



Charles Franklin Kettering

Charles F. Kettering was born on August 29, 1876 in Loudonville, Ohio. Kettering lived on a farm in Ashland, Ohio with his family.

In 1904, Kettering graduated from Ohio State University with a degree in engineering. Following graduation, Kettering headed off to Dayton where he found employment at the



**Charles F. Kettering with a Buick automobile,
Dayton, Ohio in 1913.**

Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society

National Cash Register Company. It was there that Kettering developed the first electric cash register.

Kettering left the National Cash Register Company, and in 1909, he co-founded the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (Delco) with Edward Deeds. While working at Delco, Kettering was part of many research projects, such as the invention of a portable electric generator. General Motors purchased Delco in 1916 and in 1920 Kettering became vice president of GM.

Kettering is credited for many advances in the automobile industry. He invented the first electric ignition system which banished the old way

of starting a car engine with a crank. The first car to use the electric ignition and self-starter was the 1912 Cadillac. Soon after Kettering invented the first electric lighting system for automobiles.

In 1913, Kettering developed a small electric generating system which he set up at his parent's farm in Ashland, Ohio. In 1916, he started the Domestic Engineering Company in Dayton. The company produced the electric generating systems that were sold to the public. During the Great Depression, Congress created the Rural Electrification Administration to help farmers get access to electric power. In 1940, half of the farms in the United States had electricity. By 1950, all farms had electricity.

Kettering was also responsible for numerous other inventions such as the spark plug, leaded gasoline, quick drying paint for automobiles, safety glass, four wheel brakes, electric railway gate, and the first synthetic aviation fuel. He also invented freon for refrigerators and air conditioners.

In 1947, Kettering retired from General Motors. He and General Motors president Alfred Sloan started the Sloan- Kettering Institute for Cancer Research in 1945. Kettering was honored for many of his achievements, received several honorary doctorates, and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1980.

Charles F. Kettering died in Dayton, Ohio on November 25, 1958.

