



German Gun Collectors Association

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The Latest News from the

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German Gun Collectors Association

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This Newsletter goes to our members and friends that we want to stay in touch with, bringing you news of our Association, our members and of opportunities that might be of interest to you.

Why not forward it to one of your friends, fellow hunters or collectors and suggest that they consider membership in our Association.

These Newsletters are not taking the place of our Journals or Bulletin Board Supplement,

but we ask you to give us your opinion whether you would find it an advantage or don't mind if the Bulletin Board Supplement will be attached to a Newsletter that goes to all those members, who give us their e-mail address.

As a member you have received the latest Bulletin Board Supplement by mail a few days ago. We attached it to this Newsletter and ask you to open it, look it over, print it out if you like and let us know if you are not happy to receive it this way for any reason. We will consider no news to be good news, but want to hear from those of you who are against it or have another idea. Please do it right now!

And now the News:

With the summer just about over, we hope that you have one last enjoyable Holiday Weekend and a good fall season. We are now making the last preparations for the **Vintagers Side-by-side Championship and Game Fair** in Maryland, and hope that many of you will participate in the events, including our *Round Table of German Guns* and our *Exhibit of German Guns*. Visit our website <germanguns.com> for all information you might want to have.

Member Scott Onishuk asks whether any one of you who is coming to the **Vintagers** would like to shoot in a **GGCA Squad**. If you do, please contact him at Scott@BengalEngineering.com

What a wonderful note to receive:

As a young Lieutenant in 1974 I had the good fortune to be assigned to a VII Corps Artillery Group headquartered in the little Franconian village of Wertheim am Main. During the five years I spent there I discovered German hunting, a hunting ethic which was inspirational, and a love for Drillings and long elegant Mausers which is undiminished to this day. Finding your organization and publication awakened a wonderful set of memories of drive hunts and hunting songs, a massive stag in southern Bavaria, and a bitter cold moonlit night awaiting a huge old Keiler. Thank you for your good work, and let's all be thankful for a country which gives us the opportunity to share such passions.

Weidman's Heil. Joe G. Taylor, Major General, United States Army (R)

News from Suhl, the German Gunmaking Center for hundreds of years:

The Merkel Company had been turned over at the end of World War II by the American troops who occupied Suhl first to Russian occupation after about three months. When a Communist German Government was established, the factory like all other industry in Suhl was owned by this government until the two parts of Germany were re-united. The East German economy, like that of all Soviet Block Countries, collapsed and has still not fully recovered.

Merkel was first managed by the **“Treuhand”**, the Government Trustee that tried to find new owners for all East German commerce and industry. Among applicants who had an interest in taking over the remaining Suhl gun industry was the American Gunmaker **Sturm, Ruger**, together with members of the Simson family who owned the biggest gun factory in Suhl before the Nazis came to power. Their offer was rejected in favor of a group of investors who enriched themselves and went out of business after only one year.

The **“Treuhand”** then turned the company over to a bank and the Austrian Steyr-Mannlicher Company. A few years ago the gunmaker **Heckler & Koch** took over the company and expanded it. They had 126 employees in 2003 and built this up to 171 employees now. Because of H & K's engineering and marketing know-how the company became profitable and expanded their markets into Eastern Europe and the United States. They went back to the original name **Merkel**, and bought the business and the facilities of the **GSI** Company in Trussville, Alabama.

All this is now history, but it is not the end of the story. **Merkel was sold to Caracal International LLC**, a company that is located in the **United Arab Emirates** and produces pistols. The company is managed by the former President of the United Arab Emirates, **Sheik Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan**.

Now, that is news! The employees of Merkel have the hope that the uncertainties of the past are behind them, and that enough capital will give them the opportunity to grow and to expand. The problem they face is the fact, that good gunmakers and technicians are hard to come by. The world is changing!

FIRMENGESCHICHTE

Wieder verschwand ein Stück Büchsenmacherheimat

Abriss von Wohnhaus und Produktionsstätte der einstigen Firma Bernhard Merkel

VON GABI HOFFMANN

Das Jahr 1900 war gerade drei Tage alt. Bernhard Merkel begann es auf besondere Weise. Er richtete den Antrag auf Bau eines Wohnhauses an die Suhler Polizeiverwaltung. Es war ein Schritt mit Weitblick.

SUHL – Der Bauantrag des Suhler Büchsenmachers trug das Datum 3. Januar 1900. Errichtet werden sollte das künftige Domizil von Bernhard Merkel auf dem Gartengrundstück an der Wolfgrube. Die amtlichen Mühlen mahlten rasch. Schon am 8. Februar wurde Bernhard Merkel die Erlaubnis zum Wohnhausbau mit einem Keller-, Erd- und Obergeschoss erteilt. Noch schneller wurde amtlicherseits der Antrag zum Anbau eines Werkstattgebäudes an gleicher Stelle bearbeitet. Den stellte Bernhard Merkel am 21. September 1903. Schon sieben Tage später wurde ihm



Auch das Wohnhaus mit ausgemauertem Fachwerk (r.) wird abgetragen. FOTO: frankphoto.de

The photo above, that appeared recently in the Newspaper of Suhl, shows a very nice old house and what's left of the shop that was next to it that was built in 1900 by the well known and respected gun maker **Bernhard Merkel**. Some of his guns show the trade mark *Bemesu*, others were sold by Kettner in Köln and Barella in Berlin. If you have one of these guns, you know that their superb quality.

More and more history of the Suhl gunmakers is disappearing. Those of you who want a copy of the whole article, although written in German, can request it from our home office, and if you want to see what can still be seen in Suhl, join us when we will travel to Suhl in June 2008 for the re-opening of the Suhl Gun Museum, Schützenfest and a World Cup Trap Shoot. Information on this will follow.



This photo and the following comments were sent to us by Jim Cate, member and author of two books on Sauer and working on a third one. He is very active in the *National Automatic Pistol Collectors Association* and writes this about their last annual get-together:

“More than 1/2 of the guys who attended were not in the photo because they had already packed and were on their way back to their homes in different parts of the world. We had several European members join us this year. We also had members come from Oregon, California, Chicago, Texas, Nevada, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Florida and Louisiana.

So, my point is that these members took the time and money to visit the best of all the closed shows in this country. We had absolutely no problems and the hotel was top drawer. If we, as members of the GGCA, want to get to know each other, help each other and promote our organization, there is no better way than to have this type of show/convention.....regardless of where we have it.”

Think about it and give us your opinion!

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Dedicated to the study of and sharing the history of German sporting arms, their makers, and the hunting and sporting traditions involved in their use.

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