William Seward Burroughs Encyclopedia Article

William Seward Burroughs

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William Seward Burroughs

1855-1898

American inventor of the calculator. The earliest seeds of Burroughs's passion for invention were planted while tinkering in his father's machine shop as a young child. At age 15 he came up with the idea for a device that would calculate the sum of numbers. In 1881, he began working on his invention, and three years later had it patented, but his machine still needed work. It wasn't until 10 years later that Burroughs had designed a fully functional version of his adding machine, which printed its results on paper. His invention proved to be a great success, but not in Burroughs's lifetime.