

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 7, 2019

Lamson's Cash Carrying System: Tom Marshall's computer was misbehaving on Sunday, so he was unable to draft his usual Weekly News story. In its place, I offer a remembrance he related to me last week when we were talking about early stores in Wilmington and elsewhere. He remembered visiting the original Wilmington Dry Goods Store as well as Desco Plumbing Supply store downtown and described an intricate conveyor system that was a novelty to me. When I asked for more info, he replied, "The device I was trying to describe was invented about 1880 and was known as Lamson's Cash-Carrying System. It was in wide use in department stores, large hardware stores, plumbing supply houses, and the like, where a clerk at the sales counter collected cash, wrote up a temporary sales slip, put everything in a cage that was attached to a metal framework than ran throughout the store. When the clerk closed the basket and pushed a button, quantities of air blew through this air-tight framework and moved the basket toward its destination, which was probably the treasurer of the company or the chief clerk, who was located on a 3rd- or 4th-floor landing. Very rapidly, said official would type a sales slip and insert this, along with the merchandise and cash change, back in the box for return to the counter clerk, who was keeping his customer occupied. This device was available in at least five large Wilmington stores: Lippincott's (dry goods and department store), Wilmington Dry Goods Company, Woolworth's Five and Ten Cent Store, Kennard & Pyle (dry goods), and Desco Corporation (wholesale plumbing supplies). If these were installed around 1900, they were long-lived, as some were still in service in the 1980s. There was quite a clatter in the store when the boxes were moving to and from the main cashier."

I Googled the system name and found images that show the system in operation at an antiques store in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. Sadly, the store burned down on New Year's Day 2004, but these images remain.



The Cash Cable Story (*as related by the store owners before the building's destruction by fire*): Installed in 1915 by Walter Joyner, this Lamson Cash Carrier System was made in England and is the world's largest operational Cash Carrier System. The system is one of only two still remaining in the world today and the only one still in operation in North America.

This system is over a 1,000 feet in length and still operates throughout all three levels as well as all three sides of the building. The cash cars travel at 22 miles per hour on the system. With 15 clerk stations, this was the quickest and most economical means of handling cash in the early years of the Joyner's Department Store.

In 1992, the Joyner family was offered a substantial dollar for this system by Walt Disney World for their Euro-Disney; however, Mr. Joyner decided to honor his late father's wishes that requested the cable system always remain in Moose Jaw. The cable system remains in the building on lease from the Joyner family and is used now solely as Moose Jaw's Newest Tourist Attraction.

If you would like to see the Cash Cable in operation please ask for a demonstration from the clerk in the Candy Department up front.