

Camillus® Cutlery Co. History

In 1876, Adolph Kastor, a 20 year old immigrant from Germany, formed A. Kastor & Company to import quality cutlery from Germany and England. Located on Canal Street in New York City, the new company offered an extensive assortment of knives.

In 1897, the Dingley Tariff dramatically increased import tariffs on knives and Kastor searched for a domestic manufacturer to satisfy his growing customer's needs. Contracting with Mr. Charles Sherwood of Camillus, New York to provide knives, Kastor eventually purchased the small factory that employed 20 men in 1902. The one story factory in Camillus was expanded and new equipment and techniques were developed to increase production to meet the needs of the growing American market.

In the coming years, Kastor turned the Camillus factory into one of the major knife suppliers in the United States and production totaled 902,976 knives in 1910. The small one story factory perched on the banks of Nine Mile Creek had now grown to 6 buildings and employment reached 200 workers.

During World War I, Camillus' skilled craftsmen turned out 471,044 knives for the Canadian, British, United States, and Dutch governments. The American doughboys were provided with a Camillus folding knife & spoon courtesy of the Red Cross.

In the 1920's many new lines were added and knives with stainless steel blades were introduced. The Cutlery continued to prosper with many new patterns being offered during the 1930's including knives commemorating George Washington, Babe Ruth, and Buck Rogers. Numerous knives were made under private label for companies such as Hibbard Spencer Bartlett & Co. (O.V.B.), Sears Roebuck & Co. (Craftsman and Dunlap), F.W. Woolworth (Kent), Simmons Hardware Co. (Keen Kutter), and A.F. Shapleigh Hardware Co. (Diamond Edge).

With the beginning of World War II, the Camillus factory geared up to meet the Allied Forces knife requirements. During 1942 - 1945 more than 15 million *military knives* were produced including the U.S.M.C. Raider Stiletto and 7" Fighting Knife. For distinguished service the Cutlery received the Army/Navy "E"xcellence Award on several occasions.

Following World War II new items were introduced under the Camillus® and Camco® line (Kastor brand was discontinued). Character knives such as The Lone Ranger, *Daniel Boone*, Davey Crockett, and Dick Tracy were designed to appeal to the young buyer. An official *Mumbly Peg*® knife and *Charm* knife were produced in the late 1950's.

During the Vietnam War, Camillus manufactured the U.S.M.C. 7" Fighting Knife, #MIL-K-818 four blade utility knife and the 5" Pilot Survival Knife.

The original *American Wildlife*® Series of 4 knives was first offered in 1975 and eventually grew to include a total of 18 different models. Many newly designed styles including the LOK-BACK, LOK-RANCHER, and CAM-LOCK were developed.

The Western® Cutlery Company of Boulder, Colorado, a knife manufacturer since 1896, was purchased in 1991 and added to supplement the extensive Camillus line.

Camillus remains as the leading private label manufacturer of quality sporting and pocket knives in the world. Over 20 different brands are manufactured at the Camillus factory. These brands, as well as, the Camillus® and Western® brands are distributed in all 50 states and worldwide.

A tradition of manufacturing quality knives continues today due to the dedicated skilled craftsmen that produce more than 2 million knives annually at the Camillus factory. Many workers have followed in the footsteps of their fathers and grandfathers that began work in the late 1800's.