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The Sauer K98k

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J.P. Sauer & Sohn was one of the oldest gun makers in Germany. Sauer had made Gew. 98 rifles for Imperial Germany in WW I. Their line of pocket pistols were well known throughout the world and had been widely used by the German military and police forces of the 20th century.

After the end of the First World War Sauer continued in the firearms business, and thus was ideally suited to be one of the prime contractors for the new German K98k rifle. When German re-armament began in 1933, Sauer was assigned the manufacturer's code "S/147", and their initial production was dated with the letter code "K" for the year 1934.

Sauer K98k's had a deep commercial blue finish up until 1941 and often displayed a two-toned (blue in front--plum color in the rear) coloration on the receiver ring which was caused by the hardening process used only by Sauer.

The Sauer "S/147K" marking appeared on the right side of the receiver ring and in small letters rather than on the top of the receiver. The known serial number range for this variation is from 478 to 7656, with an estimated production of less than 10,000 rifles (making it a rare variation). The first Sauer K98k rifles used a different barrel band retention system than Mauser. Sauer used two separate springs pinned into the stock, (the spring on the right side of the stock retained the front band and the spring on the left side of the stock, which faced rearward, retained the rear band). This system was used into the "a" serial number range of the Sauer "G" date K98k rifles. All other subsequent K98k production used a single band spring inlaid into the right side of the stock between the front and rear bands.

"K" date stocks and handguards were made from solid walnut. Weimar type eagles were used for proofing and Waffenamts "49", "114", "115", and "116" were used. All parts were milled and every part was numbered to the rifle including the cleaning rod. **All known examples were issued to the Heer (army) but a great many can be found with "R.F.V." marked deeply into the buttplate.**



The 1935 "S/147/G" date Sauer K98k has three variations based on the code and date locations and size. The first variation is a continuation of the "K" date marking standard with a small "S/147/G" marking on the right side of the receiver ring. The second variation (starting in the mid "b" serial number range) moves that small "S/147/G" marking from the right side of the receiver ring to the top of the receiver ring.

The Third variation occurs in mid "c" serial number range. Large size letters and numbers replace the smaller sized markings. The first 12,000 rifles produced (approximation) in 1935 continued to use the unique two-band spring system of the "K" date Sauer 98K rifle before changing to the Mauser system. Stocks and handguards remained solid walnut. Weimar type eagles remained in use and Waffenamts numbers used were "114", "116", "214", and "359". All known examples are "H" branch of service stamped (army). The known serial number range is from 520 to 6889 for an estimated production run of 80,000 rifles. All metal parts are milled and numbered to match the rifle.

It is interesting to note that both the "K" and "G" date Sauer rifles lacked the "Mod 98" on the siderail.

1936 Sauer "S/147" production follows the standards set in 1935, with solid walnut stocks and handguards and all metal parts milled and numbered to match the rifle. Weimar type eagles and waffenamts numbers "118", "214", and "359" continue to be used. These rifles have flat buttplates, 10 inch cleaning rods, and are all army (Heer) issued. The known serial number range is from 72 to 8533t, with an estimated production run of 210,000 rifles. The "Mod.98" legend was added to the siderail in the middle of the "c" serial number range.

"S/147" rifles started to use laminate stocks and handguards in 1937. All parts continued to be milled and numbered to match the rifle. Weimar eagles appear exclusively in the proofing until the "d" range when Nazi eagles began to appear in conjunction with the earlier Weimar type. The Nazi eagles are used for the firing proofs on the barrel and bolt and as the final assembly and acceptance proof on the right side of the receiver ring. Waffenamts numbers are now "214" and "359". The entire year's production appears to have gone to the Army. The known serial number range is from 4864b to 8475r, with an estimated production run of 190,000 rifles.



In 1938 the "S/147" code was changed "147". The known serial number range of the "S/147" coded rifle is from 1129 to 9849i. The known serial number range of the "147" coded rifle is from 9663g to 431s. There was a combined total production run of 195,000 rifles. Weimar and Nazi type eagles continue to appear together. Waffenamts numbers continue to be "214" and "359". The entire year's production appears to have gone to the Army. Solid Walnut stocks and handguards continue to be the norm but the use of laminate stocks continues to grow. All metal parts continue to be milled and numbered to match the rifle.

During 1939 the Weimar type eagle was phased out. It appears that by the "k" serial number range Nazi style eagles were being exclusively used. The Waffenamts numbers changed to "37" and "359". Stocks and handguards were almost all made of laminate. Sauer produced stocks can not only be identified by their "214" and "37" waffenamts and also by the use of a smaller diameter bolt takedown washer in the buttstock. Sauer made K98k's also use smaller sized proof eagles (as compared to those used by the other manufacturer) on both the barrels and the receivers. All metal parts continue to be milled and numbered to match the rifle, and a 12.5 inch-cleaning rod replaced the 10-inch cleaning rod. Flat Buttplates continue to be used. The known serial number range is from 2106 to 9278t for an estimated production run of 210,000 rifles. Contract barrels begin to appear, (i.e. "Geco", "exn", and "bys" are known examples). The entire year's production appears to have gone to the Army.



The production standards used for the 1940 "147" code K98k were the same as those used for 1939. Waffenamts "37" and "359" continued to be used and a few waffenamt "280" proofs can be found on parts such as the safeties, firing pins, and bolt sleeves. Stocks and handguards are exclusively made of laminates and still use flat buttplates. The known serial number range is from 1987a to 5209v with an estimated production run of 230,000 rifles. The entire year's production appears to have gone to the Army with the exception of the Swedish Model 40 rifles. (The Swedish Model 40 Mauser rifle made by Sauer only differs in that it uses the more powerful Swedish 8 x 63 machinegun round and also uses a muzzle brake to compensate for the heavier recoil of this cartridge. These rifles were sent to Sweden as partial payment for iron ore and ball bearings).



In 1941 the Sauer production code changed from "147" to a script "ce". The script used has fooled some neophytes into believing that they have a rifle with a previously unknown code. Cupped buttplates were introduced to help prevent the de-lamination of rifle buttstocks, along with a sheet metal front sight hood. Sauer began to use "bys" and "dfb" barrels and magazine followers which have a waffenamt "214". Waffenamts "37" and "359" continue to be used on most parts. All metal parts continue to be milled and numbered to match the rifle. 1941 was the last year that external proofs and serial numbers appear on the bottom spine of the stock. The known serial number range is from 1005 to 613v for an estimated production run of 225,000 rifles. For the first time Sauer produced rifles for the Luftwaffe (these rifles will have a Luftamt on the barrel). Sauer also supplied receivers to Erma-Erfurt in 1941 (look for "ax" coded receivers with script Mod.98 siderail markings).



The 1942 Sauer K98k has two variations based on the manufacturing code. The slanted Script "ce" was changed to a vertical script in the "n" serial number range. The waffenamt "280" as a final acceptance proof appeared on the right side of the receiver ring in the "p" serial number range, and the use of subcontract buttplates ("gqm"). It appears that when the shape of the code letters was changed the style of the Mod.98 on the siderail was also changed from block to script letters (it is not known if both changes occurred at the same time). Stocks are branch of service marked (Heer) the known serial number range is from 3139 to 3339s, with an estimated production run of 195,000 rifles.

In 1943 the Sauer K98k again had two variations based on the manufacturing code. The shape of the "ce" code was changed from the 1942 style block letter script "ce" to a simple block letter "ce". This change took place toward the end of the "b" serial number range so the first approximately 30,000 rifles have the script "ce" and the remainder of the year's production has the block letter "ce". 1943 was the peak year of production for the Sauer firm's K98k's as the known serial number range runs from 8216 to 6567gg, with an estimated production run of 340,000 rifles (this is the only year Sauer got into double letter suffix numbers). Waffenamts used were "37", "359", and "280". All milled parts (including speed milled front bands) were numbered to match the rifle. Stamped bands first appear in the "bb" serial number range and they are also numbered to the rifle.

You will be able to find Sauer assembled 1943 Mauser Borsigwalde "ar" coded rifles. They will have Waffenamts "280" and "37" final assembly proofs. Another oddity is 1943 "ce" coded receivers with 135 Waffenamts numbers (a case of Sauer receivers which were sent to Mauser Oberndorf for assembly into complete K98k's).

1944 was the last year Sauer made K98k's. The 1944 rifle featured the use of stamped bands, trigger-guards, and followers. The known serial number range is from 1169 to 7309u, with an estimated production run of 220,000 rifles. The notable variation was the appearance of a small number of "ce" 44 rifles with the so-called machine gun barrel. The "bcd" 4 rifles with MG barrel are well known but the use of them by Sauer is much less recognized. The barrels on these rifles have three rings milled around the barrel. The purpose of these rings was to collect and trap powder residue before it could collect and perhaps cause a machine gun Jam. who supplied these barrels and what they are is still unknown. They are a rare variation, especially, the one on a Sauer rifle. Waffenam numbers remained "37", "359", and "280".



No one knows why there were no Sauer rifles were made in 1945. The presumption is that the approaching Eastern Front and the location of the Sauer plants in Suhl forced an early evacuation of the area. Perhaps the plant was dismantled for shipment to the West or it was destroyed by the Germans to prevent its capture by the Russians.

1941 ce by Sauer

In 1941 Sauer manufactured 225,000 K98k rifles

Proofing & serial numbers (sample rifle 1941ce)

Receiver code	ce (41) in script	receiver proofs	waf 359(1) waf 37(2) on side
Side rail	blank		
Serial number	4 digits possible alpha suffix		
Upper band	s/n (4) waf 37 milled H		
Lower band	s/n (4) waf 37		
Trigger guard	s/n waf 37(2)	milled with lock screws	
Bolt	ribbed & blued		
Root	rear firing proof	top s/n	underside waf 37
Gas shield	s/n (4) waf 37		
Safety	s/n (4) waf 37		
Cocking piece	s/n (4) waf 37		
Extractor	s/n (2) waf 37		
Extractor collar	no s/n waf 37		
Front sight	hood	waf 37	
Rear sight	meter scale both sides	s/n (4) waf 359	
Rear sight base	s/n (4) waf 359		
Stock	Laminate		
Stock Markings (external reported only)			
Side	waf WaA37 & "H"		
Pistol grip	waf WaA37		
Spine	s/n (4) waf WaA37 (2)		
Bayonet lug	s/n	waf 623	
Floor Plate	s/n (2) waf 37		
Magazine follower	s/n (1) waf 37		

1944 ce by Sauer

The early 1944 variant.

Proofing & serial numbers (sample rifle ce 44)

receiver code	ce (44)	receiver proofs	waf 280 (1) (on side)	waf 37 (1) (on top)
side rail	Mod. 98 (mod in script)			
Serial number	4 digits possible alpha suffix (s/n 92-d)			
upper band	s/n	no waf	speed milled	
lower band	s/n on bottom of band	no waf	stamped	
Trigger guard	s/n (4 digits)	no waf	milled with lock screws	
Bolt	ribbed & blued			
root	rear firing proof	top s/n	no waf	
gas shield	s/n (4)	no waf		
safety	s/n (4)	no waf		
cocking piece	s/n (4)	no waf		
extractor	s/n (2)	no waf		
extractor collar		no waf		
front sight	hood	no waf		
rear sight meter scale	one side	s/n	waf 280	
rear sight base	s/n	waf 280		
Stock	Laminate (reddish hue)			
Stock Markings (external reported only)				
side	Eagle H			
pistol grip	no marks			
Spine	Waf unreadable			
bayonet lug	no s/n	waf e		
Magazine follower	no s/n	Waf unreadable	stamped	
Floor Plate	s/n (4)	no Waf	milled	