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BOOK REVIEW: M1 CARBINE

When your editor first heard of this book, he felt a tinge of jealousy. Many of us have felt the urge to write a book on the M1 Carbine and somebody else 'got off his duff' and beat us to it.* This gave way to puzzlement: "How did someone acquire the knowledge to write an encyclopaedic treatise on the M1 Carbine while remaining incognito to a host of serious collectors?" We have now read the book and have a different question: "Does the good information in this book justify all the misinformation?"

M1 CARBINE by Larry Ruth is in large part copied verbatim from U.S. Government records, most notably HISTORY OF THE U.S. CARBINE, CAL.30 by Major H. P. Smith and W. H. Davis under the direction of Lt. Col. H. H. Mitchell. If that were its only fault, it would be forgivable, as the original documents are readily available on microfilm, somewhat inconvenient for most readers. Unfortunately, that part of the book not copied verbatim from these records is replete with errors, some of which could lead to costly mistakes on the part of the novice collector. To circumvent this tragedy, we will recount some of the more serious errors in a chapter by chapter review.

Chapter 1 & 2: These chapters cover the testing of competitive designs for the carbine. As they are almost verbatim from the government records, they are quite accurate.

Chapter 3: This chapter recounts the story of Winchester's involvement with the carbine. Errors abound in this chapter, including errors of omission, errors of commission, and the recounting of errors in the source material. Under omission, no mention is made of: changes in hammer and sear design, change to round bolt or different shape bolt lug, the extractor problem in early '43, receiver code markings, or Underwood-supplied receivers. Under commission, it is stated that: Winchester barrels are undated (not so for early production), that Winchester trigger housings are marked 'W' (early ones are marked C , the surest identification is the machining variation), 'SW' code is Winchester (true only for magazines and safeties), 'WA', 'AW' & 'WI' are Winchester codes ('AW' is correct, on receivers only). 'Carbine' Williams is represented as the 'inventor' of the carbine (his invention was the gas mechanism, which later tests showed, at best, unnecessary).

Chapter 4: This chapter recounts the story of Inland Manufacturing Division's part in the carbine story. Information from government sources is supplemented with information from Inland publications to present a fairly complete, if disorganized story. The following errors were noted: an implication is made that Inland made their own stocks whereas in fact they were supplied by Overton and by Hillerich & Bradsby; no mention is made of XE or XG codes; 'H', 'K', 'PU',

* So did Bob Gibson, with his small but fact-packed Guide to Collecting the M1 Carbine.

'AW', 'PS' are incorrectly listed as Inland codes, although elsewhere on the same page 'AW' and 'PS' are correctly identified. There is no mention of two styles of 'SG' codes on receivers, or that these are found with two styles of tang. There is no mention of spring-tube receivers. Illustrations are shown of both styles of T3 receiver labelled by Inland. Your editor has believed that the later type without the bar was made only by Winchester. Any information to the contrary would be much appreciated.

CHAPTERS 5 & 6: These chapters are partly verbatim from the Smith & Davis 'History' dealing with the efforts of Ordnance to develop additional vendors of the carbine. The departures from verbatim quoting of Smith & Davis introduce some of the most dangerous errors in the book. These will be dealt with by vendor name.

UNDERWOOD: 'UN' is erroneously listed as an Underwood code. 'TRIMBEL/TN' is the only listed stock code(it is a rarity on Underwoods and usually is NPM; expected codes are 'M-U' and 'P-U'. No mention is made of the several Underwood receiver codes or machining differences.

ROCK-OLA: A line drawing of a Rock-Ola receiver is shown, marked 'UN' on the rear bevel, along with a recapitulation of the story about Union Switch & Signal supplying receivers to Rock-Ola. Available information suggests this is a figment of someone's imagination, as the plan for US&S to provide Rock-Ola with receivers was a casualty of the cancellation of Rock-Ola's expansion plan.

Further, known US&S receivers are marked with 'U', not 'UN'. Of course, the 'UN' could have readily been faked to dupe someone ignorant of the machining peculiarities of US&S receivers. Another line drawing shows a Rock-Ola receiver with 'INLAND' on the bevel. This also is highly doubtful, as Inland receivers on other makes seen so far have the Inland in the proper place, sometimes lined out--the new vendor's mark elsewhere.

QUALITY HARDWARE: Codes for parts are remarkably accurate, considering the errors under other vendors. The biggest error again concerns receivers, with a line drawing showing 'UN' on the bevel of a QHMC receiver. Most of us know that these are really marked 'UN-QUALITY' unless a few unmarked ones exist. Ruth remarks that most QHMC carbines seen had Underwood barrels. This is possible if he has seen a limited number in the higher serial number ranges. Besides the Rock-Ola barrels almost universal on the early ones, Winchester and Inland barrels are found on the late ones.

NATIONAL POSTAL METER: Same story with the 'UN' on the receiver bevel. These really have a 'U', not the 'UN' shown by Ruth. No mention is made of Underwood supplied receivers. The story of the Commercial Controls carbines is comprehensive, although the number produced does not agree with other sources. There is no mention that these were, like the X-letter series Inlands, presentation models to satisfy company big-wigs and important subcontractor personnel, not G.I. issue. (Rock-Ola is known to have pulled the same trick, maybe all the vendors found a scheme to bootleg a few carbines to the big-wigs?).

IRWIN-PEDERSEN: Ruth has an excellent recounting of the fiasco which resulted in this vendor's Grand Rapids facility being run by management from Saginaw Gear after the government bought out the principals with the taxpayers money.

Unfortunately, Ruth apparently never heard of S'G' carbines and thinks the whole contract block was delivered marked 'IRWIN-PEDERSEN'. He doesn't even list S'G' as a code found on IRWIN-PEDERSEN carbines. The early Underwood Pedersen 'U' handguard marking is erroneously listed as IRWIN-PEDERSEN, as are 'IR', 'SG', 'SRG', 'RMG', 'PS', and 'IN'(Sounds like data from a Mixmaster?). An outline drawing shows a receiver with the classical round 'ear' but the text makes no mention of this or the square variation. The trigger housing peculiarities are likewise not mentioned.

STANDARD PRODUCTS: The treatment of Standard Products suffers most from typographical or proof-reading errors. The stock marking listed should be 'S-HB' not 'H-B'; the buttplate marking should be 'S-S3', not 'S-SB'. No mention is made of the variety of numbers appearing on Standard Products receivers, bolts, slides, and milled trigger housings. The wrong serial number block is referenced at one point in the text (actually the IBM block).

SAGINAW GEAR: No mention of both S.G. and S'G' guns in the 3250020 block of numbers is made, apparently because Ruth never heard of S'G' guns. Of the part markings given under "Other Markings:", only the 'S.G.', 'PS', and 'E-SG' markings are correct. A line drawing of a Saginaw receiver does not show the wide tang of all except very early Saginaws.

IBM: The data on IBM is remarkably accurate, missing the wide tang on the A0 subcontract receivers and showing that code wrong, but otherwise excellent. There is a section on the heat-treating problem with bolts at Auto-Ordnance. There is no mention that Auto-Ordnance was passed over to give IBM a contract, who then subcontracted more parts to Auto-Ordnance than they made themselves.

Chapter 7: This chapter describes models and variations of carbines. Ruth attempts to define configurations of early and late parts in standard categories. While this is fairly accurate, and will do as a rough cut, legitimate combinations of early, middle, and late-type parts will be encountered which do not fit this scale. The treatment of T3 carbines is believed to be in error, in that the variety with the brazed-on bar mount is described as the late variety, and the other is listed as made by both Winchester and Inland. This is in conflict with some government manuals (which, could, in turn, be in error). The trigger housing shown in Figure 7-44 and 7-45 is not a standard production housing, as described, but is from Inland #18, shown in TB 23-7. The description of hammers misses the two varieties of 'dog-leg' hammers, and the peculiar S'G' variety. The slide description is out of sequence, the B version in figure 7-62 being the earliest (identifiable by the round cut at rear of the box, dropped on the later styles A and C of the same figure).

Chapter 8: This chapter deals with accessories. While this chapter is replete with errors, another member who specializes in this area has promised an article on just this one chapter, so we will offer only two comments, viz: like the rest of the book, this chapter contradicts itself in several places; of the codes listed for oilers, only 'IS' even exists!

Chapter 9: This chapter deals with Post War (read Commercial) manufacturers. Your editor has an active distaste for this class of merchandise, and this interferes with his being well informed. A few comments, however, seem in order. Plainfield Machine Co. is now owned or operated by Iver Johnson and current product is so marked. An additional commercial make of unknown history is "BULLSEYE". Rowen-Becker carbines do exist, but they are marked RB INC per two specimens examined by the editor, not ROWEN-BECKER; both were rewelded G.I. receivers. The tooling for National Ordnance has been acquired by Rock Island Armory (Trade Mark, not the Arsenal) and they are selling receivers as well as complete carbines. They aren't pretty, but are adequately machined and work well. In summary, this book contains a wealth of information and an equal wealth of misinformation. With all its faults, it gathers more information in one place than can be found in any other source. My copy is not for sale. If you heed the warnings above and question anything that cannot be verified from another source, it is an interesting and informative addition to the carbine collector's trove of data. Copies can be obtained at the Valley Book Center, 720 Pin Oak Road, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740 for \$24.95. Telephone number is 301-797-0618.

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