
Preface

One might well ask why anyone would want to write a book on so limited a subject as the Krag bayonets, as there is not likely to be a large audience for such a book. This is, of course, a legitimate question, one which I have asked myself a number of times over the past few years. Fortunately, while asking myself this question, I have come up with some equally legitimate answers, which I list below for the interested reader.

First, the US Krag bayonet, Model of 1892, is historically important, as it is the first knife bayonet adopted by the US Army. Secondly, the Krag bayonet is historically important because it was directly involved in the search, during the 1890s, for an effective entrenching tool for the army. In addition, this knife bayonet is more interesting to many collectors than many other US bayonets, as it has several variations, including the cadet, bowie, and bolo versions. Fourthly, the Krag bayonet, with its walnut grips and sleek, well proportioned blade, is aesthetically pleasing to the eyes of many collectors, with the Krag bowie arguably the most aesthetically attractive bayonet ever manufactured by the United States military. Fifthly, this book is important because it provides a wealth of information on the Krag bayonet. While there are excellent books available on the Krag rifle and on US bayonets, these books are necessarily limited on the amount of information they may contain solely on bayonets for the Krag. This book is not subject to such limitations. Furthermore, a number of the current books with information on the Krag bayonet are somewhat limited with regard to scholarly references and detailed documentation. This book provides abundant references to aid future scholars in further research, whenever possible returning to original sources. While admitting that documentation currently available may not tell the whole story of the Krag bayonet, the copious use of US Army letters, endorsements, telegrams, etc., clearly enhances the thoroughness and accuracy of this study. Also, this volume presents a large number of clear, color photographs detailing the variations and modifications inherent in the Krag bayonets and scabbards, along with numerous vintage photographs of ordnance and armory personnel, officers at West Point, and soldiers stationed in Cuba and the Philippines during the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this book allows me to express my deep interest in a specific field of collecting which has enriched my life through knowledge, travel, and friendships. I bought my first bayonet, a Krag, in the late 1960s while stationed in Texas as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Air Force. If memory serves correctly, I paid \$7.50 for this bayonet! My wife furthered my interest in Krag bayonets by purchasing our first Krag “bowie” bayonet while I was stationed in Vietnam in 1970,



Captain Donald J. Hartman,
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and by surprising me one Christmas with a very nice Krag cadet bayonet with three of the five variations of the cadet scabbard.

While I've purchased numerous additional US bayonets over the course of forty years, I still feel a strong affinity for the Krag, and Krag bayonets, even when well hidden under assorted militaria at a show, still catch my eye and require, if not a studied analysis, at least a cursory examination. The reason for this continued affinity is somewhat elusive. It may be the juxtaposition of the bright blade and pommel with the dark walnut grips; it may be the nostalgia associated with the aforementioned first bayonet purchase — a Krag; it may have something to do with the knowledge that an ancestor of mine, John D. Leinbach Hartman, an 1888 graduate of West Point, participated in the battle of Santiago, Cuba, in 1898, and undoubtedly had first hand experience with the Krag rifle and bayonet. In the final analysis, the reason for my continued attraction to the Krag bayonets is unimportant. What is important is that this fondness has led to an interest in discovering as much information as possible on this bayonet which, in turn, has led to the book which you now hold in your hands, a compilation of forty years of collecting and several years of researching.

Personally, this forty year "journey" has been both immensely enjoyable and extraordinarily informative. It is my hope that those who read this work will also enjoy their journey through these pages and will appreciate the wealth of information contained herein.



John D. Leinbach Hartman, Class of 1888 USMA
USMA Library, Special Collections and Archives Division

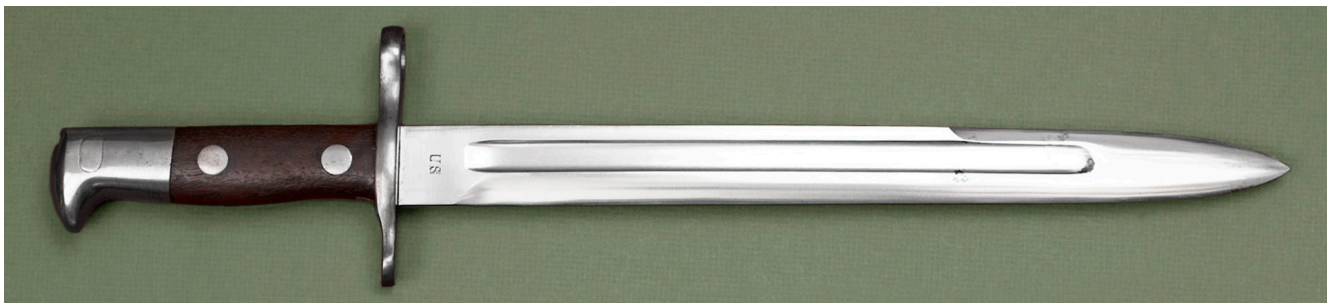


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Bayonet Comparison: 1889 Swiss bayonet (top) and 1894 US Krag bayonet (bottom)



Standard issue US Krag bayonet



1900 Cadet bayonet — obverse view



1900 Cadet bayonet — reverse view



4th Version—Cadet Bayonet Scabbard

A fourth version of the cadet bayonet scabbard was manufactured in mid 1900 concomitant with the manufacture of those cadet bayonets dated 1900. This version also used the Hoffman attachment, but the connection of this attachment to the scabbard body utilized the lug and notch configuration made standard in July, 1899, instead of the previous pin and slot configuration. Identical to the previous scabbard in all other particulars, this scabbard was merely an updated version, utilizing the most recent method of attachment.

In response to an order for supplies directing the issue to West Point of Cadet rifles and bayonet scabbards with the Hoffman attachment, Lt. Col. Phipps wrote to the Chief of Ordnance on June 29, 1900: “I have the honor to report that we have no Cadet Magazine Rifles on hand, nor have we any Cadet bayonet scabbards with Hoffman attachment.”²⁴

In this letter Lt. Col. Phipps then recommended arming the whole battalion of



Hoffman attachment – 1900

Cadets at West Point with the Krag rifles of the latest service pattern. In a 3rd endorsement to this letter, dated July 5, the Commandant of Cadets concurred with the recommendation: “It is deemed advisable to arm the whole battalion of Cadets with new rifles of the latest service pattern, with the Cadet bayonet, and the bayonet scabbard containing the Hoffman attachment, the only attachment that can be used with the white belts worn by Cadets.” A 4th endorsement, same date, from Col. Mills, Superintendent, USMA, to the Chief of Ordnance, approved the Commandant’s request and emphasized the necessity of the Hoffman attachment in the final paragraph: “Attention is invited to the fact that the scabbards containing the Hoffman attachment are needed so that they can be worn with the white belts used by cadets.” On July 11, a fifth endorsement from the Chief of Ordnance to the Commanding Officer, Springfield Armory, instructed Lt. Col. Phipps “to furnish the equipments indicated for the whole battalion of Cadets.” This endorsement also emphasized the necessity of the Hoffman attachment: “Attention is particularly invited to the last paragraph of the preceding endorsement.” By July 13, Lt. Col. Phipps had responded to the Chief of Ordnance in a 6th endorsement, reflecting some minor



Lug and notch attachment

on page 178, showing month and year, page number of document, name of assembler, and number of intrenching bayonets/knives assembled.

Bayonet Specifications

Although there may be some question concerning the exact number of Krag bowie bayonets manufactured in 1900, there is no question that this bayonet is quite distinctive and highly prized by serious collectors. With its beautifully proportioned bowie blade, it is arguably one of the most aesthetically pleasing bayonets ever produced by the United States Military. The blade is $9\frac{1}{8}$ inches long, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide at its widest point, and approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. The clipped point and the unstopped fullers add to the distinctive blade configuration, which is actually reminiscent of the blades on some of the experimental intrenching knives of the 1870s. A short sharpened section on the rear half of the back of the blade begins about one inch from the cross guard and continues for approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches on each side. The blade is finished bright, with "US" on the obverse ricasso and the date "1900" on the reverse ricasso.

The hilt is the standard Krag hilt in 1900, $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches long, making the length of the entire bayonet $13\frac{3}{4}$ inches long. The scales are of walnut and the rivets are peened to a dome shape. The guard is $3\frac{7}{16}$ inches long, with a bore diameter of $\frac{5}{8}$ inches (.625). The pommel is of the

bird's head pattern, slotted at the top for the bayonet stud. The weight of the bayonet is 14.7 ounces, or .92 pounds. The blued steel scabbard is slightly curved to accommodate the slight curve of the bowie blade, and the mouthpiece is likewise designed to accept the cross sectional configuration of the blade. The scabbard body is ten inches long, and the belt hook, from the top of the upper bend to the bottom of the hook where it connects to the scabbard body, is approximately $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches. This belt hook is of the design approved on July 22, 1899, with the wide double wire latch and



Obverse view



Reverse view

Wooden Prototype

This next picture, rather than a letter opener, is a real eye opener. Without documentation to verify its provenance, it is impossible to state with certainty when and where this wooden representation of the Krag bowie bayonet was made, but it is possible that this is a wooden prototype of the Krag bowie. Such wooden prototypes were apparently routinely fabricated at Springfield Armory, and the current owner of this piece indicates that he bought it from an individual who purchased it from

the grandson of a wood model worker who had worked at Springfield Armory. As the comparison photo well illustrates, the wooden representation is nearly identical to the actual bayonet. Measurements of the wooden likeness are as follows: blade length: 9 1/16 inches; hilt length: 4 11/16 inches; guard length: 3 9/16 inches; weight: 2.3 ounces. Measurements of the wooden scabbard: length: 9 5/8 inches; width at widest point: 2 3/8 inches; weight: 1.5 ounces. This wooden scabbard is made in two halves, held together with twenty-five small dowels!

The small round ball finial at the tip of the metal scabbard was probably part of the wooden scabbard also, as there is evidence to suggest this part was at some point broken off. While it is not certain whether this wooden representation of the Krag bowie and scabbard is an actual archetype or a likeness made at a later date, one thing is certainly clear. The individual who fabricated this likeness was an artisan of great skill, with an eye for detail and an appreciation of the aesthetics of the experimental bowie bayonet.



Wooden Bowie and wooden scabbard
Collection of Stanley Tranquillo



