

Atarian's Wartime and Post-war Slide Part Compatibility Study

Introduction

There are instances where one would consider replacing wartime slide parts with post-war parts, or even installing a wartime parts set in a post-war slide. Unlike the wartime frame, where post-war parts will "drop in" with little or no fitting, some parts in the slide are not interchangeable.

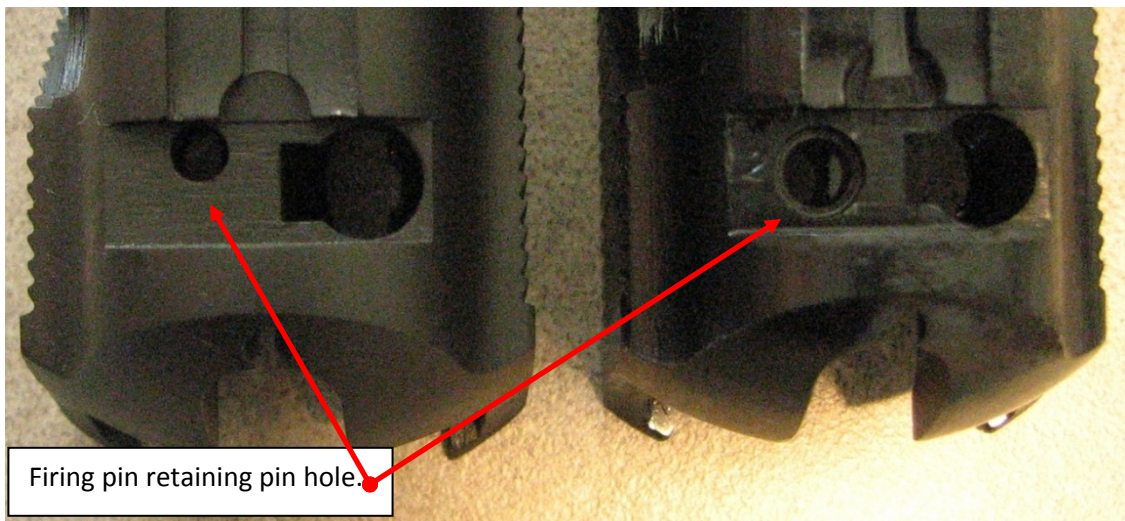
Below are two slides, one a war-era Mod HP slide (right and bottom), and the other a post-war "fat" slide dated 04/81 (left and top).



Differences

Firing pin retaining pin

Upon examination of the slides, it can be noted that the firing pin retaining pin hole, located under the rear sight, is larger on the wartime slide (right) than the post-war slide (left). The hole on the wartime slide is centered (front to rear) in the rear sight groove, while it is off centered in the post-war slide.



The firing pin retaining pin on the wartime slide is held in place by ridge on the pin which fits into a bevel in the slide. The post-war pin is retained by a lip in the slide, which contacts the bottom of the pin.



Wartime firing pin retaining pin hole (as seen from the top of the slide).



Post-war firing pin retaining pin hole (as seen from the top of the slide).



Wartime (left) and post-war (right) firing pin retaining pins.

As is shown, the wartime pin is too big to fit in the hole of the post-war slide. Conversely, the post-war pin would fall through the hole in the wartime slide. These two parts are not interchangeable.

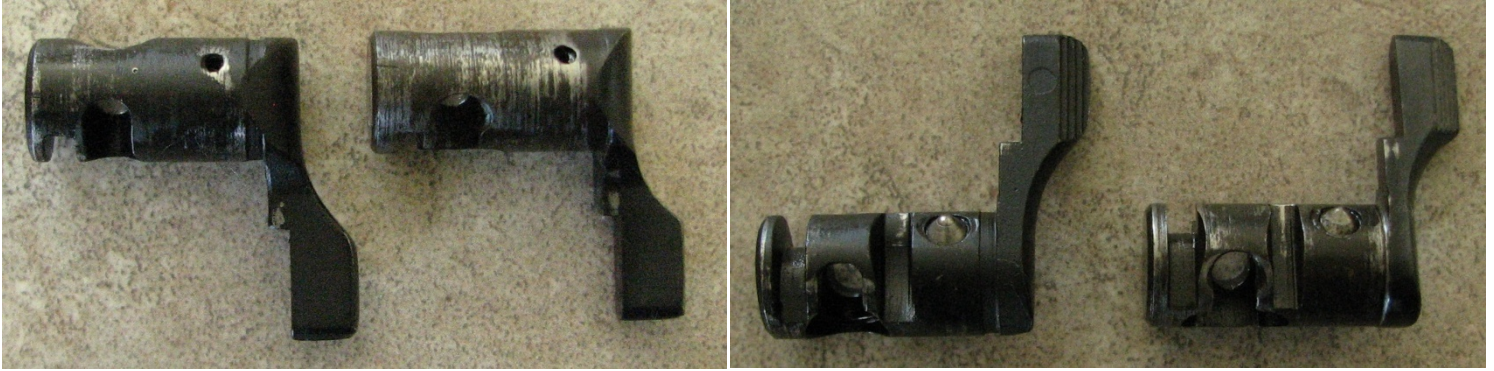
Firing pin and safety lever

Walther changed the design of the firing pin and safety lever in the post-war P.38 as well. What was a flat style firing pin was replaced by a round style. Below are the two types of firing pins – the top is the post-war version and the bottom is the wartime version. With the change in the firing pin came a change in the safety lever (or de-cocker) to accommodate the new firing pin design.



Either safety can be installed in either slide, however the post-war safety lever will only accept a post-war firing pin, and vice-versa (i.e. the post-war pin will not fit through the wartime safety lever, and the wartime pin will not fit through the post-war safety lever).

The two types of safety levers are seen below (post-war left, wartime right in both pictures):

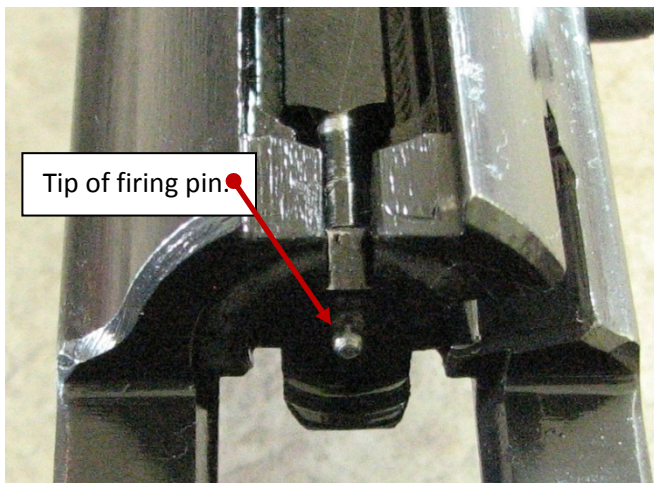


The next pictures show the hole in the safety lever through which the firing pin passes (post-war left side, wartime right side). These parts are not interchangeable – a wartime firing pin must be used with a wartime safety lever, and a post-war firing pin must be used with a post-war safety lever.



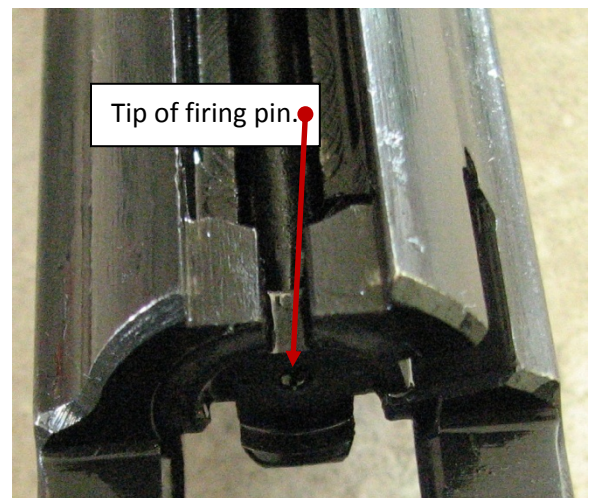
Using a post-war firing pin and safety lever in a wartime slide

A post-war firing pin can be physically installed in a wartime slide and held in place by the wartime retainer, using a post-war safety lever, however even if all the other parts could be correctly assembled the pistol would be non-functional. Due to changes in the firing pin and the location of the retainer in the slide, when the firing pin is struck by the hammer the firing pin does not travel forward enough to make contact with the cartridge primer.



the cartridge primer. To the right is an illustration of a post-war firing pin installed in a wartime slide. The firing pin is in its most forward position, yet still

does not protrude through the breech face. Contrast this with the wartime firing pin installed in the wartime slide (left) which protrudes through the breech face and would contact the cartridge primer.

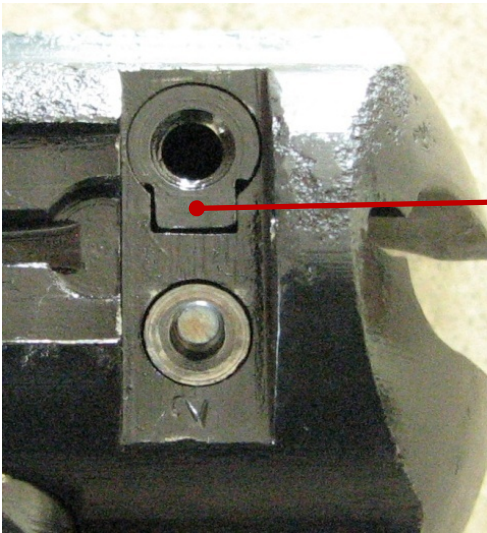


Automatic firing pin lock lifter

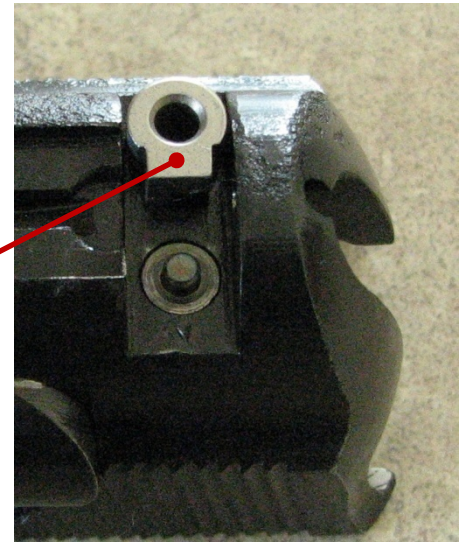


The automatic firing pin lock lifter was redesigned in the post-war era. It will not fit or function in a wartime slide. The post-war and wartime types are seen to the left (post-war on the left, and wartime on the right).

A properly installed wartime lifter in a wartime slide will allow installation of the rear sight. Attempting to install a post-war lifter in a wartime slide results in the lifter not seating properly, making installation of the rear sight impossible.



● Wartime lifter installed in a wartime slide.
● Post-war lifter installed in a wartime slide.



Similarities

Interchangeable parts

Other parts were re-designed in the post-war era, yet can still be installed and will function properly in a wartime slide. These parts include the:

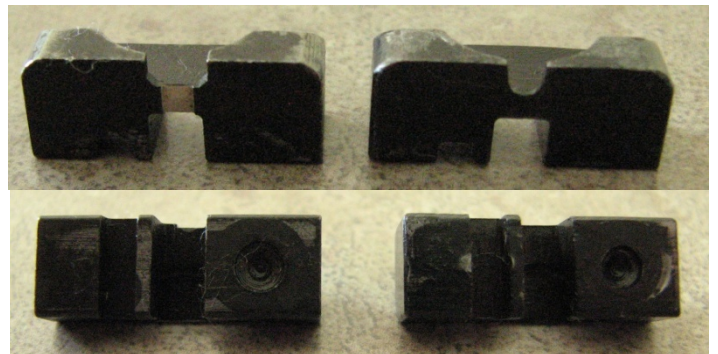
Top cover (post-war upper left, wartime lower right).



Firing pin spring (post-war upper left, wartime lower right). The redesign of the spring allows the loaded chamber indicator pin (which passes through the loop in the end of the spring) to be held down more tightly.



Rear sight (post-war left, wartime right). The notch in the rear sight is now wider, and has a white square for better visibility.



Extractor (post-war left, wartime right). The extractor spring and plunger (not shown) required for the operation of the extractor are interchangeable.



Summary

While many post-war parts will fit into a wartime slide, some major components will not. If a top cover is lost, an extractor is broken, or springs need to be replaced, they can be replaced with post-war parts. However, if a wartime slide is cracked and one wishes to transfer the wartime parts into a stripped post-war slide, a full transfer of all the parts is not possible. It would be easier and likely more cost effective to buy a complete surplus slide and part out the wartime slide.

The table below summarizes the interchangeability of post-war parts into a wartime slide.

Top cover	yes	Loaded chamber indicator pin	yes
Loaded chamber indicator pin spring	yes	Firing pin	no
Firing pin spring	yes	Extractor	yes
Extractor spring	yes	Extractor plunger	yes
Safety (de-cocker)	no	Auto firing pin lock lifter	no
Auto firing pin lock lifter spring	yes	Rear sight	yes
Firing pin retaining pin	no		