**Tarbell Electronics – History**

(From www.s100computers.com)



Tarbell Electronics burst on to the S-100 scene in 1977 with its Cassette Interface board.  The company was setup by Don Tarbell.

The influence this board had on the development and popularity of the early S-100 bus is often overlooked. While there were other cassette interface boards at the time notably those of [MITS](http://www.s100computers.com/Hardware%20Folder/MITS/SIO-B/SIO.htm), [Processor Technology](http://www.s100computers.com/Hardware%20Folder/Processor%20Technology/CUTS/CUTS.htm) and [TDL](http://www.s100computers.com/Hardware%20Folder/TDL/SMB/TDL%20SMB.htm) they never attained wide spread use. Primarily because they were either hardware specific to those manufactures or read data slowly.   Many Tarbell tapes were passed back and forth at user group meetings. For a short time even commercial S-100 based computer software was sold on cassettes in "Tarbell format".

All this quickly changed with the introduction of the Floppy disk -- particularly the mini-floppy.   While Tarbell Electronics did come out with a single density board and later a double density one (see below), they were late to do so and lost market momentum for data exchange between S-100 computers.  Northstar had the initial lead giving way later to many CP/M soft sectored S-100 boards.

In 1981 Tarbell came out with a complete computer system consisting of a Z80 CPU board, their FDC and a 32K static memory board all in their own S-100 box. Their CPU card had two RS-232 ports and a "memory management" feature allowing the mapping of 4K blocks or RAM on to 1MB address space (similar to the [IAZ80-II](http://www.s100computers.com/Hardware%20Folder/Intersystems/Series%20II%20Z80%20CPU/Intersystems%20Z80-II.htm) board).

Tarbell Electronics itself was located on S. Lapwood Ave, Carson, CA.  Don Tarbell himself sadly died on May 19th 1998.

(From Herb Johnson)

Don Tarbell was an early developer of S-100 cards, beginning with the Tarbell Cassette Interface card in 1977. This card used a manual audio cassette tape recorder to store and recall programs. Cassette storage was popular in the years before floppy disk drives and controllers were available and affordable. Tarbell went on to produce a popular single-density floppy disk controller card among other S-100 cards and systems.

Here's some comments from Barry Watzman, a former Heath/Zenith engineer in the S-100 era, about Tarbell's floppy controller, as posted in comp.os.cpm from late 2009. With permission. - Herb.

"The Tarbell single density board and the NorthStar [MDS floppy controller] board were key products in moving most 1970's hobbyists from cassette and paper tape to floppy diskette. They were probably the most important two floppy disk controller products of the era."

"There was \*\*\*NO\*\*\* standard layout for double density diskettes, either 8" or 5.25". It was a "do your own thing" world. Only SSSD 8" had a standard format."

"Versions of the Tarbell double density board prior to Revision E were horrid and unstable. Revision E and later generally worked ok, but the board was revised to at least a revision "H" board. One problem with that board was that the power regulator was grossly over-stressed to the point that the fiberglass usually was burned and discolored around the voltage regulator. A common "jury rig" was to put a low value power resistor across the regulator on the back side of the board to "bleed off" some of its load (under 10 ohms, 2 to 5 watts). [The tarbell DD board was not the only board to have such a problem]."- Barry Watzman