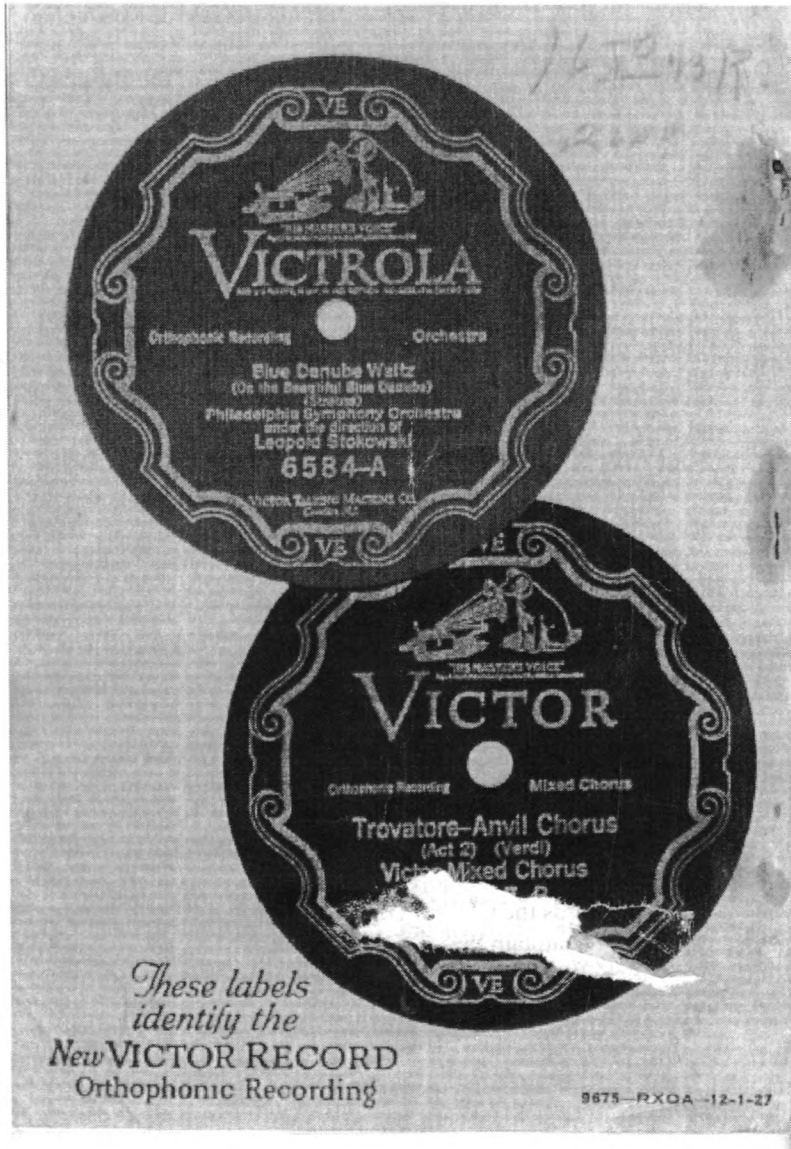


G&T GAZETTE

Established 1995. Incorporating the *Edison Echo*

January/February/ March

2010



Illustrations: Front & Back Cover see the article pages 6-7.

EDITORIAL

A lot of things have happened since our last meeting for the year at John & Jacqie Sutcliffe's place at Raumati. At this meeting Peter Fry showed me a letter he'd received from Hugh & Beverly Price concerning the fate of a collection of Blue Amberol cylindrical recordings. I responded to this at Peter's request and along with the Price letter this is re-printed in this issue of the Gazette. Sadly, when my letter was received, Hugh had been admitted to the Mary Potter Hospice where he passed away on the 28th of December. Shortly before this Beverly had rung me and mentioned that they had received a positive response about the cylinders from a source which she did not disclose. In keeping with this event and its sad ending, I have written an obituary for Hugh. Although not directly associated with us in any form or fashion, he was an Edison enthusiast.

As well I approach a topic in this issue of the *Gazette* which to my knowledge no one from our group has ever ventured before in written or open discussion. That is to express concerns about the fate of our record collections and what steps we might take to see them saved for posterity. This is a hot potato in every sense of the word and one which I hope will not cause disorder or distress in our happy band! None the less, it is a key issue and one which we should not put into the 'too hard basket' without some thoughts being aired on the issue. So to set the ball rolling, I've put down some thoughts on this matter and I hope it leads to a lively debate amongst ourselves.

Finally, I've compiled some information and researched a piece regarding a gramophone which I drew attention to at John's place last December. This was the machine he used to present some of his older 78s in his programme. This was of course his Model 202 HMV gramophone. In this particular context those who know me will verify that I have always been a believer in playing records (where possible) on contemporary equipment which was in use when the records we collect were issued. I know this may draw anguish from some who aren't interested in acoustic gramophones, especially if their collection leans predominantly towards the CD era. However, it would be nice to think that those who go to pains to maintain these relics from the past do get our support as a group. We do after all, give lip service to the industry regarding recordings, so why don't we go the whole hog!

Bill Main

THE HUGH & BEVERLY PRICE COLLECTION

24 Glasgow Street
Kelburn, Wellington, 6012
10 November 2009

Peter Fry,
Radio New Zealand.
PO Box 123. Wellington

Dear Archivist,

**Memorandum from Hugh and Beverley Price
for archivists and others who are interested in the early history of recorded sound**

We have a large collection (over 800) Edison Blue Amberol Cylinder Records, some donated, but mostly bought from NZ second-hand shops. The retail price in Australia is now, on average, A\$18 per cylinder, so a collection of 800 is a valuable resource. We wish to donate the cylinders to an archive where they will be cared for, and hope that some of the records may one day be reproduced by modern technology.

Edison Blue Amberol Cylinders (made of celluloid with plaster cores) were produced from 1912 to 1929. The Price collection does not include the earlier wax cylinders, which were discontinued in 1912. The collection includes a couple of dozen Edison cylinders that are not in the catalogue described in the next paragraph.

The key to the organisation of the collection is a bound photocopy of an old typed catalogue, *Blue Amberol Cylinders*, compiled by Sydney H. Carter in Bournemouth. Each cylinder in the Price Collection is marked in this catalogue with a P. Before Te Papa was built, Hugh catalogued the collection held by the National Museum of New Zealand, then at Mt Cook, Wellington, and each cylinder in the Museum's collection is marked in the same catalogue with an M.

The Price cylinders are stored at our home in Kelburn. together with an Edison phonograph in working order. The phonograph is an Edison Amberola, a table model in an oak case, bought by Hugh's father, Frederick Llewellyn Price, in about 1929 and still in good working order, thanks to the skills of Brian Blackford of the Winder-Uppers Club.

Thomas Edison claimed (rather extravagantly) that Blue Amberol cylinders could be played 3000 times without showing any wear! Now that they are nearly a century old there are inevitable variations in quality, but some recordings are still in excellent condition. It is impossible to judge recordings from the condition of the grubby cylinder boxes, which have been swapped around, and are frail - often showing damage from dirt, fading, dampness and insect attack. Most owners failed to keep the right lids on these interchangeable boxes - today the only way to find out what is in the boxes is to read the titles and numbers stamped on the cylinder rims. The sound quality can be assessed only by listening to each recording.

Edison Blue Amberol Cylinders catered for the popular taste of the time, which ranged widely: popular love songs (Me and My Gal; K-K-K Katy; Who Were You with Last Night?); American numbers (Indiana; Hawaiian Hula Medley; Musical Sam from Alabam'); music produced for dancing (Moonlight and Roses - fox-trot; Jolly Fellows -

THE HUGH & BEVERLY PRICE COLLECTION

waltz; Dancing Down in Dixieland); songs from WWI (Pack up your Troubles in your Old Kit Bag,- There's a Long, Long Trail a- Winding; Tipperary); hymns and carols (Abide with Me; The First Noel); traditional airs and folk songs (Robin Adair; Annie Laurie; Come Back to Erin); famous and powerful voices (Peter Dawson - Hearts of Oak; Toreador song), popular music hall artists (Harry Lauder - Roamin' in the Gloamin', I Love a Lassie); humour (Desperate DesmonDrama, The Pussy Cat Rag : recitations and readings (The Night Before Christmas, The Awakening of, Scrooge); national anthems (God Save the King, The Star Spangled Banner); military marches Semper Fideles, National Emblem March, King Cotton); Gilbert and Sullivan (Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes, Pin afore Airs); short classical pieces (Blue Danube - Strauss; Traumerei- Schumann; Merry Widow - Lchar; Marche Slav - Tchaikovsky),- Handel's Messiah (Comfort Ye My People; Every Valley Shall Be Exalted); highlights from opera (Anvil Chorus -Verdi; William Tell Overture - Rossini; Tannhauser March Wagner); New Zealand interest (Invercargill; New Zealand March - Lithgow) ...

The cylinder numbers shown below indicate the markets in which the Amberols were first released. The Prices own over 600 different titles, and have some duplicates. with examples from all the series listed below. The numbers in brackets show how many Edison produced:

1501 - 5719 American series (4219 cylinders - by far the largest series)
22,535 - 22,539 Hawaiian series (5)
22,540 - 22,544 Australian series (5)
23,001 - 23,403 British series (403) (Total number produced = 5343)
26,001 - 26,215 German series (215)
27,001 -27,219 French series (219)
28,101 - 28,290 Concert and Grand Opera Series (190)
29,001 -29,077 Royal Purple Amberol series (77)
A-K Special Attachment series. (10)

Within each series there are no logical groupings - classical, humour, spoken voice, popular music hall and religious music follow each other randomly. in order of production. At a rough estimate the Price Collection comprises about 11 % of the titles in the series listed above. All were produced 1912 - 1929, though old stock continued to be sold in New Zealand for a few years after production stopped in the Great Depression.

The conditions for accepting this collection are these:

- 1) The recipient agrees to keep the cylinders as a heritage collection - a donated archive that will not be resold (but which could be added to).
- 2) The recipient agrees to make copies of records in the collection available to all who want them (at cost) for use in radio, CDs, tapes, TV, film and so on.
- 3)The recipient agrees to acknowledge the collection as the Price Family Collection.

Yours sincerely,
Hugh and Beverley Price

THE HUGH & BEVERLY PRICE COLLECTION

14 December 2009

Hugh & Beverley Price
24 Glasgow Street
Kelburn
Wellington 6012

Dear Hugh & Beverly

By virtue of my senior position as a member of the Scratchy Record Group (SRG), I have taken it upon myself to answer a letter which you sent to one of our members - Peter Fry - regarding the fate of a collection of Edison Blue Amberol Cylinders which you have and would like to place in good hands. While I have no quick solution which I can offer without having consulted our group, I would like you to know that once it is informed of your intention, they will support you to find a permanent home for this important sound archive.

In this respect, I request your permission to reprint an edited version of your letter in the first issue for 2010 of our publication called the G&T Gazette (sample copies enclosed). The SRC was formed in 1958 and celebrated its 50th anniversary in grand style last year with a special luncheon and gathering. At this function, we issued a special celebratory CD, a copy of which I also enclose with this letter.

Once I have published your letter in our journal, I am sure a small deputation would like to meet with you to discuss a strategy which will see the way clear to establish this archive in a manner which will meet your requirements.

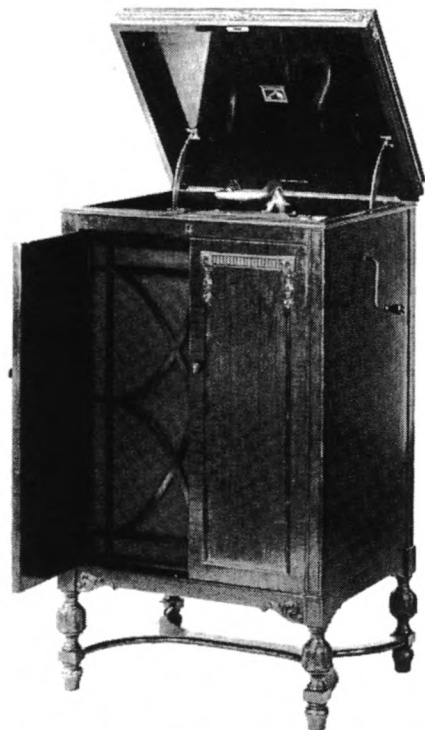
I might add in conclusion, that I can assure you one of the main planks SRG members will endorse in your list of three conditions will be to add items from their collections which we consider to be of great historical interest, especially sound recordings with a New Zealand origin and connection.

Yours sincerely

William (Bill) Main

Extract from "The Fabulous Phonograph," by Roland Gelatt.

"At Camden the atmosphere shivered with daring plans. In May 1925 an entente was reached between Victor and R.C.A. allowing for the incorporation of Radiolas into the new line of Victrolas coming that autumn. Meanwhile production in the Camden factories had all but halted; almost the entire plant was in process of retooling for an entirely new kind of instrument. For along with electrical recording Victor had also bought manufacturing rights to the exponential-horn phonograph developed by Bell Laboratories. Victor dealers were alerted to expect something wonderful in the autumn; at the same time they were urged to clear out stocks of old-style Victrolas at no matter what sacrifice. Then began the biggest advertising campaign in Victor history. The day of unveiling the new instrument, to be called the Orthophonic Victrola, was set for 2nd November. It was dubbed Victor Day. A deluge of advertising informed America of the miracle that Victor dealers were preparing to demonstrate, 'a musical instrument which in performance and in construction is unlike, and vastly superior to, anything the world has ever known'. Old John Philip Sousa, who had given Victor its first important testimonial in 1901, obliged again with another terse comment. 'Gentlemen,' he was quoted as saying, 'that's a band.' At a banquet for the phonograph trade held in New York's old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, electrical recordings and the Orthophonic Victrola were demonstrated by Walter Clark, the Victor executive who had led the fight for them within the company and who had taken charge of Victor's recording policy. Victor's dealers were hugely impressed with the new Victrola and the new records. Their enthusiasm infected the stock market, where Victor shares in mid-October climbed to 117; earlier in the year they had dropped as low as 65. Approximately \$6,000,000 was spent by Victor that year in launching its new line of Victrolas. It represented a last-ditch gamble. Everything the company had was thrown into this effort; Victor's surplus at the end of 1925 was down to \$122,998, where only a few years earlier it had been \$23,000,000. But the gamble paid off America flocked to the dealers on Victor Day and began buying Victrolas again. Within a week the Victor company had pocketed orders for \$20,000,000 worth of instruments."



Above: Most expensive of the range of Re-entrant horn HMVs introduced in 1927 was the Model 203, priced at £75 and over 4 feet (238 cm) high when closed. Its mahogany cabinet was the only difference from the cheaper oak Model 202. Re-entrant horn machines continue to be highly sought after by modern collectors.

Roland Gelatt in the 1956 English Edition of The Fabulous Phonograph gives a very concise and clear description of the circumstances which led up to the release of Orthophonic machines onto the American market in 1925. HMV a year or so later released their version of the American phonograph which they called the Re-entrant Exponential Gramophone, claiming the system was devised from a scientific principle known as MATCHED IMPEDENCE. Unlike Victor who incorporated the word Orthophonic on their record label design, HMV did nothing to link their records to an electrical recording system.

Ed.

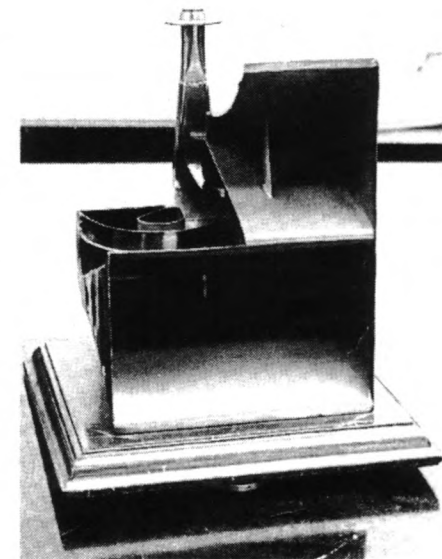


Left: Cellulose polishing in HMV's cabinet factory at Hayes, Middlesex, about 1927. All cabinet HMVs were comparatively expensive and hand finishing was the norm for many years.

Below right: Cutaway model of a Re-entrant horn, used in such HMVs as the 203 (shown overleaf), looking into the horn from the front to show its complex construction. The horns were made of terneplate (lead-plated steel.)

British version of the 'Orthophonic Victrola' was available, Victor's sister HMV introducing the electric records with a new, but less sophisticated, design of internal folded horn.

Older-style gramophones were still available, HMV even launching a new open-horn model, the 32 (HMV's last) in 1927. It cost just £9, compared with over £70 for the new 'Re-entrant' horn models. The true enthusiast could buy uncompromising 'Handmade Gramophones' from the British maker E. M. Ginn, under the name of 'EMG' and later 'Expert'. These had external horns of exponential taper, the diameters of whose mouths were often as large as 33½ inches (85 cm)! Ginn's instruments were made from the late 1920s until the 1940s. HMV's rivals boasted scientific-sounding names for their new internal-horn instruments such as Columbia's 'Viva Tonal' and Lockwood's 'Micro-Perophone Chromogram'.



This page has been extracted from the Shire Album "Old Gramophones" by Ben Bergonzi.

HUGH CHARLES LLEWELLYN PRICE

MNZM, MA, D LITT (HONORIS CAUSA)

Information extracted from Reed's Who's who in New Zealand 12th edition.

Born Wellington, 13 July 1929, died 28 February 2009, son of Frederick Llewellyn Price and Elsie (nee Aller); married Beverley Joan Randell, daughter of W H Randell, 1960; one daughter. Educated Hadlow Prep School, Masterton; Wairarapa College; Victoria University, MA 1953; Wellington Teachers College, Diploma of Teaching 1952; Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, London, London School of Printing, Graphic Arts, 1955-56. Worked as Editor, Typographer, Designer for several London book publishers, including Methuens, University of London Press, BBC Publications, 1954-57; Manager, Modern Books, Wellington, a co-op bookshop, and See, Wellington Co-op Book Society Ltd, 1957-60; Art Editor, School Publications, Department of Education, Wellington, 1960-63; Foundation Manager, Sydney University Press 1963-68; Managing Director, Price Milburn & Co Ltd, book publishers, also Managing Director, Kea Press Ltd, 1968-84 (rtd); Member, committee controlling Victoria University Press, 1968-88; Mem-

ber Society of Industrial Artists, 1975-; Executive Member, NZ Book Council, 1976-87; Member, PEN, 1984-; Honorary Publication Consultant, Alexander Turnbull Library. Leader, winning Parliamentary Shield debating team, Wellington, 1962; Chairman, Campaign for Abolition of Death Penalty, 1961; Executive Member, NZ Council for Civil Liberties, 1970-; Trustee, Africa Information Centre 1976-; Publications: *Civil Liberties in a Changing New Zealand* (co-author) 1985; *Reinterpreting the Educational Past* (co-author), 1987; *Old Masterton in Colour*, 2003; *The Truth about the Little Red Hen*, 2003; *Old Wellington in Colour* (co-author) 2008; *Wellington at Work in the 1890s* (co-author) 2008; numerous articles, book reviews etc in *Here and Now* (Auckland), *The Bookseller* (London), *Political Science* (Wellington), *Scholarly Publishing* (Toronto), *NZ Bookseller and Publisher* (Auckland), *NZ Listener*. Recreations: carpentry, collecting cylinder phonograph records, typography, book design.



Hugh Price seated at his publishers premises in Wellington.

of course the NZ Postcard Society which we both joined in the late 1990s. We'd often bump into one another at collectors fairs in the Hutt Valley, seated in front of dealers tables that were groaning under the weight of shoe boxes of postcards. His interest in postcards along with that of his wife Beverly, was centred on coloured cards featuring Masterton and Wellington. He would occasionally ring me over an article I'd written for the Society's Journal *The Postcard Pillar* and other matters we held in common like the wonderful way Wellington was represented on postcards.

As a result of our mutual interests we visited one another's homes and pored over publishing projects that we always seemed to have in mind. His help with my book on Joseph Zachariah was one I shall never forget even though I was never able to accommodate his suggestion to increase the point size of the body text! On that we were at some odds for space reasons, but apart from that, we seemed to enjoy one another's company greatly. I will never forget one occasion when I was given a guided tour of his Glasgow street carpentry modifications. Hugh was of slender build and when he ascended a stair case he'd put in to gain access to a loft for his files and documents he'd gathered over the years, I was at a distinct physical disadvantage when it came to climbing and turning to locate the next space to put my foot!

I shall miss his counsel and company.

Bill Main

A Personal Memoir.

I first got to know Hugh Price from a distance as the manager of Modern Books in Manners Street in the mid to late 1950s when I used to pop into his shop to see the range of books which differed greatly from other retail outlets in Wellington. Although I never got into conversation with him about his collection of Edison Blue Amberol cylinder recordings, we both knew of one another's interests in record collecting through associates of the organisations we both belonged to; he as a member of the Winder-uppers while I was a Scratchy Record enthusiast. The main bond between us for nearly a decade was of

COLLECTORS I HAVE KNOWN

(CHAPTER FIVE)

In my last article, I mentioned one or two lesser known collecting friends before wandering off the beaten track a bit by telling you about the time I briefly managed a coffee bar in Newtown called the Colorado. In conclusion I promised to put a few thoughts down on what we should do with our collections when old father time catches up with us. Better known to some as a **KICKING THE BUCKET** list. If you don't like my sub-heading, then read no further!

My personal experiences with this ticklish problem are based upon my own experiences as collecting friends died and left me to selling off their records. Figuring strongly in this several years ago were the collections of Ray Hedges and Don Cameron, instances I will draw upon as I attempt to explain certain points along the way. But before I launch forth on this subject, let me state a few facts which are obvious but seldom seem to be taken seriously with us in New Zealand. Here I am referring to selling your collection to overseas interests.

It's not the first time my attention has been drawn to this as a possibility no matter the size or quality of the collection. Its only drawback is of course that those responsible for clearing up an estate don't want to be bothered with a term which I think describes the process perfectly 'cherry picking'. Key items - no problem, they will sell like hot cakes to overseas interests who are prepared to pay top prices - something which is still in its infancy here in New Zealand. But what do you do with the left

overs? Side stepping this for a moment, I think there is considerable merit in exploring this alternative despite the doom and gloom merchants giving it a low priority. After all I read of collections in other countries being sold in this manner. So I don't think our isolation has anything to do with it.

Then there is the problem of making it accessible for inspection. Failing that, a catalogue needs to be produced. This can take a lot of time. However, it can also serve as a permanent testimony to the collector who put the collection together in the first place, a reference work to be studied long after the collection has been dispersed.

By-passing this procedure is gifting or donating your collection to specified individuals or organisations leaving clear instructions on who and what has operated fairly well for us in the past as we are a small group and easy to reach when it comes to transferring goods. Nowadays beneficiaries might be less inclined to accept this gifting situation as a viable alternative because of high costs associated with burial charges etc.

Another factor which doesn't really apply but used to be high on some individuals 'bucket list' was donating the collection to a library or museum. While one can not completely cancel this out of contention, the chances of a donation a collection of recordings to a national institution is very unlikely unless there are some very signifi-

cant feature which makes it desirable.

Having dealt with two collections in recent years, here are a few pointers which I think might prepare you for the worst.

Having got Ray's collection out of his house and set up so people could inspect it, was a labour of love in every sense of the word. When the great day arrived a number of our group turned up and began to sort through the piles on tables which I'd set up in our garage. Admittedly, it wasn't the best way of encouraging a sale. However some bought and others didn't. My greatest disappointment was the fact that some having given up their time to attend virtually left empty handed! Why they came at all is a mystery to me! This may have been because they couldn't find anything to interest them or they weren't prepared to do the time consuming sorting it required - I don't know!

Lesson number one.

Be organised. Sort the records out alphabetically if you can by artist name so your customers can go directly to the records that interest them.

Lesson number two.

If getting rid of your collection be flexible with your pricing. Don't specify a specific sum per record. Look at a customers selections and give a figure. Be prepared to negotiate.

A couple of years ago, I was invited to look through Don Cameron's records by his widow. She had alerted auctioneers who were calling a day or two after I turned up on the scene. With the help of Des, we went through what we could see and both arranged to buy from her on the

spot. I don't know what eventuated when the residue got to the auction rooms but I anticipate it wouldn't have made much difference to his widow. But I'm pretty sure the unit price we offered would have been considerably higher than the auction room bids.

There is one other possibility I would like to cite and its one which I might entertain in the fullness of time. This is to make a catalogue and put a price on every item. To begin with, sell off as much as you can from this list in the knowledge that you will be left with a lot of run of the mill items which you might advertise. Then there are the charity shops!

Don't take this to heart - after all this is where they probably came from in the first place! This procedure is called blind justice!

Postscript:

Some years after I'd begun to take an interest in acquiring records for my collection from overseas dealers and collectors, I was surprised to play host to Henry and Alice Hirsch from New York. They came to New Zealand on a visit combining a bit of business with pleasure. Besides myself, they called in on Dennis Brew in Auckland and were delighted to meet up with Michael Woolf and me in Wellington.

While it's a remote possibility to think of this happening today, I wonder if Kurt Nauck or Larry Holdridge would contemplate a trip down our way! It would be nice to host them and perhaps arrange for them to give a talk to our group! Closer to home, I'm sure some of our Aussie brethren might hop a plane to inspect the goods!

Facts you should know!

YOU can play the new Victor Orthophonic Records on old style Victrolas. But for ideal results they must be played on the new Orthophonic Victrola or Electrola, manufactured by the Victor Talking Machine Company.

The Orthophonic Victrola and Orthophonic Victor Records are made for one another. And in conjunction, they represent an advance in recorded music which is difficult to believe until you have heard them together.

With the old style Victrola and acoustical recording, about the lowest musical note you could hear was the middle C of the soprano, the lowest note the usual soprano voice can sing comfortably. Instruments like the double-bass disappeared from orchestras because all were ambitious to make records, and they found it necessary to discard the deep-toned instruments, which would not reproduce fully. Some manufacturers gave up trying to record these instruments.

The Victor Company persisted. The Orthophonic principle opened the gates, and we found we could record the lowest, and just as important, the highest tones of music, and reproduce them. The new Orthophonic Victrola and Orthophonic Victor Records in combination now give you your music with a realism long declared impossible.

Orthophonic Victrolas cover a range of prices to suit any purse. Some embodying the Orthophonic principle may be had for as little as \$75 list price. Orthophonic Victrolas and Electrolas are offered in combination with the famous Radiola. You should see and hear what you get in the new Combination Instruments for a modest sum.

The Orthophonic Victor Records are so far above anything else, that if you are playing them only on an old style Victrola it will surprise you to hear them on a modern one.

Reprinted from a 1927 Victor Record Catalogue