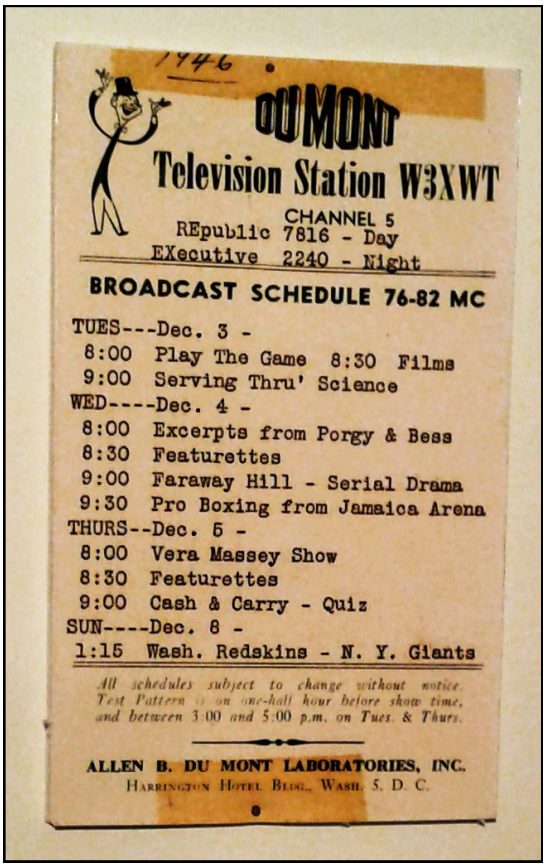
National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

1946 W3WXT Schedule



Alan B. DuMont was a television pioneer. Having made and sold oscilloscopes during the 1930s, DuMont began making and selling electronic television sets in 1939, one of the earliest companies to do so. He also launched early TV stations in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh. His company got a construction permit in May 1945 to build an experimental station in D.C., with call letters W3WXT. Initially housed in the Harrington Hotel, it got on the air soon after that, but it was months before the station had any significant programming to offer.

In November 1946 DuMont got FCC authorization to convert his experimental D.C. station to a commercial station with call letters WTTG (honoring DuMont's chief engineer **T**homas **T**. **G**oldsmith), broadcasting on Channel 5. The first program aired on WTTG was a Washington Lyons hockey game from the Uline Arena, sponsored by the U.S. Rubber Company.

DuMont formed the DuMont Television Network, which produced some quality TV shows during the 1950s, but did not have the resources to compete with NBC, CBS, and ABC and fell by the wayside by the mid-1950s. For more on WTTG history, see Bob Davis' article in the April 2007 museum newsletter.

The schedule shown here from early December 1946, just before W3WXT went commercial, emphasizes the fact that at that time TV stations were not on the air 24/7 as they are today. At first, only a couple of prime time evening hours were available for viewers. That is why many early TV sets were TV/radio combinations, so families could use the radio during the day, and switch over to TV in the evening.

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!