

# Our History

Since the 14th century, the city of Steyr (Upper Austria) has been a center for metal working, and is particularly known for manufacturing firearms. In the middle of the 17th century thousands of muskets, pistols, and carbines were produced annually for the Imperial Army.

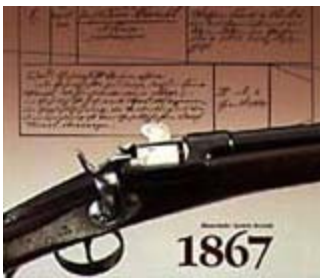


Josef Werndl

Josef Werndl came from a family firmly anchored in the firearms craft. After his father's death, the 24-year-old Werndl took over the factory's management, together with his mother. He modernized the enterprise by applying new step-by-step production techniques that he became acquainted with, during his apprenticeship in the United States.

On April 16th, 1864, Josef Werndl founded the "Josef und Franz Werndl & Comp. Waffenfabrik und Sägemühle in Oberletten" (Josef and Franz Werndl & Partners), from which later emerged the "Österreichische Waffenfabriksgesellschaft", and subsequently the Steyr Werke AG and Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG, from which STEYR MANNLICHER was a division.

## The Breech Loader



Werndl-rifle Mod.1867

"Österreichische Waffenfabriks-gesellschaft" made the first breakthrough with the breech loader, designed by Werndl, together with his foreman Holub, and the famous Werndl-rifle with the "tabernacle action" was born.

Starting in 1867, hundreds of thousands such rifles were delivered to the Central Army Administration of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. During these boom years, up to 6,000 workers were employed in Steyr, and production exceeded 8,000 rifles per week.

## A New Steyr Bolt Action Rifle



Ferdinand Ritter von Mannlicher

In 1885, a new Steyr bolt action rifle was accepted by the Austrian Hungarian army, which became a sweeping success. It was designed by Ferdinand Ritter von Mannlicher (Knight of Mannlicher), who in due course was to become the head designer of "Österreichische Waffenfabriks-gesellschaft". In 1889, the number of workers surpassed 10.000.

Josef Werndl died unexpectedly at 59-years-old, on April 29, 1889, but this event did not impact the continuous popularity of Steyr's firearms, worldwide. Rifles with the Mannlicher systems design were produced in the millions, not only for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, but also for many armies in Europe and overseas, as well as for the civil market.

## The Mannlicher Schönauer Stutzen



Mannlicher pistol model 1905

Shortly before the turn of the century, Mannlicher designed, together with the "Österreichische Waffenfabriks-gesellschaft"-director Otto Schönauer, another new bolt

action rifle, which was destined to become one of the most successful hunting rifles in firearms history. Its precision, durability, optimal handling, and reliability, plus a graceful outline, made the Mannlicher Schönauer Stutzen (full stock rifle) a worldwide sales triumph, which lasted for decades. The Mannlicher pistol model 1905, and the Steyr pistol M.1912, became milestones in auto-loading pistols technology, which was first applied in 1890.

## Steyr Weapon Hall



Otto Schoenauer

Before World War I, the weapons factory in Steyr was one of the largest, most productive and most innovative factories in the world, for product development and production of small arms. Between 1912 and 1914, a huge new factory was built in the city of Steyr, since the dated facilities and its equipment did not correspond to the demands for an up-to-date production.

The capacity was enhanced just in time. At the beginning of World War I, daily production output amounted to 4,000 firearms. In addition, bicycles for the military, and aircraft engines were manufactured as well. The employees' number exceeded 15,000.

During World War I, the Steyr Weapons Hall was built at the Steyr factory. It was designed and built in the Nordic architectural style. It was later moved, in its entirety, to the new plant. The new plant is now located near the city of Steyr. Show cases, which are recessed into the hand crafted wooden walls, display a 140 year representation of STEYR firearms.



## Steyr Weapon Hall

With the treaty from St. Germain, following the end of World War I, the firearms production in Steyr was nearly prohibited, and in 1918, the company faced bankruptcy. In this crucial situation, management decided to convert the machinery into the production of cars. Later on, when firearms manufacturing restrictions loosened, firearms production was revived, in co-operation with the Swiss weapons manufacturer Solothurn AG. However, after the end of World War II, the production of firearms again was prohibited.

## General Mark Clark



General Mark Clark

In 1950, the production of hunting rifles continued, thanks to the approval of the US High Commissioner, General Mark Clark. The famous Mannlicher-Schönauer full stock rifle experienced a renaissance.

The re-emergence of the Austrian Armed Forces in the Second Republic was simultaneously also the base for a new start of the military weapons production. Over a long period of time, the main product was the assault rifle “StG 58”, made under a firearms license agreement.

## The Steyr Mannlicher Hunting Rifle

In the sixties, the Steyr Mannlicher hunting rifle was developed, and featured new and innovative construction details, such as the synthetic rotary magazine. Thanks to the rifle's extraordinary precision and reliability, it soon became a major player in the market.

## Military Firearms



STEYR AUG

In the seventies, Steyr opened up new dimensions in the military firearms development as well, and developed a new assault rifle in a "bull-pup" design, utilizing extensively synthetic materials, and an integrated fixed optic. This example of a new and modern generation of assault rifles was launched in Austria under the name "StG 77."

The export version became the AUG – "Armee Universal Gewehr" (Universal Army Assault Rifle). Remarkable success was achieved by licensing its production in Australia and Malaysia, as well as by exports to Ireland, New Zealand, Tunis, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the USA.

## STEYR IN THE NEWS



"Guns & Ammo Handguns Annual 2012"

—Eric Poole