

PMM BLOG ARCHIVE

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The M3 Fighting Knife

At the end of World War I it was clear that a reliable fighting knife would remain an important part of the individual kit & gear issued to members of the US Army. However, unlike other branches that chose to have a dual-purpose (fighting and utility), the Army continued to issue separate iterations. Many times, this was based on the type of unit, the type of primary weapon issued (and corresponding bayonet, or not), and the mission set. Despite such variables set in place by big-Army, individual troops sourced their fixed blades.

For two particular units, Airborne and Rangers, many found their primary weapon was without a corresponding bayonet or were engaged in missions that necessitated the issuance of a dedicated fighting knife for close-quarters battle.



Replacing the Mark I Trench Knife, the M3 Fighting Knife, filled the critical role of a fighting knife – standard issue for Airborne and Rangers. Later in the War, post-1943, the knife became more available to other troops.

The M3 resembles a dagger in design but does not feature a full edge on both sides however its application is equally accomplished for penetrating thick clothing. To protect the use, the knife has metal guard, though small, that keeps the user's hand from sliding off of the stacked leather handle and onto the blade. Worth noting, the design of the blade was also meant to use material sparingly. As such, a dagger is not well designed for prying, digging, and heavy field use due to its thin profile and length.



At issuance, there was a leather sheath (scabbard) available that would transition out of supply channels making way for a sheath made of fiberglass and steel. For those in Airborne units, it was commonplace to lash the M3 on the exterior of the boot while at the same time many others would place knife at other locations such as belts or packs. Most commonly, the knife would find its way into the most convenient location for emergency retrieval and use.



Regardless of how advanced weapon systems, training, and society becomes the necessity of a reliable knife is likely to remain - at least, most would argue, it's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it.