



Johann"John" Phillip Gemmer was born on June 21, 1839 in Lollschied, Germany. His mother died when he was quite young. In 1855, at the age of 16, John and his father traveled to the U.S. by sailing ship. They landed in New Orleans and then traveled up the Mississippi River by steam boat arriving in St. Louis. John settled in Boonville, Missouri and began learning the trade of gun making. In 1859 he returned to St. Louis and began working at the gun shop of Emanuel Kleinhen. After about a year he took a position in the well-known "Hawken Shop", which was founded in 1822 by the Hawken brothers. The Hawken name was famous throughout the west for providing rifles for trappers, frontiersmen, and mountaineers. During the Civil War, John was employed for a time by the U.S. Government at the Arsenal in St. Louis, attaining the rank of Corporal in the Arsenal Battalion. J.P. Gemmer took ownership of the "Hawken Shop" from William L. Watts in approximately 1865, towards the end of the Civil War. He reached an agreement with Sam Hawken to stamp the rifles he made with "S. Hawken". The location of the shop moved a number of times until it settled at 700 N. Third Street. Due to the changes in gun technology, J.P. Gemmer could see that the muzzleloader was being replaced by breach loading guns, so he began to modifying muzzleloaders to breach loading guns. His custom gun shop was unable to keep up with the competition, Winchester, so J.P. Gemmer changed his shop into a sporting goods store. From 1865 to 1915 J.P. Gemmer operated the Hawken-Gemmer shop until he closed it in 1915, just four years before he died on October 6, 1919 at the age of 81. He is buried at the Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

J.P. Gemmer contributed much to the rich history of St. Louis, and it is his name that the J.P. Gemmer Muzzleloader Gun Club was so named. - R. Vogt, 2019

For more details, please read the full article "Closing the Circle" by Matthias Recktenwald in the August 2010 copy of Muzzle Blasts.

