This thesis looks at the international operations of the National Cash Register (NCR) from 1885 to 1922. NCR quickly grew to international prominence selling cash registers because of the leadership of President John Patterson. NCR agents perfected their salesmanship skills within the domestic market, which were then used to expand the company’s operations in foreign markets. Other companies of the time saw foreign markets simply as a way to unload surpluses, while Patterson used foreign business to create a distinct image for his company. Patterson made international operations a key component of the company’s policies and business strategy. Using the foreign success as a tool, the company created a narrative in which the cash register brought civilization to those around the world. Foreign sales did serve a monetary function, but were more important because NCR then used its foreign business to sell itself as a modern and cosmopolitan company.
“THE SUN NEVER SETS ON NATIONAL CASH REGISTERS”: THE INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS OF THE NATIONAL CASH REGISTER COMPANY, 1885-1922

A Thesis

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Introduction

The National Cash Register Company was an early proponent of expanding into international markets, not only as a way to increase business, but as a means of creating a specific corporate culture and image. John Patterson, the company’s president from 1885 until his death in 1922, was the figurehead and moral leader of the company. He strongly believed in the promise of international business and created corporate policies that encouraged expansion abroad. The late nineteenth century was a period in which many American corporations were beginning to expand abroad. Most did so in order to relieve excess supply or simply to increase sales. NCR’s business clearly benefitted from selling more cash registers to a greater number of customers. However, increased sales were not the only benefit that the company derived from its international business.

Patterson and other executives created the image of NCR as a cosmopolitan and progressive company as the result of the work the company was doing overseas. NCR’s
corporate culture focused on these ideas; domestic advertising highlighted these aspects as well. As a progressive company, NCR executives created a corporate narrative in which the cash register provided “civilization” to those that were using it. In their definition, “civilization” meant accepting American methods of doing business. In order to create this cosmopolitan image, the company had to be successful overseas and its own employees had to be convinced that this was a worthwhile venture. Patterson used the successful salesmanship techniques that were being honed within the United States and adapted them to overseas markets to allow for a quick expansion. The company literature and rhetoric discussed the expansion extensively, insisting to company employees that the National Cash Register was useful throughout the world.

After James Ritty invented the cash register in 1879, he formed the National Manufacturing Company in Dayton, Ohio. In the mid-1880s, John Patterson took over the company and renamed it the National Cash Register Company (NCR). Patterson promised that the cash register would change many of the traditional methods of doing business. The cash register was a machine that could be used to ring up transactions, but it was also part of a system to improve the efficiency of business operations and provide more information to business owners. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the company relied on customer feedback and its manufacturers to create a machine that was increasingly sophisticated and able to accomplish more complex functions. Almost immediately after the company was founded, Patterson pushed to expand quickly into overseas markets. The company’s foreign business became a central part of the company culture and an integral part of the business strategy. NCR is interesting because of its early and intense focus on foreign business.¹

The nineteenth century was a period of increasing corporatization throughout the United States. Business historians looking at the latter part of the nineteenth century focus on several key issues. These include the merger movement, rapid westward expansion by railroads, and the increasing use of technology and communication tools. Alfred Chandler’s seminal work The Visible Hand argues that the late nineteenth century was a period of managerial capitalism, in which larger corporations required that operations be run by salaried managers. This type of capitalism was marked by rigid internal structures, which all duties clearly delegated among various levels of executives.² Within this historiography, there are an


increasing number of scholars looking at the international expansion of the American economy. It was during the second half of the nineteenth century that American companies truly began to expand into overseas markets. Technological innovation and the incorporation of assembly line methods allowed companies to produce a greater and greater supply of products. Company executives in the manufacturing industries utilized scientific methods and modes of thinking. The influence of scientific thinking extended beyond the assembly line. Business leaders incorporated scientific ideas into the organization and structure of their companies, creating concepts of scientific management. Scientific management was a system of organization in which scientific ideas were used to organize the methods of doing business within a company. John Patterson’s organization of the company showed the influence of scientific management. Every aspect of his company was controlled to increase the efficiency of workers, including his welfare programs like employee lunches.  

Increasing supply created a need to seek markets outside of the local area, eventually pushing companies into international markets. Most accounts of this period of business history focus on technology as the driving point of the American economy. In these accounts, technology was the factor that made the American economy successful, driving businesses into overseas markets and allowing them to prosper over foreign companies. This argument is especially prevalent when looking at companies that specialized in information technology. James Cortada, in a study of the computer and information technology industry, observes that the cash register “was, perhaps, the most visible of all such hardware because one did not have to work in an office or for an insurance or railroad company to see one in use; increasingly, a person simply had to walk into a store.” The size and visibility of the cash register made it recognizable to shoppers throughout the world, compared with other machines that were less visible to the general publics. The cash register, because of its conspicuousness, was an obvious

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symbol of the business system it represented. It was not only a machine, but showed that the business owner was dedicated to a modern method for doing business.

It was also during this time period that corporations began to recognize the unique cultural role they played and began to consciously create a corporate image. The rise of corporations, aided by strong entrepreneurs, created a unique business culture within the United States. Corporations began to recognize the social role that they played, creating welfare programs and branding themselves in particular ways. NCR was an early proponent of corporate welfare, hiring a corporate welfare director and developing community programs. With this more “human” side to large corporations, advertising and marketing were a way for companies to reach customers using emotion. The creation of a public corporate image reinforced the cultural role that businesses played.

American companies began expanding abroad in a big way in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Singer Manufacturing Company, which produced sewing machines, became hugely successful throughout Europe in the years leading up to the Civil War, while the company was in the midst of patent disputes with other sewing machine companies. Companies specializing in communications and information also began moving abroad throughout the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The punch-card system was introduced by Hollerith throughout Europe in the 1890s. The National Cash Register Company was organized by Patterson at a time when other companies were proving that international business was a viable option. NCR used existing models of international business and united that with an increased awareness of the intangible benefits of this business.

NCR brought together the push for international business and awareness of the cultural relationship between business and society. Companies not only had to do business, but had to create meaning in these dealings. As other companies were creating meaning in their domestic operations, NCR used its international operations to create a narrative about the company as a whole. In this thesis, the first chapter studies the company’s salesmanship techniques and their adaptation to foreign markets. NCR was known as a pioneer in the standardization of selling skills and this aspect has been studied widely. These selling techniques enabled the

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company’s salesmen to be successful in foreign markets. The adaptation of these selling techniques, or often the lack of adaptation, provides insights into the way that NCR saw itself in relation to foreign customers. The second chapter looks at the centrality of international business to the corporate culture of NCR. It charts the chronological expansion of the company’s agents into foreign territories, including the focus on international exhibitions and lecture tours. The third chapter analyzes the creation of civilizing narratives in the company’s foreign business. When selling to foreign customers, company executives and sales agents created a narrative of progress in order to justify the company’s rapid expansion.

The primary sources that I use come from the NCR archives, which are held by Dayton history. In order to chart the chronology, I rely heavily on a ledger, which recorded sales figures from 1902 to 1910, broken down by country. The ledger is divided into six sections; each section includes a region of the world. Every country has a page of sales figures that are broken down by year. These figures not only include sales in terms of number of registers sold, but also quotas, the percentage of the quota that was achieved, and points. The points system, developed by John Patterson, gave each model of register a different point value, with the more expensive and newer models being worth more points. Each salesman had a target point value for the month and year, with incentives for those that achieved their target goal.

Another source that I use is The N.C.R. This was an internal company newsletter that was distributed to sales agents and factory employees. I use it throughout all three chapters as a measure of the corporate culture of NCR, as well as a record of the happenings within the company. The third type of source I use is photographs. Because of Patterson’s philosophy of “teaching through the eye,” the company kept extensive photographic records. These include photographs of the installation of cash registers, customers, factory and grounds, and important events. These events include company events and conferences, as well as world events, such as the Olympics and opening of the Panama Canal.

This thesis looks at the globalization of American business in a concrete example, studying several aspects of the company’s international business operations. NCR, which has very rarely been studied, and not in this context, provides excellent insight into questions about the globalization of modern business structures. The few prior histories of NCR examine its ground-breaking corporate welfare programs and salesmanship techniques, but do not delve into the significance of its extensive international operations. NCR provides a different view of globalization, as it is data- and information-based, rather than driven by consumers. The cash register assisted businessmen with acquiring more information about their business. NCR’s policies were created with businessmen in mind, which means that their audience was quite different than companies selling consumer or technological products. NCR was in the business of selling to other businesses. The target customer was a small business owner, who had to be addressed in the language of business. In order to sell the cash register and create a successful company, NCR expanded into overseas markets and made foreign business a central aspect of company policies. When selling to foreign business owners, NCR was selling not just a machine but a new perception of business. But sales alone do not account for the importance that was

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11 NCR Foreign Sales Ledger, held by the NCR Archives at Dayton History.
given to foreign business. Company executives, most notably John Patterson, saw the cash register as a symbol of modern, progressive business and believed that their product could bring “civilization” throughout the world.
Chapter 1
The Corporate Policies of NCR and their Adaptation to Foreign Markets

When James Ritty invented the cash register in 1879, he had little idea of the success that his invention would one day have. He had trouble selling it, struggling to convince business owners of its usefulness. Many believed that the cash register provided few benefits over current cash drawers and that it cost too much. In 1884, the National Cash Register Company reorganized under the leadership of new majority stockholder John H. Patterson. Patterson created a demand for the new product by introducing innovative salesmanship techniques, which were later adopted across the industry. His techniques were specifically created to overcome the various challenges that were faced by the company. The cash register threatened clerks because it promised to curtail theft. The high initial cost and uncertainty about the usefulness of a new product also created hesitancy in potential purchasers. Patterson and the other executives at NCR overcame these challenges with various selling strategies. There were practical ideas, like financing plans, as well as strategies meant to overcome the company’s negative image with the public, like advertising and welfare programs. The company then used these programs and policies to sell NCR as a model company to potential customers. The company’s board of directors, lead authoritatively by Patterson, was able to successfully introduce a new technology using superior salesmanship techniques. These tactics, which were created in response to domestic challenges, then allowed NCR to successfully expand to international markets. Patterson had created a pyramid of authority, which could be adapted to local conditions when he deemed necessary, but ultimately was under his control. The pyramid plan was an organizational system that put Patterson at the top. This allowed NCR to easily adapt to challenges presented by overseas markets, but retain the same corporate structure and policies in these new markets.

In the late 1800s, store owners knew very little about how their businesses ran while they were away, trusting that their employees recorded every transaction in a ledger and deposited the correct amount of money in the cash drawer. Many owners believed that their clerks were pocketing some of the profits, but had no way to verify this. Before James Ritty, others had attempted to design a machine to remedy this problem, but had little success. One model affixed a bell to the drawer, so there was an audible warning every time that the money was accessed. However, there was still no way to link the cash deposited with a specific transaction. A transaction might still be entered into the ledger incorrectly, or a portion of the money pocketed, which could not be traced to a specific transaction. Ritty sought to create a machine which would connect the two functions of security and accountability. His cash register combined many of the current designs of cash drawers, such as the bell, with the

12 Isaac Frederick Marcossen, Wherever Men Trade; The Romance of the Cash Register (New York: Dodd, Mead & company, 1945), 12.
functionality of a ledger book. The most revolutionary function of his cash register model was that it allowed the business owner immediate access and control over his business transactions. There continued to be ongoing problems with clerks being able to record one amount and charge another. This was one of the factors that led to the focus on accounting features over theft-prevention.

James Ritty created his machine in order to guard the profits of business. He first introduced the cash register in 1879 to little success. It was a new piece of technology with a high cost and little proven value. The cash register was also a physically large machine. A skilled craftsman required large amounts of materials and time in order to create a working model. It was difficult to transport such an unwieldy machine over long distances; company salesmen also had to personally haul the cash register to various demonstrations. Some storeowners sold registers on consignment, making them experts on NCR’s products. This lessened the burden on traveling salesmen.

Ritty was not able to overcome these obstacles in the first years after inventing the cash register. Businessmen were accustomed to using a separate cash drawer and ledger book and the first cash register models did not provide a significant improvement over these two items. Business owners needed to be convinced of the usefulness of the cash register. In 1885, the company leadership was taken over by John H. Patterson, who had become a majority stockholder the previous year. Patterson reorganized Ritty’s National Manufacturing Company into the National Cash Register Company (NCR). Patterson was working in the coal business in the early 1880s when he became aware of the cash register. He believed that untrustworthy employees were cutting into his profits and jeopardizing the success of his business. He bought a cash register to combat this problem and quickly became a proponent of the machine. He was so impressed that he transferred his coal business over to his brother in order to jump full-time into the cash register business. He was convinced that the cash register had the potential to change the way that businesses operated.

Other contemporary companies faced similar problems in the introduction of new technology. The Singer Manufacturing Company had difficulties when it first introduced the sewing machine in the 1850s. As an early example of a globally successfully business, historians have long made competing arguments about the success of Singer. Robert Davies argues that “it [the sewing machine] benefited very directly from the prevailing ethos that valued any labor-saving machine.” The Singer sewing machine was developed using a mix of patented technologies, as were all other sewing machines on the market. To prevent un-ending legal battles, eight patents were combined into America’s first patent pool in 1856. This pool ensured the survival of competitors to Singer’s machine in America, which incentivized Singer to seek

15 Spellman 3.
16 Marcossen 13.
17 Spellman 27.
18 Samuel Crowther, John H. Patterson, Pioneer in Industrial Welfare (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1923), 110.
foreign markets.\textsuperscript{20} Davies argues that Singer pushed into European markets based, “On the assumption that manufacturing interests abroad were more solidly established and would have surplus capital to invest in developing and introducing inventions.”\textsuperscript{21} Although NCR sought to expand its potential sales, Patterson wanted to prove that the cash register was a machine that was useful to everyone throughout the world.

Patterson’s influence was central to the corporate policies at NCR. He led the company through the difficult early years, creating programs and policies that shaped the company into the success that it became. He was often eccentric, pushing strange health and diet trends on his employees. He was not only the organizational head of the company, but the emotional one. Lena Harvey Tracy, the welfare director, observed that Patterson, “was a veritable presence among us, a commanding general, always authoritative, sometimes dictatorial, but a brother as well, who looked into your face and summoned from you a response, a desire to be what he believed you capable of being.”\textsuperscript{22} As Tracy attests, those within the company looked to Patterson for leadership but also with fear. He was quick to reprimand salesmen who did not meet their quotas, but simultaneously to give tips and build the employees back up.

Under Patterson, the company quickly targeted its problems and created strategies to overcome them. The first was to tackle the high cost of the cash register. Following earlier companies, such as Singer, NCR introduced a variety of financing options for store owners looking to purchase a register. These plans made it possible for small store owners to make this large purchase, since they were the primary intended customers. The perceived problem of clerk resistance was addressed in several ways throughout the late 1880s and early 1890s. The company believed that clerks were the root of their poor reputation. NCR blamed many of the company’s early problems on the opposition of clerks, from factory sabotage to low sales.

Sales clerks posed a problem to the cash register’s introduction because they actively resisted having the machine in their store. The primary selling point of the register to business owners was that it reduced theft among clerks. Thieving clerks obviously were opposed to a machine that would curtail their extra money, while honest clerks felt insulted that their trustworthiness was being questioned. Early salesmen for NCR targeted bars and saloons, which were thought to have higher rates of theft than other trades. The sales figures from the 1880s reinforce this belief, with bars and saloons being the most popular industry purchasing a cash register.\textsuperscript{23} Looking back on this early period, Crowther explains that, “[Patterson’s] machine- the machine out of which he hoped to do so much-was just a contraption for catching light fingered clerks.”\textsuperscript{24} Although the accounts are likely exaggerated, stories appeared in The N.C.R., the company’s internal newsletter, of clerks rushing to the mail to destroy NCR advertisements before the owner could see them.\textsuperscript{25} The same fearful clerks intercepted travelling NCR salesmen before they could speak with the business owner. These types of
stories were used within NCR to highlight the challenges faced by their salesmen, who had to overcome such obstacles.

In order to combat this problem, Patterson hired a large sales force to cover extensive territory. Salesmen were able to combat clerk problems on the ground. When John Patterson took over in 1884, NCR employed only thirteen people, but he focused on hiring more salesmen to market his product.\(^{26}\) Patterson quickly expanded the company and believed that salesmen would be the key to NCR’s future success. Even in 1884, the factory was manufacturing more cash registers than could be sold, so salesmen needed to make up for this excess. Company executives worked to innovate selling techniques and they were good at it. NCR pioneered many of the selling techniques that would come to be standard practice across many industries. The standardized sales pitch and guaranteed sales territory for salesmen were among the most important. Executives that began their careers at NCR would bring the ideas about selling that they learned and go on to helm some of the biggest companies in America, spreading Patterson’s ideas. The most notable of these executives was Thomas Watson, who later led IBM to success.

In \textit{Birth of a Salesman}, Walter Friedman argues that Patterson pioneered the pyramid plan of management, which organized and streamlined the internal structure of sales-based companies. Most importantly, Patterson sought to bring a scientific attitude to the principles of selling and give selling a professional reputation.\(^{27}\) Using Nicole Woolsey Biggart’s concept of charismatic leaders, Friedman argues that the policies and culture of NCR were shaped by Patterson’s personality, given him ultimate control over the company. Patterson created an atmosphere in which employees felt that selling for NCR was a way of life, where they were driven by ideological motivators rather than just financial incentives.\(^{28}\) The force of Patterson’s personality was evident in almost all of the company’s major decisions and policies.

The standardized sales pitch allowed John Patterson to exercise control over all aspects of the company. He, along with several top selling agents, created a script that could be used in all situations called \textit{The Primer}. It included answers to common client concerns, as well as varying sales pitches for different industries. \textit{The Primer} not only included what words to say, but what gestures to use and how to conduct oneself in front of potential clients. Patterson expected salesmen to dress cleanly and present themselves professionally.\(^{29}\) Salesmen were standardized not just in their sales pitch but in their daily activities. They were required to create logs of all their customer visits, detailing each attempted sale. Patterson strongly believed that being a good salesman was not an innate characteristic, but rather a set of skills to be learned. Accordingly, he invested considerable energy into creating a plan for educating salesmen in the correct method of selling cash registers. Patterson founded a training school in 1894 for his salesmen, to instruct them in his preferred methods.\(^{30}\) When NCR expanded abroad, international sales schools were established. The selling techniques taught at these

\(^{26}\) Marcossen 31.
\(^{27}\) Friedman 150.
\(^{28}\) Tracy 129-132.
\(^{29}\) Marcossen 116.
\(^{30}\) Marcossen 114.
international schools were the same as those taught in America. Patterson believed that the techniques that worked in America would work throughout the world.\footnote{Crowther 267-268.}

The salesmen at NCR were treated as professionals, based on their training and success rate. As Friedman shows, throughout the nineteenth century the salesman was still a profession that commanded little respect.\footnote{Friedman 10-12.} Salesmen were seen as little more than peddlers. However, NCR agents were instructed to dress sharply, behave professionally, and, above all, be knowledgeable about their product.\footnote{Marcossen 116.} Most NCR salesmen were also quite skilled at fixing the machines, as there were few repairmen that knew the inner workings of this new machine, as well as collecting payments from customers. This organization is different from that at Singer, where repairs, collections, and sales were done by separate people. Patterson believed that having such a knowledgeable salesperson would allow them to connect personally with their customer, further guaranteeing the sale of a National Cash Register. Patterson gave each salesman a guaranteed territory, which would be traveled only by him.\footnote{Marcossen 143.} This, he believed, bred camaraderie among his agents instead of competition. He reasoned that they would be more likely to share selling tricks and secrets with each other if each knew that his territory was safe.\footnote{Crowther 106.}

NCR began to shift the message in advertisements, choosing to focus less on the thief-catch abilities of the register and more on its information-gathering and accounting abilities. Many clerks and business owners responded negatively to the thief-catching ads, which they believed accused clerks of dishonesty. This poor reputation was also the result of NCR’s predatory business habits. The company was consistently involved in litigation with other companies, while aggressive American salesmen were seen as pushy in other countries. Patterson wanted to highlight the many ways in which the cash register was useful and used advertising to show the many uses. As company executives became more aware of the negative perception of ads that focused on the thief catching abilities of the cash registers,\footnote{Marcossen 112.} advertisements began to highlight instead the cash register’s accounting functions and its ability to gather information about daily transactions.\footnote{Crowther 91.} The target of these advertisements was always the business owners who would potentially purchase a cash register.

In addition to advertising, NCR sought other methods to improve the company’s public image. Company agents solicited feedback from customers and improved the register based on these requests. Throughout the 1890s, NCR developed increasingly sophisticated functions that responded to customer demands. The company gathered feedback through its network of salesmen, which created an ongoing discussion about the machine.\footnote{Spellman 27.} This network was also developed by store owners who would sell the machines on consignment. This arrangement
made them experts on the machines and, often, sales were made without an NCR salesmen’s expertise. In Ross Thomson’s study of the relationship between selling and inventions at Singer, he argues for a “learning thesis,” which is the technological learning that takes place when potential customers, salesmen, and inventors are able to have discussions to promote future invention. He argues that, “technological change is a cumulative process which for techniques diffusing as commodities is tied to the evolution of sales.” This learning thesis helps explain the way in which NCR expanded. The company was truly selling a technique, a system of doing business, which was centered around the cash register. By utilizing this dialogue, NCR was able to capitalize on its sales networks to spur future innovation in the cash register.

In the case of Singer, Ross Thomson argues that, “such interactions could point out defects, suggest solutions, and identify complementarities which the inventor had not foreseen and could also pose quite distinct technical problems.” Similarly, NCR salesmen created an ongoing dialogue with their customers that furthered innovation. Various monetary denominations were customized for different customer industries, such as saloons or grocery stores. Storeowners were an active participant in this discussion and helped to further innovation on the machine. To combat clerk theft, different cash drawers were created for each clerk, with an associated bell so that a clerk would be alerted if another person was ringing up a transaction into their drawer. The auditory alert of the cash register also reminded clerks that they were constantly being watched. New versions of the cash register were able to mark what department a sold item came from, in order to better track inventories. A clerk could mark an item that was part of a promotion. All of these innovations allowed business owners to gain more specific information about the way that their business operated.

Patterson also created many welfare programs to combat the company’s negative image. He strongly believed that employees needed to be happy in order to be efficient workers, and implemented programs, such as healthy lunches and food classes, which sought to improve the lives of his employees. In 1897, he hired Lena Harvey Tracy as the company’s welfare director, the first such position in the country. Her first task was to mend relations between the company and the local community. One of her first programs was initiating a garden competition among local young boys, some of whom were suspected of vandalism to the company’s factory. The company provided programs such as these to improve the welfare of its employees and community. The welfare programs were then advertised to company employees, potential purchasers, and on speaking tours throughout the world. Images of NCR’s cafeteria were displayed alongside images of the cash register in sales pitches. Potential

39 Spellman 27.
41 Thomson 444.
42 Thomson 441.
43 Spellman 19-21.
44 Marcossen 64.
45 Tracy 42-48.
customers quickly learned that NCR not only sold cash registers, but a particular company image as well.\textsuperscript{46}

NCR’s superior salesmanship skills allowed the company to successfully introduce a new technology, despite facing many challenges. NCR was an integral played in the shift of salesmen from petty peddlers to respected professionals. Patterson fostered a community atmosphere within NCR that allowed for many ideas to prosper, while ultimately enforcing his own authority. He allowed for some accommodation of different environments but insisted that his standardized sales pitch would always be the most successful. NCR used a unified sales team, maintained through company newsletters and conferences, to overcome challenges such as a damaged company image and resistance to new technology. Patterson believed, “that pooled knowledge was better than scattered knowledge and hence he invented the conference idea and carried it to extraordinary lengths. And so he charted and subdivided the duties of the people who worked with him as to produce what we know to-day as a ‘business organization.’”\textsuperscript{47} The company, under Patterson’s leadership, first initiated new ideas, like its welfare programs, and then used those ideas to sell the company image through its highly-trained salesmen.

**Salesmanship Abroad**

When NCR expanded into overseas markets in the late 1880s, it faced many of the same challenges as in the domestic market. Patterson decided to transport many of the salesmanship techniques that had been honed within the United States into these new markets. While the company literature applauded the ability of the company’s sales agents to adapt to local markets, in reality NCR often used the same organizational structure and standardized sales pitch as in the United States.

When expanding abroad, the first step was to send a salesman to the new territory. He would tour the potential territory, giving demonstrations of the cash register and getting a sense of the sales opportunities. If the company decided that the territory would be a viable market, a sales agent would be appointed that territory and given exclusive right to sell there. After a period of time (usually a year) of proven sales, a sales agency would be established in that territory. An office would be leased, with particular instructions from Patterson on the location and qualifications of the office. The sales agency was headed by a manager, who led several sales agents in that territory. Each agent was responsible for a given route, selling registers, repairing broken ones, and giving demonstrations. Similar to McCormick and Singer, NCR originally sold its registers through commissioned agents then quickly switched to agents that were contracted only with NCR.\textsuperscript{48} The larger sales agencies, such as the one in England headed by J.W. Allinson, could be responsible for an entire country. Smaller agencies covered only part of a country or a specific city. The overseas agencies and offices usually did not contain more than one manager or other administrative employees. In 1903, the company

\textsuperscript{46} Tracy 151.
\textsuperscript{47} Crowther 12.
established the first overseas plant in Berlin. Eventually, there were also manufacturing plants in England and Japan. These manufacturing plants were created largely to bypass tariffs and other protective taxes, but the locations were chosen strategically in areas of large sales. Because the international agencies were developing at roughly the same time as the domestic ones, the structure was largely the same as in the United States, although on a more limited scale. Administrative oversight came almost entirely from the Dayton headquarters. After NCR was clearly established in Europe, the European branches were incorporated and a headquarters was added in London in the late 1890s. The company expanded by buying out other companies, or creating similar machines in order to drive competitors out of business. These were hostile combinations, in which NCR emerged more powerful and the competitors were no longer in the picture.

When expanding into international markets, the bureaucratic oversight was largely done from within the United States. As Alfred Chandler shows in his organizational chart, companies of this time were breaking down management duties into various levels of middle-managers. As companies were growing larger, it became more necessary to have people training in management in order to run the business most efficiently. NCR’s structural organization was based on Patterson at the top and delegating duties to the executives and then managers below him. He deemed his structure the “pyramid plan,” which fits in with the structure described by Chandler. NCR was divided into specific departments, such as marketing, selling, technology, photography, and welfare. Each department was headed by manager, who then divided duties to a number of middle managers depending on the size of the department. In 1906, the European offices had the following managers: an overall manager for continental Europe, an assistant manager for the continent, eight managers of specific territories, and nine general agents over European territories.

NCR established the first overseas sales agency in 1885 and was soon headed by J.W. Allinson. The company continued its policy of giving a guaranteed sales territory to each agent. Allinson quickly became quite successful, having the highest sales of all agents in April 1887, and the other sales agent in England was terminated in favor of Allinson. Allinson’s immediate success proved the ability of agents to sell registers in England and quashed potential excuses from those who argued against the viability of overseas markets. Allinson used the same techniques in England as would any agent in the United States. Although an Englishman, a profile of Allinson in The N.C.R. was quick to note that he was “thoroughly Americanized.” Allinson often sent letters to The N.C.R., offering his advice to other salesmen. When talking about the methods used to sell cash registers, he did not advocate using different techniques than were used in Dayton, Ohio. When Frank Slater, one of Allinson’s agents in

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49 Marcossen 205.
51 Friedman 158.
52 Crowther 57.
53 Crowther 272.
54 The N.C.R., September 1, 1888.
55 The N.C.R., March 16, 1891.
London, complained that it was difficult to sell registers to Londoners, he was quickly rebuked. Joseph Crane, the author of *The Primer*, answered him that, “if Mr. Slater would study *The Manual*, or give the subject the thought that has been given it on this side of the Atlantic, we believe his sales would be very much increased.”

Even in these early years, the company’s infrastructure was in place to handle such long distance orders. Allinson notes the “expeditious work [of the company], 18 days from my receipt of order to the execution and delivery of same, 3,600 miles away.” However, he did acknowledge that it was often more difficult to achieve results in these new foreign markets. In an article in *The N.C.R.*, the author wrote that England was “composed of a people who are adverse to American inventions and innovations. The English are a slow-going nation, who hesitate to change their modes of living and doing business by the introduction of systems that savor of American push and energy, which is by nature quite foreign to their hereditary characteristics.” Despite these alleged difficulties, however, Allinson continued to stand by the standardized NCR method and had great success. This quote highlights some of the difficulties that NCR faced in foreign encounters. NCR was selling the cash register using a distinct style of American capitalism, which was perceived as pushy in other countries.

The organizational structure of NCR abroad was largely the same as in the United States. Patterson wanted to maintain his control over all aspects of the company, preferring to be hands-on in the expansions. By the mid-1890s, he was making almost yearly trips to Europe, with less frequent trips to other NCR offices around the globe. Patterson believed that the cash register was useful for businessmen of all nationalities. In 1889, he bragged that “The National Cash Register Co. has its name and handiwork in every part of the civilized world.”

The company’s successes were so great internationally that “the sun never sets on National Cash Registers.” In his trips, Patterson marveled at the differences between the United States and the rest of the world. These differences made it even more impressive that NCR was successful in these countries.

The company’s sales agents did make some concessions to local conditions in order to make sales. The cash register itself was adapted to new conditions, such as monetary denominations. When Allinson was first introduced to the cash register in 1884, he was struck by it and ordered a machine for his business, customizing the buttons for English currency. Sales agents in emerging markets relied on word of mouth to make first sales. Agents saw the first sale as the most difficult and afterwards the machine would sell itself because other potential purchasers could see the machine in use. However, throughout the 1880s and early 1890s, foreign agents did not spend any more than American agents on advertising their product. J.W. Allinson spent only $2.33 on advertising per register sold, while the overall average was $4.19 spent on advertising per register sold. In the 1880s and 1890s, sales agents

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57 *The N.C.R.*, June 1887.
58 *The N.C.R.*, February 1, 1889.
59 *The N.C.R.*, June 12, 1889.
60 *The N.C.R.*, June 12, 1889.
61 *The N.C.R.*, July 1, 1889.
in foreign countries were usually Americans, trained in the sales school in Dayton, and then sent to a foreign post. However, by the turn of the century, NCR executives began to prefer hiring local agents. This indicates that NCR was unable to wholesale export their American-style capitalism without making accommodations. There were fewer transportation problems and local agents knew the environment and culture of the region better. American sales agents did not always understand the people to whom they were selling. The company also changed its name to reflect the local language. Marcossen argued that, “Although the overseas organization conforms to local customs and conditions, American methods of organization and selling are in force everywhere.”\(^62\) Although Patterson claimed to be adapting the company to local conditions, he undermined this assertion by insisting on his own methods. In his biography of Patterson, Crowther argues that, “it was [Patterson’s] constant aim to have as leaders for the various organizations natives of the respective countries, and eliminate everything American from the organizations.”\(^63\) However, this claim is immediately followed by Crowther’s assertion that, “[Patterson’s] agents’ schools, conventions, and advertising campaigns, which he inaugurated in America many years ago, were copied almost to the letter.”\(^64\) NCR made concessions, but it did not alter the fundamentals of its pioneering sales techniques.

Other contemporary technology companies had a very different customer base. The Singer Manufacturing Co., for example, sold their sewing machines primarily to individuals, most of these women. The potential purchaser (called p.p.’s in NCR’s sales materials) of an NCR cash register was a small business owner. Although used in factories, the sewing machine was largely marketed as a domestic product to be used in the home and provide women with a labor-saving device. When Singer moved into international markets, it studied and sought out individual customers, rather than businesses. Founded in 1851, Singer was an early advocate of using foreign markets to their fullest extent; the company was firmly established in British and European markets by the mid-1860s. Because Singer achieved success much earlier than many other companies, its overseas model was emulated by many later companies. NCR and Singer share some key characteristics, perhaps most importantly the size and heft of their products. This caused difficulties when displaying the product to potential customers, not to mention the logistical trouble and cost associated with shipping a heavy machine overseas.\(^65\)

Another contemporary technology that provides contrasts to NCR’s story is the punch card system. Introduced in the 1880s, the punch card system was created in order to conduct and tabulate the United States’ 1890 census. Following the census, Herman Hollerith, the engineer responsible for the US’s punch-card system, sought other uses for this machine, looking abroad as an outlet for the technology.\(^66\) Like the cash register, Hollerith traded in information technology. Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company eventually morphed into the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM). In contrast to Singer, where the primary

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\(^62\) Marcossen 199.
\(^63\) Crowther 270.
\(^64\) Ibid., 270.
\(^65\) Davies 302.
audience was domestic women, the punch-card system was intended to be used by governmental organizations. Because Hollerith had such a limited customer based, he quickly sought to be chosen as the census-tabulator of Europe as well. He traveled to Europe four times in 1894-1895. His system, however, was not particularly efficient and so was rejected by all European countries. Hollerith underestimated the statistical differences and differing needs between the US and Europe. Following these failures, Hollerith looked instead to expand the types of potential customers for his machine. He then targeted life insurance companies, beginning with those in the United States. This endeavor was more successful, and he was eventually able to sell the punch-card system to life insurance companies throughout the world. The punch-card system and sewing machine provide useful contrasts to NCR’s potential customer, which was a small business-owner.

In Mira Wilkins’ article “An American Enterprise Abroad,” she discusses the international operations of the American Radiator Company during this formative period of the latter half of the 19th century. She argues that it serves as a perfectly average example of American companies abroad during this period. Her analysis focuses on governmental and structural analysis, pinpointing tariffs as a primary motivator for the American Radiator Company’s decisions abroad. NCR recognized tariffs as a problem, but only because it was a fixed cost which reduced the negotiating power of the sales agents. The New Zealand agent complained that “in no instance could [the agent] induce a p.p. to give the enhanced price necessitated by the Customs imposition.” Despite this barrier, NCR executives rarely mentioned tariffs in correspondence. In contrast, Wilkins argues that tariffs played a pivotal role in the international decisions of the American Radiator Company. When discussing a proposed plant in Germany, she asserts that, “If [the tariff was] put into operation, the business of the American Radiator Company in that country would be destroyed- that is unless the company had a plant.” The company made concessions to local culture, renaming the company the “National Radiator Company” in the local language when in foreign countries, instead of the “American Radiator Company.” Similarly, NCR was renamed in the local language when the company was established abroad. Wilkins asserts that, “American Radiator was in no way motivated to invest abroad to defend its domestic market.”

NCR’s motivations for expanding abroad were different, since one of NCR’s primary motivations in moving abroad was to improve its domestic reputation. Singer went abroad to seek additional sales, as their domestic sales were in jeopardy because of fierce competition. This goes against Wilkins assertions that the American Radiator Company was an average example. NCR sought international markets in order to be an outlet for their domestic supply, but also to reflect upon the company’s cosmopolitan image, which was used extensively in

67 Heide 41.
68 Heide 42-50.
70 The N.C.R., July 15, 1890.
71 Wilkins 335.
72 Crowther 270.
73 Wilkins 342.
advertisements and company promotions. Its international operations did not keep the company afloat in a competitive domestic market, as Wilkins’ argument suggests, but provided the company with even more areas of expansion.

NCR’s salesmanship strategies were integral to its success within the United States. By practicing innovative techniques, the company was able to successfully introduce a new technology. The company’s agents focused on salesmanship and were taught many strategies to overcome the initial difficulties of selling this bulky, expensive machine. Based on John Patterson’s enthusiasm, the company quickly moved into overseas markets following its founding in 1885. When first expanding into overseas markets, the company used their polished salesmanship techniques, with little adaptation to the local environment. This allowed the company to quickly expand internationally, having sales agents active in 21 countries by the beginning of the twentieth century. NCR differentiated itself from other contemporary companies through its quick adaptation to structural problems, such as transportation and legal barriers. The potential customer for the cash register also presented NCR with unique challenges compared to Singer, Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company, or the American Radiator Company. The techniques that NCR used in its pursuit of small businessmen provide insights into the globalization of American business.

NCR executives saw their potential purchasers as a unified group, with similar needs. In spite of cultural differences in various countries and regions, these small business owners were seen as rational customers, who would be swayed by the same advertisements and selling techniques that were used within the United States. In his biography of Patterson, Samuel Crowther claims that, “[Patterson] looked on the world as a whole—that which was good for an American store keeper was equally good for an English or a Chinese storekeeper.” Other companies sold to individual consumers, which meant they had to use significantly different approaches to international markets. NCR was in the business of selling a method of doing business, of attempting to convince the world that the American model was the best way to do business. For Patterson, “it made no difference...that the foreign storekeeper might think otherwise.” It was the job of NCR salesmen to convince these storeowners that a cash register was necessary, regardless of what the storeowner thought. Because of their audience, NCR executives used little adaptation when moving into foreign markets.

74 NCR Foreign Sales Ledger, from the NCR Archive at Dayton History.
75 Crowther 264.
76 Ibid., 264.
Chapter 2

NCR’s Expansion to Foreign Markets

This chapter will follow the path of expansion into various countries throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. This growth was variable based on the region, both because of political realities and cultural assumptions. Even when faced with challenges, foreign sales agents were continually told to persevere and reminded of the importance of their work. The volume of foreign business, as well as the importance that it was given, shows how prized this sector of business was to NCR. It was not only that foreign business made up a significant percentage of overall business, but that this business was constantly talked about within the company. Patterson and other NCR executives devoted extensive energy to traveling abroad, giving informative lecture tours, and creating exhibits for international exhibitions. Foreign business was placed in a central position to the company’s image. The corporate culture of NCR relied heavily on its image as a “civilized” company, based on its welfare work and international reputation. Patterson was keenly aware of the monetary benefits of this welfare work and the positive image of the company. He explained that, “all through the shops are scattered signs with the two words ‘It Pays.’ There is no charity in anything we do. Isn’t it just good business to lose three cents on a girl’s lunch and get back five cents’ worth of work? And so on throughout the whole.”

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the corporate culture of NCR was largely related to its foreign business as a symbol of the company’s values. Being successful throughout the world proved the universal utility of the cash register and the progressive values of the company. This chapter shows the various ways that NCR interacted with the international business community, building upon the previous chapter which showed how the company was able to sell cash registers successfully. The company’s many entrants into international markets demonstrate the importance of international business to NCR’s overall business strategy.

Chronology of expansion

In 1886, NCR first displayed its cash registers in an international exhibition, beginning a practice that would become central to its strategy. The company began to show its cash registers at world’s fairs, international exhibitions, and on lecture tours throughout the world. These presentations were an opportunity to display the National Cash Register brand in a new country and to potential customers that were likely unfamiliar with this American company. This began at the international exposition in Bristol in 1886. This exhibition featured several models of cash registers, as well as images of the company’s model factory. These international exhibitions made the company familiar to businessmen, the intended customer, and the general public alike.

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77 Crowther 206.
78 Marcossen 113.
In 1887, John Patterson’s philosophy of “teaching through the eye” was put into practice with the establishment of a photography department at NCR. The company founder believed that photography could communicate and educate in ways that just words could not. Initially, the photography department played an integral role in the welfare work that the company was doing. Photographs were taken at the model factory in Dayton and of the community events that were sponsored. Building on this, the photography department expanded to focus on work being done throughout the world. Photographs were taken of the installation of each cash register throughout the world, as well as new store openings and worldwide exhibitions. Eventually, the photography department sent out photographers to cover news-worthy events that were not directly related to NCR, such as the Stockholm Olympics in 1912 and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. Company executives also solicited for international photographs to be included in company materials. The N.C.R. asked for submissions of “very unique and interesting picture[s], something decidedly out of the usual line of photographs.” These photographs were then displayed for company employees, visitors to the factory, and in exhibitions.

By the late 1880s, cash registers were being successfully sold in most English-speaking countries of the world, with limited expansion in other areas of Western Europe and South America. J.W. Allinson achieved the highest sales of all company agents in April 1887. Total sales of registers in foreign countries doubled from 1887 to 1888. Sales agents had recorded sales in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa as well. In 1888, an order for a cash register was sent from South Africa and addressed simply to the National Cash Register Company. Patterson marveled at, “the fact that it reached us without Ohio and U.S.A. on it, is evidence of the extent of our advertising, and the familiarity of postal clerks with our address in all parts of the world.” By the end of the 1880s, NCR had sales agents in Great Britain, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Italy, Spain, France, and Norway. There was limited success in these countries until the 1890s, but the volume of sales was large enough even in the 1880s to justify appointing sales agents in those territories. By the end of the 1880s, initial sales had also been made in Japan.

The 1880s was largely a period of experimentation, both in the United States and abroad. A sales agent, usually an American trained in the Dayton factory, would travel throughout several countries determine the feasibility of expanding to those areas. If sales were made on these tours, a permanent agent might be appointed for that country. The early 1890s represented a period of transition to a more structured plan for expansion. In early 1891, the American agent H. Hirsh was sent on an introductory tour of Mexico. He scoped out

79 Marcossen 149.
80 The N.C.R., January 15, 1891.
81 The N.C.R., September 1, 1888.
82 The N.C.R., June 12, 1889.
83 The N.C.R., February 1, 1888.
84 The N.C.R., February 1, 1888.
85 Marcossen 193.
86 The N.C.R., July 1, 1889.
87 The N.C.R., March 2, 1891.
potential cities, met with business leaders, and investigated the sales potential for the cash register in Mexico. Hirsh was an American who did not speak Spanish and was unfamiliar with Mexican customs. He reacted with racist assumptions to the culture in Mexico and the habits of the people. However, he did allow that there were great opportunities for business in the country, and plans for the establishment of a sales agency in Mexico moved forward accordingly. The appointment of F.A. Mueller in Germany, contrastingly, showed the direction that NCR would take in later years. Mueller was a German and had already been working as a salesman. He was well acquainted with the business patterns in Germany. Increasingly throughout the 1890s, the company began to prioritize local knowledge in its sales agents. Those appointed in the 1880s were usually Americans with little knowledge of the local culture that they were to work in, while agents of the 1890s and beyond were foreign agents that were trained in the selling methods of NCR.

Company executives began to be more hands on in their approach to international business. John Patterson began to regularly visit Europe and knew intimately how the foreign branches were managed. On his second tour of Europe in 1895, Patterson cancelled the general agency that was in effect in England and instead formed an incorporated national cash register. In October of 1895, the company organized a sales branch in Germany. The sales branch, which was already established in England, was an organizational structure that was one step above the sales agency. Sales branches were responsible for organizing multiple offices and, usually, many traveling sales agents. In 1894, Patterson organized a school for sales agents at the Dayton factory. This was the first school devoted to training sales agents in the country. This school, while aimed primarily at American agents, served to standardize the sales methods being used by the company throughout the world. The expanding business structures and standardized methods allowed the company to expand more smoothly throughout the earlier 1890s. However, this early expansion was not without its problems. In 1894, a large shipment of cash registers intended for England and Europe had to be returned to the factory because of employee sabotage. Employees at the factory in Dayton were frustrated with working conditions and they tampered with the machines, rendering them defective. The problems resulted in fifty thousand dollars’ worth of damage that had to be corrected by the company. Reflecting on this incident, Patterson said, “Then I got my lesson- an unforgettable one that nearly put us out of business…we had made up a group of cash registers to sell in England...we expected every one of them to be a splendid advertisement.” Incidents such as these weakened the company’s reputation among foreign customers. The company was relatively unknown outside the United States, aside from dramatic events such as the damage.
Despite some growing pains, NCR was increasingly relying on foreign orders to support its business. By 1896, foreign sales accounted for twenty-three percent of total company sales. The largest of these foreign sales came from Great Britain and Germany, which accounted for 9 percent and 8 percent, relatively. These growing sales numbers were accompanied by the recognition that foreign agents needed to be fully incorporated into the corporate culture of NCR. A convention for international agents was held at the Dayton factory in 1895, but the first truly international convention for sales agents was held in Berlin in 1897. These conventions were meant to improve morale and motivate struggling agents, as well as provide practical training and techniques. At the conventions, banner agents were rewarded for achieving their sales, while Patterson doled out stern lectures to agents that did not. It was also at the conventions that the agents were presented with their sales goals for the upcoming year, a goal which was always higher than the previous year’s.

Always minutely involved in the management of NCR, John Patterson began to make frequent international trips in the late 1890s so that he could personally check in with his sales agents. In one trip in 1897, he visited fifty cities in fifteen countries in the span of sixty days. Other company executives made tours of the foreign agencies as well. Sales agents that performed particularly well were taken on tours of Europe as a reward.

Around the turn of the century, NCR had established branches in England, Germany, and Australia, and had been making regular sales in some places, like South Africa and Japan, for more than a decade. Foreign agencies were being introduced outside of English-speaking countries and into Western Europe, Mexico, Argentina, and the West Indies. These locations were newly introduced and just becoming established. NCR then became to look to more remote countries to continue its growth. Initial sales were made in many countries of Central and South America by the end of the nineteenth century. By 1902, sales had been recorded in all of the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rico, Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Australia, Hawaii, New Zealand, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Holland, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland. These countries were largely in Western Europe and Central America, as well as British colonies. They were located geographically close to established markets, making transportation and expanding salesmen’s routes easier. These countries pointed to the new regions for potential growth and throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, NCR would record initial sales in many new countries.

The company kept records of its international sales in a sales ledger, which is held by the NCR Archives. Below is a sample page of the ledger, showing sales figures for Argentina from 1902 to 1925.
The far left column displays each year from 1902 to 1925, with columns to the right for quota, percentage of quota met, sales, points, S.H. points and percentage of S.H. points. Sales indicates the number of registers sold. Quota is based on the number of points, where each register model is given a different number of points. This page of the ledger also has sales broken down by month, although this detailed information was not recorded for all countries. In this ledger, there was a page for overall foreign sales, a page recording sales for each section. The world was divided into six sections based on geography. Then each country within a section had a page like the one above, in which sales were recorded. Argentina had sales in all the years between 1902 and 1925, but this was not the case for all countries. In the selection below, for Honduras (South), there were no sales prior to 1912. After that, quotas were appointed for each year but sales were not always made. This indicates that Honduras was an emerging market, where NCR was struggling to enact sales.
Countries that had previously received little attention now became the focus of NCR’s expansion. South and Central America was a primary region of growth. Up until the turn of the century, there were very small numbers of cash registers sold in several South and Central American countries, relative to other regions. In 1902, agents in Brazil and Argentina sold 30 and 35 cash registers, respectively. This is compared to 300 in France, 452 in Austria, and 341 in Denmark, which were all established markets. Cuba logged similar numbers, while Costa Rica sold a mere 5 registers. One register was also sold in Puerto Rico. The big seller in the Americas was Mexico, where NCR’s agent Parker was able to sell 118 registers, a quantity that was similar to smaller markets, such as New Zealand or Switzerland. The emerging sales in South America show the direction in which NCR was now looking. New colonies of the United States, like Hawaii, Cuba and Puerto Rico, were also receiving the attention of the sales agents of NCR. These countries would see increasing sales throughout the early years of the twentieth century. Not only were sales themselves increasing, but the quotas and goals that the company set for
these countries were increasing as well. An increase in the quota for a country indicates that it was an area that NCR expected large future growth.

By 1910, cash registers were being sold in Honduras, Columbia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, El Salvador, Trinidad, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the Philippines. Guatemala and Jamaica also had isolated sales in the years between 1902 and 1910. Cuba, which had sales of a mere 30 registers in 1902, sold 753 registers in 1910. Similarly, Brazil, which had sales of 30 registers in 1902, was shipped 641 registers in 1910. Even counties with smaller numbers of sales quantitatively saw similar exponential growth. This sort of exponential growth was typical of the countries in South and Latin America. American political interest in a particular country, as in Panama with the building of the Panama Canal, served as an entry point for NCR. Sales in Panama increased as a result of the American presence in the country from 0 registers in 1902, to 19 in 1906, and 122 in 1909. NCR was able to translate its earlier foreign success into new areas with ease because it could quickly adapt its sales methods and organizational structure to new markets. South America had fewer of the logistical problems that plagued NCR’s sales in Australia and Japan. Transportation was markedly easier since cargo didn’t need to be shipped overland, only to be later transported via ship, as it was for Pacific countries prior to the opening of the Panama Canal. Distances were also much shorter and many labor disputes had been reconciled, which resulted in fewer registers being sabotaged from the factory in Dayton. This made the transition to these markets in America’s backyard much smoother than NCR’s initial foreign enterprises.

Within the first decade of the twentieth century, NCR had placed footholds in most of Central and South America, although the offices here were still in the process of becoming established. Other regions, like Asia and Africa, that had previously been seen as peripheral now gained the company’s attention. While the company was achieving success in South America, NCR was not able to achieve the same success in Asia and Africa. These areas had economic systems that were the most dissimilar to the United States’; which made it difficult to export the cash register as the embodiment of an American style of capitalism. In NCR’s sales ledger from 1902 to 1920, only six African countries were listed. Aside from South Africa, which was an early exception, the other five countries achieved miniscule sales. Between 1902 and 1910, only ten registers were sold in Algeria; Egypt had 38 sales in this same period; Angola, Mauritius and Congo had zero sales. These are the only African countries listed in NCR’s ledger, which indicates that sales were expected in these countries but did not materialize. The remaining countries in Africa were clearly not expected to have any sales, as they were not given sales quotas. The situation in Asia was equally dismal. The Pacific countries included in the ledger were China, the Dutch East Indies, the Federated Malay States, French Indo China, Guam, India, Japan, the Philippines, Siam, and the Society Islands. Of these countries, only China, India, Japan, and the Philippines had any sales in the period from 1902 to 1910. India received a scant 4 registers in this period, while there were only seventeen sales in China. Japan and the Philippines fared slightly better; by 1910, there were 16 registers sold that year in India, while there were 93 registers sold in the Philippines. The sales in the Philippines are interesting given the context. The Philippine-American War officially ended in 1902, but sporadic hostilities

100 When using NCR’s ledger, I have referred to the countries as NCR did.
continued well into the 1910s. The large American presence on the islands helps to explain the relatively large number of sales, but it is surprising given the violence of the country. In 1910, the sales in the Philippines are quickly approaching the level of those in Hawaii, a more firmly established market (93 registers and 167 registers, respectively).

The difficulty in selling to these two continents highlights some of the ongoing troubles for NCR in its foreign sales. The physical distance, which was an asset for the countries in South America, was detrimental to potential sales on distant continents. Transportation could take three weeks or more, which was a problem in countries where the company was not as firmly established as in Europe. Customers buying a cash register feared purchasing a product they were unsure of from a company they didn’t know personally. This was especially true in the early years of the twentieth century, when NCR executives were continuing to insist on sending American sales agents, rather than using local agents. This would quickly change in favor of local agents, removing one cultural barrier to sales. Local agents created a bridge between the American product they were selling and the local culture.

The exponential growth of sales in some emerging markets was in contrast to sales in the established European markets. Although they saw significant growth, it was not of the same explosive nature as in some of the newer markets. Holland, which had sales of 191 registers in 1902, had steady grown to 621 registers in 1907 and 749 in 1910. The sales increases in France were even steadier in their growth, rising from 300 registers in 1902 to 457 in 1907 and 551 in 1910. NCR’s business was clearly in a growth period, where nearly all countries saw increases in sales. However, NCR saw the largest growth in the markets that were least established. It therefore chose to focus on these countries, devising ways to target their markets and setting ever higher quotas to be achieved.

These regional divisions provide important insights into the trending nature of NCR’s sales. NCR’s sales ledger divides the world into six sections. Section one was the United States and Canada. The second section encompassed Central and South America and the Caribbean, while section three was a mix of African and Asian nations. The fourth section held nations from Eastern Europe. Until 1924, sales in England were large enough for it to be the only country in section five. The sixth section was primarily countries in Western Europe, although there are a few exceptions from Eastern Europe. Notably, the countries of sections four, five, and six were combined in 1924 to form a single section. These distinctions reflect geographic differences and not necessarily cultural ones. For example, Egypt’s sales in the period of 1902 to 1910 are significantly higher than other countries in Africa; however, Egypt remains in section three. Political considerations also affect these regional generalizations. The Philippines and Hawaii are obvious examples of the way colonial interests impacted NCR’s sales. In a later example, sales in Russia abruptly stopped in 1917 following the Russian revolution. Quotas for various countries in a section are roughly similar, despite vast differences in population or other considerations. Each section was assumed to be roughly similar and therefore was expected to produce similar results.

The period between 1902 and 1910 was a transition period for NCR. The 1890s signaled the beginnings of NCR’s push to become an international company. The company had originally
emulated its contemporaries by primarily moving into markets that had already been shown to be hungry for American products. In the early years of the twentieth century, NCR moved beyond these established areas into largely untapped markets, with mixed results. NCR expanded into Central and South America successfully, but struggled to make sales in Asia and Africa. Central and South America had a clear advantage in transportation, while Asia and Africa were perceived to be more culturally different from America.

From 1910 to 1925, these trends largely continued. Many of the areas which had been new markets in the first decade of the twentieth century now stagnated, or even declined, in sales. This was especially true in South American and Caribbean countries. Argentina reached a high of 2070 sales in 1913, before declining sharply and averaging only 1087 sales in the period between 1914 and 1925. This same trend is true in Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico, as well as in many of the smaller countries. Most countries in this region reached their sales peak around 1913, before falling and then remaining steady until the mid-1920s. Some other regions bucked this trend through Japan, which had only 29 register sales in 1913, had an astounding 1037 sales in 1924. The company had very steady, even sales growth in the Philippines, ranging from 30 to 252 sales per year between 1913 and 1925, with the average being 111 registers sold. The sales in European countries also followed this trend of peaking in 1913, with declining sales following. This pattern was often punctuated by a single year with very high or low sales. Holland, for example, averaged 739 sales between 1910 and 1925. Sales gradually increased to a peak of 1041 in 1916, before steadily declining to 521 sales in 1925. This arc was punctuated by a mere 45 sales in 1918, with no reason recorded as to why this was the case. Germany, after having steady sales throughout WWI, had record low sales in 1920. Sales in England remained largely the same, with the exception of 1917, in which sales were less than half the average. In general, European countries peaked around 1913, before slowly declining through the next ten years.

The cash register’s rapid expansion to other parts of the world was done not only through sales but in displays and exhibitions. These venues provided a way to reach potential customers, both in the United States and abroad. They were a means for NCR to consciously create a company image. This image was altered depending on the audience, and different aspects of the company were highlighted depending on the situation. American-style capitalism required modifications in order to accepted in other countries.

During the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, NCR displayed a number of photographs that showed nationalities throughout the world using the cash register, including “curious, small, dark-skinned people” of a Java village, along with a South Sea Islander village that showed “their thatched huts, odd costumes, etc.”¹⁰¹ The company boasted that these photographs “will make the finest advertising device we have ever used, and will attract thousands to our office windows, throughout the World.”¹⁰² Public exhibitions were used to advertise the cash register, but more often the exhibit focused on the strange foreigners that bought the machine. Robert Rydell’s work All the World’s a Fair, argues that “ideas about race, nationality, and

¹⁰¹ The N.C.R., September 1, 1893.
¹⁰² The N.C.R., September 1, 1893.
progress...molded the fairs into ideologically coherent ‘symbolic universes’ confirming and extending the authority of the country’s corporate, political, and scientific leadership.”  

In American exhibitions, such as the World’s Fair, NCR’s exhibitions focused on the international renown of the company. Exhibits featured photographs of “curious” natives and their natural habitats. These displays of racial categories were consistent with other exhibits at the fairs, which Rydell says, “centered on the interpretation of Darwinian theories about racial development and utopian dreams about America’s material and national progress.”

Similarly, Peter Hoffenberg studies these exhibitions, focusing on the imperial narratives that were used. He argues that, “Exhibitions celebrated not only mechanical devices and inanimate power, but also the new industrial and scientific organization of society.” NCR’s displays at these exhibitions played on cultural ideas. When displaying the cash register to a domestic audience, the focus was not on the device itself, but on the symbolic power of it. The use of stereotypical and racist photographs is not surprising or unusual, as the fairs often reinforced racial and class categories. What NCR did was to link the cash register, as a machine and economic commodity, to ideas about American racial superiority through its exhibits.

When these exhibits took place in foreign countries, the company focused on the cash register itself and the technological achievements of NCR, rather than cultural ideas. The national cash register was showcased internationally for the first time in 1889, followed by other exhibitions in all parts of the world that the company was active. NCR was first exhibited in Antwerp in 1893, and for several years after. The company showcased its cash register at the Exposition of Inventions in Copenhagen in 1894. The highlight of this exhibit was “two young ladies [who] explain the registers twice a day- two hours in the forenoon and two hours in the afternoon.” These ladies drew attention to the display, which was then focused on the technical merits of the cash register. At a display of the register in Antwerp in 1893, “some thought it was a new kind of sewing machine, while others thought it must be a kind of typewriter.” At this exhibition, NCR had a booth with at least a dozen different cash registers on display, but no photographs of various customers. The differing tactics taken in foreign versus domestic environments show how NCR approached international business. Potential foreign customers were sold on the technological merits of a cash register, while domestic customers were sold on the exotic work of the company throughout the world. The company was a frequent participant in international exhibitions.

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104 The N.C.R., September 1, 1893.
105 Rydell 235.
107 Marcosson 193.
108 The N.C.R., November 15, 1893.
109 The N.C.R., March 1, 1894.
110 The N.C.R., July 16, 1894.
111 The N.C.R., September 1, 1894.
112 November 1, 1896.
In 1902, Patterson made his first visit to the eastern offices, touring India, China, and Japan. Other executives were often sent on tours of Europe as well. His son, Frank Patterson, took an extended tour of the continent in 1889 and several times throughout the 1890s. Frank Crane, a successful salesman and co-writer of The Primer, toured Europe in 1897. Hugh Calmers, another salesman, visited the European offices in 1898. These tours were often a reward for achieving sales goals and part of the tour involved giving motivational speeches. Crane and Calmers shared their expertise in selling with other sales agents. Other company executives were charged with giving lecture tours throughout the world. These lectures focused on the welfare work that the company was doing, as well as the efficient management strategies that Patterson had adopted for the factory floor. These lectures were meant to increase morale, but also were educational for the executives. Patterson “insisted that the executives of the company be as familiar with Europe as with the United States.” Many of these lectures were given in Europe, but the agents traveled as far as South Africa.

At the same time, the Dayton factory opened its doors and invited foreign businessmen to tour its model factory. These were not just potential or current customers, but were businessmen in all industries. The goal of these factory tours was to impress visitors with the technological prowess of the factory in producing cash registers. In 1896, Patterson insisted that a convention be held for all foreign agents in Dayton, so that they could visit the factory and company that they were representing. When visiting, the foreign agents received an in-depth tour of the factory and the manufacturing facilities, as well as the company grounds and adjacent buildings. These salesmen met with fellow employees and speeches were given in a classroom setting for their benefit. In 1897, there was a large delegation of Latin American businessmen who came to Dayton as part of their travels. Their visit to the NCR factory was covered by the Associated Press, as well as extensively in The Daily N.C.R. The N.C.R. also covered factory visits from Germany, England, Austria, Italy, New Zealand, and Japan. These tours and visits show the various ways that the company was interacting with the world.

It was in the 1880s and 1890s that NCR developed into a truly international company. By the turn of the twentieth century, the company had sales agents in almost every continent and was active all over the world. Patterson was proactive in seeking out international business because he believed that the cash register’s system of business was applicable to business shops around the world. He made sure his company was known worldwide, not only for the cash register, but for the company’s welfare programs and progressive policies. The international reputation of the company was then used as a selling tool within the domestic

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113 The N.C.R., March 15, 1902.
114 The N.C.R., October 1, 1889.
115 The N.C.R., November 15, 1897.
116 The N.C.R., August 1, 1898.
117 Crowther 264.
118 The N.C.R., October 15, 1898
119 Marcossin 198.
120 The N.C.R., July 1, 1897.
121 The N.C.R., March 15, 1898; The N.C.R., September 1, 1898; The N.C.R., December 1, 1898.
market. The company culture was strongly centered on a vision of NCR as an international, cosmopolitan company.
Chapter 3

The Cash Register as a “Civilizing” Agent

When NCR moved into foreign markets, the company sold the cash register not only as a new piece of technology, but a “civilizing” force. Company executives used “civilized” to mean American methods of business and American-style capitalism. At this time, American capitalism meant corporate capitalism. The cash register was a symbol of this form of capitalism, because you had to use an American style of capitalism in order to use the system that the cash register was a part of. By accepting the cash register, customers in other countries indicated their openness to “modern” methods of business, which were implicitly American methods. The company’s employees were in constant contact with foreigners. Registers were being sold at a rapid rate, saturating the “civilized” world, while lecture tours were given globally and the cash register was being displayed at world’s fair exhibitions. Prominent businessmen and sales agents from throughout the world were invited to visit the factory, to learn the methods of the model factory. John Patterson claimed that the National Cash Register “has its name and handiwork in every part of the civilized world.”

By using the term “civilizing,” NCR executives were aligning American business methods with civilization and thereby excluding those that did not use a cash register.

The civilizing narrative accomplished several things for NCR. Much like the welfare work at the factory and in the Dayton area, Patterson was selling NCR as a moralizing force in business to achieve several ends. Choosing to purchase a National cash register was not just a business decision, but a moral one. American clients were expected to feel confident that they were doing business with a model company. Company employees were saturated with images of their company doing moral work throughout the world. The cover of The N.C.R. often featured images and artwork highlighting the foreign work of the company.

In this chapter, I will explore the particular civilizing narrative that was created by the leaders at NCR. By equating the cash register with civilization, NCR selected a definition of civilization that was linked to technological process and business efficiency. By choosing to purchase a cash register, businessmen could ostensibly put themselves on the path to “civilization.” Patterson defined civilization as a link between openness to new technologies and civilization and progress, which were not necessarily related to cultural characteristics. “Civilization” and Americanization were intertwined in complicated ways, since the US was the country producing these new technologies for other “less civilized” nations. As editor of The N.C.R., John Patterson explained that, “of course, the place we occupy today, pre-eminent among nations, our advancement in knowledge, and our vast accumulations of wealth, are due, in part, to the progressiveness of our people, but would not have been possible had it not been

122 The N.C.R., June 12, 1889.
123 For information on the “civilizing rhetoric” and American technological expansion, see Michael Adas, Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America’s Civilizing Mission (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).
backed by mechanical ingenuity.” In regions that were open to the cash register, they were described as open-minded, progressive, and modern. In areas that were more resistant, the people were described as backwards and traditional. These negative descriptions often relied on racial stereotypes. Racial terms were used to show how those from other countries, specifically those rejecting US capitalism, were not modern. The term “civilized” is clearly a tricky one, with many various implications. NCR executives used it extensively, usually referring to people or a country being “civilized.” In NCR rhetoric, “civilization” was aligned with the possession of a cash register.

NCR used these civilizing narratives to argue that it was improving the lives of the people who used the cash register throughout the world. Mona Domosh has argued that companies of the period “produced a narrative of progress...within which all people were potential consumers and all nations potentially modern.” Grounding her argument in geography, she explains that companies were able to discursively lessen racial differences by presenting a narrative in which consumption was a path to civilization. She names this concept “flexible racism” whereby people could become “white” by consuming American products. This flexible racism was an intermediary between the commodification of others largely used throughout the 19th century and the economic development rhetoric of later in the 20th century. In the former, foreign peoples were placed into fixed racial categories, while the latter asserted that differences were based on economics rather than race and were thus changeable. “Flexible racism” operates in the middle, asserting that racial categories are malleable in order to create business opportunities in foreign markets.

The usually American sales agents of NCR encountered cultural differences in their business abroad. Sales agents and the company often relied on racist stereotypes, as when a letter from the agent in South Africa was titled, “From the ‘Dark Continent’.” Italians were characterized as the slowest of all Europeans to adopt new technologies. When contemplating expanding into Russia, the German agent Mueller advised that, “While Russia, so well known for crookedness and dishonesty, ought to be a magnificent [sic] field for the sale of Registers yet, to secure good reliable passing agents in that territory would be as difficult a matter as to find them here.” These types of stereotypical characterizations were reflective of a company that had little knowledge of the people to whom it was attempting to sell. The first agent in France was from Ohio and had no French language skills. The N.C.R. bragged of “our record in Mexico, where cash registers are unknown, and where people are as far behind as the natives of Africa.” NCR sought to expand its business and needed foreign customers in

124 The N.C.R., July 1, 1896.
126 Domosh 185.
127 Domosh 192.
128 The N.C.R., January 15, 1891.
129 The N.C.R., January 4, 1894.
130 The N.C.R., February 15, 1892.
131 The N.C.R., January 1, 1894.
132 The N.C.R., August 15, 1891.
order to do so. Based on these characterizations, NCR executives also believed that foreigners would benefit the most from the “civilization” that a cash register provided.

Domosh argues that, within the framework of flexible racism, racial stereotypes continued to be used, but racial differences could be lessened because all consumers had the potential to become similarly modern. The N.C.R. solicited photographs showing the various uses for the cash register by customers around the world. They received a photograph of a store in South Africa employing a Zulu clerk and commented “it is a very unique and interesting picture, something decidedly out of the usual line of photographs.” Despite using a cash register, the clerk continued to be different because of his unusual dress and appearance, distinguishing him from American stores. However, this clerk was connected to businessmen in America because he utilized a modern piece of technology.

On an exploratory trip to Mexico in 1891, NCR’s newly appointed agent in the region H. Hirsh sought to investigate the possibility of success for the company. No sales had yet been recorded. Hirsh spent several weeks in the country, meeting with business leaders and scouting various areas in the hopes of setting up an agency. He allowed that “I am sure good results can be produced here eventually. The obstacles though, would discourage any one but an N.C.R. agent.” These obstacles included a lackadaisical attitude toward business, in which the people lived in a “land of holidays.” He marveled at the outdated attitudes of the Mexican people, saying that any student or historian studying them would find “a perfect climate...for delving into the modes and manners of the past and the curious customs of a strange people.” Several weeks into his trip, Hirsh started to feel homesick for the comforts of America. He looked forward to his return, writing back to The N.C.R. that “I will be pleased to tell you, when I reach the land of civilization, all about the difficulties encountered, and the difficulty of introducing our machines.”

For Hirsh, Mexico, with its manners of the past, easily contrasted with the US as a land of civilization. This was paralleled by the possession of a national cash register, which wasn’t present yet in Mexico. Mexico possessed the “modes and manners of the past” while the US was the “land of civilization.” Hirsh studied the business habits and tendencies of the Mexican people and found them to be “of the past”, meaning that US businesses had evolved beyond these dated habits. The cash register was a key factor in this evolution, bringing the US into a modern land of civilization.

John Patterson similarly drew this distinction, in which civilization was equated with possession of a cash register; the rest of the world was obviously uncivilized without a cash register in use. In 1889, Patterson reflected on recent business saying, “one year ago we were

133 The N.C.R., January 15, 1891.
134 The N.C.R., April 1, 1891.
135 The N.C.R., April 1, 1891.
136 The N.C.R., April 1, 1891.
137 The N.C.R., April 1, 1891.
138 The N.C.R., April 1, 1891.
139 The N.C.R., April 1, 1891.
represented in the civilized world by an out-put of 6,438 registers, today the number placed on the last shipment was no. 12,049.”¹⁴⁰ The borders of the civilized world grew as the number of registers sold increased, while cash registers were only sold in civilized areas by definition. Patterson related these two concepts by saying, “the National Cash Register Co. has its name and handiwork in every part of the civilized world. The sun never sets on National Cash Registers.”¹⁴¹ For Patterson, civilization was creeping into all corners of the globe as the national cash register company expanded.

“Civilization” was associated with American cultural characteristics for many NCR executives. Americans were praised for many of their positive traits, which allowed them to succeed in business. The success of NCR throughout the world was linked with particularly American ideas. Especially in the first years that the company went abroad, each region was contrasted with America and found to be lacking. Allinson observed that “everyone [in England] is so wedded to old customs and habits, than it is in America, where you have so much enterprise and push.”¹⁴² Americans were described as having great energy and perseverance. After a trip to the factory in Dayton, Allinson further explained that, “I was so impressed with all that I saw and heard while over with you, that I am quite satisfied now that we are at least a thousand years behind the age of the new country...I am more impressed of the fossilism here from the fact of having so recently left such bright minds, intelligent people and business surroundings.”¹⁴³ In this explanation, civilization was the pinnacle of a long progression, which England might aspire to achieve in a thousand years.

Other countries were found to be even further behind than the English, who John Patterson’s son Frank found to be “smart and eager for business...about as wide awake as the Americans.”¹⁴⁴ Each country that was slow to adopt the cash register, or didn’t live up to the sales expectations of Patterson, was described as slow-going, conservative or opposed to progress.¹⁴⁵ Italians “cling to old ruins and traditions”¹⁴⁶ while Germany was “a country of conservative people.”¹⁴⁷ These conservative countries were still found to be more advanced than others because of their intelligence.¹⁴⁸ The countries that would be the most difficult to make sales were places such as Russia that were described as “plague-stricken.”¹⁴⁹ F.A. Mueller, the agent in Germany, went even further to say that Russia was a “poverty stricken country...so well known for crookedness and dishonesty”¹⁵⁰ and advised that conditions were so bad that it was not advisable to go into that country. Such negative assessments were given to each

¹⁴⁰ *The N.C.R.*, June 12, 1889.
¹⁴¹ *The N.C.R.*, June 12, 1889.
¹⁴² *The N.C.R.*, February 1, 1888.
¹⁴³ *The N.C.R.*, May 15, 1892.
¹⁴⁴ *The N.C.R.*, May 1, 1889.
¹⁴⁵ *The N.C.R.*, March 1, 1893.
¹⁴⁶ *The N.C.R.*, January 1, 1894.
¹⁴⁷ *The N.C.R.*, February 1, 1893.
country as NCR was struggling to establish itself in a new market. Conversely, areas of quick success were praised as sensible men and intelligent.  

Nationalist messages became an integral part of the company’s image and corporate culture. These foreign markets were always the passive receptors of American technological products. This made it seem inevitable that United States would play an aggressor role in saturating the world with products. Artwork commissioned by the company became a forum to transmit these nationalist messages and reinforce the inevitable success of the cash register. These images were primarily displayed in an internal setting, to the employees of NCR. In an image from 1894, “All nations pay homage to the National Cash Register,” NCR placed the cash register in a central position, to be revered by those around the world. The technological prowess of the cash register is the envy of other nations. The United States is symbolized by a cash register and the two are interchangeable. In the imagery that NCR created, feats of technology and national pride became inextricably linked. The cash register was a symbol for national superiority. Technology, in the form of machines like the cash register, was a way to express patriotic pride, as this image with the soaring eagle shows. Created to honor the Fourth of July in 1895, this image was accompanied by a poem that read, “Let the eagle scream!/ Let the cannon roar!/ and when the glorious fourth is o’er, / we’ll sell cash registers as before; / we’ll sing their praise from shore to shore, / ‘till merchants call for more and more; / so let the eagle scream!”

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151 The N.C.R., November 1, 1896; The N.C.R., January 1, 1896.
152 Domosh 4.
153 The N.C.R., January 1, 1894.
154 The N.C.R., July 1, 1895.
155 The N.C.R., July 1, 1895.
These patriotic messages were then linked to imperial aims, where the National Cash Register Co. portrayed itself as supporting the quest for imperial power. *The N.C.R.* proclaimed that “the science of salesmanship means more to the modern world than the science of warfare.”\(^{156}\) While the United States was asserting its colonial ambitions in the Spanish-American war, the National Cash Register Company was asserting that businesses had a greater influence throughout the world than military power. The company created an image of Uncle Sam, holding the cash register in one hand and a naval battleship in the other, declaring that “he is well protected.”\(^{157}\) Here, the message was clear. Business success, in the form of new technology like the cash register, was as important to protecting America’s empire as its military.

\(^{156}\) *The N.C.R.*, June 15, 1895.  
\(^{157}\) *The N.C.R.*, June 1, 1898.
In these images NCR showed how business and military interests were directly related to a national mission. Emily Rosenberg asserted that “economic expansion would...replace traditional political military and political involvements.”\(^{158}\) However, NCR’s imagery gave military power and economic might equal importance. Michael Adas, in his historical study of American technology, argues that during this same period of economic expansion, Americans equated greater possession of technology as the key element of civilization.\(^{159}\) This was based on the assumption that superior technology was indicative of a superior culture. Adas is largely critical of the idea that technology was a form of benign empire, while John Steele Gordon argued that “if the world is becoming rapidly Americanized...the reason lies not in our weapons, but in the fact that others want what we have and are willing, often eager, to adopt our ways in order to have them.”\(^{160}\) The Uncle Sam image showed a strong military that protects the country. In this image, the cash register was given equal importance to military might. NCR’s overt nationalist messages created a balance between American military power and business strength.


\(^{159}\) Adas 12.

Taking this imperial metaphor even further, the company created imagery to show the ways in which the cash register was asserting power and creating its own empire throughout the world. In these characterizations, NCR oversaw an empire of economic power because of the success of their American machine. In Victoria de Grazia’s study of the United State’s “Market Empire”, she contends that, “products of every ilk, having been tried out on a vast diverse, fiercely contended home market, had a strong competitive edge by the time they were exported...entrepreneurs saw foreign sales territories as extensions of the domestic market and planned to engage customers abroad with the same techniques they used at home.”

In one image, a dinner tray was uncovered to reveal a cooked turkey, printed with a global map. The countries were available to be “carved” up by the National Cash Register Company. Patterson saw the globe as a market for NCR, to compete with other cash register companies, but also to spread American business methods throughout the world.

Patterson saw himself as the leader of an empire. The cover of The N.C.R. in May 1896 showed a line of cash registers stretching across the globe with the title “The sun never sets on National Cash Registers.” Borrowing the British Empire’s famous phrase, the artist positioned NCR as an empire in its own right, based on business success. The phrase implied that NCR’s

162 *The N.C.R.*, November 15, 1897.
163 *The N.C.R.*, May 1, 1896.
success was epic in nature and as dominant as a typical political empire. The reach of cash registers throughout the globe, this image implies, is a powerful American parallel to Great Britain’s colonialism. Later companies would make the same claim; a corporate history of IBM is entitled *The Sun Never Sets on IBM.*

This march across the world was seen as inevitable, a creeping expansion of technology and American business methods throughout the globe. An image from 1895 explained that “the hand of destiny is over Europe,” showing a hand reaching over from the US to drop a cash register over Europe. The spread of the cash register was depicted as a certain expansion throughout the world, using the sales techniques of NCR and distinctly American push and energy to make it a reality. James Cortada, studying the informational technology industry, claimed that “anybody working in the American economy could have concluded that increases in productivity and hence, standard of living and output were made possible by using new technologies.” Other companies, as well as political legislators, made similar claims about the inevitability of US economic expansion. Another image from *The N.C.R.* showed how the salesmanship techniques of the company allowed for National cash registers to sold

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165 *The N.C.R.*, December 1, 1895.
successfully around the world. The image showed a salesman leaping the globe, with the line, “Give me more territory, and I can sell them.”\textsuperscript{168} The policies of NCR, in addition to American technological innovation and energy, created the opportunities for success.

These images created by the art department of NCR showed a company that was rapidly expanding throughout the world. The executives used patriotic and imperial claims in order to rationalize these expansions. There was a clear link between the military imperialism of the period and the language used by NCR in its business strategies. When the first agent was appointed in Switzerland, Patterson heralded “the gunshots of the national are being heard around the world.”\textsuperscript{169} The company used these imperial and military references to relate their own civilizing narrative with larger historical events, justifying the rapid expansion of the company into foreign markets.

For NCR executives, being civilized meant using modern business structures, which implicitly meant accepting American methods. The adoption of new technology and methods of accounting, as exemplified by the cash register, showed that the store owner was a modern businessman. The store owner, and NCR customer, was a man who approached running a business with a scientific attitude, proving himself to be progressive and modern. The applications of scientific thinking to business practices gave justification to the expansion of US businesses to many businesses at the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{170} In order to run a modern business, a cash register was necessary. It provided essential information to business owners

\textsuperscript{168} The N.C.R., May 1, 1894.  
\textsuperscript{169} The N.C.R., May 1, 1892.  
\textsuperscript{170} Rosenberg 82.
and system to structure their business. NCR rhetoric and images showed how a cash register provided this modern structure, which was necessary in order to be “civilized.”

This attitude is shown most clearly in the image above, from the cover of The N.C.R.\textsuperscript{171} From 1896, it proclaims that “From the notched stick to the National Cash Register; the Progress of One Hundred Years.” The before pictures depicts natives, trading goods using notched sticks, while the after picture shows modest Victorian ladies shopping in an elegant store. The key cause of this progress, as the image shows, is the adoption of the cash register during the intervening hundred year period. The cash register completely changed the methods of doing business, bringing progress and civility.

Similarly, in a yearly review of foreign business, Patterson proclaimed that “there is hardly a country on the face of the globe where any civilization exists into which national cash registers have not found their way...wherever you see the sign, ‘this registers the amount of your purchase,’ whether in Scandinavian, Russian, or what not, it is a sign also that the man using the register has a due regard for system in business and he is likely to be a prosperous merchant.”\textsuperscript{172} The cash register was a symbol for a system of business. By choosing to purchase a cash register, the business owner was aligning himself with NCR’s definition of “civilized.”

For the men who ran NCR, civilization was generally related to nationality, although this could be transcended by a commitment to modern methods. Although J.W. Allinson was an

\textsuperscript{171} The N.C.R., May 15, 1896.
\textsuperscript{172} The N.C.R., January 1, 1894.
Englishman, he was “thoroughly Americanized,” which meant that he observed the standardized sales methods of NCR and believed in the benefits of the cash register. These characteristics ostensibly distinguished him from most Englishmen who, “as a rule, are slow to appreciate the advantages of any new practical invention, conducting business, as they do, after the style of their fathers and grand-fathers.”

The key difference was a commitment to progress versus traditional methods, which made one Americanized.

By using Domosh’s argument about flexible racism, it becomes clear that NCR executives similarly conceived of civilization as a spectrum that could be theoretically be achieved by all, and not a fixed characteristic that was only possessed by some. Those who were uncivilized could become civilized by the adoption of new technologies, like the cash register. The two photographs shown above were both taken by the NCR photography department in Japan during roughly the same period. The left shows a shop selling plates and dish wares. The workers do not use a cash register and are dressed in traditional Japanese clothing. It is an open-air shop in which all the goods are openly displayed and available to potential customers. In contrast, the photograph on the right is focused on the installation of the cash register. The central person, presumably the owner, is dressed in a western-style suit, and the other workers are cleanly and plainly dressed. The store is indoors, with all the products against the walls and distinctly organized, so that the shop assistants can retrieve items quickly.

The primary difference between these two stores is the cash register. The cash register is paralleled by differences in the appearance of the clerks and the environment of the stores. The implication is clear; a cash register is meant to be used in a modern, indoor shop with employees dressed similarly to western clerks. The use of the cash register is an integral step towards achieving this model shop. Similar images were used by NCR in international lecture tours and exhibitions. Photographs of cash register installations reinforced the notion that only clean, organized, modern stores were adopting the cash register. It was a marker of the owner’s commitment to progress and civilization.

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174 Left is NCR.1998.L0043.014, right is NCR.1998.L0053.012, accessed at DaytonHistory.org
The contrast in these photographs, as well as similar ones in other regions throughout the world, highlight that not all stores in a country fell into the same category of civilized or uncivilized. There were varying levels even within one country and culture. In Japan, civilization spread unevenly, as marked by the use of the National Cash Register. A store owner could control which category he was in, by making specific choices in the management of his store.

NCR used this civilizing narrative in order to create opportunities for the company and to justify their rapid international expansion. Using civilizing as an imperative, the company quickly moved throughout the globe, especially to countries that were considered least civilized, as the need there was greater. NCR reflects other companies of the late 19th century that used “their international experiences to align their products with civilizing experience and [used] the discourse of civilization to legitimize their international sales.”\(^{175}\) This civilizing narrative was primarily a discourse that was used within the company and within domestic markets. Potential foreign customers of the cash register were not sold on the progressive values embodied in the cash register; foreign advertisements, in print and exhibitions, focused on the technological advances of the product and practical uses of it. It was only when the company focused internally that the cash register was depicted as a symbol of modernity, as shown in *The N.C.R. covers here.*

The foreign business of NCR served as an advertising tool, practical business decision, and moral imperative. Thirty years after John Patterson founded NCR, Woodrow Wilson addresses a convention of salesmen with a similar message:

“let your thoughts and your imagination run abroad throughout the whole world, and with the inspiration of the thought that you are Americans and are meant to carry liberty and justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go, go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America.”\(^{176}\)

The civilizing narrative used within NCR was used by other companies to justify aggressively expanding to other countries. When appealing to domestic customers and company employees, company executives relied on a civilizing narrative. This narrative created a spectrum of civilization, in line with Domosh’s concept of flexible racism, which posited that people throughout the world could become civilized if only they adopted new, progressive technologies like the cash register. Company executives and agents continued to rely on racist stereotypes to depict those that were resistant to the cash register, but with the condition that cultural and racial characteristics could be mitigated by choosing American products and business methods. NCR created a link in which civilization became interchangeable with American values and technological acceptance.

\(^{175}\) Domosh 14.  
\(^{176}\) de Grazia 2.
Conclusion

The early years of NCR show a company that was struggling with the challenges and opportunities of international expansion. After Patterson became president, he was confronted with the many problems of introducing a new machine to market. Chapter one shows the various ways that he adapted company policies to these challenges, while simultaneously planning for the new challenges of overseas work. Patterson was constantly aware of the multiple ways that policies could be used. Expanding to foreign countries was a way to increase sales and also to present a specific company image to domestic customers. The company’s policies were slightly adjusted to accommodate local conditions, while the overall structure remained largely the same. What is unusual about NCR in comparison with other contemporary companies is the extent to which company executives and company materials focused on international business. Expansion quickly became a central part of the corporate culture.

The second chapter follows the company’s ongoing expansion throughout the world. The 1880s were largely a time in which Patterson was still dealing with domestic challenges and the foreign market was a testing ground. By the end of the 1880s, corporate offices were well established throughout Western Europe by successful agents like J.W. Allinson and F.A. Mueller. Then sales agents began to expand throughout other areas of the globe. Business interests pushed salesmen into new, more remote territories. The cash register became a visible machine, not only in small shops but in international exhibitions and lecture tours. Company materials showed a shift from away from recognized markets in the 1890s, when company executives sought out strange locations and odd customs.

The third chapter shifts from practical business interests to the moral and cultural implications of globalizing American technology. In order to rationalize the aggressive expansion overseas, Patterson created a narrative of civilization. In this narrative, the cash register was a modern piece of technology that was a source of “civilization” to the businessmen who purchased it and the clerks who used it. The civilization narrative was created and perpetuated in company newsletters and visual materials. By creating a cultural rationale for international business, Patterson created an imperative for NCR salesmen to push beyond familiar regions into those areas perceived to be “uncivilized.”

As other contemporary companies began to expand into foreign countries, John Patterson keenly understood how to use this new development to his advantage. This awareness and use of dual benefits is a staple of the policies of NCR throughout the early years. When John Patterson and other executives were found guilty of monopoly in 1912, the conviction was ultimately overturned. The credit for this is given to Patterson’s humanitarian response to the 1913 flood in Dayton, where he provided relief services for those affected by the damage. NCR provides an example of the way in which companies approached international business. For NCR, they only made minute changes in company policies and structure. Patterson and other NCR executives chose to expand to global markets because of the cultural benefits they derived from doing so. It was not only about increasing sales, but...
about the company’s image. Globalizing business meant changing business strategies and required a rationale for doing so. It was not an inevitable move, but one that was undertaken with “that savor of American push and energy.”

NCR was pushed into global markets by its charismatic and controlling leader.

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177 The N.C.R., February 1, 1889.
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