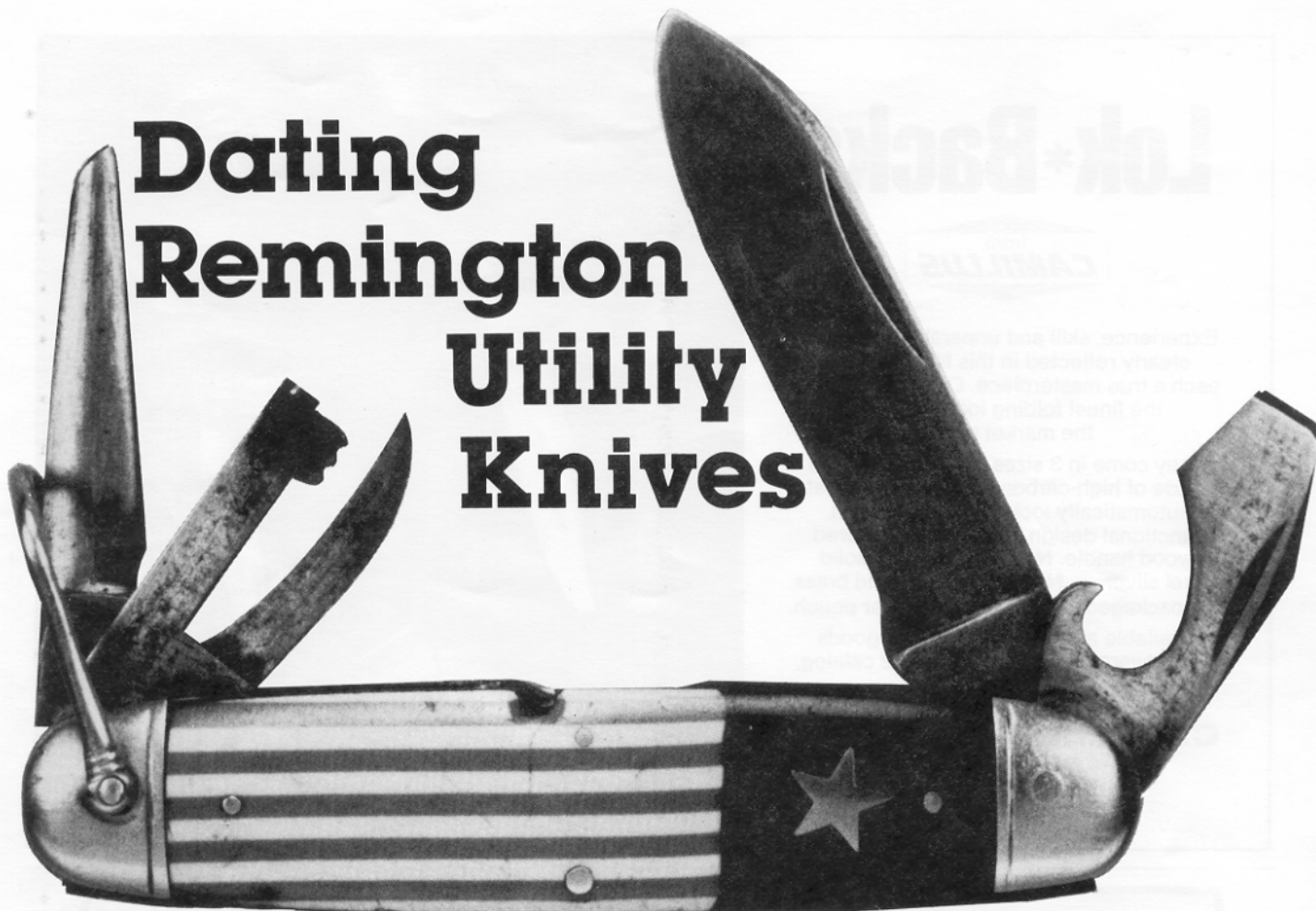


# Dating Remington Utility Knives



*by Dennis Ellingsen*

The area of collecting that has been the most stimulating and interesting to me has been the scout/utility knife. It will have to be admitted that the collectors of scouts are very much in the minority, and I find myself oft times listening to comments such as, "Get rid of those scouts and into those big folders." Well, I've still got those scouts; and the big folder is a special, fully functional two foot long scout that closes with real authority.

The purpose of this article is not to convert collectors to the scout/utility knives, but rather to use this particular pattern to show the historical progression in the evolution of a cutlery company through the design changes initiated to simplify the manufacturing or to increase sales.

The pride of our scout type knives most certainly centers around the 14

Remington variations that fill a very special spot in our collection of 150 knives. No other knives are handled more, looked at more, polished more or studied more. Especially studied. Each time that I look at a Remington, I am able to draw a new conclusion or am delighted at an obvious difference that had not been seen before. The following is based mostly on conjecture and conclusions through observations. Please bear in mind, that many ideas suggested may be applicable to other patterns, but no such claim is being made now.

All scout knives are utility knives, but not all utility knives are scout knives. A utility knife should consist of a main cutting blade with a can opener and/or cap lifter and/or punch and/or screwdriver. Many times they have all of the above. A scout knife is one that is sanctioned by any of the recognized official scouting organizations, i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or Campfire Girls.

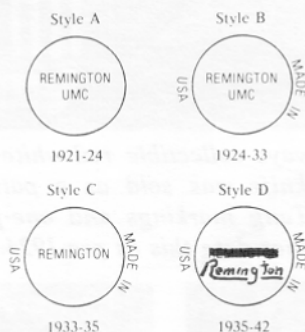
*“All scout knives are utility knives, but not all utility knives are scout knives. . . .”*

These knives are always so marked by either an official shield and/or an authorized etching on the blade stating it is an official knife. Many a utility knife carries the inscription “Boy Scouts” or “Scout Knife,” but without the official mark, it is only a utility knife. Remington made utility knives, Official Boy Scout knives, Girl Scout knives and Campfire Girl knives.

Remington entered the cutlery business in 1921, and one of their first patterns was the utility pattern. The official scouting organization's were only 11 years old, and the movement was quite strong and presented a very lucrative selling market for a cutlery firm. The first Official Scout by Remington was made circa 1924 using the acorn shield. The acorn style shield was used until 1927-28, at which time it was changed to the familiar round shield with the official emblem.

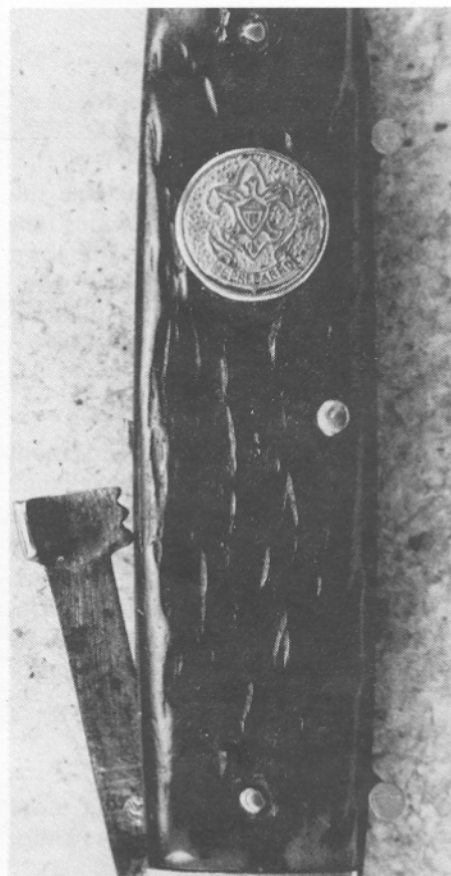
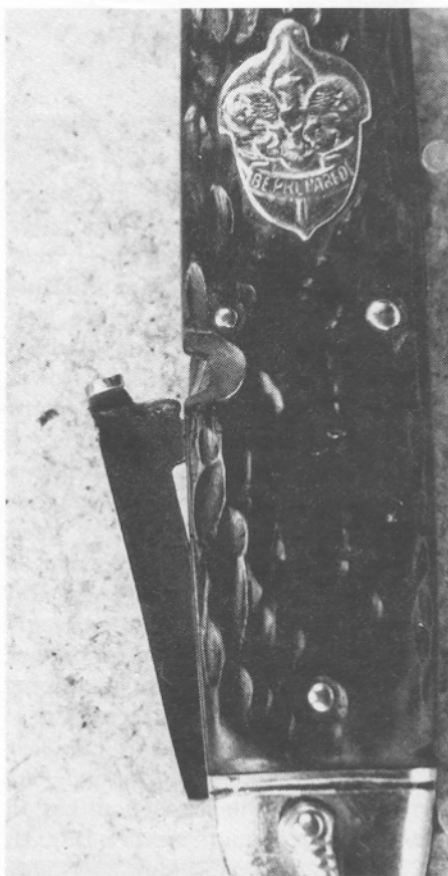
#### TANG MARKS

The first point of interest viewed on any pocket knife is the main blade tang marking. There were four variations of tang marks used on utility knives during the 21 years of the Remington Cutlery Co. The tang marks are:



#### THE SCREWDRIVER/CAP LIFTER

All specimens of the Remington utility knives this author has viewed have utilized the screwdriver and cap lifter on the same blade. Three variations of the screwdriver exist, which can be described as short, long and medium. The short was offered for sale until circa 1930 and the long from 1929 to 1931. The long screwdrivers I've viewed have usually been bent



*The acorn official shield and the vertical lift tab date this pre-1927, while the round shield and horizontal-to-frame lift tab indicate post-1927.*

*The three screwdriver styles help to identify dating of utility knives. The longest design almost always has the bump or kick below the cap lifter.*



# With the ground work laid, let's outline the clues to identifying Remington Utility Knives.

## Phase 1 Pre-July 28, 1924

- A) One-piece can opener design
- B) Style A tang markings
- C) Short style screwdriver

## Phase 2 July 28, 1924 to July 12, 1927

- A) Two-piece can opener marked Remington
- B) Vertical lift tab with cut in frame
- C) Style B tang markings
- D) Short style screwdriver

## Phase 3 July 12, 1927 to 1931-32

- A) Two-piece can opener marked with patent number
- B) Style B tang markings
- C) Either short or long screwdriver (not medium)
- D) Parallel lift tab on can opener (used on all following years)

and twisted; therefore, I believe the company standardized the medium blade. Note the bump in the long screwdriver which served as a kick. This kick was only evident on the long screwdriver.

### THE PUNCH BLADE

Not too much can be said about the punch blade, since little change occurred. It can be noted that the lettering styles are identical to the main blade tang marking; however, this blade was often not marked. Also, the punch blade was casehardened, as can be witnessed by the coloration of the inside surface of the blade.

### THE CAN OPENER

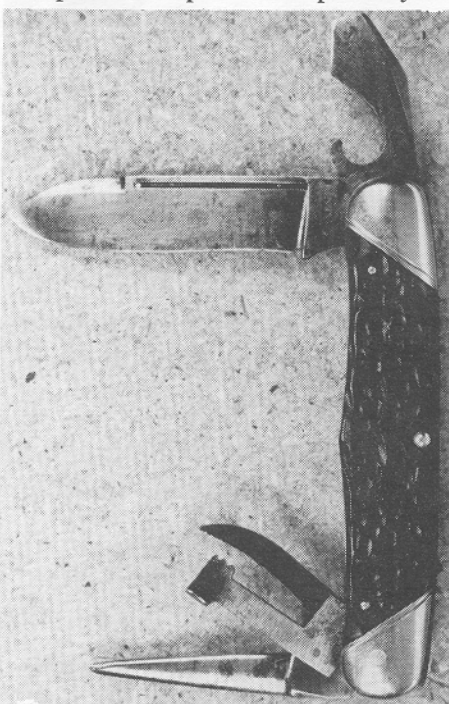
This tool has shown the most design change of any part of the knife.



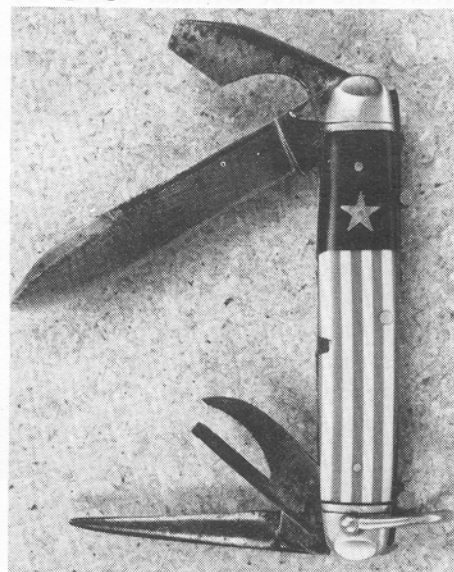
(Above left) An Official Campfire Girls Knife. The Wo-He-Lo shield stands for Work-Health-Love. Can opener markings, tang markings and short screwdriver date this as phase 3. (Right) A rare Remington utility knife pattern with slant bolsters. The can opener indicates the patent number, making this a phase 3.

The first designs were one-piece construction which resembled a letter D with a broken top portion. A new pattern was submitted for patent July 28, 1924; this was a two-piece construction riveted together to open rimmed or rimless cans. The lower cutting blade was made of a hard high-carbon steel which would retain a sharp cutting edge; the back or upper part was made of a softer and tougher spring steel. This design was used exclusively from 1925 to 1942 and was even used from stockpile by Pal Cutlery Co. after that company purchased Remington. This can opener was costly to manufacture; therefore, once the stockpile was depleted, a new design was manufactured by Pal.

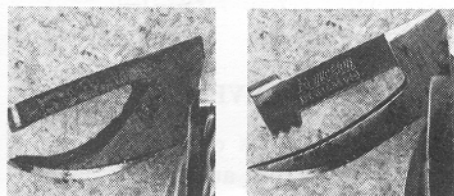
From the above information, one can safely draw the conclusion that all one-piece can openers are pre-July 28,



1924. It took three years for the patent to be issued. Between July 28, 1924 and July 12, 1927 the new two-piece design was manufactured with only the name *Remington* stamped on it. On July 12, 1927 patent number 1,635,649 was given to Remington Arms for the two-piece can opener. All can openers with a patent number stamped on them were made after July 12, 1927. It is guessed that this stamping can be found for at least



The always collectible red-white-blue utility knife was sold as a patriotic knife. Tang markings and one-piece can opener date this as pre-1924.




(Above left) Before the invention of the two-piece can opener (1924), this one-piece design was found on all Remington can openers. (Right) This can opener was made after 1927, as evidenced by the patent date stamping.

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*Phase 4 Circa 1933 to 1935*

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- A) Two-piece can opener, no marking
- B) Style  tang markings
- C) Medium style screwdriver  
(used on all following years)

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*Phase 5 Circa 1935 to 1942*

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- A) Two-piece can opener, no marking
  - B) Style D tang markings
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three to five years, and then no more can opener markings appear. Can openers marked with the Remington stamp only are pre-July 12, 1927 but after July 28, 1924; while those with no name stamped on them are after circa 1932.

Another point to mention is the lift tab located on the upper forward portion of the can opener. This original design showed a vertical-to-the-frame lift tab which required that a cut be made in the bone and frame to allow for this tab to be in a rest position. In 1927, this was changed to a parallel lift tab, eliminating the extra step of manufacture.

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The above identification clues are fairly accurate, but exceptions will exist due to stockpile situations on certain parts. A little sleuthing will straighten out the exception.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on the Remington C-5 catalog. It is my belief that this catalog was first published in 1925, as evidenced by a price list which accompanied the first catalogs dated February, 1925. Discontinued models bear this out. Reprints of the C-5 catalog indicate a date of May 1, 1930; however, the only difference in the 1925 and 1930 catalogs is the first few pages preceding the actual numbered page 1. The interesting pages are those that depict the one piece can opener design, when we know that this changed in 1924. The 1930 reprint shows the two-piece design in the first few pages. It is my feeling that this catalog preceded the new two-piece can opener, and no change in pictures was ever made, save for those preface pages. I would welcome additional information and correction. ☐