

Flewelling Short Wave Converter, 1930s

By Bart Lee, K6VK, CHRS Fellow in History

Short wave radio was the next radio craze after the coming of AM broadcasting in the early 1920s. By the early 1930s many people realized that they could literally hear the world with the new radio technology, not just the locals. The cheapest and easiest way to do so was a short wave converter. This plugged into the regular radio, often in place of the detector tube. Then the listener could hear pretty much from 3 MHz to 18 Mhz. One elegant converter was made by E. J. Flewelling (later by AC Dayton in his name, with him working for the company).



See www.radiomuseum.org for further information.



The evolutionary interplay of a newly useful part of the radio spectrum, old radios, new converters, then new radios shows a nice pattern, especially given how very interesting SW broadcasting became by 1936 or so, with the next War coming.

The Gernsback 1934 Short Wave Manual (now reprinted) collected several articles on converters. Short wave converters were apparently fairly popular. In the Gernsback Manual there are 16 commercial converters (see table of contents) and construction articles for seven converters. Probably people either lost interest in short wave and tossed the converters out or as the 1930's progressed people found money to buy a radio with short wave capability and then tossed the converters out. Once one had a radio with a short wave band, and a superhet at that, there was no

need to save an antique gizmo that may never have worked that well.

A depression-era catalog shows six converters for sale for up to \$15. For comparison, one simple regenerative short wave radio sold for \$33. The Flewelling sold for \$9 for a DC (battery) set and \$15 for an AC set.

 <p>BAIRD Short Wave Adapter</p> <p>The new Baird Short Wave Adapter, which effectively covers a wave length range of from 16 to 225 meters when used in conjunction with your regular receiver. Just insert the adapter plug into the radio set, connect the aerial to the adapter and plug in tube and coil. Has three interchangeable coils. Housed in a metal cabinet of brown crystalline finish.</p> <p>No. C7125. For AC Receivers. List, \$25.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$14.70</p> <p>No. C7126. For DC Receivers. List, \$15.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$8.25</p>	 <p>Submariner S-W Adapter</p> <p>Specially created to enjoy short wave broadcasting without the expense or inconvenience of another radio set. Covers a wave band of 20 to 65 meters, which covers most short wave activities. Neat brown cabinet, 5 1/2 x 3 1/2 in., with sloping front panel. Wt., 3 lbs.</p> <p>No. C7130. For 4-prong battery operated sets. Model D. List, \$17.50. YOUR PRICE..... \$10.22</p> <p>No. C7131. For 5-prong AC sets only. Model A-7. List, \$17.50. YOUR PRICE..... \$10.29</p>
<p>Dayton-Flewelling Short Wave Adapter</p> <p>Covers a wave length range of 17 to 85 meters through the use of three interchangeable plug-in coils. Only one tuning dial on polished verichrome panel. 7 1/2 x 5 1/2 in. In genuine bakelite case. Wt., 3 lbs.</p> <p>No. C7126. For AC sets. List, \$15.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$8.25</p> <p>No. C7127. For DC sets. List, \$15.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$8.25</p>	 <p>Aero Short Wave Converter</p> <p>The new Aero Converter, compact and factory built, equipped with special short wave coils, ready to plug into your present radio set. This amazing instrument operates on all sets. Furnished complete, ready to operate. All tubes and coils are concealed in operation. Housed in a neat golden brown compact metal cabinet, crackle finished. Size, 6 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. Wt., 10 lbs.</p> <p>No. C7136. For AC Receivers. List, \$25.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$14.70</p>

New Short Wave Converters

 <p>AIR KING Short Wave Converters</p> <p>An ideal short wave adapter for use in connection with your present radio receiver. Each unit furnished with three external coils, for a range of 18 to 78 meters. Enjoy the thrills the short waves have to offer without changing your present set.</p> <p>The Standard Model Walnut cabinet with polished bakelite panel. No. C7115. For AC sets. List, \$15.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$8.45 No. C7116. For DC sets. List, \$14.50. YOUR PRICE..... \$8.25</p> <p>The DeLuxe Model The same adapter built more luxuriously. No. C7117. For AC sets. List, \$19.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$11.17 No. C7118. For DC sets. List, \$18.50. YOUR PRICE..... \$10.87</p>	<p>Walker Multi-Unit</p> <p>The new Walker Multi-Unit answers the demand for a flexible, single tube adapter which can be put to a multitude of uses. Short wave receiver and adapter—Regular broadcast receiver—Screen grid pre-amplifier—Remote control adapter—Extra stage of R. F. or "Booster"—Single dial converter—Audio oscillator—Radio "Experimental" unit—Crystal receiver—Wave trap—and Wave meter. Truly an unusual radio instrument, performing any individual function of a complete receiver, and, in addition, serving for calibrating, testing or checking.</p>
 <p>SCREEN GRID Short Wave 4</p> <p>A complete custom-built screen grid short wave receiver, comprising one stage of screen grid R.F., followed by a smooth working regenerative detector and two stages of audio. Effectively covers a wave length range from 18 to 120 meters.</p> <p>Short Waves For Thrills This short wave 4 is contained in a beautifully finished aluminum cabinet which furnishes complete shielding. Requires one UX-222 screen grid tube, two UX-201A and X-112A tubes. Color-coded cable furnished.</p> <p>No. C7133. List, \$56.00. YOUR PRICE..... \$32.90</p>	<p>MANY CIRCUIT COMBINATIONS</p> <p>Serves as either an extra stage of tuned radio frequency or short wave adapter, by merely plugging into one of the tube sockets of the receiver. Tools or radio knowledge not necessary. The complete unit including four-lead plug-in adapter, plug-in coils, screen grid cap clip, antenna, fixed condenser, etc., is housed in an attractive case, neatly finished. Complete non-technical instructions furnished. Box measures 7 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. Wt., 5 lbs.</p> <p>YOUR PRICE \$9.40</p> <p>No. C7120. List, \$16.00.</p> <p>No. C7121. Walker 227 AC Adapter plug for 5 prong detector tubes. List, \$2.50. YOUR PRICE..... \$1.47</p>

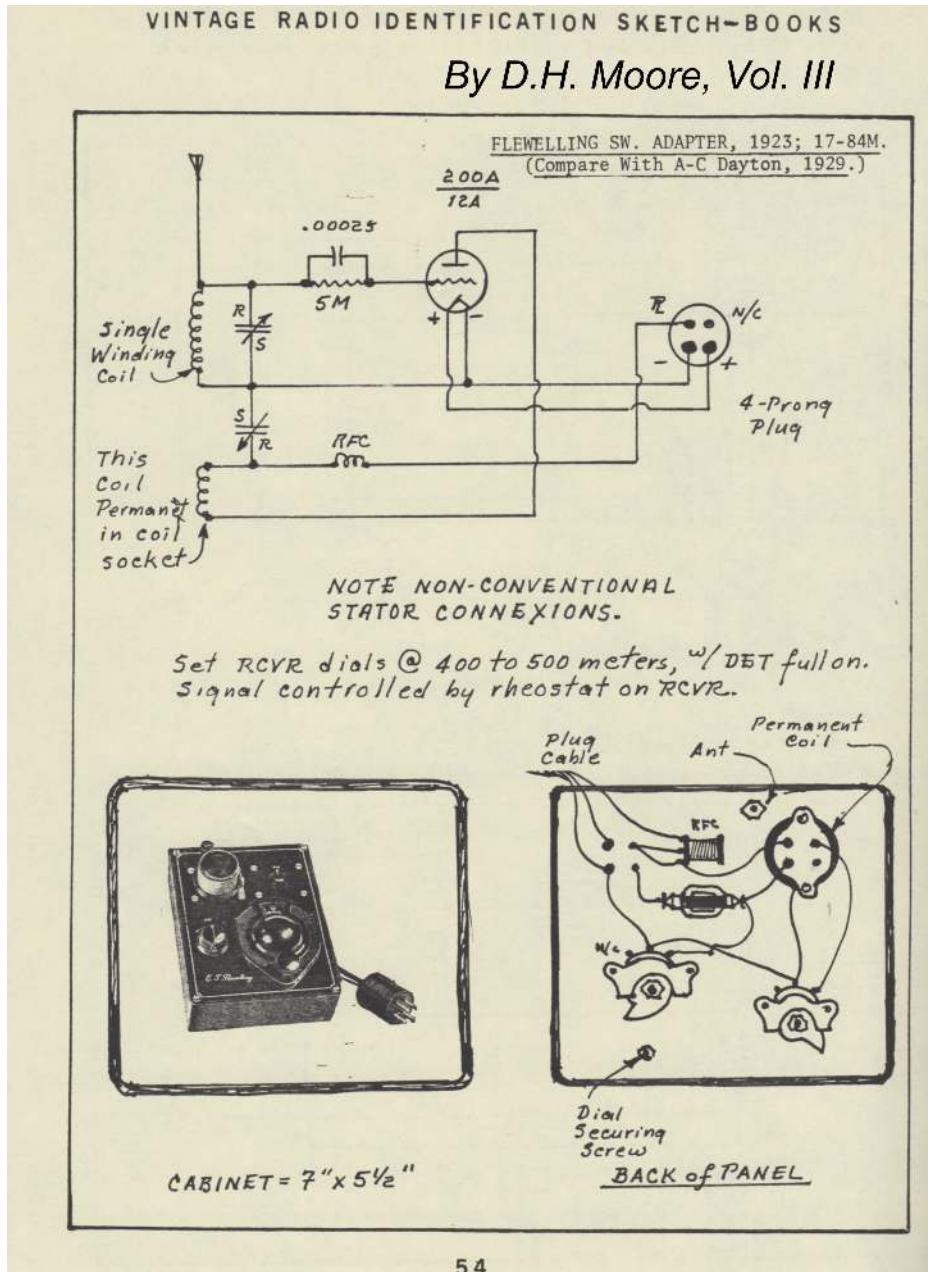
(Chicago Salvage Stock Store "A New Method of Economic Merchandising" (n.d. [1930s])

Some of the converters, though sometimes quite elegant, were not small. For example, the Stromberg Carlson tombstone converter, perhaps the best of the genre, built quite sturdily. (See photo).



Paul Bourbin, CHRS, points out: “... some of the converters not only converted short waves to the broadcast band, but also converted a TRF [tuned radio frequency circuit] into a superhet. Neither component was, in itself, a superhet so manufacturers could get around RCA’s patents.”

D.H Moore dedicated Vol. III of his Vintage Radio Identification Sketchbooks to converters and the like. (He didn't think much of them, but he collected some nice examples.)



(de K6VK; thanks to Walt Hayden, Denny Monticelli, Paul Bourbin and Kent Leech)