

A Brief Treatise on John Bu>, Horn Carver

John Bu> is my favorite horn carver of the French and Indian War period. While not the most prolific of the carvers, in my opinion, he, without a doubt, was the best. His work was copied by other carvers of the period with whom he had contact or who saw his work.

Thirteen known powder horns were made by, or attributed to, John Bu>:

Made by Bu>

John Magherd n/a

Jonathan Ogdan (Roger Ranger) Ft. Wm Henry Feb. 24, 1756

Robert Roger (Roger, Ranger) Ft. William Henry June 3, 1756

Jerome Burbank n/a

William William Lake George 1755

Ebenezer Knap (Roger, Ranger) Ft. William Henry Nov. 5, 1756

Attributed to Bu>, but likely not done by him

John Auvin Ft. Edward Sept. 14, 1756

Nathan Whiting Ft. William Henry Oct. 11, 1756

David Baldwin Ft. William Henry Oct. 18, 1756

Zelmu Beebee n/a

Thomas William Lake George Sept. 8, 1755

Israel Putnam Ft. William Henry Nov. 10, 1756

James Hackleton n/a

John Bu> was not the most productive of the F&I War period (6 known horns by Bu>, Samuel Lounsberry--9 known), but was certainly one of the first major carvers. Several other carvers copied his work, thereby

confusing identification, resulting in attribution to Bu> which we now know are false.

John Bu> wa< a mulatto, the 3rd son, and one of 8 children of a free black farmer named George< Bu>, born in Shrewsbury, Ma|achusetts< in 1725.

From exi}ing Mu}er Roll< we know that John Bu> served in the following Ma|achusetts< Militia companie<

Capt. Jame< House'< Coy, Ft. Wm. Henry, Nov. 27, 1755-Mar. 14, 1756

Capt. Joseph Ingersoll'< Coy, Ft. Wm Henry, Mar. 14- Nov.29, 1756,
li}ed a< a clerk

Prior to hi< military service he worked in a print >op, where he obviou#y learned the beautiful calligraphy and artwork he used on hi< horn<.

These mu}er Roll< indicate John Bu> wa< }ationed at Ft. William Henry during the 1755/56 winter and the 1756 campaign season. No record ha< been found of hi< enli}ment for the campaign of 1757, however, he appear< on a li} of mi|ing from Fort William Henry after its fall. In addition, a letter dated Sept. 14, 1758 from George< Bu> to Ma|achusetts< Governor Thoma< Pownall solicit'< the Governor'< aid in locating hi< mi|ing son from Fort William Henry. Thi< letter can be found in the Ma|achusetts< Hi}orical Society. Thi< letter i< the source, in George<' description of hi< son that we know John'< approximate age and that he i< a "free mulatto fellow."

John Bu>'< fate wa< unknown until October 9, 1758 when a li} of dead and mi|ing wa< publi>ed in the *Bo}on Gazette*. Thi< li} wa< supplied by Israel Calkin<, who had ju} returned from France a< a prisoner of war. Bu> wa< captured by Indian< after the fall of William Henry, sold or traded to a French Officer, and sent to France. Calkin< li}< Bu> and +ve other< a< having "died on board in the pa|age to France." The exact date and cause of John Bu>'< death remain a my}ery. It i< quite po|ible

that he died of wound^s suffered at his capture, his treatment as a prisoner, or small pox, which was epidemic at the time. Whatever the cause, a remarkable talent was lost forever, but the result of that talent live on in the 6 known John Bull-carved powder horns.

Because of the legacy of John Bull I have chosen to emulate his style in my own work. Chauncey, my dear friend, the horn I have made for you is an example of the best of John Bull's known work. Wear it with Honour and Pride!

Seamus