

W.H. Baker and Baker Guns



Images may be enlarged with Ctrl +

History of William H. Baker

1835 - Born on December 25 in Upstate New York, in either Chenango or Otsego County.

1859 - Listed as a gunsmith in Greene, N.Y.

1860 - Moved to Marathon, N.Y. Married about this time and making percussion rifles, telescopes and pistols.

1863 - Received U.S. patent #40,809 for a fire-arm lock with the mainspring mounted on the hammer.

1867 - Moved to Lisle, N.Y. Began making shotguns in addition to rifles.

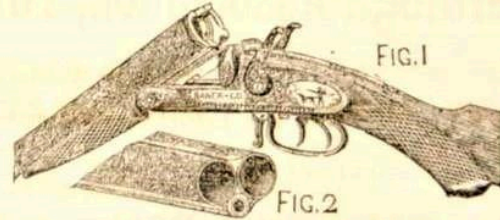
1875 - Received U.S. patent #167,293 for a breech loading 3 barrel gun. By this time he was making only breech loading guns.

(There is a brief mention [unconfirmed] in “An Illustrated History of the Village of Lisle, Broome County, New York, 1866-1966” published by the Lisle Centennial Committee in 1966 that Baker was visited in Lisle in 1875 by “Munroe and Bart Smith [likely L.C.’s brothers Monroe C. and Wilbert], and Frank Stanley of the gun shop of L.C. Smith, and Sam and Charley Patch, Will Landers, Will Carley, and Day Edwards of the Ithaca Gun Shop.”)

1877 - Formed the firm W.H. Baker & Co. with Leroy H. Smith, with financial backing from L.C. Smith, and moved to Syracuse, N.Y. No production records exist but it has been estimated that about 1,500 guns were produced 1877-1880.

Drillings were offered in 10 or 12 gauge over an ordnance steel rifle barrel chambered for .44-40 WCF. The cocking lever was forward of the trigger guard.
https://lcsca.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=43784&module_id=246333

THE BAKER GUNS.



We make the best double gun in the world for the money. Choke-bore, rebounding locks, extension top rib. Our \$40-gun has the best English twist barrel and the best material throughout. All guns sent on trial and guaranteed.

Price, Best English Twist barrel..... \$40
 Price, Damascus barrel..... \$55 to \$200

A new feature in the gun line. It is light and compact, from 8 to 10 lbs. weight. The rifle is perfectly accurate. It has proved a great success for all kinds of shooting. An owner of this gun cannot make a mistake and take the wrong one when he goes out for game.

Price..... \$75 to \$250

W. H. BAKER & CO., Syracuse, N. Y.

1880 - Baker and Leroy Smith leave W.H. Baker & Co. Using Baker's patent #199,773, three barrel drillings and double barrels were now produced by "L.C. Smith, Maker of Baker Gun, Syracuse N. Y." until early 1884. Alexander Brown's patent #234,749 November 23, 1880 moved the rifle barrel cocking lever inside the trigger guard.

Drillings were offered in 10 or 12 gauge over .44-40 WCF, and later .45-70 and .38-55 WCF; in Quality No. 1 (\$75) to Quality No. 5 (\$200).

Double barrel shotguns were offered in 10 or 12 gauge in Quality A (\$40) to Quality F (\$200 => \$5,000 today).

No production records exist but it has been estimated that about 1,200 Drillings and 8,300 doubles were produced 1880-1884.

THE BAKER NEW MODEL THREE BARREL GUN.



This Gun has now been in active service for a sufficient length of time to demonstrate that it has no equal for a general hunting gun. The rifle has proved to be thoroughly accurate up to 800 yards. Its average weight is from nine to ten lbs.

ALL GUNS SENT ON TRIAL AND WARRANTED.

For further particulars send for illustrated catalogue No. 4.

THE BAKER DOUBLE BARREL SHOT GUN.



We make the best Double Gun in the market for the money. All Guns are choke bored, and have rebounding locks, extension top rib, and patent fore end.

ALL GUNS SENT ON TRIAL AND GUARANTEED.

Price Best English Twist Barrel, - \$10 00

" Damascus Barrel, - \$55 to \$200 00

For further particulars send for descriptive circular No. 4.

L. C. SMITH,
Sole Maker of the BAKER GUN,
SYRACUSE, N. Y.

1883 - Alexander Brown patents #274,435 March 20, 1883 (rotary locking bolt), patent #282,838 August 7, 1883 (improved cocking lever), and patent #289,062 November 27, 1883 (bar action sidelock) were used to manufacture the new "L.C. Smith Maker, Syracuse, N.Y." double barrel hammer shotgun. The Baker three barrel gun was discontinued, and the new shotgun was available by May 1884.

1883 - Baker, along with Dwight McIntyre and Jon Van Natta (builder of Van Natta dam above his grist mill on Six Mile Creek) formed what was to become the Ithaca Gun Co. in Ithaca, N.Y. They were later joined by Leroy Smith. The Ithaca guns carried Baker's May 25, 1880 and June 1, 1880 patents.

Having Many Inquiries As To What Distinguishes The "ITHACA GUN" From The Original "BAKER GUN" Of Which I Was The Inventor And For a Time The Manufacturer, I Will Say: The "ITHACA GUN" Has The Top Lever, Instead Of The Trigger Action, An Entirely New Arrangement Of Locks, And Construction, Making It More Desirable In Every Respect; For Which Reason It Was Thought It Best Not To Have It Conflict In Name With The Old Gun.

Sincerely Thanking My Numerous Friends For Their Liberal Appreciation Of My Efforts To Produce Such Work As Our Progressive Shooting Demands, And Trusting That The "ITHACA GUN" Will Continue To Merit Their Patronage And That The Pleasant Business Relations Formerly Existing May Be Continued With The ITHACA GUN COMPANY,

I Am

Very Truly

W. H. BAKER

Ithaca, N.Y. MAY 1885

"Baker's Latest and Best Invention"

THE ITHACA GUN?
 BEST ENGLISH
 TWIST BARRELS,
\$85.

DAMASCUS STEEL BARRELS,
\$50 to \$200.



BAKER'S
Latest and Best Invention.

Strongest, simplest and best balanced gun made. All have Top Lever, Low Hammers, Rebounding Locks, Interchangeable Parts, Extension Rib, Self-Fastening Compensating Fore End, Rubber Butt Plate, and the shooting qualities that made the Baker Gun a great success. Send for Circulars.

ITHACA GUN CO., Ithaca, N. Y.

1887 - W.H. Baker and his wife deed their interest in the Falls Creek gun company to McIntyre, Van Natta, Smith, and George Livermore, and moved back to Syracuse to join with his brother Dr. Ellis L. Baker, who had founded the "Syracuse Forging Co." to manufacture wagon wheels and other forgings. The name of the firm was changed to the "Syracuse Forging & Gun Co." and began to manufacture guns designed by A.C. McFarland, patent #370,966.

Summer 1888 - A fire at the factory ended production in Syracuse.

1889 - The Bakers moved their operation to Batavia, N.Y. The guns produced at this time were marked "The New Baker, Syracuse Forging and Gun Co., Batavia, NY". W. H. Baker is incapacitated and Frank Hollenbeck of Syracuse is brought in as supervisor of the Batavia gun operation.

October 10, 1889 - W.H. Baker died of tuberculosis (and possibly silicosis - a gun maker's occupational lung disease which increases the risk of TB).

1890 - The name of the company is changed to the "Baker Gun and Forging

Company”. “Baker Gun Co.. Makers, Batavia, NY” is stamped on the top rib and “Baker Gun Co.” on the lockplates.

It remained in operation until 1919, when the gunmaking portion of Baker Gun and Forging Co. was sold to H. & D. Folsom, who moved the manufacturing to their Crescent factory in Norwich, Connecticut.

(Some information from H.J. Swinney, *The New York State Firearms Trade*, 2003)

W.H. Baker Resources

Baker and The Ithaca Gun Co.

Walter C. Snyder, *The Ithaca Gun Company: From The Beginning*

Baker and L.C. Smith Maker of Baker Guns, Syracuse

John Houchins, *L.C. Smith “The Legend Lives”*

The Double Gun Journal

Vol. 3, No. 3, 1992, Daryl Hallquist, “The Guns of the Baker Brothers”

Vol. 3, No. 4, 1992, William Furnish and Daryl Hallquist, “The Guns of the Baker Brothers, Part II”

Vol. 9, No. 2, 1998, William Furnish and Daryl Hallquist, “The Guns of the Baker Brothers, Part III” (covering the Baker hammer guns)

Vol. 14, No. 4, 2003, James Tyson, “The Baker Aspect Of My Ithaca Reality”

Vol. 19, No. 3, 2008, Townsend Breeden, “Baker Single Barrel Trap Guns”

Guns Illustrated, 1997, “The Baker Shotguns” Don Hardin and Daryl Hallquist

Cornell Publications has a number of Baker catalog reproductions

<https://www.cornellpubs.com/old-guns/historic-baker-firearms.php>

“W.H. Baker: Gunmaker of Distinction”, Kenneth H. Shanks, *American Rifleman*, June, 1968

W. H. BAKER: GUNMAKER OF DISTINCTION

A review of the shotguns of this famed American craftsman

By KENNETH H. SHANKS

BAKER double-barrel shotguns, remembered for their fine shooting qualities and durability, take their place with the Parkers, Smiths, Ithacas, Foxes, Lefevers, and Remingtons, as the finest of the old American-made doubles.

William H. Baker, the elder of 2 brothers, contributed most of the design work for the Baker guns. He also designed the first L. C. Smith guns and the first Ithaca guns. Most Baker guns bear a remarkable resemblance to L. C. Smith guns and, in fact, often are mistaken at first glance for Smiths.

William was born at Oxford, Chenango County, N. Y., on Christmas Day 1835, and the younger brother, Ellis L. Baker, was born at nearby Greene on Mar. 15, 1845. By 1869 the younger brother had become a physician, and had opened his first office in Marathon, N. Y. William was making muzzle-loading and metallic-cartridge rifles in the same town. He also built guns at Lisle, N. Y., and there became acquainted with the Smith and Livermore families. Due to his association with Leroy H. Smith and, later on, with George Livermore, 2 of the greatest of the American gun manufacturing concerns were started.

First Baker guns

The young doctor, having established himself in the medical profession, moved to Hartford and then to Syracuse in 1875. William continued to make rifles and develop his ideas on shotguns in Marathon until 1878, when he followed his brother to Syracuse. Leroy H. Smith had succeeded in getting his brother, Lyman C. Smith, to finance a new enterprise, a partnership of the Smith brothers and W. H. Baker, known as W. H. Baker and Co. This venture evolved into L. C. Smith and Co.

First of the Baker guns was a trigger action or front-trigger break gun, made in 10-ga. and 12-ga. It opened when the underbolt was withdrawn by pressing forward on the front trigger. These

were massive guns with long barrels of London twist steel, yet they had classic lines and functioned well. A combination rifle and shotgun was produced on the same action. The patent date on the first trigger-action gun produced by Baker was Aug. 31, 1875.

Ownership changes hands

The business, located at 20 Walton St., operated as W. H. Baker and Co. for 2 years before L. C. Smith bought the interests of his 2 partners and continued production of the same guns. These were marked "L. C. Smith and Co., Maker of the Baker Gun" on the rib, and "Baker Pat." on the locks. Smith dropped the Baker name in 1883, but continued to produce this gun and a shotgun-rifle combination in Syracuse until 1888. At that time the business was sold to the Hunter brothers. As the Hunter Arms Co., they made L. C. Smith guns for about 60 years. The Marlin Firearms Co. bought the gun business from Hunter Arms Co. in the early 1940's, and after World War II produced a few models of L. C. Smith shotguns under the Hunter Arms Co. name until about 1950.

Baker and Smith entered the gun business again in Ithaca, N. Y., where on Feb. 7, 1883, they began setting up a plant to manufacture shotguns. Among others, George Livermore provided part of the capital. Mr. Livermore, who was Smith's brother-in-law, and Lou Smith, a son, remained in the business and helped to direct its affairs long after it became known as the Ithaca Gun Co.

It has not been clearly established at what time the new company was first called the Ithaca Gun Co. The Ithaca directory for 1884-85 listed a W. H. Baker & Co., Gunworks; and the one for 1885-86 listed Baker, William Henry—Gun Manufacturer. Baker referred to all guns made there under his direction as Ithaca guns, to distinguish them from the guns he had made earlier at his small shops in Lisle and Marathon, and

from the guns made by W. H. Baker and Co. of Syracuse.

Being an energetic young man with great drive and a compelling creative desire, William Baker soon moved from Ithaca, going back to Syracuse in 1887 to rejoin his younger brother. This was the start of a small business which grew into the Baker Gun and Forging Co., principal producer of Baker guns.

Dr. Ellis L. Baker, on July 6, 1885, had formed a small firm, the Syracuse Forging Co., for manufacturing carriage hardware. The machinery included equipment for making use of a growing principle known as drop forging. W. H. Baker, on his return to Syracuse, was taken into the company as plant superintendent, and the name of the company was changed to Syracuse Forging and Gun Co. Here 2 models, both hammer guns, were produced for about 2 years and Baker's developmental work continued. A fire caused the firm to move to Batavia in the spring of 1889.

Elder brother dies

William H. Baker died on Oct. 10, 1889, as operations were getting under way in Batavia, but the guns he had designed formed the foundation for the splendid Baker guns made during the next 30 years.

On the death of William, Dr. Baker ceased the practice of medicine and devoted full time to the gun business. The Syracuse Forging and Gun Co. name and the Batavia address were marked on guns until the company was reorganized on Feb. 13, 1890, and the name of the firm was changed to Baker Gun and Forging Co.

At that time the shotgun manufacturing industry was changing and developing rapidly. To devise production techniques, procure money for expansion, plan the introduction and promotion of new models, and devise sales methods was a great challenge and burden upon Dr. Baker. He remained as president, playing a major part in the direction of the company, until his re-

BAKER GUNS

Model	Made By	Location	Period	Range Of Serial Numbers*	Remarks
Trigger Action, or Front Trigger Break	W. H. Baker & Co.	20 Walton St., Syracuse, N. Y.	1878-1880	1-400	Made in 10-ga.; 12-ga., and shotgun-rifle combination
Trigger Action, or Front Trigger Break	Lyman C. Smith	60 Walton St., Syracuse, N.Y.	1880-1888	400-10000	Made in 10-ga., 12-ga., and shotgun-rifle combination
Ithaca Gun	W. H. Baker & Co., and Baker Gun Mfg. Co.	Steam Bending Works, Ithaca, N.Y.	1883-1893	1-17000	Baker left in 1886 after about 3000 guns had been made
Syracuse, New Baker, 1896, and 1897	Syracuse Forging & Gun Co., and Baker Gun & Forging Co.	32 Basin St., Syracuse, N.Y., and cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1886-1912	1-45000	Same series common to all models
"A", and "B"	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1890-1910	1-7000	'A' discontinued in 1909
"C" or Batavia Hammerless	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1897-1898	50000-56000	Only box-lock gun made by the company, first of "Batavia" line
Paragon, Expert, "L" or Pigeon, and Deluxe	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1892-1919	1-2000	One series common—higher grades added at intervals
—	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N. Y.	1898-1900	60000	Marked "Baker Gun Co." on both lock plates
Batavia Leader	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1898-1915	75000-156000	Made by Baker Gun & Forging Co. in twist steel barrels only
Batavia Special	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1908-1915	150000-161000	Probably numbered in same series as Leader
"R" and "S"	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1905-1915	200000	One series common to both grades
Batavia Damascus, and Batavia Ejector	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1905-1915	Not known	Few produced—could have been numbered with "R&S"
Black Beauty, and Black Beauty Special	Baker Gun & Forging Co.	Cor. School & Liberty Sts., Batavia, N.Y.	1916-1919	1-45000	Black Beauty replaced Leader as "stock" gun

A revised and more accurate version of production dates and SNs is here
[Baker Gun & Forging Co. Guns](#)

W.H. Baker Patents

40,809 December 8, 1863, Marathon, New York

Improvement in locks for fire-arms

167,293 August 31, 1875, Lisle

Improvement in breech-loading fire-arms

3 barrel gun trigger locking device. Cocking lever forward of trigger guard.

Breech-Loading Fire-Arms.

No. 167,293.

Patented Aug. 31, 1875

Fig. 1.

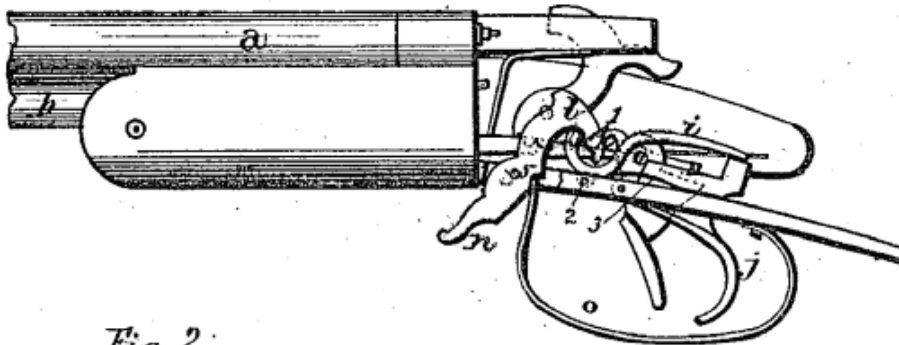
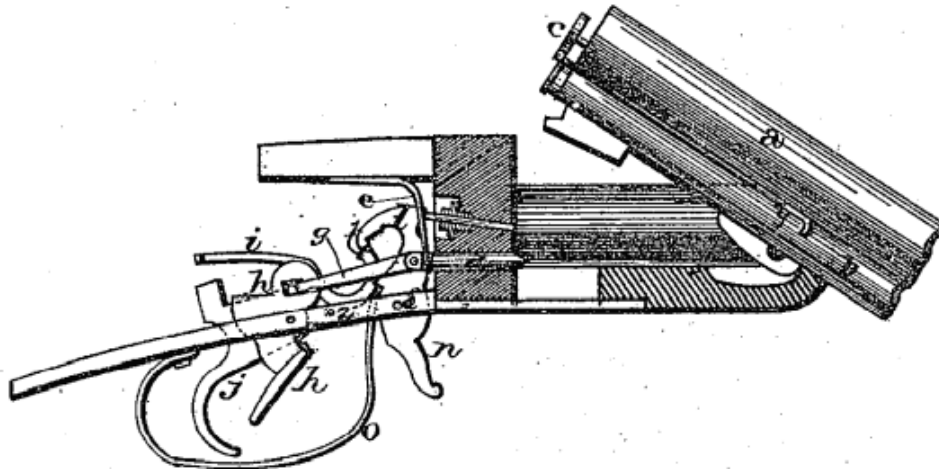


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

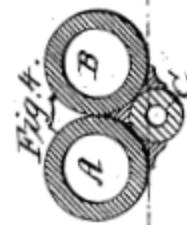
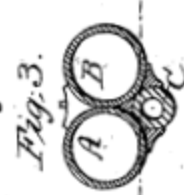
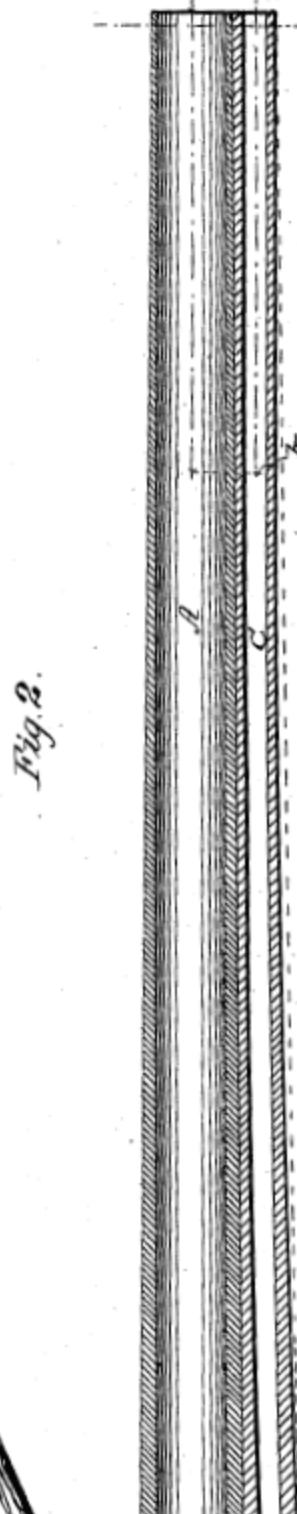
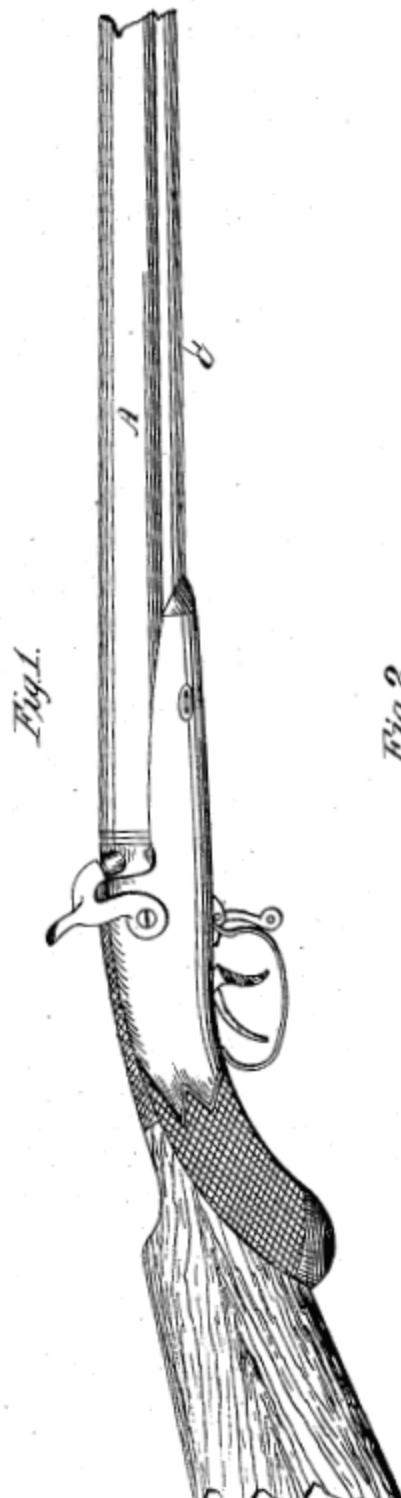


198,333 December 18, 1877, Syracuse
Improvement in gun-barrels
3 barrels; 2 shotgun over rifle

W. H. BAKER.
Gun-Barrel.

No. 198,333.

Patented Dec. 18, 1877.



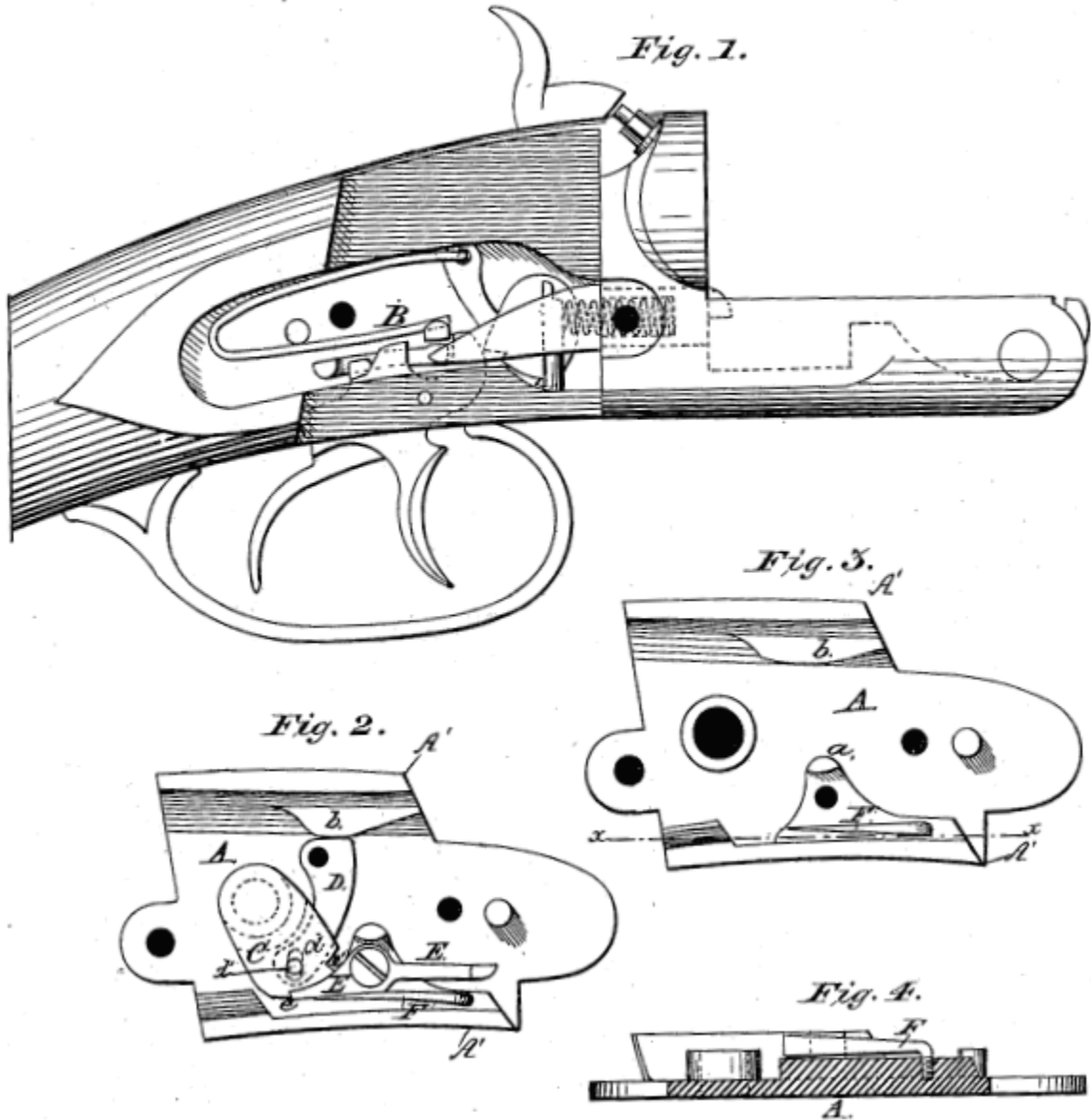
199,773 January 29, 1878, Syracuse

Improvement in locks for fire-arms with "back-acting mainspring"
<https://books.google.com/books?id=8do6AQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA325&lpg>

W. H. BAKER.
Locks for Fire-Arms.

No. 199,773.

Patented Jan. 29, 1878.

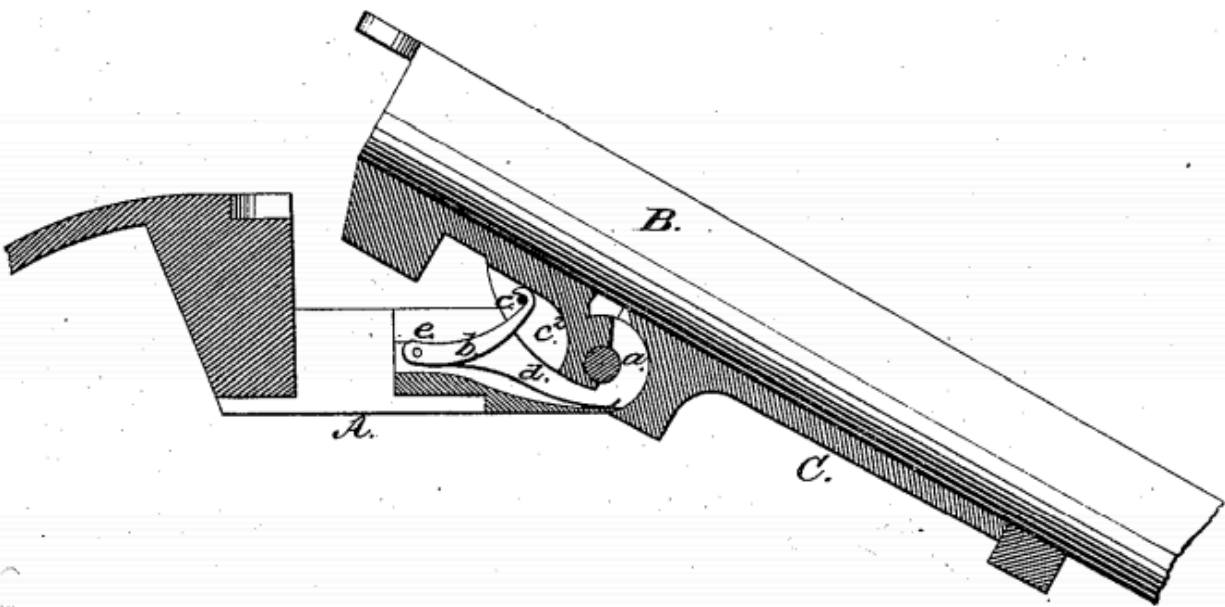


This patent was used by "L.C. Smith Maker of Baker Gun Syracuse N. Y."



202,397 April 16, 1878, Syracuse
"Barrel check spring-hook"

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Ss06AQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA171&lpg>



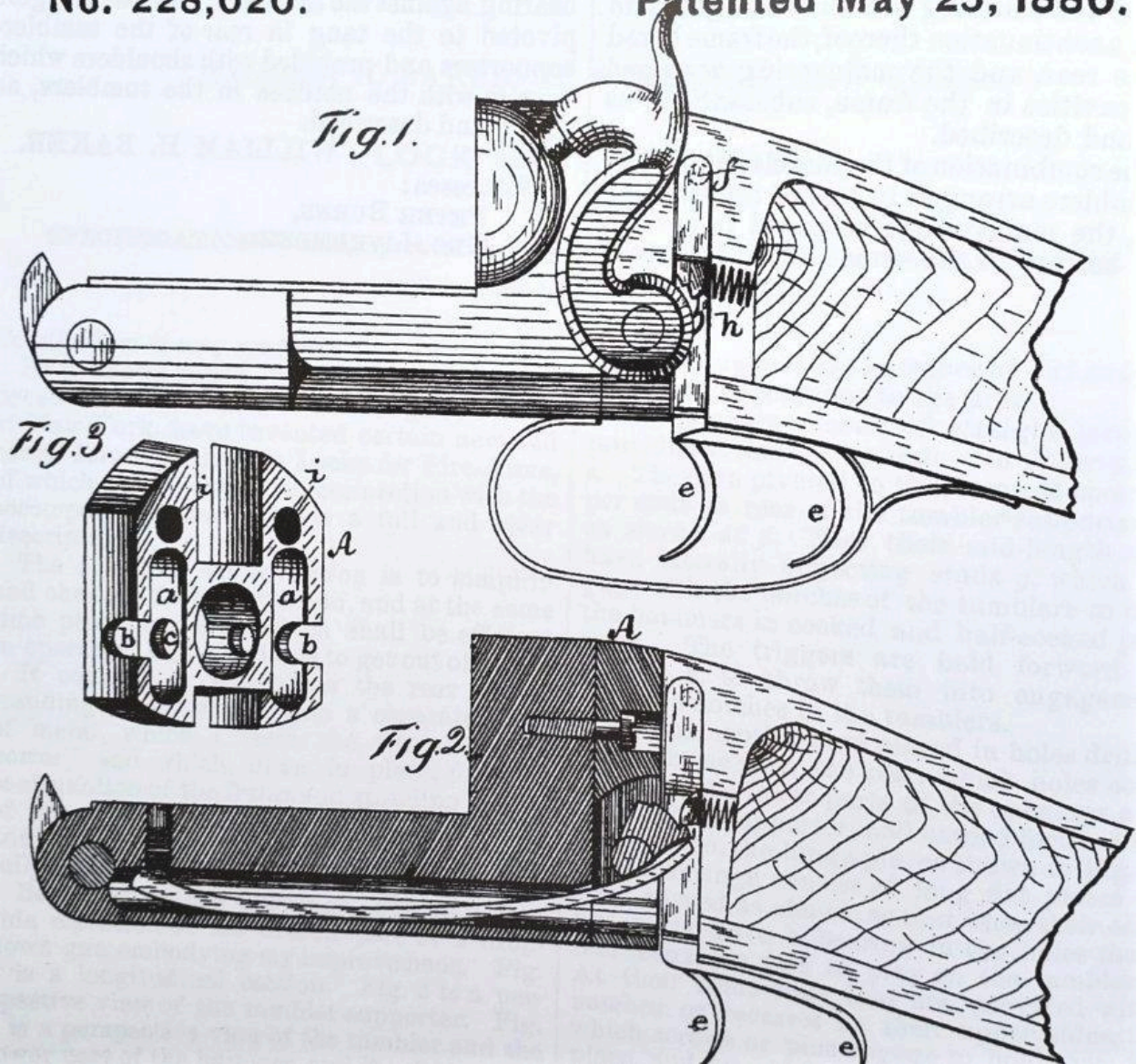
228,020 May 25, 1880, Syracuse

Improvement in lock for fire-arms; "tumbler-supporter" in the frame

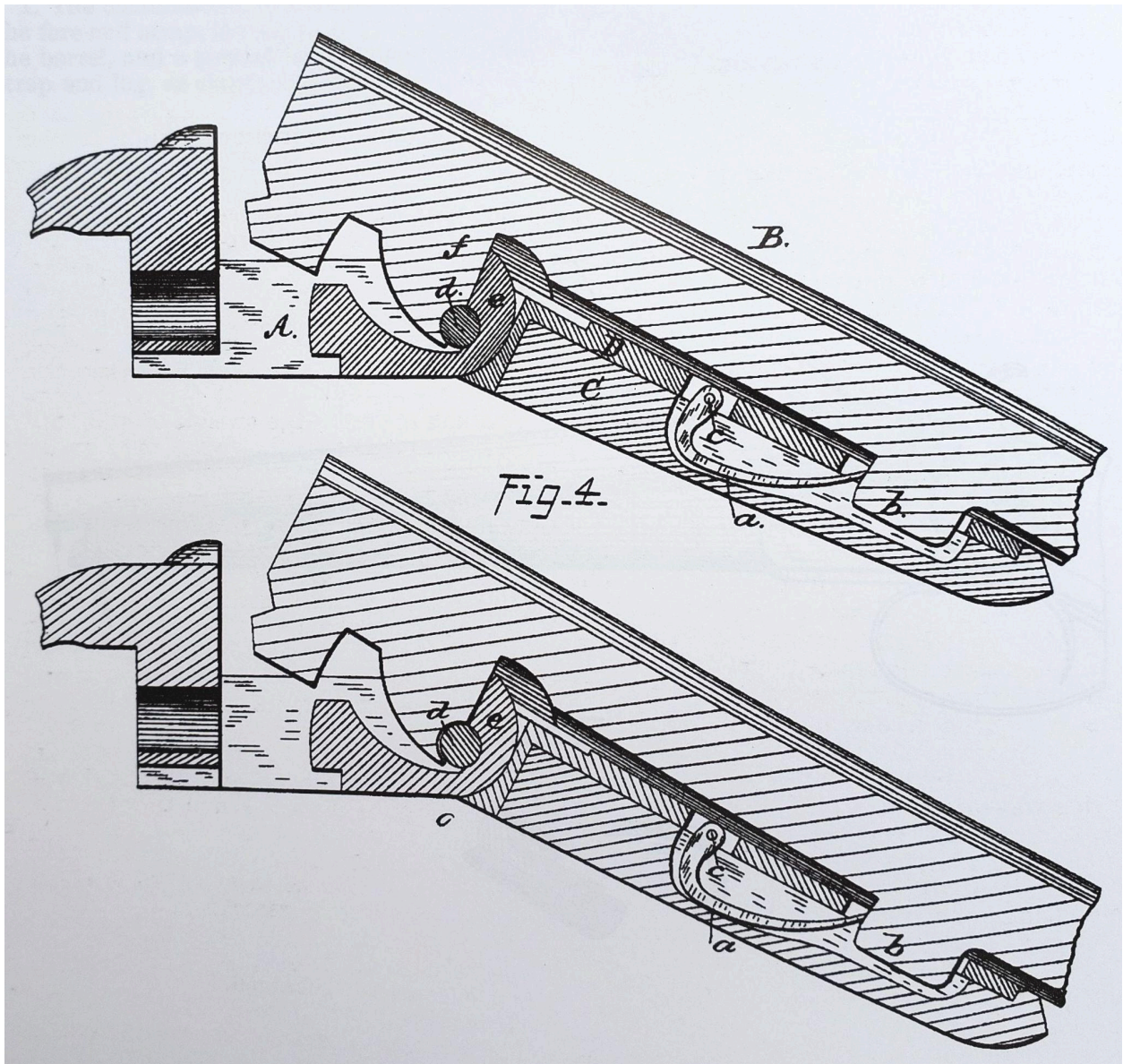
W. H. BAKER.
Lock for Fire-Arms.

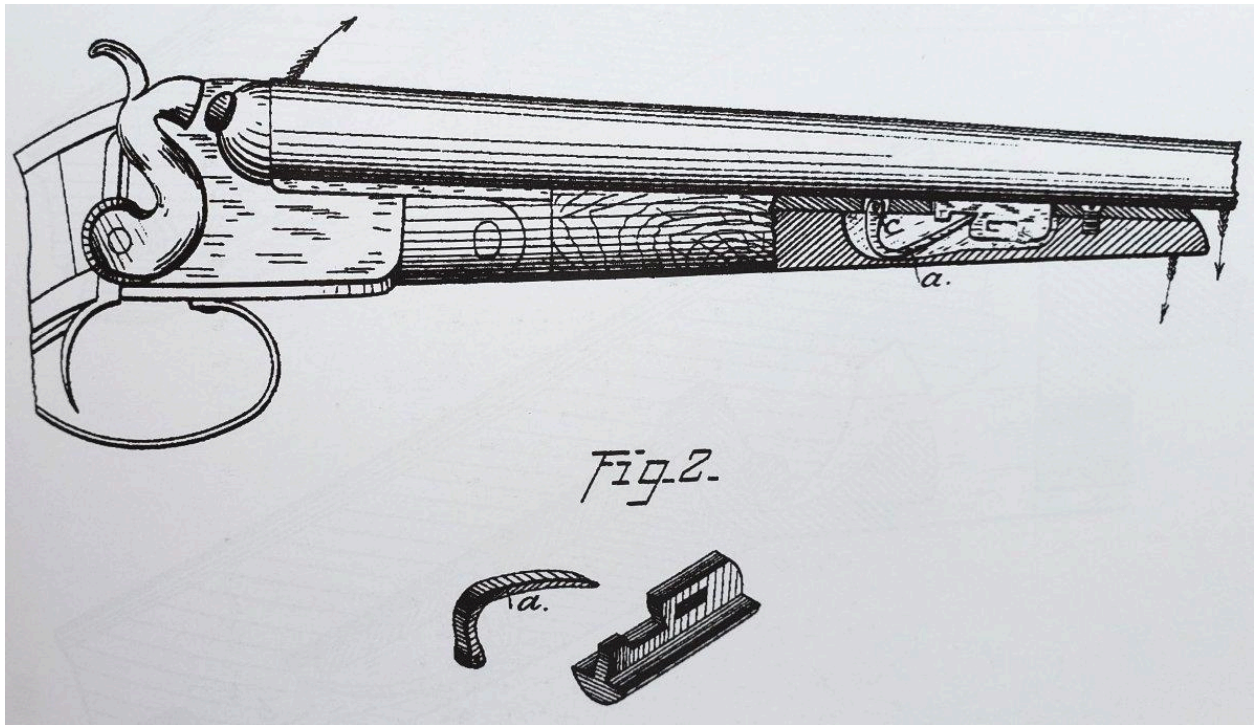
No. 228,020.

Patented May 25, 1880.



228,165 June 1, 1880, Syracuse
For-end "strap and lug" (J-spring) fastener





248,249 October 11, 1881, Syracuse
Top lever linked locking-bolt

(Model.)

W. H. BAKER.

BREECH LOADING FIRE ARM.

No. 248,249.

Patented Oct. 11, 1881.

Fig. 1.

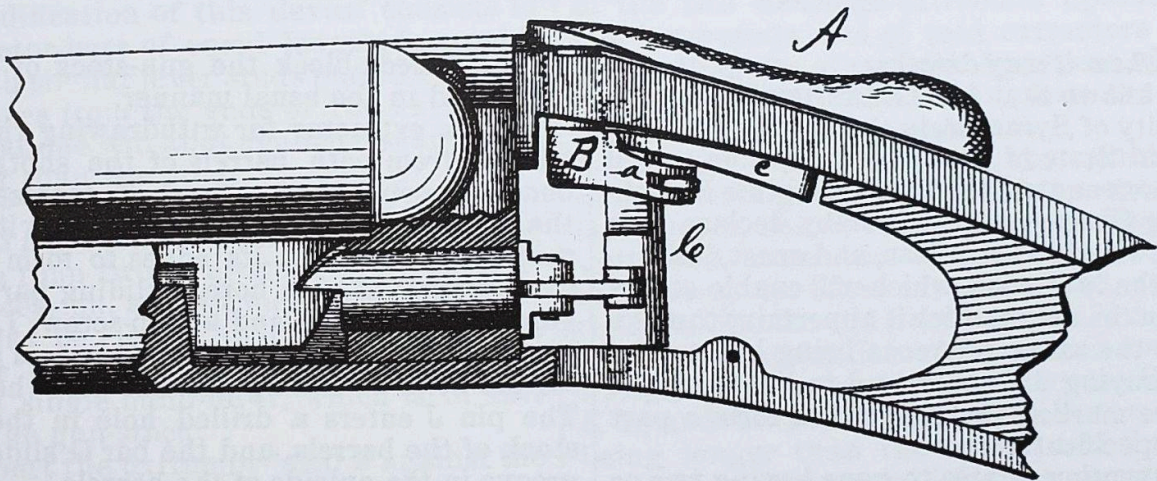
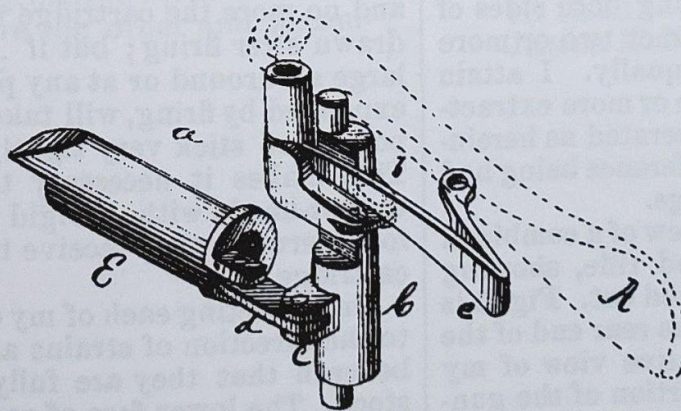


Fig. 2.



W.H. Baker, Marathon New York

Sniper/target rifle, 31" hexagonal barrel, .46" bore









Drilling .354" rifle over .658" shotgun, 29 1/2" barrels





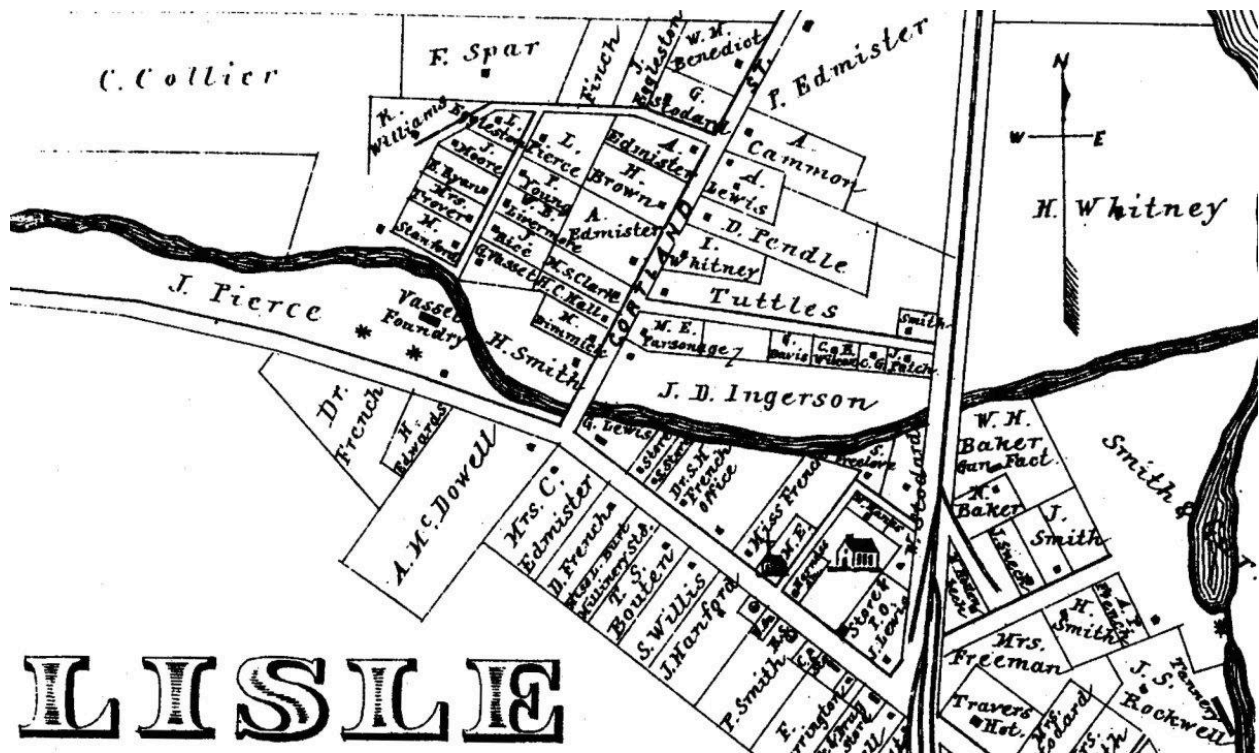




W.H. Baker, Lisle New York

Lisle Atlas

“W.H. Baker Gun Fact.” and likely home center right, on Dudley Creek;
immediately west of the Tioughnioga River



Something New!

THREE BARRELED BREECH-LOADING GUNS.



(TWO SHOT AND ONE RIFLE.)

A new feature in the Sporting Line. Furnis a light and compact gun frem eight to ten pound, giving to sportsmen the very thing so often wanted in all kinds of shooting.

Breech-Loading Shot Guns,

Combining all the modern improvements, and warranted to give satisfaction

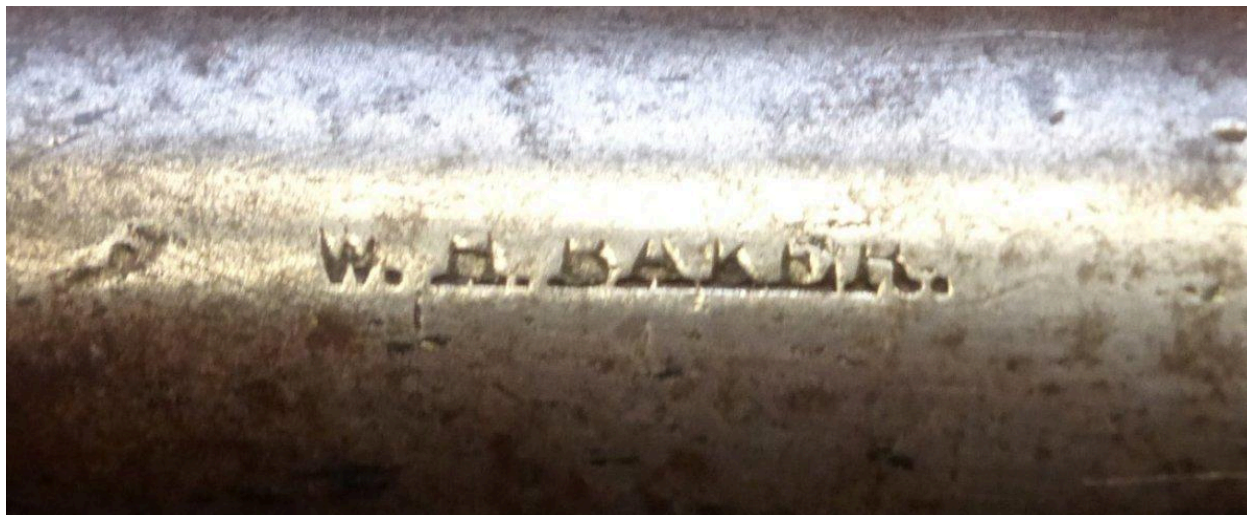
Altering muzzle to breech-loaders a specialty—from \$30 to \$45. Rifle attached if desired.

SEND FOR CIRCULAR.

W. H. BAKER,
LISLE, BROOME CO., N. Y.

mch30 6m

.40 rifle over .630" shotgun, 25" barrel





Drilling conversion using Baker's 1875 patent, likely of a Marathon gun; .705" over .400







Allerton & Baker prior to the Smith partnership in 1877

Centerfire drilling .715" shotgun over .365", 28 1/4" barrel







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