

# Washington State Muzzleloader's Association

January 2016 Journal

[www.wamuzzleloaders.com](http://www.wamuzzleloaders.com)



## Washington Sportsmen's Show

It was another great year at the Sportsmen's Show! Our staff of volunteers did an outstanding job and we talked with many, many fine people who are interested in our sport. I want to especially thank Harry Charowsky for bringing his living history display, and all the Cascade Mountain Men who augmented our staffing. We've got some good ideas for next year. Here is the list of folks who made this possible, please thank them the next time you see them:



Boyd Phillips	Coffee Pot	Mark Curtis	Jim Hillberg
Randy Scuka	Nina Baker	Mike Moran	Bill Sick
Dennis Dunleavy	Dakota Nash	Jenn Gray	Mike Nesbitt
Don Kerr	Steve Hohnstein	Bill Daly	Jim Haeckel
Cindy Riggs	Renita Foust	Randy King	

## General Membership Meeting, February 13<sup>th</sup>

The first General Membership Meeting for the WA State Muzzleloader's Association will be held on Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at Capitol City Rifle & Pistol Club during Rain-Dee-Voo. The time is still to be determined, but should be in the afternoon. A special notice will go out when the time is confirmed. The Executive Committee will meet first, then it will be open to the General Membership.

## WSMA Nominations and Elections

Its election time, and I don't mean the Presidential Primaries. With the new year comes a chance to elect new officers to the Executive Committee. The current (2015) slate of officers is:

*President:	Mike Moran	Director (West):	BO Brown
*Vice President:	Don Kerr	*Director (West):	Bill Daly
*Secretary/Treasurer:	Mike Nesbitt	Director (East):	Gary Sheets
*Event's Booshway:	Pete Strobel	*Director (East):	Vacant
*(Indicates positions up for election)		Director (Past Pres):	Steve Cole

All officer positions are elected for a term of one year, so all positions will be voted on. The Director positions are for a two year term, with one East side and one West Side Director being elected each year. The Past President becomes the 5<sup>th</sup> Director. If you are interested in running for an office,

contact Mike Moran at [michael.moran248@gmail.com](mailto:michael.moran248@gmail.com). Nominations will be finalized during the General Membership Meeting and Elections will be held immediately after nominations are closed. You can read a description of the duties of each office on the website under "By-Laws".

## Membership Renewals

It is that time of year again to renew your annual membership. According to the By-Laws, "Dues shall become due on January 1 of the current year, but shall not be in arrears until March 31st." For your convenience, the membership forms will be available at Rain-Dee-Voo, Spring Thaw, and the Cascade Mountain Men's Gun Show, as well as on the website and attached to the end of this Journal.

## Cascade Mountain Men's Muzzleloading Gun Show, March 12-13

WSMA will again have a booth at the CMM Gun Show at the Fairgrounds in Monroe. We are looking for volunteers to man the booth for a 2 hour shift.

### *Bill Willyums His Rifle*

By Dave Braun

The antique gun in this photo exhibits the classic lines of a J. Henry halfstock plains rifle from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Its 31 inch barrel is somewhat shorter than usual for a Henry, but that was the original length. The bore is just over .53 caliber. The wide, trade gun trigger and authentic brass tacks imply a Native American connection. The top barrel flat is stamped "J P Lower Phila ". Perhaps the distributor? The bottom of the barrel is marked "H Leman Lancaster", indicating that Mr. Henry found it more economical to outsource some of his parts rather than fabricate them in his Boulton, Pennsylvania factory. In all likelihood, this gun is an example of a contract trade rifle used somewhere on the western frontier. That's all interesting enough, but when we flip the rifle over and install its lock, things get even better.



This classic, percussion period American plains rifle is fitted with a British flint lock! For the sake of brevity, I'll simply assure you that several experienced collectors have carefully examined this rifle and concluded that the piece is in remarkably pristine condition. The barrel

was never fitted with a percussion breech or a drum and nipple. It was never shortened. There is none of the fulminate erosion typically found on old percussion firearms. All evidence indicates that the imported Brandor and Potts flint lock is original to the rifle.

That particular 150 year old lock by the way, functions better than any modern-made flint lock I have ever seen. Each “click” is still sharp, positive and loud enough to spook game. The shower of sparks is almost scary. Over the years that I have owned and demonstrated this rifle, the frizzen has never missed fire. I think the metallurgy, hardening and tempering of the steel must be close to perfect. It’s also impressive that the light, crisp trigger release of this rifle is accomplished without the use of a detent (“fly”) in the mechanism.

So what is a flint lock doing on what would otherwise have been a state of the art percussion period rifle? And what does that imply about the use of flint ignition on other late period styles, Hawken rifles for example? We know that flintlock trade fusees were manufactured late into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and this gun can clearly be characterized as a trade rifle. But American rifle makers were innovative, continually striving to surpass one another in style and function. A flint lock on an American half stock plains rifle is definitely a throwback.

I think the mystery might be explained with a scenario something like this. Maybe Mr. Henry had a contract to fill and the specifications weren’t very rigid. Maybe he had a few imported British flint locks laying around the shop and this gave him an opportunity to put the obsolete things to use. It’s certainly cheaper and less time



consuming to produce a flint breech as opposed to one of Henry’s signature percussion design, so he saved a couple bucks on a few rifles. That hand full of flint guns found their way into a contract lot of conventional Henry percussion rifles and nobody noticed or even cared. Eventually, the guns were sent west – perhaps via J. P. Lower.

I don’t expect collectors will find many other original, flintlock, halfstock plains rifles out there. I sure wouldn’t hold my breath waiting for somebody to turn up an original flint, half stock Hawken. This flintlock Henry halfstock may very well be one of a kind, or one of very few. That makes it a pretty rare piece.

But the story of this rifle isn’t finished yet. There is still the matter of . . . the inscription.

Between the trigger guard and the toe plate are crudely carved, the words: *Bill Willyums His Rifle.*

Bill Williams? You mean, *THE* “Old Bill” Williams, famous mountain man??? That’s sure not the way Old Bill spelled his name. Could it really be? Naw! Could it?

Honestly, I’ve never taken the inscription very seriously. I’ve rather thought it more like vandalism on a cool old rifle. I’ve always imagined some kid, maybe 100 years ago, playing with an old family relic. Maybe he was inspired by a book about American frontiersmen and he just got a little carried away with his pocket knife. Or maybe the piece played a role in some local legend connected to Bill Williams, that probably had no real basis in history. I’ve discounted the possibility of intentional fraud because I didn’t pay enough money for the gun. When I bought the rifle at a Cody gun show years ago, I paid the market price for a generic half stock rifle in good condition. The dealer who sold it to me didn’t seem to even notice the inscription. Why fake something like that and then not try to jack up the price? No, my favorite theory has always been the kid with the pocket knife.

And then . . . Last summer I was re-reading George Ruxton’s novel, Life in the Far West , and it got me thinking. In his final chapter, Ruxton described the scene of Old Bill Williams’ death in 1849. He specifically mentioned Bill’s rifle being among the personal items that were recovered when Williams’ body was found. Could “*Bill Willyums His Rifle*” be a period way of identifying the piece as “Bill Williams’ Rifle”, carved into the stock by the semi-literate mountaineer who picked the rifle up?

Though Life in the Far West was a work of fiction, Ruxton made a point of stressing the care he took to preserve the historical accuracy of all the background events depicted in his story. He was attentive to minor details and much of what he wrote has been corroborated by other sources. In general, George Ruxton is recognized as a reliable commentator on the lives and times of the mountain men. That being said, finding Old Bill’s rifle is just the kind of plot element you would expect in a romantic story from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The detail could easily be just a sentimental embellishment.

It’s impossible to actually prove a historical connection between our flintlock plains rifle and Old Bill Williams the mountain man. Even the circumstantial evidence is awfully thin. Any connection can however be definitively disproven, could it be shown that rifles of that style had not yet appeared in the mountains prior to Williams’ death in 1849.




Just when exactly did J. Henry start producing halfstock plains rifles? My intuition tells me that our rifle was made later, maybe in the mid to late ‘50s – or even a decade after that. It’s hard to tell. My opinion is based on a “feel”

for the overall style of the piece and I could very well be wrong. As they say: "If only this rifle could talk."

What we know for sure, is that this gun was actually *there* – somewhere in the West during a truly amazing period in our history. That knowledge makes it a genuine thrill to handle the piece, to speculate about it and to wonder. I would sincerely appreciate the insight of any collector or student of fur trade firearms who might help shed some light on the history of this very interesting antique rifle.

You are cordially invited to inspect, handle, speculate about, psychically channel and/or otherwise play with this rifle yourself, when the Ruxton Museum and Traditional Shooting Palavar comes a rendezvous near you. See you there!



**WORLD'S FOREMOST OUTLETER**  
*Hunting • Fishing • Outdoor Gear*

1600 GATEWAY BLVD. NE  
LACEY, WA 98516  
MAIN: 360.252.3500  
FAX: 360.456.6247



**Cash Manufacturing Co., Inc.**  
Scott D. Pobjoy


201 S Klein Dr, PO Box 130  
Waunakee, WI 53597

Phone/Fax: 608-849-5664  
Email: office@tdcmfg.com  
www.TDCMFG.com



**TENNESSEE VALLEY MUZZLELOADING INC.**  
*Handcrafted Rifles & Smoothbore*

#1 Assembly Street N., Natchez, MS 39120  
(601)445-5482 tvn@avsia.com



**OCTOBER COUNTRY MUZZLELOADING**  
QUALITY HORN AND LEATHER PRODUCTS FOR THE SHOOTING INDUSTRY

John and Dawn Maciosek

Mailing: P.O. Box 969, Hayden, ID 83835-0969  
Phone (208) 762-4903 • Orders 1-800-735-6348 • Fax (208) 772-9230  
www.octobercountry.com

Shipping: 6272 N. Government Way, Dalton Gardens, ID 83615



**CAREFUL LOODRS**  
SHOOT 'N STUFF

RANDY RICE, PROPRIETOR  
8018 187TH. ST CT E  
PUYALLUP, WA 98375  
(253)-318-2136  
CAREFUL-LOADER@COMCAST.NET




**THE GUN WORKS**

JOE and SUZI WILLIAMS  
(541) 741-4118  
Fax (541) 988-1097

Muzzle Loading Supplies & Guns  
Custom Building

Email: info@thegunworks.com  
247 South 2nd Street  
Springfield, OR 97477

www.thegunworks.com  
www.thegunworks.biz



# MUZZLELOADER

Historical Enterprises, LLC  
*Jason W. Galliff*

PO Box 1316  
Gallatin, TN 37066  
Office: 615-230-9853

jason@muzzleloader.net  
www.muzzleloadermagazine.com

## Muzzle Loading & More Ent.

Muzzle Loading Supplies  
Ken & Sherry Kinkaid  
Knief & Pok-a-Dot



503-390-5128 Keizer, OR, 97303  
E-mail knief@muzzleloadingandmore.com  
www.muzzleloadingandmore.com



## Many Hats Traders

Quality crafted  
mountain man chairs  
for yer outdoor, rende and camping  
needs. Keep yer powder dry.  
Bugler

Will Ury  
Draper  
2001 26th St  
Olympic WA 98512  
(360) 852-4224



## M Clothiers & Muzzleloading Supply

17801 MARINE DR.  
STANWOOD, WA 98292  
360-652-4749 FAX 360-652-3009  
Margaret Evenson marken5@frontier.com

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb 12-14 Rain-Dee-Voo, Puget Sound Free Trappers, Littlerock, WA
- Mar 12-13 Cascade Mountain Men Gun Show, Monroe Fairgrounds, WA
- Mar 18-20 Spring Thaw Rendezvous, Evergreen Muzzleloaders, Littlerock, WA
- Apr 9 WSMA Fundraising Banquet, Tacoma Sportsmen's Club, Puyallup, WA
- Apr 15-17 Sagebrush Free Trappers Rendezvous, Benton City, WA
- Apr 15-17 Trade Gun Frolic, Evergreen Muzzleloaders, Littlerock, WA
- Apr 21-24 WA Historical Gunmaker's Guild Horn Fair, Littlerock, WA
- Apr 29-May 1 Olalla Long Rifles Rendezvous, Poulsbo, WA

## WSMA Booth at Cascade Mountain Men Gunshow Volunteer List

Please contact Mike Moran at [michael.moran248@gmail.com](mailto:michael.moran248@gmail.com) to volunteer. We need a minimum of two people per shift, more are certainly welcome!

### SATURDAY, 12 March:

9:00-11:00      1  
                         2.

11:00-1:00      1.  
                         2.

1:00 – 3:00      1.  
                         2.

3:00-5:00      1.  
                         2.

### SUNDAY, 13 March:

9:00-11:00      1.  
                         2.

11:00-1:00      1.  
                         2.

1:00-3:00      1.  
                         2.

# Washington State Muzzleloaders Association

[www.wamuzzleloaders.com](http://www.wamuzzleloaders.com)

## APPLICATION TO JOIN WSMA

New   Renew

\_\_\_\_   \_\_\_\_   Individual Annual Dues (\$10.00)  
\_\_\_\_   \_\_\_\_   Family Annual Dues (\$15.00) (Head of house, spouse, children under 18, still living at home)  
\_\_\_\_   \_\_\_\_   Club Annual Dues (\$10.00)  
\_\_\_\_   \_\_\_\_   Trader Annual Dues (\$20.00). Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to WSMA and mail to PO Box 2913, Olympia, WA 98507**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletters will be sent by email unless requested otherwise.

## AREAS OF INTEREST AND PREFERENCES

Primitive: \_\_\_\_\_ Flint Rifle: \_\_\_\_\_

Target: \_\_\_\_\_ Perc. Rifle: \_\_\_\_\_

Hunting: \_\_\_\_\_ Pistol: \_\_\_\_\_

Historical: \_\_\_\_\_ Shotgun: \_\_\_\_\_

Trader: \_\_\_\_\_ Trade Gun: \_\_\_\_\_

Gun Maker: \_\_\_\_\_ Appraisal: \_\_\_\_\_