National Capital Radio & Television Museum

Artifact of the Week:

1939 Wilcox-Gay Wireless Record Player



In the 1930s the only way to enjoy recorded music in the home was to have a music box, a player piano, or a way to play 78-rpm phonograph records. This device would have been marketed to families that owned a radio but did not have a phonograph.

Purchasing this Wilcox-Gay Model A-60 was an interesting option for such a family. It was not a stand-alone phonograph. It had no speakers, but inside was a low-power AM transmitter that could broadcast the music from a phonograph record through any, or all, of the AM radios in the home. A frequency adjustment allowed the user to select a quiet place on the AM dial to receive the music.

Wilcox-Gay, based in Charlotte, Michigan, for most of its life, began in 1910 and stayed in business until 1963. The company made dictation machines, record players, and later, radios. It is best remembered by collectors for its “Recordio,” a radio and home recording machine introduced about the same time as the Model A-60. The device could play either purchased 78-rpm records or make home recordings on blank Recordio discs. Musicians such as Johnny Cash and Les Paul used Recordios.

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.