

The Hawken Classic is the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the J&S Hawken rifle. We began celebrating this event in 2022, and this is the fourth and final event.

The Hawken brothers were instrumental in the development of the purpose-built Plains/Mountain rifle. Their rifles became the prototype for all makers supplying the Western trade. The Hawken Shop in St. Louis supplied rifles for the trans Mississippi trade from the 1820's through 1860. The Hawken Classic is a celebration of the Hawken rifle's contribution to American History. The Lewis and Clark Boat House and Museum near St. Louis, Missouri, is a great location for this event.

Activities will include:

1. Incredible collection of original and contemporary Missouri rifles on display.
2. Knowledgeable guest speakers on the history of the Hawken rifle and related subjects. Seminars are held under the museum.
3. Living history camps in period correct attire.
4. Vendors – including [The Hawken Shop](#), [Trail Creek Trade Company](#), [Powderhorns and More](#), and others.
5. Artists and craftsmen demonstrating weaving, forging, horn and leather work, and more.
6. Opportunity to shoot black powder from an original Hawken rifle owned by Greg Roberts.
7. See many period correct guns, accoutrements and enjoy the living history.
8. Test your skills at traditional archery, tomahawk and knife throwing, and fire starting.
9. Learn how Lewis and Clark and the Hawken rifle impacted America's history.
10. Entry into the Museum will be **FREE** thanks to the [NMLRA](#), [The Hawken Shop](#), and the [Gemmer Muzzle Loading Gun Club](#).



Website:

<https://www.GemmerMuzzleloadingClub.com/Hawken-Classic/>

Registration: <https://forms.gle/Bq4KebqynWHPs294A>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/hawkenclassic/>

Facebook Group: [Hawken Classic Public Group](#)

YouTube: [@HawkenClassic](#)

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/hawkenclassic/>

Email: hawkenclassic@pm.me



Pick up a copy of *Taking the Long Shot* and have artist, David Wright, sign it.



Contacts:

Event Coordinator: Bob Vogt, hawkenclassic@pm.me

NMLRA: Amber May, (812) 667-5131, amay@nmlra.org

Lewis and Clark Boat House and Museum:

(636) 947-3199



Dates: May 16 – 18, 2025

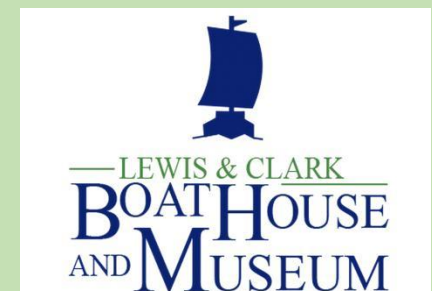
Times: Friday, 10am to 5pm
Saturday, 10am to 5pm
Sunday, 10am to 5pm

Backup Date: September 5-7, 2025
(in case of spring river flooding)



Location:

[The Lewis and Clark Boat House and Museum](#)
1050 S Riverside Drive, St Charles, MO 63301
(**FREE** entrance to the museum during the event.)



History of the Hawken Rifle

Jacob and Samuel Hawken (J&S Hawken, St. Louis) were the 3rd and 4th sons of 6 sons and a total of 9 children by Christian Hawken (wife Juliann) from Hagerstown, Maryland. Christian and his brothers migrated to this country from Switzerland/Germany prior to the Revolutionary War. Christian (1756-1821), the patriarch of the Hawken family, taught all his sons and others the serious craft of gunsmithing. The Hawken brothers' lineage of gunsmiths, at least fifteen, contributed immensely to the growth, development and history of our nation.

Jacob (Jake; 1785-1849) left his father's shop in Hagerstown around 1810 to work for the Harpers Ferry Armory (US) until around 1818. Anxious to go west, Jake traveled to St. Louis, Missouri which was the hub of trade along the Missouri River in 1819. During his early years Jake worked with former Virginia gunsmith James Lakenan, who is believed to have inspired the iron mounts we see on his rifles. General blacksmithing proved essential to pay the bills.

Samuel (Sam; 1792-1884) left his family and set out on his own to work in Xenia, Ohio. After the death of his wife and father, he returned to Hagerstown briefly before joining his elder brother out west. It was June 1825 when Sam arrived in St. Louis to form a partnership with Jake (J&S Hawken).

From 1822-1849 the J&S Hawken rifle evolved to perform and survive service in the far west. This filled the void for providing a dependable, powerful rifle for buffalo and grizzly bear. The rifle was also accurate at longer distances across the plains. Many stocks were made of curly maple as were their father's long rifles. About 20-25% were stocked in walnut. They weighed around 10 pounds, had a bore of 50-58 caliber, and used up to 120 grains of powder. Generally, a J&S Hawken was sighted in for 130 yards and was accurate to 200. One of the first J&S Hawken rifles went to General Ashley for a return trip along the Missouri to the Yellowstone to combat the Indians along the riverbanks. Sam, later in life, referred to the rifle as the Super Rifle. The J&S Hawken was preferred by famous men such as Jim Bridger, Jim Clyman, Kit Carson, Joe Meek, Marina Modena and Jedediah Smith, to name a few. After Jacob's death in 1849, Sam left the shop to his son, went further west to Colorado, but soon returned to St. Louis.



J.P. Gemmer—In the early 1860's ownership was transferred to J.P. Gemmer, who held true to tradition and maintained the "Hawken" quality until the shop finally closed in 1915.

The tools and machinery lay unused in Gemmer's St. Louis home for fifty plus years. Early in the 1960's at the sale of the Gemmer estate, Walter Kennedy acquired these remnants of the "Hawken Shop" for his close friend, Art Ressel. Mr. Ressel, a Hawken enthusiast, felt obligated to continue the tradition and opened the "Hawken" gun shop. Less than 100 Hawken rifles were produced during this period before Mr. Ressel closed the gun shop in the mid 1980's. Again, the original "Hawken" quality was unobtainable, and a valued part of American History ceased to exist.

In December of 1990 a new and equally great period of the "Hawken" story began. Mr. Ressel sold the entire shop to a family owned business in Washington. Greg Roberts and Claudette Greene purchased "The Hawken Shop" to preserve this valued part of Americana. Once again, the classic "Hawken" had returned. Current planning was to wait two years before proceeding with the "Hawken" venture. At that time Greg and Claudette were absorbed in the planning and development of a traditional muzzleloading rifle in the style of Dimick and Leman, and felt they could not devote additional time to "Hawken". However, fate intervened and a foundry fire destroyed all other tools and parts, except for the Hawken tooling. Consequently, The Hawken Shop was back in business and producing Hawken rifles once again.

Art Ressel—Being the son of antique dealers, his early collecting interests lay in items from the Civil War. With a love for that early history, it was only natural for him to become instantly interested in a Hawken Rifle offered to him by a local antique dealer. He was fresh from the Marine Base in San Diego, and he and his wife sacrificed to come up with the overwhelming sum of \$1,000.00 to purchase his first Hawken rifle. Eager for more information on Jake and Sam's product, he pursued information on all of the St. Louis area's early gun makers. This led to the acquisition of the remnants of the Gemmer Gun Shop. He also acquired an enviable assortment of Hawken guns and other early St. Louis examples. This saw the change of his "Antique Arms" business into "The Hawken Shop". His first Hawken Rifle was in virtually unused condition. The legendary gunsmith Keith Neubauer used it as a model for the manufacture of the "Original" S. Hawken Plains rifle sold by The Hawken Shop.

Greg Roberts—Greg began his gunsmithing career in 1971. While specializing in handguns, his interest in all types of guns grew. An introduction to muzzleloading in 1985 led to the purchase of tooling to make breeches, tangs, and percussion locks. As the business grew, his awareness of the vast variety of muzzleloaders became apparent, and Hawken stood out as the finest example. When Art Ressel decided to sell The Hawken Shop in 1990, the decision was made to take the ultimate plunge and buy the shop.

"It is an honor to be able to continue the production of Sam Hawken's Classic Plains Rifle and save this great part of American History." - Greg Roberts

The Hawken Shop will be one of the vendors at the Hawken Classic. Come on over and meet Greg. He will have an original Hawken rifle for visitors to shoot and get their picture taken while holding the Hawken.

