

1795 Springfield Muskets: 1795-1815

By William Reid

William "Bill" Reid is an avid collector of US Muskets. This presentation was accompanied by a display of each of the arms discussed. Members had the opportunity to hold and disassemble the muskets for a "hands-on" learning experience. The old adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words," certainly applies to this presentation of 1795 Springfield muskets. —Editor

The purpose of this article is to give a brief history of the origination of the Springfield Arsenal and information on the production of the first muskets manufactured by the United States. These have become known to collectors as the "1795 Springfield Muskets." For informational purposes, original locks will be chronologically illustrated to document the changes through the production of 1795 muskets.

In 1794, President George Washington established a National Arsenal at Springfield, Massachusetts, to manufacture arms for the United States. The flintlock musket was the primary weapon used in western warfare in the 1700s and early 1800s. The facility that became known as the Springfield Armory had been in existence as a storage depot before 1794 and is believed to have had some repair capacity. When it was established as an arsenal, the arsenal was directed to copy the French musket Model 1766. The term "Model 1795" is a modern collectors' designation. The term used in official records is "US musket, Charlesville pattern." As to the Type I, II, III, and IV variations, these are also collectors' designations. Differences in the lock are generally the easiest way to distinguish Type I, II, and III muskets. Points of significance are (1) where and how the "SPRINGFIELD" is placed on the lock plate, and (2) knowledge that the type of eagle die used changed from 1799 to 1815.

MUSKET TYPES

Type I Muskets

The type I Springfield musket lock plates had a detachable faceted pan. The Type I muskets, in chronological order, are shown in Figures 1 through 9.

Type II Muskets

The type II musket lock plates changed to a round detachable pan. Type II muskets are shown in chronological order in Figures 10 through 12.



Type III Muskets

The Type III muskets have an integral round pan. Type III muskets are shown in Figures 13 through 17.

Type IV Muskets

The Type IV muskets have a mixture of 1795 Type III and Springfield Model 1812/1815 parts while retaining the iron integral pan (Figures 18 and 19).

EVOLUTION OF THE MUSKET TYPES

The pan started as a detachable faceted iron pan on Type I muskets; it was changed to a round detachable iron



Figure 1. Undated Type I. (Photo by Jim and Pam Reid)



Figure 2. 1799 Type I.



Figure 3. 1800 Type I.



Figure 4. 1801 Type I.



Figure 5. 1802 Type I.



Figure 6. 1803 Type I.



Figure 7. 1804 Type I.



Figure 8. 1805 Type I.



Figure 9. 1806 Type I.



Figure 10. 1806 Type II.

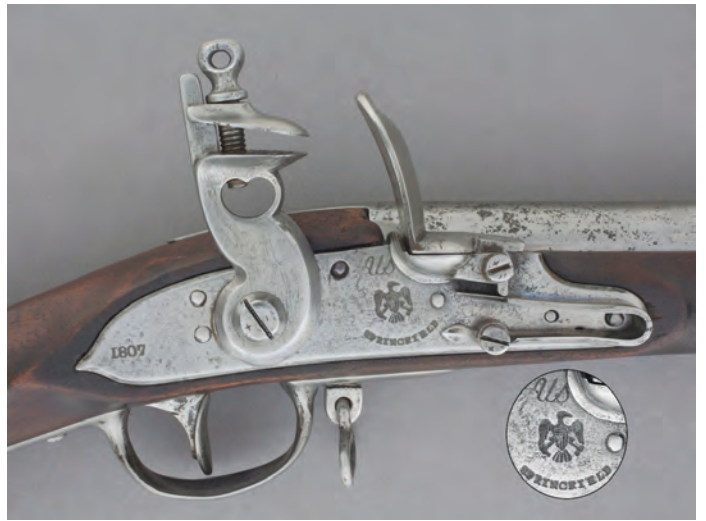


Figure 11. 1807 Type II.



Figure 12. 1808 Type II.



Figure 13. 1809 Type III.



Figure 14. 1810 Type III.



Figure 15. 1811 Type III.



Figure 16. 1812 Type III.



Figure 17. 1813 Type III.



Figure 18. 1814 Type IV.



Figure 19. 1815 Type IV.

pan on Type II muskets; then it became an integral round iron pan on Type III muskets. Type IV muskets have a mixture of 1795 Type III and the later Springfield Model 1812/1815 parts while retaining the integral iron pan. Springfield Arsenal made continuing changes in many areas to Model 1795 muskets to accommodate new manufacturing improvements. Type I muskets were generally manufactured from 1799 to 1806, Type II muskets from 1806 to 1809, Type III from 1809 to 1813, and Type IV from 1813 to 1815. **However, these dates are general, and muskets within a year or two of the dates listed may have mixed characteristics.**

Springfield muskets can be identified from 1799 when markings were applied. No positive identification of a Springfield manufactured musket before 1799 has been documented. There are undated Type I Springfield muskets in existence. They have the Springfield and eagle marking with P, V, and Eagle Head on the barrel. These muskets may have

been assembled just before the decision to mark the musket with the assembly date and after the Springfield and eagle dies were available. They also could be refurbished Type I butt plate dated muskets that had the butt plate replaced during the refurbishing process. We do know that musket parts from the Philadelphia Arsenal and the Schuylkill Arsenal were shipped to Springfield. These were salvaged parts from French muskets. The assumption is that these parts were used to assemble muskets as the Springfield Arsenal developed the ability to manufacture additional parts and assemblies. In time, Springfield Arsenal manufactured an increasing percentage of each musket. (For additional detailed information regarding the Springfield Arsenal and the manufacturing of Model 1795 muskets please see: Moeller, George, *American Military Shoulder Arms, Vol. 2*, ISBN: 0-87081-308-0; and Schmidt, Peter, *U. S. Military Flintlock Muskets, The Early Years*, ISBN: 1-931464-21-9.)