

Charles Adams-Randall, 1846-1923

Nickel-in-the-Slot Phonograph Pioneer

Charles Adams Randall was born on the 1st July, 1846, in Rochester, Plymouth County in Massachusetts. His father was Charles Randall (1822-1893), and his mother was Louisa Green Nye (1823*-1906), married on the 14th May, 1843. Charles was the oldest of five children. Siblings: Sarah Nye Randall died young (-), Philip Green Randall (1851-1925), Frank Mortimer Randall (1858-1922), and Ida Bella Moulton Randall (1864-1919). Charles Adams Randall was married on the 21st January, 1872, to his first wife Phoebe Adelia Rogers (1845-1924), and it is known they had three children; - the son Clarence Eugene (1874-1923), and the two daughters *Blanche* (-) and Ella Jane (1879-). Charles Adams Randall was separated from Phoebe around 1882, and was married again in London, England, on the 12th March, 1890, to his second wife Evelyne Anna Edwarda Caspar von der Trave (1863*-1930). In the 1920s Evelyne became well known as Eva Adams, a travel writer and lecturer first in New York and later in 1928-1929 at the University of Wichita, and Charles and Evelyne had one daughter Carla Alberta Louise Adams Randall (1893-1987). Carla was married on the 21st July, 1927, to Ralph Brinckerhoff Crum (1888-1936), the Head of the English Department at the University of Wichita from 1928 until 1935, and she was married again in Chihuahua, Mexico, on the 21st April, 1944, to Wesley John Duesler (1886-1967).

Charles Adams Randall is today mainly known as the inventor of the coin operated *Automatic Pariophone* or *Improved Phonautograph*, filed for patent in England on the 5th July, 1888. The first of two British patents was granted on the 4th May, 1889. However, it is not known if the coin operated machine was actually demonstrated to the public before the first demonstration of the pay-to-play concept by Louis Glass in San Francisco on the 23rd November, 1889. It was stated in *The Morning Post* in February, 1889, that Charles Adams Randall was a consulting engineer at *The Electric Date & Time Stamp Co.* in London, a short-lived company based on one of his patented inventions and overseen by his friend and future brother-in-law Don Clan Alpine Thatcher (1842-1896), married to Evelyne's sister Alberta. In fact Charles Adams Randall had been a very active electrical and mechanical engineer and inventor for many years, and the first patent related to development of telegraph equipment was filed in America on the 5th July, 1870, with Theodore Marshall Foote. In the following years Foote and Randall had nine telegraph related patents registered in America and Canada, and Charles Adams Randall had until the 27th September, 1920, a total of at least 65 American, Canadian and British patents to his name. Most of them related to the development of telegraph and telephone equipment, but while he was living in London, England, he also improved the mechanism of phonographs. Three British patents related to phonographs were filed in 1891 and 1892 before they were filed for patent in America. Interesting to note that Charles Adams Randall used the address *Mattapoisett* on several British patents in the 1890s, two locations *3 Woodstock Road* and *1 The Avenue* at Bedford Park, and the village name from his home State Massachusetts could also be found as the home of his mother-in-law, Mary Frances Caspar von der Trave, *born Coad*, when she died on the 27th May, 1899. Charles Adams Randall started to use a hyphen in his name after his father died on the 24th May, 1893, and he decided to move back to America in 1901 to work mainly in New York and later Boston. Home address on British patent application in 1904 stated as *18 Rose Street* in Brooklyn, New York.

During his active life Charles Adams-Randall was connected to several American companies: *The Electric Date & Time Stamp Co. Inc.* in St. Louis, *The National Improved Telephone Co.* in New Orleans, *The Randall Telephone Manufacturing Co.* in Augusta, the *Randall & Carey Vibrat-*

Massage Machine Co. in New York, the United Telephone Co. in Boston around 1912, and finally in 1916 the Electrical Inventions Co. in Boston. It was mentioned in The New York Times in February, 1912, that Charles Adams-Randall was a former assistant to Thomas Alva Edison, but until now the exact period has not been found in the historic Edison archives. However, it may have been around the time that Charles Adams Randall was injured and shocked at the Pelhamville Train Station accident on the 27th December, 1885. He was on his way back to his home at *219 East 48th Street* in Brooklyn, New York, after a Christmas family visit in Massachusetts, when the Boston Flyer train on the New Haven Line was derailed. The train struck a portion of a hundred foot long passenger platform lifted by a heavy wind. About one year later, the exact date is not yet found, Charles Adams Randall moved to London after one or two previous short visits, but he was not in any way associated with Thomas Alva Edison's representative in London, the Colonel George Edward Gouraud (1842-1912), who recorded the first British wax cylinders in the Crystal Palace on the 29th June, 1888.

Charles Adams-Randall died on the 8th October, 1923, in Sharon, Norfolk County in Massachusetts, and the Randall family grave marker can be found at the Pine Island Cemetery, Marion Road, Mattapoissett in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, the editor has not yet found a photographic portrait of the inventor Charles Adams-Randall in any old newspapers or historic telephone trade magazines.

Gert J. Almind

* Year 1822 on grave marker, but the year 1823 can be found in family ancestry records published 1943 by Frank Alfred Randall.

* Proclamation in London, 14th November, 1889, Evelyne aged 26 in the marriage document. Year 1870 on grave marker, but the year 1863 can be found in official British records. Evelyne was the third of six children of Charles Albert Ignatius (*Graf von Leuchtenfels*) (1824-1889) and Mary Frances (1826-1899) Caspar von der Trave, married on the 1st February, 1853. Siblings: Alberta Mary Frances (1853-1927), Eugenie Victoria (1855-), Percy Cecil Arthur (1866-1897), Mabel Violet (1867-), and Carl Bernhard Oswald (1869-1880).