



Artifact Showcase

Uncle Al's "Miracle" Model 2 Crystal Radio

In the 1920s factory-built tube-type radios were expensive. To save money many people built home-made crystal radios, which typically used a crystal of galena (lead-sulfide) as the detector to separate the audio signal from the carrier wave. To have any reception at all, you needed to install an outside wire antenna, as high as possible, have a good ground connection, and use a sensitive pair of earphones.



A number of companies offered factory-built crystal sets. This 1925 model came from Uncle Al's Radio Shop in Oakland, California. It sold for \$12.50 (\$225 in today's dollars). You would have been better off to spend somewhat more to get a basic vacuum tube radio, with its better performance.

Uncle Al called the Model 2 his "Miracle" set. That was certainly a gross exaggeration, but Uncle Al's crystal radio probably was slightly better than the simplest crystal radios in that it had *two* tuned circuits rather than the more typical one.

The three binding posts on the left are antenna connections. The top one is labeled S, the middle one L, and the lower one is the ground connection. A short antenna would be connected to the top one (S), a long antenna to the middle one (L). The two terminals on the right are for the earphones.

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!