

## Laurens Hammond Dies at 78; Invented Electric Organ in 30's

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CORNWALL, Conn., July 2—  
Laurens Hammond, inventor of  
the electric organ, died yester-  
day at his home here. His age  
was 78.

Mr. Hammond, who retired  
as chairman of the Hammond  
Organ Company (now the Ham-  
mond Corporation) in 1960, had  
also invented a "tickless" elec-  
tric clock, a system for project-  
ing stereoscopic motion pic-  
tures and an improved barome-  
ter.

With six workmen in a small  
room over a Chicago grocery  
store, he organized the Ham-  
mond Clock Company in 1928.

Mr. Hammond turned to the  
complex problem of producing  
music by electricity in the early  
nineteen-thirties. Using the key-  
board of a battered secondhand  
piano, he experimented to cre-  
ate a musical instrument of fine  
tone and wide range, in which  
electricity replaced reeds and  
pipes.

In 1935, the first model of  
the Hammond organ came out.  
The late George Gershwin was  
the first purchaser. Instead of  
using the conventional tablets  
for changing tonal combina-  
tions, the organ embodied a  
series of drawbars that made  
it possible for an organist to  
form myriads of tonal combi-  
nations. The instrument was  
unaffected by temperature  
changes, and it could not get  
out of tune. The company be-  
came a leader in its field.

Mr. Hammond had received  
his first patent as a boy in  
France, where his mother took  
him three years after his birth  
in Evanston, Ill. The patent was  
for a transmission for auto-  
mobiles. He received a patent  
when he was 16 for a barome-  
ter that could be sold for \$1.

Mr. Hammond earned a me-  
chanical engineering degree



Merrill Chase, 1955

Laurens Hammond

from Cornell University in 1916.

In World War I he served in  
the Army in France and rose  
to captain. He was a civilian  
consultant to the guided-missile  
section of the Army Air Forces  
in World War II.

Mr. Hammond also worked  
on stage effects with the late  
Florenz Ziegfeld, impresario of  
the "Follies."

Discussing inventing in an in-  
terview some years ago, he  
said, "You have to have some  
talent and luck; luck is very  
important. You should keep  
looking for new ideas."

"A good field for the inven-  
tor," he remarked, "is toys  
for adults."

Surviving are his widow,  
the former Roxana Scoville,  
and a daughter, Mrs. Kazimir  
Karpuszek of Minneapolis.

A memorial service will be  
held Friday at 2 P.M. in the  
Second Congregational Church,