



Artifact Showcase:

Sylvania Model C32M UHF Converter Box

As television began to catch on with consumers in the early 1950s, TV sets were equipped to receive VHF (very high frequency) channels 2 through 13. It quickly became clear that there were not enough VHF channels to serve all the cities that wanted television. In response, the Federal Communications Commission allocated additional TV channels at higher frequencies. Beginning in 1952, UHF (Ultra-high frequency) channels 14 through 83 became available. It took awhile before the government required TV manufacturers to provide both VHF and UHF channel capability, and so thousands of TV sets in the hands of consumers were not equipped to receive UHF stations.



If you owned a VHF-only television set, and then a UHF station came on the air in your town, you did have an option other than purchasing a new UHF-compatible TV set. You could buy a UHF converter box like the Sylvania Model C32M shown here as well as a UHF antenna to attach to the antenna terminals on the converter box. Another cable went from the box to the antenna terminals on your TV set. Most UHF converters had a switch to select output on either VHF channel 3 or VHF channel 4. You would set your TV to whichever of those two channels was not active in your town, and then you could receive any UHF station with a sufficiently strong signal that it could be tuned to on the converter box.

Some UHF converters had a line cord that plugged into the wall outlet. Others were battery powered. Many consumer electronics companies offered UHF converter boxes at reasonable prices well into the 1960s.

The higher UHF channels were rarely used; today UHF channels go from 14 to 36.

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!