

Wesley Nelson, Collector, Rifle from Battle of Blair Mountain A&M 4499

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ca. 1917



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A&M 4499

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Unit Date

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Language

English .

Extent

.2 Linear Feet 2 in. (1 flat storage box, 2 in. x 14 in. x 60 in.)

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Repository

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Scope and Contents

One Enfield Rifle (47 in. in length) recovered from the site of the Battle of Blair Mountain (1921) in Logan County, West Virginia. There are also shell casings of various calibers recovered from the Blair Mountain site.

Per Dr. Jack Weaver, WVRHC Reference Supervisor, this rifle is probably an M1917 rifle, manufactured by Winchester, Remington, or Eddystone for service in the First World War (1914-1918) by U.S. troops. Most American soldiers carried the M1917 instead of the 1903 Springfield, because there were not enough Springfields to equip the surge of men who enlisted or were drafted for service in France. The M1917 is an American version of the P14, a British rifle modeled on the Mauser carried by the Boers in the Second Boer War (1899-1902). The British planned on replacing their old rifle, the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE), with the P14, but World War One started before they could start manufacturing it at scale. As a result, most British troops in WWI carried SMLEs, but the British government contracted with the U.S. companies Winchester, Remington, and Eddystone to make P14s. Since they were already mass-manufacturing the rifle, the U.S. government ordered Winchester, Remington, and Eddystone to re-chamber the P14 from .303 British to .30-06 American, an easy switch. Small numbers of U.S. troops and large numbers of Canadians used the M1917 in World War 2, and as of 2018, Arctic troops in the Danish Army still used it.

Keywords

Blair Mountain, Battle of, W. Va., 1921
Blair Mountain (W. Va.)