

Dr. Calvin Hooker Goddard 1891- 1955



Often called the “Father of Modern Firearms Identification”, Goddard was responsible for many important advancements in the field of Firearms Examination. Two very important advancements included the adaptation of the comparison microscope for the simultaneous examination of two adjacent items and the creation of a comprehensive firearms database. With the help of Charles Waite, the two researched and collected data from all known firearms manufacturers. Results were compiled and a database created to house this information. It was the most comprehensive ballistics database of its time.

What began as a boyhood interest in firearms led him to the more specialized field of Firearms Identification. Working with the help of Phillip Gravelle, they developed a microscope which allowed Goddard to examine characteristics left by rifling, firing pins, extractors, and breech faces on two bullets or cartridge cases at one time. Being able to examine two items side-by-side allowed him to make determinations as to whether a bullet or cartridge case was likely fired from the same firearm. His first paper explaining this new method was published in **Army Ordnance** in 1925. His hobby quickly brought him fame, and he was asked to work in criminal cases involving firearms evidence.

In 1926, Goddard and his colleagues formed the Bureau of Forensic Ballistics. Soon after its creation, Goddard was asked by the Governor of Massachusetts to review an appeal from two convicts, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were accused in the murder Alesandro Beradelli who questioned the reliability of the firearms evidence against them. By using the comparison microscope to analyze the bullets from Sacco’s revolver, Goddard determined that the gun was used in the murder. Goddard’s findings were upheld in a re-examination 30 years later.

In 1929, Goddard was asked to examine the evidence from the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in Chicago, in which seven gangsters were murdered by men wearing police uniforms. Working as an independent examiner, he determined that none of the machine guns possessed by Chicago police were used in the murders. Months later, during a raid on the home of one of Al Capone’s gang members, two machine guns were recovered. Goddard determined that these weapons were used in the murders. As a result of Goddard’s efforts, civic leaders in Chicago convinced him to organize a Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory in their city.

In 1930, with the support of Northwestern University, Goddard was named Director and Professor of Police Science. He developed a staff of specialists in the areas of chemistry, toxicology, serology, document examination, microscopy, and firearms within his newly created Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory at the Law School at Northwestern University. This was the first comprehensive police laboratory in the nation and was later used as the model for the first FBI crime laboratory.

Today, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement employs crime laboratory analysts statewide who conduct casework in the discipline of Firearms Identification.