

HARDWARE FOR TRENCH WARFARE

A COLLECTION
SPANNING THE AGES

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY JOSHUA SWANAGON



Left to Right: British Model 1907 Sword Bayonet, U.S. Springfield M-1903 Sword Bayonet, U.S. Model 1917 Sword Bayonet, Argentine M1909 Sword Bayonet, Persian Model 29 Sword Bayonet.

Nestled safely in Mid-Michigan, in the private military memorabilia collection of Curt Scott, lies a collection of old bayonets worthy of any museum. I recently had the opportunity to visit with Curt and peruse his expansive collection, which was a true pleasure experiencing the history and craftsmanship displayed within. Being a big fan of antiques and anything sharp and pointy, I felt like a kid in a candy store being left with only one regret — that I didn't have the space in this article to cover his entire collection, just a small sample.

Curt and I had been talking about this collection for some time but I really didn't know what to expect when I showed up to his house for our meeting. As I pulled in to his drive that early afternoon and was finding the best spot to park, he was coming out the door to greet me. I could tell from the excitement on his face that he really enjoys his collection and takes much pleasure in sharing it and its vast history with people as interested as he is in the topic. Grabbing my camera gear and backpack full of props and backgrounds for the photography, we headed inside.

I noticed right away that his wife had put out some vegetable and sausage trays along with a cut up sub, and I thought to myself that this really wasn't

“ONE DAY, WHILE LOOKING AT THE 60-OR-SO BAYONETS AND MILITARY KNIVES IN HIS POSSESSION, IT OCCURRED TO HIM THAT HE HAD A COLLECTION.”



Left to Right: Spanish M-1893 Mauser Knife Bayonet, Spanish M1907 Artillery Bolo Trench Knife, Yugo M48 Knife Bayonet, British Pattern 1888 Mk. 1 Bayonet.

WORLDBAYONETS.COM

I would like to thank Ralph Cobb of WorldBayonets.com for his assistance and consultation on the history of the bayonet. For a very in-depth and detailed history on bayonets, please visit www.WorldBayonets.com.

going to take that long. Continuing on to his living room I could see the historical military accents in the décor, very subtly and tastefully done, it was obvious I was in the right place to see some exquisite historical bayonets.

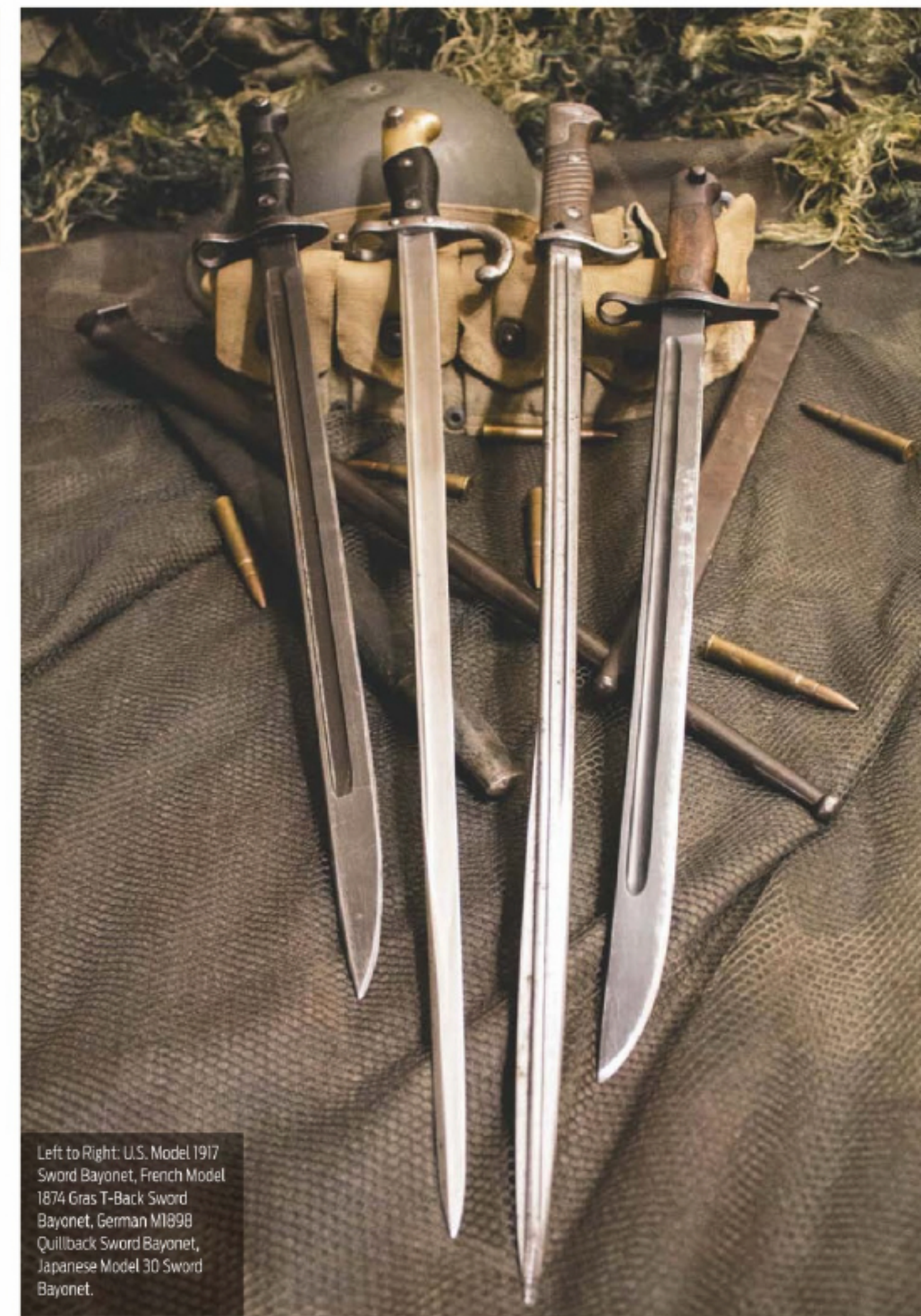
Wasting no time getting to the main attraction, Curt took out a medium-sized barrel and equally sized chest and began pulling bayonet after bayonet out of each and handing them to me. It seemed like they just kept coming and I slowly started to feel a slight edge of anxiety as I pondered how I was going to photograph a collection of such growing magnitude. A little over an hour into foraging through his collection, without a noticeable end in sight, it occurred to me why his wife set out food for us, she had been here before.

An Accidental Collection

Perhaps one of the more humorous stories I have heard in regard to any kind of collection is the fact that Curt never set out with the intention of collecting bayonets, it just sort of happened and before he knew it, he had a collection that would turn anyone's head.

Having a love for anything military at a very early age, especially the historical aspects, Curt picked up his first bayonet when he was 14 years old. It wasn't that he automatically fell in love with bayonets, on the contrary, his real love was always mil-surp guns. His love for bayonets was more for the fact that they were cheap in the early '60s. Over the years he would find them in many places including flea-markets, yard sales, gun shows and from time to time through personal conversations with people whose family members brought them home from military service.

One day, while looking at the 60-or-so bayonets and military knives in his possession, it occurred to him that he had a



Left to Right: U.S. Model 1917 Sword Bayonet, French Model 1874 Gras T-Back Sword Bayonet, German M1898 Quillback Sword Bayonet, Japanese Model 30 Sword Bayonet.

“THE 11.875-INCH STEEL BLADE [OF THE SPANISH M1907 ARTILLERY BOLO TRENCH KNIFE] HAS WHAT ALMOST APPEARS TO BE AN EARLY VERSION OF A RECURVE, WITH AN OVERSIZED BLOOD GROOVE RUNNING NEARLY THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE BLADE.”



A small sample of Curt's large, eclectic bayonet collection.

400 YEARS OF THE BAYONET

Dating back to the early 1600s, it is believed that the bayonet can attribute its beginnings to the region around the town of Bayonne, France — a small coastal town that was known for its cutlery. Originally designed for hunting, the “bayonnette” was “a kind of small, flat, pocket-dagger, furnished with knives; or a great knife to hang at the girdle, like a dagger,” according to Randle Cotgrave’s *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*. Due to the inaccuracy of the single-shot firearms of the day, hunters would carry both a dagger and spear with them when hunting large or dangerous prey.

Becoming One with the Rifle

While it is still unclear how the dagger first came to be inserted into the bore of the musket for use as a spear, it directly changed everything moving forward. It was this innovation that led to an interest in

the bayonet by the military, allowing for musketeers to convert their musket into a pike once their shot was expended. This made them more mobile and provided armies the ability to decrease the need for pikemen (who held the line as the musketeers reloaded), which allowed them to arm more soldiers with firearms.

Improved Utility

In an effort to allow the firearm to remain operable while the bayonet was in place, new inventions were developed, starting with the ring bayonet, which was simply a plug bayonet with rings affixed to the handle to slide over the barrel, as opposed to inserted into the barrel of the firearm. Due to its sloppiness and tendency to fall off, the great French Military Engineer Vauban invented the socket bayonet, which was accepted as a standard piece of equipment for firearm-bearing

soldiers sometime in the late 1600s. It was at this time that the bayonet was no longer viewed as merely a defensive weapon to replace the utility of the pike, but was gaining ground as an offensive weapon. Toward the beginning of the 18th century, pikes had been completely decommissioned in all major European armies. Improving the locking mechanism, by 1840 almost all socket bayonets produced were utilizing the medial locking ring, designed by the French in the late 1770s.

Edged Bayonets

While bayonets were vastly considered a thrusting weapon, the Germans and Prussians developed a mounting system allowing them to affix short swords to their rifles. While the Prussians designed a very rigid mounting system still in use today, in 1882 a German firm, Gebrüder Weyersberg, developed a

coil spring press stud that was housed completely in the pommel, which shielded it from the elements. This alteration meant that soldiers could attach their sword and knife bayonets to their rifles with far less risk of the mechanism rusting and breaking unexpectedly. By the late 1800s, knife bayonets became more commonplace due to their lighter weight and ease of carry.

Still Going Strong

Although it is not as prominent as it has been over the past 350 years, the bayonet still has its place at the end of military rifles the world over. Even when many of the world’s major powers attempted to produce firearms that would not accept a bayonet after World War II, within five years most redesigned the rifles to accept bayonets or replaced them with rifles that did. Obviously, the bayonet still has a place today.

BAYONET CHARGES

With the problem of fixed bayonets being resolved and use of the pike decreasing, a formation of infantrymen would utilize the fixed bayonet to overrun enemy strongholds over short distances, rather than risking musket volleys. Due to the gruesome nature of a bayonet attack in a confined area, it was more common for the opposing side to run and avoid mass casualties. For this reason, the bayonet charge was considered a very effective form of capturing ground during a conflict.

collection. I don’t want to give the impression that he picked up just anything and threw it on the heap; having spent some time with him and his collection I can attest that this is far from the truth. Although he didn’t start out with a collection in mind, it is very clear that these bayonets were a symbol of his love for the genre. Regardless of which piece I picked up, he knew everything about it,



Curt with a French Model 1874 Gras T-Back Sword Bayonet.

“WHILE IT IS STILL UNCLEAR HOW THE DAGGER FIRST CAME TO BE INSERTED INTO THE BORE OF THE MUSKET FOR USE AS A SPEAR, IT DIRECTLY CHANGED EVERYTHING MOVING FORWARD.”

Knives
THE PREMIER CUTLERY MAGAZINE ILLUSTRATED

Find us on



Discover the premier knife magazine.

www.facebook.com/knivesillustrated

DEALERS ONLY!
YOUR ONE SOURCE FOR KNIVES & SWORDS
1,184 PAGE FULL COLOR CATALOG
FULL COLOR MONTHLY PUBLICATION



Blue Ridge Knives

BLUE RIDGE KNIVES • DEPARTMENT KI
166 ADWOLFE ROAD • MARION, VA 24354
PHONE (276) 783-6143 • FAX (276) 783-9298
E-MAIL: ONESTOP@BLUERIDGEKNIVES.COM
WWW.BLUERIDGEKNIVES.COM



Left to Right: U.S. 1864 N.C.O. Sword, Prussian Jr. Officer's Sword.

FAR BEYOND BAYONETS

Although he has a collection of bayonets that would suggest where his focus lies, Curt is a collector of all military memorabilia with a real love for mil-surp firearms. His collection of firearms is an impressive sight, with quite a few of the firearms pairing with the bayonets in his collection. All of his firearms are serviceable and in amazing condition. The firearms items that surprised me most were his small collection of stone Civil War bullets, they are pictured with the swords.

Knife is a very unique piece with an overall length of 17.25 inches. The 11.875-inch steel blade has what almost appears to be an early version of a recurve, with an oversized blood groove running nearly the entire length of the blade. The curved handle is very ergonomic, with steel pommel and crossguard framing the wooden handle scales, which have a carved checker pattern in them.

Due to the historical significance, I was very impressed by the U.S. Springfield 1863 Socket Bayonet. Manufactured somewhere around 1855-1872, it was potentially one of the most-used bayonets in the Civil War. Being a socket bayonet with an overall length of 21 inches, it was designed to fit various U.S. .58 muskets and 50-70 Springfield "Trapdoor" rifles prior to 1873, utilizing a mortise slot and locking ring to affix the 18-inch triangular blade.

Curt has a hard time picking a favorite in his collection, because each one is unique in its own way and all have a history and story of their own. But, I found he tended to lean toward a French Model 1874 Gras T-Back Sword Bayonet; a beautiful piece at a length of 26 inches overall, with solid brass pommel, integral push-button latching mechanism, wood handle scales, steel crossguard and muzzle ring and a hooked quillion lower guard. It has a 20.5-inch triangular steel blade making it a very sturdy thrusting weapon. Maybe it can't be claimed as his favorite, but it is definitely the one that he seems to have a bit of a

soft spot for. And it definitely is worth a bit of favoritism.

Conclusion

By the time I left his house at around 9:30 in the evening, I was full of good food, good discussions, the parting gift of an immaculate World War II era Camillus MK2 USMC Fighting Knife and a story worth telling about a collection that spans the ages. It is rare that you get the chance to visit with someone with such an expansive collection of such historical significance. It is even rarer that you get to spend so much time with that collection, carefully inspecting each piece and learning its story. I am thankful to people like my friend Curt, for his love of military history, because it is people like him that give us the opportunity to learn, grow and experience the treasures of the past in a tangible and meaningful way. Thank you Curt, for sharing your accidental collection with me — it is this that started the discussion and research into the history of such a game-changing battlefield tool. **KI**



Left to Right: British Number 4 MKI Spike Bayonet, British Number 4 MKI Bowie Bayonet, U.S. Springfield 1863 Socket Bayonet, Russian Nagant 91/30 Bayonet, French Lebel 1886 Sword Bayonet.

down to the minor nuances and intricacies. Even though he never regarded it as a "collection" he has spent countless hours reading, studying and replacing pieces he already had with ones in better condition, if he could find them. It was and is a true labor of love.

Getting to spend some time with his collection, I was humbled to be handling some very impressive and important history, with pieces ranging from all over the world including the United States, Britain, Persia, Spain, France, Russia, Japan, Argentina, Germany and more. Although the entire collection was outstanding, I was really drawn to a few particular pieces.

The Persian Model 29 Sword Bayonet has beautiful lines throughout its entire 21-inch overall length. The steel pommel houses an integral push-button latching mechanism, while the wood handle scales give the hilt a nice two-tone appeal. The steel crossguard leads to a 15.75-inch steel blade with an oversized blood groove running almost its entire length.

The Spanish M1907 Artillery Bolo Trench

EX-T01 TOMAHAWK
DESIGNED BY ALLEN ELISHEWITZ

HOGUE KNIVES

Call or visit online for a free catalog
HogueKnives.com
1-800-438-4747  MADE IN THE USA