

# 100 Years of Tryon

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First, let me give credit to those who guided me and assisted me in this research: Richard Hujsa, whose knowledge of arms and arms makers always astounds me and who tirelessly helped me erect the display; Ron Gabel, who always had another Tryon item and worked effortlessly photographing; Craig Nannos, who led me to primary items at every turn; Tim Lubenesky, President of the Jacobsburg Historical Society, who helped with primary research, design, and procurement of Tryon items; and finally my wife, Nan, who played an active role and tolerates this hysteria.

The Tryon story is a remarkable one. It is the story of a family business that started with a merchant from Holland bringing arms and Indian trade goods for sale into this "New Country." It continued for some 150 years in spite of numerous trials and financial panics. The business prospered as a gun and gun parts concern in the early 1800s and evolved into a leading wholesale house and hardware store in the early twentieth century. Throughout this period, the Tryon family provided able leadership and merchandising ingenuity.

The Tryon story is important to collectors because it is a microcosm of the gun trade in our new country and, more specifically, in the Philadelphia area. The picture of Tryon as a gun maker is often clouded by Tryon's hardware store image of the late 1800s and the 1900s. The sale of imported and brand-name arms during this later period led many to consider Tryon merely another early Sears and Roebuck or Montgomery Ward with arms as a side line.

Gun makers from the Philadelphia area such as Tryon, Henry, Wurfflein, Krider, and Wickham concentrated on producing and merchandising arms or arms parts rather than a style or a particular arm. Unlike the traditional "lock, stock, and barrel" gun maker, Tryon would manufacture, import, assemble, or acquire what a dealer or the public wanted. These Philadelphia gun makers also made parts for other gun makers throughout the country as well as for export. It is documented that Henry made parts for Colt, Winchester, and Remington.<sup>1</sup> Tryon parts can be found on Henry and Krider arms, and Tryon sold parts and gun manufacturing equipment throughout the country. This proliferation of gun parts and supplies for the assembly of arms makes the study of Philadelphia gun makers challenging, but the quality of arms produced by these gun makers makes the task worthwhile.



So, let me take you through a sketch of the first 100 years of Tryon.

In the early 1700s, John Jacob Tryon began transporting arms and trade goods to America. His business ventures were quite successful, and he began to acquire property around the settlement of Winchester, Virginia. He was making plans to settle in this promising land.<sup>2</sup> After several profitable trips, he decided to move his family and establish a trade center in America. Unfortunately, it was an ill-fated voyage, with both John and his wife killed in a major fire aboard ship. The children somehow survived the fire and were put ashore in Philadelphia with most of their worldly possessions and proof of property ownership destroyed.

A young son of Jacob Tryon, Jacob Henry Tryon, was apprenticed to a tin maker. He practiced this trade until his untimely death during a scarlet fever epidemic in Philadelphia in 1793. One surviving son, George W. Tryon, was apprenticed to a gun maker named Frederick W. Goetz, who began his trade in Philadelphia in 1805.<sup>3</sup> Goetz primarily produced flintlock fowlers and 1808 contract muskets.<sup>4</sup>

## EARLY GUN-MAKING YEARS

Apprenticed at an early age, George Tryon successfully learned his trade working for Goetz and evidently developed sound business skills as well. In early 1811, Goetz and Tryon became partners, and by the end of that year Tryon owned the business. A product of this partnership, a flintlock fowler, bears the names Goetz and Tryon (Figure 1).

The course of this new business was interrupted by the

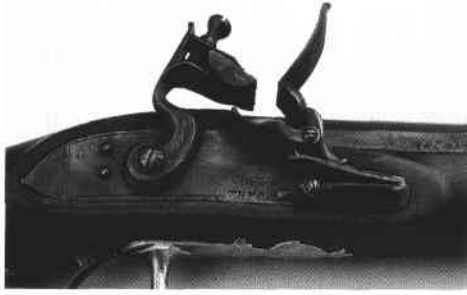


Figure 1. Goetz and Tryon lockplate.

War of 1812. George Tryon promptly enlisted in the service and was ordered to Camp Cadwallader. According to family history, before seeing any active service, George was sent back to his shops by the government to produce arms vital to the conflict. With the Bureau of Ordnance Deputy Agent for the North and East stationed in Philadelphia, George operated his factories for the manufacturer of government arms during this period.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of Tryon's high regard for the Kentucky rifle and pistol, he was very successful in securing contracts for government arms. In 1814, he was contracted to assemble 276 pistols from parts bins at the U.S. Arsenal in Philadelphia. These arms were noted to have been assembled, delivered, and paid for within a year.<sup>6</sup> The pistol (Figure 2) was considered by many to be just another Tryon import, yet it is definitely a U.S. martial contract pistol. These arms were considered secondary martials by C. W. Sawyer in his early work on U.S. martial pistols.<sup>7</sup> Later Jim Wertenberger documented these pistols to indeed be from a martial contract.<sup>8</sup>

### *Tryon Contract Pistols*

These pistols have iron or brass barrels that are signed "TRYON"/"PHILADELPHIA" with two British proofs. The outside of the lock is marked "TRYON" with a floral design behind the cock. The inside of the lock is stamped "RH" for Richard Hollis, a British lock and parts maker who later produced many pistols and numerous gun parts for Tryon. Three such pistols have the common markings with the more decorative



Figure 2. Tryon contract pistol.

and octagonal brass-barreled pistol, probably an issue for an officer (Figures 3-6).

George W. Tryon was always an innovator in the evolution of firearms ignition systems. It was a trait that ran in the Tryon family. A significant contract was earned by Tryon and the Henry factory to make repeating flintlocks and swivel arms for the U.S. Navy. This contract was awarded in early 1814 between the U.S. Navy, George W. Tryon, and J. J. Henry. These arms were to be made in line with the design of Joseph G. Chambers and are well documented in William Gilkerson's book *Boarders Away II*.<sup>9</sup> A 16 February 1814 extract from the account book of J. J. Henry documents this transaction:

Be it remembered that on the sixteenth day of February A.D. 1814. It is agreed between George Harrison, Esq. Navy Agent of the United States in behalf of the United States, and George W. Tryon & J. Joseph Henry of the City and County of Philada. in manner and for viz.,

The said George W. Tryon and J. Joseph Henry do agree to make in a complete and workmanlike manner, twenty swivels according to the description mentioned in the annexed memorandum, furnished by Joseph G. Chambers Esq. and also two hundred muskets of description as particularised in the AFSD. memorandum annexed at the rate of one hundred dollars for the swivels each and at the rate of twenty three dollars for the muskets. . . .<sup>10</sup>

The muskets are described in the memorandum by Chambers:

The muskets are to be furnished with good and sufficient brass mounting of style and quality at least equal to the British Marine. The barrels of the American calibre and somewhat stronger forward than ordinary so as to give one eighth of an inch internal diameter at the foremost touch hole, ten inches from the bottom or inside.

They are to be furnished with brass sights at the muzzle and iron back sights truly ranged, and the bore sufficiently straightened so as to have the most competent accuracy and effect in firing, etc.<sup>11</sup>

The memorandum goes on to define Henry's early involvement:

The locks are to be fitted with the holes adapted to the fixture of safeguard and teller previous to being hardened and in general everything arranged so as to best accommodate the objects of the repeating fire according to the best specimen already constructed by Henry.<sup>12</sup>

I have not had the good fortune of locating a repeating musket or swivel, but a Tryon repeating muzzle-loading pill lock is pictured in the 100th anniversary document produced by Tryon in 1911.<sup>13</sup> I have had the good fortune to own a

Henry-Chambers repeating pistol reconverted from repeating flintlock to flintlock by the arsenal. It is quite representative of this system and is well covered by Jim Wertemberger in *Boarders Away II* (Figure 7).<sup>14</sup> This pistol had a touch hole allowing a normally positioned lock to serve two touch holes. This pistol is restored by the arsenal to its flint condition with the arsenal replaced wood piece where the priming tube reached the second touch hole. The second touch hole was at the far extreme of the wood replacement and is easily detected with the stock removed (Figure 8).

#### Other Tryon Early Arms

George Tryon continued to be involved with arms making for the federal government and militias. Some time in the 1814-1820 period he manufactured a militia rifle patterned much

like the common rifle. This rifle has a common rifle style lock, a turned-down barrel, a numbered lug for a bayonet, and sling swivels. Other examples of arms made and/or marketed during this period include a Kentucky flintlock pistol, an imported British flintlock, and a high-quality flintlock pistol (Figures 9-16).

George Tryon continued to use his craftsmen to manufacture and assemble arms. The business was built on his ability to utilize craftsmen in his organization and from the surrounding area. The business continued to grow and prosper, and in 1829 he purchased larger quarters opposite his original shops. A stable on the new property was turned into a gun factory.<sup>15</sup> Tryon also produced many other items other than arms. A copper kettle representative of the period signed "G. TRYON" is one example of the goods produced during this time (Figure 17).



Figure 3. Barrel markings on Tryon contract pistol.



Figure 4. Lockplate of the Tryon contract pistol.

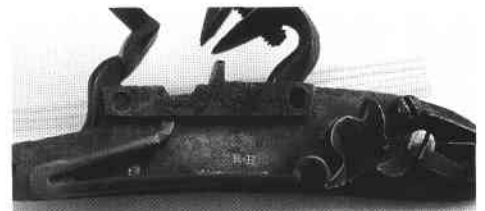


Figure 5. Internal markings on the lockplate.



Figure 6. Three contract pistols.

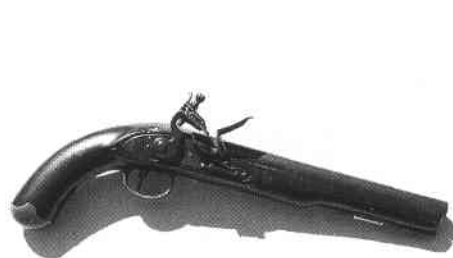


Figure 7. The Henry-Chambers pistol.

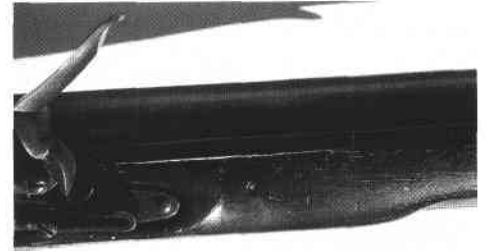


Figure 8. View of wood replacement done by the U.S. Arsenal in Philadelphia.

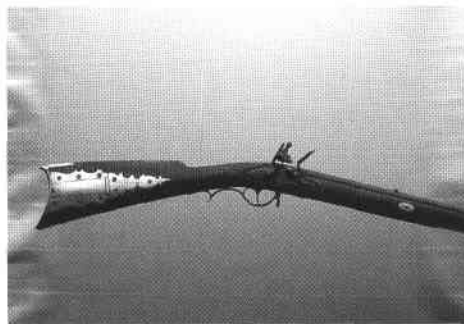


Figure 9. The Tryon Common Rifle-style militia arm.



Figure 10. Close-up of lockplate.



Figure 11. A Kentucky-style Tryon pistol.



Figure 12. Close-up of Kentucky pistol lockplate.



Figure 13. A British import Tryon-signed pistol.



Figure 14. An early Tryon quality pistol.



Figure 15. The barrel signature.



Figure 16. A close-up of the lock engraving and safety.



Figure 17. A large copper tea pot signed "G. TRYON."

## THE 1830s

As we move into the 1830s, we find it to be an active period for the Tryon organization. George wanted to separate his manufacturing interest from the general merchandise activities, and in 1836 his son, Edward K. Tryon, entered the business, allowing George a good opportunity for change. New partnerships were formed, and Tryon had three separate businesses during this period. During this decade he had Tryon Son & Company, Manufacturers, continuing the manufacturing facility as well as George W. Tryon & Company—Importers and Dealers operating the general merchandising activities. One of his early and notable gun makers, Henry E. Lehman, worked in the factory from 1831 until 1834, when he returned to Lancaster and established the Connestoga Rifle works.<sup>16</sup>

From 1832 until 1837 George Tryon also had a partnership with Samuel Merrick called Tryon, Merrick and Company. This firm operated as a separate entity and concentrated primarily on gun making, with sidelines of watches, jewelry, and fishing tackle. The firm was discontinued in 1837 because of the global financial panic of the period, with the other two firms surviving the depression.<sup>17</sup>

Several arms representative of this period include a Tryon militia rifle, a Tryon and Merrick flintlock pistol, and a Tryon and Merrick percussion shotgun.

## *Tryon Militia Rifle*

The militia rifle is .46 caliber with a 37¼-inch cut-down barrel. The barrel is signed "TRYON PHILADA" and it is marked with a "P" in an oval (Figure 18). The underside of the barrel is marked "Panabacker," an old spelling of the Pannabecker barrel-making family from the area between Lancaster and Ephrata, Pennsylvania (Figure 19). The lock is stamped "Ross" and was probably acquired from the Ross gun-making family in Ohio. This rifle is quite representative of the assembly work done at the Tryon factory.

## *Tryon and Merrick Flintlock Pistol*

This Tryon and Merrick flintlock pistol is .65 caliber with a 10-inch octagonal barrel. The barrel is marked "PHILADA" with deep British proofs on the underside (Figure 20). The lockplate is marked "TRYON"/"MERRICK & CO." (Figure 21), and the stock is stamped "Goetz," probably signifying Goetz as the stocker of the pistol.

## *Tryon and Merrick Percussion Shotgun*

This fowler is 12 gauge with 33⅝-inch double barrels. It is a half-stock with checkered grips. The top of the barrel is marked "TRYON, MERRICK and COMPANY" (Figure 22). The back

action locks are marked "TRYON"/"MERRICK"/ & "CO." (Figure 23). The barrels are British proofed on the underside. Since many American gentlemen preferred British barreled guns, these barrels plus the decorative trim, the rather short cut stock, and the silver name crest leads one to believe this shotgun was custom assembled in the Tryon and Merrick shop.

It is also noteworthy that this is an early time for the use of the percussion ignition system. It shows a continuing interest for progressive gun making. This shotgun plus a percussion shotgun given by Tryon to J. J. Henry (mentioned in Henry-Tryon correspondence and on display in the Jacobsburg Historical Center) are indicative of the continuing relationship between Henry and Tryon.



Figure 18. A converted Tryon militia rifle.

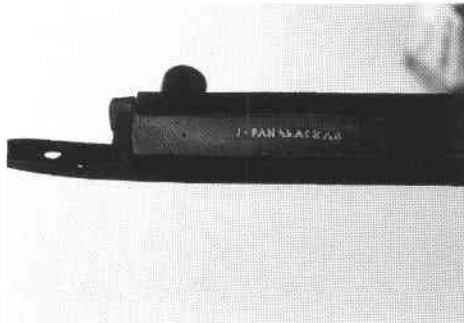


Figure 19. The "Panabacker" stamp on the underside of the barrel.



Figure 20. A Tryon and Merrick flintlock pistol.



Figure 21. The Tryon and Merrick lockplate.



Figure 22. A Tryon and Merrick fowler.



Figure 23. The stamped back-action locks.

## THE 1840s

The 1840s were a decade of transition for the Tryon companies. The two surviving firms weathered the financial crisis and were quite successful in securing numerous government and militia contracts, while continuing to expand market share in hunting and sporting rifles as well as gun parts and accouterments. In 1841, George W. Tryon retired from the business, and Edward K. Tryon assumed all business interests under the firm name of Edw. K. Tryon & Company. In 1843 the firm conducted business as "Edw. K. Tryon."

During this period of the early 1840s, the firm adopted the logo of the Golden Buffalo. The Golden Buffalo became a worldwide symbol for Tryon and the goods Tryon manufactured or "jobbed" for other manufacturers. The huge buffalo in front of the store as well as the buffalo logo used on stationery, invoices, etc., were all an outgrowth of an

advertising plan incorporating the buffalo. This logo first appeared in a flat sheet used throughout Tryon's sphere of operation (Figure 24).

By now Edward K. Tryon and his company were well known throughout Pennsylvania. In 1846 the company was recognized by the Franklin Institute of Pennsylvania when awarded the Bronze Medal for producing rifles for the U.S. government.<sup>18</sup>

In 1839 the firm of Tryon, Son & Co. secured a contract signed by Texas Ordinance officer Col. George W. Hockey to produce flintlock muskets of the Type III, 1816 style for the Republic of Texas. The contract was for 1,500 muskets and production began in 1840. However, documents indicate that only 860 were received and paid for by the Republic.<sup>19</sup> Some credit the cholera epidemic for the delay in shipment until Texas became a state, and others believe the Republic just ran out of money. No documentation on the issue has surfaced to date.

## The Republic of Texas Musket

This musket is .69 caliber with a 42-inch round barrel. The barrel has the proofs "P"/"GF." Additional correspondence indicates that J. G. Zlegal, a former U.S. Inspector, certified that the muskets "are equal in quality to those made for the U.S."<sup>20</sup> The lockplate has the five-point star of the Republic under the pan and "TRYON"/PHILADA behind the cock (Figure 25).

Over the years, another Republic of Texas arm has surfaced. The lockplate and arm follow the style of the Mississippi Rifle (Figure 26). Only two such arms have surfaced, and it is called the "Mystery Arm" by Michael J. Koury in his 1973 book, *Arms for Texas: A Study of the Weapons of the Republic of Texas*.<sup>21</sup> Research on this arm is a project of its own.

Tryon also received government contracts to produce the "1841" or Mississippi rifle. While the rifle was built by many contractors as well as at the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Tryon built these rifles for the government from 1841 until 1848.

## Tryon Mississippi

This particular rifle is .54 caliber and has a 33-inch barrel that is turned down to accept a bayonet. The barrel is proofed "US"/"JCB"/"P" (Figure 27). The lockplate has "TRYON"/"US" under the bolster and "PHILADA"/"1848" behind the hammer. The patchbox has been stamped with the inspector marks "w" (Figure 28).

Tryon also received contracts to produce guns for numerous militias as well for the government needs for the fur trade. The firm produced arms for the fur trade from the early 1840s until 1855. These Northwest trade guns were made to numerous specifications. They were patterned after

the Kentucky rifle and produced in flintlock ignition. Two such arms produced under the contracts—one a rifle and another a smooth bore—are representative of the trade arms.

## Trade Rifle

This rifle is .46 caliber with a 41-inch octagonal barrel. The barrel is marked "TRYON PHILADA," and the lockplate is marked "Tryon" (Figure 29). The barrel on this rifle was also manufactured by Panabaker and is so marked on the underside. The rifle is full stocked, brass mounted, and the barrel is proofed with a "P" in an oval. There is a pewter fur trade symbol on the left side of the stock (Figure 30).

## Trade Smooth Bore

This smooth bore conversion is .58 caliber with a 42½-inch octagon barrel (Figure 31). The arm has double-set triggers with "TRYON PHILADA" on the barrel and "TRYON"/"PHILADA" on the lockplate. The gun is brass mounted, and the barrel is proofed with a "P."

Although Tryon was quite busy with his contract work, he continued to make, import, and assemble arms for the civilian trade as well as numerous supplies and accouterments. Several arms of this period include a small-bore French fowler (Figure 32) and two saw-handle-grip percussion pistols (Figure 33).

As noted, Tryon also produced or imported many knives and other supplies for the wholesale and retail trades. Most of the early knives bearing the name Tryon were British imports. Tryon is among the early merchants mentioned by Harold Peterson in his book *American Knives: The First History and Collector's Guide*.<sup>22</sup>

The Tryon "Bowie" and powder keg are examples of Tryon goods of the period (Figures 34 and 35).



Figure 24. Tryon advertising or broad sheet.



Figure 25. Lockplate of the Republic of Texas Musket.

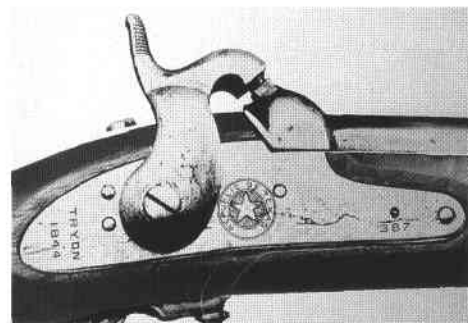


Figure 26. Lockplate of the Republic of Texas "Mississippi" rifle.



Figure 27. The Tryon Mississippi.



Figure 28. Lockplate of the Tryon Mississippi.

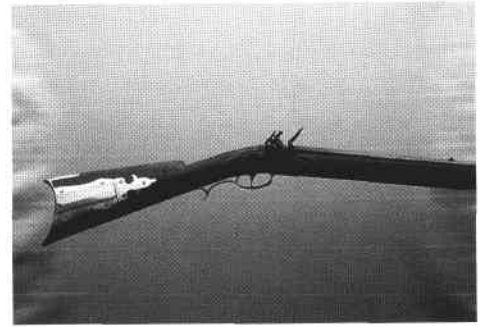


Figure 29. The flintlock Trade rifle.

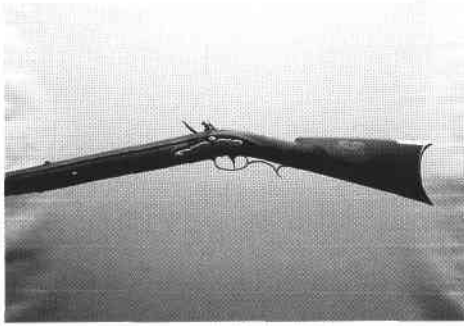


Figure 30. The pewter Trade symbol on the left side of the stock.

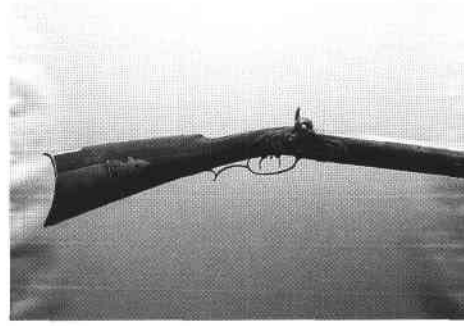


Figure 31. A converted Trade rifle.

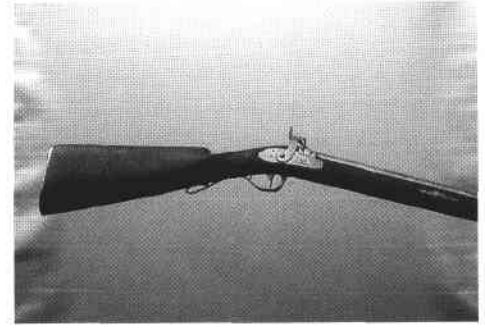


Figure 32. A Tryon-marked imported French fowler.



Figure 33. A pair of period saw-handle-grip pistols.

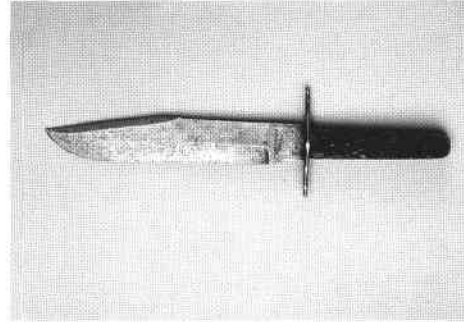


Figure 34. Tryon-signed Bowie.



Figure 35. Tryon-stamped powder keg.

### 1850 TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR

The Tryon firm continued to prosper under the guidance of Edward K. Tryon, and the 1850s were a time of prosperity for the company. Tryon continued to expand his wholesale operation, while the retail store continued to grow and diversify. In spite of the successful retail trade, Tryon was always aware that wholesale trade was the foundation of the business.

Firearms were still being made or assembled by hand or imported and proofed at the Tryon factory. Many half-stock and full-stock rifles were produced with a dealer's name, the name Tryon, or both, depending on dealer specifications. This makes the tracking of Tryon arms quite difficult at times.

In 1857, George W. Tryon, Jr., the eldest son of Edward K. Tryon, was added to the partnership, and the name of the business was again entitled Edward K. Tryon and Company. In 1859, a new store was opened at 625 Market Street in

Philadelphia, basically for the wholesale trade. George W. Tryon, Jr., also made the first trips as a traveling salesman for the house at this time. His first visits concentrated on major Southern cities, with later calls in the larger Western cities.<sup>23</sup>

Along with the concept of regular scheduled visits to major clients, Tryon produced its first catalog for wholesale customers. The catalog was considered quite an innovation at the time, and while it was well received by customers, it was openly resented by competitors, who called it the "Tryon Bible." The 1860 catalog was the first of many produced by Tryon, who produced catalogs either annually or semiannually every year thereafter.<sup>24</sup>

Tryon produced and/or assembled many arms during this period. These arms were produced while Tryon also began to represent numerous noted gun manufacturers of the time on a wholesale and retail basis. Several such manufacturers noted in a price flyer from the period are Colt, Sharps,

Warner, and Allen & Wheellock. In addition, surplus U.S. muskets, rifles, and pistols were also for sale.<sup>25</sup>

Several arms representative of Tryon's production during this era include the following.

#### *Half-Stock Percussion Rifle*

This half-stock rifle is .45 caliber with a heavy 31½-inch octagonal barrel. The barrel is marked "TRYON PHILADA." The rifle has engraved silver furniture and a silver clamshell patchbox (Figure 36).

#### *Half-Stock Percussion Rifle—Elk County (Pa.) Style*

This half-stock rifle is .52 caliber with a 35½-inch octagonal barrel. The barrel is marked "TRYON PHILADELA."

#### *Half-Stock Percussion Rifle—Elk County (Pa.) Style*

This half-stock rifle is .52 caliber with a 35½-inch octagonal barrel. The barrel is marked "TRYON PHILADELA," and the lockplate is marked "TRUITT BROS."/"& CO. TWO pieces of the patchbox are marked "TRYON." The Truitt brothers made locks in Philadelphia from 1847 to 1861 (Figure 37).<sup>26</sup>

#### *Half-Stock Elite Percussion Sporting Rifle*

This rifle is .44 caliber with a 32-inch octagonal barrel. The rifle is trimmed in engraved silver with a silver-lined patchbox and two

silver-lined cap boxes. The back-action engraved locks are internally stamped "J.E. Evans," (a Philadelphia lockmaker of the period) and are signed "Tryon" in gold. The barrel is signed "Tryon" in gold inside a banner (Figures 38-40).

#### *Half-Stock Quality Percussion Sporting Rifle*

This rifle is .36 caliber with a 33½-inch octagonal barrel. The rifle is trimmed in engraved silver and has a silver eagle on the stock as well as a silver patchbox. The barrel is signed "Tryon," and the engraved back-action locks are marked "Henry Parker," who was a lockmaker of the period (Figures 41 and 42).

#### *Pair of Tryon Deringer Pistols*

These pistols are .36 caliber and have 3⅞-inch octagonal barrels. The pistols are fitted with belt hooks and a German silver front sight. "TRYON"/"PHILADA" is on the back-action locks, and the dealer's name and location—"L. FISHER LYNCHBURG, VA" is stamped on the barrels. These pistols are further described in *The Deringer in America, Vol. II* (Figure 43).<sup>27</sup>

#### *Tryon Small Pistols of the Period*

Tryon manufactured or imported many smaller pistols for civilian trade. The group of four in Figure 44 include a folding knife engraved pistol and three unique "muff" pistols. All are signed "TRYON."



Figure 36. A half-stock rifle with clamshell patchbox.

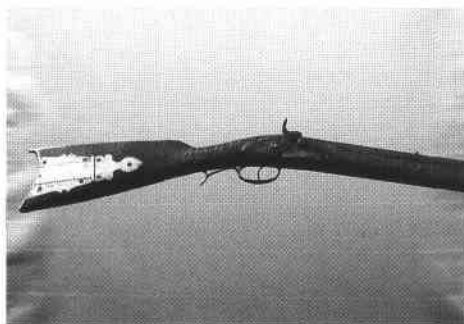


Figure 37. An Elk County-style half-stock rifle.

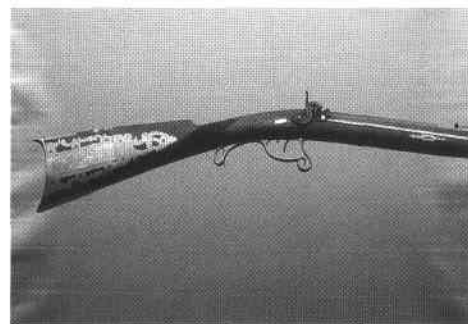


Figure 38. A high-quality Tryon half-stock.



Figure 39. Left side of rifle.



Figure 40. A close-up of the gold barrel signature.



Figure 41. Another Tryon quality half-stock.



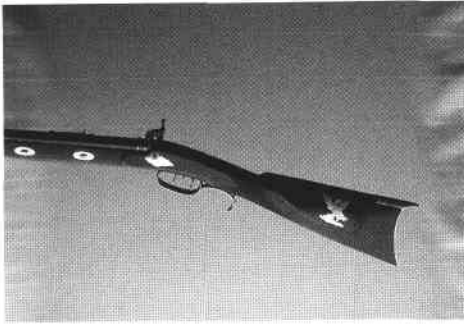


Figure 42. Left profile with silver eagle inlay.



Figure 43. A pair of Tryon Deringers for the southern trade.

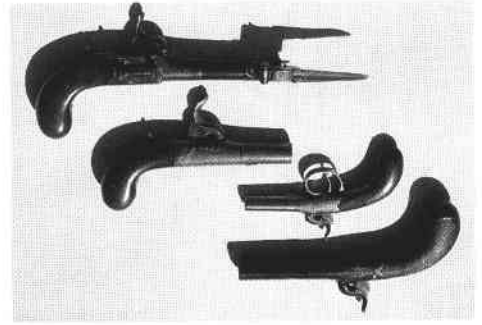


Figure 44. Four imported and Tryon-signed small pistols.

## THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD

Just as the new facilities were completed and the road trips were beginning to pay dividends, the Civil War broke out. Since young Edward Tryon had dedicated much of his travel to building trade among Southern customers, a large volume of business was suddenly cut off when trade with the South was suspended.<sup>28</sup> Tryon was well known for his success in developing Southern trade, particularly in Virginia and South Carolina. This success brought the Tryon organization under close scrutiny by the government as well as by Philadelphia locals. As noted in Tryon's account of the early war period, "Twice the faithful manager of the old Second Street store, Theodore T. Subers, was forced to remain with all his men to protect the "Sign of the Golden Buffalo" from threatened mob.

During this period, Tryon made numerous bids to assist the government in altering obsolete flintlock arms to viable percussion alterations. A bid for such work was included in the 100th anniversary historical booklet.

Henry C. Davis, Esq.

Philadelphia, Aug. 9, 1861

Dear Sir:

We have this day forwarded a sample of the U.S. musket altered by us, and send you the express co.'s receipt herewith. We have altered this flint lock to percussion by putting on a good forged iron hammer and instead of putting a tube on the top of the barrel, or a plug in the side of it, both of which methods are imperfect and dangerous & have been justly condemned; we have put a patent breech which is certainly stronger & better than the ordinary breech that is used in U.S. or Enfield rifles, as any man who is used to handling guns well knows. We have also rifled the barrels so as to make it suitable for a minnie ball, and placed on it a superior sight.

The government has a very large quantity of muskets either flint or altered to percussion with a tube on the top of the barrel, and which they are not using on that account. These

guns by the above alteration can be made serviceable in a very short time, while to make new guns will cost a large sum and also it is impossible to manufacture or import them in time to meet the requirement of the department.

We propose to alter any quantity of the guns, 5000 or over in number, but our arrangements are such that if we have 10,000 as a minimum we can work to better advantage to ourselves and to the government. We will alter the guns like the sample, at \$5.00 each, cash or U.S. Treasury notes to be paid upon completion of each 1000 guns and will do any slight repair or cleaning that may be required to put the locks in good working order, without extra charge. We will also inspect the muskets as they arrive & will not alter any except those that or otherwise in good working order.

We are capable of doing this work correctly and with the utmost dispatch, having abundance of capital and business knowledge to do so.

We have conducted the gun business since 1811, have made thousands of guns for the U.S. & other governments, & if we alter these guns, we feel assured that they will give perfect satisfaction.

Yours Respectfully,

E.K. Tryon & Co.<sup>30</sup>

While no documentation on Tryon's success on this proposal has been located, one can be assured that many of the patent breech conversions such as those of Wurfflein could be the work of Tryon.

## POST-CIVIL WAR TO 1872

During the Civil War, poor health drove Edward K. Tryon to retirement, and a new copartnership was formed between his sons George W. Tryon, Jr., and Edward K. Tryon, Jr. The new organization was called Tryon & Brother. The firm built a new factory with modern machinery to manufacture contemporary shotguns, pistols, and component parts.

In addition, the organization continued to hand-make the old-line muzzle-loading rifles and fowlers. Tryon continued the practice of stamping the arms with their wholesale customer's name, the Tryon name, or both.

The family continued to experiment with ignition systems and designs. They began to manufacture pistols under the Rupertus patent, with Rupertus himself directing the activities in the new facility. One pistol was planned to be an eight-shot revolver with a quite short revolving cylinder. However, there was a patent dispute between Tryon and Smith & Wesson, which drove Tryon to limit production to the pepper box-style pistol. Tryon produced several styles, both single- and double-barrel pistols, and fulfilled a 7,000-pistol contract under the name of "Rupertus Patent Pistol Mfg. Co., Tryon and Brother, Sole Agents."<sup>31</sup>

The organization saw several changes as family members retired or pursued other activities and new partners were added. Always known as Tryon, the firm was named Tryon Bros. & Co. from 1866 to 1868, and Edward K. Tryon Jr., & Co., from 1865 to 1905. The old factory was finally closed in 1872, and the "Golden Buffalo" facility was finally closed in 1894, signaling the end of the major gun manufacturing eras of Tryon.<sup>32</sup>

Numerous arms were manufactured during this post-Civil War period, and many were of high quality. While Tryon produced thousands of arms in the name of wholesale clients, several signed arms representative of the era include the following.

#### *Two Deringer Pocket Pistols*

Deringer or Deringer-styled pocket pistols were made by Tryon from 1860 until the mid-1870s. These percussion pistols were percussion pistols of various barrel length in .36

to .44 caliber. While many were made under the client's trade name, the two shown are marked "TRYON" (Figure 45).

#### *Half-Stock Percussion Sporting Rifle*

Tryon continued to serve a large market of sportsmen who preferred the percussion rifle. This half-stock is .44 caliber with a 29-inch octagonal barrel. The barrel is marked "TRYON PHILADA," and the lockplate is marked "CHANCE," who was a hardware merchant from the area. The stock and patchbox are Lehigh County (Pa.) styling (Figure 46).

#### *Silver-Mounted Sportsman Half-Stock*

This rifle is .36 caliber with a 39 $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch octagonal barrel. The rifle has double-set triggers with "TRYON PHILADA" on the barrel and "TRYON" on the lock. It represents the quality rifles still available in the early 1870s (Figures 47 and 48).

#### *Tryon-Made Galveston Trade Rifle*

Tryon continued make, assemble, or purchase guns for wholesale trade. This half-stock rifle was located in Houston several years ago. The lock is unmarked, and the octagonal barrel was marked "MAN'D FOR JOS. L. BADIE"/"GALVESTON." Just this year, I located several Tryon stamping dies, and one had the identical markings found on the barrel of this rifle—it finally had a maker (Figure 49).

In addition to the arms available during this period, Tryon made, had made, or imported and sold numerous styles of knives, razors, and sports or hunting items. The items always occupied a large space in Tryon's catalogs and sales cases in addition to a continuing emphasis on firearms and shooting supplies (Figure 50).



Figure 45. Two Deringer-style Tryon-marked pocket pistols.

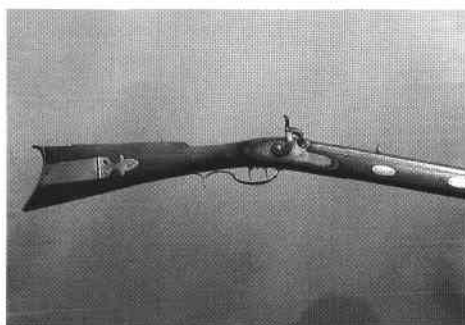


Figure 46. A Lehigh County-style half-stock rifle.

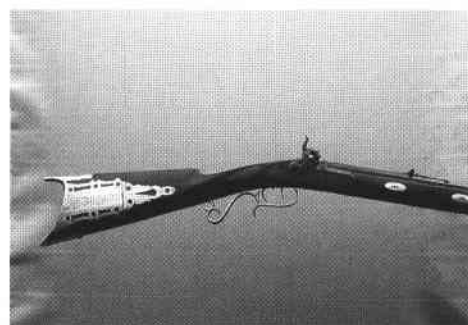


Figure 47. A silver-mounted half-stock rifle.



Figure 48. Left profile of silver-mounted half-stock.



Figure 49. A Tryon half-stock from a Galveston, Texas, merchant.



Figure 50. An assortment of Tryon-marked bone-handled knives.

## TRYON FROM THE 1880s TO THE EARLY 1900s

Although Tryon had reduced the gun-making operation significantly, the organization continued to operate with the Golden Buffalo as its logo well into the twentieth century. Firearms were still a primary line, but the wholesale operation was expanded with the firm “jobbing” sporting goods items throughout the country. The retail side of the business, which helped salvage the operation in difficult times, continued to be transformed into a diversified hardware store.

Tryon was still involved in making or assembling quality arms to order and produced many custom-made arms for the elite sportsman. One such cartridge shotgun produced in the 1880s is engraved in honor of Lincoln Jeffries, who was a noted field trial competitor in the United States as well as in England.<sup>33</sup>

### *Tryon Presentation Shotgun*

The double-barrel shotgun is heavily engraved and is signed “THE TRYON GUN” on the top of the barrel. It is also engraved “Lincoln Jeffries” with a listing of the numerous field trials won by him. The gun is 12 gauge with 30-inch English barrels (Figures 51 and 52).

Tryon continued to expand the wholesale operation and in the early 1990s began to develop a new base of

business—both wholesale and retail—by procuring product lines of items made specifically for Tryon to market under Tryon brand names. A chart of Tryon’s major brand names was inserted in the 100th anniversary booklet (Figure 53).

### *Brand-Name Products*

Included in the brand names were Keystone—arms made by Savage under the Keystone brand (Figure 54); Knives under the 3/T, Tru Temper, or Tru Sport brand (Figure 55); golf clubs under the Tryon name (Figure 56), and numerous other items too numerous to illustrate, including boxing gloves, fishing tackle, baseball equipment, football gear, and tennis equipment. Bicycles were also a major Tryon product.

In conclusion, the study of Tryon is indeed an adventure. One can investigate the skill of gun making and the interchange of parts, tools, and talent between Philadelphia gun merchants and those in the surrounding area. One can also follow the innovative development of a business that would make a fine case study for the Harvard Business School. After my initial study, it is quite evident that the name Tryon is certainly a cornerstone of gun making and commerce among gun makers in Philadelphia and America. This preliminary history has merely scratched the surface of Tryon’s contribution to American arms. I fear my mission has just begun.



Figure 51. The engraved lock of the late presentation shotgun.



Figure 52. “THE Tryon GUN” on the barrel of the presentation shotgun.



Figure 53. An early listing of Tryon brand names.



Figure 54. A full shot of the Tryon "Keystone" .22.



Figure 55. A later-period Tryon brand name knife assortment.



Figure 56. Early Tryon golf clubs.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Jacobsburg Historical Society, *Extract from Correspondence of John Joseph Henry* (Nazareth, Pa.) (hereafter cited as *John Joseph Henry*).
2. Charles Z. Tryon, *The History of a Business Established One Hundred Years Ago: Edw. K. Tryon Company, Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: E. K. Tryon Co., 1911), 5 (hereafter cited as *The History of a Business*).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Frank M. Sellers, *American Gunsmiths* (Highland Park: The Gun Room Press, 1983), 121.
5. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 9.
6. Samuel E. Smith and Edwin W. Bitter, *Historic Pistols: The American Martial Flintlock—1760-1845* (New York: Scalamandr'e Publications, 1985), 296 (hereafter cited as *Historic Pistols*).
7. C. W. Sawyer, *U.S. Single Shot Martial Pistols: 1776-1945* (Old Greenwich, Conn.: W.E. Inc., 1971), 85.
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9. William Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II* (Lincoln, R.I.: Andrew Mowbray, Inc., 1993), 148-151.
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11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 24.
14. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 151-153.
15. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 13.
16. Col. Robert E. Gardner, *Small Arms Makers* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1963), 115.
17. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 17.
18. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 29.
19. State of Texas, *Documents of the Republic of Texas* (Austin).
20. Michael J. Kourey, *Arms for Texas: A Study of the Weapons of the Republic of Texas* (Fort Collins, Colo.: The Old Army Press, 1973) 18-20.
21. *Ibid.*, 21-22.
22. Harold L. Peterson, *American Knives: The First History and Collector's Guide* (Highland Park, N.J.: The Gun Room Press, 1993) 34.
23. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 31.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Tryon and Co., *Price List of Rifles, Shot Guns, Pistols, Sporting Apparatus and Gun Materials* (Philadelphia: Tryon, circa 1859).
26. Sellers, *American Gunsmiths*, 309.
27. R. L. Wilson and L. D. Eberhart, *The Deringer in America: Vol. I* (Lincoln, R.I.: Andrew Mowbray, Inc., 1985), 89.
28. Tryon, *The History of a Business*, 31-33.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, 35.
31. *Ibid.*, 39.
32. *Ibid.*, 41-44.
33. W. W. Greener, *The Gun and Its Development*, 9th ed. New York: MacMillan, circa 1970, 682-687.

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