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G. E. MATTHEWS

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DEMONSTRATION OF EARLY MOTION PICTURES AND HISTORICAL TELEGRAPHONE AT THE HOLLYWOOD CONVENTION*

During the Spring, 1931, Meeting at Hollywood, Calif., motion pictures, taken thirty-four years ago by Mr. Oscar B. Depue, of Chicago, were projected. In addition to these, a sound picture was projected which showed Mr. Depue addressing the meeting, and in which were included views of the telegraphone illustrated below.

The words by Mr. Depue, addressed to the Society from the screen, were as follows:

"You have just seen motion pictures that I made thirty-four years ago. They are reduction prints made from 60-mm. negative. The very first one that I made was in front of St. Peters in Rome, the grandest of all cathedrals; with the Vatican, the fountains, and the goats in the background; then the gondolas, in Venice, in front of the Piazzetta on the Grand Canal; later, the Plaza in front of the beautiful Milan Cathedral, and the Place de la Concord at the entrance of the Champs-Elysees. These were made over a third of a century ago. Now I want to take you back a quarter of a century and give you a few examples of early sound recording.

* A contribution to the Historical Committee Report. Presented at the Spring, 1931, Meeting at Hollywood, Calif.

"It was while touring Europe with Burton Holmes in 1907 that I first learned about the Poulsen telegraphone, a marvelous little instrument that recorded sound magnetically on a fine wire. I was fascinated with the thought of recording the voice electrically; whereupon I went to Copenhagen and purchased this early model telegraphone. It is machine number 41.

"On the steamer coming home I had it set up in my cabin, and passengers hearing about it used to make short records and were delighted to hear their own voices reproduced through the head-phones.

"Among the passengers was the late James Powers, the Irish comedian. Mr. Powers gave several selections and at the end of one of them gave the date of the recording.

"When I reached my home I could not operate the instrument as my home was

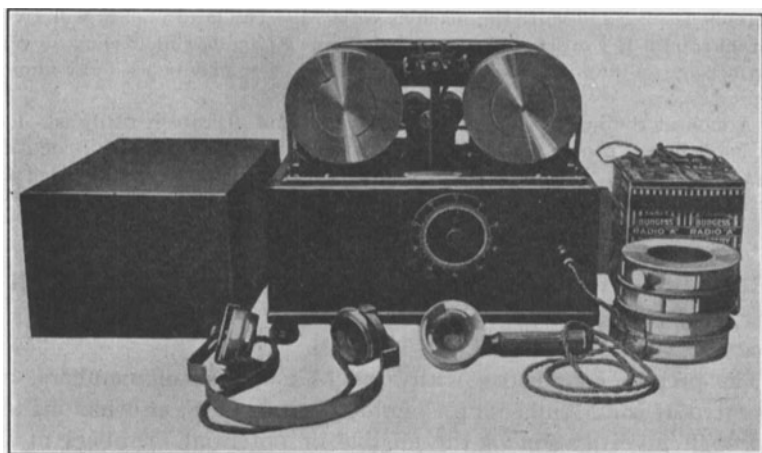


FIG. 1. Mr. Depue's Poulsen telegraphone used for magnetically recording sound on wires in 1907.

not wired with direct current and so the machine has been falling to pieces during these years while lying in my den.

"Mr. Walter Hotz, sound engineer for the Industrial Division of the Burton Holmes Lectures, told me one day that he thought he could trace out the broken circuits of the machine and get it to operate, and that if anything remained of the records he probably could amplify it and reproduce it on film. Thanks to his patience in repairing the machine and in untangling some of the awful messes that the wire reels go into, we have been able to reproduce for you, with ample volume for an audience to hear, those old records. I cannot detect any appreciable loss of characteristics and volume during these 24 years of repose.

"I am sorry circumstances prevented me from attending the convention in person. I should like very much to hear the able papers and discussions and I should like to ask that you consider Chicago for the Fall Convention.

"Now, Mr. Chairman and fellow members of the Society, as usual, I have talked too long and I know you are waiting to hear Mr. Powers give you 'Sally, in Our Alley.'"

The sounds recorded magnetically by the telegraphone, in 1907, to which Mr. Depue referred in his talk, were reproduced from film for the audience to hear. Mr. Depue's talk, reproduced from the continuation the film, was as follows:

"Perhaps you would like to see the telegraphone in operation. To make a recording you touch the forward button; then you plug in the microphone and talk into it at rather close range. Now, to reproduce, you push the stop button and then the 'backward' button, rewinding as far as you wish. Now, remove the microphone plug and start the machine forward. The head-phones will give a reproduction. If you should leave the microphone plug in while reeling forward, any message on the wire would be wiped off. The wire may be used any number of times.

"A look at the inside shows how complicated and delicate it really is. I do not know how it can be used in the industry unless, possibly, for play-backs for a quick check up. But I think this form of machine is far too complicated and the wire too delicate and subject to breakage and tangling to be practical."

REPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTION COMMITTEE*

The present committee, with a slight variation of members, has operated as the Membership Committee since 1928, and has made a thorough investigation of the eligible or potential members in the motion picture engineering field. In 1930 it undertook the work of increasing the number of non-member subscribers to our JOURNAL, and thus became the Membership and Subscription Committee.

The Committee believes that the present entrance fees and dues, as well as the JOURNAL subscription rates, are entirely too high compared with the charges of other societies and the cost of subscriptions for their technical publications. As a result of our high rate of dues, a large number of eligible younger workers are being kept out of the Society. These must resort to reading JOURNALS borrowed from friends, or lack the publications.

As the object of this Society is the dissemination of scientific information, and as the Society has already a number of substantial sustaining members among the manufacturers and producers, we

* Presented at the Spring, 1931, Meeting at Hollywood, Calif.