

# Tales from the Electronic Hearth

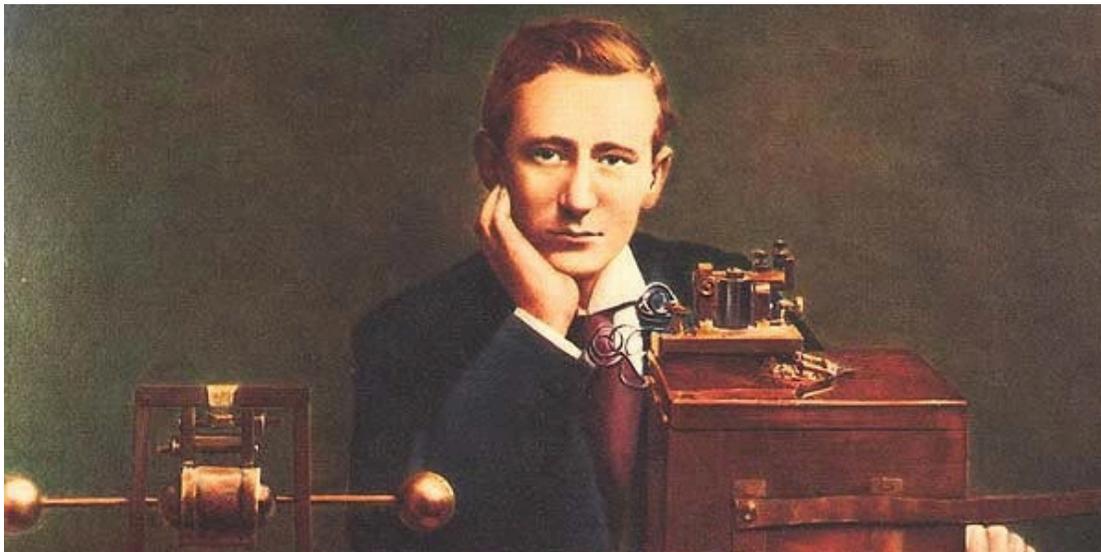
## Radio changed our way of life

- At first, it could only be used for sending messages, point-to-point.
- Later, it was used to “broadcast” to a larger audience.
- From that point on, it literally changed the face of mass communication.



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## THE BEGINNINGS



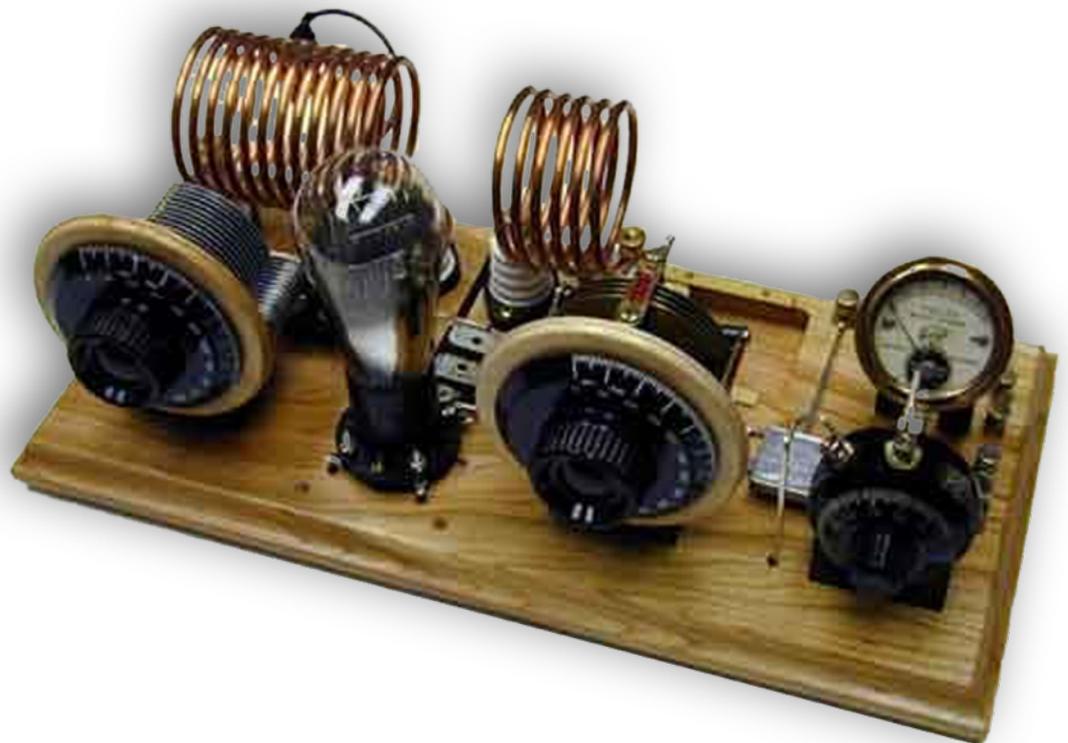
Guglielmo Marconi

# Guglielmo Marconi

- An Italian inventor, he proved the feasibility of radio communication.
- He was born in 1874, and was not very good in school.
- But he loved electricity
- He sent and received his first radio signal in Italy in 1895.
- By 1899 he flashed the first wireless signal across the English Channel and two years later received the letter "S", telegraphed from England to Newfoundland.
- This was the first successful transatlantic radiotelegraph message in 1902.
- 1903: King Edward VII and Pres. Theodore Roosevelt exchanged messages over radio
- 1904: Marconi established wireless news service. He also started American Marconi, later RCA.

## How did it work?

- Radio-telegraphy is the sending by radio waves the same dot-dash message (morse code) used in a telegraph.
- Transmitters at that time were called spark-gap machines.
- It was developed mainly for ship-to-shore and ship-to-ship communication.
- This was a way of communicating between two points; however, it was not broadcasting as we know it today.



## Signals were sent over enormous antenna arrays



y.

- What was needed was a way to strengthen those signals.
- Enter Lee DeForest.
- In the early 1900s, the great need for further development of radio was an efficient and delicate detector of electromagnetic radiation.
- Lee De Forest provided that detector (the Audion Tube).
- It made it possible to amplify the radio frequency signal picked up by the antenna before application to the receiver detector;
- thus, much weaker signals could be utilized than had previously been possible.



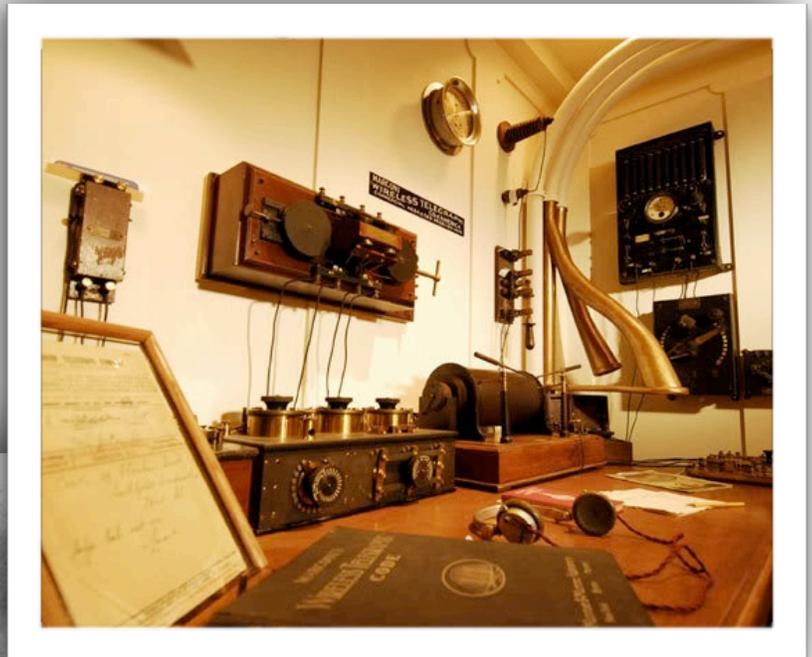
Lee DeForest

- The result of Lee DeForest's work was the invention of amplitude-modulated or AM radio that allowed for a multitude of radio stations.
- It was the first method of impressing **SOUND** on a radio signal other than dots and dashes.
- It was the beginning of “broadcasting.”

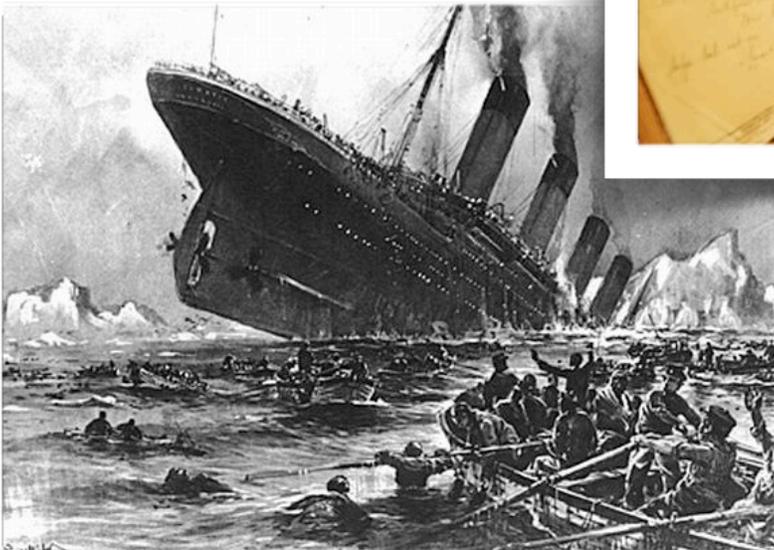


## It was also the beginning of regulation

- 1912: the Titanic sinks
- 1912: Federal Radio Act
- 1917: Government shuts down amateur radio
- 1926: NBC is established
- 1927: Federal Radio Commission is established
- 1928: CBS is established
- 1934: Federal Communications Act establishes FCC



Reconstruction of radio room on Titanic



# By the 1920s, everybody has a radio!

- “Radio enthusiasm is spreading through the country like whooping cough through a kindergarten; it has taken the place of prohibition as the foremost topic of dinner-party conversation”

—advertising executive Bruce Barton, 1922



“Comin’ In Great!”

## At Last! — High Efficiency Receivers at a Down-to-Earth Quick-Sale Price

ELEVEN years in the manufacture of electrical units and apparatus—eleven years in the production of one line of equipment, means something in accumulated facilities.

That’s the answer to how we have been able to market this super-sensitive radio head set for



All the high-priced qualities—extreme sensitiveness, perfect balance, natural voice pitch, no scratches—BASCO Receiver refinements. Light weight, and—solid horse shoe type magnet, no laminated connections, no loose, hairlike wires.

Light, extra sensitive diaphragm, set to thousandth accuracy from magnet poles. Clean cut, rugged design easy on the head—comfortable on the ears and gills. Compare them with any other head set, irrespective of price. You’ll be convinced they’re what you want, for quick sale.

Write for exceptional dealer proposition and list of Basco Radio



**\$6.00**  
Put up in attractive orange-colored cartons

**Briggs & Stratton**  
Milwaukee Products Wisconsin



## ATWATER KENT RADIO



MODEL H RADIO SPEAKER. Entirely of metal. Crystalline finished in two shades of brown. With 9 feet of flexible cord. \$21



MODEL 30, six-tube, ONE Dial Receiver. Solid mahogany cabinet; gold-plated name plate, power supply switch and vernier knob. \$60



MODEL 33, six-tube, ONE Dial Receiver. Antenna adjustment device. Unusual selectivity. Solid mahogany cabinet; gold-plated name plate, power supply switch and vernier knob. \$59



MODEL E RADIO SPEAKER. The result of nearly three years' laboratory work. Faithfully covers the entire range of musical tones, from the lowest to the highest register. With 9 feet of flexible cord. \$30



MODEL 35, six-tube, ONE Dial Receiver. Crystalline-finished cabinet; gold-plated slip-model name plate, decorative coverlet and power supply switch. \$65

They're not alike—  
and yet they are

WHEN every note of the music you hear is what the distant artist intended you to hear—that's *tone*. When you select or change programs at will by touching ONE Dial—that's *simplicity*. When your radio always does what you wish it to do—that's *reliability*. When you are glad to have your guests see it as well as listen—that's *beauty*. When you avoid high prices and at the same time enjoy radio to the utmost—that's *economy*.

The instruments composing the family of Atwater Kent Radio differ in special abilities. In tone quality, simplicity, reliability, beauty and economy they are alike—for these are fundamental.

Write for illustrated booklet telling the complete story of Atwater Kent Radio

ATWATER KENT MANUFACTURING COMPANY  
A. Atwater Kent, President  
4745 Winabickon Avenue Philadelphia, Pa.

ONE Dial Receiver Licensed under U. S. Patent 1,044,004

Prices slightly higher from the Radio's West, and in Canada  
EVERY SUNDAY EVENING—The Atwater Kent Radio Hour brings you the stars of opera and concert, in Radio's finest program. Hear it at 9:15 Eastern Time, 8:15 Central time, through:

WEAF . . . . . New York	KSD . . . . . St. Louis
WEER . . . . . Boston	WWS . . . . . Detroit
WCAR . . . . . Pittsburgh	WFI . . . . . Philadelphia
WJAB . . . . . Cincinnati	WCCO . . . . . Mpls.-St. Paul
WTAM . . . . . Cleveland	WVY . . . . . Schenectady
WCN . . . . . Chicago	WBB . . . . . Atlanta
WCC . . . . . Washington	WAM . . . . . Nashville
WGB . . . . . Buffalo	WMC . . . . . Memphis
WOC . . . . . Danversport	WRA . . . . . Louisville
WJAF . . . . . Kansas City	WTAA . . . . . Dallas
	KVOO . . . . . Oklahoma City

# Radio changes daily life

- Simultaneity of experience: Everyone can listen at the same time.
- Changing concepts of time: We learned to “tune in” to certain programs broadcast at certain times.
- What we call today “appointment” media.
- Changing sense of nationhood, identity, community through:
  - DX-ing with crystal sets
  - Listening to music
  - Storytelling

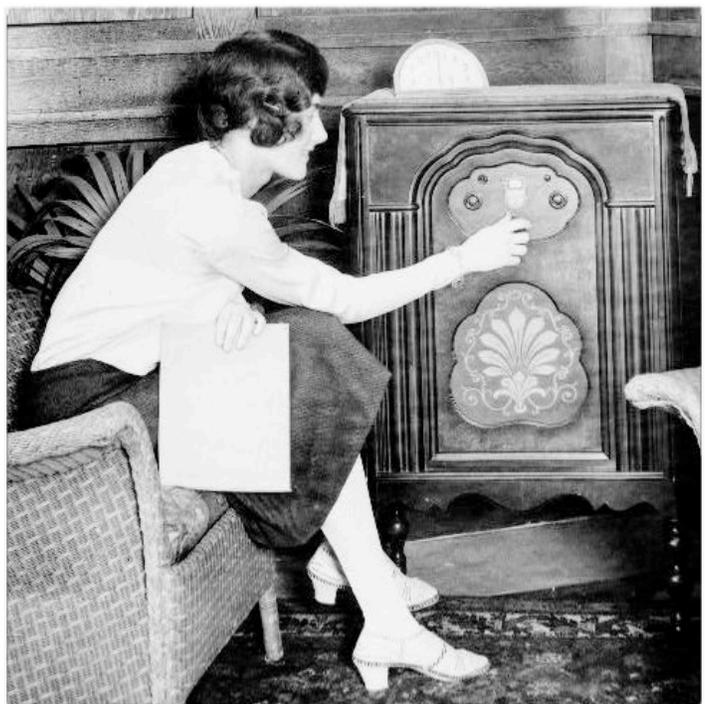
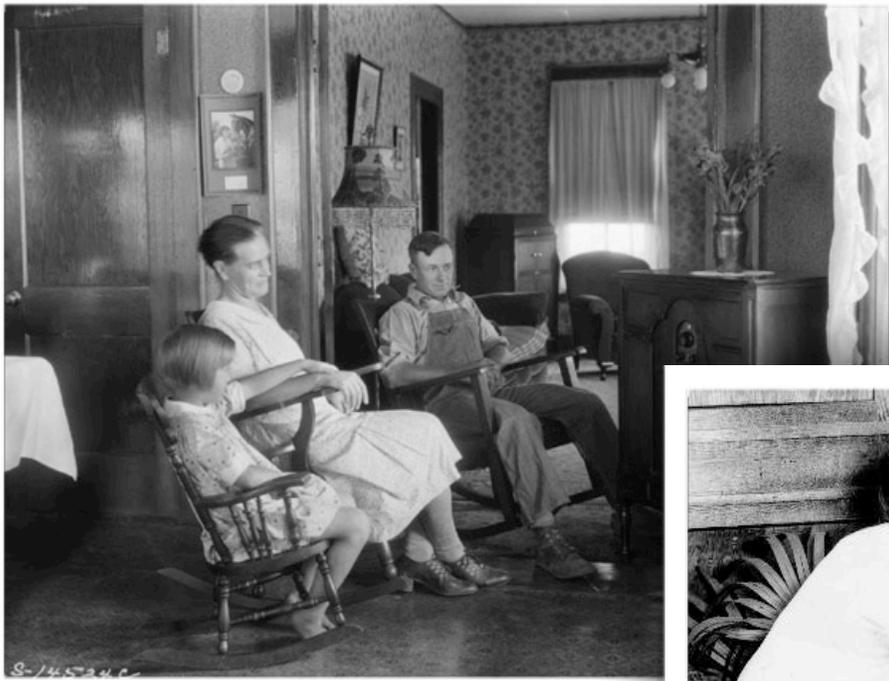
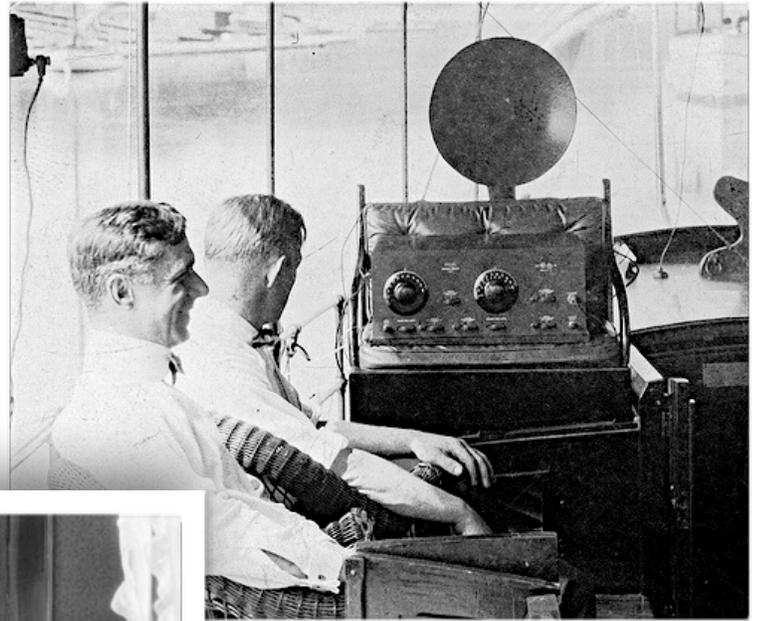


## Early radio listening



At first, there were no speakers, so you had to listen through headphones. The earliest radios required large batteries to provide the electric current.



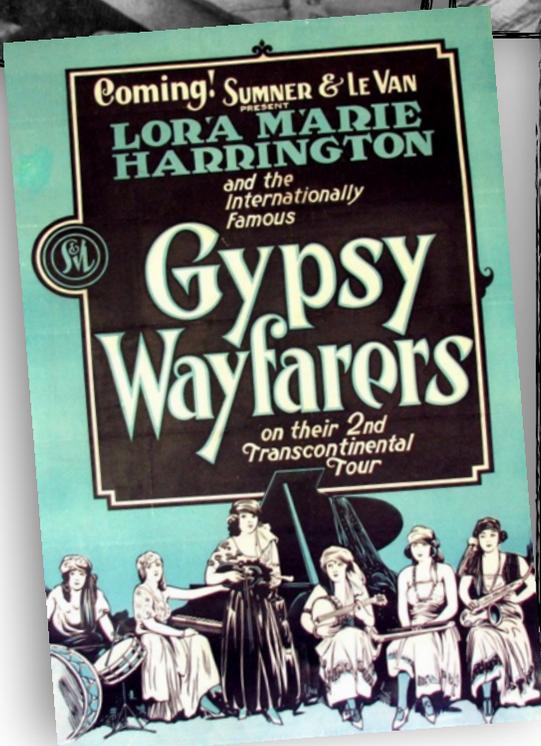


Early speakers utilized large "horns" much the way early gramophones employed them. Later radios became self-contained furniture with the speakers inside.

# How did radio change our lives?

Thinking about home as space

- If you had no media in your home, what would you do for news? For entertainment?
- Would you leave house? Why?
- If you stayed at home, what spaces would you use for news & entertainment?
- Would you do these alone or with others?
- If a radio then came into your home, how would that change your life?



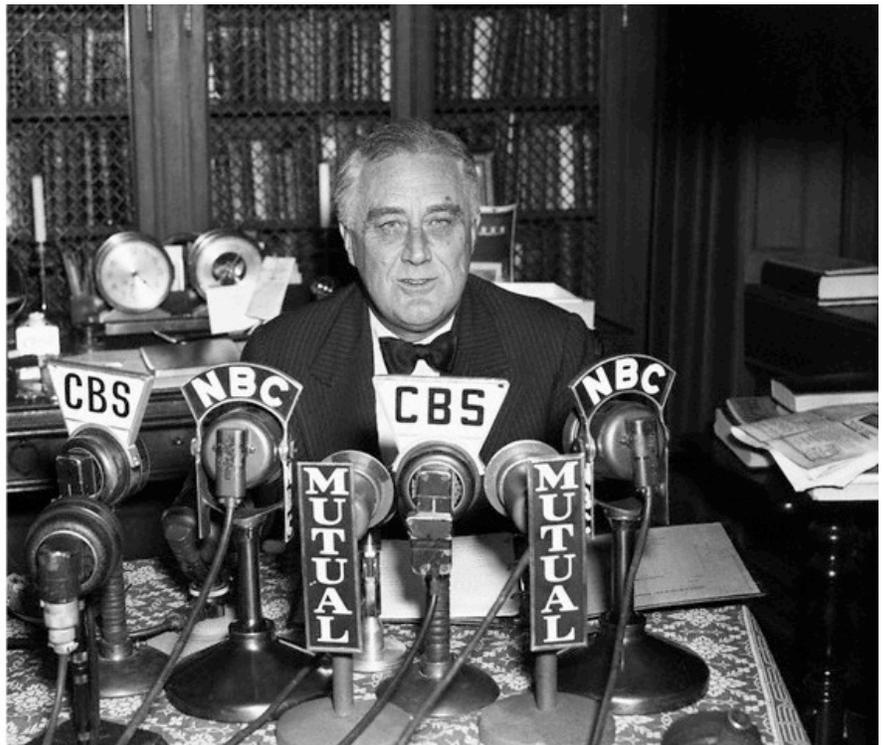
## The changing hearth

- Large radios dominated living rooms
- Made for stationary, at-home audience
- Families gathered 'round the "electronic hearth"
- Time became segmented by programming



# What was on the radio?

Beyond the 1920s



Both Hitler and FDR came into power at the same time. Both used radio.

# Radio Programming

During the 1930s, radio provided a wide variety of programming.

- News
- Mysteries & Comedy
- Soap operas
- Talks shows



Popular NBC newscaster Elmer Davis



Publicity photo of the "Shadow"



The comedy team, Bud Abbott & Lou Costello



Part of the cast of Guiding Light



People began to believe in radio as an authoritative source.

## Mary Margaret McBride

- Popular program on daily at 1 p.m. 1930s-1950s
- She was the “Oprah” of her day
- Hosted a range of guests: Gen. MacArthur, Walter White (head of NAACP)
- “Doing the products”—she tested all of them herself, enhancing her credibility.



## War of the Worlds

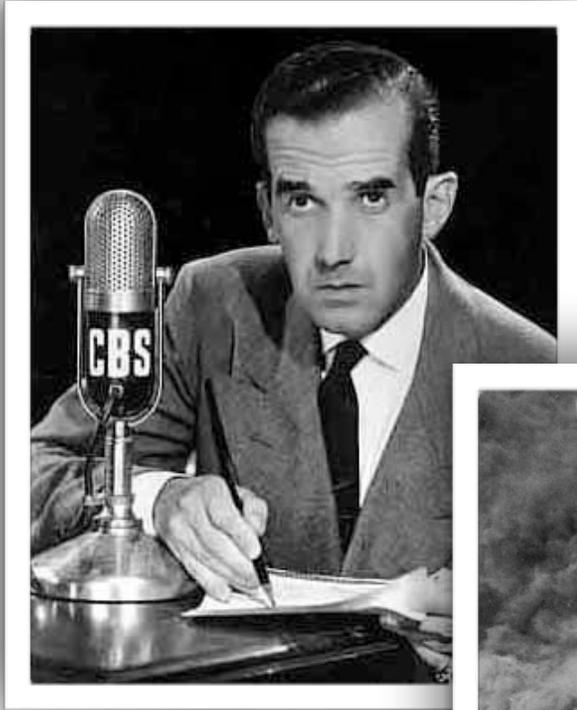
- “War of the Worlds” was broadcast October 30, 1938 on Orson Welles’ Mercury Theatre on the Air in New York city.
- Allegedly, thousands of people believed it was real, resulting in panic in some places.



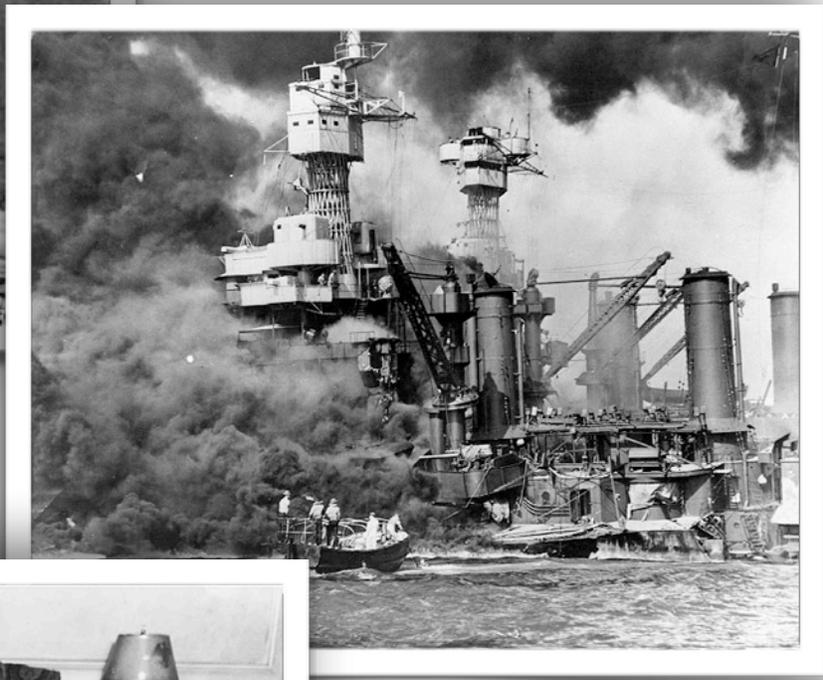
Writer and director Orson Welles leads a studio crew of actors, sound effects experts, and an orchestra in recreating H.G. Wells science fiction classic.

But, that panic over a fictional war was soon replaced by the real thing.

**Beginning in the late 1939 and through the middle of the 40s, war news literally dominated the airwaves.**



Edward R. Murrow reported directly from London during the German bombings, becoming one of the most popular broadcasters of the war.



The attack on Pearl Harbor



Franklin Roosevelt became the first President of the U.S. to actively use radio to reach the American public. Here he is seen prepping for his weekly "Fireside Chat" with the nation.

# Radio changes

- Beginning in the 1920s—more people began to have cars
- The car brought change from courting to dating—a question of space (among other things).
- But still no music in cars.

Following the war, increased American mobility meant increased mobility for radio.

- Sound redefined public space in the 1950s.
- People were on the go, both in terms of commutes from suburbs and frequent moves.
- By 1955, 70% of Americans owned at least one car, and they had radios.
- The car radio had been invented 1928, but didn't work well.
- The old vacuum tubes were fragile, cumbersome & hot.
- With the invention of transistors in 1947, a radio could run off the car's system and had much better reception.



**The best part of your ride**

**MORE POWER** — 600-1000 watt output  
Constant, full power throughout the band. No "fade out" or "fade in" as you change stations. 600-1000 watt output. \$49.95.

**EASIER TO INSTALL** — No vacuum tubes  
Nope! No vacuum tubes, no hot, no noisy, no fragile. Just a simple, easy-to-install transistor radio. \$49.95.

**QUIET OPERATION** — No vacuum tubes  
No hot, no noisy, no fragile. Just a simple, easy-to-install transistor radio. \$49.95.

**CONVENIENT VOLUME** — Built-in tone  
Nope! No vacuum tubes, no hot, no noisy, no fragile. Just a simple, easy-to-install transistor radio. \$49.95.

**SEE THE MOTOROLA INSTALLER** — He'll show you how to install your Motorola auto radio. He'll also show you how to get the most out of your radio. He'll also show you how to get the most out of your radio. He'll also show you how to get the most out of your radio.

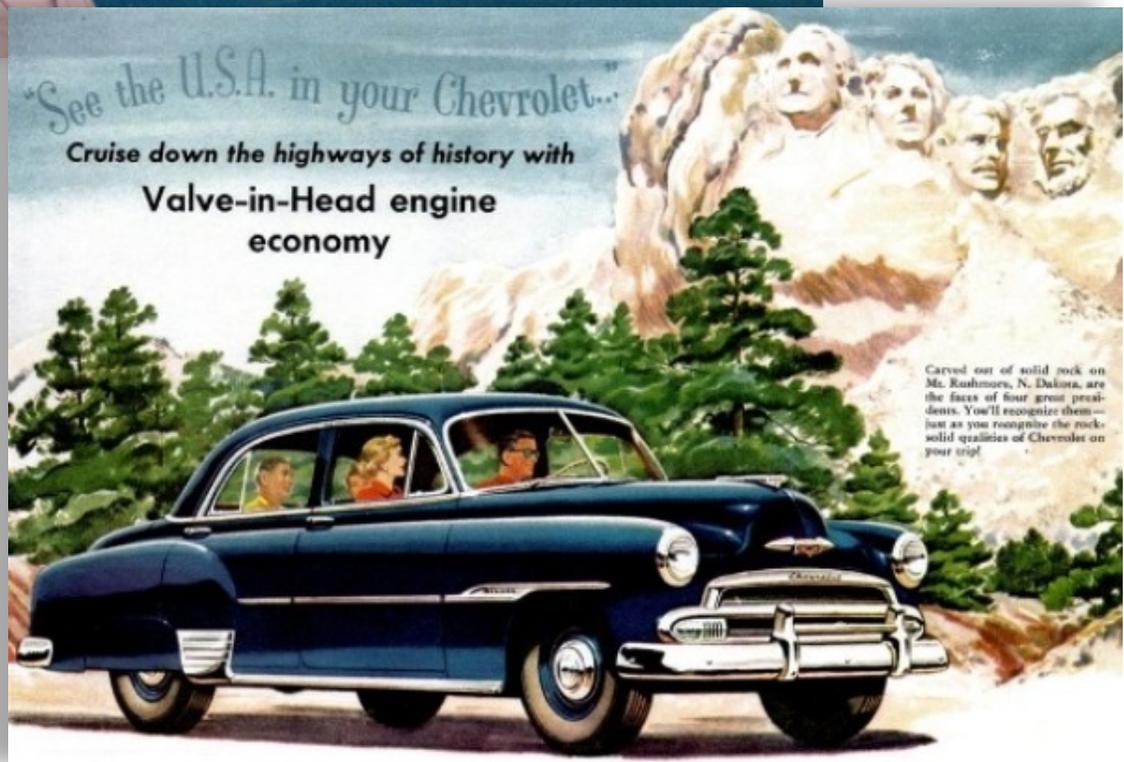
**FOR 22 YEARS—MILLIONS OF MOTORISTS HAVE MADE MOTOROLA THE FAVORITE**

**Motorola** auto radio

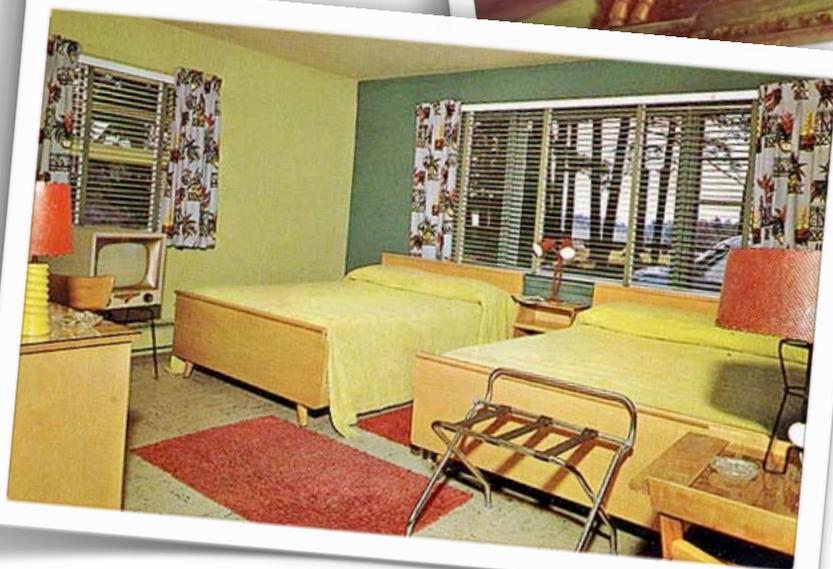
SEE THE MOTOROLA INSTALLER

# The Interstate Highway Act was passed in 1956

- Soon, new, high-speed, interconnected roadways criss-crossed the nation.
- And the nation responded.
- “See the USA in your Chevrolet”: one of the more famous automotive ads geared to the modern nomad.



At the same time, a new kind of hotel for the highway generation began to spring up along the interstates: The Motor Hotel, or “Motel.”



They may have looked different on the outside, but they were all the same on the inside.

# Changing radio content

- Rock music began to replace storytelling (the dramas and comedies of the 1940s disappeared).
- A whole, new audience, “teenagers,” tuned in, but mostly for MUSIC!

## More radio

- In 1942, there were 800 AM stations in U.S.
- In 1956, there were 3,000 AM stations
- And the kids were listening.

## Programming began to change

- Radio became “flow”— a kind of soundscape that was always there, yet it was segmented.
- Songs were designed in shorter lengths to fit a mobile lifestyle, and to accommodate more advertising, to the new audience— “Teenagers,” themselves a new invention, sort of

Teenagers listening to music in a local record store in the 1950s. If they liked it on the radio, they bought it at the record store.



As radio's format shifted away from news, the very music that caused its new popularity was soon co-opted by an up and coming medium...

