

## History, Zenas Alexander, Apprenticeship

American Silver-Hilted, Revolutionary and Early Federal Swords, Volume 2  
By Daniel D. Hartzler

"**ISAAC PRICE** had two indentures in July of 1787 for apprentices **THOMAS PRICE** and **ZENAS ALEXANDER** to learn not only the goldsmithing but also the gunsmithing trade. By 1798, **ALEXANDER** had taken **RICHARD JORDAN MITCHELL** as an apprentice in Mecklenburg County "to learn the art of stocking and the mounting of guns, and also common silverwork." In 1805 and 1810, he had other apprentices in the same county learning both trades. On May 7, 1814, **JACOB KIBLER** took **JAMES DONAHO**, age seven, an orphan, to learn the gun and blacksmith trades."

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### The Mecklenburg School of Longrifle Makers Discovery – Identification – Documentation

When: 10 AM – 2 PM Saturday – December 6<sup>th</sup>

Where: Charlotte Museum of History – 3500 Shamrock Drive – Charlotte, NC.  
28215 – Phone 704-568-1774

Who: **C. MICHAEL BRIGGS** will be on hand with some of his Mecklenburg School Longrifles, and he is also inviting anyone with any information, portraits, or related artifacts, history and documents on the men that made longrifles in Mecklenburg County to bring their items to the museum that day to be identified, documented, and photographed. If you have an old longrifles that you think may be from this area or related items such as powder horns, hunting bags, or paper documents such as wills, deeds, or receipts pertaining to the men listed below, they will be of interest to him and may be included in the upcoming book.

**BRIGGS** is doing research for a book he plans to publish in 2015 on the Longrifle Makers of the Mecklenburg School. Here is a list of Mecklenburg School gunsmiths who worked in Mecklenburg – Gaston – Lincoln Counties between 1760 and 1830 on whom he is seeking more information. [School is defined as a regional architectural style.]

1. **ZENAS ALEXANDER**: Apprenticed under **ISAAC PRICE** in 1787. Died in 1826. One signed rifle exist. He worked as a gunstocker and silver-smith.
2. **CHRISTIAN ARNEY**: He was born in 1795 and died in 1840. He lived just west of the Catawba River in Lincoln County. Two signed rifles exist.
3. **HENRY BEMHART**: He was hired by **THOMAS POLK** in 1792 to make a new gun lock, trigger, and trigger plate.
4. **JOHN BLACK**: He was born in 1763. He apprenticed under **ISAAC PRICE** in 1778.
5. **SAMUEL BLACK**: He is believed to be the youngest of the Black brothers. It is not known whom he trained under. Two signed rifles as known to exist.
6. **WILLIAM BLACK**: He was born in 1785 and died in 1827. It is not known whom he trained under. Two signed rifles are known to exist.
7. **CG**: A Mecklenburg School rifle exists that is signed "CG" on the patchbox lid. CG has not been identified at this time.
8. **ABRAHAM HENDERSON**: He was born in 1762 and apprenticed under **ISAAC PRICE** in 1776.
9. **LH**: Two Mecklenburg School rifles exist that are signed "LH" on the patchbox lid. LH has not been identified at this time.
10. **HENRY MCBRIDE**: He was born in 1797. He apprenticed under **ZENAS ALEXANDER** in 1810.

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11. **JAMES MCKEE:** He was born in 1788. He apprenticed under **ZENAS ALEXANDER** in 1805. One signed rifle Appalachian School rifle known.
  12. **JAMES MITCHELL:** He apprenticed under **ZENAS ALEXANDER** in 1798.
  13. **JOHN PENNEY:** In 1777, he was hired by **JOSEPH WALLACE** to stock three guns, one with brass patchbox.
  14. **ISAAC PRICE:** He was born in 1747 and died in 1811. He is believed to have been the founder of the school.
  15. **JOHN PRICE, JR:** He was the brother of **ISAAC PRICE**. He was born in 1749 and died in 1787.
  16. **THOMAS PRICE:** He was the son of **JOHN PRICE, JR**. When his father died in 1787, he was bound as an apprentice under his uncle **ISAAC**.
  17. **ELISHA SMARTT:** He was born in 1795. He apprenticed under **ZENAS ALEXANDER** in 1810.
  18. **ISAAC THOMPSON:** he was born in 1802. He lived in the Paw Creek Section on Mecklenburg County. Five signed rifles are known to exist.
  19. **DAVID YOUMENS:** He is listed in several records as being a gunsmith in Mecklenburg County.
- BRIGGS** will give a brief program on how to identify Mecklenburg School rifles at 10 AM. The public is invited to attend. Admission is free, but please register online at [Charlottemuseum.org](http://Charlottemuseum.org) to reserve a seat!

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