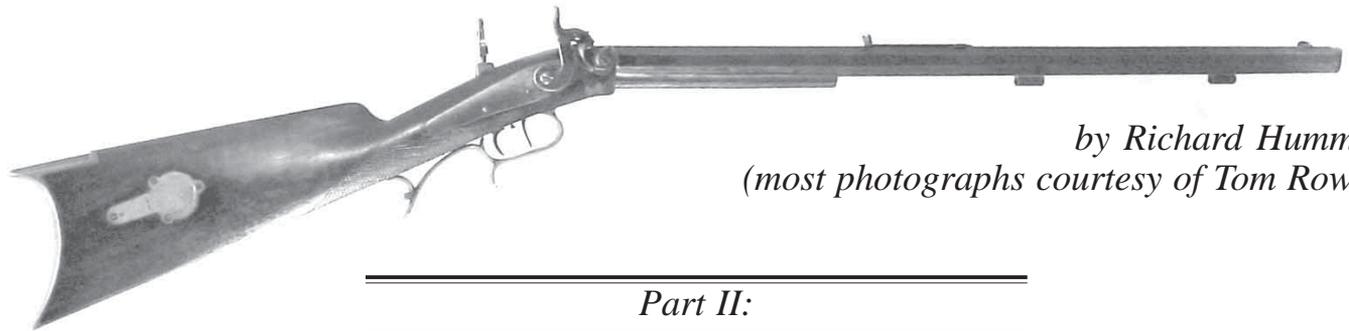


The Percussion Target Rifle for Single and Double Rest Matches



by Richard Hummel
(most photographs courtesy of Tom Rowe)

Part II:



Edwin Phillips, New York City, New York

The Rifles

New York State Target Rifles

Percussion target rifles appear in a wide range of weight classes, from the miniscule to the mammoth! Let's start with the lightest, smallest target rifle that has found its way into my heart. A dear friend's father owned this specimen for 50 years or more and I was able to adopt it only after the father's passing just last year.

Crafted by **Edwin Phillips**, New York (known active 1850-1868), this rifle's graceful lines, small caliber (.32), and lollipop tang sight nominate it as a youthful target shooter's instrument. Its lines almost duplicate those of another Edwin Phillips jewel, living at the same address, and pictured in Swinney and Rowe, v. 5, p. 386-7. (Several heavier Phillips rifles can be seen in Swinney and Rowe.) This second ex-



ample of Phillips' work on lighter-weight target rifles has a 29-inch barrel in .40 caliber. Both rifles are turned at the muzzles for bullet starters (both missing, alas).

Rowe suggests that Phillips probably catered to upscale clients who could afford engraving on their target rifles rendered by the likes of L.D. Nimschke (p. 387), although the engraving on this rifle cannot be definitely traced to Nimschke.

Both svelte jewels meet the criteria of dual-purpose hunting/target rifles: precise enough for the target range and light enough to carry afield.

Ohio Rifles

Some German-American rifle makers immigrated to America after completing their apprenticeships in Germany. Others received their training on this side of the pond. Why would a young man train as a gunsmith in Germany? Were there too many gunsmiths in Germany in the middle of the 19th century? Gunsmith apprentices were trained to produce luxury arms for the financially endowed classes. Being appointed a *Hofbuchsenmacher* to one of the many German political subdivisions was an endorsement of much significance for finding customers.





Peter A. Reinhardt, Loudonville, Ohio

But why would a German-trained gunsmith decide to immigrate to America where there was no comparable class of customers for finely finished firearms? I believe that a person did not train to be a gunsmith in order to emigrate to America, but emigrated for other reasons, e.g., political or religious, and just happened to be a gunsmith. A trained gunsmith émigré would find that the American market for firearms focused on plain-finished hunting arms and plain but precisely constructed target arms for American target shooting:

the Germanic Schuetzen game and bench-rest long-range shooting with telescopes. So the German-trained gunsmiths came to the American market.

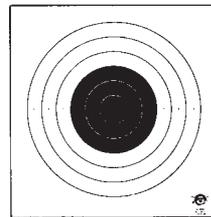
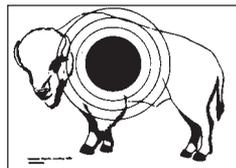
Peter A. Reinhardt, however, received his training after he came to America. Would he have entered a gunsmithing apprenticeship if he had remained in Germany? A road not traveled, forever unknown!

My knowledge of Peter Reinhardt flows from the classic reference by Ned Roberts, *The Muzzle-Loading Caplock*



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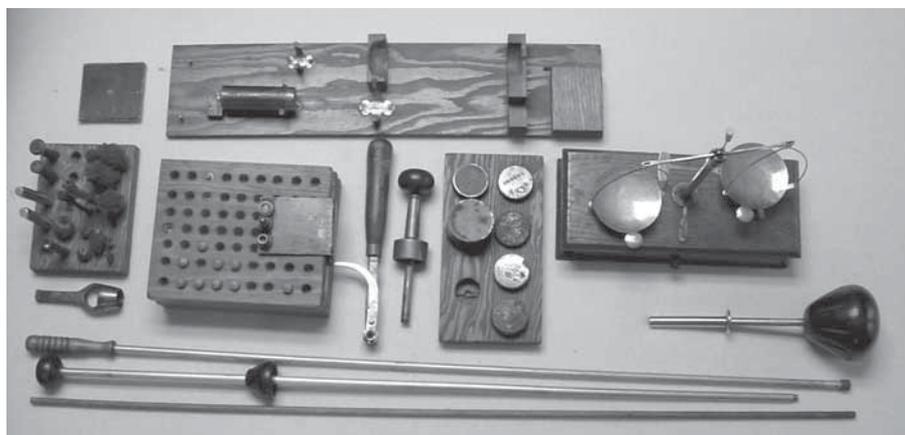
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Rifle, first published in 1940 and still in print today. (A fine remembrance by Frank Reinhardt, Peter's son, appears in *Muzzle Blasts*, Vol. 6, No. 8, April 1945). According to Roberts [Roberts, 222], Peter A. Reinhardt was born in 1827 in Neidernberg, Bavaria and immigrated to Columbus, Ohio with his parents at age 5. He reportedly learned his gunsmithing as an apprentice with Cornelius Jacobs. Reinhardt moved to Loudonville in 1849, working for a time in the gun shop of a man by the name of Sprague. Next, Reinhardt opened his own shop, operating it successfully for seven years, after which he traveled to Rochester, New York to continue his skill development under the tutelage of William Billinghamurst for several years. Thereafter, Reinhardt returned to Loudonville, reopened his shop, and commenced a career of building and shooting percussion target rifles around the target-shooting circuit of eastern America.

I recommend readers consult Roberts [Roberts, 223] for an amazing recounting of Reinhardt's successful shooting career. He made what he shot and shot what he made, and stood behind his products to the end of his career. He moved from Loudonville to Dayton in 1896, living and working there until his eventual retirement.

I have had the good fortune to "adopt" four examples of Reinhardt's excellent bench rest target rifles. A fascinating feature of Reinhardt's output is that he always marked date of manufacture on the top barrel flat of his rifles. My quartet has birth dates of: 1873, 1878, 1881, and 1888. My stable of Reinhardts includes a heavy Schuetzen-butt, bench rest rifle with long sighting tube and a complete set of loading tools, an underhammer target rifle in an original case with loading tools, minus its original telescope, an underhammer target rifle reputed to be bored for round ball shooting, and a sidehammer bench gun with long telescope and a complete set of tools. What a brood!

The Schuetzen-butt, percussion target rifle is engraved on the brass butt plate with the name of the owner, "G. Trautman" and his city of residence, Ft. Wayne. This rifle earned a place in John Hamilton and Tom Rowe's *The American Percussion Schuetzen Rifle* [Mowbray Pub., 2004. 260-61] due to its unusual features: its weight, 23 pounds; its complete set of loading tools; and its gaudy metal plating of lock, receiver, and false muzzle. The barrel is 1.43 inches across the flats, 31 inches long, and is marked with Reinhardt's name and address and the date "1873." Tom Rowe described the plating as chrome. (I prefer instead to believe it was nickel-plated a long time ago).



Schuetzen tools

The bullet mold(s) produce two-part slugs to be swaged together in dies included in the heavy wooden carrying case. The tools mimic the design of tools shown with Billinghamurst outfits, documenting some of what Reinhardt learned from Billinghamurst in Rochester. Examine the picture of the tools from left to right, top to bottom. The top row contains black cardboard squares with pin holes in the centers, suggesting they were sighting "buds," used to get the shots to land in the target's center without changing the metallic sights.

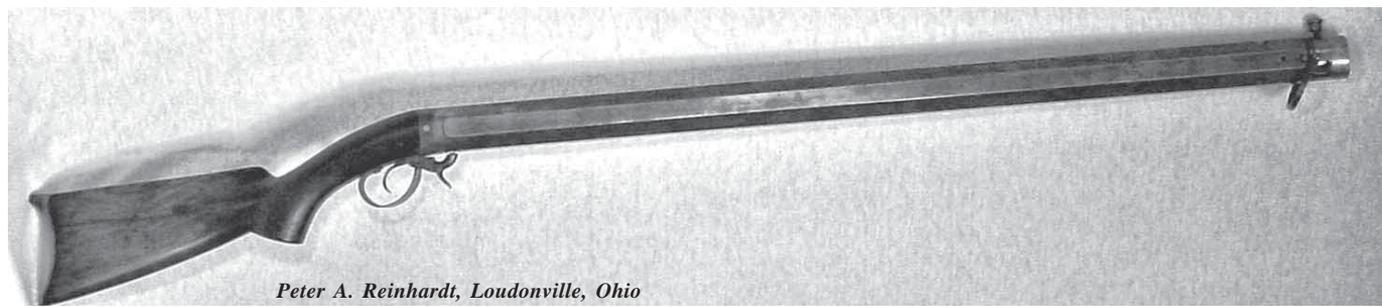
To the right of the squares is a wood base with places for loading accessories, several obviously missing. I opine that at the top a powder flask resided. The only tool present on the board is the bullet swage for the picket bullet, minus its plunger.

Starting on the second row, from the left, a wood base houses cleaning tips, swabs, brushes, etc.; then three wood bullet racks. On the right side of the bullet racks is the iron base plate with three bullet base plugs used in bullet molding.

In the middle of the second row we see the Billinghamurst-style bullet mold and the brass bullet starter with plunger. Then a wood base with percussion cap tins attached for holding various small parts as well as caps. Finishing off the second row is the small balance scales for weighing powder. The oversized palm rest is also nearby. (The palm rest is a real puzzle since the weight of the rifle certainly precluded any serious offhand, Schuetzen shooting with it. Anyone have any thoughts about this? The muzzle rest plate attached to the barrel suggests a more likely usage at a bench.)

The last row consists of the patch cutter punch and three rods, one a long bullet starter, another metal cleaning rod, and finally a hickory rod. Oh, what tantalizing tales are suggested by the contents of this container!

The first of two underhammer percussion target rifles is cased with tools for shooting. The case is full-length, al-



Peter A. Reinhardt, Loudonville, Ohio



Peter A. Reinhardt underhammer

lowing the rifle to be carried assembled. The rifle has a 31 5/8" long octagonal barrel, .50 caliber, with false muzzle machined for use with crossed paper patches. The barrel is 1.65 inches across the flats and the entire rifle weighs approximately 24 lbs. The barrel is marked with Reinhardt's name and the date 1878.

The rifle was originally equipped with a long target telescope, as attested by the threaded hole through the top and bottom tangs at the wrist and the empty dovetail slot at the muzzle. Additional tapped holes on the top barrel flat record the presence of later scope bases.



have won the great match at South Vernon, Massachusetts, in 1878-79 where he carried the top honors against shooters from 28 states – also winning the shoots at Dayton, OH, Fort Wayne, IN, Tiffin, OH, and Warren, OH. In an important match with ten of the best shots in the country he won a ten-shot event at 40 rods with this rifle.

The note continues: *Rifles with the name of P.A. Reinhardt came to be of national importance. They are now extremely rare and highly esteemed. Mr. Reinhardt also made underhammer rifles with telescopes for Berdan's Sharp Shooters.*

Well, now, if only all the above were provable! The case has the stenciled initials "S.H.B Boston" at each end, suggesting another owner who packed the cased set around to matches on the railroads of the day. The rifle clearly was campaigned long and hard.

The second underhammer rifle is slightly lighter, 20 lbs, and its barrel is but 1.55 inches across the flats and 31 1/2 inches long. It is also of .50 caliber, and its previous owner claimed it was rifled for round ball shooting with iron sights. It has a rather modern set of adjustable iron sights. Its barrel is dated 1881 and its false muzzle does not have the locking lever that the first underhammer specimen does.

The third rifle has virtually all the bells and whistles a muzzleloading target rifle could accumulate in the late 19th century. Its barrel date is 1888 and not photographed because to do so I would have to remove the full-length telescope for a clear view.

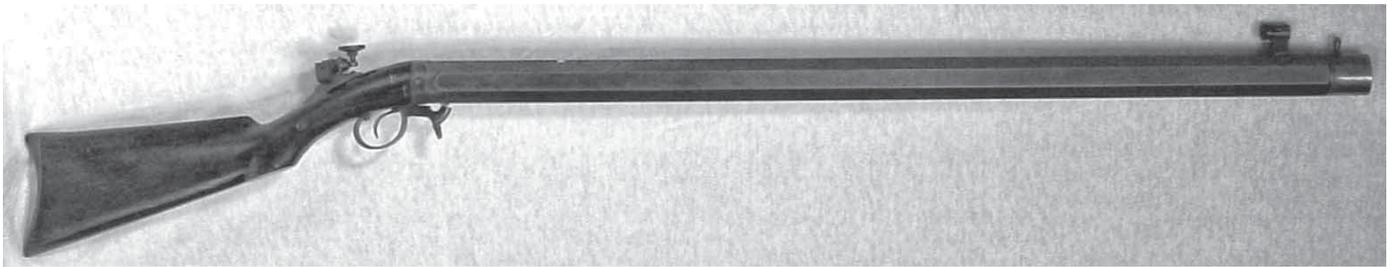
The finish and fittings on this side-hammer percussion bullet rifle reflect P.A. Reinhardt at the top of his game. His customer apparently had deep pockets, since the silver mounts are all engraved with tasteful scrolls. The probable customer's name, "D.A. Hancock" is engraved on a silver plate mounted opposite the lock. The silver palm plate on the fore end is an elegant extra touch on a rifle designed for shooting from a



Examine the picture of the tools with this rifle and you see in the top row, left to right: bullet mold for the hard nose of two-piece bullet, base for bullet molds, bullet mold for solid lead base of two-piece bullet. The second row contains bullet starter, extra bullet starter rod, and muzzle rest to be screwed to the bottom of the barrel. The third row shows the swage for compressing the two pieces of the bullet together and a nipple wrench. Pictured below the barrel is a box of paper cross patch strips and a loading board filled with prepared two-piece lead bullets.

Now, a peculiar mystery: the cased assemblage includes an old note on thin cardboard that reads, in part:

An extremely rare shooter's and collector's prize. The personal rifle of the famous gunsmith and nationally known crack shot. Peter A. Reinhardt (active 1850-1899) of Loudonville, Ashld. Co. Ohio, with which he is reputed to



Peter A. Reinhard underhammer



Peter A. Reinhardt sidehammer



bench rest. Its total weight of 16 pounds almost certainly eliminated the option of shooting it offhand.

Examine the accompanying tools housed in a sturdy, carefully crafted walnut box. Scan the picture from top to bottom and left to right. The most interesting to me is the barrel rest fixture obviously designed to be bolted vertically to the face of a shooting bench. Apparently constructed from a section of barrel threaded inside for the vertical screw adjustment, its horizontal screw adjustment is also bewitching.

The intricate iron sights for the threaded tang hole and the dovetail for the front telescope mount are adorable. The false muzzle with locking lever and bullet starter are next in the picture. The delicate, turned wooden powder funnel near the muzzle-starter is also charming.

Near the box are bullets in a wooden block. We also see a nipple wrench, and a bullet mold in a design learned from William Billinghamurst. Then there is the bronze muzzle rest. Below the bullet mold is the casting base plate for use with the mold. The final four objects are a brass cleaning rod tip, a percussion cap tin with oiled cut patches, the swage with plunger for forming the final bullet profile, and a patch-cutting die.

To be continued...

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