

Eli whitney and interchangable parts

Politics



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U. S. History--Presentation for 10/25/11 on “ Eli Whitney and interchangeable parts” In the late 1700s, in addition to inventing the cotton gin, Eli Whitney also came up with the idea for interchangeable parts. This was the pre-manufacturing of machinery pieces that could be quickly assembled to make a functioning piece of equipment, such as a gun. Before Whitney, each gun had to be handcrafted, and each one was different in its assembly.

This meant that it took a long time for them to be made or repaired. When Congress voted for a war with France in 1797, Whitney saw an opportunity to market his idea because he knew a lot of guns would be needed to fight the war. Whitney obtained a federal grant from the government in 1798 to build 10, 000 muskets for the army in 2 years, which was a ridiculous proposal for the time period.

He applied the idea of interchangeable parts to the production of firearms and created a machine that could make exact copies of individual components of guns. These could then be assembled faster and more efficiently, thus saving the government time and money. Although it took him eight years to complete the project instead of two, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams among others were both impressed with Whitney’s invention when he came to the Washington area to defend it.

News of the success of interchangeable parts spread quickly, and by the War of 1812, the leading firearms manufactures in America were using the system to produce weapons at an alarming rate. By the 1950s, firearms manufactures around the globe had adopted interchangeable parts thanks to America’s success. Whitney’s breakthrough also affected and helped to develop other industrial activities. Cars, sewing machines, clocks, and

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typewriters were all being assembled with interchangeable parts. This also would lead to the rise of the assembly line.