

ISAAC RIVIERE PATENT-TRACKING NUMBERS (SOMETIMES REFERRED TO ERRONEOUSLY AS “SERIAL NUMBERS”), PLUS BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

RRGML= Riviere Rifle Gun Maker London.

RPRGML= Riviere Patent Rifle Gun Maker London.

RPGML= Riviere Patent Gun Maker London.

EXCEPT AS NOTED, ALL THESE NUMBERS ARE PART OF “RIVIERE PATENT XXX”, USUALLY ON THE BARREL TANG.

A CASED PAIR OF SMALL F/L BOXLOCK TURNOFF POCKET PISTOLS WITH HIDDEN TRIGGERS. HISTORIC ARMS GALLERY, UK. “RIVIERE” ON ONE SIDE, “LONDON” ON THE OTHER. THE RARE TRADE LABEL WITH THE 121 OXFORD STREET ADDRESS, UPDATED IN INK TO “REMOVED TO No.315”. THESE ARE THE ONLY DATABLE RIVIERE FIREARMS I’VE SEEN SO FAR. THE DATING IS BASED ON THE ADDRESS CHANGE OF 1817/1818.

<https://historicarmsgallery.co.uk/sold-gallery-3-1>

and scroll down.

2.

10. Holts 11/2025 lot 592. Cased DBL gun. 16 bore.

RIVIERE LONDON on rib. "c.1825-1830"

<https://www.holtsauctioneers.com/asp/fullcatalogue.asp?salelot=A1125+++592+&refno=++238451&saletype=>

43. HutchinsonScott 11/30/2022 lot 399. DBL gun. RPGML on rib.

<https://www.hutchinsonscott.co.uk/auction/lot/lot-399---rivire-patent-an-early-19th-century-16-bore-side-by-side-double-barrel-percussion-shotgun/?lot=28238&so=0&st=&sto=0&au=41&ef=&et=&ic=False&sd=1&pp=96&pn=5&g=1>

124. Bonhams 3/27/2003 lot 180. Rifle, 20 bore. RRGML.

165. West Street. Rifle, stock + pistol grip. RRGML on barrel. 3207 on the butt, which I interpret as a collection number.

<https://antiquearmsandarmour.com/products/percussion-riviere-patent-sporting-rifle-sn-8771>

<https://www.bonhams.com/auction/26792/lot/252/a-rare-17-bore-percussion-riviere-patent-sporting-rifle-4/> "c.1825"

201,202. Christie's, date unknown. Pair of "coat" pistols. RIVIERE PATENT on barrels.

3.

219, 220. Royal Armouries XII.1461A and XII.1461B. Cased target pistols, RIVIERE LONDON on barrels. 44 bore.

227. Paul Lederer article (see below). Single target pistol.

227 on the long tang (as usual) and also on the underside of the barrel.

234. Holts 11/2025 lot 527. Rifle, 80 bore. RRGML on barrel.

<https://www.holtsauctioneers.com/asp/fullcatalogue.asp?salelot=A1125++++527+&refno=++238456&saletype=>

235. Holts 12/2014 lot 465. Cased rifle, 80 bore. RRGML barrel.

<https://www.holtsauctioneers.com/asp/fullcatalogue.asp?salelot=A1214++++465+&refno=83622&image=1>

237 & 238. Neal sale 1, Christies 11/8/1995 lot 202. Cased pair of target pistols. “c.1825”

263. Royal Armouries XII.3493. Double gun, 12 bore.

4.

280 & 281. Neal sale 2, Christies 11/9/2000 lot 163. Cased pair of “coach” pistols. “c.1825”

299. Bonhams 11/10/2022 lot 168. Rifle, circular patch box cover. 16 bore. RPRGML on barrel. “c.1825”.

<https://www.bonhams.com/auction/27784/lot/168/a-rare-16-bore-riviere-patent-percussion-target-or-sporting-rifle/>

<https://www.bonhams.com/auction/21639/lot/511/a-rare-16-bore-riviere-patent-percussion-sporting-rifle/>

SO FAR, ONLY PATENT-LOCK FIREARMS HAVE NUMBERS, WHICH ARE PATENT-TRACKING NUMBERS: ALL THESE ARE IN THE FORM "RIVIERE PATENT XXX". THERE ARE NO NUMBERS ON ANY OTHER TYPE OF FIREARM, SO I BELIEVE RIVIERE DID NOT USE SERIAL NUMBERS (WHICH APPEAR ON ALL OR ALMOST ALL OF A GUNMAKER'S PRODUCTION OVER HIS CAREER). IN PAUL LEDERER'S ARTICLE REFERENCED BELOW, HE REPORTS FINDING 17 RIVIERE FIREARMS. THE ONLY NUMBERS HE SAW WERE PATENT NUMBERS. UNLIKE SOME MAKERS' SINGLE SERIAL NUMBER FOR A PAIR, THERE MUST BE TWO CONSECUTIVE PATENT-TRACKING NUMBERS FOR PAIRS BECAUSE THERE ARE TWO SEPARATE "LOCKS".

ALL AUCTION AND DEALER LOT/PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS SO FAR SAY EITHER "c.1825" OR "c.1825-1830". THIS MERELY PARROTS THE YEAR OF THE PATENT AND IS TOTALLY WORTHLESS FOR DATING. NOBODY KNOWS HOW TO DATE THESE FIREARMS, SINCE THERE ARE NO BENCHMARKS.

ONLINE I'VE SEEN A VARIETY OF UNNUMBERED FIREARMS MARKED RIVIERE: A PAIR OF COPPER CAP OFFICERS' PISTOLS, A BRUNSWICH RIFLE, A BAR-HAMMER PEPPERBOX, AND A TURNOVER PISTOL ARE CERTAINLY BY ISAAC 2. A 4-BARREL TAP ACTION FLINTLOCK PISTOL WITH A SILVER BUTT CAP HALLMARKED FOR 1799 MUST BE BY ISAAC 1, ABOUT WHOM ALMOST NOTHING IS KNOWN. OTHER FLINTLOCK PISTOLS ARE UNCERTAIN: A CASED PAIR OF "BELT" PISTOLS MARKED "RIVIERE" ON THE LOCKS AND "LONDON" ON THE BARRELS (RIA 12/6/2019 LOT 269); A BOXLOCK POCKET PISTOL; A BRASS-FRAMED BOXLOCK BLUNDERBUSS PISTOL WITH A SPRING BAYONET; AND A NEW LAND PATTERN FLINTLOCK PISTOL (HOLTS NOVEMBER 24, 2025, LOT 461).

## ISAAC RIVIERE AND HIS GUNMAKING FAMILY.

**RIVIERE**

**Isaac 2** Son of Isaac (1), b.1781. Gunmaker, 121 Oxford St., 1809-17; 315 Oxford St., 1818-51; 28 Piccadilly, 1822-29. Granted Eng. Pat. No. 5175 (Concealed percussion lock), 1825. His lock tried and rejected by Ordnance, 1834. His trade card advertised "Patentee for the Guns without Locks." Also made percussion locks with hammers containing revolving pellet magazine. Joined the Honourable Artillery Co., 1821; became Sgt., 1829; Lieut., 1829-33; Capt. of Jäger Corps, 1833-48. Organised rifle range at Wormwood Scrubs which he leased to Honourable Artillery Co. and the Royal Victoria Rifles of which he was Corps Treasurer. His residence at Rifle Cottage, Wood Lane, Hammersmith, 1851 Census (age 69). d. and will pr. 1851 (PCC). In 1818 the

Gunmakers Co. accused him of selling guns with counterfeit marks, but did not apparently press charges through the courts.

**RIVIERE**

**Augustus** Son of Isaac (2), b. 1818. Worked for father, joined Honourable Artillery Co., 1837. Gunmaker, Union St., 1843; Bedford St., 1845 (SMW). Viewer of percussion arms to East India Co., 1848-60. d. 1894.

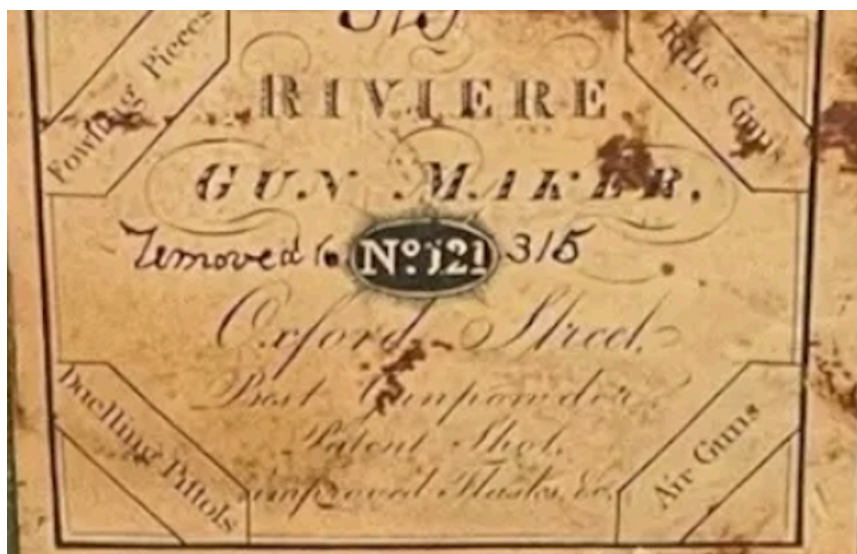
**Henry** Son of Isaac (2), b. 1833. Appr. to father. Gunmaker, 2 Davies St., Berkeley Sq., 1853-9; 8 Queens Rd., Bayswater, 1860-2; 19 Queens Rd., 1863-5; 41 Queens Rd., 1866. With F. T. Baker, granted Brit. Pat. No. 1865 (Cartridge loader), 1868. d. 1893.

**Isaac 1** Armourer, East India Co. ship, *Earl of Wycombe*, at 50s. per month, 1793-5.

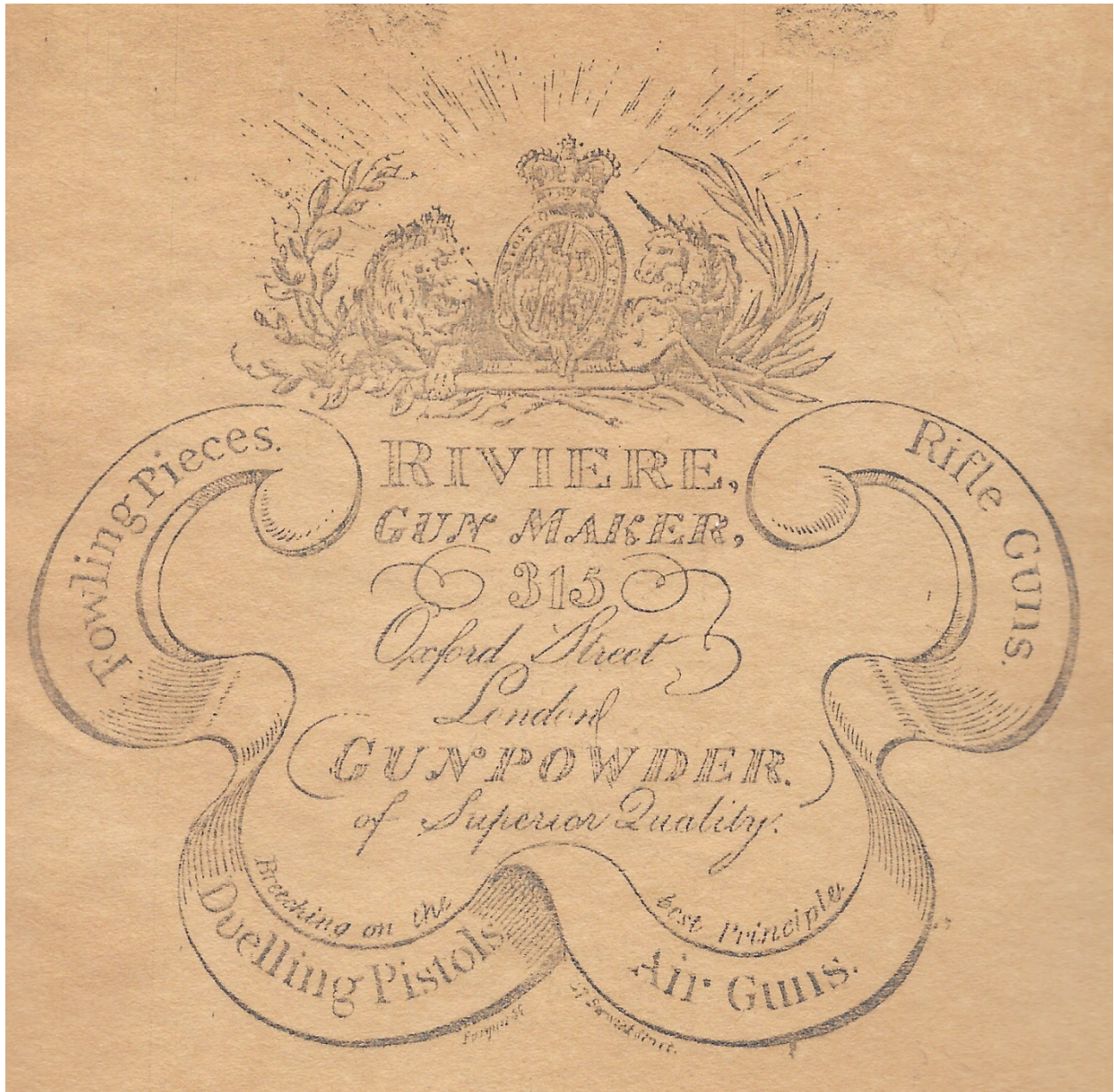
**Isaac 2** Son of Isaac (1), b. 1781. Gunmaker, 121 Oxford St., 1809-17; 315 Oxford St., 1818-51; 28 Piccadilly, 1822-9. Granted Eng. Pat. No. 5175 (Concealed percussion lock), 1825. His lock tried and rejected by Ordnance, 1834. Trade card advertised 'Patentee for the Guns without Locks'. Joined Honourable Artillery Co. 1821; became Capt. Jäger Corps, 1833-48. Had rifle range, Wormwood Scrubs; residence, Rifle Cottage, Wood Lane, Hammersmith, 1841. d. and will pr. 1851 (PCC).

**Napoleon** Son of Isaac (2). Gunsmith with father. Joined Honourable Artillery Co., 1836. d. 1840 (Tsushima).

8.



A RARE 1809-1817 121 OXFORD STREET LABEL, WITH AN UPDATE WRITTEN IN INK:  
"REMOVED TO NO. 315".



1818-1825

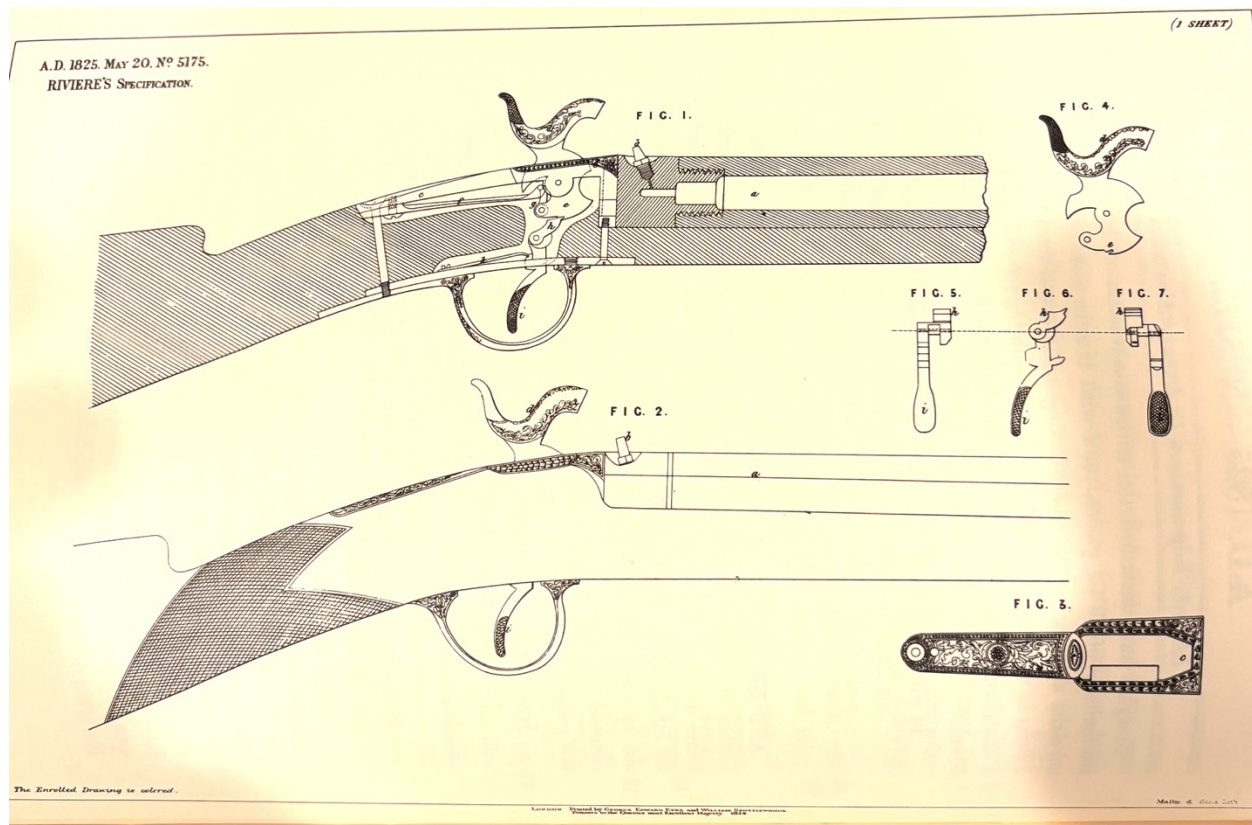


1825-1851.

BRITISH PATENT 5175, MAY 20, 1825:

“LOCKS OF FIRE-ARMS”;

“AN IMPROVED CONSTRUCTION, ARRANGEMENT, AND SIMPLIFICATION OF MACHINERY BY WHICH GUNS, PISTOLS, AND OTHER FIREARMS ARE DISCHARGED”.



*100. Isaac Riviere's concealed percussion-cap lock. Drawing from patent No. 5175 of 1825.*

HERE'S THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE PATENT:

Though I have described the entire construction of the machinery, and the form of all its pieces, yet I wish it to be understood that I do not claim all those parts as new, having used some of them before; but I claim as new the form of the piece constituting the sear and trigger. I also claim as new the attachment of the main spring to the false breech.

A STANDARD SIDELOCK ATTACHES THE ACTION'S COMPONENTS TO A REMOVABLE PLATE. #5175 ALLOWS THE ACTION TO SIT INSIDE WITHOUT SUCH A "LOCK". THE HAMMER AND MAINSPRING ARE ATTACHED ABOVE TO THE LONG BARREL TANG AND THE TRIGGER/SEAR COMBINATION IS ATTACHED BELOW TO THE TRIGGER PLATE. RIVIERE BASICALLY PATENTED AND PRODUCED AN 1820s VERSION OF THE BOXLOCK.

I THINK THE PATENT'S SUCCESS AND ITS CONTINUED FAME DERIVE FROM THE FIREARMS' WEIRD APPEARANCE AND FROM RIVIERE'S BRILLIANT ADVERTISING SLOGAN: "PATENTEE OF THE GUNS WITHOUT LOCKS." THIS PARADOX IS STILL AN EYE-CATCHER.

JUST BELOW IS A PHOTO FROM PAUL LEDERER'S ARTICLE, SHOWING THE SIMPLE INSIDES OF #227.

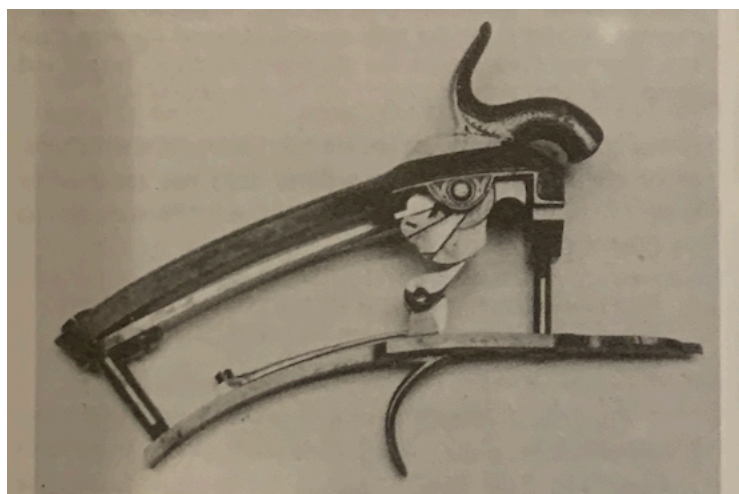


Figure 6 shows the heavily engraved iron, case-hardened, top plate, marked "Riviere Patent. 227." note the offset hammer on the left of the picture and the end of the screw which fastens the main spring to the top plate.



A FRONT-AND-BACK PHOTO OF A RIVIERE FORSYTH-STYLE PRIMER. "PIRATED" IS GOING TOO FAR, SINCE RIVIERE PUT HIS INITIAL ON IT RATHER THAN AN F. "CHALLENGING FORSYTH'S PATENT" WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE.

FORSYTH SUCCESSFULLY SUED RIVIERE IN 1819, BUT THE PATENT'S PROTECTION ENDED IN 1821.

THE PHOTOS ARE FROM D.H.L. BACK'S FORSYTH & Co PATENT GUNMAKERS 1806-1852, FIGURES 57a and 57b.

AN INTERNET SUMMARY OF A COURT CASE INVOLVING THEFT OF PISTOLS FROM RIVIERE:

<https://www.internetgunclub.com/hd/historicalresult.php?id=65245&country=United+Kingdom&area=london&firstname=&surname=&text=&currentpage=98>

JONATHAN FERGUSON'S EXCELLENT ROYAL ARMOURIES VIDEO ABOUT RIVIERE'S "GUNS WITHOUT LOCKS", FEATURING PATENT-TRACKING NUMBERS 219/220.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiZCDzgw7h4>

LITERATURE: Paul Lederer, "Isaac Riviere's Guns Without Locks". Arms Collecting Volume 38 #1 (February 2000), pages 8-12.

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