

A Most Ancient Art & Mystery
by Thomas E. Ames

Often the most rewarding experiences come when we least expect them; from unexpected finds in flea markets to an all too rare horn at a good price (for the buyer, that is) at a gun show. I call these "gifts of the spirit," almost as if the one who had lived with the relic horn or gun reaches into our subconscious to prepare us for the discovery. A few of you, a know the story behind how I came to find a spout stopper that seemed to have grown with a horn purchased on a bag half and hour earlier. The original stopper with a vent pick inserted in the shaft had been lost from the original outfit. Within the hour, some miles distant, a stopper complete with pick was found.

Coincidence? No, such events occur far too often for it to be chance. How many people know the story of how Madison Grant came to reintroduce the folding Barlow pattern knife and fork pictured in The Kentucky Rifle Hunting Pouch? [plate 128, page 197] Was this an original set? Perhaps, perhaps not. But each exemplifies the character of the other and by that compliment they encourage appreciation and our quest for understanding the lives of our forebears. Such is the value of the relics they've left behind for us. Listen and feel of what they tell us and listen to that inner voice as you recreate them.

Such is the value of the work we leave behind as contemporary artisans following in the footsteps of our ancestral heritage. At times even the plainer examples of our labor become masterpieces by virtue of their voice to our inner being. Sometimes they radiate their own specialness beyond even the critical eye of their maker.

Bob Chattin, a well known horner in southeastern Pennsylvania and a founding member of our Company, has been active for many years at Dixon's Gun Fair. Early on, I chose to establish a working friendship with Bob and his partner, Jeff Renninger, because they were competent craftsmen in their own right. Both Bob & Jeff worked in a traditional manner and that was all important to me. They did not need my influence beyond the critique stage. They deserved the right to develop in their own way, their own unique style.

Well, things change over the years and we became more than passing acquaintances at the Gunmakers' Fair each year. Yes, I wanted an example of the work they exhibited and quietly waited for that special piece that would encompass a regional feeling as well as fill a void for pouch service related to a particular gun.

I found that special piece at the rifle frolic on the Henry Factory site last June: a ringed or banded horn of fine architecture, painted red, shadowing an original regional production. It would serve to balance the refined architecture of the plain rifle of the region that I use in the field.

In July, Bob Chattin approached me as I arrived at the Gunmakers' Fair at Dixon's and handed me a small pocket horn. On it he had engraved a likeness of

the regional liberty capped figure head. He asked me to critique the likeness.

Many of you know of my long research about this particular motif so I didn't consider Bob's request as anything more than an honest appraisal. The first thing to strike me, however, was the well polished honey colored maple base; semi-domed, it radiated a degree of depth that struck me as a very fine attribute to the entire package. It was like looking into a clear sun lit pool of water with each layer of grain reflecting its own light. I commented to Bob briefly on the whole horn and made note of the attraction of the base treatment.

Late on Sunday afternoon, Bob brought the horn to me again and noted that perhaps I'd not seen everything the first time. As I rolled the horn around, I was pleased and honored to see a newly made inscription: "To Thos Ames, a token of respect and friendship from Robt Chattin."

On my way home ward from Dixon's, I stopped for dinner with the Odle family. I related the story of Bob's presentation and handed the horn to him. Mark was drawn to the base details as we sat across the dinner table. In the restaurant's lighting, a face appeared to radiate from deep within the base plug!

There, in the maple, was the liberty capped figure head of Tammany appearing to stare from the natural holograph. Intentional? I think not! Each fiber of wood grain picked up by the artificial lighting in the restaurant could not belie the unintended spirit behind its maker. No creative hand could have represented the spirit of Tammany any better. It was dimensional, the face reflected in the holograph of creation. The dictionary defines holograph as "a document solely in the handwriting of its author."

When I turn the base upside down, as with any two faced grotesque, another face appears to issue from its depths- that of a wizened old man. Eyes drawn, his face lined and creased with knowledge, his mouth hidden behind a drooping mustache. I have to ask myself: who is the author of such a document? Who are we to judge the true creative spirit of another? Why do we feel we must compare the merits of one against another? What value do we place on our special gifts, be it a contemporary horn with special meaning or a relic that some how found its way to us in a manner that defies rational explanation? And finally- Bob, did you know?

I trust we all shall find our answers as we continue to express ourselves through creative spirit and the knowledge of the phrase that so endeared itself to the crafts of old as "the ancient arts and mysteries" will be made known unto you.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

The officers of the Company wish you and yours a warm and friend filled holiday with bounty to share and blessings for all. Let us take time to be thankful for all we have been given and the fellowship of our Guild brothers.

1997 Annual Meeting & Symposium, Feb. 28- March 2

Plans for our annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, are mostly complete at this time except for a few slots for speakers. This will be held at the Ohio Historical Society's magnificent facility; bring the family to see their museum and historical village. A \$4.00 admission for adults covers their entire facility which includes a fine library and gift shop. The OHS is located immediately on Interstate 71 at 17th Avenue (Exit 111) with plenty of parking. It is only a few miles to the Columbus International Airport.

Due to fire code, our meeting and exhibit rooms are limited to 100 persons- this means that we can only accept the first 100 registrations; after that, no more. Period. Nada. No exceptions. They strictly enforce these occupancy limits as required by law.

Immediately across 17th Avenue is the Day's Inn, the only close lodging. I have stayed there twice and recommend it highly. If you are a senior citizen or a AAA member, let them know. To make a reservation you can either call the national toll free number, 1-800-329-7466 or directly to the Inn at 1-614-299-4300. Their street address is 1700 Clara Street (which dead ends into the OHS facility). Depending on the number of persons and any applicable discounts, the rate will vary from about \$35 to \$60. There are 118 rooms and they have coffee & a continental breakfast in the mornings. If you are a light sleeper, ask for the rooms on the side of the building away from the interstate.

The next issue of The Horn Book will contain a complete and final listing of our programs. At this point, the certain program includes: Shelby Gallien will speak on the Tansel Family; Roland Cadle will demonstrate lanthorn making and Berks County type staining; Williamsburg craftsman George Suitor will make a pressed horn flask; Erv Tschanz will turn horn cups. This is a program with *the* experts in their fields that you will never see again. Preregister now!

A Plea from England

A gentleman from England seeks to have a powder horn made of the type used in New England circa 1680-1740. I urge any interested horners to please reply directly to him at: Mr. D. G. Hicklin

67 Delamore Parkway West
Delamore Park
Cuddington
Cheshire CW8 2UL
ENGLAND

A New Product for Powder Horn Makers

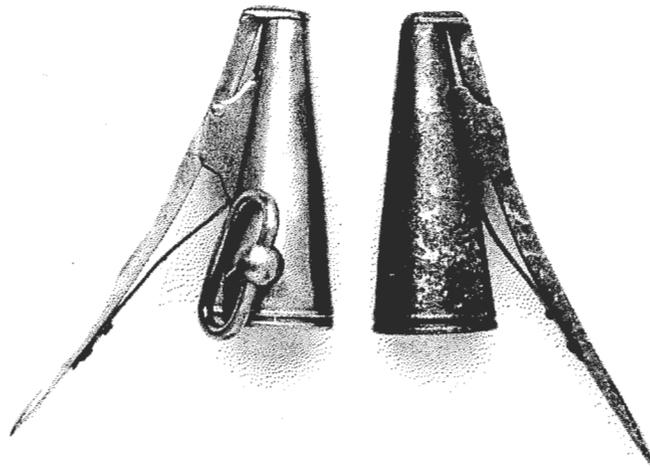
The old reliable firm of J. P. Gunstocks has made a number of spring closing metal powder horn tips of the style commonly used for military cannon primers and other horns. See The Powder Flask Book by Ray Riling, pages 250-251, and Powder Horns in the Southern Tradition, pages 33 and 41, for good examples of military primers.

Jim's cast reproduction is sturdy and very well made. The inside diameter at the base is 7/8" and the length is 2 5/8". There is a double round molding at the base. The samples I have seen have excellent fits at the closure, an absolute necessity both to keep the powder dry and to prevent a stray spark from igniting the contents! The finish is bright and needs a minimal amount of surface dressing before use.

Guild brother Steve Lodding, from Las Vegas, has used several of these on his horns. Pictured below is one of Jim's tips that Steve has antiqued prior to mounting up. The iron easily takes all of the usual treatments used by muzzle loading gunmakers to add a little or a lot of patina and age. Note that the tip on the right has a swivel and the one of the left does not; these are available either way you want for the same price, \$45.00, which includes shipping and handling. If you have ever made one from scratch, you'll appreciate the price. They accept both Visa and MasterCard.

These tips are available directly from:

J. P. Gunstocks, Inc.
4508 San Miguel
North Las Vegas, NV 89030
(702) 645-0718
(702) 645-9576 Fax
On the Internet: www.jpgunstocks.com



Editor's Shavings

In the deluge of holiday catalogs jammed into my mail box, , at least two have horn objects that may be in direct competition with what you make. The Williams-Sonoma catalog for gourmet chefs lists a 4 3/4" caviar horn spoon, made in France, for \$14.50 and a silver tipped version for \$24.00; caviar will discolor most metal implements and hence horn has always been the traditional medium for caviar spoons & dippers. The Atlanta Cutlery catalog lists a double ended buffalo horn whistle for only \$6.50.

I bring these to your notice because they may impact you whether you knew about them or not. The public which attends various trade fairs and views your wares will mentally compare these items to your work on the table. You can determine if the outcome is positive or negative. Undoubtedly, your workmanship will meet or exceed these mass produced pieces but likely so will your prices. What do you say when the gentleman from Cleveland in the plaid leisure suit says "I saw these in a catalog for \$4 less!"

The answers lie in marketing, education & documentation. Show them why *yours is the better value* even if it more expensive- more beautiful horn, finer architecture, careful *American craftsmanship by you*, broad selection to choose from, and information on care and use of horn. In fact, maybe they might want to purchase a set? You might add that you have documented this exact object at a given time and place and *show them* a photograph of the original. Original wrapping makes them excellent and easy gifts as well; note the packets of "colonial dry ink" for sale; the object itself is quite undistinguished (and indeed, not even visible to the buyer!) but the paper packet made from laid paper and set with a colonial appearing type face is *really* the object being purchased. You can do the same with a nice leather or cloth container for the object and a nicely printed or hand written documentation to accompany the horn object.

So far you have at least matched the mass produced item. But there is more! Almost by definition, those bought from catalogs are generic but you can customize yours... and for an additional fee! How about the owner's initial on the handle? A large spoon with the wedding date & names on it? A little silver escutcheon, well engraved?

Think about all of the untapped buyers. Most of us sell through Colonial Trade Fairs and to re-enactors, markets that are sought by many other craftsmen and are perhaps over saturated already. How about your local gourmet food store or deli for the caviar spoon? Boy Scouts for primitive camp items? A finely scrimshanded banded cup as a trophy for a shooting club or riding club (both were done in period) ? Be creative and sell your work! Being the creator of a fine object is only half the job- the rest is selling it.

The 1996 Conference Video

A limited number of the four video sets are still available; when these are sold, that's all! The cost is prohibitive to have them reproduced in smaller numbers, alas. You may order the four tapes, which cover all the speakers and their presentations, for only \$87.50 (U.S. funds only), postage and handling included, from:

Rev. Roland Cadle
Route 1, Box 152G
Waynesburg, PA 15370
(412) 852-1094



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

NAME _____ Date _____
Business Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
telephone: home _____ work _____
Do you wish to be listed in a directory for members only? Yes No

Dues for 1997 \$15.00 (U.S. funds only)
Registration for Annual Meeting \$25.00
Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to: The Honourable Company of Horners

Mail this page (or a xerox copy) with payment to:
Lee Larkin, Vice President
Honourable Company of Horners
8400 Atherton #1 South
St. Louis, MO 63130