

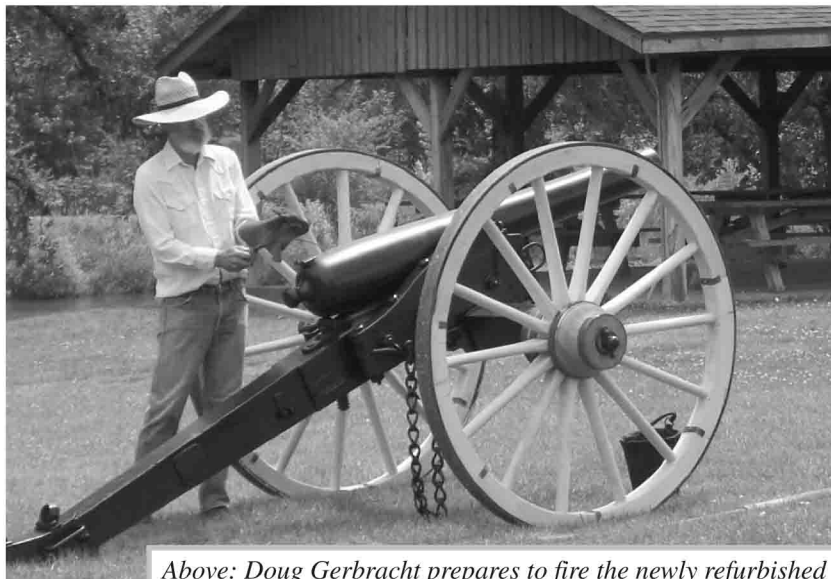
## The Brook Cannon

by Kyle D. Conrad, 2006

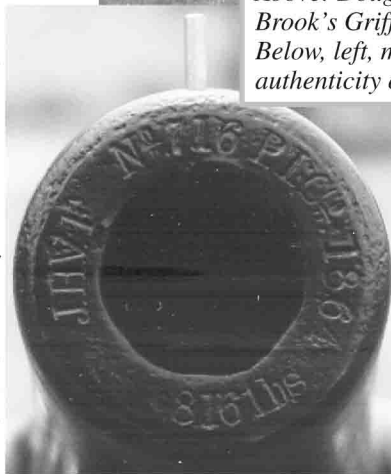
The history of Brook's Civil War cannon begins with a suggestion by John Hershman to John Bennett Lyons that a memorial should be erected to the memory of soldiers of Iroquois Township. A meeting was called and held at the Bank of Brook on a spring day of 1909 and this idea was unanimously adopted. Rev. A.M. Snyder was appointed chair and J. R. Hershman secretary. A fund raising effort was begun and John B. Lyons and George Ade headed the list with subscriptions of \$150 each. The monument was erected in McKinley Park at a cost of \$800 for the monument and \$150 for the concrete base.

The Civil War cannon and a supply of 40 8" cannon balls were ordered to complement the monument and in February of 1909 the cannon arrived. The limber for the gun was obtained from the Westerville Arsenal in New York, the barrel was shipped from Texas. News accounts of the time referred to the cannon as a 'parrot gun', a popular piece of arsenal from the Civil War. Research into this gun, however, shows otherwise.

Inscriptions on the barrel show the gun was a product of the Phoenix Iron Co. and was patented December 9, 1862. This gun shows the manufacture date of 1864 and a weight of 816 lbs. The Phoenix Iron Company dates to 1783 in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. When the War of the Rebellion broke out, superintendent John Griffen designed a cannon manufactured out of spirally-wrapped wrought iron, making it stronger and less likely to explode than any other cannon in use. It was called the "Griffen Gun" and the Phoenix Iron Works would make 1400 for the US Army by the time the war was over. The first shot fired at the Battle of Gettysburg was from a Griffen and it proved to be a pivotal weapon for the Union forces. All markings on Brook's cannon, including the weight, prove that this is indeed, a Griffen Gun manufactured in 1864 by Phoenix Iron Works.



*Above: Doug Gerbracht prepares to fire the newly refurbished Brook's Griffen Gun at the 2006 Sesquicentennial Celebration. Below, left, markings on the end of the barrel validate the authenticity of the cannon. NCHS file photos.*



Brook's cannon sat proudly in McKinley Park until late 1963 when a decision had to be made to junk it or restore it. In true Brook fashion, the cannon was restored and in June of 1964 the old Griffen was taken to Lake Kenoyer and fired. It was that same year that the tradition of firing the cannon on the 4th of July was begun, and was continued for over 45 years. By the year 2000, more restoration was needed and the cannon sat idle in the town's museum until Brook's sesquicentennial year of 2006 when it was again restored. With new wheels modeled after the originals and a new coat of paint, the Griffen was again fired during the four day festival.

With the old arsenal in like new condition once again, the Griffen gun should be heard for many more years, signifying the independence of America, and honoring those who fought to preserve her independence during the war years of 1861 to 1865.



Cannon Shoot: Milky Kenoyer Left  
E. Miller-Paul Weston-Orv Hamacher



Park Monument 1909

