



- ▣ Overview & Section Summaries
- ▣ The Finnish Area
- ▣ Global Mosin Nagants
- ▣ The Mosin-Nagant Store
- ▣ Collector's Articles
- ▣ Site Dedication

- ▣ Discussion Boards
- ▣ The Russian-Soviet Area
- ▣ Sniper Section
- ▣ 110 Years Of The 7.62X54R
- ▣ Tuco's Hot Links
- ▣ Site Sponsors
- ▣ Feedback

## GUESTBOOK



Home &gt;&gt; Finland &gt;&gt; The Model 1939

## HOT LINKS

- ▣ gunboards
- ▣ about us
- ▣ The Finnish Area
- ▣ battletours.com

**Introduction:**

If there is one Mosin Nagant that has captured the attention and respect of the American collector it is the Finnish Model 1939 Service Rifle commonly referred to as the M39. Not only have these fine rifles gained respect in their own right but they have often created new converts to the Mosin Nagant collecting community. This is not something that is a shock to Finnish collectors, as we have long known of the many fine traits of these rifles. The quality of workmanship of the M39 may indeed be the best of all the Mosin Nagant line of rifles, with maybe only certain versions of the Mosin sniper rifles even giving them a run for their money in this category. The M39's also have a number of variations and makers/manufactures as well as having quite a diverse history both in WW2 and post war Finland. One could also state the M39 is the rifle that turned around the "cheap Russian junk" prejudices that many once had stated when referring to the Mosin Nagant. This line of thinking has often been changed at the many firing lines and ranges across America as there is no doubt the Finnish Model 1939 is one of the most accurate military surplus rifles one will ever encounter. The pure shooting aspect of the M39 is one that can not be overlooked and indeed awakens many new converts by their accuracy alone. While it can be argued if the M39 is truly the best of the Mosin Nagant line of rifles there is no denying the overwhelming popularity and following this fine weapon has behind it. Without a doubt the M39 is the Mosin Nagant that has created the largest sensation here in America.

While the M39 is widely collected here in the US there are still a number of misconceptions that follow them. How many were made, when were they made, what do the various markings mean, and what makers are more uncommon are questions that appear almost everyday in collectors circles. One reason for this is the sheer numbers of M39's on the US market and the many marking and proof marks that can be found on these rifles. As these were all M91's at one time the collector can become overwhelmed by the markings alone. When one adds this with the fact that the source of the M91's could have been from a number of nations (Germany, The Balkan Nations, Austria, Russia, the United States, Poland, to name a few) all who might have left a marking or two on the receiver, one can understand if the confusion gets even deeper. While this article will not be the end all - do all article on the M39, it is our hope that it covers some of these questions. The M39 was a very important rifle to Finland and served the Finnish nation for a number of years and as such there are a number of variations one can come across. It can be confusing and it is hoped this article will also clear up some of these details and questions.

I must publicly thank Vic Thomas for the work on this article as it could not have been done without him. This article has been in the works for quite a long time but I had not been able to complete it due to an illness and work related time constraints. As such Vic once again came forward to assist the collecting community and simply has done an outstanding job. While I have added some notes, photos, and captions the credit should entirely go to Mr. Thomas. Vic is one of the most advanced Mosin collectors here in the US and has a number of years of research, both here and abroad, invested in the M39 rifle. There is no expert here in the States that has spent more time and energy on the Finnish Mosin Nagants than Vic. Both his research and writings are outstanding and I am proud he would share it here on the site.

The assistance of Finnish firearms author and expert Mr. Markku Palokangas should also be noted as he most graciously answered a number of nagging questions for both Vic and I while in Finland in September of 2000. Mr. Palokangas' knowledge on these rifles is the best in the world and his input was invaluable. His outstanding efforts should go a long way in clearing up many of the false assumptions that have plagued Finnish collectors here in the States. For further study of the Finnish weapons I highly recommend his three volume work *Sotilaskasiaseet Suomessa 1918-1989* as there is no finer reference on the material.

As always if there are any questions that pop up make sure to see the Collectors Forum of this site as good original information appears there almost everyday. This information is not limited to only the Finnish Mosin Nagant but covers a large range of arms in detail. No question is a dumb one and all collectors (advanced to the first time owner) are most welcome.

I hope that this article is both educational and enjoyable to the reader, as it is always a pleasure to present these works to you. The entire purpose of this site is to share such information with collectors and I feel that Mr. Thomas' article does this better than any other English work on the subject.

Warm Regards -  
Brent Snodgrass  
Co-author Finland At War  
Owner Mosin Nagant Dot Net 09/05/02



#### THE START OF THE M/39

The Finnish high command in the mid 1930's began to recognize a need to standardize the production of the Mosin Nagant and the various models concurrently in production in Finland. It was not fiscally wise or logistically sensible to be producing three different versions of the Mosin Nagant simultaneously so it was decided to produce only one standard model. A committee including personnel from both the Army and Civil Guard as well as depot supervisors and personnel was formed to look into this problem. Their assignment was to combine the best features of the various designs already in production or to expand on those designs with improvements incorporating them into one new design. The two major service branches that were producing weapons for their troops—the Army and the Civil Guard—each felt that they had a better design or that the features of the rifle they had already developed should be incorporated. As one might expect the progress on the new rifle's designs was painstakingly slow.

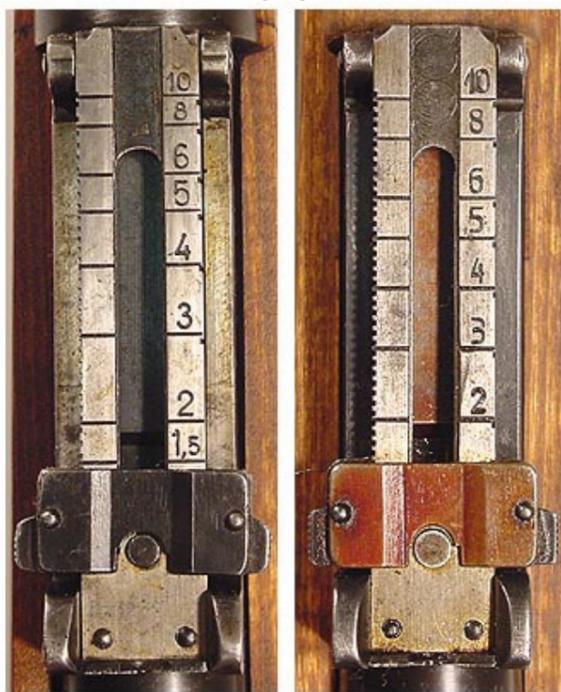
The results of the committee finally produced several prototype rifles from 1932 to 1935 with a few of the rifles showing enough promise to receive a model designation. The Army's best design received the designation of m91/35, but the Civil Guards response to this was the adamant opinion that the m28-30 was a far superior weapon. The Army was convinced that the direction the new rifle should take was that path which the Germans had followed with a carbine length weapon. The m91/35 was the same length of the earlier m/27 cavalry carbine but it incorporated some of the design improvements the committee had suggested such as an improved stock and handguard as well as new sights. The Army was not fond of the finely adjustable sight's of the images's m/28-30, so a sight similar to the Civil Guard's m/28-30 design was developed, but less sensitive in it's adjustments. The Civil Guard was in turn not pleased with the m91/35's excessive muzzle blast and it's lack of acceptable accuracy with multiple versions of powder loads and bullets being tested, all showing sub- standard accuracy results. The design committee also found fault with the m/28-30's older m/91 style stock, considering it to fragile. In the end the design teams of the Civil Guard and the Army for testing and evaluation submitted two rifles. It was determined that the Civil Guard designed weapon showed more merit and upon some small revisions the Army accepted the weapon as well on April 14 1939.

Initial production for the m/39 was hampered by the lack of preparation at the arsenals and the amount of new parts required for the newly adopted rifle. Only 10 rifles had been produced by the start of the Winter War with the Soviets in November of 1939. As a result of this conflict, the production of the rifle was put on hold and emergency production of the m/91 was again undertaken. This was done as vast amounts of parts; stocks and the support systems needed to produce them were already in place for immediate production. The m/91 stayed in production alongside the m/39 from 1940 until 1943 at Tikkakoski and up to 1942 at Valmet.

The first m/39's to be received by the troops were quickly nicknamed the "Ukko-Pekka" after the Finnish President P. E. Svinhufvud (36). The word translates to "old man Pekka", "Pekka" being a common Finnish nickname.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE M/39

The m/39 is one of the most distinctive and advanced Mosin Nagant designs produced by the Finn's or anyone else for that matter. Completely redesigned components included the stock, handguard, barrel band and nose cap. The sling connections, barrel weight and front sight assembly were also new to this rifle in design and attachment points. The bolt, magazine assembly and portions of the trigger assembly were retained from the previous versions based upon the m/91 Russian design. The new stock featured a pistol grip design and besides the later Czech Vz54/57, it is the only Mosin Nagant version to feature this design in the stock. The rear sight was borrowed from the Civil Guard's m/28-30 but the addition of a shorter battle sight graduation of 150 meters was added.



VIC THOMAS

The new improved m/39 rear sight on the left and the sight used for its basis the m/28-30 on the right. Note the only difference is the addition of a 150 meter battle sight setting on the m/39's slight leaf.

#### STOCK, FITTINGS AND HANDGUARD

The stock used on the new m/39 in Finnish service is the most recognizable of any Mosin Nagant, due in part to its use of a semi pistol grip in the contour of the stock. In initial production the SAKO rifle works did not have the machinery in place during the first few months of the manufacturing process and the stocks produced at this time were of a straight grip design as on earlier Mosin Nagant models. The machinery was soon put in place but not until 7,000 stocks of the straight wrist design had been produced. Most of the "straight stock" rifles were later replaced with the pistol grip style upon repair or refurbishment during and after the war. Due to this fact a straight stocked m/39 is a rare find. It is apparent though that many of the straight stocks made during the initial production run were not used, as they appear on some rifles overhauled post war in nearly unissued condition. There is mention that 6,200 stocks were fit to rifles leaving the remaining 800 in inventory for later use explaining the wonderful condition of some of the straight stocks used on rifles outside of the correct date range of 1941.

The design of the m/39 stock is a considerable improvement over previous versions. It is considerably heavier in terms of thickness and durability in the pistol grip area and the forend; both areas were prone to frequent problems of breakage on previous models. The forearm on the new m/39 is considerably thicker due to the forward

placement of a new barrel band. This forward placement allowed the forearm to be thickened slightly to add strength. The stock is still of a jointed design, forend spliced to the rear portion using a dovetailed or "finger" type interlocking splice. The original wartime produced stocks utilized a rounded type shape to the fingers in the splice. Later versions on replacement m/39 stocks were of a triangular shape pointed splice used during the transition period post war. This led to the final design of the joint to the square shaped fingers in the splice favored during the later manufacture of the stocks used in replacement and refurbishment of the rifles during the 1960's and onward. These later two types, the triangular and square joint types are most often found on post war replacement stocks made of Birch (5). The initial production of stocks was made with Arctic birch wood that was resistant to warping or cracking in the extreme cold and temperature fluctuations found in Finland and the surrounding area. Some of the birch stocks can be found with a beautiful burl or pattern in the form of a tiger stripe or swirls in the wood grain.

The m/39's handguard is also a new design. It is a departure from the previous designs that were little more than slight improvements over the original m/91 design which were rather fragile at best. The m/39 was thicker and stronger due to the placement of the barrel band for the stock. Previous handguard designs on Finnish Mosin's were retained in but two places, front and rear. The new m/39 handguard is retained and positioned by three attachment points. The front is retained by the top portion of the hinged noscap, the center at the barrel band retention position and the rear in a sheet metal lip that is fastened to the front of the rear sight base. This positioning provided a very stable and secure platform for the handguard and again added in its durability and strength.

The m/39 also featured a departure in the design of the sling connection points. It incorporated two different styles of sling swivels and attachment points so both ground and mounted troops could utilize the rifle in a variety of slung positions. The original designs of slotted escutcheons are omitted completely on the m/39. The front sling connection point is mounted on the barrel band. There are two points as mentioned earlier, one on the bottom for a traditional carry and one on the side for ease of carry for mounted troops. The rear connection points are on the bottom rear of the buttstock where a swivel is mounted by use of two screws. The side of the buttstock has a sling bar mounted with two screws over a rectangular inletted depression to provide relief for the sling to pass under the bar to the forward side mounted swivel on the barrel band.

The barrel band and the noscap were new designs specifically fabricated for the m/39. The noscap is an improved and evolved version of the earlier m/27's design utilizing the hinged upper portion of the noscap that could be opened to allow removal of the handguard. The noscap is hinged on the left side and is retained in the closed position by use of a screw that fastens vertically. The screw is non-removable to prevent its loss under field conditions. The noscap is retained as well on the stock by use of a milled groove in the interior to aid in seating placement on the noscap area of the stock and also by a horizontal screw that passes through the stock to securely fasten the noscap. The bayonet lug is located on the bottom of the noscap. The one-piece design of the noscap borrowed some influence from the m/28-30 in the manner it supports the forward portion of the barrel as the m/28-30 utilized the aluminum sleeve to accomplish the same task. The bayonet lug is designed to allow the use of the new m/39 bayonet that is reminiscent of a fighting knife or "pukko" as well as all previous versions of Finnish designed knife type bayonets such as the m/27, m/28, m/28-30 and m/35.

The barrel band is a one-piece design that is split to allow its removal by spreading it slightly. A vertical screw that tightens the two halves of the separated band together to retain the stock and handguard together retains it. It is retained in position by a band spring that is inletted into the left side of the stock in a traditional manner as found on Mausers or m/91-30 type rifles. The band spring has a catch or ledge that upon tension prevents the band from being slid forward unless the band spring is depressed into its inletted channel to provide clearance. Some m/39's can be found with an additional pin that protrudes from the stock as an aid to the band spring. The sling connections on the forward band are simple rectangular swivels with rounded ends. They are approximately 1 inch in width and are situated on the left side and bottom of the band.



From Vic Thomas For Mosin-Nagant Dot Net

**A post war stock disc found on the m/39 rifles. These zinc discs were added after the war and almost all identify the rifle as being from the Karelian Artillery Brigade. In this rifles case the 3 brigade and the rifle is number 87 of this issue.**

#### BARREL CHANGES

The barrel of the m/39 was modified from previous dimensions of the earlier Finnish designed Nagants, both in exterior and interior dimensions. The exterior barrel dimensions were reduced from that of the m/27 for a weight reduction and compensation of the slightly heavier stock design as well as for material conservation. The overall length of the barrel remained the same as the previous m/27 and m/28-30. The interior bore diameter was increased from .3082" of previous models to .3100" on the m/39. This change was due in part to allow the use of captured Soviet ammunition and machine gun ammunition which often times was of a slightly greater bore diameter than it's Finnish counterparts. The rifling twist was also changed to one twist in 10" rather than one twist in 9.5" on the m/28-30 (5).

#### M/39 MAKERS AND DATES-SAKO

The army placed the initial production order No. 328/40 for the m/39 with SAKO in April of 1940 for 20,000 rifles and two successive orders placed in 1942 and 1943 for an additional production of 40,000 rifles. Limited production began in 1940 and increased steadily to meet urgent wartime demands. Production was hampered slightly as the m/27 and m/28-30 were still being phased out of production in the early portion of 1940. The first rifles of the new m/39 therefore did not reach the field and issue with the army until early 1941. Even though the model had been agreed upon and standardized by both branches of the Finnish Armed forces, the Army and Civil Guard, they still submitted separate orders for the rifles. As a result, the SAKO m/39's made for the Army had a serial number range that started at 200,000 beginning in 1940. A photograph of rifle serial number 200,009 dated 1940 is shown in one Finnish reference (20) as well as the inspection firing target card of rifle number 200,004 by Mr. Erkki Maristo dated December 7th 1940, is shown in the outstanding reference on Finnish rifles-Sotilaskäsiaseet Suomessaa 1918-1988 by Markku Palokangas. (48) Production of the Civil Guard's order started in 1942 at serial number 500,000 and was marked with the Civil Guards identification marking of "Sk.Y" on the barrel shank. The Civil Guards serial number range was to begin at 500,000 and end at 520,000. The contract was not completed though and only slightly more than half of the order was filled at 10,500 rifles before the war ended. SAKO produced m/39's can be found dated from 1940 through 1945 with the highest reported serial number of 29982.

SAKO produced Civil Guard production ran from 1942 to 1944 with the highest reported number serial number of 509667. A reliable Finnish reference book reports that a total of about 66,500 m/39's were produced by SAKO for the Army from 1940 to 1945 (48). The final year of production in 1945 by SAKO was predominately from guns in the works already and almost completed and in 1945 only 6,500 rifles left the factory.

#### VKT PRODUCTION OF M/39 BARRELED ACTIONS

VKT or Valmet also manufactured m/39 barrels from 1940 to 1944 that were shipped to the Army weapons depot number 3 (Asevarikko 3 or AV3 for short) at Kuopio for final assembly. AV3 assembled 30,300 m/39's from 1941-1944 (48) with the VKT and Belgian made barrels (discussed below). The stocks were also reportedly produced at the AV3 depot as well as by subcontractors. Some of these sub-contracting firms were Sakara Oy utilizing the crossed cannon cartouche with an "S" inside. Other sub-contractors were V. Lindholmin Puusepäntehdas using the stock maker's cartouche of an "L" in the circle. The final sub-contractor for the stock fabrication was done by Oy Ekwall Ab and is thought to have used the crossed cannon's "Z" cartouche to indicate it's production (48) The VKT m/39's run from a known low serial number of 2508 to a high of 76,470. Many of the m/39 barrels in the VKT serial number range are actually Belgian produced barrels received under contract.

The Belgian contract was placed to provide m/91 barrels and the barrels produced for this contract are marked with a capital "B" on the barrel shank between the serial number and the date. Some barrels also are marked with "Liege" proofs on the left side, which consist of a stylized "EL", and a small star followed by 7.62m/m. Many of these Belgian made m/91 barrels were modified and shortened to m/39 specifications and are serial numbered within the range of the VKT produced m/91 barrels. No reported m/39 barrels though have been marked with the Liege proofs, only the B designation- and all are dated 1942. The VKT made m/91 barrels also were modified to the m/39 specification as well. It is not known exactly why but some sources suggest that it was to supplement lagging production and supply on hand or later

replacement of damaged barrels upon return for repair. VKT serial number ranges for the m/91 ran from serial number 1 in 1940 to serial number 45,700 approximately in 1942. There are many reported m/39's that fall within this serial number range. One such rifle, a m/39, is serial numbered 2508 with a 1940 date. VKT and Belgian barreled assemblies were shipped to AV3 for final assembly into rifles. Upon observation and measurement of barrel diameters to ascertain conversion from m/91 barrels it is apparent that production by VKT after 45,700 was exclusively of m/39 configuration.

One unusual characteristic noted on at least some of the m/39 barrels of Belgian origin is the unusual color of the metal finish. Some are noted with a "bronze" type color to a deep purple rather than the normal blue/black. This can be attributed to a few things such as the metal content containing a high nickel percentage to the temperature of the bluing solution and metal preparation prior to finishing. The answer probably lies in a combination of all three theories. The lowest reported serial number of the VKT marked m/39's is 2508 dated 1940 and 76,227 dated 1944. The "B" barrel rifles have a serial number range of the low of 23,294 to a high of 48,978. All have 1942 dates.

#### m/39 BARREL MARKINGS

There are basically five standard markings of arsenal production on the m/39 rifles barrels, the SAKO, Valmet (VKT) and Tikkakoski marked barrels as well as the Belgian "B" marked barrels and the non maker marked barrels of the late 1960's and 1970 produced guns. There are also some very unusual marked barrels that are non standard in their pattern such as m/39's using converted barrels from Russian produced weapons as well as Remington and Westinghouse marked barrels. There are also a small lot of barrels that carry no marking other than the serial number. I refer to these rifles as "no maker/no date" m/39's. The serial numbers of these guns follow no pattern and appear to be random overhauls or built from existing barrel blanks and all of the markings removed.

The SAKO barrels feature the "S" in a gear wheel logo atop the date and the serial number, although later production shows that the boxed [SA] appears above the gear wheel. On these later produced guns the "[SA]" was stamped on the gun at the time of production so it is in a standard repeatable location. On the SAKO rifles produced under contract for the Civil Guard or images, the rifles in the 500,000 serial number range, the Sk.Y marking is found below the gearwheel and above the serial number. The serial numbering style in regards to the type of font or style is also unique to the SAKO made guns. This style can also be found on the m/28-30 production in its serial number stamping. The date of production is found directly below the serial number. Other markings found typically are the bullet type stamping of a capitol "D" and the SAKO "3600" firing proof marking with a small gearwheel emblem dividing the 36 and the 00. The inspection markings of =S= from the Civil Guard and on Army issued rifles the boxed [SA]. Many times the original Russian and Finnish markings from a previously used part often remain on the receiver, bolt, and magazine as well as other parts but in many instances these markings are lined out or neatly ground off. There is an indication that SAKO did produce some rifles in the same capacity of the m/28-30 for civilian sales and private purchase. The marking is the same as on the m/28-30, that being the SAKO gear wheel and the words SAKO with RIIHIMAKI below that. The private purchase m/39 are said to have been serial numbered in continuation of the 100,000 range used on the m/28-30 sales. There are no known specimens in American collections.

The VKT and Belgian "B" barrel markings are very similar to each other with the same stamping styles and sizing used. This could be explained by the fact that VKT may have handled the delivery of the blanks and the serial numbering and marking of them when they were put into use. The only difference is that the "B" replaces the <VKT> in a diamond symbol on the Belgian produced barrels and the test proof for firing of 3600 does not include the VKT symbol on the Belgian barrels. The markings from top to bottom include the boxed [SA] followed by the "B" or VKT manufacturing marking, the "D" bullet type marking and the serial number and date. There is no marking to denote that the rifle was assembled at the AV3 depot. The serial number is sometimes stamped along the side of the receiver per import legislation and occasionally serial numbers of previous rifles can still be seen. It is noted here that some of these receivers and components were being rebuilt and refit to a new rifle for the third time when they ended up assembled on a m/39. For example, many receivers started out on a Russian m/91 then could have been rebuilt and refurbished while being assembled into a Finnish m/91, m/24, m/27, m/28 or a m/28-30. Its final use then would have been on the m/39.

One characteristic noted from observed specimens and from the database of registered rifles of VKT and Belgian barreled m/39's is that the dates on the barrels are not chronological in the order of the serial numbers. This raise the possibility that the barrels were not date stamped until they were actually assembled at AV3. Of the 30,300 reported barrels that used VKT and Belgian specimens, it appears that 1943 dated VKT barreled rifles are quite scarce and that Belgian produced barrels as used on m/39's are rare as well. An educated guess by analysis of known serial numbers and determination of barrels produced apparently in sequence can be ventured as to total numbers of guns produced. Since no concrete numbers can be ascertained on specific "B" barrel m/39 production, it is my opinion that approximately 9,000-10,000 barrels were made for the m/39 rifles with the Belgian produced barrel blanks and marked with the identifier of "B" on the barrel shank and dated 1942. It is also apparent that the "B" barreled m/39's outnumber the rifles assembled with the original m/91 configuration barrels considerably. This would include post war assembly of "B" marked barrels on m/39's as well.

Many m/39's have been reported with barrels dated from 1967 to 1970 and later 1973. Some rifles have even been reported with earlier dates such as a "48" marking found above the serial number that could denote date of manufacture. This could indicate a weapon assembled by an armorer in 1948 and be one of the few thousand guns that were mentioned previously as being assembled at the AV1 depot after the war from remaining inventory of parts. Serial numbers for the 1967-70 range started at 300,000. Known serial numbers in this series of rifles start with the year 1967 and the lowest known serial number of 300,608 to 30914. The following year of 1968 shows a low serial number of 301,362 and the highest reported number of 1968 being 303,467. 1969 saw a low known serial number of 303,920 and continues to the high of 304,166. The final year of 1970 was thought to be the last in this series of small production runs but a few 1973 and 1972 dated guns have surfaced. The low known number of 1970 is 306,135 and the high of that year being 306,420. The other odd years of 1972 and 73 may be just repaired and or specially assembled rifles since no know quantity exists beyond the known few examples. The only marking on the later date guns is the serial number range and the date with no indication of manufacturers or assembly point. These guns are quite scarce and are usually found in excellent condition probably denoting very little use. A source in Finland has stated these 1967-1970, 1973 dated rifles were used primarily for marksmanship training of officers.

Total production of the m/39 rifle during the wartime period of 1940-1945 was a total of 96,800 rifles. Total production total of the m/39 including post war modifications is approximately 102,000.

A relatively new barrel marking for the m/39 rifle was recently introduced with the last import of these rifles. It consists of barrels made by Tikkakoski. These barrels carry the standard Tikkakoski marking of a "T" inside an inverted triangle enclosed in a circle. These barrels are originally m/91 barrels that have been modified to m/39 specifications. The barrels are shortened and recrowned and were used to replace badly worn or damaged barrels of m/39's when they were re-inspected or passing through a depot level repair/refurbishment cycle. It is not known what depot performed the repairs but the total number of barrels used for this procedure is known-5,000. This makes the Tikka barreled m/39 quite a rare find. Those known and observed have all been in extraordinary shape indicating little use after the refurbishment. Many still exhibit the arsenal tag affixed to the barrel band.

One of the last remaining primary markings that can be found on m/39 rifles are the little used and short lived PUOLUSTUSLAITOS marking. It was used but for a few short months in 1942 prior to the implementing of the boxed [SA]. This marking basically denotes "Government Property". It was initially used to prevent the Army's goods and weaponry from finding its way back home with the soldiers. All weapons were ordered to be marked this way in 1942 but for obvious reasons (the length and difficulty of applying such a large stamping in the metal) it was quickly abandoned in favor of the much smaller and easier boxed [SA] stamping. These rifles, the m/39 bearing this mark, are prime collector targets and are rarely encountered and highly prized when they do turn up.

Other unusual variants of the m/39 include some known with a round receivers instead of the traditional hexagonal type. These rifles are post war rebuilds utilizing some 91/30 receivers available to the depots. Barrels used run the gamut of standard Russian m/91-30 versions to even US made Westinghouse and Remington model 1891 barrels. Other oddities include specialty rifles like a version modified for a trench firing attachment and those used for sniping and night vision optics. The versions used during the Continuation war as a sniper's rifle was called (in order of issue) the m/39 PH, m/39 SOV, m/39-43 and the m/39-44.

The initial rifle, the m/39 PH was the Finnish army's first attempt to mate optics to the m/39. The initial test of the Physica scope and mount came with the earlier m/27 PH that was adopted for service in 1937. The great urgency for optically sighted rifles for snipers and marksmen forced the PH back into service with the m/39 in 1939-43. The sight base was as on the earlier m/27PH (m/37), welded to the left rear section of the receiver. The mount was attached to the base by means of a reverse dovetail and used a pressure fit type of attachment. A new stock was fabricated with a large wooden cheekpiece attached to the left side comb of the stock. Two versions of this stock are known, the early version using a standard m/39 stock cut and dovetailed for the cheekpiece and a later version factory produced as such and exhibiting a greater degree of fit and finish. Less than 150 of the m/39PH's were produced and are one of the rarest snipers found in the world today. The second m/39 sniping version called the m/39 SOV was basically a m/39 fitted with captured Soviet PE or PEM scopes and mounts. The bolts were turned down to allow clearance of the optics as on earlier snipers. Initially the mounts and bases were taken off captured Soviet m/91-30 PE sniper rifles when damaged or the barrels were worn to the point of diminishing accuracy. These were then adapted to the m/39. This however led to a critical shortage of required units and the state rifle factory or VKT began production of a Finnish copy of the over the bore base and mount. These were marked and serial numbered by VKT with approx. 150 units being produced. Only a couple of hundred SOV's were produced in total. The production year for this model was 1942 through 1944.

In order to ease the telescopic sight shortage a Finnish produced copy of the Soviet "Zeiss" telescope or PE was studied and arrangements were made and carried out to procure a large supply of optical parts needed for production from sources outside of Finland. The procurement of the parts and lens' proved difficult and soon after this plan was abandoned. To rectify this shortcoming the Finnish Army secured a contract with their co-belligerent in WW2- the Germans, to purchase telescopic sights from German optical manufactures. The initial contract of 2,000 scopes was never realized though as German requirements for the scope in their own service exceeded production and only 500 units were obtained. These scopes were fitted to a unique Finnish mount and base at the depot level and rushed into use. It is known that several hundred made it to see combat before the close of hostilities in 1944. This new scope and mount arrangement was designated the m/39-43.

The final version of the m/39 in sniping service in the Continuation war was a variant in the m/39-43. To supplement the shortage of optical sights available, the Army turned to Finnish Professor Väisälä to produce a Finnish copy of the German Ajack scope. This scope was nearly identical in size and shape to the German version but lacked the central focus ring. The same mount and base set up as the earlier m/39-43 was utilized with this new Finnish scope as well. This rig was termed the m/39-44 to differentiate it from the earlier version using the German telescopic sight. Marrku Palokangas reports in his reference books that only 50 rifles were ready for service

before the end of the war in 1944. It is not known how many more were produced after the close of hostilities from remaining stock. The initial production version of the Finnish made Ajack utilized a focus adjustment ring on the tube forward mounted. This was later deleted from the production version and only a few are known to exist today. They can be identified by the lack of any serial number or identifying marks on the tube. It is also reported that post war the Army obtained small lots of telescopic sights from the German firm of Wetzlar to replace damaged or worn m/43 and 44 scopes.

Valmet also produced a small batch of scopes in the 1950's but these proved to be too delicate for field conditions and were kept in storage. These scopes approximate the Soviet PU scope in shape but are a bit longer, approximately 1.5 inches.

#### ACCESSORIES

There are a few basic accessories which were issued to m/39 rifle, with the most basic being the sling. The standard sling produced for the m/39 was a leather one using a zinc coated steel buckle of square in shape. The leather was tanned and dyed green or in some instances a gray/green color. The other version of the sling used on the m/39 is a wartime expediency sling produced for the Civil Guard's contract of rifles. It is a canvas/web type sling, light brown in color and having a leather forward portion sewn on. This brown leather section retains the sling button for affixing the sling to the forward swivel found on the front barrel band. The Civil Guard brand of SkY is found stamped on the leather tab just above the canvas section. This sling is rarely encountered as only 10,000 rifles were produced for this contract. Other accessories are the blank firing device used in training and the cleaning kit and bayonet

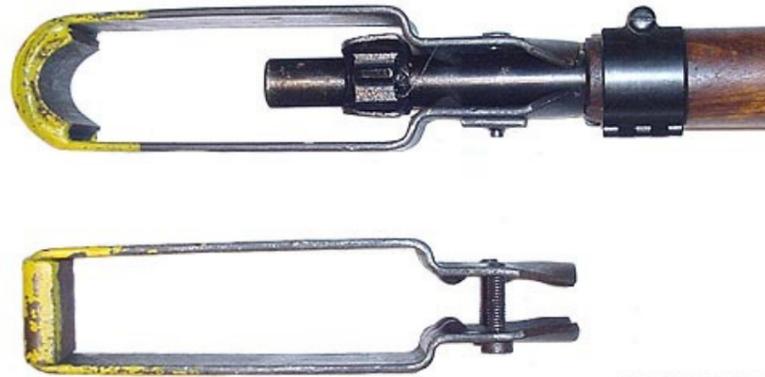
VIC THOMAS



VIC THOMAS

The slings of the m/39 rifle above. On the top is the standard leather m/39 sling in green died leather. In the middle is the canvas and leather sling issued by the Civil Guard for the m/39 rifles they contracted for. On the bottom is an ersatz rubberized sling for the m/39 used during the Continuation War when supplies were short. On the bottom is the leather end of the m/39 SkY rifle sling showing the stamped impression of Sk.Y denoting Civil Guard ownership.

The blank firing device is attached to the barrel behind the front sight ears by a screw and clamp arrangement. Its basic function is to deflect and prevent muzzle flash or blast from causing any harm to a nearby soldier. The cleaning kit was issued in a small canvas or cotton pouch with a drawstring closure. It consisted of a combination tool/screwdriver that allowed for the firing pin protrusion to be checked, the disassembly of the weapon and the tightening of the jag or bore brush to the two brass cleaning rod extensions provided. This screwdriver was in two parts. The wooden handle end that had flattened sides and a steel reinforced cap that had a slot in it. This allowed the screwdriver/combo tool to be inserted into the handle. The blade was reversible to allow a large and small blade to be used. Other components of the kit were a bore brush, two brass cleaning rod extensions one of which is a jag tip, a rod collar to protect the rod head when used during cleaning and a small rod handle that was flattened on one end to allow it to pass through the slot in the m/39's cleaning rod head for tightening the rod into the stock and for removal. One or two small round oil bottles were issued. When in tandem one was filled with oil and the other solvent often times petrol or kerosene. The muzzle cover/cleaning rod guide was also carried in the pouch.



VIC THOMAS

The m/39 bayonet is one of the rarest accessories for the rifle. The bayonets were produced starting in 1941 to fulfill a Civil Guard contract for 10,000 pieces. The bayonet was a new design that was to allow its use as a fighting knife or pukko and in a traditional role when affixed to the rifle. Veljekset Kulmalan Konepaja was contracted to produce the blade. There were plans for an army contract as well but the small firm was not able to meet the Civil Guard's initial contract of only 10,000 bayonets and the Army soon canceled their pending order. The bayonet was issued with a green leather scabbard with a metal reinforced tip and edge. The bayonet's contract was not completed until the later half of 1942. The blade shape is very much like that of a hunting knife in design and appearance. Most of these bayonets were put into storage until they were eventually destroyed for scrap. The Army did experiment with a shortened version of the m/27- m/28-30 bayonets to the new m/39 shape and configuration and designated the modified bayonets the m/42 for the year of project. The project was then canceled in 1943 with only 150 blades being converted. These are extremely rare and hardly ever encountered.



VIC THOMAS

#### CONCLUSION

The m/39 rifle is one of the finest combat rifles produced during WW2. It's accuracy rivaled that of the other issue battle rifles and surpassed a great number of them. It is my opinion the most accurate battle rifle of bolt action design that saw combat in WW2 outside of the Swedish m/96 Mauser. The total numbers produced are rather small when compared to other main battle rifles of the time frame. There are many interesting collectable variants within the production and a collection could be built on m/39's alone. We are very fortunate in the United States to see three different batches of the m/39 come into the country over the years for the collector and military rifle enthusiast. The history of these rifles is unparalleled and the total production numbers incredibly low. The m/39 should be a part of every Mosin Nagant collector's inventory as well as any WW2 rifle collection.

The Finnish m/39 stayed in inventory with the Finnish defense forces well into the 1990's. Only in this past year of 2000 have the final 20,000 rifles of the remaining 78,000 rifles from reserve inventory been released/sold to the public and collectors.

Good luck and happy hunting for the m/39 rifle.

## The Finnish Mosin Nagant Model 1939 Service Rifle

---



---

### The m/1939 rifle photo section

---



M39 without bayonet



M39 with its issued bayonet affixed



M39's with two versions of hangtags. There are other versions of these handtags but the two above are the most commonly seen. Note that all hangtags are post war according to Markku Palokangas.

---



A standard M39 pistol grip stock above and an early straight stocked version below.



Straight stock top and pistol grip M39 bottom. Notice the splice on the buttstock of the straight stock as this is very common to see on Finnish M39's.



Two 1941 SAKO straight stocked M39's. In past years when one would encounter these rifles the stocks almost always showed hard use, and this would make sense as these would have been the first M39's to see field action. Stating this in the last few imports straight stocked M39's have shown up in almost new condition and the rifles have been outside of the "correct" date range. It has been assumed by some collectors (myself included- Tuco) that there must have been some unissued stocks still in Finnish stockpiles that were not used when the standard pistol grip came into full production. These stocks must have been stored and fitted to rifles sometime post war in a Finnish rework. These stocks were just fitted to what was on hand as I have seen straight stocks on B barrels, VKT's, and even one 1970 dated rifle. There has to be a reason these new stocks are showing up and my guess to why is stated above. Again this is just an assumption and is not stated as a fact but it sure seems to be a valid assumption.



A close-up of the Tikka markings from a M39. While some sources here in the US have stated that these rifles only seem to fall in a certain date range, examples such as this one show this to be an incorrect assumption. This M39 was once a 1926 made Tikka M91 rifle and is one of three examples that I (Tuco) have personally seen with 1920's dates.



Various stock maker markings from the M39 rifle. There are other variations not shown.



The lower photo of the white "T" used as control marking. These stocks were marked when the rifles went into long term storage. The "T" marked rifles were inspected regularly to check for proper storage conditions. The large "T" on this rifle identifies it as belonging to the ordinance department in charge of issuing equipment and most probably in charge of the storage facilities handling the stockpiles of equipment. The "T" stands for "Taisteluvälinehallinto" and was also found commonly as an ink stamp or impress on leather goods like slings.



The three stock splice variations that a collector will encounter on the m/39 rifles. On the left is the rounded finger shaped splice of the wartime produced stocks. The center shows the immediate post war produced versions used for repair of rifles in inventory and the last is the final version of the "three finger" splice made in the 1960's for use in refurbishment of the rifles that required new furniture.



B barrel M39 and SAKO made Puolustuslaitos marked M39. Sako made Civil Guard SKY M39 and VKT M39. No date no maker and later 1970 dated M39 are pictured below.





Finnish M39 bayonet in its green leather sheath above and the below the blade removed from the sheath. This bayonet was an attempt to bridge the gap between the bayonet and the fighting knife (puukko) so favoured by Finnish soldiers. In the inset box you see the markings of the Civil Guard impressed into the leather of Sk.Y



The markings found on the bayonet for the m/39 rifle. On the left is the Civil Guards markings of Sk.Y stamped on the base of the blade and the acceptance proof of the organization =S= on the ricasso. On the right is the blade makers name-Veljekset Kulmalan Konepaja.



A grouping of m/39 bayonets and scabbards.

Mosin-Nagant Dot Net Collection



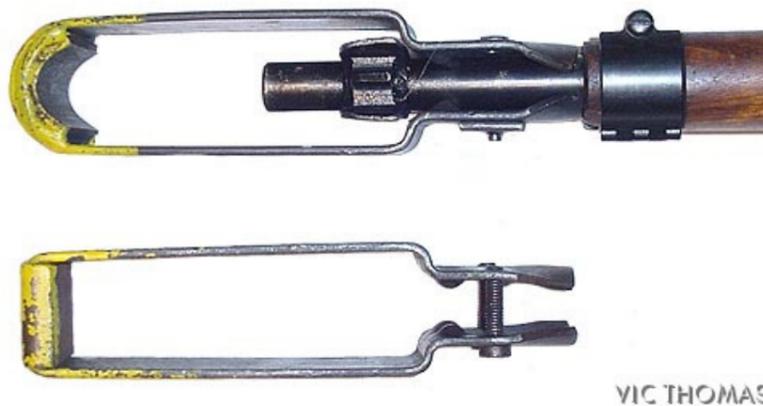
m/39 bayonets and scabbards. The lighting in the photo has made the scabbards a bit darker than they really are. The scabbards are lighter green in color as can be seen in the first photo on this page. All the bayonets on this page are a part of the Mosin-Nagant Dot Net Collection.



m/39 muzzle covers from early smooth first pattern version on the left to the progression of checkered brass and steel to the later plastic postwar version.



The field cleaning tool kit for the m/39 rifle. Each kit was issued to a soldier to be carried at all times with him. The kit was issued in a small pouch often times marked with a [SA] and T ink stamping . The kit contained two brass cleaning rod extensions-one as an extension piece and the other as the jag retainer for a small flannel patch used in cleaning. The kit also contained a specially shaped tool that doubled as the cross handle for the cleaning rod when used in conjunction with the rod collar and tow tighten and or remove the cleaning rod. The flattened end was inserted into the slot of the cleaning rod and used as a wrench to tighten or loosen the unit. The kit also contained a combination tool/screwdriver used in assembly and disassembly and for measuring the firing pin protrusion. A small oil bottle was the final addition to the kit. Note the rod collar from the m/39 kit contains two holes for mounting the rod either above or below the end of the rod when in use with the special flattened cross handle tool.



The two versions of the blank firing device opr BFD.. The first pattern above mounted on the rifle and the later second pattern with the flat end below.



VIC THOMAS

A wooden hang tag that has caused much confusion at times here in the US. These are very uncommon to see but do show up from time to time. When I was at a major importer this year I picked up a few examples of these as I had never seen one in person. The tag is wooden and has a Finnish name on it. It had been assumed this might be an rifle used by someone in an armory and that is why the name was added. The breakthrough came when I spoke to a Finn that had served in the Army in the mid 1960's as he told me that this was the name of the Finnish soldier the rifle was issued to. This is very interesting and adds a bit of history to a rifle.

New Info: This was sent to me today in an email from Finland. It seems the use of these tags was more common than I thought and also a more modern practice. Thanks much to the Finnish NCO for the input. From the email: *"The wooden tags are and was used in our army as a name tags. Every private had 5 tags and those were put in weapon, gas mask, back bag, combat vest bread bag and one was in reserve. It is still a very common practice an in thos tags are written soldiers name and unit."* Another Finn has added these tags were issued during field use so the tag staying on a rifle sold then imported to the US is not a common find.



Civil Guard district number from a M39. It is not as common to see these on M39 rifles as it is the earlier models of Civil Guard rifles. It is assumed the reason is that most of these rifles went into service very quickly and there was no time (or need) for the Civil Guard armories to mark these as such.



Pressure proof marking on a M39 rifle. This proof is from VKT but there are other versions of this marking that depend on the maker of the rifle.



VIC THOMAS

The very rare M39 PH Sniper Rifle. This is without a doubt one of the most rare military rifles one will ever encounter as only 100 or so of these were ever made in 1943. To use the somewhat odd Physica scope a special raised cheekpiece was added to the stock. There are not many of these known in the world today with the example above being one of the only two complete examples that I know of here in the United States.



VIC THOMAS

The m/39 SOV was an attempt to use the captured top mount PE scopes and mounts that were coming in from the front in the conflict with the Soviet Union. It married the excellent m/39 and its exceptional accuracy with a rugged proven scope and mount design. The Finns made copies of the Russian mount and the work of fabricating the snipers was done at the State Rifle Factory or VKT. This was the most abundant of the snipers made by the Finn's with a little less than 500 being made.



VIC THOMAS

Another rare example of a M39 sniper is the M43 that is fitted with a Finnish Ajack type scope. Only 500 of these scopes were sent to Finland in 1943 and again these are a very rare rifle. The example above is in a private US sniper collection and is one outstanding item. For more information on these rifles please refer to the Sniper Section of this site. It is full of great information on all the Mosin Nagant sniper rifles.



Finnish M39 Sniper Rifles from top to bottom:

M39 PH Sniper Less Than 100 Made

M39 SOV Less Than 200 Made

M43 Less Than 500 Made



The m/39 SOV scope and mount. This example from the authors collection has a Finnish marked scope as pictured-the boxed [SA]



The right side view of the scope and mount. The base is one of only a couple hundred made by the State Rifle Factory (VKT) and is marked VKT on the left and the boxed [SA] denoting Finnish military property



VIC THOMAS



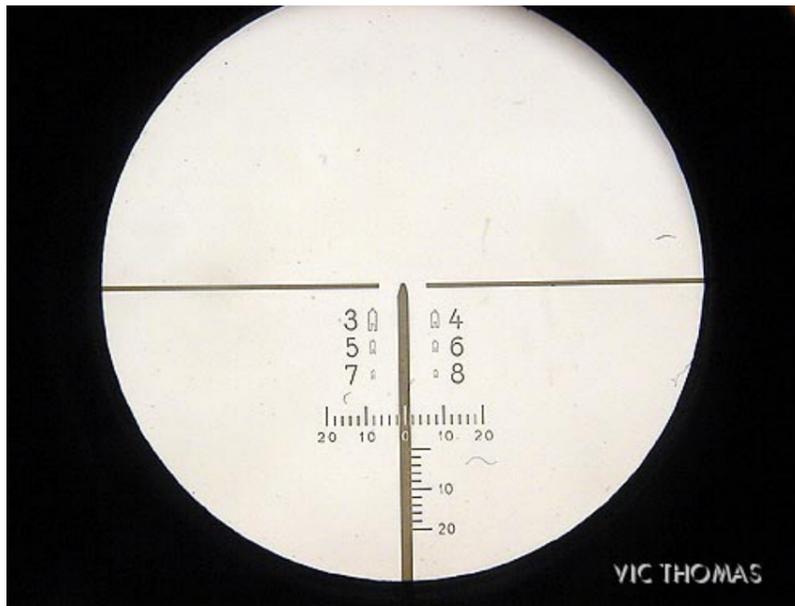
VIC THOMAS

Top and bottom view of the M39PH Sniper Rifle.



VIC THOMAS

The scope of the M39PH is its case.



The view from the scope. This is from a rare M27 PH Sniper but the scope is the same as one finds on the M39 so the view is the same.



The odd stock that allowed the use of the scope on the rifle. A top view of the stock. The scope was fitted so far to the left of the rifle that this cheekpiece needed to be added so the shooter could get correct line of sight.

**Back To Top**

#### Site Updates and News

**April 2006**

Estonia: This article has been in the works for a while but has been delayed a number of times. The main reason for the delay was the death of Hannes Walter - the director of the Laidoneri Museum. Hannes was a great guy and I was able to gain a wealth of information from him over the past few years. I also must thank the Estonian Ministry Of Defense as they have been helpful in my research.

I plan on some updates to this section in the summer as I should have some photos, manuals, line drawings, and the like from Estonian production by this time. Sorry these are not in place now but again due to a number of reasons this just did not happen - Still I wanted to go ahead and share the information that I have on hand.

A great part of this information has never been seen outside of Estonia so I am pleased to bring this to the site users. Estonia is one of those nations whose history has been clouded by being a part of the former USSR and Estonian history is just now becoming accessible.

Inter Ordnance of America IP

©2013 Mosin-Nagant.net Trademarks by permission subject to their respective copyright(s)