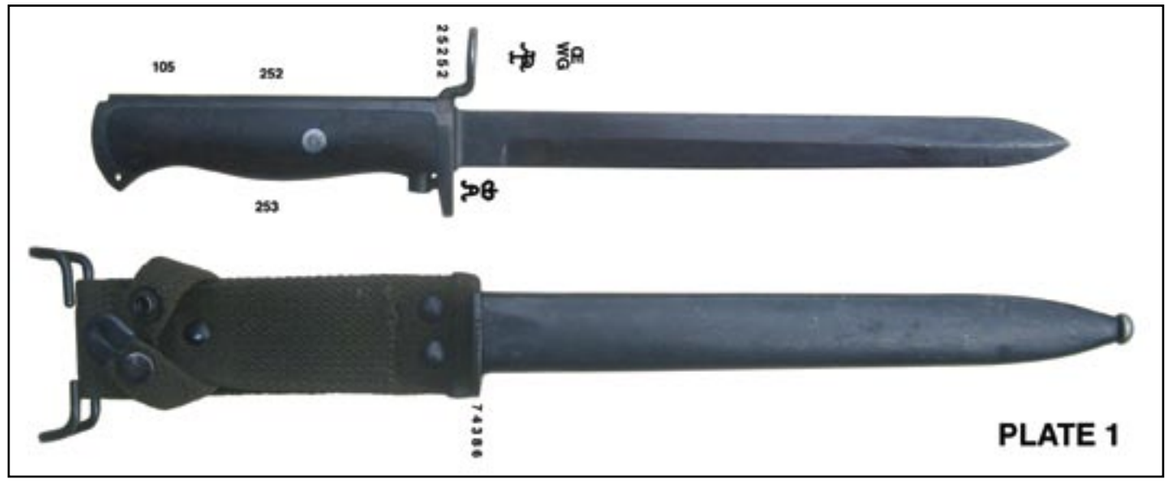
The Norwegian Model 1894 Short Knife Bayonet modified c.1956 to fit the U.S. M1 Carbine



BAYONET FACT FILE NO.50

by R.D.C. Evans

Overall Length: 335mm Blade Length: 213mm
Muzzle Ring: 15mm Scabbard
(with webbing hanger): 364mm

The bayonet in its present form (Plate 1) is a conversion of an earlier model. The blade of this model and the basic metalwork of its hilt are parts of a single steel forging with a blued finish. The design of the hilt is highly unusual, the blade-tang being forged with a substantial protective re-inforcement along its hilt back (or upper side), extending along the top edge of each grip to blend at its forward end into the integrally forged cross-guard. At its rear end it runs smoothly into a curved pommel-cap, also an integral part of the hilt forging. The beak of the pommel is pierced by a 3.5mm diameter round hole.

The steel hilt back has a concave profile and has a 53mm long T-section mortise machined into its rear section. The two smooth walnut grips are relatively long (as a result of the absence of a normal-length pommel) and are held by a single screw-bolt. The bolt has a flat screwdriver-slotted head set in a cup-washer on the reverse side and a plain circular nut on the obverse. The bayonet's fixing catch consists of a lever pivotted on the grip-securing screw-bolt. At the rear end of the lever, a stop projects into the T-mortise, whilst its forward end engages a coil-spring actuated drum-shaped operating button positioned to the rear of the guard's lower quillon.

The catch button has a chequered surface and also features a hook which projects into a slot cut through the lower quillon. This hook engages a similarly hooked post projecting rearwards from the lower edge of the scabbard mouth-piece. The operating button therefore serves the dual purpose of releasing the bayonet from being fixed on its companion rifle, or allowing the sheathed bayonet to be drawn out of its scabbard.

The slim blade is unfullered and single-edged and terminates in an unswaged spear point. A muzzle-ring, which was not a feature of the bayonet as originally manufactured, has been added by machining a notch in the upper extremity of the cross-guard and brazing in place a new component. The muzzle ring is formed out of relatively thin steel which bends through two right-angles to position the ring above the blade ricasso, a little forward of the original hilt.

The scabbard has also been converted, altering some features of its original design. It has a blued steel body with an oval ball finial at the tip. There is a separate mouth-piece, also of blued steel, which includes a rearward projecting hook to engage the catch positioned in the slot in the bayonet's lower quillon. The mouth-piece is secured by a screwdriver-slotted bolt through the reverse side of the scabbard body. There is a raised thickened rectangle on the reverse surface of the scabbard body which now has no function, but which originally served to engage a catch which locked the scabbard in its belt-frog.

An additional plate has been brazed to the reverse surface of the scabbard body near the throat, this plate having a hole drilled to allow acess to the mouth-piece retaining screw-bolt. The added plate is doubly curved and extends to the rear of the scabbard body to allow the attachment, by means of two domed blued steel rivets, of an olive drab webbing hanger. There is a webbing retaining strap which is secured to the hanger by a further identical rivet and which is furnished with a snap-fastener and two blued steel protective tips. There is a double belt-hook of heavy gauge steel wire at the rear end of the webbing hanger.

Plate 2 shows the converted bayonet, which forms the main subject of this article, in comparison with an unmodified original bayonet. The Norwegians adopted their native-designed Krag-Jørgensen Rifle in 1894. The rifle was equipped with a long T-sectioned bayonet bar on the underside of its barrel, a short distance to the rear of the muzzle. Bayonets designed for this arm lacked a muzzle ring, being supported by the bayonet bar alone with part of the hilt projecting forward of the rifle muzzle when fixed. The Model 1894 bayonet had a short 213 mm unfullered blade, but models were also made with longer 367 mm fullered blades. Many of the long bayonets were subsequently shortened to the 213 mm blade length.

The markings found on the bayonet and scabbard shown as Plate 1 all date from the original manufacture as a Model 1894, no additional markings having been added at the time of its subsequent conversion. The obverse blade ricasso is stamped "OE/WG" indicating that this particular bayonet was made for the Norwegian authorities by Oesterreichische Waffenfabrik Gesellschaft at Steyr in Austria. Other M.1894 bayonets were made by Husqvarna Vapenfabrik AB in Sweden or by Norway's own Kongsberg Våpenfabrikk arsenal. Below the Austrian maker's mark is an "MP" monogram, indicating inspection by the Norwegian government Controller Captain Jacob Maximilian Gran Paske. A tiny "Crowned A" stamp can be found on the flat lower edge of the ricasso (to the rear of the cutting edge), probably another official inspection mark. A serial number "25252" appears on the obverse side of the cross-guard. In addition a series of numbers can be seen if the bayonet is disassembled. The obverse side of the catch lever, concealed under the obverse wood grip, is stamped "105". The inside surface of the obverse grip is stamped "252", while the reverse grip is similarly marked "253". The only marking on the scabbard is a non-matching serial number "74386" stamped on the obverse edge of the mouth-piece.

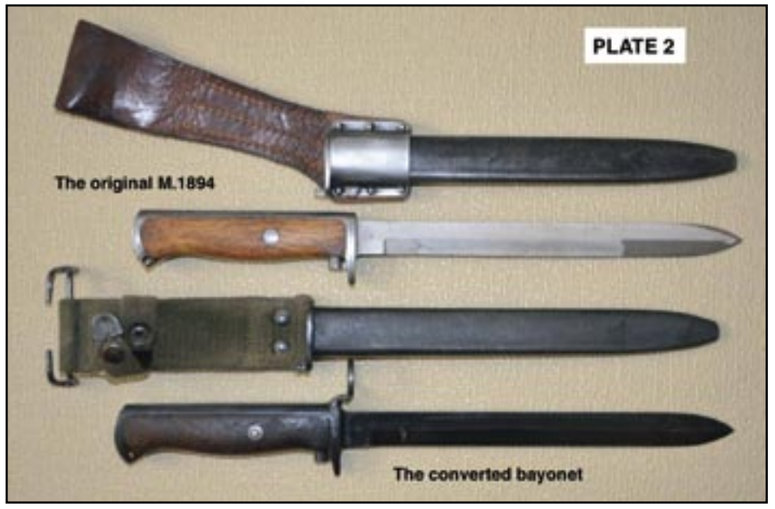
During the German occupation of Norway, from April 1940 until May 1945, Krag-Jørgensen rifles and bayonets were issued to members of the Norwegian pro-fascist "hird" para-military organisation led by Vidkun Quisling. The bayonets utilised at this time were all of the short 213mm blade length, unfullered examples having been originally made with this length of blade, whilst examples with fullers running to the point were long bayonets which had been shortened and repointed under German direction. Production of the short unfullered M.1894 recommenced at Norway's Kongsberg factory in 1943 under German control, bayonets made in these circumstances being stamped with the German Heereswaffenamt Eagle mark over "WaA 84" on the reverse side of their cross-guards. Some had birch-wood grips and a rather inferior finish and scabbards lacked ball finials at their tips.

All Norwegian short Model 1894 bayonet scabbards, including those produced under the German occupation, were worn with unusual and complex frogs as shown in Plate 2. These had an angled brown leather belt-loop fitted with a steel scabbard-holder which was held in place by six steel rivets. A catch engaged the raised rectangular stop forged on the reverse surface of the scabbard body and had to be depressed to release the scabbard from its frog.

Attention should now be refocused on the converted bayonet as shown in Plate 1 which is the primary subject of this article. In the 1950s and early 1960s the United States Military Assistance Program supplied 98,267 M1 and M2 Carbines in .30in. calibre to Norway. These were designated the Selvladekarabin M1 (Self-loading Carbine, or S.L.K. M1) in Norway. Some leather-gripped U.S. M4 bayonet-knives accompanied these carbines, but the number supplied must have fallen short of requirements as Norway had to manufacture a quantity of M4 bayonet copies at the Kongsberg arsenal. The number of bayonets available for use by the Norwegian armed forces with the U.S. carbines however remained inadequate and an economical solution to the problem was found by converting stocks of existing Norwegian M.1894 knife bayonets to fit the American carbines. It is believed that some 30,000 were so modified, probably at Kongsberg, plus a further 1,000 converted by the Hærens Våpentekniske Korps. The fact that a bayonet model originally adopted in 1894 was modified and re-issued over 60 years later was a highly unusual occurrence, indeed Norway may be unique in having updated a bayonet design after such a long period.

The Model 1894 bayonets which were converted in the 1950s to fit the U.S. carbines all had the short (213mm) unfullered blades. Amongst the stock of bayonets utilised for the conversion were those originally made under German control during the Second World War occupation and these still carry the Waffenamt eagle mark on their cross-guards.

The alteration of the Model 1894 knife bayonets to fit the U.S. carbine involved cutting a notch in the upper edge of the cross-guard section of the original hilt and brazing the newly-manufactured muzzle-ring component in this location. The metal at the rear end of the T-section mortise was cut away to a depth of some 3mm, leaving a distinct step in the curved profile of the rear surface of the pommel. The rear opening of the T-mortise has been widened out and the aperture in the floor of the T-mortise through which the fixing catch lever protrudes has been lengthened. Finally, the centre portion of the stop at the rear end of the fixing catch lever has been removed, leaving only two lateral finger-like projections in the T-mortise which engage the bayonet bar of the U.S. carbine. The alteration of the M.94 bayonet to fit a firearm for which it was not originally intended was cleverly executed and required no modification of the existing bayonet mounting system of the American carbine (see Plate 3). The scabbard was also updated at this time. The original steel and leather frog was discarded altogether and replaced by a webbing hanger permanently attached to the re-used older scabbard, as previously described.



As a footnote to the above, there has been an interesting historical relationship, as far as military small-arms are concerned, between Norway and the United States of America. The conversion of Norway's M.94 bayonet to fit the U.S. .30 calibre carbine in the 1950s was only a footnote to this long-running story. The U.S.A. had adopted the Norwegian Krag-Jørgensen rifle as early as 1892, this being America's first small-bore repeating rifle firing a smokeless cartridge. The Norwegian bayonet design was however not favoured by the U.S. military. Instead, the Americans adopted a close copy of the Swiss Model 1889 knife bayonet which Switzerland had adopted for use with their Schmidt-Rubin Rifle. This had a conventional pommel-mounted coil-spring actuated fixing catch rather than the Norwegian lever catch system. However, when in 1905 the U.S.A. was seeking a new knife bayonet to replace the inadequate rod bayonet originally adopted with the M.1903 Springfield Rifle, a design was chosen which featured a close copy of the Norwegian M.1894 lever fixing catch. The U.S. Model 1895 Springfield bayonet, like Norway's pioneer design, had a fixing catch lever which pivotted on a single grip-screw, which was operated by a button positioned behind the lower quillon and which had a hooked scabbard catch protruding through a slot cut through the lower quillon. This Norwegian catch system proved to be very popular in the U.S.A., and continued to be employed for a number of subsequent U.S. bayonet designs including the M1 and M5 bayonets for the Garand Rifle, adopted in 1943 and 1953 respectively, and the M6 bayonet for the M14 Rifle. U.S. bayonet designs, particularly the M1, were widely copied internationally so the Norwegian M.1894 fixing catch can be regarded as a significant innovation which influenced many subsequent bayonet designs.

References & Acknowlegements

Brayley, Martin J. (2004) *Bayonets: An Illustrated History*. David & Charles, Devon, UK. pp. 175-176.

Cobb, Ralph E. (website) *World Bayonets: The Collectors Edge*. www.worldbayonets.com/index.htm

Hanevik, Karl Egil. (1998) *Norske Militaergevaerer etter 1867*. Hanevik Våpen, Rena, Norway. pp.149, 335-348 & 371.

Holmbäck, Per. (website) *Bayonets of Scandinavia*. See under 'Norway'. www.holmback.se/

Kiesling, Paul. (2009) *Bayonets of the World: The Complete Edition*. S.I. Publications, The Netherlands. pp. 394-397.

Tatreaux, Roland et al. (2010) *Les baïonnettes norvégiennes: M1894 - M1912 - M1913 - M1916 - M1894-43 - M1916 raccourcie - M1956 SLK*. Le Journal de l'Association Française des Collectionneurs de Baïonnettes. [France.] No.54. Eté 2010. pp. 28/44-32/44.

Vial, Jean-Pierre. (2003) Le Nouvel Atlas de Baïonnette de Collection. Tome 1. Editions de Portail, France. p.160, N257.

Sincere thanks are due to Peter White for his invaluable assistance in the preparation of this article, particularly for his photo (Plate 2) which shows two bayonets in his collection and also to Ralph E. Cobb for Plate 3.