

Springfield Model 1795 Muskets to 1809: The Asheville Study

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Eighty-two flintlock muskets produced at the Springfield Armory before 1810 were brought together at the April 1996 meeting of the American Society of Arms Collectors in Asheville, North Carolina, for detailed study and examination. The study and this paper were the joint effort of Vern G. Eklund, Burton A. Kellerstedt, George D. Moller, Arthur F. Nehrbass, and William M. Reid. In addition to muskets from the above members, John J. Callan, Jr., Peter L. DeRose, Edward R. Flanagan, William G. Gavin, Dick Holt, Stephen D. Marvin, Theodore S. Myers, Johnathan M. Peck, Norman E. Schaefer, and Peter S. Wainwright generously contributed their Springfields to the study.

To our knowledge, this is the first time such an extensive collection of early Springfield flintlock muskets has been assembled for study. What follows is our best effort to analyze these muskets based on what was observed. Some personal judgments regrettably, but necessarily, make up part of this paper. We are most grateful to the members who contributed their arms and hope that this effort will meet with their approval.

Confident that the reader would not want a musket-by-musket recounting of marks, trigger shapes, trigger guard evolution, barrel lengths, etc., we will attempt to summarize the most significant findings.

The study sample consisted of the following dates: undated: eleven; 1799: eleven; 1800: five; 1801: four; 1802: six; 1803: seven; 1804: three; 1805/6: one; 1805/7: one; 1806: eight; 1807: nine; 1807/8: one; 1808: nine; 1808/9: one; and 1809: five.

INFANTRY MUSKETS

Of the above, forty-five were considered to be substantially unaltered infantry muskets and serve as the basis for the conclusions in this category. In addition, some parts from other muskets not in this sample of forty-five (notably, lock-plate markings) were also considered in the study.

Barrels: Length varied between $43\frac{5}{16}$ and $45\frac{1}{16}$ inches. All had barrel proofs of "P," eagle head, "V," reading from the muzzle, stamped into the barrel's upper left quadrant. "US" was stamped on the top. Typical barrel markings of these muskets are shown in Figure 1. The bayonet stud was located on the top of the barrel except for two of the 1803-dated examples, which had bayonet studs on the bottom.



The barrel extension beyond the front barrel band varied from $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches to $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches, the most common measure being about $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches.

Lock: Until 1801, "Springfield" was observed to be stamped at the rear of the cock in a vertical curve, as shown in Figure 2. It was then observed to be in a horizontal curve through 1803 (see Figure 3). In 1804, "Springfield" was still in a horizontal curve but was *forward* of the cock beneath the eagle. In 1805-6 it is again stamped behind the cock, but the curve is inclined upwards at the rear, as shown in Figure 4. From 1806, "Springfield" in a horizontal curve is stamped beneath the eagle forward of the cock (see Figure 5). Two of the 1803- and two of the 1804-dated lockplates had a reversed "N" in "Springfield," as shown in Figure 6. The eagle looks towards the butt through 1800, and towards the muzzle through 1809. The cock's finial or tang is curled through 1803 and both curled and straight in 1804. Thereafter, it is straight through 1809. The pan is faceted and detachable through 1803, when it becomes round detachable through 1808. 1809 finds both round detachable and round integral pans. The frizzen toe is curled through 1803 and then becomes straight to 1809. The frizzen spring's lower branch generally ended in a teat-shaped finial to 1803, though a round and a pointed example were observed. From 1804 to 1809 it was observed to be pointed. Again, refer to Figures 2 through 5.

Stock: The stocks had long and deep wrist flutes to 1804, as shown in Figure 7. In 1804 they were seen to be of medium length and, with two long exceptions in 1809, continued medium throughout 1809 (see Figure 8). Of the forty-five examples in this group, thirty-nine had some mark in the stock. The undated muskets, presumed to have been fabricated before 1799, had no marks. Those fabricated from 1799 through 1809, with a few exceptions that were marked

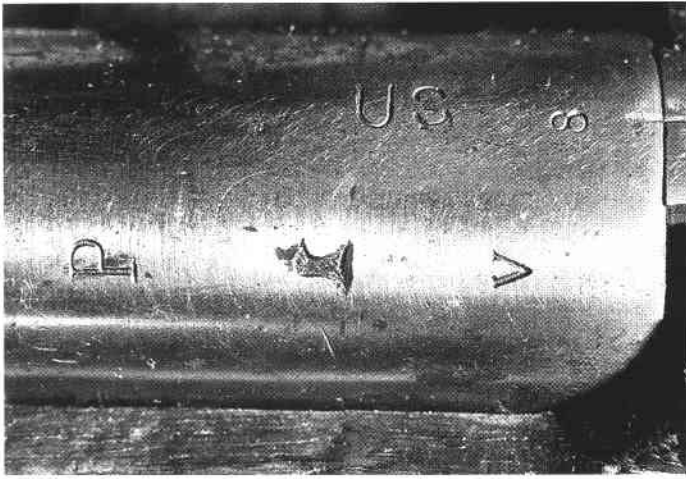


Figure 1. Typical inspection and proof marks of "P", eagle's head and "V", as well as the "US" federal ownership mark, stamped in the barrels of the Model 1795 Springfield muskets. The "8" on this barrel is peculiar to this particular musket.



Figure 4. This 1805-dated lock has a curved, inclined "Springfield" behind the cock and the eagle's head is turned toward the muzzle. The frizzen spring finial is pointed and the frizzen's toe is straight.

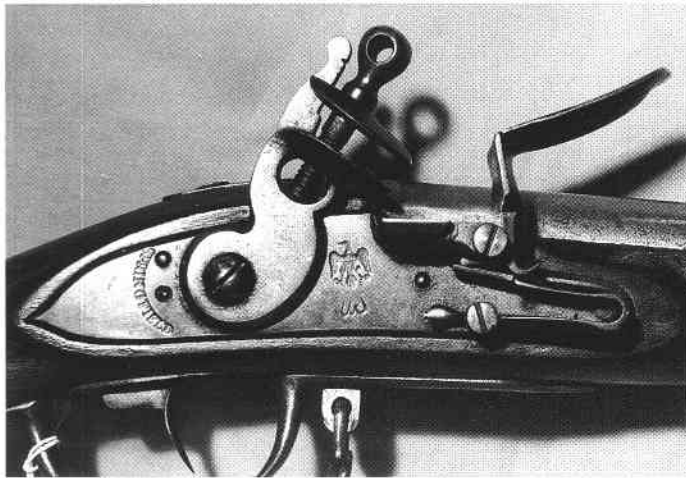


Figure 2. Typical lock markings of 1800-dated Springfield muskets. Eagle's head is turned toward the butt. The frizzen spring finial is teat-shaped and the frizzen's toe and cock's top are curled.



Figure 5. 1808-dated Springfield lock with "Springfield" beneath an eagle with head turned toward the muzzle, forward of the cock. The frizzen spring finial is pointed and the frizzen's toe and cock's tang are both straight.



Figure 3. The lockplate markings of an 1803-dated Springfield musket. The eagle's head is turned toward the muzzle. The frizzen spring finial is pointed. The frizzen's toe and cock's top are curled.

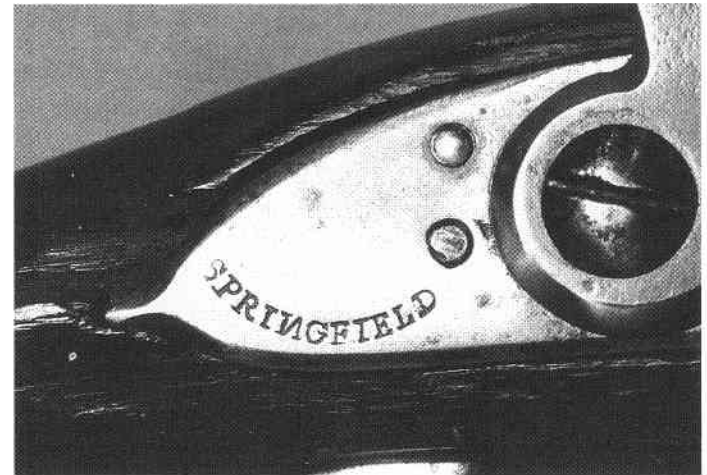


Figure 6. The reversed "N in the word "Springfield" observed on two of the study's 1803-dated lockplates and also on two of the of 1804-dated plates.



Figure 7. The Butt stock of this 1800-dated Springfield musket has long and deep flutes.

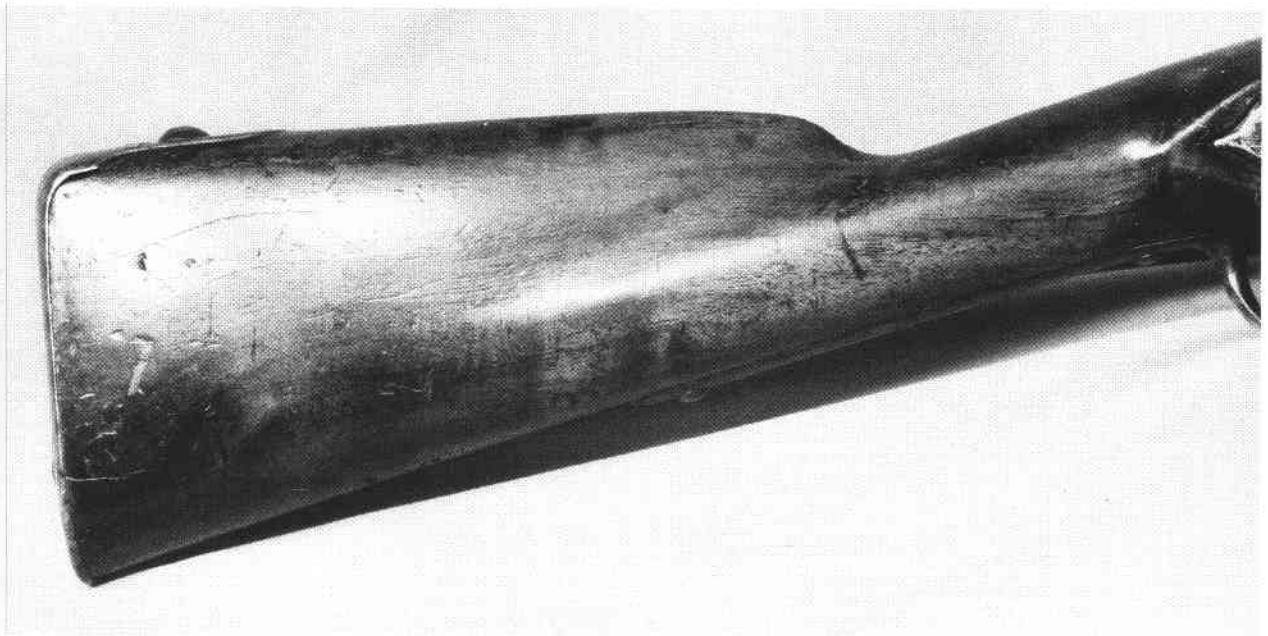


Figure 8. The butt stock of an 1807-dated Springfield musket with Medium-length and depth flutes.

elsewhere, had an initial or initials at the rear of the trigger guard. Also beginning in 1799 and extending to 1809, individual letters, believed to be initials, were stamped into the left flat of many of the muskets: "A," "V," "NB," "AK," and "JF" were observed. Beginning about 1806, a script "US" was also observed. The stock area around the barrel tang and in various places on the butt were sometimes marked with one or two letters. Two representative stock markings are seen in Figures 9 and 10.

Trigger and guard: The guards' front and rear ends were in the form of teat-like projections to 1804. In about 1805, the ends were rounded, and in about 1806 the rear remained round but the front end took on various pointed

shapes such as that shown in Figure 11. From 1807, the guard had round ends. The early guards were between $13\frac{3}{8}$ and $12\frac{1}{8}$ inches long, $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches being a rough average. The round-ended guards were generally about $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches, although the 1806 guards tended to be a little shorter. All of the triggers noted had webs, which varied from large to small and appear mixed throughout the period.

SHIP'S MUSKETS

Two examples of what are considered to be true ship's muskets, dated 1799 and 1800, were identified. The specifications and markings for these muskets are identical to those of



Figure 9. "US" and "A" are stamped into the stock's left breech flat of an 1806-dated Springfield Musket.

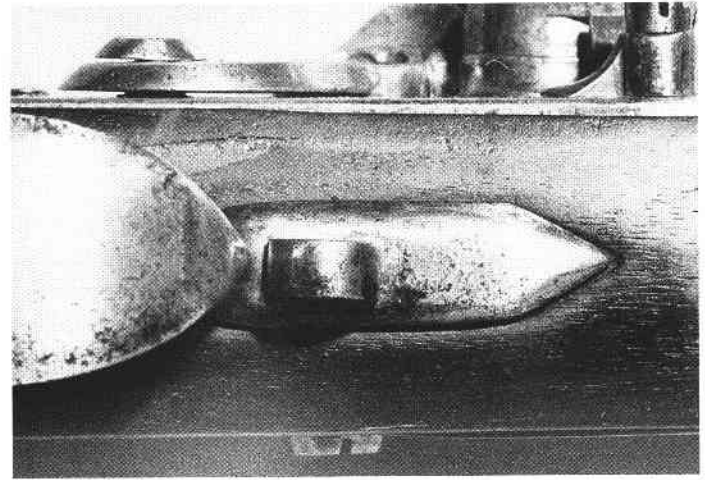


Figure 11. The trigger guard of a very few 1806-dated Springfield muskets were observed with a pointed front end.



Figure 10. Two "A" 's are stamped into the stock's left breech flat of a 1799-dated Springfield musket.

concurrent infantry examples above, except the barrel lengths are $41\frac{3}{8}$ and $42\frac{1}{8}$, respectively.

1813 SPRINGFIELD ALTERATION

The 1813 Springfield alteration of infantry muskets with soldered-on bayonets occurred when the barrels and forestocks were ordered to be shortened to eliminate the soldered-on bayonet. This study had four examples of this type of musket: three dated 1803 and one dated 1805/6. They followed the general specifications of infantry muskets for like dates. Three barrels were $32\frac{3}{8}$ inches, and the fourth was $32\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The examples in this study had a peculiar mark stamped into the right side of the butt, as shown in Figure 12.

REPAIRED OR REBUILT MUSKETS

Thirty-one of the examples were judged to be muskets that had probably been repaired or rebuilt. Of these, twenty-four apparently were rebuilt in 1814 to 1818. Four had no

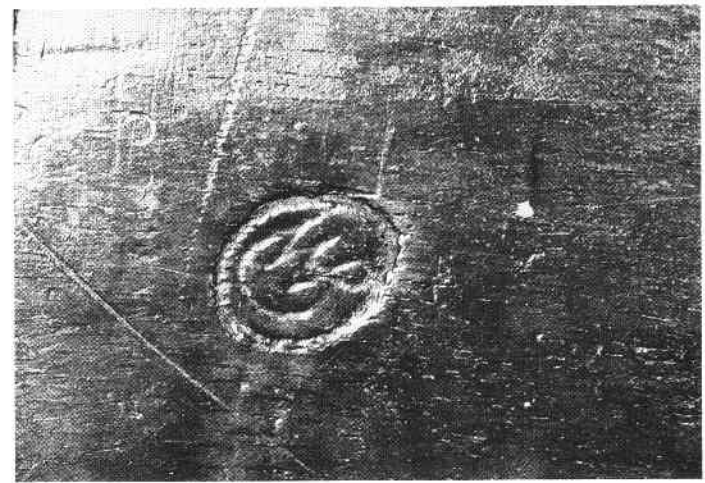


Figure 12. Mark noted stamped on the right side of the stocks of the 1813-altered muskets of this study. This appears peculiar to these shortened muskets.

barrel proofs, and three were shortened, but it appeared that these were not part of the 1813 Springfield alteration discussed above.

Fifteen muskets with forty-four-plus-inch barrels and their original proof marks (one barrel is $43\frac{1}{8}$ inches) appear to have been restocked or otherwise altered. Twelve of these had no stock marks, and three had their original stock marks. If they were altered at national armories, the alteration was probably accomplished before 1816, when the shorter forty-two-inch barrel length became standard. If altered at arsenals, by authority of states, or elsewhere, this alteration may have been accomplished at any time during the flintlock period.

Five muskets with their original proof markings had been shortened to forty-two-inch barrel lengths. The stocks were unmarked. Two were undated; the others, dated 1802, 1803, and 1807, gave evidence of having been arsenal altered or repaired.

Four muskets, two undated and two dated 1804 and

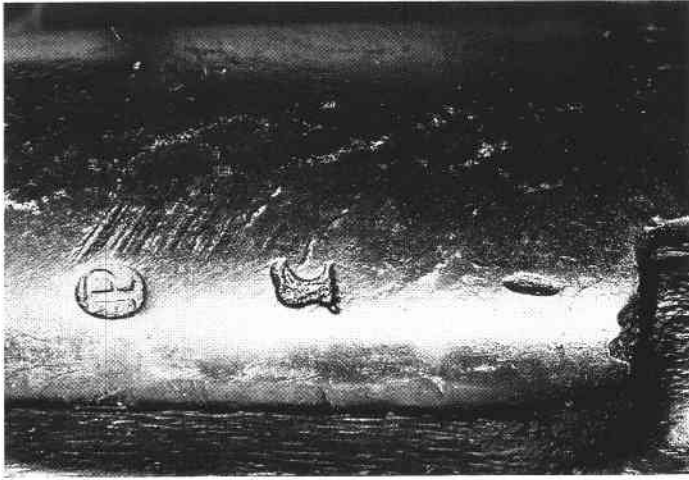


Figure 13. The proof and inspection marks of the style used from 1818 found on the barrels of Model 1795 muskets with new or reproved 42-inch barrels.

1807, had new or reproved forty-two-inch barrels with the style of proof that began in 1818 (shown in Figure 13). The tangs of two muskets were dated 1819 and 1820.

The study's remaining seven muskets gave evidence of non-arsenal alterations. It could not be determined whether they were altered by commercial interests or by states' militias.

SUMMARY

The study has enhanced our ability to recognize legitimate evolutionary changes in early Springfield muskets and to judge appropriate proof marks. We trust that this short paper will similarly assist the reader. A continuation of this study of Springfield flintlocks after 1809 is being considered.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR. . . .

The Ashville Study on Springfield muskets initiated a series of group displays that allow members to see arms unlike any assembled world-wide. This is a healthy move toward society members sharing and comparing arms of the same maker or "school". Some have elected to document their findings. Others have opted to present joint displays allowing members to draw their own conclusions.

At this meeting several members decided to pool their Deringers and make note of the similarities and differences of the pistols. Doug Eberhardt, author of two volumes on Deringers, was picked as the spokesman for the group. The following paper is a result of this team effort. While definitive statements are made the author was quick to solicit any additional information that members may have.

Bob Sadler