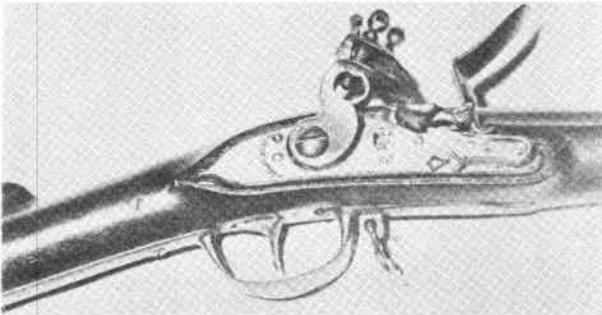


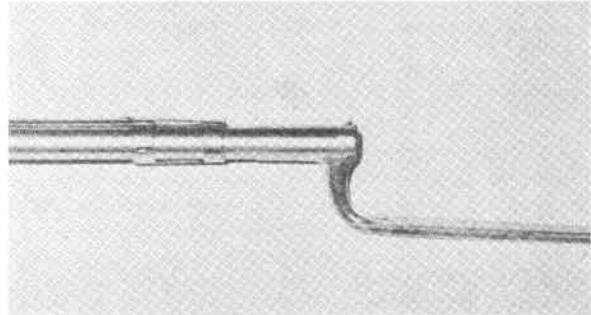
A SPRINGFIELD MODEL 1795 MUSKET WITH PERMANENTLY ATTACHED BAYONET

By Stephen D. Marvin

The United States musket, model of 1795, was the first arm manufactured at the Springfield Armory. At the time of the Armory's authorization by act of Congress in 1794, the United States Armed Forces found themselves in lamentable condition, at least, in so far as equippage was concerned. In a style to be copied repeatedly in the following 190 years, Congress had permitted the stocks of arms - many already obsolescent at the close of the Revolution - to lapse further into decay. The intent behind the establishment of government armories to provide a domestic source of arms was simultaneously subverted by the selection of the Charleville Pattern of 1763. It is difficult to understand why the later, and much improved French model of 1777, was not utilized. Even the Ordnance Corps should have been able to obtain enough specimens for the patternmaker in the seventeen years that had passed. Be all this as it may, Springfield produced 245 weapons of the earlier 1763 pattern in the year 1795 and continued their production for the next eleven or twelve years.



SPRINGFIELD MUSKET M-1795



TOP VIEW

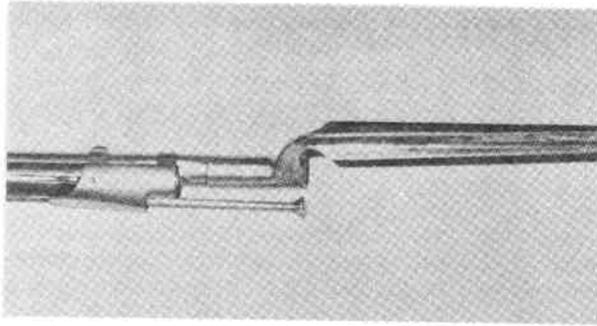
It is natural to expect a variety of types to appear during a production period as long as the one devoted to the 1795. Illustrated is an example of one of the earliest variations - the 1795 Springfield musket with permanently attached bayonet. Why Secretary of War McHenry (1796-1800) approved such an experiment probably will never be known. Nevertheless, by his order, half socket bayonets were ordered to be produced and soldered (not brazed) permanently with soft solder to the barrels. No one ordered a stop, apparently, for some six or seven years later, Secretary Dearborn inquired, rather timidly in June of 1806 as to just what kind of bayonet Springfield was producing, with the clear implication that if they were still permanently attaching them, such practice should cease. One can imagine his reaction when he received a reply to his letter which must have reinforced his worst fears - there were 15,000 in storage alone, not counting those that may have been issued!

The muskets were the subject of sporadic correspondence for the next seven years. In 1809, we find Colonel Whiting's report on the Springfield Armory to Secretary of War Eustis citing the presence of over 15,000 arms of this type in storage. The Colonel felt that the barrels had been thin at the muzzle and it was in an attempt to strengthen them that the permanent attachment was made.

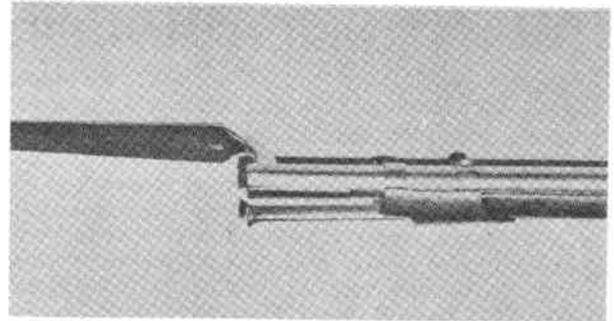
It was the War of 1812, which seemed to redirect attention to the arms and in 1813, between six or eight thousand had the bayonets with eleven inches of attached barrel cut off. Those that were finished saw light as short muskets with thirty-three inch barrels; with the original middle band omitted and a sling-loop attached through a lug brazed to the underside of the barrel; and with the stock shortened proportionately and the original front band and band spring relocated downward. Apparently, the vast majority were not so rebuilt for Rosewill Lee, the Superintendent, wrote to Colonel Decius Wadsworth, the Commissary General of Ordnance, in June of 1815 lamenting the was the guns had been cut down and then left unfinished to rust and requested instructions on what to do.

At this point, the shadow of William Cramond of Philadelphia fell across these muskets. Cramond was an enterprising surplus arms dealer actively engaged in exporting arms to Africa, the West Indies, and Central and South America. On January 23, 1816, his agents purchased the entire lot (some 15,382 stands of arms) from Springfield, having previously purchased the entire supply of muskets stored in the Schuylkill Arsenal consisting of the muskets made at Harper's Ferry Armory and by the contractors of 1798.

It is not surprising, then, to recount that the weapon pictured herewith came to light in 1952 in the dark corner of an incredibly filthy junk shop in the low rent district of Port au Prince, Haiti. It is amazing that it survived. The forearm was in worm eaten, splintered condition from the rear band forward. Otherwise it had resisted the perils of one hundred thirty-six years of tropical use remarkably well, even retaining



RIGHT SIDE



LEFT SIDE

its original ramrod. The arm is a standard, early 1795, dated 1799 in script on the top of the butt plate. It carries what appears to be a MARYLAND stamp in the stock, just forward of the trigger guard. The bayonet blade is a standard 1795 type with a deeply struck but undecipherable mark on the lower, inside flat. The socket is nearly a three quarter rather than a half socket and is attached with solder. There is no indication that the barrel was even processed for a standard (top of barrel) bayonet stud.

While William Cramond, no doubt, performed a welcome service by buying up what, in 1815 and 1816, could not be described in any more generous terms than a lot of junk, he personally contributed directly to the scarcity and resulting mystery of our early flint muskets. It is painful to think how quickly those wonderful, old, rickety, slender pieces must have disintegrated.