Charles Franklin Kettering Encyclopedia Article

Charles Franklin Kettering

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Charles Franklin Kettering

1876-1958

American engineer whose more than 300 patented inventions include the first electrical ignition system for automobiles, the self-starter, and the first practical engine-driven generator. In 1909 Kettering left the National Cash Register Company (NCR) to establish the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (Delco) with businessman Edward A. Deeds. In 1916 he sold his company to General Motors (GM) and became the vice president of its research corporation. Under Kettering's leadership the GM lab developed the lightweight diesel engine, the refrigerant Freon, four-wheel brakes, and safety glass, among other inventions.