

The four Fort Griffin Sharps rifles in the Author's collection.

# Fort Griffin and the Buffalo Sharps

Robert L. Moore

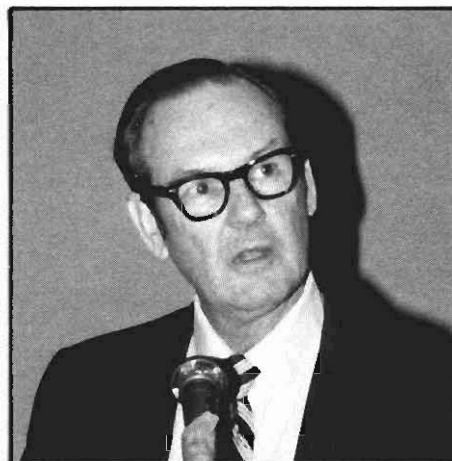
All of us who collect have particular favorites in our collections. Being a Sharps collector, one of mine is the original metallic cartridge Sharps Rifle Company records of Hartford and Bridgeport, Connecticut. I have long been fascinated by these old historical ledgers. The records consist of more than eighty volumes of invoice, order, and letter books. Shortly after acquiring these records I began researching and writing so-called "factory" letters on Sharps rifles, much as do Winchester and Colt. I noted early on the tremendous interest in Western Sharps and especially those that might have been involved in the buffalo harvest in the 1870's. I was frequently asked by fellow collectors many questions about these old buffalo camp guns that I could not answer, which gave me the idea for this paper. My thought was to pick an important hide town, to research the Sharps records of this area, and to locate as many Sharps rifles shipped there as presently known. In the selection process Fort Griffin in northwest Texas won hands down.

Before the Fort Griffin story, however, some important events and facts:

At one time the buffalo or American Bison covered most of our nation from the Rockies to the East coast. However, by 1820 there were none east of the Mississippi. Civilization and the Bison did not mix. After the Civil War there were still 70 to 100 million covering the Western Plains in four great herds. The buffalo is the largest American wild animal, weighing 1700 to 1800 pounds and a grown bull a ton or more. He was perfectly suited to our Western plains but the great slaughter caused him to become a nearly extinct species.

The Nomadic Plains Indian depended on the buffalo for his commissary and often went on the war path when he saw the mass of carcasses left to rot killed by the white man for only the hide, tongue and hump.

Treaties were made in 1867 stipulating that no white was to hunt in a neutral strip formed by the Indian Territory (Oklahoma) panhandle. J. Wright Mooar was an important figure in the buffalo harvest. He came to Kansas from Vermont at age 19 and while hunting with Charles Rath helped fill an order for 500 hides for an English tannery experiment. He had 57 hides left over, which were sent to his brother in New York and sold to a Pennsylvania tannery; which resulted in an order for 2000 more. This started the American commercial hide market. Heavy industrial leather was in great demand and hides were to bring \$1.50 to \$2.50 each at Dodge City, Kansas, a



large amount of money for the mid-1870 era and its financial panic.

By 1873 the Kansas buffalo had been greatly diminished and the hunters were looking elsewhere. J. Wright Mooar, breaking the treaties by crossing the neutral strip, found the remainder of the Southern herd in the Texas panhandle. Many hunters followed. In June, 1874, however, there was the famous Adobe Walls fight. The heavy Sharps rifles of the buffalo hunters repelled the Indian attack but the door was closed to the Northern approach of the Lost Texas herd.

Texas had retained her public land when joining the Union and was not bound by the treaties. The Texas legislature favored the hunters when told in 1876 by General Phil Sheridan that they had done more in two years by killing the buffalo than the Army had done in 30 years to control the Indian situation.

The Kansas hunters found a new route from the east to the Texas herd via Denison, a new rail head, and on west to Fort Griffin. West of here was a great herd of buffalo but the herd was in frontier unsettled territory, still infested with Indians.

## Fort Griffin and The Flat

Fort Griffin was established in 1867 on the Clear Fork of the Brazos River to protect the settlers from the Comanche and Kiowa Indians. The Indians were more or less unmolested during the Civil War. The troops were primarily Negro. The military post was on top of a hill soon to be called Government Hill or The Hill. A roaring town of Fort Griffin soon developed between The Hill and



the river. This was to be called The Flat and later Hide Town. The Flat was to become a boom town because of three sources of economy: military troops, buffalo hide hunters, and drovers of the cattle trail. Albany was to be 17 miles to the south and Fort Worth was 125 miles to the east. Fort Griffin became one of the lustiest frontier towns America was to know. Buffalo hunters were to make this their outfitting point and their market for hides, and Griffin was to benefit from the western cattle trail recently established just to the west of town in competition with the Chisholm Trail which ran through Fort Worth. For a few years Fort Griffin was the envy of Fort Worth. A military telegraph line had been completed from Denison to Fort Griffin in 1875 and was available for civilian use. A railroad Fort Griffin was never to have. Hastily built were saloons, gambling rooms, and dance halls. The streets were either dusty or muddy and often filled with oxen or mule-drawn wagons. Such notable characters as Batt Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Pat Garrett, and Comanche Jim were all there. Some of the illustrious soiled doves were Sinful Molly, Long Kate, Big Billie, Ellen Gentry, and Sally Watts, who frequented such places as the Beehive and Wichita Saloon, the Occidental and the Bison Hotel.

By mid-1875 commercial hunters were working out of Fort Griffin with their heavy Sharps and by the fall of 1876 northern hunters were here in great numbers, with an estimate of 1600 hide men. The winter of 1876-1877 was a bumper for all the hunters with trains of ten or more wagons common in the streets of The Flat. By late 1877, however, after a heavy kill, the Texas herd was much diminished.

The professional hunting outfits were formed for protection and mass kills were usually of 3-12 men consisting of a cook, several skinners, hide peggers, reloader, and the hunter, who was usually the owner. The wagons carried water kegs, cooking and sleeping gear, a grindstone, and sometimes tents. Often there were two or more heavy Sharps rifles for long range shooting from 300-500 yards whose mellow boom at this range did not stampede the herd. A half ton of lead and several kegs of powder were on hand. The hunter shot from a stand in the mid-morning after the animals had fed several hundred yards downwind from the smaller groups of from 50-60. Shooting from crossed sticks, the leader, usually an old cow, was shot first, hopefully in the lungs so she would not run. The second kill would be the next one to leave the herd and so on until as many were killed as could be skinned in one day, keeping them in the smallest area possible.

Often a pair of guns were used and while one was cooled with water, snow or urine the other could be shot. A skilled hunter might kill 50 or more from one stand. After the hunt the skinners in wagons came forward, working in

pairs. Green hides weighed from 100 to 150 pounds and were taken back to camp and pegged hair side down to dry into so-called flint hides which brought \$1.50 to \$2.50 in town or \$1.00 camp delivery. The hunter spent his afternoons scouting for the next day's kill, reloading his precious ammunition, and protecting the skinners from Indians. A few large kills per stand were J. Wright Mooar 96, Charles Rath 107, Frank Collinson 121, and Tom Nixon 204 using a pair of Sharps. Several season kills were 6,000 or more. J. Wright Mooar reported 20,500 in his 9 years of hunting, Joe McCombs 12,000. Some notable outfits out of Griffin were White & Russell, the Mooar brothers, and still talked about in Albany, was the McComb, Jacobs, Poe outfit.

There were two Sharps dealers at Fort Griffin, namely T.E. Jackson, the first dealer, and Frank E. Conrad. Conrad later was in partnership with Charles Rath.

#### **T.E. Jackson**

There is not much known about Jackson and we have no likeness of him. He built the first store building in Shackelford County, in The Flat at Fort Griffin. He apparently had a very successful beginning and was the first to receive a Sharps rifle, a 12 pound Model 1874 Sporting octagon barrel rifle of .44 calibre on July 15, 1875. His guns are quite rare today, probably due to his junior partner's absconding after appropriating the cash on hand. Due to his misfortune he employed C.K. Stribling, attorney at Fort Griffin, to contact his creditors, Sharps Rifle Company included, to arrange a suitable installment payment by notes. His early orders were by telegraph and mostly for 16 pound .50 calibre guns. The orders were delayed due to the company's having to make these guns up. Probably there would have been many more Sharps bought by Jackson had they been available. Sharps also began substituting the .44 calibre for the Big .50's which Jackson had ordered but had become unavailable. It is thought that Jackson had a land business in Albany and most likely moved there in 1877 and 1878. Frank E. Conrad might have taken over the notes with Sharps.

#### **Frank E. Conrad**

Frank E. Conrad was born in Illinois in 1842 and served with Hood's Texas Brigade during the Civil War. In 1870 he became sutler at Fort Griffin and later moved his business to the Flat. His trading post became the most important supplier of the buffalo hunting trade in west Texas. He was highly thought of by the Sharps Rifle Company. Conrad catered to the hide hunter as well as the drovers and ranchers. He advertised as having the largest stock of firearms, groceries, and drovers' goods west of Fort Worth. From him the buffalo hunter bought his supplies and to him sold their flint hides. His store was described as a huge house of rooms crowded with mer-

chandise with four or five wagons waiting to be loaded at all times and perhaps 100 hunters purchasing supplies. Often \$2,500.00 per day would be spent on guns and ammunition. He grub-staked the hunters, always expecting the flint hides in payment. He had the only safe in town and thus became their banker.

His hide yard often had four acres of hides in bales ready to be shipped to Fort Worth by wagon freight. Conrad's store often had thirty tons of lead and five tons of black powder stored in the warehouse and attached magazine. His first order with Sharps was June 27, 1876. He developed a large business in Sharps rifles, ammunition, loading tools, replacement gun barrels, parts, etc. Soon Conrad was wiring every few days for heavy 15-16 pound guns of .44 and .50 calibre. Several orders by Conrad of \$1,000 to \$4,000 were forthcoming, to the delight of the financially strapped Sharps Rifle Company. Conrad's business was booming and on May 30, 1877, at the peak of the buffalo harvest in Texas, there is a two-page letter from E.G. Wescott, President of Sharps Rifle Company to Conrad, who had asked for an exclusive franchise for the sale of Sharps rifles in Texas. Wescott was very careful to refuse; he was quick, however, to extend to Conrad the full 30% discount with the statement that no one gets more. Wescott also suggested that he should have on hand a supply of Sharps rifles rather than the frantic telegraphic orders which might take as long as two weeks to fill and another two weeks for shipment. Conrad proposed a visit to the Sharps works. A cordial invitation was extended but the visit was never made. Orders began coming by steamer via Galveston and Fort Worth as much quicker.

Fifty miles west of Fort Griffin near Sweetwater was a competitor, the partnership of Charles Rath, Lee & Reynolds called Rath City or Camp Reynolds. Charles Rath was from Dodge City and had played an important part in the early Kansas hunts as dealer, hunter, etc. Lee & Reynolds were post traders at Camp Supply, Indian Territory. All of these men were dealers in Sharps and shipment was via Dodge City, Kansas, to Sweetwater. In late 1877 Conrad bought the interest of Lee & Reynolds and he and Rath formed the partnership of Conrad & Rath at Fort Griffin.

In October, 1877, there was the first letter and order from Conrad & Rath for 40 guns to be filled in a hurry. Orders then declined. By 1880, with the dwindling buffalo trade, Charles Rath pulled out and moved back to Dodge City. In 1881 Conrad, as did many of his business friends, moved his store to Albany, 17 miles to the south, and was quite successful there in the general mercantile business until his death in 1892. The store still stands.

### The Guns

All the Fort Griffin Sharps were Model 1874 Sporting

octagon barrel rifles. The first few guns shipped to T.E. Jackson were from the Hartford, Connecticut, plant. The remaining Jackson guns and all of Conrad's guns were shipped from the Bridgeport, Connecticut, works. Business was booming for the Sharps Rifle Company and they moved to their larger plant at Bridgeport from Hartford in January, 1876. Basically, both the Hartford and Bridgeport Sporters were similar side hammer breech loaders, however, the Hartford guns had an Army type butt plate, a round collar at the rear of the barrel, and a pewter forearm tip. The Bridgeport guns had a shotgun butt plate, no collar and no pewter forearm tip. Of the approximately 12,000 Model 1874 guns produced, about 6,000 were Sporting rifles. The other 6,000 were Business, Hunters, Military, and Target models. To quote Frank Sellers' excellent book, *Sharps Rifles*, "The Sharps buffalo rifle is a bit hard to define but strictly speaking if one chooses to do so, one can class every Sharps Sporting, Hunters, Business, or Military rifle larger than .40-50 calibre as a Sharps Buffalo rifle since there is a small chance that the rifle in question was used at one time to kill buffalo, however, the full octagon rifle weighing over 12 pounds with double set triggers was the most popular on the buffalo range."

Certainly no Sharps Sporting rifle would be shipped to Fort Griffin for any other reason than to kill buffalo and they are without question genuine buffalo Sharps camp guns.

The four calibres of guns shipped to Fort Griffin were: 50-90-2½" straight, 44-90-2½" bottleneck, 45-2½" straight, and 40-90-2½" bottleneck (the wildcat of the 1870s).

Not until 1876 did the heavy rifles become common on the ranges. The fall of 1876 saw the decline in the use of the .44 and .50 calibres in favor of the 45-2½" shell. During this time the weights of the guns were from 13¾ to 16½ pounds with the average 14 pounds.

All of these rifles that I have seen show much use and at times crude alterations. They are all tired guns and have little or no finish. The collector has to accept the fact that a Sharps with lots of finish probably never saw the buffalo range. Many have heavy barrels that are actually larger than the action. The sheer size and weight of these guns is impressive. The factory charged \$1.00 per pound extra over 12 pounds. Many of these old guns have broken stocks with crude repair with green leather or wire. Some have been shot out and rebarrelled with a Sharps replacement barrel. Often the sights have been filed to suit the shooter and several have cut off barrels done after the harvest to lessen the weight when used as saddle or utility guns. All that I have seen have double set triggers and open sights. They were nursed along to the very end and many will have crude but effective frontier repairs. Now

for a look at the shipments to both Jackson and Conrad.

### **Sharps Rifles Shipped to T.E. Jackson**

Total guns shipped between July, 1875, and January, 1877, a 19-month period, was only 41, a surprise to most. I know of only three T.E. Jackson guns through my research: one is in El Paso, another is owned by a fellow Society Member, Pablo Ballentine, and one by an anonymous Texas collector.

### **Sharps Rifles Shipped to Frank E. Conrad or Conrad & Rath**

Shipment was between June, 1876, and October, 1877, a 17-month period; a total shipment of 182 guns. This total included 40 to Conrad & Rath.

Note that the heavier 14, 15 and 16 pound guns predominate. Note the rarity of the .40 and .50 calibres and the large shipment of .45 2½" guns but yet still 53 44-90 guns.

Of the above 182 buffalo guns shipped to Conrad or Conrad & Rath I know of or have researched only 25 guns. Obviously there must be others out there that have not come to light. Surprisingly, Conrad received only one telescopic sight and it was not attached to a gun. There were a large number of extra heavy replacement barrels and parts shipped to both Conrad and Jackson along with large shipments of unloaded shells and loading implements.

In March, 1880, Conrad received six .40 caliber 26" round barrel 8¼ pound rifles from Sharps, obviously not for buffalo shooting.

Conrad, while at Griffin bought a white buffalo hide, one of only two killed in the entire Texas herd. After a local Indian tanned the rare prize he gave it to his 12 year old son, Frank B. Conrad. The son became president of a Bank at Marietta, Oklahoma, and stated in 1944 that after keeping it for 40 years he gave it, very moth eaten, to a domestic couple; this he later regretted. J. W. Right Moorar killed the other white buffalo near Snyder, Texas, in 1876.

By 1878 there was a noticeable business lag in Griffin, primarily because of a lack of hide hunters. The animals seemed to move north and west. Actually, they had nearly all been killed, and by 1879 the hide hunters had all moved home or to other areas. The railroad had selected a route south of Griffin, the military post was closed in 1881, and Frank E. Conrad had moved to Albany the same year. By this time the tainted beauties, the saloon keepers, and the gamblers were leaving fast. The town died a natural death in 1882. By the turn of the century only a combination general store and post office remained and it too was soon abandoned and The Flat faded into oblivion. Albany, the nearest town to Fort Griffin, is the site of the famous open air living history pageant each June called the Fandangle which features Fort Griffin and the buffalo. Their museum, The Old Jail

Art Center, is rich in buffalo lore.

Today Fort Griffin is one of the outstanding ghosts of the Lone Star state. It is an established and well maintained state historical park, and a popular year-round camping and picnic area. There are several remaining ruins on The Hill but only the Masonic Hall made of stone remains in The Flat. The Historical Park is also the home of the state Long Horn herd, but only one lonely buffalo is now at the site.

Maybe the collector who is fortunate enough to own one of these heavy Sharps camp guns sold by T.E. Jackson or Conrad & Rath has the most prized remaining piece of Fort Griffin history.

I would like to close by reading a letter from one buffalo hunter to another.<sup>1</sup> This letter was to Joe McComb of Albany from John Jacobs of San Antonio. Joe McComb had organized a buffalo hunting party out of Fort Griffin in December, 1874. John Jacobs and John Poe were his skinners. The following year Poe and Jacob organized their own outfit and became one of the best known in the hide industry. The letter is dated July 13, 1924.

"My Dear Joe,

About next Saturday a man will drive up to your feed store in a car. It will be John Jacobs. You are to get in with me and drive down on the creek where we will camp and break bread together after all of these years. No one but you and I must know of this. I am at last beautifully fixed in life, but Joe I would give it all up for my old Sharps .45 and my old team back again that I might follow you and good old John Poe up on the buffalo range with supplies. I well remember it has been fifty years ago when we broke up camp on Paint Creek. You and John took the horse team and struck out for a new range leaving me behind with the ox team to haul hides to Griffin. No road, nothing but dim trails. I told you and John that anywhere the trail forked you were to take thirty steps from the fork and dig a little square hole with a spade beside the trail you were to take so that I could follow and at every fork the welcome hole was there. I gave you and John a little board about two feet long and four inches wide. Where you and John left the trail and struck off for our camp you were to bury this stake in the ground with a note by it in a primer box, the note telling me the distance to your camp and the direction. Now Lord, how good that stake did look when I came to it. It was getting dark and I could not see to keep my course so I concluded to camp there for the night. I was out of matches so in order to cook a little food I picked ravelings out of a flour sack, drew the bullet out of a .45 shell, poured most of the powder out, stuck the ravelings in, and fired into a handful of dried grass and caught the fire. After putting wood on I let down my ox bells, hobbled my steers, and was cooking my bacon and hoe cake when you and John walked up to the firelight and you had heard the bells and the report of my gun at your camp two miles away and it was indeed a happy meeting. Poor old John has crossed the divide. You and I are about the only ones of the buffalo hunters left. If you

<sup>1</sup>Courtesy Shackelford County Archives, Albany, Texas.

cross over the range first and join John don't forget the spade and the stake and just thirty paces from every fork of the trail dig a little square hole that I may find and be with you again on that dear shore. And when the shades gather and I am about due listen for my ox bells and if you hear them jingling in the dim distance come again to my rescue as of yore and we will pitch our camp beside some gurgling stream. Our occupation will be whatever the Great Spirit wills and so may it be.

Your Lifelong Friend,  
John C. Jacobs"

Jacobs did make the trip out to Albany as referred to in this letter. They went out on the creek and had some target practice with their old Sharps rifles. McComb won the match and Jacobs sent him a fine rifle as a prize on his return to San Antonio. All three have long since passed to the dear range, as referred to by Jacobs and it is hoped that all is well in the camp Jacobs seemed to wish for in the letter.

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Lundy; Lester W. Galbreath, Park Superintendent, Fort Griffin State Park, Albany, Texas; Ms. Joan Farmer, Archivist, The Old Jail Art Center, Shackelford County Archives, Albany, Texas; J. William La Rue; Ed Curtis; J. Robert Warner; Joseph H. McCracken, III; Cynthia J. Beeman, Texas State Library; Cinda Martin and Lisa Shippee Lambert, Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University; Tom Norris, Kansas State Historical Society; John S. Ezell and Shelley Arlen, Western History Collection, The University of Oklahoma; Shirley Leftwich, Scurry County Museum, Snyder, Texas; Gerald Corkran, Western Texas College, Snyder, Texas.

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*The Buffalo Book*, David A. Dary  
*Fort Griffin on the Texas Frontier*, Carl Coke Rister  
*The Rath Trail*, Ida Ellen Rath  
*The Saga of the Buffalo*, Cy Martin  
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*Sharps Firearms*, Frank Sellers  
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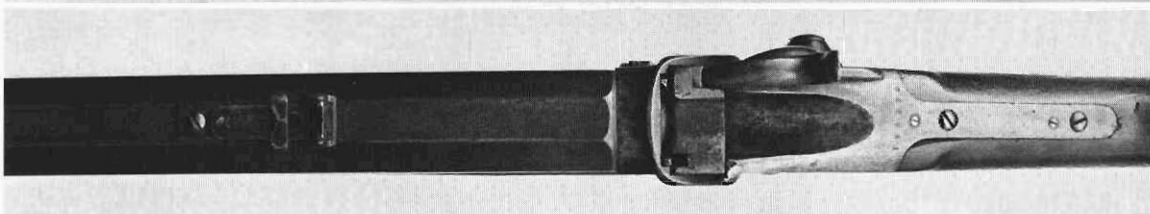
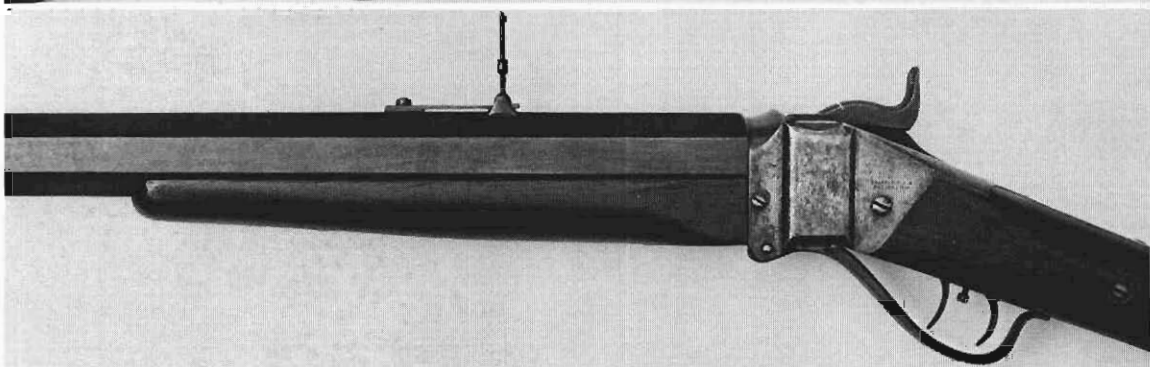
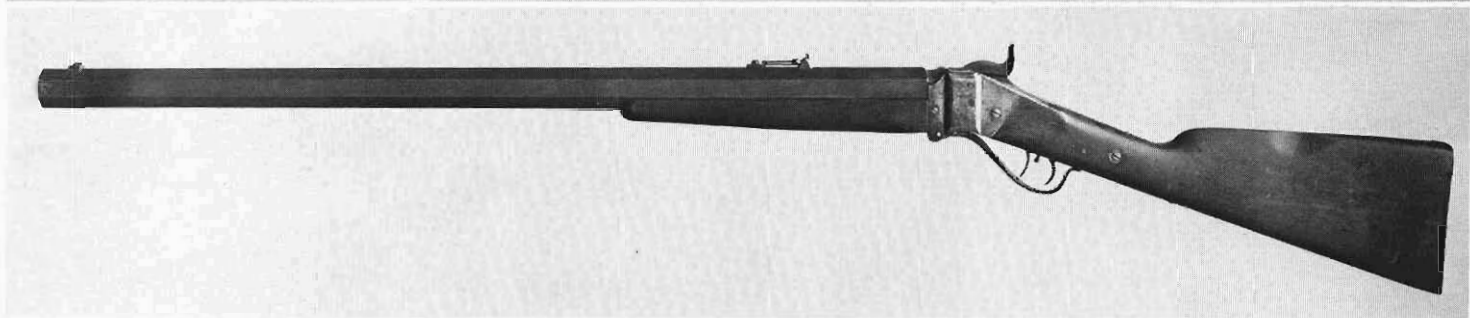
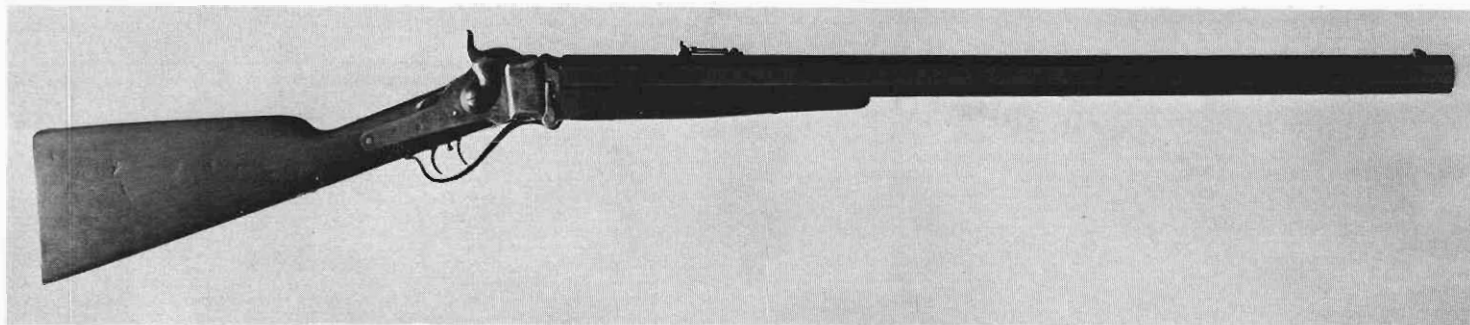
**Sharps Rifle Company shipping records of Model 1874 rifles sold to T.E. Jackson, Fort Griffin, Texas**

			Price Range
6 - 40 cal.	37 30" octagon barrel	6 - 12#	
16 - 44 cal.	1 33" octagon barrel	13 - 13#	
4 - 45 cal.	1 32" octagon barrel	15 - 14#	\$40 to \$50
<u>15 - 50 cal.</u>	1 28" ½ octagon barrel	2 - 15#	
41 Total	1 34" octagon barrel	4 - 16#	
		2 - ??#	

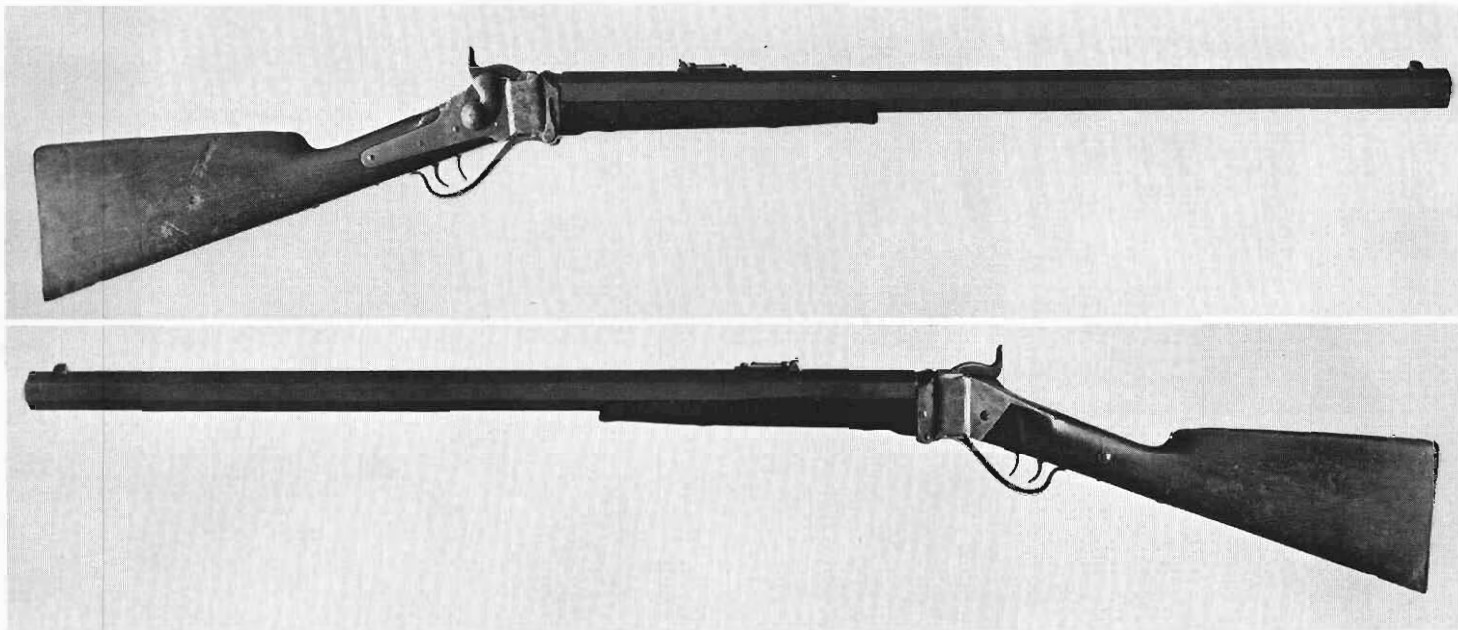
Note that 31 of the 41 shipped to Jackson were either .44 or .50 calibre; in other words, the popular calibres of the earlier buffalo hunt.

**Sharps Rifle Company shipping records of Model 1874 rifles sold to Frank E. Conrad and/or Conrad and Rath, Fort Griffin, Texas**

			Price Range
1 - 40 cal.	1 26" barrel	1 - 9#	
53 - 44 cal.	2 28" barrel	1 - 11#	
125 - 45 cal.	171 30" barrel	22 - 12#	\$40 to \$50
<u>3 - 50 cal.</u>	8 32" barrel	0 - 13#	
182 Total		33 - 14#	
		49 - 15#	
		74 - 16#	
		2 - ??#	

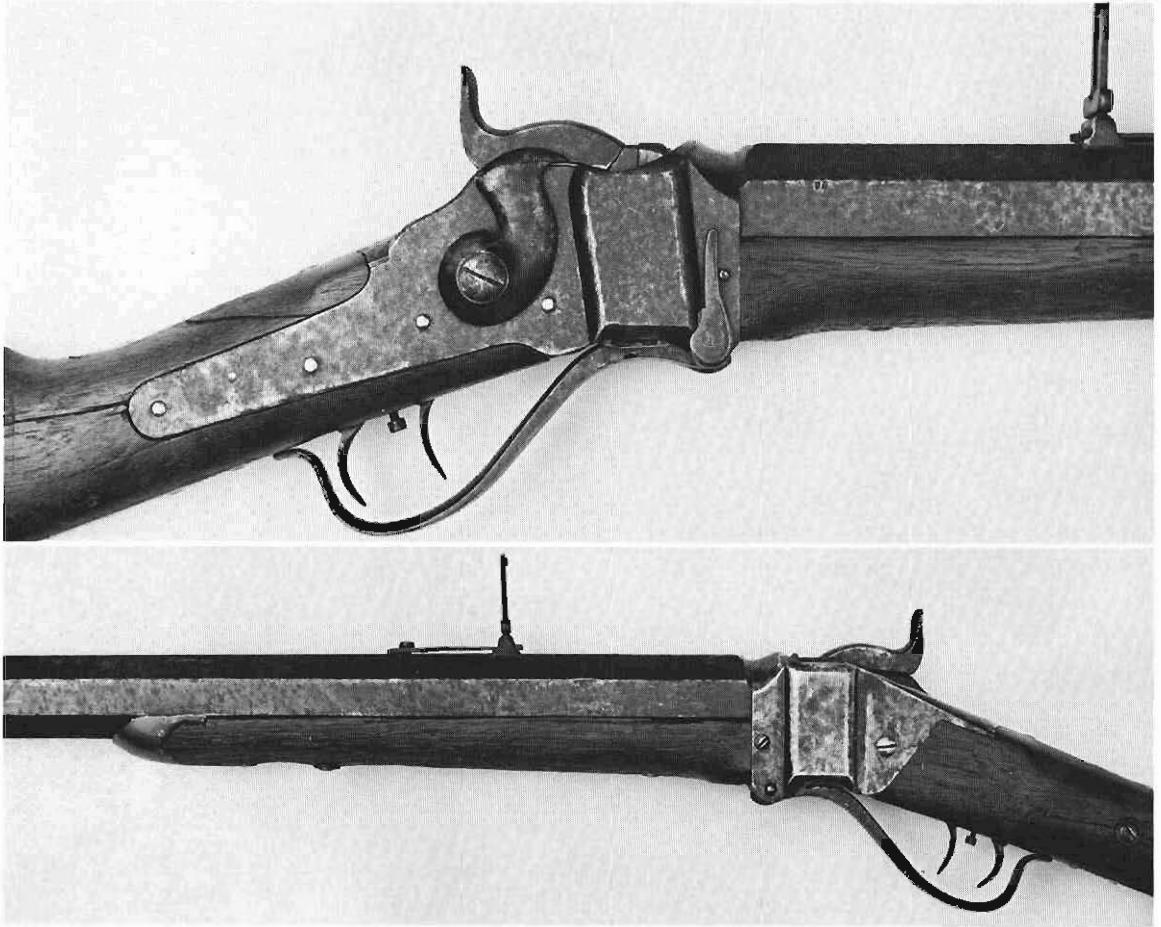
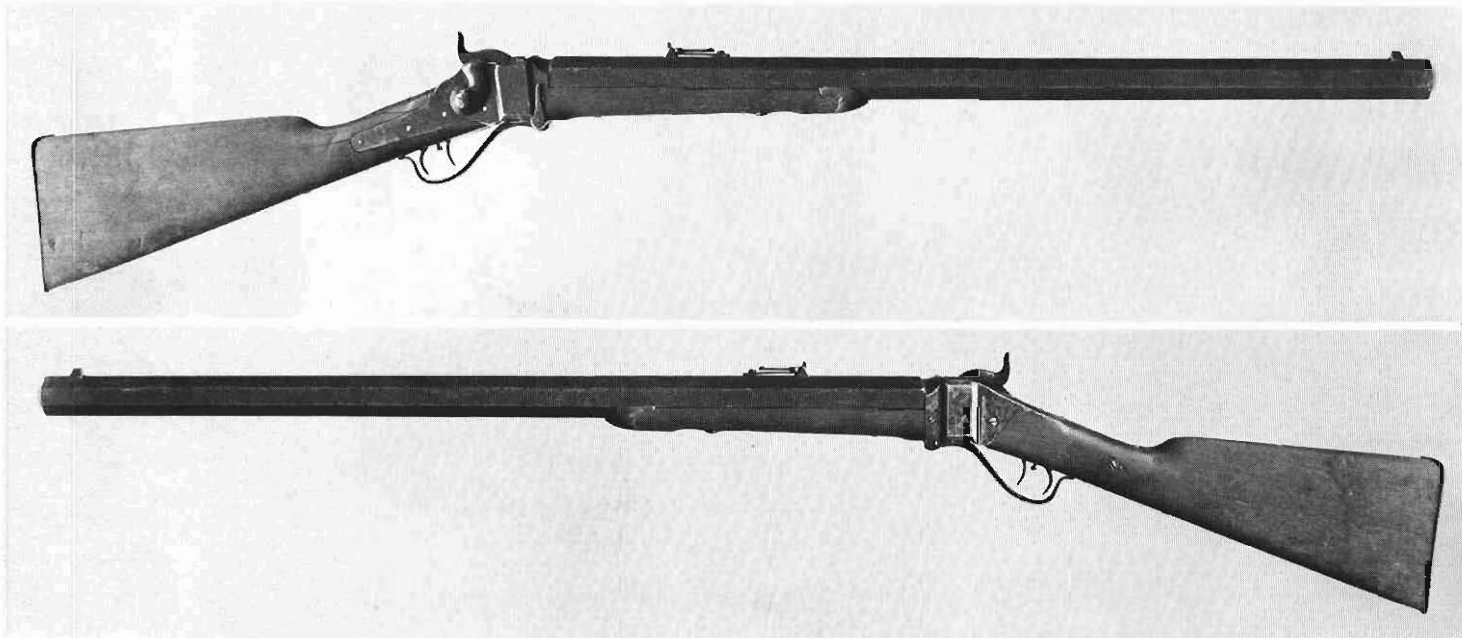


Sharps Model 1874 Sporting Octagon Rifle serial #160120, shipped to Frank E. Conrad, Fort Griffin, TX, September 5, 1877. Calibre .45 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", double triggers, weight 15 lb. 15 oz., cost \$46.00 list. Author's collection.

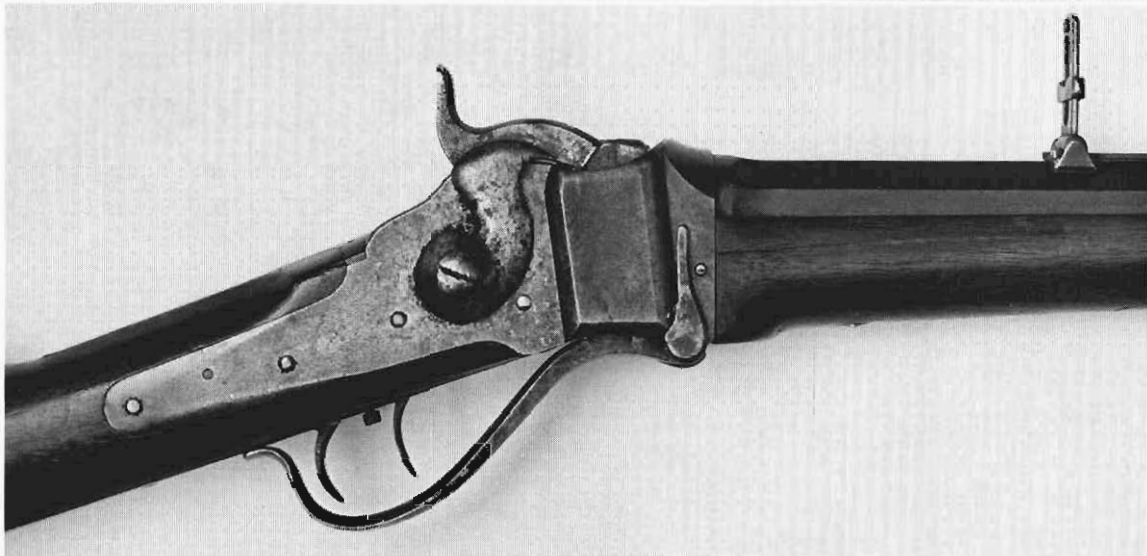
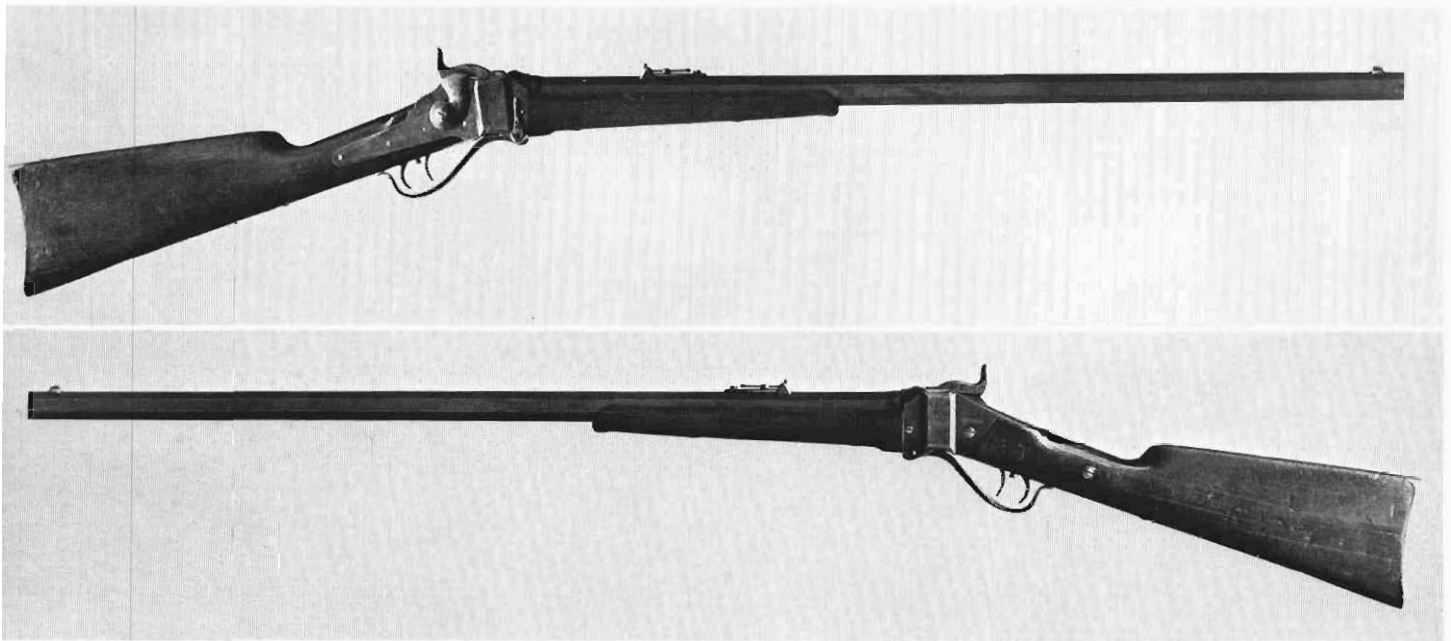


Sharps Model 1874 Sporting Octagon Rifle serial #162075, shipped to Conrad & Rath, Fort Griffin, TX, October 29, 1877, calibre 45 2/4" 30" oct. barrel, double triggers, weight 15 lb. 9 oz., cost \$46.00 list. Author's collection.





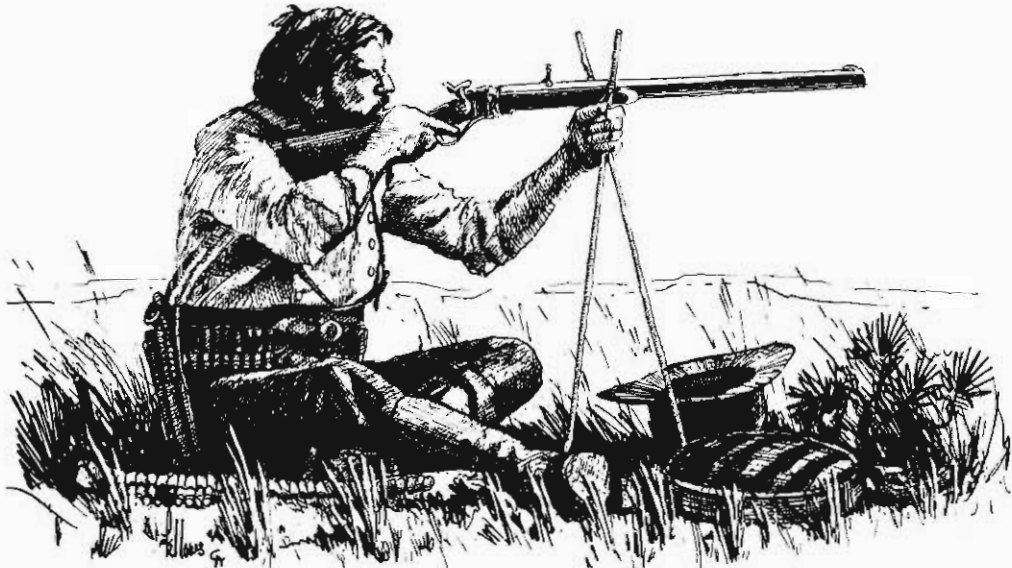
Sharps Model 1874 Sporting Octagon Rifle serial #158440, shipped to Frank E. Conrad, Fort Griffin, TX, August 7, 1876, calibre 44/90 2½", 30" oct. barrel, double triggers, cost \$46.00 list, weight 16½ lb. Note the Hartford type pewter forearm tip. Author's collection.



Sharps Model 1874 Sporting Octagon Rifle serial #161254, shipped to Frank E. Conrad, Fort Griffin, TX, September 5, 1877. Calibre originally was 45 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and weighed 14.10 pounds. Has been rebarrelled with Sharps factory barrel to 40/90 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (the wildcat cal. of the '70's). Author's collection.



Sharps Model 1874 Sporting Octagon Rifle serial #159003 shipped to Frank E. Conrad, Fort Griffin, TX, December 19, 1876. Calibre .45 2/8", 30" oct. barrel, double triggers, weight 15 pounds 14 oz., cost \$46.00 list. Fred Fellows collection.



The Hide Hunter by Fred Fellows CA, Big Timber, Mont. Pen & Ink 11 X 14" Author's collection.



Examples of the original Sharps Rifle Co. ledgers, letter and invoice books. Buffalo bronze by George Dabich. Author's collection.



The Stand by George Dabich, Cody, Wyo. Oil 22 X 36". Author's collection.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

**Sharps Rifle Company**

BRIDGEPORT, CONN. U. S. A.

BREECH LOADING FIRE ARMS  
AND  
AMMUNITION.

OLD RELIABLE

NEW YORK OFFICE AND WAREHOUSES  
No. 177 BROADWAY.

PRICE LIST.—JANUARY, 1877.

Superseding all Previous Lists.

Rifles of .45 calibre having proved to give much better results and greater satisfaction to our customers, the Company have discontinued the manufacture of either the .44 or .50 calibre, except on special orders.

The .45 calibre "Sporting" and "Business" Rifles, chambered for the 2 1-10, or 2 7-8 inch shells, will be found entirely effective and in every way satisfactory for either medium or heavy charges of powder.

[NOTE.—The 2 1-10 inch shell is intended for 70 grains of powder. The 2 7-8 can be used for from 90 to 120 grains.]

**SHARPS "SPORTING" RIFLES.**

Weight 9 to 12 lbs., .45 calibre, polished stock, open sights, single trigger, 30 inch, octagon barrel, \$36.00, and \$1.00 per pound for all weights exceeding 12 lbs.

Double Triggers, extra, \$4.00.

The following weights will be kept in stock. All others will have to be made to order.

30 inch, .45 calibre, octagon barrels, 9 to 10, 10 to 11, 11 to 12, 12 to 14, and 14 to 16 lbs.

(All our .45 calibre arms, chambered for 2 1-10 inch shell, are adapted to the U. S. Govt. Cartridges of that calibre.)

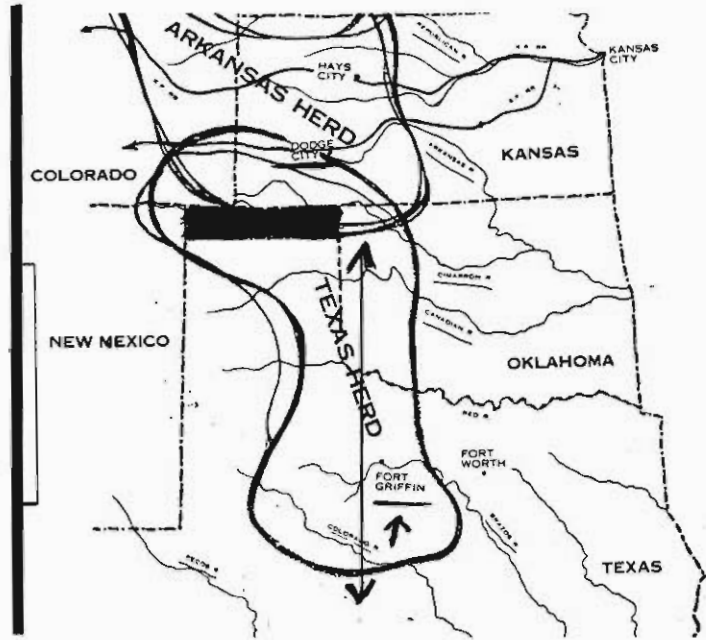
As all deviation from our regular list product involves much additional outlay for hand labor, on extra charge of twenty per cent. will be made on such special orders, and additional time will be required to fill them.

Special arms of either calibre .40, .44, .45 or .50, of any weight or length, made and engraved to order.

Sharps Rifle Co. catalog with Jan. 1877 price list of the Model 1874 "Sporting" Rifles which were the ones shipped to Ft. Griffin.



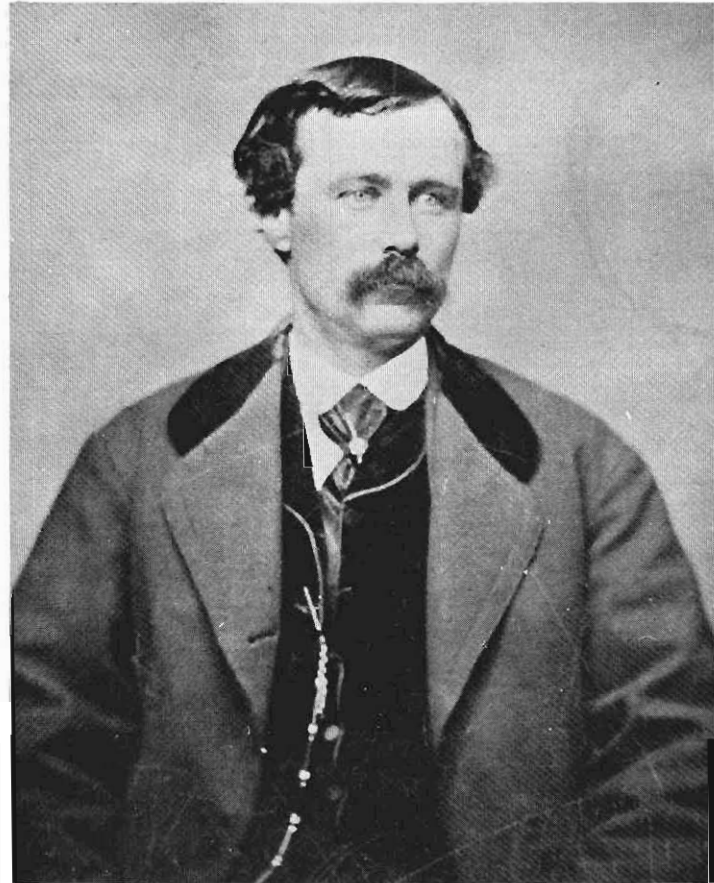
"The Scavengers of the Plains," a drawing from the February 24, 1872 issue of HARPER'S WEEKLY.



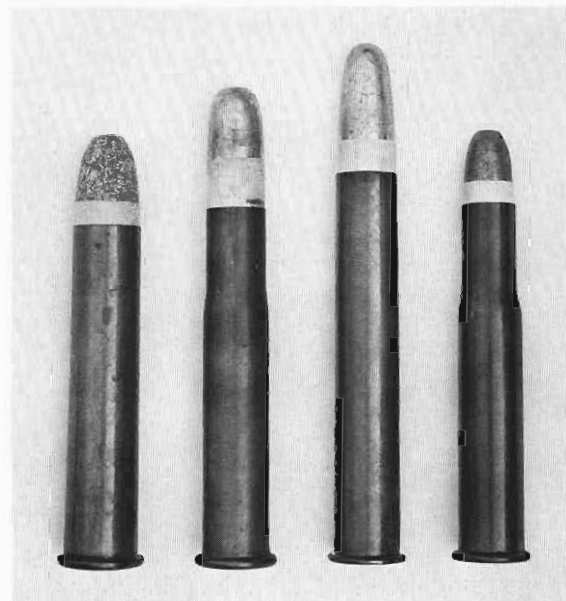
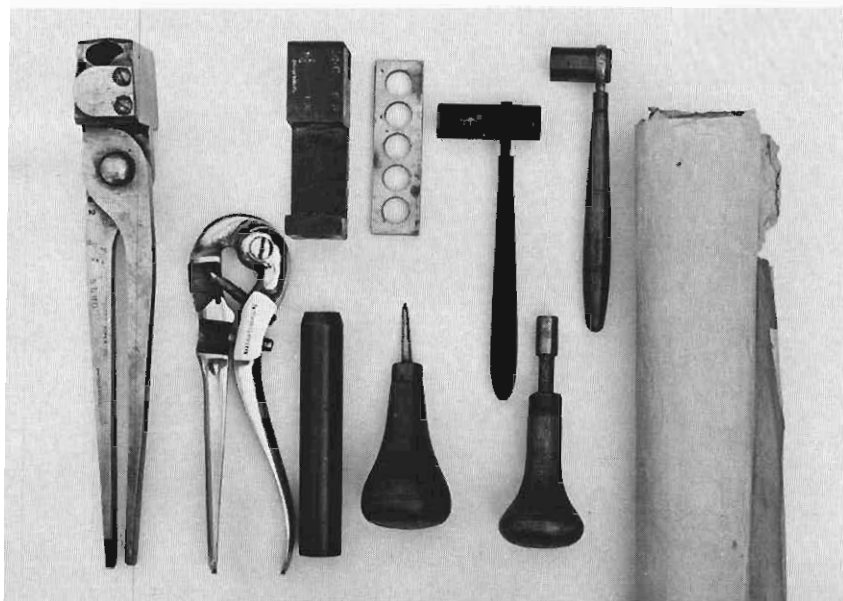
The Four Great Buffalo Herds of the 1870s: Harper's Weekly; and The Texas Herd and the Neutral Strip. The vertical arrow is the 100th Meridian west of which in 1874 was unsettled Indian infested frontier.



Frank E. Conrad



Charles Rath



et of Sharps Rifle Co. reloading implements, bullet mold, and old roll of patch paper, and the four cartridges for the Sharps Rifles shipped to Fort Griffin: 50/90 2¼" straight; 44/90 2½" bottleneck, 45/100 2¾" straight, and 40/90 2½" bottleneck.

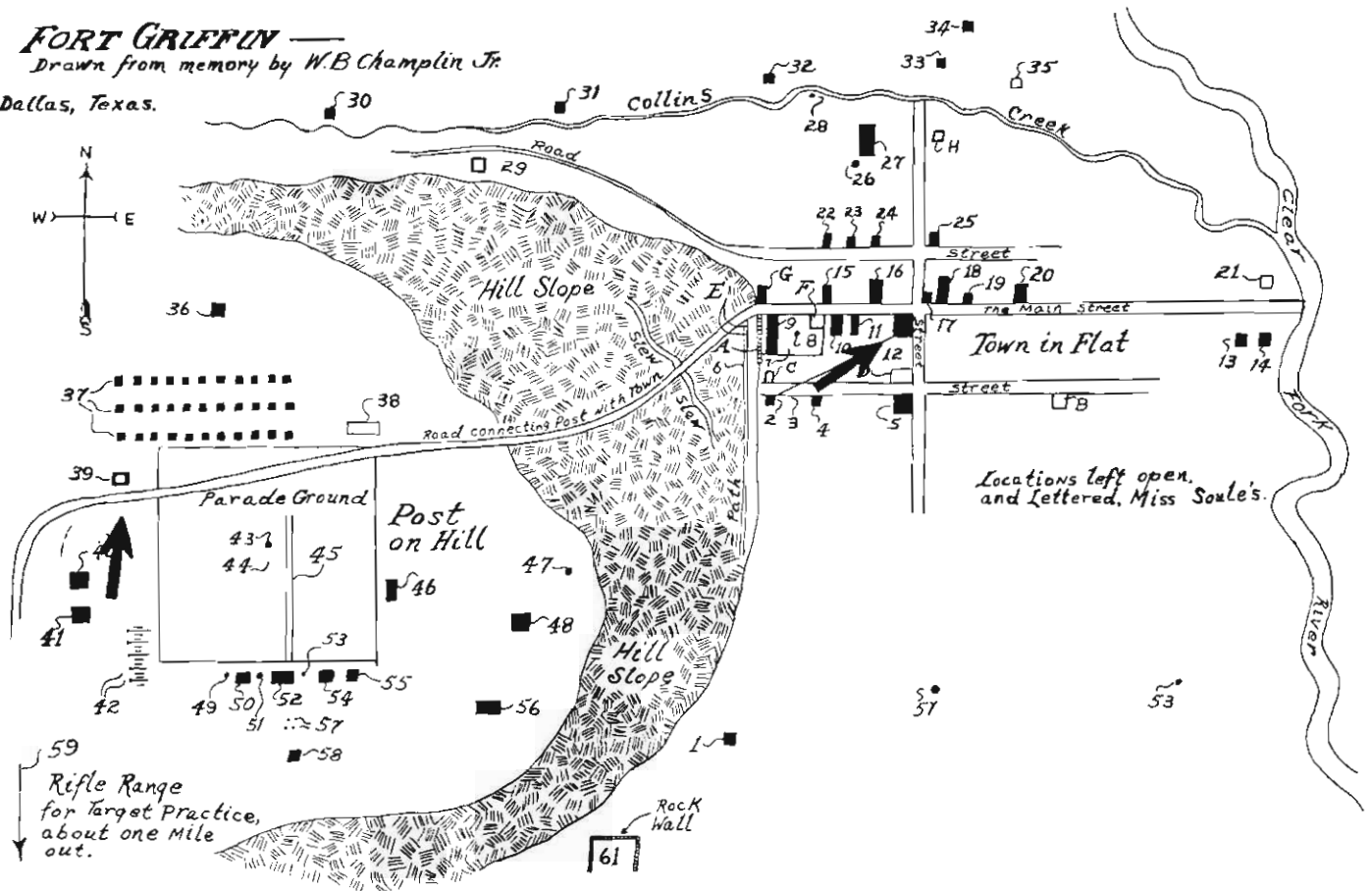


Masonic Temple remains. The only structure standing in The Flat at Fort Griffin today.

# FORT GRIFFIN

Drawn from memory by W.B. Champlin Jr.

Dallas, Texas.



Map of Fort Griffin, Texas, The Hill & The Flat as drawn by W. B. Champlin, Jr. a former resident, from memory about 1940. No. 39 on The Hill is Conrad and later Conrad & Rath's Sutler's store. No. 12 in The Flat is Conrad & Rath's store after their move. See arrows. Courtesy Shackelford County Archives, Albany, Tx.

## Key to the Fort Griffin Map

### FLAT:

- 1 Path
- 2 Bradley
- 3 Hotel
- 4 Wilhelm Res.
- 5 Telegraph
- 6 York
- 7 Soule
- 8 Well
- 9 Lot
- 10 Post Office
- 11 Main Street
- 12 Conrad & Rath
- 13 St. Road Leading So.
- 14 Road to Post
- 15 Keenan
- 16 Saloon
- 17 Market
- 18 Frankel
- 19 Calaboose
- 20 Echo

- 21 Champlins
- 22 Powell
- 23 Cap. Steele
- 24 School
- 25 Bell
- 26 McGonigal
- 27 Philbrick
- 28 Kate Gamble
- 29 Cupp
- 30 Curtis
- 31 Stribling
- 32 Dalrymple
- 33 Thorp
- 34 Slaughter Pen
- 35 Arandt
- 36 Ward
  
- POST:
- 37 Givins
- 38 Barracks
- 39 Building Conrad & Rath's Sutler store.

- 40 Well
- 41 Guard House
- 42 Blacksmith Shop
- 43 Cannon
- 44 Flag
- 45 Sun Dial
- 46 Zug
- 47 Weaver
- 48 Champlin
- 49 Chapin later Bennett
- 50 Sands
- 51 Lieu. Chandler later Wilhelm
- 52 Bakery
- 53 Powder House
- 54 Lime Kiln
- 55 Cemetery
  
- A Cistern
- B Cistern
- C Well
- D Oak Trees
- E Very Large Oak

4578  
Dr 20th  
Fort Griffin, Tex. E. Co. 1/16  
The Sharps Rifle Company  
Bridgeport, Cal.  
Sents

Please send us per Express and  
 J. P. Morrison & Co. Fort Worth, Tex.  
 2 Rifles 40 cal. chamber for 2 7/8 in shells } with  
 2 " 50 " " " 2 1/2 " " } Retaining  
 4 " 44 " " " 2 7/8 " " } impurities.  
 Weight of each from 12 to 15 lb. oct. Carrels  
 C. S. Double Trigger  
 1 Rifle Carrel 55 cal. 1/2 Oct Carrel  
 Weight 12 lb Length 30 in for 2 in. Chamber.  
 Best Rifles & best Material. C. S. Double  
 1 Rifle Carrel oct. 34 in long, 12 lb,  
 for 2 7/8 in shell open sight shell street  
 1500 Shuts Patch Paper  
 6 Lever Springs  
 2 Mad Cutters each 44 & 50  
 6 Leaf Awns  
 10 Lubricator.  
 We enclose Laminograph Certs for  
 \$20.00 amt to our credit.  
 Yours Respectfully  
 T. E. Jackson

2 50  
2 44  
4 44

Est. 1870

# CONRAD and RATH

Frank Conrad Charles Rath

Wholesale and Retail Dealers in

## GROCERIES

and

## STAPLE DRY GOODS

## CLOTHING

and

## FIREARMS

AGENTS FOR: SHARPS RIFLES  
 WINCHESTER RIFLES and COLT'S REVOLVERS

and

## RANCH SUPPLIES

# fort griffin

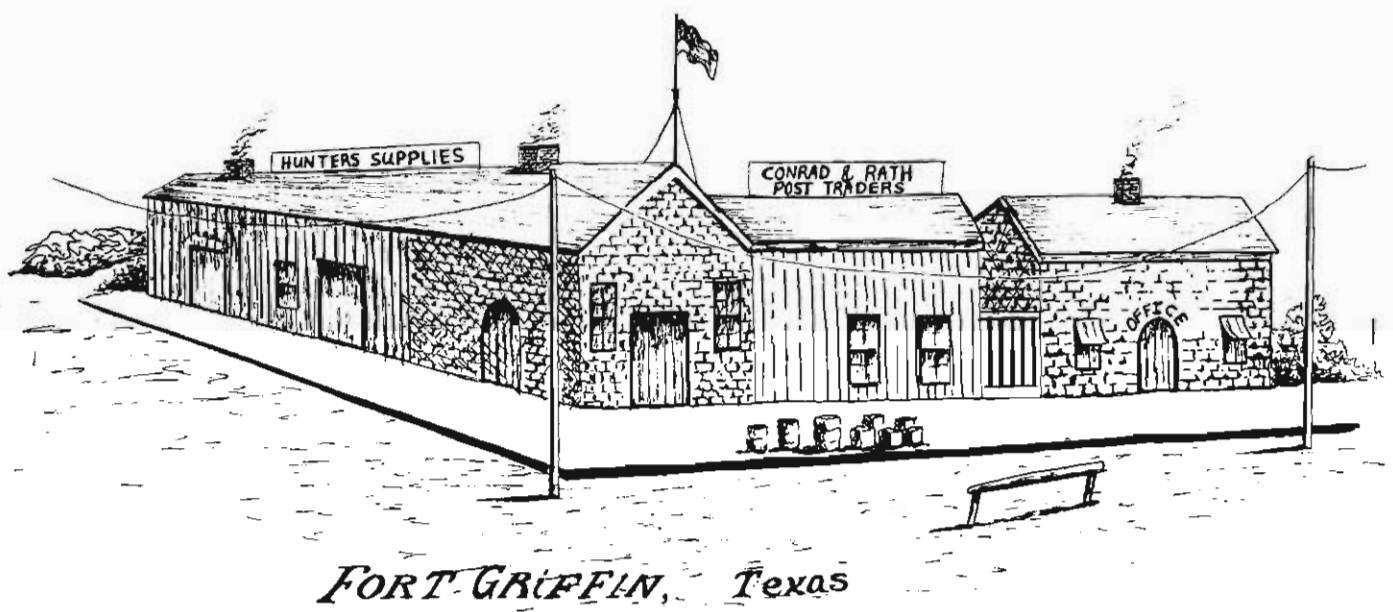
## TEXAS

Store Situated on the Great Cattle Trail from Texas to Kansas

**Largest Stock of Firearms, Groceries and Drover's Goods West of Fort Worth.**

Typical T.E. Jackson letter to Sharps Rifle Co. Jackson had no formal letterhead that is known.

From original Conrad & Rath broadside, 9 X 16".  
 Author's collection.



**FORT GRIFFIN, Texas**

Conrad & Rath's Sutler's store on The Hill at Ft. Griffin. Taken by artist Glenda Lundy from an original letterhead in Texas State Library





**Buffalo hide yard of Charles Rath & Co. of Dodge City, Ks. Rath is seated on the right. Conrad & Rath's yard at Ft. Griffin would have been similar. Courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Ks.**

### **Pages 63- 65**

Taylor County Buffalo Hunt, 1874 on Evans Creek near Buffalo Gap (south of present day Abilene, Tx.). Made by photographer Geo. Robertson of Austin, Tx., for the stereoscopic series *Life on the Frontier*. The old glass plates were found in 1926. Note the Sharps rifles, buffalo camp with scaffolds for drying the tongues, hides stretched and pegged on the ground for drying, water kegs, grindstone, and photographic equipment. All photographs courtesy The Texas State Library, Austin, Tx. Also, the last two plates courtesy The Phillips Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla.



