

Carroll Yesteryears  
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Prized Musket, Pistol Find a Home in Taneytown  
By Mary Ann Ashcraft

If you are a collector of stamps, coins, art, dolls, etc., you know what joy collecting brings and what fun it is to share your enthusiasm with others. For many years New Windsor has been home to Daniel D. Hartzler, a nationally-recognized collector of militaria.

Dan is an authority on antique guns, especially those made by Maryland's early gunsmiths, and is the author of over 20 books, many featuring weapons he acquired over the course of 60 years. When he was younger he enjoyed using some of them for hunting and shooting. He frequently loans pieces from his extensive collection of muskets, rifles, pistols, swords, sabers, powder horns, and other items for displays at local museums and lectures on them as well.

Recently Dan decided to sell his collection through Morphy Auctions in Lancaster County, PA. Morphy produced an attractive catalog with pictures of the items accompanied by their historical backgrounds wherever possible. Dan notified families which had sold items to him in the past of the pending sale in case they chose to buy back those family heirlooms. And he made sure that people in Taneytown knew about some of his pieces made by gunsmiths associated with that area. In the late 1700s and early 1800s its craftsmen had a reputation for turning out top-quality firearms.

Looking through the Morphy catalog, Doug Heck and Carroll Hahn identified several pieces of Hartzler's collection which they, Sandra Crouse, and other directors of the Taneytown Heritage and Museum Association (THMA) felt would be important acquisitions because of their strong local connections. The THMA is a volunteer-run, non-profit founded in October 2004. Heck and Hahn's bids on two guns were successful and ensured that the items would remain in Carroll County for years to come. Eventually they will be on display in the THMA museum and headquarters at 340 East Baltimore Street, Taneytown. The museum is already home to several Eli Bentley clocks as well as other items produced by Taneytown's early craftsmen. Below are descriptions of the guns which will call Taneytown home.

Taneytown resident Mattias Schroyer was likely the maker of what was described in the catalog as an "extremely rare US Model 1794 flintlock musket." Associated with the musket when it came to light many years ago was a 1798 endorsement of Schroyer as a capable gunsmith for Federal contracts written by John Ross Key, father of Francis Scott Key.

A little historical background helps explain the origin of this rare musket. In the early years of the new republic, the United States lacked enough domestic manufacturers of firearms and recognized the need for more. The government began contracting with known gunsmiths along the Eastern seaboard to produce muskets—7,000 were to be made in 1794, the year Schroyer made this .69 caliber musket with a 44.5-inch barrel and a walnut stock. Its condition was noted in the Morphy catalog as "fine showing some honest period use." By 1798, Mattias Schroyer held a contract with the Federal government to make additional muskets, perhaps thanks to

Key's endorsement. Having both the 1794 weapon and the Key endorsement make this purchase by the THMA very exciting.

The other item from the Hartzler collection was a fine pistol made by Philip Creamer who was born in Taneytown about 1775. David Buie wrote an article about Creamer which appeared in this paper in September 2021. Creamer, son of German immigrants, got his start as an apprentice to an unknown Taneytown gunsmith. In 1805 he and his family moved to the east side of the Mississippi across from St. Louis where he began turning out rifles for frontiersmen who were opening the West. Illinois was still a territory at that point—a frontier area itself. As the years went by, Creamer also produced stunning pistols for important people. Andrew Jackson received a pair, one of which is on display at The Hermitage, his home in Nashville. The pistol now owned by the THMA was probably made at the height of Creamer's career. He returned to his boyhood home for several years, possibly to work at the Harpers Ferry arsenal, but moved back to Illinois where he died sometime in the 1840s. More information about Creamer including the article by Buie can be found with a Google search.

Dan Hartzler watched the auction online and was delighted that two guns from his collection would remain locally. Congratulations to everyone associated with the THMA for their efforts to preserve this part of Taneytown's heritage.

*Mary Ann Ashcraft is a volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.*



*Image 1: Courtesy of Dan Hartzler*

*Caption: This pistol made by Philip Creamer was recently purchased by the Taneytown Heritage and Museum Association from Dan Hartzler's collection of firearms. Creamer was born in Taneytown about 1775 and learned gunsmithing there.*



*Image 2: Courtesy of Doug Heck*

*Caption: Close-up of the lock plate on a 1794 flintlock musket attributed to Mattias Schroyer, a Taneytown gunsmith. The extremely rare musket came from Dan Hartzler's firearms collection.*



*Image 3: Courtesy of Doris Hull*

*Caption: The Taneytown Heritage and Museum Association, located at 340 East Baltimore Street, Taneytown, houses a permanent collection of the town's historic artifacts as well as an exhibit with a local theme that changes each year.*