

SHORT HISTORY OF

THORDARSON ELECTRIC MFG. CO.

by PETER KAILUS

Background:

--Thordarson Electric Co. founded in Chicago, Ill., 1895

--Became a division of Burgess Battery Company in 1936.

--Became a division of Maquire Industries, Inc. in 1940.

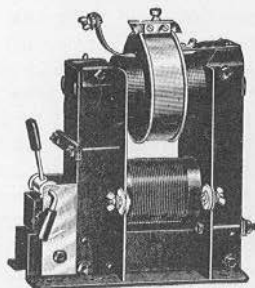
--Became Thordarson-Meissner (Division of Components Corp.)

The Thordarson Electric Manufacturing Co. was founded in 1895 by Chester H. Thordarson, originally a native of Iceland. A manufacturer of electrical goods, it specialized in amateur equipment in the early days with emphasis on high voltage transformers used in spark transmitters. Old time amateur well remember the Thordarson line which was available from 1/4 to several kilowatts with voltages over 25,000 volts.

or at the University of Wisconsin (1896) he acquired some equipment for the Chemical Engineering building from a newly formed company bearing the name "C. H. Thordarson". In time the two met and a lifelong friendship began.

Forty years later (1936) the Thordarson Company was in desperate financial trouble with numerous business debts. Creditors were preparing to put through a re-organization order by which Thordarson would be eliminated. He would also lose his valuable electrical library which had been mortgaged.

After a lengthy research by Burgess, a plan was worked out whereby the Burgess Battery Company would finance the retirement of outstanding indebtedness and become owner of



Thordarson Type R Transformer

For use on 108 to 115-volt 60-cycle alternating current. Provided with adjustable magnetic leakage gap which controls primary input, giving a wide range of amperage and permitting easy adjustment. No impedance or choke coil necessary in primary circuit. This transformer has some wonderful long distance records and has given general satisfaction to amateurs for years. Works best when used with rotary spark gap producing about 800 sparks per second. Shipping weights, 35 and 55 pounds.

Article Number	K.V.A.	Amperage	Sec. Volt	Price
563 J 630	1 1/2	1 to 6	10,000	\$21.00
563 J 632	1	2 1/2 to 14	25,000	38.00

Thordarson Type RS Transformer

This type differs from the well known model shown above except in that it does not have the adjustable magnetic shunt. All other features of sturdy, compact construction and correct electrical characteristics are the same. For use on 105 to 120-volt 60-cycle alternating current.

Article Number	K.V.A.	Sec. Volts	Shipping Weight	Price
563 J 633	1/4	8,000	15 pounds	\$10.00
563 J 635	1	25,000	35 pounds	25.00

In addition to the spark transformer, the company made oscillation transformers and rotary gaps. The early transformers used a frame of molded cast or malleable iron. Later models used a frame of pressed steel to reduce cost. An outstanding feature on some models was the magnetic shunt control which protected the transformer from undue surges.

Chester Thordarson had an interesting life. As early as 1896 his path crossed that of Charles Burgess (later of Burgess battery fame). When Burgess was an E.E. Instruct-

Common stock. Thordarson would become owner of Preferred stock and President of the Company. The plan saved the company and in time he recovered his valuable library.

Following WWI the company expanded to a full line of power and audio transformers, choke coils and other radio items. The name became prominent in radio for the next 30 years and contributed much during WWII.

A sidelight to Chester Thordarson's life was his interest in Rock Island located in Lake Michigan

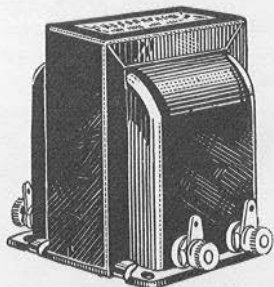
near Green Bay, Wisconsin. He purchased the 900 acre island in 1914 with visions of creating an Icelandic kingdom of his own, similar to the island he had known as a child.

His most important legacy to the island was a huge stone boat house which has become known as Viking Hall and at one time housed his valuable historical electrical library and one of the largest collections of Icelandic literature in the world.

Thordarson had become a book collector in early life and in 1941 moved his huge collection to Rock Island where the books were placed in tall cases around the walls of the great hall.

Chester Thordarson died in 1945 leaving to his heirs the history-laden island.

In time the magnificent library was purchased by and moved to safety by the University of Wisconsin (1964). Rock Island was purchased by the State of Wisconsin in 1964 and is presently known as Rock Island State Park.



THORDARSON R-300 AUDIO TRANSFORMER

SUPREME in musical performance, the new Thordarson R-300 Audio Transformer brings a greater realism to radio reproduction. Introducing a new core material, "DX-Metal" (a product of the Thordarson Laboratory), the amplification range has been extended still further into the lower register, so that even the deepest tones now may be reproduced with amazing fidelity.

THORDARSON ELECTRIC MANUFACTURING CO.
Transformer Specialists Since 1893
WORLD'S OLDEST AND LARGEST EXCLUSIVE TRANSFORMER MAKERS
Huron and Kingsbury Streets — Chicago, Ill. U.S.A.



Power Supply Transformers



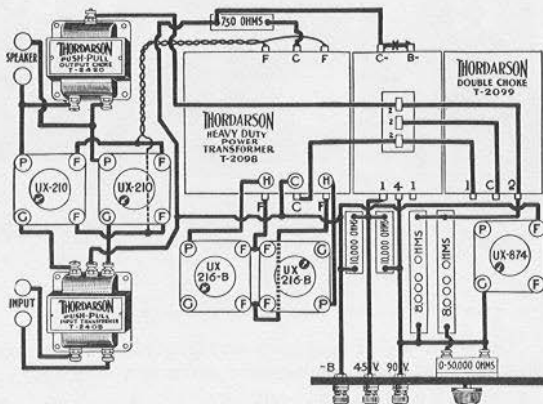
Double Choke Units



Power Compacts



Speaker Coupling Transformers



Audio amplifier and power supply of the mid 20's. The company also manufactured a line of amateur transmitters in the late 1930's.

PICKERILL COLLECTION
given to

BROADCAST PIONEERS LIBRARY

Much of the soft-ware (books, catalogs, photos, etc.) remaining in the Pickerill estate has been given to the Broadcast Pioneers Library in Washington, D. C. by his cousin Eugene Baker.

"Pick" was a Honorary Member of AWA, pioneer wireless operator and aviator. The Association made a slide/tape show of his career several years ago before his death.

CORRECTION: #5 slide in AWA Museum slide show is mounted in reverse. Turn slide over so contents of slide will match tape commentary.