



George Philipp Schalk

George Schalk, Pennsylvania Artisan

Henry A. Truslow

It might seem strange that a collector of nineteenth century American percussion revolvers would elect to discuss the grandfather of the Schuetzen rifle in this country, but it is because of two members of this Society that I came to know the work of George Schalk of Pottsville, Penna. A single shot percussion pistol came to me from Sam Smith's collection via Dick Littlefield. I became fascinated by its story. Both Ned Roberts in his book *The Muzzle Loading Cap Lock Rifle* and Ray Smith in *The Story of Pope's Barrels* dedicated a chapter to George Schalk. Roberts had personal recollections of Schalk, and Smith drew heavily on recollections of Mrs. Louise Schalk Doyle, the granddaughter of George Schalk. I hope that what follows will put a little flesh on the skeletal information previously reported on George Schalk and his genius. The new information contained in this report has been supplied by Mr. Francis Schalk Doyle, the great-grandson of George Schalk. Mr. Doyle's help and friendship will always be highly treasured by me, and, as a result of his keen interest in preserving the legacy of his great grandfather, future historians will have a body of information for study and it is our hope that others will be encouraged to share their knowledge of Schalk and his work with us. More on that later.

George Philipp Schalk was born in Wiesbaden, Germany on November 22, 1825. He was the son of George Christian Schalk and Dorothea Hartz Schalk. His father was a highly respected and well-known millwright whose flour mill was near Wiesbaden. This was a family business that had been operated by the Schalks for generations. It is therefore unusual that young George would not have remained in Wiesbaden to enter the family business. In geneological notes written by Mrs. Louise Schalk Doyle, it appears that George had a brother Carl and a sister Catarina. No data is available on either, but I suppose that Carl was an older brother who entered the family business, thus making it advisable that George learn another trade. Hopefully, a geneological search taking place in Wiesbaden will shed some light on the relationship between George and his brother Carl.

George was educated in Wiesbaden and it was there that he apprenticed and learned the trades of locksmith and gunsmith. He received his first stage diploma as a locksmith on January 26, 1844, at age nineteen. He would continue his pursuit of the locksmith trade to complete his training and achieve the rank of Master Locksmith on August 9,



1852, age 27. George Schalk received his official license to work as a locksmith on September 25, 1852.

During this same period it is known that he worked with wrought iron. In Wiesbaden the crosses that adorned the cupolas of the Greek Catholic Church were done by him. A photo of these crosses was kept in Mrs. Louise S. Doyle's scrapbook with the note "wrought iron crosses . . . made and erected by George Schalk before he came to America in 1854." In 1842 Schalk made a flat iron and stand of special design. The flat iron itself has decorations of brass, a hard wrought handle, and his signature on a coat of arms attached to the door of the iron. This door opens in order that hot coals might be inserted to heat the iron. The stand shows equally fine workmanship and engraving and bears his signature and the date 1842 on the bottom. Another example of his skill with wrought iron can be seen in the enlargement of the photo of his shop on Norwegian Street in Pottsville. The shop sign is his handiwork.

During this same period George Schalk served as an armorer's aide (for the 2nd Regiment of the Grand Army of the Duchy) from October 6, 1848, until April 15, 1849. Fredrick Jaeger served the position of Master Armorer. A translation of the Armorer's contract gives a fascinating insight into the life of a gunsmith in the military. Fredrick Jaeger was one of George Schalk's examining masters on his acceptance into membership in the gunsmith profession, as witnessed by his Apprentice's Indenture dated November 18, 1850, at age 25.

From April 14, 1846, until August 9, 1849, Schalk served in the military and he received his final discharge on August 9, 1852.

Having satisfied his military obligations and established his credentials as a master locksmith and a gunsmith, it



Contr. N^o 78.

Lehrbrief

Ich, Carl Johann Schaller aus dem Ort Guntersdorf
 habe dem hiesigen Lehrmeister Herrn Johann
 Schramm aus dem Ort Guntersdorf nach dem
 von der Obrigkeit der hiesigen Ortsgemeinde
 davon befohlen worden für das Lehren,
 nachzugehen gut und sorgfältig zu
 und durch den Herrn Schramm befohlen, daß
 er die Aufnahmen in dem Ortschaften
 des hiesigen Ortsgemeinde befohlen zu
 sein soll dem hiesigen Ortsgemeinde
 befohlen zu sein legitimieren müßte
 und so.

W. Schramm aus dem 18. November 1880.
 Herr Schramm aus dem Ort Guntersdorf

Steyger
 Friedr. Mayer
 Ludwig Kaser



[Signature]

Gunsmith Apprentices Indenture

Contract

Josephus dem Schmiedemeister des fürstlichen
Kriegs- und Artillerie-Regiments, und dem Büchsen-
macher Friedrich Jaeger zu Bielefeld,
wirds zufolge des am 6. Octobr. 1848 od. 8. 1849
Abtheilung II unterzeichneten Vertrages
Contract abgeschlossen.

1.)

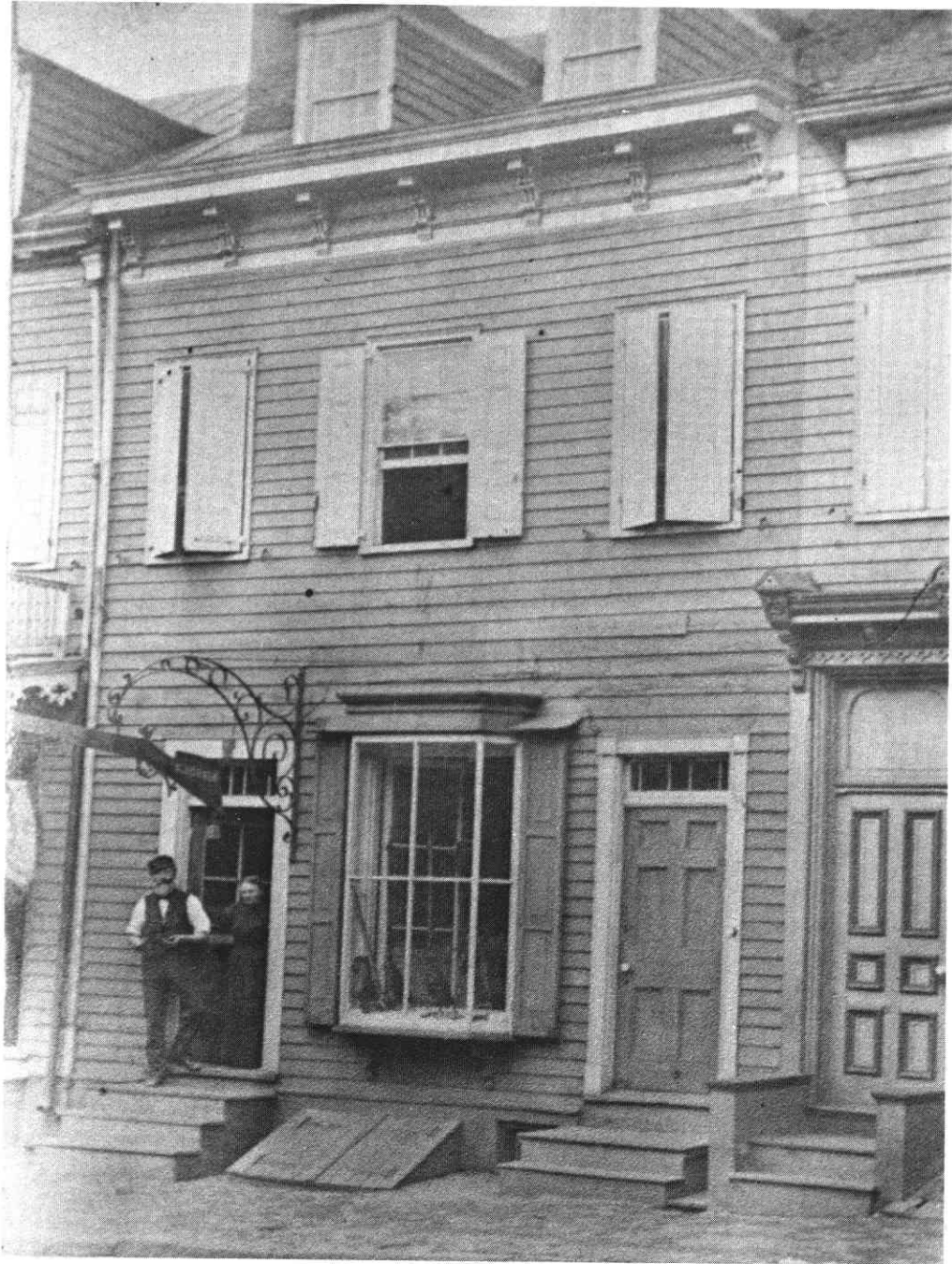
Der Büchsenmacher Jaeger übernimmt
ein Verlangen als Kriegs- und Artillerie-
macher auf die Dauer von fünf Jahren,
unter folgenden Bedingungen.

2.)

Der selbe hat bei allen in der Armee
dienlich vorkommenden Aufträgen
als Werkmeister anzutreten und
zu sein.

3.)

Es ist verpflichtend, sobald dieser Contract
die fürstliche Genehmigung erhalten hat,
sich mit dem von dem Werkmeister
für die Dauer der fünfjährigen
Dauer zu begeben, und sämtliche
Arbeiten zu thun, in vollkommener
bester Weise zu vollziehen.



Schalk's shop and home on Norwegian Street.

would be easier for Schalk to confidently emigrate to Pottsville, Pennsylvania in 1854.

Other important events would take place in Wiesbaden before young George would seek his fortune in America. On August 25, 1852, Schalk married Wilhemina Sophie Windisch, who was five years his senior, being born October 4, 1820. Their marriage and relationship was one of great warmth and peace, as can be gleaned from the following quote from a tribute to Mrs. Schalk in the Pottsville

Republican March 24, 1911: "Mrs. Schalk was the widow of George Schalk, who likewise was one of the town's best known residents up to the time of his death in 1893. He was known far and wide as an expert gunsmith, an all around mechanic and an expert marksman. When the most expert mechanics failed he was depended upon to succeed. In this way he was kept constantly busy. He was a great lover of reading and as his wife was not physically strong, she spent almost all her time in his shop with him where she read to

him as he worked. She was exceedingly well read, enjoyed the highest German education and was recognized as one of the most competent of German scholars. It was her constant association with her husband which caused her to become so generally known throughout the entire town, and her acquaintance was always most highly desired and richly esteemed." Or this from the *History of Schuylkill County*; "It was her custom to sit by the hour in her husband's workshop, reading aloud to him from the newspaper or educational literature or fiction, her fingers meanwhile busy with her knitting needles, his hands skillfully occupied with his work while listening to his wife's reading." Again her presence in the photo taken of George's shop gives a feeling of the closeness that must have existed between the two of them. In Wiesbaden, before their emigration to Pottsville, Sophie gave birth to Adolph W. Schalk on June 16, 1845. Adolph would become a prominent lawyer and leading citizen in Pottsville.

Schalk was issued his German passport in Wiesbaden on December 31, 1844. Almost ten years later he would use it to emigrate to America and become one of her premier artisans. He booked passage on the ship *Golden Eagle* and sailed from Port D'Anvers on June 20, 1854, destination New York.

I think that it tells us something of George Schalk's nature to note that along with the papers and documents that he saved were the baptismal certificates for both himself and Sophie, and also his church confirmation certificate dated October, 1839, when he was thirteen years old.

On September 9, 1854, Sophie W. Schalk and her son, Adolph, received their passport to emigrate to America and join George in Pottsville. They sailed on the ship *Peter Hettrick* on the 25th of November and we can imagine George Schalk's joy in receiving the following telegram message via his friend George Lippe. "December 28, 1854. Mrs. Schalk and son will come tomorrow."

The move to America in 1854 brought to this country a man of considerable genius. George Schalk made contributions in many ways, i.e. those of marksman, gunsmith, engraver, violin maker, and general artisan.

Ned Roberts, Ray Smith, and more importantly, accounts of the day, give credit to George P. Lippe for urging Schalk to emigrate to Pottsville. There can be no doubt that Lippe, who was a printer and publisher of a German language newspaper in Pottsville, had a close friendship with the Schalk family, since the Morse Line telegraph announcing the arrival of Mrs. Sophie Schalk and son was sent to Lippe, and the business card identifying Schalk's gunsmithing services was printed by Lippe and has "1854" added in pencil by Schalk. It is understandable that such a move to a new country would be considered carefully and

the event noted appropriately. We have a few glimpses of how Schalk placed high significance on his move. In his books there are a number of inscriptions. The inside flyleaf of the book on the Greener system has the inscription "George Schalk Wiesbaden 1850," but on the title page the inscription has been updated to read in his handwriting "George Schalk, Pottsville, 1856." His machinery handbook has written in his hand "George Schalk Pottsville 1862," even his pen knife has "Geo. Schalk Pottsville 1854" carved in its handle. A second penknife is of interest because it has his name carved on one side and has the delicate carving of a Scheutzen rifle on the other. While on the subject of books, one is a German/English textbook published in 1843: there is no signature in this book, only sketches for the design of Scheutzen rifles inside the cover. It is as if he knew that his rifles would do his talking and the English language could wait. Another book is interesting because he signed it in both Frankfurt and in Pottsville in 1862. He purchased this book in Frankfurt when he was there to participate in a Scheutzenfest, which, by the way, he won.

Schalk was, of course, an unrivaled gunsmith and rifle maker; however, he was also a marksman of international acclaim. Ned Roberts writes, "I will remember having met Mr. Schalk in the summer of 1883 at Newark, New Jersey, where he shot in one of the German Scheutzen rifle matches with a rifle of his own make . . ." Harry M. Pope also writes of his meeting George Schalk in excerpts of this letter to Mrs. Louise Doyle: "I met your grandfather the first time almost exactly 48 years ago at my first Schuetzen Fest at Newark in 1888. Met him through William Hayes . . ." Pope continues . . . "I met Mr. Schalk perhaps 7 or 8 times at various important matches. I was a boy outside listening to wisdom and saying little but drinking in all I could without intruding. I remember the first time I met him he wore two pairs of spectacles, one over the other . . ."

Francis Schalk Doyle's recollections of his visit to Harry Pope: "Not having in our possession one of George Schalk's fine rifles was unfortunate. However, my mother, Louise Schalk Doyle, did possess the small (about half size) muzzle loading rifle made for her by her grandfather. After she learned of Harry M. Pope and the credit he gave to George Schalk she wished to meet Pope and show him "her" Scheutzen rifle. In June, 1936, I accompanied my mother to visit Mr. Pope in Jersey City, New Jersey (his shop was in a warehouse in the industrial area). Mr. Pope was then 75 years old, with failing eyesight and poor hearing but with keen mind and memory. He was still doing the meticulous work he loved, plodding long hours. Mother left her small rifle with Mr. Pope for reconditioning. In retrospect, considering Pope's backlog of work and his cluttered shop, I realize that no work was ever done on the rifle. I tried unsuccessfully to regain possession of the rifle, which



Shooting medals won by Schalk: 1. August 5, 1867—"W.S.V. dem besten Schutzen August 5, 1867"; 2. August 7, 1867—"W.S.V. dem besten Schutzen August 7, 1867"; 3. 1864—Bust of George Washington, signed Paquet "The Constitution is Sacredly Obligatory to All" obverse: "1st Prize of the Philadelphia Rifle Club for the benefit of the U.S. Sanitary Commission June 1864—Won by George Schalk; 4. 1873—"W.S.V. Preis fur die mehrsten Blattchen August 4 bis 7, 1873"; 5. Medal used as watch fob—1867 face "Dem Festen Schutzen fur das . . . Schutzenfest des W.S.V.—1867" obverse: unidentified monogram; 6. August 8, 1870—"B.S.G. August 8, 1870" obverse: "Geo. Schalk"; 7. 1870—"B.S.G. fur die Mehrsten Blattchen 1870" "G. Schalk" on pin hanger; and 8. 1871—obverse: "B.S.G. August 21, 1871" face: sculpture of Liberty over shield.

apparently was misplaced in Pope's shop. He died in October, 1950.

"In our conversations with Mr. Pope in 1936 he recollected the various Scheutzen Fests where he had been a spectator and later a participant (his score for off hand shooting is among the tops in the record books). As a young man attending Scheutzen matches in Newark, he saw George Schalk display skill as a marksman. I asked Mr. Pope whether he knew Schalk to which Pope replied "I was just a very young man. I would not dare to speak to the great George Schalk!" As a post script to this account, the Doyle's did receive a rifle from Pope's son which was supposed to be the one Mrs. Doyle left for repair. In fact, it was a Flobert which bears little resemblance to the half sized rifle Schalk had made for his granddaughter. Ray Smith was instrumental in retrieving the Flobert and we can only wonder where the original Schalk rifle might be.

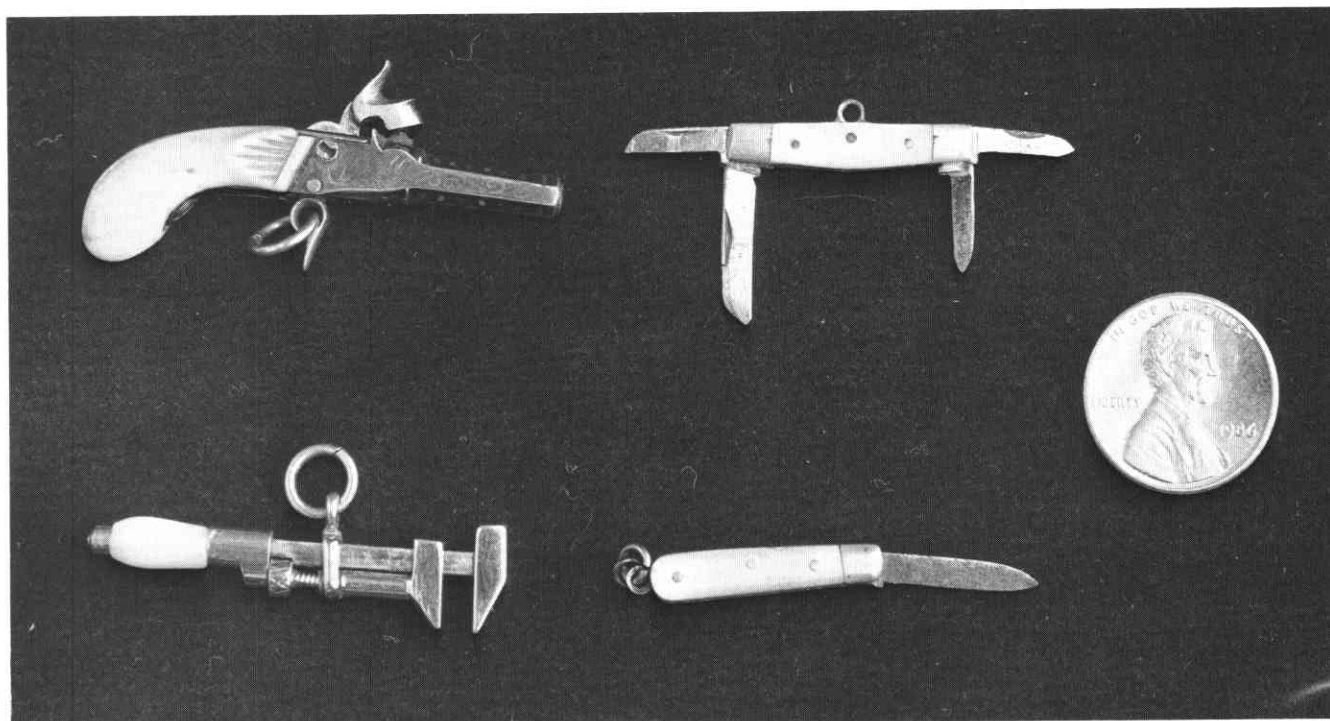
As evidence of Schalk's ability, nine shooting cups won by him are exhibited. The oldest cup is a magnificent silver cup won in Frankfurt in 1862. This cup has Schalk's name engraved on the back side. Two of the cups were won in

Offenbach, Germany, in 1869, one in Kaiser Lautern, Germany in 1869, another at the Grand Swiss Shooting Festival in 1874, one in Baltimore in August of 1874, another in Philadelphia in 1876, and the last at the Third National Festival of the Sharpshooter's Union in New York, 1878.

The shooting medals exhibited are all of gold and represent what is extant of a much larger number. The earliest and perhaps the most beautiful of the seven is dated 1864 and shows the bust of George Washington with the inscription "The Constitution is Sacredly Obligatory to All" on one side and "1st Prize of the Philadelphia Rifle Club for the Benefit of the U.S. Sanitary Commission June 1864—Won by George Schalk" on the reverse. The design for this medal was done by Paquet, the designer of many of the coins and presentation medals produced by the U.S. Mint. The other seven medals are dated 1867 through 1873.

Schalk won many more trophies and medals; these are just a few that survive.

The ninth cup displayed is large quadruplated cup engraved "Viertes Bundes Schiessen 1885—Indianapolis, Ind." George Schalk won this cup at the same meet that



Miniatures made by Schalk

his friend, customer, and fellow marksman William Hayes, a jeweler from Newark, New Jersey, won the King's medal, using perhaps the most significant of all of Schalk's rifles. At the suggestion of Hayes, Schalk build for him a .33 caliber muzzle-loading rifle for use without a patch. The system employed used a grooved, lubricated bullet loaded by use of false muzzle and bullet starter. With this rifle Hayes scored 220 out of a possible 225 points on the German ring target at 200 yards offhand. This is great offhand shooting even with today's equipment, and the story is that Schalk refused to put his name on the barrel made for Hayes until he saw how well it shot. If he had his dies with him in Indianapolis that day in 1885, I am sure that he stamped the barrel before it cooled.

As a shooter and gunsmith George Schalk was always experimenting with different systems of seating a bullet, of rifling, of bullet configuration. This is borne out by the numerous sketches in his books plus newspaper accounts of his experimental shooting at the rifle range at Tumbling Run near Pottsville.

The results of one of his experiments is a single shot percussion pistol of about .30 caliber (see photo). It is stamped in two lines on the top of the barrel flat, "G. Schalk / Pottsville." The octagon barrel is 4-1/2" long when measured from the muzzle to the base of the nipple. The pistol breaks by pushing the trigger guard forward, the guard also acting as a lever which raises the breech block for front loading and exposes the nipple for capping. When loaded and closed for firing, the hammer does not strike the nipple directly, but hits a sort of firing pin which in turn hits

the nipple. The flash of the cap is thus contained within the frame, being allowed to escape through holes on each side.

The only other pistol known to be made by Schalk is the absolutely magnificent miniature pictured with his other miniatures. This fully operational miniature exhibits all Schalk's skills as engraver, gunsmith, and artisan. It has carved ivory grips and a beautifully engraved frame showing wildlife scenes, and has gold inlaid engraving on the barrel. This miniature was worn by George Schalk at the end of his watch chain.

While they are lost today, a 1941 newspaper article speaks of a collection of canes made by Schalk. All had beautifully hand wrought heads of metal, wood, and bone. One was presented by Mr. Schalk to his son on his wedding day, December 6, 1870. It has a 10 dollar gold piece inserted in the head on which is engraved "A. W. Schalk, von seine Vater, Dec. 6, 1870." The reporter said, "The tracings are delicate and exceptionally beautiful."

Schalk's reputation and ability as an engraver brought him many different jobs. The engraving on a locket, a birthday gift from Schalk's wife to her granddaughter, exemplifies his skill as an engraver. He was called upon by local funeral directors to engrave the identification plates used on coffins. His granddaughter, Mrs. Louise S. Doyle, recalled for the *Pottsville Journal*, on September 2, 1935, that her grandfather's shop was a popular meeting place where many valuable possessions ranging from watches, to instruments, to trophies were brought for repair by Schalk's "nimble fingers." His broad talents were well recognized at the time as the obituary writer in the *Miners Journal* wrote the



Percussion pistol by Schalk

following: "He had a mind rich in rare endowments and it is said of him that the most delicate mechanism has no mysteries that he could not solve at a glance. He was an inventive genius and could make or repair anything in mechanism that was possible in the mind of man. His violins are well known in advanced musical circles. Eminent violinists, like Wilheimg (sic—apparently the correct spelling. H.A.T.), who have visited Pottsville, have tested them and spread abroad knowledge that in the mountain town of Pottsville there is a gunmaker who can turn out a violin that would have puzzled an Amati, a Guarneri, or a Stradivari to excel."

In spite of these wide and significant talents Schalk listed himself simply as "gunmaker" in the city directories of the time. The only variation from this that I have found is his Internal Revenue License for 1865-66 which lists his occupation as "manufacturer." I suppose that this more general designation was purposefully done in order to allow a broad range of work to be done in his shop. The IRS charged \$10 for a one year license: how much more appealing is this than the income tax! On the subject of taxes, it is interesting to note that the Internal Revenue Service also taxed billiard tables kept for private use, carriages, silver plate and gold watches. The receipts for George Schalk's payment of the 1867 and 1868 \$1 tax on his gold watch are exhibited on my table.

The Schalks maintained both the shop and their home at the same location at 13 East Norwegian Street; in 1874 the town changed the numbering system to 115 East Norwegian Street. Sophie would move again in 1894, after George's death, to 320 West Market Street, next door to her son Adolph W. Schalk, then a prominent attorney in Pottsville. As we have already noted, the Schalks life

together must have been very content. Their closeness can be felt in the picture of the shop and is again evident in this excerpt from the Pottsville *Journal* and from Mrs. Louise S. Doyle's recollections with Ray Smith: "Just inside the door of Schalk's there was a counter on which Mrs. Schalk always kept a box of crumbs for the birds." "A flock of birds awaited his arrival at his shop every morning, knowing of his habit of throwing crumbs." The shop location has been lost to a host of urban renewal projects, and now is a garden space between two office buildings. The shop at 115 East Norwegian Street was sold in 1907, some fourteen years after Schalk's death. Francis Schalk Doyle feels that much of the shop's contents including the sign and important shop records were lost during this time. I suspect that George Schalk kept all of his records in his native German language.

Schalk learned to play the violin as a boy in Germany. While a student in Wiesbaden he had as a schoolmate Wilheimg, who would become a world renowned violinist. The Pottsville Republican reports that when Wilheimg came to America he came to Pottsville to visit with his old schoolmate. How many violins Schalk made may never be known, but based on newspaper accounts and the number that are known today, I would estimate the number to be about a dozen.

Schalk, being a student of the violin as a youth in Germany, made violins in Pottsville. There were a number of violin makers in Snyder, Union, and Lycoming counties during the mid 19th century. Many of these same areas have provided us with a rich history of the Kentucky rifle and a survey of city and town directories of the area would probably reveal a great number of artisans, but few like Schalk, who did it all!

His violins received the same high praise as did his rifles. Mrs. Louise Schalk Doyle remembered her grandfather's shop as a popular meeting place. She also remembered her grandfather as he whittled wood into shape for the violins he made, even sandpapering it to the exact thickness. The glues and finishes he used were of his own formula and unfortunately were lost with his death. The violins he left behind, however, are testimony to his skills. His beautiful finishes highlighted the exquisite woods that he used. My personal favorites are the miniatures made for Louise S. Doyle, Schalk's granddaughter. The first is a scale model or quick study made to determine the measurements of the finished version. This model shows something of Schalk's sense of humor in that he has signed the violin "Cremona/1750 G.S./Prop." Cremona was the center of violin making in the 18th Century and the area where Guarneri, Austi, and Stradivari fashioned their masterpieces. The model is crude by comparison to the finished miniature but it was made with good humor and love.

The finished half sized violin made for his granddaughter he signed in three lines: "G. Schalk/Pottsville/1881." Two full sized violins are of equal beauty to the miniature and one, of darker wood, is signed in two lines "G. Schalk/Pottsville." This one he did not date but it is suspected to be earlier than 1880 because he did not use a "c" in the spelling of his name. The second full size violin is signed and dated in three lines "Geo. Schalk/Pottsville, Pa./1880."

The Pottsville *Journal* wrote an article on George Schalk during his lifetime, which was quoted by *Shooting & Fishing* Nov. 2, 1893: "Mr. Schalk has a half dozen of these instruments on hand at present, and as they are the work of years of patient labor, he prizes them highly—perhaps too highly for the common market. But occasionally an artist turns up who wants a first class instrument, and those who are really capable of judging of the merits of a violin do not consider the price Mr. Schalk has set upon his as at all excessive."

After all is said and done, and in spite of his many talents, it was in the profession of gunsmith that George Schalk truly excelled. Harry Pope in fact acknowledged that were it not for the work of George Schalk he might well have remained in the business of making bicycles. After having witnessed the shooting of Schalk and William Hayes, Pope began experimenting with the rifling of his personal rifle barrels and soon after Schalk's death did some work for previous Schalk customers. In his early advertising Pope gave full credit to Schalk by saying "barrels on the Schalk System."

From his work with Frederick Jaeger as an armorer in Germany, to his apprenticeship under Jaeger, and the establishment of his gunsmith shop in Pottsville, to the exquisite workmanship evident in all of the arms produced by him, it is evident that gunsmithing and the advancement

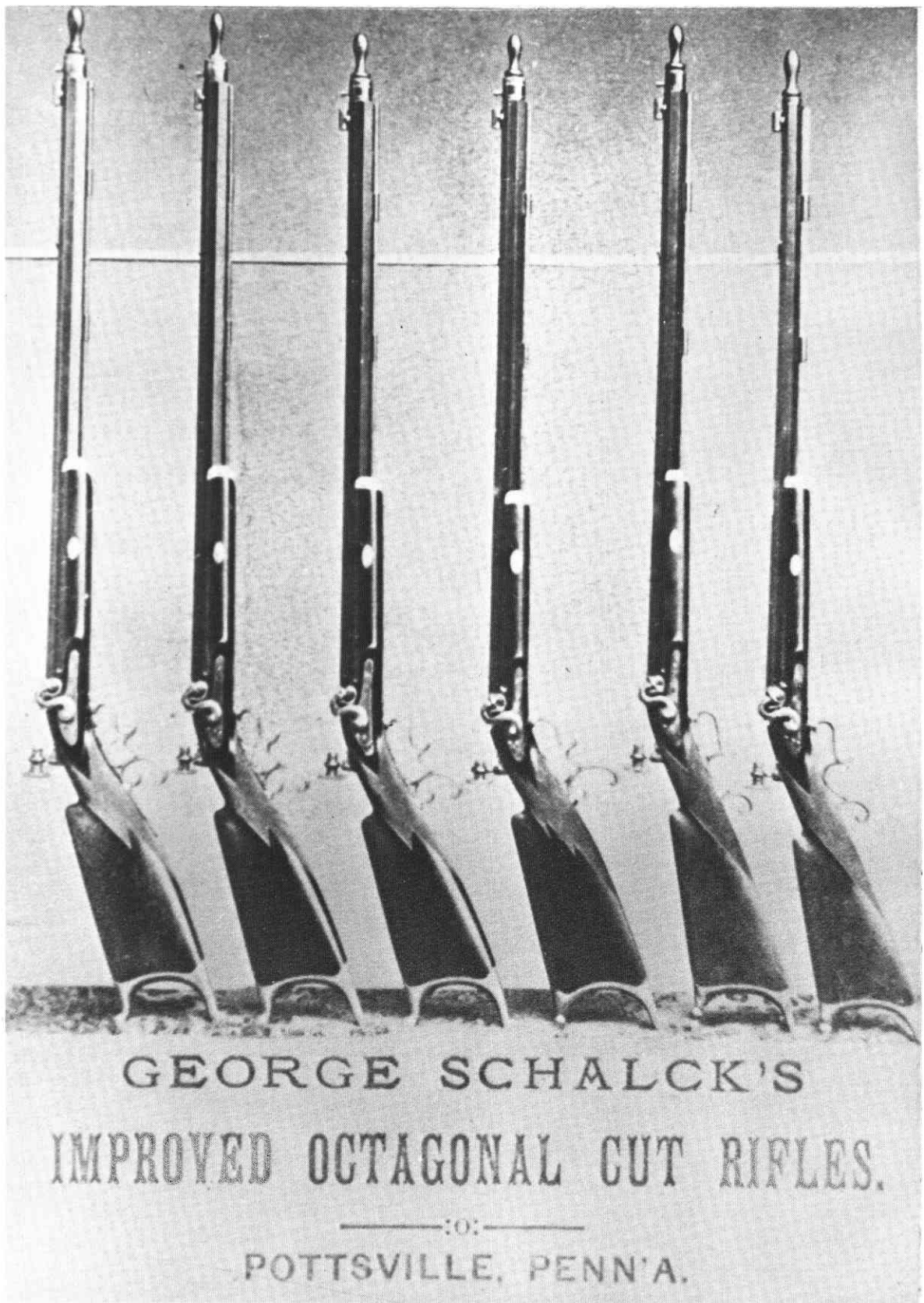


Miniature violins made by Schalk

of the art were his passion. No two of his rifles are exactly alike. Each has a refinement or character different than the one that came before.

In 1854, when he first arrived in Pottsville, his friend, George Lippe printed his business card. It lists Gain Twist Rifles, Common rifles, Pigeon Guns, Double shot guns, Common Guns, Pistols, and etc. as his specialties. These he would "make to order" and "repairs" would be "done neatly and cheap." The only pistols known are the rising breech single shot percussion and the exquisite miniature already discussed. I don't know of the existence of any double shot guns and wonder if the double shown in one of his portraits was made by him. Hopefully an example will surface one day. Schalk did not invent gain twist rifling nor did he invent the false muzzle; however, he was responsible for considerable improvements to both. He could not resist improving upon existing design. His personal Smith & Wesson, Model #1, Third Issue, revolver shows his addition of a rear peep sight on the top cylinder stop spring.

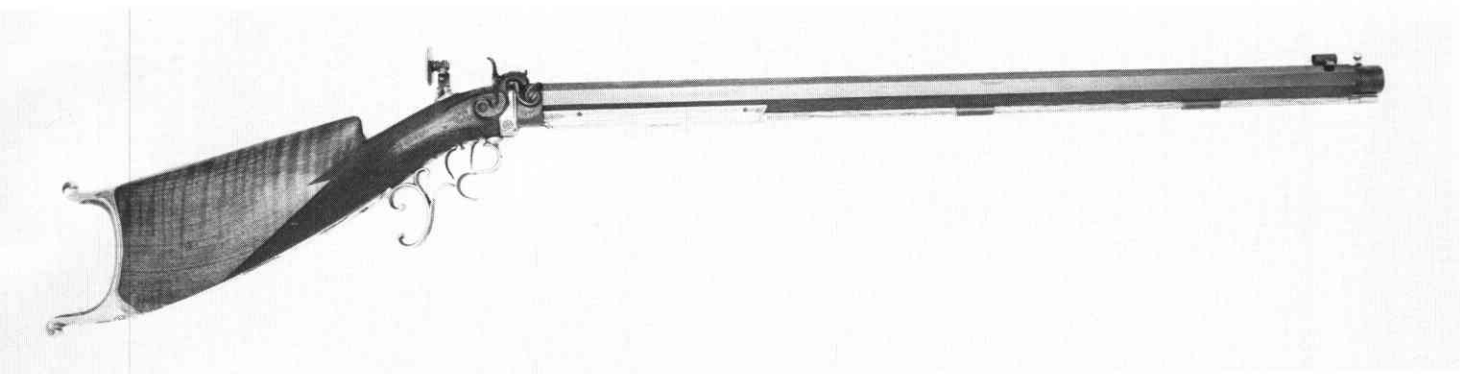
His treatment of gain twist rifling utilized eight bands and grooves with the bands narrower than the grooves and the grooves .008 of an inch deep with square corners. He built these rifles in calibers ranging from .32 to .45. As the gain twist rifling neared the muzzle, the twist was at a



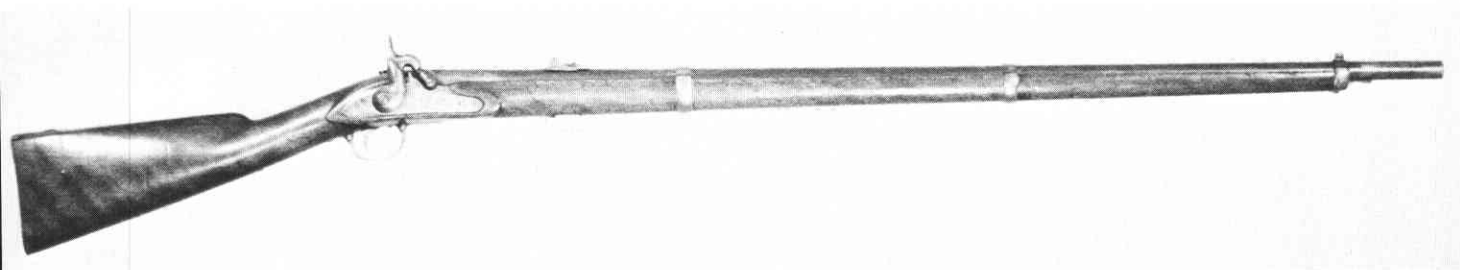
Schalk's trade card

quicker rate than at the breech. In 1884 the Schuetzen marksman William Hayes worked with Schalk on the development of a 33 caliber muzzle-loading rifle that used a

lubricated bullet and no patch. It was this system that Pope would later perfect further, primarily by rounding the edges of the grooves in Schalk's rifling.



Schuetzen rifle by Schalk (Ron Peterson collection)



Rifle musket by Schalk (Geo. Moller collection)



Rifle musket lock plate



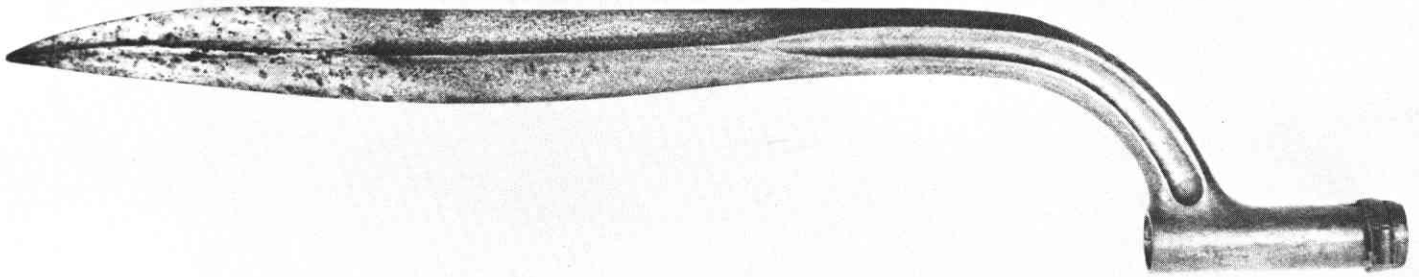
Rifle musket side plate

The Schuetzen rifle illustrated is from the collection of Ron Peterson and it exhibits all of Schalk's skills as a rifle maker and an engraver. Remington Arms Co. would later copy the lines of the stock and trigger guard almost exactly in one of the most beautiful Schuetzen rifle models they would produce. They would not, however, outfit their rifles with the German silver and fine engraving utilized by Schalk. Schalk's Scheutzen rifles were judged the best available in his day and were prized as fine competition rifles into the 1940's.

The fact that each rifle was slightly different made it necessary for Schalk to make molds, bullet seaters, bullet starters and false muzzles for each. His own shooting box

and its accessories are missing but fortunately his personal mold survives; it shows that his personal choice was a bullet having six bands of equal width but with varying diameters with the base band or driving band being the widest to provide an efficient gas seal. He spent much of his time experimenting with bullet configuration as indicated by a study of his molds.

The quality of his Scheutzen rifles were recognized, as were his violins, by the Pottsville *Journal*, which wrote: "Those who handle a rifle but indifferently may recoil at the announcement of Mr. Schalk's prices; but an expert, who is familiar with all the points of excellence which years of faithful study has enabled the maker to incorporate in



Bayonet made by Schalk for the rifle musket.

these rifles, never haggles over the price, which, considering they are all made by hand, and as true as steel and brains can make them, is by no means high."

Perhaps the most rare and in many ways the most fascinating work that George Schalk performed was on his rifle musket. I only know of two of these; the one illustrated is from the collection of George Moller. These rifle muskets are in 58 caliber with a 40-3/16" round barrel utilizing three barrel bands. All mountings are iron. The lockplate is from a Model 1817, with all markings removed. The unique features of these guns are the placement of the ramrod on the left side of the stock, and the location of the bayonet lug on the underside of the muzzle. The barrel is marked "G. Schalk, Pottsville, 1861." The bayonet itself was of a unique design and is extremely scarce.

It has been estimated that Schalk produced 100 of these rifle muskets in an attempt to gain a contract from the State of Pennsylvania for military or volunteer regiment issue. I doubt that he made more than a half dozen of these pieces, but do not doubt that they were made for military approval. George Schalk worked alone and had little interest in mass production. I suspect that these rifle muskets were the result of Schalk's patriotic desire to aid in the war effort. They were made at the time of the call to arms and Pottsville's formation of the 96th Regiment of Pennsylvania volunteers. It was also for this Regiment that he made a cannon which they took to war. He had been in this country seven years at this time. It would not be until May 15, 1862, that he would swear an oath to support the Constitution of the United States. I am certain that it was with a great deal of pride that two days later on May 17, 1862, he received his American passport, number 5,829, signed by Schalk and the Secretary of State, William Seward.

Ray Smith mentions that Schalk forged his own barrels and cast his own mold blanks. A receipt from Remington dated 1871 shows that he also purchased barrel blanks for rifling, and invoices from Kennedy & Curtis show the purchase of mold castings which he would finish to a specific rifle's requirement.

It is interesting to note the similarities that exist between Schalk and Pope, perhaps the two most important

men to influence single shot rifles in the country. Ned Roberts states that Schalk "was a very industrious, hard-working man and until his health failed he frequently worked from 7 o'clock in the morning until 11 or 12 at night." Pope wrote to Mrs. Louise S. Doyle of his work schedule as follows: "I work till exhausted and, when it gets to be 10 or 11 at night, do not have the courage enough to write to even my own family." Ray Smith writes, "Like so many other fine mechanics, George Schalk never became wealthy. He was not interested in amassing a fortune; but, rather, worked with a passion for creating a work of art." Pope writes of his own career "I have made a living at it, not too good, and now just able to make ends meet by long hours of work." Schalk and Pope both worked right up to the end. As Pope writes in 1936 to Mrs. Doyle, "Right eye is failing, so work is slow and hard, and, as I will be 75 next month, I cannot hope to continue many years longer, but still keep fighting." He is tolling the end of an era.

For George Schalk there were many rewards not known by many men. He was an accomplished marksman of international fame. He was an artisan/gunsmith/violin maker whose work was in demand. He influenced the making and shooting of single shot rifles perhaps more than any person in the 19th century. His work made that of Harry M. Pope possible. Perhaps the highest compliment and recognition that a man and his work can receive occurred on Wednesday, October 25, 1893, the day of his funeral, when business places in Pottsville closed to honor him. On the day of his death, October 21, 1893, the *Pottsville Republican* wrote: "In the death of Mr. Schalk the town not only loses a good citizen, but his loss will be the more greatly felt on account of his merits. In his home life he was the centre of a small but happy circle, and in his contact with his fellow man he inspired the greatest attention and respect."

The most treasured of all sources are the many conversations and visits with Francis Schalk Doyle, the great-grandson of George Phillip Schalk.


It is the hope of Mr. Doyle and myself that we will be able to locate and identify other of Schalk's work. To this end I have some questionnaire forms to solicit information on any Schalk material extant. If you have anything from

I do hereby swear and support the Constitution of the United States

I, George Schalk, of the Borough of Pottsville, in the County of Schuylkill and the State of Pennsylvania, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution and Government of the United States against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign, and that I will bear true faith, allegiance and loyalty to the same, any ordinance, resolution, or law of any State, Convention, or Legislature to the contrary notwithstanding; and further, that I do this with a full determination, intent, and purpose, without any mental reservation or condition whatsoever; and further, that I will without feigning perform all the duties which may be required of me by law.

To help me God

I was and subscribed this 10th day of May, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and ninety two



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To all to whom these Presents shall come Greeting

George Schalk

DESCRIPTION

Age 40 Years
Structure tall
Forehead level
Eyes grey
Nose large
Mouth moderate
Chin well
Hair black
Complexion healthy
Face well

Signature of the Person
George Schalk

I the Undersigned Secretary of State of the United States of America hereby request all whom it may concern to permit, supply and freely to pass

George Schalk

a Citizen of the United States and in case of need to give him all lawful Aid and Protection

Given under my hand and the impression of the Seal of the DEPARTMENT OF STATE at the City of Washington on 10th day of May 1892



John Sherman
 Secretary of State

Schalk's oath of allegiance and passport

holds to rifles that might be of interest, or if you have knowledge of anyone who might be able to help, please write me for copies of these questionnaires at P.O. Box 40, Sunbury, PA 17801. All replies will be held in the strictest confidence.

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