

History of Burroughs Corporation

The Burroughs Corporation began in 1886 as the American Arithmometer Company in St. Louis, Missouri selling an adding machine invented by William Seward Burroughs. The company moved to Detroit in 1904 and changed its name to the Burroughs Adding Machine Company, in honor of Burroughs, who died in 1898. Burroughs grew into the biggest adding machine company in America, although by the 1950s it was selling more than the basic adding machines, including typewriters and computers.

The Company developed a range of adding machines with different capabilities and created the office accounting machine range that began with the Sensimatic, which had a moving programmable carriage to maintain ledgers. It could store 9, 18 or 27 balances during the ledger posting operations and worked with a mechanical adder named a Crossfooter. The Sensimatic developed into the Sensitronic which could store balances on a magnetic stripe which was part of the ledger card. This balance was read into the accumulator when the card was inserted into the carriage. The Sensitronic was followed by the E1000, the E2000, E4000, E6000 and the E8000 which was computer system supporting magnetic tape, card reader/punches and a line printer.



In the late 1960s the D2000, D4000 range was produced - also known as the TC500 (Terminal Computer 500) which had a golf ball printer and a 1K (80 bit) disk memory. These were popular as branch terminals to the B5500/6500/6700 Systems, which sold well in the Banking Sector, where they were often connected to non-Burroughs mainframes.

In 1953 the Burroughs Adding Machine Company was renamed the Burroughs Corporation and began moving into computer products, initially for banking institutions. This move began with the purchase in June 1956, of The ElectroData Corporation in Pasadena, California, originally a division of Consolidated Electrodynamics Corporation, but which had been spun off. ElectroData had built the Datatron 205 and was working on the Datatron 220. The first major computer product that came from this marriage was the B205 Tube computer.

The Burroughs Corporation developed three highly innovative architectures, based on the design philosophy of "language directed design". Their machine instruction sets favored one or many high level programming languages, such as ALGOL, COBOL or FORTRAN. All three architectures were considered "main-frame" class machines.

Burroughs was one of the eight major United States computer companies (with IBM, the largest, Honeywell, NCR Corporation, Control Data Corporation, General Electric, RCA and UNIVAC) through most of the 1960s. IBM's share of the market at the time was so much larger than all of the others, that this group was often referred to as "IBM and the Seven Dwarfs."

Later, this group became known as the BUNCH - (Burroughs, UNIVAC, NCR Corporation, Control Data Corporation, and Honeywell)

In September 1986, Burroughs Corporation merged with Sperry Corporation to form Unisys.

