

Collecting and Shooting the Military Surplus Rifle



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Tennessee Gun



Article by [Ralph Cobb](#)

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In times of need, some rather unexpected manufacturers have produced bayonets. In this article, I wanted to share some of the bayonets in my collection that were made by firms that one might not normally associate with bayonets or arms. Over the years, I have often been just as fascinated by the history around some of the firms that produced bayonets, as I have about the history of the bayonets themselves. This is another interesting aspect of bayonet collecting.

A Bayonet or Just a Big Needle?

Having lost so much of its military hardware at Dunkirk, the British government set the Royal Ordnance Factories to churning out Lee-Enfield No. 4 Mk. I rifles as fast as they could. At the same time, they looked to private firms to manufacture bayonets. The No. 4 bayonet was a homely socket bayonet with a short spike for a blade. The first firm to produce No. 4 bayonets was the Singer Manufacturing Company. Singer was world famous for their immensely popular line of sewing machines. Singer was an American company, founded in 1851. Singer opened an assembly shop in Glasgow, Scotland in 1867 and built a massive factory in Clydebank in the early 1880s. Only 75,000 No. 4 Mk. I bayonets were ever produced, with their distinctive cruciform blade. All were made by Singer. Despite being targeted by the Luftwaffe during the blitz, Singer went on to produce another 1,171,782 No. 4 Mk. II bayonets at Clydebank before the war ended.



Note the nicely finished socket with deeply struck markings, including the royal cipher of King George VI. The workmanship that went into these early bayonets stands in stark contrast to the increasingly crude manufacturing practices exhibited by the Mk. II, Mk. II* (pronounced, mark two star), and Mk. III bayonets that followed.

Several makers of the simplified No. 4 Mk. II and Mk. II* bayonets were also unlikely candidates as arms makers. Howard & Bullough Co., Accrington, Lancashire, and Prince-Smith, & Stells & Co. Ltd., Keighly, Yorkshire, were manufacturers of textiles machinery. Howard & Bullough specialized in cottons, while Prince-Smith & Stells specialized in worsted wools. Bullough was one of the smaller makers of the No. 4 Mk. II*, with approximately 161,026 reported produced. Prince-Smith was one of the larger producers with 1,057,515 reported produced.

Joseph Lucas Ltd., Chester Street, Birmingham, produced the No. 4 Mk. III bayonet. Lucas is best known for their automotive electric products, like lamps, instruments, and switches. The No. 4 Mk. III bayonet was crude in the extreme, with a socket fabricated of welded stampings. 196,200 were produced, all by Lucas. The No. 4 Mk. III bayonets were such wretched examples that they were declared obsolete in



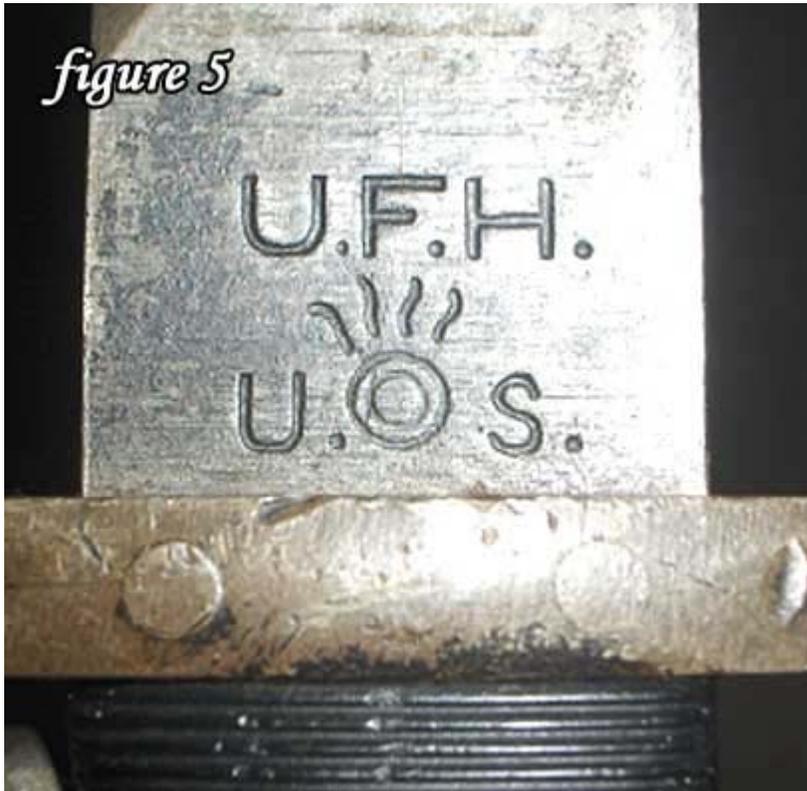
1946. Just compare the workmanship of the original No. 4 Mk. I bayonet above to this No. 4 Mk. III!

Sears Craftsman Bayonet?

When the U.S. entered World War II, no bayonets had been made since Springfield Armory ceased producing M1905 bayonets in 1922. With Springfield Armory fully committed to producing the M-1 Garand rifle, the U.S. government turned to private firms for bayonets. One of the firms to produce the M1905 bayonet, with its 16 inch blade, and the 10 inch M-1 bayonet, was the Union Fork & Hoe Company. Union Fork & Hoe Co. was founded in 1890 at Columbus, Ohio.



Union manufactured and sold farm tools including pitchforks, hoes, rakes, shovels and repair handles for such tools. In 1913, Union began making the Craftsman line of tools for sale in the Sears and Roebuck catalog. This M-1 bayonet was made in 1944 by the Union Fork & Hoe Co. at their plant in Rome, New York. Union



produced between 350,000 and 400,000 M1905 bayonets and approximately 600,000 M-1 bayonets by war's end. This is the first bayonet that I ever owned.

Served on a Silver Platter

One of the most unusual British bayonets of the 20th Century has to be the No. 7 Mk. 1/L. As World War II came to an end, the British were eager to find a replacement for the never popular No. 4 spike bayonet. The No. 7 was an attempt to make a combination bayonet & fighting knife that would attach to the socket mount of the No. 4 Lee-Enfield rifle. While a very clever design, it was not well liked by the British authorities. Although produced in some quantity, it saw little use. The No. 7 Mk. 1/L below was made ca. 1945-1947 by Elkington & Company of Birmingham. While not exactly a household name in the U.S., Elkington & Co. is one of the most important names in English silver and certainly the most important in silver plate. They invented the electroplating process in the 1830s!





Ever versatile, the No. 7 Mk. I/L would also mount to the Sten Mk. V submachine gun. The "L" designates that it was adopted for land use only. The grips are of a resin-impregnated cloth material, called Paxolin. Examples are also found with black grips. Note how the pommel rotates 180 degrees, to become a socket reminiscent of the No. 4 spike bayonet. Ingenious, isn't it?

I've Been Working on the Railroad

During WWII, Burma and India was where Japan's westward expansion across Asia was finally checked by British, American, and Indian troops. Rifle Factory Ishapore had been producing Lee-Enfield No. 1 Mk. III rifles and Pattern 1907 bayonets in India since 1914. As with so many countries, the seemingly insatiable demand for war production resulted in private firms stepping in to fill the gaps. As new Pattern 1907 bayonets were required during World War II, they were made with an unfullered, 12 inch blade and designated No. 1 Mk. II*.



This No. 1 Mk. II* was made in the workshops of the famous Bengal & North West Railways in 1944. The North West Railways was formed in the early 1880s and ran until taken over by the Indian Government



in 1943. The North West Railways carried freight, passengers, and steamship mail from Dehli to the northern frontier of British India and beyond to Peshawar, Pakistan. During World War II, many of the Railway's shops were converted to produce war materiel and this immaculate specimen is an example of their handiwork.

From Loom to Zoom

As Japan armed for expansion in the 1930s, they too turned increasingly to private industry for bayonet production. Although the Army Arsenals continued producing Type 30 bayonets, they also supervised private subcontractors. One such subcontractor was Toyoda Jidoshoki Seisakusho (Toyoda Automatic Loom Works). Toyoda Automatic Loom Works was a manufacturer of textile production machinery that had been around since the days of wooden looms. In 1933, they also began producing automobiles. In 1937, they began producing bayonets under supervision of the Nagoya Army Arsenal. In that same year, the automobile department was spun off as a separate company. That company was what you know today as Toyota Motor Sales.



Toyoda made bayonets from 1937-1945. This is an early example, with a highly polished blade; hooked quillion, grip screws set in escutcheons; and, a contoured, birds-head



pommel. Made at the high-water mark of Japanese militarism, this bayonet exhibits the same fine workmanship for which Toyota automobiles have become so well known.

The Road to Ankara Runs Through . . . Rhode Island?

Turkey has long been a military power to be reckoned with in the middle east. During the 19th Century, Turkey purchased the latest in firearms technology from around the world. After the American Civil War, as breech loading cartridge rifles came into their own, Turkey adopted the Peabody-Martini rifle. In the early 1870s, the Turkish government contracted with the Providence Tool Company in Providence, Rhode Island to produce 850,000 Peabody-Martini rifles and bayonets. The Providence Tool Company began as a manufacturer of nuts and washers in 1834. In the 1860s and 1870s the company continued to produce hardware and machinery, but also produced war materiel during the Civil War. The Turkish M1874 Peabody bayonet is a behemoth. Weighing in at well over two pounds, it measures over 28 inches in length, with a blade nearly 3/8 inch thick at the ricasso.





While it is difficult to imagine shooting offhand with this bayonet fixed, it surely had tremendous psychological impact. With the advent of smokeless powder and the Mauser repeating rifle, the single-shot Peabody-Martini rifle faded into obscurity. However, many of the bayonets soldiered on, converted into handsome sidearms. This example is one such conversion. The mortise and press stud have been filled, the metal nickel-plated, and the original leather grips replaced with rosewood and mother-of-pearl inlays. Someday, I'll carve my birthday cake with this beauty!

The history associated with bayonets and their makers can take some unexpected twists and turns. The stories that bayonets tell are rich with history. Stories of places far away and sometimes surprisingly close to home. One more reason why bayonet collecting is so interesting. For more information on bayonets and bayonet collecting, visit my website at www.worldbayonets.com.

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