

The article below was originally published in Carbine Club newsletter #377 and is reproduced with permission. A featured carbine, an M1E2 - the experimental predecessor of the M1A2 - is discussed afterwards.

## **The M1A2 CARBINE, WAS IT EVER ISSUED?**

Newsletter 220 introduced readers to the short-lived M1A2 carbine. It incorporated an Inland-designed T21 adjustable rear sight that was modeled after the one for the M1903A3 rifle. The M1A2 was standardized on 11 February 1943, making the M1 Carbine “Substitute Standard.” The problem with the M1A2, however, was that the rear sight required a redesign of the carbine receiver’s dovetail.

The carbine production expansion program was rapidly accelerating at that time, and a redesign of the receiver would have caused unnecessary delays. The O.F. Mossberg Company was consulted and the T21 rear sight was redesigned to fit the standard carbine receiver. The M1A2 receiver design was then made obsolete on 25 November 1943. A photo of the T21 adjustable rear sight can be found in War Baby! page 96. (The Mossberg-modified T21 rear sight is the common adjustable rear sight that was first assembled onto carbines in March-April 1944.)

Available records indicate that Inland made five M1A2 receivers for testing of the T21 rear sight. Any subsequent production between February and November 1943 is unknown. However, Don Hillhouse has recently discovered a number of Ordnance Service “Materiel Status Reports” concerning U.S. weapons inventories in the United Kingdom. These lists, if accurate, indicate that Inland may have manufactured a pre-production lot of M1A2s before the receiver design was cancelled.

As of 31 August 1943, these reports show 3 M1A2s “on hand - with troops” in the U.K., against a “troop requirement” of 31,248 M1A2s. One month later, on 30 September, 434 M1A2s were “on hand - with

troops” in the U.K., against an increased “troop requirement” of 57,843 M1A2s.

Sending a very small quantity of a new item to an overseas theater for familiarization and testing, soon followed by a larger quantity was common during WWII, adding interest to this listing. To date, that is all the specific evidence that Don has uncovered: 434 total M1A2s in the U.K. as of 30 September 1943 – shortly before the M1A2 was cancelled in November.

These M1A2 figures are in addition to the quantities of M1 Carbines. As of 31 August, there was a total of 51,949 M1 Carbines in the U.K., with 50,099 of them “with troops.” This was against a “troop requirement” of 112,363 M1 Carbines. One month later, on 30 September, there was a total of 92,784 M1 Carbines in the U.K., with 84,930 of them “with troops.” This was against an increased “troop requirement” of 122,165 M1 Carbines.

The 30 September report also listed the paratroopers' M1A1 Carbines: 4,059 in the U.K., including 3,264 “with troops.” This was against a “troop requirement” of 5,211 total M1A1s.

Add these figures together, and they total close to 100,000 carbines in the U.K. as of 30 September 1943. Excluding USAAF personnel, the Army only had six mostly-complete divisions in the U.K. at that time (but none of the combat support battalions - tank destroyer, field artillery, etc.). That's a LOT of carbines!

So, whatever happened to the M1A2s? Referring back to the Ordnance Service “Material Status Reports,” the Nov 1943 report lumps the M1 and M1A2 quantities together as one line item (making it impossible to determine whether any additional M1A2s were received). This continues through Feb 1944. However, between 10 March - 25 March 1944, the M1A2 designation disappears from the reports and is not seen again!

Why have no M1A2s ever been reported as ETO veteran “bring backs” or “imports” from the 1990’s? Why hasn’t CMP ever found one among those returned by our Allies? That mystery remains unsolved.

A few possibilities exist: The most promising is the French Rearmament Program. During March 1944 the Free French Forces were given 13,000 M1 Carbines. This is the same month that the 434 M1A2 listing disappeared from the ETO report.

The second possibility is that the M1A2s were air-dropped to Resistance fighters. In Newsletters 181 and 350, we learned that 16,807 carbines were parachuted into occupied France between Jan - Oct 1944. These weapons could easily have been “lost” among the partisans and probably never returned to U.S. or NATO-friendly inventories.

The third possibility is that the listing of M1A2 Carbines in eight consecutive ETO Materiel Status Reports was simply a clerical error that was carried forward until an Ordnance staffer deleted the listing upon learning the M1A2 had been made non-standard.



This M1E2 (prototype for the M1A2) is from the estate of Major Eli Cooper, an Ordnance Department officer during WWII. It is one of 5 such carbines built by Inland in late 1942, and serialized X59-X63.

Note the special (low wood) stock made without the oiler slot, obviously added when the carbine was chosen as a “presentation carbine.” The

handguard is shallow groove. The hardware on this carbine is fall-1942 vintage, including an Inland 8-42 barrel.

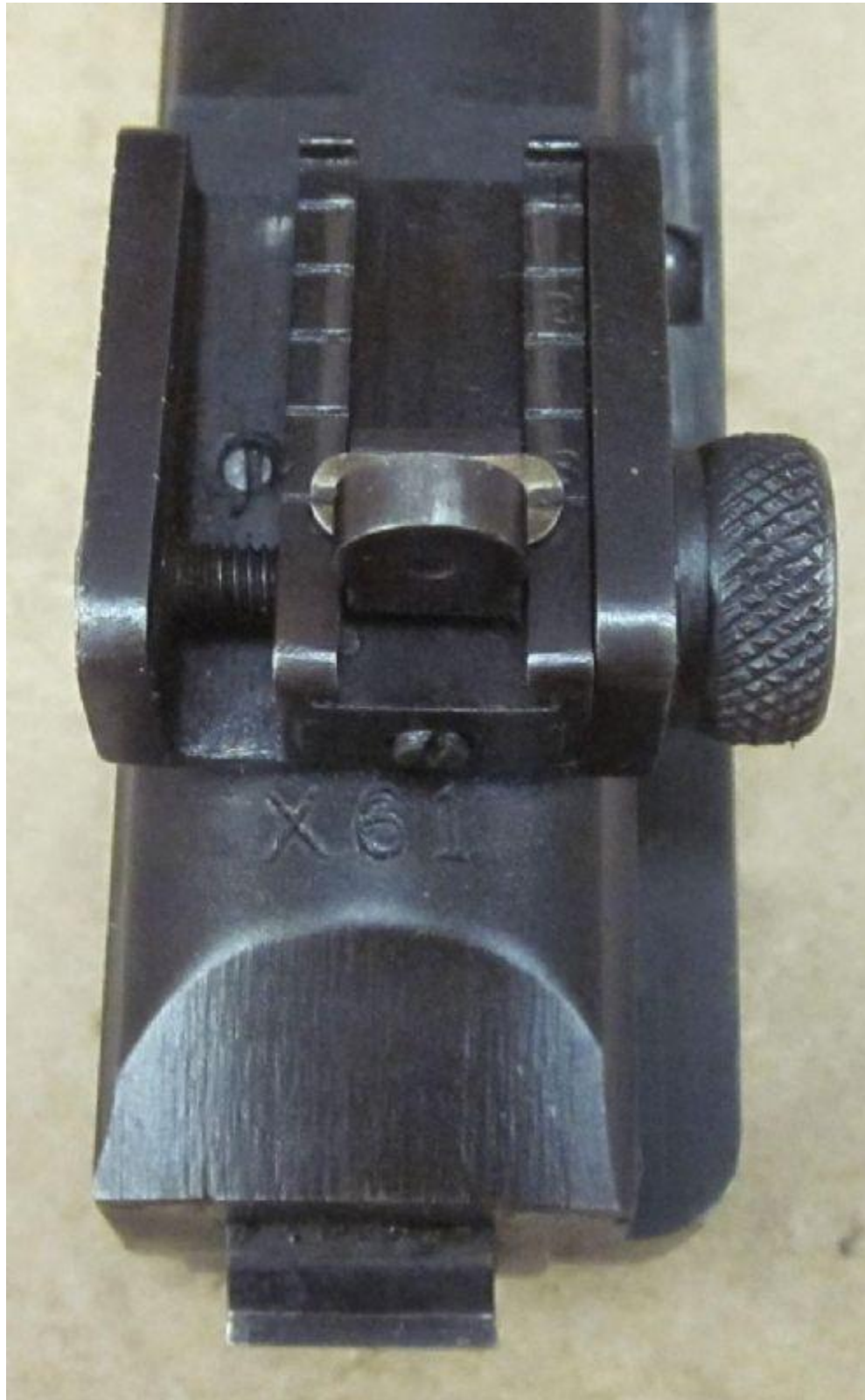
The 5 M1E2 Carbines were sent to Springfield Armory for evaluation. It is not known if they were returned to Inland and subsequently given away postwar, or if Springfield Armory presented this carbine to Major Cooper.

The front ring on this carbine is unmarked. It is unknown how the adopted M1A2 Carbine was marked. None have ever been reported!



Note the similarity of the Inland-developed T21 rear sight to the milled adjustable rear sight that was eventually adopted, including the

adjustable windage alignment plate on the back. Also, compare this sight to that found on 03A3 rifles.



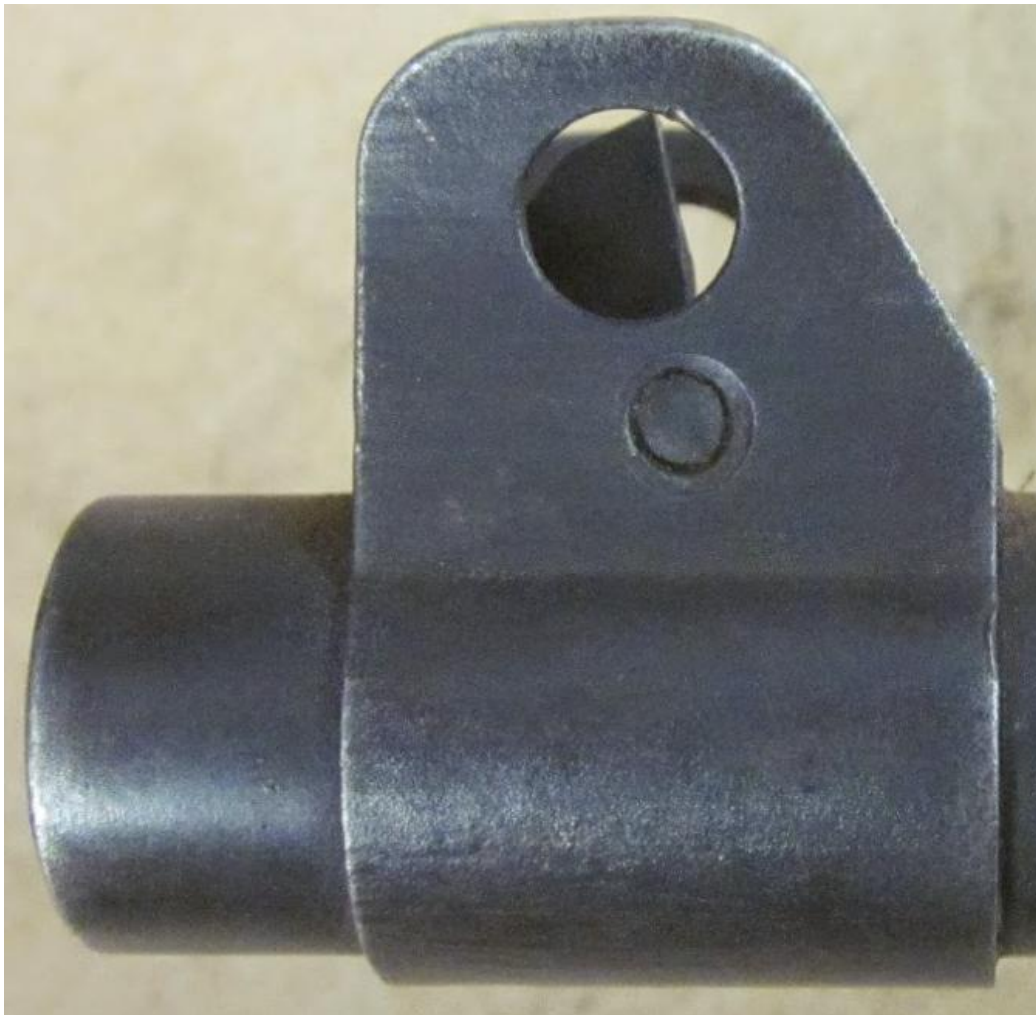
The small shallow screw (shown closeup below) secures the sight to the dovetail. When screwed down tight, it exerts uplift pressure on the sight against the dovetail. Think of it as a type of staking. But, look closely at



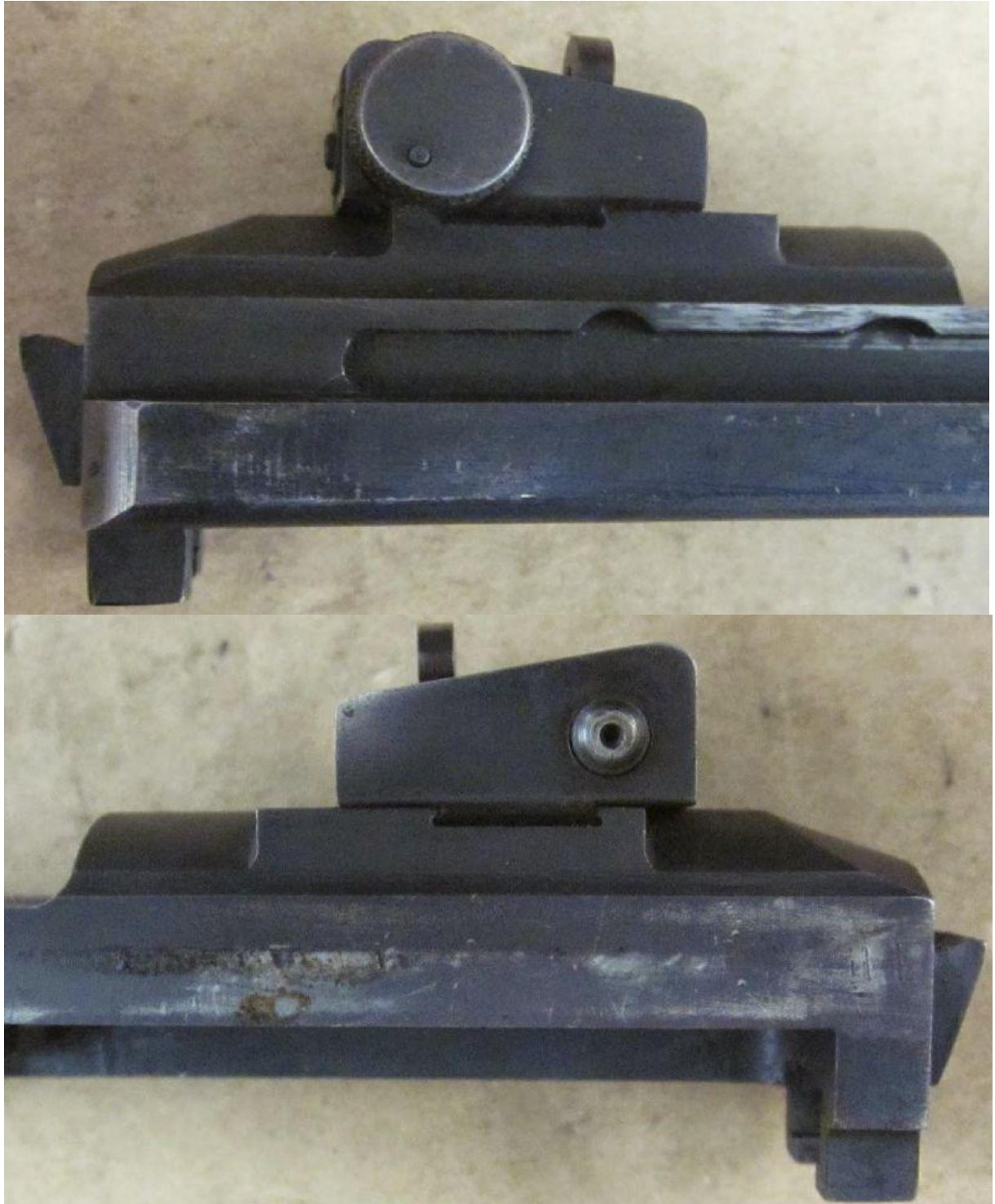
the upper left photo and note that the screwdriver slot is not centered on the screw head!



Note how tall the front sight is!



The T21 adjustable rear sight sits in a very shallow dovetail on a rather flat-topped receiver. Compare this profile to that of a standard M1 Carbine. The receiver construction characteristics confirm manufacture of this receiver in late 1942. (See Carbine Club newsletter 346-2 article by Chris Albright.)



Note the odd hammer and the steeper angle of the hammer spring and plunger.





The spring is 18-19 coils!



Below, the odd (prototype or experimental?) hammer compared to a common hammer. The prototype is noticeably taller and obviously heavier.





In the photo above, note that the recess in the trigger housing to seat the hammer spring and plunger was modified after the black oxide (dull blue) finish was applied. Major Eli Cooper had a degree in Mechanical Engineering. During WWII, he rose to the position of Head of Production Design and Development, R&D Division of the Ordnance Department. He received postwar patents for the M15 Grenade Launching Sight (for the Carbine and M1 Garand, a patent he shared with John C. Garand),

the Carbine ammunition 10-round Stripper Clip, and the leather Cheek Pad Assembly for the M1C Sniper Rifle.

He also received credit for his help in the development of the M4 Bayonet, the M2 Carbine, the M3 "Grease Gun," and the mount for the Sniperscope/ Snooperscope.



Thanks to Marcus Rust for sharing the photos and details.

Marty Black

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