



SPRINGFIELD RESEARCH SERVICE

P.O. Box 4181 • Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

SPRINGFIELD RESEARCH DATA
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Our search through records in the National Archives for serial numbers and other interesting information on small arms has resumed, and we have come across several blocks of Krag and Model 1903 rifle numbers. This newsletter will be devoted to publication and discussion of these numbers and the arms represented by them.

KRAG SERIAL DATA

The Krag numbers consist of one very large block plus a small block and 103 miscellaneous numbers.

a. 26th U. S. Volunteer Infantry Rifles - The large block represents 1,272 Model 1898 rifles shipped to the 26th U. S. Volunteer Infantry at Plattsburg Barracks, N. Y., on July 15, 1899. One of these rifles, serial no. 170493, appeared in one of our previous listings. This rifle was recovered on the battlefield at Balangtan, Panay, during the Philippine Insurrection; it was then sent to the Chief of Ordnance and was subsequently donated to the Smithsonian Institution, where it can be seen today. Serial number 172563 appears twice in the list published by Springfield. Assuming this was not a clerical error, this is the first reported duplication of a Krag serial number that we have seen.

b. 26th (regular) Infantry Rifles - These rifles, as well as many others listed in this issue, were reported as a result of the Brownsville Incident. This incident occurred on the night of August 13, 1906, when a group of American soldiers shot up the town of Brownsville, Texas, with their service rifles. This action created a great furore and was played up by the press and eventually investigated by Congress. All U. S. troops in the vicinity of Brownsville were armed with Model 1903 rifles; however, the Washington Post published an article stating that surplus Krag rifles retained by the 26th Infantry after changeover to the '03 had been sold or given away by the commanding officer to local citizens, including Mexican nationals. Subsequent investigation established that all Krag rifles issued to troops stationed at Fort Brown, including the 26th Infantry, had been turned in prior to August 13.

c. Miscellaneous Krag Rifles and Carbines - Some of the more significant arms in this list are:

28992 - Another Rough Rider carbine. This is the first one we have seen from Troop L, but its serial number falls within the main block of Rough Rider carbines.

180617 - This number was added to the end of the list of Model 1899 carbines purchased by the New York National Guard, but it almost certainly had a Model 1898 rather than 1899 receiver.

204293 } Issued to the Swiss pursuant to the practice at
227167 } that time of exchanging sample arms and equipment
with foreign governments.

225705 } Issued to the Senate Committee on Military Affairs
458919 } in connection with investigation of the Brownsville
Incident.

450397 - Chambered for the .30-03 cartridge and fired 100 times with different bolts in connection with investigation of the Brownsville Incident. Because all empty cartridge cases found in the streets of Brownsville were caliber .30-03, it was postulated that one or more of the Krags allegedly sold or given away at Ft. Brown had been rechambered for this cartridge and used by the persons who had shot up Brownsville. This rifle is presently in the Springfield Armory Museum; its accession card states erroneously that it is one of several rifles selected for the Canadian Militia.

MODEL 1903 SERIAL DATA

Model 1903 serial data reported in this issue consist of several medium-size blocks plus two dozen miscellaneous numbers.

a. Rifles of Companies B, C, and D of the 25th Infantry in 1906 - These are the rifles of the troops who were suspected of perpetrating the Brownsville Incident. The 25th, a Negro unit, had recently returned from the Philippines and was one of the few units to be armed with Model 1903 rifles before the order was given to modify all 1903 rifles for knife bayonet and Model 1905 rear sight. These rifles were shipped to Springfield Armory in early 1907, where Ordnance personnel succeeded in matching fired cases found in the streets of Brownsville with about a half dozen of these rifles.

b. Rifles of Companies F through M of the 25th Infantry in 1909 - These rifles were inspected as a result of complaints of inaccuracy due to bad bores. Barrels of early 1903 rifles frequently were found to be in bad condition after only a few seasons of use, and much effort was expended by the Ordnance Dept. in attempting to learn the cause or causes of such rapid deterioration. All of the rifles in this group had barrels of Springfield manufacture, and dates on the barrels were reported. Following is a tabulation of barrel dates versus serial numbers on these rifles:

Bbl. Date	# Rifles	Serial Range	Average Serial
05	144	10826 - 227607	64777
11-05	1	61821	61821
1-06	1	36874	36874
7-07	1	319236	319236
8-07	4	324518 - 334025	331530
9-07	25	175980 - 332997	282871
10-07	163	73471 - 335685	302763
11-07	105	8587 - 335868	195346
12-07	5	81794 - 150559	117561
1-08	1	202302	202302
2-08	1	333042	333042
6-08	1	352886	352886
7-08	1	353029	353029
8-08	4	352533 - 353033	352788
9-08	2	353032 - 353173	353100
10-08	15	335308 - 353292	351755
Total		474	

Analysis of the above table indicates that there was very little correlation between barrel dates and serial numbers of the early '03 rifles. This may be due to the fact that most of the rifles listed had been converted from .30-03 to .30-06 caliber, which entailed removal of all barrels and replacement of those which had been fired; but even the rifles in the 352XXX - 353XXX range, which were among the 1,000 made in .30-06 caliber with M1908 Warner & Swazey telescopes and which had star-gauged barrels, show a span of four months in barrel dates.

Two of these rifles had duplicate serial numbers (330779), and the original list bears the notation "2 rifles same number" indicating that this was not a clerical error.

c. 25th Infantry Rifles in Sept., 1910 - This is basically the same group of rifles discussed above, with the addition of rifles for companies A - E and less those rifles still in good condition in 1910.

d. Miscellaneous M1903 Rifles - Following are some of the more significant rifles in this list:

129 - One of quite a few early '03s that suffered damage from firing. This particular case was traced to a bolt which had been casehardened too deeply, and the rifle was put back in service with a replacement bolt.

23270 - The receiver of this rifle, and others listed as "blew up", let go for no apparent reason. Frequently there were signs of excessive pressure such as fused case heads.

31514 - One of a number of rifles seized from civilians by law enforcement officers. Starting in 1915, the "NRA" mark was applied to '03 rifles sold to civilians to distinguish them from Government property.

174958 - One of ten rifles tested by Springfield to determine if it were possible to match up a fired case with the rifle it had been fired in, in connection with the Brownsville Incident. This possibility was suggested by Ora W. Knight of Bangor, Maine, who stated that it had been done in a court case in 1901.

193911 } Examined by the Senate Committee on Military
198263 } Affairs in connection with their investigation
245484 } of the Brownsville Incident.

SEQUENCE OF RIFLE PRODUCTION

Some collectors believe that Springfield Armory assembled rifles in order by consecutive serial numbers, a belief we do not share. Our contention that rifles were not assembled in serial number order is based on data which shows the serial numbers of new rifles packed within given arms chests by Springfield, and also on a statement by Col. Alfred Mordacai (commanding officer of Springfield from 1892 to 1898) that rifles were not assembled in any particular order. The records containing the serial numbers of the 26th USV Inf. Krags and 25th Inf. ramrod-bayonet '03s reported in this issue show the chest within which each of these rifles was originally packed following assembly and proofing. On the assumption that rifles were packed in approximately the same order in

which assembled, the following data from these records should give us a clue as to this order:

Krags:	Chest No.	Lowest Serial	Highest Serial	Difference
	7117	152821	172563	19742
	7118	151607	172521	20914
	7119	148719	172377	23658
	7120	163220	172564	9344
	7121	153821	172432	18611
	7122	165112	172562	7450
	7123	155061	171828	16767
	7124	170097	172259	2162
	7125	162438	172276	9838
	7126	167786	172570	4784
		Average diff. 13327		

M1903s:

4096	41390	48790	7400
4102	11747	48692	36945
4108	41195	46910	5715
4114	38889	46462	7573
4120	41591	46916	5325
4126	39919	46502	6583
4132	13092	46615	33523
4385	49437	54033	4596
4391	37487	50575	13088
4397	34972	53278	18306
	Average diff. 13905		

Not only was there a wide spread of serial numbers in each chest of these rifles, but it is also noteworthy that not a single chest of '03s reported contained even two rifles with consecutive serial numbers, and only a few Krag chests did. (Note: Krags were packed 20 per chest, whereas '03 chests contained only 10 rifles each.)

The significance of all this is that collectors tend to assign blocks of serial numbers to certain models (such as Parkhurst Krags) and to look askance at specimens falling outside this range; however, this appears to be justified only in the few cases in which the receiver itself was made with a special process or material.

NEWS ITEMS

- 1) Back issues of Newsletters No. 3 and later are available for \$1.50 each.
- 2) Renewal notices are sent on the basis of subscription year (4 issues). Since the current issue is normally sent upon receipt of a new subscription, this may be shorter than a calendar year.
- 3) THE KRAG RIFLE STORY has been printed and is being bound. It should be ready for distribution about the third week of January.

TRADING POST

Wanted: Metcalfe altered stock or complete rifle, also M1873 lock plate. Dennis L. Gahagen, 4431 E. 64th Ave., Commerce City, CO 80022