

The Singer .45 Auto

by Edward S. Meadows

Manufacturer: Singer Manufacturing Company, Elizabeth, New Jersey

Model: 1911A1

Date of Manufacture: 1941

Number Manufactured: 500

Serial Numbers: S800001 - S800500 inclusive

Caliber: .45 ACP

Operation: Recoil

Sights: Fixed

Finish: Blue

Stocks: Checkered plastic without eschucheon rings

Magazine: 7 round, blue finish

Markings:

Left side of slide: S. MFG. CO.
Elizabeth, N.J., U.S.A.

Right side of slide: None

Left side of frame: JKC/P

Right side of frame:

UNITED STATES PROPERTY

M1911 A1 U.S. ARMY

NºS8XXXXX

Historical Development and Comments

Although production of the Model 1911A1 pistol by Singer was limited and the role played by that company a relatively small one, it has captured the imagination of the collecting fraternity and is the most sought after .45 automatic pistols of that era.

The intervening years between World Wars I and II were lean ones for the Ordnance Department and few contracts were being let for small arms with private manufacturers.

In order to maintain some level of preparedness, the Ordnance Department let contracts for production studies to determine the best methods by which small arms could be produced. These studies did not call for actual manufacture of the item but only an analysis of the possibilities and a detailed plan of action should a requirement develop.

The Singer Manufacturing Company was requested to develop such a study for the Model 1911A1 pistol. In June of 1926, Singer submitted their study to the Ordnance Department covering complete details of existing production facilities, personnel, procurement and production methods as well as estimates of additional machinery and space which would be necessary to produce 25,000 pistols per month in two eight hour shifts per day. (The Nash-Kelvinator

Company also produced a production study pertaining to the M1911A1 pistol during this period).

Following the production studies, small educational orders which called for the actual production of a limited number of various types of small arms were placed with private manufacturers in order to further prepare them for production in the event of a developing requirement. Two such educational orders were let for the Model 1911A1 pistol, one to the Singer Manufacturing Company, the other to the Harrington and Richardson Arms Company of Worcester, Massachusetts.

Harrington and Richardson never completed their contract. Singer, on the other hand, relying on their previous production study, did complete the 500 pistols ordered under their educational contract (W-Ord-396), coordinating with the Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut to establish and insure the interchangeability of components.

Singer's successful completion of the educational order resulted in a production order for 15,000 pistols but the order was subsequently cancelled due to an order for M3 Artillery Directors which had a higher priority. The pistol requirement was re-allocated to the Ithaca Gun Company. Consequently, the Singer tooling, machinery, drawings and all other material related to pistol manufacture was sent to Ithaca.

The Singer experience with the M1911A1 pistol is recorded in a historical report published by the Singer Company entitled *Singer in World War II, 1939-1945* which reads in part as follows:

"...In April of 1940 an educational contract was placed with Elizabethport Factory calling for the preparation of one complete set of tools, fixtures and gauges and the manufacture of 500 complete pistols, plus spare parts. The purpose of this contract was primarily to provide tools which would be available for further larger production orders and to familiarize the Elizabethport personnel with pistol manufacture.

A major part of this educational contract required the preparation of complete production data, including machine, tool and gauge drawings, detailed descriptions, photographs and time study information for more than 1,000 operations on the fifty-four different parts of the pistol. Plans were detailed for new construction, for the purchase of machinery and the hiring of personnel, all based on a manufacturing schedule of 100 automatic pistols per hour. This information was all carefully compiled and tabulated and although Elizabethport Factory never actually engaged in this large scale pistol manufacture, the information proved to be extremely useful to other manufacturers undertaking pistol production.

Upon completion of the production of the 500 pistols called for in the educational contract, the Ordnance Department instructed Elizabethport to deliver the tooling and all other material and production information to another company which has subsequently used the Elizabethport tools in the manufacture of large quantities of excellent pistols. The 500 pistols of Elizabethport manufacture were used as models. The purpose of this arrangement was to relieve Elizabethport Plant of the pistol work in order to place a highly important fire control device in production there."

The 500 pistols produced by the Singer Manufacturing Company were shipped to Springfield Armory in December of 1941 in ten arms chests containing fifty pistols each. While some of the pistols may have been sent to Ithaca as samples, as suggested in the Singer report, most were issued, purportedly to the Air Corps.

The pistols made by the Singer Company exhibit excellent workmanship. They are finished in a near commercial blue and are fitted with plastic checkered grip panels without eschucheon rings. All parts are machined and the wide, short spur hammer, trigger, slide stop, safety and mainspring housing are checkered. The frame bears the inspection initials JKC. Current consensus is divided on the identity of this inspector. Originally he was believed to be John K. Christmas, but the name John K. Clement has also been brought forth by some researchers. Neither identity has been incontrovertibly proven. Additionally, there is a small P proof on the left side of the receiver and on top of the slide. Other slide and frame markings are as described above.