

Bruce N. Canfield's

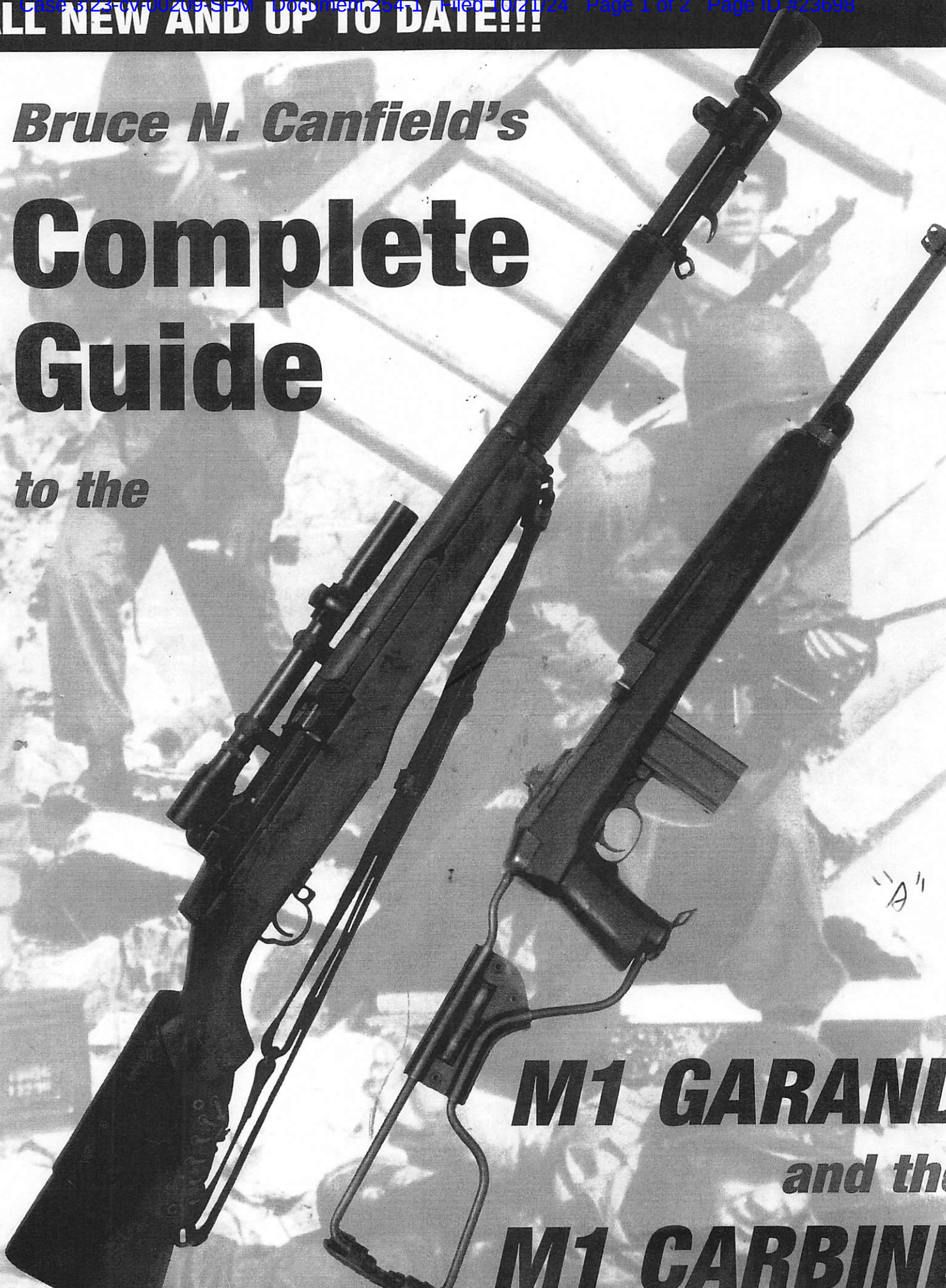
Complete Guide

to the

M1 GARAND

and the

M1 CARBINE



Introduction

Only one United States small arm of the Second World War surpassed the M1 rifle in numbers produced and issued. This weapon was the M1 carbine. While the Garand represented a quantum step forward for military service rifles, the carbine was actually an entirely new class of weaponry. Before 1941, the U.S. M1 carbine did not even exist and by the end of WWII in 1945, the weapon had been produced in greater numbers than any other U.S. military small arm. From August 1941 through June 1945, the staggering total of 6,221,220 carbines had been produced by ten different commercial contractors. Carbines saw action on all fronts during WWII and remained in front line service well into the Vietnam era. In addition to use by American armed forces, huge quantities of carbines were supplied to current and erstwhile foreign allies under various military aid programs. Carbines are in active military use in many nations even today.

Collector interest in the carbine parallels that of the Garand in a number of ways, although it was actually recognized as a great collecting theme several years earlier. Until some fifteen or twenty years ago, collector interest in the carbine was rather minimal. There was generally a feeling among collectors that one carbine was pretty much like any other, and the weapon was of interest to only a relatively small group of collectors. The earlier martial arms such as "Trapdoor" Springfields, Krag's and '03s were looked upon much more favorably as collecting themes than was the M1 carbine. Gradually, as these other guns became harder to find and more expensive, many collectors took a second look at the carbine and discovered many interesting and scarce variants. It is noteworthy that the "Baby Boom" generation has embraced the carbine as a collectible much more than has the prior generation. This is due, no doubt, in large measure to the fact that many veterans of WWII saw the carbine (and the Garand) as a wartime tool and had no particular interest in collecting the weapon. On the other hand, some veterans remembered the trim little carbine with some fondness and may have wished to own one after the war. For these

individuals, the acquisition of any carbine usually fulfilled their desire.

From the end of WWII until the early 1960s, however, carbines were extremely scarce on the open market since they had not been released by the government for sale to the general public. Occasionally, one of the few M1 carbines that had been legitimately sold through proper channels surfaced and was eagerly snapped up. Carbines that left the government's inventory via "unofficial" means sometimes changed hands during this period as well, although in usually a less forthright manner. However, even the rather limited demand at the time was not met by the even more minuscule supply of genuine GI carbines. Some enterprising persons took advantage of the situation by acquiring large quantities of the tons of surplus carbine parts available in the late 1950s and early 1960s and assembled the parts to commercially made receivers. Many of these receivers were investment cast and were not made to the same high standards as were the government issue carbines. Several firms produced ersatz "GI" carbines that superficially resembled the real thing. While not of interest to martial arms collectors, such commercially made carbines helped satisfy the demand for "shooters."

The situation drastically changed in 1963 when the government released some 240,000 M1 carbines through the DCM to qualified members of the National Rifle Association for the very attractive sum of \$20.00 each. Sales were limited to one carbine per person. Almost overnight, genuine GI carbines went from being quite scarce to very common. This large scale release of the weapons also sowed the seeds, which allowed for the carbine to become a highly desirable collector's item a number of years later. The supply of the DCM carbines was quickly exhausted, and it didn't take long for the original \$20.00 carbines to triple or quadruple in price as the weapons changed hands. However, even into the early 1980s nice condition GI carbines could be purchased for a hundred dollars or less.

As more and more collectors entered the field, the market price for collectible GI carbines began an