

Hawken Classic

The 200th anniversary of the Hawken rifle is 2025. The Hawken brothers were instrumental in the development of the purpose-built Plains/Mountain rifle. Their rifles became the prototype for all makers supplying the Western trade. The Hawken Shop in St. Louis supplied rifles for the trans Mississippi trade from the 1820's through 1860.

The Hawken Classic is a celebration of the Hawken rifles contribution to American History, and the Lewis and Clark Boat House and Museum near St. Louis, Missouri is a great location for our event.

Activities will include:

1. Incredible collection of original and contemporary Missouri rifles on display.
2. Knowledgeable guest speakers on the history of the Hawken rifle and related topics.
3. Living history camps in period correct attire.
4. Vendors—including The Hawken Shop, Trail Creek Trade Company, and many more.
5. Artist and craftsmen demonstrating weaving, forging, fire starting, powder horns, leather work, and more.
6. Opportunity to shoot an original Hawken rifle owned by The Hawken Shop.
7. See many period correct guns, accoutrements and enjoy the living history.
8. Test your skills at traditional archery, hawk and knife throw, and fire starting.
9. Come learn how Lewis and Clark and the Hawken Rifle impacted America's history.

Much of the event will be *free* to the public. Access to the Museum where the Hawken rifles will be displayed will have the following museum access fees:

\$7 for Adults, and \$3 for Children.



Interested in being a vendor or living historian, contact us at HawkenClassic@pm.me. Registration and more info is found at <https://www.gemmermuzzleloadingclub.com/hawken-classic/>



National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association

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PROCLAIMED AUGUST 2023

Missouri's Official State Rifle — The — HAWKEN RIFLE

Date: May 17 - 19, 2024
Time: Friday 10am - 5pm
Saturday 10am - 5pm
Sunday Noon - 5pm
(Backup Dates: Sept 6 - 8, 2024)



Location:

10150 S. Riverside Drive
St. Charles, Missouri 63301
(636) 947-3199



History of the Hawken Rifle

Jacob and Samuel Hawken (J&S Hawken, St. Louis) were the 3rd and 4th sons of 6 sons and a total of 9 children by Christian Hawken (wife Juliann) from Hagerstown, Maryland. Christian and his brothers migrated to this country from Switzerland/Germany prior to the Revolutionary War. Christian (1756-1821), the patriarch of the Hawken family taught all his sons and others the serious craft of gunsmithing. The Hawken bothers lineage of gunsmiths, at least 15 in all, have contributed immensely to the growth, development and history of our nation more than any other family.

Jacob (Jake; 1785-1849) left his father's shop in Hagerstown around 1810 to work for the Harpers Ferry Amory (US) until around 1818. Through his various roles at the Armory in his tenure, he couldn't contain his desire to go west. Jake went to St. Louis, MO in 1819, which was a major location for trades along the Missouri River. During his early years Jake worked along former Virginia gunsmith James Lakenan, who is believed to have given Jake the iron mount we see on his rifles. Jake also did a lot of general blacksmithing to pay the bills.

Samuel (Sam:1792-1884) left his family to set out on his own in Xenia, Ohio; but after the death of his wife and father, he returned to Hagerstown briefly before joining his elder brother out west. It was June 1825 when Sam arrived in St. Louis to form a partnership with Jake (J&S Hawken).

From 1822-1849 the J&S Hawken evolved for the trapper's and westward movement that filled the void for being dependable, powerful (Buffalo & Grizzly Bear), and accurate at longer distances across the plains. It was made of curly maple (as were his father's longrifles), weight around 10 pounds, bore of 50-58 caliber using 120gr powder. Generally, a J&S Hawken was sighted in for 130 yards – accurate to 200. One of the first J&S Hawken rifles went to Gen Ashley for a return trip along the Missouri to the Yellowstone to combat the Indians along the riverbanks – Sam referred to the rifle, later in life as the Super Rifle. The J&S Hawken was preferred by famous men such as Jim Bridger, Jim Clyman, Kit Carson, Joe Meek, Marina Modena, Jedediah Smith, to name a few.

After Jacob's death in 1849, Sam left the shop to his son, went further west to Colorado, but soon returned to St. Louis.

J.P. Gemmer—In the early 1860's ownership transferred to J.P. Gemmer, who held true to tradition and maintained the "Hawken" quality until the shop finally closed in 1915. Is this where our history lesson ends? Thankfully, no!

The tools and machinery lay unused in Gemmer's St. Louis home for fifty plus years. Early in the 1960's at the sale of the Gemmer estate, Walter Kennedy acquired these remnants of the "Hawken Shop" for his close friend, Art Ressel. Mr. Ressel, a Hawken enthusiast, felt obligated to continue the tradition passed on and reopened the "Hawken" gun shop. Less than 100 Hawken's were produced during this period before Mr. Ressel closed the gun shop in the mid 1980's. Again the original "Hawken" quality was unobtainable and a valued part of American History ceased to exist.

In December of 1990 a new and equally great period of the "Hawken" story began. Mr. Ressel sold the entire shop to a small family owned business in Washington. Greg Roberts and Claudette Greene purchased "The Hawken Shop" to preserve this valued part of Americana. Once again, the classic "HAWKEN" had returned! Current planning was to wait 2 years before proceeding with the "Hawken" venture. At that time Greg and Claudette were absorbed in the planning and development of a traditional muzzle-loading rifle in the style of Dimick and Leman, and felt they could not devote additional time to "Hawken". However, fate intervened and a foundry fire destroyed all other tools and parts, except for the Hawken tooling. Consequently Hawken was back in business, producing Hawken rifles once again.

Art Ressel—Being the son of Antique Dealers, my early collecting interests lay in items from the Civil War, so with a love for that early history it was only natural for me to become instantly interested in a Hawken Rifle offered to me by a local antique dealer. Even though I was fresh from the Marine Base in San Diego (Korean War), and with a new baby, we sacrificed dining luxuries, and for the (at that time) overwhelming sum of \$1,000.00, purchased my first Hawken rifle. The seed was sewn! --- Eager for more information on Jake and Sam's product, I pursued information on all of the St. Louis areas early gun makers, leading later to the acquisition of remnants of the Gemmer Gun Shop (the purchasers of the Hawken Shop), as well as an enviable assortment of Hawken guns and other early St. Louis examples. This saw the change of my "Antique Arms" business into "The HAWKEN Shop" – and you know the rest of the story! – P.S. Since my first Hawken Rifle was in virtually unused condition, it served as the model for my legendary gunsmith Keith Neubauer, to create the models for the manufacture of our now renowned, "Original" S. HAWKEN Plains rifle,

now offered by Greg Roberts – The HAWKEN Shops new Washington State address.

Greg Roberts—Greg began his gunsmithing career in 1971. While specializing in handguns, his interest in all types of guns grew. An introduction to muzzleloading in 1985 led to the purchase of tooling to make breeches, tangs, and percussion locks. As the business grew, his awareness of the vast variety of muzzleloaders became apparent and Hawken stood out as the finest example. When Art Russell decided to sell The Hawken Shop in 1990, the decision was made to take the ultimate plunge and buy the shop.

"It is an honor to be able to continue the production of Sam Hawken's Classic Plains Rifle and save this great part of American History." - Greg Roberts

The Hawken Shop will be one of the vendors at the Hawken Classic. Come on over and meet Greg. He will have an original Hawken rifle for visitors to shoot and get their picture taken while holding the Hawken.



Contacts:

Event Coordinator:

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NMLRA:

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The Lewis and Clark Boat House and Museum:

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