

THE GUNS AND THEIR MAKERS OF THE GREAT WESTERN EMPORIUM



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Like most westerners, Missourians were early possessed with the national pride of extending American ideas and institutions to the territories of the southwest.

Missouri has long felt an almost blood relationship with Texas because of the many Missourians who had settled Texas. A statement has been made that between 1822 and 1836 "There were few prominent Missouri families that were not at some time represented in the life of the new State of Texas (Texas admitted to union in 1845).

In 1820, Moses Austin a Missourian, received a grant for the colonization of land in Texas. Austin died the same year and his son, Stephen F. Austin worked to carry on his father's dream. Eugene Barker, Stephen Austin's biographer, states that "No other of the forty-eight commonwealths composing the United States, with the possible exception of Utah, owes its position so completely to one man as Texas does to Stephen Austin, but without Austin there is no reason to believe that Texas today would differ from the Mexican states South of the Rio Grande."

I realize full well that it is one hell of a note for a Missourian to come down here and try to tell a Texan anything about the history of their beloved state, but I feel morally obligated to dispell the vicious rumor that Texas had been founded by Harry Knode and Red Jackson.

The Santa Fe trade further linked Missouri's interest with the southwest. Missourians were the leaders in the founding and carrying on of the trade, and Missouri towns were the starting points of many of the caravans. In 1843 the trade amounted to \$450,000. Much of this trade was carried on a Murphy wagon. Beginning in 1825 Joseph Murphy supplied over 200,000 wagons to the pioneers who settled the west and to the troops that fought the Mexican War. These wagons, with their seven foot wheels, were capable of carrying 4,000 to 5,000 pounds, gave rise to the famed "Missouri Mule", most of the wagons went west with oxen only to find that their tender feet would not allow the return trip. Mules found in Mexico were more adaptable and many of the traders left their oxen in Mexico and returned under mule power, and thus was born the Missouri Mule.

The third facet of this developing sphere of influence and association of Missouri and Texas occurred in May of 1846 with the declaration of war between Mexico and the United States. Within a month 1300 Missouri volunteers were assembled at Fort Leavenworth fit and ready for battle.

Once upon the scene of battle these men acquired the name of "Los god-dammies." The Missouri mounted volunteers were as wild a band as ever assembled under the banner of a fighting force of the United States.

The men were totally wild, & undisciplined - - the only clean objects being found in their camps were their rifles, yet these same unwashed defenders of the flag on several occassions defeated four times their number of the trained and disciplined Mexican troops.

From these sidelights it can readily be seen how the Missouri gun-makers fit into our story. A Missourian going to Texas between 1820 and 1860 was either going as a colonist or to fight a war. In either instance a prime requisite for the travel was a serviceable rifle. Our own Jim Severn probably initiated a great deal of interest in the Saint Louis gunmakers with his article on the Hawken rifle which appeared in the "Rifleman": more recently, Charles Hanson's book on the "Plains Rifle" put a bit more light on the subject.

By far the most famous, faked and expensive arms supplied to the southwest originated in the Shop of Jacob and Sam Hawken. There is much of the early Hawken history in Saint Louis that remains very vague. We have been unable to find any documentary proof as to the year Jacob Hawken arrived in St. Louis although some sources in the family say 1805 to 1807. Very few if any, of the rifles of the flintlock period seem to have survived. The shop probably started in 1815.

Jacob Hawken would seem to be the enigma of this phase of history. We cannot say where he arrived in St. Louis, nor has a photograph or drawing survived. He died on May 8, 1849 during the cholera epidemic and apparently his body was disposed of in the river or in some type of an unmarked mass grave at the peak of the epidemic.

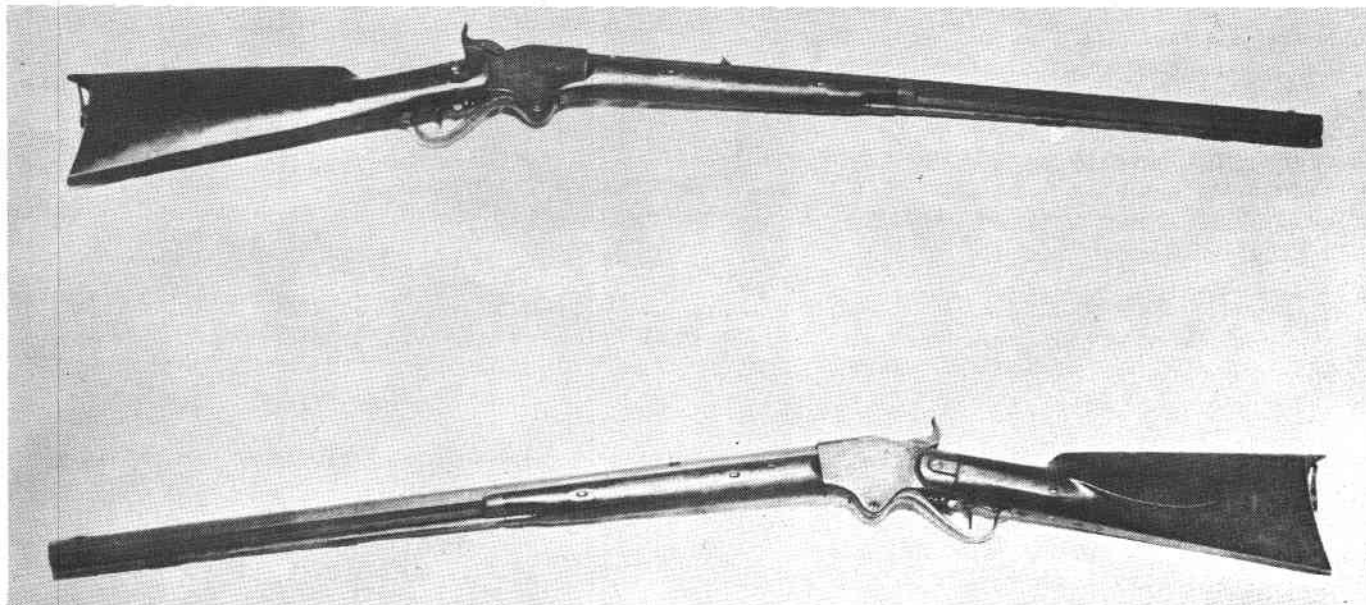
The basic history of the Hawken rifle has been well written and documented in the works of Homer Kephau, Charles Hansen or our own Jim Severn. I refer you to these authors for an excellent outline of this portion of the story. My point this morning is to inject a few of the lesser known facts of the Hawken story as well as to inject a few thoughts of my own.

The Hawken stamping die was apparently made in two pieces. S. Hawken on one part and Saint Louis on the other. This may appear on one or two lines. In other cases only the S. Hawken may appear.

The question of the Hawken overstamp or "double stamp" presents cause for much speculation. Was this as it appears to be, simply an accident that in striking the first blow, the imprint was not deep enough, or was this of some particular significance? I have seen the mark on several occasions. The first was a typical large bore (50 to 55 caliber) half stock rifle. The gun was characteristic in every way - - twin keys, plain iron hardware, scroll trigger guard, etc. The only ringer was in the stock. Here the quality was definitely second class, both as to grain and finish. There was no evidence that the gun had been restocked. The top of the bbl. carried the overstamp or "double stamp" marking, S. Hawken, St. Louis. In this instance the double mark appears deliberate. All characters of the dye can be seen on the first stamp just as clearly as can be noted in the overstamp. This presents the first point in our dilemma. Is it possible that in a few cases a second quality gun left the Hawken Shop and was so designated as such by the "double stamp?"

Further speculation can be elicited by a second gun. This being a small bore (42 cal.) half stock rifle with the bbl. again over stamped, "S. Hawken, St. Louis." The lock plate is unmarked. Here the resemblance ends. The furniture is brass with the trigger guard pinned to the stock rather than being held with screws as is customarily seen. The walnut stock is poorly finished as was the previous double stamped Hawken.

I noted striking resemblance to a gun marked J.P. Gemmer, St. Louis. Now begins the fun. When Gemmer bought the Hawken Shop in 1862 undoubtedly all "equipment and good will" was included in the purchase price. This surely included the Hawken stamping dyes. What was to prevent



SPENCER-HAWKEN RIFLE, BARREL TYPICALLY MARKED S. HAWKEN ST. LOUIS. IT IS FELT THAT A LIMITED NUMBER OF THESE GUNS WERE PRODUCED BY J.P. GEMMER, ST. LOUIS.

Mr. Gemmer from complying with the demands of the trade by supplying a "Hawken Rifle" to his customer. The present saleability of the new Belgian miscarriages of Sam Colts products attests to the ability of Yankee ingenuity to make the supply equal to the demand.

Let us give Mr. Gemmer credit for some integrity and allow him to slip just a mite with the dye and we have a second Hawken overstamp. The purchaser had his Hawken rifle and Mr. Gemmer returned to his bench with his integrity only slightly tarnished.

The fate of these name dies is one of the more fascinating parts of this study. To further fan the coals of heated conjecture, let's consider the "Hawken Spencer". As has been previously noted, Sam Hawken sold the shop in 1862 and retired to the firehouse or at least to Kirkwood. By this time the great war was well under way and the value of the muzzle loading weapon was rapidly declining.

During the later days of the war, the devastating effects of the Spencer rifle was well known. This is a hybrid Spencer with the keyed fore-end and the heavy octagonal bbl. of the plains rifle. The top rib of the bbl. is stamped under the rear sight "S. Hawken, St. Louis". The stock is not the martial variety, being well finished and having a cheek plate. The action is typically Spencer with the Stabler cut-off.

In the interests of romantic fiction, let us explore the possibilities of this piece. I think it is fair to conclude in the beginning that Sam Hawken had little to do with this rifle. The Spencer action only appeared in the last year of Sam's gunmaking activity and certainly the Stabler cut-off was added several years (1865) after he had retired to the tranquility of Kirkwood. At least five of these rifles are presently known so it is unlikely that they were made up by a skilled survivor of the war who had developed a liking to the Spencer's firepower without having lost an earlier love for the accuracy and endurance of his old Hawken. This would seem to have been a rifle of limited production of some type. Here, of necessity, we return to the Gemmer Shop. Gemmer's interest in breech loading systems is known. Two patents were issued in his name and a converted Springfield needle-fire rifle is in the Missouri Historical Society Collections. The western trade was demanding an accurate breech loading weapon of the multi-shot variety. The Hawken bbl. filled the first demand and the Spencer action and cartridge the latter. The actions were easily obtained at surplus prices and the St. Louis market provided the outlet of this combined ingenuity.

The only point that remains is to justify the "S. Hawken, St. Louis" mark on the bbl. Dare we shake Mr. Gemmer's integrity again by implying that he utilized the Hawken stamp to provide a more attractive and saleable weapon; or can we now make an honest man of him again by thinking that these bbls. were original Hawken "extras" left over from the old shop and now resurrected for this gun. John Barsotti offered a thought in regard to these rifles; were they perchance, made up to special order to a "Home Guard" or drill team in St. Louis of which Sam Hawken or one of his sons was a member? - The Hawken stamp being added to honor old Sam. I personally cannot get too excited over this thought. This rifle was no "nickel plated Springfield" intended for show, but rather a functional rapid fire weapon better suited to buffalo slaughter than to parades. I feel that this gun was more a contemporary of the Henrys and the Sharps constructed for rough service in a dirty job. The use of the Hawken name? - - - if you are a stickler - - say that they were old Hawken bbls. puts to a new use; - - - if you are a romanticist, say that since Sam Hawken and the mountain men opened the west it was fitting that Gemmer felt that Hawken's name should be there when the west was torn apart; - - - if neither satisfy you, then be materialistic and think that it just helped to sell guns.

The use of these stamps is all purely conjecture. The true facts will never be known. The men that struck the mark are gone . . . it is doubtful if we will ever explain the old Hawken heiroglyphics found on many of the bbls. These were personal marks, hallmarks of the craftsmen . . . who indeed "made his mark" not only on his weapons, but also on our civilization.

Surprisingly enough Sam Hawken is as well known in Saint Louis as a fireman, as he was elsewhere as a gunmaker. Sam organized the "Northern Fire Company" in the 30's; in 1845 a four wheel reel was named in his honor. Sam was a thinking man and history records that in 1841 while fighting a fire in subzero weather he experimented with pouring whiskey into the pumps to keep them from freezing.

Another little known and rather interesting chapter of the Hawken story concerns Sam's migration to Colorado in 1850. According to some authors, Sam went west for his health considering

the fact that he probably had to walk a good one-third of the way, this seems doubtful. Sam was accompanied by his son, William, who was to remain in Colorado. An ad appearing in the February 15, 1860 ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS states: "Sam Hawken for the past thirty-seven years engaged in the manufacture of the Rocky Mountain Rifle in Saint Louis would respectfully say to the citizens of Denver, Auroria, and his old mountain friends that he has established himself in the gun business on Ferry Street, between Fourth and Fifth next to Jones and Cartwrights, Auroria is prepared to manufacture his style of rifles to order. Repairing done at short notice."

In the "Larimer Reminiscences" the reporter recalls having seen in Hawken's Auroria Shop the first rifle manufactured in the Colorado Territory. The bbl. marking S. Hawken, Auroria J. T. is described.

The Hawken Shop was apparently continued for some time after Sam's departure in 1861, to return to Saint Louis and to ultimately dispose of the shop there in 1862.


Thomas J. Albright, although in the past lesser known than the Hawkens and Dimicks, must be given a major position in the history of St. Louis Gunmaking.

Tom Albright following the opportunity of the West came to St. Louis between 1842 and 1845. Unlike some of the other makers, Albright was an accomplished gunmaker when he opened his first shop at 99 Chestnut Street.

The Albright name in gunmaking originated with Andrew Albright (Andreas Albrecht) who was born in 1718 at Zella, Thuringia. He became an armorer and served with the army during the War of the Austrian Succession. He came to America in 1750 and began gunsmithing near Nazareth, Pennsylvania. He moved to Bethlehem in 1766 and to Lititz, Pennsylvania in 1771 where he died April 19, 1802.

Andrew's son John Henry Albright was born in Lititz, Pennsylvania, on August 5, 1772 and died at Nazareth, Pennsylvania on January 27, 1845. He was taught the gunsmithing trade by his father and also spent sometime with William Henry who had also been trained by Andrew. Henry had 14 children by two wives. Thomas John was born at Gnadenheutten, Ohio on July 5, 1808. His mother was the first wife of Henry Albright, Anna Barbara Hubley.

By 1849 he was joined by his two sons, William A. and Thomas J., Jr., as Thomas J. Albright & Sons at 40 North Main Street (21 Chestnut Street). At that time the "Missouri Republican" carried the following ad:



T. J. ALBRIGHT & SON.
DATE REMOVED TO
No. 40, Main Street.
DEALERS OF
SHOT GUNS, RIFLES, PISTOLS,
 Fishing Tackle and Gun Material of every description.
THE BEST STOCK IN ST. LOUIS!
ALLEN'S NEW PATENT REPEATER, 3 to 8 inch, and the best out, at Wholesale or Retail.
NO. 40, MAIN ST.
Outfits for Pike's Peak Gold Fields, complete.

ALBRIGHT ALONG WITH HAWKEN AND DIMICK WAS A VERIFIED MANUFACTURER. MANY OF THE OTHER ST. LOUIS MARKED GUNS WERE EASTERN PRODUCTS LOCALLY MARKED

T. J. Albright & Sons

The subscriber has now on hand the largest and most complete assortment of firearms ever offered in St. Louis, comprising every article suitable for California emigrants and others, some of entirely new patterns with superior home-made locks and warrented to shoot accurately at prices to defy all competition - - -

also - - -

I would likewise state, that in a few weeks more, I shall have completed my manufactory when I can supply orders at a distance at the shortest notice both wholesale and retail.

A few good hands wanted.
 T. J. Albright, 21 Chestnut Street
 St. Louis.

This would date Albrights actual manufacturing efforts to 1849. True to his boast every type of firearm has been seen with the Albright stamp.

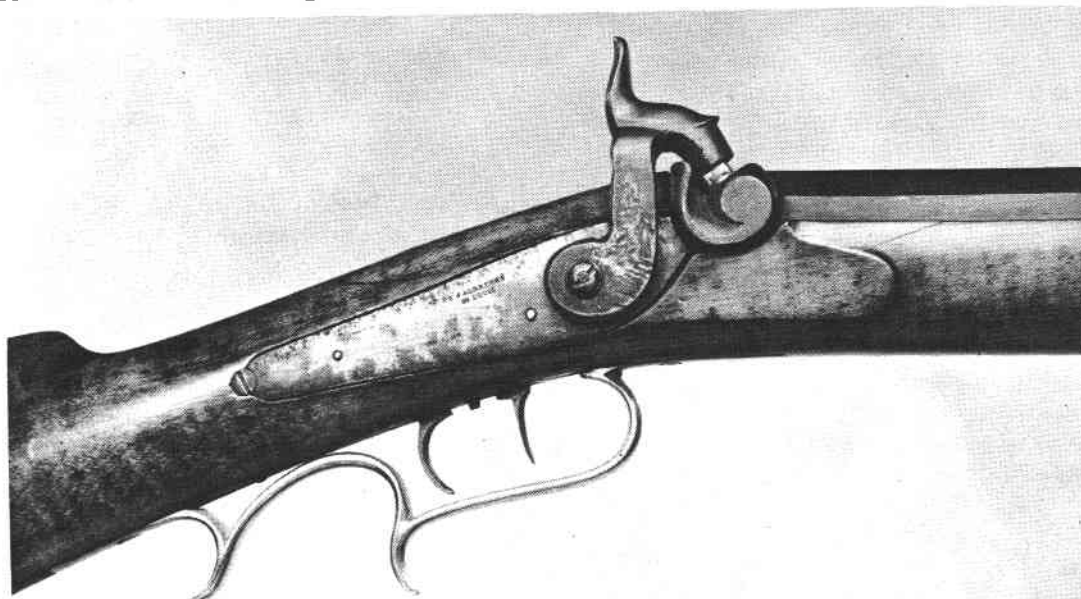


ADOLPHUS METER ST. LOUIS FLINTLOCK, HALF STOCK RIFLE. THE SAINT IS ABBREVIATED AS SN^T THE 'T' BEING STRUCK ABOVE THE LINE, THIS BEING A PERSISTENT GERMANIC TRAIT.

The picture shows a halfstock flint lock rifle. The lock plate is simply engraved Adolphus Meier & Co., St. Louis, Mo. The daisy finial on the patch bock would indicate the Lancaster influence on the maker. The flint hammer is of the improved variety (1835-1850) it is easy to speculate that this could well be an early Albright rifle.

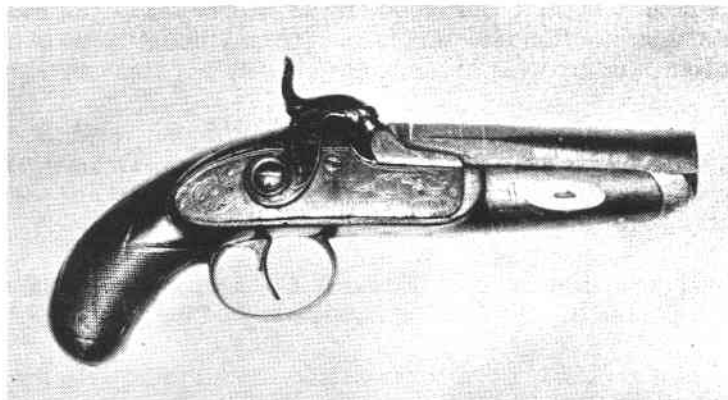
The halfstock rifle is the most commonly seen Albright rifle. It is cal. 48, the barrel fastened to the stock with a single key. This earlier specimen lacks the patent breech, although this feature has been seen on later specimens. The lock is a quite plain back action lock. The inside is stamped T. Gibbons. More will be mentioned later of Gibbons place as a lock maker. The furniture, all of brass is quite plain. The stock is of maple and is well, but simply carved. Lock and top of barrel is stamped "T. J. Albright, St. Louis".

This picture shows a small great coat pistol that illustrates the foreign influence on the St. Louis Shops.



PLAIN HALF-STOCK RIFLE BY T. J. ALBRIGHT ST. LOUIS, BACK ACTION LOCK MARKED ON INSIDE T. GIBBON. GIBBON IS THE ONLY ST. LOUIS LOCK MAKER THAT I HAVE VERIFIED.

Virtually all of the double gun barrels including the shotguns, side by side rifles and rifle and shotgun combinations carry either English or Belgian proof marks. The imported barrels were then locked and stocked by the St. Louis artisans. The soft iron rifle barrel of the plain rifle represents the total St. Louis product.



SMALL GREAT COAT PISTOL, BELGIAN PROOFED,
LOCK STAMPED T. J. ALBRIGHT, ST. LOUIS, MO.

This small pistol barrel carries the Belgian proof marks on the left side of the barrel. The lock plate is engraved T. J. Albright & Sons, St. Louis, Missouri.

Albright was active during the Great Rebellion as a supplier of military goods. 1861 Union companies were being organized secretly to combat the very active secessionist movement in St. Louis. The following is a copy of a bill issued to F. P. Blair.

BILL

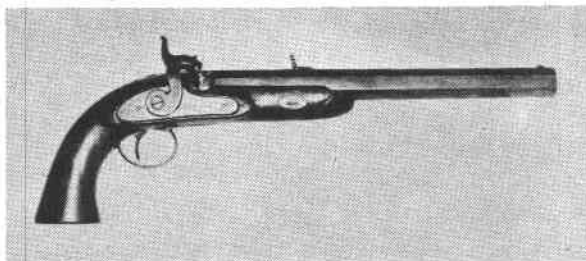
F. P. Blair, Jr.

St. Louis, February 14, 1861

TO: T. J. Albright, Dr.

TO: 50 U. S. Muskets at \$5. 50	\$275. 00
20 U. S. Muskets at \$6. 00	120. 00
3 boxes for same	4. 50
400 Ball Cartridges	8. 00
Caps	. 40
	\$407. 90
Credit by Cash	325. 00
Received due bill for balance	\$ 82. 90

Although not short on patriotism, the unionists were somewhat light on cash. The records of a private committee for the solicitation of funds for a safety committee reveals that in 1861 the same T. J. Albright contributing the sum of \$5.00. Perhaps the size of his contribution reflects his suspicion of F. P. Blair's due bill for the 70 muskets.



ANOTHER MARKED T. J. ALBRIGHT PISTOL

T. J. Albright & Sons continue through 1877 during which time they supplied a variety of sporting arms and undoubtedly represents Horace Dimick's major competition. A peculiar arrangement seems to have existed between all of the shops. Hawken is known to have sold rifles for resale to both Albright and Dimick, parts were freely exchanged as were the efforts of a number of suppliers. Tom Gibbons made locks for Hawken, Dimick and Albright. Ed Linzel, a fine gunmaker in his own right worked at times for both Dimick and Albright while maintaining his own shop.

Upon the death of Horace Dimick in 1877, William Albright (T. J.'s son) joined with William Rudolph in buying out the Dimick shop.

T. J. Albright died February 9, 1890. William Albright continued as salesman for Chapin Arms Company and later with E. C. Meacham Arms Company until 1896 - - at the time of his death, the St. Louis Albright tradition ends.

I am confident that our good friend, Herschel Logan has more information in his head on Horace Dimick's contributions to this story than I could expose in weeks of discourse, so I will touch only the highlights in drawing an association with my final character.

Horace E. Dimick (wife Rosa) was born in Vermont about 1811, moved to Covington, Kentucky (1824-1830). (Some say Lexington, Kentucky) where he worked as an upholsterer and cabinet maker. Dimick came to St. Louis around 1849 - - - (first directory listing 1851) questionably had some association with the Hawken shop.

In 1851 with his brother Edward E. Dimick he opened a gun shop at 36 North Main Street, H. E. Dimick & Company. The 1852 shop was at 38 North Main Street.

In 1854, to 1859 Dimick was associated with Henry Folsom as H. E. Dimick and Company. In 1861 Folsom had left the association, the shop remained at 97 North 4th Street. The name Horace E. Dimick & Company persisted until 1865, 1864-1865 as H. E. Dimick & Co. In the period 1865 to 1873 the company was known simply as H. E. Dimick & the firearms were so marked.

Horace Dimick died August 27th, 1873 and the shop was bought by Thomas Rudolph, Dimick's bookkeeper and William Albright, son of T. J. Albright.

Thomas Rudolph & Co. (Thomas Rudolph and William A. Albright) firearms, ammunition and fishing tackle, 209 N. 4th Street. This company no longer appears after 1883.

I can find no direct relationship to the original Albright shop and Rudolph. Rudolph and Albright appear to have been associated only for one or two years. (1873-1874). T. J. Albright & Company appears through 1877 with Wm. Albright's shop 313 N. 3rd Street listed 1877-1881. Thomas Rudolph in 1872 was listed merely as a bookkeeper for Dimick.

Henry Folsom & Company

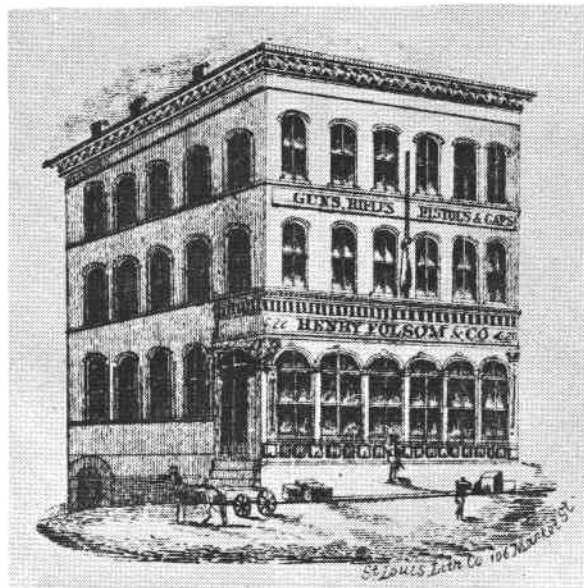
Appears first on the St. Louis scene in 1854. During the next five years as associated with H. E. Dimick & Company at 38 North Main Street and later at 97 N. 4th Street. In 1861, in association with Grant H. Burrows as Henry Folsom and Company, he operated a store selling grates, mantels and military goods on Washington Avenue at 5th Street. This expanded to 1863 when he opened a store at 64 North 4th Street selling military goods, revolvers and firearms generally. At this time, he was the sole agent for Bacons celebrated revolver.

Some confusion apparently exists as to Henry Folsom's sympathies during the Civil War.

Albaugh and Simmons (ref.) have stated that Henry Folsom was a Southern sympathizer. This conclusion was apparently drawn from the fact that Folsom operated shops in both Memphis and New Orleans during the war.

Quite the contrary is true. . . Henry Folsom making the most of his friendship with Grant and his staff followed the success of the Army. The Memphis shop was opened late in 1862 Memphis having fallen to the Federals in June of 1862. The shop was at 345 Main Street operating under the name of Henry Folsom & Company, was managed by J. C. Lullman. In 1866 this office was sold to Mr. Lullman and A. J. Vienna who operated under their own name and as successors to Henry Folsom and Company.

The New Orleans branch was opened in 1864 (New Orleans had fallen to the Federals



HENRY FOLSOM & CO. ST. LOUIS STORE

in 1864) at 55 Charles Street under the name of Henry Folsom & Company. It was managed by George Folsom, a brother of Henry. In 1866 it was moved to 3 Old Levee Street and in 1868 to 9 Old Levee Street. At the time of the second move the name was changed to Folsom Brothers. In 1888 the Company was incorporated under the name H.&D. Folsom Arms, Company under the laws of New Jersey and the New Orleans office adopted the same name. A rifle marked "Folsom and Kittridge, New Orleans" has been seen, but this relationship has not been traced.

In 1891 George Folsom died, and the New Orleans office was managed by Armond George and Walter More, two employees of David Folsom.

David Folsom by now had succeeded Henry as President of the Company upon the latter's death in 1887. In 1894 the New Orleans office was moved to 113-115 Decatur Street and in 1896 Armond George became the sole manager when Walter More moved to the New York office.

Upon the death of David Folsom in 1897 his nephew, Henry T. Folsom (son of Henry) became President. He closed the New Orleans office in 1899.

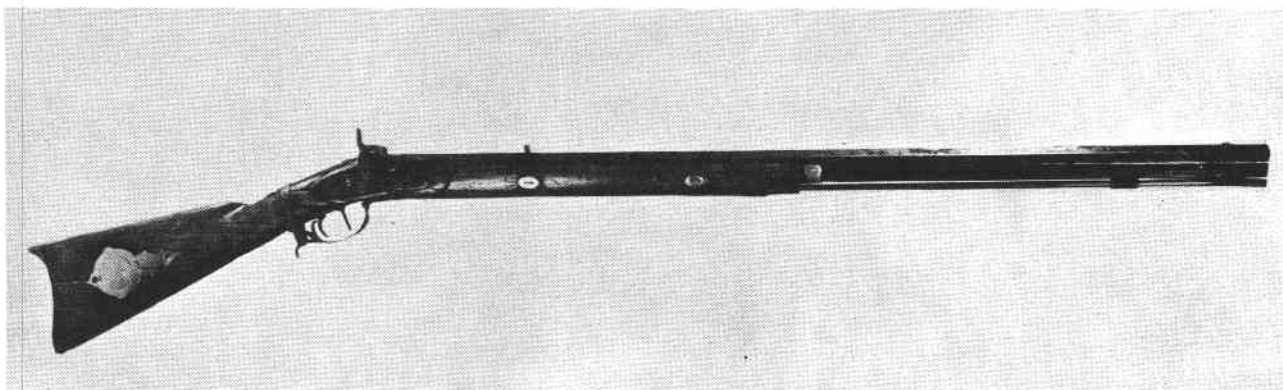
This very valuable information was supplied by the Reverend Henry T. Folsom from the family records.

Thus it is apparent that Henry Folsom was a staunch unionist and that his friendship with U. S. Grant caused him to follow the fortunes of war with the opening of military stores in Memphis and New Orleans to supply the troops.

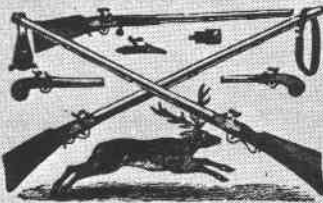
In 1861 St. Louis and Missouri were divided in sentiment. The hard core nucleus of the Unionists in St. Louis was made up of General Nathaniel Lyon and his staff together with a small contingent of Regular Army Soldiers. With the outbreak of the Rebellion Lyon's call for volunteers was answered by a large number of citizens of German extraction.

The parade of uniform loving "Dirty Damn Dutch", as they were irreverently called by the Secessionists, had been schooled in drill in their marching societies and in riflery in their Schuetzenbunds. They easily adapted to military life.

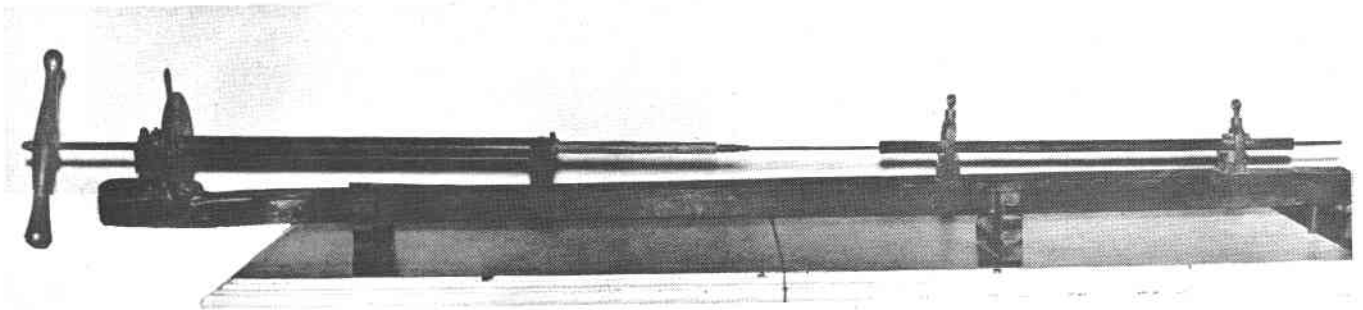
Most of the St. Louis Gunmakers were of German extraction and their sentiments followed much the same pattern as their fellow countrymen. One exception to this was Reno Beauvais, jeweler, silversmith and gunmaker. Beauvais' sentiments were largely with the confederacy.



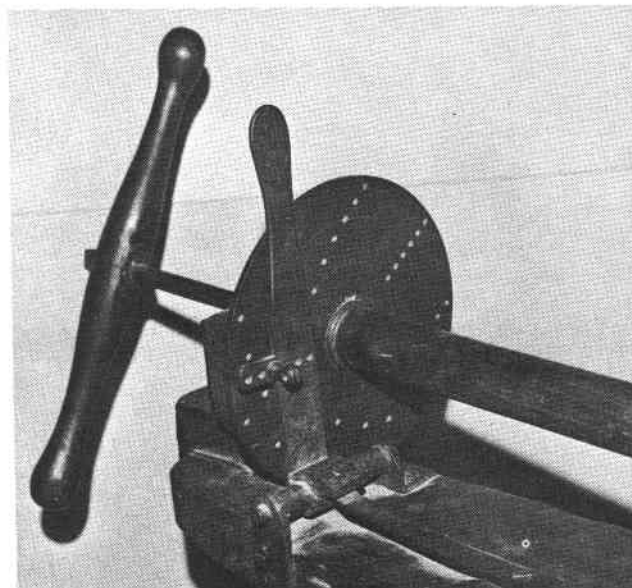
HALF STOCK RIFLE MARKED R, BEAUVAIS, ST. LOUIS. THIS APPEARS TO BE OF HAWKEN MANUFACTURE AND FOR BEAUVAIS SALE. THIS PARTICULAR GUN SHOWS INDIAN USAGE

R. BEAUVAIS,
 Importer and Wholesale Dealer in
WATCHES, CLOCKS, JEWELRY,
AND FANCY GOODS.

GUNS,
Pistols,
CUTLERY
AND FISHING TACKLE,
 No. 93 North Main Street,
 ST. LOUIS, MO.

BEAUVAIS A JEWELER AND SILVERSMITH SOLD
 AND ORNAMENTED THE PRODUCTS OF
 SEVERAL ST. LOUIS GUN MAKERS



#15 BARREL RIFLING RIG USED BY HAWKEN AND GEMMER,
 COURTESY OF THE MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY



#16 INDEXING HEAD TO SELECT NUMBER OF GROOVES AND LANDS FOR RIFLING
 OF BARREL. COURTESY OF MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY