

Chapter 4

The Krag Cadet Bayonet

One of the more interesting features of the Krag-Jorgensen weapon system is the variety of rifle, carbine, and bayonet. One such variation is the Model 1896 Cadet rifle and its accompanying Cadet bayonet, the last rifle and bayonet combination manufactured specifically and exclusively for the cadets at the United States Military Academy (USMA). The 1898 *Description and Rules for the Management of the U.S. Magazine Rifle and Carbine* noted that this Cadet rifle was similar to the Model 1896 service rifle but differed in some minor particulars including the bayonet: “The blade of the Bayonet is three inches shorter than that for the service rifle.”¹ Similarly, the 1896 RCO stated:

The armament of troops in the regular service and of the cadets at the Military Academy with the new .30 caliber magazine arms was completed in May, when the last issue of carbines was made to the cavalry...

The magazine rifles and carbines now being manufactured are known as model 1896.... The rifles furnished the cadets of the Military Academy are of the regular .30 caliber service pattern, model 1896, except the bayonet and ramrod, with minor details controlled thereby. The bayonet is shorter than the service pattern and the ramrod is in one piece (model 1892).²



Interestingly, when the Commandant of Cadets, USMA, Lt. Col. Sam Mills, wrote the Chief of Ordnance on August 2, 1895, asking when the Corps of Cadets might receive the new Model 1896 Cadet rifle, he requested a few minor alterations to the service rifle, but made no request for a shorter or lighter bayonet.

The only change I would ask for in the rifles for the use of Cadets, would be the omission of the swivel and plate on the stock and the swivel on the lower band. These are not required as the Cadets do not use a sling; with these exceptions, the rifle complete as supplied the service with bayonet, could be issued to Cadets.³

However, when General Flagler, Chief of Ordnance, responded to the Commandant of Cadets on September 28, 1895, he clearly suggested a lighter bayonet.

.....
Sir:

In reply to your letter of August 2, 1895, I have to state that the Commanding Officer of Springfield Armory has been directed to prepare and ship to you the special magazine rifles, caliber .30, requested in your letter, and also to furnish with the arms bayonets of reduced weight, if practicable.

The special arms will be prepared as soon as possible and I will notify you in a few days of the probable date of their shipment.⁴

Furthermore, when General Flagler, on the same day (Sept. 28), informed the Commanding Officer of Springfield Armory that an order for supplies for the special magazine rifles for the Corps of Cadets would shortly be sent to him, General Flagler directed that a bayonet of reduced weight be fabricated.

.....
Sir:

An order for supplies for 400 magazine rifles, caliber .30 for the Corps of Cadets at the Military Academy will be sent to you. These rifles are to have no swivel and plate on the stock, and the swivel on the lower band is also to be omitted. In other respects, they will be the same as the regulation rifle. The swivel on the upper band must be retained, as it is made use of in stacking.

The weight of the new arm is objectionable for the use of the cadets, but it is not deemed practicable to diminish its weight or to make a special "cadet" rifle. As the knife-bayonet, however, will never be used as a knife or intrenching tool, it is desired that you will make for the use of the cadets a special knife bayonet of reduced weight. The weight to be made the least possible and still maintain proper strength, appearance and the conditions required for manual and drill.

Please report what reduction in weight, if any, you deem probable, and also when the arms can be shipped. They will be prepared to be shipped as soon as possible.⁵

The order for supplies mentioned above was numbered 5251 and was dated October 3, 1895. Col. Mordecai responded promptly, sending, as his letter of Oct 12 makes clear, a shortened and slightly modified version of a standard Krag knife bayonet as

a sample, thereby holding off the manufacture of a set of new dies, fixtures, and tools until the sample was approved.

.....
Sir:

Referring to your letter of September 28th, 1895, No. 9995, "Magazine Rifles, Special, Cadet," I have the honor to forward by mail, for examination, a sample of Bayonet for the Cadet Rifle, which can be made without fabricating new Dies and Fixtures.

It is intended that the grooves in the blade shall not run out to the point as in the sample, but stop at the proper place.

This sample is submitted for consideration before offering a pattern which will call for a complete set of new Dies, Fixtures and Tools.⁶

In a 1st endorsement from the Chief of Ordnance dated Oct. 16, 1895, General Flagler approved the sample bayonet.

.....
Respectfully returned to the Commanding Officer, Springfield Armory, approving the sample of bayonet herewith with grooves to terminate as noted within, excepting the guard.

The removal of a part of the guard appears to render the "unfixing" of bayonet less safe as regards injury to the hand. With the sample rifles and bayonets received at this office considerable difficulty has been found at times in unfixing the bayonet, and the full guard is advantageous in this operation.

In a 2nd endorsement dated October 21, 1895, Col. Mordecai noted the General's concern, and attempted to ease this concern with some additional information.

.....
Respectfully returned to the Chief of Ordnance, U.S.A.

It is understood that it is desired that for the Cadet Rifle, the same Bayonet Guard be used as on the standard Rifle, and this will be followed.

On the Rifles now turned out, little difficulty will be found, generally, in removing the bayonet and they might be made even still freer for the Cadets. It should be noted that when the bayonet does stick it is at the pommel, and therefore to apply force at the guard should only produce twisting and increase the binding.

The proper method of removing a bayonet that does not work freely is to press the thumb against the head of the pommel or to strike it with the side of the palm of the hand.

The sample bayonet is retained at this office.

The design of the Krag Cadet bayonet must have been finalized in late October or November of 1895, for Col. Mordecai, on Dec. 4, 1895, was able to give a definitive answer to General Flagler's earlier question on weight reduction of the Cadet rifle and bayonet.

Sir:

In reply to your letter of September 28th, 1895, No. 9995, "Magazine Rifles, Special, Cadet," I have the honor to state that the only reduction in weight that appears practicable is 3 3/4 ounces, due to the shorter Bayonet and the omission of the Sling Swivels.

The 400 Cadet Rifles will be ready for issue by January 1st, 1896, or soon thereafter, unless delayed by the manufacture of the new Rear Sight, as this latter work is now suspended awaiting action on letter of the 26th ult., from this office.⁷

In November or December then, the cadet bayonets were fabricated, but issue of the 1896 Cadet rifles and bayonets to the cadets was delayed briefly due to some modifications of the stock and rear sight, as mentioned above. Clearly interested in getting the new rifles and bayonets to the Cadets as soon as possible, General Flagler sent a

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NUMBER	SENT BY	READ BY	CHECK
66 B	On	J	26 Paid Gort

RECEIVED at 3:49 Pm March 20 1896

Dated Washington D C 20

To Comdr Officer
 Springfield Armory
 Springfield Mass

Do not change stocks of cadet rifles complete and issue them to westport earliest date possible

4:15 Pm Flagler Chief of Ordnance

March 20, 1896 telegram

telegram to Col. Mordecai on March 20, 1896, with the following message: “Do not change stocks of cadet rifles; complete and issue them to West Point earliest date possible.”⁸ In response to this telegram, Col. Mordecai reported that the Model 1896 Cadet rifles and bayonets were issued without rear sights to the USMA on March 28, 1896, adding that “the rear sights will be completed in about 2 weeks.”⁹

Cadet Bayonet Specifications

Designed and manufactured in late 1895 and issued in early 1896, the Krag cadet bayonet is quite rare and highly prized by collectors. In order to reduce its weight from the standard bayonet, the cadet blade is $8 \frac{1}{16}$ inches long, approximately 3 inches shorter than the service bayonet, and $\frac{3}{16}$ inches thick, approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ thinner than the service bayonet. As a result, the Cadet bayonet weighs .85 pounds, a reduction of approximately .15 pounds. Both the Cadet bayonet and the service bayonet are $1 \frac{1}{16}$ inches wide at the ricasso. The Cadet bayonet has a fuller of $6 \frac{1}{8}$ inches, with a false edge of $6 \frac{1}{4}$ inches and a true edge of $7 \frac{5}{8}$ inches. The overall length of this bayonet is $13 \frac{1}{4}$ inches. The hilt design and measurements are identical to the standard Krag bayonet. All cadet bayonets manufactured in 1895 are dated 1895 in the reverse ricasso and marked US (no periods) in the obverse ricasso. These bayonets have smooth scales and smooth rivets, in keeping with the hilt design of the Model 1892 standard service bayonet.

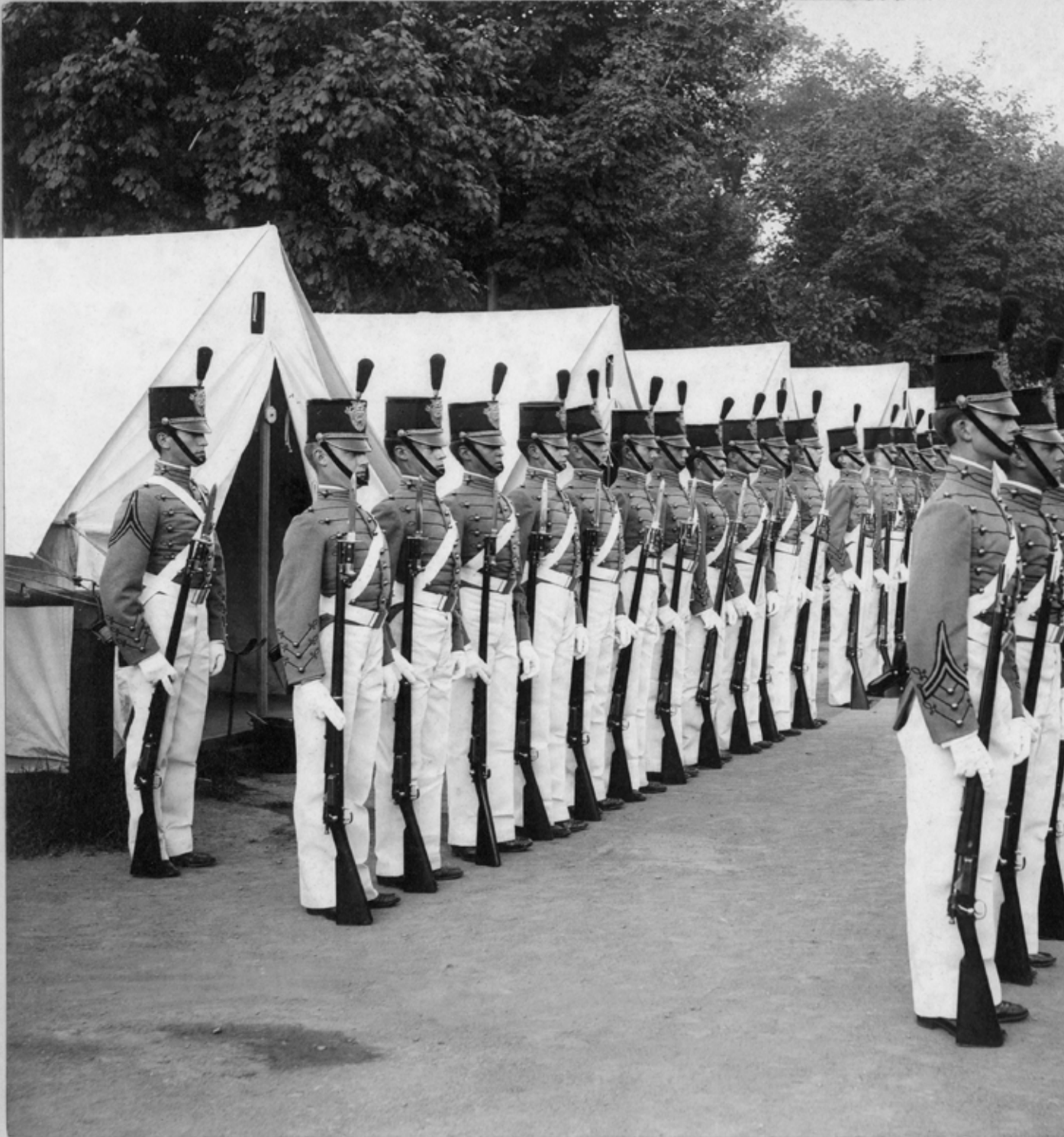
A second lot of Krag Cadet bayonets was fabricated in mid 1900, apparently in response to an increase in the number of cadets and the transition from the Model 1896 Cadet rifle to the Model 1898 service rifle. In referring to an Order for Supplies from the Chief of Ordnance directing the issue to the USMA of Cadet rifles and bayonet scabbards, Lt. Col. Phipps, Commanding Officer of Springfield Armory, reported on June 29, 1900, that the Armory had no Model 1896 cadet rifles on hand, and made a recommendation:

The Cadet rifle is of the 1892 pattern, and differs from the regular service rifle of that pattern in very few particulars, which are indicated on page 27 of



Top: 1895 Cadet bayonet. Bottom: 1895 Service bayonet





Pack Bros.

1899 summer camp cadets with 1895 Cadet bayonets