

THE WINCHESTER MODEL D BOLT ACTION MAGAZINE MILITARY RIFLE Half Brother of the UK Pattern 1914

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When people think of rifles that were derived from the .30-06 U.S. Model of 1917 (M1917) they usually think of the Remington Model 30 series and the Remington Model 1934 military rifle that was produced for Honduras. However, the M1917 was itself a modified U.K. .303 Enfield Pattern 1914 (P-14). During and after World War 1 the Winchester Repeating Arms Company also designed and produced civilian sporting and military rifles that were partially based on the P-14 and the M1917.

Winchester was one of three U.S. companies, along with Remington and its Eddystone subsidiary that had contracts to manufacture the P-14 rifle for Great Britain during the war. Most, if not all of the machinery and tooling belonged to Britain, and was to be exclusively used to manufacture the P-14. However, Winchester appears to have used P-14 parts, manufacturing equipment and tooling to produce a number of little known sporting and military rifles that it designed and tried to sell during World War I. One of these rifles was the Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle.

Winchester Model D Design and Production

Thomas C Johnson, a Winchester engineer and designer who worked on the Pattern 1914 rifle for Winchester, also designed the Model C sporting rifle and the Model C military rifle. Both were heavily influenced by the P-14 and the military rifle in particular, bears a strong resemblance, to the P-14. This design never went into production. Johnson next developed a new military rifle in June 1916, the Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle. This rifle was a hybrid that included a number of characteristics of his earlier designs (Winchester Models A, B and C) and of the P-14, as well as many P-14 parts.



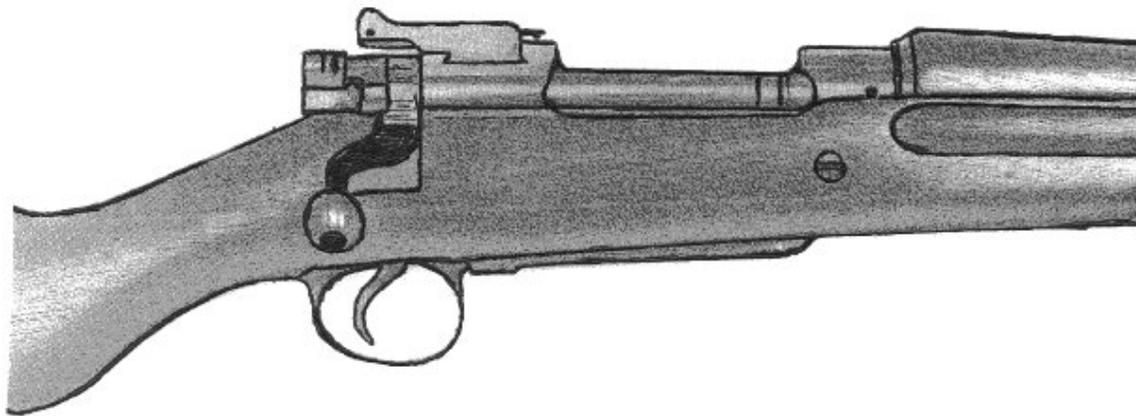
Drawing of the Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle by the author.

The Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle was primarily intended for foreign military sales. Winchester fabricated 15 pre-production samples in six calibers: 6.5mm

Portuguese, 7mm Mauser, 7mm Spanish Mauser, .30-06, .303 British and 7.62mm Russian. The number of different calibers is an indication of the diversity of the potential customers.

The Model D looked like a slightly slimmed down P-14. It was a well-designed, robust and versatile weapon. It used a slightly modified Enfield P-14 receiver and a bolt and bolt handle that resembled the P-14 bolt but was actually designed by Johnson. Of the 73 parts in the Model D, 44 were identical in form and dimension to P-14 parts. Of the remaining 29 new parts, 9 could be manufactured on machines intended for production of P-14s.

The Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle was 46 ½" long with a 26" long barrel. It weighed 9 pounds without a bayonet and 10 pounds, 3 ounces with a fixed bayonet.

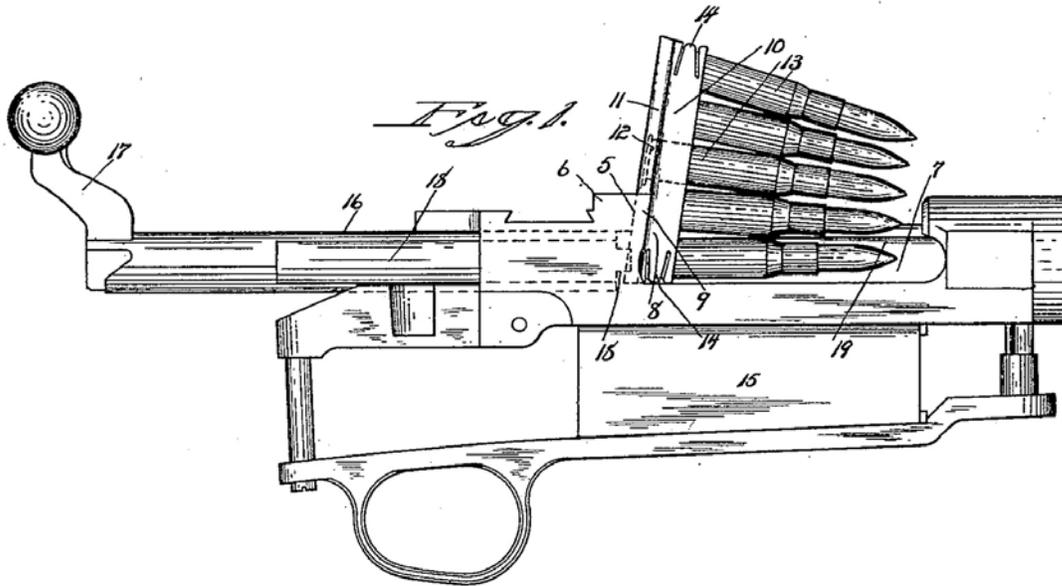


*Drawing of the Model D Military Rifle action & sight by the Author.
Note the shape of the bolt handle.*

The rear sight was located at the rear of the receiver, similar to a P-14. It had a peep sight and was protected by low "ears." The front sight was enclosed by a prominent sight protector that covered the top of the sight as well as the sides. The front sight protector also assisted in target acquisition. The distance between the front and rear sights was 31.75". Unlike the P-14 safety, which was directly behind the bolt handle, the Model D's safety was located on the bolt sleeve at the rear of the bolt. When it was turned to the right, the bolt could not be manipulated and the firing pin was locked. The rifle could be fired when the safety was turned to the left. And when the safety was vertical, the bolt could be removed from the receiver and the firing pin removed from the bolt. The grip of the stock resembled the German Mauser 98k's grip.

Not only was the Model D's bolt handle the same shape as the P-14's bolt handle but it was also in the same close proximity to the trigger as the P-14 bolt handle. Like the P-14, the Model D's bolt handle fit into a recess cut into the rear of the receiver and acted like a third locking lug when the action was closed.

The bolt face and barrel breech design allowed it to be chambered for virtually every military cartridge then being used. It could be chambered for rimless cartridges up to 3.34" long and a base diameter up to .526" wide. It could take rimmed cartridges up to 3.1" long and a base diameter up to .57" wide. Winchester literature emphasized the company's belief that the large amount of breeching surface between the bolt and barrel was a significant improvement over most current military rifles of that era.



*Drawing from Thomas Johnson's US Patent 1,218,263 filed Dec. 14, 1916, issued March 6, 1917 for cartridge clip guides in the Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle.
Source: US Patent Office*

The Russian Sale

In November 1916 Winchester sought to secure a Model D contract with the Imperial Russian government for the Russian Army. Russia was at war with Germany and was desperately short of modern small arms with which to equip its huge army. The firm sent a sales team headed by a vice president with three sample Model D rifles, chambered in 7.62mm Russian, to Russia. Winchester was probably confident that it could win a Russian contract and not solely on the strength of the Model D. The Russians were already familiar with Winchester, as they had previously purchased almost 294,000 Winchester Model 1895 Muskets in 1915 and 1916.

The three sample Model D rifles successfully passed all the initial tests of the Russian Commission and the Model D was recommended for troop trials. Winchester produced and serial numbered 550 Model D receivers in February 1917. Winchester records indicate that the company manufactured at least 500 Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifles in 7.62mm Russian and shipped them to Russia in March 1917. Unfortunately, it is not known if the trials took place or, if they did take place, what the results were. Kerensky overthrew the Czar's government that year and was in turn

replaced by Lenin's Bolsheviks, and Russia dissolved into the chaos of Civil War between the Reds and the Whites. As far as the author is aware, none of the Model Ds sent to Russia for trials have surfaced. Also, since the company records indicate that 500 Model D rifles were sent to Russia, it is not known if the remaining 50 receivers were used to fabricate additional rifles or if they were scrapped.

Winchester made no further attempts to secure foreign military sales of the Model D Bolt Action Magazine Military Rifle. Although it appears to be a good design that incorporated many of the best features of the P-14, it was developed at the wrong time – after the world was already at war and few countries, including the United States, wanted to take the chance on an unknown. When the U.S. entered World War I the government adopted the proven P-14, with just a few modifications, as the U.S. Model of 1917.