

The Percussion Target Rifle for Single and Double Rest Matches

by Richard Hummel
(most photographs courtesy of Tom Rowe)

Part IX:



Perkins - OH?

This 25 lb. bench rifle is .45 cal., with a false muzzle and bullet starter. The name "Perkins" is stamped on the lock plate only. That name appears in Ohio and New York addresses. It wears a full-length sight tube with no magnification. Its weight would have caused it to face the handicap of automatic score reductions in matches with 20 pound limits. Perhaps the sighting tube is a later appliance. Additional filled screw holes appear on several barrel flats, suggesting unknown sighting



equipment in its history. Its single set trigger and shotgun butt are very robust. The barrel is 32" long and 1.71" across the flats at the breech and 1.675" at the muzzle. Were there target matches restricted to rifles with iron sighting tubes only as optics? What would that have been about?

I hope a reader recognizes the "Perkins" name and/or the rifle style and speaks up. I'm listening!!





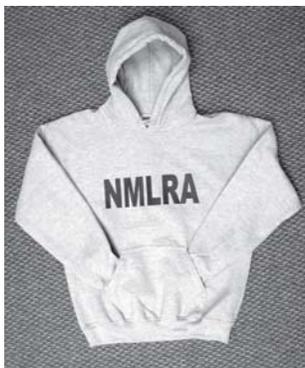
Norman Brockway – Bellows Falls, VT

This rifle came to me from a friend who purchased it from an old time collector who insisted it was crafted by Norman Brockway. He explained that Brockway was known only to sign his name to various tools he created for his rifles, but not the rifles themselves. Brockway serial numbered his rifles on the lower barrel flat near the muzzle. We find it there, on this rifle, the number “341.” The story goes that this rifle was one of a lot of 6 slug guns that my friend bought from the collector, and is the only one my friend kept (Do you notice my tear

stains on the page?). The lot included a Billingshurst, two Horace Fox pieces, and two unmarked slug guns, plus this Brockway. Oh my! My friend wanted to shoot it and commissioned Larry Thompson to do what was necessary to make it range ready. Originally the previous owner could not locate the original tools for the gun. The tools pictured are a blend of originals: mold with casting base plate, muzzle rest to be screwed to the bottom barrel flat, and one of the bullet starters, and new fabrication by Thompson: second bullet starter, swages for two-piece slug bullet, cross patch guides, etc.



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Larry Thompson also constructed a full length telescope and then machined period-correct mounts for the telescope. The total refurbishing tab was more attractive to me than it was to my friend and he graciously allowed me to adopt the resurrected rifle.

The rifle weighs 20 lbs. with false muzzle in place; it has iron stock furniture and double set triggers. The bottom barrel flat at the breech reads "Remington-Cast Steel." The barrel is 29.5" long; it measures 1.47" across the flats at the breech and 1.45" at the muzzle. Notice the substantial pitting of the barrel surface in the photo. This rifle has not lived in a dry environment and its external well-being has been neglected. The bore, however, is pristine, obviously having been carefully cleaned, and greased before taking up residence in its moist surroundings. My friend, its previous owner, recalls that he could have restored the exterior, but felt that would obliterate some of the rifle's history.

In my search of evidence that this might be a Brockway product, I confirmed Brockway's use of Remington Cast Steel barrel blanks (Roberts, *MLCLR*, p. 201). Roberts provides other details of Brockway's life and work that encompass the topic.

The telescope crafted by Larry Thompson, of Salem, OH, is a gem, as are the mounts he machined for it. The rifle originally had a sealed ignition system using Berdan primers. Larry Thompson crafted a new ignition system taking small Boxer primers of current manufacture.



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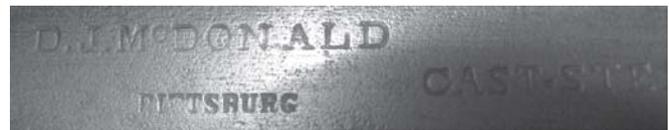
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striped. The stock furniture is iron with double set triggers and a pewter fore end. A cleaning/loading rod resides in iron thimbles.

There are two threaded holes on the top barrel flat near the breech that likely allowed attachment of a rear sight (telescope?) base. A hole in the tang would have received a lollipop disc sight. Simple sights on the barrel fore and aft are consistent with this being a hunting rifle. The horizontal index marks scribed on the top muzzle flat would have been used to adjust the front mount of a telescope.



Daniel. J. McDonald – Pittsburgh, PA

Sellers (p. 194), lists this name as an associate of William Craig in the Iron City Gunworks, 1856-57 and active 1856-1864. This 14 lb. rifle is .43 cal. with the muzzle drilled for a false muzzle, which is not present. The barrel is 34" long and has a patent hook breech; it measures 1.27" across the flats at the breech and 1.23" at the muzzle. The stock appears to be curly maple, but perhaps has been artificially

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Henry C. Palmer – Chicago, IL & St. Louis, MO

Sellers lists Palmer as active in Chicago in 1854 and then in St. Louis, Missouri 1860-1868. How delicious to have a specimen that represents either/or Illinois and Missouri. I would prefer to discover that it was born during Palmer’s Chicago sojourn, however, the crisp lines and unadorned hardware nudge me in the direction of concluding this is a product of Palmer’s St. Louis period. It appears that the rifle was left in the white, barrel, lock, and furniture. A cleaning rod rides in iron thimbles under the barrel and enters a pewter nose cap. The retainer nut on the tumbler axis connotes a higher quality lock construction.

This 12 lb. rifle is drilled for a false muzzle, which is not present, and wears a globe tang and a globe front sight. There is no provision for a rear barrel sight, suggesting this was always a dedicated target rifle.

The 30.75" barrel has a .41 cal. bore and measures 1.28" across the flats at the breech and 1.17" at the muzzle. The muzzle displays index marks to assist in adjusting front sights, perhaps a telescope.

Remington Light Target – Illion, NY

This rifle is a promising prospect yet to be vetted. I deem it “promising” because I know of no Remington catalog description of percussion sporting rifles on offer from the E. Remington firm (what have I missed?). The lock is marked “Remington” with no other marks except perhaps an illegible “Remington” stamp on the inside of the cap box lid. The rifle

is a dedicated light target rifle, I believe, because there is not provision for a rear barrel sight and the tang and front sights seem most likely suited for target contests. The single-set trigger lives in a walnut stock with German silver stock fur-





niture, including the cap box, trigger guard, butt plate, and toe plate. The fore end cap is pewter.

The rifle weighs about 8 lbs., has a 31.75" octagon-to-round barrel and a .36 cal. bore. The octagon-to-round feature is the most unusual design I

have witnessed. See in the photos the precisely milled barrel flats that remind one of the "Rigby flats" feature that enhance Ballard cartridge target rifles. Only a very well equipped shop could execute such contours, I opine. The muzzle, so nicely turned as part of the front 2/3 of the barrel, would accommodate a bullet starter easily.

We've studied the last percussion target rifle on the bottom rungs of my gun vault! There are no more herein; lots more out there among you though, deserving of your mention and display. Come on, share!

I reiterate my main point that percussion target rifles in America seem to have been crafted the breadth of the country above the Mason-Dixon line. I suspect numbers of examples were birthed and campaigned on target ranges in the South, also. I just haven't had the good fortune to encounter them. Perhaps their current custodians will read this and contribute. We hope so.

MB



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