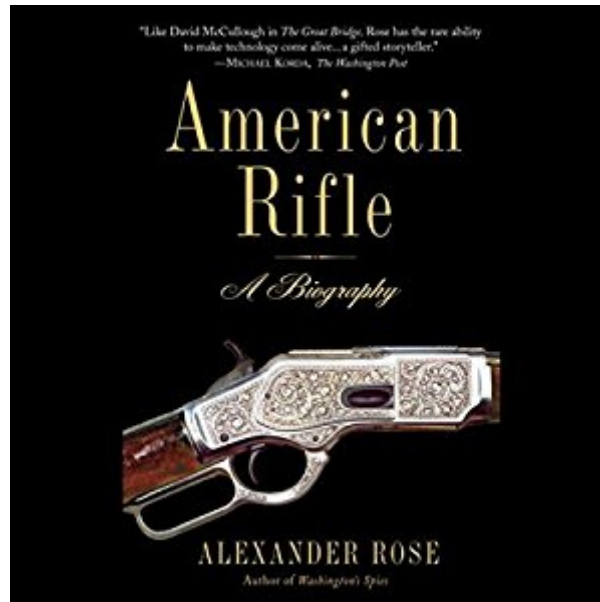




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American Rifle: A Biography



Synopsis

George Washington insisted that his portrait be painted with one. Daniel Boone created a legend with one. Abraham Lincoln shot them on the White House lawn. And Teddy Roosevelt had his specially customized. Now, in this first-of-its-kind audiobook, historian Alexander Rose delivers a colorful, engrossing biography of an American icon: the rifle. Drawing on the words of soldiers, inventors, and presidents, based on extensive new research, and encompassing the Revolution to the present day, *American Rifle* is a balanced, wonderfully entertaining history of this most essential firearm and its place in American culture. In the eighteenth century American soldiers discovered that they no longer had to fight in Europe's time-honored way. With the evolution of the famed "Kentucky" Rifle - a weapon slow to load but devastatingly accurate in the hands of a master - a new era of warfare dawned, heralding the birth of the American individualist in battle. In this spirited narrative, Alexander Rose reveals the hidden connections between the rifle's development and our nation's history. We witness the high-stakes international competition to produce the most potent gunpowder...how the mysterious arts of metallurgy, gunsmithing, and mass production played vital roles in the creation of American economic supremacy...and the ways in which bitter infighting between rival arms makers shaped diplomacy and influenced the most momentous decisions in American history. And we learn why advances in rifle technology and ammunition triggered revolutions in military tactics, how ballistics tests - frequently bizarre - were secretly conducted, and which firearms determined the course of entire wars. From physics to geopolitics, from frontiersmen to the birth of the National Rifle Association, from the battles of the Revolution to the war in Iraq, *American Rifle* is a must listen for history buffs, gun collectors, soldiers - and anyone who seeks to understand the dynamic relationship between the rifle and this nation's history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When my wife gave me this book for Christmas, my first thought was "A biography? Of the rifle?" Two days later, when I surfaced from reading it cover to cover during every spare moment, I thought "Brilliant book!" and "Brilliant wife!" This book is an absolute must read for anyone interested in firearms and their place in American society. I began reading thinking I knew quite a bit about the rifle--thanks to growing up in the American West, the Marine Corps, and many years as a cop. I finished this wonderfully well-written biography with a better understanding of how and why the rifle has been an integral part of our nation's social, technological, military and political evolution. Bryan Vila, Ph.D. Co-author [The Micronesian Blues](#) Co-author [The Role of Police in American Society: A Documentary History](#) (Primary Documents in American History and Contemporary Issues)

Part of the great story of the American Revolution is how the Colonists used their more accurate rifles, along with woodcraft learned from the Indians, to defeat the British soldier who relied on smoothbore muskets and unaimed fire in ranks. Like most legends, there's an element of truth to the story, but it's far from the whole truth. Back in 1776 there was a heated debate on the effectiveness of massed fire versus aimed fire, and that debate continued through every war this country fought. It even continues to this day. During the American Civil War the US Army resisted adopting the new repeating arms from Henry and Sharps, even as they were being purchased by some units with their own money. The repeaters weren't powerful enough, and encouraged troops to waste ammunition, said the Army, and even an order from Lincoln wasn't enough to get them to change. As late as the Spanish-American War the same debate was being fought between those who favored the standard single-shot rifle, and those who supported the new European-styled bolt-action Krag-Johnson, which delivered a higher rate of fire. A few years later, on the eve of World War 1, many fought the introduction of the new Springfield rifle, a modern bolt-action design heavily borrowed from Mauser that used a European-style bullet of only .30 caliber. Nonsense, the traditionalists argued. You need the spacing power of the good old .45-70! And in World War II there were even a few commanding generals, WWI vets themselves, who insisted that their troops be armed with the good old Springfield rather than the new Garand semi-automatic- itself generally acknowledged as the best infantryman's weapon in the war. After WWII there was the battle over a

new gun that became the M-14, and this time it involved our NATO partners as well. The Army won, largely because England and Europe were still recovering from the war. When we entered Vietnam another new weapon set the traditionalists against the progressives: The M-16. And the battle continued in the Gulf, as the new M-4- a gun designed for short ranges and high rate of fire- went up against the M-16. Author Alexander Rose is a deft hand with historical narrative and does a great job of presenting the people, the debates, and the history surrounding all these battles- I learned quite a bit reading this book. Rose is at his best dealing with the personalities that make up this narrative- soldiers, politicians, inventors, and all manner of eccentrics and curious characters. He's on less solid ground when it comes to technical matters, and those with a background in arms will find a few jarring errors whenever he gets into technical explanation. The third lug on the Springfield bolt was to insure against the first two failing and sending the bolt flying backwards; Rose says it was to prevent the chamber exploding. Not quite the same thing. His discussion of the M-16 problems seriously understates the problem of corrosion, which resulted from the Army's refusal to spend a few extra dollars to have Colt chrome-plate the barrel and chamber. His discussion of Kalishnikov does note the debt the AK-47 owed to German guns, but doesn't note that it was a group of engineers and gunsmiths who designed and built the rifle for which the man received all the credit. (For the definitive stories on the M-16 and the AK, as well as other fascinating historical stories about arms in the modern age, see C.J. Chivers's *The Gun*, an excellent book) Details aside, this is a very good book, with a lot of material that I don't think has been discussed in popular histories before. It's a good compliment to Chivers' book, with more detail on the period from the Revolutionary War through WWI, and a fine addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in the history of arms and armies.

Wanna "know" what you're talking about when it comes to the history of American firearms? Well pilgrim read this book. The transition from the M-1 Garand to the M-16 is especially well described and heart breaking because of the way it was introduced to fighting men in Vietnam. The difference of stick and ball gunpowder in this weapon's ammunition needs to be exposed as one of the root causes of its fail to fire blues. And to all who lionize the M-14 (the stopgap between the M-1 and the M-16) the true story of why the M-14 and why it was an inferior weapon as opposed to the communist AK. A damn good read IMHO.

This is a terrific work, well researched and engaging. One of the best parts of this format is that the references are hotlinked within the text. In other words, when a passage in the book refers to a

research work the author used, the superscript is a hotlink to the references section, where the reader may get more information on the passage. There is a handy link in the references page which then returns the reader to the passage. Very nice, especially in a work like this. As for the book itself, it did suffer from some formatting issues, mainly hyphenated words which, in the original, were obviously at the end of a line. However, this only distracted me a little. The content is informative and engaging, the conclusions drawn are apt, and the history given was, at least for me, something not commonly taught or learned. I appreciated Mr. Rose's efforts with this book and look forward to reading more of his works.

This book was an awesome read!! For those of you that would like some insight into the background of the rifle as pertaining strongly to the American military, read this book. It was fascinating to see the the basic structure and operation change with history and the wrangling within the US government as they battled the thoughts of what was always used in the past versus new trends of thought and how effective they may or may not be. Also, the effects of how various rifles and calibers would relate to our allies in Europe and the effect that the AK47 had in regards to the growth of the American military rifle. Mr. Alexander Rose did a great job of describing the various military rifles and the manufacturers and how they competed with each other and the heads of the US military. You will not be disappointed with this book. Thanks.

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