

Charles Babbage Encyclopedia Article

Charles Babbage

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Charles Babbage

1791-1871

English mathematician considered the inventor of the first mechanical computer. Babbage devised plans for two machines, a difference engine (1823) to perform mathematical calculations and an analytical engine (1834), the forerunner of a modern computer. Because these mechanical devices required precise machining of geared wheels exceeding the capabilities of mid-nineteenth century technology, they were never completed as working devices. But Babbage's basic ideas persisted in the mathematical world and influenced later computer development.