THE FIRST U.S. ARMY CONTRACT WAS THE PHROBIS #79 ADD 83

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THE FIRST LANCAY CONTRACT
THE FIRST MODEL

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SUBJECT: THE SECOND U.S. ARMY M9 BAYONET CONTRACT PRODUCED BY LANCAY

Phrobis III won the original U.S. Army M9 bayonet contract in 1986 by winning the XM9 trials. Since that original contract ended in 1989 the U.S. Army had not made any further purchases of M9 bayonets.....

In 1991 the Army offered a bid for the second U.S M9 contract and the two competing bids were offered by Buck Knives and the LanCay company. LanCay won the bidding and the first of the Army's M9 bayonets which had been redesigned at Rock Island Arsenal were produced. The initial delivery of test bayonets was in the summer of 1993.

This contract is exclusively a U.S Army one with the contract specifically requiring that any bayonets or parts not delivered to the Army will be totally destroyed. Contract overruns or civilian sales are specifically prohibited.

A variety of changes have been made in the bayonet and scabbard by the Army engineers at Rock Island. It is the opinion of this author that some of these changes were sound, but that some are negative and degrade the effectiveness of the bayonet. However, all the changes that Rock Island specified have been incorporated into the bayonet as spelled out in the contract--regardless of the efforts of the manufacturer and his consultant to change and improve the design.

What follows is a general description of the "product improved" M9 bayonet as it is different from the original pattern Phrobis M9.

I) THE WEBBING SYSTEM

To simplify the webbing system of the bayonet and to reduce the overall complexity and weight the Army chose to totally modify the webbing system that mounts to the back of the scabbard. The worst feature of this change is that there is now no webbing strap covering the sharpening stone. This leaves the rough stone with its four sharp square corners exposed to abrade the clothing and equipment of the individual soldier. Additionally the stone can bang against metal and plastic objects creating a noise problem.

a) The web pouch on the scabbard has been deleted as it was considered unnecessary. There was some complaint that the velcro on it made noise and that the pouch caught on underbrush in the field.

b) The webbing on the back of the scabbard has been simplified by removing the web strap covering the sharpening stone. Thus the snap and screw below the sharpening stone have been eliminated also.

c) The back webbing that extends from the two screws in the back of the scabbard to the "Bianchi" clip has been lengthened from 1 1/2 inches to 3 1/2 inches (measured from the center of the screws to just below the "Fastex" buckle).

d) The diagonal web cross-strap which was stitched to the back webbing and crossed the mouth of the scabbard to the snap on the face of the scabbard has been eliminated, as has the snap itself.

e) The web cross-strap that holds the bayonet hilt to the webbing system has been moved from the top of the "Fastex" buckle to below it on the webbing.

f) The roll of webbing which supported the cross-strap above "Fastex" buckle has been eliminated, leaving only three folds of webbing to be riveted to the "Bianchi" clip.

g) LANCAY has manufactured a modified design of the "Bianchi" clip which has no markings on it and has only the two holes in it for the webbing rivets.

h) The internal design of the "Fastex" buckle has been changed without the Army being aware of it, and it now has two internal ribs at the lower end of the female section to make it more crush proof. This has caused some concern as the old buckles are not readily interchangable with the new buckles.

II) THE SCABBARD

a) The change of the webbing system has resulted in the elimination of the front and rear snaps on the scabbard.

b) Below the sharpening stone the name LANCAY is molded into the scabbard body.

c) The right side hole (looking at the back) which supports the the cutter plate screw is no longer internally stepped. Both of the holes are now slightly raised on the back of the scabbard.

III) THE CUTTER PLATE

a) The cutter plate is now made as a normal stamping, whereas the earlier Phrobis plates were fine blankings, and is a bit rougher

b) The two cutter plate screws are of the same length and the concept of tightening down the right one to press against the blade to keep a tight fit between the plate and the blade when wire cutting has been eliminated.

IV) THE BAYONET BLADE

a) The blade is of a coarser finish than the Phrobis blades, but is completely up to specifications. It is finished with a sand blasted finish, rather than the finer bead blasted finish used by Phrobis. This new finish reflects less light.

b) The process by which the blade is made is identical, but there are two different marking variations. This is due to the two different subcontractors who are receiving the blade blanks for finishing, marking and hardening. "GC" is marked------ M9, over LANCAY, over USA. "BP" is marked------M9, over LanCay, over USA. This is done purposely to keep track of the two companies quality control on their blade work.

c) After sand blasting the M9 blade is dunked into cold solvent, cutback, corrosion preventive oil.

V) THE CROSSGUARD

a) The crossguard is a non-stainless steel stamping (as were the Phrobis guards) which is then phosphated. It is totally unmarked and the Army has eliminated the two lightening cuts on the guard's face, which served as bottle openers.

VI) THE TANG ROD

a) The tang rod is the same design as the original Phrobis contract pattern, except that the Army changed its specification from stainless steel to normal carbon steel. The threaded lat plate screw hole in the rear of the tang rod has been reduced depth from 1 1/4 inches to a depth of 7/8 of an inch.

b) As specified by the Army the tang rod is dipped into a dry film lube and heated to 400 degrees to increase its resistance to corrosion (the heating period is one hour).

VII) THE HILT

a) The hilt is molded to the same specifications as the Phrobis pattern hilt, with the vertical grooves and the horizontal grooves being on different levels. The only change made was due to unforseen mold shrinkage; the molder has run a reamer through the tang rod hole to open it up a bit.

VIII) THE LATCH PLATE AND LATCH PLATE SCREW

a) The latch plate is made to the same specifications as the Phrobis pattern, but with a more grayish color to the finish.

b) The latch plate screw is also the same pattern and retains the screwdriver slot, as well as the hex head slot. It also is a more grayish color than the Phrobis pattern.

IX) THE MANUAL

a) The user manual has been totally revised by Rock Island and includes some suggestions of the manufacturer and his consultan

X) THE PACKAGING

a) The Army at first specified a packaging system similar to the Phrobis packaging (a clear plastic bag with the bayonet and manual heat sealed into it, then individually boxed with all the external codes and markings on the box). Lancay had the requested boxes made with all the proper markings, but then the Army decided to simply put each bayonet into a bag layered with brown paper and plastic, then heat sealed, and placed in groups in much larger cardboard boxes.

Submitted by,
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