

Model 1903 Serial Number 1



The Model 1903 rifle was based on the design of the German Mauser, a bolt action, military rifle. Because it was designed and first produced by Springfield Armory, it is commonly called the *Springfield*. Beginning in 1904, Rock Island Arsenal produced the Model 1903 rifle. The first 18,000 examples were the rod-bayonet style type. Production of the rod-bayonet was halted under orders of President Theodore Roosevelt on January 4, 1905. He requested that a knife-bayonet replace the rod-bayonet.

The serial number 1 rifle was immediately sent to the museum after its fabrication on December 20, 1904. The 1905 date on its stock refers to the fiscal year in which it was manufactured. The stock is also marked with a "CN/1905" cartouche indicating that Conrad Nelson inspected the rifle in fiscal year 1905. Conrad Nelson was the final inspector of small arms at Rock Island Arsenal from 1904 to 1915.



Conrad Nelson (left) is seen at his workbench while employed at Springfield Armory. When the Model 1903 manufacturing plant was established at Rock Island Arsenal, Conrad Nelson was one of the Springfield Armory employees transferred to complete the job. He arrived at Rock Island on August 17, 1904, and became final inspector of small arms.