

Springfield Research Newsletter

ISSUE NUMBER 25
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INFORMATION SOURCES FOR THIS ISSUE

This issue contains data from the following sources:

Records of the Adjutant General's Office (AGO), Volunteer Units, Civil War

Letters Received, Office of the Chief of Ordnance (OCO), 1877-78

Records of the AGO, Volunteer Units, War with Spain
General Correspondence of the OCO, 1894-1913 and 1915-41
Records of Army Commands, 1942-present.

TRAPDOOR DATA

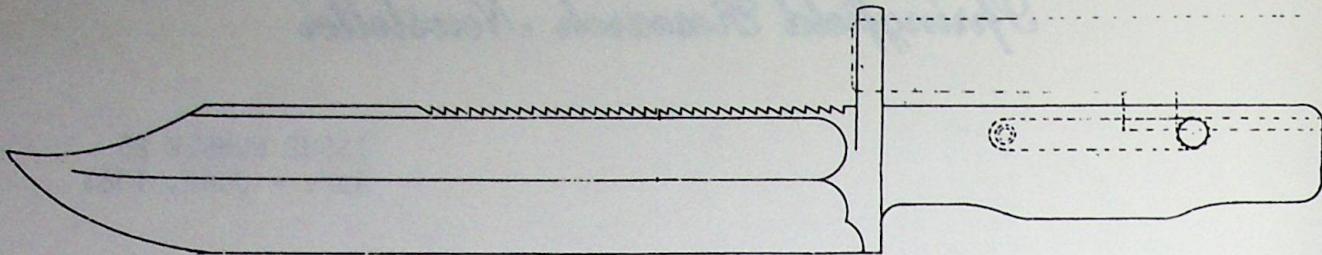
Trapdoor serial number data reported in this issue consists mainly of rifles reported by the 2nd USV Infantry as being in use during the Span-Am War.

TRAPDOOR BAYONETS

That the angular bayonets for Models 1873-84 cal. .45 rifles were made by compressing the sockets of Model 1855 bayonets is almost an article of faith among bayonet collectors. However, we have found the original correspondence indicating that this practice, which was the idea of Col. Benton of Springfield, originated in January, 1878, a full 4 years after the Model 1873 rifle and its bayonet had gone into production. Before 1878, bayonets for the cal. .45 rifle were made from scratch; and based on the production records, we estimate that this amounted to approximately 55,000 bayonets.

As in the Krag era, trapdoor bayonets were considered a part of the basic arm. They were packed with the rifles and were not reported separately in production summaries (except those produced as spares). Bayonet scabbards, on the other hand, were considered accoutrements and were supplied and tabulated separately. One interesting consequence of this situation is that users of the trapdoor Cadet rifle were frequently supplied with rifle-length scabbards rather than the shorter Cadet ones.

The illustration at the top of the next page is a sketch of a very effective looking combination intrenching knife bayonet proposed by Maj. Parker and Capt. McKee in 1878. It is suggestive of the Krag Bowie knife bayonet tested in 1900. We have not gone far enough into the records to be able to say whether any bayonets following this design were made and tested; if so, it appears that the sawtooth feature would make it very difficult to withdraw this bayonet from the body of an opponent, and it would have likely been rejected for this reason.



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"U.S.N."-MARKED TRAPDOOR

George Williams reports a Model 1873 rifle serial no. 194750 which is marked "U.S.N." rather than "U.S. Springfield" on the lock plate. Also, he reports that the inspector's mark on this rifle is stamped on the bottom of the stock directly to the rear of the trigger guard, instead of on the side.

KRAG DATA

Krag serial data in this issue consists of those for some of the rifles in use by the 42nd USV Infantry in the Philippines.

MORE ON "ANOTHER INTERESTING KRAG CARBINE"

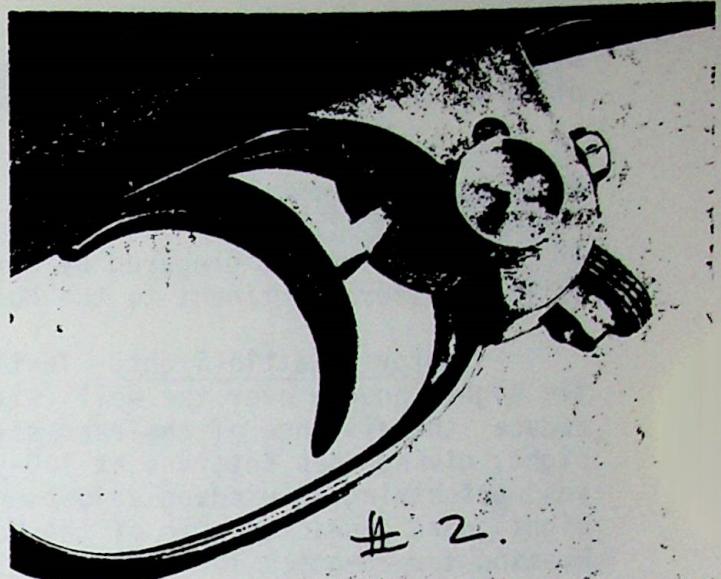
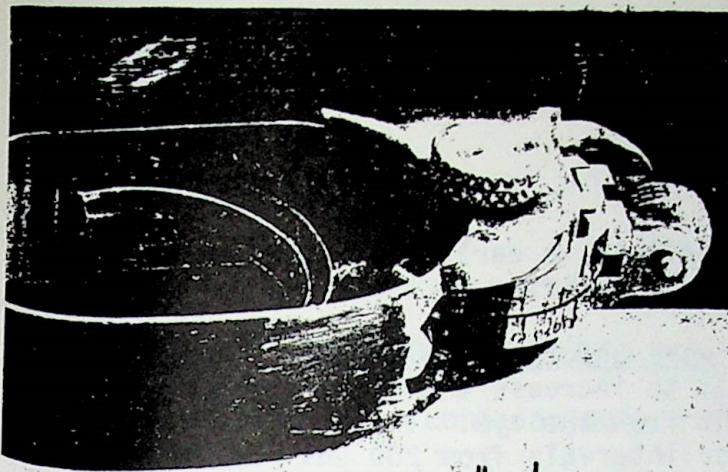
Our request for reports on Model 1896 carbines with markings similar to the "12" and "P2" on no. 28683 produced a letter from Nelson Tillou stating that he has observed one, no. 68578, marked "4" and "P5".

MODEL 1903 RIFLE DATA

The short Model 1903 rifle serial listing in this issue contains several significant rifles. No. 352379 was a truly "loaded" rifle, in several ways: it was a selected and stargauged rifle fitted with Model 1908 telescopic sight serial no. 7 (for luck?), Neary illuminated sights, and Maxim silencer. It was made up in 1909 for former President Teddy Roosevelt, apparently for use on one of his hunting expeditions. Springfield equipped a Winchester Model 1895 cal. .405 rifle with the Neary sights for him at the same time.

FIRE CONTROL DEVICES

In an attempt to prevent wild shots fired at too high or low an angle of elevation, vertical fire control devices were developed for the Model 1903 rifle by Ely, Phillips, and Moore. These were gravity-actuated blocks which prevented depression of the trigger unless the attitude of the rifle was within a limited vertical range. The mechanism of the Ely



device (illustrated above) required modification to the rifle, whereas the Phillips and Moore were essentially added on. The records we have seen so far indicate that 30 rifles equipped with the Phillips device were tested in 1909.

HOFFER-THOMPSON RIFLE NOTES

Records indicate that the extractor cut in the barrel of the Model 1903 Gallery Practice rifle was changed in April, 1908, to prevent jamming. At about the same time, material in the cartridge holders was changed from cast steel to Class "D" steel.

Initially, the Model 1903 GP rifle was equipped with a rear sight graduated for the .30/03 cartridge (2400 yds. maximum range marking). In March, 1910, a rear sight graduated for the .30/06 cartridge (2700 yds.) was directed to be used. Up to that time, 8,300 GP rifles had been made, and the sights on nearly all of these were subsequently replaced. Front sights as well as rear were replaced, as the front sight for 1906 ammunition was slightly higher.

PRE-WWI INVENTIONS

In addition to the fire control devices described above, we went through files on several other inventions proposed in the 1907-13 period. These included the J. Wilkinson telescopic sight, Thompson sight, Place peep sight, Roscoe front sight, Maxim silencer, Neary illuminated sights, Lewis bolo bayonet, search light for rifles, Bernard rear sight, Low flexible triggers, and various ideas submitted by Charles Newton (such as the .25/06 cartridge, developed by Newton in 1912).

MORE ON AIR SERVICE RIFLE

A memo from the Chief Signal Officer dated Apr. 29, 1918, stated that the prototype Stripped Springfield Rifle had been delivered to Col. H. H. Arnold, and it suggested some minor changes be made to the rear

sight. The writer further recommended that 825 of these rifles be supplied as requested by Gen. Pershing.

OTHER WWI DEVELOPMENTS

A status report prepared by Springfield in early 1918 contained the following items pertinent to the Model 1903 rifle:

- Improved Battle Sight. Tests were under way to produce a new battle sight located over the well (sic), to increase the sight radius and reduce the distance of the rear sight from the eye. The Lyman-Warner sight, giving snap settings at 100-yd. intervals from 200 yds. up to 600 yds. but having no windage adjustment, was being considered. The front sight guard characteristic of the Model 1917 rifle was also under consideration for adoption for the Model 1903 rifle.

- Sniperscopes. The Yaggi Sitascope had been made up and tested. The Engineering Div. had revised the design to reduce the weight, simplify the periscope, and improve the balance and functional arrangement.

- Telescopic Rifle Sights. Although 4,000 Warner & Swasey sights were on order, the Ordnance Dept. had decided to abandon the W&S reflecting type in favor of a Goertz type of direct telescope. 500 Winchester telescopic sights with Marine Corps mounting had recently been delivered.

- Winder Tube Sight. The characteristic feature of this sight was a tube extending from the front sight blade to a loop in the battle sight. One thousand of these were about to be ordered.

- Extension Magazine. A magazine holding 10 or more, up to 25 cartridges, and readily substituted for the floorplate, had been developed for the Models 1903 and 1917 rifles. It was expected that this magazine would be adopted for aeroplane, Sitascope, and similar special uses, and possibly for general issue.

GARAND DATA

Listed in this issue are a few more serial numbers of M1 and M14 rifles, from post-WWII records.

We saw reports stating that "canned" M1 rifles were used at times as the basis for National Match rifles. This probably explains the low serial numbers reported for some of the NM rifles presently in the DCM inventory.

Another anomaly was brought to our attention by M. L. (Lee) Brown, who reports that he was issued an IHC rifle serial no. 4700566 while in the Marine Corps. This number falls within a serial number block assigned to H&R.

TRADING POST

FOR SALE: Krag 1896 carbine; stock not cut for oiler; cartouche dated 1896; serial no. 33882. \$600. Jack Luckowski, 113 N. Five Point Rd., West Chester, PA 19380.