

Donation of the Month

Cash Register
Museum Purchase
2006.40.10



No store owner today would open their doors without a cash register at the checkout counter. Simple cash registers totaled the sale for the customer and dispensed a receipt. Other more complicated machines could tell the owner much more than just the day's sales. One look at a register tape or the internal computer can tell an owner if he's making a profit, how many transactions have taken place, and how much money should be in the drawer. While the first stores opened without this invention, by the turn of the century no business was without one.

Invented in 1883 by James Ritty, a saloon keeper in Dayton; within a year his company, patent, and machines were purchased by John Henry Patterson, who formed the National Cash Register Company.

Business was slow and in the first decade only sixteen thousand registers were produced. A new marketing strategy brought a leap in sales as the number of registers per year jumped to 110,000 by 1914. Patterson headed the company till his death in 1922 and that same year the company produced its two millionth cash register. Today, the company known as NCR continues to make cash registers, but has expanded to include other machines.

This cash register made by the National Cash Register Company is a class 400 register and was ahead of its time when made between 1900 and 1910. Internal counters tracked different types of sales and could even keep track of two cash drawers. Other counters showed how many times the register was used, how many times a purchase was paid by cash or on account, and how much cash was in the drawer. Each counter could be turned back to zero at any time. In 1909 this register set the business owner back from \$75 to \$400. These detailed machines were found most often at department stores, florists and drug stores. This register came from Applegate Drugstore on First Street.

The complicated machine came with these operating directions:

Press keys showing the amount of the sale, a special key showing the kind of sale and an initial key showing who made the sale. Press the handle slightly from you, then pull toward you and turn until it comes to a stop.

A printed check will be issued, bell will ring, cash drawer will open, the indicators will show the amount, which will be added on the counter wheels and printed on the detail strip. Do not leave the checks in the receiver, as they will clog the printing mechanism.

Since the turn of the century business owners have relied on a cash register to total a customer's bill. While some cash registers did much more complicated counting and tracking of transactions and cash flow, simpler registers could also be purchased. This machine was of the more complicated type and while the workings on this cash register appear antiquated and requiring a bit of effort the internal counters could tell the owner as much information as today's computer driven machines.