

The Toledo Scale Collection, 1900-1980

Historical Sketch

The story of Toledo Scale began when Henry Theobald was fired from the National Cash Register Company for instituting changes in the production system that he believed would decrease costs and improve the product. He decided to start his own business, solicited investors, and bought the DeVilbiss Computing Scale Company from Allen DeVilbiss Jr. of Toledo around 1900. DeVilbiss had invented and patented a pendulum type scale that used actual weight (gravity), as a counterbalance rather than spring tension. The pendulum scale was superior because spring tension would change with temperature and wear, while gravity would not. Theobald's goal was to offer grocers devices with which they could obtain exact measurements, because accuracy in weight in the retail environment meant happier customers and higher profits.¹

Henry Theobald founded Toledo Scale in 1901, and coined the phrase, "No Springs, Honest Weight" as a slogan for the new company. During his reign, Toledo Scale boomed. "Mr. Theobald was a man of amazing energy, ability, and imagination, as was proved many times in the nearly twenty-five years that he headed the company."²

In 1912 the company began producing a double pendulum model that had an automatic indicating dial rather than a beam and poise. The new scale line was suitable for industrial use, and was a great success. With the invention of the double pendulum mechanism, and with the war years calling for shell loading scales, counting scales, and

¹ Bob Terry, *Honest Weight: The Story of Toledo Scale* (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corp., 2000).

² Toledo Scale Company, *The First Fifty Years* (Toledo, Ohio: Toledo Scale Company, 1951).

forced measurement devices, the groundwork was laid for a specialized subsidiary, "Toledo Precision Devices," founded in 1929.³

After the death of Henry Theobald in 1924, Toledo Scale remained static. His son, Bob, took over the company for a while and was doing well with the business. However, Bob became depressed over the deaths of both his father and his young wife, which occurred within 1 1/2 years of each other. In 1925 Bob committed suicide, and it was in 1926 when the new era of Hubert D. Bennett emerged.⁴

Hugh Bennett was the son of George Bennett, general manager of Willys-Overland in Toledo. By the time he came to Toledo Scale, he had served in the French army during World War I, taught at DeVilbiss High School, worked for Willys-Overland, and held the position of assistant sales vice president for Studebaker in South Bend, Indiana. Between 1926-1951, Bennett brought Toledo Scale to a new competitive level. He reorganized the company, brought in stockholders, and settled several patent infringement suits. He also inspired employee pride when he commissioned artist Georges LaChance to paint some of the company's craftsmen at work. LaChance's paintings were entitled, "Paintings of Master Craftsmen," and they remained on display in the Telegraph Road plant until 1976.⁵

With the Great Depression and World War Two, the engineers at Toledo Scale developed innovative designs and used new materials to create cutting edge scales. Plastic and aluminum were used to develop industrial scales, including the Printweigh. Additionally, in 1934 the Kitchenware Division of Toledo Scale was born, producing choppers, mixers, slicers, and grinders. The growth of Toledo Scale demanded the expansion of factories and office buildings. In 1939 Toledo Scale moved on to an 80-acre site on Telegraph Road in

³ Terry, *Honest Weight*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Toledo. By World War Two the factory expanded three times and increased its capacity by 50%.⁶

By the middle of the 1940's, the "winds of change" were again blowing at Toledo Scale. The War was just about to end, and the stockholders wanted to see the company pursue more post-war research and production. Despite his many accomplishments at Toledo Scale, Hugh Bennett wanted to pursue further innovations in plastics. In 1946, Bennett retired and Harris McIntosh became the third president of Toledo Scale.⁷

Under Harris McIntosh, Toledo Scale introduced two of its most popular scales, the Printweigh 400 and the Verilux. At the same time, the 2000 series of Toledo Scales were considered the best industrial scales in the world. The scope of the company expanded further with the development of batching systems, digital readings, computer feed scales, and electronic pre-packaging scales. In addition, the company adapted the current load cells measurement systems, which resulted in the first innovation in motor truck and railroad track scales in over 100 years.

In 1968, Toledo Scale became a division of Reliance Electric of Cleveland. McIntosh became a member of Reliance's Board of Directors, and Bob Metzger replaced him as head of the Toledo Scale.⁸

During Metzger's tenure the company developed the Expressweigh system, a high-speed, in-motion device for weighing and data recording, primarily for use in beef packaging facilities. Also under Metzger, the company purchased The Wrapping Machinery Company of Franksville, Wisconsin, maker of the "Superwrapper" line of automatic wrappers and labelers. This enabled Toledo Scale to develop a complete wrapping, weighing, and labeling

⁶ *Toledo Scales: A History of Our Future* (Worthington, Ohio: Toledo Scale: A Division of Reliance Electric Company, 1976).

⁷ Terry, *Honest Weight*.

⁸ *Ibid.*

system. At this time the company also entered the electronic age when, in the early 1970's, it was the first to use the Intel microprocessor in its retail scales.⁹

In 1971 Metzger suffered a serious injury and was put on extended sick leave. Management passed for a short time to Tony DiVincenzo. During this time, the 8400 electronic candy scale came into production. This scale was unique for its ability to display price and weight information on both sides of the counter. Also, a new plant was built in Spartanburg, South Carolina, specifically dedicated to the manufacture of load cells for use in retail scales. In 1975, Reliance announced that Toledo Scale's headquarters would be moved to Columbus, leaving only one small department physically located in Toledo. DiVincenzo retired soon thereafter.¹⁰

Management changed frequently after DiVincenzo's retirement. The company pulled out of the food machine business. Reliance sold the Houghton Elevator Division, and in 1979 the Exxon Oil Company purchased Reliance. Exxon restructured the company once again, and many more changes in management were made. Reliance sold the Telegraph Road plant to Willis Day Properties, but rented a small part of the facility where it continued to make mechanical scales and parts for electronic scales.¹¹

In 1984, Reliance decided to close the Toledo operations completely, and laid off the employees who were still left there. On July 7, 1985, a fire completely destroyed the Telegraph Road plant. In 1986 Reliance became independent from Exxon through a leveraged buy-out, and in 1989 it sold the Toledo Scale Division to Ciba Geigy. Ciba Geigy merged Toledo Scale with another of its companies, Mettler Instrumente AG, a manufacturer of laboratory balances. The merger vastly increased the global scope of the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

company, which, as a result, operated in 18 countries. In 1992, the name was officially changed to Mettler Toledo, Inc. Then, in 1996, Ciba-Geigy sold Mettler Toledo to AEA Investors, a group of investors located in New York City. The name was changed once again to Mettler Toledo International, Inc. The company's new headquarters were located in Polaris, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus. In 1997, AEA took the company public, and today its shares are listed on the New York Stock Exchange with the symbol MTD.¹²

¹² Ibid.