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Caille Money Back Scale

by Johnny Duckworth



Main Street of Kansas City
Circa 1903, where the scale resided.

In this Issue:

- The Caille Money Back Scale
by *Johnny Duckworth*
(cover story)..... 4
- ABT Playball Vendor
by *Bill Howard*..... 6
- Topsy-Turvy over Sweeney Todd
by *John Peterson*..... 8
- Chicagoland - Spring Show
by *Jack Kelly*..... 14
- Silver King O.K. Gum Trade;
Check Vending Machine No. 101
by *John Carini*..... 17
- When It Comes to Vending
by *Roger Smith*..... 20
- Slots to Do on Vacation
by *Jimmy Rosen* 28
- Trophy Golf - Bob Legan
by *Bill Howard*..... 30
- Tales of the Hunt by Jack Freund
Pulver - Woody Woodpecker
by *Jim & Merlyn Collings*..... 32
- Slot Machine Finds
by *Herb Weinfield*..... 33

The Caille Money Back Scale

by Johnny Duckworth

Here's a great looking oak model "Caille" money back scale. This rare scale was purchased around 40 years ago at auction near Pittsburg, Kansas for the sum of \$35. When I heard about the scale last year located in Texas I had to have it. The guy had no interest in selling the scale because it was part of his family after 40 years. He told me he was looking for a Simplex motorcycle as he had once owned one in his younger years and laughed that if I had one he might trade. I decided the only way I would ever get that scale from him was to find an old Simplex motorcycle and try to make a trade. I went out searching and finally located a very nice original Simplex which I knew he wouldn't be able to pass up. I sent him pictures of that Simplex and after a phone call to my surprise he didn't want a nice original motorcycle he wanted a freshly restored one. I felt at that point I had tried every way I knew to obtain this scale and it was just not going to happen as he had no intention of selling.

I had all but gave up when I received a phone call weeks later and he told me he had located a restored Simplex which he wanted in Alabama and if I would be willing to buy that motorcycle for him he would give me the scale. I couldn't believe it; I was



finally going to get the scale and the deal was made. I contacted a very good friend of mine in Texas who was able to drive over that Saturday, pay him the price of the Simplex, and pick the scale up before he came to his senses.



I had always wanted to find a nice gambling scale and this one had such a great look along with the Caille name to boot. The glass around the scale face is glue chipped just as the upright floor machines of that period. The

scale glass has big maroon letters which state "Money Back Scale" and the Caille company initials are found in the lower corners. This big machine almost looks like an old grandfather clock standing just over 6 feet tall with its curved wood top. The scale face shows charts for men and women but then goes into more detail with the boys and girls. The big cast iron plate above the pin field reads "watch where your money goes" and the center chute in the pin field is labeled "money back". The pin field is located right in the center of the machine and when you drop your penny in the scale it will fall down and bounce through this area. If you get lucky and the penny hits the center money back chute a set of bells inside will ding as the penny



falls into the payout cup below. This would be the gambling feature of the machine as you are trying to get your penny back and your weight for free.



The scale is very interesting and also has a metal tag on the front below the pin field which states property of the Yale Operating Company 720 Main Kansas City, Missouri where it was located. The Yale Amusement Company resided at 720 main be-

ginning in 1904 and later in 1914 they changed the name to the Yale Arcade Theater. This theater building at 720 Main actually opened in 1898 and was the pioneer for moving picture theaters in Kansas City. It was the first of its kind and among the first in the United States. The theater held 75 seats with no side arms or cushions and the films ranged from 100 to 300 feet in length.

The Kansas City Star on May 28th 1916 talks about the old Yale Theater closing its doors and running the last picture. It also had this to say about the theater in the newspaper article which I had to share with you; and no I didn't make it up, "The patrons who saw the last picture explored their way through the same magical surroundings that in ancient days attracted the pleasure seekers to the new, the ultimate thrill. For the way has always led through a room filled with penny slot machines, some of which, with their quickly flopping cards, were the predecessors of the movie picture."

One clear answer to the date of the scale is right on the face as it reads "made only by the Caille Company 206 Randolph street Detroit U.S.A." Adolph Caille started out as a Coin Machine Manufacturer in 1897, working out of his home at 96 Park Place. The next year the company opened its doors at 24 Gratiot where it remained until 1902 when it moved to 1427 Woodward. The Caille Company was located



at 206 Randolph street in 1903 and then in 1904 was moved for the last time to 1300 Second St. where it remained.

I have tried to locate this scale in the old Caille catalogs but I have had no luck. I don't believe many were ever produced as this is the only known model to ever surface. This style money back scale model would have been

replaced by the later George Washington Scale which could also be purchased in a money back version.

It's always so exciting to hunt for these old machines but when you can find out some history to go along with the machine it all comes together. If you want to share some information on these old coin operated machines you

can contact me at Johnny@kccoinop.com or through my website www.kccoinop.com.

