

## JOHN LAGER

John Lager was born in Sweden. He immigrated to New York City, and lived the remainder of his life in Brooklyn. During the late teens and 1920's he recorded with other accordionists Franzen, Olson and Jahrl. Like the others, he was very busy playing for dances in such places as Vanity Ballroom, Parkway Assembly, and Anderssons. He also played for various club functions, and during the summer he played at the Yacht Club on Long Island. Many of the yacht captains were Norwegian.

Unlike Eric Olson, Lager could not read music, and during recording sessions he would hear a tune a couple times and then be ready to record it. He recorded for both Victor and Columbia.

Lager died in 1962, exactly one year later than Franzen.

## ERIC OLSON

From the age of six years, Eric Olson (Olzen) studied violin and piano in his home country Sweden. His father was a professional violinist, and so Eric grew up in a musical environment. At age twelve he took accordion lessons from David Hellström, one time accordion champion of Sweden. By age thirteen Eric was playing professionally all over Europe, and in 1910 he made a number of recordings in Germany and England.

In 1912 Olson came to the U.S. and began a long and successful career of vaudeville and concert appearances, performing with such accordionists as Ragnar Sundquist, John Lager, Einar Holt, Arvid Franzen and Walter Eriksson. He also founded an accordion school in Brooklyn which became the center for Scandinavian accordionists. Eric Olson was their mentor as well as teacher for many.

During his career, Olson recorded more than 200 records, most of them for Columbia Records in New York City. He and his group The Old Fashion Melody Boys performed a regular Saturday morning show on WBBC Radio, Brooklyn. He was also very busy playing dances and various club functions in the area.

In retirement Olson lived in West Palm Beach, Florida. He died in 1984.

— LeRoy Larson 1983

## Eric Olson

One of the earliest popular Swedish instrumentalists was Eric Olson, a composer-accordionist who while spending much time in Europe switched to a more American instrument when he settled here. Born in Sweden in 1895, as a boy he learned to play the chromatic accordion. He came to America as a teenager and soon decided on a musical career, at first as chiefly a classical musician with his ten-man orchestra. Just before World War I he shifted to playing the piano accordion. After returning to Sweden he came back to America in the mid-1920s, switched more to popular pieces, opened a music school for his instrument in Brooklyn in 1926, which became one of the largest in the country, and began publishing his own sheet music in the early 1930s, with such compositions as "In the Hay Loft," and "Sunbeam Polka." He was well known among local Scandinavians in the mid-1930s for his Saturday morning radio show on WBBC in New York. He made around two hundred records of various genres for the leading labels in the twenty years following World War I.

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