Notes on How to Search the Database

This database is a transcription of the Gibson Guitar Co. shipping ledgers from March 1935 to January 1953 plus the addition of Joe Spann's well-known record of serial numbers and FONs (factory order numbers) collected over a period of nearly 50 years. The item descriptions are exactly as they appear in the Gibson records so may cause a little confusion (e.g., Southener Jumbos may appear as "So", "SJ" or "Southener").

The database is very spotty in places. The FONs for inexpensive instruments (e. g., L-0 and L-00 guitars) were rarely recorded, except when instruments sent back to Gibson for repairs. For more expensive instruments (e. g., L-4, L-5 etc.) the serial numbers were often, although not always, recorded.

Since the success rate of any single search may be low, searches are made by purchasing a "token". A successful search will usually generate the model name, a shipping date and a destination to which the instrument was shipped, but may also provide a dated repair record or the model number of the case sent with the instrument. When a search is made but yields no result, the "token" is not cancelled and another search can be made using the same token.

The FON or serial number to be searched must have an exact match in the database or no result will be displayed. This methodology was chosen to prevent getting a search result from partial FONs or serial numbers.

This method is also useful for searching hard to read FONs. For example, for FON 1199 the last digit (a letter) may not be readable. Searching FON 1199 will not yield a result because the full FON is actually 1199C. The "token" system allows the user to "guess" the last digit until a match is found.

Tokens are priced at US$5 for one, US$8 for two or US$10 for three.

As might be expected, there are many errors in the database: some as a result of hard to read records, some due to errors in the original shipping ledgers entries and some, inevitably, to errors in transcription. Please report any obvious errors and they will be corrected.

Due to the nature of the Gibson records this database is designed to be a work in progress. Hopefully, collectors and dealers will report FONs and serial numbers that don't appear in the database. For each additional piece of information a new entry will be added to the database and credit given to the person reporting. When reporting a new FON please report the model number and as much of the FON as you can read (a photograph would be appreciated).