

# 'Hog Rifle' Wrong Term for Long Rifle, Says Wilburn

## Historian And Authority Tells Of Early Rifles

**"Regretted That Such A Useful Gun Should Be Dubbed Hog-Rifle", H. C. Wilburn Points Out.**

(By H. C. Welburn)

It is not generally known, even among educated people, that Benjamin Franklin, the wise old philosopher that he was, recommended and strongly urged, on the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, that the continental forces be armed with the English long bow and arrows instead of guns that were standard equipment for European armies of that day. Nor is it generally known that, instead of following Franklin's recommendation, George Washington, the day after his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial armies, in June, 1775, advised the Congress to issue a call for ten companies of expert mountain riflemen.

Washington's recommendation was adopted. Six of these volunteer companies were raised in Pennsylvania, two in Virginia and two in Maryland. Sixty days after the call was issued, the ten companies reported on the Boston Common, carrying their individual owned rifles, accoutrements and other equipment, and were duly incorporated with the forces already assembled.

Prior to this time the different colonies had raised armed forces, and they had co-operated in several enterprises. The above mentioned call for volunteers, however, was the first effort by the newly federated states to raise armed forces for the common defense. And this action constituted the birth of the American army which had as its nucleus the ten companies of expert mountain riflemen. The important consideration, in so far as the purpose of this story is concerned, is the fact that the men of these volunteer companies were equipped with homemade long rifles forged out in backwoods blacksmith shops throughout the Appalachian Mountains which, at that time, constituted the frontier of English sponsored settlements. These guns were, therefore, the birthright and characteristic weapon of the first American army. And it was the effectiveness of these weapons, in the hands of men who knew how to use them, that made a reputation and created a respect for American infantry fire.

The reason back of Franklin's recommendation regarding the bow and arrows was that he was an academic type of person, and had gained his knowledge of warfare of that day from European history. Guns that were standard equipment for infantry of that day were, at best, a large, smooth-bore flintlock, notable, mainly for the amount of smoke and noise it could make, thus creating panic and confusion in the enemy. Generally, they were not "aimed" at any definite object, but were fired in volleys in the general direction of the approaching enemy.

On the other hand, Washington had had valuable experience on numerous scouting trips and war parties into the French territory in the Ohio valley. He had seen "expert mountain riflemen," from a vantage point behind a tree or rock, pick off a lurking enemy by a well aimed shot at a distance of one or two hundred yards, and sometimes up to four hundred yards. Washington owed his success on these trips and expeditions, in a very large degree, to his guide and assistant, Christopher Gist. It is said that Gist seldom, if ever missed a shot, whether aimed at an animal or a lurking enemy. On more than one occasion he saved his illustrious ward from drowning or freezing in the wilderness, or from an unexpected enemy.

History records the fact that as a result of Braddock's defeat (combined British and Colonial troops) by the French, at Fort Du-

quesne, now Pittsburg, in 1755, five thousand, or more, families deserted their exposed position on the Virginia frontier and settled in the Piedmont section of North Carolina and South Carolina. Among these were the Gists, the Boones, the Walkers, and many others who became famous in their new locations. It is interesting to note that Nathaniel Gist, son of Christopher Gist, soon after this, in the late 1750s, settled as a trader among the Cherokees and became the father of half-breed Sequah who was the inventor of the Cherokee alphabet and written language. Descendants of Gist, by a later white marriage, still live in the vicinity of the Cherokee Reservation and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

History also records that as a result of the deadly "aim" of the American riflemen, there resulted the wildest consternation in British officialdom. A British statesman declared on the floor of Parliament that they, the Americans, were the most prolific widow and orphan producers in the annals of history. The riflemen were trained and encouraged to pick the brilliantly uniformed officers and make them the subjects of their deadly aim. They were usually found with a small bullet hole in the center of their forehead or some other well selected vital spot.

Several of the crucial battles of the Revolution were won by reason of the effectiveness of the expert mountain riflemen. Saratoga which was fought in the fall of 1777, brought to a tragic close the British campaign in the North. It was successful to the American cause, mainly, on account of the effectiveness of Daniel Morgan and his Virginia riflemen. The defeated British then shifted their efforts to the South, and there followed the disastrous fall of Charleston and Savannah, and the almost complete subjection of South Carolina and Georgia. The victorious Cornwallis then started, in the summer of 1780, across North Carolina with the purpose of subduing this state, by expert mountain riflemen who carried their own guns and ammunition, rode their own horses, and gave their time without hope of pay or reward, except having done their duty. Ferguson and his army were completely destroyed. Cornwallis was forced to retreat from Charlotte.

On January 17, 1781, Tarleton, Cornwallis' other flanking operator, was met at Cowpens by Daniel Morgan and his riflemen and completely defeated. Cornwallis finally reached the Chesapeake at Yorktown, but not through a defeated North Carolina. Washington, who had been watching the progress of the events from his post near New York, with the help of the French navy, closed in and soon brought the campaign to a successful close.

In the battle of New Orleans on Jan. 8, 1815, twenty-six thousand British were killed in twenty-five minutes by Andrew Jackson's long riflemen, with a loss of his own forces of but eight killed and thirteen wounded.

If the frontier riflemen could have been kept continuously in the Colonial army, the conflict would in all probability, have been terminated in a much shorter time. But those hardy pioneers had little time and no patience with a slow moving army and a long drawn out campaign. What they did was done in a dash and they were soon back at home clearing their fields, building their cabins, or driving ever troublesome Indians back. In less than three weeks they had assembled at Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River (near Eliza-

bethon, Tenn.) ridden some hundred and fifty miles, mostly over wilderness trails; mopped up the enemy, and were back at their homes. Not many days later, Sevier and many of the men that had participated at Kings Mountain, were galloping down the Tennessee river in the opposite direction, to fall upon the Cherokees who had planned to massacre the settlers in their brief absence.

It was some time about the 1700 that some settlers from the Swiss Alps and from the Palatinate area of Germany began to make their appearance in what is now Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Some of these mountaineers brought with them crude, grooved barrel guns which they had learned to make and use effectively in their native land. By about 1725, a backwoods blacksmith by the name of Roesser had so improved these guns that they were in much demand by the frontiersman in his efforts to keep meat in his cabin and the lurking Indians at a safe distance. The characteristics of the Roesser guns were, a long barrel, small bore, spiral grooves inside the barrel and a close fitting bullet.

Along about 1738 some clever blacksmith who was possibly an even better marksman, discovered the idea of wrapping a piece of soft, tawolled cloth or buckskin around his bullet. This insured a closer bond for the exploding gases, prevented "leading" of the grooves by the passing bullet, and cleared the barrel from the objectionable residue left by the explosion of impure powder.

By the end of the next decade, following this simple, but tremendously valuable improvement, a number of improvements and refinements had been worked out, and makers, one or more of which formed an essential part of every frontier settlement. Most important of these improvements were: correct length of barrel; the number of grooves to give the best results; correct degree or "pitch" for the grooves in the barrel; proper form and placement of the sights; hair triggers; the correct amount of powder and weight of bullet; and finally, but not least, correct form and "hang" of the stock. It was also about this time that the settlements began to push southward and westward, and along with them the gun maker and his trade.

Thus, over a period of about a half century, these scientifically correct principles of fire arms were worked out by the slow and tedious process of trial and error. The blacksmith who could produce the best gun had the greatest number of customers and got the most praise. The individual who used the best gun, together with his own personal prowess and skill, brought in the most game, and was most effective in defending his home and that of his neighbor against the ever lurking redskin. Many times the marksman and the blacksmith argued over, and tried out proposed change and improvement. It speaks much for the American pioneer that he was able to start almost from "scratch" and produce a weapon ideally suitable for the purpose at hand. That is to supply his family with meat, defend it from enemies, and finally to win his independence from a mercenary and imperialistic mother country.

Following the purchase of the Louisiana country in 1803 and other important events in the next thirty to forty years, the western frontier erupted, and there arose a need for a different type of gun. The long, cumbersome small bore of the mountaineer was not the weapon for the hard-riding plainsman galloping after the buffalo and chasing down the Indian war parties. Saint Louis became the center of much activity and a point for outfitting westward moving settlers, every party of which needed arms. A man by the name of Haken cut down the length, enlarged the bore and made other necessary changes in the mountaineer's rifle, and thus led in the development of the famous Hawken Rifle which also had its role to play in American settlement and development. These are the guns that were carried by the great Western Rangers such as Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, and many others equally as daring, but less renowned.

Consideration of the foregoing facts might lead to the conclusion that the name, "American Rifle," would be appropriate for these guns. But it must be remembered that the modern Winchester developed directly from the old Henry Gunworks of Pennsylvania, which had its beginning as a backwoods blacksmith shop. So, that name would include the Winchester as well as other modern weapons. The consensus of opinion amongst writers on American arms is that the name, "Kentucky Rifle," is the most acceptable and appropriate. This grows out of the fact that at the time the Kentucky country was figuring so largely in American frontier activities, these guns were at the height of their development and use. The first explorers and long-hunters in this area, such as Dr. John Walker, Christopher Gist, Daniel Boone, and many others, were dependent

### SCOTT'S SCRAP BOOK

By R. J. SCOTT



upon the use of the long rifle in ground. It is to be regretted that in this "dark and bloody hunting the days of its degeneracy, that is,

after it had served its period of major usefulness, it should be dubbed, "hog-rifle." There is no known explanation of this name. It is assumed that it grew out of the fact that in its later days and its local use, it served only as a meat-getter, including hogs. This name is only local, and has never appeared in literature.

As a result of newspaper publicity given to the activities of some gun smiths in Haywood county about a year ago, some twenty-five to thirty letters of inquiry from persons in nearly every state east of the Mississippi River, except New England, were received. Every one of these inquirers wished to have one or more guns repaired, or a new one made outright by the old patterns and the methods. This reveals the fact that there is still wide spread and much interest in these guns. In all worthwhile collections of American arms, attention is given to the "Kentucky Rifle."

A reasonably representative and complete set of specimens of these guns, together with the tools and appliances used by the blacksmiths in the park region, has been made, and are now stored in several different government buildings. It is to be hoped that provision will be made for an adequate museum

## Forests Should Be Best For Color This Week-End

For two weeks now Mother Nature has been at her annual job of coloring the mountains. This week-end should show forests at their best, to forestry men who know they are talking about.

Some of the best fall views leaves right here at home had at Wagon Road Gap, Gap, Cove Creek Gap, and down through the Fines area and up the Spring road

building in which these specimens may be worked into a well sized set of exhibits that adequately portray the mounting significance of these and valuable relics of a now forgotten, stage of American history and civilization.

Note: This is being largely from memory, at a time where there is not adequate facilities; otherwise more statements might have been in a number of instances.



### Your Chance To Support In Haywood A Growing Farm Effort

## 4-H Club's PRIZE

# ON SALE

### Baby Beeves This Week-End

Premium Beef - Premium Price	
Teabone Steak	lb. \$1.00
Sirloin Steak	lb. 69c
Round Steak	lb. 50c
Prime Rib Roast	lb. 40c
Rib Roast	lb. 35c
Rib Stew	lb. 25c
Hamburger	lb. 15c

### In This Connection--

## The County Agent Says--

The stores and cafe who bought these beeves at auction in Hendersonville—paying a premium price—did so as boosters.

The prices paid went way beyond regular market values, and in placing the beef on sale, the stores must charge premium prices to avoid a considerable loss.

The prices asked simply distribute the cost of producing these prize beeves.

### The Prize Winners--

#### THE BOYS AND THEIR BEEVES

White faced Hereford raised by Reeves Ferguson, son of Sam Ferguson, on Fines Creek. Bought by the First Natinal Bank at 16 1/2 c with weight of 1047 lbs.

White faced Hereford raised by Robert Buchanan on the Jack Hipps farm in Cecil Township. Bought by Ray's at 13c with weight of 874 lbs.

Black Pole Angus raised by Wayne Stamey on Pigeon. Bought by Ray's at 13c with weight of 1044 lbs.

All of these calves graded "Choice" quality.

## WWNC CAFE

### Be A Haywood Booster

Buying a piece of this prize winning beef, puts you in the position of being a Haywood booster.

It puts you on record as believing that the farm boys and girls of Haywood are the biggest assets we have.

It puts you on record as being behind the County Agent's Office.

ENJOY EATING WHILE BOOSTING

## RAY'S Super Market | The FOOD STORE

Stores Built By Service To Haywood County

Ticonderoga is an asset to the business man: executive, salesman, clerk, stenographer—an asset to anybody who writes. Your hand and brain travel together faster with—

## TICONDEROGA

America's Favorite Pencil

The Mountaineer

Send to us for quantity quotations. Ticonderoga leads are: No. 1, very soft; No. 2, soft; No. 2-5/10, firm; No. 3, medium; No. 4, hard. Comes with standard eraser or with new Knife-edge rubber eraser tip, preferred by typists.