National Capital Radio & Television Museum

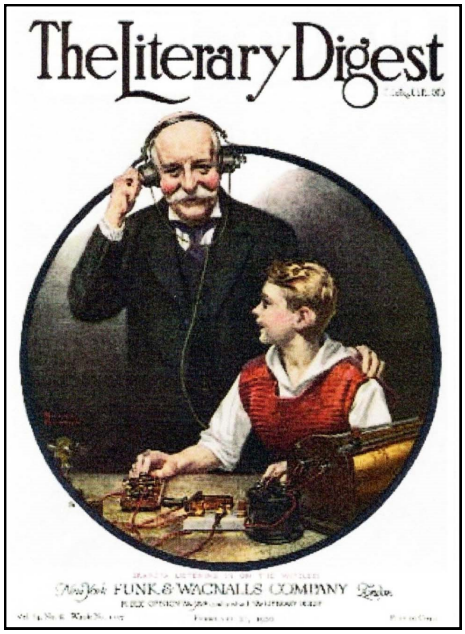
Artifact of the Week:

Norman Rockwell Plate



Beloved American artist Norman Rockwell created visual stories of everyday life featuring ordinary people, celebrating (or sometimes coping with) the latest developments. The scene on this decorative plate currently exhibited at the museum first appeared on the cover of *The Literary Digest* as "Grandpa Listening on the Wireless," on February 21, 1920.

The young boy demonstrates his ham radio wireless apparatus to his grandfather, who is undoubtedly pleased at his grandson's knowledge of this amazing new technology. Rockwell is quoted as saying about this image: "As my father clearly shows in 'The Radio Operator,' an inventive spirit can span generations."



The boy's hand rests on a telegraph key, suggesting that he can *send* Morse code as well as receive radio signals. The large coil appears to be a "loose coupler" tuning device used in conjunction with a crystal radio receiver. The knife switch on the table was to switch the antenna from transmit to receive.

In 1920 radio was an exciting new development that captured the attention of tech-oriented kids. Today's analog would be teenage kids fascinated by computers and robotics.

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!