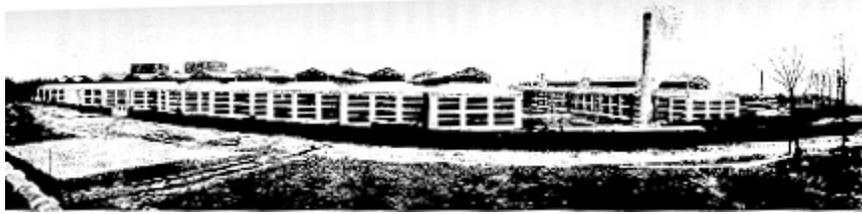


# The Eddystone Story

By Walter J. Kuleck, Ph.D.

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**Eddystone Rifle Plant**

**The war activities of the Baldwin Locomotive Works also included the construction of two large plants on their property at Eddystone for the manufacture of rifles and ammunition, and accomplishments in this connection constitute a series of achievements worthy of record.**

**On April 30, 1915, the British Government placed a contract with the Remington Arms Company of Delaware for 1,500,000 rifles to be manufactured in one of the plants mentioned above, under the general direction of Mr. S. M. Vauclain. The work of constructing equipping and organizing this enormous plant was fully accomplished, and production established by December 31, 1915, continuing until the close of 1918. Mr. Charles H. Schlacks was engaged as General Manager on May 1, 1915, and to him great credit is due for the completion of the organization and the remarkable manufacturing results obtained.**

**The main building of the Rifle Plant covered 14 acres of ground, and had a length of 1,040 feet and a maximum width of 816 feet. Great difficulty was experienced in obtaining delivery of equipment and machinery in time to meet the terms of the British contract, and some idea of the extent of the installation may be had from the fact that 10,000 machines, 40,200 feet of shafting, and 424,000 feet of belting were required.**

**The first British contract, mentioned above, was followed by another, signed August 2, 1915, calling for 500,000 rifles, and necessitating additional equipment. Because of the complexity of rifle manufacture, it was impossible to obtain experienced workmen; hence it was some time after the completion of the Plant before it could be operated at capacity. In consequence, an extension of time was granted for the completion of these contracts.**

**Soon after the United States entered the war, April 6, 1917, and in view of its prospective rifle requirements, cancellation of the British contracts, after the completion of 600,000 rifles, was arranged. Later, the British-owned machinery and equipment passed by agreement to the United States Government who continued the British arrangement with the Remington Arms Company for its operation in the manufacture of rifles for the United States Army.**

**The first contract for rifles for the United States Government was signed on July 12, 1917; and during the twelve months beginning September, 1917, 1,000,000**

rifles were completed, the greatest known achievement in rifle production. These rifles differed slightly from those manufactured for the British Government, in that they fired a .300 calibre rimless cartridge; whereas the British rifle, which was an Enfield (model of 1914) fired a .303 calibre rim cartridge.

On January 2, 1918, the Remington Arms Company of Delaware was absorbed by the Midvale Steel and Ordnance Company (Eddystone Rifle Plant). The latter Company operated the plant until after the close of the war.

The completion of rifle number 1,000,000 for the United States Government was celebrated by a mass meeting held on September 12, 1918. the meeting was attended by a number of notable army, navy and industrial officials, and by more than 14,000 employees of the Plant.

Operations at the Plant ceased on January 11, 1919, at which time nearly 300,000 rifles were in process of manufacture. The Government then leased the premises for a storage plant.

The total number of rifles manufactured in this Plant was 1,959,954, in addition to spare parts equivalent to 200,000 rifles. The greatest production exceeded 6,000 rifles per day, and the maximum number of employees was 15,294. When it is remembered that nearly two-thirds of all the rifles used in combat by the American Army in France were manufactured at Eddystone, the value of the work done can, to some extent, be appreciated; and the achievement was the more remarkable in view of the exceptional difficulties encountered in equipping the plant and securing labor and material.

*--from "History of The Baldwin Locomotive Works 1831-1923," company history reprinted in "The Locomotives that Baldwin Built" by Fred Westing, Bonanza Books, New York, 1966.*

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