

Tuning the 1858 Remington

Compiled by Dennis M. Norton

I am partial to the Colts, but even though I like the Colts, I must admit honestly the Remington 58 is really a better firearm. It was in 1858 and it still holds true. As an owner of multiple '58's I admit you will have less problems with this revolver as opposed to the Colts. It is just the nature of the beast. Solid frame revolvers are just better... The Colt Company recognized this and in 1873 they went to the solid frame revolver known as the Colt Peacemaker.

Historically speaking at the close of the Civil War Remington Sales far exceeded Colt and Remington with their 1858 percussion that saw a lot of action during the CW was favored over Colt after the war. When the firearms industry started switching over to cartridge firearms after the war... Remington had an edge on Colt. It was far easier and cheaper to convert a '58 Remington to Cartridge than it was to convert the Colts which were Open Tops. And that tradition is still carried on today with the advent of the Howell Conversions. The '58 Remington of today (Pietta and Uberti) have a new life in Cowboy Action Shooting also known as SASS. Converting the '58's today is a lot more expensive than it was back in the late 1860's... but it is still a very popular handgun. Hollywood and Clint Eastwood made the 1858 Remington even more popular with the movie "Pale Rider" showing Eastwood walking down the street and reloading his '58 with the spare cylinder. Kirst Konverter's jumped on the Band Wagon and in 2010 or there about started selling Pale Rider Konversions. This conversion does not require cutting a Loading Port in the Frame like the Kirst Full Conversion requires. The '58 Remington is very popular with Re-en actors. Again Kirst created the Civil War Konverter and when this converter is used it looks like the revolver is still cap and ball, but it is in reality a cartridge revolver.

While on the subject of "Conversions"... There are other conversions other than Kirst. One called Howell Conversions The old R&D and Howell are one and the same The latter two are not as expensive as Kirst. But I think that if one chose the Pale Rider Konverter from Kirst the price is about the same as the R&D or the Howell. The good thing about making the '58 conversion... you have the best of both worlds... a percussion for Black Powder and the Conversion for Smokeless Cartridge.

As I stated in my first part on Remington's, if a new shooter asks me which percussion revolver to start out with... I would recommend the Remington '58. The reason: You will have less problems with it as compared to the Colts. Folks who read my postings in the Cap & Ball Group on Facebook will so note all the different articles on Colt... but there are very few on the Remington '58. The same for all the other gun talk Forums... Little is said about problems with the '58. There is a reason for this... the '58 has very few problems. The weakest link in the Remington '58 is the hand with spring. The Leaf Spring on the Hand has a tenancy to break, just when you least expect it. So for folks who shoot the '58 the best advice here is to have extra hands with the springs in your possession. And as I have stated a few extra trigger/bolt springs as well.

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Which Remington is better, the Uberti made or the Pietta made? The Uberti are more close to the Original than the Pietta is. They cost more than the Pietta but it is not a fantastic jump in price. Uberti does another thing that I like and that is where they place their logo and that ridiculous statement BLACK POWDER ONLY... it is on the bottom of the barrel and out of sight hidden by the Loading Lever. Pietta is just the opposite... their Logo is on the right side of the barrel and on the left side you see that omnibus statement BLACK POWDER ONLY. Pietta '58's have different grips and folks with large hands complain about the discomfort when firing the revolver. But I have small hands and have no issue with the grip. So with all that I am biased... I prefer the Piettas. But they both can be tuned the same.

ACTION WORK ON AN 1858 REMINGTON

Right out of the box the first thing the owner should do is clean the revolver religiously. Once the revolver is cleaned take some old panty hose and rub down all the parts to see if there are any burrs or machine marks. Rub down the inside of the frame also, once the revolver is broken down. Small burrs really make for a bad shooting firearm. Wherever you have metal rubbing metal, these areas need to be highly polished. To highly polish the gun metal you start with 100 grit sand paper and work up thru the grits to 2000 grit. Doing this will make the gun metal look like a new chrome bumper on a car from the 50's or early 60's. Most of the Uberti's need need some work as will the Piettas. Do not forget to check the bolts on both Uberti and Pietta revolvers before cocking the revolvers.



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The next picture shows the revolver completely disassembled, and the parts that may need work to make the revolver more smooth.



After checking the frame where the action parts are installed and the frame is void of any Burrs or heavy machine marks we will start with the Hammer. It should be polished as shown in the pictures below. Check the firing pin area (face) of the hammer to make sure there are no burrs or other things that may cause the hammer to fail where it enters the frame.



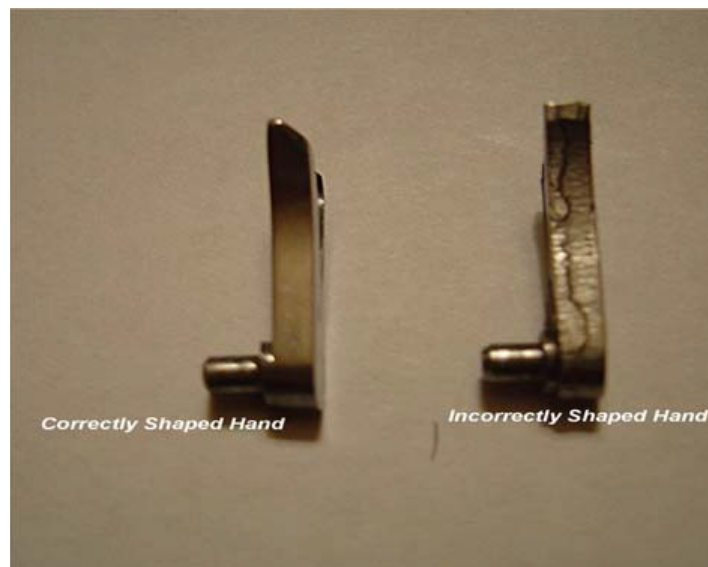
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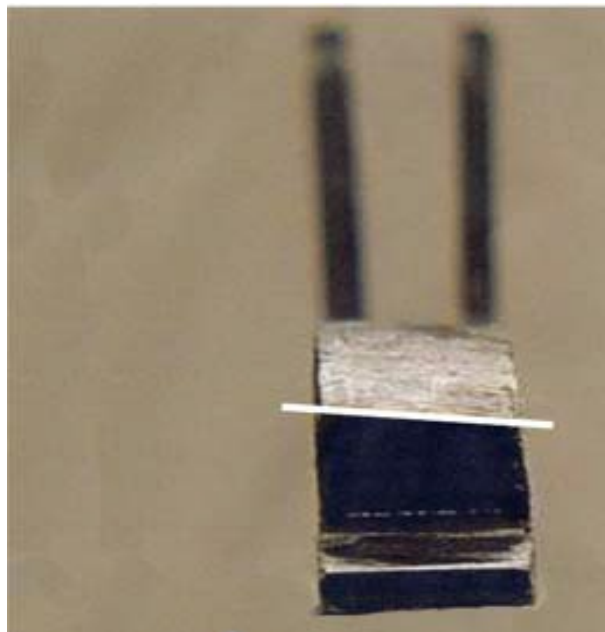
Next we will check and correct the hand with Spring. Polish the Hand and insure the Front portion that is curved and highly polished. Check the Spring to insure it is smooth with no Burrs.



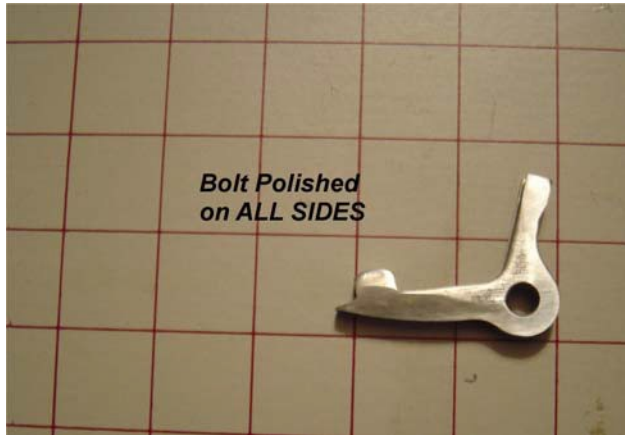
Below we will take a look at a Colt hand and spring. Normally the factory will put a fairly decent cut on the hand but it will be rough. The Hand has a curved portion and this is always a very rough cut. Using a Dremel Tool with a 120 grit sandpaper roll we want to smooth out the curve of the Hand. Do not change the angle of the curve, just smooth it out. Next we want to polish the side of the hand so that it looks like a new chrome bumper using the sandpaper grits stated above... 100 to 2000 grit. Use 350 grit to polish the spring, it will normally have burrs on it. The tip of the Remington hand should be shaped the same as the Colt



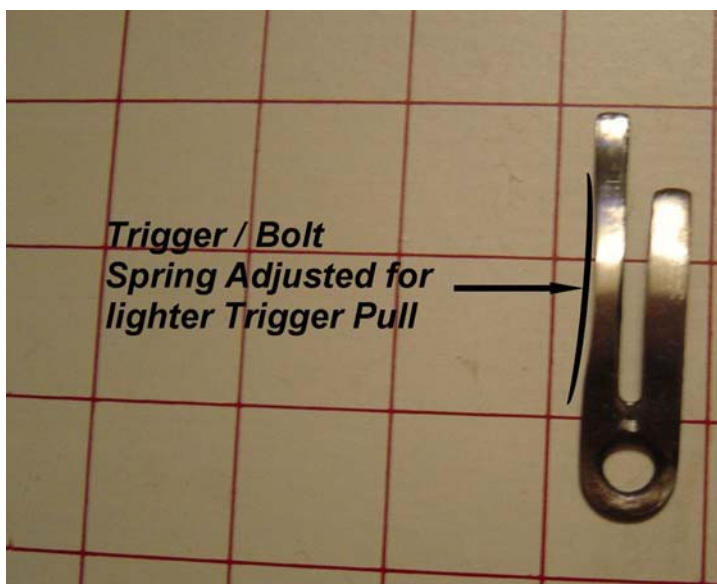
The next item we will address is the bolt. First we want to make sure the Bolt will fit into each Bolt Notch on the Cylinder, this is done with using a Caliper. Measure the width of the bolt (that round hump that sets on top)... then using the calipers measure the Bolt Notches width in the Cylinder. The Bolt should be less than the cylinder bolt notches... measure all six notches. If the Bolt does not have a smaller measurement... remove metal from the bolt on both sides to get it to fit into the cylinder notches. Once this is done, Check the angle of the bolt ridge (hump). It should be slanted as seen in the picture below. It is slanted this way so that when the cylinder turns when the hammer goes to half cock the bolt drops, as you go to full cock the bolt starts to rise and it will engage the ramp that precedes the cylinder notch. At full cock the Bolt lock up the cylinder bank vault tight. If it is not doing this then there is a problem with the hand. If the Cylinder over rotates then the hand is too long. If the cylinder under rotates then the hand is too short. To shorten the hand use a flat diamond file or smoothing stone and remove metal from the top of the hand. Do this a little at a time to get the correct fit. If the hand is too short use a flat round metal punch, place hand on a piece of metal or hard wood, place the punch on the back of the hand under the spring and use a hammer with medium to soft hits to lengthen the Hand. Once you have the Hand and the Bolt working in unison so that the Bolt is riding up into the ramp at half cock and going into the cylinder notch at full cock... the revolver is then in time. Finish up the Bolt by polishing it and on the two arms (legs) that stick to the rear, the left arm (leg) that engages the hammer sear should be beveled so that it makes a smooth move over the sear.



Re-install the Hammer and the hand with the small Retaining hand screw, once the Hand Screw is tightened, push up on the Hand and align the Hammer with the large hole and install the Hammer Screw. Now take the Bolt and insure it will fit into the bolt notches, If all is well... polish the Bolt. Take the Trigger and insure it will engage the half and full cock notches on the Hammer. Polish the trigger as shown below.



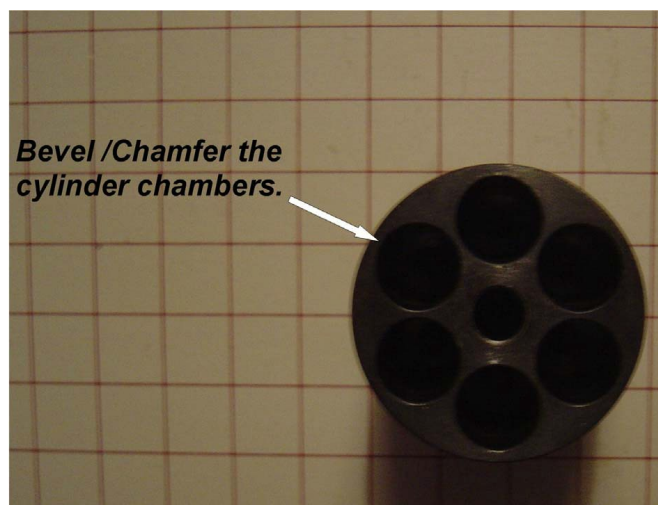
We will now use our Dremel Tool with Stone and remove metal from the left side of the Trigger / Bolt Spring... go easy, you just want to remove a small amount of metal to give the trigger spring the look of a half hour glass. Polish the trigger Spring and insure the bolt side of the Spring (Right Side) is smooth and void of Burrs. Install the Bolt and the Trigger with the Trigger/Bolt Screw into the frame. Install the Trigger/Bolt Spring with the Trigger/Bolt Spring Screw.



The next step is strictly voluntary. Remingtons have a tendency to have a very heavy trigger pull. To lighten that pull, we will now take the factory installed Main Spring and reduce the sides to make for a smoother Hammer Pull. We want to hour glass the Main Spring, that is remove a little of the metal on the sides to get the desired weakened hammer pull. Ideal is right at 4 lbs of pull. A 4 lb hammer pull will still be strong enough to ignite the Percussion Caps.



Last but not least is the Cylinder. We want to bevel or chamfer each of the 6 chambers... not so that it is very noticeable to the naked eye. Use a chamfer bit and twist it between your thumb and index finger... do not use a hand drill... it will remove too much. Chamfer just enough so that when seating the ball it is easier to enter the chamber. For 44 Caliber revolvers we want to use lead balls in diameter of .454" and if your Remington '58 is a Navy in 36 Caliber we want to use lead balls in diameter of .380". After doing this you might wish to add more bluing to the face of the cylinder where you chamfered the chambers to hide the silver rings.



Re-assemble the revolver and it will surprise you at how easy it is to shoot. Below is a recap of the various parts in the Remington Tune Up.

