

Michigan in South Dakota

by
James Kelly

This over-under rifle by Claudius Beach recently returned to Michigan from South Dakota. The gun has a silver blade front sight, with a rear sight adjustable for elevation. The fine threaded peep sight is now missing from tang. Walnut stock.

Both barrels are .45 caliber, with deep six-groove rifling, twist 1 in 50". Round 32 1/8" round barrels and iron mounted, including a scroll trigger guard with deep bow, this rifle weighs 12-1/2 pounds. , double ramrods with two iron thimbles each side. This is a rifle designed for large Western game, and for serious discussions with the original landowners of that region.



The *Michigan Pioneer & Historical Collections* says about Beach "During the reign of hand-made firearms Mr. Beach's produce was among those which bore national repute. He often made shipments as far west as the Pacific slope and was regarded as *the* gun manufacturer of Michigan."

Beach, Claudius H. Beach made percussion sporting rifles in Marshall, Michigan from about 1840 to the 1880's. He made single, double and triple barrel pieces, some of the earlier being pill-lock ignition.

Originally from East Bloomfield, Ontario County, New York, he was born June 19,

1815 and died at home in Marshall August 26, 1888. He was a gunsmith in the Marshall area as early as 1844. His obituary stated in part:

"When of proper age he was apprenticed to a gunsmith and a proper calling it proved to be for him. Thinking to better his circumstances in life, he emigrated West in the year 1844, and settled down in Marshal, where he prosecuted his chosen profession with vigor. In his wife, whose maiden name was Mary McKay, and whom he took as life partner October 10, 1838, Mr. Beach was possessed of a model & loving helpmeet. Three children were the fruit of the union. It is a few months over 43 years since the Beach family took up their residence in the same house which is now made lonely by absence of the old and familiar form of its master, who seemed almost a part of the place.

The two back action side locks are each marked **C.H. BEACH MARSHALL, MICH_**.

These locks have no half cock position. When hunting, the gun must be carried with one or both hammers down on the cap, or one hammer cocked. The locks release only by the double set trigger. Whichever lock is cocked is released by the DST. This is not uncommon for Michigan double guns. It serves to remind us how very different were attitudes about safety and mortality, a century and a half ago.



excerpt from:

***Michigan Gunsmiths from the 18th
through the Early 20th Centuries,***
James Kelly & Dorr . Wiltse, Jr., ©2010

James Kelly has been a member of MAAC since 1973. General collector, primary interests flint muskets and pistols.