

Johannes Bonewitz—Master Gunsmith, Womelsdorf, PA

Henry I. Bishop



By all definitions of the word, John Bonewitz was truly a master of his trade. His work spanned an entire era of gun making in the United States from the American Revolution to the War of 1812. He was there when the “Golden Age”¹ of rifle making started and he was there as the era began its decline. Design, execution, excellence and consistency were the basic principles of his success and long career. The flintlock Pennsylvania rifles made by John Bonewitz provide the viewer and the collector with a terrific example of early American functional art. Functional—as a means of defense, providing food for the table and enjoying a day of competition at the local beef shoots. An art form—by its beautiful carving and engraving designs and unique combination of wood, iron and brass. A pleasure to behold as well as to use.

Shortly after Joe Kindig Jr. published what he had gathered together on John Bonewitz in *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*, several Bonewitz descendants started a genealogical review of the family on their own. I doubt they even knew about Kindig’s work and I’m certain Joe didn’t know about theirs. A few family members shared in the general outline and other than a regional reference to John Bonewitz in 1977 by Earl Ibach in his book *The Hub of the Tulpehocken*, the information has basically sat unused at the Tulpehocken Historical Society since 1968.

The family genealogy provides an overview of the early Bonewitz descendants and contains a brief account of each member. The families’ supporting files and notes led to the original documents used in preparing the initial segments of this study. These interesting documents were found in the Berks County Archives. Previously unknown documents were found in both the Berks County and Schuylkill records departments.

The family genealogy shows John Bonewitz served in the York Co. militia during the summer of 1781.² They describe his duty but not the source of their information. It took several days of research in the Pennsylvania archives to find the original payroll muster and the names of the additional 91 members of the militia detail. The significance of this will be obvious once the reader ventures through the text of this study.



The family genealogy reveals John Bonewitz moved to Pine Grove in 1809.³ When John Bonewitz disappeared from the Heidelberg tax rolls in 1810, most early collectors and historians thought he had found eternal rest. This was not the case, as we will learn. Why he picked up and left Womelsdorf and moved his entire family to Pine Grove is the subject of several thoughts found well along in this study. Bonewitz’s move was verified while reviewing the Pine Grove Townships 1810 & 1811 tax records in preparation for this article. Leonard Reedy, a gunsmith directly associated with Bonewitz, was also on the 1811 Pine Grove tax list. A close look at the 1810 Pine Grove census on a recent visit to the Pennsylvania Archives shows Bonewitz and Reedy as neighbors.⁴ Definite fuel for future thought!!!

Luck and timing have always played an important role in research. It certainly is true throughout this entire study. No more so, however, than when one of the most important and last documents uncovered surfaced during an interview with a Bonewitz descendant at the Pine Grove Historical Society. He had a photocopy of the first page of an article published by a member of the Schuylkill County Historical Society in 1910. The title, *Account of Sales at the Public Vendue of John Bonawitz’s, Pinegrove Twp., Oct., 1828*.⁵ Since I had discovered the estate inventory of John Bonewitz the previous year in the Schuylkill County Archives, this 1828 summary of the estate sale had special meaning. The rest of the 1910

article was found in the Schuylkill County Historical Society Library. The estate inventory is a great read all by itself, add the estate sale information and a unique view of Bonewitz's life is complete.

The family name is most often spelled Bonawitz or Bonewitz, however, no less than nine different variations were encountered during this study. Boneywits was the most unusual, but when trying to understand the phonetic interpretations of the times it is understandable. The families' religious background is Protestant and it is believed the original members of the family arrived in America from an area near Dresden, Germany in the 1750 time frame. The small town of Bonnewitz has existed there since 1378 according to the family genealogy.⁶

JOHANNES BONEWITZ 1758-9/22/1828
CITIZEN & SOLDIER

John Bonewitz's tombstone would have us believe he was born in 1754. However, a Berks County Orphans Court document (Exhibit A) signed by his mother in 1765, seeking guardians for her children, describe his age as "7 or thereabouts".⁷ Easy math gets us back to 1758. This is the date the family genealogy also uses, probably using the same 1765 document as support. Left alone the 1754/1758 mystery would still be a puzzle. Making the 1758 date a little easier to accept, however, was a search through the 1800 census. It lists one free white male in the Bonewitz household age 26-44 and none over the age of 45.⁸ A 1754 birth date would have John Bonewitz age 46 in 1800; a 1758 birth date would have him at 42—1758 prevails!!

Johann Bonewitz was the third child born to Johannes Adam and Juliana Bonnewitz. John George, his older brother, was born in 1752. John George was a farmer, a weaver and a laborer according to the family genealogy. John George died in 1793. An older sister, Catharine, was born in 1756 and a younger brother, Jacob, was born in 1761, the same year in which Johannes Adam, the father died.⁹ It was very common for the German family to use John, Johannes or Johann as a preface to a male child's given name. This was a respectful tribute to the many saints named John in the Lutheran religion. Our subjects given name was simply John and written the three different ways on the documents available. In keeping with the tradition and to avoid everyone in the family responding to the name John, Johann Adam was known as Adam and John George as George.

The exact birth place of John Bonewitz is not known. He was about two years old when his father, purchased 386 acres and 88 perches from Conrad Weiser.¹⁰ The 1760 indenture and record of the purchase describes the land and

To the Worshippful the Justices of Orphans Court of,
the County of Berks at an Orphans Court held at Reading
in and for the said County the seventeenth Day of May
Anno Domini 1765.

The Petition of George Staborling and
Juliana his Wife, late Juliana Bonewitz, Widow of
Adam Bonewitz late of the Township of Heidelberg
in the County aforesaid Yeoman deceased.

Humbly sheweth

That the said Adam Bonewitz died about
four years since leaving a Considerable Estate in the said
County and Issue four Children, to wit, John George, now
of the Age of thirteen Years or thereabouts, Johannes now
of the Age of seven Years or thereabouts, Jacob now
of the Age of four Years or thereabouts, & Catharine now
of the Age of nine Years or thereabouts, for whom by
his Testament and Last Will he has appointed no Guardians
or Guardian - Your petitioners therefore humbly pray
Your Worships to appoint Guardians over the persons &
Estates of the said & Minor Children. And Your petitioners
will ever pray &c.

George ^{his} Staborling
mark

Exhibit A

Juliana ^{her} Staborling
mark

Exhibit A. Berks County Orphan's Court Document

its location near present day Robesonia, a small community several miles east of Womelsdorf. A 1758 Heidelberg tax¹¹ list shows Adam Bonnewitz living in the area so it is safe to assume John was born in the vicinity.

Womelsdorf, known in 1758 as Middletown,¹² and Robesonia were close to the western frontier of an expanding Pennsylvania. There were only a handful of settlers west of the area near the Susquehanna River and even fewer to the north beyond the Blue Mountain range. The main trail providing access to Middletown from the east started in Philadelphia and ran west through Pottstown, Reading and Robesonia. From Womelsdorf [Middletown] the path extended west to Fort Harris [Harrisburg] and north to Fort Henry. The Indian trail leading north from the region, through Fort Henry, extended all the way to Fort Augusta, today's Sunbury.¹³ Early Pennsylvania history is full of grizzly stories of Indian depredations and attacks on the white settlers less than half a days travel from the area. The most

serious attacks occurred during the French and Indian war and the last of any consequence in 1759.¹⁴

Middletown and Robesonia were a part of Heidelberg Township which was a part of northwestern Berks County. The most famous resident of the area in the 1750s was Conrad Weiser. His efforts, both as an Indian agent and leader of men, contributed greatly to the safety and development of the township where John Bonewitz grew up. A great deal has been written about Conrad Weiser and it is suggested students explore more knowledge regarding this important man.

John Bonewitz was only 3 years old when his father passed away. Adam Bonnawitz's will¹⁵ written May 2, 1761, several weeks before he died, is a classic example of the times. Originally written in German, it has been translated into English. He allows for the settlement of his debts and provides for the needs of his wife and children. His estate consists mainly of livestock, farm tools, household items, a gun, two cartridge boxes & powder horn,¹⁶ and the 386 acres of land he had purchased from Conrad Weiser in January the year before. Three hundred and eighty-six acres was a sizable spread in 1761 and Adam intended for it to remain in control of his children. He wrote in his will:

"Thirdly—Of my place situate here in Heidelberg whereon I now live it is my Will that my wife with the children live and remain, and to maintain herself and the children on the place till my eldest Son arrive at the full age of eighteen years, then my eldest Son Johann George shall enter upon the place and manage the same till my youngest child is of age then the place shall be appraised by discreet & indifferent persons, and according to the appraisment the youngest son shall have and shall pay to each of the other children their shares; but if the youngest son will not have it, afterwards one of the other children may have the place as the youngest child might have held it."¹⁷

Literally translated, George would inherit the "place" in 1770 and manage it until 1779. In 1779 Jacob would have the option to take it over if he wanted to. John and Catharine were included in the plan but not specifically as owners or managers, their shares coming due whenever or however Jacob decided. It is unclear what happened in 1779 but George is still listed on the Township tax roles for the year.¹⁸ We do know, however, in 1783 George, John and their sister Catharine deeded 186 acres and 88 perches to their brother Jacob.¹⁹ It is assumed the remaining 200 acres were sold sometime before or after 1783 and the proceeds divided equally between George, John, and Catharine.

It is interesting to note that not all land sales or business transactions were recorded in the early days. Contracts or indentures (as they were called) were written,

but whether or not a copy found its way to the county court house was another matter. Many simply remained in the hands of the parties involved and have been lost over time. Others were filed, misplaced or destroyed in fires or floods.

Prior to 1783, we have little reference to John Bonewitz other than his mother's 1765 guardianship petition to the Berks County Orphans Court resulting in the Court appointing Fredrick Weiser and John George Lauck his guardians;²⁰ a 1780 Berks County, Heidelberg Township, tax record listing him as a Single Freeman;²¹ and his 1781 Revolutionary War record found in the Pennsylvania Archives. A search through the records of Mr. Weiser and Mr. Lauck could very well provide useful information on John Bonewitz's development and interest in the gunsmith trade.

We do not know where Bonewitz was or what he was doing at the beginning of the American struggle for independence. Many state documents show gunsmiths at the start of the war were involved in appraising, purchasing or confiscating local weapons for use by the Committee of Safety²². During the early years of the war gunsmiths were required to manufacture muskets and bayonets for the Continental Army and local militia units.²³ At age 18 he could have easily been involved in these activities. We do find him, listed as a "single freeman" in the 1780 Heidelberg Township tax records (which includes Womelsdorf) and then in the summer of 1781 in York, Pa. as a member of the local county militia.

Bonewitz, now 23, may have traveled to York to visit with old friends or he could have been looking for work. Bonewitz served with York County gunsmiths Conrad Welshantz (Welshans), Ignatius Lightner (Leitner), Jacob Leder (Ledder, Leather, etc.), and several members from other York County gunsmith families (Long and Heckert) in "a detachment of York County Militia guarding prisoners of war from York Town (York, Pa.) to Reading, in Berks County; commanded by Col. Henry Miller, from June 12th to the 20th, both inclusive"²⁴ (Exhibit B). This is the only Revolutionary War record we have for him which supports the theory he may have been working as a gunsmith and exempt from military service until this time. It is interesting that he knew these three York County gunsmiths, two who were most likely his contemporaries and the third older. How long he stayed in York is uncertain. His presence at the division of his father's estate places him back near Womelsdorf in 1783.

We know Bonewitz was back in Womelsdorf as a gunsmith and consistent tax payer in Heidelberg Township from 1784 until 1809. In May of 1786 he purchased lot 42, present day 145 West High Street, from Christian and Veronica Heckenthorn.²⁵ The Stouch Tavern, established in

<u>Captain</u>				
John Ehrman				
<u>Adjutant</u>	<u>Lieutenants</u>	<u>Ensign</u>	<u>Serjt. Major</u>	<u>Sergeants</u>
William Wall	Charles Barnett Christian Sinn	Charles Spangler	Ignatius Lightner	Ludwig Sheib William Lanius John Ernst
<u>Corporals</u>	<u>Fifer</u>	<u>Drummers</u>	<u>Esqr. Lt. Horse</u>	<u>Qtr. Mastr. Lt. Horse</u>
John Collins John Coho Simon Ford Adam Stayer	Jacob Strohman	Jacob Spangler John Minn	Thoms. Hartley Christian Stake Daniel Spangler Matthias Zimmer Jacob Kauffeld	Jno. Scott Peter Ickes Jacob Steward
<u>Privates</u>				
John Frey Benedict Funk Jacob Bleyemeyer David Welshantz Conrad Welshantz Jacob Frankeberger Adam Wolf George Mock Jacob Leder Francis Kuntz William Long Vincence Imfeld John Probst Jacob Kramer	John Stop Henry Buser Andrew Honey John Engelbrecht Frederick Woer John Woer John Weldy Levi McClean Ludwig Michael James McCalmon John Newman George Spangel Philip Hasselbaeh	Marlin Cronmiller Henry Bringman John Brencison Philip Spangler George Heckert Frederick Elsberry John Seffrens Henry Marshall John Davis John Lawman Jacob Shram Frederick Shetly Frederick Shanck	George Zumwald Philip Wertz John Leissner Joseph Woodward Peter Wolf William Clayton Adam Frey John Rush John Wagner Matthias Ritz James Murray Joseph Cooper George Kraft	Philip Herman Conrad Michael John Oldham Robert Bailey George Emig George Miles Jacob Bott Joseph Zimmer George Eisenhart John Haller John Fisher John Bonewitz Jacob Correl Andrew Hawk, Sgt.

*Payroll of a detachment of York County Militia Guarding Prisoners of war, from York Town to Reading, in Berks County; Commanded by Colonel Henry Miller, from June 12th to the 20th both inclusive. 1781'

Exhibit B. Revolutionary War Record

1785 and still operating today, was directly across the street from lot 42 and a regular stop for the stagecoach operating between Harrisburg and Reading.²⁶ His rifle-making production in Womelsdorf spanned the course of 25 years and was without a doubt his most active time frame. In 1809, John Bonewitz moved his family and presumably his business 15 miles northwest of Womelsdorf to Pine Grove, a small community bordering the Swatara Creek in present day Schuylkill County.

While living in Womelsdorf John Bonewitz was busy raising a family as well as building rifles. Records of Christ Lutheran Church of Tulpehocken indicate John Bonewitz married Katharine Laubinger on April 19, 1789. Katharine was the daughter of George and Dorothea Laubinger. At the time of their marriage John was 31 and Katharine was 25. John and Katharine had five children:²⁷

Benjamin	Born 1791	Married Sarah Weiser
John Jr.	Born 1794	Married Magdalena Faust
Margaret	Born 1797	Married Daniel Angst
Mary	Born 1800	Married Peter Keiser
George	Born 1805	Married Mary Koons.

Benjamin and John Jr. served in the War of 1812 during the threat to Baltimore by the British from Sept. 2, 1814 through March 5, 1815. Benjamin was a Lieutenant in the 2nd Regt.-1st Brigade Penna. Militia commanded by Capt. Peter Snyder²⁸ and John Jr. was a private in the 1st Regt.-1st Brigade commanded by Capt. John Elder.²⁹ Both units contained men from Schuylkill Co. but were formed and mustered out of York a distance of 60 to 65 miles from Pine Grove. For a long time several references

listed John Sr. as having served with his sons during this 1814 campaign. All records from the War of 1812 referring to John Bonawitz are to Junior who was 20 in 1814. John Sr. was 56 at the time and most likely exempt from service. Leonard Reedy and Henry Eckler also served during this exact same period (Eckler was a private with Benjamin in the 2nd Regt.-1st Brigade).³⁰ It is very probable Benjamin, John Jr., Henry Eckler and Leonard Reedy, along with a number of their Pine Grove neighbors, marched to York in 1814, enlisted in the army together, and answered their countries' call to arms.

When John Bonewitz moved his family and gunsmith business "over the Blue Mountains" to Pine Grove in 1809 he left behind a well-established farming community and a good deal of competition to the west in Lebanon and to the east in the Borough of Reading. Pine Grove, on the other hand, was a growth area with the resulting opportunities. The enormous stands of pine and hemlock in the mountains surrounding Pine Grove had fueled a thriving lumber industry since the 1790s that was still going strong in 1810.³¹ Anthracite (hard coal) was just starting to be mined in significant quantities and its use was gaining acceptance,³² albeit slowly. Early accounts of the Swatara Creek, which runs through Pine Grove, describe it as an excellent source for the power needed to drive the newest water driven technology being introduced in the country. Drop hammer forges, mills and tanneries required this powerful resource to operate this new technology efficiently and several were established in Pine Grove in the 1810-1811 time frame.³³ Of course, John Bonewitz could have retired and moved to Pine Grove seeking the easy life of a gentleman farmer. This is not likely, however, when you consider Leonard Reedy was there as well and the remnants of an active career were evident in Bonewitz's estate inventory. At 51 years of age he may have slowed down a little but my guess is this move was economically driven and well thought out.

According to the Schuylkill County Historical Society article published in 1910 regarding the estate sale of John Bonewitz "he settled a short distance north of Pinegrove, on the farm now owned by Mr. John C. Hikes."³⁴ Mrs. Kreichbaum, a local historian who lives nearby, told me this property had a large barn, a log house and blacksmith shop situated close to the north road out of town. The house and barn were on the west side of the road and the blacksmith shop on the east side a short distance away. The Swatara Creek ran in a southerly direction 100 yards or so behind the shop. The barn and blacksmith shop are gone now but Mrs. Kreichbaum pointed out the original location. The house is still there, however, and today is the location of the Pine Grove Historical Society. The house sits nicely on a small rise and at one time must have had a wonderful view of the

Swatara Creek. Presently the view is blocked by Route 125, trees, heavy undergrowth, and an abandoned car repair garage where the blacksmith shop once was.

When the Pine Grove Historical Society first moved into the house they undertook a major restoration of the structure. Mr. Kenneth Lehman, President of the Society, explained it was during this project that one of the original outside log walls was exposed and someone in the group recognized the logs on the first course were a different wood than those on the second level. (Oak was used on the first level and pine on the second.) An architectural restoration expert and an associate were consulted and the Historical Society learned the house was originally built around 1780 using an English floor plan. Sometime between 1800 and 1820 a second story was added and the home's configuration was changed to a layout popular among the German community.³⁵ Bonewitz moved to Pine Grove in 1809.

Everything seems to fit for a good discussion in favor of this parcel of land and buildings being John Bonewitz's Pine Grove homestead, gunshop and the location of the estate sale held October 29 & 30, 1828.

John Bonewitz died on September 22, 1828. He is buried in an old cemetery directly across the street from St. Peter's Lutheran Church on the main road into Pine Grove from the south. His stone is weathered but at high noon when the shadows are right it is distinctly legible. I had trouble finding it in the morning light and I completely missed it on my first visit during a major downpour. Go at noon, however, follow a short distance in from the south edge of the grounds and about a third of the way back you will find his grave. His wife's grave can be found in the far left corner near the back. Her stone is weathered as well but in the right light leaves no doubt—Catharina, wife of Johannes Bonawitz, died 16 March 1843, aged 79y 6m.

St. Peters Lutheran Church played a major role in the development of the Pine Grove community³⁶ and from 1810 John Bonewitz must have contributed for at one time he was a Deacon and at another an Elder of the church.³⁷ If a man held these positions in the church he was usually well-respected and a leader in the community.

John Bonewitz died intestate (without a will). On September 29, Samuel Hain and Abraham Kieffer (Kieser) appraised the inventory of his estate.³⁸ One week later, on Oct. 6, sons Benjamin and John Jr. signed an oath (Exhibit C) agreeing to "truly comply with the provisions of the Act Entitled an Act relating to Collateral Inheritance passed the 6th day of April AD 1826."³⁹ On October 25, a little over a month after John's passing, Catharina signed a statement (Exhibit D) in which she declares "I have released and hereby release all my right and title to the administration of the said estate".⁴⁰

The estate inventory prepared by Samuel Hain and Abraham Kieffer is most interesting. (Exhibit E). The family genealogy states "he had a collection of books". This information in no way prepared me for what I found in the Archives section of the Schuylkill County Court House. Most estate inventories of the time would list books and pamphlets in lots: i.e, lot of books-\$50, lot of books & lot of pamphlets-\$1.25, or 2 books-\$50. In John Bonewitz's case over 20 books were listed individually with their titles. Example:

- Geographical Lexicon-\$3.00
- Life of Napoleon-\$1.00
- Letters on Helvetia-\$0.75
- German Atlas-\$0.75
- History of Rome 3 vol-\$1.50
- History of England in French-\$0.50

Schuylkill County
 We Benjamin Bonawitz and John Bonawitz Administrators of all and singular the goods & chattels rights and credits which were of John Bonawitz late of Pine Grove Township in Schuylkill County yeoman and do swear, that we will diligently and faithfully regard and well and truly comply with the provisions of the Act Entitled an Act relating to Collateral Inheritance passed the 6th day of April AD 1826 and subscribed before us the 6th day of October 1828

Benj^r Bonawitz
 John Bonawitz

Ornley Register

Exhibit C. Signed Compliance Agreement

I Peter Frailey Esq^r Register of the probate of Wills and Granting Letters of Administration in and for the County of Schuylkill

Whereas my late Husband John Bonewitz died Intestate whereby the right of the Administration of the Estate of the said deceased did devolve upon me Catharina Bonawitz widow and relict of the said deceased NOW KNOW

Ye that for divers good Causes and considerations mooving unto moving I have released and hereby do release all my right and title to the administration of the said Estate

Witness my hand and seal the twenty fifth day of October in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and Twenty eight

Scaled and delivered
 In the presence of us

Catharina Bonawitz

John Huber

Exhibit D. Catherina Bonewitz Release

Life of Fredk. king of Prussia 5 vol.-\$2.50

Carpenters Astronomy-\$1.00

Christian on the Sabbath-\$2.00

German Psalms 6 books-\$2.00.

These ten books and another group just like them are the first items on the inventory followed by Gunsmith tools valued at \$50.00, two double gun tiggers (triggers) at \$2.00 and one new gun lock at \$1.00. Gunstocks and Planks are listed for \$3.00, four pair Spectacles @ \$0.50, four sheets of sandpaper @ \$0.06 1/4 and an item no respectable gunsmith should be without—1 Cork Screw-\$0.25. The list is three pages long and includes numerous household and personal items as well as livestock and farm tools. The total value of the items listed came to \$772.48 3/4.⁴¹ It is extremely difficult to compare 1828 dollars to the value of money today. When you look at the number and type of items listed, you get the feeling the Bonewitz family lacked for very little and certainly would be considered today as solid members of the community.

The sale of John Bonewitz's personal property, published in the 1910 Schuylkill County Historical Society pamphlet, was held October 29 & 30, 1828. (Exhibit F) It had the typical rules of the day:

"the highest bidder shall be the purchaser. Each sale not over a dollar shall be paid in cash; all else sold above this sum shall have credit until the next 31st of December [60 days]. However, the purchaser must give a note with sufficient security, and this condition must be observed without respect to person. Each bidder shall be bound to his bid, and the damage resulting from a second sale shall fall back on him."

Benj. Bonawitz, John Bonewitz,
Administrators.⁴²

The sale moved 161 lots the first day and 121 the second. Members of the Bonawitz family bought nearly half of the items sold, primarily farming tools, a number of the books, household furniture, kitchen utensils and related sundry items. Henry Eckler bought a spinning wheel, 3 gun stocks, 2 buckets, a vise, shears to cut iron,

Inventory of all and singular the goods & chattels rights and credits which were of John Bonewitz late of Pinegrove Township Schuylkill County dec'd as appraised this 20th day of September 1828 by Samuel Hain & Abraham Kieffer appraisers

Books

Geographical Science 3 vol. German Atlas \$0.75	3.75
History of Rome 3 vol \$1.50 German Atlas \$0.75	2.25
History of King Sudo 1 vol \$0.25 a quantity of pamphlets	1.50
Life of Fredk. King of Prussia 5 vol \$2.50 History of England in pamphlets	3.00
Christian on the Sabbath \$2.00 - Life of Christ \$1.50	2.50
Life of Napoleon 1 vol \$0.50 - Life of Napoleon \$1.00	1.50
Christian Geographical \$0.50 Holy Books \$0.50 - Life of Christ \$1.00	1.75
Saw of Ben's Dictionary \$1.25 - Travel in Africa & Circulation \$1.00	1.00
Carpenters Astronomy \$1.00 2 Books \$0.50 - Willing's Works 3 vol \$2.00	2.00
American Revolution German \$0.25 - Life of Luther \$0.25	0.50
Set of Books & Pamphlets \$1.00	1.00
Latin in 1812 1 vol & nat. Hist. \$0.50 German Psalm 6 Books \$2.00	2.50
4 large Religious Books \$1.50 1 Vol. Sermons \$0.25	1.75
Historical 2 Books \$0.50 2 Maps \$0.50 1 Bible \$0.50	1.50
Large pocket Book \$1.25 2 small Bibles \$1.25	1.50
2 pair silver knee Buckles \$1.00 Silver Buckles & keys \$1.50	2.50
Cork Saw \$0.25 4 pair Spectacles \$1.50 4 Sheets sand paper \$0.24	5.87 1/2
2 double gun tiggers \$2.00 Chest key of \$1.00	3.00
Gunsmith Tools of \$50.00	50.00
Seals & weights \$1.50 New Gun lock \$1.00	2.50
Carried over	85.87 3/4

Amount brought forward 85.87 3/4

Gunstocks and Cinks \$3.00	3.00
1 Bed & Bedstead \$7.00 1 Tr. \$5.00 1 Tr. \$6.50	18.50
1 Chest \$2.00 1 German hunt \$0.25 1 Chest \$0.75	3.00
1 Saddle \$6.00 1 Tr. \$1.00	7.00
1 old Copper Kettle \$0.50 - Iron \$1.00	1.50
2 Drough brought flour Barrels 12. Dec. 1828. 200 lbs. each	24.00
10 Bags \$2.00 Wearing apparel \$5.00 2 pair Wool Carders \$0.75	7.75
Flax Matchets \$1.50 Brass Kettle & Brass water bucket \$1.50	3.00
4 Ladles flesh Fork \$0.75 Tea Pot \$0.75	1.50
Sheep Shears & Sewing mugs \$1.25 Chaps & Basket \$0.50	1.75
2 Spinning Wheels Red & wooden \$2.25 Apple peeler \$0.25	2.50
10 Tractors \$1.50 1 Bottle of Charlestown \$1.25	1.75
Set of Bellows \$0.50 - Socking g lops \$0.25	0.75
1 Large Table \$2.00 1 Tr. \$1.25 1 Tr. \$1.50 1 Vinegar keg \$0.50	4.25
9 Chairs \$3.30 1 Bed & Bedstead with Curtains \$7.00	11.30
Bureau \$5.00 - Desk & Book Case \$4.00	9.00
2 Tin plates Stoves & paper \$5.50 2 Bread bags \$0.50	9.00
2 Candles sticks \$1.00 12 Cor. silver gowns & sugar tray \$3.50	4.50
Kitchen Dresser \$3.00 Lining Pewter plates Cups Borden & spoons	13.00
4 Iron Pots \$2.00 4 Frying pans \$2.00 Naple Tray \$0.75	3.75
Cabbage Chopper Sawlun Chain Nail Bellows of \$1.00	1.00
2 Coffee miller Coffee Box 2 Coffee comm. of	1.50
Large funnel & old Coffee pot \$0.50 Bake plate & tray \$1.00	1.50
2 Andirons Fire tongs & Shovel \$2.00 2 Pitchforks \$0.75	2.75
Shear yards \$1.00 3 flat Irons & Tray \$1.00	2.00
1 Large Pewter Dish 2 D. plates & 6 small D.	4.50
Carried over	85.87 3/4

Exhibit E. Estate Inventory

1 lot iron, 1 bullet extractor, 2 tin plates, old iron, 1 draw knife, 1 double trigger, two pommice stones, 1 piece steel, 1 kettle with lime and 1 glass bottle. A fellow named John Brown bought ten gun stocks, a saw and lamp, 1 ramrod bar and the other double trigger. Two pistols and an old shotgun appear on the list. The pistols brought \$0.12 ½ and \$0.08 and the shotgun \$1.08. Daniel Angst bought a gun barrel and cow bell (1 lot) for \$0.13 and several of the books and various tools. John Buechler paid \$0.21 for an old gun barrel and \$0.30 for a kugelbohrer (bullet extractor). The gun lock valued in the inventory at \$1.00 sold over estimate for \$1.38.

The most expensive lot sold was no. 98, a wagon sold to Benjamin Bonewitz for \$38.50. The second highest item was a blacksmith's outfit sold for \$32.00. A foal sold for \$30.50 and a ladies saddle brought \$11.62 ½. A cow brought \$13.00 and a windmill and several beds sold for \$10.00 each. The book *Geographical Lexicon* raised \$6.50 and the 5 vols. of *Frederick the Great* sold for \$3.62 ½.⁴³ A person can spend

hours reviewing information like this. If you are so inclined copies are included, with this study.

JOHN BONEWITZ
GUNSMITH

We have learned much of what we know about the 18th-century apprentice system from the early works of Henry Kauffman, Joe Kindig Jr., and Capt. John Dillin. Like today, very little was cast in stone but the basic workings of the system followed many of the traditions brought to the new world from Europe. Generally, a young man would enter a trade at 12 to 14 years of age and depending on the degree of difficulty his apprenticeship would last from 4 to 8 years. The silversmith and gunsmith trades were considered among the most difficult in Europe and it can be assumed the same held true in America.⁴⁴

John Bonewitz was born in 1758. If we follow conventional wisdom, we can guess he entered his apprenticeship somewhere near 1770-1772. If he spent 6 or 7 years as an apprentice, he was ready to work on his own or as a journeyman around 1776-1779 (18-21 years respectively), which would put him either at the beginning or in the middle of the American Revolution. Since his military service was limited to 9 days in the York County militia in 1781, we can legitimately speculate most of his time during the war was spent making and repairing muskets and rifles for use by the Continental Army and local Militia. Where and if he performed this required service is a pure guess. Although the war years most likely limited his early production, he conceivably could have made rifles as an apprentice or journeyman before the war reached full pace, during the Revolution and on a full-time basis after Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, October 19, 1781. Whether he made rifles before or during the American Revolution is, again, a guess. Supporting the argument, are 4 early rifles, one signed, that could have come from this period. The signed example is number 78 in Kindig's *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*.⁴⁵ It is the earliest signed Bonewitz (IB) known to this author.

There are over 30 rifles in collections across the country identified as the work of John Bonewitz. A good number have the initials I B along with a rampant lion (Exhibit G) stamped near the breech on the oblique barrel flat opposite the lock. One is signed John Bonewitz in script with the patch box engraved Wommelsdorf Town.⁴⁶ There are another 5 or 6 rifles that could have been made by Bonewitz as they exhibit the signature characteristics he established early and consistently used throughout his career. A signature characteristic is a basic pattern, hardware mold, engraving style or carving style that allows immediate

Amount brought forward	
2 Scissors & small box \$0.50 Looking glass \$0.25	0 80
2 Buckets \$1.00 1 Large iron Kettle \$2.00	2 50
1 Copper Kettle \$1.00 2 small tubs \$1.00 2 Pans \$0.75	2 75
China Ware Tray 2 Hogs \$1.50 Two Buckets & Lamp \$0.50	2 00
Potatoes in the ground \$4.00 Large tub \$0.50	4 50
Smith Tools \$13 75 Set of Iron \$1.00	14 75
2 Bung forks gutting Hoe, Hoe & Spade One Cow Chain	2 12 ½
Drawing knife Auger lathe spalter & Trammel	0 75
Harrow \$1.00 Winnowing Mill \$1.00 Cutting Box \$1.50	12 50
2 pitch Forks \$2 75 Saw \$0.50 Shovel by the Dingleby & Mann	2 00
1 Barrel \$0.50 Two 2 Barrel \$1.00 Saw cut Tub & 2 Hogs \$0.75	1 50
Wheel Barrel \$1.00 Box of Iron \$2.00 Miscellaneous Cords & Paper	3 00
<hr/>	
1 Haggart, Saddle & Caddis	11 50
1 Red Cow \$7.00 1 Red spotted Df \$9.00	16 00
1 Hog \$4.50 1 Man & Gear \$10.00	14 50
20 lbs flaxen linen - 25¢ yard	5 00
5 Linen Sheets \$3.00 8 Table Cloths \$2.00 10 pillow Cases \$1.00	6 00
2 Bed Cases \$1.00 four Trunks \$0.50 6 Window Curtains \$0.75	2 25
1 Bed Quilt \$0.75 1 Blanket \$0.50	1 25
1 Chaff Bag & other Bags \$0.50 Thread \$0.25	0 75
2 Quilt Bells 1 pitcher 2 Sun Stns 1 white 2 Bl. Bricks	1 00
2 Working Canvas	1 25
	322 25
	450 10 00
	772 25

Book Accounts

Exhibit E. Estate Inventory (continued)

Account of Sales at the Public Vendue of John Bonawitz's, Pinegrove Twp., Oct., 1828.

The conditions of this public sale, which will be held today, the 29th, and tomorrow, the 30th of October, Anno Domini, 1828, at the house of the deceased, John Bonawitz, lately of Pinegrove Township, Schuylkill County, of the personal property of said deceased, held by us, the administrators, shall be as follows:

The highest bidder shall be the purchaser. Each sale not over a dollar shall be paid cash; all else sold above this sum shall have credit until the next 31st of December. However, the purchaser must give a note with sufficient security, and this condition must be observed without respect to person. Each bidder shall be bound to his bid, and the damage resulting from a second sale shall fall back on him.

BENJ. BONAWITZ,
JOHN BONAWITZ,

Witnesses present: JOHN BENTER, Administrators.
I. C. KISSELMANN.

1. John Bonawitz, wax-machine, (waechs-machine)	\$. 12½
2. Benjamin Bonawitz, manure fork, and hoe..	.13
3. John Bonawitz, a hoe and a shovel15
4. George Bonawitz, a spade and a hoe.....	.20
5. Daniel Angst, gun-barrel and cow-bell.....	.13
6. Jacob Spankuchen, scythe and corn chopper (hack-messer)19
7. Philip Zimmerman, auger and drawing-knife.	.13
8. Benjamin Bonawitz, hay-fork.....	.28
9. Benjamin Bonawitz, grain-fork.....	.17
10. Benjamin Bonawitz, two shovels.....	.12½
11. Henry Buechler, an old ax.....	.29
12. Adam Spankuchen, two cow-chains.....	.26
13. Benjamin Bonawitz, two cow-chains.....	.68
14. Adam Brown, one cow-chain.....	.38
15. John Brown, saw and lamp.....	.06

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95. John Dollinger, 1 gunlock.....	1.38
96. Benjamin Berger, 1 box old tools.....	.80
97. John Bonawitz, 1 box old silver.....	1.20
98. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 wagon.....	38.50
99. John Bonawitz, 1 windmill.....	10.00
100. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 cutter bench.....	1.37½
101. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 harrow.....	2.05
102. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 mare.....	7.00
103. Benjamin Bonawitz, harness.....	2.00
104. Benjamin Bonawitz, harness, (kumet spaem).	1.00
105. Jacob Hautz, 1 cow.....	8.10
106. Henry Zimmerman, son of Jacob, 1 cow.....	13.00
107. George Bonawitz, 1 bed.....	9.75
108. Henry Zimmerman, son of Jacob, 1 bed.....	10.50
109. George Bonawitz, 1 lot books, 6 pcs.....	.17
110. George Bonawitz, 1 books.....	.21
111. John Buechler, Ried, 7 books.....	.12½
112. John New, 1 lot books.....	.16
113. Jacob Kriebel, 1 lot books.....	.26
114. Philip Zerbe, 1 lot books.....	.06
115. Daniel Angst, 1 Remarks About America..	.19
116. Daniel Angst, 1 prayer book.....	.36
117. George Bonawitz, 1 Historical book.....	.32
118. George Bonawitz, 1 religious book (geistlich)	.62½
119. Daniel Schneck, 1 Act of Assembly.....	.06
120. Jacob Christ, Esq., The Philosophy of Christ	.50
121. Jacob Kriebel, The German Grammar.....	.07
122. Jacob Lehman, 1 German book.....	.21
123. Samuel Hain, 1 English Geography.....	.10
124. Samuel Hain, 1 Book of Travels (Reisebeschreibung)87½
125. John Keiser, The Revolution.....	1.00
126. George Bonawitz, The Constitution.....	.56
127. Henry Buechler, 1 lot books.....	.26
128. George Bonawitz, History of George Washington, (Beschreibung von G. Washington)	.32
129. Benjamin Bonawitz, Book of Travels.....	.40
130. Benjamin Berger, 1 lot books.....	.17
131. Daniel Angst, 1 lot books.....	.20
132. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 religious book.....	1.00
133. John Keiser, 5 volumes Frederick the Great	3.62½
134. Daniel Angst, 2 parts Christian Sunday.....	3.78

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16. John Bonawitz, hoe and knife.....	.37
17. John Bender, pig catcher (sau faenger).....	.30
18. Benjamin Bonawitz, pistol.....	.12½
19. Peter Miller, pistol.....	.08
20. John Hand, Senior William, lot old iron.....	.25
21. Jacob Kriebel, basket.....	.12½
22. Phillip Zimmerman, trowel.....	.16
23. Henry Eckler, spinning-wheel.....	.15
24. George Bonawitz, two bee baskets (bee hives)	.22
25. John Bonawitz, sieve.....	.50
26. Benjamin Bonawitz, lot of old wood.....	.06
27. John Hand, Senior William, lot of iron.....	1.00
28. John Biechler, blacksmith, copper and brass	.25
29. Benjamin Bonawitz, old iron.....	.62½
30. John Buechler, old gun-barrel.....	.21
31. George Bonawitz, grindstone.....	1.25
32. George Bonawitz, cabbage-tub.....	.25
33. William Power, gallon-cask.....	.06
34. Benjamin Bonawitz, two barrels.....	.16
35. Jacob Spankuchen, meat-tub.....	.21
36. Jacob Kraeter, big spinning wheel (woll-rad)	.12½
37. John Brown, 3 gun stocks.....	.75
38. John Brown, 3 gun stocks.....	.25
39. John Brown, 3 gun stocks.....	.12½
40. John Brown, 1 gun stock.....	.55
41. Henry Eckler, 3 gun stocks.....	.30
42. John Keiser, 3 maple planks.....	.55
43. Benjamin Bonawitz, tub.....	.06
44. Benjamin Bonawitz, iron kettle.....	1.45
45. Benjamin Bonawitz, wheelbarrow.....	1.05
46. Michael Huber, Jr., blacksmith's outfit.....	32.00
47. Jacob Kriebel, 2 sheep shears.....	.60
48. William Power, dinner-horn and shears.....	.21
49. Peter Bonawitz, wool-cards.....	.16
50. Michael Huber, Jr., angle machine.....	.31
51. George Lehman, house clock.....	3.50
52. Michael Clements, hackle.....	1.70
53. Jacob Kriebel, field bucket (stuetz).....	.22
54. George Bonawitz, hackle and chisel.....	.24
55. George Bonawitz, 2 planes (hobel).....	.42
56. John Buechler, 2 buckets.....	.26
57. Henry Eckler, 2 buckets.....	.06

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135. Benjamin Bonawitz, 2 parts Travels French, (Reisebeschreibung French)65
136. Benjamin Bonawitz, Sketch of Pennsylvania25
137. Jacob Christ, Doctor, sketch of Trenck?	2.00
138. John Keiser, Sketch of Napoleon.....	2.00
139. Jacob Reeber, 1 religious book.....	.65
140. George Bonawitz, 1 Lexicon.....	6.50
141. Benjamin Bonawitz, Letters on Switzerland	.37½
142. Adam Raudenbush, History of King Judas.	.40
143. John Bonawitz, 1 geography.....	1.00
144. Benjamin Bonawitz, History of the Romans	1.00
145. Samuel Hain, 2 maps.....	.25
146. Michael Huber, lot maps.....	.06
147. Benjamin Berger, 1 tin quart measure.....	.75
148. John Neu, 1 tallow funnel and candle form..	.12½
149. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 tea kettle.....	.57
150. George Schardel, 1 tin pint measure.....	.35
151. Benjamin Berger, 1 tin pint measure.....	.52
152. Daniel Angst, 1 tin teacan.....	.65
153. George Bonawitz, 1 coffee can.....	.26
154. Philip Brown, 1 candle form and holder.....	.25
155. Daniel Angst, 1 tin quart measure.....	.66
156. Henry Buechler, 1 tin pan.....	.81
157. Henry Eckler, 2 tin plates.....	.68
158. Adam Raudenbush, 2 tin plates.....	.65
159. John Huber, 2 tin plates.....	.60
160. George Bonawitz, 1 tin pan.....	2.05
161. John Zimmerman, son of Henry, 1 tin pan..	2.05

THE SECOND DAY.

1. Benjamin Bonawitz, old iron.....	\$. 32
2. Benjamin Berger, 1 axe.....	.24
3. Benjamin Berger, old iron.....	.08
4. Miss Bonawitz, old kitchen utensils.....	.07
5. Benjamin Bonawitz, old candle stick.....	.40
6. Adam Lengel, old bellows.....	.09
7. George Scherdel, old flatiron.....	.17
8. Jacob Hubler, Sr., 1 small bread basket and quart measure20
9. Henry Buechler, 2 cards of wool.....	.50
10. John Keiser, 1 funnel.....	.30

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58. Michael Huber, Jr., steelyard.....	1.35
59. Jacob Wagner, Williams Valley, old shotgun	1.08
60. Henry Eckler, vise.....	6.20
61. John Hand, Sr., Williams Valley, vise.....	5.62½
62. Henry Eckler, shears to cut iron, (eisen-scheer)	1.25
63. Abraham Kiefer, scales with weights.....	1.20
64. George Bonawitz, 2 augers.....	.50
65. Peter Filbert, square and auger.....	1.70
66. John Keiser, 1 box old tools.....	.62
67. George Bonawitz, 1 saw.....	1.30
68. Philip Zimmerman, mason, 1 bag.....	.21
69. Henry W. Conrad, 2 bags.....	.38
70. Henry W. Conrad, 1 bag.....	.40
71. John Hand, Sr., Williams Valley, 1 lady's saddle	2.00
72. Jacob Scheffer, 1 lady's saddle.....	11.62½
73. John Filbert, 6 files.....	1.50
74. Benjamin Berger, 5 files.....	.45
75. John Buechler, blacksmith, 7 files.....	.40
76. Henry W. Conrad, 6 files.....	.55
77. John Keiser, 4 files.....	.45
78. Philip Zerbe, 6 files.....	.12½
79. Jacob Spankuchen, 7 files.....	.29
80. Jacob Spankuchen, 6 files.....	.64
81. John Hubler, 1 box with tools, (Geschirr)...	.38
82. George Bonawitz, 1 set chisels.....	.70
83. George Bonawitz, 1 set chisels.....	1.10
84. George Bonawitz, 1 set chisels.....	.40
85. Henry Eckler, 1 lot iron.....	.12½
86. Henry Hubler, 1 lot augers.....	.24
87. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 lot patterns (muster)	.50
88. Henry Eckler, 1 bullet extractor, (kugel-bohrer)60
89. John Buechler, blacksmith, 1 bullet extractor, kugelbohrer30
90. George Bonawitz, 1 box with tools (Geschirr)24
91. Jacob Spankuchen, old tools, geschirr.....	.75
92. John Bucher, 1 vise-square.....	.40
93. George Schartel, 1 tongue and vise.....	.50
94. George Bonawitz, 1 oil stone.....	.80

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11. Daniel Angst, 1 punch.....	.27
12. Philip Zimmerman, mason, 4 weaver shettles	.20
13. George Schardel, 1 old plane, candlestick...	.09
14. Henry Eckler, old iron.....	.13
15. Jacob Sausser, 1 anvil.....	.12½
16. John German, 1 anvil.....	.22
17. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 horn.....	.45
18. Benjamin Berger, buck-saw, (spansaege).....	.25
19. Henry Buechler, 2 hacksaws, square.....	.25
20. William Power, 1 lot Zug Kolben.....	.10
21. John Bonawitz, 1 draw knife.....	.28
22. Jacob Sausser, 1 draw knife, hacksaw.....	.10
23. Benjamin Berger, 1 lot old tools.....	1.25
24. John Buechler, blacksmith, 1 large draw knife	1.45
25. Henry Eckler, 1 draw knife.....	.50
26. Miss Bonawitz, 1 rip saw.....	.34
27. Jacob Ditzler, Sr., 1 iron pan.....	.50
28. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 iron pan.....	.30
29. Miss Bonawitz, 1 iron pot (tiegel).....	.12½
30. Daniel Angst, 1 iron kettle.....	.32
31. Miss Bonawitz, 1 shovel and tongues.....	.09
32. Miss Bonawitz, 1 andiron.....	.12½
33. Miss Bonawitz, 1 andiron.....	.12½
34. Miss Bonawitz, 1 iron stove.....	6.00
35. Miss Bonawitz, 1 iron kettle.....	.25
36. Miss Bonawitz, 1 iron kettle.....	.12½
37. Miss Bonawitz, 1 iron pan.....	.06
38. Miss Bonawitz, 1 scale with weights.....	.50
39. Miss Bonawitz, 1 iron pot (tiegel).....	.25
40. Miss Bonawitz, 1 cake tin (kuchenblech)...	.12½
41. Miss Bonawitz, 1 last.....	.12½
42. Miss Bonawitz, 1 tin utensil (bleckgeschin)...	.20
43. Miss Bonawitz, 1 tea kettle.....	.06
44. Miss Bonawitz, 1 coffee mill.....	.15
45. Miss Bonawitz, 1 coffee mill.....	.10
46. Miss Bonawitz, 1 wooden tub.....	.06
47. Miss Bonawitz, 1 wooden tub.....	.30
48. Miss Bonawitz, 1 wash tub.....	.06
49. Miss Bonawitz, 1 (salz mesh).....	.12½
50. John Bonawitz, 1 saw bow.....	.04
51. Benjamin Berger, 1 saw bow.....	.08

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Exhibit F. Account of Sales

recognition of a gunsmiths work or, at the least, heads the viewer in the right direction. The characteristics may not be unique to the gunsmith but when used in combination help identify his work. This study results from the hands-on examination of 20 Bonowitz rifles and the close-up photo study of

another five. In addition, six rifles in the "could be" category have been handled and examined as well. I am certain time will produce more examples as the interest in John Bonowitz becomes more widespread.

52. John Brown, 1 ramrod bar.....	.25	90. Benjamin Bonawitz, 2 baskets.....	.14
53. John Bonawitz, 1 ramrod.....	.48	91. Miss Bonawitz, 1 axe.....	.25
54. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 ramrod.....	.50	92. George Bonawitz, 2 chairs.....	.25
55. John Bonawitz, 1 ramrod.....	.53	93. Jacob Ditzler, 1 chair.....	.13
56. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 ramrod.....	.75	94. Daniel Stahl, 1 iron kettle.....	1.00
57. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 drawbar, (Zugstange).....	1.00	95. Daniel Angst, 2 pictures.....	.15
58. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 drawbar.....	1.00	96. Henry Eckler, 1 kettle with lime.....	1.16
59. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 drawbar and bench.....	6.75	97. George Bonawitz, 1 chest.....	.25
60. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 drawbar.....	2.10	98. Miss Bonawitz, 1 German trunk.....	.93
61. Miss Bonawitz, 1 spinning wheel.....	.25	99. Philip Zimmerman, 1 lot lime.....	.55
62. John Huber, 1 butter churn.....	.85	100. Daniel Stahl, 1 old saddlebag.....	.66
63. Benjamin Berger, 1 pocket book.....	.16	101. Miss Bonawitz, 1 vinegar barrel.....	.66
64. John Bonawitz, 1 pair spectacles and one book.....	.58	102. Benjamin Berger, 1 barrel with lime.....	.55
65. Jacob Kriebel, 1 pair spectacles and 1 pocket-book.....	.10	103. John Kaiser, 1 walnut table.....	1.95
66. John Kaiser, 1 pair spectacles and 1 book.....	.85	104. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 walnut table.....	.37½
67. John Bonawitz, 1 pair spectacles and 1 pair buckles.....	.25	105. John Bonawitz, 1 small table.....	.66
68. John Bonawitz, 1 pair silver buckles.....	.30	106. Henry W. Conrad, 1 glass bottle.....	.66
69. John German, 1 pair silver buckles.....	.53	107. Henry Eckler, 1 glass bottle.....	.12½
70. John German, 1 pair silver buckles.....	.32	108. Gorge Bonawitz, 2 glass bottles.....	.93
71. Thomas Kercher, 1 box old dishes.....	.18	109. Jacob Kriebel, 2 glass bottles.....	.99
72. John Garman, 1 lamp.....	.08	110. Henry Buechler, 2 glass bottles.....	.10
73. Henry Buechler, 1 lot file handles.....	.21	111. Miss Bonawitz, 1 barrel, almost new.....	.50
74. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 piece leather, (wild-leder).....	.30	112. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 barrel, old.....	.37
75. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 small lock without key.....	.66	113. Joseph ———, 1 mirror, old.....	.30
76. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 small lock without key.....	.66	114. Miss Bonawitz, 1 mirror, old.....	.12½
77. Henry Buechler, 1 small lock without key.....	.67	115. George Bonawitz, 1 iron stove with pipe.....	4.99
78. John Brown, 1 double trigger.....	.29	116. Peter Bonawitz, 1 bookcase with desk.....	8.00
79. Henry Eckler, 1 double trigger.....	1.11	117. Benjamin Berger, 1 foal.....	30.50
80. John Bonawitz, 1 lot cartridges.....	.12½	118. Michael Spankuchen, 1 quart bottle.....	.27
81. Henry Buechler, 1 chest lock.....	.66	119. Miss Bonawitz, 1 stone jug.....	.66
82. Henry Eckler, 2 pommice stones.....	.66	120. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 pint bottle.....	.17
83. Henry Eckler, 1 piece steel.....	.12½	121. Jacob Kriebel, 1 scythe with handle.....	.28
84. Daniel Angst, 1 chest.....	1.20		
85. Miss Bonawitz, 1 meat tub.....	.12½		
86. George Bonawitz, 1 meat tub.....	1.15		
87. Benjamin Bonawitz, 1 tub.....	.09		
88. John Zerbe, 1 barrel.....	.16		
89. George Bonawitz, 1 bidel.....	.25		

Exhibit F. Account of Sales (Continued)

The signature characteristics John Bonewitz used consistently on the rifles examined include the following:

Metal Work

- A specific wedding band molding found at the end of the butt plate extension. Even though the curve in the butt plate profile change through the years this molding remained constant. (Exhibit H)
- A full hinge across the patch box. (Exhibit I) Although not uncommon, the gunsmiths in the two closest schools, Lebanon and Reading, generally used a partial hinge.
- Two rivets used to secure the patch box release stud to the underside of the cover combined with the cover release button located in the middle of the butt plate. (Exhibit J)
- The use of 3 raised platforms, in the design of ½ octagon, molded in the trigger guard. (Exhibit K)
- This same ½ octagon molding used on the rear ramrod pipe extension. (Exhibit L)
- A flat ledge and raised molding at the forward lock bolt on the beveled side plate. (Exhibit M)

Carving Style

- Beautiful carving forward of the patch box finial that kept the same basic theme through out with the addition of a v shaped gouge added early on. (Exhibit N)
- An interesting scallop design carved under the cheek rest. This design varied in number from five to ten scallops and some are not as deep as others but the theme is always the same. (Exhibit O)
- A well-executed and consistent raised carving design forward of the cheek rest. (Exhibit P)



Exhibit G. Barrel Stamping

- Raised carving behind the cheek rest unique to John Bonewitz. The basic design is consistent and makes up 85% of the pattern. Each rifle has minor additions and changes that make each carving unique but identifiable as Bonewitz. (Exhibit Q)
- The sweeping feather or leaf carving found at the barrel tang and rear ram rod pipe (Exhibit R) is the signature design found most often, however, there are at least 6 early rifles with a design at the rear pipe more like that found on early Reading rifles and the tang of an early Wm. Antes rifle.
- Early rifles have a one or two line address from the toe of the butt to the trigger guard. These lines evolved into a distinct molded edge on later rifles. (Exhibit S)

Patch Box Design

- Devil humiliated by Mary, Mad Rooster or Bird Creature. (Exhibit T) The first description of this design is by far the most interesting and the subject of an ancient old world legend. This design is found on most of Bonewitz's earliest rifles.
- Sophia¹⁷ or Snowman (Exhibit U)—once again, the first description is the best. This is the pattern most often used by John Bonewitz during his lengthy career.
- Flame or Emerging Flower (Exhibit V)—this design is most often associated with Leonard Reedy, however, Bonewitz used it on 4 of the 25 rifles examined. We will never know who came up with the idea but Reedy, Bonewitz and Fichthorn Jr. all used this pattern.

During the period Bonewitz was developing his style, variations of his butt plate extension molding were in use in Lancaster, York, and Reading, although none are



Ex. H



Ex. I



Ex. J



Ex. K



Ex. L



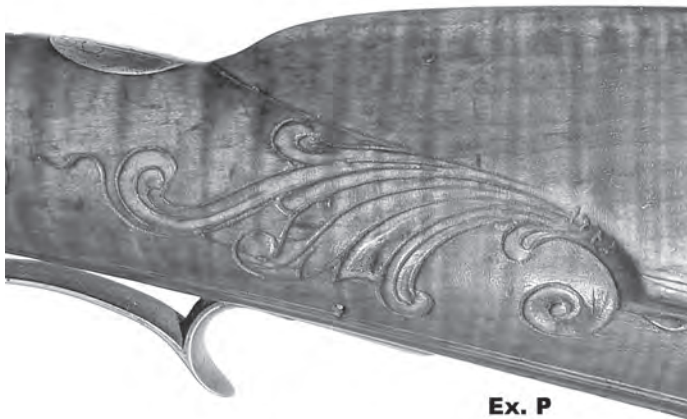
Ex. M



Ex. N



Ex. O



Ex. P



Ex. Q



Ex. R

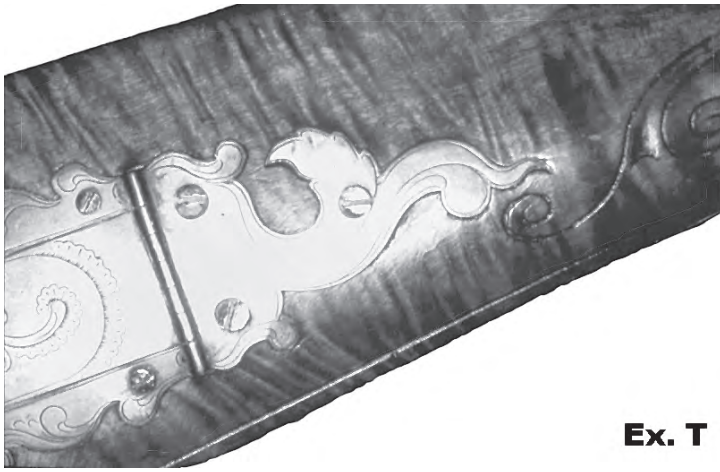


Ex. S

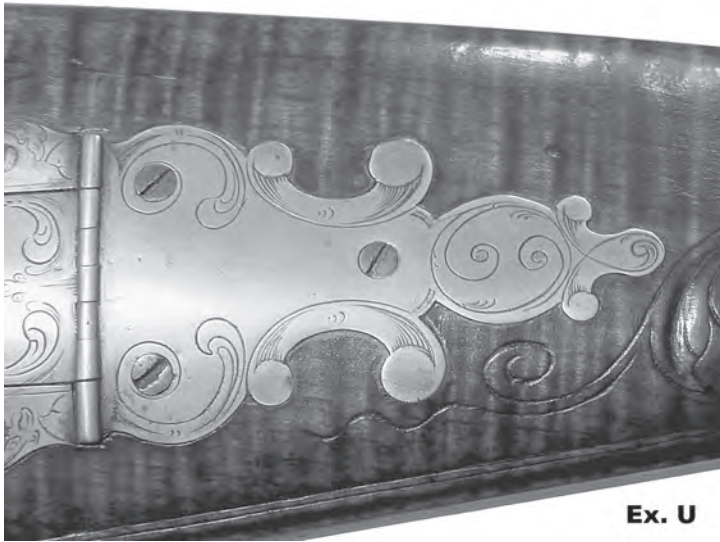
Exhibits N-S. Bonewitz Carving Style

exactly the same. The four raised ½ oct. platforms found on the trigger guard [3] and rear ram rod pipe [1] have been seen on a Lancaster and York rifle but neither example appears to pre-date Bonewitz. The side plate design in use in Reading is a close variation of the one used by Bonewitz throughout his career. The full patch box hinge used by Bonewitz was commonly found in both Lancaster and York but not in Reading and Lebanon, the two gunsmithing schools closest to Womelsdorf.

Bonewitz' use of the patch box cover release button centered on the butt plate may have come from rifles he saw by J. P. Beck or may have been an old concept from the wooden patch box cover. The two-rivet catch release may be his own innovation although one rifle attributed to the Welshans family using this reinforced design does exist. This rifle, however, does not appear to pre-date Bonewitz' earliest use of this technique. The two patch



Ex. T



Ex. U



Ex. V

Exhibits T-V. Bonewitz Patch Box Design

designs most commonly associated with Bonewitz are either his originals or those of his unknown master.

Bonewitz's raised carving behind the cheek rest seems to favor the early Christian Springs and Lancaster makers,

and with the exception of the Reading and Wm. Antes style carving found at the rear ram pipe on his earliest rifles, all else appears to be his original well executed designs.

Keep in mind Bonewitz established the majority of his signature characteristics early in his career. With so many similarities to each of the schools that existed in his developmental years (1770-1779), you start to wonder how all this came about. There is no shortage of speculative answers but the three strongest possibilities generally agreed on by knowledgeable collectors and students are as follows:

- The master gunsmith who taught John Bonewitz the trade was a highly skilled craftsman from the old world who had a direct influence on many gunsmiths in the area.
- John Bonewitz traveled from school to school as an apprentice or journeyman working for several different masters, taking the best of what he learned to develop his own style.
- The gunshop in which John Bonewitz apprenticed and/or worked as a journeyman had a lively business of repair and refurbishing of other gunsmiths' work. This could have occurred during the early years of the Revolution when all types of weapons were prepared for use against the British.

This last scenario explains a lot. As a journeyman or apprentice working under the restrictions and edicts set forth by the Committee of Safety, Bonewitz would have witnessed many different styles, patterns and examples of the early makers work—even more if he actually worked in each school as suggested in the second example. If he took the best of what he saw, it would lead to the type of rifle he produced: a little Christian Springs, a little Lancaster, a little York, a little Reading, and a lot of original Bonewitz.

Regardless of where John Bonewitz learned his skills, he learned them well. Many consider Bonewitz among the best and his work fits nicely in the category of Pennsylvania rifles Joe Kindig III calls "quite possibly our only native American art form."⁴⁸

When used together the Bonewitz signature characteristics are rather limited to him and those to whom he taught the trade, namely Leonard Reedy and Andrew Fichthorn Jr. A strong argument can be made that John Bonewitz developed a distinct school of gunsmithing in Womelsdorf and someday his work and that of his apprentices may be recognized as such.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to those collectors who graciously allowed me to review and photograph their Bonewitz rifles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Specific location of any document of interest available from author.

- Joe Kindig III, *Artistic Ingredients of the Longrifle*, 1989.
- John Bivins Jr., *Long Rifles of North Carolina*, 1968
- Joe Kindig Jr., *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*, 1960.
- James R. Johnston, *Kentucky Rifles & Pistols 1750-1850*, 1976.
- KRA, *The Kentucky Rifle—A True American Heritage in Pictures*, 1967.
- Henry Kauffman, *The Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle*, 1960.
- Capt. John G. W. Dillin, *The Kentucky Rifle*, 1924.
- Earl Ibach, *The Hub of the Tulpehocken*, 1977.
- Judge George B. Haas, *History of Pine Grove*, 1935.
- The Book of Bonewitz*, Private work of several Bonewitz family members, 1963 through 1968.
- State Printer of Penna., *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania 1895*, 1896.
- KRA bulletins: Vol. 20, No. 3; Vol. 25, No. 3; - Vol. 28, No. 1.
- Numerous documents from:
- Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
 - Pine Grove Historical Society, Pine Grove, Pa.
 - Schuylkill County Historical Society, Pottsville, Pa.
 - Berks County Historical Society, Reading, Pa.
 - Tulpehocken Settlement Historical Society, Womelsdorf, Pa.
 - Berks County Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans Court, Reading, Pa.
 - Schuylkill County Court House—Archives Section, Pottsville, Pa.

NOTES

1. A 25- to 30-year period of time following the American Revolution. Joe Kindig, Jr. first used this term in his famous book *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*, (Wilmington, Del.: George N. Hyatt, 1960).
2. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*. Private publication with numerous contributors (1960s), p. 13.
3. *Ibid.* p. 13.
4. Bureau of the Census. Pennsylvania 1810. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa. Reedy's name is spelled 'Lennert Rudy' by the census taker.
5. *Account of Sales at the Public Vendue of John Bonawitz's, Pinegrove Twp., Oct., 1828*. Schuylkill County

Historical Society, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1910), p.168-176 .

6. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*, p. 1.
7. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document. Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans' Court, Berks County, Pennsylvania.
8. Bureau of the Census. Pennsylvania 1800. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
9. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*, p. 1.
10. Berks County Deed Book, Vol. A2, p. 170.
11. Berks County Tax Records, 1758, Heidelberg Township. Microfilm roll 520. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
12. This information has been gathered from several sources in the Pennsylvania State Archives and a number of books concerning the early days of the region (see Note 14).
13. There are several early maps of this region located in the Pennsylvania State Archives and the Pennsylvania Museum in Harrisburg. A map entitled *Philadelphia, Printed by James Nevil, 1770* is a good example. Earl Ibach published a book on the region in 1977 called *The Hub of the Tulpehocken*. It contains a good deal of information on the development of Womelsdorf and the Tulpehocken Valley.
14. *Frontier Forts of Pennsylvania*. Vol. 1, (Clarence M. Busch, State Printer of Pennsylvania, 1896) *The Indian Forts of The Blue Mountains*—by H.M.M. Richards.
15. Adam Bonnawitz folder. Original Document Register of Wills/Clerk of the Orphans Court, Berks County, Pennsylvania.
16. Adam Bonnawitz folder. Original Document.
17. Adam Bonnawitz folder. Original Document.
18. Berks County Tax Records, 1779, Heidelberg Township, Berks County Historical Society, Microfilm Dept.
19. Berks County Deed Book Vol. 16, p. 503. This Indenture is dated 4/11/1796 and records the sale of 92 acres and 131 perches to George Ege Esquire by Jacob Bonewitz. The Indenture also documents the April 23, 1783 transfer of 186 acres and 88 perches to Jacob from his brothers John and George, and his sister Catharine. The original document was examined after the microfilm proved difficult to read.
20. John Bonewitz folder. Original Document.
21. Berks County Tax Records, 1780, Heidelberg Township. Microfilm roll 520. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.
22. John Bivens Jr. in his book *Longrifles of North Carolina* published by George Shumway in 1968 provides a good example of N.C.'s attempt to gather guns from the locals on page. 15. The entire chapter on Committee of Safety Gunsmiths is a great source of understanding.
23. The original document from the Continental

Congress initiating this action in November 1775 and various local Committee of Safety documents following up on the resolution exist. *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789* edited by Worthington C. Ford, 1904-1909, references the original resolution in Volume III. The Lancaster Historical Society has a similar document dated Nov. 13, 1775 pertaining to Lancaster County and specific county gunsmiths. John Bivens Jr. found North Carolina's order dated Nov. 28, 1775 in *The Colonia Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 10, p. 338.

24. Pennsylvania State Archives, Series VI, Vol. II, p. 628, transcribed from the original. Microfilm of the original on roll with numerous miscellaneous entries. The original is available by special request only.

25. The Tulpehocken Historical Society has a set of deeds for lot 42 in Womelsdorf. These deeds record the ownership of lot 42 from 1739 until 1988. A remarkable history of one piece of land!

26. The Stouch Tavern was the second public house of note in the pre-revolutionary settlement of Womelsdorf, and the original structure may have been built during the 1730s. Conrad Stouch purchased the property from Jacob Seltzer in 1785. The tavern served as the hub for the Stouch-Calder Stagecoach lines for nearly a century.

27. *Book of Bonawitz and Bonewitz*, p. 13.

28. Pennsylvania State Archives—Series VI, Vol. VIII, p. 1022.

29. Ibid, p. 873.

30. Ibid, p. 978.

31. *History of Pine Grove*, Judge George B. Haas, First printing 1935, Chapter IV and other chapters related to the history of Pine Grove Township from the 1750s until 1900.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. This article in the 1910 Schuylkill County Historical Society publication is a comparison to the value of John

Bonewitz's estate in 1828 to that of Henry Boyer who died 71 years earlier in 1757. The article is signed D.G.L. The identity of D.G.L. is unknown.

35. This survey conducted by Ross, Keyser and Moraux in 1999 is kept in the Pine Grove Historical Society files and is available for public review.

36. *History of Pine Grove*, Haas, Chapter XXVIII. The Lutheran Church Archives also contain this information.

37. Ibid.

38. John Bonewitz folder. [Original Document](#).

39. John Bonewitz folder. [Original Document](#).

40. John Bonewitz folder. [Original Document](#).

41. John Bonewitz folder. [Original Document](#).

42. John Bonewitz folder. [Original Document](#).

43. John Bonewitz folder. [Original Document](#).

44. There are several documents that exist confirming a gunsmith apprentice ended his obligation to his master at age 21. Without definite proof of each individual situation, however, the conclusion is somewhat vague. This assumption is based on the writings of the aforementioned authors and gives us a timeframe within a few years to determine reasonable dates of initial activity.

45. *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age*, Joe Kindig Jr., 1960, George N. Hyatt Publisher, Wilmington Del., No. 78, p. 209.

46. Ibid. No. 80, p. 211. Note: There are several other Bonewitz patch box covers engraved Womelsdorf or a similar variation known to the author.

47. *KRA Bulletin*, Vol. 20, No. 3. Lorentz Kafka.

48. *Artistic Ingredients of the Longrifle*, Joe Kindig III, 1989, George Shumway Publisher, York, Pa., p. 101.

