

Install an M1887 Sling on a Krag Rifle

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The Model of 1887 Slings, originally put to use with the Springfield Trapdoor rifles, were also issued with the new Krag rifles when they were adopted by the US Army in 1892. While original and reproduction slings are fairly easy to find, my search in the public domain for a good practical guide for sling installation turned up empty. While I did figure out how to put the sling on my 1896 Krag correctly, I hope that this guide fills a gap in providing M1887 sling “newbies” an easier time than I had of figuring out how dress up their rifle.

The original M1887 slings included two Keepers, one LARGE and one SMALL. The Large keeper holds three layers of leather, and the small keeper holds only two. My sling is a reproduction which included two keepers that I presume are both SMALL sized. There are large keepers available if you look, but of course, new leather can stretch relatively easily and I took advantage of this fact to save myself a few bucks getting a “correct” LARGE keeper.

Before beginning, I assume that you’ve removed the brass button if it is installed.

Step 1: As always, ensure the firearm you are working on is EMPTY and UNLOADED.

Step 2: Set the rifle on your lap or rifle stand with bolt up and muzzle pointing towards the right. Position the brass frog about 6” up from the buttstock swivel with the rough side of the leather towards the rifle.



Step 3: Run the "button" end of the sling through the LARGE keeper, with the keeper threads oriented towards the rifle. Run the "button" end through the stock swivel FROM BUTTSTOCK TOWARDS THE MUZZLE and AGAIN through the Large keeper.



Step 4: Pull the "button" end of the sling all the way through the LARGE keeper, and insert in the SMALL keeper up by the lower band swivel. Again, the threads on the SMALL keeper should be oriented towards the rifle. Pull the "button" end of the sling through the lower band swivel.



Step 5: ..And back through the small keeper..



Step 6: Ok here's the fun part. Pull the "button" end of the sling down and insert into the Large keeper BETWEEN the other two layers of leather. This is where you'll have to work to carefully stretch out the Large keeper to get it to fit through if you had two "small" keepers like I did on my repro. If you have a true Large keeper then you'll probably chuckle at the fuss. Anyways, get it through....



Step 7. ...And loop it once again through the stock swivel.



Step 8. Then install the brass button, another fun chore which I don't recommend trying if you smashed your finger earlier in the day with a hammer. Note that I installed the button with the rounded end away from the rifle.



Step 9. From what I can tell, unlike the later M1907 sling, the M1887 sling really only had two settings: Parade and Carry.

Carry: Secure the brass frog points through a set of holes down by the buttstock swivel. The particular hole set you choose will depend on the fit when the rifle is slung over your shoulder. Run the small keeper down to the frog to secure it in place.



Parade: Pulling the brass frog towards the muzzle will tighten up the sling into Parade adjustment. Get it as tight as you can, and if you're lucky, the two sets of holes on both layers will line up down near the lower band sling and you'll be able to secure the frog there. (note in the picture I've flipped the rifle over so you can see the brass points poking through both layers)



Step 10: Then, push the small keeper down onto the frog to secure it in place.



You're done!



Some examples of the sling in Parade configuration can be found here:

<http://www.trapdoorcollector.com/photographs1.html>

<http://auntada.tumblr.com/post/12629046983/spanish-american-war-infantry-holding-krag>

http://www.morolandhistory.com/05.PG-Kris-vs-Krag/3.american_longarms.htm

Note the various positions of the brass frog to keep the sling taut in Parade configuration. I'd bet a more well-used sling will have stretched out more and so the frog will be closer to the lower barrel band. Eventually you just wouldn't be able to keep it tight same as the poor fella on the left in the 3rd picture (and who would have really given a poop anyways except his commanding officer?).

As we know, the M1887 sling as issued for the Krag was augmented by the Mills web "tropical" sling and then rebranded as the M1903 sling when the M1903 Springfield was issued. That lasted just another year, with modifications coming every year until the Army settled on the M1907.

Considering that the the US Army wasn't using slings to steady the rifle during firing really until issue of the M1907 sling, there are two other drawbacks to the M1887 that I quickly picked up on which probably led to its late-life modifications and ultimate replacement by the M1907 sling.

- 1) Length of the sling is over 64", which can be difficult to get out of a hide especially if you're trying to field a number of slings sufficient to equip the US Army.
- 2) The leather tends to stretch with use, and to get the thing into Parade mode you have to do a fair amount of stretching regardless. I can imagine that the sling would rather quickly stretch past the point of being tight enough to be acceptable for Victorian-era military inspections.

Being familiar with the M1907 sling, it's fairly obvious from looking at it that the M1887 is the granddaddy of our beloved M1907, with features of the future M1907 getting their start with this sling.