

EARLY NATIONAL AUTOMATIC TOOL COMPANY HISTORY

The history of the Natco has always been intertwined with George H. Fianning and his relatives. Fianning had two wives, both were cousins named Von Pein. William Bockhoff, founder of the Natco, was originally a grocerman and was located at 332 South 11th, Richmond. (Now Fianning Grocery) It was while a merchant that he conceived the idea of the multiple drawer cash register. He proceeded to build this register and attempted to sell it to National Cash Register Company. They first turned him down. Wanting to expand his facilities to build these multiple-drawer registers, he talked with his brother-in-law, Matthew J. Von Pein. Bockhoff asked Von Pein, "Where can I get a machinat and engineer that can help me build and perfect this register?" Von Pein said, "You should hire my youngest brother, Ed."

The factory was moved to Indianapolis with Ed Von Pein as its first machinat and engineer. The company continued to grow until National Cash Register saw it as a threat and offered now to buy them out. Bockhoff agreed on a price, but they had to agree to take Ed VonPein on their payroll. Ed Von Pein, while at National Cash Register, had another man working for him by the name of Thomas J. Watson. Because of this association, Ed Von Pein later became International Business Machines's first creative engineer. Von Pein, before his death, had personally patented between 300-400 items and was a close friend and associate of Charles Kettering of General Motors.

After Bockhoff sold to National Cash Register, he wished to return to Richmond and build a new plant. His family stayed in Indianapolis, but he lived in Richmond with his brother-in-law, Matt Von Pein at 703 South J Street, which was also the first mailing address of the Natco. Julia (Von Pein) Porter, Missoula, Montana, and her brother, Matthew Von Pein II (dec. 1920) were the first mail clerks or couriers for the Natco. Upon arrival of the mail at 703 South J Street, these two promptly carried all Natco mail across the fields and railroad to the new plant. Their salary was 25¢ per week.

Ricka Von Pein Fianning not only cooked for Bockhoff during this period, but served as Natco's first secretary and telephone operator at 703 South J since the plant was so far out in the country. She took all calls and recorded their messages, serving without pay since it was Uncle Bill.

Later other relatives served the company in important positions. Robert Schurman, whose wife was Florence Fianning, was its secretary--treasurer. Also Ralph Guildenhar, nephew, also now serves in the same capacity. Myron Fianning, a grand nephew, is superintendent. Charles Youngflesh, a son-in-law, is company photographer.