

# **Eighteenth Century American Fowlers—The First Guns Made In America**

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Amazingly overlooked, yet highly important, flintlock fowlers in Colonial America armed our forefathers with the first truly “made-in-America” guns. Doing double-duty as hunting guns and firearms for defense, they were used to put food on the table and defend against enemy soldiers.

Surprisingly little has been written about the flintlock fowlers of the settlers who colonized America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Focusing on the muskets carried by British, French, Spanish and other troops, noted authors such as M. L. Brown and Harold Peterson have documented the various foreign-made weapons used by soldiers during America’s colonial period. However, equally valued was the farmer’s American made fowling-piece, which he depended on to provide game for his family and to fend off marauding Indians. The first examples were assembled out of foreign parts and stocked with whatever wood was available. By the end of the eighteenth century, facilities for producing iron and steel as well as the capabilities of American gunsmiths to craft an entire firearm, had been developed. However it remained far more cost and time-efficient in making guns to use recycled parts or purchase new parts from Europe. Fowlers produced in the eighteenth century constitute the first guns made in America; the study of how they were made and used is a significant part of our history.

Farmers in the agricultural eighteenth century often had to rely on their American built fowlers and the great number of arms in use is obvious because the majority of the people were living on farms. Only five percent of the people in America in 1750 lived in cities, none of which exceeded sixteen thousand.<sup>(1)</sup> Immigrants sought land, creating a pattern of settlement throughout the colonies of rural farmsteads. The exception to this style of expansion was found in the south where large plantations were created to grow sugarcane and rice. In the north the pattern of individual farmsteads spreading out over the countryside and advancing in a westerly direction provided a great demand for fowlers for hunting and defense. The wide extent of gun ownership in America in the mid-1700s is reflected in a statement by the Governor of Virginia, Sir Jeffery Amherst, who wrote in 1759, “Most people in North America have arms of their own”.<sup>(2)</sup>



These individually crafted fowlers varied in construction from plain to elaborate, rarely equaling the workmanship of their European counterparts, yet today are greatly prized for their historical interest and sometimes for their folk art appearance. Fowlers from five different regions in America are identified in this talk and serve to illustrate an important style of firearms from our colonial past.

In America during the eighteenth century, the fabrication of firearms developed dramatically. Early in the century there were few gunsmiths and the majority of the weapons were imported from overseas, but by the end of the 1700s the number of craftsmen increased and their capabilities grew to the extent that complete guns were being fashioned.<sup>(3)</sup> Scarce examples from the late 1600s and early 1700s show that arms-making in America at that time consisted mainly of assembling old or salvaged parts. Only by the late eighteenth century did materials become available and the expertise of gunsmiths increase enough to enable them to fabricate a gun in its entirety. Even late in the century though, gunsmiths found it quicker and less expensive to purchase gun parts from Europe instead of making their own. Exceptions exist, as shown by the guns made by members of the Hills family in Goshen, Connecticut. They sometimes manufactured all their own parts, including the lock and the barrel.

The population of Colonial America increased from 250,000 people, mostly along the Atlantic Seaboard, at the start of the eighteenth century, to 5,000,000 inhabitants by the end of the century.<sup>(4)</sup> This rapid explosion of settlers moving

westward created a great demand for weapons, and European-style fowlers, with long barrels and flintlocks, were copied to fill the need. These guns constituted a civilian arm, the counterpart of today's shotgun, and although designed for hunting they were often pressed into military use. By comparison, the musket made for war consisted of a sturdy stock and a heavy barrel fitted for a bayonet, built to withstand the rigors of combat.

The distinction between fowlers and muskets in the eighteenth century was not always obvious. Those manufactured from existing parts shared a common appearance often combining aspects of both fowler and musket. In times of Indian raids or war the family fowling-piece served the need for a fighting gun.

Fowlers are an important part of our heritage and they represent the first style of gun manufactured in America. Gunsmiths who settled in one section of the country crafted fowlers that were similar to other guns being made in the same area. The following groups of fowlers constitute five different styles of guns each with its own distinctive appearance, plus a sixth classification for arms whose architecture is not identifiable with any specific region:

1. New England Fowlers
2. Club Butt Fowlers
3. Hudson Valley Fowlers
4. British Style Fowlers
5. Kentucky Fowlers
6. One-of-a-kind Fowlers.

#### NEW ENGLAND FOWLERS

New England fowlers make up the largest group of guns, exhibiting considerable French influence in their stock design and their hardware. The stocks have a rounded drop to the stock that was copied from French fowlers and is often referred to as a "Roman Nose" profile.

#### CLUB BUTT FOWLERS

Club Butt fowlers were manufactured in Massachusetts and possibly Rhode Island. They have a decidedly convex curve to the underside of the buttstock. This profile was copied from examples of European guns dating back to examples as early as the 1657 Model Austrian matchlock.

#### HUDSON VALLEY FOWLERS

Collectors have long admired guns manufactured in the Hudson Valley that follow Dutch designs. These large guns, often five or six feet in length, are easily recognized due to their size and hardware which is similar to the seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch guns used for waterfowling.

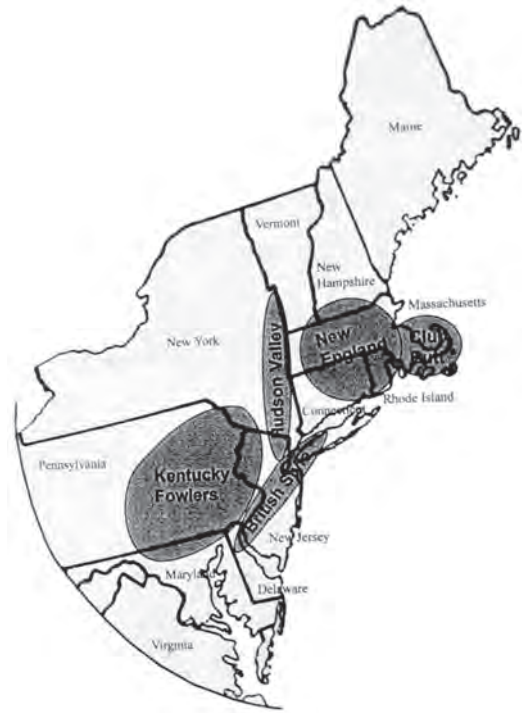


Figure 1. Map showing the approximate geographical locations of the five identifiable groups of eighteenth century fowlers.

#### BRITISH STYLE FOWLERS

Another group of long guns exhibits characteristics of both British fowlers and muskets. These guns with a stock profile similar to British sporting guns of the eighteenth century are also large guns, from five to six feet in length. Their buttstocks have the appearance of a British Brown Bess including the swell of the stock at the rear ramrod thimble. Only a few were signed, making the majority impossible to trace with certainty to any known locality. Wester White, a recognized authority in the arms field, concludes many examples having a large shell-like carving on the stock or at the barrel tang were made in New York City. Since they could also have been made in the gun shops of other large cities, and several are marked Philadelphia, it is more accurate to refer to them from their appearance rather than to a known geographical locality, simply calling them British style fowlers.

#### KENTUCKY FOWLERS

Still another group of guns distinguished by their appearance are those made by Kentucky rifle gunsmiths. In this instance, collectors are fortunate in that many examples have survived, examples that are also signed by the gunsmith. The same gunsmiths that made rifles in Pennsylvania also built fowlers, creating the need for a category designated as Kentucky fowlers.

#### ONE-OF-A-KIND FOWLERS

Finally, there are those one-of-a-kind specimens that defy classification. They are unusual guns that do not fall into any

specific category. They may be made up of used parts and often cannot be specifically identified either as musket or fowler. This creates a catch-all group in which each gun is noted for its individuality rather than its similarity to any other gun. This miscellaneous group includes guns whose design prevents inclusion in any of the individual categories, yet they are worthy fowlers for any serious collection.

The majority of the fowlers in four of the groups were constructed in the eighteenth century. Construction of New England and Kentucky fowlers continued undiminished into the first part of the nineteenth century.

Two groups of guns not included in this discussion are rifles and Indian trade guns. By definition, a rifle has grooves cut into the bore of the barrel and is loaded with a single ball rather than shot. The second group of guns not included, "Indian Trade Guns", were imported into America to be used for bartering with the Indians. As early as 1624, the Dutch in Albany were trading guns for beaver pelts with the Mohawk Indians.<sup>65</sup> Because early Indian trade guns were made in Europe they are excluded from our study, but guns restocked in America from used parts of trade guns are considered American made and therefore are included in the group designated One-of-a-kind fowlers.

#### NEW ENGLAND FOWLERS

Of all the American fowlers extant, there are more New England fowlers than any other type. The New England guns vary in design more than those in the other categories because they were produced by a greater number of gunmakers over a longer time period and spanned a larger geographical area.

Many New England fowlers have barrel lengths that range from 44 inches to 52 inches, and buttstocks that curve downward following the design of French guns after c.1720.<sup>66</sup> The lower edge is concave and the comb convex, creating a downward curved buttstock referred to as the "Roman nose" design. Factories at Tulle, Saint-Etienne and Charleville produced guns, destined for New France, whose characteristics provided a pattern for gunsmiths in New England to copy.

In addition to copying French guns, gunsmiths used Dutch guns for examples to imitate. A Dutch gunsmith from

Amsterdam who signed his name on the bevel on his locks "H. Sleur" (Clamer Hendrick Sleur 1699-1756), made guns with vinelike tendrils carved around the barrel tang, at the finial of the triggerguard and at the rear ramrod pipe. This style of carving was copied on New England fowlers, particularly as a decoration at the barrel tang, where his trefoil pattern is often seen. Carving at the wrist of the buttstock on the Sleur guns is distinctive and similar to carving appearing on some New England fowlers such as those by Phineas Sawyer, Welcome Mathewson and others. One long time collector of New England guns, Frank Klay, has seen many guns signed H. Sleur, which he believes were imported to Boston as early as 1730, serving as early examples for New England gunsmiths.

In Merrill Lindsay's book titled *The New England Gun* are listed many locations of gunsmiths in New England.

"There were several centers of colonial gunsmithing in New England. The largest by far was in Boston and the suburban Boston area ranging roughly to the semicircle of today's Route 128. Going west there were many gun-making shops and even small factories in the Worcester-Sutton area. Still farther west there is the complex of gun-making communities running up the Connecticut Valley".<sup>67</sup>

In western Connecticut, Medad Hills and John Hills had their gun-making business and there were also gunsmiths in the other New England colonies including Rhode Island.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF GUNSMITHS AND ARMS MANUFACTURERS IN NEW ENGLAND.



Figure 3. Distribution of Gunsmiths and Arms Manufacturers in New England 1770-1870. From *Arms Makers of the Connecticut Valley*, by Felicia Johnson Deyrup, 1948.



Figure 2. A New England fowler with a typical long barrel.

## CLUB BUTT FOWLERS

Club butt fowlers have a distinctively shaped stock and are aptly named for the unusually large section at the butt. The heavy convex form of the underside of the stock is traceable to early European arms.<sup>(8)</sup> This style is seen on military matchlock guns preceding the flintlock era as viewed on the Austrian musket, (model of 1657) Figure 5.

The oddly bowed contour of American club butt fowlers was derived from the design of the European weapons. Imports with club butt stocks from England, Liege, and France served as patterns for versions, which were mostly indigenous to eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Some collectors call them “Marshfield” fowlers attributing their origins to an area around Marshfield, south of Boston, near Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Fowlers of this form were produced over a long period of time, from the last quarter of the seventeenth century until early in the nineteenth century. There were fowling pieces made late in the eighteenth century with post-Revolutionary War era British Brown Bess flintlocks as well as an occasional very late club butt fowler originally manufactured with a percussion lock.

One style of club butt gun is commonly referred to as a Buccaneer gun. It was named for Indians called “Boucaniers” who lived on islands in the Caribbean Sea where they smoke or boucaner their meat on “grills placed in a hut called boucan” from which they derived their name. In 1724,

Reverend Father Labat was one of the first to use the term Buccaneer Musket in America, stating this gun was so called “because it is the boucaniers and the hunters of San-Domingo Island who made it popular”.<sup>(9)</sup>

The early Buccaneer gun was referred to as a musket, although it differed only slightly from later fowlers. It featured a heavy slab sided butt section and a barrel from four to five feet long. This type of gun was used on sailing ships beginning in the late seventeenth century and exported to the French Islands in the Caribbean, Louisiana and Nova Scotia. Buccaneer Muskets were very popular until 1749, the year in which a French Navy report proposed that their manufacture be discontinued.

In *Colonial Frontier Guns* by T. M. Hamilton, there are two line drawings of both sizes of Buccaneer guns used in the French Navy with barrel lengths of 55 and 51 inches, Figure 6.<sup>(10)</sup>

There is also a buccaneer gun shown in Hamilton’s book that has a very deep cut to the top of the buttstock where it joins the wrist. The popularly accepted idea of the purpose of guns containing this deep cleft is that they were produced for trade to African chiefs for female slaves and were therefore nicknamed “female buccaneers”.

Although the French Navy discontinued the use of Buccaneer guns in the middle of the eighteenth century, some manufacturers continued to produce this style of gun. There is a letter in the *Journal of the Historical Firearms Society of South Africa*, Vol. 4, No. 5, (June 1968) from Captain Leo Milligan in Australia to an individual in Pretoria, South Africa.

The letter states the “Fs Dumouline & Co. were still in business, have been making firearms since 1849 and has made the guns illustrated in their catalog for the African trade well into the twentieth century, until 1925 in fact”.

Collectors should be alert to the fact that these lesser quality club butt fowlers produced for the African trade during the early twentieth century continue to find their way

to the marketplace. A gun examined several years ago was easily identified as a foreign-made African trade gun by the overall rough appearance of the gun and very late-style French lock.

A very different feature incorporated on some club butt fowlers is a brass nose cap from three to four inches long, fastened with a pin through a barrel key at the muzzle. These long nose caps are very distinctive and indicate



Figure 4. A Club Butt fowler with the distinctive heavy buttstock.

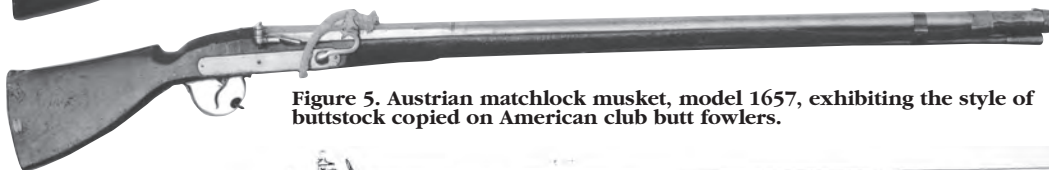


Figure 5. Austrian matchlock musket, model 1657, exhibiting the style of buttstock copied on American club butt fowlers.

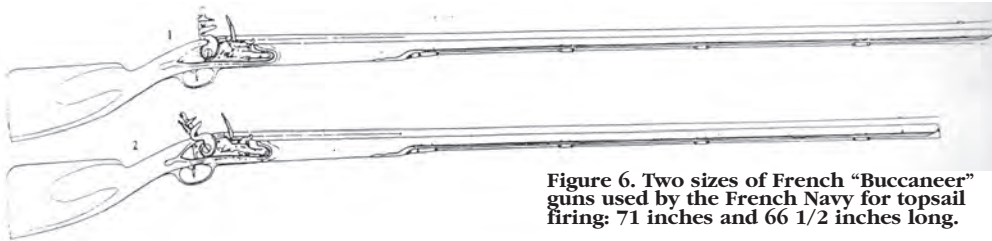


Figure 6. Two sizes of French “Buccaneer” guns used by the French Navy for topsail firing: 71 inches and 66 1/2 inches long.



Figure 7. Nose cap used on some Club Butt fowlers.

fowlers that may have been manufactured in the same shop or at least in the same vicinity.

### HUDSON VALLEY FOWLERS

Hudson Valley fowlers have always been highly prized for the attractive carving of their stocks, engraving on the brass hardware, and dramatic overall length. Their Dutch origins in America began with Henry Hudson's early trip up an uncharted river in search of a new route to China. In September of 1609, he sailed the *The Half Moon* on a strange estuary later to bear his name and this exploration was the beginning of the Dutch influence in America. A merchant company, the Dutch West India Company founded a colony at New Netherlands (New York) in 1609.<sup>(11)</sup> In 1664, the Dutch lost political control of the New Netherlands to England, but their cultural domination continued for many years. In rural areas and in towns such as Albany, the Dutch language was spoken well into the nineteenth century, surviving partly through its use in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>(12)</sup> The Dutch presence along the Hudson River was manifested in architecture, art, furniture, style of living, and of course, in the Hudson Valley fowler derived from earlier Dutch guns.

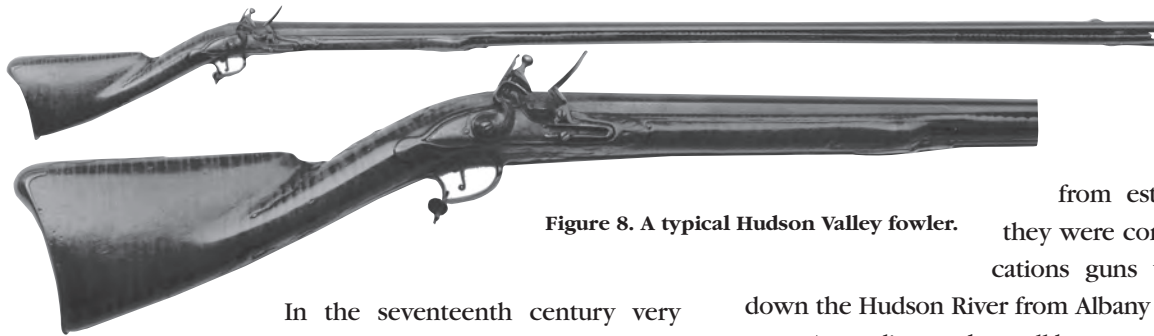


Figure 8. A typical Hudson Valley fowler.

In the seventeenth century very long guns were developed in the Netherlands for hunting waterfowl in rivers and marshes. Swans and geese were often found in marshes and along the shore of the Zuiderzee. In "July and August when the birds molted and were thus unable to fly, they would be driven together by boats, after which a mass-killing took place."<sup>(13)</sup>

When the Dutch immigrated to America it was natural for them to bring their long waterfowlers with them. An early example of the importation of a fowler comes from Jan Piet Puype's books on the Visser collection, one volume of which quotes the following letter credited to Wester A. White:

...a letter received in 1651 by Jon Baptist van Rensselaer, when he had just become director of Rensselaerswyck (now Albany, New York) from his brother in Amsterdam, advising him that he was being sent "...a gun having a barrel 5 feet long, made here by Abram Volckertsz...I hear from mother that you ordered a gun from Jan Cnoop, which seems (to have) a little too wide a bore; otherwise it is very good."<sup>(14)</sup>

The popularity of these waterfowlers in America is shown by their wide use not only on the Hudson River but down into Virginia, as attested to in accounts of Virginia gunsmith James

Geddy. He advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* that he was offering "Fowling pieces, of several Sorts and Sizes". In 1738 his ad read, "Gentlemen and Others, may be supply'd by the Subscriber in Williamsburg, with neat Fowling-Pieces, and large Guns fit for killing Wild-Fowl in Rivers, at a reasonable rate."<sup>(15)</sup> His reference to a gun brought to him in 1739 for a new lock and stock refers to a long barreled waterfowler.

"About Six Months Since, a long Gun, about 6 or 7 feet in the Barrel, was brought by a young Gentleman of Gloucester County, to me, the Subscriber, in Williamsburg, to be Stock'd and Lock'd; and as I have some Reason to believe, that the Person who brought it is dead, and am desirous the right Owner should (sic) have it..."<sup>(16)</sup>

Examining Hudson Valley fowlers today indicates the long barreled guns in America followed the characteristics of the Dutch waterfowlers, which had fine carving on the stocks, heavily chiseled patterns on the triggerguard, and escutcheons, and sideplates with openwork of a serpentine pattern. Although American gunsmiths copied these features when crafting their fowlers, they were unable to equal European expertise and therefore American examples are often executed

more crudely. The makers of Hudson Valley fowlers did not sign their guns, preventing researchers

from establishing exactly where they were constructed. There are indications guns were produced up and down the Hudson River from Albany to Phillips Manor.

According to the well-known collector and dealer Glode Requa, the first American Hudson Valley fowlers date from about 1700 until production ceased around the time of the Revolutionary War.

How many Hudson Valley fowlers have survived? It is difficult to estimate the number because so many collectors and museums have individual examples in their collections. Glode Requa, who has lived in the Hudson Valley all his life, estimates he has handled seventy-five to one hundred of these attractive pieces in his lifetime. Anthony Darling wrote, "probably less than 300 fowlers—in any condition—have survived".

### BRITISH STYLE FOWLERS

The classification of British style fowlers evolved from the examination of eighteenth century American fowlers that were similar to Hudson Valley guns, but whose shape was decidedly different. They were large like Hudson Valley fowlers and obviously used in the same manner for waterfowling, but they exhibited the lines and hardware of British sporting guns rather than Dutch guns.

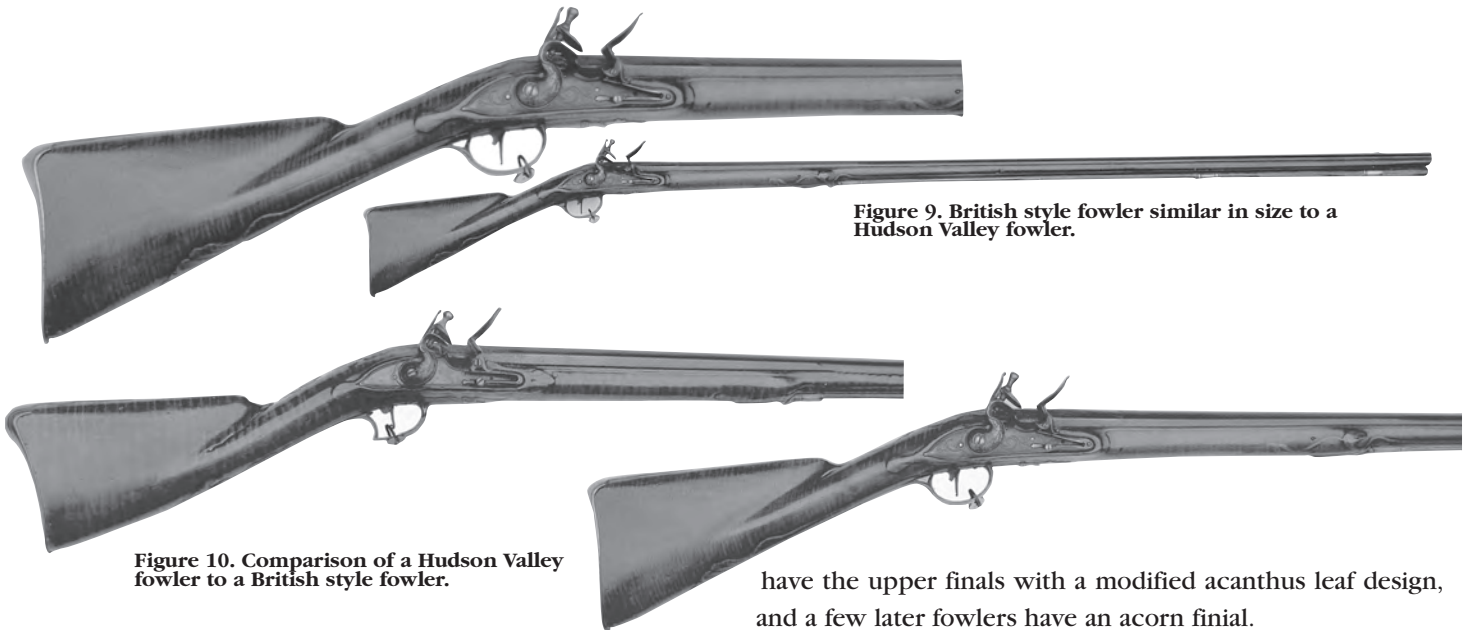


Figure 9. British style fowler similar in size to a Hudson Valley fowler.

Figure 10. Comparison of a Hudson Valley fowler to a British style fowler.

In this comparison the underside of the Hudson Valley buttstock is convex and the top of the butt has a horizontal line, the British style fowlers have a butt on which the top and bottom form straight lines slanting slightly downward, Figure 10. The hardware used on the British style guns has features common to English guns as opposed to Hudson Valley fowlers that are very Dutch style in appearance. A comparison of buttplate tangs, triggerguards, and sideplates is shown in Figures 11, 12, and 13.

The Hudson Valley triggerguards are very ornate, frequently with the raised area of the stock around the trigger-guard carved with a leaf pattern at both ends. The British style triggerguards are simpler. Most British style fowlers

have the upper finals with a modified acanthus leaf design, and a few later fowlers have an acorn finial.

The Dutch style tangs on the buttplates of Hudson Valley guns are designed with a series of lobes and the barrel tangs are surrounded with carving. The British style fowlers have simpler, pointed tangs on their buttplates and occasionally have a modified shell pattern at the barrel tang.

More than half of the Hudson Valley fowlers have open-work sideplates with vine and dragon designs; the remainder were made with triangular sideplates. Most British style fowlers have triangular sideplates.

Many British style fowlers have some carving, usually a shell pattern, at the barrel tang, rear ramrod pipe or trigger-guard. As mentioned previously, Wester White feels this shell pattern of carving was used on guns made in or around the New York City area.

Maker's names are absent on most British style fowlers, which makes tracing their history difficult. There are three fowlers known, which were made in Philadelphia and signed. The signature of "Perkin" on the lockplate and "Perkin Philada" on the barrel of one fowler, and "Perkin-Coutty" on the lock of

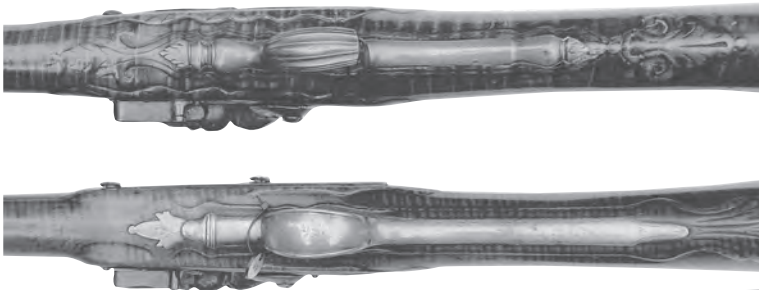


Figure 11. Hudson Valley and British style triggerguards.

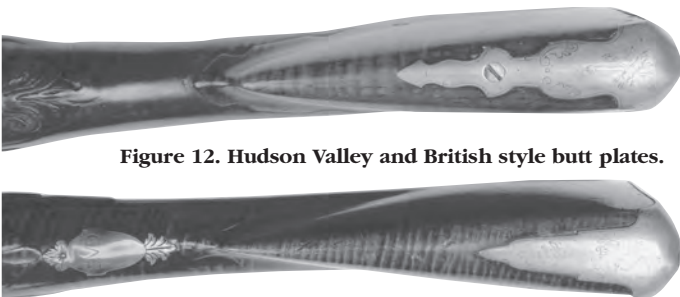


Figure 12. Hudson Valley and British style butt plates.

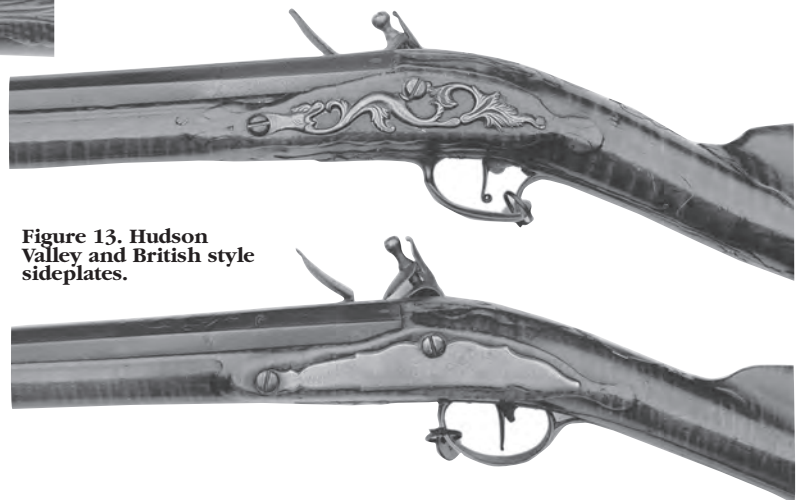


Figure 13. Hudson Valley and British style sideplates.

the second fowler identifies the maker and location. Joseph Perkins is listed in Philadelphia from 1780 to 1793 and was in partnership with Coutty in 1781.<sup>(17)</sup> A third fowler is signed “Miles” on the lock and “Philad<sup>a</sup> Proved” on the barrel. This is a late eighteenth century fowler as the maker John Miles is listed as working in Philadelphia from 1790 to 1808.<sup>(18)</sup> These signed waterfowlers are extremely valuable as documentation of the manufacture of British style fowlers in Philadelphia and suggest that gunmakers in other large colonial cities could have produced waterfowlers besides those made in New York.

American made “British style fowlers” were closely copied from British guns that were imported from England, and the two are often difficult to differentiate from each other. Usually the carving is more sophisticated, the hardware more elaborate, and the engraving finer on the British guns. For instance, shell carving at the barrel tang is usually better executed on the British fowlers and the lines of the engraving have a grander style. It is only after the examination of a large number of guns that these differences become clear to the collector. Adding to the confusion is that American made guns often used British locks and barrels so sometimes the only difference between American and British waterfowlers is found in the stocking, the carving, and the finish. A British made waterfowler is pictured to show how difficult it is to separate American made guns from their English counterparts, Figure 14.

An early British waterfowler by John Nicholes of Oxford who worked from 1730 to 1775. The fine engraving on the lock, sideplate and buttplate was better executed than American engraving. Also, the shell carving at the barrel tang has a more refined appearance than American carving, Figure 15.

Most American made waterfowlers were crafted in the middle of the eighteenth century but some continued to be made until the end of the 1700s; a few were produced as late as the early nineteenth century. Altogether the British style waterfowlers are fewer in number than Hudson Valley waterfowlers, but they are equally sought after by collectors.

#### KENTUCKY FOWLERS

During the eighteenth century, Philadelphia was America’s largest city and an important immigration port. It was the first home in America for many gunsmiths and related tradesmen skilled at gunmaking. But it was not until the middle of the century that gunsmiths who migrated into Pennsylvania’s Lancaster County, Berks County, Bucks County, and Northhampton County began developing a new form of gun that would eventually become known as the “Kentucky Rifle” although it was originally built in Pennsylvania. Some of the earliest of these guns had wooden patchbox covers following the style of European weapons. These patchboxes later evolved into the uniquely American brass mounted patchbox. The vast majority of Kentucky rifles and fowlers were produced after the Revolutionary War, reaching their “golden age” during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Fortunately many of these truly artistic guns were signed by their makers, Figure 16.

The definition of a Kentucky rifle is long barreled rifle, artistically manufactured by hand, that shoots a patched ball, has an octagonal barrel, and a maple stock, which frequently has a patchbox. By contrast, a Kentucky fowler is described as a gun having the same graceful Kentucky-style lines, but with a thin walled octagonal to round barrel without rifling and a butt that normally does not contain a patchbox. In addition to these more obvious differences there are four other features



Figure 14. A British Waterfowler.

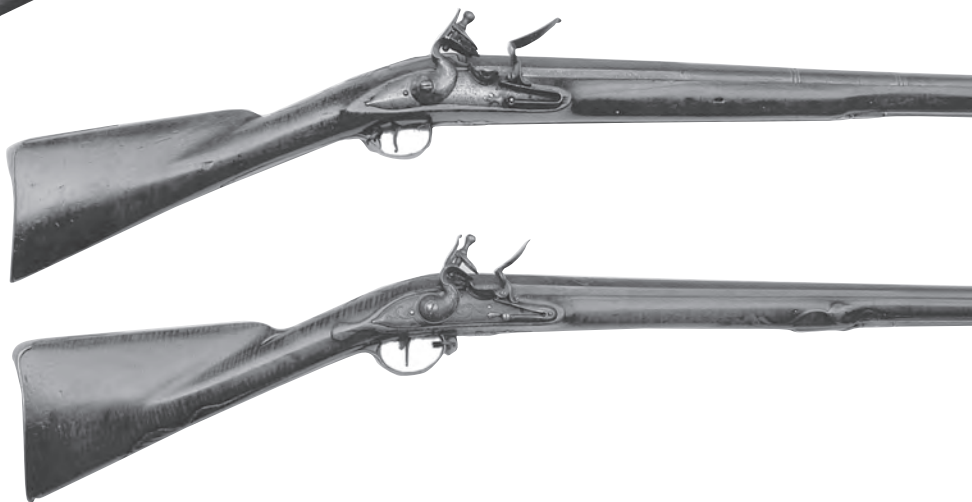


Figure 15. Comparison of a British Waterfowler to an American made British style fowler.

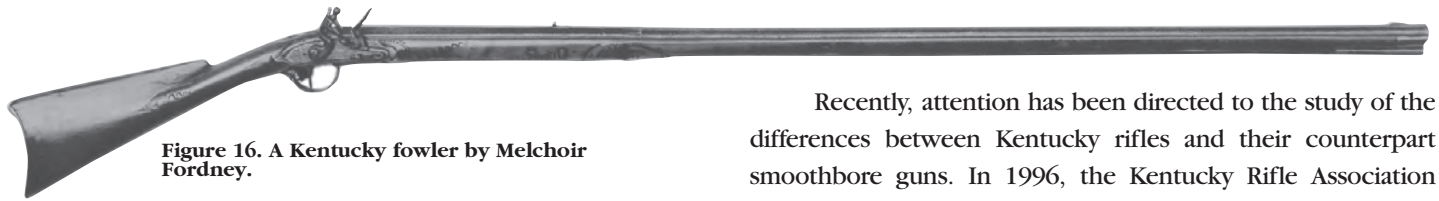


Figure 16. A Kentucky fowler by Melchoir Fordney.

that set the fowler apart from the rifle. First, the triggerguard on a fowler has a simple rounded bow, while the rifle's triggerguard incorporates a grip rail. Second, the underside of the fowler's butt is rounded, while the rifle's butt has a flat underside extending from the toe of the butt to the triggerguard. Third, the fowler's butt has no cheekpiece unlike that of the rifle butt. Fourth, the tang of the buttplate on the fowler is extended into a rounded tip while the tang of the buttplate on the rifle is squared off and faceted, Figure 17.

Many more rifles were produced than fowlers and there are some guns that do not conform to these norms. Occasionally there will be a mixture of these various characteristics on the same gun.

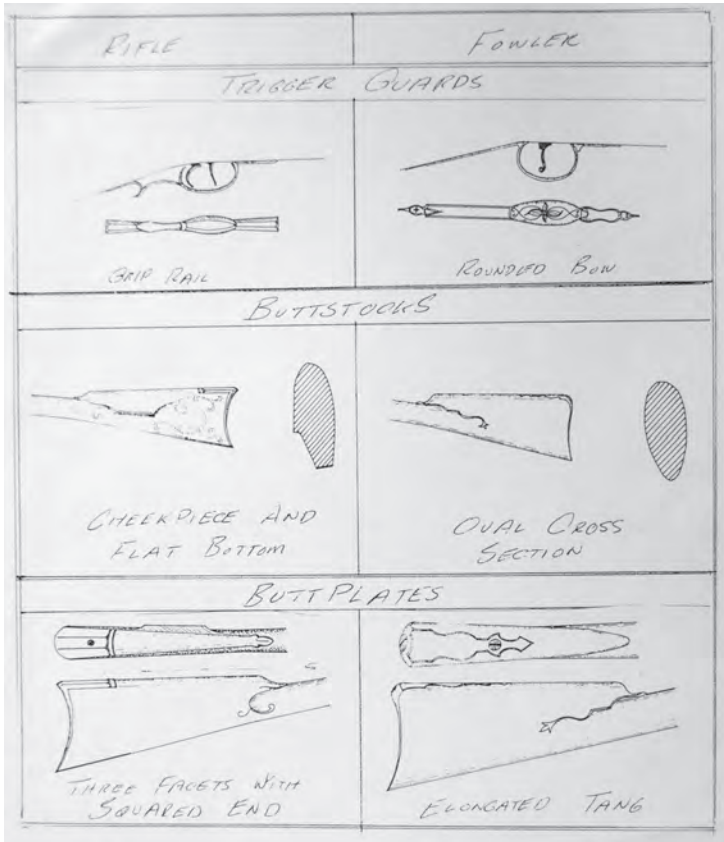


Figure 17. A comparison of Kentucky rifle and fowler characteristics.

Recently, attention has been directed to the study of the differences between Kentucky rifles and their counterpart smoothbore guns. In 1996, the Kentucky Rifle Association (KRA) asked members to bring their fowlers to the annual meeting for study. A group of twenty-seven guns was assembled and documented by member Dwight Bellinger leading to a specific award category for Kentucky fowlers at future annual meetings.<sup>(19)</sup> In the fowler study, Bellinger compiled some interesting statistics. The majority of Kentucky fowlers have barrels shaped from octagonal to round with the remaining fowlers having fully round barrels. No fowlers in the study group had full-length octagonal barrels. However, there are thicker walled smooth bore fowlers, which many collectors have referred to as buck and ball guns designed to fire either a charge of shot or a single ball. A feature on many Kentucky guns is the presence of a rear sight on the barrel, which in the past was assumed to indicate that the gun was a rifle. This is not correct because a majority of fowlers also have a rear sight.

#### ONE-OF-A-KIND FOWLERS

A blacksmith may have crafted this One-of-a-Kind Fowler. In the previous classifications, the fowlers discussed had common features that helped place them in a specific group. But there are some fowlers that do not conform to any common set of characteristics, yet are fine and distinctive guns in their own right. Out of the way gunsmiths may have used homemade parts or left over hardware to assemble a useful fowler. There are not many of these fowlers whose architecture and metal work are one-of-a-kind, but they are highly prized when an outstanding example is discovered.

Frank Klay remembers his father remarking that fox hunting was greatly enjoyed in New England many years ago. As a sport widely practiced in England, it had a great tradition and "riding to the hounds" was an honored past-time that was also followed with fervor in eighteenth century New York.<sup>(20)</sup> After being transplanted to America, it was accomplished more by foot than horseback dictating a more manageable gun than the long New England fowler. The fowler shown in Figure 18 is a shorter, blacksmith-made gun that could have been used chasing through the woods after a fox.

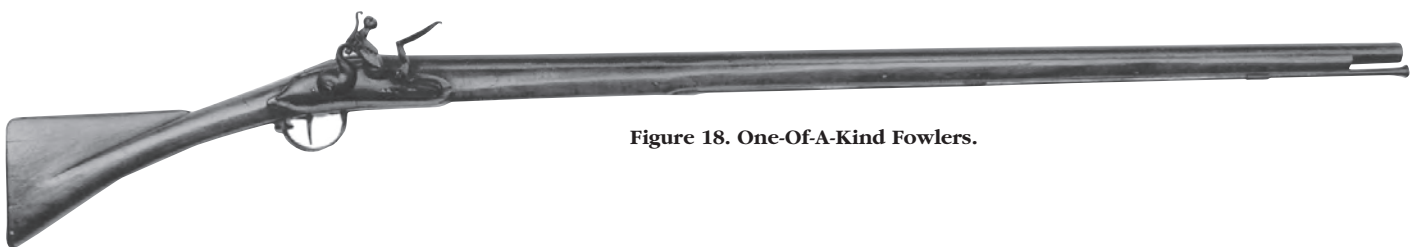


Figure 18. One-Of-A-Kind Fowlers.



Specific makers, geographical region or style cannot be attributed to one-of-a-kind fowlers, yet they are fine representative guns of the eighteenth century.

In summary, fowlers originated among Europe's aristocracy as a sporting weapon, but became a necessary tool for survival in the American wilderness. Remarkably little attention has been focused on eighteenth century fowling pieces; researchers instead have studied the readily identifiable Brown Bess and Charleville muskets carried by soldiers in the numerous conflicts in North America. An example of this emphasis is the fine collection of arms Herman P. Dean donated to the Huntington Galleries in Huntington, West Virginia depicting the general development of firearms, and specifically those used in North America. However, there is not a single eighteenth century flintlock fowler represented. This omission characterizes the scant previous information available about fowlers, although, knowledgeable collectors have been cognizant of their value for a great many years and are now being joined by a growing group of admirers.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Gary B. Nash, *Social Development—Colonial British America*, edited by Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 247.

2. Harold B. Gill, Jr., *The Gunsmith in Colonial Virginia* (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1974), 13.

3. The number of gunsmiths in Colonial America had increased rapidly by the time of the Revolutionary War. Counting their numbers in Henry J. Kaufmann's book *Early American Gunsmiths 1650-1850*, and grouping the names chronologically, the growth is as follows:

17<sup>th</sup> Century 8 gunsmiths  
1700-1725 4 gunsmiths  
1725-1750 12 gunsmiths  
1750-1775 25 gunsmiths  
1775-1800 112 gunsmiths.

Realizing that his collection of names is not all inclusive, this sampling still shows a dramatic and logical increase in the number of practicing gunsmiths as the century progressed. A partial sampling from Frank Sellers' more recent book *American Gunsmiths* shows a similar distribution:

17<sup>th</sup> Century 5 gunsmiths  
1700-1725 7 gunsmiths  
1725-1750 12 gunsmiths  
1750-1775 62 gunsmiths  
1775-1800 132 gunsmiths.

Also, in Merrill Lindsay's book, *The New England Gun*, on page four he states, "In 1775 there were twenty-five gun-

smiths in Connecticut alone who were considered capable of producing complete muskets".

4. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans, The Colonial Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), 355.

5. Codman Hislop, *The Mohawk* (New York: J. J. Little and Ives Co., 1948), 49.

6. Wallace B. Gusler and James D. Lavin, *Decorated Firearms 1540-1870, From the Collection of Clay P. Bedford* (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1977), 39.

7. Merrill Lindsay, *The New England Gun: The First Two Hundred Years* (New York: David McKay Company, 1975), 3, 4.

8. There are numerous guns pictured in *The Flintlock: its origin and development* by Torsten Lenk, depicting various forms of heavy buttstocks attributed to western Europe in the mid-seventeenth century. Guns in paintings show similar style stocks such as a picture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, by Dutch artist Jon Bath (1618-1652). The painting entitled *Bandits Leading Prisoners*, dated 1646, illustrates bandits carrying guns with a pronounced swell to the buttstock.

9. Russel Bouchard, *The Fusil de Tulle in New France, 1691-1741*, Historical Arms Series No. 36 (Bloomfield, Ontario: Museum Restoration Service, 1998), 17.

10. T. M. Hamilton, *Colonial Frontier Guns* (Chadron, Nebraska: The Fur Press, 1980), 51.

11. Kathleen Eagen Johnson, *Antiques and the Arts Weekly* (Newtown, Connecticut: Bee Publishing Co. Inc., November 26, 1999), 1.

12. Johnson, 68.

13. Arne Hoff, *Dutch Firearms* (London: Philip Wilson Limited, 1978), 195.

14. Jan Piet Puype, *The Visser Collection: Arms of the Netherlands in the Collection of H. L. Visser; Volume I* (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders Uitgevers, 1996), 372.

15. Harold B. Gill, Jr., *The Gunsmith in Colonial Virginia* (Charlottesville, Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1974), 28.

16. Gill, 28.

17. Henry J. Kauffman, *Early American Gunsmiths: 1650-1850* (New York: Bramhall House, 1952), 74.

18. Frank M. Sellers, *American Gunsmiths* (Highland Park, New Jersey: The Gun Room Press, 1983), 209.

19. Dwight Q. Bellinger, "Observations on Kentucky 'Longfowlers,' 'Smooth-Rifles,' and Rifled Kentuckies" (*The Kentucky Rifle Association Bulletin*, Volume 23, Number 3, Spring 1997), 2-5.

20. Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr., *New York City During the War for Independence #357* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 183.