

Stedman Machine Company Incorporated

Founded: 1834

Location: Rising Sun (1834–49); Aurora (near Baltimore and Ohio Depot—now Allen Real Estate and Appraisals) (1849–1912); 129 Franklin Street, Aurora (1912–)

In 1834, at the age of twenty, Nathan R. Stedman, in partnership with Col. Pinkney James, founded Stedman's Foundry & Machine Works in Rising Sun. He later moved his company upriver to Aurora, in partnership with Thomas and J. W. Gaff. Stedman was a molder by trade and a native of New Jersey. As a young man he made his way west to Cincinnati, finding work in a foundry. After several years of working for others he decided to form his own foundry, a firm that would make cast-iron nuts, bolts, screws, and other components for cotton and hay presses, items mostly purchased by southern planters. After the plant's relocation to Aurora the company began making sawmill and steam engines for river boats and the booming industrial market of southern Indiana.

During the Civil War Stedman converted his plant to the creation of war material for Union forces, reconvertng it to civilian use after 1865. After the war the company began to make machinery used for the chemical, meatpacking, gravel, and glass industries, specializing in tools that aided in the crushing, pulverizing, disintegrating, or mixing and screening of goods. The Stedman engine, used in sawmill work or in stationary structures, grew immensely popular after the Civil War. In 1884 Nathan R. Stedman died, leaving the company in the hands of his son, Nathan. The younger Stedman had aided his father in the firm since 1854, serving in various capacities.

In 1885 the company expanded its product line and began to produce fertilizing and rendering machinery, receiving patent number 518,010 on a "disintegrator" (cage

mill). The very first model of what would become the company's most important product was sold to the Oakland Pressed Brick Company of Zanesville, Ohio, by salesman G. C. Little. The forty-inch cage mill was shipped to the Zanesville company on 22 April 1886 and according to one source was still in use in 1984. The company at that point employed between eighty and one hundred workers, with the Stedman engine the mainstay of the firm's product line. At the end of 1890 the company began shipping Stedman Disintegrators overseas, the first sent to the Kennedy Brick Machinery Manufacturing Company of Liverpool, England.

In 1893 Nathan Stedman and his two sons, William R. and George M., incorporated the firm, using the name Stedman's Foundry and Machine Works. A year later the U.S. government granted Stedman a patent for his "cage mill crusher." In 1912 the company moved to a new location on Franklin Street in order to expand production due to increased demand. The company continued to produce machinery at that site in 1999.

In 1913, after three generations of family control, a group of men from Cincinnati—Stewart P. Sutphin, Chester A. Peebles, and Perin Langdon—purchased the company from George Stedman, retaining control of the firm until 1949. During World War I the company joined the war effort by making machine tool castings that were used by Cincinnati manufacturers to craft munitions. A circa 1925 catalog showed that the company's primary product line included disintegrators, road surface spreaders, fertilizer spreaders, and mineral separators. The United Engineering & Foundry Company of Pittsburgh took control of the corporation in 1949.

During the 1960s the company built a 17,000-square-foot facility to house the machinery division, leaving the older 10,000-square-foot building to the foundry division. The company later added a testing facility where prospective clients could come and test the machinery on any materials they chose before deciding to buy. The testing building continued to be a good sales tool for the company in the 1990s. In 1980 the foundry ceased operations because the firm could not afford to bring the plant up to the new standards required by EPA and OSHA in the late 1970s. The machinery division continued, however, and the organization's name was altered to the Stedman Machine Company, Incorporated, to reflect the change.

In the 1970s the concern continued to be competitive and innovative, designing a flared cage mill that was especially suited to processing wet and sticky material such as clay without clogging. In the 1980s the firm improved upon their cage mill crushers, introducing the "G" series, which ranged in size from forty inches to seventy-four inches with a capacity of one thousand tons per hour. According to an outside source, the "G" series represented "a major design advance in which push-button, quick-opening retraction permits change—out of wear components in as little as 1 hour." The company also began producing impactors, which break material by slamming it against a hard surface rather than grinding it between rotating parts, as in a cage mill. A decade after the foundry closed, the company was acquired by the Eagle Crusher Company of Galion, Ohio. Eagle Crusher Company specializes in portable crushing equipment.

In 1999 Larry Giffin oversaw the Aurora firm that continued to make and market cage mill crushers, now portable, as well as secondary impactors and jaw crushers to a

worldwide market. In 1999 the company employed approximately one hundred people and expected sales of more than \$10 million.