

Donation of the Month

Grundig Majestic radio

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Donor: Jodi Hamilton



Radios used to be all the rage. They sat prominently in the living room, looking more like a piece of furniture than a piece of technology. Radios kept people in touch with news around the world and brought endless hours of entertainment. Much of the early technology used in radios such as this one was vacuum tube technology. This particular radio was made by the Grundig Majestic Company in West Germany. The original sticker notes it could pick up 8 broadcast and 13 FM stations. Today, radios have become smaller and less prominent; however the information and entertainment they provide is still a part of everyday life.

It was the technology that made the radio possible. Vacuum tube technology has been around since the 17th century. However, it wasn't until the 1850s that technology produced a sophisticated version of the tube. In 1904, John Ambrose Fleming invented the "Fleming Tube", which he called a thermionic tube. This tube, called a diode, when heated created an electric current as electrons flowed from a filament to a metal plate. Not only did it create an electric current it could detect radio waves. This technology got a big boost in 1906 with the invention of the triode. By adding a 3rd element within the tube the radio waves could be amplified. As this new technology took hold, KDKA out of Pittsburg became the first commercial radio station on November 2, 1920.

By the time this 1958 model 7038 Grundig Majestic radio was produced, radio technology had come a long way. The Grundig Company started in 1930 by Max Grundig in Fuerth, Germany. After World War II, Grundig opened a new business Grundig Werke GmbH. Between 1948 and 1960 Grundig produced over 1,000 different radio models. Made in West Germany this unit was sold in the US by Grundig's American sales division called Majestic International Sales Corporation.



This very nice looking light walnut cabinet made the radio a piece of furniture as well as a form of entertainment and news. In the top is a 4-speed turntable for records. Some examples of the model also came with a reel-to-reel tape. According to the donor this radio still works! If plugged in, the vacuum tubes warm up, and we should be able to pick up 8 broadcast and 13 FM stations. The front panel of the cabinet pulls out to reveal the controls for the radio, complete with an indicator light letting you know when the tubes are ready. Not only can you listen to domestic radio stations, but you can pick up stations from around the world.

Vacuum technology first made the world wireless as radio waves were harnessed. Bringing radio waves into homes made the world a smaller place bringing news from across the globe, and provided hours of endless entertainment. While most living rooms are now dominated by large screen televisions instead of radios, radios still provide entertainment and news for those at work or in the car.