National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

Seeley's Radio Delivery Truck



This week's artifact is an undated photograph from among the many in the museum library. The truck is a late 1920s model, so the photo is probably circa 1930.

At the time, radios were commonly purchased at department stores, shops exclusively selling and servicing radios, or electrical shops that might also have sold appliances such as toasters and waffle irons. The sign on this truck says that "Seeley's," had locations in Lynn and Chelsea, Massachusetts. It also indicates that Seeley's sold batteries, radios, and auto ignition components.

Large wood-cabinet console radios, popular at the time, were often too big and heavy for a buyer to cart home, so most dealers offered free delivery, necessitating a truck like this one. Since early 1930s radios generally required a long outdoor wire antenna to work well, many dealers offered free installation of an antenna if the customer purchased one of the higher priced models. In such cases, the truck would also carry an extension ladder.

Because radios of this era were costly, non-working radios would be repaired rather than junked. There was a market for used radios, so most dealers would take trade-ins. If the new radio was a replacement for an older model, the delivery truck would haul the old one back to the shop to be fixed up and sold in the used radio department.

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!