

I want to tell you about my latest find. Trouble is; there wasn't anything particularly interesting about how I found my machine. It wasn't found in an old barn or behind a false wall in an old store. I found it on eBay. I guess the only things I can think of that were somewhat interesting about my find is that, as interesting as this machine is, it lasted a whole week on eBay with no one bidding on it. The second thing is, I was able to buy this machine even though I live in one of those poor unfortunate states that aren't supposed to even bid on slot machines (Tennessee). We need to get these states legal!

A while back, I saw a listing on eBay for a 1940 5¢ Jennings Modern Vendor. The starting bid amount seemed pretty good, and the few pictures that were there looked interesting. I added it to my Watch List and started a Google search to find out more about a Jennings Modern Vendor. Thing is, there was next to nothing on the Internet about this machine. I found pictures of four other Modern Vendors that had gone through "real" auctions and that was about it. Nothing! You can find the answer to the "Meaning of Life" on the Internet and yet, there was nothing about this machine. Ok, I'll just look through my extensive collection of coin-op books to see what someone wrote about this machine. Still, nothing! I later realized my collection of books is not as extensive as I thought. My third option was to start bugging other collectors by sending emails asking about this elusive machine. Two of the emails I sent were to Jeff Frahm at Two-Bit Restorations and Tom Kolbrener at St Louis Slot Machine Co. Jeff and Tom were quick to respond. Jeff wrote back:

*"Wow, that's a rare old bird. You are correct; it's an early 1940s model that Jennings played around with. It never went into a large production run. It is NOT foreign. The correct name is "Jennings Modern Vendor" but was also known as "Free Play Mint Vendor". This is a quote from an Introductory Ad by Jennings in the June 8, 1940 Billboard Magazine, "Here's the news that you've waited for- Now the Bell Machine has been approved by the Superior Court of one of our largest states - It's the Jennings Modern Vender. The machine has no payout - awards are made in free plays - and one roll of Mints vended with each coin played." A picture of it in the ad appears on page 397 and 402 of Dick Bueschell's two-volume set of books, JENNINGS SLOT MACHINES 1906-1990. It only came out as a nickel machine and was discontinued due to poor sales and World War II. This is a wonderful historical piece and highly collectable. I'd grab it if I were you."*

I also found a couple places in "The Coin Slot" magazine where this machine was mentioned. Dick Bueschel wrote, in part, in the Winter 1988/89 issue:

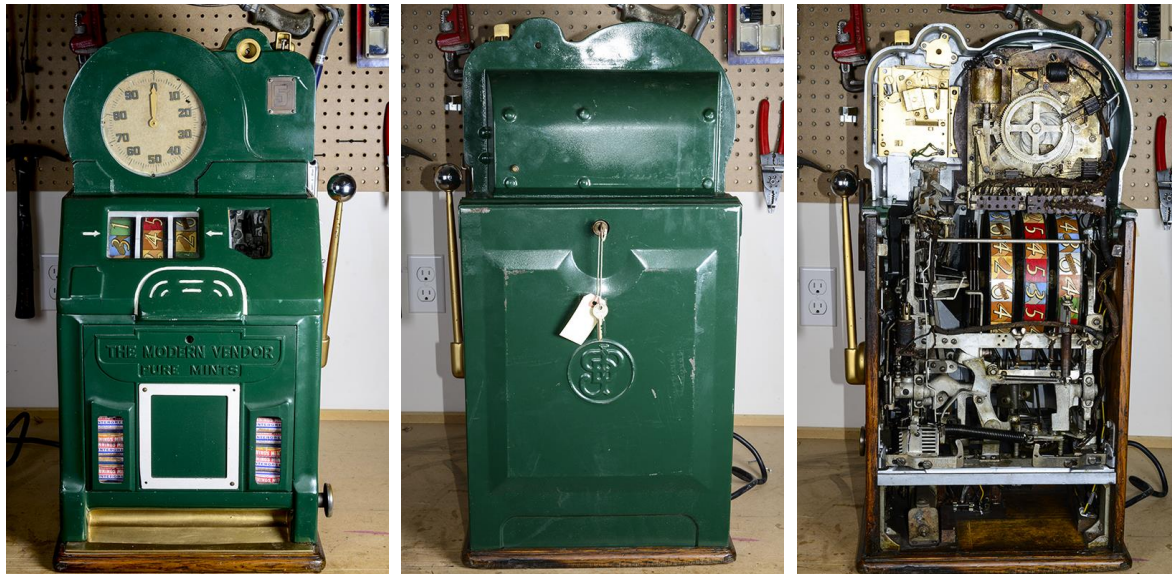
*".....Thanks for the picture of your Jennings Modern Vendor. This interesting gadget, while touted as a trade stimulator, is actually a slot machine, except it doesn't have the payout slides. But they got around that. Introduced in June 1940 as the Free Play Mint Vendor Chief – so it's a Chief machine – it tallied "free plays" on the clock dial at the top. So when a player is ready to quit, the location paid off in nickels times free games, or offered it in trade. It was a way to get around the payout slot machine laws. They also called it the MODERN VENDOR to hide the gambling aspects....."*

Bob Stone wrote, in part, in the Winter 1993/94 issue:

*".....This is the second one that I recall seeing in about 25 years....."*

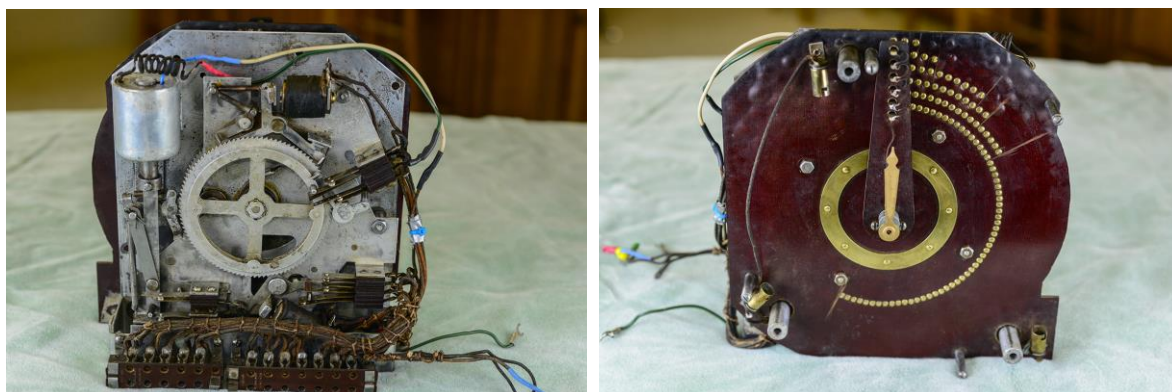
Now I'm really interested. How can I buy this machine? I can't bid on it. Then I realized there was only a day left on the auction and no one had bid on it yet. I waited. To my surprise, the week ended and no

one bid on the thing. I quickly sent an email to the owner asking if the machine was still available and would he be interested in dealing with a law breaking collector from Tennessee. We quickly agreed on a price and I sent him the money. This is what I received from the big brown truck about a week later.



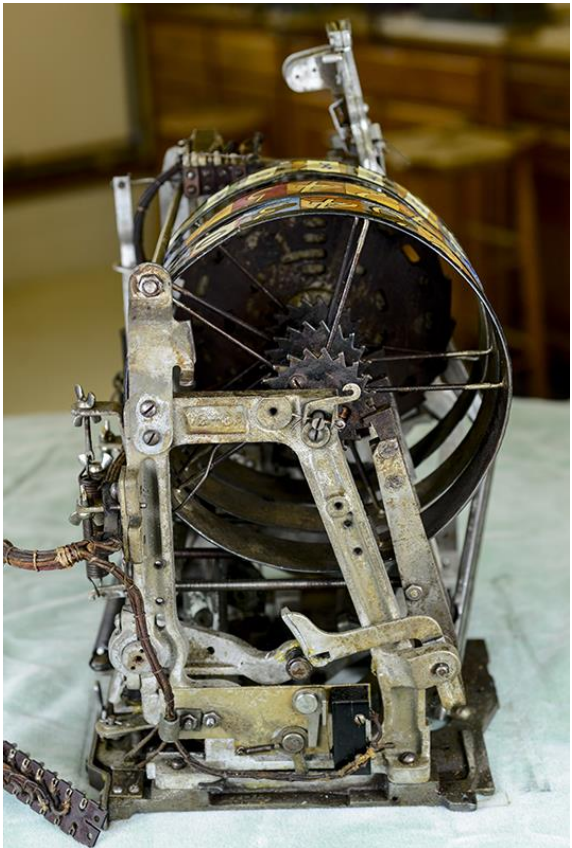
The Modern Vendor is an electro-mechanical machine, a first for me. It seemed to be all there, except the award card. Thanks to Bob Stones' photos he included in The Coin Slot issue mentioned above, I was able to reproduce the award card. As you can see, it has the original back door, with key. It even has the original cash box, with key. I also got the key to the mint vendor on the front and there were about 12 rolls of mints with reproduction Jennings wrappers. Someone's been working on this machine. On closer inspection, I noticed the power cord was replaced and I don't think all that gold paint belongs there. I'll take care of cosmetics after I get it working.

This is where my dilemma starts and the main reason for writing this article. I've never worked on anything electro-mechanical before and I know very little about how this machine should work.



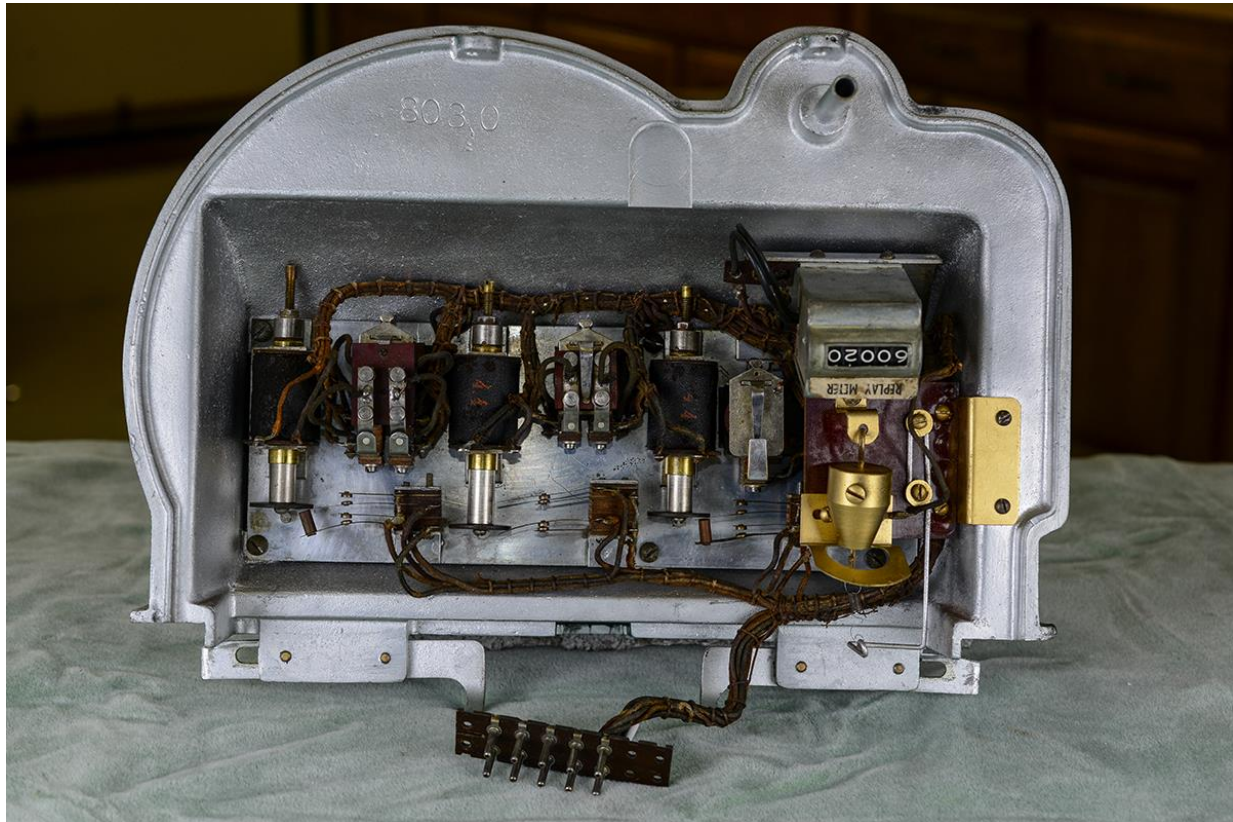
After a very careful inspection, I found several small things that needed fixing. The flat spring that returns the credit dial on the stepper unit, above the mechanism, was broke. A few wires were loose or badly frayed.







The mechanism works fine and needed no adjustments. However, based on the holes in the payout disc, I think the strips are incorrect. I'm finding a lot of the symbols aren't matching the payout holes on the corresponding disc. The strips seem to have a horse race theme with numbers 1 through 6 and all of the 6's have "Disqualified" or "Scratched" written over the 6. Based on that information and the payout disc, I'm assuming the payouts are 1 through 5. As stated above, the payouts are in credits that show up on a large dial at the top of the machine. Once you earn credits, the mechanism will not accept any coins until all credits are used up. The mechanism has none of the coin payout parts in the lower half of the mechanism.



The back bonnet has several solenoids and relays plus a tilt mechanism and small mechanical counter attached. Sticking through the back bonnet is a reset button. All of the electrical "stuff" on the mechanism and the back bonnet plug into a stepper unit that sits above the mechanism. This stepper unit keeps track of winning combinations on the reels and shows the credits on the front.

I've got something that needs adjusting on either the stepper unit or in the back bonnet electrical "stuff". When I land on a win, the stepper goes into a continuous credit giving mode. Somehow, it's not getting the information needed to know how many credits to give. I am playing around with the machine, trying to figure things out. I think I've identified about half of what the electrical components and switches do.

So, my question, my plea, to all collectors that read this. If anyone knows anything about this machine or how the components should work together, I would love to talk to you.

I sure would like to talk to those four other collectors that bought those Modern Vendors I saw on the Internet. If you're trying to get your machine working, then together, we can figure this very interesting piece of history out.

My contact information is in the COCA member's information on their web site and right here.

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