

Wurlitzer

A Timeline History

RADIOACTIVITY 2015



1856

Founding

Rudolph Wurlitzer Company offices and showrooms founded in Cincinnati by Franz Rudolph Wurlitzer (1831-1914) a German immigrant (1853) from a family of musical instrument makers. Later successively directed by sons Howard, Rudolph, and Fanny.

Imports instruments (stringed, woodwind, drums, brass, and music boxes) from the family in Germany and sells them in the U.S. under military contracts (American Civil War & Spanish-American War).

1880

Pianos

Starts manufacturing and selling upright and grand pianos, sells from Cincinnati and retail outlets in Chicago, expands across U.S.

They develop several refinements including “Pentagonal Soundboard” and “Tone Crafted Hammers” for richer and fuller sound.

More on pianos later....but first...

1889



Robert Hope-Jones (1859- Sept. 13, 1914)

Robert Hope-Jones

In England, by age fifteen he is a school chapel and church organist, and becomes Chief Electrician at the Lancashire and Cheshire Telephone Company.

In 1889 (age 40) leaves the telephone company to work on improving the church organ.

1890 starts business to build electric action pipe organs.

Robert Hope-Jones

Builds about 100 church organs in the U.K.

Moves to the U.S. in 1903, he joins and forms several different companies.

In 1910 his patents and plant are purchased by the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company.

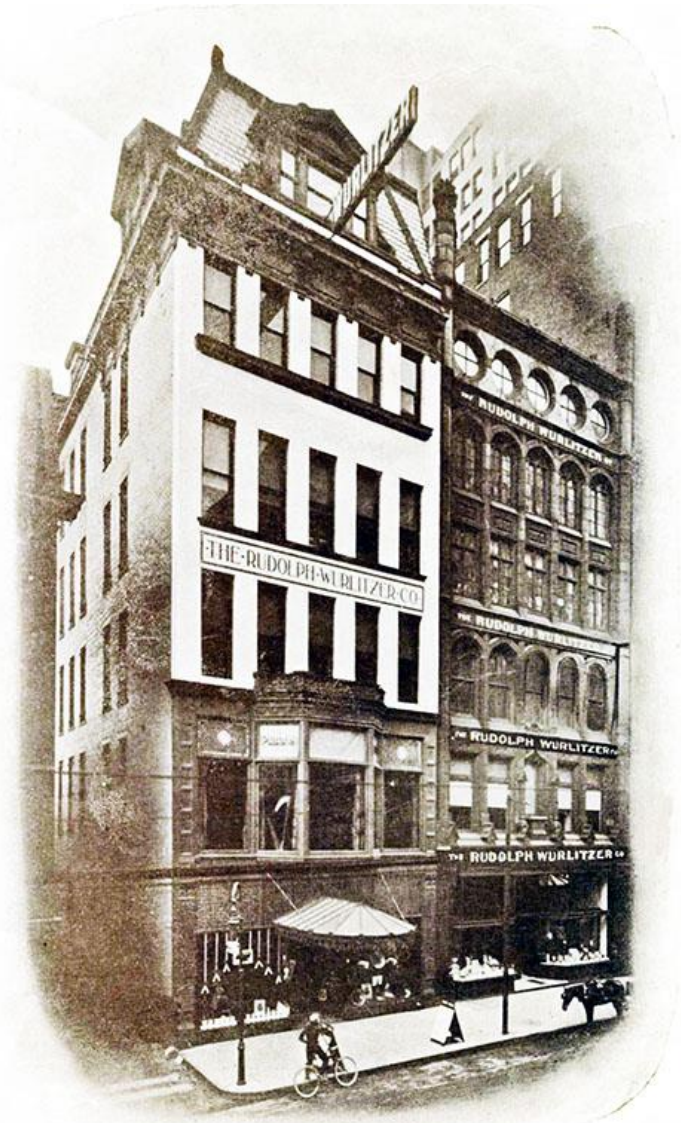
Robert Hope-Jones

Improvements to organs...(leads to the “Mighty Wurlitzer”)

- Adds more instruments - wants to have enough voices to create a one man orchestra,
- Improves electro-pneumatic action, now wires connect keyboard to electric valves, this allows for the ability to separate the console keyboard from the organ,
- Uses *stoptabs* instead of *drawknobs*, can fit more stoptabs on console for more voices.
- Uses higher wind (air) pressures (10”-50”)
- Developed system “unification” adds stops to ranks

1891

New main offices and
warehouse built in
Cincinnati.



Main Offices and Warerooms of the House of Wurlitzer, No. 121 East Fourth Street, Cincinnati. They Moved to This Site 1891; Building Destroyed by Fire 1904; New Home Erected and Dedicated 1906.

1892

Band Organs

Late 1800's street and fairground band organ business growing (bigger and louder for a variety of rides).

Band organs range in size from small (easy to store-like a radio) to large (get a BIG enclosed trailer!).

Small band organs played from a barrel with pins and were hand cranked or steam powered. Later and larger band organs have electric motor powered blowers and operate pneumatically using continuous folded cards or paper rolls.

Band Organs...continued...

1893 the U.S. Government puts high import tariff on new band organs from Europe, but not parts.

Eugene de Kleist starts the North Tonawanda Barrel Organ Factory in North Tonawanda, New York building band organs with European parts and American wood.



John Smith Bunkley Organ
20 Notes
Horn Built

COAA Organ Rally
The Happiest Music on Earth
CAROUSEL ORGAN
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
WWW.COAA.US



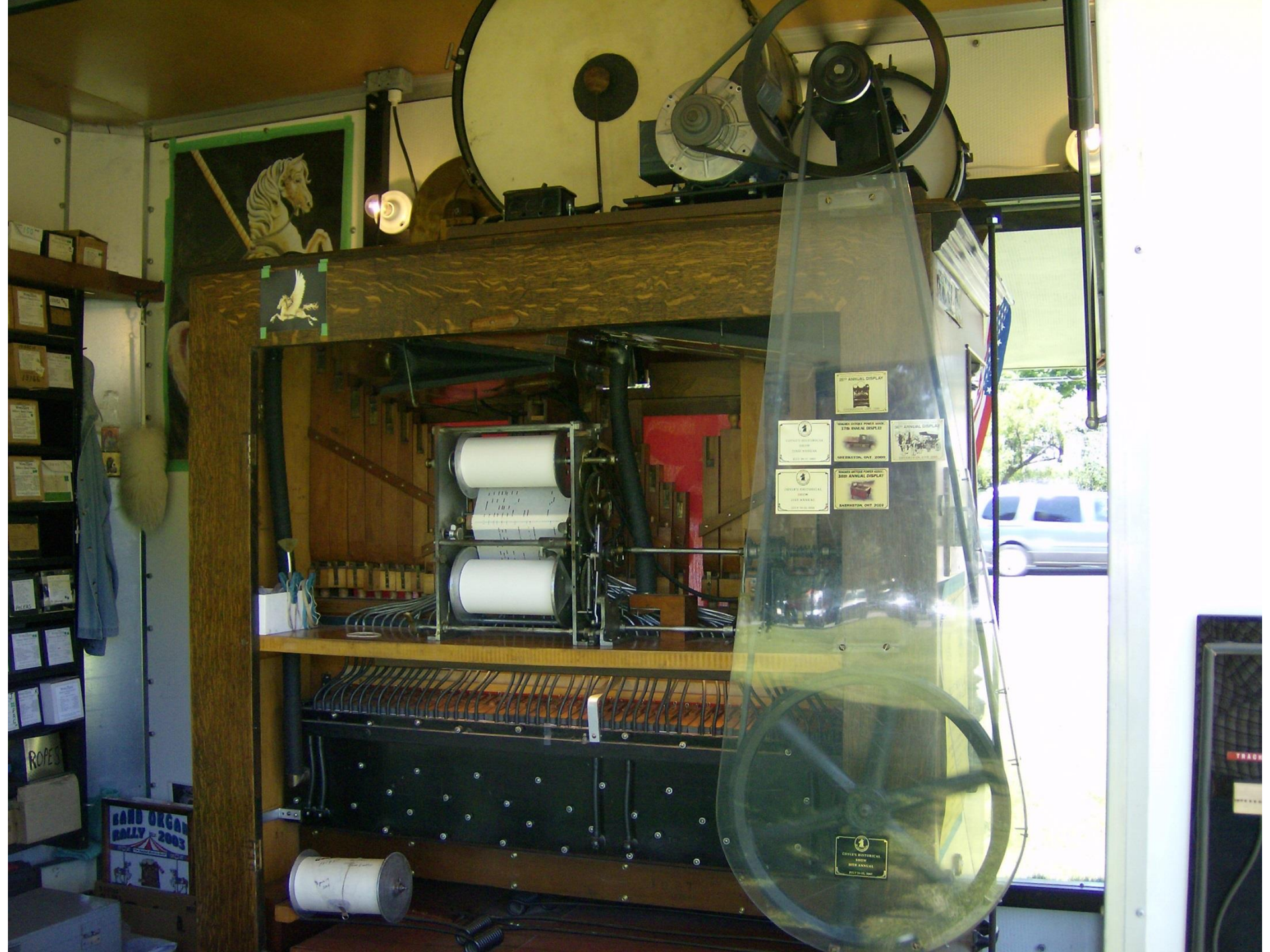




NORTH TONAWANDA MUSICAL INSTRUMENT WORKS
NORTH TONAWANDA, N.Y. U.S.A.

JULY 25

1911 Military





1896

De Kleist calls Wurlitzer to sell them some barrel band organs...Wurlitzer says No Thanks, BUT...

Wurlitzer does buy a coin operated piano from De Kleist and starts developing the Wurlitzer “Tonophone” aka. Nickelodeon...

Sidenote...

“Nickelodeon”

Player piano you put a nickel in to hear play,

Early movie house, short films, charged 5 cents,

Hand crank peep shows that cost 5 cents to see,

Jukebox that you put a nickel in to hear a
record....

1897

De Kleist changes company name to...

De Kleist Musical Instrument Company

Wurlitzer invests into De Kleist...will later buy out De Kleist...

1901

Wurlitzer starts selling the Tonophone coin operated piano.





1903

Imports piano orchestrions (ranks of pipes and percussion pieces) from J.D. Philipps & Sohne of Germany – marketed as “The PianOrchestra”...

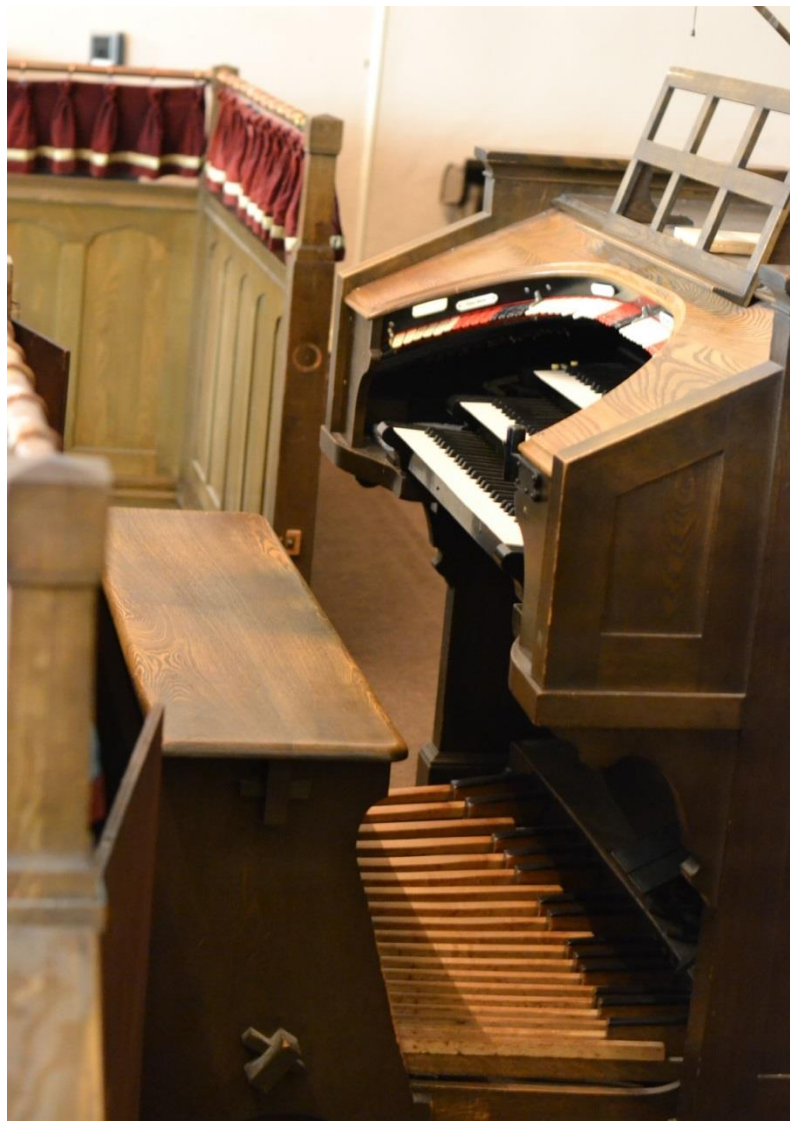
About 1000 units imported until WWI.

1908

Wurlitzer buys out De Kleist and forms the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company of North Tonawanda. This puts Wurlitzer for more into the manufacturing business than pianos.

Robert Hope-Jones builds and installs his Opus 2 concert organ at the First Universalist Church in Rochester, New York. It is a 3 manual 13 rank organ with a tuba. The Wurlitzer company rebuilt the organ in 1937. It is one of the few remaining original Hope-Jones organs in existence.

First Universalist Church - Console



First Universalist Church - Pipes



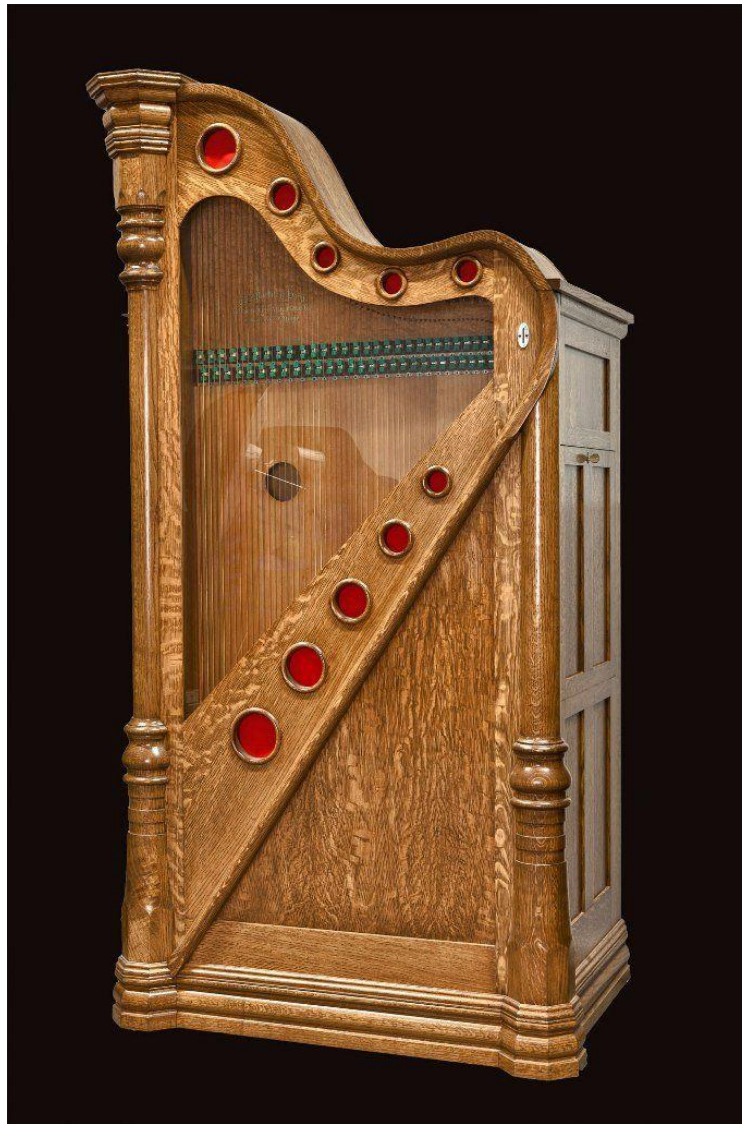
1909

Wurlitzer starts developing and improving harps, wants harps to be more durable.

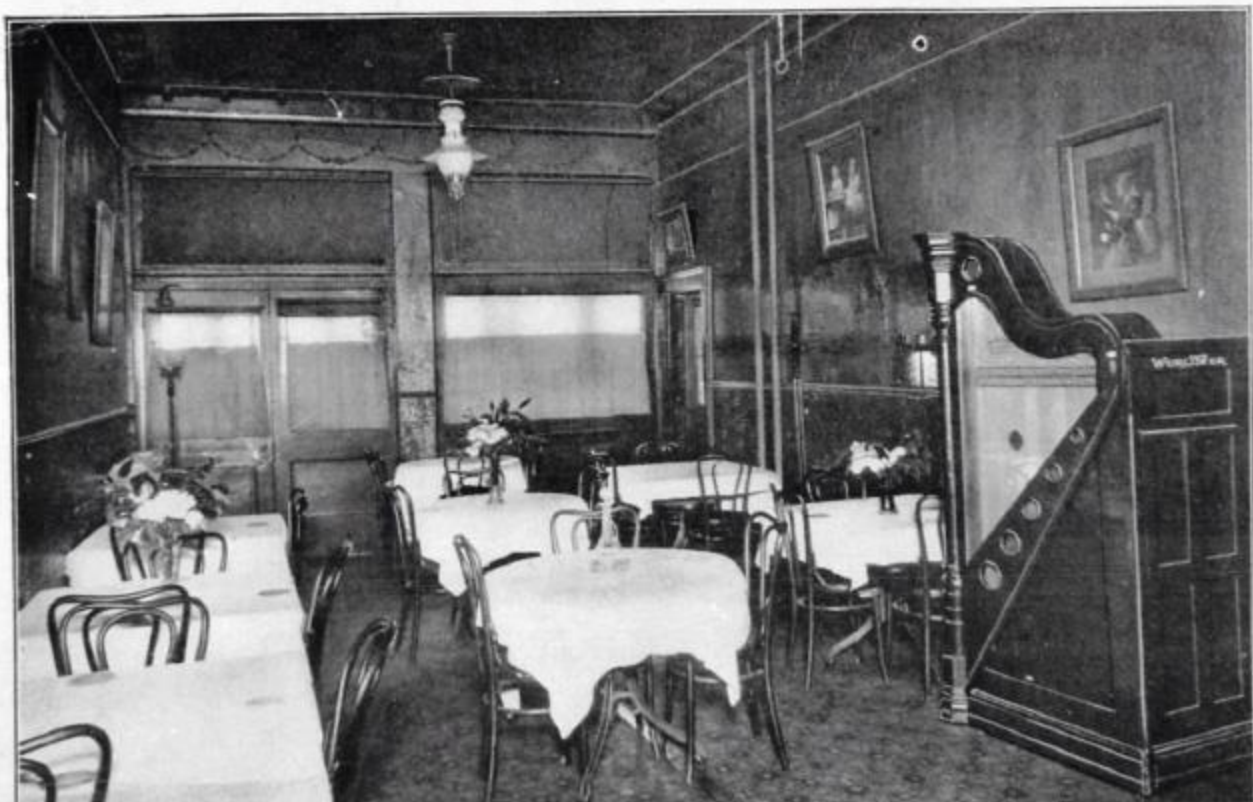






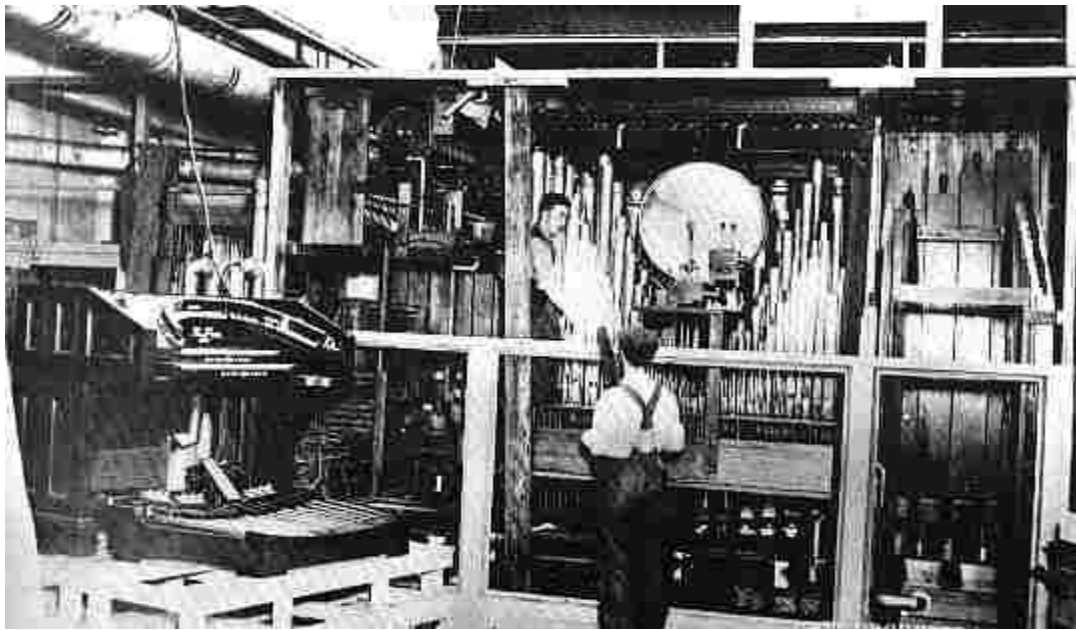


Wurlitzer Automatic Harp in Wm. C. Scott's Restaurant
Ninth Avenue and Elm Street, CINCINNATI



1910

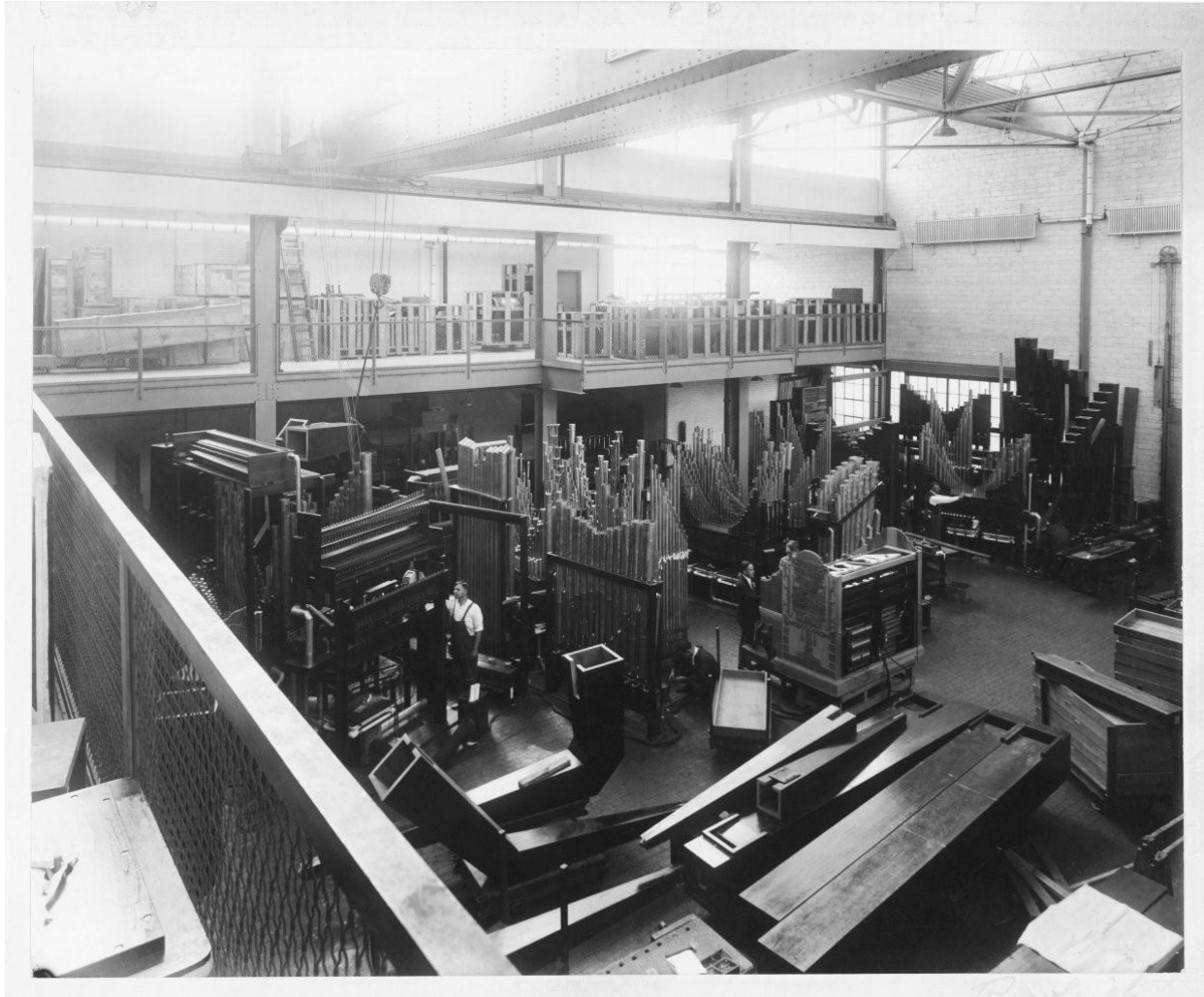
Silent movies are “in”...need music with them,
orchestras cost money, introducing...



“The Mighty Wurlitzer”, the one man orchestra!

Thank you Robert Hope-Jones!

Theatre Organs – The Mighty Wurlitzer





Stage Left Console - Radio City Music Hall, NYC





The console was part of an instrument originally installed in 1928 at [Brooklyn's Fox Theatre](#). In the 1970's, the console was moved to the Cardinal Music Palace restaurant in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was installed in its present location in 1986 (Gig Harbor, Washington) 4/48.

Weinberg Center-Frederick Md

\$350,000 movie palace opened Dec. 23, 1926

Wurlitzer \$19,000

2 manuals / 8 ranks

656 pipes

Only theatre organ in original
location in state of Maryland



1912 - Photoplayers

Wurlitzer begins building piano based instruments with pipes, drums, and sound effects for motion pictures...these were sold to small 5 cent theaters...replaced small group of musicians with one musician.



1913

Eugene De Kleist dies Biarritz, Spain.

1914

Wurlitzer becomes exclusive distributor of Melville Clark pianos.

Rudolph Wurlitzer Sr. dies January 14, 1914.

WWI ends imports from Germany and Philipps.

Robert Hope-Jones dies September 13, 1914.

1919

Wurlitzer buys Melville Clark piano business and factory in DeKalb, Illinois. Brand names include: Melville Clark, Apollo, DeKalb, Julius Bauer, Farney, Kingston, Kurtzman, Merrium, Schaff Bros., and Underwood.





1923

Los Angeles...
13 story building,
A million dollars,
Built in six months,
Has a large recital hall,
showroom for pipe organs,
Wurlitzer occupied the bottom
four floors and basement area,
leased out the top eight floors.



1926

Detroit
14 story building
Administrative and
retail operations
including rooms for
lessons.



Detroit – May be come a hotel...



Showroom -Wurlitzer Building

120 West 42nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10036



1929

Business slows across the board...

Wurlitzer adds furniture and refrigerators to product lines.

1929

Wurlitzer takes over All American Mohawk –
Lyric of Chicago.

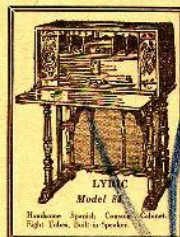


Model R Standard Cabinet



LYRIC B6L CA1935

6 TUBES, 1 BAND, DC



LYRIC
Model 22
Headphone, speaker, vacuum cabinet,
Eight Tubes, built-in speaker.



LYRIC
Model 23
All Electric Radio Phonograph combination. Eight tubes, one dial vacuum, dynamic speaker.



LYRIC
Model 24
Built-in Vacuum Cabinet housing the eight tubes, one dial vacuum, built-in speaker.



LYRIC
Model 25
An attractive Walnut Veneer Table Model; hand-crafted piano finish. Illustrated one dial, six tubes, one vacuum.

All American Mohawk Corporation

LYRIC RADIO

Now establishes a
new high standard
of perfection ... and

Opens wide the doors
to joys you have
missed in radio.

Here is the greatest advancement ever scored in the field of radio—the exact duplication of all sound, all tones. You can't realize what a remarkable improvement has been made in tone quality until your own ears have registered the delicate gradation of sound in the new All American Mohawk Corporation Lyric Radio. The elimination of all that is suggestive of an artificial element, not voices keyed with mechanical harshness, but sound, *melody* in its real value—just as you would hear it within speaking distance.

There is beauty of cabinet design and finish as gratifying as their mechanical excellence. A wide variety of models to suit every requirement as well as Phonograph and Radio combinations.

Prices range from

\$92.50 to \$425 Less Tubes

NEXT CHRISTMAS You Will Be Glad If
You Purchased an All American Mohawk
Corporation Lyric Radio This Christmas

Select Your Radio for Christmas
From New York's Finest Music Store

Better Terms—Better Service—
Better Delivery

OPEN
EVENINGS
UNTIL
10
O'CLOCK

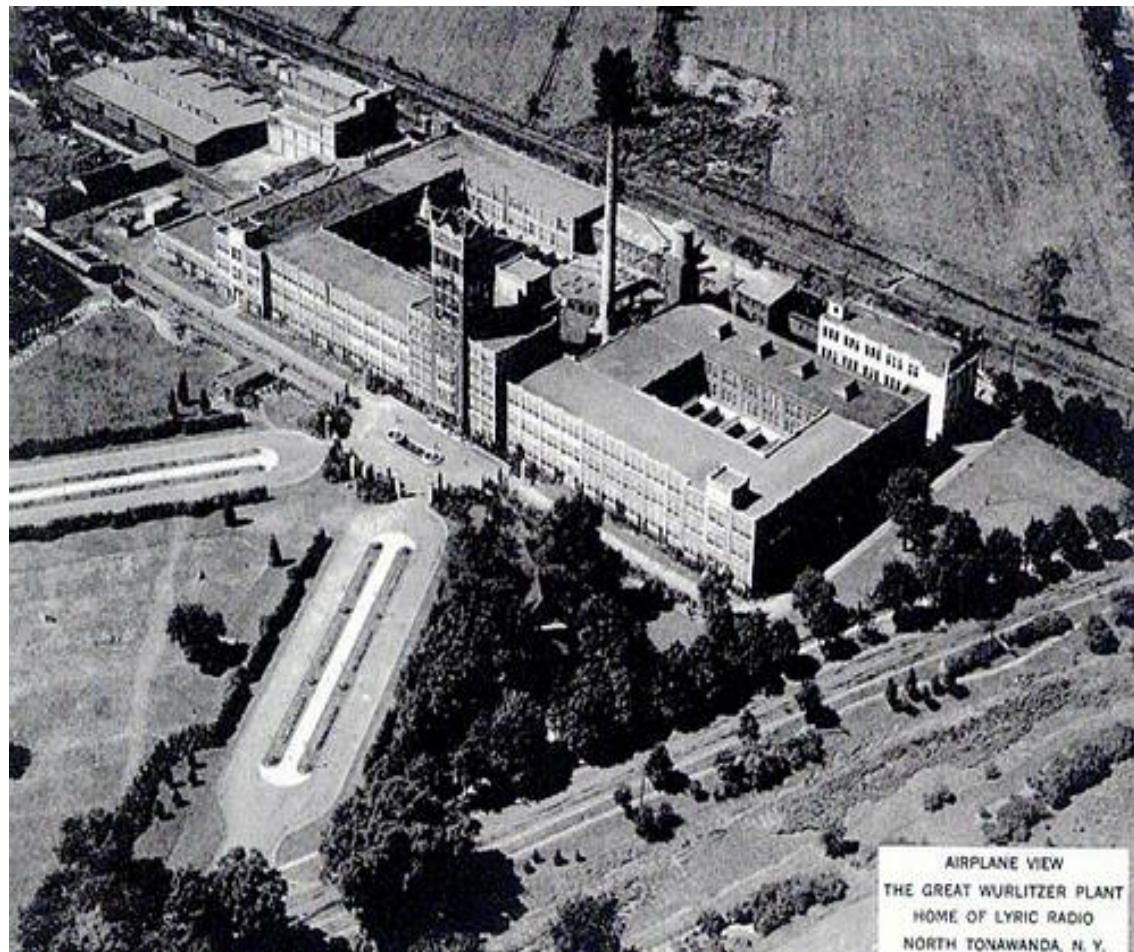
WURLITZER

120 West 42nd Street Between Broadway
and Sixth Avenue

Please send me catalogue literature
from the following Lyric Radio
models: ☐ Model 22 ☐ Model 23
☐ Model 24 ☐ Model 25
Name address



1929



AIRPLANE VIEW
THE GREAT WURLITZER PLANT
HOME OF LYRIC RADIO
NORTH TONAWANDA, N. Y.

1933

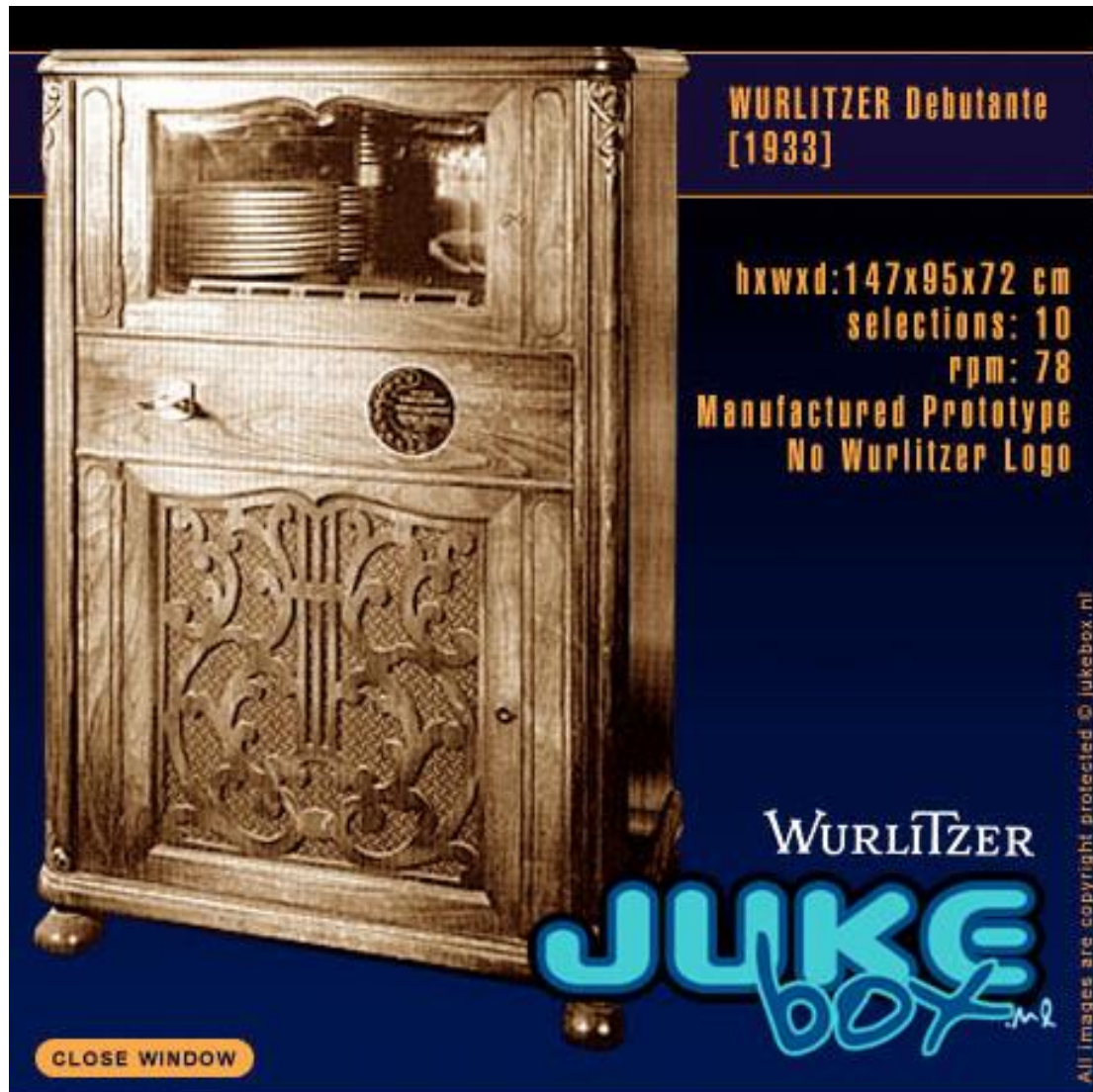
Early Wurlitzer bought the Simplex record changer from Homer Capehart and brought Homer Capehart to Wurlitzer.

Capehart Co. was formed in 1927 was taken over by Farnsworth in 1939.

Early models hold 10 records (78 rpm), later hold 24 records and play only one side.

Wood gets replaced with metal and plastic with lights and bubbles.

1933



P-10



1935

End of production of the nickelodeon pianos
Wurlitzer introduces the spinet piano



1940's

1942 - Barrel organ production ends

1943 – Mighty Wurlitzer organ production ends at 2,243, the most made by one maker of about 7,000 made in U.S.

1949 – Rudolph Wurlitzer Jr had started fine and rare violin collection, his son Rembert starts fine violin division in 1938 and leaves Wurlitzer in 1949 to start Rembert Wurlitzer Co specializing in fine violins and bows until his death in 1963.

1950's

1950 – Seeberg introduces new model that uses the 45 rpm record, hold 50 records, or 100 songs, captures much of the jukebox market.

1955 – Electric piano is introduced, made until 1982.

1956 – Wurlitzer attempts to regain market with the 200 model, holds 50 45 rpm records. Also brings out the Nostalgia model 1050 in 1971.



1960's

1966 – Distributes electric guitars by Holman-Woodell Co., but discontinued in 1967

1967 – Wurlitzer branded guitars by Welson in Italy until 1969

1970's

1973 – Jukebox line sold to German division of Wurlitzer, in production until 2013, uses CDs.

1973 – North Tonawanda plant closed.

1980's & 1990's

1988 – Baldwin Piano of Cincinnati buys Wurlitzer piano.

1996 – Gibson Guitar buys Baldwin

2006 – Gibson Guitar buys Deutsche Wurlitzer (the jukebox business), production ends 2013.
Parts are still being sold.









