

Jackson-Bell From Startup To Demise

A “Marketing Story” In Seven Years!!!

By Richard Gray & Jim Ryan

When KHJ and KFI went on the air in 1922, radio was a curiosity. Only a few Hams and Hobbyists could even listen in.

The programming, such as it was, was not for general audiences. By 1925, sustained and sponsored radio programming could be considered Entertaining, or at least Informational. However, for the Family to listen in, it required a considerable investment and technical knowledge.

“The Opportunity”

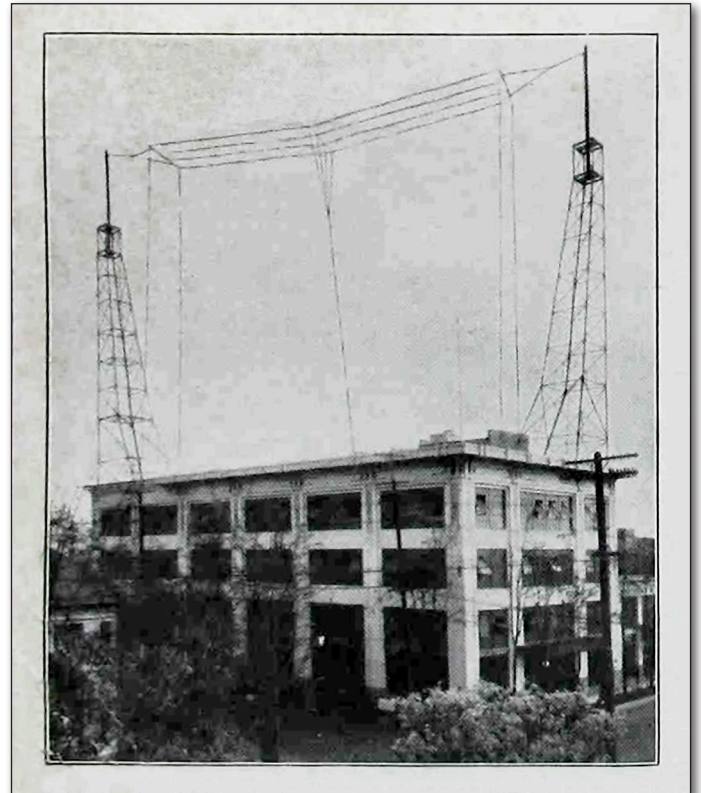
By 1927 many companies were offering battery sets (with battery eliminators and chargers). With large horn speakers, the entire family could listen in. Some sets were in nice cabinets to hide all the gear. Radios had many knobs, needed long antennas and a good earth ground. And, did I mention... lots of Money!

Most people had more modest means, less technical expertise, or lived in apartments, and were left out of the radio experience. The opportunity is there... **the Radio as entertainment for the masses emerged.**

Hang on tight, it is going to be a bumpy ride just hitting the high points.



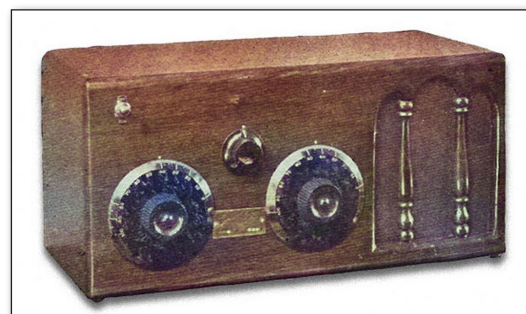
Herbert A. Bell - Jackson-Bell Founder



**KFI Radio Station 10th & Hope Sts., Los Angeles -
Owned and operated by Earl C. Anthony Inc.
California Packard Distributors**

“The Value Proposition”

Jackson (we know little about him, probably put up the money), and Herbert Bell had an idea; a radio that could run off the “Mains”, was simple to operate, self-contained, and requires no external antenna or earth ground.

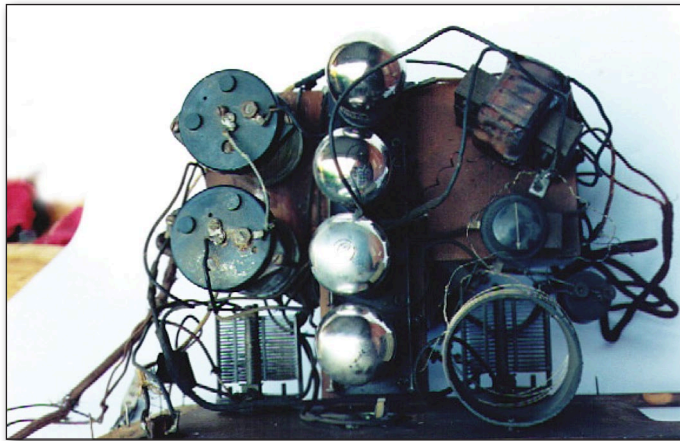


The First Jackson-Radio - Model 4

“The Value Proposition” Continued...



**The Model 4 - Very Crude Construction
Even for a Garage Shop**



The Model 4 - Radio Chassis Outside The Box

The radio does run off the mains power, but it did require periodic service. The “Electrolytic Rectifiers” required the liquid to be replaced from time-to-time.

Their initial market idea, hotel rooms, with a coin slot... Perhaps the liquid renewal service could be combined with emptying the coin drawer!

“Be Flexible”

When a door closes, look for another way.

By the end of 1927, Jackson-Bell was offering this radio to the public. Flexibility in marketing is the key to success. Follow the path that is proving fruitful.

The home radio market was open. The electrolytic rectifiers a minor inconvenience compared with the alternative radio sets on display in the showroom!



**Two Of These Electrolytic Rectifiers.
Dump The Electrolyte And Replace When The
Speaker Volume Goes Low**

“Establish Your Brand”

Another very important marketing goal is establishing the “Brand”. It is not just another radio, it is a **“Jackson-Bell Radio”**.

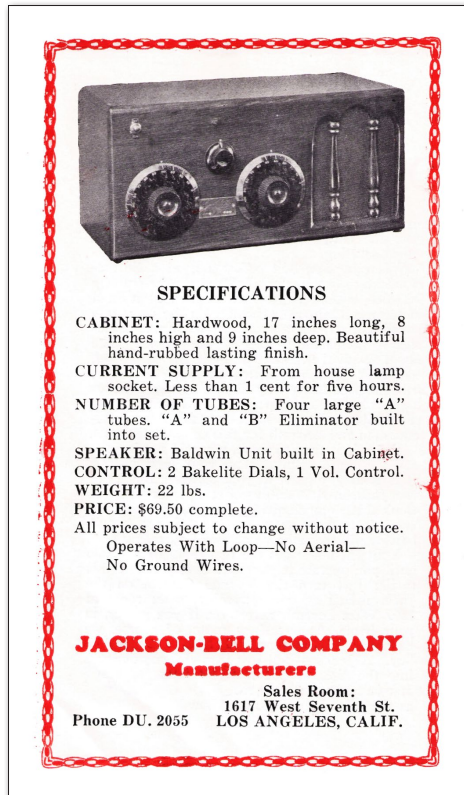

Jackson-Bells first offering had a brass name plate. With the company name, hand script font, and a bell. Recognizable in advertisements, store displays, and most importantly in homes by guests (Now referred to as “Viral Marketing”).



The Model 4 - Radio Name Plate

“Emphasize Your Strengths”

Unlike most of the other offerings of the day, take it home and start listening. If you lived in an apartment or bungalow, perhaps this is your only choice in the radio shop!

Front and Back Cover Of The Model 4 Brochure - Summer Of 1927
Key Words are “Complete”, “No Aerial”, “No Ground”

Daily News - Los Angeles, Ca.
June 17, 1927

“Emphasize Your Strengths”

The crital next step, the second offering - build on your success.

Jackson-Bell had established their first market niche, small self-contained table top radios. Their next radio, the model 5 offering, was focused on technical improvements made possible with newer technologies. The 80 rectifier tube, and the 27 detector. The performance was modest, fine for local stations, their Los Angeles city markets.



The Jackson-Bell Model 5



The Oakland Tribune, Oakland, Ca.
September 14, 1928

“Emphasize Your Strengths” Continued...

By late 1928, early 1929, there were many self-contained radio offerings, all of which ran off mains power. Many also had in-built speakers. Jackson-Bell had lost its little “Complete Radio” competitive advantage.

“Expand Your Markets”

Jackson-Bell’s model 6 and model 8, were bigger heavier, better performing sets. However, they were “Me too” Radios, running head-to-head with more established Eastern brands. Only manufacturing proximity to the local markets was Jackson-Bells edge.



The Jackson-Bell Model 6



The Jackson-Bell Model 8

Make necessary “Course Correction”

This could have been the end for Jackson-Bell, but by the late summer of 1929 Jackson-Bell had a breakout product offering, the Jackson-Bell model 59. Actually, it was a “Me Too” radio following the lead of “Echophone”, “Keller-Fuller”, and other Los Angeles Startups.

The model 59 is a stylish Art Deco table radio, small in size, with decent performance. The model 60 radio, which soon followed, had better performance, with the same styling.

Late in 1929, Jackson-Bell had what the market wanted - a “Cheap” attractive offering, with cabinet variations to fit your decor.



The Jackson-Bell Model 59



The Jackson-Bell Model 60

"Establish Marketing Channels"

Jackson-Bell also had an established dealer network... radios were being sold outside Los Angeles with the Jackson-Bell Brand. Jackson-Bell also sold radios with "House Branding" for other retailers. One radio design, the model "S", was exclusively sold to other retailers with house brandings like the "Broadway department stores". Herbert Horn, later to be a radio manufacturing force in Los Angeles, started with the model 60 radio in a "Custom Cabinet".

Select Your Own Merry Christmas Gift, Tomorrow!

The Broadway's Midget Console Radio

Here is the radio you've wanted! It has TONE QUALITY. Is Selective, Sensitive. Will give you whatever Volume you want. The console of polished Walnut Veneer is a beauty. Of a size to fit perfectly into the modern cottage or apartment. But, you say, "I can't take a Console Radio to the cabin or carry it up to my own room... portability is what I want in a radio." But this console has just that, too! Look...

\$49.50 COMPLETE

\$5.00 DOWN

Balance equal monthly payments; small carrying charge.

The Broadway Midget, Complete, Slips In and Out of Console as Easily as the Watch in Your Pocket!

Convenient... no adjustment necessary. When you want to take the Midget with you, just slip it out of the Console Case. When you're through, put it back. Just as easy as that! No fuss or bother. This way, you really own TWO RADIOS IN ONE!

(1) Midget Complete, 6 Tubes.	(3) R.C.A. Licensed Circuit.	(5) 3-Gang Condensers.
(2) All-Electric, A-C.	(4) Lansing Loud Speaker.	(6) Walnut Veneer Console.

The Broadway—Radio Sales—Fifth Floor.



Jackson-Bell Model "S" Broadway Department Store Advertisement
Los Angeles Evening Express - Los Angeles, Ca. - Dec 03, 1930

Loeser's Midget A Good Radio!

\$44.50

After Sale \$59.50

Made by Jackson-Bell—all the dependability and superior performance of larger models. Electro dynamic speaker, seven tubes, screen grid, all electric receiver. Installed complete!



RADIOS—FOURTH FLOOR

Loeser's Department Store "House Brand" Radio
The Standard Union - Brooklyn, New York
Sep 12, 1930

By the beginning of 1930 Jackson-Bell had established their brand, and they were selling well all over the Western United States. Jackson-Bell also was a well-established manufacturer of other branded radios.

Lachman Bros.
GIVE TIME
MISSION 31 16 10 BUILDINGS 30 FLOORS

A Marvelous! Radio Value!

JACKSON BELL
ALL ELECTRIC

at a popular price
COMPLETE

\$69.50

SPECIAL TERMS
Only \$7.50 Down



Compact! Portable!
Take it anywhere—No aerial or ground wire necessary—Plug into any light socket!

Complete, as shown, with built-in speaker and the latest type of AC tubes, the Jackson Bell presents exceptional quality and selectivity. Tuning is accomplished with a single dial, illuminated, and a trimmer control that varies the volume at will from a mere whisper to booming tones of amplification. Reproduction is clear and natural. And at the popular price of \$69.50.

Lachman Bros. Radio Shop is open evenings

Lachman Bros.
GIVE TIME
MISSION 31 16 10 BUILDINGS 30 FLOORS

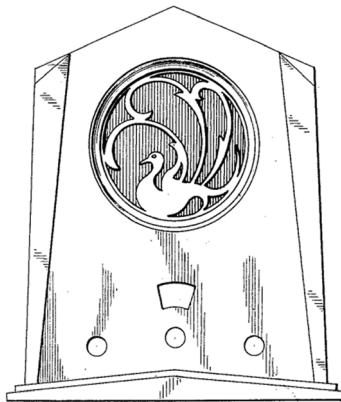
Lachman Brothers Radio Shop
The San Francisco Examiner -
San Francisco, California
Mar 13, 1929

“Consolidate Production”, take advantage of “mass-market” opportunities

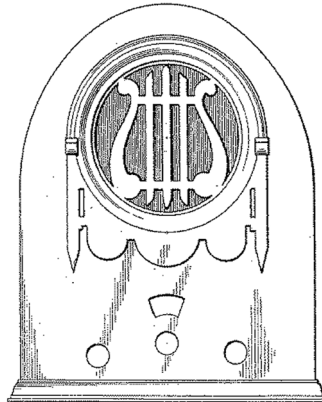
The next Radio Offering was designed to exploit the market Jackson-Bell already had, and move to the next level - a Radio that could capture the national stage.

The Jackson-Bell model 62 chassis used breakthrough TRF performance. The sensitivity is

suitable for distant reception. The selectivity is very good, weak stations can be separated from local much stronger signals. No longer limited to city markets... JB could market anywhere.



Art Deco Patent Drawing



Cathedral Patent Drawing



Lyra-Tone Model 62 Cathedral



Art Deco Fleu De Lis Model 62



THE BIG GIFT

in the *Small Package*

JACKSON-BELL Midget RADIO

NEW MODEL 62

\$59⁵⁰
Complete

ONLY 15 inches high, 11½ inches wide, and 8 inches front to rear, yet JACKSON-BELL Midget is a powerful, complete, up-to-the-minute Radio . . . musical instrument "par excellence" . . . and distinctive, classic embellishment. Think of the extra hours of happiness because of its handy compactness and easy portability. Inspiration, companionship, entertainment . . . always . . . wherever you are or go; any room, any time, any place. No other way so little money can buy so much. The ONLY radio combining big-set power, tone, and selectivity in so handy and attractive a cabinet. All-electric, tone control, electro-dynamic speaker, illuminated dial, 6 tubes (4 screen grid), and other latest modern features. \$59.50 complete ready to plug in, nothing else to buy.

Choice of TWO beautiful cabinets. No. 1 above, No. 2 at right. Hand-rubbed, selected American walnut, richly embossed with grain panel overlay.


Jackson-Bell Company . . . Los Angeles . . . Calif.
Mfrs. of All-Electric Radios . . . Since 1926

Wright Furniture Co.

Telephone 53

Ponchatoula, La.

The Enterprise, Ponchatoula, La. - Dec 12, 1930



The World's Best Midget "LYRATONE" 62

Retails in New Zealand £22/15/- is 4 SCREEN-GRID 6 A.C. Tubes. PHONO-COMBINATION MODEL 2, £37. Price includes 230-volt circuits. Nothing extra for Transformers or other "gadgets." It's Gillilan's and IT'S THE GOODS. See Fear & Co.'s Window this week. Shipment ex "Waihemo."

GET YOUR ORDER IN EARLY.
 Wellington Agents:
F. J. W. FEAR & CO.
 Wholesale:
CRAWFORD & FINLAYSON, LTD.,
 Wellington.

New Zealand 1931 Advertisement

"Consolidate Production" Continued...

Jackson Bell Radio
Screen-Grid . . . Midget Size!

\$59.50

—A gift that bespeaks the giver sixteen hours out of twenty-four . . . three hundred and sixty-five days of the year! The Jackson Bell Midget offers quadruple screen-grid tubes, 4 gang condensers, a shielded chassis and lighted dial. Famed for its tone control and acute sensitivity! Encased in a handsome walnut cabinet.

**\$5 Down!
\$5 Monthly!**

—RADIO SHOP
RICH'S FOURTH FLOOR

RICH'S
INC.



Atlanta Constitution - Atlanta Ga. 30 Nov., 1930

"Domination Of The Market"

SMASHING
all **RADIO RECORDS!**

for
**Performance
Popularity
Value**

WHAT a Radio! Never have you heard or seen anything like this New JACKSON-BELL Midget. Thousands say the same thing. The big hit of the Chicago Radio Show. Crowds throughout the entire nation buying it eagerly. Such amazing power, sharpness, and tone. So unbelievably compact. So exquisitely beautiful. So complete and up-to-the-minute.

JACKSON-BELL Midget
**WORLD'S
MOST
USEFUL
RADIO**
Only 15 in. high—11½ in. wide

\$59.50
Complete with Tubes

Choice of 2 beautiful Cabinets
Radio's most classic compact cabinets . . . choice, hand-rubbed American walnut, richly embossed with grained panel overlay, in 2 beautiful symmetrical designs. Convenient carrying case at nominal cost.

SMALL down payment - SPECIAL easy terms to XMAS Shoppers
The SMALLEST fine radio, FINEST *mini* Radio, and MOST USEFUL of all. Move it from room to room, take it visiting or a-traveling. Also ideal for Apartment, Hotel suite, and Club room. All-electric, plugs in any light socket. The ONLY Radio combining TONE CONTROL, DYNAMIC SPEAKER, ILLUMINATED DIAL, 6 TUBES (4 screen grid), and other latest features, in so compact and beautiful a cabinet. Think how many additional ways and places you can enjoy so handy a set. The perfect Christmas Gift. Ask your dealer for JACKSON-BELL Midget TODAY, and be sure to get what you ask for.
H. B. Curtis Co. Col. Distributors, 311 Third St., Oakland
San Francisco—395 O'Farrell St. Los Angeles—116 Wall St.

Portable
Fits anywhere . . .
Carry it with you



Oakland Tribune - Oakland Ca. - 11 Dec., 1930

The Greatest Value In Radio History

Jackson-Bell
Midget Radio

(25 CYCLE)

\$59.50

COMPLETE With Set of Matched Tubes

\$76.62 Complete in the Border
Cities with Duty and Taxes Paid

Licensed Under R.C.A. Patents

The long period of manufacture together with the tremendous volume of national sales enables the makers to present this wonderful radio at the lowest price ever offered in the highest quality receiver.

Here Are 5 Outstanding Features

- 1—Offers Complete Tone Control**
First time offered in any "Midget" set. Gives you PERSONAL CONTROL of station tone, so you can enjoy music the way YOU like it. Also cuts down interference and produces maximum clear tone!
- 2—Has Four Screen-Grid Tubes**
Three stages of tuned radio frequency amplification with four tuned circuits and screen grid power detector. Amazing selectivity and volume without DISTORTION.
- 3—Has Single Illuminated Dial**
Operating a 4-Gang Condenser
Important Points of Merit Noted in the Jackson-Bell "62" Midget
Its Perfect Tone Control Allows You to Tune to the lowest Whisper Without Impairing Quality.
- 4—New Electro Dynamic Speaker**
Designed and engineered to the Jackson-Bell set. Insures perfect tone co-ordination between speaker and receiver. You will ENJOY every program to its fullest with the aid of this special speaker!
- 5—Exquisitely Styled Cabinets**
Built of beautifully finished walnut that will blend with the handsomest room furniture. Smartly designed and perfectly proportioned. Smallest, most compact cabinet ever built. A cabinet work gem for the loveliest home.

Jackson-Bell Radio is guaranteed for 90 days . . . And all statements contained in this advertisement are warranted true by

WATERSTON'S
427 Woodward Ave.—Detroit
JUST NORTH OF JEFFERSON AVENUE
Who have served Canadians for over a quarter of a century, as the Home of Good Tools, Sporting Goods, Hardware and Radio
OPEN MONDAY AND SATURDAY EVENINGS UNTIL 9:30



The Windsor Star - Windsor, Ontario, Canada
Dec 08, 1930

The Jackson-Bell marketing campaigns were world class (See the opening colorized store front).

The marketing and sales network rivaled the bigger Eastern companies... Jackson-Bell was a radio force to be reckoned with!!!

Like all initial competitive advantages, eventually the more established companies catch up! By the beginning of 1931, Eastern companies like Philco and RCA had their midget offerings. Perhaps not as stylish as the model 62, but a force to be reckoned with!

Another huge Challenge for Jackson-Bell they were a one trick pony. The model 62 (in many cabinet variations) and nothing else!

“Times Change”, be prepared to move on to new designs, and opportunities

The radio technology was moving on... by the beginning of 1931 the buzzword was “Superhetrodyne”.

Herb Bell tried to buy time... he extolled the virtues of the model 62 chassis... but time was running out!

Look for **“Synergism”**

What strengths we have, what can a partner bring to the Table?

Jackson-Bell had money; a huge dealer network. They needed a jump-start on the next new thing! Like all successful Companies when it is time to make a market move... consider acquisitions.

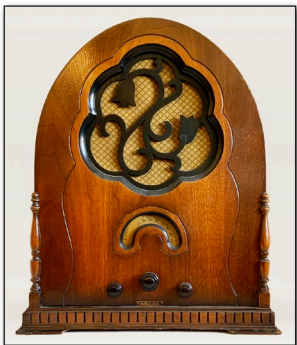
Jackson-Bell bought the much smaller Flint Los Angeles radio manufacture. In the deal, they got three new radio offerings, and new engineering talent.

The **“Supderhetrodyne Design”**

... which quickly turned into the model 88 chassis.

By the spring of 1931, the Model 88 could be had as a table model, console, or grandfather clock. By years end, Jackson-Bell had other superhetrodyne offerings both up and down the price range scale.

Jackson Bell’s first Superheterodyne - the Model 88 was offered in three very different cabinet designs.



Model 88 Cathedral



Model 88 Console



Model 88 Grandfather Clock Radio

Click this link to return to the [Blogs Page](#)

Go back to select and read [Part 2](#)