

BOOK REVIEW

After many long years, there is a new carbine reference book on the market. Written by Roger Larson, the owner of L&S Supply, the *Comprehensive Guide, M1 Carbine* is available from several online sources for an average price of \$59.95 plus shipping. It has a soft cover with glossy paper and contains 829 pages. The book's cover states there are over 4000 full color illustrations. While the illustrations were not counted to confirm this, the quantity of photographs indicates that the figure is accurate. Most of the space in the book is devoted to pictures and charts. Measuring approximately 9 1/4" tall by 6 3/4" wide and 1 3/4" thick, it is bound on the long side. With the exception of the table of contents at the beginning, the final 60 some pages, and a few other pages, the book must be rotated 90 degrees clockwise to read, because most of the pages are in landscape format.

Readers who are familiar with the late J.C. Harrison's *Collecting the Carbine* series will recognize the layout of this book. In fact, Larson provides thanks to Harrison's family for allowing him to "update" and use portions of Harrison's final book. Although this writer is not a fan of Harrison's *Collecting the Carbine* series, due to the large number of errors they contain, his books are laid out in a very logical manner, and the same can be said about Larson's work. Unlike Harrison, who used line drawings of parts, Larson went a step further and used pictures of actual parts. The use of photographs makes for better presentation without some of the interpretation issues present when dealing with drawings. Unfortunately, this latest book suffers some of the same maladies that plagued its predecessor. More on that subject later.

Sprinkled throughout the pages are WWII period photographs showing American GIs with their carbines. This is a nice touch and a constant reminder of the historical significance of the carbine. The original publishers of these photos are not mentioned. In addition to J.C. Harrison, the author lists several other contributors, including some names that will be familiar to experienced carbine collectors.

The book begins with a detailed table of contents, notes from the author, and basic disassembly instructions. From there, it is divided into three main sections. *Section One* consists of detailed information covering the three major component groups of an M1 Carbine. In order of appearance, they are *Barrel and Receiver Group*, *Trigger Housing Group*, and *Stock Group*. Each group begins with a photograph of the major assembly with the individual components identified, along with the page number on which individual part variations can be found. The author identifies the different variations using the common Type I, Type II, Type III, lingo. There is also a chart that depicts various part markings attributed to the prime manufacturers.

In the *Barrel and Receiver Group*, there are step-by-step instructions on how to repair the crater-like stake mark commonly associated with the installation of the adjustable rear sight. The author notes how effective the method is, saying after it is properly done you won't be able to tell the carbine has been restored. This procedure is not unique to restoring carbine receivers. It has been used by those rebuilding firearms from "demilled" parts kits for quite some time. One has to wonder whether such a practice, being used to hide the fact the receiver once had an adjustable sight installed, is detrimental to the hobby or not. The author claims to have restored several thousand receivers using this method. That should be a warning sign to anyone contemplating the purchase of a carbine with a flip sight, to be extra cautious before completing a purchase.

Following the component groups, there are sections devoted to: *Accessories*, the *Full-Auto M2 Carbine*, and *Sniper & Sniper Scope Information*. Each of these areas is tabbed for quick reference. The information in these areas is presented in a clear, concise and logical manner. This area of the book is probably the best source currently available on consolidated information in these subject areas. There seems to be a disproportionate amount of space devoted to M3 trench knives and M4 bayonets.

Six pages are used to show examples of the M3 trench knife from each manufacturer and the variations, three pages for bayonet scabbards, but only one page is dedicated to the M4 bayonet.

Section Two consists of 90 examples of carbines manufactured by the prime carbine contractors. Depicted are 15 Inland, 11 Winchester, 8 Underwood, 14 Rock-Ola, 9 Q.H.M.C., 6 N.P.M., 5 each Saginaw Gear (S.G.) and Saginaw Gear (S'G'), 3 Irwin-Pedersen, 4 each I.B.M. and Standard Products, along with 6 Inland M1A1. As with the component groups in the first section, the beginning page for each manufacturer is tabbed for easy access. The first page provides some basic information on the prime manufacturer, such as total production, assigned serial number blocks, and approximate period of production. There is also a date chart that appears to be derived from the flawed charts in *Collecting The Carbine III*. It should be noted that the carbines presented in this section are representative of a specific production period. They don't inform the reader which part types and markings were used in a given serial number range, in a manner similar to the manufacturer updates by the Carbine Club.

Overall, the photographs in the book are very nice, although many of the photographs are redundant and don't add anything of value. As an example, there are 90 carbines pictured, along with 90 pictures of a common trigger spring. After the first couple, readers should get the idea of how a trigger spring should look. Additionally, a number of the pictures appear to have been altered or "Photoshopped" beyond just brightness and contrast adjustments.

For example, readers might closely observe and compare the photos of the bottom flat area of two Inland barrels. The one on page 292 is said to be dated 4-44. The one on page 298 is said to be dated 7-44. The markings on the flat area, forward of the slide dismount notch, are identical on both barrels, and are located identically. That identical placement would not have been possible when various personnel were hand stamping the marks at various steps in the manufacturing process. The two characters alongside the slide dismount notch are identical, and are identical in their placement with respect to each other, but the pair is located slightly forward in the photo on page 298. The 2 and 3 in the photo on page 292 are not present in the photo on page 298. The H is located slightly forward in the photo on page 298. The light colored area of wear on the barrel flat area, about half way between the gas cylinder and the receiver, is identical in both photos, even down to the small scar at the forward end of the worn area. It appears that the barrel in the photo on page 298 is a "Photoshopped" version of the barrel in the photo on page 292.

Another example is the receivers pictured on pages 292 and 322. These receivers have the same wear marks, dings, and machining marks, although the barrel on page 322 is completely different. There are several occurrences like this in the book. All this might make a reader wonder which are actual pictures of the parts named, and which are merely pictures of parts that have a similar appearance.

The author makes no specific claim about the originality of the carbines depicted in this section. There is a statement in the beginning of the book, that the carbines depicted in this section "are generally accepted as to their particular date of manufacture". With such a vague statement, it appears the reader is left to determine if the carbines shown are originals, restorations or something else entirely. As an example, out of the ten Winchester carbines shown in this section, three have hammer markings like those found on White Sewing Machine hammers. Is the reader to believe the White hammers are the original hammers, or are these WRA carbines that have been incorrectly restored?

In a different section of the book, the author includes a chart that lists rear sights marked I.R. Co. 7160060 as post-WWII. Yet in another section, they are listed as being used during WWII. Rear sights marked as such are shown on Inland carbine 6644314 and WRA 6620615 in this section. Are these two examples of upgraded carbines, or are they original examples? If novice collectors are looking for information on a carbine close to either of these serial numbers, which section are they to believe?

The third and final section titled *Other Information* contains information on magazines, oilers & slings, ordnance markings, arsenal marks, import markings, post-WWII parts, a list of lateral support between manufacturers, and an alphabetical listing of parts and the contractors who made them. This section contains a lot of information, most of which can also be found in other readily available reference books. Like the previous two sections, it also has its share of errors.

Since this book became available, there have been some discussions on various Internet forum sites on the authenticity of some of the parts pictured in the book. Are there repro parts presented in the book? Some say yes and some say no. Many of the parts pictured do not share the same characteristics with known original parts bearing the same contractor/sub-contractor codes. The Rock-Ola barrel pictured on page 35 has the same characteristics as the fake Rock-Ola barrels identified in NL 329-12 & 13. There are additional photographs of Rock-Ola and Inland barrels in the book with these same characteristics. In *Section One* there is a picture of a type II barrel band that is clearly marked PI in a triangle. There is no mistaking this marking for the triangle symbol (A over S) as covered in NL 359-8. As mentioned earlier, many of the pictures appear to have been "Photoshopped". Is this one of them? Was this picture edited to make the triangle symbol appear more like a PI, or is it a reproduction type II band marked this way? Larson also uses the PI in a triangle to describe possible markings on several of the Inland carbines in section two.

It is certainly true that there is not now, and probably never will be, a carbine reference book without some errors. However, with too many errors, a book can be misleading to a less experienced person. As was mentioned earlier, this work suffers from some of the same maladies that plagued its predecessor. One of the biggest problems with Harrison's books is the number of errors they contain. The same issue is prevalent in this book. The errors that have been pointed out in this review are not the only ones found in the book. For an experienced individual, the errors will be obvious and corrections easily made, but for a novice or less experienced carbine enthusiast, the errors won't be so noticeable, and undoubtedly will lead them astray or cause confusion as to what is correct.

In addition to the "technical" errors, there are simple mistakes throughout the book that should have been caught during a good proof-reading, before the material was sent to the printer. Some examples are: the Robert Bobbins Company is referred to as the Hobert Bobbins Company; ordnance is spelled ordinance in several places; swaged is spelled swedged in all references to the swaged-on gas cylinder; the abbreviation for International Register Company is listed as both I.R.CO. and I.H. CO.; RIA is listed on page 777 as Rock Island Armory instead of Rock Island Arsenal; Lawrence Appleyard (see NL 240) is shown on page 788 as Laurence Applegate; Seymour Smith is spelled Seymore Smith on page 807; Kal Machine Works is shown as Kal Machine Company on page 788; page 812 says the Underwood barrels dated 10-49 were made in October 1942. The "square S" marking used by Lyman on flip sights is referred to as the Winchester type marking; the hole in the receiver for the operating spring is often referred to as "spring tube channel" in photos of receivers that do not have a detachable spring tube.

Some errors might be attributed to the book being printed in China, rather than to errors on the author's part. Others, like listing Rock-Ola Manufacturing Corporation as Rock-Ola Music Company and Singer Manufacturing Company, Inc. as Singer Sewing Machine Company, can't be attributed to printing errors. Getting the name of a prime carbine contractor wrong is almost inexcusable in a book touted as a comprehensive guide.

In summary, Larson's book is laid out in a logical format and is presented nicely, with information being easy to find. Unfortunately, the errors and other questionable aspects of the book significantly detract from what could have been a very valuable reference for both the experienced and novice carbine collector. Perhaps, after some future revisions, the "Comprehensive Guide" moniker might become appropriate.