

THREE BAYONETS; ONE RIFLE THREE RIFLES; ONE BAYONET

by Martin Miller, Jr.

In 1892 the US adopted its first modern small bore rifle: the Krag-Jorgensen, with a twelve-inch knife-blade bayonet. This was the first standardized knife-blade bayonet adopted by the US Army. The various versions of the Krag Bayonet were all interchangeable and differed in only minor details.

In 1903 the Model 1903 Springfield was adopted with an integral Rod Bayonet that was a repeat of a filed idea tried several times before and quickly condemned by President Teddy Roosevelt. In 1905 the caliber was also changed to .30-'06 and a new sixteen-inch knife-blade bayonet was adopted. The blasé was four inches longer than the Krag Bayonet since the 1903 Rifle was “shorter” and they wanted the same reach with the bayonet attached. The British would use the same rationale with the change from the “Long” Lee-Enfield to the Short Model Lee-Enfield. The French kept with a long bayonet and long rifle, believing in the spirit of “elan.”

In 1937 the US adopted the M1 Garand semi-auto rifle. Originally this rifle came equipped with the Model 1905 Bayonet from the Springfield Model 1903 Rifle. In 1942 many of the Model 1905 Bayonets were shortened to ten-inch blades, and then again later the M1 new-made bayonet was adopted.

All three of these bayonets will interchange with each other; and conversely, all three rifle models will take any of the three bayonets. This was a deliberate design requirement by the Army. The exact reason for this is not totally clear. In any event, the Krag Bayonet was in use as the West Point Military Academy up until the M1 Garand was replaced by the M14 in the mid-1960s.