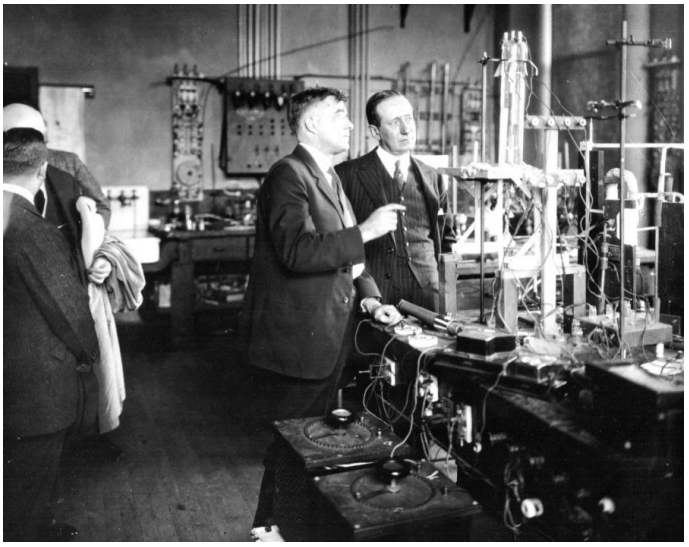
National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

1922 Photo of Marconi Visiting GE's Laboratory



This week we feature an item from the NCRTV Museum's library, which has a marvelous collection of historic photographs. This one pictures two notable individuals in the history of radio.

Guglielmo Marconi (right) is the famous radio pioneer who sent the first wireless message across the Atlantic in 1901. His company provided the radio system on board the *Titanic* that allowed the sinking ship to call for help, thus enabling the rescue of many passengers. Early in the 20th Century, Marconi's company was the preeminent firm providing reliable world-wide radio communication for ships at sea. (See "Marconi's Long-Distance Wireless Telegraph," *Dials and Channels, May 2017*.)

Irving Langmuir was a key scientist at General Electric's Schenectady, New York, research laboratory which made significant contributions to the development of vacuum tube technology in the early 20th century. By striving to understand the physics of tubes, Langmuir and his GE colleagues were able to make dramatic improvements in tube performance.

Langmuir won numerous awards, including the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1932, the Hughes Medal from the Royal Society of London, and the Faraday Medal from the U.K.'s Institution of Electrical Engineers. He served as president of the Institute of Radio Engineers and the American Association for the Advanced of Science.

Marconi, also a Nobel laureate, visited the Unites States often, where he might drop in on researchers at General Electric or Bell Labs, and he always enjoyed meeting with RCA's David Sarnoff, who began his career working for American Marconi. Throughout his life Marconi enjoyed "talking shop" with other radio engineers and scientists. (See *Dials and Channels,* September 2019.)

In this photo Langmuir is showing Marconi his tube laboratory and explaining how the apparatus works.

We appreciate your support of the museum so that historical artifacts like this one, and the stories that go with them, can be preserved for future generations. THANKS!