



Do you ever walk yourself through the mental exercise of answering this question - *"What rifle or rifles would I keep if I had to get rid of almost all of them?"*

I know, I know this would never actually happen - or could it?

She (*the wife, the one who actually runs the household*) someday might actually make the statement - *"Hon, it is either them or me!"*

It could happen (*only in my worst nightmare*).

- or -

Sometimes I look in the closet(s) and exclaim to myself - *"what the hell is that?"* I look at a rifle and realize I have either never touched it or have not shot it for over a year - I start to think - *"what would I keep if I did not keep them all?"*

I go through the list of everything I own, categorizing them by my likes and dislikes. I can usually get the list down to around six distinct models.

Starting at six and counting backwards:

Jamie's Mil-Surp List of Lust	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Father, my Russian SKS</b></p> <p>He is cheap to shoot and the <b>perfect</b> specimen of a simple and easy to maintain semiautomatic carbine.</p> <p>Basically he can <i>"throw-down!"</i></p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>The Enfield No. 4</b></p> <p>Actually it would have to be both my Enfield No. 4 Mk 1 and Mk 2 (<i>I count these as one rifle. Well one rifle type</i>). I like the simple elegance of the No. 4. I have found that folks either "really like" the</p>

	Enfields or they "really dislike" them. I fall into the "really like" category. They are precision engineered and manufactured and a highly accurate rifle that is just a joy to shoot.
4	<b>The .30 M1 Garand</b>  This is ground zero for me, baby! The very first love of my collection. I really can't say more than that!  Anyone that has ever owned a Garand understands what I mean.
3	<b>U.S. Model 1917 rifle</b>  I know - it does not make any sense. It is big, heavy, and ungainly in appearance. I can't help it - I like underdogs!
2	<b>Swedish Mauser m96 rifle or m38 short rifle</b>  Without a doubt, the Swedish Mausers are one of the finest bolt action rifles ever made for battle ( <i>or for anything in my opinion</i> ).  Kind of like the Mercedes of rifles: perfect fit and finish and accurate to a fault.
1	Number one for me would have to be the <b>U.S. Model 1903A3</b> and <b>U.S. Model 1903</b> .

**Note:**

*The list above is only my opinion based upon what I own today. As I add rifles to my collection the list is constantly being reevaluated. It is an ever dynamic and compulsive disorder based process, as are most unimportant things in life.*

I knew I had found the cream of the crop of U.S. Military rifles when I shot my first '03. After the experience I was no longer convinced that the Mauser deserved my number one ranking. Oh don't get me wrong, I really like Mausers.

The U.S. took the Mauser and improved on the design. The Mauser is distinctly European, but the '03 made the design something America could identify with and endear.

If you don't believe me then take the following steps and you will be just as enamored as I am with this rifle:

Pick up an '03 and -

1. Cycle the bolt (*feel how smooth the action is*);
2. Shoot five cartridges (*revel in the accuracy*);

### 3. Feel the weight (*or lack there of with the '03*).

I am not kidding - I have **never** found a rifle that is as smooth or as accurate as the '03.

Enough of the warm and fuzzy stuff!



Although the '03 were abundant at one time and could be purchased for a song and a dance, their availability of late has lessened dramatically. The [Civilian Marksmanship Program \(CMP\)](#) has both the 03A3 and the '03 available for sale. If not from the CMP you will find the '03 in local stores and shows usually on consignment from someone's collection.

I purchased my '03 from a local collection. She was made in 1918 and rebarreled in 1942.

There were two things that I did not like about her and wanted to correct.

First was a cosmetic flaw: a WWII (*or later*) era handguard that was replaced for some unknown reason. The handguard's walnut was much lighter in color, very rough, and un-sanded in appearance when compared to the original stock. To correct this flaw I -

1. Removed the handguard and stripped off the current finish;
2. Sanded it to reduce the porous surface and closely match the original stock's smoothness (*while being ever-so-careful not to remove dents and dings so it still has aged patina and character*);
3. Applied a dark walnut stain until the color is almost, but not quite as dark as the original stock's finish;
4. Hand rubbed several coats of Boiled Linseed Oil;
5. Hand rubbed a multitude of coats of beeswax until desired appearance was achieved.

For a detailed overview of this procedure - [click here!](#)

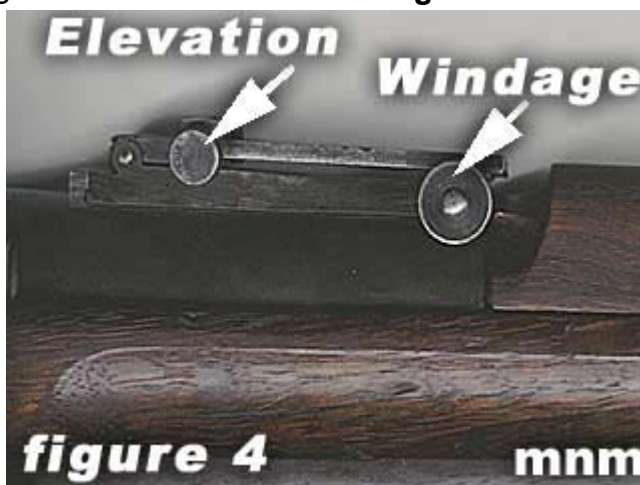
Secondly the rifle had an 03A3 stamped trigger guard cover. I ordered the replacement parts and replaced them - never to speak of this again.....



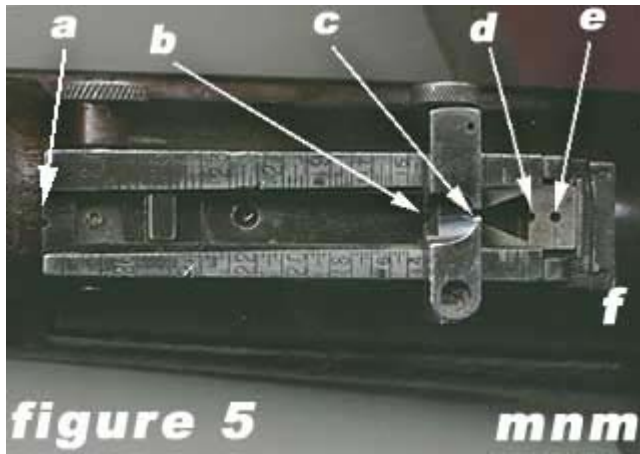
I found the rifle's rear sight was fairly complex and I could not figure out which notch or aperture to use. So I set off to do some research and this is what I found.



To use the rear sight's adjustable notches or apertures the sight leaf is lifted as shown in **figure 3**.



To adjust windage (*left or right*) turn the windage knob (as shown in **figure 4**). Each graduation marking equals 4 minute of angle at 100 yards.



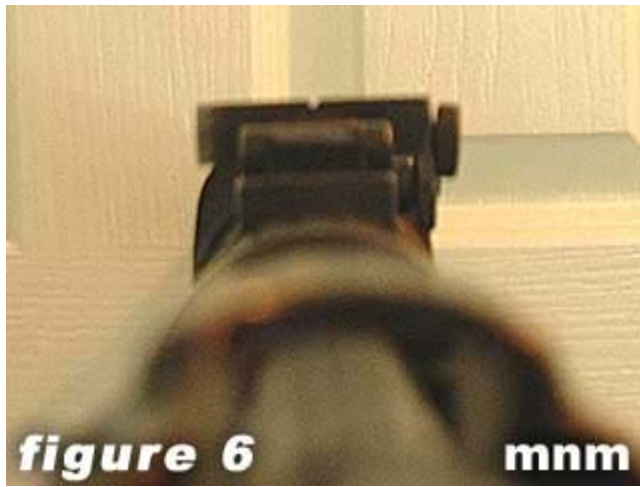
I believe that the 1903 has one of the most accommodating rear sights found on any early 20th century battle rifle.

Imagine a sight being produced for a rifle with no less than 5 sight notches and apertures (3 adjustable and 2 set for specific distances).

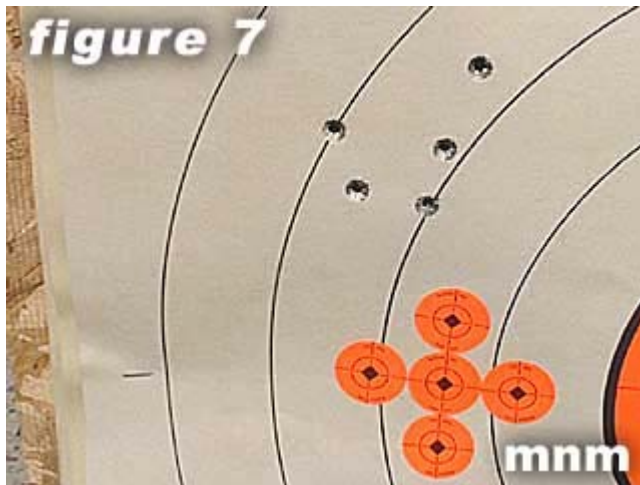
To adjust for elevation loosen the elevation knob on the right and then slide the aperture up or down (as shown in **figure 5**).

**Figure 5** shows a **type 4 sight leaf** with graduations from 100 to 2825 yards. The 1903 had seven different leaf types (ranging in max graduated distance from 2000 to 2825). The leaf's left side scale ranges from 200 to 2820 while the right side scale ranges from 100 to 2825.

Ref	Name	Range Used
<b>a</b>	Top "U" Notch	2850 yards
<b>b</b>	"U" Notch	1400 to 2750 yards
<b>c</b>	Battle Sight Notch	400 to 530 yards
<b>d</b>	Bottom Sight Notch	100 to 2450 yards
<b>e</b>	Peep Sight	100 to 2350 yards
<b>f</b>	Windage Scale	Eleven per side (each marking equals 4 minute of angle at 100 yards)



**Figure 6** shows the 1903 battle sight picture that is set at 400, 530, or 547 yards (*depending on sight type and cartridge used*). The battle sight was used for the following: A soldier using the battle sight could hit a man between 100 and 400, 530, or 547 yards (*depending on sight type and cartridge used*).



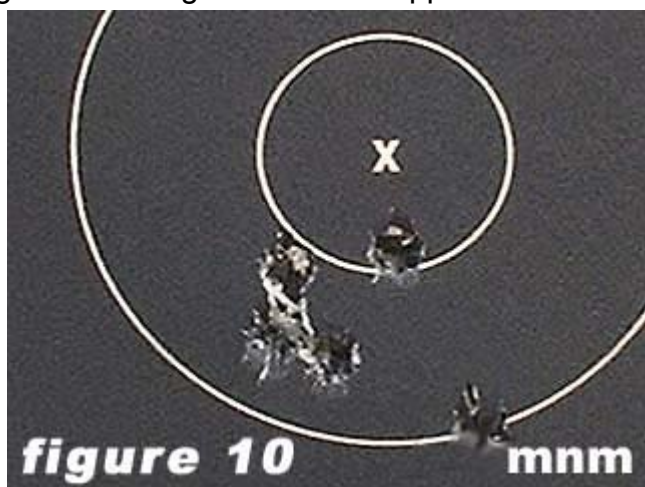
Once I mastered the rear sights of the '03, I found I could achieve reasonable accuracy. I fed several types of ammo through her, including my own cast bullets.



**Figures 7, 8, and 9** are all examples of 100 yard shooting with cast 170 grain bullets pushed by IMR 3031 powder.



Once I finally got her dialed in and felt comfortable with the sights - the magic started to happen.



**Figure 10** shows the magic (at 100 yards). I shot this using [168 Grain HPBT Sierra MatchKing Bullets](#) on top of 45.9 grains of IMR 4064.

Heck, I should have just filled the entire page with a larger version of the picture with a subtitle saying - "Need I say more?"

jlm ;)

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