or fifteen, in 1811 or 1812. He worked for gunsmith Allen until about 1817. He must have been a good pupil because after his apprenticeship he moved to Greenfield, Mass., which is about 50 miles to the northwest of Shrewsbury, a growing town on the banks of the Connecticut River. On September 13, 1819, he advertised in the *Franklin Herald* as follows: "Martin Smith informs the public that he has taken the



Lock plate marking on Phineas Sawyer fowler. 1746-1820.



Fine carving around trigger guard of flint lock Worcester county gun.



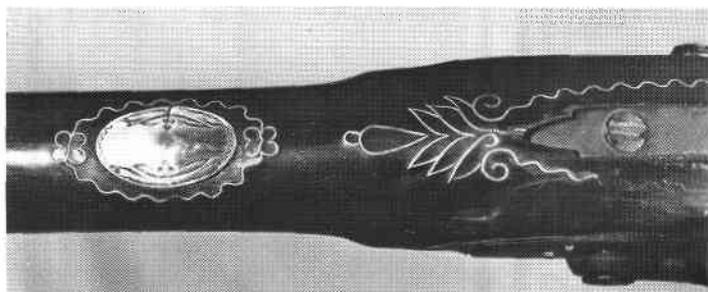
Fine carving detail at lower thimble of Worcester County fowler.



W. Allen signature on his buck & ball gun c-1790-1810.



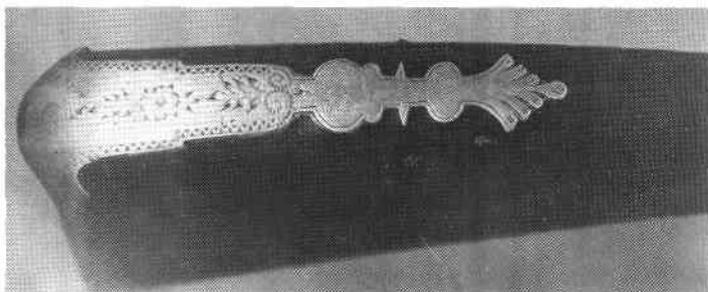
Thomas Holbrook name on lockplate of buck & ball gun c-1747-1810.



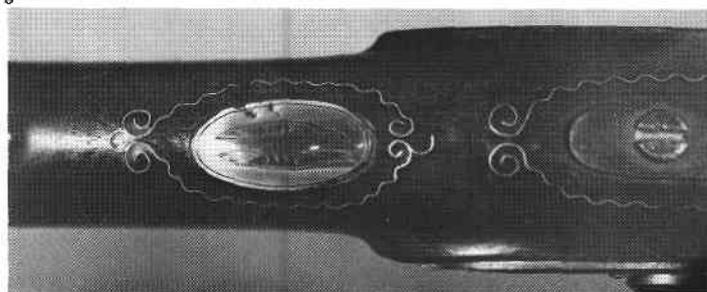
Silver wire and escutcheon on W. Allen buck & ball gun.



Silver Escutcheon and carving behind barrel tang of Worcester County gun.



Typical butt plate of Worcester County buck & ball gun.



Silver wire and escutcheons on Silas Allen rifle.

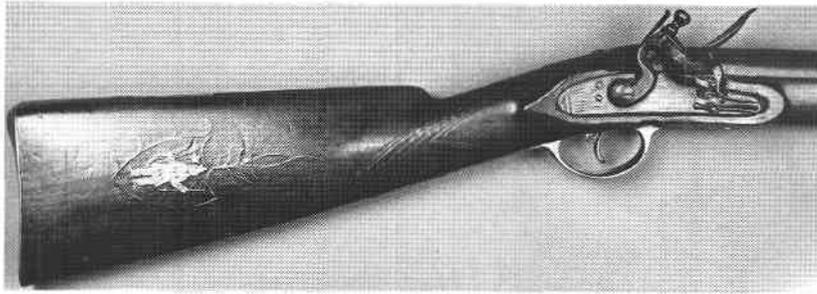
shop lately occupied by Mr. Mark, a few rods East of Mr Pierces store where he intends manufacturing rifles, muskets and fowling pieces and solicites patronage. Old guns repaired at short notice, Greenfield Sept. 13, 1819."

Martin Smith made mostly flintlock rifles and a few fowlers. He also had a small contract for Indian trade muskets with the American Fur Co. in Canada. We are sure of this fact because the records of the American Fur Co. are still in existence.

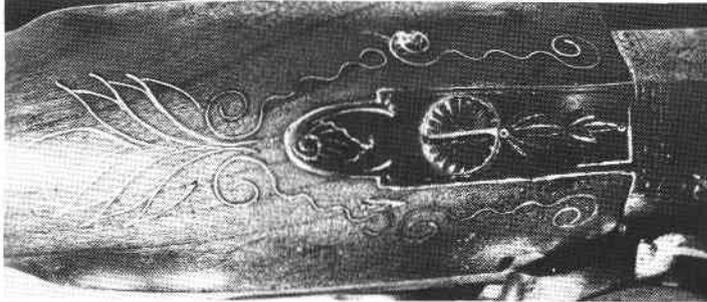
The rifles Smith made are very similar to the rifles of his teacher Silas Allen, Jr. The fit of wood to metal is excellent; they are strong, well-made guns. He made a few high quality guns, at least four of which have well executed horsehead patch boxes and engraved brass fittings. He also used silver wire inlaid behind the barrel tang and around the escutcheons on the

wrist. One rifle I have has a silver inlay on the cheek rest and silver escutcheon barrel key plates. Smith's production must have been small, only a few rifles a year, and his working span was only 17 years or so. Consequently, I estimate that the total output of rifles alone must have been one hundred.

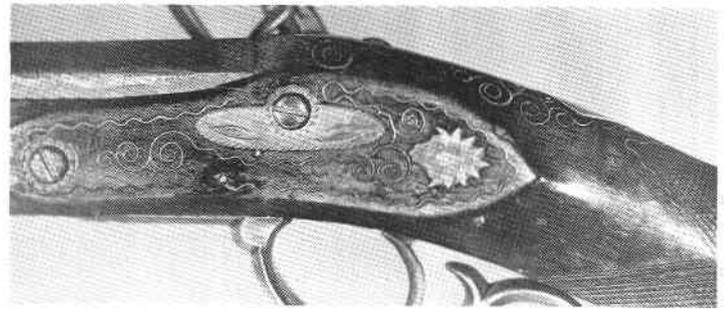
Nevertheless, gunmaker Smith must have done well, for he ran another advertisement in the *Franklin Herald* of September 12, 1826, saying, "Percussion rifles the subscriber has an assortment of rifles and fowling pieces which he would like to exchange for cash, coal, old brass, cherry planks or most kinds of produce. Rifles from \$12.00 to \$100.00, fowling pieces from \$9.00 to \$50.00. Signed Martin Smith." In 1827-8, he built a fine two-story brick home at 497 Main St. in Greenfield. This home, still standing on Main St., has a small building in the rear which I think was his original gun shop. Two years



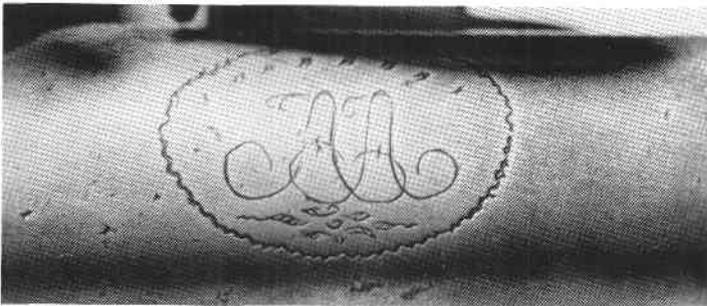
Fine quality militia musket by Alvan Pratt for the Concord Light Infantry.



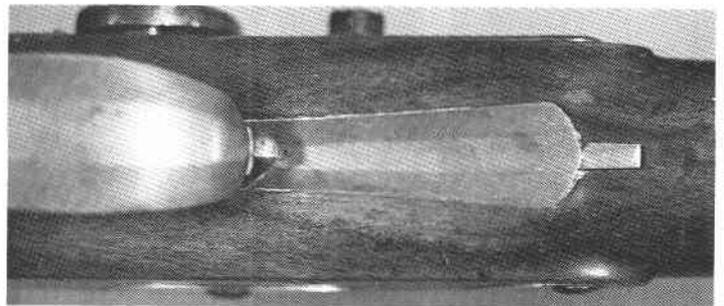
Silver wire inlay on Silas Allen rifle.



Side plate escutcheons and silver wire on Henry Pratt rifle.



Unknown A A signature on at least two early guns and one pistol.



Typical trigger guard finial of a Worcester County rifle.

later Smith bought the corner lot on Hope and Main St. On this lot he constructed a new, larger gun shop. When he built his new gun shop, Smith ran a wooden pipe from his old gun shop several hundred yards to supply the new shop with water-power and water. This shop eventually became the local post of the D.A.R. In 1930, the post was razed to make way for the building of the Franklin County Court House.

In 1836, Martin Smith sold his shop, including the use of the water rights, to Mr. W. C. Clements. Mr. Clements made a few fine rifles in Greenfield before going into business with Samuel Norris to make contract rifle muskets for the state of Massachusetts, in Springfield. These rifles are marked *S.N. & W.T.C. for Mass.* I can find no trace of Martin Smith after he sold his business in 1836.

Alvin Pratt (1790-1877) apprenticed with Nathaniel Whitmore of Sutton, then moved to Concord and opened his own gun shop. He made rifles and many of the better quality militia muskets for the elite militia troops in the area. His brother, Henry Pratt (1783-1861), apprenticed with Silas Allen of Shrewsbury and opened his shop in Sherborn, Mass., but he also sold his rifles in his sporting goods store in Roxbury, Mass.

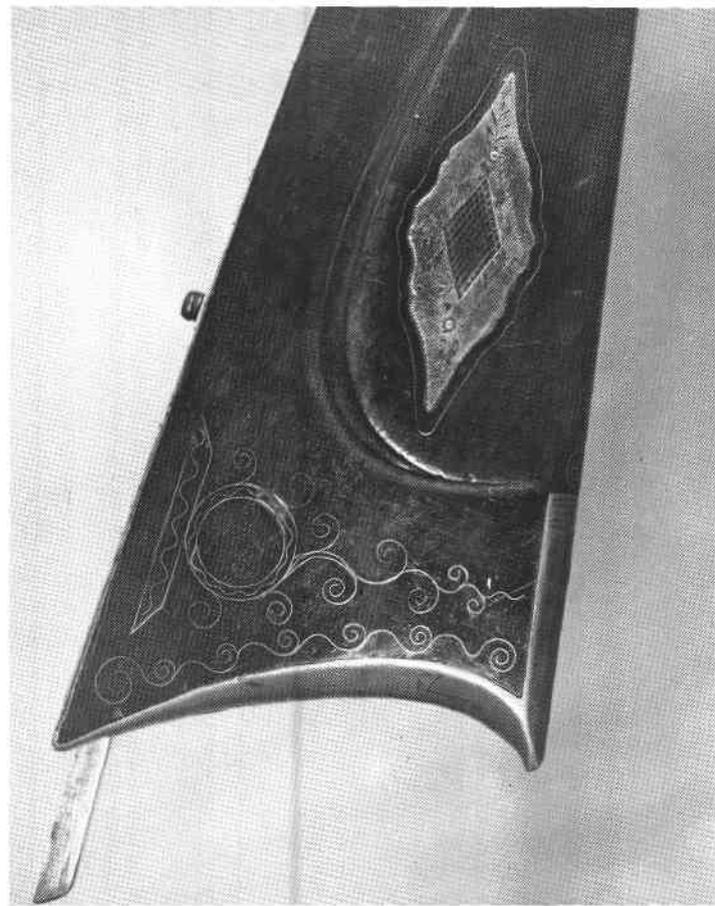
Josiah Maynard (1791-1825) also apprenticed with Silas Allen in Shrewsbury, then moved to Worcester, where he opened his shop near the courthouse around 1815. His production must have been small, for I have found very few of his rifles. Another good riflescope who apprenticed with Silas Allen of

Shrewsbury was Hardin Slocomb, who opened his shop in Worcester in 1818, and a few years later moved to Cortland, N.Y., where he worked from 1851-1857. James Jenison (1798-1850) apprenticed with either Silas Allen or James Mason in Shrewsbury and opened his own shop in Southbridge in 1820. Job Hapgood also apprenticed with Silas Allen, then moved to Boston to make and sell his rifles and pistols while running a general gunsmithing store from 1830-1856.

I have found a few signed rifles on which I can find no information. I have heard of two rifles and seen one pistol signed in script *A.A.* Perhaps this could be Ambrose Allen of Walpole, New Hampshire or Silas Allen's brother Asabel Allen from Medfield, Mass. Another name which I have seen signed in script on one rifle and in block letters on another rifle is *Cushing and Pratt*. This could be Nathaniel Pratt of Sutton, who was a brother of Alvin and Henry. Another signature I have seen occasionally is *W. Adams*, perhaps a barrel maker or riflescope from Dunstable, Mass. I have seen the name *Nolan* and also *Nolan and Lacky* on one rifle each. Perhaps this is another barrelmaker. There is a horsehead patch box rifle signed *Maynard and Slocomb*. This probably refers to Josiah Maynard and Hardin Slocomb, who both worked in Worcester. I have also seen two signed rifles by E. C. Fisher, perhaps from Springfield, Mass. Last in the category is a high quality rifle signed *Mason and Baldwin*, probably John Mason and one of his apprentices.



Non-typical patchbox on a Henry Pratt target rifle.



Silver inlay and design in wire on butt stock of Henry Pratt rifle.



Josiah Maynard horse head patchbox design.



Typical patchbox of Worcester County rifle.