

"The History of NBC New York Television Studios, 1935-1956"

Volume 1 of 2 (Revised)

5 Rare Interior Photos of The International Theater added on page 64

By Bobby Ellerbee And *Eyes Of A Generation.com*

Preface and Acknowledgement

This is the first known chronological listing that details the conversions of NBC's Radio City studios at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City. Also included in this exclusive presentation by and for *Eyes Of A Generation*, are the outside performance theaters and their conversion dates to NBC Television theaters. This compilation gives us the clearest and most concise guide yet to the production and technical operations of television's early days and the network that pioneered so much of the new medium.

As you will see, many shows were done as "remotes" in NBC radio studios with in-house mobile camera units, and predate the official conversion date which signifies the studio now has its own control room and stage lighting.

Eyes Of A Generation would like to offer a huge thanks to the many past and present NBC people that helped, but most especially to Frank Merklein (NBC 1947-1961) Joel Spector (NBC 1965-2001), Dennis Degan (NBC 2003 to present), historian David Schwartz (GSN) and Gady Reinhold (CBS 1966 to present), for their first hand knowledge, photos and help.

This presentation is presented as a public service by the world's ultimate destination for television history...*The Eyes Of A Generation*. –Bobby Ellerbee

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"The History of NBC New York Television Studios, 1935-1956"

Volume 1 of 2

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Please Note: **Converted** should be understood as the debut date of the facility as an exclusive TV studio, now equipped with its own control room. **First Use** means television remote broadcasts were done while the facility was still primarily a radio or theater property. In some cases, First Use and Converted occur simultaneously.

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Introduction: Part 1...The Early Years of RCA and NBC

To set the stage for this first and only timeline and history of the NBC New York Television Studios, I think we need to first take a look at the history of both RCA and its National Broadcasting Company division. There will be some surprises along the way!

The Birth Of RCA

In the beginning, there was David Sarnoff. By 1919, Sarnoff was the commercial manager of American Marconi in New York. That same year, British Marconi had made an offer to General Electric to buy the worldwide rights to their Alexanderson Alternator technology which was vital for transatlantic communication. The prospect of a foreign company controlling international communications set off alarm bells in Washington and the government approached GE with a counter offer. If GE would place the Alternator in a new subsidiary company, they would be allowed to operate the international wireless circuits for both government and commercial traffic. To sweeten the deal, the Navy agreed to turn over all the wireless patents it received through their wartime research. Who could refuse?

The new GE subsidiary company was named the Radio Corporation of America and at the helm was Owen Young as Chairman, Ernst Alexanderson as Chief Engineer and David Sarnoff as General Manager. Within months, AT&T, Westinghouse and a big customer of international wireless services, United Fruit Company bought up all the RCA shares.

By 1921, things had gotten interesting on another front...radio stations. 28 sprang up that year including the Westinghouse owned WJZ in New Jersey. With the July 2, 1921 World Heavyweight Championship fight between America's Jack Dempsey and France's George Carpentier looming, the nation was anxious for a speedy way to know the details and outcome. David Sarnoff decided RCA should broadcast the fight on WJZ. It was a radio first; a publicity coup for RCA and Westinghouse, and sold lots of radios! With Westinghouse in a good mood, Sarnoff convinced them to allow RCA to take over WJZ, and later that month, RCA built and installed a powerful new transmitter for their first station atop Aeolian Hall in New York.

By the end of 1922, 430 more radio station licenses had been granted and Sarnoff was paying attention, but had a different train of thought. To him, it seemed the bigger opportunity was not in owning local stations, but in creating a national network. In a memo to Chairman Owen Young, Sarnoff said that RCA should provide “a national broadcasting company” that would entertain a nation with high quality programs of news, sports and music. The plans for The National Broadcasting Company were in place now, but it would take a few more years.

Part of RCA's original corporate mandate was to issue and collect licensing fees from those manufacturing wireless radio equipment. That meant everyone; including one of RCA's major shareholders... AT&T. Even though they would be rewarded by their stock ownership, AT&T began to chafe at the bit and in early 1923, began manufacturing receivers without paying the license fees to RCA. On top of that, they had also refused to allow RCA to lease phone lines to begin a network for WJZ. RCA's only alternative was to use telegraph lines which had very poor voice quality.

In the summer of '24, there were some anti-Semitic remarks aimed at Sarnoff by AT&T head Walter Gilbert, and things got pretty heated, but that actually worked to RCA's advantage. After that embarrassing flap, AT&T's management began to discuss getting out of the radio business, and in July of 1926, AT&T agreed to sell WEAF to RCA. The sale came with the stipulation that from then on, they would rent AT&T lines, which is what Sarnoff wanted all along.

The Beginning of NBC, September 9, 1926...NBC Was Incorporated By RCA

The incorporation process was the first step on a long and profitable road for RCA's new broadcast division. The nation's first major broadcasting network came to life on **November 15, 1926**, with a gala four-hour radio program originating from the ballroom of the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel at 5th Avenue and 34th Street, which is now the Empire State Building's location.

After NBC was created, their two stations became the centers of their two semi-independent networks...NBC Blue, based on WJZ, and NBC Red, based on WEAF, each with its respective links to stations in other cities.

RCA became the network's sole owner January 1, 1930, when former partners General Electric and Westinghouse were bought out. Many believe that NBC created the first radio network but that is not exactly the case. RCA's old partner AT&T had the first radio network and their first network radio broadcast was January 4, 1923 between WEAF in NYC and WNAC in Boston.

RCA's WJZ also had also begun to build a small network. Their first network broadcast was in December of 1923 between WJZ and General Electric's station WGY in Schenectady on the newly available AT&T lines.

Below is a photo from the WEAF Network from November 4, 1924. Shown here is Will Rogers (far right) with The Waldorf Astoria Orchestra on "The Eveready Hour" at WEAF, which would soon become the flagship for NBC's Red Network. Remember, back then a lot of radios were powered by Eveready dry cell batteries. I think Alternating Current radios were first introduced in late 1923.

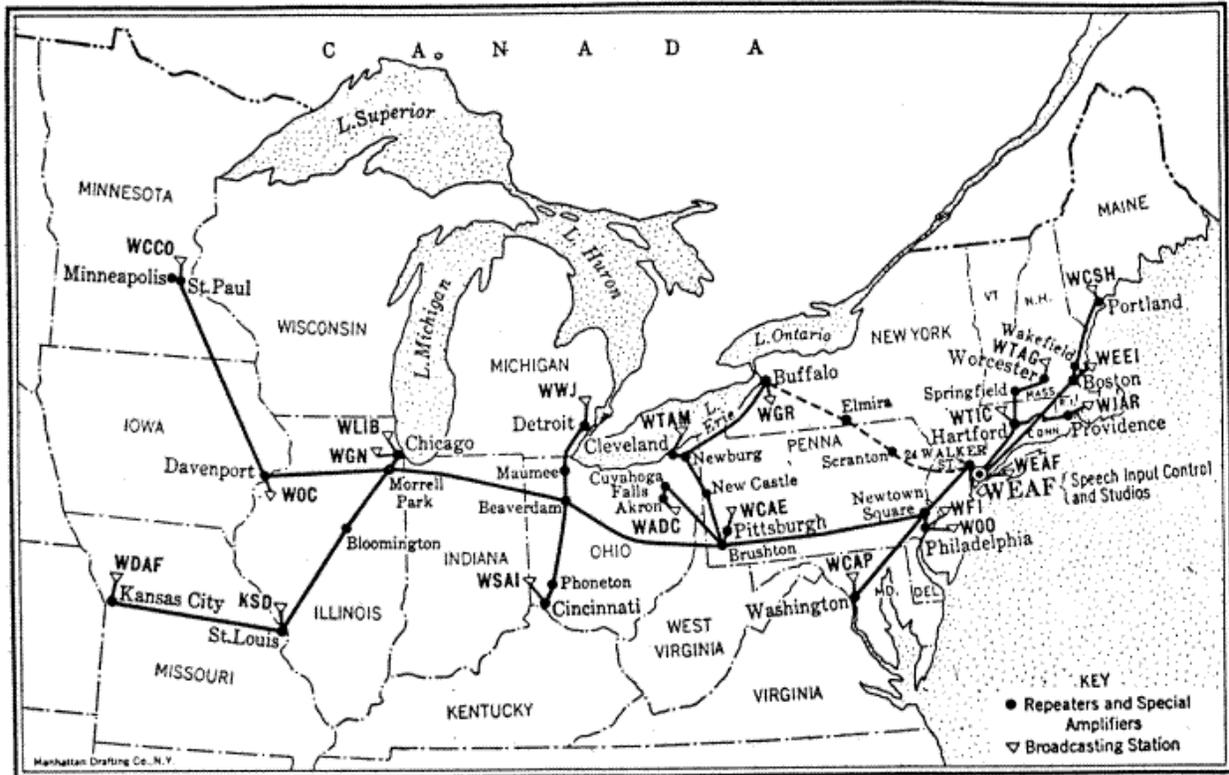


The First NBC Radio Network Broadcast, November 15, 1926

NBC's first radio broadcast, on November 15, 1926, was a four-and-a-half hour presentation of the leading musical and comedy talent of the day. It was broadcast from New York over a network of 25 stations, as far west as Kansas City; close to half of the country's four million radio homes tuned in. The first coast-to-coast broadcast soon followed, on New Year's Day, 1927, when NBC covered the annual Rose Bowl football game in California.

The inaugural program originated from NYC, Chicago and Independence Kansas. The "official" part of the broadcast came from New York's WEAF where David Sarnoff and other leaders of RCA, Westinghouse and GE spoke. The new National Broadcasting Company was divided in ownership among RCA (50 percent), General Electric (30 percent), and Westinghouse (20 percent). From Chicago, the popular vaudeville comic team Weber & Fields did their act, and in Kansas, columnist and all around "fun poker" Will Rogers spoke for a while. Both became regulars and were the first ever network stars.

Below is a map of the 17 station WEAF network. The WJZ network connected New York, Schenectady, Washington, and Springfield. By the time of the November 15th broadcast, five more stations were added to the lineup.

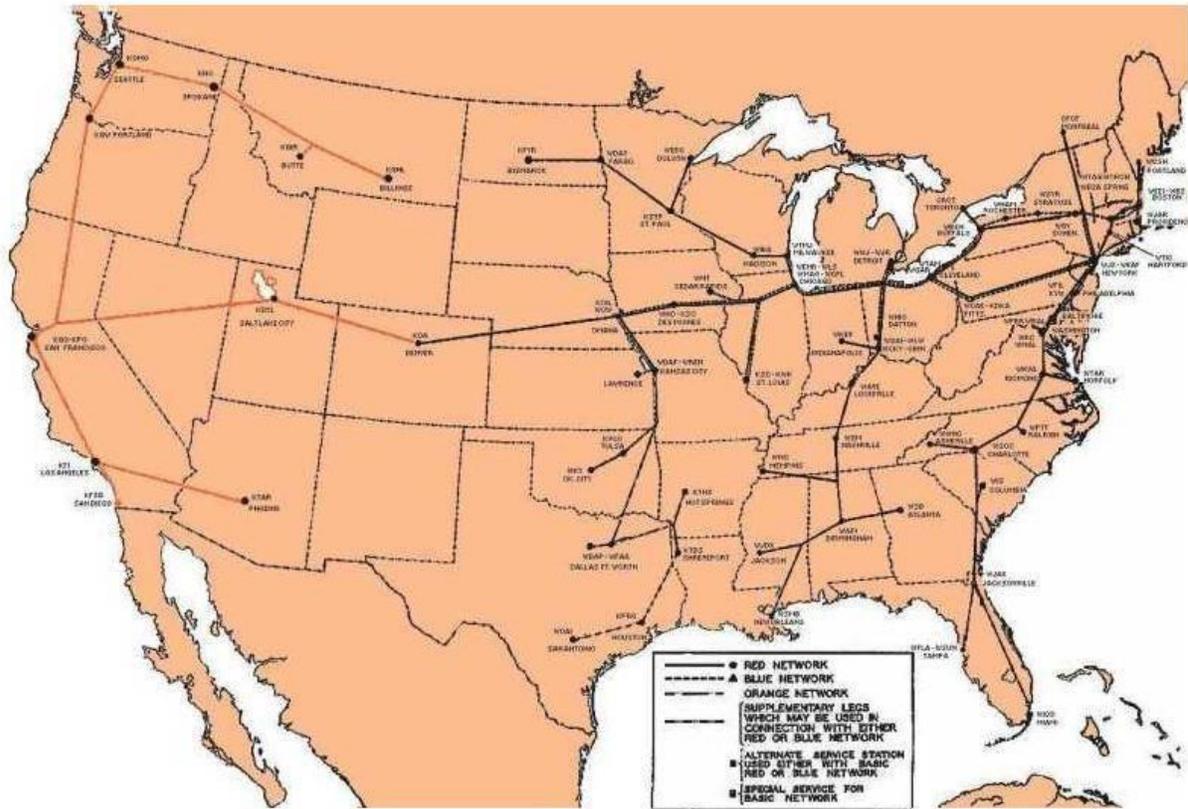


The demand for a network service among local stations was mounting so rapidly, that less than two months after its first national broadcast, NBC split its programming into two separate networks...the Red and the Blue networks, to give listeners a choice of different program formats. That happened on January 1, 1927.

By 1941, these two networks blanketed the country; there were 103 Red subscribing stations, 76 Blue and 64 supplementary stations using NBC programs. The Blue Network provided mostly cultural offerings: music, drama, and commentary. The Red featured comedy, variety, games and the more popular types of entertainment shows.

The first coast-to-coast broadcast was the January 1, 1927 Rose Bowl between Alabama and Stanford, but regular network operations from the east to the west coast did not start until December of 1928 with a fulltime leased line to San Francisco.

As for entertainment, after Will Rogers, Eddie Cantor was among the first big stars to appear on NBC, and came aboard in 1926. In 1927 came the first "hours" shows like "The Collier's Hour," "Cities Service Hour," and "The Palmolive Hour". Al Jolson made his NBC debut the first week of 1928. Later that year, a whole new dimension was added to radio when "Real Folks" became the first ever dramatic series. In 1928, Rudy Vallee and one of the biggest shows ever came to NBC Red...the daily "Amos 'n Andy" series. On Christmas Day, 1931 NBC Blue began a 10 year run of Saturday afternoon shows, live from New York's Metropolitan Opera, almost entirely at their own expense. Jack Benny, Ed Wynn and Groucho came in 1932.



This is a map from the late 1930s showing the NBC Red, Blue and Orange networks. NBC Red was the larger radio network, carrying the leading entertainment and music programs. In addition, many Red affiliates were high-powered, clear-channel stations, heard nationwide. NBC Blue offered most of the company's news and cultural programs, many of them “sustaining” or unsponsored.

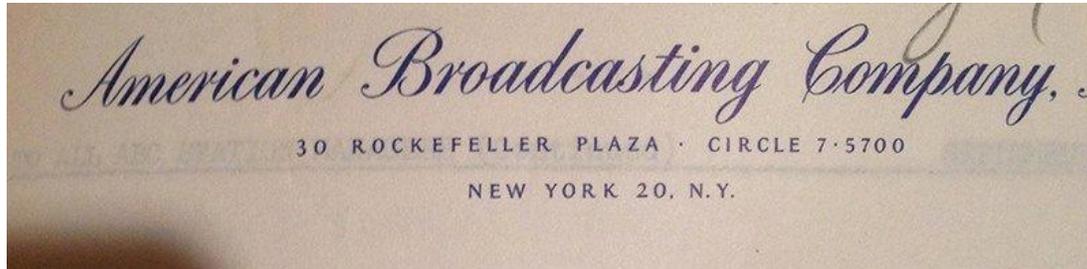
How did they arrive at the names Red and Blue? The legend is that it was either from the red and blue pencil marks on the engineering map or the red and blue push pins on the management's maps. NBC White was NBC's Religious Programming network, also referred to as The Watchtower Network, and operated from about 1928 to 1936.

NBC's Orange Network was for West Coast affiliates, KGO, KFI, KGW, KOMO, and KHQ and began operations in 1931. NBC also operated a Gold Network comprised of KPO, KECA, KEX, KJR, and KGA which was soon disbanded and absorbed by the Orange Network in 1933.

When the Federal Communications Commission declared in 1941 that no organization could own more than one network, NBC sold the Blue system, which became the American Broadcasting Company.

NBC's Blue Network became ABC in 1943, due to a landmark Supreme Court Ruling that held that NBC had specifically maintained the parallel, Red and Blue, networks for the express purpose of stifling competition. NBC subsequently extricated itself by selling NBC Blue to

Edward Noble of the Life Savers Candy Company, who first called his new network, simply “The Blue Network”. That name was followed by “The Blue Network of the American Broadcasting Company” and eventually in 1945, they dropped the Blue Network reference altogether and it was simply called the American Broadcasting Company.



Notice the interesting address on the ABC letter head! It seems the sale of the Blue Network to ABC included a 10 year lease on telephone lines, equipment and office and studio space in New York, Hollywood, San Francisco and Chicago.

The First Home of RCA and NBC...

When RCA acquired WEAJ in July of 1926, that studio and office space in the AT&T Building, at 195 Broadway was NBC’s first home. The facilities were already outdated, and less than a year after NBC started, the company’s first made to order studios were ready.

On October 1, 1927, NBC moved into the new facilities on the twelfth and thirteenth floors of 711 5th Avenue. There were originally seven brand new radio studios, A through G, at the new headquarters building, which eventually became ten. This is Chief Engineer O. B. Hanson supervising the NBC Radio Network’s debut broadcast on November 15, 1926 from the AT&T Long Lines Control Center at 32 Avenue of the Americas, about three miles south of NBC.



At this link is a very good New York Times article on the 711 building’s history.
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/realestate/21streets.html?_r=1&

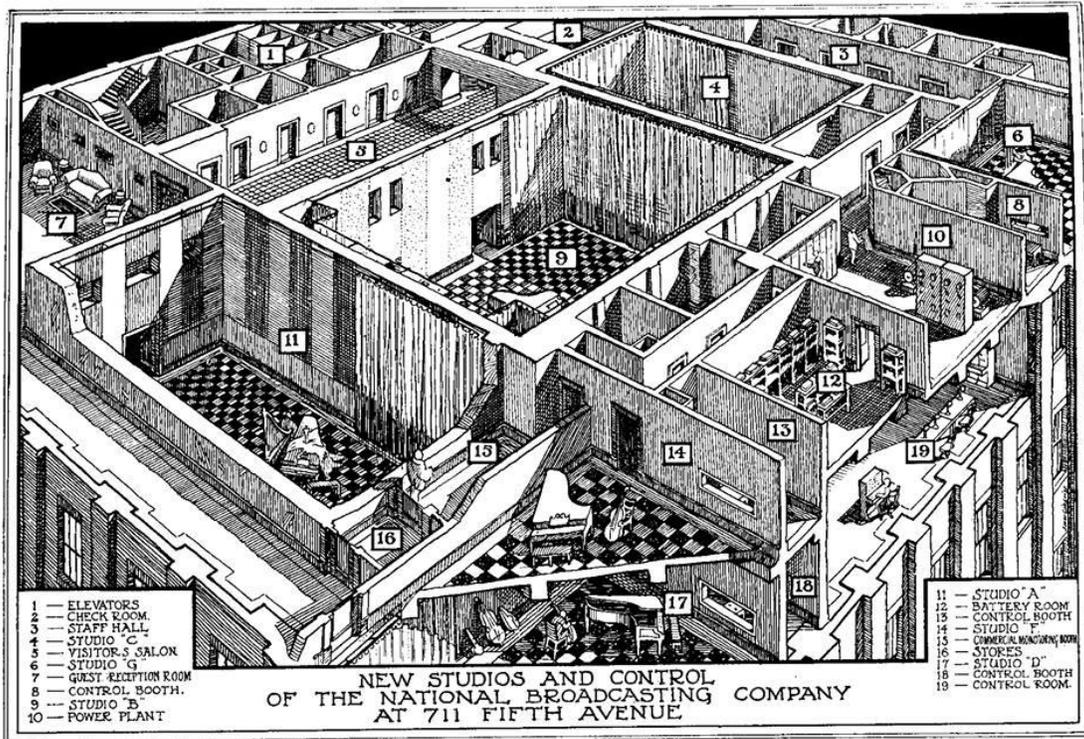


Fig. 3.

This is the layout of the 5th Avenue Studios. Less than three years later, NBC would be back at the drawing board, working on plans for their new space at Rockefeller Plaza. As the network's success skyrocketed, so did the demand for more studios. Below is the Green Brothers Novelty Band inside NBC Studio B in early 1928 and is one of the first ever photos of an NBC studio.



NBC's Move to 30 Rockefeller Plaza

On November 7, 1933 NBC held dedication ceremonies and special programs at its new 30 Rockefeller Plaza headquarters at Radio City. It took 88 men and 23 trucks 42 nonstop hours to move the NBC offices from its old HQ at 711 Fifth Ave to 30 Rock. All of the broadcasting elements of the company were new installations located in an eleven story tower, which had been finished and tested the week before.

There were 27 studios in service, with 8 more planned. The entire sixth and seventh floors were left unfinished until 1941 and would ultimately become Studios 6A and 6B. For public relations purposes, what we know as Studio 8H was then referred to as the Auditorium Studio and Studio 8G was called The Radio Guild Studio. The first broadcast was at 8PM Saturday night, Nov 11. The inaugurating sound was that of the national anthem performed by the NBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frank Black from Studio 8H with 1,200 special guests. This is the story from the December 1933 issue of *Radio Engineering Magazine*.

NEW STUDIOS IN RADIO CITY, NEW YORK

By O. B. Hanson

It would be quite in keeping with what follows to begin this with "once upon a time," for the National Broadcasting Company's new home in Radio City is quite as fabulous as any palace ever described by Grimm or Lang, quite as fantastic as any air-castle ever built in day-dreams.

Ten stories, 400,000 square feet of floor space, built especially for radio broadcasting, filled with the newest and most improved devices of their kind—a "world center," for what takes place within these walls is heard round the world, is of interest to you and to me, to our neighbors, our fellow-countrymen and those in other lands, even to those inhabiting the "narrow corners" of the earth!

Radio itself is as fabulous as Prince Housan's magic carpet of Arabian Nights fame—more so as it can fly completely around the world seven times in one second.



(NBC Photo)

The world's largest broadcasting studio. This photograph was taken from the visitors' gallery of the Auditorium Studio in the National Broadcasting Company's Radio City headquarters in New York.

How it is done, what is necessary for the doing and how these facilities have been provided reads like a fairy tale.

Rockefeller Center is a cultural and entertainment center of unsurpassed size, beauty and grandeur occupying three New York City blocks, from Forty-eighth to Fifty-First Street, and extending from Fifth Avenue to Sixth.

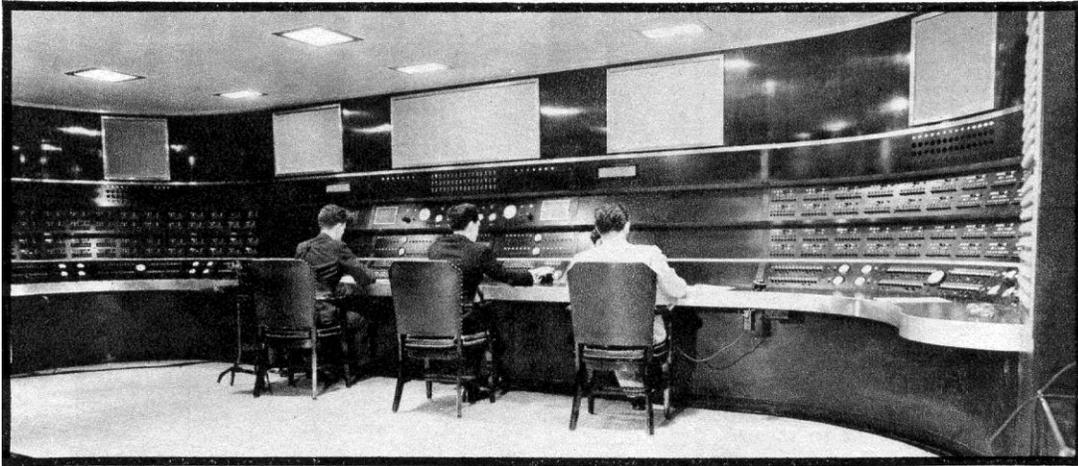
Rising to a height of seventy stories, eight hundred and thirty-six feet, in the midst of this community stands the Central Tower of Radio City, The RCA Building. In this are housed the studios, offices and equipment of the National Broadcasting Company.

The creation of Radio City was magnificently timed. The National Broadcasting Company's activities have been growing as fast as Jack's beanstalk. What seemed spacious accommodations when we started business seven years ago had become uncomfortably cramped. At 711

Fifth Avenue we had ten studios—but for every hour of broadcasting there is now an average of seven hours of rehearsal and there must be time to clear studios of one program and prepare them for the next. There are at least two programs being broadcast simultaneously in our studios from eight a.m. to one a.m., three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Frequently we broadcast programs of purely metropolitan concern which are of no interest to the stations on our two networks. This means that occasionally we are called upon to broadcast as many as four programs simultaneously. Studios also are demanded for auditions. Ten studios had become far too few. Gladly we welcomed the opportunity to expand, especially since this included the opportunity to build from the ground up just what is required, instead of fitting the service into a structure already built.

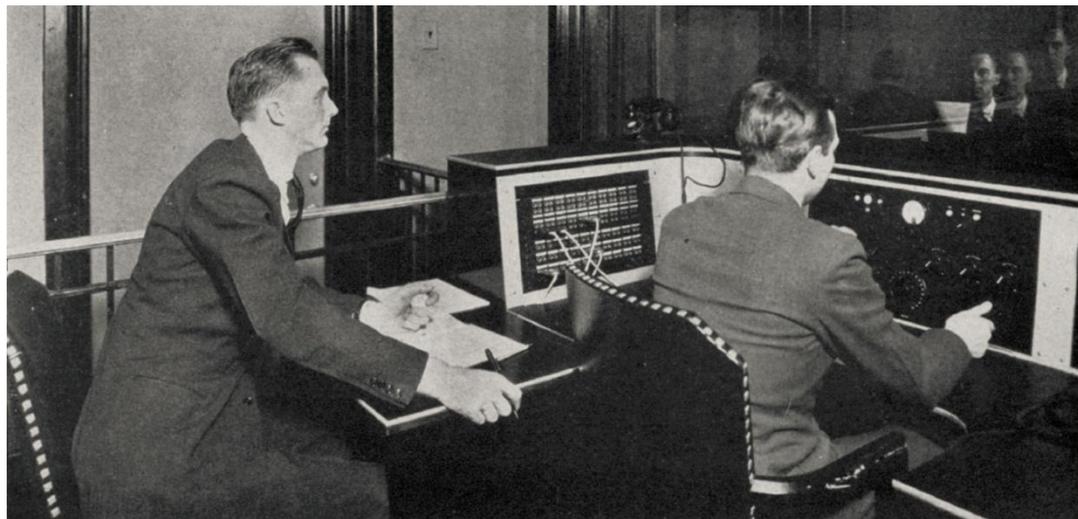
The planning of the new headquarters proceeded along four lines: first, designing and constructing a building that would adequately

The top two images give us a rare look at NBC Radio Master Control, while the bottom photo shows the control room of one of the many smaller speaker and news studios at Radio City.



Des for NBC

NBC'S MASTER CONTROL BOARD KEEPS TWO RADIO NETWORKS CLICKING



The Beginning of Television at RCA and NBC....

As you will see, NBC's television history officially started in 1939 but long before that, RCA was in control and did many things that we (including me), have thought were NBC activities.

RCA's first experimental television transmissions were mechanical and began in April 1928 on station W2XBS at 411 Fifth Avenue, eighteen blocks south of the RCA headquarters at 711 Fifth Avenue. On March 22, 1929, nightly two hour broadcasts from 7 – 9 on Channel 1, began there. In 1930, this was moved to The Roof Garden Theater on the top floor of The New Amsterdam Theater building, transmitting 60 line pictures in the new 2-3 mHz band allocated to television. The final mechanical tests would come from the 85th floor of The Empire State Building.

Here is the 411 Fifth Avenue building with some detail of these tests.

<http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-unique-1915-no-411-fifth-avenue.html>

FIG. 14. (below) *WNBW* is a far cry from RCA's first television station, *W2XBS* installed at 411 Fifth Avenue (New York) more than twenty years ago. The view below shows the whole "works" at *W2XBS*, the studio, scanner, and transmitter (on table at left)—even the chief actor "Felix the Cat."



A 13" Felix the Cat figure made of paper mache was placed on a record player turntable and was broadcast using a mechanical scanning disk to a scanning disk receiver. The image received was only 2 inches tall, and the broadcasts lasted about 2 hours per day. Below is a 1930 broadcast schedule...one of the first ever.

April 1, 1930

RCA-VICTOR COMPANY

A. F. Murray, Advance Development Division Head

W. A. Tolson, Television Section Leader

K. A. West, Television Ass't. Section Leader

TELEVISION PROGRAMME

1. Musical Prelude (Stein Song by Rudy Valle and his orchestra)
2. Call letters WEXBV
3. Program director Mr. T. V. DeHaven ✓
4. K. A. West, Master of Ceremonies
5. Miss Prudencia Gomez, singing La Paloma in Spanish. Accompanied by record, Jesse Crawford at the organ.
6. Mr. C. DeKlyn Monologue
7. Miss Gill Vocal Solo
8. Mr. R. E. Smith Vocal Solo
9. Mr. John Paul Smith Banjo Solo
10. Miss Gomez Song with a Uke
11. Pathe News Musical Accompaniment
12. Sign Off
13. Informal demonstrations

Technical Staff

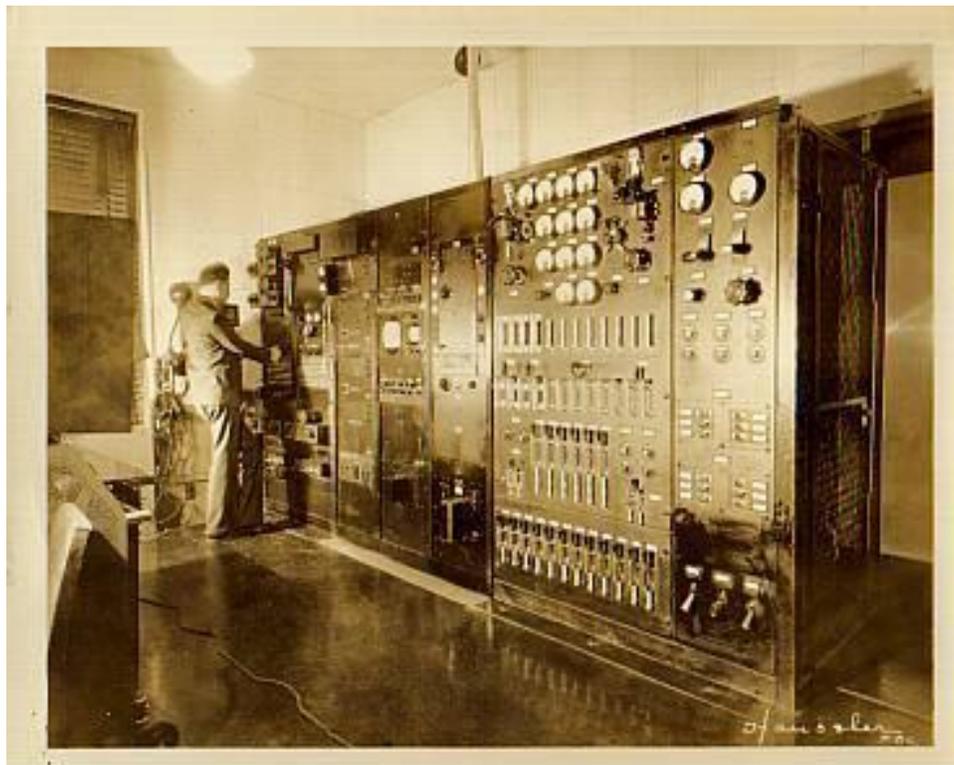
- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| W. A. Tolson | Receiver Director |
| B. Cioffari | Receiver Operator |
| C. S. Gilchrist | Microphone Operator |
| A. C. Stocker | Picture Control Panel Operator |
| J. A. Briggs | Indirect Scanner Operator |
| R. C. Campbell | Motion Picture Scanner Operator |
| J. P. Smith | Photocell Pick-up Operator |
| Mr. Evans | Picture Power Amplifier Operator |

On December 22, 1931, RCA made its first experimental television broadcast from the new transmitter site in The Empire State Building which, when completed in May 1931, was the tallest building anywhere.

RCA leased the 85th floor of Empire State for a studio and transmitter location for experimental television broadcasts, which at this point were still mechanical. Through its broadcasting division NBC, RCA applied to the Federal Radio Commission on July 1, 1931 for construction permits for the sight and sound channels of a television facility at Empire State, which were issued on July 24, 1931.

While mechanical scanner television tests were going on in New York, electronic television tests were going on at RCA in Camden. These concepts emerged from the lab in 1933. Field testing of the Iconoscope cameras in Camden went on until early 1935 when finally the number of lines of resolution went to 343 with an interlaced pattern having 60 cycles and a repetition rate of 30 frames per second was used. The results of these tests were so satisfactory that testing was moved to New York. In preparation, NBC Radio Studio 3H was converted to a television studio.

The Empire State TV transmitter, seen below, had an input power to the final stage of about 5kW, giving an estimated power output to the antenna of about 2kW. The sound channel of the TV station was separately licensed as W2XK for a 2.5kW transmitter to operate on 61Mc. Both transmitters were located on the 85th floor and used separate vertical dipole antennas extending from the top of the building. Previously the W2XF call sign, and its predecessor 2XF, belonged to Bell Laboratories.



Television Comes To 30 Rockefeller Plaza

Under a blanket of secrecy, RCA converted 30 Rock radio Studio 3H into a television studio in 1935. This mysterious new space was controlled by RCA, not NBC. Due to competitive developments, there was a year of low key experimental broadcasts from 3H on W2XBS, but by early in 1936, RCA decided to go public with the news of their electronic television operations.

NBC's official television history begins with the April 30, 1939 World's Fair broadcasts which is when they launched local television operations as a regular public service with the fair's dedication ceremonies. The first studio program from 3H, under the new custodian (NBC) from W2XBS, was May 3, 1939. It was a variety show that included Fred Waring, other headliners and a Walt Disney short film from 5F. Broadcasts were one hour on Wed and Friday nights, but during the fair, the station transmitted four or five hours a day to receivers in the RCA Pavilion.

The first television network was formed Jan 11, 1940 when W2XBS (WNBT) and W2XB (WRGB) carried a special New York originated program for viewing by FCC members in Schenectady via automatic radio relay.

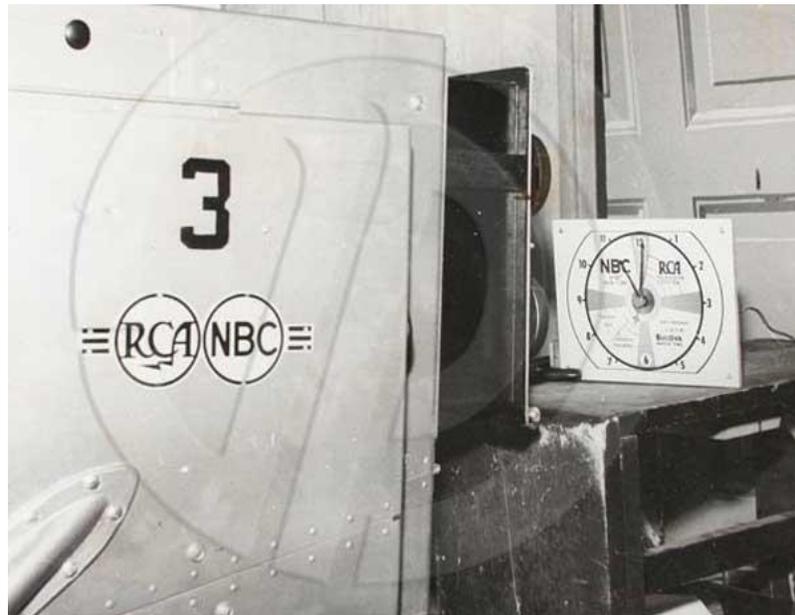
Reportedly, the first NBC Television Network program was broadcast on January 12, 1940 (the day after the FCC test) when a play entitled "Meet The Wife" was broadcast from Studio 3H at Rockefeller Center and rebroadcast by W2XB (WRGB) in Schenectady. About this time, occasional special events were also seen in Philadelphia (over W3XE, later called WPTZ, now known as KYW) as well as Schenectady. The most ambitious NBC network event of this pre-war era was the telecast of the Republican National Convention on June 24, 1940 from Philadelphia, which was fed live to New York and Schenectady as well.

Television's experimental period ended when the FCC allowed full commercial telecasting to begin on July 1, 1941. NBC's New York station W2XBS received the first commercial license*, adopting the call letters WNBT and later, moved from Channel 1 to Channel 4. The first official, paid television advertisement on that day, the first commercial broadcast by any station in the United States, was for Bulova Watches, and was seen just before the start of a Brooklyn Dodgers baseball telecast on WNBT. A test pattern, featuring the newly assigned WNBT call letters, was modified to look like a clock, complete with functioning hands. The Bulova logo, with the phrase "Bulova Watch Time", was shown in the lower right-hand quadrant of the test pattern.

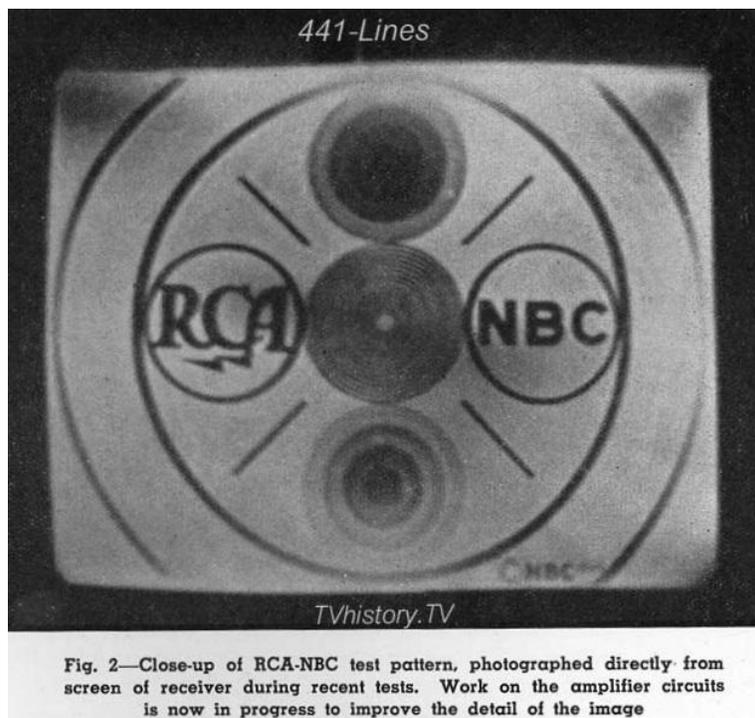
At this link is a very detailed preview of the 30 Rock facilities from the December 1933 issue of *Radio News Magazine*. <http://www.antiqueradios.com/features/radiocity.html>

* CBS was granted their license simultaneously. On June 24, 1941, W2XAB received a commercial construction permit and program authorization as WCBW. The station went on the air at 2:30 p.m. on July 1, one hour after rival WNBT, making it the second authorized fully commercial television station in the United States.

Below is a photo from Studio 3H showing television's commercial message. The sponsor was Bulova Watches, and in the lower right corner of the test pattern clock you see their brand name.



Below is a July 1938 photo from *Electronics Magazine* that shows a monitor view of the new 441 line broadcast image of the test pattern with the 3H Iconoscope cameras.



Introduction: Part 2...Some Surprises

As I mentioned, there will be some surprises along the way and they start now. In this second part of the introduction, we'll take a look at the lead up to NBC's massive push to add television studios both inside and outside Radio City in the late 1940s.

After WW II, television began a new era aided in no small part by the exceptional new Image Orthicon cameras from RCA...the TK30 field camera and the TK10 studio camera which became available in late 1946. With this, television began to gather a new momentum; slowly at first but by around the end of 1947, things were moving faster. By a year later, "June was bustin' out all over"...literally. Milton Berle's "Texaco Star Theater" debuted June 8, 1948 live in the newly converted Studio 6B, and television sets began selling like hot cakes, which is part of the reason Berle was known as "Mr. Television."

As TV set sales skyrocketed, the push to expand the hours of the broadcast day, add more shows, upgrade production standards and the viewing experience was palpable. Remember, this was all live and most shows were fifteen minutes or thirty minutes...only about twenty five percent were an hour and those were in prime time. You can only turn a studio around so fast, so more space was needed. Oh...and did I mention rehearsals that needed studios and cameras to block the show? This explosive growth put a strain on everyone, and gear was not as available as you may have thought! You would think that being owned by RCA, NBC New York would have cameras everywhere...surprisingly they didn't, but they didn't let that stop them from adding shows left and right. How much equipment did they have? Here's the answer.

In the December 5, 1949 edition of *Broadcasting Magazine*, (image below) Reid Davis who was NBC network television operations supervisor in New York stated that at the time, NBC had twenty five RCA TK10 studio cameras, twelve TK30 field cameras, three 16 mm and four 35mm film chains as well as six slide projectors in use with ten studios in New York. Two of those were film studios, 5F at 30 Rock and Studio F at the Uptown Studios. **The active production studios in 1949 would have been 3H, 3A, 3B, 6B and 8G inside Radio City, The International Theater and studios A, B and C at The Uptown studios.**

As I stated earlier, one of the biggest surprises in this research was the discovery that NBC actually had internal mobile units covering shows inside Radio City! You'll get the whole story as told by one of those crewmen, Frank Vierling, when we cover 3A and 3B, but here's a quick rundown. NBC had four mobile units of three cameras each, two of which were complete units with trucks and two were cameras only. Unit 1A had blue color coded equipment, 1B had green, 1C had yellow and 1D had red. 1A and B were the truck units and 1C and D were the in house, camera only units. The red equipment was mobile for a while too, but eventually went into 3A permanently, and that made 3A only the third studio inside Radio City to have its own cameras...the other two were 3H and 8G with three each. Uptown had three cameras in each studio for a total of nine and, true story, the Uptown cameramen took their lenses with them from studio to studio.



PROGRAM PLANNERS at the studio of NBC's New York television outlet—WNBT (TV)—discuss future schedules in this huddle. L to r: John C. Warren, sales manager; Thomas S. McFadden, manager; John H. Reber, program manager, and Reid R. Davis, network television operations supervisor.

installed in the service hospitals by NBC.

In 1944, boxing and wrestling were added to WNBT's sports schedule, which proved to be almost as popular with New York's civilian viewers as with the servicemen. On Sept. 24, 1944, Gillette Safety Razor Co. began sponsoring boxing matches one or two evenings weekly, first on WNBT alone and later, since Nov. 8, 1946, on the NBC-TV Network. Gillette thus stands as television's oldest continuous program sponsor.

Both major political parties held their 1944 conventions in Chicago, beyond the reach of TV network connections at that time. WNBT covered them by films which were flown to New York and aired as soon as possible. WNBT also resumed studio programming during 1944, increasing its total program time to more than 500 hours for

tol-Myers, RCA, U. S. Rubber, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Firestone Tire & Rubber Co., Bulova Watch Co., Elgin National Watch Co., Botany Worsted Mills and, of course, Gillette.

In addition to its regular fight telecasts Gillette in 1946 sponsored the first telecast of a world's championship heavyweight match, the Louis-Conn fight on June 16, as well as NBC's Army-Navy game video pickup on Nov. 30.

THE last three years have seen the growth of the NBC-TV Network to include 49 stations and have proportionately added to WNBT's responsibilities as the network's key station in New York, where the majority of video programs originate.

Baseball serves as a good example of the effects of WNBT's network duties on its local opera-

tional idea and until a lot more studio space is available," a station spokesman said last week.

IN addition to General Manager McFadden, WNBT's top executives are Donald A. Norman, assistant manager; John C. Warren, sales manager, and John H. Reber, program manager. The services of program personnel are rented from NBC, along with the network's video studios and equipment. This currently comprises 10 studios in the RCA Bldg. and the building at 106th St. and Park Ave., two theatres for audience shows, 25 studio cameras and 12 field cameras, three 16mm and four 35mm motion picture projectors, and six slide projectors. Studio and transmitting equipment is, of course, RCA.

Studio 3H, NBC's original TV studio at Radio City, is 30 by 50 by 18 feet. It is equipped with the Eddy-type lighting fixture, using both incandescent and fluorescent light units which can be electrically controlled and mechanically oriented from the light bridge. A catwalk for lighting extending around all four walls is equipped with three RCA field type cameras. The floor is level and small audiences such as *Howdy Doody's* Peanut Gallery are sometimes used. Lap dissolves can be integrated with film sequences.

Studio 8G, 50 by 90 by 18 feet, contains four permanent "non-standard" cameras, each equipped with a three-lens turret. These were the first Image Orthicon studio cameras and were custom built to NBC specifications. This studio, which was put into use in March 1948, is the only Radio City studio with control room equipment specifically designed for video operations. Lap dissolves and split screen can be accomplished by the cameras or integrated with the

December 5, 1949 edition of *Broadcasting Magazine* describes the studio and equipment situation in New York.

Speaking of The Uptown Studios (105 East 106th Street), when we get to it, you will be very surprised at by the names and number of productions that originated there. Before I got deeply involved in researching this time line project, I had never really heard anything about that location, except a rumor and it's time to put that to rest. Some had claimed that *Howdy Doody* had come from there...close but no cigar. Actually, it was the lead in show to *Howdy*... "The Gabby Hayes Show", "brought to you by Quaker Oats, makers of the cereal that is shot from guns." And yes, Gabby had a prop cannon on the set which was loaded with puffed oats by his stage manager Fred Rogers. Fred left NBC in '53 for public television and became "Mr. Rogers." Gabby aired at 5:15 from Uptown and *Howdy* came on at 5:30 and ran till 6 from Studio 3H at Radio City (aka, 30 Rock).



This is one of the NBC “mobile units” in Studio 6A, shooting a special onetime only radio/TV simulcast of “Break The Bank” October 5, 1949, the day the show moved from ABC Radio to NBC Radio. This is seven months before it was converted from a radio studio to a television studio. The camera control units were wheeled in and set up in the sound locks between the studio and hall way.

Before we begin the actual studio history part of this presentation, let’s take a look at a red letter day for television...June 19, 1946...the day the RCA TK30 Image Orthicon cameras debuted!

The first three RCA TK30s ever made were sent to NBC New York just a week before the biggest fight ever...the Joe Louis – Jerry Conn rematch. Regular delivery of the TK30s was to begin in October of 1946, but got delayed. Same with the TK10 studio version that was scheduled to debuted in December of '46.

The Louis - Conn rematch was such a big deal that RCA rushed production to get at least a few prototype TK30s in service for the fight. NBC covered the fight on radio and television on the full network. This was television's first ever coverage of a World Heavyweight Championship bout at Yankee Stadium. Reports on the television coverage were glowing! These cameras had delivered the clearest, sharpest pictures ever, and each had four lenses on their turrets. The

cameras in the photos below were at the fight that gave us this long-remembered line from Joe Louis, “He can run, but he can't hide.”

As we'll see later, NBC built their own Image Orthicon cameras for Studio 8G. It's a good thing they did, because RCA was several months late on their planned introduction date. Did you know Howdy Doody started with the Iconoscope cameras? More on this just ahead.



The History of NBC New York Television Studios, 1935-1956

Part 1...The First Studio Converted, 3H - 1935

In 1935, two years after Radio City opened, NBC Radio Studio 3H was converted to RCA Television Studio 3H and technically, would remain an RCA domain until 1939, at which time W2XBS and this studio were put under the control of NBC Television.

Starting July 7, 1936, 3H was the home of the first black and white experimental broadcasts and this can be seen in this two part film. This not a kinescope of the broadcast, but is a film made by a Pathé cameraman in the studio. This is quite historic video. Notice the call letters used are not W2XBS, but W2XK which was one of several testing channels with another being W2XF. David Sarnoff is at the desk with RCA Chairman, General Hubbard. In part two, Ed Wynn appears at the 17 minute mark.

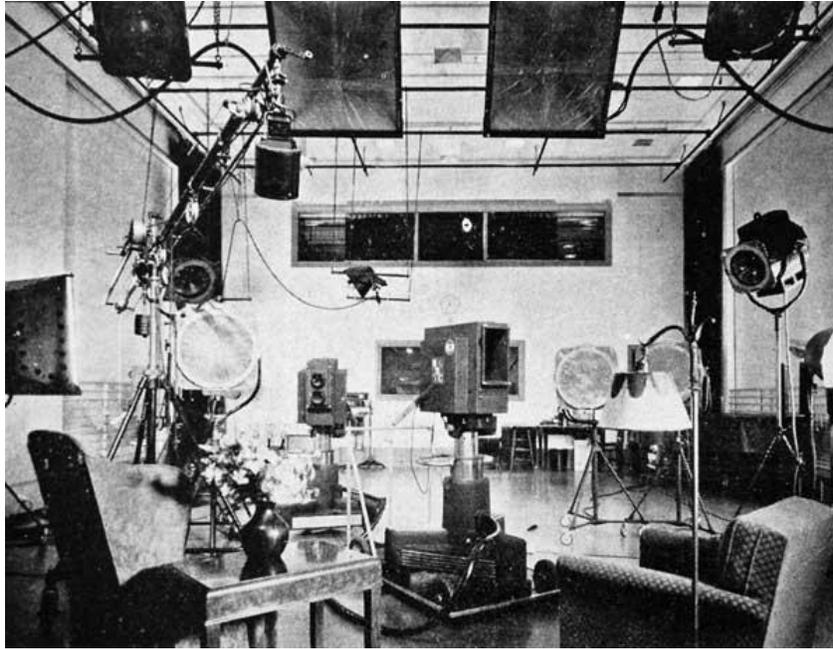
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iWJ5LObN2o>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHKPSH9dskI>

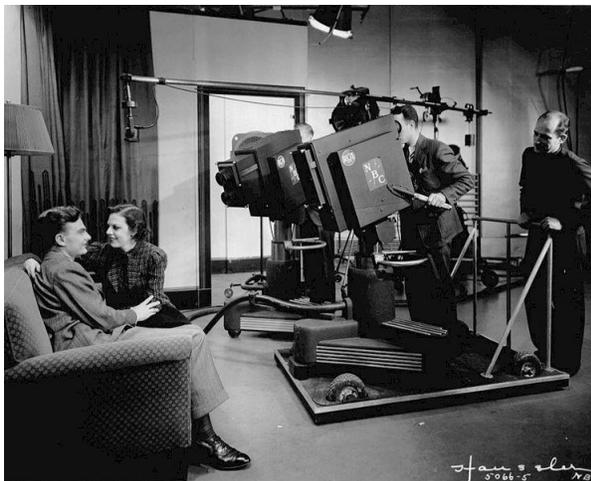
In this photo, we see **NBC's first cameraman, Albert Protzman**, who stayed behind the camera for many years, and later became a technical director. Under RCA operations, this was where the 3 RCA Iconoscope studio cameras were located. The first version was the dark colored cameras with optical viewfinders, which were succeeded a few years later with the look alike silver colored Iconoscope cameras called the A500.



Below is Studio 3H showing the fourth floor control room, 4H in 1936. In today's configuration, the main hallway would be behind us in this photo and the fourth floor tour window was just above and behind us.



In a November 6, 1936 broadcast from Studio 3H, The Inkspots appeared and became the first professional musical act, of any race, to be seen on television. That day Eddie Albert and Grace Brandt (left) appeared here in television's first original teleplay, "The Honeymoon" written by Albert. On the right is the earliest known photo of the 3H control room which was called 4H.



Part of that day's telecast were two film shorts, one a 16mm and the other, a 35mm which originated in Radio City's only other television facility...Studio 5F, a film projection room on the fifth floor. In the July 7 videos above, 5F was also a part of the broadcast.

Keep in mind that television was so new; they were literally making it up as they went. In 1939, Albert Protzman, NBC's first cameraman, was asked to write a paper for *The Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* (forerunner of SMPTE) that explains the techniques and details of how television is produced. At this link is a copy of his fascinating 12 page article that describes Studio 3H in great detail, and every aspect of the new production process that began July 7, 1936. Mr. Protzman covers everything from cameras and audio to lights and actors.

http://books.google.com/books?id=i_MndBVwJL8C&pg=PA44&lpg=PA44&dq=Albert+W.+Protzman,+nbc&source=bl&ots=MSbYDK3QyZ&sig=YWUUVTAQpOamCKG4f8gP_hnYzko&hl=en&sa=X&ei=4O9EVJuJCYXxgwgSGkoGYBw&ved=0CDYQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=Albert%20W.%20Protzman%2C%20nbc&f=false

Between 1939 and 1951 3H was used for regular programming and was NBC's only permanently equipped studio till radio studio 8G began television trials in 1946. Some of the earliest network shows from 3H were "The Kraft Music Hall," "Television Scene Magazine," "The Howdy Doody Show" and "The Camel News Caravan." All these shows started out in 3H with the big silver Iconoscope cameras. It was not till April of 1948 that 3H finally got the new RCA TK30s.

Below are two photos from "Television Scene Magazine" from May of 1948. The lady is co host Ursula Halloran. On the left, she is on the set of her weekly show that was basically a guide to what was on TV. On the right, a rare day is captured. Using some of the Howdy Doody set as a backdrop, she interviews America's top two clowns, Emmett Kelly and Clarabell. About two hours earlier, Kelly was on the Howdy show and put makeup on Clarabell for the very first time!



"Television Scene Magazine" went on the air five weeks before the December 17, 1947 debut of "Puppet Playhouse," which in late 1948 changed its name to "The Howdy Doody Show."

My friend Frank Merklein began with NBC on March 8, 1948. Just a few weeks into his new job, he was sent to Studio 3H to fill in for a sick cameraman on the brand new “Puppet Playhouse”. Frank had never been behind a camera before but they gave him a crash course. The problem with these Iconoscope cameras was the optical viewfinders. Everything was backward and upside down and Frank had a very hard time with this, but did well enough to become a full time crew member of the show and stayed with it till the end in 1960.

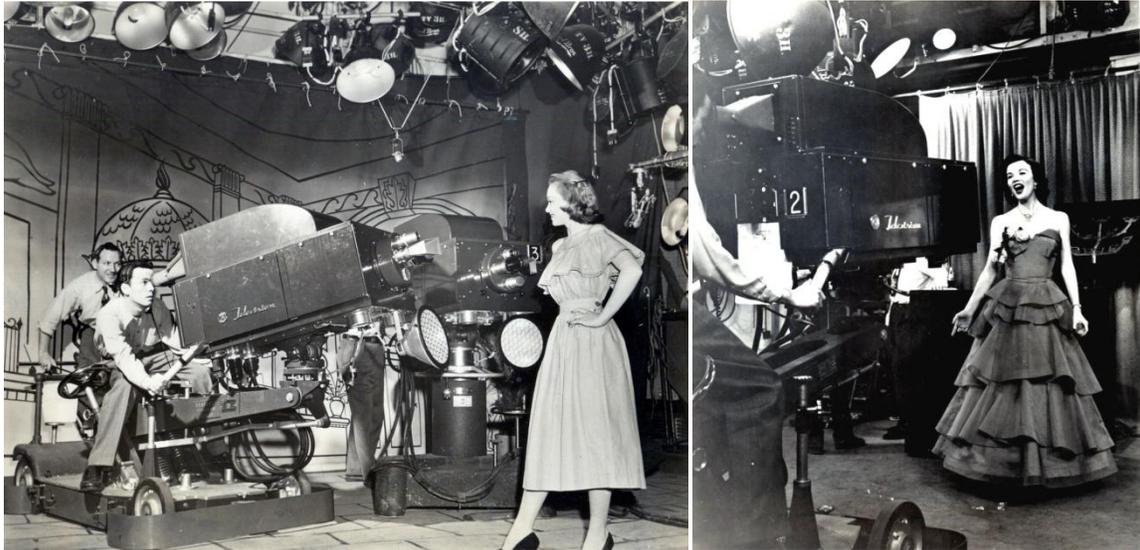
Below is Frank Merklein on camera on the Doody show in 1952 in 8G. Posing as his dolly man is the show’s producer Roger Muir.



To his great relief, three new RCA TK30 Image Orthicon cameras arrived a month later, in April of 1948, just after 8G was dedicated. The Iconoscope cameras were finally a thing on the past. Below is the original “Ugly Howdy” puppet (right) from Frank Paris. A few months later, there was the Howdy we all know and love. It was made by Velma Dawson from drawings by friends of the show: Disney artists Mel Shaw and Robert Allen.



In 1951, Howdy and the other shows done here moved out, and 3H would become the home of the experimental color tests after the Wardman Park color tests concluded in Washington. The Wardman color cameras were not installed in 3H, however the Washington color veterans were brought from there to continue color tests with the new “coffin cameras.” The joke was, these huge new umber gray cameras were big enough to bury a man in. These were the predecessor to the TK40s and this is the first appearance of the rounded top viewfinder.



Left, NBC “Miss Color TV” Marie McNamara posing for skin tone color adjustments. Right is Nanette Fabray who sang and danced three times a day for two years in closed circuit tests in 3H. Below, more experimental color test photos from 3H in 1951. On July 9, 1951, WNBT started compatible color telecasts from Studio 3H and had their first remote color pickup from Palisades Park, New Jersey a year later.



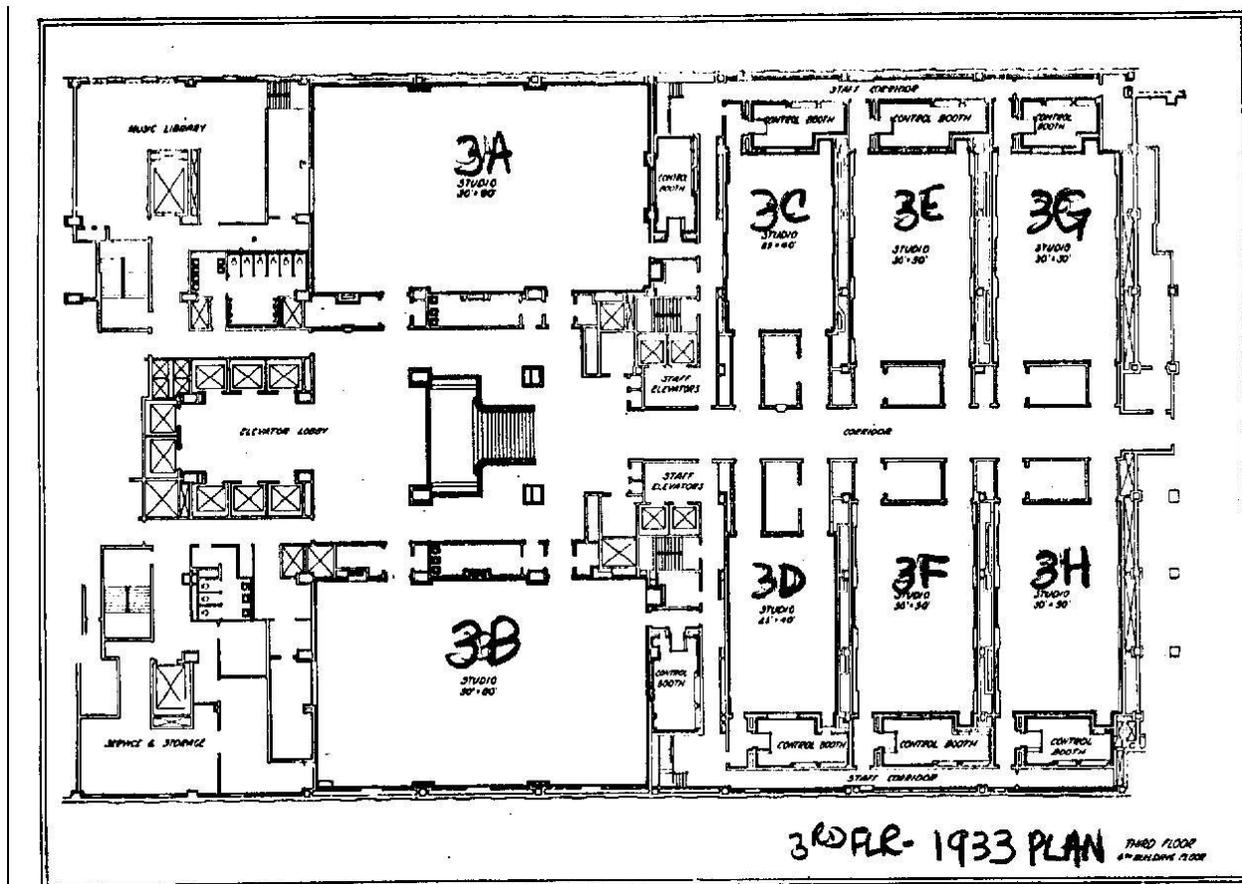
Nanette Fabray and Rene Paul, stars of the Broadway stage, in one of the scenes which were a part of the field-test programs of RCA's color television system.

Yma Sumac, South American songstress with a multi-octave voice, was one of the features of the color television programs broadcast from station KE2XJV.

Variety like demonstration shows were done weekdays at 10, 2 and 4 and were staged with vivid colored wardrobes and sets. These shows were mostly for the engineers in New York and RCA's Princeton labs who watched on closed circuit feeds. Not one to ever miss a marketing opportunity though, these shows were also fed to a half dozen custom built color receivers that were on display in the RCA Exhibition Hall in Rockefeller Plaza. In early '53 these daily shows would move to The Colonial Theater which was where the new prototype TK40 cameras were beginning to be tested.

After the color tests left for the Colonial, 3H was still involved in color monitor tests, but even when the color cameras were in the studio, it had been quite busy with regular 15 minute daily programs and live commercials coming from the studio with TK30s wheeled in from Studio 3B.

In the summer of 1955 3H was closed as construction crews took out the wall between 3H and 3F to create the first color studio inside Radio City. The new studio was to become 3K and with a double debut, both Studio 3K and Howdy Doody went to live color the afternoon of September 12, 1955. You can see the original 1933 floor plan below.



For 22 years, after the conversion to 3K, cameramen had to work around three support columns that were in the walls between 3H and 3F, but in 1977, these columns were removed. During the

3H-3K conversion, a permanent, fully functioning kitchen was built into one of the walls and is where all the famous Kraft spots were done. We'll see that location in the separate 3K story.

By the way, notice in these drawings, the back studio walls also contain small staff corridor walkway areas to the control rooms. Tours were big business for NBC and this was their way of expediting techs and actors from place to place without having them in the main hallways.

A Guided Tour Of Television's First Studio...NBC's 3H, 1939

<https://archive.org/details/RCAPrese1939>

The things I have learned this past year from NBC vets, and visits to 30 Rock, allow us to see this old video with new eyes. The first public broadcast from 3H was June 7, 1936, but closed circuit test productions started from here in late 1935.

Before we start, here is some information that will help you get your bearings. This is something I learned while standing in the space that once was Studio 3H, but is now 3K.

Now, you enter the third floor studios from the main hallway, but when this film was made, that hallway was mostly for tour groups. Engineers and talent used an interior hallway that was on the backside of the studios to avoid the crowds. So, when you see the control room window, it will be on the back wall and is accessed from the fourth floor. The orchestra seen here will be directly under the visitor's observation window, which faced the 4H control room window. The visitor/tour group window was also on the fourth floor which was accessed from the main hallways used for access today. If it seems confusing, I think seeing the video will clarify that.

At the head of this is a one minute RCA ad for their new sound on film projector, but I'm cueing this up to the feature start. Many thanks to Joel Spector for his help pointing out these rarities.

At 2:00 we are at the RCA Labs in Princeton NJ where tube and camera tests are underway.

At 2:57 we see the antenna atop The Empire State Building and just after that, we see the transmitter room a few floors under it.

At 3:34 we see the new mobile units leaving 30 Rock and arriving at a horse race track for a live broadcast. This is a great sequence and gives us a good look at these trucks.

At 5:27 we finally enter Studio 3H. Watch closely! Notice the camera on the left has its top flipped up and the cameraman is making some internal adjustments. Notice on the right...the camera is rising. These pedestals had an internal electric motor to ped up and down. The cameraman with the rising pedestal is NBC's first...Albert Protzman.

At 5:50 we see up top, the visitor's observation window on the fourth floor. This is the wall that opens into the main interior hallway that we use now. The smaller window below the 4H control room was the original 3H radio control room. Opposite this, at the main hallway end of the studio was a storage room which became a rear screen projection room.

At 6:00 we see the control room window. This is on the fourth floor and accessed by hallways on the back of the studios, against the exterior walls of the building.

At 6:14 the cameraman on the left is NBC's great TD, Heino Ripp, on the right is NBC's second cameraman Don Pike.

At 6:22 we see NBC's first cameraman, Albert Protzman, manning the title card camera.

At 6:38, the broadcast starts. If the center camera were to tilt all the way up, we would see the visitor observation window.

At 7:02, notice the big tally lights under the camera lens. They are green. Before there were red tally lights, they used the green tally color to denote which camera was on the air.

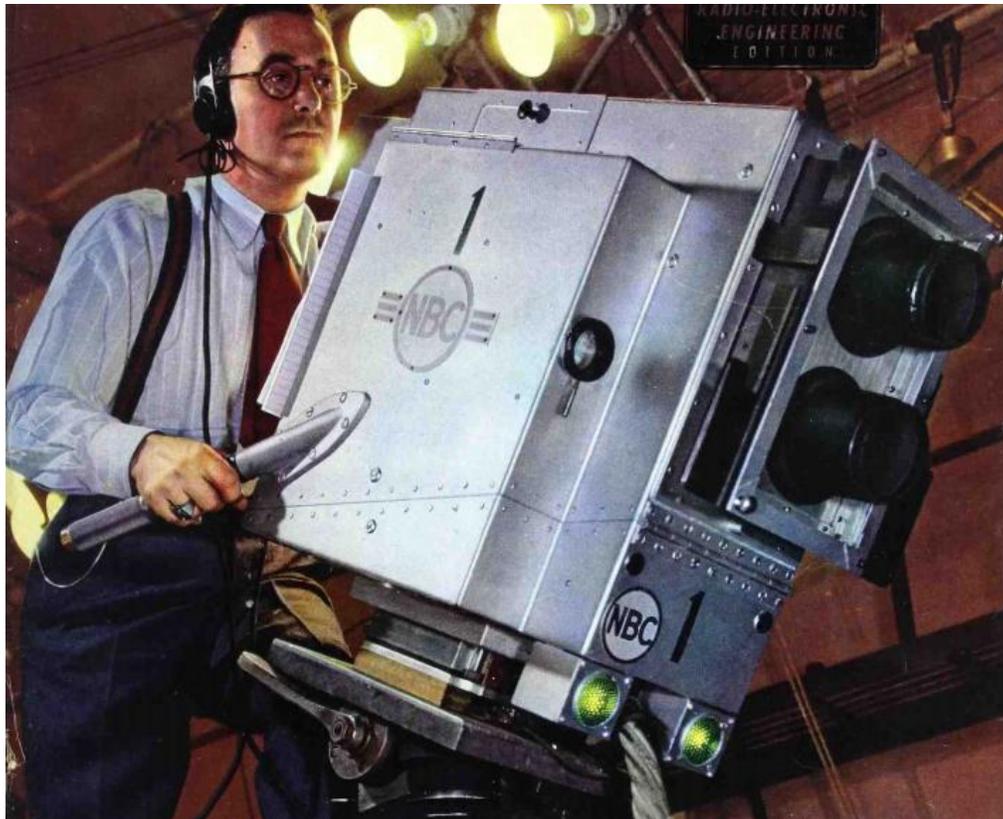
At 7:12 we get a look over the shoulder of the people in the control room looking out on the studio.

At 7:24 we go to the control room for a while. At the back desk, the director is in the foreground, closest to us. The woman is what was then called the production director who was mostly concerned with the script, runtime, cues and talent...today that would be an associate director. The man on the far end is what was then called the video engineer and is doing the switching...today we call this the technical director. At the front desk is the video man (closest) who is shading the cameras and on his right is the audio man.

Below in this great, rare color photo is NBC's second cameraman, Don Pike in Studio 3H. The camera is the RCA Iconoscope A500 model. The first cameras here, the dark umber grey models were almost exactly the same on the outside, and it is possible that once the improved Iconoscope tubes were installed, the same camera bodies were used, but were painted silver to reflect the heat better. I think they went to silver in late 1938, or early '39. **To get a better look at the cameras, click the link below.**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBiIj_mPpbw&feature=youtu.be&t=59s

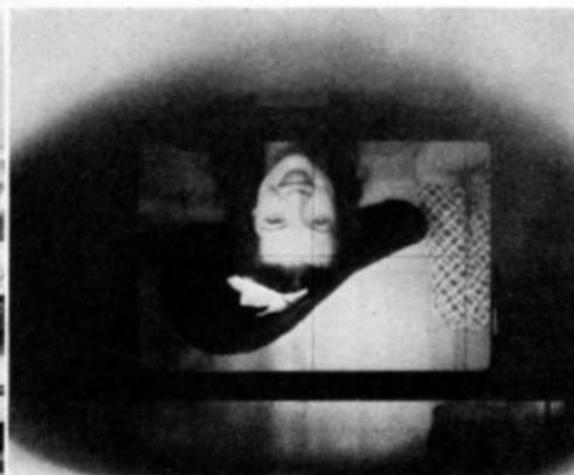
From 1:15 to 1:40 we see new images of the camera top up with the cameraman adjusting the Iconoscope tube, the camera's focus handle and get a amazing look into the ground glass viewfinder where everything is upside down and backward. The cameraman with the tube is none other than TD legend Heino Ripp...NBC's third cameraman.



Above, NBC's second cameraman **Don Pike** in Studio 3H. Below is the view inside the ground glass, optical viewfinder of these early Iconoscope cameras. The images were upside down and backwards and make the cameraman's job quite confusing. Seeing this, now you understand why Frank Merklein had such a hard time on his first day behind one of these Iconoscope cameras on *Howdy Doody*.



Hat model, Nina McLoughlin, watches the television birdie. Augmenting the ceiling wattage is the floor light broad, and we don't mean Nina! Here's the focusing handle at work. Headphone permits cameraman to receive his cues and orders from the director.



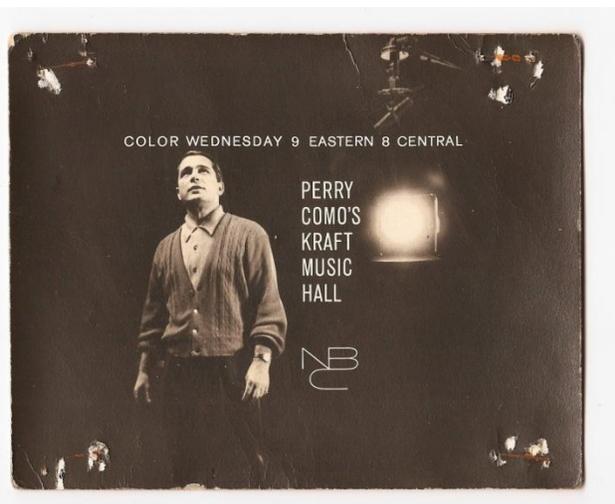
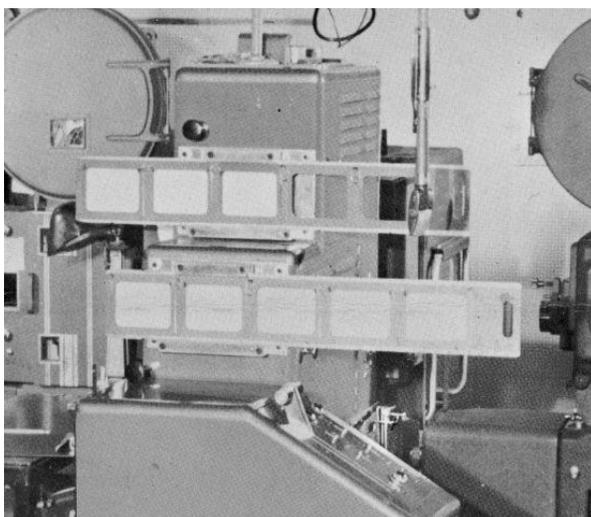
Upside-down television image as seen by the cameraman through the view-finder. Nina is bottom-side-up and in reverse. A light inside the camera tells the cameraman when he is on the air. The crossed hairline is identical in all standard cameras.

NBC's Second Television Facility...5F, Telecine



Although Studio 5F was not a production studio, it was an integral part of the early television operations and handled the film chain duties. As you can see, there was one 16 and two 35 mm projectors here, and on the other side of the wall, two modified Iconoscope cameras.

Television's early graphics were handled with art cards on easels. Slides did not come about until color film chains in the 1950s, but in the mid 40s, there were Telop machines that used opaque images for commercials and promos. Below is a Gray Telop machine and a 1955 telop promo card for Perry Como.

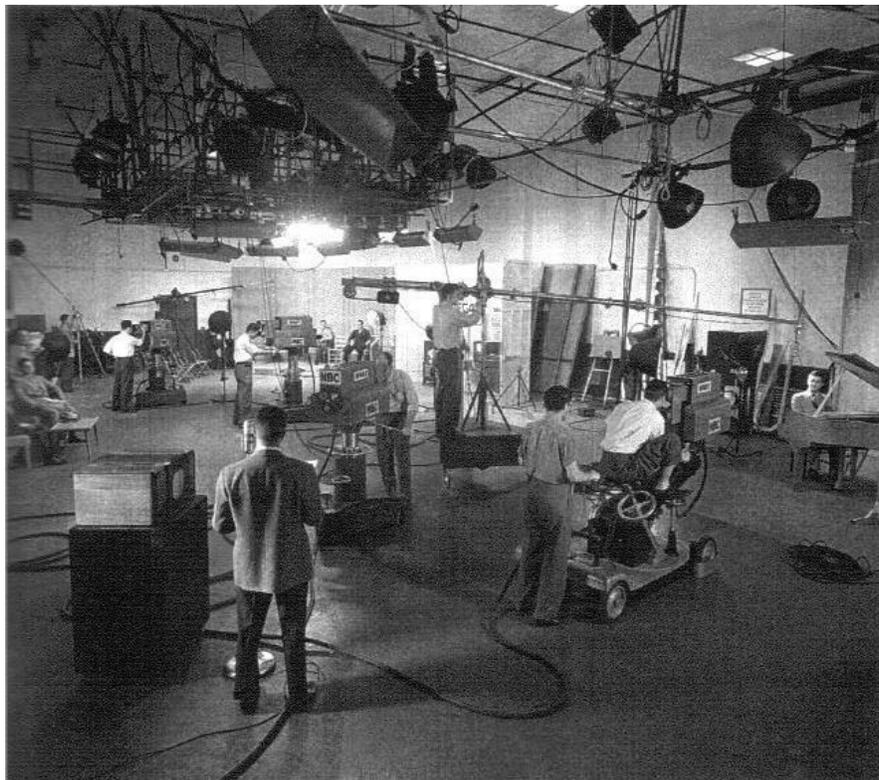


Part 2...The Second Studio Converted, Studio 8G

Officially dedicated April 22, 1948, but it had been used for television since May of 1946.



Above is "Hour Glass" in production, below is the only photo of all four of the NBC built 8G Image Orthicon cameras in action. This too is "Hour Glass", NBC's first network variety show.



These are the only two photos I know of that show NBC Studio 8G as a radio studio, and are from around 1938. The long set of glass windows in both is the 9th floor observation gallery which became the control room when this became a television studio. The small, low window on the back wall is the control room and the larger windows are client and writer viewing boxes. I think this, and Studio 8H were the only early studios with fixed, theater style audience seating.



I believe the first TV show ever to come from Studio 8G was also network television's first variety show. It was called "Hour Glass" and debuted May 9, 1946 when 8G was still officially a radio studio. Later that year, "Let's Celebrate" was done here on December 15, 1946 with Yankees announcer Mel Allen as host, and contestants were competing in stunts for prizes.

In the 6 page NBC press release below announcing the conversion of 8G, notice the "The Swift Show" will be the first produced here after the conversion using the full facilities, meaning the dedicated control room and permanent lighting.

Prior to conversion, the television productions from here were done with the NBC built 8G cameras, the same way the later RCA TK30 internal mobile units covered shows...with rolling Camera Control Units in the sound locks and cables run to the 3H control room or to a remote truck. There was also a lighting crew with each camera crew that brought along about a dozen scoop lights out front and an occasional spot light.

With the RCA TK30s on the way, I have often wondered why the NBC engineers built these cameras to use in 8G, but recent research put a new face on this and answers a few big questions.

NBC knew television had to grow fast after WW II, but there were still war related shortages and hesitancy by the Defense Department to release Image Orthicon technology to non military uses. Believing that new cameras would come more slowly than RCA's October '46 debut date, NBC engineers knew they had to have more than the Iconoscope cameras in 3H and the better, but not great, RCA Model 1846 Orthicon field cameras to work with. Late in 1945, they managed to get from RCA, four Image Orthicon tubes and four seven inch kinescopes for the viewfinder and built their own.

I believe these cameras were actually ready for use by the spring of 1946. "Hour Glass" debuted from 8G on May 9, 1946 which was six months before the TK30 scheduled release in October, and nearly a year before production got into full swing, so the 8G cameras were a good idea. At this time, plans were also being made at NBC to add their first Master Control facility in Room 575. When Frank Merklein started on Doody in 3H, March of '48, he said the only way they were able to do a dissolve shot was through the new Master Control, because that's where the effect had to be done. 3H's Iconoscope switcher was primitive, but when the TK30s came to 3H the next month, so did a new video board. I suspect that was the week after 8G was dedicated.

Only studios 6A, 6B and 8H had permanent theater seating. All other radio studios had removable seats, which was a good thing in this case. Originally 8G had theater seating, but that was removed some time in the mid 40s. Thankfully 8G was three times the size of NBC's only other television studio, 3H. When television came to 8G, all of the Sunday morning half hour shows originated in this one studio. 8G could handle four consecutive shows, one after the other from different walls of the studio.

Here is NBC's official press release on the opening of 8G... their second television studio.

NBC TELEVISION NEWS

WNBT
NEW YORK

PR 12

April 21, 1948

WORLD'S MOST MODERN VIDEO STUDIO--NBC'S 8G--TO OPEN
TOMORROW, APR. 22, MULLEN ANNOUNCES

- - -

Equipped With Radically New Audio, Video Controls,
Studio Cameras and Lighting

NEW YORK, Apr. 21 -- The world's most modern and best equipped television studio, incorporating engineering and production advances never before utilized in sound or video broadcasting, will be unveiled by the National Broadcasting Company tomorrow, Thursday, Apr. 22, it was announced today by Frank E. Mullen, NBC executive vice president.

The new studio, 8-G on the eight floor of NBC's headquarters in the RCA Building here, will be officially opened at 8:30 p.m., when "The Swift Show," formerly produced in studio 3-H, becomes the first television program to make use of the full facilities of the new studio.

Studio 8-G is equipped with radically new audio and video controls, television studio cameras and lighting. It has provisions for six of the newly-designed NBC Television cameras which make use of the sensitive RCA Image Orthicon tube. It eliminates four-fifths of the heating requirements formerly necessary for television studio operations. It presents a new combination of lights developed by NBC engineers to deliver the best possible picture under a minimum of

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AMERICA'S NO. 1 NETWORK . THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

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heating requirements. It features a control room built to specifications by engineers and production personnel who have had more than ten years' experience in television operations.

In preparing Studio 8-G for operation, there have been installed 500 miles of wire, more than 2 miles of coaxial cable, 52 tons of refrigeration, and enough light, heat, power and air-conditioning to supply a village of one hundred average-sized homes.

O.B. Hanson, NBC vice president and chief engineer, who was responsible for the re-building of 8-G, a former radio studio, for television's needs, termed the new studio the most modern advance in television technique thus far developed. Its design, he said, is the result of ten years of pioneer television broadcasting by NBC and represents the best thinking of operating and engineering personnel.

The studio is flexible enough to allow the presentation of any conceivable type of television program. As many as four separate programs may be presented consecutively from this one studio. Added scenery effects -- including falsified perspectives for background scenery, use of photo-enlargement drops, and use of the floor as part of the scenery -- will be possible because of the increased size and scope of Studio 8-G. In addition, rigging for the scenery will be four times as heavy as that used in NBC Television's present studio 3-H, permitting heavier, more realistic sets.

A commentator's booth has been constructed on the ground floor portion of the studio with a monitor and control equipment to permit narrators, commentators and announcers to talk over the pictures being transmitted. If necessary, one camera can be installed in this booth.

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The most revolutionary feature of the studio is the design of the control room. The control room and equipment were designed by NBC engineers. Located one floor above the studio itself, the control room is separated from the studio by a glass partition of light-attenuating plastic which eliminates excessive light from the studio which would interfere with the operation of the monitors. At the same time it permits the operators to see into the studio. Of trapezoidal shape, the control room is so located as to give each engineer and program director a clear view of the entire studio.

There are provisions in this control room for the audio engineer, turn-table operators, assistant program director, director and producer, technical director and video engineers all of whom face the monitor panel board and the glass partition giving on the studio. All these men -- except for the turntable operator and the video engineer -- are seated at one long control table, overlooking the studio.

The audio engineer is provided with a set of control panels unique to audio or television broadcasting. Before him is a sound mixer panel which includes variable dialogue equalizers for all microphones. On another panel also is an "audio perspective" system which permits switching of microphones with the switching of the cameras, also providing for the proper sound perspective for the particular camera on the air. The panel is made of lucite to permit illumination of the control panels so that the engineers can see the dials without overhead lighting. Sound equipment and five turntables are provided behind the audio engineer.

A new communication system -- which consists of a shortwave transmitter and pocket ear radio receiver -- is provided for the program

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director to talk to production personnel on the studio floor. This has eliminated thousands of feet of unnecessary cable and wires.

By far the most elaborate switching unit in television is that provided for the technical director. Before him are facilities for switching in any of the six cameras on the floor, film studios or remote cameras. Facilities for dissolves and superimpositions between any of two cameras are also provided on this panel.

Behind the technical director's control panel sits the video engineer who is responsible for all electronic adjustments of the picture. Before him are two video monitors one of which carries the picture which is on the air, the other of which can be switched electronically to pick up any other camera he desires to adjust. An oscilloscope for each monitor is set into the video engineer's panel to check wave form and voltage amplitude of the video signal.

Each of these control engineers can talk by means of a special microphone to the men he controls on the floor of the studio. The audio man has his own microphone which feeds through a separate amplifier to talk to microphone boom operators; the program director talks by way of the "Pocket Ear" system; the video engineer can talk to the lighting bridge, but the technical director can talk to all -- mike booms, lighting bridge, camera operators at the same time or individually by the flick of a switch.

The terminus for all the electronic switching in 8-G is located three floors below in studio 5-E, the master control position. This has been done in order to group as much of the technical equipment as possible in one place.

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Only two master monitors are used in the control room, Hanson said. One carries the picture on the air, while the other can be switched to any camera, remote or film for lining up the following shot. This innovation does away with a separate monitor for each camera which NBC engineers and producers have decided would be too complicated to watch during the split-second timing of a television production.

Studio 8-G, a converted radio studio, measures 48ft.x87ft. It is approximately 3 times as large as 3-H, the studio out of which NBC Television has been operating since 1935.

Overhead, and covering one half of the studio, is a permanently fixed steel catwalk which will be used as a lighting bridge. In addition, there are de-mountable lighting towers which can be used anywhere in the studio -- a flexible system devised by NBC engineers to hang lights on short order.

The lighting will consist of a combination of fluorescent units, large incandescent lamps and banks of photo-floods with internal silver reflectors. These can be used in any combination required.

A low level of heat will be emitted by these lights because of the small amount of light required by the NBC cameras. These will require a maximum light of from 200 to 250 foot candles, reducing to one-fifth the heat and light formerly needed in television studio productions.

The new NBC cameras -- of which four will be used at the beginning of the studio's operations but will later be increased to six -- use the sensitive RCA Image Orthicon tube. The new NBC cameras were designed by the network's engineers and are of special construction to accommodate the requirements of the new studio. Another new

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development has been the addition of a seven-inch electronic view finder on the cameras in place of the five-inch finder formerly used. Three lens turrets have been mounted on each of the four cameras, giving the equivalent of twelve cameras in the studio.

Two eye-pieces have been mounted on the view-finder so that when the camera is raised above the cameraman's eye-level, he can switch to the lower of the two eye-pieces which sees through the view-finder through mirror reflection.

Standard motion picture studio-type microphone booms will be employed in the studio with a specially-designed television microphone far more directional than any other now available or in use.

The cameras are mounted on movable pedestals -- designed to NBC Television specifications. One is mounted on a two-man movable dolly. A new and improved steering and friction mechanism has been added for steering and tilting the camera.

-----o-----

This is the NBC historical display outside Studio 8G which includes “Americana” and the first big, long running production from here, “The Philco Television Playhouse”. The “GE Hour Of Charm” radio show ended in April of 1946, just in time for television to begin here.



At the link below is a rare look at Studio 8H in action. The show being telecast is “Hour Glass”. This will start just before our first glimpse of the studio and its new control room.

<http://youtu.be/ZvNF8scIar0?t=21m1s>

From 1948, here is a shot of the opening of “The Philco Playhouse” from Studio 8G.



Phil Silvers and Milton Berle clown for one of the NBC built 8G cameras.



Part 3...The 3rd & 4th Conversions, Studios 3A and 3B

Third Floor, 30 Rockefeller Plaza

First shows, Summer of 1948 with Official Dedications Labor Day, September 4, 1950

“You Are An Artist” with John Gnagy was the first show to come from a third floor studio other than 3H. Gnagy started on WNBT on November 1, 1946 with a fifteen minute show that aired at 8 PM and originated in 3H, and was immediately followed by “Let’s Rhumba” from the same studio at 8:15.

In the summer of 1948, the show moved to NBC radio studio 3B and was covered by the new in house mobile units. Below is a must read firsthand account of that period from NBC veteran, Frank Vierling.

“The Birth and Rebirth of Studio 3A”

By Frank Vierling, with thanks to Joel Spector

I was hired and reported for work on January 6, 1949. All new engineering hires had to pass through Whitney Baston’s studio audio operations class. I was assigned to Kinescope Recording in 5F for about a month, waiting for a new class opening. Following Mr. Baston’s class I worked a few studio shows before being assigned to the TV Field group where the mobile units were garaged in Long Island City.

Field had two mobile units, each equipped with three camera chains. 1A’s gear was color coded blue and 1B’s was Yellow. A third set of cameras (the Green Gear) was stored in Rock Center and moved to different studios as programming required. Only two studios, 8G and 3H had cameras.

The Green Gear covered the NBC Symphony from 8H, Perry Como in 6A and Milton Berle in 6B, among others. As the broadcast day expanded theaters and other outside facilities were equipped for TV. On a 1949 Saturday, now a member of TV Field, I was part of a crew assigned to 3B. We moved the Green equipment to 3B and set up for Jon Gnagy’s show “You Are An Artist.” John hosted the very first “learn to draw” show on TV.

Following Gnagy one camera was pushed across the hall into 3A for “Story Book Time.” An actress, dressed in a Little Bo Peep costume, read and turned pages of a giant story book. (This was TV’s first use of 3A although technically it was just an extension of 3B.)

Before we broke for lunch, Leon Pearson did a noon news spot. While we were on our lunch break, 3B was set up for the prime time “Phil Silver’s Arrow Shirt Show,” which was followed by a Pearson news spot at 11. After the Pearson news spot, we moved the gear and set up 6A for Sunday morning’s Horn & Hardart “Children’s Hour,” hosted by Ed Herlihy. With little sleep and short turnaround we were back in for the Sunday broadcast day.

In addition to the “Children’s Hour,” we did “Leave It to the Girls,” with Maggi McNellis in 6B (cameras pushed across the hall). The cameras returned to 6A for the “The Meredith Willson Show” and sign off news with Leon.

The Birth of TV in 3A

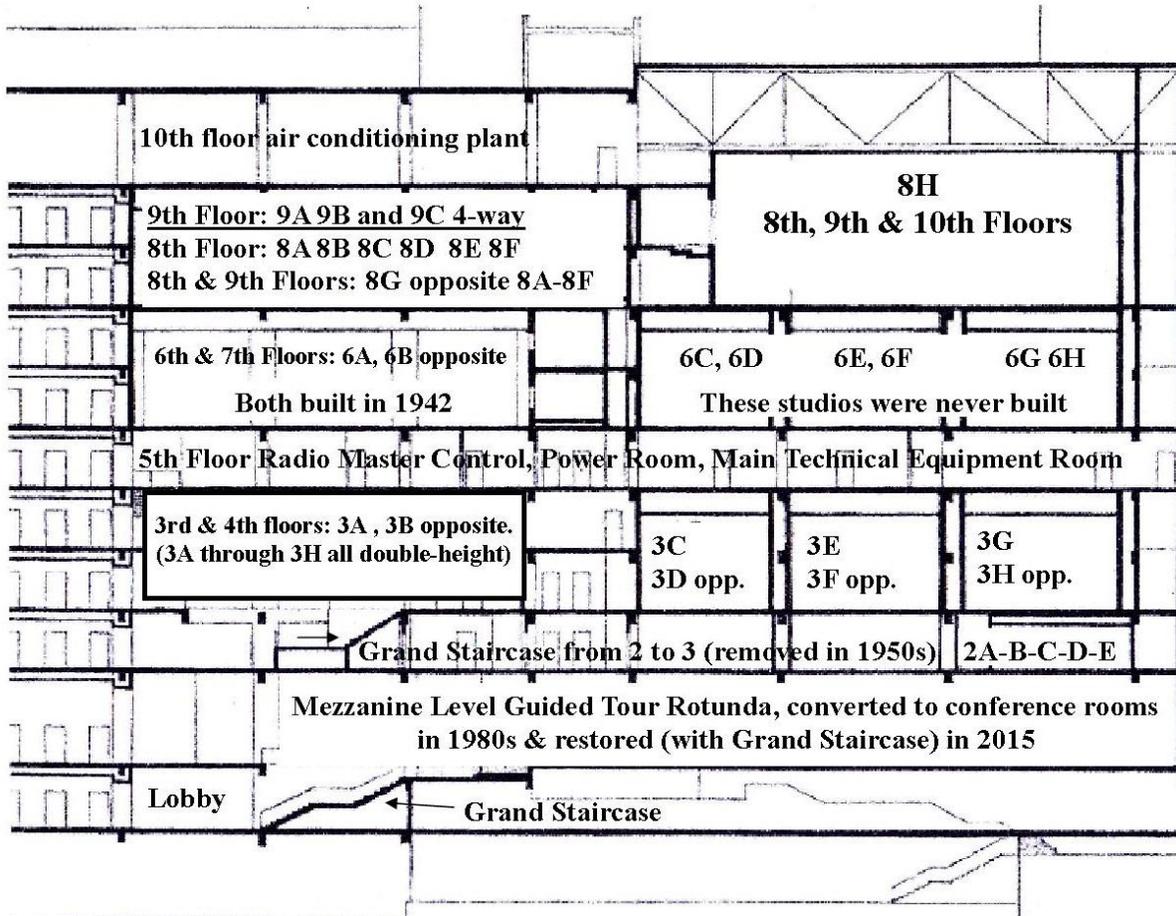
Sometime in 1949 Field received three new camera chains. At first, it was thought they were to replace or add to our Field equipment. We soon found they were for permanent installation in studio 3A. The gear was coded Red. With the Red Gear, 3A became the third TV Studio to have its own cameras.

A variety of shows originated from 3A. A few I worked were “Morton Downey’s Mohawk Rug Show” and “The Roberta Quinlan Show,” the sitcom “Henry Aldrich” (“Coming Mother”), “Who Said That?” and “Date in Manhattan,” the outdoor talk show from Central Park’s Tavern on the Green.

Many thanks to Frank for capturing that great history and Joel Spector for sharing it. Below is an annotated shot of Studio 3B as a radio studio taken from the glass enclosed 4th floor observation room for tours and radio audiences.



This is a cross section look at the studio building from the 50th Street side. This view is from Radio City Music Hall looking south. Notice that the 6th floor was empty till 1942. Thanks to NBC veteran and historian Joel Spector for marking this up.



In Volume 2, when we get to Studio 8H, notice the second page of the NBC press release from August 11, 1950 on the remodeling of 8H. **There we are given news that Studio 3A and 3B will be in operation by Labor Day, September 4, 1950**, so that is the date we are using as their official conversion to television.

From the time NBC moved to 30 Rock in 1933, the identical radio studios 3A and 3B were very busy. Both were very versatile with the only fixed seating located in the observation rooms, which had microphones for the audiences that sat there. As you can see in these rare photos of Studio 3B, audiences could also be seated on the floor. In 2007 a major renovation gave the use of most of the 3rd and 4th floors to MSNBC. Studios 3A and 3K and their control areas were highly modified to suit MSNBC. Additional control facilities for MSNBC were created on the 2nd floor.



The top photo is Studio 3A around 1937, and the bottom is its twin, Studio 3B around the same time. These studios were mirror-images of each other, like 6A and 6B.



This is the 1968 news set for WNBC in 3A with two Vizmo screens and a map.



Below is Studio 3B in late 1968 which was then home to “The Doctors” soap opera.



Part 4...The 5th Conversion, Studio 6B: June 8, 1948

Before we can even begin to approach television on the sixth floor, we have to put radio there first. If you remember, when 30 Rockefeller Plaza was dedicated in late 1933, the sixth and seventh floors were empty. The only thing in this space was the raw infrastructure and some work lights.

In 1933, television was still in the infant stages, but this space was left empty just in case it decided to grow up, or radio took off. As it turns out, radio took off and with 8H and 8G the only theater style studios in the building, NBC went ahead with plans to build two big radio theaters on six and seven, but with an eye toward television eventually catching up. World War II was on the horizon and just a month before Pearl Harbor, 6A and 6B were finished. Perfect timing!

But...the timing wasn't exactly all due to NBC's crystal ball! In 1940, an impatient landlord threatened to turn the vacant floors into the worst possible acoustical neighbor of all...a bowling alley, unless they followed through on their studio plans.

NBC Radio Studios 6A and 6B began operations in early November of 1941. At this link is RCA's first article on the new studios. This 9 page description of the mirror image studios includes many rare details of the look, the design and acoustical properties and several one of kind photos. This is from the *RCA Review*, dated January 1942.

<http://www.americanradiohistory.com/Archive-RCA-Review/RCA-Review-1942-Jan.pdf>

Among the earliest radio shows from 6B were "The Bob Hope Pepsodent Hour" and "The Gertrude Lawrence Show" which is seen below.



At the link is a rare look at Studio 6B in the radio days. This is a “Bell Telephone Hour” rehearsal from 1947. At 2:50 the guest soloist enters through the studio’s double doors. At 15:50 there is an interesting commercial message on how the show is transmitted coast to coast.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT6BN_GnnWI#t=221

The summer of 1948 was quite a busy time for NBC's engineering department...kinescope recording was about to start, but another large deadline loomed. Just in time for an important debut, Studio 6B completed its conversion. **On Tuesday night, June 8, 1948, NBC's “Texaco Star Theater” debuted, as did Studio 6B as a television studio.**

This ultra rare photo is the best of only a few studio shots of “The Texaco Star Theater” in production and is possibly the debut show. The slip card easel graphic matches the title card for the show as seen in the video below. Notice that the camera platforms are so new, they do not even have the rear handrails yet, that you will see in other pictures from 6A and 6B before they were converted. Just in front of Camera 1 (far left) is Milton Berle.

Berle hosted the debut show June 8, 1948, but over the summer, Henny Youngman, Morey Amsterdam, George Price, Jack Carter and Peter Donald rotated as host, before Berle “won the competition,” and was made permanent host in September.



At the link below, we see the earliest available online kinescope of the show, just ten months into its historic run. This is the March 22, 1949 show and just so you know, the lady with the funny laugh, which you hear in almost all of the Milton Berle shows, is his mother.

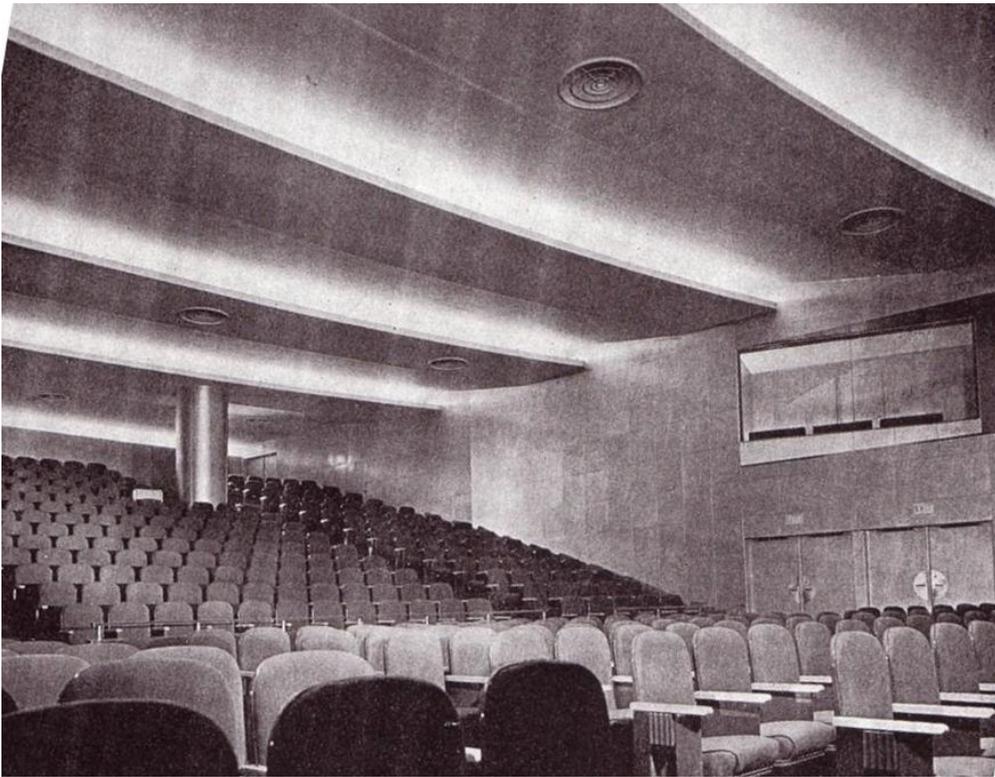
<https://archive.org/details/TexacoStarTheater22March1949>

I'm sure other broadcasts came from 6B in the summer of '48, but the next known show to originate here debuted September 2, 1948. It was "The Gulf Road Show" with Bob Smith (yes, Buffalo Bob) and was mostly music based and flipped from musical variety with acts like Patti Page, to music quizzes, to celebrity sketches, to music's newest acts.

Below is a shot from "The Gulf Road Show" with Milton Berle and his daughter Vickie, Gabby Hayes and Bob Smith in a skit about radio programs.



Below are shots of 6B as a radio studio in 1942 and as you will see, the biggest change was the removal of the floor seats when it was converted. The overall length of each studio was 100 feet; the width an average of 48 feet. The stage was 37 feet deep and 45 feet wide with a 13 to 16 foot ceiling. The 6A walls were a rich warm copper color and 6B's walls were silver tone. Both had dark green seats and carpeting. There were 150 removable floor seats and 300 permanent theater seats in each.

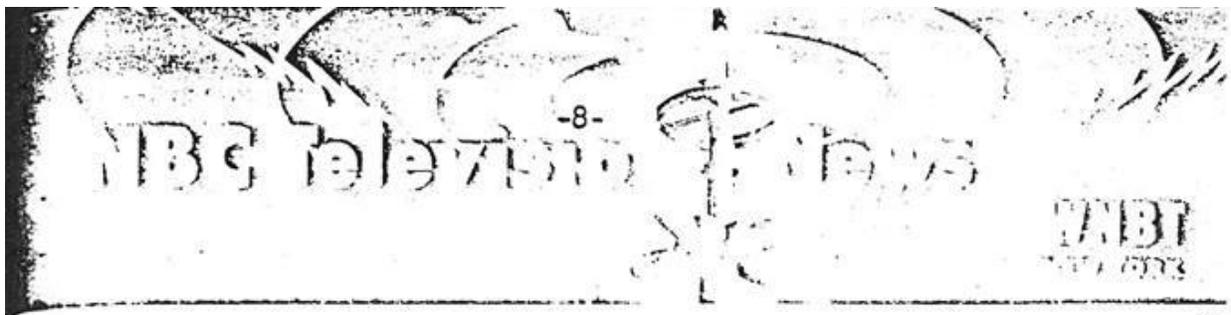


Here is an older historical display outside 6B with a partial list of shows from this studio.



As mentioned, the summer of 1948 was quite a busy time for NBC's engineering department. Not only did they debut “Texaco Star Theater” in 6B on June 8, 1948, they also debuted kinescope recording the same month! With all this, and just having added 8G, 3A and 3B months before, preparations were being made for the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia on June 21.

The convention would be the first “official” use of kinescopes, but testing had started in the first week of June and Berle's first show was quite likely the first big show to ever be recorded on kinescope. Here is the cover page of NBC's June 17, 1948 press release.



KINESCOPE RECORDING TO BE USED BY NBC FOR FIRST TIME
AT GOP CONVENTION IN REGULAR PROGRAMMING SERVICE

NEW YORK, June 17 -- The kinescope recording system, enabling stations not yet interconnected to the NBC Television network by coaxial cable or micro-wave relays to telecast important programs, will be used as an integral part of NBC's programming for the first time during the Republican national convention in Philadelphia the week of June 21, O.B. Hanson, NBC vice president and chief engineer, announced here.

Designed and engineered by NBC, the kinescope recording system was put into operation several weeks ago. All recordings made to date, however, have been on an experimental basis.

Use of the recording cameras will provide television programs for non-interconnected midwestern and west coast NBC stations and affiliates in less than a day after the action occurs. The programs will be recorded as they are presented to the NBC video network. The recordings will be made and the film processed in New York, and prints will be ready for shipment by air within 12 hours after the conclusion of each program. Planes will rush the film to stations across the country.

(more)

“Tonight” Comes To Studio 6B

The first week of January 1960, “Tonight” with Jack Paar moved from The Hudson Theater to its new home in Studio 6B. In the photo below we see Jack's famous June 16, 1960 interview with JFK done with RCA TK11/31 black and white cameras in 6B.



The show went color from here September 19, 1960, but on January 12, 1959, while still at The Hudson, the show had begun being videotaped. For the first few months of taping, Paar did the Thursday night show live for some reason, but before long that ended and over the years, the taping time moved from 8 PM to 6:30 PM.



Below, Johnny Carson with three TK41s broadcasting his show from New York. Carson took over the show on October 1, 1962 with Ed McMahon as his announcer and side kick. For all but a few months of its first decade on the air, Carson's "Tonight" show was based in Studio 6B.





On Monday, October 1, 1962 NBC had two debuts! In the morning, Merv Griffin did his first daytime talk show, and later that evening, Johnny Carson debuted as “Tonight” host. Prior to that, Merv had hosted “Play Your Hunch” in 6B which is where he met Jack Paar, who invited him on “Tonight” as a guest. After seeing Griffin with Paar, NBC was more receptive to his request for a daytime talk show...“The Merv Griffin Show.” Below is a shot from Johnny’s first night, with Joan Crawford as his first guest. Griffin was one of the guest hosts between Paar and Carson in that six month interlude.



Part 5...The Uptown Studios, A, B, C and F: December 1948 106th Street, Near Park Avenue



Before we start, I must say that aside from the discovery of NBC's use of in-house mobile units covering television shows from yet to be converted radio studios at 30 Rock, this was the second biggest surprise for me. I had heard the Uptown studios mentioned in passing, but I had no idea they played such a large role in NBC's daily production schedule.

NBC's 6th, 7th & 8th Studios were located at what was called The Uptown Studios at 105 East 106th St near Park Avenue. Today, this property is the independently owned Metropolis Studios and is still an active production center where "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire" was taped. It is managed by NEP.

NBC's first official mention of this site was in their 1948 year-end wrap-up press release and stated that these studios had opened in December of 1948. Studios B and C were 30x60x21 while A was 74x94x32. There was also an F studio as well, which was a film studio and that brings us to a segue to the pre NBC days. I hope you noticed the Pathé sign above...it's important.

The 11 story tower is one of three buildings that was once the heart of Pathé. It was built in the late 1920s as an Odd Fellows headquarters and lodge. The other two buildings (a two story and four story) were owned by Pathé and housed their main commercial processing labs. Some years before NBC took over, Pathé bought the Odd Fellows building and converted the tower to a film production facility.

I think NBC became familiar with this site as a client of the Pathé film processing labs. If you remember, just above we read that RCA/NBC started using the Kinescope process in June of 1948: there was a lot of film that had to be processed and Pathé was the only NYC lab big enough to handle the job. Negotiations and technical conferences had started much earlier which had brought NBC brass to the 106 Street plant.

When the NBC business came their way, Pathé decided to concentrate on the processing contract and let slide the production facility. NBC needed studio space, so a deal was made for them to take the 11 story tower.

On February 16, 1948, NBC launched an all film weekly news show called “NBC Television Newsreel” which soon became “The Camel Newsreel Theatre.” It began as a ten minute program that featured Fox Movietone newsreels with John Cameron Swayze providing voice-over for the series, with a live organist providing background music.

On February 16, 1949, the weeknight “Camel News Caravan” debuted with Swayze now live on camera, and immediacy became important. I think that by the debut date, NBC had installed a telecine/film chain here to feed “late breaking news” to the live Swayze news show. That became Studio F.

Rumor was that Howdy Doody had come from here, which is not true, but...the lead in show for Doody did and that was “The Gabby Hayes Show”. The live part of the Hayes program was done in Studio C and the film clips came from F, which as you will see, would later be the same for Swayze’s show.

Other shows that originated from Uptown include, the “Lights Out” drama series 49-52, the “We’re On” talk show hosted by actress Virginia Gilmore and directed by husband Yul Brynner. Before joining the “Home” show, Josephine McCarthy’s cooking show came from here.

At the same time he did “Today,” Dave Garroway also hosted a Friday night variety series, “The Dave Garroway Show” from October 2, 1953, to June 25, 1954 from Uptown. “Miss Marlow” came from A in 1954, Edgar Guest’s “A Guest In The House” came from B in 1951. “First Love” came from B in 1954, “Follow Your Heart” came from A in 1953, “Three Steps To Heaven” came from A in 1954, and the “US Royal Showcase” anthology show came from C in 1952.

Third paragraph from bottom left side puts "Camel News Caravan" at The Uptown Studios.

TELEVISION TODAY'S NEWS

By **RALPH HOWARD PETERSON**
Director, "Camel News Caravan"

A 15 minute newscast on your screen represents hours of preparation and the services of a highly-trained staff.



John Cameron Swayze before the cameras for the "Camel News Caravan."

PUTTING together the "Camel News Caravan" every day for the television network of the *National Broadcasting Company* might be compared to running a push-button desk for myriad magic carpets and geni all over the world. Because that is what we do through the magic carpets of modern communications and transportation, through the coordinated efforts of a highly skilled staff as we bring actual events from all over the world to the television screen each day.

Only, it is not that simple, nor that easy.

To carry televiewers from Seoul to Budapest, from baseball field to the White House, to picture "Today's News Today," calls for a fabulous organization, a highly complicated operation and great expense. We must be ready with manpower and equipment to cover anything that happens in any accessible point on the globe.

This series was started in February 1948 as a straight newsreel program. Newsreel film was edited and put on the network with suitable commentary background. However, television outgrew this form of news coverage very quickly, so the program was turned over to the NBC-TV News Division which developed the technique of mixing live action pickup with film.

Often the program involves at least a dozen switches from New York headquarters to other cities and back again.

Film is being rushed in constantly from more than 100 cameramen stationed strategically around the world.

Producing television's most popular network news show is a 24-hour-a-day job. But take the typical day at the NBC-TV Uptown Studios in the Pathe Building at 106th Street, Manhattan, our headquarters.

Editor John Lynch checks over the incoming news, then he confers with our staff, including Chief Writer Reuven Frank and myself. We decide what is the day's big news and how we can cover it. We check over reports from correspondents and representatives all over the world. Telegrams, cables, radiograms, and trans-oceanic phone calls carry the assignments and instructions.

We spend the day rushing back and forth between our offices with its news teletypes and the movie projection room where we review film as it arrives.

In the last year, "Camel News Caravan" ordered 250

miles of 16 mm. and 35 mm. film shot. Thirty-five miles of film were shown on the program.

This film may be brought by the cameraman himself from a local fire or a local political event around the corner, or rushed by special courier, jet plane, trans-ocean air liner, and motorcycle from some remote corner of the globe. Most of it arrives undeveloped and is prepared for viewing by a laboratory staff here. For this reason, many of our cameramen never see the film they shoot and send in film that millions of televiewers see as a routine part of their evenings at home.

One-third of all films included on the Caravan arrive too late to be developed and printed by air time. To make the evening deadline with them, we project the negatives by a special apparatus with reversed polarity. This gives a normal picture to show last-minute news.

To the 16 mm. and 35 mm. sound and silent films from all over, we add the on-camera commentary by John Cameron Swayze in New York, by Bill Henry and David Brinkley in Washington, by Edward Wallace in Cleveland, by Clifton Utley, Jim Hurlbut, and Clint Youle in Chicago, by others in Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Also in the New York studio, we carry the film story with off-camera voices of newscasters like Kenneth Banghart, Radcliffe Hall, Don Goddard, and Bob Wilson. Connie Lempke is the off-camera voice of fashion.

We go through the motions of a rehearsal about 7:15 o'clock to make up our show. This is essential in blending as many as fifteen different segments into the smooth-flowing news program that appears on the coast-to-coast hookup at 7:45 p.m., New York Time. But, at rehearsal, probably half of the segments are not shown. These are picked up from other cities during the actual show, or received at our studios between the rehearsal and the telecast.

Our technique has been improving steadily through the years; our world covering staff grows in size and skill. NBC Vice-President William F. Brooks has described the Caravan as "a major step in adapting the tools of a new medium, television, to the age-old job of reporting news." Also, he might add, it is adapting the great developments of a scientific age to the art of news reporting.

I think "Camel News Caravan" actually moved from Studio 3H at 30 Rock to Studio C in late 1950 to make room for the color tests in 3H. That brings us to another interesting piece of history. This is an NBC Master Control log from Monday, March 12, 1951 that shows the line up from 3PM till sign off, as well as their originating studios.

MASTER

ISSUED BY ED WHITNEY NBC TELEVISION SUBJECT TO CHANGE
 MONDAY, MARCH 12, 1951 BROADCAST OPERATIONS ROUTINE PAGE 1

PROGRAMS	COMMERCIAL SPOTS
Kine DS DS 3:00 Miss Susan (PHILA)-N	
3:15 Edgar Guest (B)-N	3:15 Theatre Arts
3:30 Bert Parks (6B)-N	3:30 Bordens #1053-H
Kine DS DS 4:00 Kate Smith (HUD)-N	4:00 Gimbels
5:00 NBC Comics (F)-N	4:15 Anthracite #10441 - RKO
Kine DS DS 5:15 Gabby Hayes (F & C)-N	4:30 Sunshine #102
Kine DS DS 5:30 Howdy Doody (8C)-N	4:45 Ward #10462 - RKO
6:00 Cactus Jim (CHI)-N	5:00 Joy #1
6:00 Easy Does It (B)-L	5:30 Sunshine Biscuits #102
6:25 Shell Oil News (F)-L	6:00 Alka-Seltzer #101 (EDI)
6:30 Tex & Jinx (HUD)-L	6:00 Spuds #S-15 (EDI)
6:55 Weatherman (B)-L	6:25 Gimbels
Kine DS DS 7:00 Kukla, Fran & Ellie (CHI)-N	6:30 Blatz Beer #22
Kine DS DS 7:30 Mohawk Showroom (J.)-N	6:55 Cuticura (Date)
7:45 Camel News Caravan (C & F)-N	7:00 Birdseye #1025
Kine DS DS 8:00 What's My Name (INTL)-N	7:30 Bonrus #32 - Rheingold (Bonecko)
Kine DS DS 8:30 Voice of Firestone (CEN)-N	7:45 Borden #1044-H
Kine DS DS 9:00 Lights Out (a)-N	8:00 Bulova #1408-8 - Beechnut
Kine DS DS 9:30 Robert Montgomery (8H)-N	8:30 Breyers #50-6 - Kools #2
Kine DS 10:30 Who Said That (3A)-N	9:00 Bulova #1316-9-Parliament B (Rev.)
10:30 Talent Search (6B)-L	9:30 Eversharp #70 - Stahl-Meyer
Kine DS DS 11:00 Broadway Open House (HUD) -N	10:30 Canay - Bulova #310-10:30
12:00 News Summary (FN)-L	11:00 Anthracite #10442
	12:00 Parliament #1 (1:00)

To help read this, notice on the left are notations on which shows are to be recorded to kinescope. The origins are all in parenthesis () and the -N or -L denote if the show is local on WNBT or on the NBC network.

(PHIL) means the show came from WPTZ in Philadelphia, (B) is Studio B at 106 Street, (6B) Studio 6B at 30 Rock, (HUD) is the Hudson Theater, (F) is the film studio there at 106 Street that means the show was part or all film. Notice Gabby Hayes is (F & C) which means the live part of the show was in Studio C at 106 Street and the cowboy serials he showed came from the film studio in the same building. Notice Howdy Doody is in 8G. (CHI) is a feed from WNBQ in Chicago. (INTL) is the International Theater on Columbus Circle. (CEN) is the Center Theater. Notice at 7:45 "The Camel News Caravan" is from (C & F) which was all at The Uptown studios location at 106 Street.

I'm not sure when NBC left Uptown, but they did not stay here long and were probably out by the end of 1954, after having acquiring the West 67th Street studios from WOR. Here's a link to the Metropolis web site.

http://www.nepinc.com/solutions/services/studio_production/studios_in_new_york/nep_metropolis_studio?lang=UK



"COAXIAL CABLE" is chopped by Dave at end of another show. Audience next sees a fade-out of Dave holding the frayed cable ends, then a flash of light.

Here's a novel way to end an episode of a Friday night variety series, "The Dave Garroway Show," which he did from Uptown from October 2, 1953, to June 25, 1954.

Part 6...International Theater, 5 Columbus Circle, January 1949

5 Columbus Circle (Revised: 5 New Interior Photos Added, starting page 64)



The International Theater was the first of NBC's Broadway style theater acquisitions and had been a vaudeville and movie theater prior to its conversion to television. The first known use of the theater by NBC was the debut of "The Admiral Broadway Revue" on January 29, 1949.

According to Frank Vierling, who then was a member of the Field Unit, the show was covered as a remote broadcast and switched from a truck. "The Village Barn" was television's first county music show and was done from the nightclub of the same name in Greenwich Village on Friday nights. After the equipment was loaded, they drove the mobile units to The International and set up the cameras there for the Saturday night Admiral show.

At the link below is a full episode of "The Admiral Broadway Revue" (#13 of 17) which aired live April 22, 1949.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjkCkqMs1is>

This is the start of one of television's greatest early comedy teams...Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca. The show had great ratings but unbelievably, Admiral (who "owned" the show) ended it in May of '49. It seems that the show generated sales of Admiral TV sets that were far beyond their capacity to manufacture them. Admiral had to either end the show or build a new plant.

Since they owned the show, it could not continue with another sponsor and they would not sell it. Such were the sponsorship problems of the early days of television. Soon after this, NBC Vice President Pat Weaver would solve this problem by having the network own the shows and sell spots to sponsors. He is the man that brought magazine style ad sales to radio and television, which spread the cost of production among several advertisers and gave us the line... "this portion sponsored by _____."



This is Sid Caesar in "The Admiral Broadway Revue" at The International Theater in early '49.

Even as the Admiral show was being canceled, plans were already being made by producer Max Liebman and NBC to bring back the show's two hot stars...Caesar and Coca. NBC was also planning something big for Perry Como and it was about this time that I think NBC went ahead and added a control room and permanent lights. That would have been around August of 1949.

The next production known to have come from here was the September 8, 1949 "second debut" of "The Chesterfield Supper Club With Perry Como," and by then, this was a television studio.

Perry debuted on this show a year earlier in 6A (which we will see in just about three more pages in the 6A part), but...that was the fifteen minute version which aired on a very irregular schedule.

This show from the International was the half hour version and is his first regularly scheduled show on NBC Television...the first of many. At the link is a full episode from November 22, 1949 with Patti Page and Victor Borge.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTCiKVC7rBU>

On February 25, 1950, four of The International's brightest years started with the debut of "Your Show Of Shows," Caesar and Coca were back with a cast of writers that have become the "who's who" of comedy including Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner and more, but that's another story. Below is one of many famous clips from "Your Show Of Shows" with Reiner and Howard Morris in "This Is Your Story." It's still hilarious, and gives us a good look at part of the theater.

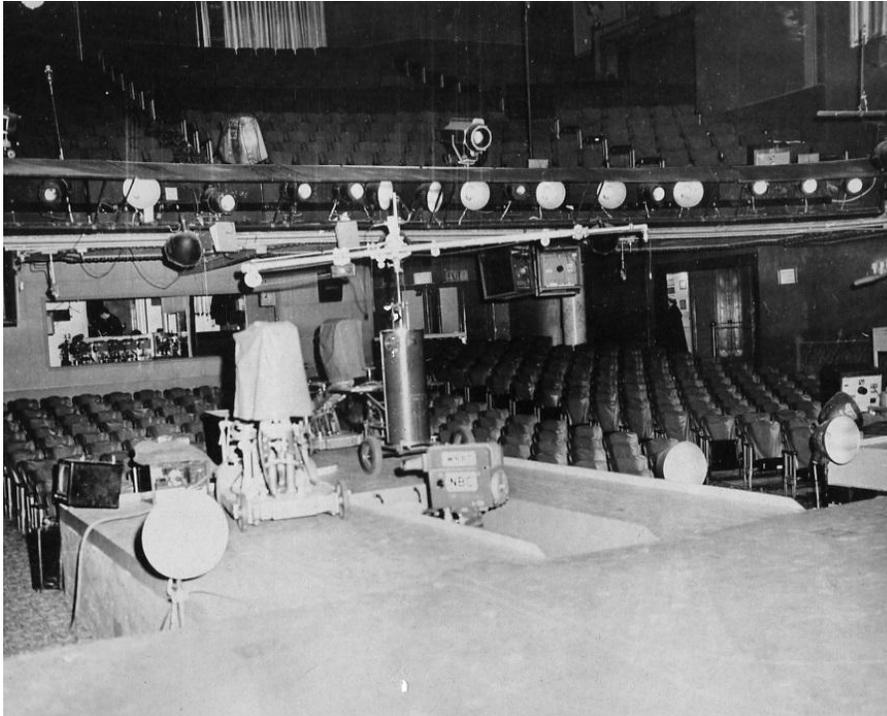
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNbT9Lf9xZo>



This is a shot from "YSOS" (Your Show Of Shows) at The International Theater in 1950.

"YSOS" debuted as part of a two and a half hour block that was called "Saturday Night Revue." The first hour, was "The Jack Carter Show," live from WMAQ in Chicago and was a comedy/variety affair airing at 8 Eastern. At 9, ninety minutes of fun on YSOS hit the air and was followed at 10:30 by "Your Hit Parade" which probably came from Studio 8G. Jack Carter's show was replaced the next year by "The All Star Revue." This two and a half hour block was the first time Pat Weaver's "participating sponsor" plan was used.

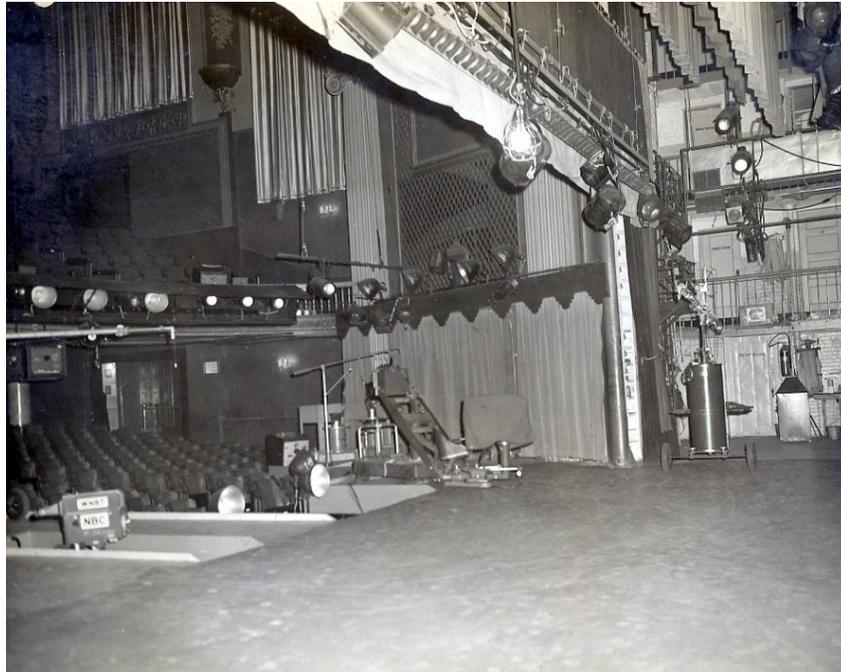
Five amazing new photos of the International's interior have just arrived courtesy of Nick Van Hoogstraten. This is a shot from the stage of "Your Show Of Shows" giving us a look at the twin dolly ramps and the floor level camera in the pit. In the rear, we can see into the control room.



Here's a look toward the stage that shows the location of the orchestra. There are two Houston Fearless Panoram dollies on the ramps.



On the left, we see one of the first Saner Studio Cranes on a short ramp with the fourth camera. Saner had worked for NBC and left to build a new platform that was taller than the HF Panoram Dollies, and the Saner Crane was the result. A year or so later, Houston Fearless came out with their 30B crane, which was more popular. Only about 30 Saners were made.



In this photo, we see the announcer's desk and the place where the live commercials were done.



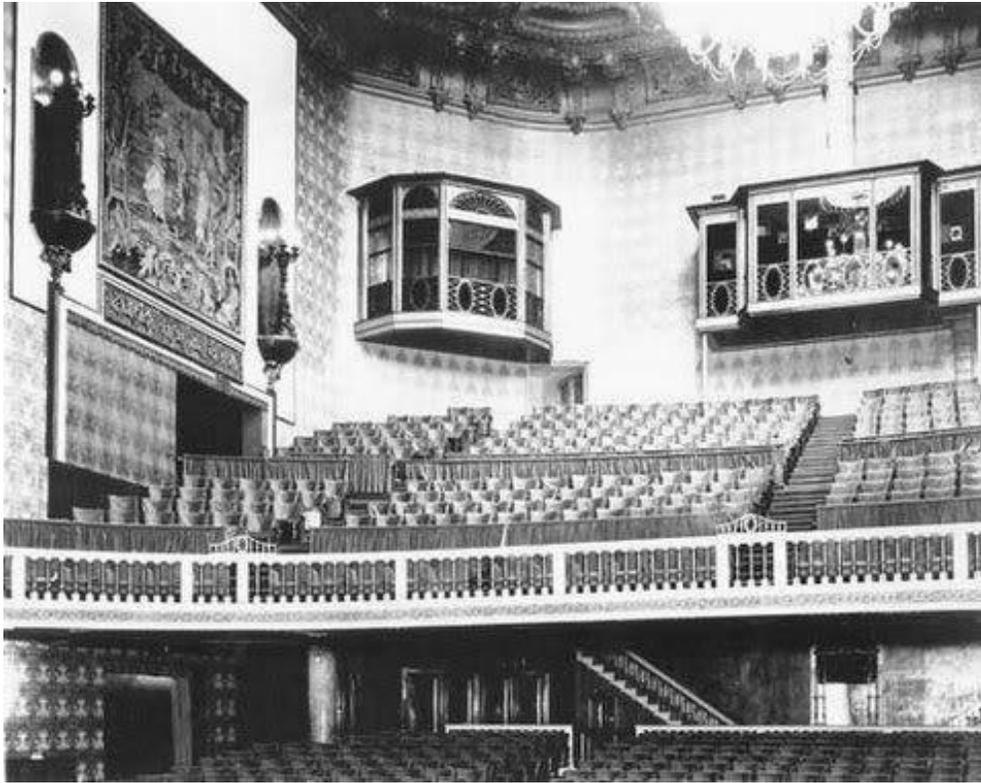


Here is our last new photo showing the long dolly ramp and the control room in the background.

The 25th Academy Awards ceremony was held on March 19, 1953. It took place at the RKO Pantages Theater in Hollywood and at the NBC International Theater in New York. It was the first Academy Awards ceremony to be televised, and the first ceremony to be held in Hollywood and New York City simultaneously. The New York ceremonies were held in NBC's International Theater. The photo at the beginning of Part 6 is from that night.

In the short clip below, we see Shirley Booth accepting the best actress award for "Come Back Little Sheba" at the International with cuts back and forth from Hollywood. There's a quick glimpse of one of the cameras as she exits the stage. Her ascent to the stage is without a doubt the first televised "gown trip." She is a true pioneer!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcBMpusmlkw>



Above is the theater around 1930. It seated about 1355 and was built in 1903, but was demolished in 1954 to allow for wider sidewalks in front of the New York Coliseum, which in turn was torn down to make way for the Time Warner Center in 2000. The closing coincided with the end of “Your Show Of Shows” and the Coca-Caesar split. The next year, both Imogene's and Sid's new shows debuted in the newly converted Century Theater.

Here is Shirley Booth accepting the Academy Award for “Come Back Little Sheba” in 1953.



Part 7...Studio 6A, The Sixth Conversion: May 1950 6th Floor, 30 Rockefeller Plaza

At the link is what I believe is the first television broadcast to have come from Studio 6A. It is also the first ever television broadcast (a simulcast) of “The Chesterfield Supper Club” with Perry Como on December 24, 1948. As 6A was still a radio studio at the time, the set up would have looked very much like the one in the photo, which was also taken in 6A.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJNOISmZSoY>



A second television use of radio studio 6A was on a “Break The Bank” radio/TV simulcast on October 5, 1949, the day the show moved from ABC Radio to NBC Radio. The photo above and the two below, all from “Break The Bank,” show us how the roving in house mobile units were setup when they were brought into the then radio studios for television broadcasts. They came complete with portable wooden platforms and ramps and about a dozen or so scoop lights and a couple of sound booms.



Below are three rare photos of Studio 6A as a brand new radio studio in December of 1941.





This is a look at 6A around 1960 showing the whole studio space all the way to the back wall. On the back wall are double doors that open into prop and scenery storage areas.

The first broadcast to originate from 6A as a television studio is believed to be the May 29, 1950 debut of “Broadway Open House.” Although it debuted there, I think it moved to 6B soon after.

A young California comedian named Don Creesh, who had been recommended to Pat Weaver by Bob Hope, was signed to host a new experiment by Weaver to put comedy and variety on television at 11 at night. Reports are that NBC was rushing to finish the conversion of 6A from radio to television in time for the May 22, 1950 debut of “Broadway Open House,” but Creesh died just days before. Hurriedly, Morey Amsterdam was brought in to host Monday and Tuesdays with Jerry Lester filling out the rest of the week to get the show on the air a week later.

Here’s clip of “Broadway Open House” from 1950 that opens with Jerry Lester standing on the camera platform. There are no landmarks to tell if this is 6A or 6B. Notice the writers’ credits at the end. Doc Simon is actually Neil Simon and Danny is his brother.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnkCg5wnBOo>

There is a long list of shows from here, but the stand out is of course “Late Night With David Letterman” from '82-'93 and followed by Conan O'Brien as host. Letterman had been in 6A even earlier hosting the short lived mid morning “David Letterman Show” in 1980, which you can see

part of at the link below. And yes, that's John Tesh in the audience.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRoAG_AmqrI

Now, A Word From Our Sponsor....Late Night Television History

This seems an appropriate place to add this great clip of NBC's late night history. It starts with "Broadway Open House" and ends with Johnny Carson. In the Jerry Lester part, you can see by the doors behind him that the show is now in 6B. Some of what we see here will come in handy later.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvzaJY3TfiA&feature=youtu.be>

Part 8...The Center Theater, September 1, 1950

1230 Sixth Avenue, on the corner of 6th Avenue and West 49th Street

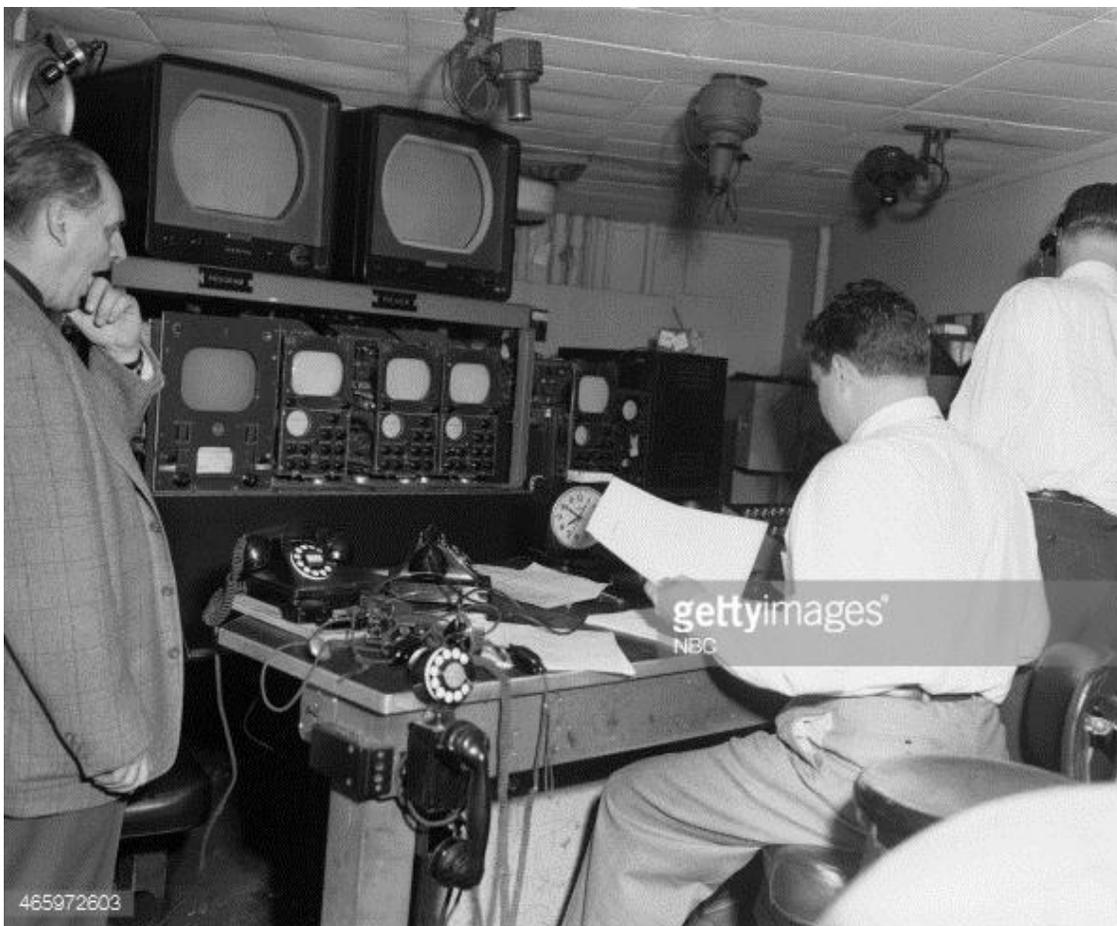
Shades of things to come...here is a photo from August of 1950 announcing the coming of NBC.



Officially, The Center Theater went into use as an NBC television property as of September 1, 1950, with the first show coming on Monday, September 4, 1950.

That is when the second season of “The Voice Of Firestone” debuted on the NBC Television Network. Historically, “The Voice Of Firestone” had been a big show on NBC Radio’s Blue Network since 1928 and was the first program ever simulcast on both AM and FM radio.

As you will see in the press release below, August of 1950 was another busy time for NBC. That’s when plans were announced to convert 8H to television, and to add The Center Theater and The Hudson Theater as television studios. With 8H about to close for a few months, a new home for Firestone had to be found and that facility had to be done before 8H could start construction. Even if Firestone had to be done as a remote for a few weeks till the Center control room could be finished, then so be it. Below is a photo of the Center’s completed control room.



Another famous show that came from the Center Theater was the “All Star Revue,” which was originally titled “Four Star Revue.” This big budget variety series starred Danny Thomas, Jimmy Durante, Jack Carson and Ed Wynn - the four stars of the title - with each hosting a different week in the month. It debuted from The Center Theater October 4, 1950.

“Four Star Revue” was one of the most expensive hours in television with an initial budget of \$50,000 a week, with big money spent for name entertainers. Among the initial hosts, Durante came with his act and show already in place. He brought along his old nightclub partner Eddie Jackson and musicians Jules Buffano, Jack Roth and Candy Candido.

Ed Wynn had his own well-established identity already from vaudeville, radio and a previous TV series. Nightclub performer Danny Thomas soon featured child performer Bunny Lewbel every week as well as vocalist Kay Starr. Film actor Jack Carson kept a large crowd of weekly company: comics Jack Norton and the team of Bob Sweeney and Hal March, The Honey Brothers, sisters Betty and Jane Kean and singer Lola Albright.

With the series second season premiere in the fall of 1951, the title was changed to “All Star Revue” as other stars like Bob Hope, Spike Jones and Paul Winchell were brought in to host. By the fall of 1952, Durante was the only one of the original hosts still with the program. Added to the rotation was Tallulah Bankhead, George Jessel and Martha Raye.



At the link is full 1952 episode of “All Star Revue.” Guest stars Olsen & Johnson were notorious for using gags in the audience and at 2:09, you can see some of that and the theater’s interior.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmGjysZdYQE>

Below is the August 10, 1950 NBC press release on the acquisition of The Center that also covers some of the theater’s impressive history and features.

August 10, 1950

NBC LEASES HUGE CENTER THEATRE AS
TV SHOW ORIGINATION POINT

The world-famous Center Theatre, one of the show places of New York's Rockefeller Center, has been leased to the National Broadcasting Company for television.

The world's largest legitimate theater, with a seating capacity of 3,000, the Center Theatre will become the world's largest television studio. It will be used by the National Broadcasting Company as a television theater for the origination of video programs. Several of the network's largest productions will emanate from it in the Fall.

Announcement of the lease, one of the largest transactions of its kind in the entertainment business, was made jointly by Joseph H. McConnell, president of the National Broadcasting Company, and G.S. Eyssell, executive vice president of Rockefeller Center, Inc.

"Acquisition of the Center Theatre," said McConnell, "will provide the National Broadcasting Company with excellent facilities to accommodate our tremendously expanded television business.

(more)

2 - Center Theatre

"The National Broadcasting Company in the Fall will be originating each week more than 100 individual television programs from New York City. Many of these programs are productions requiring facilities comparable in scope to anything ever attempted on Broadway.

"In addition, the size of the Center Theatre will permit the network to do productions on television heretofore impossible in any other theatrical type of presentation. No other theater anywhere is equipped to handle the types of presentation planned to originate from the Center Theatre."

The stage for television productions has an area of 4,200 square feet and flares out into what at one time were the eight front rows of orchestra seats. The fan-shaped stage measures 100 feet at its widest and has a depth of 90 feet. The stage includes an elaborate elevator in three sections with turntable arrangements.

The Center Theatre is equipped with thousands of square feet of facilities of all types, including air conditioning, dressing rooms, and shop facilities for engineers, carpenters, electricians, painters and other technicians.

In the basement level are situated a property room, carpenter shop, machine shop, paint shop, chief electrician's office, property manager's office and offices for engineers and the maintenance staff.

"We at Rockefeller Center feel that the use of the Center Theatre by NBC as the world's largest television studio-theater marks a significant step toward the continued predominance of New York City as the capital of the television industry," Eysell said.

(more)

3 - Center Theatre

"Nelson A. Rockefeller, president of Rockefeller Center, Inc., joins me in congratulating NBC upon the addition of this great theater to its extensive radio and television facilities, which for many years have been centered here. We are certain that the theater's unsurpassed facilities will make possible the production of many superlative programs."

NBC's technical and production staffs have been surveying the Center Theatre for the past several months, planning for its conversion to television use. All plans are fully drawn and the change-over will commence at once.

A further advantage of the theater to the network is its proximity to NBC's television headquarters in Radio City.

The Center Theatre first opened on Dec. 29, 1932. A motion picture theater until Sept. 1934, it changed its policy then and started a series of lavish theatrical presentations. The first of these was "The Great Waltz," and others included "The White Horse Inn" and "The American Way." The last legitimate show to appear in the Center Theatre was "Swinging the Dream." A successful series of ice shows started at the Center Theatre in 1940, and in addition, the Ballet Theatre has made periodic appearances and the San Carlo Opera Company has been seen virtually every year.

-----O-----

(NBC - August 9, 1950)



The top photo above is a 1946 image of the theater that shows NBC and Radio City just to the north. Just to the left of the marquee is the famous Hurley's Saloon.

The lower photo is the beautiful interior of the 3000 seat theater. It was at 1230 Sixth Avenue, on the corner of 6th Avenue and West 49th Street, just on the other side of the street from NBC and a block south of big sister, Radio City Music Hall.

The Center Theater was the only original Rockefeller Plaza structure ever demolished and that happened in May of 1954. US Rubber bought the property to build an 18 story headquarters tower. The marquee below shows one of the events NBC broadcast from here as a **NEMO** in the year or so before they took over the theater. NEMO was the term NBC and AT&T used for their remote broadcasts. It stands for “**Not Emanating from Main Office.**”



Part 9...The Hudson Theater, September 25, 1950 145 West 44th Street



The Hudson Theater became NBC's newest New York studio on September 25, 1950 with the debut of "The Kate Smith Show." Her daytime show was on at 4PM weekdays from '50 till '54. From September of '51 till June of '52, she also hosted the "Kate Smith Evening Hour" at 8PM Wednesday nights from the Hudson.

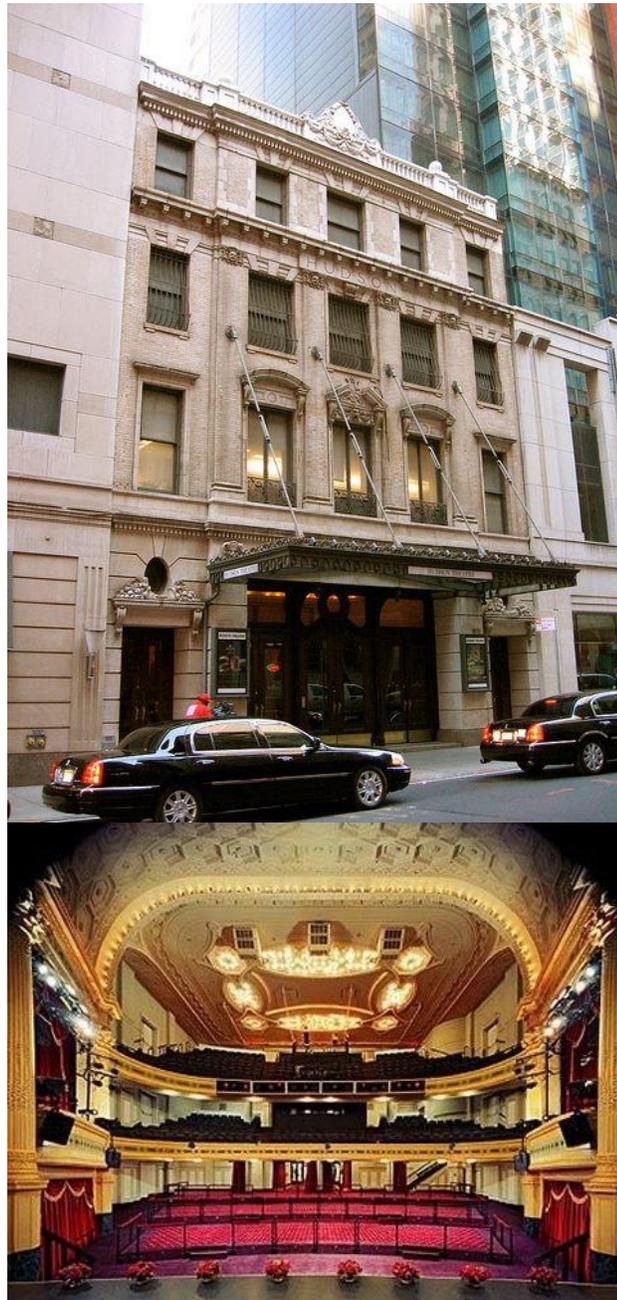
Below is a clip of the opening of Kate's daytime show which always started with her big hit from the 40s, "When The Moon Comes Over The Mountain."

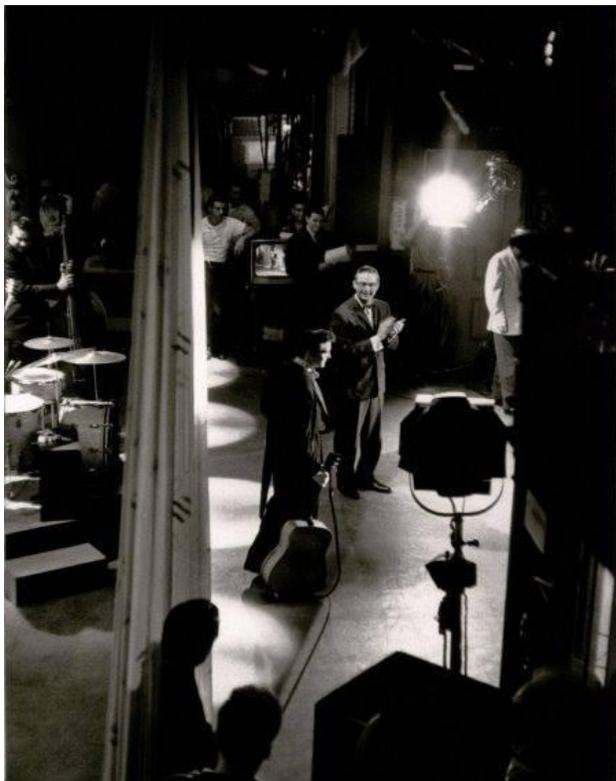
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY_UPo6nNs

On Sept 27, 1954, "Tonight" with Steve Allen debuted from The Hudson and stayed there until December of 1959. Jack Paar had taken over in June of '57 after the strain of hosting 'Tonight' and, the Sunday night "Steve Allen Show" became too much for Steverino. Both Allen shows were done at The Hudson.

With the January 1960 debut of “Tonight” from Studio 6B, NBC's lease on the Hudson was up and the theater went back to legitimate theater after having spent the ‘30s and ‘40s as a CBS Radio theater and the ‘50s as an NBC Television studio. Today, the theater has been restored to its former glory and is now used as a conference and party space for the Millennium Broadway Hotel.

This is the Hudson Theater as it looks today.





The top photo is of Steve Allan leaving The Hudson after the “Tonight” show, about 1:30 AM.

Below is Steve with Elvis Presley who played his Sunday night “Steve Allen Show” in June of ’56. Ed Sullivan had passed on Elvis calling him a “hip swinging lunatic.” Sullivan and Allen were head to head Sunday nights and after seeing the ratings, Ed changed his tune and invited Presley to his shows.

On the next page, the August 2, 1954 *Broadcasting Magazine* announcement of the coming of “Tonight” and its arrival at The Hudson Theater.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SmoHU4_eY8

At the link above is a very rare moment in television. Here, on “The Steve Allen Show,” is Elvis Presley doing his first ever TV comedy sketch with Steve, Imogene Coca and Andy Griffith!

Below is the *Broadcasting Magazine* announcement of debut of the “Tonight” show. Notice the last paragraph...only four minutes of spots per half hour. Ahh, the good old days!

NBC's 'Tonight' to Be Counterpart of 'Today' and 'Home'

NBC-TV's often-discussed *Tonight* program will be launched on Sept. 27 and will be presented Monday-through-Friday, 11:30-1 a.m. EST and 11 p.m.-12 midnight CST.

In announcing plans for the program last Thursday, Sylvester L. (Pat) Weaver Jr., NBC president, termed *Tonight* a late evening show of entertainment and service features, “the logical evening extension” of *Today* (NBC-TV, Mon.-Fri., 7-9 a.m., EDT and CDT) and *Home* (NBC-TV, Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m.-12 noon, EDT and CDT). He said that these two programs, typifying the magazine concept of television, have paved the way for smaller-budgeted national advertisers to use network tv, and added that *Tonight* will make “big-league nighttime tv available to the client who might otherwise not be able to afford class A network time.”

Steve Allen Selected

The new program will star Steve Allen and present other entertainers, as well as coverage of the latest news, sports and weather. Though the bulk of the show will originate from NBC-TV's Hudson Theatre, in New York, Mr. Weaver stressed there will be mobile unit-remote pick-ups from various points of the country.

No plans were announced for presenting the program in color. It was pointed out by an NBC-TV spokesman that the Hudson Theatre is not equipped for color, but he added that it was “conceivable” that use could be made of NBC-TV's mobile color unit, as is done for *Today* and *Home*.

Same Selling Plan

Mr. Weaver announced that the program will be sold under the same sales plan as that of *Today*, with four one-minute commercials sold per half hour of the program. He noted that *Today* had 83 different sponsors in 1953.

Executive producer of *Tonight* will be Richard A. R. Pinkham, who has been executive producer of *Today* since August, 1952. Mr. Pinkham came to NBC in 1951 as manager of planning for the television network.

Page 70 • August 2, 1954

MUST SEE ARCHIVAL VIDEO...THE NBC STUDIOS IN 1950

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GUk-f2dEzw&feature=youtu.be>

As TV was taking off in 1950, NBC and others struggled to find studio space in New York. This rare film shows us, in more detail than we have ever seen, the course those efforts with a look inside not only the “Radio City” 30 Rock building, but also the International, Center and Hudson Theaters and thankfully, the “missing link” is shown here too...NBC's Uptown Studios at 106th Street. There is a lot more here, including film of the NBC Kinescope department, the renovation of Studio 8H for TV, NBC prop storage at what later became the CBS Broadcast Center, a new Master Control and much more.

A Detailed Guided Video Tour of NBC...From 1926 – 1947

To help you get a better understanding of Volume 1, here is a look back at a lot of the things that we have just covered, but now we see them living and functioning. Even if you have seen this before, you will see it with new eyes now that you know more of this rich history. Much of what we have just been over, including a lot of things from the Introductions is here.

With the help NBC veterans Joel Spector and Dennis Degan, we have identified the many places inside Radio City at 30 Rockefeller Plaza that are shown in this interior travelogue of NBC. This is narrated by NBC legend Ben Grauer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvNF8scIar0&feature=youtu.be>

In the first minutes, there are quick opening shots of Arturo Toscanini in 8H and the NBC Master Control room on the fifth floor which was in use from 1933 till 1963.

At 2:11, we get more quick shots of 8H, 3B and Bob Hope in the new 6B radio studio.

At 2:40, we see a rare 1926 broadcast from NBC's first home at 711 5th Avenue.

At 3:28 we see the first NBC Radio network maps

At 4:00 we see the first coast to coast broadcast of The Rose Bowl Game from Los Angeles in January of 1927.

At 4:50, we see the exterior of 30 Rockefeller Plaza, and just seconds later, we are in the lobby in the early 1930s.

At 5:01 we get a look at the original lobby configuration which included the staircase to the large mezzanine and as the footage rolls, we wind up there. NBC is restoring these areas now and they will look a lot like this when they are finished this year. The staircase is located where the security desk was until just recently.

At 5:25 we see the original radio master control board used at 711 5th Avenue. It is in front of the new radio master control on the 5th floor.

At 5:38 notice on the master control board, Studio 3H.

At 6:45, after seeing the 5th floor, we enter NBC Radio Studio 3B which is now home to NBC Nightly News.

At 8:00, we find NBC's legendary newscaster H. V. Kaltenborn in one of the many small news studios in the building in late 1945. This was on the 4th floor, as was the newsroom that we see next.

At 9:37 we see NBC’s Kenneth Banghart delivering the news and just after that, the transcription department.

At 9:46 to 10:36 is an engineer cutting reference lacquer discs in Room 770, the Radio Recording Department. Its eight Scully lathes were in use into the 1970s. This room opened in 1942 when the 7th floor was opened for business. NBC had a vibrant radio program and music syndication service in the 40s and 50s, and this department made the master discs for those programs. This portion of the 7th floor is now part of the three new HDTV control rooms being put into service. They can be assigned to any studio floor.

At 14:20, we move into Studio 8H, which was then called “The Auditorium Studio,” with a performance by Fred Waring.

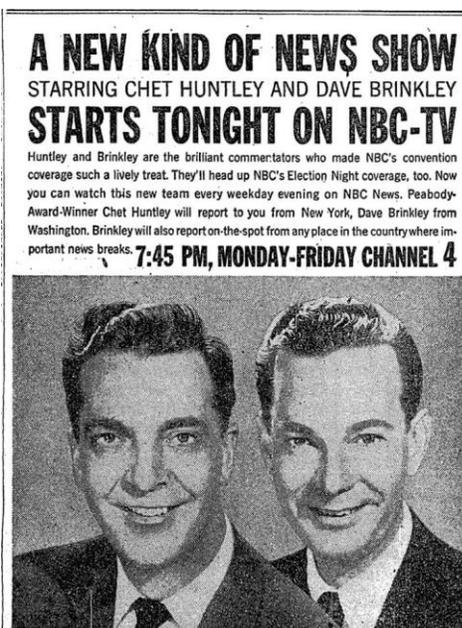
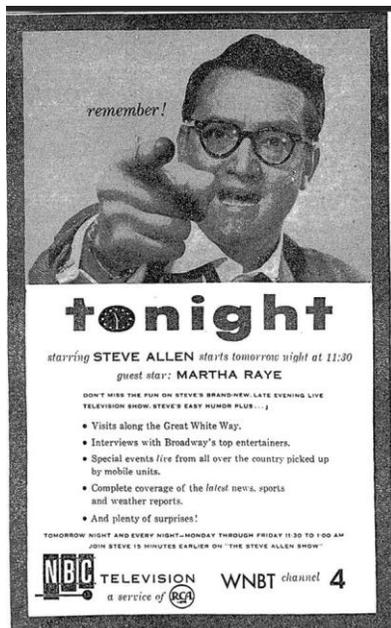
At 14:52 we see director George Voutsas with engineer Gil Markle, both of whom Joel Spector worked with in 1965.

At 17:20 we get a quick look at NBC Radio City West in Hollywood.

At 19:08 is a rare look at radio Studio 3A.

At 21:55 we arrive in television land in Studio 8G, NBC's second television studio. The first 8G broadcast was “Hourglass” and we see it in rehearsal here.

At 22:13 we see the new 8G (9G) 9th floor TV control room with everyone in one workspace, as in 3H (4H). This was modified in subsequent control rooms to first move the audio console into its own booth, and, except for 8H (black and white), move the video consoles into their own room as well. This allowed those engineers to function without disturbing the show’s director and TD. We end in 8H with The NBC Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Arturo Toscanini.



Just for fun, here are the debut day *New York Times* ads for the “Tonight” show with Steve Allen from September 27, 1954 and the October 29, 1956 debut of “The Huntley – Brinkley Report” from NBC News. Just below is the history of NBC’s early television shows! There are some surprises!

The Honorable Mention Section

I'm including some things here that I thought you may be interested in seeing...things that didn't quite have a place in the studio history narrative, but none-the-less are milestone images and events that happened along the way.

V-E DAY

**Watch WNBT for
Special Victory News Program**

.....

SEE: *Famous NBC Newsmen in action*
SEE: *Historical films of the War in review*
SEE: *Up-to-the-minute Victory News flashes as they are received on the Television Studio News Ticker*

.....

For exact time of **WNBT** V-E Day Program
—stay tuned to
WEAF, New York—**660** on your dial



WNBT
Television Channel
No. 1

NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY
A SERVICE OF RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA



On May 8, 1945 the war in Europe ended with a huge celebration around the world. Above is an RCA Model 1846 Orthicon camera broadcasting the mass party from Times Square from atop the Hotel Astor's marquee. Later that year, WNBT would use the same address to broadcast the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade locally. Below is a photo of camera tests the day before the parade.



The Beginnings of Television News...



The most widely celebrated dates in NBC news history are February 16, 1948 and February 16, 1949. In '48 "The Camel Newsreel Theater" debuted as a 10 minute weekday newsreel from Fox Movietone News which was narrated off camera by John Cameron Swayze.

The next year, Swayze moved in front of the camera and that began "The Camel News Caravan" as a live news show. CBS had put Douglas Edwards on camera May 3, 1948.

BUT...this was not the start of news at NBC. In fact, almost immediately after their first regular TV service began April 30, 1939, news had begun to be reported on W2XBS (WNBT).

Newscaster Lowell Thomas had occasionally simulcast his NBC Radio show locally from Studio 3H as early as December 1939 and from February till July of 1940, he regularly simulcast his "Sunoco News" show to New York viewers.

There was also the weekly "Esso Television Reporter" from March until May of 1940 hosted by William Spargrove, who narrated off camera. The Esso program used live organ music and on camera was a mix of newswire photos, maps and graphic miniature depictions of news event locations.

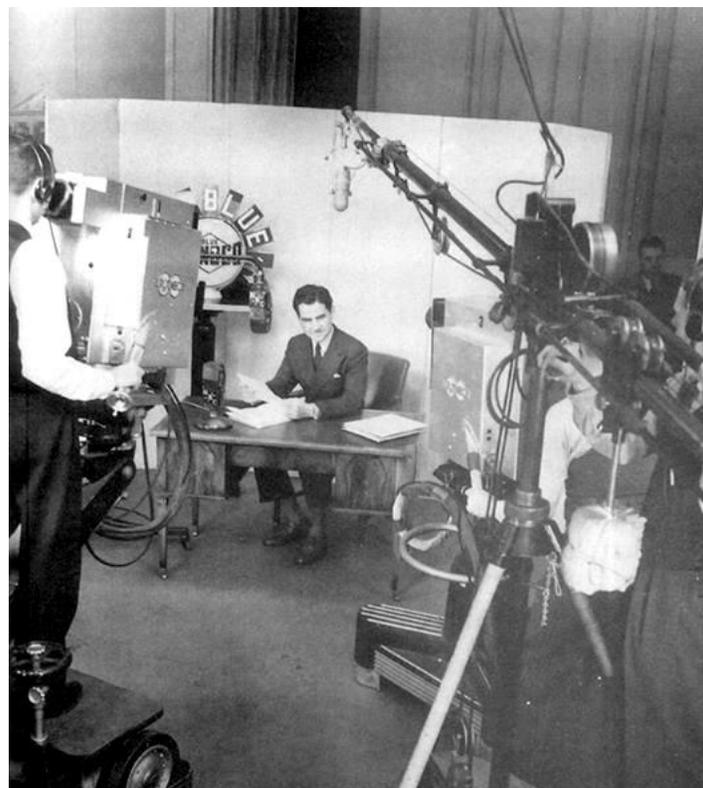
In the photo just below, we see one of those Esso mini sets in use. This scene depicts the first use of aircraft to attack warships.

Remember, although WW II had not come to our shores yet, Europe was fully engulfed in 1940. As we will see, the war severely curtailed television in every way, but there is more to the pre war story below. **On the left are the debut day newspaper ads for both shows.**



Fig. 20.1.—Miniature Set for Television Transmissions (courtesy of NBC).

Above is a shot from “The Esso Television Reporter” in 1940 which was broadcast on W2XBS. The cameraman is Don Pike. Below is a Lowell Thomas simulcast “The Sunoco News” from Studio 3H on what is now commercial station WNBT which is why we can date this photo after the July 1, 1941 license approval. Otherwise, the sponsor signage would not have been possible.



From July of 1941 till May of 1942, Sam Cuff hosted a weekly news commentary called “Face The War,” but the show ended as television cut back everything five months after Pearl Harbor. On February 23, 1944, things started to stir a bit as “The War As It Happens” came to television, and NBC News has been on the air more-or-less continuously since then.

“The War As It Happens” began as a local program, but NBC records indicate that in April of 1944, it was fed to Schenectady and Philadelphia on the fledgling NBC Television Network and became the first newscast regularly seen in multiple cities.

At the time, even the great NBC Radio news department, which began in 1933, was tiny compared to the wire services and newspapers and newsreels. Television was even less able to gather news because they didn’t even have local film crews. The first breakthrough came in 1944 when John Royal, the first head of television at NBC, acquired the rights to Army Signal Corps film.

Using this footage, “The War As It Happens” followed what was basically a newsreel format, using the film with Paul Alley narrating and Ray Forrest in the studio with commentary, maps and wire photos.

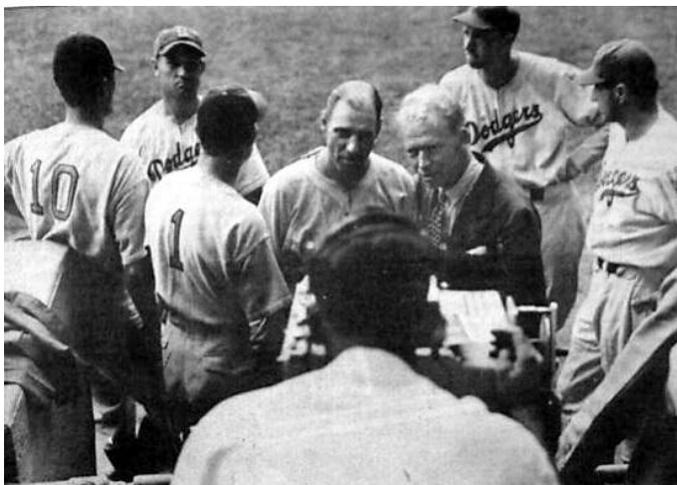
In August 1945, the war was over and the Sunday “The War As It Happens” newscast was renamed “The NBC Television Newsreel.” In mid 1946, it gained a sponsor and became “The Esso Newsreel” and was rescheduled to two nights a week, Monday and Thursday.

On February 16, 1948 Esso bowed out and a new sponsor came to the show which became “The Camel Newsreel Theater.” The next year, it went live with Swayze on camera, but surprisingly there are reports of background music throughout the broadcast until the early 1950s. That was a remnant of the old newsreel shows. In 1956, Swayze was replaced by Chet Huntley and David Brinkley. I think you know the rest of the story.

This is a rare look at David Brinkley’s set in Washington D.C. at NBC’s WRC TV.



The First Major League Baseball Television Broadcast



The first ever Major League Baseball game was televised on August 26, 1939 on experimental station W2XBS, which is now WNBC. With Red Barber announcing, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Cincinnati Reds played a doubleheader at Ebbets Field. The Reds won the first, 5–2 while the Dodgers won the second, 6–1.

Barber called the first game on NBC Radio and moved to TV for the second game which he did without the benefit of a monitor and with only two cameras capturing the game. One camera was close to Barber who had to sit in the stands behind home base. The other was on the first base side up high. During the game, Red's headset also went out so he was winging more than just the play by play action.

At the time, the New York World's Fair was in full swing, as was RCA and NBC's first big television push. Including the sets RCA had installed at the fair and around town, there were only about 400 receivers in the NYC area.

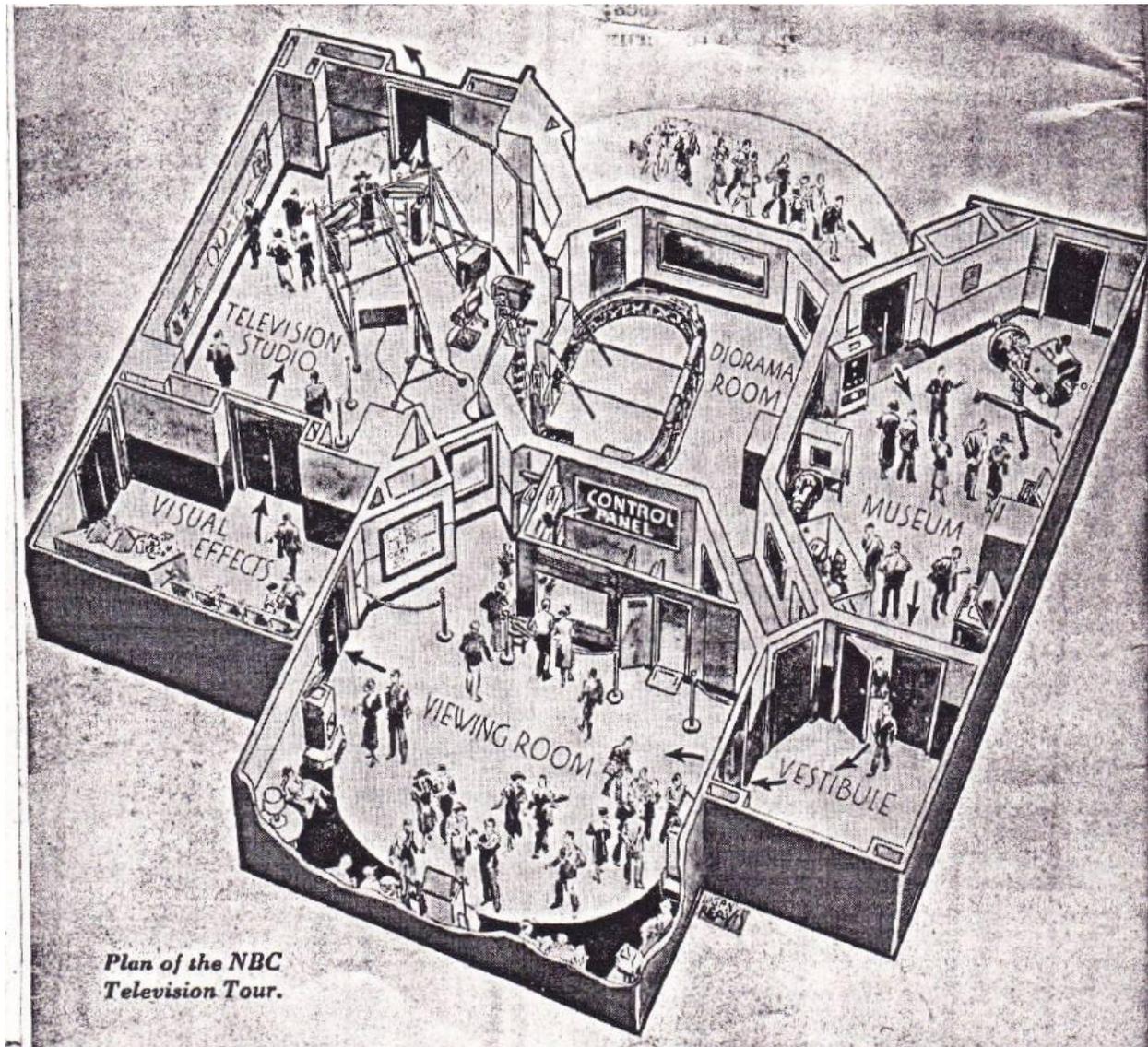
The first televised baseball game had actually come four months earlier on May 17, 1939. It was a college game between Princeton and Columbia at Columbia's Baker Field. The contest was aired on W2XBS and was announced by Bill Stern. Stern almost did not make the opening pitch of that game as he had rushed home to get his hair piece.

The Beginning Of The 1939 World's Fair For RCA And NBC

Shown here, from left to right is NBC President Lenox Lohr, RCA Chairman David Sarnoff and from the World's Fair Committee, Grover Whalen signing the contracts for the RCA Pavilion in Studio 3H in a local broadcast in early 1938. At the bottom is Lohr at the Fair, introducing David Sarnoff on April 20, 1939 at the opening of the RCA Pavilion, ten days before the fair opened. April 30, 1939 is the official start of regularly scheduled programming on NBC Television.



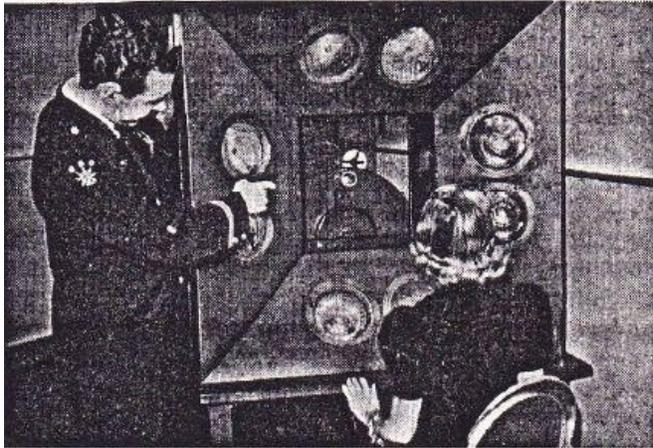
The NBC Studio At The 1939 World's Fair...



Above is the NBC Studio portion of the RCA Pavilion. The Studio is where we saw people “televised” at the second link on the page before this, but take a close look at the Museum in the illustration.

If you ever wondered, like me, what happened to the first mechanical scanner and the “Felix The Cat” mechanical camera used at 411 5th Avenue and The New Amsterdam’s Roof Top Theater, here they are on display. Unfortunately, no one knows what happened to them after the fair ended in 1940. **As mentioned in the Introduction, Ernst Alexanderson was a GE engineer and one of his creations was the first scanning camera RCA tested when they began exploring television. You see it here, below right.**

*Outmoded mechanical scanning camera.
Subject sat before photoelectric cells.*



*Mechanical scanning camera used by
Dr. E. F. Alexanderson about 1930.*



<http://eyesofageneration.com/pdf-test/>

At the link above is a rare copy of the full 32 page program handed out by RCA at the 1939 World's Fair Exhibit. The title is *Television* and there are many unseen photos and details packed into this wonderful rarity.

At this link is very rare color footage of NBC "televising" people at the World Fair. The RCA Pavilion had a camera that visitors could walk in front of and see themselves on a monitor. It was all the rage and certificates were issued stating that the bearer had indeed been among the first people ever to be "televised"!

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10201188466899905&set=vb.189359747768249&type=2&theater>

At this link is another color World's Fair clip from a travelogue film showing the "televising" process. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPMwsdvzO54>

W2XBS Becomes WNBT July 1, 1941...

Just for fun, here are some program schedules and a rate card from 1941 that I hope you will find interesting. The rate card will make you look twice.

No. 1 *Television Program* (Preserve For Posterity)

STATION WNBT
NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

WEEK OF JUNE 30th — JULY 5th, 1941

Audio frequency 55.75 mc. } **NEW YORK CITY**
 Video frequency 51.25 mc. }

P.M.

MONDAY June 30th	9:00-11:00	(1) Amateur Boxing at Jamaica Arena.
TUESDAY July 1st	2:00-5:00	(2) Baseball—Brooklyn Dodgers vs. Philadelphia at Ebbets Field.
	6:45-7:00	(3) Lowell Thomas.
	9:00-10:00	(4) Culmination of U. S. O. Drive with: Mr. Thomas E. Dewey Mrs. Winthrop W. Aldrich Mr. Walter Hoving Lt. General Hugh Drum Admiral Adolphus Andrews Mrs. Ogden L. Mills
		(5) Excerpts from the "Bottlenecks of 1941"—Fort Monmouth Signal Corps Replacement Training Center Show.
		(6) Truth or Consequences with Ralph Edwards.
WEDNESDAY July 2nd	2:30-5:00	(7) Eastern Clay Court Tennis Championships at Jackson Heights.
	9:00-10:00	(8) Feature Film "Death From A Distance" with Russell Hopton and Lola Lane.
THURSDAY July 3rd	2:30-5:00	(9) Eastern Clay Court Tennis Championships at Jackson Heights.
	9:00-10:00	(10) Variety.
		(11) Julien Bryan, Photographer-Lecturer.
FRIDAY July 4th	2:30-5:00	(12) Eastern Clay Court Tennis Championships at Jackson Heights.
	9:00-10:00	(13) Film "Where the Golden Grapefruit Grows"
		(14) "Words On The Wing", a Streamlined Spelling Bee.
SATURDAY July 5th	2:30-5:00	(15) Eastern Clay Court Tennis Championships at Jackson Heights.

● ALL PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

Keep in mind; the rates are not for "spots" in these time blocks...it's for the whole period!

NBC

Television

Station WNBT

RATES

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 1941

I

TRANSMISSION
RATE

GROSS

	60 Min.	30 Min.	15 Min.
6:00 PM to 11:00 PM Daily	\$120.00	\$60.00	\$30.00
8:00 AM to 12 Noon Daily	60.00	30.00	15.00
12 Noon to 6:00 PM Daily, exclusive of Saturday and Sunday	60.00	30.00	15.00
12 Noon to 6:00 PM Saturday and Sunday	90.00	45.00	22.50
11:00 PM to Sign Off Daily	90.00	45.00	22.50

} Rates for other units of time in exact proportion to corresponding one-hour rate. No periods less than 5 minutes sold except for Service Spots.

SERVICE SPOTS (News, Weather, Time, Etc.)

Evening (6:00 PM to Sign Off)—\$8.00 for maximum of 1 minute.
Day (8:00 AM to 6:00 PM) —\$4.00 for maximum of 1 minute.

TYPE OF FACILITIES (Based on time on the air to nearest 5 minutes.)

	60 Min.	30 Min.	15 Min.	10 Min.	5 Min.
Main Studio	\$150.00	\$90.00	\$60.00	\$53.00	\$45.00
Small Studio	75.00	45.00	30.00	26.00	22.00
Film Studio	75.00	45.00	30.00	26.00	22.00
Field Pickups	75.00	(Minimum Charge—\$75.00)			

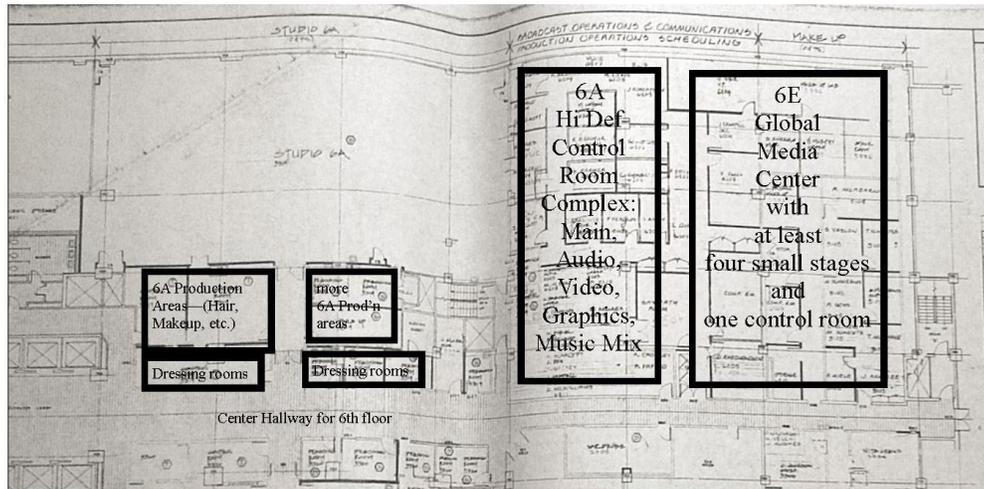
} Rates for units of time longer than one hour in exact proportion to corresponding one-hour rate.

Service Spots—Facilities and Handling—\$5.00 per spot.
(Must originate in small or film studio.)

I

PROGRAM
FACILITIES
RATE

The Global Media Center, Studio 6E...



This is something new I thought would interest you. Above is a 1980s diagram of the 6th floor with a new overlay to show the new **Global Media Center** facilities. The 6A control room and 6E areas were office space from the '40s till the '90s, but the area was originally reserved for studios 6E and 6G which were never built. In the 90s, the 6E space became a master control and on-air playback facility for WNBC-TV, part of which was then made into the first new 6A control room. This is on the 49th Street side.

During the week, “The NBC Nightly News” comes from Studio 3B and is switched from Studio 1A’s control room. On the weekends, Lester Holt does the Nightly News from one of these small “News Nooks” in the 6th floor Studio 6E Global Media Center, controlled by 1A. On screen, Weekend Nightly closely resembles Weekday Nightly thanks to the use of recorded studio backgrounds and similar set pieces. Holt's weekend news desk was used in 3C by Brokaw and Williams from 1998-2008, which is the year this space was built.



This is Media Room 1 where Holt does the Weekend Nightly News. There are four more similar sized Media Rooms here including one Al Roker uses for his early Weather Channel show.

The Real Home of “Bonanza”...Studios 4J and 4G

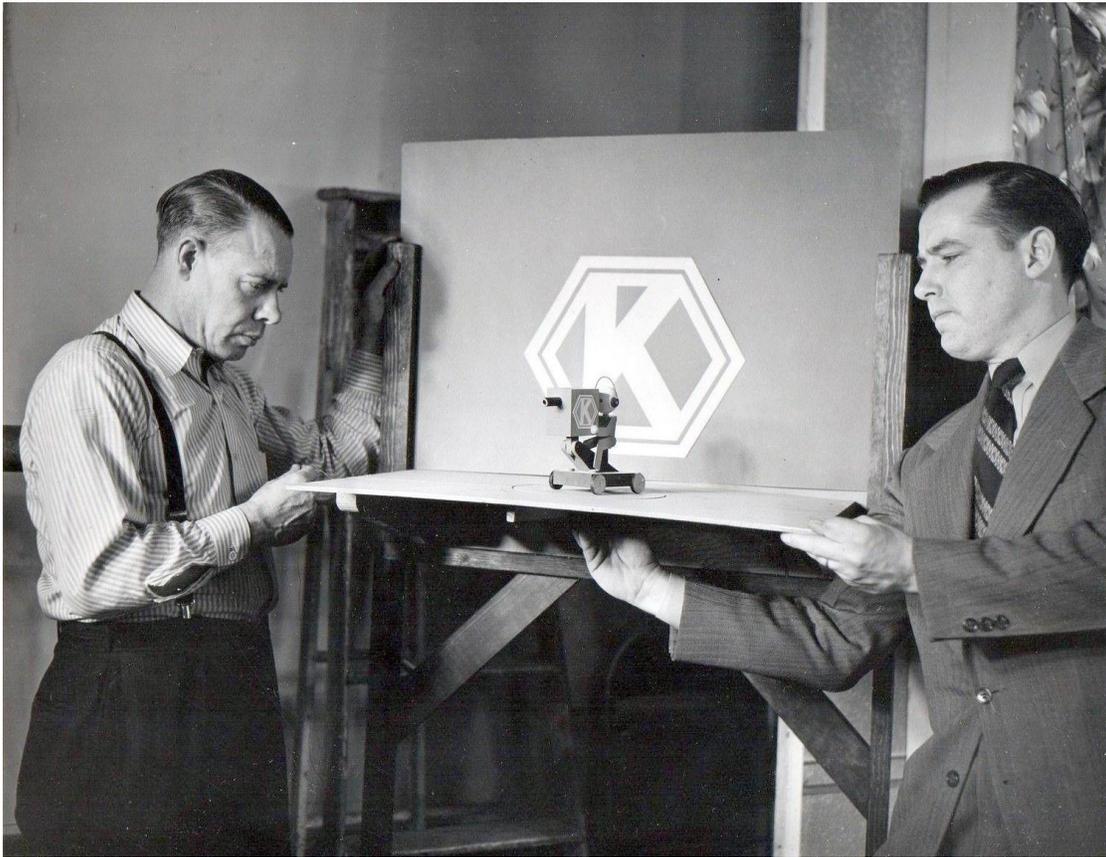


In the '60s and '70s, the coordinating Studios 4J and 4G were the heart of NBC primetime. When you watched “Bonanza” on Saturday nights, it rolled from 4J or 4G. From here, video tape from the fifth floor, or film from the eight film chains adjacent to 4G and 4J could be rolled.

Each chain had 35 and 16 millimeter film and slide systems, and as always in primetime, there was a duplicate of each show and each spot running in sync. The master broadcast film was on the 35mm equipment with a 16mm copy running at the same time, just in case the film broke or one of the systems went down. The same applied to videotape transmissions in primetime...there was always a synched duplicate running.

As was standard practice for network prime time programming, there were daily rehearsals for each night's broadcasts. Each film, slide and video and all the commercials were run in their entirety in the exact order they would run that night. As odd as it seems, the City of New York had a tax on the projection of films at movie theaters which eventually included the television networks. When this happened, NBC moved several telecine chains to its maintenance shop and warehouse in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey and the primetime film was run from there as a remote broadcast and came to 4J and 4G as a **NEMO**, (**Not Emanating from Main Office**) which was the NBC - AT&T term for remotes.

The Kraft Cameraman...1947



Before "The Kraft Television Theater" debuted on a regular basis from NBC Studio 8G in May of 1947, it had been done as occasionally broadcast from Studio 3H in 1945 with their big silver Iconoscope cameras.

I think this super rare picture of the opening title display was taken in May of '47 in 8G. We see two men working on the rotation table here, but over the years, the mode of travel changed. This turntable setup was the first arrangement. In the early '50s, the cameraman was rotated back and forth by a visible stick from underneath. By the mid to late 50s, the cameraman would dolly into the picture and then turn with the invisible help of magnets. In 1954, Kraft began offering this as a toy for fifty cents with a Velveeta box top.

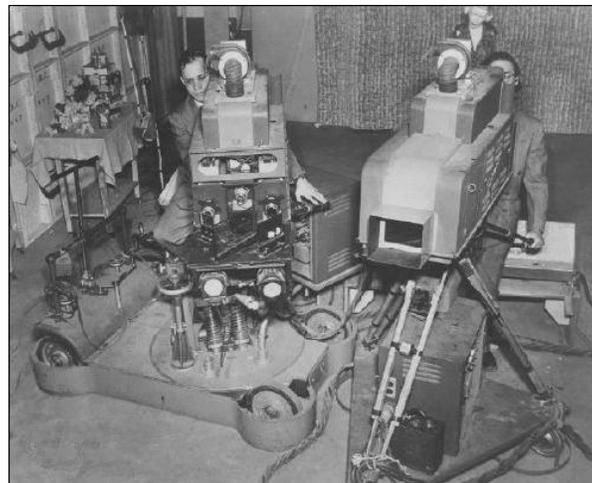
The Kraft cameraman was modeled after NBC's George Weiss. Joel Spector worked with him, and to this day rues the loss of his own Kraft cameraman toy, which he had ordered just as I have described here...with fifty cents and a Velveeta box top.

RCA's Wardman Park Color Cameras...

Below is RCA's lead color engineer Richard C. Webb around 1948, with one of the Washington D.C. based cameras with the housing removed. I think the center channel is green with red on the right and blue on the left. Notice the dichroic mirrors are in front of the lenses.



These were RCA's first electronic color cameras. They never moved to New York when color testing moved to Studio 3H in 1951, but their crew did. These went back to the RCA Labs in Princeton. Why Washington? Because this was the only practical way to demonstrate their Dot Sequential color system to the FCC and congressional committees regulating television.



On top is a 1950 color test scene being readied at Wardman Park and below, a color screen shot of the monitor from this scene test.



A Rare Look At NBC Television's First Master Control Room

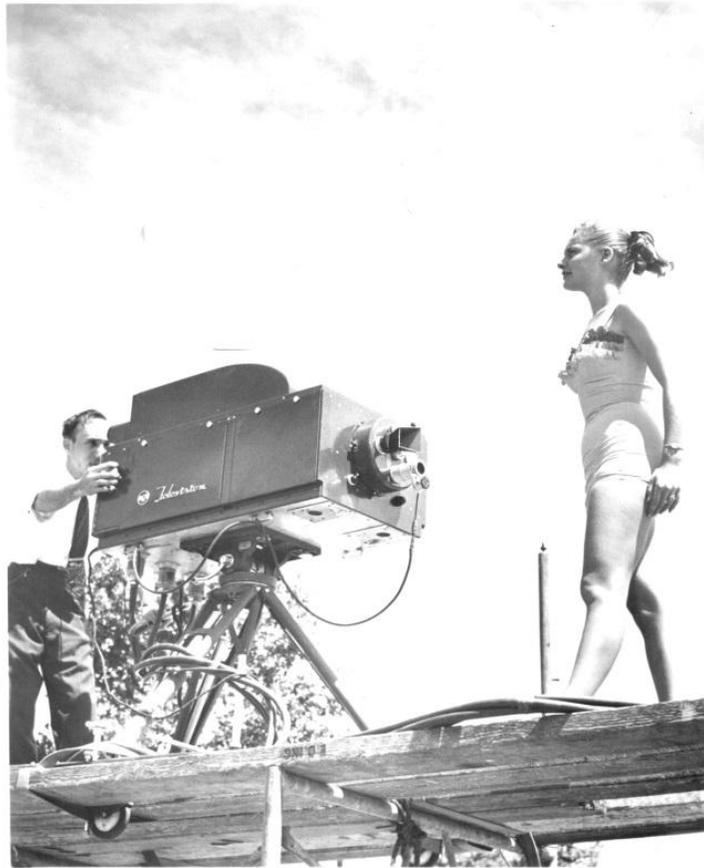


This picture is from 1951 and shows the original television master control area in Room 575. We don't know exactly when it came into use, but an NBC press release on 8G says it was in use in 1948. NBC vet Frank Merklein saw it when he started in 1948. Back then Frank worked in 3H and in order to get a dissolve shot in 3H, Master Control had to be involved. I suspect that it had to have been built before 8G began to be used for television in May of 1946.

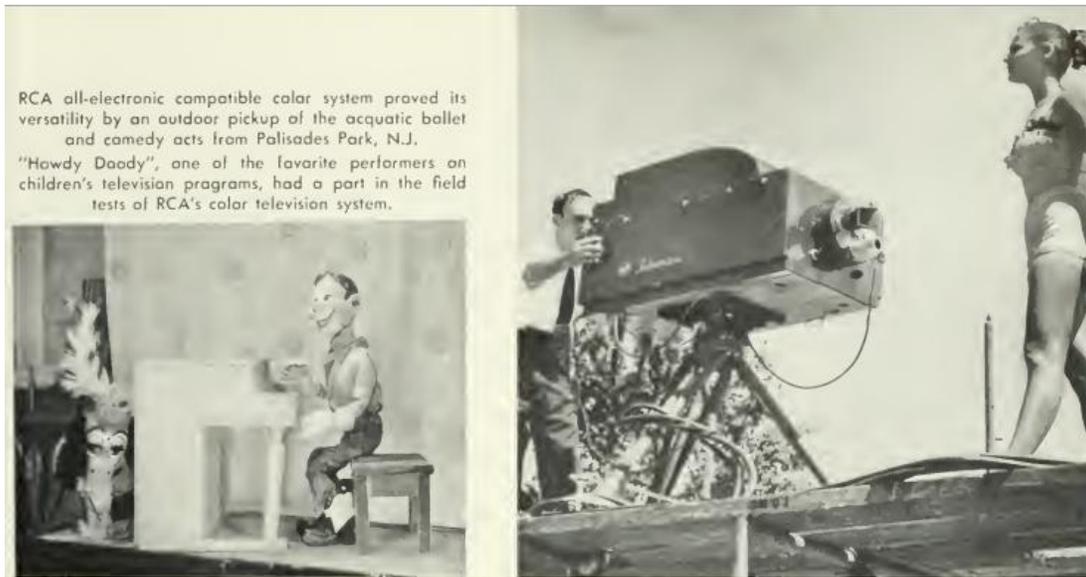
Let me direct you to the best source of information on color television that I know of. The late Ed Reitan's work is all here...volumes of rare, essential information and dates, as only he could present it...with great care and in exquisite detail. Thank you Ed!

<http://edreitan.com/>

I'll close with a shot of **color television's first remote broadcast**. This is one of the Studio 3H "coffin cameras" on location at New Jersey's Palisades Park in July of 1952 conducting a closed circuit color cast. The camera's dark color helped it overheat and stop working. When the new TK40 prototypes were delivered to The Colonial Theater in the fall, they were all silver to help reflect the heat. Notice this has a focus demand on the right side. On the TK40s, this function was moved to the pan handle, like on the old Iconoscope cameras.



Howdy Doody was there too!



End of Volume 1, Continued in Volume 2

I hope you have enjoyed this and will share it with your friends and colleagues. If you have more information, documents, video, artifacts, pictures and comments, please send them to me. I would love to hear from you, as this is an ongoing project and by no means the final word.

For daily articles on television's history, please join us on the Facebook site and/or, the Live Stream section of the main web site.

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<http://www.eyesofageneration.com/>

