

Letters to the Editor

Scientific brochure, 1964. Courtesy of Bill Dover of Dover & Company, Flint, Mich.

Editor's Note: Many dealers helped us identify the "Detronotrols" operator from our spring issue. Here are some selected letters that provide different helpful details about this unique operator.



Identifying the Old Openers

To the editor:

I enjoyed your article, the "Oldest Opener Contest." The blue Detronotrols operator was a Scientific rubber roller operator made in Detroit, Mich. I believe the latest owner was Chuck Eberhol, and I closed some years ago and may have recently passed away.

The Scientific operator worked well on swing-out doors, and I installed quite a few of them. Other manufacturers of rubber roller drives were ARDCO and Graham Magi Door.

Peter Look
Tri-County Door
Euclid, Ohio

To the editor:

In your "Oldest Opener Contest" article, that Detronotrols opener is what we in the Pittsburgh region call a Fisher-Scientific opener. It takes two guys to get these down because they weigh about 230 pounds.

There are quite a few of these still running, and some still have a working vacuum tube on the receivers. Up until 10 years ago, you could still get the rubber wheel that operates on the center shaft.

The Pittsburgh Crawford dealer installed a lot of these in the 1940s and 50s. My 86-year-old uncle, Jim Giel, still goes out every day on calls, and he works on these operators.

Gerry Giel
Giel Doors
Butler, Pa.

To the editor:

The old operator on page 53 of your spring issue is a Scientific operator.

I installed these for Acme Automatic Door in Toledo in the late 1960s. Its drive was a series of hard-rubber rollers mounted at an angle to the large, smooth drive tube shown in the picture. It had awesome power. It would lift but quickly tear the top rail from a wooden door with broken springs.

John Parisian
Best Garage Door Service
Mount Dora, Fla.

To the editor:

In your "Oldest Operator Contest" story, the operator labeled "Stumped" appears to be a Scientific American operator. This operator had a strange-looking trolley. If you ever took one of these down, you would remember it because they are very heavy.

I have installed doors and operators for close to 40 years, and I've seen a few of these. The last one was about three years ago, but it was still working when I removed it. I believe these operators date to the late 1950s. I hope this helps.

Rick Uittenbogaard
Doormaster Overhead Door
South Holland, Ill.

To the editor:

That "Detronotrols" opener appears to be a Scientific Detroit opener. Every one I've seen has been this color blue.

The motor drove a long, smooth steel tubular shaft about three inches in diameter that ran the length of the opener. Due to its unique design, it could theoretically be manufactured to any length. The trolley wrapped completely around the shaft and held numerous rubber wheels, about one inch in diameter, that were canted off-axis to the tubular shaft. Depending on which direction the shaft rotated, the trolley would move either forward or back.

The small diameter rod just above the light bulb also ran the length of the rail. It had trip levers attached to each end that the trolley would hit, causing the rod to rotate slightly and activate the reversing toggle switch. It was a pretty simple but unique electro-mechanical device.

They were very durable and heavy, as most old units were. The only drawback was that the rubber trolley wheels would eventually dry out, harden, and lose their grip on the shaft. I've seen and worked on several here in the Detroit metro area over the years.

Mike Stahl
Home Door and Window Products
Berkley, Mich.