

# Black-powder shoots held several times a year

By Jim Merriott

*The Oberlin Herald*  
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In the Tri-State area of eastern Colorado, north-west Kansas and southwest Nebraska, the Beaver Creek Muzzleloaders out of Oberlin provide regional black-powder shoots several times of the year.

"Area shooters and others from as far east as Salina and west from Wray, Colo., come to our family-oriented events each year," said shooting coordinator Tom Ewing of Oberlin. "Our club sets aside the second full weekend in May and the last full weekend in September for our shoots each year."

Ewing, Beaver Creek Muzzleloaders executive officer and head range officer, said he has been shooting a muzzleloader for over 35 years. He is a purist who feels modern in-line muzzleloaders are a marketing gimmick.

"What it has boiled down to is that manufacturers have designed the in-line muzzleloader for hunting purposes," he said. "Purists like myself only shoot traditional sidelock muzzleloaders. In-line rifles are not allowed in target competition."

There is an old saying, "If Jim Bridger didn't have it, you don't need it," he said. Bridger, an early fur trapper, and other "mountain men" survived against much greater odds than what we have today and made it, he said. True traditionalist want to keep the sport just the way it was

150 years ago.

Ewing operates Cottonwood Cottage Muzzleloading in Cedar Bluffs., making handmade frontier clothing and muzzleloading firearm accessories.

"What I try and do is to create authentic equipment and clothing for re-enactment purposes, such items as buckskins, gun socks, gun cases and possibles bags, just to name a few items," he said. "The majority of my items are sold on eBay, Auction Arms, Fireshooting Sport and Gun Broker websites on-line."

Over the past 20 years, the type of weapon used during special black-powder hunting seasons has changed, with hunters moving from the traditional sidelock long rifles of the past to the modern in-line type muzzle-loading rifle.

"Ninety-nine point five percent of all black powder muzzle loaders in today's market are switching to the modern type rifle," said Dudley McGarity, president of Black Powder Products Inc., the firm that owns the famed Connecticut Valley Firearms, "because they are easier to maintain, clean and are able to use magnum powder charges in their specially designed barrels, which allow charges between 100-150 grains of black powder. Older-type rifle barrels are not designed in the same manner and become a safety issue."

Other firms still serve the traditional shooter. "We are one of the remaining companies that still produce homemade kits designed for the customer to built their firearm from scratch,"

said Charles Kirkland, vice-president of operations for Dixie Gun Works, a black-powder manufacturer that deals strictly with mail-order re-enactment and replica muzzle loaders and memorabilia. "Our company provides equipment for the historical enthusiast.

"We are able to supply muzzle loaders with everything from homemade gun and knife kits, to clothing, camping and eating utensils. We cover the whole gambit.

"Some of our kits require very little assembly, and others are designed for the hobby enthusiast that enjoys woodworking and custom barrel building."

So why muzzle load? Kirkland says that there are two types of shooters: The hunter who is mostly interested in taking deer during the muzzleloading season, which allows hunters in some states to have an additional hunt during the year, and the shootist who just enjoys stepping back into history.

One of the joys of muzzleloading for the traditionalist is meets put on by clubs like the one in Oberlin, where everyone camps and dresses in traditional fashion.

"Each shoot, we provide medals for all ages," said Beaver Creek President Dave Bose. "Our shoots are the stepping stones to the national shoots.

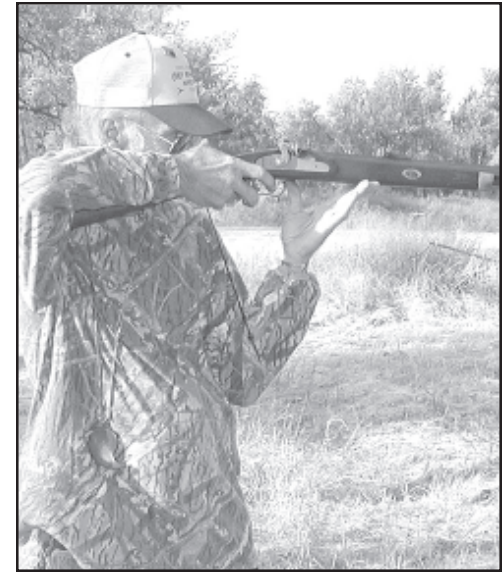
"We provide an opportunity for shooters to practice and hone their skills by joining the club for \$20 per year. Shooters are entitled to shoot at our events and are allowed to practice shooting year round at our range just east of the Oberlin Country Club near Sappa Valley Park.

"We help youngsters develop safe shooting skills in a supervised environment. "It is clean, wholesome fun for all ages."

"We also supply shooters with supplies they may be short on, such as bullets, powder, targets, ear protection and accessories.

"We invite all who may be interested."

For information, contact Beaver Creek Muzzleloaders, D. Bose, (785) 475-2394, or T. Ewing, Cottonwood Cottage Muzzleloading, Cedar Bluffs, Kan., (785) 475-3268.



Darrell Morrown of Burlington, Colo. took his time taking a shot at rubber duckies in the field during the Beaver Creek Muzzleloaders black powder shoot in Oberlin at the end of September.

— Photo by Kimberly Davis/  
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