



*The Hawken Rifle is proposed to become Missouri's Official State Firearm.
Photo: Ric Lambert*

Two States Propose Designation as their Official

Missouri and Tennessee are introducing legislation this year to designate an Official State Firearm. At present, nine states have State Firearms.

For Missouri, it would seem a natural choice to select the Hawken rifle as the Missouri State Firearm - and at the same time, in Tennessee – the Tennessee Rifle would seem to be the logical choice. Both firearms have historical significance to their respective states.

Missouri resident Kyle Carroll came up with the proposal for his state and when he shared his idea with his fellow artist friend, Tennessee resident David Wright, Wright thought it would be a great idea for Tennessee to have a State designated firearm as well.

Missouri

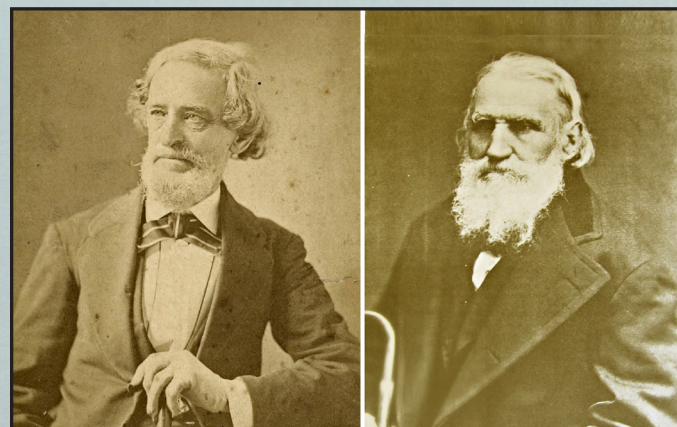
By Kyle Carroll

I was listening to “Gritts” Gresham’s Gun Talk in my truck last fall when I heard Gresham discuss the state of Utah designating the 1911 pistol as the official state firearm in 2011, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the pistol’s release. Grisham added that Utah’s designation of a state firearm was the first in the nation. That was interesting but then he mentioned a handful of other states had designated state firearms since then and that’s when it occurred to me that Missouri should have a state firearm and it should be the Hawken Rifle.

The Hawken Classic event is being held near Defiance, Missouri at the Nathan Boone home in August for the next three years to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Hawken Shop in St. Louis, by Sam and Jake Hawken, and the iconic Rifle’s place in history, so the timing to approach the legislature with the idea of an official designation seemed perfect. I made phone calls to my adjacent state representatives, Mazzie Boyd and Dean VanShoiack, and both expressed support.



Missouri State House Representative Mazzie Boyd and Kyle Carroll display a Hawken rifle. Photo: Mitch Allen



Jake and Sam Hawken

I knew from conversations with my Tennessee artist friend, David Wright that he had done a painting for the annual Hawken Classic that included a Hawken Rifle, and knew the folks involved with the event. I called David, ran my idea past him and asked if he would put me in touch with Bob Vogt and Rick Weber, both key Hawken Classic folks. I was thinking about knowledgeable people who could assist in later efforts with passing a bill.

Our conversation quickly spiraled into an all-out effort to introduce legislation in both Missouri and Tennessee. If bills could be passed in both states, it would create lots of opportunities for education about muzzleloaders and our history. The resulting publicity would reach more people and have an impact well beyond the passing of a bill into law.



An original flintlock rifle made by Baxter Bean, circa 1820s represents the Tennessee rifle proposed to become the Official State Historical Firearm.

Photo: Kenneth Orr

Original Muzzleloading Firearms *State Firearms*



This is the Daniel Boone Home; a historic site in Defiance, Missouri. The house was built by Daniel Boone's youngest son Nathan Boone, who lived there with his family until they moved further south in 1837. Photo: H. David Wright



Steve Sells fires off a round from an original Hawken rifle at a target. One of the highlight opportunities for the attendees of the 2022 Hawken Classic was the rare treat to shoot an original S. Hawken rifle, which was generously furnished by Greg Roberts, owner of the Hawken Shop. Folks will again have the opportunity to shoot an original Hawken rifle at the Hawken Classic this year. Photo: S. Sells

Efforts began simultaneously to have the Tennessee Rifle designated as that state's Historical State Firearm while the Hawken project began to take shape in Missouri. Phone calls, text messages and e-mails began crisscrossing the two states and beyond.

Those experts include Art Ressel who rebirthed the original Hawken Shop in St. Louis in the 1970's which now is still active under the same name by Greg Roberts in Oak Harbor, Washington.

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Hawken Rifle authorities – Bob Woodfill, Art Ressel, and Greg Roberts. Photo: H. David Wright

Hawken experts, Art Ressel, Greg Grimes, Bob Woodfill and Paul Fennewald were enlisted and put together historical briefs that were provided to State Representative Mazzie Boyd who pre-filed the Missouri bill on December 1st, the first day it could be filed.

The briefs noted in part: *At a modest gun shop in St. Louis, Jacob and Samuel Hawken built and perfected the rifles that evolved into and became the benchmark for the stout guns being carried to the plains, mountains, and deserts of the American West between the 1820's and 1860's. As Westward expansion continued and the rifles evolved into what became the larger bore .47-.62 caliber classic half stock plains rifles, the demand steadily increased for the Hawken rifle. These rifles were owned and carried by legendary guides, scouts, and professional hunters, as well as the captains of industry and landed gentry in Missouri. Hawken plains rifles were expensive, costing two to three times more than the trade rifles of the period. In addition to building rifles and pistols, the Hawken brothers did a lot of general gunsmithing and blacksmithing work. They repaired and made tools such as axes, tomahawks, and hatchets for the fur companies. Ledgers indicate trap repair and making iron hinges as well. The reputation of the Hawken brothers grew and the important role they played in the development of St. Louis as the hub of trade, commerce and westward expansion of the United States is evidenced by the many surviving firearms they created that are currently held in museums and private collections.*

We now have a group of folks on standby that will contact legislators and testify at the bill's hearing as to the importance of the Hawken Rifle and its iconic status in American history. One is Art Ressel who rebirthed the original Hawken Shop in St. Louis in the 1970's which now is still active under the same name in Oak Harbor, Washington.

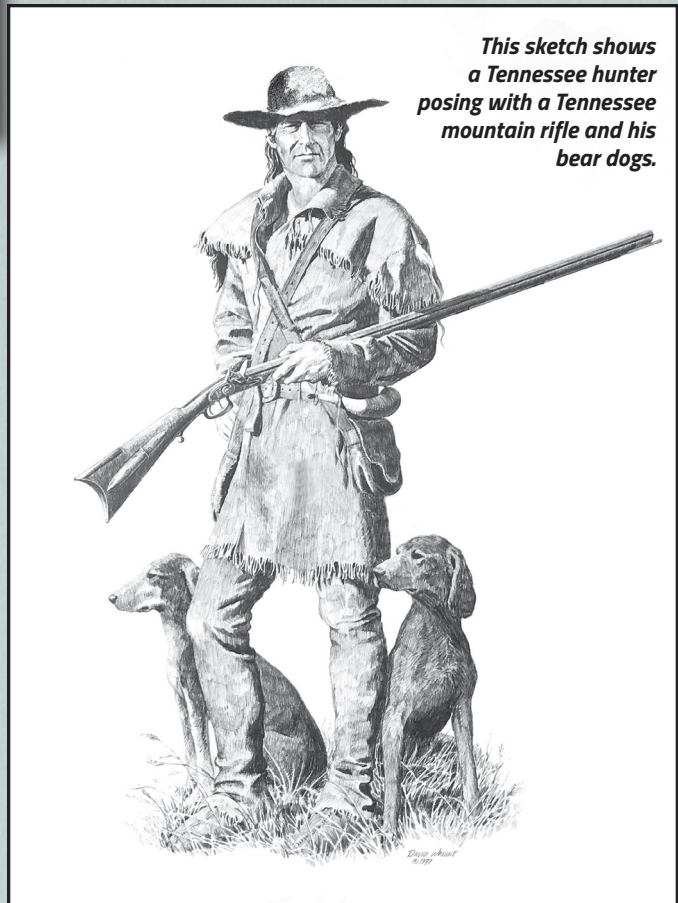
There were early conversations about having a bench copy of an original Hawken made to hang some place like the Missouri State Museum in perpetuity as a visual reminder of the beauty and functionality of the original guns and the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Hawken shop's origin. Greg Grimes met with premier Hawken gun maker, Bob Browner and inquired about a possible bench copy of an original with which they were both familiar. I soon received a

text from Greg that read, *"The genesis of a rifle is agreed to."* We were off and running. We will have a bench copy of a Sam Hawken rifle to bring to the Hawken Classic in August.

Thanks to the efforts of a lot of good folks, The Missouri Hawken project is officially proceeding in the legislature and in a Missouri gun maker's shop. The goal now is to have the gun on exhibit at the Hawken Classic in August and to find a permanent home for it.

Tennessee

By H. David Wright



This sketch shows a Tennessee hunter posing with a Tennessee mountain rifle and his bear dogs.

I started my research about designating the Tennessee Rifle the Official State Firearm, and found Tennessee already had a State Firearm: "The Barrett M82 Sniper Rifle."

When I approached my State Senator, Ferrel Haile, about the possibility of having an additional State Firearm, Ferrel said we can have two, and suggested we call ours the State Historical Firearm. With that suggestion, collector and author Randal Pierce wrote a history of the Tennessee rifle, a resolution was drafted, and the legislation was introduced.

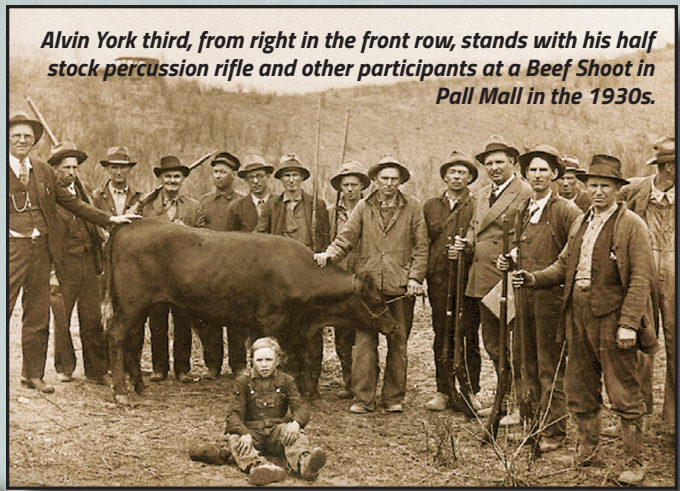
The Tennessee rifle is a logical choice for the State Historical Firearm. It was a special style of longrifle being built in the mountains of Eastern Tennessee beginning around the time of the 1796 Statehood. This rifle was recognizable because of its slender form and hand-forged iron hardware. As Randal Pierce points out, the rifle was continually built and used into the 20th century – with Tennessee World War I hero Sgt. Alvin York, among many others using the rifles in their Pall Mall,

Tennessee beef and turkey shoots into the '20s and '30s. Today that tradition is still carried on in the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf River, Pall Mall, Tennessee, with the 30th Anniversary of the Alvin C. York Memorial Shoot on March 25th.

Normally, with such a resolution as this, once it is passed, the event would pass into obscurity. This seemed like an opportunity to do something that would reach a wider audience than the official state designation might. With all the history involved with the origin of the Tennessee Rifle in the early 1800s, and recalling as Randal had pointed out, that the rifle was continually built and used into the 20th century, the idea emerged to have a copy built of a primo Baxter Bean rifle in the collection of the Tennessee State Museum.

Gun maker Steve Genglebach was contacted and agreed to build a copy of the museum's Baxter Bean rifle. Museum Chief Curator Richard White was gracious enough to allow Steve, and other of us interested folks to examine, measure, photograph and disassemble the Bean rifle from which to build a copy. Generous parts suppliers contributed to the project with Jim Chambers donating one of his late English Ketland locks, which – remarkably dropped into the Bean lock mortise perfectly. Jason Schneider duplicated the 48" barrel to match the original; Nathan Cox with Harrison Gunstocks donated a highly figured piece of curly maple as was the original; Ross Dillion contributed the set triggers, and Randal Pierce contributed a copy of a trigger guard cast from a great Baxter Bean style rifle. We were off and running and the rifle was underway to completion under Steve's masterful hand.

did York and others - on the same field where York shot the matches and the 1941 movie, about Alvin York, starring Gary Cooper, was filmed. Additionally, the descendants of Sgt. York annually attend (and shoot) and would get their photos made with the Governor as well. And we could be somewhat carrying on a tradition with this – since there is a rare photo of York, still in uniform, with his wife Gracie and Governor Roberts at the Hermitage in 1919. Of course Governor Lee couldn't be photographed with Alvin York who passed away in 1964 but he could be with his existing daughter, Betsy and grandchildren. All would be recorded on film and video to become part of the history of the copy of the Tennessee State Museum's Baxter Bean rifle which will eventually reside in their permanent collection, alongside the original Baxter Bean longrifle.



Alvin York third, from right in the front row, stands with his half stock percussion rifle and other participants at a Beef Shoot in Pall Mall in the 1930s.



(L) Simeon England and (R) Steve Genglebach copy the dimensions of the original Baxter Bean longrifle in the Tennessee State Museum. Genglebach is making a copy of this historic Tennessee rifle to be presented to Tennessee Governor Bill Lee. Photo: H. David Wright

Now we had to decide what to do with the project to keep the momentum going. Discussed was to donate the rifle to the State and make a presentation to the Governor – which has been done in the past under different circumstances. A Kentucky rifle even hung on the wall of the Kentucky Governor's office years ago.

Then the option was proposed to get Governor Lee to shoot the rifle with the intention of photographing the opportunity and record the event for posterity. Mel Hankla came up with the idea of inviting the Governor to the 30th Anniversary of the Sgt. Alvin York Memorial Shoot in Pall Mall on March 25, and let him shoot a target – to carry on the tradition as

Participants shoot "over the log" in the annual Sgt. Alvin York Memorial Shoot, held every year of the same grounds that York shot on in Pall Mall, Tennessee. This



year marks the 30th anniversary of the historic match. Photo: H. David Wright

Regarding the 30th Anniversary of the Sgt Alvin York Memorial Shoot, in addition to having the traditional over-the-log matches, there will be special displays, including two percussion rifles that were owned and used by Alvin York along with original Tennessee rifles from the collection of Randal Pierce. A 30th Anniversary poster has been designed by nationally known designer Chuck Creasy which will be given to the shooters and sold to the public to raise funds for the ongoing shoot. If all the cards come together and Governor Lee can attend the 30th Anniversary shoot, we would indeed be making an historical entry for the Official Tennessee State Historical Firearm. Regardless, the 30th will be a great event to attend. See you there.

After so many years since their introduction to the settling and expansion of the United States it is only fitting that these two firearms be designated as the Official State Firearms for their respective states. MB

HAWKEN CLASSIC TAKING THE LONG SHOT BY DAVID WRIGHT

\$25.00
+shipping

Poster

12" X 18"

80# digital silk cover

1825



2025

HAWKEN CLASSIC

Celebrating the 200th anniversary of the opening of the J&S Hawken Gun Shop in St. Louis, Missouri
Sponsored by the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association in collaboration with St. Charles County, Missouri

Sponsored by the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association in collaboration with St. Charles County, Missouri



TAKING THE LONG SHOT
by David Wright

© 2011 DAVID WRIGHT

\$45.00
+shipping

Print

20" X 24"

100# uncoated cover

Taking the Long Shot was painted by David Wright specially for the Hawken Classic event. The sales of all artwork will be used to fund cabins to be used on the NMLRA range.

To order: www.nmlra.org/store/taking-the-long-shot-poster-print or call 812-667-5131.

August 25-27, 2023

Friday, August 25 – 10am to 4pm
Saturday, August 26 – 9am to 5pm
Sunday, August 27 – 11am to 4pm

The Historic Daniel Boone Home
St. Charles County,
1868 Highway F
Defiance, Missouri 63341



The 200th anniversary of the J&S Hawken rifle is the Summer of 2025. We are celebrating this event for four years, beginning the Summer of 2022. The Hawken brothers are the first well known sporting arms makers in the United States. Jacob and Samuel Hawken built these rifles out of the St. Louis Hawken Shop from the 1820s to the 1850s.

The Hawken Classic is a celebration of the Hawken rifles contribution to American History. The historic home of Daniel Boone near St. Louis, Missouri, is a great location for this event.



Activities will include:

1. Demonstration and Rendezvous camping in period correct attire.
2. Vendors – Including The Hawken Shop, Trail Creek Trade Company, A Second Chance at History, and many more...
3. Artist and craftsmen demonstrating weaving, black smith forging a Bowie knife, wood working, fire starting, and more.
4. Historic displays and knowledgeable guest speakers on the history of the Hawken rifle.
5. Muzzleloader rifle shooting at steel targets. Everyone is encourage to bring your muzzleloader and shooting supplies. All guns will be checked and tagged upon entry.
6. Opportunity to shoot an original Hawken rifle owned by The Hawken Shop.
7. See many period correct guns, accoutrement's and enjoy the living history.
8. Watch rendezvous participants compete in shooting, hawk and knife throw, fire starting

Registration Documents, Lodging Options, and more are found here:

Website: <https://www.GemmerMuzzleloadingClub.com/Hawken-Classic/>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/hawkenclassic/>

Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1052999632052439/?ref=share>

Send your completed registration form to HawkenClassic@NMLRA.org
Or mail to Bob Vogt, 1015 Uthoff Farm Ct., Fenton, MO 63026

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