

Archeophone Archives



Edison Blue Amberol Records Domestic Popular Series *Vol. 5 (1621–1650)*

THE EDISON PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY

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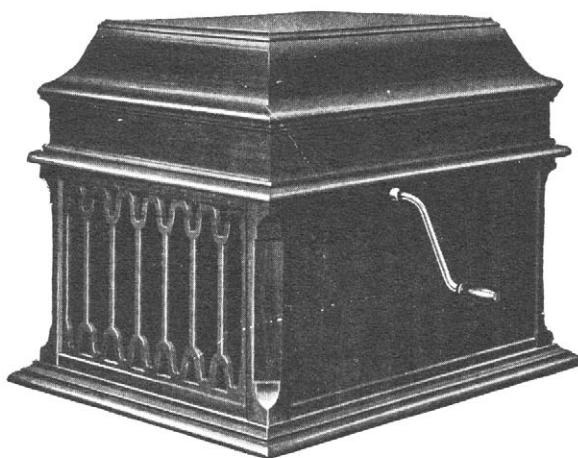
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Volume 11

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Number 3

AMBEROLA V



WE place this new member of the Amberola family next to our highest priced instruments. It represents the mature result of two years' study in acoustics to produce a *medium priced Phonograph with concealed horn*.

In appearance and workmanship it is in every respect worthy of its distinction as an Amberola. We feel particularly proud of it, and believe it will find a very welcome reception into drawing-rooms of the most cultured families, especially where space is not available for one of our full cabinet Amberolas.

Its handsome design is not the result of chance, but of discriminating taste in the selection of a case that would be

pleasing in its proportions and chaste and refined in all its outlines. Finished in mahogany (piano or dull finish) or golden oak, it makes a handsome ornament in any parlor.

That a horn could be concealed within such a space without sacrificing any of its acoustic value, is to be regarded as the happy solution of a most difficult and perplexing problem. The quality of the sound, however, is a clear, full, pure, natural tone, so characteristic of our higher priced models such as the Amberola I and Amberola III.

One obvious advantage this instrument possesses is that, while it is a drawing-room design, it may be moved

Need a good machine to play your Blue Amberols on? This won't help you with your Archeophone Archives downloads, but it's the ticket for your celluloid originals.

Series Rationale: *The Blue Amberols Worth Having*

Thomas A. Edison, Inc. introduced the Blue Amberol cylinder in November 1912. With celluloid surfaces made quiet by the aniline dye that gave them their distinctive color, these well-recorded and durable pressings were rightly hailed as the epitome of Edison's recording art. Blue Amberols comprised the longest-running and most extensive of any cylinder series—extending the commercial life of the cylinder format until 1929.

The U.S. domestic catalog began with number 1501 and concluded in June 1929 with number 5719—well over 4,100 titles released over nearly 17 years. Quality was high during the first two years of manufacture. Then to cut costs, Edison began dubbing Blue Amberols from Diamond Discs. Whereas most domestic releases through catalog number 2500 had been recorded directly to cylinder, most releases after 2500 were dubbed from discs.

Three-quarters of all domestic Blue Amberols, more than 3,100 titles, were dubbed from discs. From an archival perspective these second-generation copies are eschewed in favor of the commercially-released first-generation discs from which they were dubbed—that is, when such discs are available. Between 1915 and 1929 Edison released approximately 360 domestic Blue Amberols from *unissued* discs. Today these performances survive only as Blue Amberols.

Other issues above catalog number 2500 are also of archival interest. As sales of both Edison discs and cylinders declined in the late 1920s and the cost of making new recordings became prohibitive, Edison padded its Blue Amberol catalog with more than 90 direct-to-cylinder performances made as early as 18 years before. Again, these recordings exist only on cylinder.

In short, one-third of the domestic Blue Amberol series (nearly 1,400 titles) exists only in the cylinder format. From an archival perspective, these are the Blue Amberols worth having, and these are the titles released in the Archeophone Archives *Blue Amberol Domestic Popular Series*.

WHY DUBS ARE INFERIOR

A quiet disc pressing and a careful engineer could produce a decent dub; indeed, when played on period equipment, some of the earliest and best dubs are difficult to distinguish from direct-to-cylinder recordings. But very quickly both the quality of the discs and care in dubbing deteriorated. Most dubs from 1915 through 1929 are readily identified by surface noise from the disc, attenuated high and low frequencies, acoustic resonances, mechanical noises, and playback issues such as skips in the disc or missing beginnings of performances.

Transfers and Restoration

Transfers of Blue Amberol cylinders in the Archeophone Archives are made to the highest technical standards. The surface of each cylinder is washed with liquid cleaning solution and polished with a microfiber cloth before playing. Surfaces free of fingerprints, dirt, dust, and other contaminants that plague the format yield the quietest transfers. The best among several styli is chosen to yield the most accurate transfer given the wear pattern in the groove and the condition of the pressing. Particular attention is paid to squaring the cylinders on the mandrel. Blue Amberols are notorious for bouncing off-center in relation to the axis of revolution—analogueous to playing discs with off-center holes. The ear is very sensitive to this wow, and much attention is paid to minimizing distortion in the time domain.

The best archival practice is to transfer acoustic recordings “flat”—that is, without equalization in the playback chain—and this is how all transfers have been made. But as the acoustic recording process was anything but flat, flat playback is a terrible way to listen to acoustic recordings. After removing the thumps, clicks, pops, and crackle inherent in Blue Amberol pressings, we judiciously corrected the most glaring deficiencies and distortions in the original recording chain. Archeophone's goal is to resurrect the life in these recordings that flat playback leaves buried.

Introduction to Blue Amberol Series, Vol. 5

ONE-OFFS

Announcing its fifth list of Blue Amberols in February 1913, Edison boldly proclaimed its new records had “graduated from the so called experimental class and are now an ‘institution’” (*EPM* Feb. 1913, p. 3). The present producers will attest that the quality of these recordings does indeed remain superb.

But what’s curious about this moment in the history of the new format is how Edison had already begun taking some shortcuts. The extensive marketing blurbs accompanying the list of new records in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* evidently became too burdensome and were considered redundant, since each record had its own slip with detailed information. Therefore, Edison ceased writing up any information on the selections other than genre identifications. Ron Dethlefsen’s *Edison Blue Amberol Recordings, 1912–1914* is now especially important to those of you who want to keep up with reading about the tracks, as the book reproduces a number of the record slips.

The stable of artists also appears . . . unstable. Sure, Billy Murray, the Premier Quartet, Collins and Harlan, Helen Clark, and Walter Van Brunt are all represented here. But their contributions seem dwarfed by those of less-familiar names who would make only one, two, or three direct Blue Amberols in total. Royal Fish, Albert Wiederhold, and Ferdinand Himmelreich are three such artists. Old-timers such as Bob Roberts and Alan Turner appear for what is basically a farewell tour (Turner would make one more Blue Amberol, but not Roberts). Then there is the curious case of Rev. William Morgan, about whom we know nothing. His two scripture readings, punctuated with hymns by the Edison Mixed Quartet, were released as special “Good Friday” records that would enable resellers to stage appropriate Lenten concerts.

The overall feeling of this collection is thus one of randomness: beautiful individual performances, but with no sense of cohesion. Why does this matter? Well, we’re looking for clues as to why, in 1914, Edison abandoned its direct recording of Blue Amberols, and perhaps here we are already seeing signs of institutional fatigue.

Archeophone Archives’ digital-only releases can be purchased at [iTunes](#), [Amazon](#), and [Google Play](#). These [album notes](#) are free to everyone. Learn more about our new [Archeophone Archives](#) imprint at [Archeophone Records](#), the Grammy-winning leader in historical reissues from the acoustic era of recording.



Tenor Royal Fish is just one of several Edison artists to debut on Blue Amberol in March 1913 and have very short careers on the format. See p. 8 for photos of some of the others.

RECORD DESCRIPTIONS from *The Edison Phonograph Monthly*

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1621 | Everything's at Home Except Your Wife—"Oh! Oh! Delphine" (<i>Caryll</i>)
<i>Tenor solo, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Walter Van Brunt |
| 1622 | Orpheus Overture (<i>Offenbach</i>) | American Standard Orchestra |
| 1623 | I'll Sit Right on the Moon (<i>Monaco</i>)
<i>Contralto solo, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Edna Brown |
| 1624 | Take Me to That Swanee Shore (<i>Muir</i>)
<i>Coon duet, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Collins and Harlan |
| 1625 | You're the Flower of My Heart, Sweet Adeline (<i>Armstrong</i>)
<i>Tenor and chorus, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Royal Fish & Chorus |
| 1626 | Patriotic Songs of America | New York Military Band and Premier Quartet |
| 1627 | When I Met You Last Night in Dreamland (<i>Williams</i>)
<i>Mezzo soprano and baritone, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Helen Clark and Edwin Skedden |
| 1628 | Non e ver "Tis Not True" (<i>Matite</i>)
<i>Tenor solo, orchestra accompaniment</i> | R. Festyn Davies |
| 1629 | I'll Love You Forevermore (<i>Frantzen</i>)
<i>Tenor solo, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Harry Anthony |
| 1630 | How Could I Forget Thee—Gavotte (<i>Schuster</i>)
<i>Violin, 'cello, flute and harp</i> | Neapolitan Instrumental Quartet |
| 1631 | Sweet Antoinette (<i>Gray</i>)
<i>Tenor and baritone, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Harry Anthony, James F. Harrison and Chorus |
| 1632 | Fables (<i>Helf</i>)
<i>Comic song, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Bob Roberts |
| 1633 | Rock of Ages (<i>Hastings</i>)
<i>Sacred, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Edison Mixed Quartet |
| 1634 | Kiss Me, My Honey, Kiss Me (<i>Berlin and Snyder</i>)
<i>Conversational duet, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Ada Jones and Billy Murray |
| 1635 | A Day Dream (<i>Strelezki</i>)
<i>Mezzo soprano solo, violin and 'cello obligato</i> | Helen Clark |
| 1636 | Mattinata (<i>Tosti</i>)
<i>Tenor solo, orchestra accompaniment</i> | Charles Hackett |

- 1637 **On the Mississippi—Hanky Panky** (*Carroll and Fields*) **Billy Murray and Chorus**
Coon song, orchestra accompaniment
- 1638 **Belle of New York March** (*Clark*) and **2d Reg't. Conn. N. G. March** (*Reeves*)
New York Military Band
- 1639 **Waltzing Doll (Poupée Valsante)** (*Poldini*) **Venetian Instrumental Quartet**
Violin, 'cello, flute and harp
- 1640 **Venetian Song** (*Tosti*) **Alan Turner**
Baritone solo, orchestra accompaniment
- 1641 **St. Luke 23:33 to 38 and Calvary** (*Sweney*)
Rev. Wm. H. Morgan, D. D., and Edison Mixed Quartet
Scripture lesson with hymn, organ accompaniment
- 1642 **Saint Mark 4:35—41 and Peace! Be Still!** (*Palmer*)
Rev. Wm. H. Morgan, D. D., and Edison Mixed Quartet
Scripture lesson with hymn, organ accompaniment
- 1643 **The Yiddisha Professor** (*Berlin*) **Maurice Burkhardt**
Comic song, orchestra accompaniment
- 1644 **Unlucky Mose** **Golden and Hughes**
Vaudeville sketch
- 1645 **Down in Dear Old New Orleans** (*Conrad and Whidden*) **Premier Quartet**
Vocal selection, orchestra accompaniment
- 1646 **That Syncopated Boogie-Boo** (*Meyer*) **Premier Quartet**
Male voices, orchestra accompaniment
- 1647 **Nearer, My God, to Thee** (*Mason—Himmelreich*) **Ferdinand Himmelreich**
Piano solo with chimes effect
- 1648 **Dixie** (*Emmett*) **N. Y. Military Band, Fife and Drum Corps and Chorus**
- 1649 **Gipsy John** (*Clay*) **Albert A. Wiederhold**
Baritone solo, orchestra accompaniment
- 1650 **(a) Menuett** (*Beethoven*); **(b) Gavotte** (*Gossec*) **The Tollefsen Trio**
Violin, 'cello and piano

ARCHIVE ARTIFACTS

EDISON PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY FOR MARCH, 1913

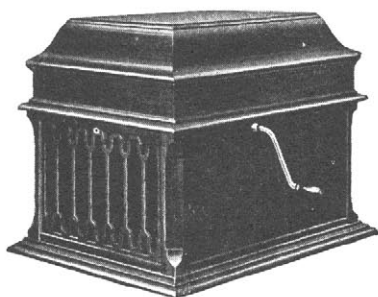
5

SUGGESTED ADS FOR THE NEW AMBEROLA V

Just Out—

HEAR *the* NEWEST EDISON

Cylinder Phonograph



“Amberola V”

The smallest cabinet,
drawing-room Edison made

Concealed horn, automatic stop. Plays the
four-minute BLUE AMBEROL RECORDS

A dandy little “Phonograph de Luxe”
in a beautiful cabinet only 16x22 inches

COME HEAR IT!

JAMES SMITH

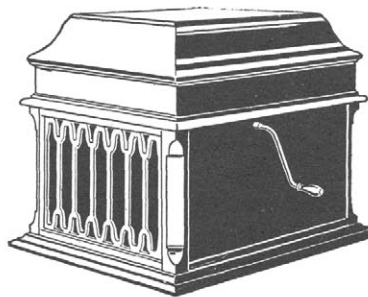
Edison Headquarters
120 Columbus Avenue

Another Edison

—a medium-priced
Phonograph with
concealed horn

COME HEAR IT!

“Amberola V”



THE SMALLEST CABINET EDISON PHONOGRAPH

(Cylinder Model)

**CONCEALED HORN
AUTOMATIC STOP
BEAUTIFUL CABINET**

Only 16x22 inches

Plays the four-minute
BLUE AMBEROL RECORDS

RONALD JOHNSTONE

“The Edison Phonograph Man”
140 West End Ave.

Stock electros of the above cuts of Amberola V.

5 in.	wide	Halftone	Cut	No.	32	4 in.	wide	Line	Cut	No.	38
3	“	“	“	“	24	3	“	“	“	“	37
2	“	“	“	“	25	2	“	“	“	“	36
1	“	“	“	“	26						

NOTE: Halftones require coated paper; they are suitable for monthly magazines, folders, etc. The Line cuts can be used on any paper and are suitable for newspaper work.

Another ad for the superior new Edison Amberola V (EPM Mar. 1913, p. 5).

SELECTED EDISON TALENT



REV. WILLIAM. H.
MORGAN, D. D.
Scripture Readings



FERDINAND
HIMMELREICH
Piano



CHARLES
HACKETT
Tenor



ALBERT A. WIEDERHOLD
Baritone

*Charles Hackett, the famous tenor, made only three Edison Blue Amberol recordings.
Rev. Morgan and Mr. Himmelreich made only two each, and Mr. Wiederhold made only one.*

RELEASE INFORMATION

Edison introduced the first Blue Amberols out of numerical order beginning in November 1912. The inaugural list contained 50 titles, with an additional 50 selections following in December 1912. The educational series was issued in January 1913 (not part of the popular domestic series), and the popular series resumed in February 1913. The final five selections in the February list are the first five included here:

3rd popular list (Feb. 1913):

Catalog #s 1621, 1622, 1623, 1624, 1625

With the fourth popular list for March 1913, Edison began issuing the selections in numerical order. Catalog numbers 1626 through 1650 make up the entire list for March 1913.

The following selections were originally released as Edison four-minute wax Amberols. The master molds from the original recordings were used to make the corresponding Blue Amberols.

BA #	Title (Artist)	Amberol # (Release date)
1626	Patriotic Songs of America (NY Military Band & Premier Qt.)	457 (July 1910)
1634	Kiss Me, My Honey, Kiss Me (Ada Jones & Billy Murray)	617 (Jan. 1911)



CREDITS

Produced by David Giovannoni, Meagan Hennessey, and Richard Martin

Digital transfers by David Giovannoni

Digital restoration by Richard Martin and David Giovannoni

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Graphic restoration by Richard Martin

Design and layout by Meagan Hennessey and Richard Martin

Notes by David Giovannoni, Meagan Hennessey, and Richard Martin

EPM transcriptions by Meagan Hennessey and Richard Martin

The Archeophone Archives sourced the David Giovannoni Collection and Archeophone Records Collection of Edison recordings and ephemera for this release. Selection no. 1650, “(a) Menuett; (b) Gavotte,” courtesy of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Davidson Library.

Thanks to David Seubert.

Essential reading:

Dethlefsen, Ronald. *Edison Blue Amberol Recordings, 1912–1914*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Mulholland Press, 1997.

Archeophone Archives is dedicated to issuing extensive runs of early sound recordings in digitally downloadable form. Like the CDs for which Archeophone Records is known, our digital downloads are carefully transferred from the best-available copies and meticulously restored to bring out the best-possible sound.

Our commitment to these critical details differentiates our releases from the free downloads available on the Internet. Archeophone Archives delivers the best sound from the best copies.

Our premiere endeavor, *The Blue Amberol Domestic Popular Series*, draws its recordings from the collection of David Giovannoni. The collection offers extensive runs of relatively common acoustic recordings in uncommonly nice condition. And it is highly curated. Each Blue Amberol is physically cleaned before it is aurally assessed; alternate takes are identified through A:B comparisons; the best copy of each take is identified; a second copy is retained when a quality duplicate is available; and digital transfers are made at archival-level resolution on state-of-the-art equipment.

The Giovannoni Collection makes its holdings available for historic CD and digital reissues, and to radio, television, and film productions. It is the first privately-held collection chosen by the Library of Congress for inclusion in its National Jukebox. And it is the primary source of choice for Archeophone Archives’ *Blue Amberol Domestic Popular Series*.

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