



Artifact Showcase:

RCA 1850A Iconoscope and 7295C Image Orthicon

One of the biggest challenges in early electronic television was developing a suitable camera pickup tube. U.S. scientists such as Philo Farnsworth and Vladimir Zworykin, and others in Europe, worked on this problem. The first commercial TV cameras used camera tubes like this monochrome RCA iconoscope (left), made just after WW II as a replacement part. The left diagram (from a Zworykin patent) shows the internal construction of an iconoscope.

Iconoscopes were not very sensitive and required extremely bright lighting. Performers in early TV shows were usually sweaty due to the intense lights. Circa 1950, iconoscope tubes were being phased out in favor of image orthicon camera tubes (right picture and diagram) that did not require such intense lighting. RCA was a leader in manufacturing both types of camera tubes.

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!

