

# RADIO LORE FOR NOVICE AND EXPERIENCED FAN

## Huge Army Radio Net Spreads Over Country Saving Big Tax

Completion of System Eliminates Heavy Payments to Private Concerns for Delivery of Official Messages.—Signal Corps in Charge

BY JOHN A. BALLARD.

The recent radio conference in Washington directed attention to many amazing revelations regarding the expansion of commercial and Government radio activities as well as in the familiar broadcasting field. In his address at the conclusion of the conference Secretary Hoover mentioned the interference difficulties presented by the 18,000 licensed transmitting stations in the United States. In discussing the ever-increasing demand for assignment of wave-length bands Mr. Hoover mentioned the needs of the army and navy in this connection.

We are all familiar with the Navy's obvious requirements for radio communication between vessels and for its ship-to-shore message traffic, but the needs of the army for radio communication in peace-time are not as apparent. This is a phase of the work of the United States Signal Corps that is rarely brought to the attention of the public.

The impression, held by some, that the army carries on in peace-time in a manner that might be likened to the fatted calf, is an erroneous one. All branches of the military establishment are actively engaged in constructive public service of some sort, and not the least energetic of these peace-time activities is the work of the communications division of the Signal Corps. This branch of the signal service operates the War Department radio net, a comprehensive network of radio stations covering important cities within the continental limits of the United States.

While the radio net was established primarily to eliminate duplication of effort and to save taxpayers money by the elimination of sending many messages by commercial telegraph, the net is now one of the biggest links in the nation's chain of national defense.

A glance at the accompanying map gives a good idea of just what this net is and what it means in the way of co-ordinating activities in time of stress or catastrophe. The various lines, as explained in the legend on the map, are in reality "paths in the air." In most cases, as communication is carried out virtually entirely by code and radiophone transmission.

One of the most impressive features of the development of this service is the fact that it has been done so quietly and yet so efficiently that the general public probably knows but little of its work. It is vital part in protecting and expediting the military and peace-time activities of the nation, both internally and in coastwise and transoceanic communications.

Not only does it provide efficient means of covering virtually every corner of the continent in the shortest space of time, but it is training officers and enlisted men in a service which has become very important in modern military practice—the telephonic and radio communication systems.

Those who train in this course not only receive a thorough discipline in the routine of communications, but they are instructed in the very latest which the science of radio has to offer, for it is the best of this service that it keeps at all times abreast of the best in radio. The War Department radio net came into being in January, 1922. The inauguration of this important service was due to military necessity, its growth was the result of the policy of the President of the United States to save the taxpayer's money by the establishment of the budget system.

In preparing the budget, when the expenditures of all Government departments were carefully scrutinized, it became apparent to the chief co-ordinator that there was a duplication of effort in Government communication activities, entailing unnecessary expense.

In a preliminary study of the situation it developed that the following departments—Army, Navy, Agriculture, Post Office, Treasury and Shipping Board—all operated independent communication agencies, the efforts of which might well co-ordinate in handling official telegraphic business of all departments and bureaus of the Government, at a considerable saving.

A joint conference was called of all governmental departments and bureaus concerned, to adopt a plan to effect the co-ordination decided upon. It was found at this conference that the Army Signal Corps was paramount in inland communication and the navy in offshore communication.

The general policy was then adopted that the Signal Corps would utilize its facilities for all inland communication and the navy would handle all overseas message traffic. The chief signal officer, the ranking officer of the Signal Corps,

gave his personal supervision to the application of this policy, with the result that an efficient communication system, the War Department radio net, was developed.

For the first time in our history, governmental business within the continental limits of the United States was conducted by radio. The extent of this new service and the amount of message traffic involved can be realized by considering the accompanying map of station locations and the fact that governmental telegraphic business is now handled by the War Department radio net for the following departments and bureaus:

War Department, Navy Department, Department of Labor, Department of Justice, Shipping Board, Post Office, Civil Service Commission, Internal Revenue, Interstate Commerce Commission, Veterans' Bureau, Public Roads, Panama Canal Zone.

With the growth of this net it was necessary for a separate section of the communication division of the Signal Corps to be organized to carry on this important work. As a result, the radio, plant and traffic section was formed.

This section is charged with the installation, operation and maintenance of all army radio stations on land and on vessels operated by the Army Quartermaster Corps. In this way the control of the radio system is centralized, since the section also assigns wave lengths and call letters, prescribes operation methods and schedules and settles interference cases.

In the beginning, with five stations in operation, about 50 official messages were handled daily, but this number increased rapidly and to-day the daily traffic at Washington, D. C., alone is about 600 messages. (The average Government official message contains about 40 words.) There are now 179 stations in the net, of which 53 are ship stations on Quartermaster Corps vessels. This total of 179 stations also includes 23 Alaskan stations, 4 in the Panama Canal Zone, 12 in the Philippines and 1 in Hawaii.

In the limits of the United States the stations are distributed throughout the nine Army Corps Areas, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and, in addition to the army station, use is made of one navy station located at Bremerton navy yard, across the river from Seattle, Wash.

As a general rule, the traffic is handled directly to and from Washington, D. C., through the corps area stations. When necessary, however, where stations do not maintain continuous service, the traffic is relayed to destinations via the local corps area nets, the latter also being shown on the accompanying map.

Most of the stations are equipped with a Signal Corps radio set, type SCR-140, a CW telegraph set using six-type P pilotone with a working range of from 200 to 600 miles. The transmitter operates on wave length of between 1000 and 8000 metres. The receiver is designed to receive in the 200 to 8000 meter wave-length range.

Data regarding some of the stations follows:

Call letter.	Name of station.	Wave length (metres)
WVA	Washington, D. C.	1333 2008
WVP	Governor's Island, N. Y.	1000 1044
WUBA	Fort Monmouth, N. J.	1000 1400
	(Camp Vail)	
WVQ	Baltimore, Md.	1601
	(Fort Howard)	

Other principal stations are located at Boston; Fort McPherson, Ga.; Columbus, O.; Chicago; Omaha, Neb.; San Antonio, Tex.; and San Francisco. Information as to call letters of these stations of the War Department net may be found in "Commercial and Government Radio Stations of the United States," published by the Department of Commerce.

All of the army radio stations in the net are operated exclusively by military operators, and it was soon found that this service was the best medium for the training of operators. However, the army cannot compete with commercial radio companies in the matter of salaries for operators, so as a result there is a large annual turnover in personnel, because men complete their enlistments and often leave the service to accept more remunerative positions in commercial concerns.

Despite these frequent changes, however, there is a high esprit de corps and considerable friendly rivalry between the staffs at the different stations. All strive to have their own station pile up

## Short Circuits



### SPACE CHARGE EFFECT

At times Smith likes to switch off the set and marvel at the science that makes it possible. It happened that I dropped in to see him during one of these reveries.

"I'm back inside one of these magic tubes again," he explained. "Just doing a little speculating on the side." "What's that to speculate about?" I asked. "Thought you knew all the details of tube action?"

Smith was not so sure about it. "It just has occurred to me," he said, "that when these little electrons start shooting off the heated filament tube ought to get filled with 'em they would repel each other. Electrons, as I picture them, are negative charges. Well, now, if you got the tube filled with them, how are you going to expect more electrons to jump off the filament? Like charges oppose each other."

That was true enough, but Smith was overlooking the effect of the positive charge on the plate of the tube. The plate charge tends to attract electrons against their better judgment. Their inclination to return to the filament when they meet a horde of their own kind in the tube space is overcome by their natural attraction for the positive charge imposed upon the plate by the "B" battery. Still, Smith's speculation was serving to introduce a feature of tube action that was new to him.

"You have stumbled over what is known as the space charge," I told him. "It is a very important feature of tube action because it is one of the situations you must take into consideration when you operate the set. The amount of

current you apply to the filament or to the plate has an important bearing upon the space charge of the tube itself, and vice versa.

"First of all, however, get an accurate picture of conditions within a vacuum tube. To start with, there are the three visible elements: the filament, the plate and the grid which is placed between them. Some of the invisible features of the tube will be plain enough once you understand what those three elements do."

"When the filament is heated by connecting it into the 'A' battery circuit, it starts to give off electrons. Most tube filaments are coated with a layer of thorium, which is a substance which repels electrons to jump off. The more the filament is heated, up to a certain point, the faster is the rate of electron emission. All this, however, is said with the provision that the electrons have some place to go."

"You can't just shoot them off into the tube space and expect them to keep shooting off, because if any electrons are in the space and if there is nothing to attract others through this space, there is going to be a clash with electrons going back to the filament again. This is where the plate functions. We give it a positive potential by connecting it to a high voltage 'B' battery. The electrons then have somewhere to go."

"When the electrons start jumping to the plate they form an invisible bridge. The strength of this bridge, speaking roughly, controls the plate current, which is the current that starts to flow through the 'B' battery or plate circuit as soon as the electrons furnish a connection between the plate and the filament. The grid, carrying the tuned radio frequencies from the broadcasting stations, then controls this flow of plate current. This is where the additional controls of this plate circuit. They have nothing to do with the changeover from radio frequencies to audio frequencies, but they have everything to do with reception. Unless they are right, the set doesn't work."

"Two controls of the plate current are within easy reach of the radio fan, but the third control requires practice if best results are to be had. The filament rheostat is one control. The tube filament must be heated to a certain temperature before it will operate properly, and it must not be burned too brightly. The second control is the plate current. Usually the set is wired so that the detector plate voltage is at a fixed point, but this must be in accordance with the type of tube used. And when the batteries commence to give out it is necessary to rewire the detector plate voltage so as to give the plate the right potential value. The third control is a balance between filament control, plate potential and the negative space charge."

"This space charge is the tendency of the tube to retard the rate of flow of electrons from the filament to the plate and thus to retard the flow of plate current from the plate to the filament back over the bridge of electrons when the filament is giving off more electrons than the plate will take. Usually the plate is wired for a certain value. Suppose it can attract 1000 electrons per second. So long as the filament does not give off more than this number of electrons per second, the space charge will not be effective. When the filament gives off 1200 electrons, however, the space charge effect is such as to send 200 electrons back to the filament per second. You can see, therefore, that the plate current is at its maximum when the filament gives off as many electrons as the plate will take, which is just below the point where the space charge effect comes into play."

Smith interrupted me by tuning for a station and then practicing what he had just learned. Smith ought to be called a radio dynamo.

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## Simple Receiver Now Demanded For Daily Home Entertainment

Designers Concentrating on Sets Meeting Ordinary Requirements.—Expert Explains All-Wave Receiver With Plug-in Coils

BY WILLIAM S. TRINKLE

The receiver here described is a very good example of the attempt now being made by most of the radio designers to meet the needs of the average family. The operation is quite easy as the three condenser dials all read about the same when a station is tuned in and the only other adjustment necessary is the potentiometer controlling the oscillations in the radio-frequency circuit. No rheostats are used, regulation of the filament current of all five tubes being taken care of by automatic controls.

This arrangement of controls makes it easy for all the members of the family to use the set without waiting for the "expert." Perhaps one of the members is of an experimental turn of mind and would like to tune in on the lower wave lengths, for example, amateur radio traffic and the low-wave-length broadcast stations. This receiver is designed to meet the above conditions, having a wave-length range of from 30 to 550 meters, accomplished by using various sized radio-frequency transformers.

The parts used in building this receiver are as follows:

- One set of interchangeable R. F. coils.
- Eight standard sockets.
- Three four-inch dials.
- One potentiometer.
- Five Amperites No. 1 A.
- Two audio-transformers.
- One 100-ohm potentiometer.
- One condenser .00025 megohms.
- One condenser .005 mfd.
- One condenser .01 mfd.
- One single-circuit filament control jack, No. 3.

One double-circuit jack, No. 2 A.

One filament switch.

Nine engraved binding posts, as follows:

"Ant. Gnd. A+, A-, B-, B+, B-, B+, C-, C+."

One panel, 7 by 21 inches.

One panel, 6 1/2 by 20 inches.

The antenna coupler and radio-frequency coils of each set of three coils are identical in appearance and windings, and are interchangeable. The windings are of the Lorenz type and are made rather odd in shape. The shape of the windings conserves space and to a certain extent limits the field to a definite direction, so that interstage coupling is

These transformers are mounted on a base having four prongs, similar to the base of standard vacuum tubes. Just as the prongs make contact with the springs of the tube sockets, so are the coils inserted in sockets, being thus interchangeable, so that three-coil combinations covering any of three wave-bands may be used with no more trouble than would be necessary in taking out an old tube and inserting a new one.

The connections from the sockets of these transformers are as follows: (G) and (A) are the primary, the (G) being connected to the plate of the preceding tube and the (A) to the "B" battery and the secondary leads are brought out through prongs which connect to the (P) and (A) posts, the (P) going to the grid of the next tube, while the (A) is the grid return. This arrangement makes it easy to do a very neat job of wiring, because nearly all of the connections can be made below the baseboard.

Some makes of tube sockets do not have the polarity of the filament terminals indicated. With the filament terminals turned toward you, the left will be negative and the right positive.

The specified coils may be bought in three sets of three each. The No. 1 set is designated to cover a wave-length band of from 100 to 300, and the No. 3 is the regular broadcast set and covers from 224 to 555 meters. All of these coils cover their respective bands when tuned with a .0005 mfd. variable condenser.

These sets of coils may be purchased

separately and the average builder will probably start off with the No. 3 or "broadcast band" set, so that broadcast concerts may be heard. As time goes on the No. 1 set may be obtained to listen in on the low-wave-length broadcasting stations, for rebroadcasting and also the amateurs carrying on traffic in the 40 and 80-meters channels. The No. 2 set may then be had if the builder is interested in code work, to be able to hear the amateurs sending on 200 meters.

The condensers used in this set are of the metal and plastic variety and have a maximum capacity of .0005 mfd. They have a straight-line capacity curve except at the lower end of the capacity. Here the stator plates are cut away slightly so that the lower wave-length stations, for example, are separated a little further apart than the higher ones.

With the regular broadcast set of coils, the dials specified will be found to be perfectly satisfactory and the tuning quite easy. Those of you who have ever tuned a neodyne will understand just how these dials operate. If you expect to equip your set with the complete kit of coils it is suggested the vernier dials having a good reduction or three of the straight-line frequency converter dials be used.

As you would naturally expect, the tuning becomes extremely sharp when the lower wave-length bands are worked. The vernier dials will really be a necessity with the 30 to 100 meter band. Of the various types available, it is suggested that the vernier, S. L. P. converter dials, be used with this wave-length range, as the stations will have a better dial spread and it will be easier to tune in the lower end of the band.

The potentiometer control on the set is of the metal and plastic variety and has a maximum capacity of .0005 mfd. It may be used for a volume control.

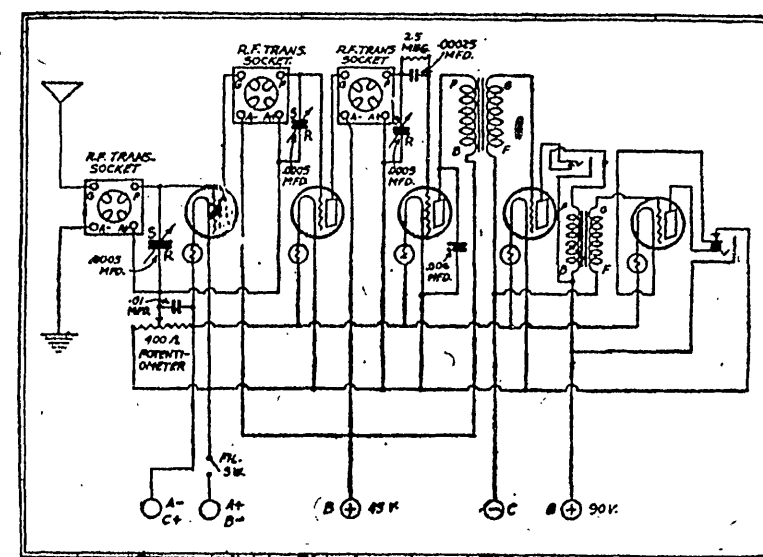
The filament temperature of all five tubes is regulated by a separate automatic filament control. This self-adjusting feature saves at least two manual controls and operates the tubes at their rated voltage. The tubes now available on the market are so uniform that this method of controlling the temperature is very practical and works the tubes at maximum efficiency.

The "A" battery current is turned on and off by a panel-type switch. The filament control jack in the last stage of the audio lights the last tube when it is in use. When the phones or speaker are used in the first-stage jack the last tube is automatically turned off.

The audio couplers in this receiver are low-ratio transformers and give very true reproduction of the broadcast concert. The circuit is standard in every respect, using the conventional "C" battery bias for the grids. If the builder wishes to experiment with more amplification, three of the audio couplers may be used and the output from the last fed into one of the new power tubes, or two standard tubes in parallel can be used.

The assembly of this set is not complicated and no trouble should be experienced if the general layout of the parts as here illustrated is followed. The wiring is easy and most of it can be placed beneath the subpanel. There are virtually no long leads in the set.

The tuning is similar to the general five-tube radio-frequency receiver, all of the dials reading about the same for any station. After a station has once been tuned in, the settings of the dials may be recorded for future reference. The potentiometer is used just below the point at which the radio-frequency tubes break into self-oscillation. Going below this point toward the positive side reduces the volume.













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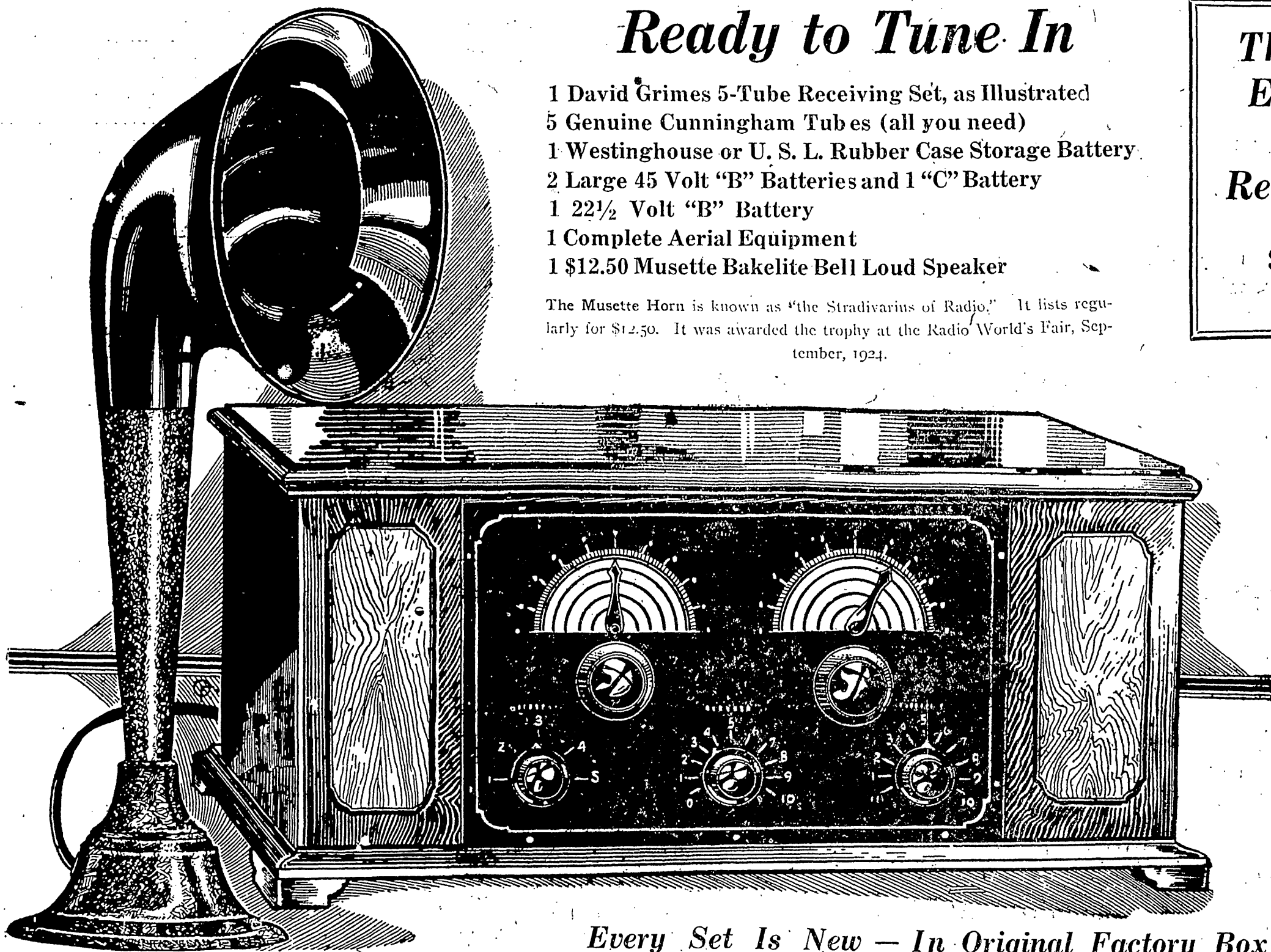
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