



Vending Machines: An American Social History

Kerry Segrave

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Although the 1880s are considered the beginning of the vending machine era, these devices have existed for a couple of thousand years. The earliest reference to a vending machine was made by Hero--a Greek mathematician, physicist and engineer who probably lived in Alexandria during the first century a.d.--who described and illustrated a coin-operated device to be used for vending sacrificial water in Egyptian temples. Completely automatic, the device was set in operation by the insertion of a five-drachma coin. This work traces the history of the vending machine from its inception to its current place in popular American culture, with the eight chapters covering significant eras. Successes and failures of the machines, economic factors influencing the popularity (or lack thereof) of vending machines, and the struggle of industry to become a dominant, large-scale method of retailing products are discussed. This text is richly illustrated and includes appendices on vending dollar value, vending sales by location type and vending statistics.

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