

RCA TRK-120

2015-51-1

Donated by Craig Roberts



RCA made a bold move by debuting all-electronic television broadcasting at the 1939 New York World's Fair. This all-electronic set lacked the mechanical mechanisms, like motor-driven spinning discs that were popular at the time. RCA began selling TV sets in the New York City area, despite lacking agreed-upon standards and commercial authorization from the FCC. Until 1941, TV stations operated experimentally without selling commercials.

Prior to WWII, television broadcasting was limited to just five cities—New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Schenectady, NY (home to General Electric's labs).

Early television sets faced design challenges, notably with picture tubes having long necks that prevented horizontal mounting without protruding too far from walls. To solve this, tubes were vertically mounted, with viewers seeing the reflected image in a lid mirror. Scanning was adjusted to prevent mirror-image viewing of printed material.

Pre-WWII TV sets are exceedingly rare, making this artifact a significant addition to the Museum's collection. These sets typically included built-in AM radios, allowing families to listen during the day and switch to TV in the evening, when broadcasts were limited to a few hours of prime time.