

HISTORY

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY SUPPRESSOR (OR SILENCER) DESIGNERS AND YEARS OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT THAT HAVE IMPROVED FIREARM SUPPRESSOR TECHNOLOGY, BUT IT IS HIRAM P. MAXIM WHO DEVELOPED AND PATENTED THE FIRST COMMERCIALY PRODUCED SUPPRESSOR.



Hiram P. Maxim was the son of United States born inventor, Hiram Stevens Maxim, who brought us the first portable fully automatic machine gun. Hiram P. Maxim, a mechanical engineer, graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He was a pioneer in ham radio technology and automobiles, and he worked in several other industries before he formed the Maxim Silencer Company in 1908. As an outdoorsman, a hunter, and target shooter, Maxim had an idea come to him as he was shooting near neighbors and was sensitive to their peace and quiet. He developed a fairly effective silencer that was largely popular and sold commercially in local hardware stores for \$3.25 per unit. Maxim coined the term “silencer” by including the word in the name of his business; however, there has never been such thing as a literal silencer. Firearms suppressors have been noted as sound suppressors, sound moderators, mufflers, silencers, and the slang term, “cans”.

In the early 1900s, law enforcement agencies started looking at ways to ban silencers. At the same time, mobs were using machine guns and hand grenades in their escapades, which drew even more attention to the need to ban certain items. Then U.S. Attorney General, Homer S. Cummings, recognized that firearms could not be banned outright under the Second Amendment, so he proposed restrictive regulation in the form of an expensive tax and Federal registration. Short barreled rifles and short barrel shotguns were also regulated by this act of Congress since the ability to easily conceal them made law enforcement agencies nervous.

In 1934, the National Firearms Act was approved and passed by Congress, and the expensive tax of \$200 was set on any legal purchase of the certain items listed in the bill. At that time, \$200 was far more expensive than any item that was purchased, making it almost impossible for a citizen with an average income to acquire.

This act of congress (which many gun enthusiasts find aggravating) restricts the following: a shotgun having a barrel of less than eighteen inches; a rifle having a barrel length less than sixteen inches; or any other weapon, other than a pistol or revolver, from which a shot is discharged by an explosive if such weapon is capable of being concealed on the person; or a machine gun. This act also restricts a muffler or silencer for any firearm, whether or not such a firearm is included in the foregoing definition. The NFA branch of the BATFE regulates the registration and restrictions of such items and classifies a silencer, suppressor, muffler, or moderator as a device that decreases the sound signature of a weapon.

After the National Firearms Act of 1934 was set into place, private ownership of silencers slightly fell out of favor. Although the military and federal agencies used silencers for certain missions, there was not a lot of movement in the way of expanded research and improved technology. It was not until the later part of the 20th century that silencer research started picking up momentum, which was influenced by the increasing interest of the military and federal agencies. Within the last twenty years, silencer technology has been improving exponentially. With the introduction of CNC machines and computer-generated 3D modeling, silencers have been improving both in effectiveness and in durability.