

Shown with the new M1A1 carbine from Auto-Ordnance are replica World War II accessories from The Sportsman's Guide, including: an M1942 paratrooper jumpsuit; an M3 "Trench" knife (early carbines had no provision for a bayonet); an M1936 pistol belt and suspenders; and paratrooper boots. For more information, go to www.sportsmansguide.com or call (800) 882-2962.

"Stand In The Door!"

The M1A1 Reprised

On the morning of June 6, 1944, Lt. Col. James H. Batte of the 87th Chemical Mortar Battalion landed on Utah Beach in Normandy, France. Moving inland as the beachhead expanded at the beginning of "The Great Crusade" to liberate occupied Europe, Batte and the 87th continued until "about noon on D-Day when a large number of gliders of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Division carrying men, artillery, ammunition and various other supplies arrived in support of these two divisions and the 4th Infantry Division already on the ground."

Batte described the thick trees and hedgerows where he and his men took up position, which was also a drop zone for follow-on American Airborne forces. "One glider landed a few yards distant

from my position and I observed a 75 mm artillery piece, which had been secured in the tail area, break loose on impact with a hedgerow and spew men and cargo out of the front, thereby killing or wounding many personnel aboard. Upon close examination, I found that all the personnel had been killed. I unstrapped a carbine from a paratrooper's leg and carried it throughout the ensuing five campaigns in the ETO until VE Day—8 May 1945." Batte, later a brigadier general, carved his initials in the stock as "many individuals wish to have such a short length 30 caliber rifle that would fit nicely between the two front seats of my jeep."

That is about as good as "provenance" gets. With modern military arms it is virtually impossible to link a specific gun with a specific battle, let alone to an Airborne gun on D-Day. So when the gavel came down at the James D. Julia Auction in March, Batte's M1A1 carbine, serial number 45457, made by the Inland Division of General Motors with a barrel date of "6-43," the "Holster Assembly, Parachutists" (known as a carbine "jump scabbard") and supporting documents, the bid was \$20,125. It was the highest realized to date for a U.S. M1A1 carbine.

The M1A1 version of the "U.S. Carbine, Cal. .30" has become one of the most desirable and collected World War II U.S. infantry arms. As prices and interest have skyrocketed, Auto-Ordnance has faithfully recreated the iconic "paratrooper" carbine.

By MARK A. KEEFE, IV, Editor-In-Chief

During World War II, 6,221,220 M1 carbines were made, but only approximately 140,000 of them were M1A1s, making them comparatively uncommon. The only difference between an M1A1 and an M1 is the former's wire folding stock and pistol grip. The Batte gun was obviously an aberration relating to a specific historical artifact. To check the state of original M1A1 carbines on the collectors' market, I consulted arms historian and U.S. martial arms dealer Scott Duff. "The days of the \$400 gun show carbine are over," he told me. "Most M1A1s will be in the \$3,500 to \$5,500 range, depending on condition and the number of original parts ... And I might be low there."

Replicating An Icon

At such prices, the M1A1 has moved out of the range of all but the well-heeled shooter, thus making it an ideal gun to replicate. As I related in "The Return of The M1 Carbine" (April 2006, p. 50), Kahr Arms found itself in the classic firearm business after first acquiring Auto-Ordnance and making new-production semi-automatic "Tommy Guns," then delving into new M1 carbine manufacture under the Auto-Ordnance name.

At the end of that article, I

wrote that an authentic replica of the M1A1 was in the works. I'm pleased to report the M1A1 is in full production, and the gun was well worth the wait—a blend of historical authenticity and practicalities of modern manufacturing.

Like the original, this is a gas-operated, semi-automatic .30 Carbine rifle that uses a short-stroke piston system and a reciprocating operating handle. Overall length is 35½", and the gun weighs 5½ lbs., unloaded. With the stock folded, it measures 25⅜" long. The operating handle is on the right, and its bolt can be locked open by retracting the operating slide, lining up its locking pin with a recess on the receiver's top right, and pressing it down.

Auto-Ordnance is in the business of making new guns, and the entire American-made M1A1 is of new manufacture. The receiver starts as a 4140 steel investment casting finished on the firm's CNC machines. The operating slide and trigger guard assembly are also investment castings finished by CNC.

The two-lug bolt, with its extractor in the right lug, is the early flat-top type, and the plunger ejector is on the inside of the recessed bolt face. The Green Mountain barrel has four-groove rifling with a 1:20" right-hand twist. The blade

front sight and protective ears are retained by a crosspin. Depressing the push-button magazine release, located on the front right of the trigger guard assembly, allows the detachable-box magazine to drop free. The barrel band has no bayonet lug and is the narrow Type 2 with the front sling swivel and vertical retaining screw on the left. The rear sight is the early non-adjustable, flip type with two heights, one for 100 yds. and the other for 300 yds. It's dovetailed into the receiver and is drift-adjustable for windage.

The top handguard is of the later "two-rivet" pattern, and the fore-end is of "low-wood" configuration with 0.45" of clearance for the operating rod. It seems Auto-Ordnance found out what the Ordnance Dept. did during World War II—the "high wood" slots break.

"A Shortened Version"

According to Larry Ruth in the finest reference on carbines to date, *War Baby!*, the Ordnance Department's Col. Rene R. Studler was asked to meet an immediate need for a shortened, more compact version of the already diminutive carbine for Airborne troops in early 1942, not long after its adoption.

Springfield Armory, Inland

The new M1A1 has early carbine features, such as a flat-top bolt, a flip sight, a push-button safety (l.) and a Type 2 barrel band with no bayonet lug. The side-folding stock is hinged at the top and bottom of the wood pistol grip.



AUTO-ORDNANCE M1A1 CARBINE

MANUFACTURER: AUTO-ORDNANCE CORP.
(DEPT. AR) 130 GODDARD MEMORIAL
DRIVE, WORCESTER, MA 01603;
(508) 795-3919; WWW.TOMMYGUN.COM

CALIBER: .30 CARBINE

ACTION TYPE: GAS-OPERATED,
SEMI-AUTOMATIC, CENTER-FIRE RIFLE

RECEIVER: INVESTMENT CAST 4140 STEEL

FINISH: PARKERIZED

BARREL: 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 4140 STEEL

RIFLING: FOUR-GROOVE, 1:20" RH TWIST

MAGAZINE: DETACHABLE BOX, 10-,
15- (TESTED) OR 30-ROUND CAPACITIES

SIGHTS: PROTECTED BLADE FRONT;
TWO-POSITION PEEP REAR, DRIFT
ADJUSTABLE FOR WINDAGE

TRIGGER PULL: TWO-STAGE,
NON-ADJUSTABLE, 8 LBS., 10 OZS.

STOCK: AMERICAN WALNUT AND
TUBULAR STEEL, FOLDING: LENGTH OF
PULL, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ "; DROP AT HEEL, 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ ";
DROP AT COMB, 1"

OVERALL LENGTH: 35 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (25 $\frac{3}{8}$ " FOLDED)

WEIGHT: 5 LBS., 8 OZS.

ACCESSORIES: MANUAL, TRIGGER LOCK,
ONE 15-ROUND MAGAZINE

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$1,030

and Winchester worked together on developing a folding-stock carbine. By March 1942, a design submitted by Paul Hamish, an engineer at Inland, was prototyped and tested. The Ordnance Dept. asked for a less expensive version on April 10, 1944. It was recommended for standardization on April 29, 1942, approved on May 12, and, again according to Ruth, "first released for shipment" on June 7, 1942. The only wartime M1A1 manufacturer was the Inland Division of General Motors. M1A1 carbines were used by American paratroopers in every major jump after adoption, including, Husky (Sicily), Overlord (Normandy), Dragoon (Southern France), Market Garden (Holland) and Varsity (the Rhine Crossing).

Getting The Stock Right

With the M1 carbine already replicated and in production, Auto-Ordnance—which made "AO"-marked receivers for IBM during World War II—turned its attention to recreating the M1A1's folding stock. It is a skeletonized side-folding design that tapers in its center for attachment of a leather-wrapped, flat-steel cheekpiece.

SHOOTING RESULTS (50 YDS.)

.30 CARBINE CARTRIDGE	VEL. @ 15' (F.P.S.)	ENERGY (FT.-LBS.)	GROUP SIZE IN INCHES		
			SMALLEST	LARGEST	AVERAGE
AGUILA No. 304 110-GR. FMJ	1851 Avg. 21 Sd	837	1.56	2.98	2.26
AMERICAN EAGLE No. AE30CB 110-GR. MCB	1930 Avg. 32 Sd	919	1.41	2.80	1.94
MAGTECH No. BG0525 110-GR. FMC	2434 Avg. 19 Sd	903	1.86	2.94	2.48
AVERAGE EXTREME SPREAD					2.22

MEASURED AVERAGE VELOCITY FOR 10 ROUNDS FROM A 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " BARREL. RANGE TEMPERATURE: 82° F. HUMIDITY: 64%. ACCURACY FOR FIVE CONSECUTIVE, FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 50 YDS. FROM A CALDWELL ROCK REST AND REAR BAGS. ABBREVIATIONS: FMJ (FULL-METAL JACKET), MCB (METAL-CASE BULLET), FMC (FULL-METAL CASE), SD (STANDARD DEVIATION).

At The Range

The Auto-Ordnance M1A1 performed just as anticipated. The comb is a bit low—as were the originals—so you need to get your head down. I decided to go "old school" and use the iron sights for the accuracy portion of the evaluation at 50 yds. Groups were fired off a Caldwell BR front and two rear bags for minimal movement off the bench. A good riflescope likely would have tightened them up, but I elected to stick with the nostalgic streak of the little gun.

Load selection was limited, as Winchester Ammunition was out of its 110-gr. hollow-point and full-metal-jacket loads, so accuracy testing was done with 110-gr. ball ammunition from Federal's American Eagle, Magtech and Aguila (the latter was secured from Old Western Scrounger). Accuracy was quite good from the bench and also in a series of practical-style drills. Just in case you didn't know, shooting a carbine is as fun—if not more so—as it is nostalgic.

A minor complaint is the depth of the recess for the operating slide stop pin on the right side of the receiver. The original guns had a deeper and more oblong cut than the sample. Also, the trigger pull was heavy with little take up and an 8-lb., 10-oz. break. Two other Auto-Ordnance M1 carbines on hand broke in the 6-lb. range.

—MARK A. KEEFE, IV

The American walnut stock is essentially cut off behind the recoil plate, and a wood pistol grip has been added with mounting points at top and bottom for the wire stock's hinges. The grip shape is of the later type, meaning it is dished out below the trigger guard for better ergonomics. There are times you don't want to be too much like the original, and the fit of the pistol grip's rear to the stock is actually better than any original I've examined.

A large screw passes vertically through the top mounting plate all the way through the left side of the grip and threads into the bottom cap and plate assembly, which doubles as the rear sling recess. The two hinges, the bottom of which is lugged, are welded to the

rods behind the hinge—just like the original. Tension is provided by a spring between the base of the grip and the bottom cap. Like the original, it doesn't lock in the open or closed position; instead it relies on the two lugs of the bottom hinge and the spring to keep the stock extended.

The blued steel cheekpiece's left is covered where it meets a right-handed shooter's face and is held in place by three steel rivets left in the white (some of the originals were painted to match the leather cheekpiece). The plate's right has an integral clamp for the cylindrical oiler. At the rear, the two tabs of the wire stock mate with dual recesses in the front face of the cast steel buttplate, which

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has aggressive checking on its rear. A blue mousetrap style spring on the two ends of the wire rotates the buttplate 90 degrees, the proper position for shooting.

The stock is recessed on its left side where the cheekpiece folds against it and, just like G.I. M1A1s, the side of the buttplate will dent and ding the stock where the two pieces meet when folded. As unsightly as it is, it's authentic.

The only complaint was the synthetic material substituted for leather on the cheekpiece's left side. The originals, according to Larry Ruth, were covered in "2- to 3-ounce leather, tanned and well formed." Auto-Ordnance's engineers are working on finding and forming the appropriate leather, which will be incorporated into later production.

These guns are not intended to



The stock has a cast steel buttplate that rotates 90 degrees when opened under tension from a mousetrap spring.



deceive anyone into thinking they are originals. No, the new M1A1s offer an honest, authentic, practical replica of a great and scarce American gun to today's shooters and collectors—new made and with a warranty. It's a shootable slice of the past, well rendered, reliable and fun. 