

GUNS

That Helped Win The West

THE PEPPERBOX ...

The Pepperbox was no glory gun. Never was it to be found in the holster of a Wyatt Earp or a Wild Bill Hickok. No song or story of the cowboy ever mentioned the lowly Pepperbox. Even its name detracted from its status as a fighting arm. Yet this homely, barrel-heavy, hard-triggered and poorly sighted hand gun with revolving barrel occupies an enviable niche in the gallery of frontier firearms.

It was the first multiple-shot hand gun. The multiple-barrel principle of three or more barrels revolving around a common axis dates back to primitive hand cannon of the early 1600s — two barrels side by side and a third barrel on top. The Pepperbox usually had six barrels, though one English model had eighteen.

The ignition system, called the percussion lock, is said by Charles Edward Chapel in "Guns of the Old West," to have been second only to the discovery of gunpowder in the history of firearms. It was invented, in 1807, by Alexander Forsyth, a Scotch Presbyterian minister. His percussion lock was destined to replace muzzle loaders and to open the way for breech-loading arms.

Forsyth's original patent was to load fulminate of mercury as a priming compound into a small metal bottle mounted outside of the gun, where it would be struck by the falling hammer. The hammer hit a tiny plunger on the bottle, exploding the priming powder in the pan. Flame from the explosion went through the touch hole and into the main powder charge. The cap lock, where the fulminate was loaded into copper or brass caps, was to come later. The percussion cap came into general use about 1840.

In 1837, the Pepperbox was introduced in America. Major manufacturers were Barton & Benjamin Darling, Ethan Allen, and Nichols & Childs, all in New England.

The Pepperbox enjoyed wide use in the East and South, even greater popularity among the '49ers. This fastest shooting iron gunned down many a miner wearing a single shot Colt. Another advantage of the snub-nosed six-shooter was its price, \$10 or \$15. But the Colt that sold for \$25 in the East cost \$200 on the West Coast.

Barrels were mostly 4 and 6 inches long. Calibers were usually .28 to .36; a few were .41.

The Pepperbox was a town gun, found more often up a man's sleeve or in his boot top than in belt or holster. Also, like the derringer, it was a lady's gun. At a range of more than a few feet it was inaccurate. But at the card table or saloon counter, or in a fancy lady's boudoir, it was a far better weapon for a man to trust his life to than a single shot pistol. Against a single shot, he could pepper his victim with six shots.

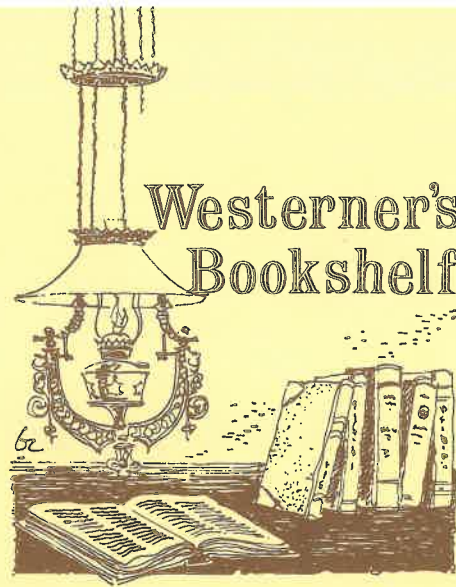
Through a strange circumstance, cartridge Pepperboxes continued to thrive long after their day was done. Smith and Wesson's patent, in 1856, on the breech-loading revolver, kept the Colt a single action until the patent expired. But the patent did not affect revolving hand guns with the barrels, instead of the cylinder chambers, bored through. So the Pepperbox, as well as the derringer, had clear sailing; it was in use up to 1900.

PM Dabney Otis Collins

Pepperbox - Ethan Allen . 1836

Bob Cornack





Westerner's Bookshelf

EXPLORING WITH FREMONT, by Charles Preuss, Translated and Edited by Erwin G. and Elisabeth K. Gudde. (The Private Diaries of Charles Preuss, Cartographer for John C. Fremont on his First, Second, and Fourth Expeditions to the Far West.) University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 159 pp. \$3.95.

When the young German emigrant, Charles Preuss, came to Fremont in December, 1841, he was destitute and desperately in need of employment. He was a skilled topographer, but the failure of the United States Coast Survey to obtain an appropriation had thrown him out of work. Fremont came to his assistance and when, early in 1842, Fremont was commissioned to explore the country between the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains, he offered the position of cartographer and artist to Preuss, who readily accepted the assignment.

Many years later, in his *Memoirs*, Fremont spoke well of the young German, but it seems Preuss did not reciprocate his chief's friendly feelings. Preuss, in his diaries, is forever complaining about the shortcomings of Fremont, of the bad food and of the monotony of the prairie. He even spoke disparagingly of the Rocky Mountains while lauding the grandeur of the Alps. It is apparent, from reading his diaries, that Preuss was not

cut out to be an explorer, nor was he able to endure the hardships of travel over uncharted routes. While he did his work well, he was morose and melancholy and was unable to accept the American way of doing things.

Surprisingly enough, with all his complaining, Preuss readily accepted an assignment for the second expedition. He was not a member of the third expedition; it would have made him unhappier than the two preceding journeys. But he again signed up for the fourth expedition.

The importance of Preuss in the westward movement is based on his cartographical achievements, his skill as an artist and his contribution to our knowledge of western exploration as revealed in his diaries. These diaries, kept on three of Fremont's five expeditions, provide fresh material concerning certain controversial matters, particularly the events of the ill-fated Fourth expedition.

The editors have done an excellent job of translation from the original German, paraphrasing when necessary in order to make the text conform to English idiom without changing the meaning.

The book is a worthy contribution to the University of Oklahoma's Exploration and Travel Series.

Armand W. Reeder, PM

GHOST TOWN ALBUM, by Lambert Florin (Superior Pub. Co., Seattle, Wash., 184 pp., \$12.50)

This is the second book by Mr. Florin on the subject of Ghost Towns, and the fact that Mr. Florin is out photographing more ghost towns, means that we can look forward to another one in the near future.

Although titled "Album," sixty percent of the book is composed of descriptive material and interesting historical facts about the towns covered. Ghost towns in the States of California, Utah, Oregon, Wyoming, Wash-

GUNS *That Helped Win The West*

WELLS FARGO HANDGUNS

Just let anyone mention the guns of the Wells Fargo messengers and what guns do you think of immediately? Why, the good old double-barreled sawed-off shotguns, of course. Wasn't this the gun the Wells Fargo men used in liquidating the stage robbers? Didn't they describe their jobs as "riding shotgun"? But that gun, as Kipling was wont to say, is another story.

An equally interesting, if less known, story is the story of the Wells Fargo handguns, two of which gained enough hold in history to be called the Wells Fargo guns. One writer said that they played as important a part as the shotgun, but that it was "more sensitive," an euphemism if I ever saw one.

Contemplate first the little diamond of Wells Fargo handguns, the Wells, Fargo & Co., Pocket Model Colt of 1849. It's a tiny thing as handguns of its era went, a tiny caliber, .31, but a mighty reputation.

This Colt had a three-inch barrel, was designed with the Wells Fargo name on the butt, and had a beautifully-engraved cylinder, showing the familiar stagecoach robbery scene.

It was perfect for its intended use, a gun to be carried in the coat pocket and used at close quarters. First models had five shots in the cylinder, later ones, after 1860, had six. They were muzzle-loaders, of course.

When the breech-loader came in, the darling of the Wells Fargo bosses and their messengers was the Smith & Wesson Schofield .45 caliber model. The messengers took to it, believing the statement that the men of the Old West refused to die unless shot with a .45.

The S. & W. Schofield was stamped with the familiar Wells Fargo name, so there was no mistaking it as the real McCoy.

And these were the handguns of Wells Fargo, supplemented, of course, with Remingtons and Colt Bisleys and other guns which a particular messenger fancied.

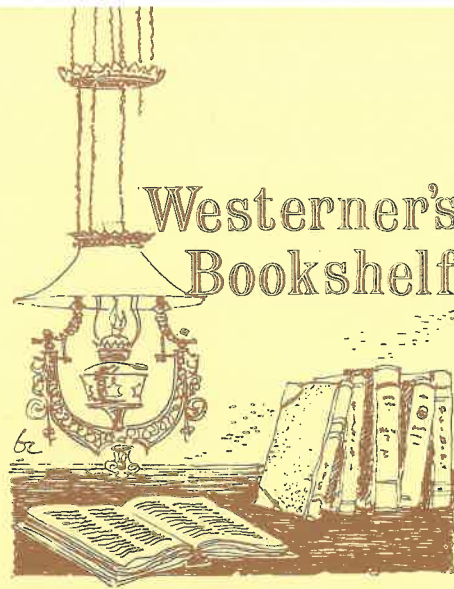
But the Colt and the Schofield, these were the old standbys—and they never let a Wells Fargo man down, 'tis said.

PM Charles B. Roth

Edmund & Wilson - Wells Fargo.

Belchfield. 45 cal. Bob Leonard '63





Westerner's Bookshelf

MOUNTAINEERING IN THE SIERRA NEVADA, by Clarence King, edited by Thurman Wilkins. *Keystone Western Americana Series* of J. B. Lippincott and Company, New York, 1962. 292 pp. and 14 p. introduction. \$2.50.

Here is escapism and relaxation for the harried twentieth century man of affairs. Let him settle back in his easy chair and read this old fashioned travel-adventure book that jogs along at the pace of a mule, and describes mountains and valleys, peaks and lakes and deserts, as if time was inconsequential. Let his mind wander back nearly a hundred years in time, let it travel geographically to California's high Sierras, and then let it settle down in imagination around a campfire, with the pines singing softly as the mountain breezes sweep through them, and then let him relax—relax as a master story teller spins yarns about his adventures with Josiah Whitney's California Geological Survey. For Clarence King, New England born and bred, considered himself first a geologist, and then many other things, high on the list of which was the avocation of writer.

First published in book form in 1872, this charming book, of a kind all too rare in the literature of the Old West, has remained in print for most of the ensuing years. Now it is being rediscovered by a new generation of lovers of the West and lovers of good writing. Chapter V, "The Newtys of Pike," is alone worth the

price of the book. But the entire product, identical to the 1872 edition, but with an excellent introduction by Thurman Wilkins and with a beautiful cover, makes this a doubly worthwhile reprint.

Richard A. Bartlett, CM

COMMERCE OF THE PRAIRIES, by Josiah Gregg (2 volumes), *Keystone Western Americana Series*, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia and New York, 1962. 352 pp., index, maps, paperback reprint, complete and unabridged, \$1.95.

This two-volume reprint of the 1844 edition of a book universally conceded to be one of the ten best source books on the West, is a real find for historians and Old West book collectors.

Josiah Gregg, born in Tennessee in 1806, came west seeking to regain his health, and stayed to become a highly successful trader and merchant on the Santa Fe Trail. In the course of his wide travels he saw a great deal, understood what he saw, and fortunately for those who came after him, had the sense to record it, and the ability to communicate his observations to others. Eye-witness narrative of a participant in the life of the frontier always has a perennial appeal, and even the baldest account carries the feel of high adventure. But Gregg's interests covered such a broad range, his details are so copious and related with such precise accuracy, that few books can stir the imagination as this one does.

Originally published in 1844, *Commerce of the Prairies* ran into eight editions within a few years, then was more or less forgotten until reprinted in 1905. Since then, two more versions have appeared, but unabridged reprints have continued to be hard to locate. Hence the importance of this new reprint.

Bernice Martin, CM

NEVADA'S TURBULENT YESTERDAY, by Don Ashbaugh. *Westernlore Press*, Los Angeles, 346 pp., \$7.50.

Here is another of the many books
continued on page 22

CHARLES G. WORMAN

4901 FEEDWIRE RD.

DAYTON, OHIO 45440

April 17, 1981

Mr. Charles Worman
4901 Feedwire Rd.
Dayton, Ohio 45440

Dear Mr. Worman:

This is in answer to your letter of March 18 seeking further information on the Wells-Fargo 10 ga. Parker shotgun that we have on display at the Pony Express Stables Museum. First, the serial number is 45199 instead of 45193 as in your letter.

This shotgun was loaned to the museum in 1972. It was later donated to the museum. I am enclosing a copy of a letter from Wm. M. Furnish, the donor, that will give you about all the information that he gave to us. We consider his judgement and knowledge to be reliable and he is a long-time friend of the St. Joseph Museum and its personnel.

I have taken the gun from the display and examined the butt stock for the "W.F. & Co." marking that you described in your letter. No such marking appears on either side.

I apologize for our tardiness in getting this information to you. I feel that since you were pushing a deadline I must at least offer an explanation. I was out of the city when your letter arrived. The cases at the Stables in which the Wells-Fargo Parker is exhibited require the use of two or more (husky) people to open since the front glass removable sections are so large and heavy. We open them once a year for renovation so expected to get your information at the same time. Due to more immediate priority, however, this renovation has been delayed and same postponed until next year. Sorry, will try to do better next time.

Sincerely,

Don L. Reynolds, Asst. Director
St. Joseph Museum
Pony Express Museum

DLR:js

Historic Firearms File ↑

CHARLES G. WORMAN

4901 FEEDWIRE RD.

DAYTON, OHIO 45440

March 18, 1981

Dear Mr. Reynolds

Several years ago, Mr. Louis Garavaglia and I visited with you in conjunction with research we've been doing for a book on firearms in the 19th century trans-Mississippi west. We obtained several photos from you for use in the book while we plan to use. (We're about 95% done and should have the entire package to the University of Oklahoma Press this spring.)

One of the photos was of a Parker double barrel shotgun with Wells Fargo markings, S/N 45193. Several weeks ago I purchased for my personal collection a similar piece, S/N41316, with 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ " barrels. The W.F. & CO. marking appears on mine at the breech on the underside of the barrel and also on the left side of the buttstock. I have no documentation verifying useage of mine by WF & Co., but the presence of similar markings on your gun, not too far distant in serial, tends to confirm validity of the piece.

I wonder if you could let me know the barrel lengthaand gauge of the gun in your collection and whether or not the butt is marked. (Mine is a 12-gauge.) Also, do you have any documentation which would tend to confirm Wells Fargo use of your gun? Apparently both guns are of the identical model and grade since patent dates and degree of engraving appear the same judging from the views of your gun which I have.

I'd welcome any comments you can make concerning these Parkers since it appears that one specimen tends to confirm the authenticity of the other.

Sincerely,

Charles Worman
Charles Worman

check butt for markings

W.F.

LIFE MEMBER: COMPANY OF MILITARY HISTORIANS
CHARTER LIFE MEMBER: SPRINGFIELD ARMORY MUSEUM, INC.
LIFE MEMBER: OHIO GUN COLLECTORS' ASSN.
FIREARMS EDITOR: HOBBIES MAGAZINE

buttstock
W.F.

MANNING & ASSOCIATES

P.O. Box 33584 (AMC Br.)
Dayton, Ohio 45433
513-429-1808

CHARLES G. WORMAN

January 13, 1978

Wells-Fargo

...that the Ballard rifle barrel was found near the site of Egan Station in Nevada. The 1853 Colt shown with the Ballard was found at Shell Creek Station site also in Nevada. The rusted revolver frame was found at the site of Horseshoe Station in Wyoming. (Please let me know the name of this revolver)

Mr. Charles G. Worman
P. O. Box 33584 (AMC Br.)
Dayton, Ohio 45433

Dear Mr. Worman:

We are sending to you as requested the following photographs:

2 8 x 10 photos of Wells-Fargo marked Parker Shotgun Ser. #45199.

1 8 x 10 photo of W-F & Co. marking on water table of Wells-Fargo shotgun

1 8 x 10 photo of Colt 1851 Navy revolver "owned by Quantrill man" Ser. #666-555, Accession #624199.

2 8 x 10 photos Hazards of the Pony Express exhibit showing 1861 Ballard rifle and Colt army revolver

(I have also enclosed a print showing the complete exhibit for which no charge is made) I am sorry that I could not get a cleaner picture of the Ballard & Colt but as you can see from the exhibit photo, these two guns are partly covered in the foreground tray and were watered in as they would more or less look if found in the desert, so I did not want to pull the exhibit apart

1 8 x 10 of rusted revolver frame found at Horseshoe Station site

1 8 x 10 of the lower portion of the front cover of H. FOTHERINGHAM & CO.'s ST. JOSEPH DIRECTORY OF 1860 showing ad for WELL'S CELEBRATED SELF-COCKING REVOLVER.

1 8 x 10 of White Cloud Dueling pistols (taken when you were here)

DLR:js
Enc.

to 800 directory
100 call of Bullard
mailed letter
January 13, 1978

Charles G. Worman
Mr. Charles G. Worman
P. O. Box 33584 (AMC Br.)
Dayton, Ohio 45433

4901 Fieldview Rd.
Dayton, O. 45440

STATEMENT

9 8 x 10 photos as described in the enclosed
letter @ \$1.50 ea.

\$13.50

Postage

.90

No P.S. Total

\$14.40

to 1860 directory

1840 Colt & Ballard

WF-marked Parker

Charles Woman
4901 Fieldwire Rd.
Dayton, O. 45440

NO RUSH

Quatrill 1851 Cott

(already picked up photo of Le Page dueller.)

January 24, 1978

4901 Feedwire Rd.
Dayton, Ohio 45440
Jan. 17, 1978

Mr. Charles Worman
4901 Feedwire Rd.
Dayton, Ohio 45440

Dear Charles:

Your letter and check is in hand. Thank you. Also, I have rechecked the serial number on the Quantrill Colt and it is indeed a lower figure. The correct number is 166555 - a typographical error. Sorry. Glad that you caught it. I've enclosed a check for \$14.40. As for the rusted relic that was found at the Horseshoe Station site, it probably is an Allen pepperbox. I haven't any drawings of pepperbox guns, but I can design one to the Allen so I can't be sure as to the make. A clue might be the shape of the grip frame interior, specifically the projection at the bottom against which the base of the mainspring lay. It probably was a Manhattan. Mr. Harold R. Mouillesseaux, 771 Circle Ave., Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417 wrote quite a fine book on Allen guns and he might be able to positively identify the gun for you. Too much of the gun is deteriorated for me to be positive. Pepperbox arms of this type were popular in this country in the 1840s and 1850s and even went into the early 1860s. They were faster firing and less expensive than the early Colt revolvers although they were strictly short range handguns due to their heavy trigger pull (at least the double action models such as the revolved Allen), lack of sights, and general design.

Don L. Reynolds, Asst. Director
St. Joseph Museum
Pony Express Museum

DLR:js

Again, I'm grateful to you for taking and printing the photos which Mr. Garavito and I requested. I'll keep the box open for an appropriate Buffalo style Sharps rifle and will advise you if I see or hear of one in the next several months with increasing western resolution.

Sincerely,

Charles Worman
Charles Worman

P.S. At your convenience, could you recheck the serial number of the Colt Navy that belonged "to a Quantrill man?" Your letter indicates a serial of 466-555, but Colt only made 220,000 of these. The number of the frame immediately in front of the forward edge of the trigger guard would be the primary number if visible.

4901 Feedwire Rd.
Dayton, O. 45440
Jan. 19, 1978

Mr. Don L. Reynolds
Assistant Director
DDSaint Joseph Museum
St. Joseph, Mo. 64501

Dear Mr. Reynolds

The group of photos arrived and they are fine. I've enclosed a check for \$14.40. As for the rusted relic that was found at the Horseshoe Station site, it probably is an Allen pepperbox. I haven't any drawings of pepperboxes that are contemporary with and similar in design to the Allen so I can't be sure as to the make. A clue might be the shape of the grip frame interior, specifically the projection at the bottom against which the base of the mainspring lay. It probably is an Allen since they were the most widely distributed such guns, although it could have been a Manhattan. Mr. Harold R. Mouillesseaux, 771 Circle Ave., Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417 wrote quite a fine book on Allen guns and he might be able to positively identify the gun for you. Too much of the exterior has deteriorated for me to be positive. Pepperbox arms of this style were quite popular in this country in the 1840s and 1850s and even to a lesser extent into the early 1860s. They were faster firing and less expensive than the early Colt revolvers although they were strictly short range handguns due to their heavy trigger pull (at least the double action models such as the typical Allen), lack of sights, and general design.

Again, I'm grateful to you for taking and printing the photos which Mr. Garavaglia and I requested. I'll keep my eyes open for an appropriate buffalo style Sharps rifle and will advise you if I see or hear of one in the next several months with documented western association.

Sincerely,

Charles Worman
Charles Worman

P. S. At your convenience, could you recheck the serial number of the Colt M1851 Navy that belonged "to a Quantrill man?" Your letter indicated a serial of 666-555, but Colt only made 225,000 of these. The number of the frame immediately in front of the forward edge of the trigger guard would be the primary number if visible.

860
OLVER.

en you

OVER

Dear Charles

Your letter & check is in hand. Thank you.

Also, I have rechecked the serial
number on the Quantrell cast and
it is indeed a lower figure. The
correct number is 166 555

a Typographical error. Sorry.
Glad that you caught it.

If we can be of you further
assistance please feel free to
call on us

Sincerely

Har O

Dear Fred:

I have delayed answering your letter of April 20, 1973 until now. Wanted to clear up a couple of things that needed Roy's memory and knowledge and he has been on a lecture tour until now.

I am sorry to have offended you by wondering if the 140 148 colt pistol ever even really belonged to Jim Moore, especially after Colt's records show it was made in 1863. This should be no reflection on you as we are just as anxious that the gun should be authentic as you are.

Now I talked to Roy about firearms that you brought down to the museum. He told me that there were four altogether:

- 1 - Colt Patterson
- 1 - Spencer RIFLE
- 1 - Colt 1851 (the one loaned to Harry)
- 1 - Colt 1851 (Jim Moore's gun that we purchased)

The Colt Patterson was returned to you (by myself to your home in person) as you will recall.

The Spencer is, and has been on display, ever since you brought it down. Roy understood that it was a donation and it is not shown as a loan on the accession records. That is my recollection, too, from what I overheard at the time, and we have always so told the public. Is this not correct?

The Colt 1851 that was loaned to Harry was returned by mail. (The receipt is enclosed). *(Do you know it Jim?)*

The Jim Moore Colt 140 148 that we purchased for \$250.00 is still on display in the Pony Express Stables as his gun. The Colt records according to their letter to us indicated that it was made in 1863 and so prompted us to drop the wording that it had been used in the Pony Express until that can be cleared up. This was done partly to keep others with knowledge of Colt arms, serial numbers, etc. from challenging the exhibit. I hope that more information comes to light.

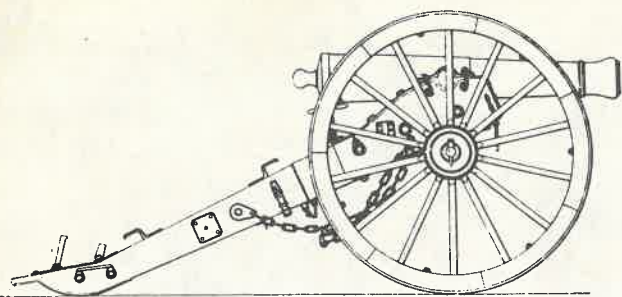
I had not known, until you told me, that Colt's records were destroyed by fire. *They evidently had a duplicate record that was not destroyed.*

Your offer to refund the \$250.00 for the Colt 140 148 was not but if that is your

desire we can return it.

I had hoped to get up you way and drop by for Mrs. Moines to see you on my way to Omaha but that trip ~~to the museum~~ was postponed for the time being.

Sincerely,



Larry O. Whittington
Colt Conversions - Cannons
1501 North Third Street
St. Joseph, Missouri 64505

3/4 Scale 6" is
Civil War
(Made prior to)

Ron Giffon (policeman)
will fire it

(Used in making the Utah film)

November 2, 1972

Mr. James Hanson
Museum of the Fur Trade
Route 2, Box 18
Chadron, Nebraska 69337

*Finearms
(Buffalo Sharps)*

Dear Jim:

Many thanks for sending along the Vol. 6, #2, 1970 Quarterly with article on vintage buffalo guns. It will be of real help to us. We also sent for and received the book that you recommended, THE SHARPS RIFLE, Its History, Development and Operation. So now if we go out and buy the wrong gun it will be our own fault.

Must say again that I certainly enjoyed your museum and hope to bring the Mrs. by for a look some year soon.

Best regards to your father. I am sending a book that has been recently re-published that you and he might enjoy. It was written by an old timer of my childhood area--Agency, Mo. Most of the people mentioned in it are names that I have heard about all my life from folks and grandfolks. The Brinton's are my wife's folks. I inherited an original copy and recently a limited 2nd edition (1,000) was published.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Don L. Reynolds, Asst. Director
St. Joseph Museum
Pony Express Museum

DLR:js

P.S. If you hear of a buffalo Sharps, even if in rather poor condition, let us know. Wouldn't have to be too good for our purpose.

Rich sends regards.