

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

Volume 2 of 2 (Updated May 2021)

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 2018), historian David Schwartz (GSN) and Gady Reinhold (CBS 1966 to 2018), 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...*Eyes Of A Generation.com*, on the web and on Facebook. –Bobby Ellerbee

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1425282661005351>



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

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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. There is a complete Date Summary on page 90.

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Part 10...Studio 8H, Seventh Conversion

8th Floor, 30 Rockefeller Plaza

First television from 8H was the weekly “Voice Of Firestone,” September 5, 1949. It was officially converted January 30, 1951.

With so much to see and say about 8H, much of the history will be told in the text accompanying each of the twenty individual photos.



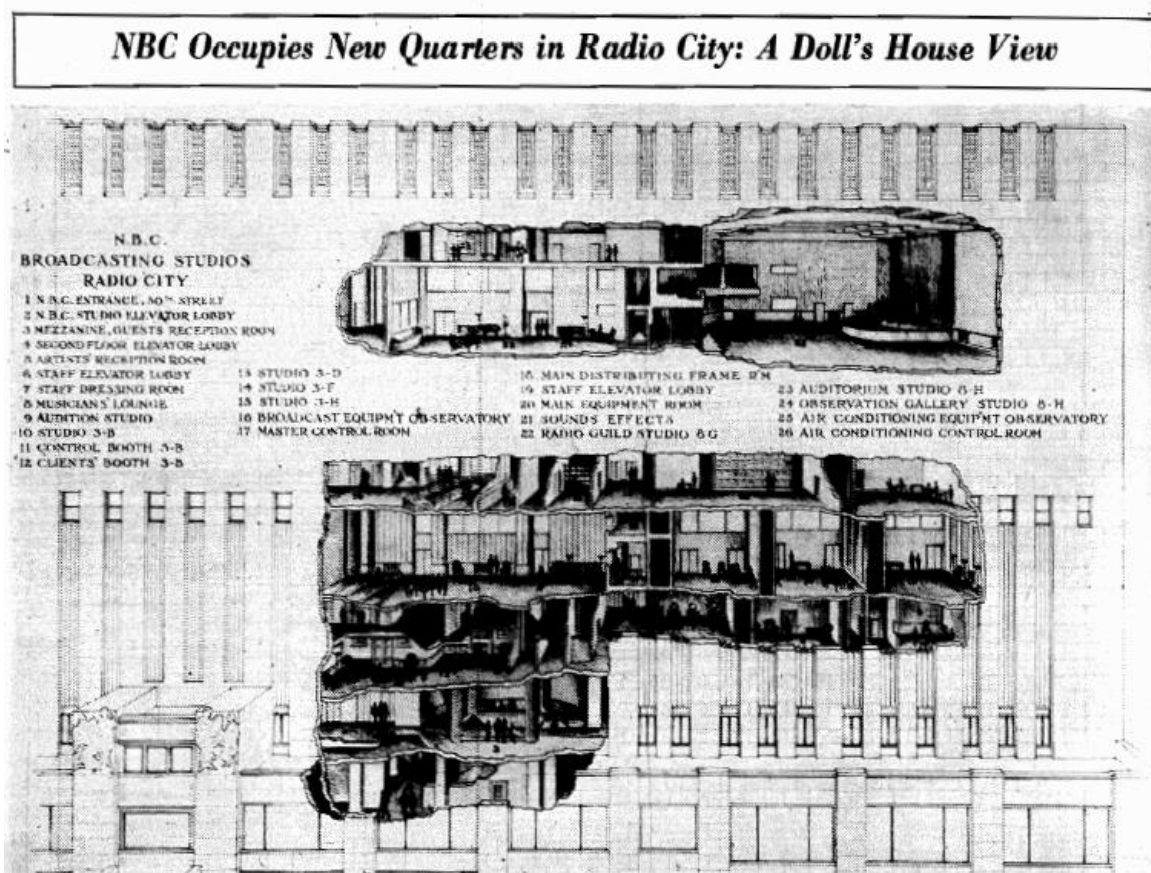
The photo above shows us 8H around 1934. It was the world’s largest radio studio and could seat around 1,200 people. At the far end (above) notice the two rectangular windows...the top window was the client viewing room on the 9th floor, and just to the left is a small open seating area which was also for sponsors and clients. When the studio was converted to television, the new control room replaced the 9th floor client viewing room and the adjacent small open audience area. A new doorway in the 9th floor studio wall led to a small platform and an open stairway to provide direct access to the studio floor. The stairway was removed in 1975 when the TV control room was relocated to the 8th floor.

The bottom window was the 8H radio control room that we see in the photo below. For reference, today’s permanent “Saturday Night Live” sets are on the same (west) wall as the original radio stage. Notice that in this 1934 photo, the seating is temporary but as we will see, sometime later, permanent theater seating was added.



Above is a photo from the 8H radio control room a few weeks before the November 1933 dedication as the wall treatments are not up yet. Below is the next configuration of the studio around 1940, which added a better stage and permanent theater seating.



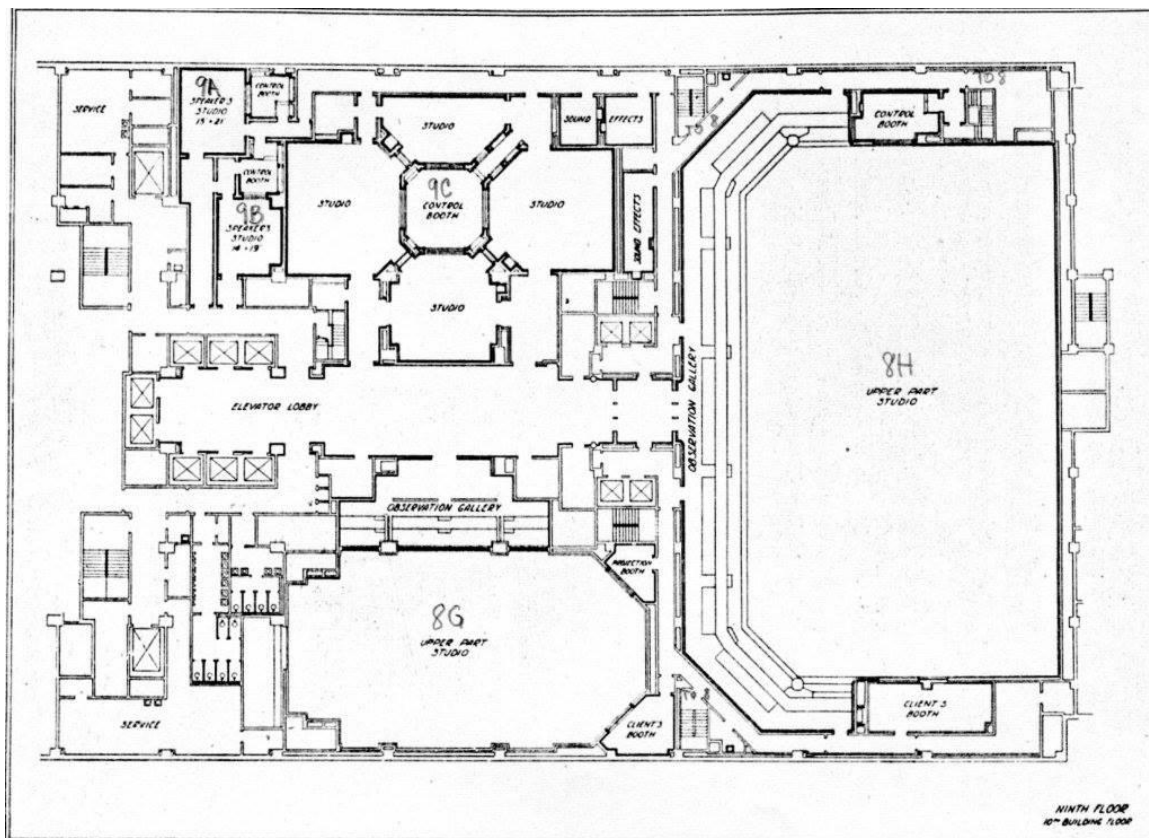
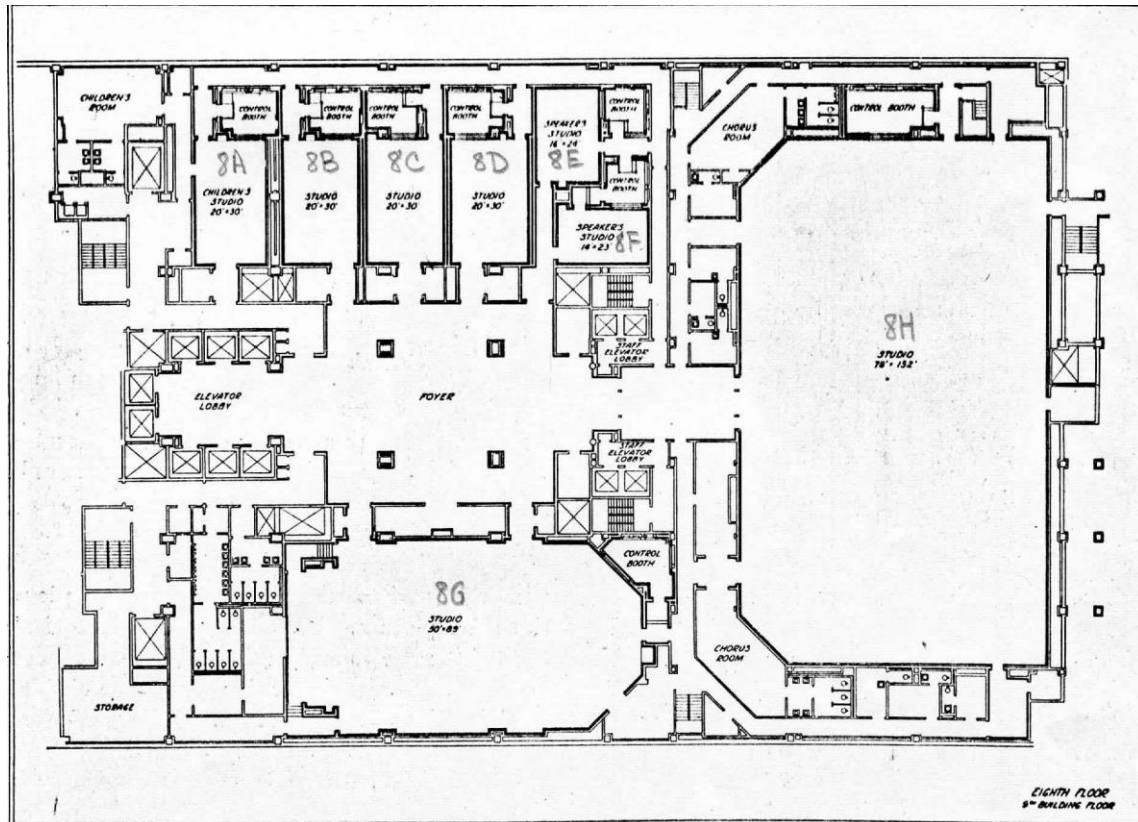


From the 50th Street side looking south, here is a cutaway drawing of the NBC radio studios from a *Broadcasting Magazine* article in December 1933.

Below are the 1933 floor plans for the 8th and 9th floors. On the 9th floor plan (bottom) we see Studio 9C. Notice the cloverleaf type configuration in 9C. At one time, there was discussion on making the 9C radio control room able to rotate 360 degrees, so it could move from show to show in the four surrounding studios. The original intent was to have four dramatic scenes, each with its own acoustic environment.

It was later proposed to use this facility for experimental television activities, with the radio control room replaced by a turntable-mounted “scanner” camera, which would rotate on a turntable to view each scene with its isolated acoustics. It is not known if this plan was ever implemented.

The 9C complex was eventually repurposed as two viewing rooms where programs and their commercials could be previewed by NBC and advertising agency personnel watching properly-adjusted color monitors. Original radio studios 9A and 9B were two of four “Speaker Studios” built to resemble cozy living rooms, with the radio microphone hidden from the presenter, usually someone not skilled at public speaking. 9A eventually became part of the NBC Tour as sound effects demonstration room. 9A and 9B, with heavily-modified control rooms, became the facilities of WNBC-FM in the 1980s until the entire NBC radio operation was sold in 1987.



As I mentioned at the top of this part, the first television show that came from Studio 8H was the weekly network broadcast of “The Voice Of Firestone” which had been a big show on NBC Radio’s Blue Network since 1928. The television debut was accompanied with a simulcast on both WNBT’s AM and FM radio bands and was carried weekly as a simulcast on AM nationally afterward.

On September 5, 1949, the television broadcast of “The Voice Of Firestone” debuted from radio studio 8H, and was handled as a remote from there for a year. At the link below is a clip of “The Voice Of Firestone” from 8H in 1949. **At the :17 second mark, you can see one of the RCA TK30s remote cameras push into the background. The cameraman is probably Frank Merklein, as the stage camera was his usual position on Firestone. He liked shooting the oboe player and did so weekly. That oboe player later had his own hit show on NBC...Mitch Miller.** For music lovers, at 2:15, one of the most passionate passages in opera erupts.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cJolYIYB9k&ab_channel=VinylToVideo

Below is a photo of an early episode of “The Voice Of Firestone” from Studio 8H. As I noted in the Center Theater part, Firestone’s last show from 8H was at the end of the first season ending in August of 1950 and with that, the show moved to The Center in time for the season two debut September 4, 1950, and allowed construction to begin in 8H.



As you will see in the official press release on the 8H conversion below, engineers were already at work on both The Hudson Theater, preparing for Kate Smith, and at The Center Theater. **Notice on page 2 we have the dates for 3A and 3B as well.**

NBC Television

WNBT NEW YORK

NEWS

August 11, 1950

NBC'S 8-H, WORLD'S LARGEST RADIO STUDIO,
TO BE CONVERTED FOR TELEVISION USE

The famous concert studio 8-H of the National Broadcasting Company in Radio City will be rebuilt as one of the world's largest television studios. This is part of a gigantic program of building expansion in television being carried on by the National Broadcasting Company.

The leasing and transforming of the Center Theatre, the rebuilding of the Hudson Theatre and the re-construction of studios 3-A and 3-B in Radio City as television studios will give NBC two new theatres and three additional studios for television program production. As part of the expansion and building program a new master control for television also is being constructed.

All of the structure inside of Studio 8-H will be removed. A new overhead of steel construction will utilize 30 tons of steel. The balcony of the studio will be rebuilt as a control room, observation room and dressing rooms. The area of the studio will be 10,000 square feet of usable space. The dimensions will be 76 feet wide, 130 feet long and 34 feet high.

(more)

2 - Studio 8-H

Studios 3A and B will be in operation by Labor Day. The work on the Center Theatre and Hudson Theatre will be completed in about a month. The 8-H project will take several months.

Rebuilding of studio 8-H recalls many of the radio triumphs that took place in that hall. It was there that Eddie Cantor broadcast his great variety shows to the nation that set new patterns in radio entertainment. It was there that Arturo Toscanini first conducted the newly formed NBC Symphony Orchestra in 1937. It was there, too, that many of the broadcasts turned to television. The "Voice of Firestone" became a simulcast in 8-H and Toscanini first went before the television cameras in that studio.

-----O-----

(NBC - August 11, 1950)

On Monday night, January 30, 1950, there was a double debut in at NBC. Studio 8H debuted as a television studio and the first show was the debut broadcast of "Robert Montgomery Presents." The Montgomery production was bi weekly until 1951 and rotated with "Musical Comedy Time" and "The Summerset Maugham Television Theater."

At the link is a New Year's Eve broadcast of "Your Hit Parade" from 8H in 1955 that shows us the studio as it was then and some fine camera wrangling!

https://youtu.be/EPBBE60_as8?t=124

Here are some artist renderings of the new \$1 million dollar studio conversion...

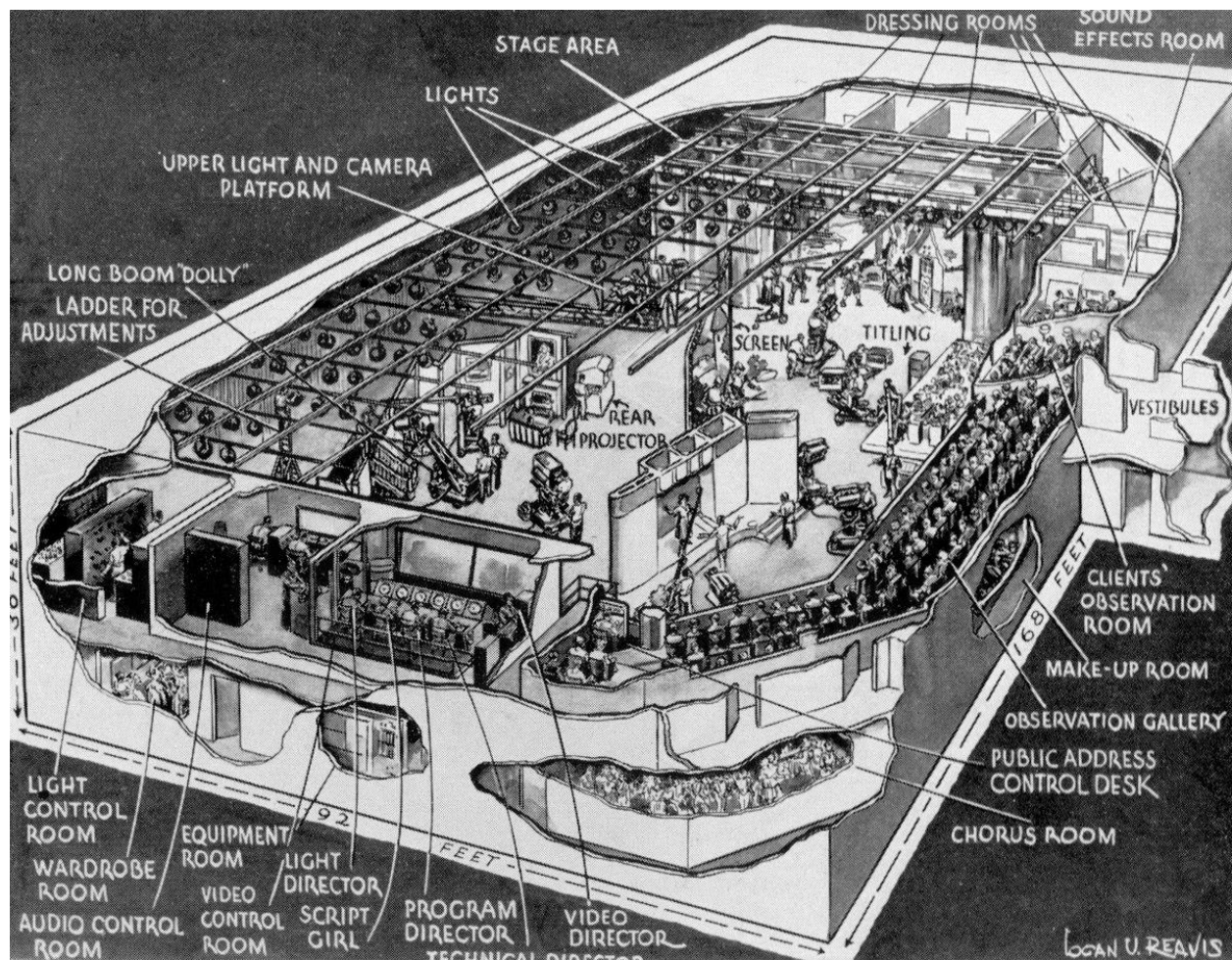
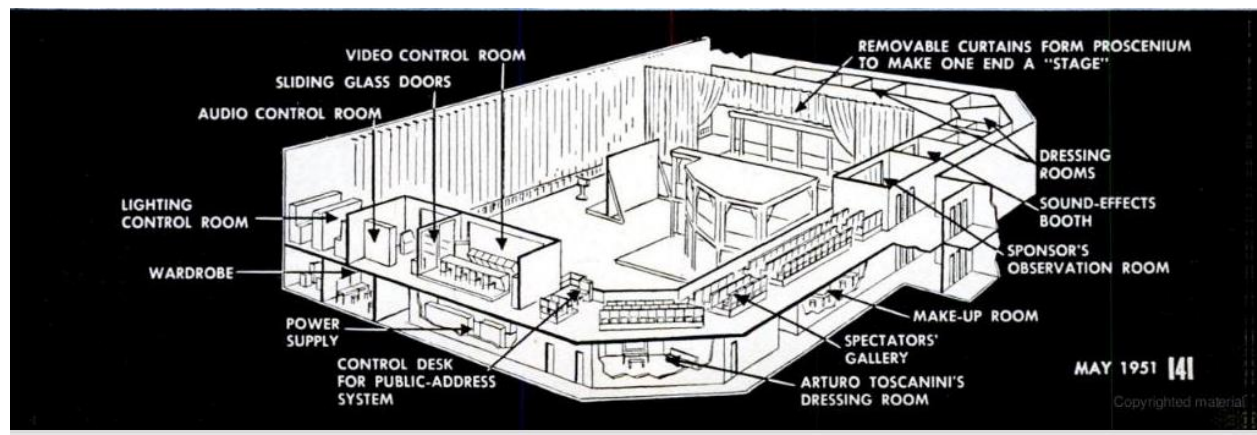
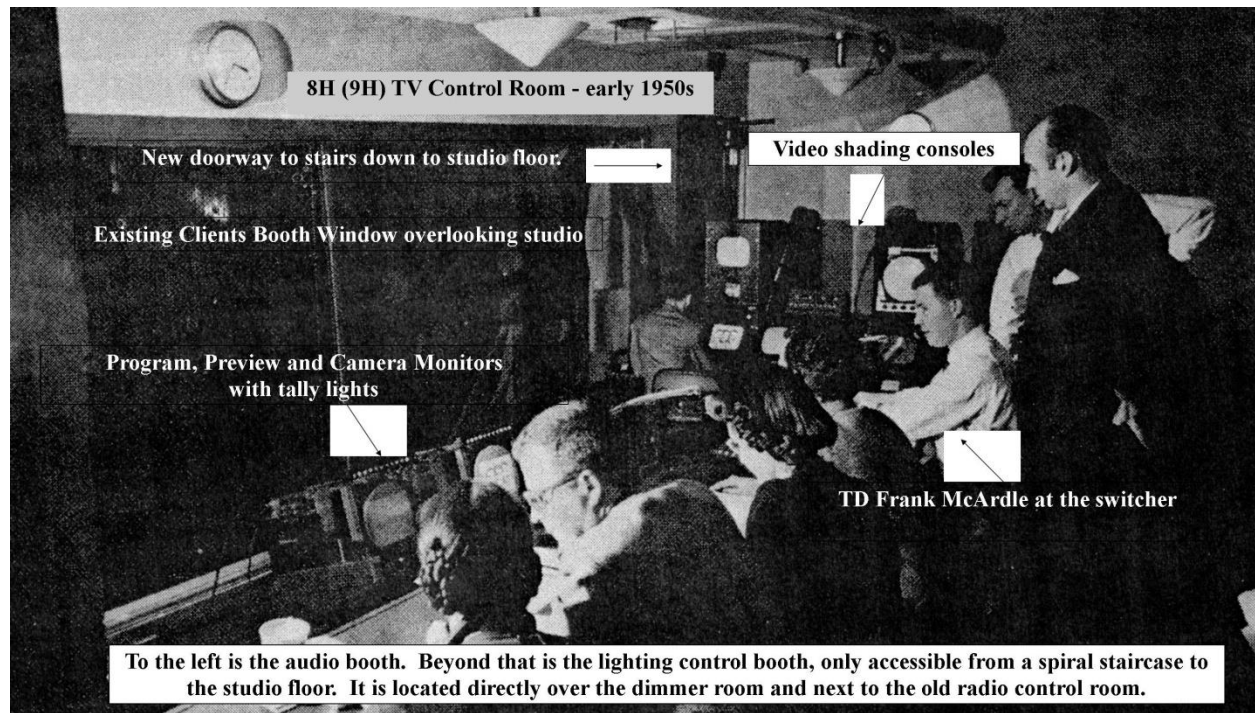


FIGURE 1. STUDIO 8-H, NEW YORK. The layout of NBC's much-discussed Studio 8-H in Radio City, New York, converted at tremendous expense from one of the network's finest radio studios. (NBC diagram by Logan Reavis.)





Here is a rare look at 8H (9H) TV Control Room in the early 1950s, annotated by Joel Spector. This was the re-purposed 9H Clients Booth and small angled section of the balcony (beyond the video control position).

This complex, remodeled several times, remained in use right through the summer of 1975, at which time the “new” 8H Control Room suite was constructed all on the 8th floor, except for the lighting booth, which remained in place, and is still there, though it and the dimmer room were completely modernized in the 1990s. The large 9H space above is now the SNL Writers’ Room.

The current 8H HD TV Control Room suite was built outside the studio floor area, in what was originally radio studios 8C through 8F. By the 1970s it was a “scene dock” storage area.

Out of necessity, in the 70s, 80s and 90s, that area became the active production support area for wardrobe, makeup and props. Totally rebuilt in the early 2000s it is now the control room suite and large support rooms for wardrobe, makeup and scenic design. The prop storage function has been relocated into the 1975 8th floor control room space. That space had originally been chorus dressing rooms.

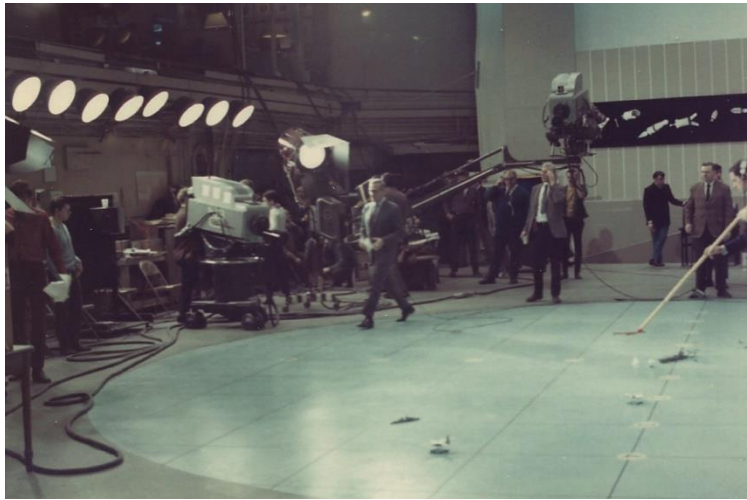
These are two views of the 9th floor 8H control room taken in 1960. Notice that by this time the control room’s large window has been covered up and fronted by a much larger monitor display. By then a “back deck” desk had been installed for the various producers, mainly of special events programs. Here they had panels to monitor and communicate with studio and remote talent and producers.

The top view shows “Concentration” TD Dorm Albert. Bottom view shows “True Story” TD Jack Coffey. The photos were taken four days apart, indicating the level of activity in 8H at that time, thanks to the use of video tape recording. “Concentration” would tape two shows in one day, considered a revolutionary concept at that time. Now, half-hour game shows tape five episodes in one day.



This historical marquee outside Studio 8H shows some of the shows that originated here. Notice all the shows with a pre 1951 date were move-ins. “Kraft Television Theater” began in 3H, and all the others, down to “Amahl And The Night Visitors,” all started in Studio 8G.

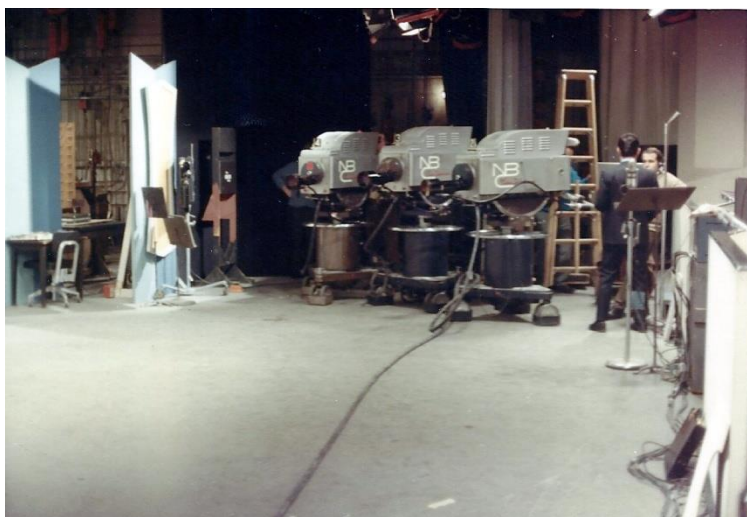




At the top is NBC newsman Frank McGee during the Apollo 8 coverage from 8H in December 1968.



This middle and lower photo are rare color shots from the early days of "The Match Game" in 8H. The man at Gene Rayburn's hosting desk is the writer that saved the show from being canceled, Dick DeBartolo. He is the one that came up with the idea giving the questions a bit of sauce by opening the door to innuendos. He wrote for the game all the way till the end, but may be most widely known for his 1966 to present day writing for *Mad Magazine*.



A lot of game shows came from 8H and as you see, the position was usually in the NW corner of the studio, with the back of the set on the west wall. At that time, there were pull out, gymnasium style seats in the studio.



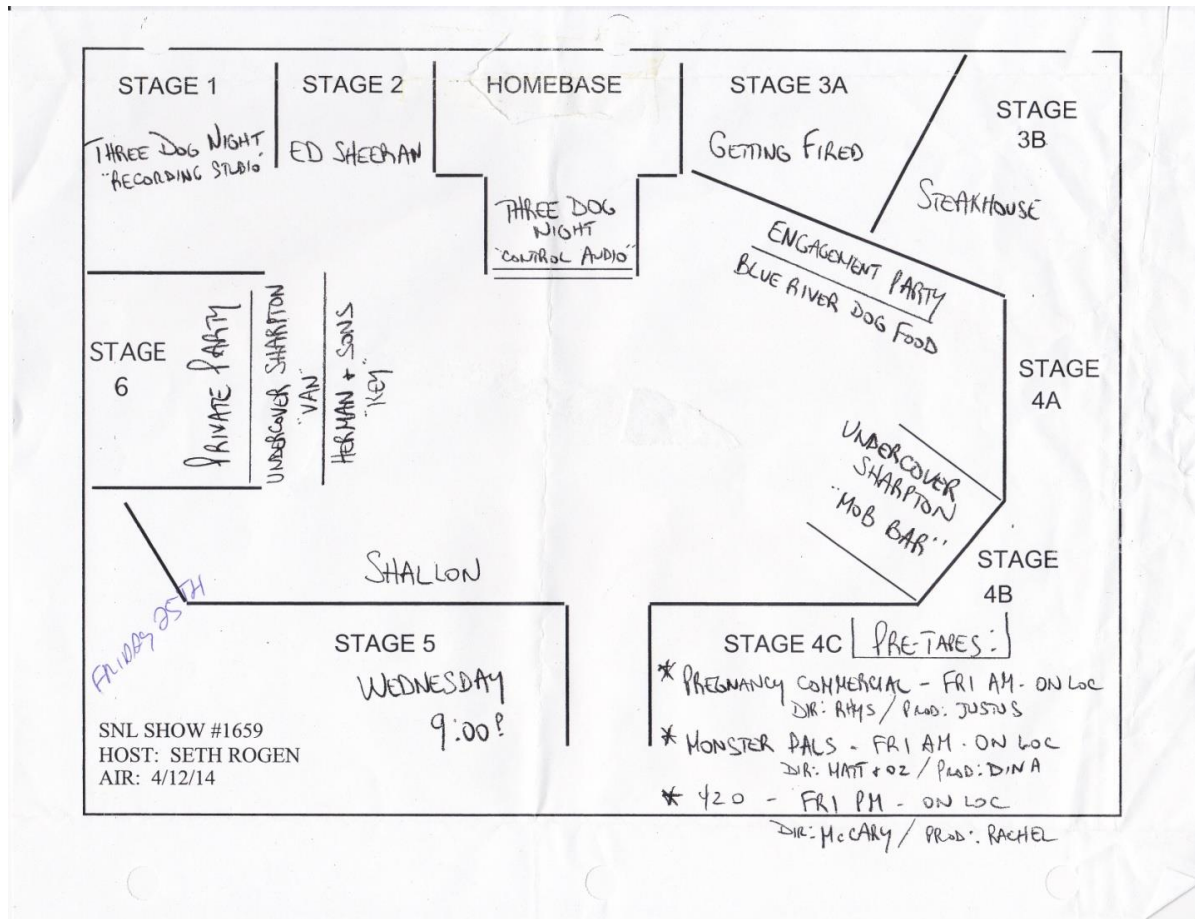
At the top, we see on the right, what is now Lorne Michaels office. In the 60s, this space was used as the news over look position when covering the many space shots from 8H. The other room with the Hope and Martin photos is now the Green Room for SNL.

The four RCA TK41B color cameras in Studio 8H were originally bought new for use at The Ziegfeld Theater which was home to “The Perry Como Show.” On the crane camera is Bill Goetz.

Around 1961, Como left The Ziegfeld for Studio I in Brooklyn, but The Ziegfeld continued on as a color production facility for another couple of years.

Planning for 8H’s colorization started in the spring of 1963. When the 62-63 season had concluded, the physical work began and the cameras were moved from The Ziegfeld to 8H. The studio went color on June 24, 1963.

It just wouldn't be right to leave 8H without some tip of the hat to "Saturday Night Live"...the oldest and only live weekly comedy - variety show in America. For those that have wondered how the 8H studio floor works during the broadcasts, here is a map from April of 2014 showing the layout of the various stage areas the studio is broken into. Like the actors and cameras, scenery is constantly on the move during the show with about 20 experienced stage hands striking and putting up sets while the action moves to another stage area in the studio...all live!



Here are 3 incredible time lapse videos of SNL in production in 8H. The first is the newest and is from April 5, 2014. Next is an older version and last is a new time lapse taken from the page desk, just outside the studio entrance on the 8th floor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i72I9NNTTM0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PU8k2hoCr2w#t=61>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oRRYJs-Ec0>

This is the SNL stage crew at work, making something out of nothing in just minutes.

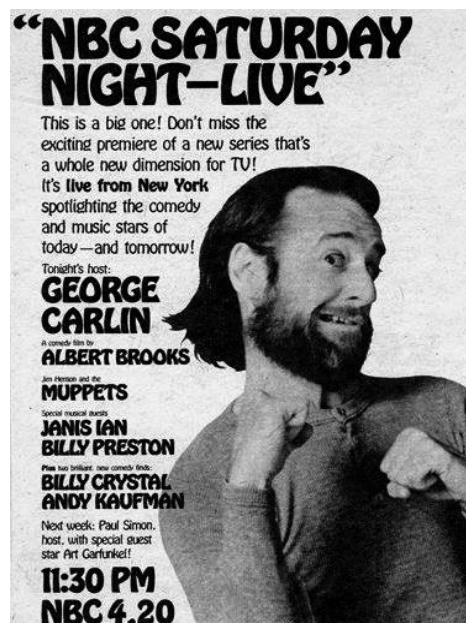
<http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/snl-backstage-set-transition/n12515>

To wrap up the Studio 8H section, here is the guy with the best job in television! “In the bucket” of the famous Chapman Electra crane, is NBC cameraman John Pinto, who came from the Brooklyn studios to SNL in 1976. John replaced Al Camoin as head cameraman in '87 when Al retired. Having seen the show live, I can tell you that it is the most awesome television spectacle you will ever see! It is a behind the scenes ballet that no one else can match!



At the link is an updated report on my visit to SNL, and Studio 8H in May of 2014. It is complete with the names of the crew and my description of one of the most fascinating experiences of my life. https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=797905990246952&id=189359747768249

Here is the TV Guide ad for the first SNL show on October 11, 1975.

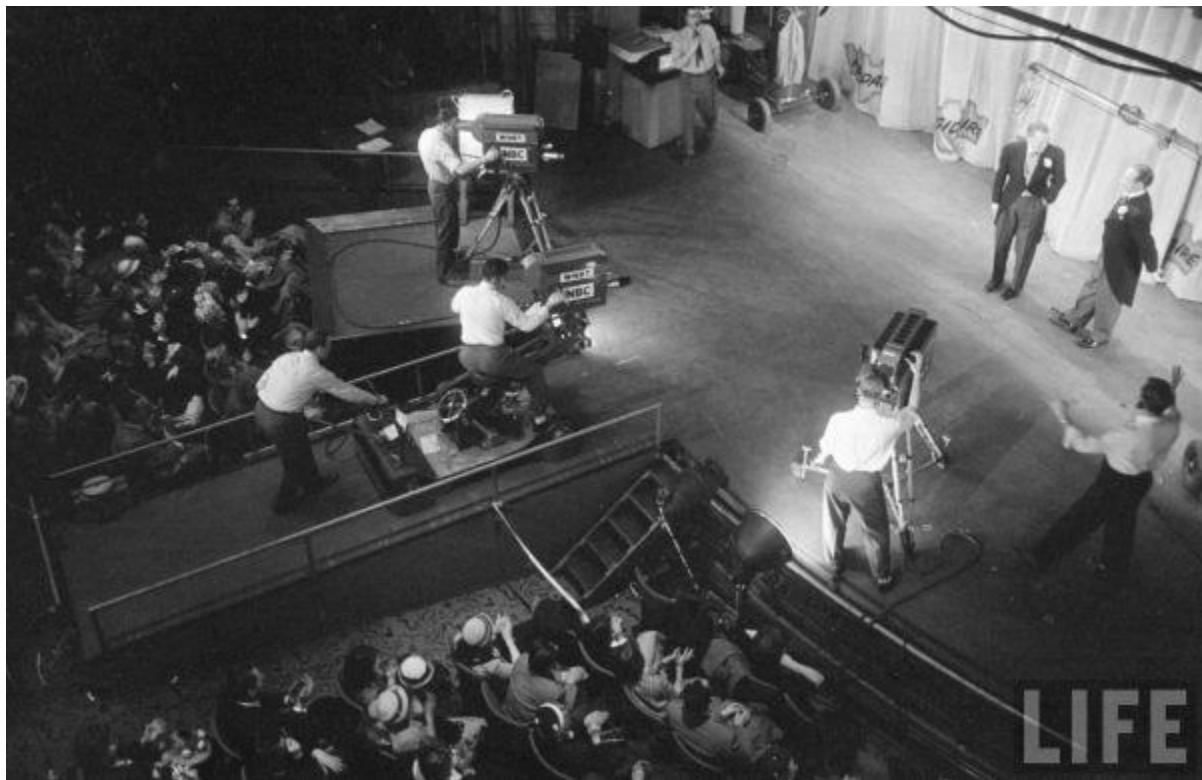


Part 11...The New Amsterdam Theater, 214 West 42nd Street

First use 1931, second use April 9, 1950 and converted on September 19, 1951

Below is a photo of the first use of The New Amsterdam Theater as an NBC television theater. This was Bob Hope's first ever television special which was broadcast Easter Sunday, April 9, 1950. On that day, NBC Radio star Bob Hope was lured to television by Frigidaire as he hosted his first ever special.

The 90 minute show was done live from The New Amsterdam Theater on 42nd Street, just weeks after WOR TV had left the facility to move into their new multimillion dollar building at West 67th Street.



WOR TV had been broadcasting from the theater since October 5, 1949 and fortunately for NBC, they had done a lot of the major work like adding a control room under the stage, upgrading the lighting grids and wiring for TV and more. When WOR left, they took all their equipment which was new and that was OK with NBC. Afterall, they were owned by RCA!

With no equipment in the theater, the Hope special was treated as a remote, and actually, that first year, all Hope's specials were handled as remotes. In early August of 1951, work began to transform the theater into "The NBC Times Square Television Theater" and the official dedication was September 19, 1951 as Hope returned for season two. Hope he stayed there till NBC gave up the lease in 1954 at which time the theater returned to live plays and later, movies.

But...this was not the first time NBC had broadcast from this address! RCA's first experimental television transmissions were mechanical and began in 1928 on station W2XBS at 411 Fifth Avenue. On March 22, 1929, nightly two hour broadcasts from 7 - 9 began there. In 1930, testing 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.

<https://eyesofageneration.com/april-9-1950-first-bob-hope-tv-special-nbc-new-amsterdam-theater/>

At the link above, is a MUST READ story, that tells us about the good fortune NBC had when it bought The New Amsterdam from New York's WOR TV! Also, the full 90 minute Bob Hope special video is there and a 20 page spread on WOR's new TV Home.

NBC would later take over again from WOR when they bought the 67th Street studios for their new "HOME" show, with Arline Francis. We'll get to that in Part 13, so now would be a good time to take a look at the article on Page 46 of the RCA BROADCAST NEWS from September 1950.

In the 1920s, The Roof Garden was the home to "The Midnight Frolics" ...a very racy and naughty sister to the show in the main theater downstairs...the famous "Ziegfeld Follies." The New Amsterdam was the home of the Follies from 1913 till 1927. After the crash of 1929, the theater hit hard times and was dark until NBC leased the main ground floor theater which was renamed "The NBC Times Square Radio Theater." This was home to the famous "Texaco Fire Chief Show" with Ed Wynn from 1932 till 1935.



As part of the famous Times Square Clean Up in the 1990s, six historic theaters on 42nd Street were seized by the city and sold to new owners who have given them new lives, including The New Amsterdam Theater. After a massive renovation by Disney, it was home to the 1997 Broadway debut of “The Lion King” and was followed by “Mary Poppins,” “Aladdin” and more.



Part 12...The Colonial Theater, 1887 Broadway – November 8, 1952

This is “Miss Color”, Marie McNamara, with the RCA TK40 prototype cameras at The Colonial.



Here comes color, and...more surprises! In researching the history of the historic Colonial Theater, NBC's first non experimental color studio, I've come across new information that has moved events up at least a year to the fall of 1952.

I think The Colonial first came to the attention of RCA/NBC in October of 1951 when RCA exhibited a color TV receiver-projector there, which provided color pictures on a 9 x 12 foot theater screen. At this time, the 1,300 seat theater, built in 1905, was a run down RKO movie theater. In 1935, RKO converted it from vaudeville and live theater to a movie theater, but newer theaters nearby had taken the wind from The Colonial's sails.

This is a brief, but important, item from the November 17, 1952 issue of *Broadcasting Magazine*. Here we learn that not only had The Colonial been remodeled by NBC, but that on November 8, "Your Show Of Shows" had been broadcast from The Colonial. Somehow this story omits the fact that the theater was a color facility.

Colonial Remodeled

NBC-TV's Colonial Theatre at 62d St. and Broadway, New York, was remodeled in time to house *Show of Shows*, starting with the Nov. 8 telecast, according to the network. Included in the installation is an electronic lighting system capable of memorizing five pre-set changes. In lighting, 520 lighting fixtures are used. Also installed are 48 microphone outlets and 20 microphone control positions in the audio-control booth. Orchestra's location gives TV stage greater area and cameramen greater mobility. Studio audience is accommodated in the mezzanine and balcony.

Below is The Colonial's all new color control room. The Colonial went online March 19, 1953.



Factory space for producing RCA color television receivers is available and necessary test equipment has been determined. Manufacturing personnel has examined the engineering samples of model RCA color television receivers and are agreed that no unusual manufacturing problems are involved.

"While a substantially increased number of component parts are required for a color television receiver as compared with a black-and-white receiver, and circuits require a greater degree of testing and adjustment, manufacturing techniques will be basically the same as for black-and-white television receivers."

Dr. Jolliffe said that the proposed technical signal specifications make provision for future improvements in equipment at both transmitter and receiver without requiring a change in standards or obsoleting receivers in the public's hands.

NBC Color Telecasting Plans and Policies

The National Broadcasting Company's color television programming plans and policies are outlined in the petition. Highlights of these plans and policies are:

The first immediate proposal of NBC consists of starting "an introductory year," in the course of which all the engineering and programming groups of NBC will have a chance to get direct experience in color-casting, it was said, because they will produce their present black-and-white television shows in color premieres.

The petition stated:

"We have now worked out a rough schedule of colorcasts from the Colonial Theatre in New York, and 3H in our Radio City studios, which are the two present color-equipped studios of the National Broadcasting Company . . . We expect to average two shows a week from the Colonial, and the two shows will average an hour together. 3H will be reserved for continued technical experiment.

"We will schedule the color premieres, out of the



Facade of Colonial Theatre, New York, originating point of the majority of color TV programs broadcast experimentally by RCA and NBC.

Colonial Theatre, on a rotational basis of all our black-and-white attractions, so that each show is seen in color at least once, in a specially-devised color show, which will still be great in black and white, but we hope superb in color. We will include the NBC opera in English, Toscanini, Great Conversations, and other occasional as well as regular shows.

"When the great shows and the regular shows of NBC are offered in their color premieres at the average rate of two a week from the Colonial, the advertiser will offer his advertising in color with the show. In the case of multiple sponsors, we hope to offer all advertisers the same opportunity.

"Local events and exhibits and celebrations can all be covered in color. When important enough, we would hope to use our remote equipment to bring the scene on a special event pick-up basis."

The petition points up the fact, now that a practical
(Continued on page 31)

RADIO AGE 7

In the highlighted boxes, we see in this January 1953 issue of *Radio Age*, The Colonial was indeed color ready and that NBC's top shows were being brought in to do one time only "color premieres" on a rotational basis. Interestingly, these color premieres were not broadcast in color on the network, as those historic colorcasts on the network were a year away, and each color network broadcast required special permission from the FCC.

I think they were broadcast locally in color under the auspices of FCC field testing of the new RCA color transmitters. Part of the reason to do this was to show affiliates how good the picture from the RCA TK40s looked in black and white and that the new RCA system was truly "compatible color."

Remember, the only color receivers were at The Colonial, 30 Rock, the RCA Exhibition Hall and RCA Labs in Princeton. For a little perspective, here is the RCA announcement of the start of color set production...notice the date.

NEWS INFORMATION



RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA
RCA BUILDING
30 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA
NEW YORK, 20, N. Y.

March 25, 1954

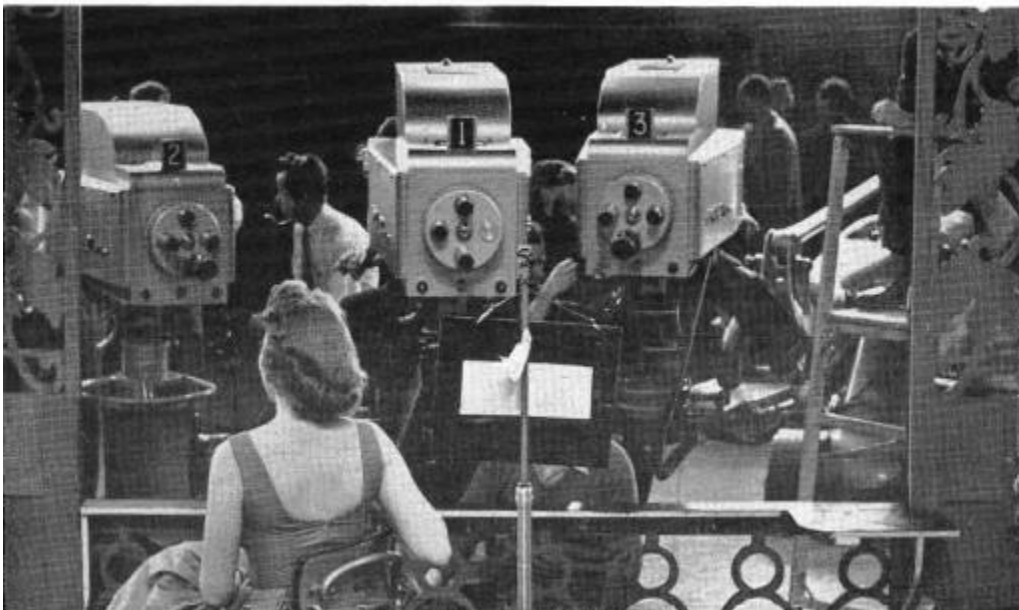
Release— IMMEDIATE

RCA BEGINS PRODUCTION OF COLOR TELEVISION SETS;
GIVES MANUFACTURING "KNOW-HOW" TO INDUSTRY

RCA Announces Plans to Bring Color Television Into American Homes --
Deliveries of RCA Color Sets Begin Next Week

BLOOMINGTON, IND., March 25 -- Production of the Radio Corporation of America's first commercial color television sets began here today as the initial step in a comprehensive program to bring color television into American homes.

"Intensive color production activities are under way . . ."



Here are three of the four new RCA TK40 prototype cameras at The Colonial in early 1953.



CAMERAS—naturally—are a favorite hobby of Rod Davis, whose pioneering lighting techniques pave the way for this fall's big color-TV season. Davis's official title at NBC is Operations Supervisor for Color TV.

One of the challenges with early color was how to light scenes. The cameras needed all the white light they could get for registration, but gel use for mood was important too.

That was up to Rod Davis and many months were spent just on figuring this out. The RCA TK40 prototypes were by far the best color camera they had come up with and now that they were in a real theatrical staging facility, a lot of new variables had to be worked out.

One thing that was still being worked out back in Studio 3H was the RCA color monitors and switching equipment. The weekday colorcasts of Nanette Fabray's variety type color demonstration show that had come from 3H at 10, 2 and 4 were moved to The Colonial and expanded to include bigger sets.

These color shows were not broadcasts. This was a closed circuit engineering test which was seen by NBC NY engineers, RCA engineers in Princeton, and by visitors to the RCA Exhibition Hall on 49th Street at Rockefeller Plaza where several hand built color sets were installed for the public to experience color TV. In January of 1952, that space became the home of the new "Today" show. The vivid costumes, the flesh tones, the lighting of sets and much more were important elements that were addressed by the presentation of these shows.

The four RCA TK40 prototype cameras that were delivered to The Colonial in the fall of 1952 underwent a year of testing. With the cameras off the bench and in daily use, a lot could be learned and RCA was making several modifications to the cameras each month. RCA had a lot riding on their dot sequential color system and before they put the TK40 into mass production, it had to be as close to perfection as possible, as did the color monitoring equipment.

On Nov 3, 1953, there were two historic firsts from The Colonial, both via closed circuit. Early in the day a live show, and later, a color film was sent via coax and microwave to Burbank. This was the first coast to coast color transmission, in preparation for the historic January 1, 1954 Rose Parade colorcast which was the first West to East network color broadcast.

The FCC gave final approval of the RCA Dot Sequential Compatible Color System on December 17, 1953. Here is the Saturday night announcement on December 19 during "Your Show Of Shows"...NBC's top rated program.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojJCJIaDp9Q>



Just the night before the color approval came from the FCC, NBC had special permission to telecast, in compatible color, "The Kraft Television Theater" presentation of "To Live In Peace" from The Colonial on December 16, 1953 (seen top left).

The first NBC network colorcasts, which were still officially experimental, were the October 31, 1953 broadcast of the opera "Carmen," and the first commercial (sponsored) color program, the November 22, 1953 "Colgate Comedy Hour" with Donald O'Connor.



NOW FOR SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL! In all these 15 years of research, I have never found this whole black and white promotional film from RCA until just yesterday! This amazing film titled "Color Television; an NBC Documentary" shows some of the most advanced science of the day as we are taken behind the scenes not only at The Colonial Theater which was the very first color studio, but to RCA's laboratories and factories in Princeton and Camden NJ and more.

<https://eyesofageneration.com/inside-nbcs-colonial-theater-rcas-color-effort/>

Also on this linked story is a 37 page special color report from RCA with all of the latest on color TV as of December, 1953.

This is a very rare look at The Colonial stage in action! From 1957, here is Dinah Shore riding the cameras as she debuts a new song...one you will probably remember.

<http://youtu.be/bNt4duaVOYg?t=2m34s>

Speaking of 1957, here are a couple of rare photos “The Price Is Right” from The Colonial. The daytime version was in black and white from The Hudson, but the weekly prime time version was in color from The Colonial from the start. In '59, the daytime version moved here too and, after the 1955 color debut of Howdy Doody, was the second color daytime show on NBC.



In the color photo below, we see the first colorcast of “Meet The Press,” part of the color debut of each NBC Show. The date is February 14, 1954 and the guest is Senator John F. Kennedy.

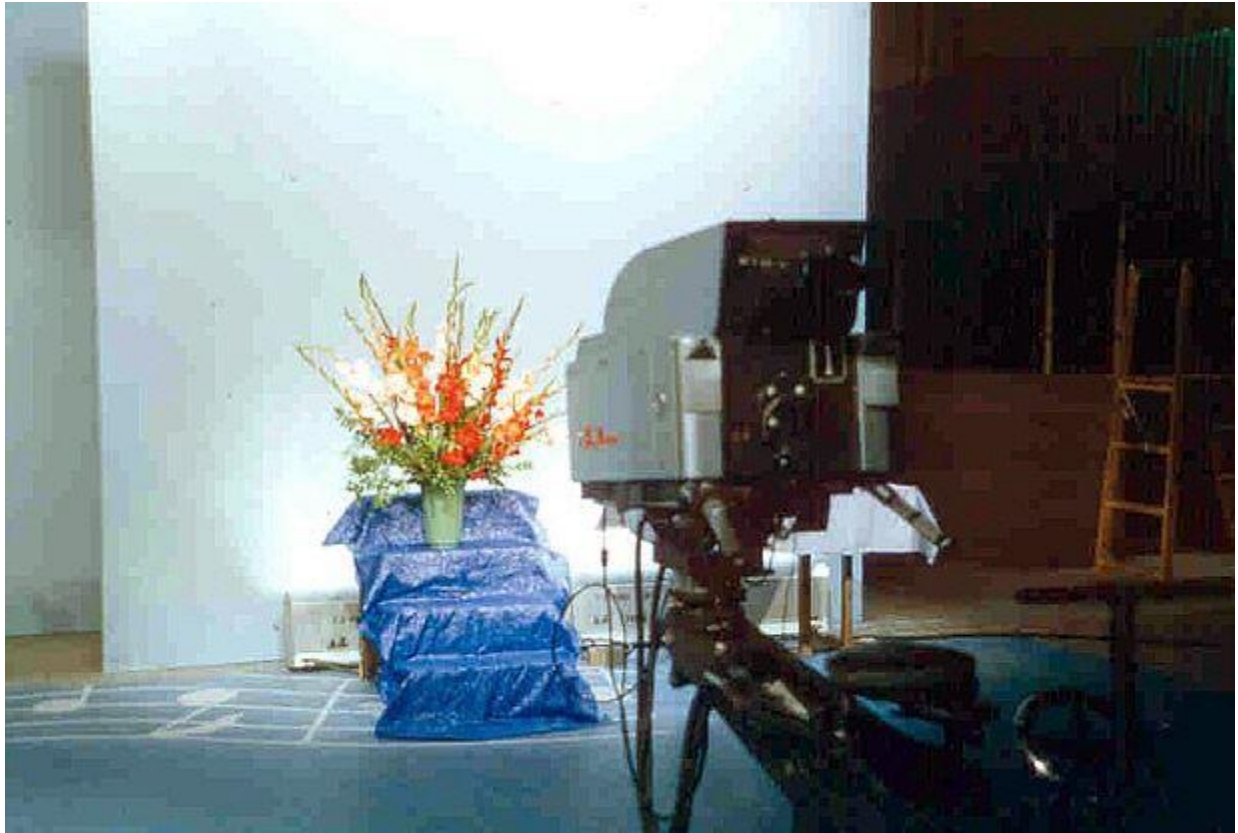


Before we leave The Colonial; two things. First, at the link are a dozen more rare photos like the one below, and are a baseball lover's dream! They are from a 1957 afternoon show from The Colonial called “NBC's Saturday Color Carnival: A Salute To Baseball,” and all the stars from all the top teams are there! Second, I have to tell you about the Blue Banana.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.488639914506896.98521.189359747768249&type=1>



The Famous Blue Banana Story! A firsthand account from The Colonial Theater...



This is a great true story told to me by Frank Merklein, who was there.

This is a photo of a TK40 prototype at The Colonial Theater around 1953 where extensive RCA color tests were going on almost around the clock via closed circuit. During the day, live test performances were done by Nanette Fabray and modeling by Marie McNamara. From about 5 until 10 PM, the live pictures sent to RCA Labs in Princeton, were of flowers and fruit for color study and adjustments in transmission.

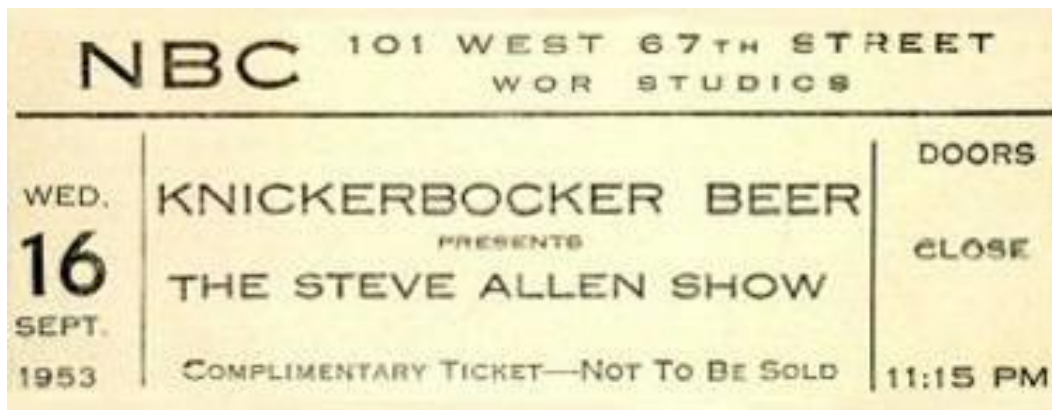
Behind the camera, you can see the legs of a table, and on the table was a bowl of fruit with apples, oranges, limes and bananas. This is where the fun begins!

After several months of this, the Colonial crew got a little bored and decided to have some fun with the RCA engineers in New Jersey. Their little joke caused quite a stir for an hour or so at RCA, and even a few department heads were called at home. It seemed that no matter what they did, the bananas in Princeton's monitors were coming up blue?!?!

How could that be? Everything else was perfect, but the damn bananas were blue!

Finally, on about the tenth call from Princeton, the Colonial crew admitted they had painted the bananas blue! On the Princeton end of the line, there was silence and then, slowly, a big laugh as the word was spread.

Part 13...The 67th Street Studios, 101 W. 67th Street...August 1953



In 1953, WNBT and its late night local movie program was getting clobbered by a better package of films being broadcast every night on WCBS.

Knickerbocker Beer, which was then a major brand in the northeast, decided it wanted to sponsor something other than late movies on WNBT...say, a variety show. Ted Cott, a successful radio executive who had recently moved into television at the NBC affiliate, suggested Steve Allen as host for the venture. Audiences had liked his short local show the year before on WCBS.

At the end of August of 1953, a 40 minute weeknight program called “The Knickerbocker Beer Show” debuted with Steve Allen as the host. A new director who would become a legend, Dwight Hemion, was at the helm in Studio A of the WOR 67th Street Studios. A few weeks after the debut, the show's name was changed to “The Steve Allen Show” and this is of course the forerunner to the “Tonight” show. Here is a rare full episode of “The Steve Allen Show” from December of 1953 from the 67th Street Studios.

<https://eyesofageneration.com/the-steve-allen-show/>

At the time, the studio was still owned by WOR and NBC was leasing space, but that changed. On March 4, 1954, Pat Weaver debuted his new creation for women...the “Home” show with Arlene Francis, and NBC had taken over the whole complex to produce it.

WOR TV built 9 Television Square in 1949 but due to corporate mergers, they announced on January 18, 1954 that WOR was moving its television operations to the new Empire State Building studios, and that NBC was leasing the 67th Street facility for three years. The building originally had four studios A (largest), B (next largest), C and D (both smaller) but by 1970, the four had been combined into two.



The most famous production to come from NBC's 67th Street Studios was the "Home" show with Arlene Francis from Studio A. I had always thought of this facility, and "Home" as black and white only, but it wasn't! Starting August 1, 1955, 15 minute color segments (11:45 - noon) were broadcast from Studio A. This puts color here almost six weeks ahead of 3K's September 12 color debut with Howdy Doody. Soon after, outside color feeds also came to "Home." Cooking segments were fed into the show from Studio 3K, which was home to the famous Kraft Kitchen, and from the new NBC color mobile units from various New York locations.

Despite good ratings, Home (1954-1957) was canceled shortly after David Sarnoff forced the show's creator, Pat Weaver, out of NBC. Frankly, the vain Sarnoff had always been jealous of Weaver as he was the one getting all the credit and press for NBC's successes in programming and compatible color advances that Sarnoff wanted the credit for. After all...he was the guy that started it all!

Weaver wasn't fired...just promoted to death. After having created "Today," "Tonight," "Home," Color Spectaculars, and "Monitor" for NBC Radio as VP of Television and Radio, Weaver was made President and later, Chairman of The Board of NBC. He was most productive and active as VP and President, but when he became Chairman, he had to give up the hands-on part of his job.

About six months into his term as President, things were a mess as the VP who took over the day-to-day operations had fired most of the great teams Weaver had hired and dismantled his formulas. Weaver stepped in, and his success in unscrambling the mess led to his next

promotion. By the time he was Chairman and totally removed from operations, he was unsatisfied and stayed mostly in his office.

Some other shows that came from here were “Concentration” ... primetime 1958, “The Sky's The Limit”...1956. “Here's Looking At You”...1955, “Close Up With Tex And Jinx”...1957, “11th Hour News”...1954 and “Breakfast With Music.”

NBC left the property in 1961 and shortly after, this became the home of The Video Tape Center. VTC had opened in 1958 at the Century Theater and this was their home from '61-'70. In 1970, the property was bought by ABC and became Studio TV-18/19. ABC stayed here till 1990 producing shows like “All My Children” and “One Life To Live.” The building was demolished in 1995 and is now the site of the fifty story Millennium Tower apartment building. I think there is a sports bar on this corner now.



Above is the building when it was an ABC property. Below is a shot of the NBC control at 67th Street when it was being used for the daily soap opera “From These Roots,” which aired from 1958 till 1961. When the show was canceled, NBC left the building and The Video Tape Center took over, buying much of the control room equipment and lighting system.

When NBC brought “Home” to Studio A in March of '54, they went all out! Here is Radio Age story on the new set, complete with two turntables in the floor.

Versatile Stage Supports New NBC Show

A MECHANICAL wonderland — the most completely workable permanent set in television — has been devised for "Home," NBC-TV's new weekday morning woman's service program, which made its debut from 11 a.m. to 12 noon on March 1.

Editorially, the program is a television service magazine, with experts in a variety of fields expanding the horizon of service information to an extent never before approached. Among the features appearing regularly are fashion, beauty, cooking, family problems, child care and training, leisure time activities, shopping news and notes, interiors and gardens, architecture and home economics.

The revolutionary set demonstrates products, processes and home procedures in the clearest and most extensive manner ever accomplished on television. The novel equipment has been completely integrated with the editorial and commercial needs of any television show.

Located at the NBC West 67th Street studios in New York, the set, conceived by Sol Cornberg of NBC-TV's plant operations, cost approximately \$200,000. Its value lies in the fact that whatever the creative production staff of "Home" wishes to do, the means for an efficient, visually exciting presentation are there and available to them.

The many devices are not simply curiosities or gim-

micks, but ingenious instruments designed to do specific jobs with a maximum effect. The set, circular in design, is divided into ten working areas. The whole is enclosed by a translucent plastic skin — a color value wall — which can be lighted from above, below, front or back.

In the center are two concentric turntables. The inner table elevates up to four feet and can also be lowered flush with the outer table. It can hold a pair of sofas, before and after upholstering, for example, or four models of television sets, or even a small car.

Can Hold a Large Car

When the two turntables are interlocked and flush, they can hold a large car. And since the whole turntable can be revolved, the camera can remain stationary while showing all sides of any object, or focus in turn on each of the objects.

The working areas follow each other around the outer circumference of the set. Each is self-contained, although not physically divided from its neighbor. There is an atmosphere of space, and each area can be seen from many angles.

The first, the "tumbler," handles heavy objects automatically and without effort. Anything weighing up to 300 pounds and measuring less than six feet in its longest dimension can be accommodated by the device.

RADIO AGE 25

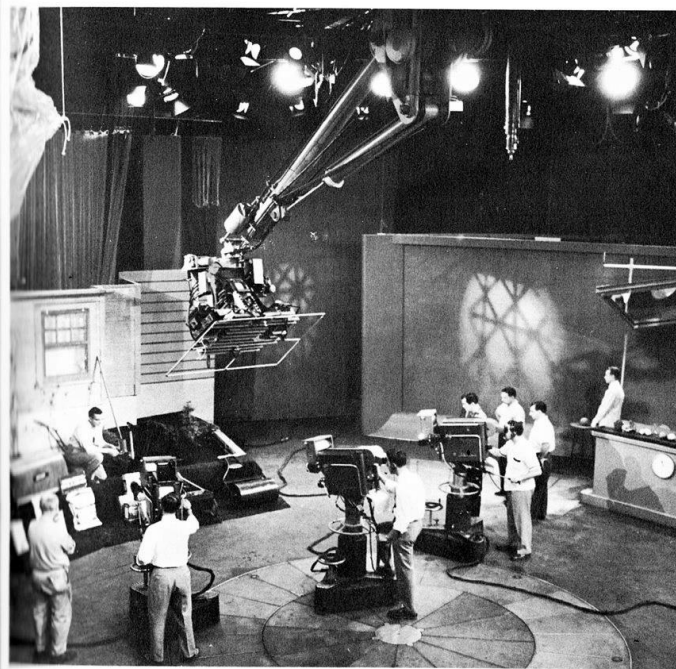


Plate 1. Large network studio, specially designed for *Home*, a daily one-hour program. Camera suspended from ceiling was remotely controlled. Cameras are equipped with prompting devices. (Courtesy of NBC)

If you skipped this link in The New Amsterdam Theater section, SEE IT NOW!

<https://eyesofageneration.com/april-9-1950-first-bob-hope-tv-special-nbc-new-amsterdam-theater/>

There and a 20 page spread on this theater in the article on Page 46 of the RCA BROADCAST NEWS from September 1950.

Part 14...Brooklyn Studio I, 1268 East 14th Street

Purchased September 1951, first use September 12, 1954

It all started here, with this news story in the September 29, 1951 edition of *The Brooklyn Eagle*.

NBC Buys Boro Studio For Televising Shows

EXCLUSIVE!

By **WENDELL HANMER**

The National Broadcasting Company soon will be televising studio shows from Brooklyn.

For that purpose it has bought the Warner Brothers studio on the irregular block bounded by Locust Ave. and Avenue M, E. 13th and E. 14th Sts., it was learned today.

The studio now consists of a number of one, two and three-story buildings, with the main building having three stories and housing a large stage for making sound motion pictures. It was constructed in 1936. The sound stage has been dismantled and all of the buildings are being used for storage purposes, several for lumber storage.

Plans for elaborate remodeling of the entire plant are

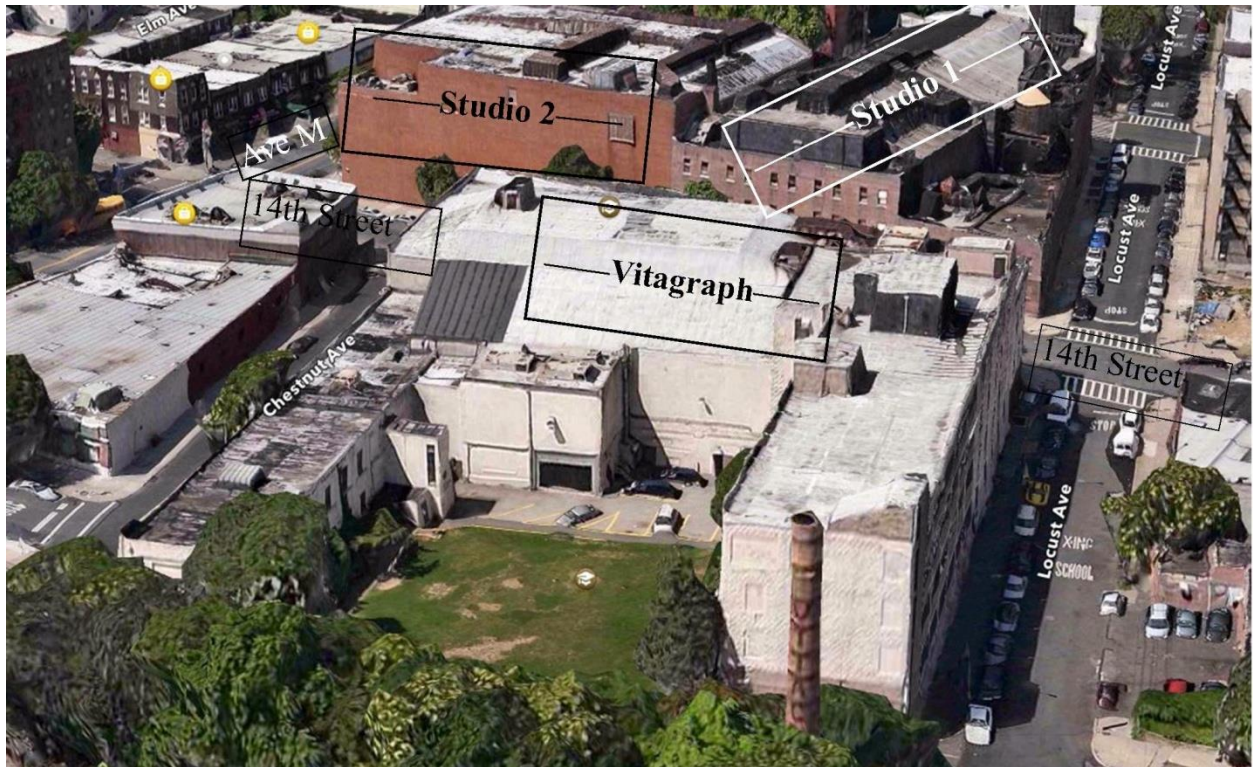
being drafted. They are said to include three television stages, dressing rooms, executive offices, scenery construction and scenery storage rooms.

Warner Brothers, which will continue to use for storage purposes its old Vitaphone studios extending from E. 14th St. to the B. M. T. Brighton Line, is said to have received \$500,000 for the parcel sold to NBC. John J. Reynolds, Inc., 64 E. 46th St., Manhattan, was the broker in the transaction.

Just which of its stage shows originating in New York City are scheduled to be televised from its future Brooklyn studio could not be learned from NBC today.

Its Brooklyn studio will be convenient for subway travel from Manhattan because of the Avenue M station of the BMT and for travel by automobile via the West Side Highway and Brooklyn-Battery tunnel or over the Manhattan bridge and by way of Flatbush Ave.

To help you get your bearings, here are a couple of annotated pictures of the properties.



For me, these new photos and information have cleared up a lot of confusion about these famous and historic film and television studios. I hope they will do the same for you, and I thank Joel Spector for his help on these. I had always thought that NBC bought the entire Warner Brothers holdings in Brooklyn, the studios and property that WB had bought from Vitagraph Studios. This is not the case. As it turns out, the big white building was retained by WB, but they sold the property on the other side of 14th Street to NBC.

The white Vitagraph building was built in 1906. Vitagraph was bought by Warner Brothers on April 22, 1925. What we now know as NBC Brooklyn Studio I was built by WB in 1936 and was first used by NBC September 12, 1954. Studio II, the smaller studio was built new from the ground up by NBC and went into service in the fall of 1956, but we'll cover that separately. By the way, back in the day, NBC used the roman numerals I and II to refer to these studios, so I am doing the same.

It's interesting to note that this property was bought about the same time RCA/NBC took over The Colonial Theater. I suspect the three year gap between when NBC bought the property and its first use was due in large part to a wait and see attitude regarding the NTSC color system court battles with CBS and the FCC. When CBS testified before Congress in March 1953 that it had no further plans for its own color system, the path was open for the NTSC to submit its petition for FCC approval in July 1953, which was granted in December. I think that is when NBC finally began the serious work of transforming Studio I from a film sound stage into the world's largest color television studio.



Up top is a shot from “Kiss Me Kate” from Brooklyn I on November 20, 1958. Below is Gene Kelly taping his famous “Omnibus” episode “Dancing: A Man’s Game” from December of 1958. Gene’s first foray into television was this NBC documentary, where he assembled a group of America’s greatest sportsmen including Mickey Mantle, Sugar Ray Robinson and Bob Cousy. Kelly re-interpreted their moves choreographically, as part of his lifelong quest to remove the effeminate stereotype of the art of dance. Here’s a quick clip.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd70iqK_bsU



Mayor Robert F. Wagner of New York cuts the tape to open NBC's new color TV studio in Brooklyn. Assisting are Betty Hutton and, at right, NBC President Sylvester L. Weaver, Jr., and Robert W. Sarnoff, Executive Vice President.

Vitagraph Studio to Relive Glory As TV Show Debuts Here Sunday

Shades of Rudolph Valentino, Mabel Normand, John Runny and the Talmadge Sisters will turn a roseate hue Sunday evening when bouncy, colorful Betty Hutton inaugurates NBC's first live, 90-minute color TV show from the recently-converted soundstage of the old Warner Brothers' Vitagraph Studio at Avenue M and E. 11th St.

The show, NBC-TV's "Satin and Spurs" will go out over the network from 7:30 to 9 p.m. from the world's largest and most modern color TV studio, situated in the heart of Flatbush.

At a cost of \$3,500,000 NBC has converted the huge, sprawling structure which saw, in the early 1900s, the birth of big-scale movie pro-

duction, into the largest in the network's nation-wide chain of 25 studios, and the center of its color telecast program.

NBC engineers have constructed a mobile, collapsible seating unit for 360 members of audience-participating shows which can be packed and rolled away in less than 12 man-hours, thus permitting full use of the overall building size—90 by 180 by 35 feet—the largest color TV playhouse in the world.

Air Conditioning, Too

Actors and audience will enjoy the comfort of a 250-ton air conditioning system capable of handling 100,000 cubic feet of air a minute, changing the atmosphere every seven minutes.

The first commercial install-

ation of a color projector screen—15 by 20 feet—will permit the audience to see the production exactly as it appears to the viewer at home.

A not inconsiderable feature of the project, as far as participating artists, technicians and supervisory personnel are concerned, is the fact that the studios can be reached for a 15-cent fare from the most remote recesses of Manhattan's caves, by way of the BMT-Brighton Line to Avenue M.

Flatbush, the cradle of the billion-dollar motion picture industry, lost out to Hollywood years ago. It is just possible that the reawakening of the old Vitagraph Studio may presage the return of an even bigger industry of the future—color TV—to Brooklyn.



RCA Color cameras focus on a scene from "Naughty Marietta," produced as an NBC "spectacular."

From the *Brooklyn Eagle*, here are stories on the dedication and ribbon cutting on Tuesday afternoon, September 7, 1954 by Mayor Robert Wagner before the big Sunday debut.

With the broadcast of "Satin And Spurs" on September 12, 1954, NBC Brooklyn Studio I became NBC's second major color facility.

The second color spectacular production from here comes September 25, 1954 when Ann Southern starred in "The Lady In The Dark."

A few of the many shows that came from Brooklyn were "Peter Pan," "The Mitch Miller Show," "The Sammy Davis Jr. Show," "Hullabaloo," "The Bell Telephone Hour" and "The Kraft Music Hall."

Pretty much every NBC color "spectacular" came from Brooklyn, including "Naughty Marietta" which aired from here January 15, 1955 as the tenth episode in the first season of "Producer's Showcase" seen here bottom left.

An Interesting Side Note: NBC Burbank's first color production was "Entertainment '55" broadcast from Studio 2 on March 27, 1955, the day it was dedicated. Color City's first show was "All Star Revue" October 4, 1952, but there was no color there until Studio 2 was completed. Studio 2 was the third stage built and "the first studio to be built exclusively for colorcasting".

On Sunday, the 12th at 7:30 eastern, NBC's first Color Spectacular debuted here as Betty Hutton starred in "Satin And Spurs" produced by Max Liebman, which you can see in full at the link.

<http://youtu.be/Yo0MEhjr7Xo?t=1h13m58s>

This video will start at the end of the "Satin And Spurs" credits when Don Pardo introduces Steve Allen who does a nice three minute overview of Brooklyn I, with TK41s in this shots. Interestingly he mentions that the show was produced from NBC's color mobile unit as there is no control room yet.

Below is a two page article from *Radio Age* that gives us a good description of the studio.

World's Largest TV Studio Opened by NBC for Color

A ONE-TIME motion picture studio in Brooklyn, N.Y., has reopened for business as the world's largest and most modern television studio, completely equipped for programming for the new era of color.

The studio is the National Broadcasting Company's new color production center, acquired from Warner Brothers and converted at a cost of \$3,500,000 to handle NBC's unprecedented series of thirty-three "spectaculars" — ninety-minute color programs of a scope never before presented on a regular basis.

Formal dedication of the vast studio took place on September 9, when Mayor Robert F. Wagner of New York cut the ceremonial ribbon and described the new center as "a fine new showcase for the best New York has to offer in the theatre arts." Participating with Mayor Wagner in the ceremony were Sylvester L. Weaver, Jr., President of NBC, Robert W. Sarnoff, NBC's Executive Vice-President, and actress Betty Hutton, who starred on September 12 in the first of the new "spectaculars."

The opening of the Brooklyn production center widens further the margin of NBC leadership in color programming facilities. These already include the Colonial Theatre in New York, the world's first fully-equipped studio for compatible color; Studio 3-H in

Radio City, used for smaller productions, commercials, and research in staging, lighting, costuming and make-up; a mobile color unit, the only one of its kind in existence, used for outdoor coverage of special events remote from studios, and RCA three Vidicon multiple film projectors capable of handling 35- and 16-millimeter color film and slides. By the end of the year, the present facilities will be augmented by another large studio being equipped by NBC in Burbank, Calif., to tap the reservoir of Hollywood talent for "spectaculars" and other color programs.

Number of Unique Features

Several unique features have been built by NBC into the huge Brooklyn center, among them the most elaborate lighting system in the industry — 900 circuits with a capacity of 960,000 watts, or enough to light a community of 3,000 homes.

The lighting is arranged in a grid system whose components can be raised or lowered by electric hoists controlled remotely from a lighting "bridge." There are 126 such hoists, capable of handling 75,000 pounds of lighting equipment. This push-button hoist arrangement was developed by NBC engineers. It permits individual height adjustment of 63 groups of lights and the pre-setting of heights for 10 scenes.

At the heart of the system is a newly-perfected "Lumi-Tron" lighting board, a complex arrangement of some 2,000 controls — twice the maximum of any lighting board previously used in television programming.

To convert the lighting system for color, the light capacity had to be increased seven and one-half times, which in turn meant a heavy reinforcement of the overhead girders to handle the substantially greater weight.

Large-Screen Projector

For the studio audience of 360, the center has been equipped with a large-screen color projector, newly developed by RCA, which permits viewing of the performance on a movie-size 15-by-20-foot screen. The audience is accommodated in a new type of demountable seating arrangement.

In addition to the main studio, 178 feet long and 88 feet wide, a smaller studio will be built in what is now a rehearsal hall to one side. The smaller studio, full-sized by usual standards, will be used for commercials, and it will be able to handle products as large as automobiles, which can be wheeled in through large doors leading in from the street.

The center also includes a carpentry shop that can build complete sets for any major production. Other facilities include an artists' lounge, remodelled dressing rooms, makeup rooms and storage space for props and equipment. A Quonset hut measuring 40 by 60 feet also is being built as additional storage space.

RCA Color Caravan

As NBC opened its new home for color programming in Brooklyn, RCA started a nation-wide tour with

a new "color television caravan" equipped to produce on-the-spot programs to introduce color TV to audiences at fairs, expositions and other large public gatherings.

The unit made its public debut on September 25 at the Mid-South Fair in Memphis, Tennessee. After its Memphis stand, it prepared for an extensive tour that will involve appearances at other expositions and at special showings for conventions, department stores, and business and service organizations.

In employing a mobile unit to promote the nationwide introduction of color, RCA is following the precedent set in 1947, when another RCA caravan toured more than 50,000 miles over the country introducing black-and-white television.

The heart of the RCA color caravan is a specially-designed 32-foot trailer containing a complete control room and technical equipment to originate any type of program, either "live" or film. The equipment includes a number of RCA Victor color TV receivers, two RCA color cameras, a color film-scanner and microwave apparatus. Like the new NBC studio in Brooklyn, the unit has been equipped also with the new RCA color TV projector capable of showing color programs on a 15-by-20-foot screen.

For the most part, the caravan will originate programs to be carried over a closed circuit to its receivers via cable. However, its equipment permits the feeding of programs to commercial television broadcasting stations or to a network whenever the occasion may require it.

A complete staff of engineers, technicians and program production experts has been assigned to the unit, which is under the supervision of Richard H. Hooper, Manager of RCA Shows and Exhibits, with headquarters in Camden, N. J.

At the "Lumi-Tron" lighting board, 2,000 lighting controls are within reach of the technician.

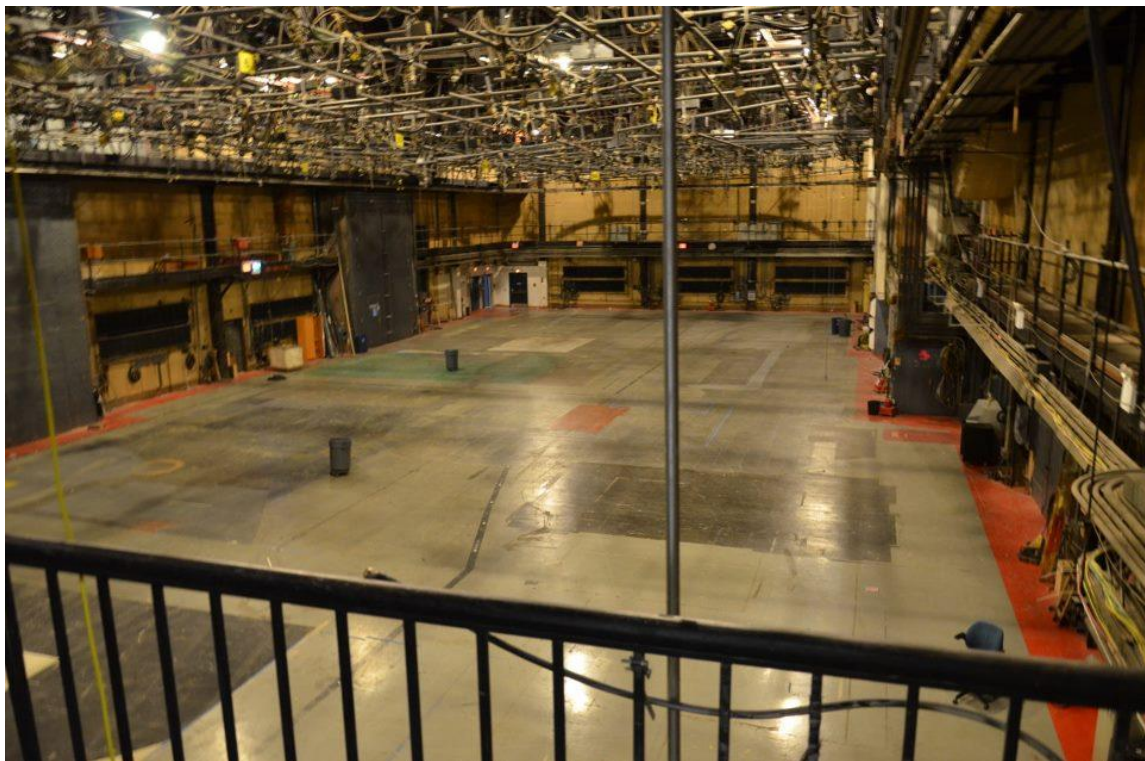


TV's most elaborate lighting system hangs over the vast studio, formerly a film sound stage.

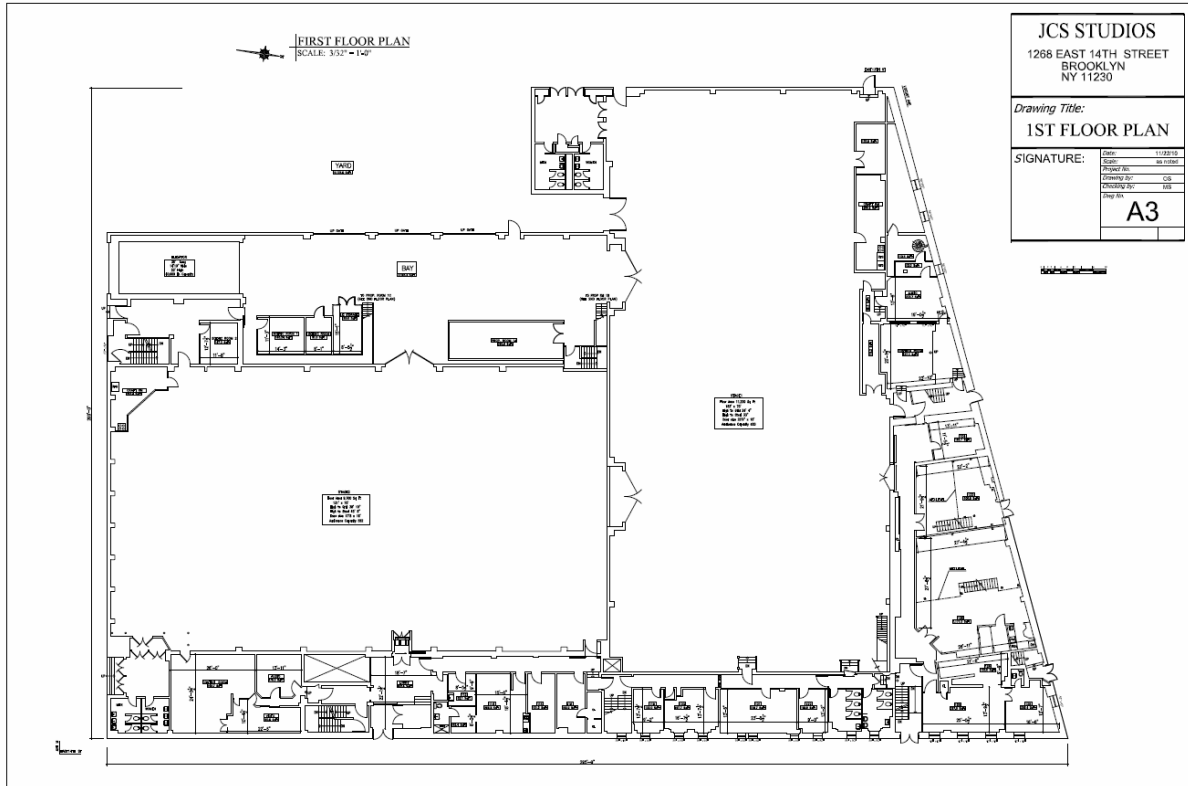




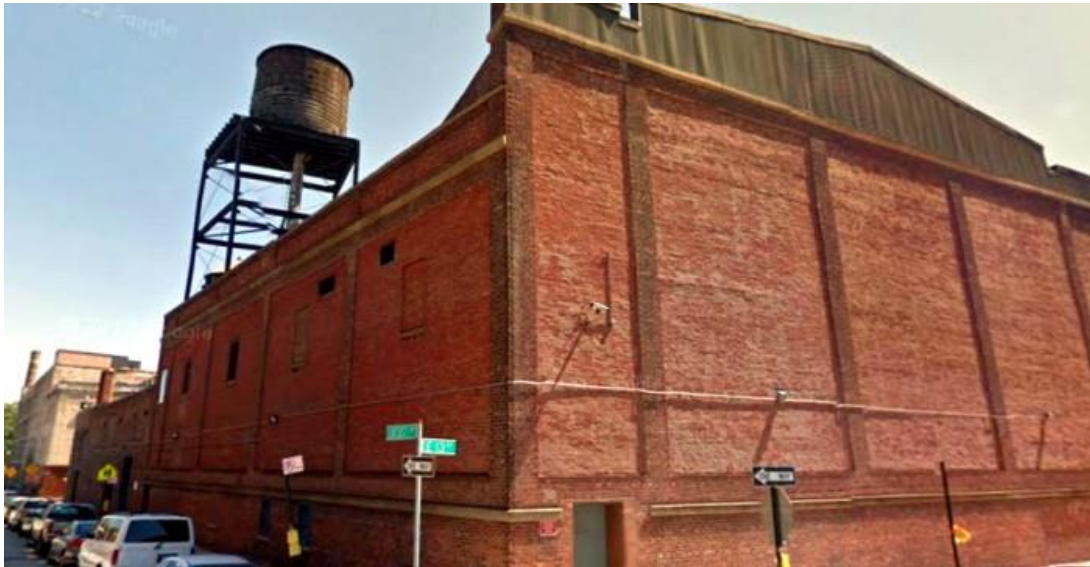
Above and below, the space that once was NBC Studio I, home of the NBC Color Spectaculars



On the right is Studio I. On the left is Studio II that came along in 1956 and there will be more on that later. You may be familiar with the famous story about the Esther Williams swimming pool that was installed here for her special. That was at the top of Studio I on the 13th Street wall. Later, it was covered and the floor resurfaced.



This is the back of Studio I on the 13th Street side...the swimming pool was just behind this wall.



In this great video, you'll see the RCA TK41s in action in Studio I at **12:58** and **23:35**. The date was March 13, 1966 and the production was "The Bell Telephone Hour." That episode was "The Music Of The Movies" and in the clip you'll see "Wizard Of Oz" Scarecrow Ray Bolger and a young Peter Marshall. This rare footage is from an interesting AT&T film that touts the reliability of their services to all types of industries. Enjoy!

<http://youtu.be/ZAJpionUxJ8?t=12m56s>

Here's "Hullabaloo" with Frank Sinatra Jr. and Petula Clark at Brooklyn I.





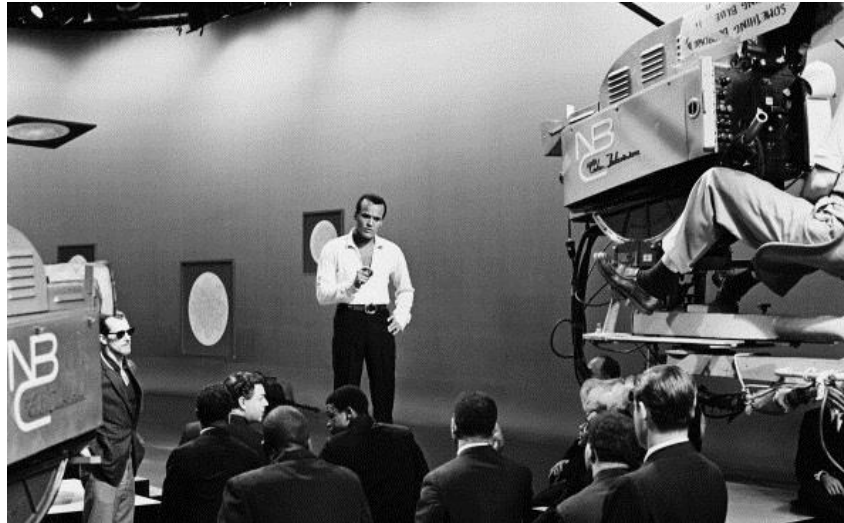
Above, the merry prankster Mitch Miller, once a humble symphonic oboe player on “The Voice of Firestone,” drops his pants in rehearsal when asked to change up this segment a little. Frank Gaeta (bottom center, stripe shirt) was there and says they often taped from 9 AM till after midnight, but Mitch frequently called out for 300 Nathan’s hotdogs and a couple of cases of champagne for the cast and crew.



Above is a classic shot on the set of “Sing Along With Mitch” with Jack Bennett on crane, Gene Martin in the middle and our friend Frank Gaeta on the bottom camera in Brooklyn. Mitch usually came from Studio II, but on occasion, was done in Studio I.

Speaking of Frank Gaeta and Mitch Miller, at the linked video, Frank is on the crane shooting the final episode of “The Sammy David Show” in Brooklyn II. Notice the VO at the end says, tune in next week for the debut of “Sing Along With Mitch” which started January 27, 1961.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXjKNl0C-AU&ab_channel=taphatt2012



Above are shots from “The Bell Telephone Hour” and the soap opera, “Another World”, both of which came from Studio I. Cameraman and Technical Director Russell Ross tells me that in the 70’s when the soaps were there (“Somerset” and “Texas”), a large heavy curtain divided Studio I into two parts so that productions in the same space would not interfere with each other...much.

From 1964, John Davidson and Bert Lahr rehearse a scene from the “Hallmark Hall Of Fame” production of “The Fantastiks” in Studio I. Here is the entire production, IN COLOR!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvsK_m7nSkI&t=1s&ab_channel=GalenFott



We can't leave without a tip of the hat to “Peter Pan”...the most famous production to ever come from Brooklyn I. Here is an ultra rare photo of Mary Martin, Cyril Ritchard and Nana.





In 1954, Fred “Pappy” Coe became Executive Producer on a project created by Pat Weaver called “Producers' Showcase.” This was a 90 minute color anthology series that aired every fourth Monday for three seasons.

On March 7, 1955, NBC presented “Peter Pan” live as part of “Producers' Showcase” with nearly the entire original cast that had appeared in the Broadway production. The show was done in color from NBC Brooklyn Studio I and was directed by Jerome Robbins who had directed the Broadway version. This is Coe at the Studio I audio board.

That 1955 “Peter Pan” event attracted a then-record audience of 65 million viewers, the highest ever up to that time for a single television program. It was so well received that the musical was restaged live for television (again under the “Producers' Showcase” banner) on January 9, 1956. Both of these broadcasts were produced live and in color, but only black-and-white kinescope recordings survive.

At this link is a MAJOR STORY on how Peter Pan was done, including the flying and flying-while-singing...a whole new thing for TV!

<https://eyesofageneration.com/march-7-1955-behind-the-scenes-of-nbcs-peter-pan-debut/>

Peter Pan was restaged for a third time on December 8, 1960, but this time it was videotaped in color which we will see below. “Producers' Showcase” ended around 1958, so the 1960 production was intended as a “stand alone” special instead of an episode of an anthology series.

All three presentations were done as live performances in Studio I, including the color videotaped version we see here. The famous flying scene starts at 24:30 in the video at the bottom of the page.

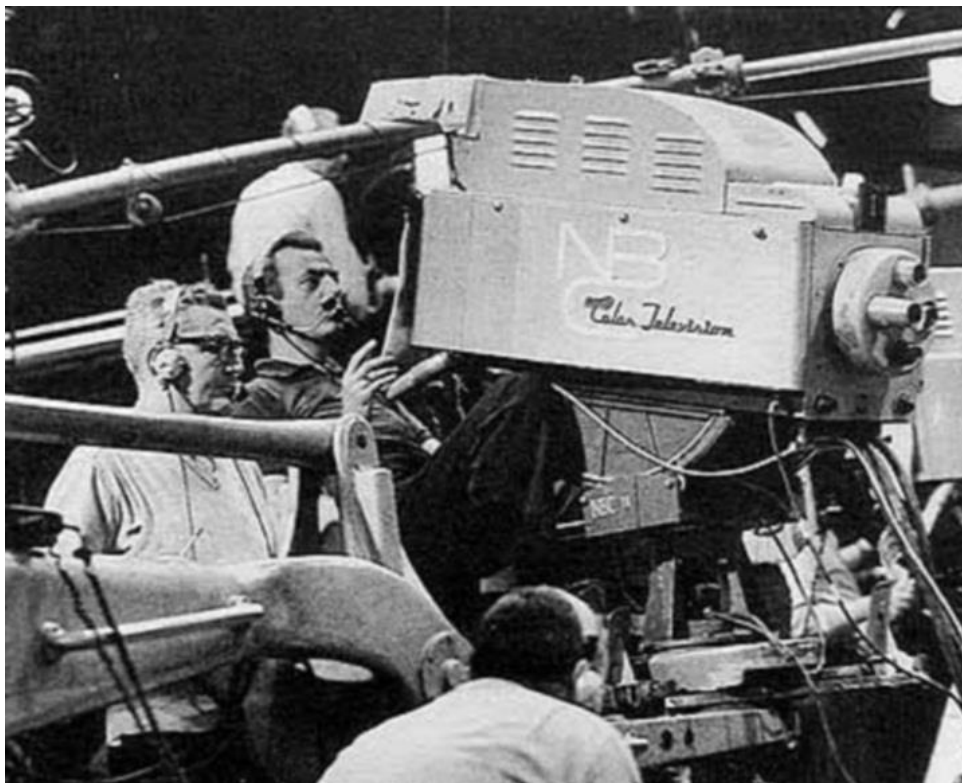
This 1960 presentation was directed for television by Vincent J. Donehue, who received a Director's Guild Award for his work. Peter Foy re-created the signature flying sequences he had staged for the 1954 Broadway production and the two Coe produced broadcasts. The color videotape at this link was rebroadcast in 1963, 1966 and 1973. The tape was restored and rebroadcast by NBC on March 24, 1989, then again in 1990, after which it went to the Disney Channel, where it was shown several times more.

To wrap up Brooklyn I, here's shot of Max Liebman's regular color spectaculars crew and below that, a photo of NBC's Don Mulvaney shooting "Hallmark Hall Of Fame."



Max Liebman Spectaculars crew.

1st row Jim Blaney, Bill Stone, Carmine Piccioccio, Joe Carridi, Frank O'Keefe, Milton Butz.
2nd Row John Ward, Nick Bruno, Art Zarakas, Carl Ricca, Heino Ripp (T.D.), George Weisz, Walter Serafin, Roy Olsen and Joe Bascietto.
3rd Row Walter Werner, Gene Cronin, Fred McKinnon, Sonny Perlmutter, Bob Sullivan, Tom Williams, Don Mulvaney, Ernie Thiel, Lauren Jaycox. Dave Byrnes and Arnold Rand aren't shown, 'cause they were playing Ping Pong behind the set.



Part 15...The Century Theater, 932 7th Avenue – March 25, 1954

First broadcast March 25, 1954, Control Room added June 6, 1954

Show here as Al Jolson's 59th Street Theater, the name changed to The New Century in 1944.



On March 25, 1954, NBC did its first broadcast from The Century Theater when it telecast the Academy Awards show for only the second time. The year before, the 25th Academy Awards show made its television debut and its bi-coastal ceremony debut from the Pantages Theater in Hollywood and The International Theater in New York.

By the time the 26th Academy Awards show rolled around, The International was closed and by summer, would be torn down. The March 1954 broadcast from the Century was a remote...the control room had yet to be added. On March 21, just four days before the Oscars, the last performance of The Azuma Kabuki Dancers occurred and marked the end of the Century's history as a theatrical venue.

At the link is MC Bob Hope in Hollywood throwing the awards show to Thelma Ritter at The Century Theater. <https://youtu.be/FIz0E7cpvE8?t=216>

By June 6, 1954, the control room was in operation and NBC took The Century Theatre live with a broadcast of “The Colgate Summer Comedy Hour” from 932 Seventh Avenue with an audience of 1700 people. This was the first year the Comedy Hour did not break for summer and the first episode of the summer series debuted from here. The episode title was “Holiday In New York” and the performers included actor Jackie Cooper; comic Kaye Ballard; singer/dancer Jules Munshin; David Daniels; Elise Rhodes; Bart Mayo; and Al Goodman and his Orchestra.

When the theater opened, October 16, 1921, it was owned by the Shuberts who named it for Al Jolson, who was the first to appear in the theater. In 1937, Orson Welles and company marched their production of “The Cradle Will Rock” into the theatre and performed it from seats in the audience, because Actor's Equity ordered the actors not to perform on stage.

The theater had many names...it started as Jolson's 59th Street Theater then became Central Park Theater, Shakespeare Theater, Venice Theater, Molly Picon Theater and was known three times as the Jolson 59th Street Theater. The Shuberts refurbished it and renamed it the New Century in 1944. In 1962, it was demolished and replaced with a luxury apartment building.

From 1954 till around 1960, NBC's Century Theater was where shows like “Who Said That,” “The Polly Bergen Show,” “Julius La Rosa,” “Doodles,” “Make The Connection,” “The Tony Bennett Show” and “This Is Show Business” came from.

Among the more famous shows that came from here would have been a season of “Mr. Peepers” with Wally Cox, a season of “Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour,” “The Arthur Murray Dance Party” in ‘54 and ‘55 and “The Milton Berle Show” in 1953, but the most famous of all would be strangest of all possible combinations.... “The Imogene Coca Show” AND... “Caesar's Hour,” starring Sid Caesar. NBC left in 1958 and Video Tape Center took over the theater as their first home. In '61, VTC would leave for NBC's vacated 67th Street Studios.





Above is a “Commuters” sketch from “Caesar’s Hour” at The Century Theater in 1954.

It's amazing that at the height of their popularity as co stars of “Your Show Of Shows,” anyone would even think about tinkering with that kind of success, but...it happened. There are several versions of what happened. Some blame Coca’s manager and others blame new NBC President Frank White.

In this clip from an *Archive of American Television*, Sid Caesar tells his version...of how NBC essentially raided the show in an attempt to create three entities. NBC's new Color Spectaculars needed a producer and Max Liebman would be pressed into service there. Coca would be given her own show and Caesar would have a new show...“Caesar's Hour.”

<https://youtu.be/ZhjmuCYi3EE?t=801>

“The Imogene Coca Show” lasted only a single season and its failure was mostly due to the fact that it was a half hour situation comedy which greatly limited Coca. Now she had to become a character and could not be the versatile and imaginative comedian she had been with Caesar in “Your Show Of Shows.”

Coca's show aired from 9-9:30 Saturday night from The Century Theater starting in September of 1954. "Caesar's Hour" came from the Century Theater on Monday nights from 8-9, starting September 27, 1954. Below, Coca is watching the playback of Kinescope of a prior episode as they are continuing on that theme in this episode.



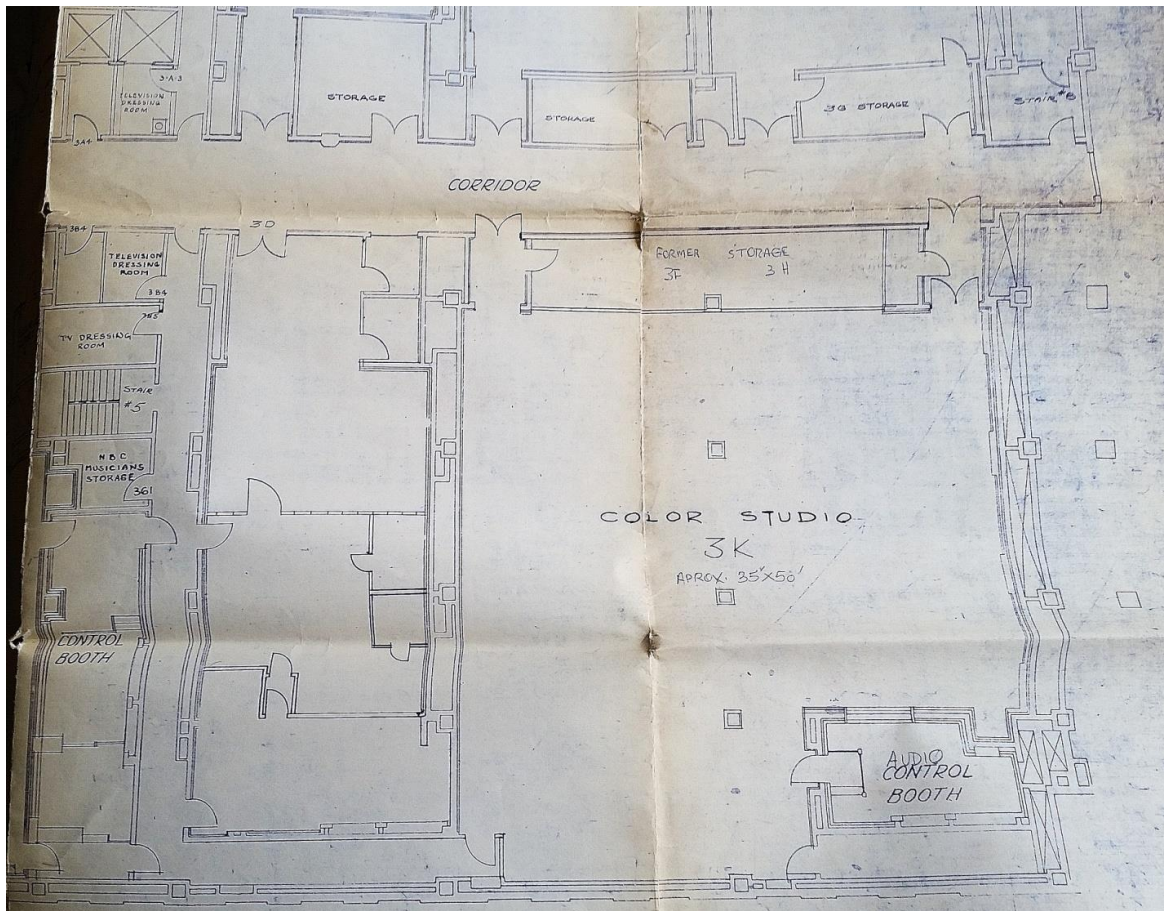
Below, the 1954 Academy Award bicoastal broadcast from the Century Theatre.



Part 16...Studio 3K, September 12, 1955

3rd Floor, 30 Rockefeller Plaza

Old Glory...NBC's first television studio, 3H is once again the in history's spot light. This time, she'll become the first in-house color studio at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. In the summer of '55, work began to take out the wall between 3H and 3F and the combined space would become Studio 3K.



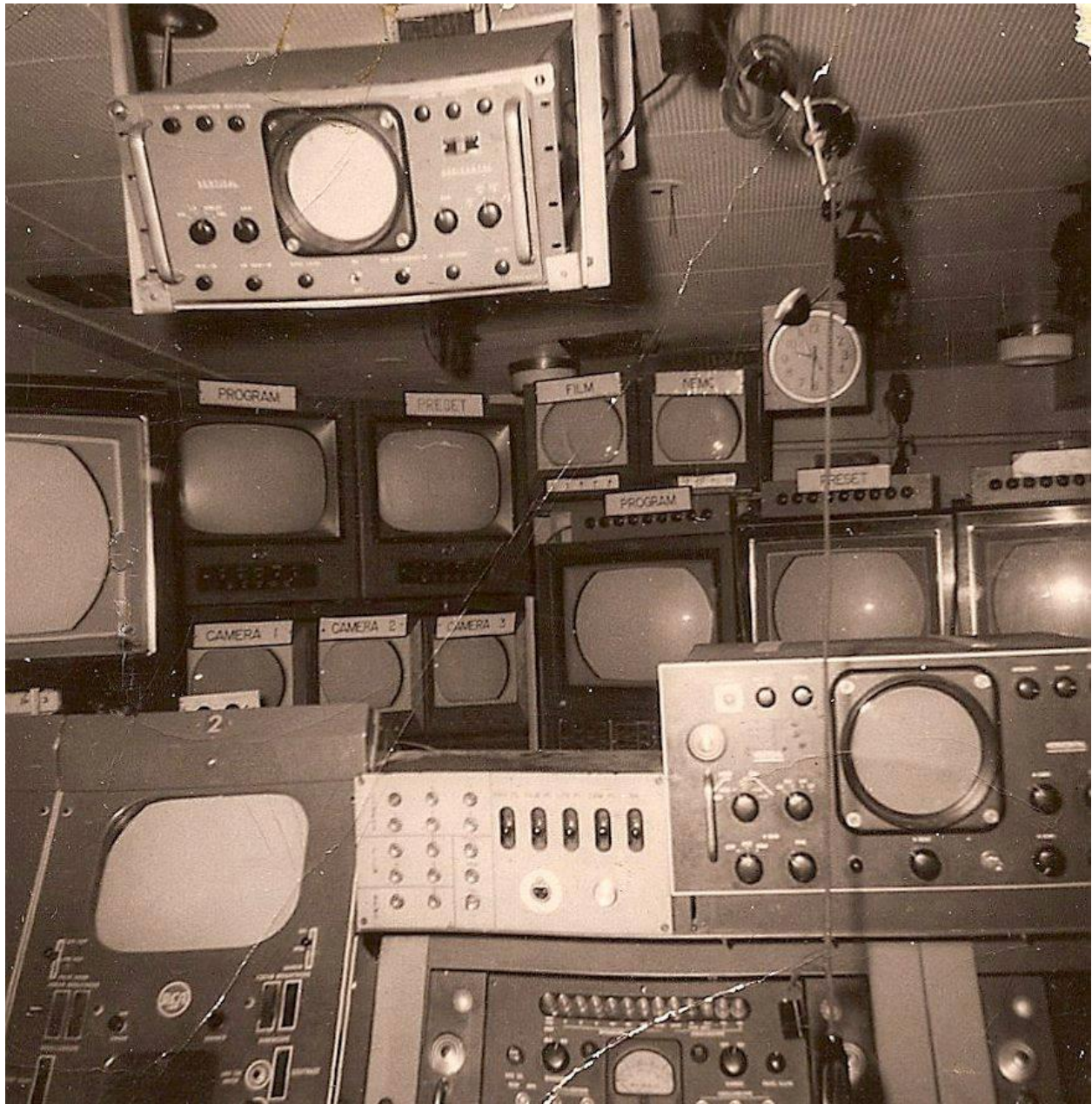
At the top of 3K, notice the “Former Storage” area. This is where the famous **Kraft Kitchen** was permanently installed when the studio was reconfigured. It was also used for cooking segments for “Today” and the “Home” show which took live cut-ins from here.

As you can see in the blueprint above, there were three steel support columns that could not be moved, and cameramen had to shoot around them till 1977 when 20 tons of structural steel were added to the ceiling of 3K, and, as two girder systems, were anchored in the vertical columns at the west end of 3H and the east end of 3F.

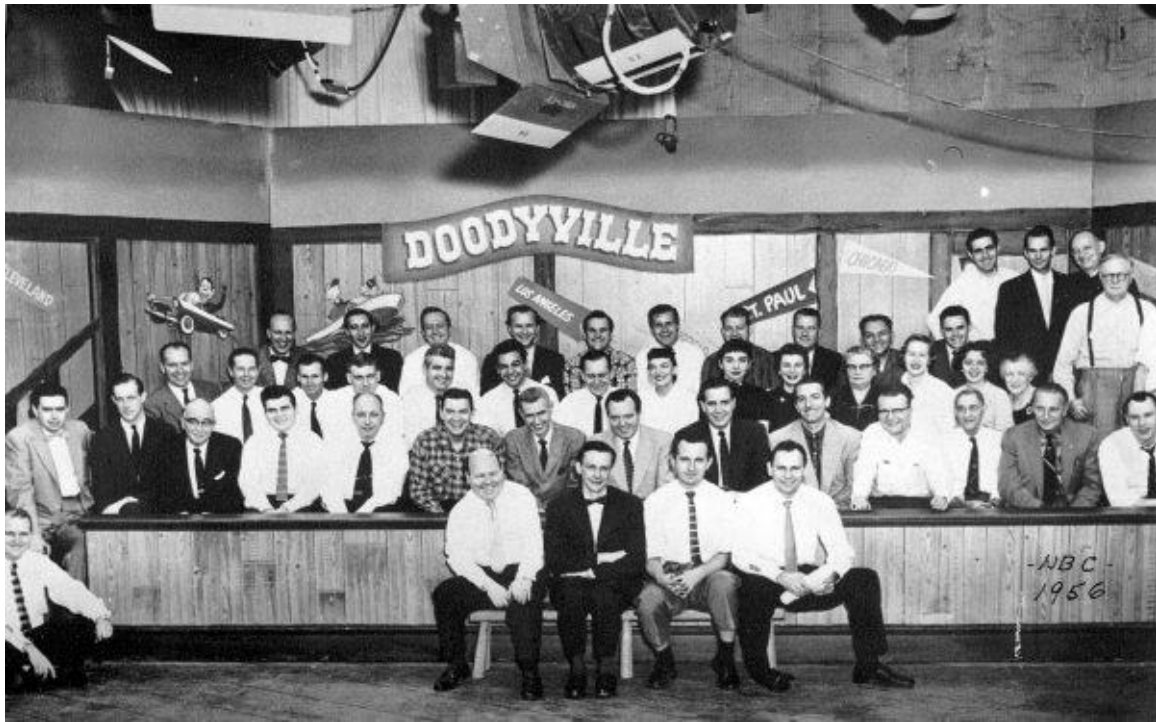
The 3K debut was Monday afternoon, September 12, 1955 and “The Howdy Doody Show” was the first broadcast from here. From this day on, Howdy would be in living color! Only a week before, on Labor Day, Buffalo Bob returned from a one year recovery after his heart attack.



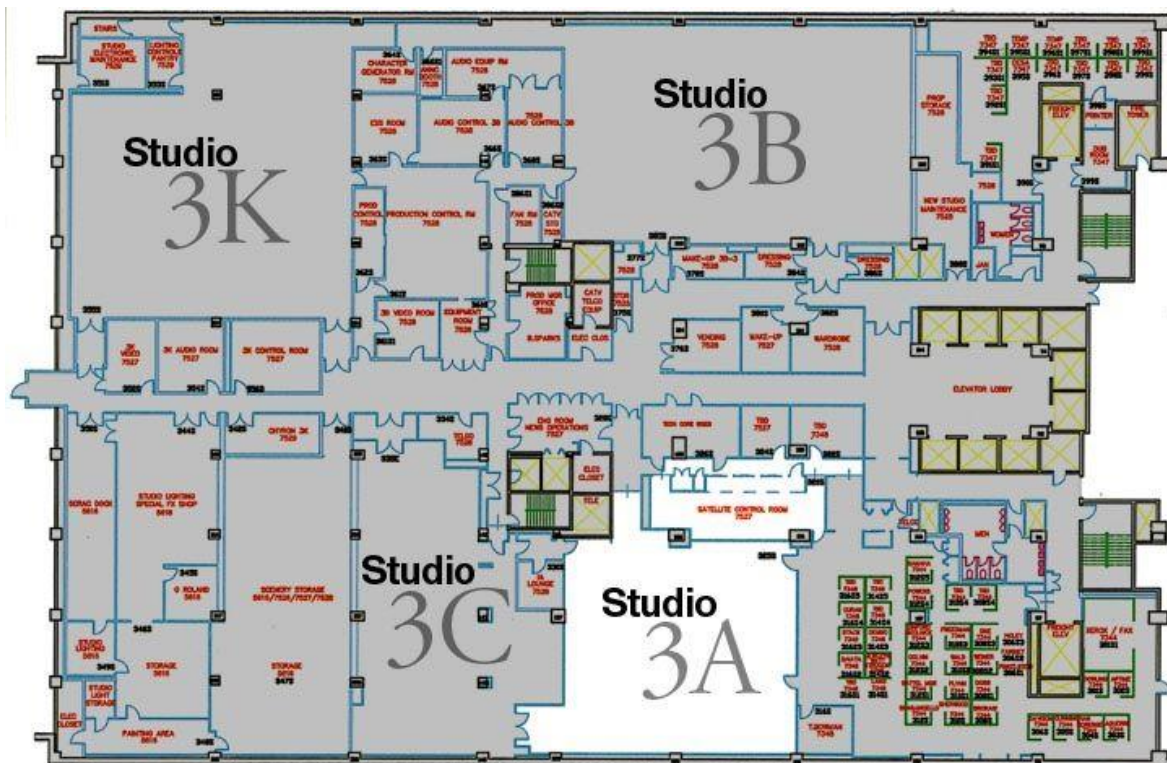
Above are a couple of shots from Howdy in their new 3K home with new RCA TK41 color cameras. Below is a rare photo of the new 3K color control room which was built in the 4th floor client booth space.



Below is a photo of the Doody show's staff and crew in 3K a few days after its dedication. This is from Doody cameraman Frank Merklein who started on Doody a few weeks after the '47 debut in 3H. He's on the front row, to the right of the man in the suit. Buffalo Bob is in the plaid shirt. I think Lew Anderson (Clarabell) is next to Bob on the left.



This is a 1992 diagram of the third floor before work began on the MSNBC modifications in 2007. Originally 3A and B were the same size but as you see A is now smaller. 6th Ave is on the left and 50th Street on top.



There is only one way to end this section on Studio 3K...with a very rare clip from the final episode of "The Howdy Doody Show," including audio from the control room. This is the beginning and end of the final episode, September 24, 1960.

The final show was an hour long and had a special NBC peacock voice track that you will see. It was recorded on color videotape, but for many years, the tape was lost. Finally it was found and restored and this is part of that historic Saturday morning...one that I remember well. I was almost 10 and had a tear in my eye when Clarabell said "Goodbye, kids."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ6ybvlsb4s&ab_channel=JanisT

An Interesting 3K Side Story...The Pat Weaver 3K Camera

Below is a photo of yours truly with what I call The Pat Weaver 3K Camera. It is part of my collection of vintage television cameras and has a very interesting history.

On the morning of September 12, 1955, at the dedication of Studio 3K, NBC President Pat Weaver was surprised by the NBC Engineering staff with the presentation of this camera to him.

This RCA TK30 had been in Studio 3H and it was presented to him as... "the first black and white camera to be replaced by a color camera."

RCA and NBC made the award to Weaver to commemorate not only his programming contributions to NBC that include "Monitor" on NBC radio, the "Today," "Tonight" and "Home" shows on the television network, but also his mighty efforts on behalf of color, both in Washington at the FCC and the addition of the NBC Color Spectaculars.



At the time, it was mounted on a tripod (below) and it sat proudly in his office. When he was made Chairman of the Board of NBC, Sarnoff gave Weaver the second most impressive office in the building by converting the NBC Board Room into a huge executive office for him. Up there, he often felt totally isolated from the day-to-day experience of running the network.

I was told by his son, Trajan Weaver, that the camera in his office helped give him the feeling of still being connected to the jobs he had loved. When Weaver resigned and moved to Los Angeles, the camera was in his den and Trajan and his famous sister Sigourney Weaver pushed it all over the house playing “TV.”

The camera is now at NBC Universal Orlando’s “Tonight Show Museum”, take a look!

<https://eyesofageneration.com/nbc-universal-orlando-new-home-to-my-pat-weaver-rca-tk30/>



Above Left: This is the original tripod and wheel set that the camera was mounted on when it was presented to Pat Weaver. When 3K construction began, this camera had been one of the three TK30s in service in Studio 3H. It may be one of the originals installed there in 1948. One of the first shows this would have been used on is Howdy Doody. Can you imagine the NBC history this camera has seen?

Above Right: That is me kissing the floor in NBC Studio 3K. The big white line on the floor is where the wall was between Studio 3H and 3F. 3H as you know is where electronic television began in America. I couldn't really help myself that day. The only other floor I have ever kissed is center stage at The Ed Sullivan Theater. So much of my childhood, including being 12 when The Beatles debuted in the US in '63, was represented on that stage. The first time I walked into Studio 6B, I teared up...so much history in these sacred places!

Part 17...The Ziegfeld Theater, 1347 6th Ave – September 22, 1956



The Ziegfeld was at the corner of 54th Street and 6th Avenue

The first broadcast from the newly converted Ziegfeld Theater was on Sept 22, 1956 with the debut of “The Perry Como Show” in color. On September 10, RCA chairman David Sarnoff had christened the theater at 1347 Sixth Avenue with a fifty minute closed circuit color broadcast, which was one of the largest in history. The show was seen by sponsors and affiliates in 120 cities as Sarnoff laid out the program highlights of the NBC season to come, which included 500% more color shows and a dozen 90 minute color spectacles.



The Ziegfeld Theatre was named for the famed Broadway impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, who built it with financial backing from William Randolph Hearst. Designed by Joseph Urban and Thomas W. Lamb, it opened on February 2, 1927 with the musical “Rio Rita.” The Ziegfeld’s second show was also its most famous; Jerome Kern’s landmark musical “Show Boat” which opened on December 27, 1927.

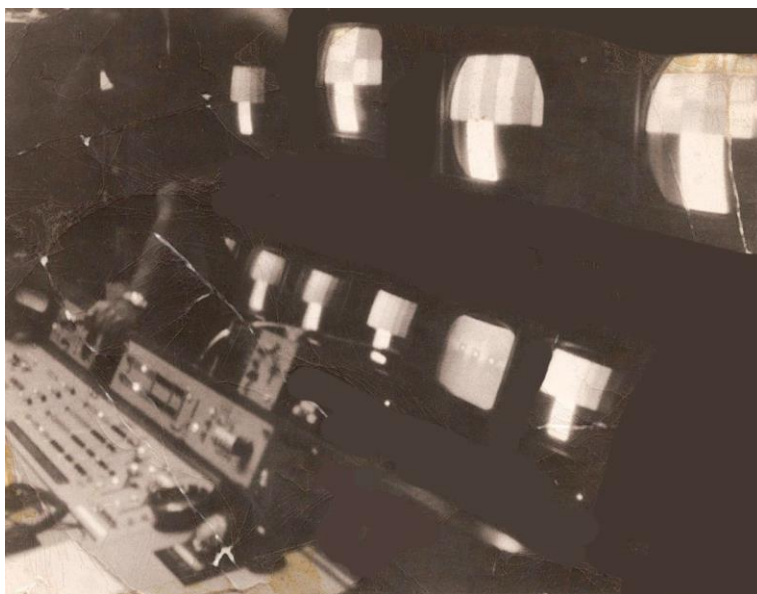
You would have thought that the famous “Ziegfeld Follies” would have called this theater home, but that series of elaborate theatrical productions on Broadway precedes the theater and ran from 1907 through 1931. However, after Ziegfeld’s death, his widow Billie Burke authorized use of his name for “Ziegfeld Follies” in 1934 and 1936 to Jake Shubert, who then produced the shows at The Ziegfeld Theater.

Due to the decline in new Broadway shows during the Great Depression, the theater became the Loew’s Ziegfeld in 1936 and operated as a movie theater until showman Billy Rose bought it in 1944.

NBC leased the Ziegfeld for use as a television studio from 1956 till 1963. The Perry Como Show was broadcast from the theater from '56 till '61 when it became "The Perry Como Kraft Music Hall", at which time the show moved to Brooklyn I. When it closed, the color equipment went to Studio 8H.



Above is the Como show in rehearsal...left to right is Lighting Director Bill Klages, next is renowned NBC veteran Technical Director Heino Ripp, legendary Director Dwight Hemion and Associate Director Enid Roth. Below is a rare photo of the Ziegfeld color control room taken by Gady Reinhold. The control room was built in the lower level of the building and the stage could only be seen via a closed circuit camera (the only screen here without color bars).



Other shows that originated from The Ziegfeld were “Tic Tac Dough” 58-59, “The Price Is Right” daytime 1960, “Masquerade Party” '57, “Kraft Music Hall With Dave King” summer replacement '59, “Hold That Note” '57, “Haggis Baggis” primetime '58, “Concentration” primetime '61, “Break The \$250,000 Bank” '57, “Bob Crosby Show” '58, “Jonathan Winters Show” '56 and “Arthur Murray's Dance Party” 1957. The Emmy Awards program also came from here in 1959 and 1961.

In 1963 the Ziegfeld reopened as a legitimate Broadway theater, but this was short-lived, as Billy Rose began to assemble abutting properties for a new real estate project. The musical “Anya” (opened November 29, 1965 for 16 performances) was the last musical to play at the theater, which was torn down in 1966 to make way for a skyscraper, the Fisher Brothers - Burlington House building.

By the way, Perry's last black and white show on NBC was from Studio 6A on June 23, 1956 when his guest, Gene Vincent, sang his new hit “Be Bop A Lula”. The guests on his first color show from the Ziegfeld were Sal Mineo, Irene Dunne, Buddy Hackett and Robert Sarnoff. In the audience, Prince Rainier and his wife, Grace Kelly, who were visiting from Monaco.

We'll leave the Ziegfeld behind with this great video clip of Perry Como welcoming Bob Hope just two months after his debut here. The clip starts with Hope waiting in the wings in front of a new RCA TK41 color camera. **When NBC left in '63, these cameras went to Studio 8H to make that a color studio.**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwA8MmXq9-E&ab_channel=furn738

The current Ziegfeld Theater on 54th Street is not the original...that is gone, but it's only half a block west from where the original was. Here is a look inside the original.



Part 18...Brooklyn II, 1268 East 14th Street – November 29, 1956

With the opening of NBC's Brooklyn II on November 29, 1956, we come to the closing chapter of this incredible period of growth for not only NBC, but for television as well. As you will notice in the October '56 article from *Broadcasting Magazine*, The Ziegfeld, Brooklyn II and Burbank's Color City 4 all came on line in the fall of this year.

NBC ACCELERATES ITS COLOR EXPANSION

Network's yearlong \$12 million project to hit high mark this fall with opening of new facilities in New York, Brooklyn and Burbank.

THE BULK of NBC's \$12 million expansion of its color facilities within the past year—three new color studios and other new color facilities—will be placed into service this fall.

NBC is reporting today (Mon.) that the Ziegfeld Theatre, "Brooklyn Two" and "Color City Four" at Burbank, Calif., are included as well as the installation at Color City of a recording system using lenticular film (new development of NBC, RCA and Eastman Kodak Co.).

The latter system, according to NBC, will be operating at the start of the fall season and will permit the network to present color programs on the West Coast on the same time-delay basis now standard for black-and-white.

The plans for these studios and other expansion which will double NBC's color production had been disclosed last fall by Brig. Gen. David Sarnoff, board chairman of RCA and then also of NBC [B*T, Nov. 7, 1955].

The Ziegfeld Theatre in the Broadway section of New York that has been converted into studios by NBC has its facilities concealed, thus retaining the theatre's traditional appearance. The network said the Ziegfeld will make "an ideal showplace for televising big entertainment events that call for a 'first-night' atmosphere."

As described by NBC, the theatre when completed will have a studio control in the basement of the theatre for production people to view stage action through two vidicon cameras. For rehearsal convenience a "Director's Delite"—a small portable control console set up temporarily on the stage floor—will be used.

A removable fore-stage floor, fore-stage lighting and an aerial camera attachable to the balcony's front will be available for larger tv productions. A large-screen monochrome monitor as well as regular color monitors will be used for audience viewing. A lighting system handling 900,000 watts of current and containing 450 lighting outlets will be employed.

The new major color studio in Brooklyn is adjacent to the color studio currently used. Brooklyn Two is said by the network to be the largest studio "ever built from the ground up specifically for color." It will have 13,500 sq. ft. of floor space, exceeding in size only that of the adjacent studio that originally was a film studio before conversion to color tv. The lighting system is described as the "most powerful" in the industry, having a capacity of 1.2 million watts and 850 outlets. Enough current will be used by the studio alone to light a city of 4,000 homes.

Burbank Facilities

On the west coast, the new Burbank Color City Four will be the second such studio and will have 12,600 square feet of floor space. This is approximately the same size as Color City Two (NBC's first color studio in Burbank).

NBC described its lenticular system as working in this way: "electronic information is reg-

Until recently, I had not known that Brooklyn II was built from the ground up at the old Vitagraph/Warner Brothers property. This would be NBC's second new construction of an all color studio following Color City 2's completion in Burbank the year before.

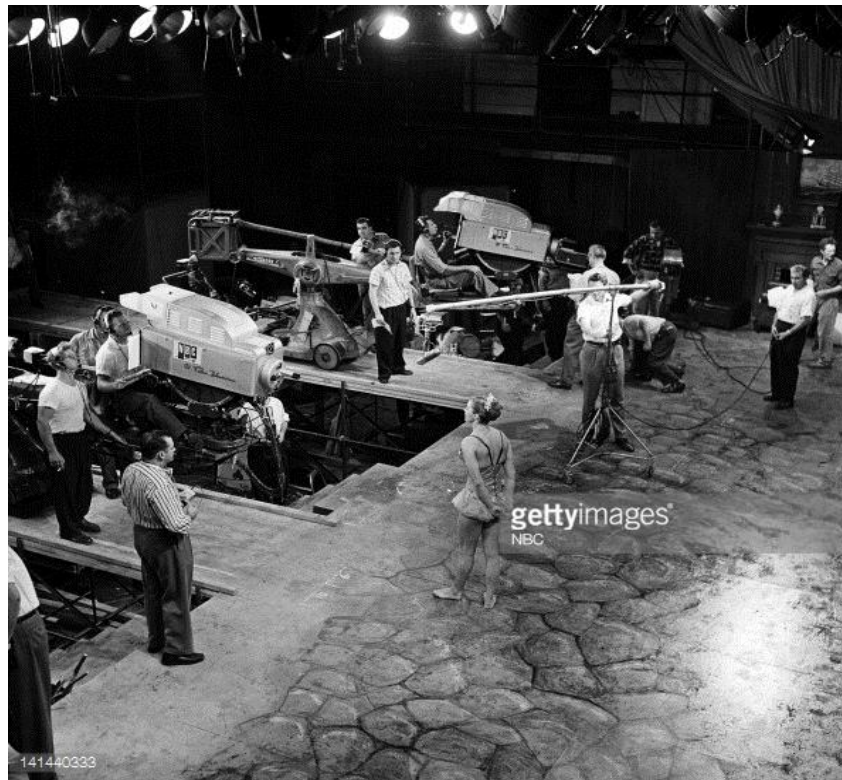
The first production from Brooklyn II was "The Esther Williams Aqua Spectacular" on November 29th, and as we all know by now, the studio floor in Brooklyn I (which went into service November 1954) was taken up and a swimming pool built for the Williams event.

As you can see in the photos, both studios were needed to pull off the "wet" and "dry" parts of the 90 minute show. There is a twin camera boom on the other side for balance of the island structure. Guests on the show included Don Adams, Peter Lawford, June Allison, Arnold Stang and Red Barber. Speaking of Red...the cameraman here is Red Trundle.

The wet part...this was all done in Studio I.



Below, we see the dry part being done in the new Studio II.



To make things more interesting, with the broadcast of this show, NBC introduced the use of a lenticular film color kinescope process. The color kine machines were in Burbank where this color spectacular aired live, but it was also recorded in color for a west coast “encore” three hours later. The playback was not spectacular.

NBC had introduced the lenticular color film process to the press in September of 56 in Burbank with “not so great” reviews. In a nutshell, this color process was like the black and white “hot kine” process, but unlike the long process of developing color negative film, NBC's film could be processed rapidly using standard black-and-white methods.

The lenticular color kine system was much like the diachronic optical prism filters in the RCA TK41 color camera which separated out the colors (R,B,G) feeding into the three IO tubes. The special film from Kodak was loaded into three kine recorders shooting a negative polarity monitor with a color filter in front of each kine which basically gave you a color separation negative. After processing, the three film strips (that now had a positive print quality in red, blue and green) was fed into a special synchronized Vidicon film chain for broadcast.

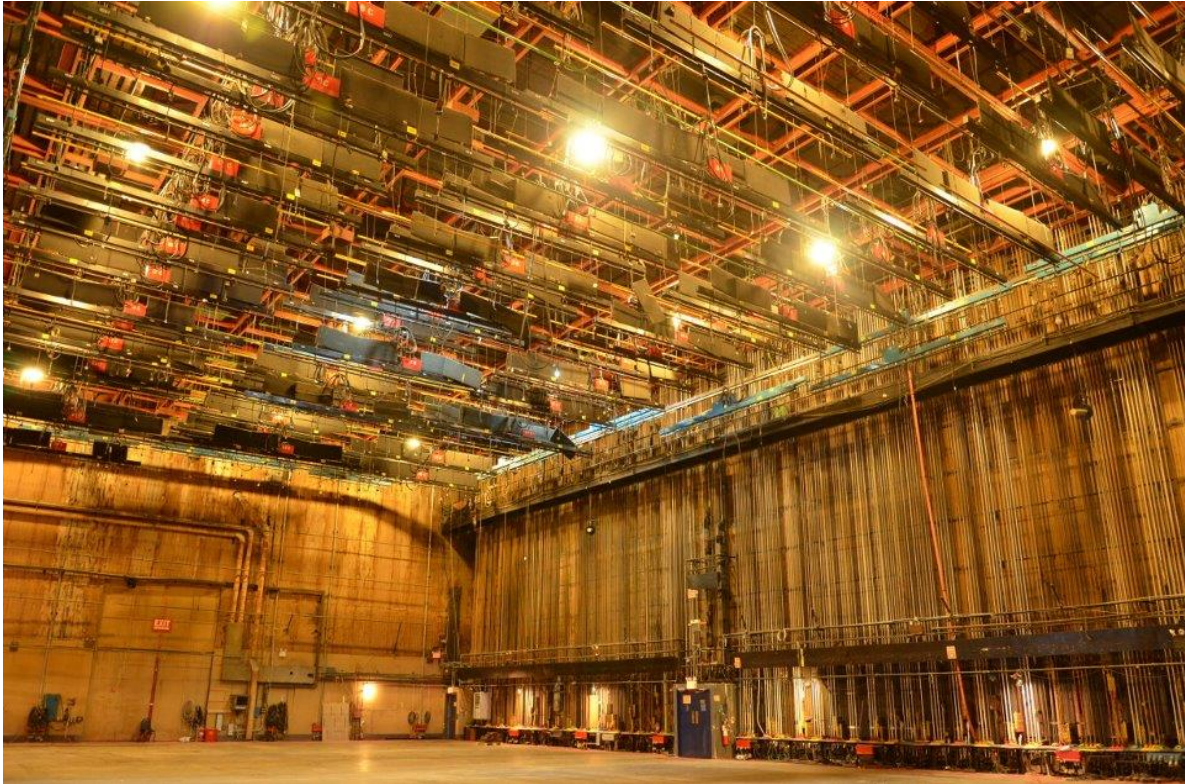
The Los Angeles Times said “it did not show off color at its best. The blues were purplish and the images were blurry. Overlapping and bleeding of colors was quite evident and generally inferior to the black and white kinescope process.”

Interestingly, the same week that Brooklyn II debuted, Ampex shipped its first VRX 1000 video tape recorders which were of course monochrome. NBC Burbank got three, New York got one, RCA got one and CBS Television City got five. On November 30, 1956, CBS used one of their machines for the first ever tape delay which was of Douglas Edwards presenting the news.

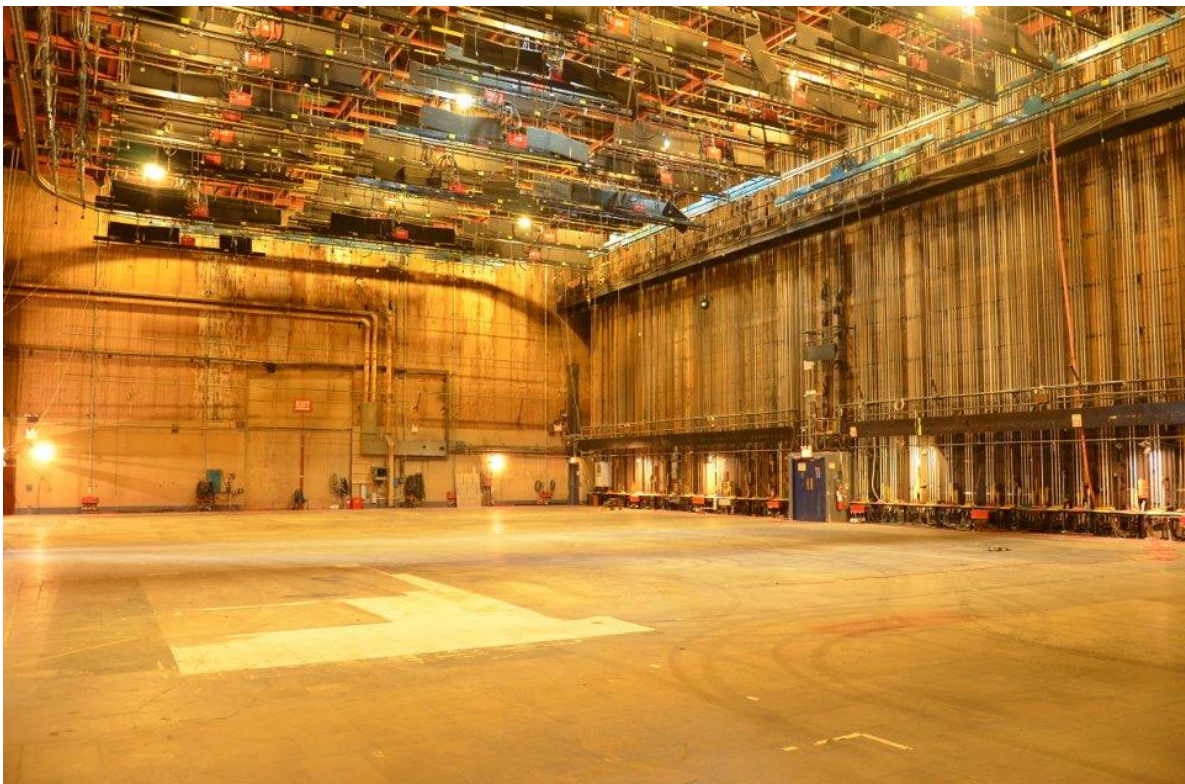
While we are on the west coast, this is a good place to mention their activities. Shows began to flow to the east, from Radio City West, as early as 1951 when AT&T finally linked the coasts. This grew slowly but steadily and on October 4, 1952, Studios 1 and 3 opened for black and white shows at NBC Burbank as the network was quickly outgrowing their Sunset and Vine Street location. By March of 1955, Burbank's Studio 2, the first color studio built from the ground up, was in operation and color Studio 4 came on line around the same time that Brooklyn II debuted. So, the west coast operations were starting to take some of the load off of New York.

Although we started with the 1935 stealth conversion of Studio 3H, the bulk of NBC New York's studio growth came in the eight years between 1948, when 8G was converted, till Brooklyn II was completed in late 1956.

In 1965, NBC led the charge with a full color prime time lineup and in the nine years after the completion of Brooklyn II, New York would not add any new studio spaces, but...would include a second round of studio conversions. This time it would be from black and white to color.



This is Studio II looking toward Studio I. 14th Street is on the right and Avenue M is behind us.





This is the Studio II doors that open to the cargo dock. Studio I is to the right and 14th Street behind us. Below Studio II from the corner of Avenue M (left to right) and East 14th Street.



The Honorable Mention Section

Part 19...The NBC Mobile Units...Television's First, 1937



This is the first and only color photo of these units I've ever seen. It was taken in front of the RCA Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York which heralded the official start of TV in the US. **Here's a surprise...the dish is a parabolic microphone, not a microwave dish!**

On December 12, 1937, an RCA mobile system, consisting of two 26 foot busses was delivered to NBC in New York City. One motor van provided two portable single-lens iconoscope cameras and their support equipment. The second van contained the 177 MHz transmitter with antenna which could relay a remote pickup to the Empire State Building from as far away as 25 miles.

The units were used for about six months before being returned to RCA Labs in Princeton for modifications in the synchronizing equipment. Another modification was the installation of a coaxial feed out the transmitter truck.

The trucks came back around August and on September 15, 1938, NBC conducted the first sidewalk interview with passers-by in Rockefeller Plaza. By the time the 1939 World's Fair came to town, NBC had a lot of experience with the units and used them heavily at the Fair.



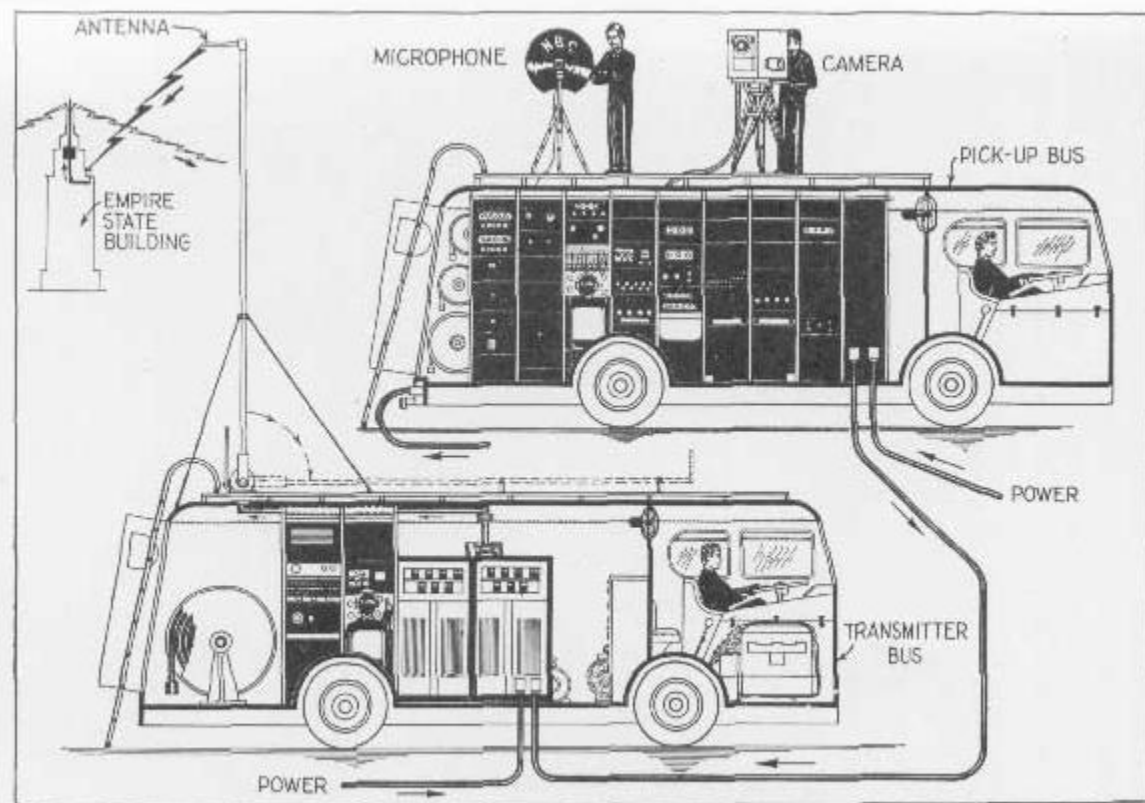


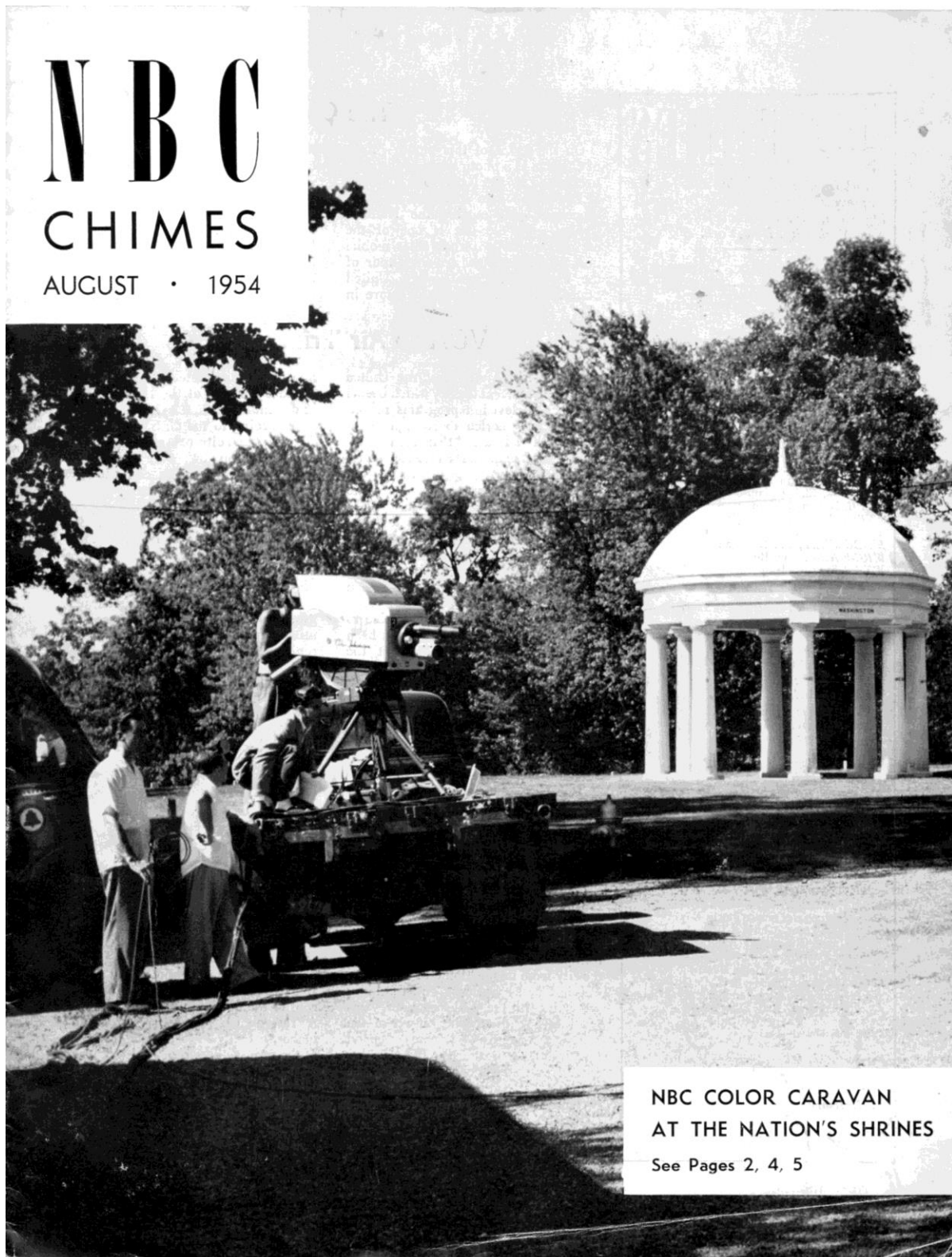
FIG. 44.—The television mobile unit. The upper unit is equivalent to a studio control room; the lower unit contains the radio transmitter used to relay the television signal to the Empire State Building for rebroadcast on the main transmitter.



On January 1, 1954, The Tournament of Roses, from Pasadena, California, was telecast in color by twenty-one stations of NBC's first coast-to-coast color network. This colorcast marked a series of significant “firsts” in television history including: the first use of NBC's new mobile color TV units; the first West-to-East transcontinental transmission of color television; the first West Coast origination of a color program under compatible color standards; and the first broadcast of a network color program by a coast-to-coast series of stations.



In June of 1954, the NBC Color units set out on a ten week trip across the East and Midwest, feeding their reports to “Today” and the “Home” show. Here’s the NBC article on the trip.



NBC Color Caravan

Two-Truck Color Television Mobile Unit Completes Tour of East and Midwest

Last week a history-making television project came to a conclusion as the National Broadcasting Company's Color Caravan wound up its eminently successful ten-week journey through the eastern and midwestern United States. In order to bring a panoramic view of America to the television audience for the first time in color, the NBC two-truck Color Mobile Unit visited a number of major U. S. cities, televising representative outdoor scenes at each stop.

The features picked up by the Color Caravan were presented on NBC's "Today" and "Home" shows. In every city where those programs are seen, local NBC stations and RCA dealers, as well as leading department stores, were equipped with RCA color television receivers, on the screens of which the public was able to view the live pickups from the field in natural color. The colorcasts, of course, were seen in high quality black-and-white on the nation's existing monochrome sets.

The Color Caravan started off on June 9 and 10 with a visit to St. Louis and the fabulous Busch estate, which

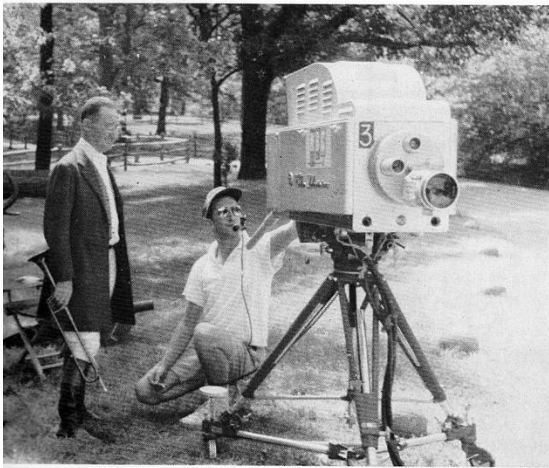
was once General Grant's farm. Seen in their natural color were the estate's storybook mansion, a lake, a deer park, and its large and unusual Old World-like stables. Next stop was Milwaukee, on June 16 and 17. The color feature there was the city's beautiful Whitnall Park, with its lagoon, herb garden, rose arbor and lily pond. As luck would have it, just before the colorcast, a driving rain smashed down the flowers. All was not lost, however, for crew members were able to shake the water out and straighten up the blooms just before air time.

In the Chicago area on June 23, the Color Caravan visited a family whose farm is one of the best and most progressive in northern Illinois. Along with the color and activity of farm life, NBC's cameras explored all of the phases which go together to make this farm a superb one. The following day the Color Caravan went to the mansion of Ohio Governor Frank Lausche at Columbus, for telecasts which were presented on "Home." The Cleveland stopover, on July 8 and 9, included among other features, a subject ideally suited for color television—

folk dances by Clevelanders of Slavic descent, dressed in their brilliantly colorful native costumes.

Then the 18-man crew packed up their mobile unit and came east. On July 15 and 16 the Caravan visited the Washington area to present scenes of two of the country's most venerated and most beautiful shrines—George Washington's home at Mount Vernon, and the Lee Mansion, located in what is now Arlington National Cemetery. On July 22, viewers saw the evolution of the railroad passenger car, when the color cameras focussed on the Baltimore & Ohio's famous collection of historical railroad cars at the roundhouse in Baltimore. On July 28 and 29 the Color Caravan was in Philadelphia, first to observe rookie firemen in a training demonstration extinguishing an actual fire, and on the second day to make a tour of the Philadelphia Art Museum.

In a spectacular topper to the whole precedent-setting ten-week journey, on August 11 the Color Caravan stopped off at Fort George G. Meade in Maryland. There, the color cameras, in the



First stop for the NBC Color Caravan was St. Louis and the fabulous Busch estate there. In left photo cameraman Dean Reed explains the workings of a color camera to one of the estate functionaries who appeared on the show. In photo on right, in a pre-telecast conference, are (L to R): August A. Busch, owner of the estate; Eve Hunter, of "Home"; Barry Wood, NBC executive producer in charge of color TV; Dick Schneider and Hal Azine, director and writer for the Color Caravan, respectively.



One of the highlights of the visit the Color Caravan paid to Cleveland was the televising, in all the natural color, of a group of Clevelanders of Slavic descent performing native dances in full costume.

last telecast of the tour, presented a color television report on the use of television in modern warfare. Participating in the demonstration were General Matthew B. Ridgway, Chief of Staff, U. S. Army; Lieut. General Floyd L. Parks, Commander, Second Army; Maj. General George I. Back, Chief Signal Officer, U. S. Army; and Brig. General David Sarnoff, Chairman of the Board of RCA and NBC. Generals Ridgway, Back and Sarnoff commented briefly on the great potentialities of the military use of television during the telecast, part of which was seen on "Home," and all of which was presented over a closed circuit to the Pentagon and the White House in Washington, and elsewhere. Viewers saw a simulated combat operation, including an assault landing, aerial attack, and how the use of the portable RCA Vidicon cameras, carried right up to the forefront of action, gives the commander a firsthand view of operations as they are happening. Thus the television audience got an advance look on what the military command post of the future will resemble.

All the operations of the Color Caravan were under the supervision of Barry Wood, NBC executive producer in charge of color television. Among the key members of the Caravan were Dick Schneider, director; Burr Smidt, color consultant; Al Cooperman, unit

New Management Training Squad

Last month, five young college graduates joined the NBC Management Training Program of the National Broadcasting Company. The five successful candidates were chosen from among hundreds of applicants who were screened by the Personnel Department during the first half of the year. These new trainees now will have the opportunity to spend 6 months learning the inside story of what it takes to operate a broadcasting company and then will be assigned to a regular job in the organization.

The five selected candidates include one NBC employee, Donald D. Brown, a graduate of Columbia, who has been working in Guest Relations. The other four are James H. Rosenfield, a graduate of Dartmouth; Benjamin Rachlis, a graduate of C.C.N.Y.; Donald Heller, a graduate of Syracuse and Maxwell Graduate School, and Howard S. Neff, Jr., a graduate of Babson Institute.

During the coming months, the candidates will be trained to handle general and specific administrative responsibilities and introduced to all aspects of NBC's operations. The program is designed so that at the end of the training period, the trainees will be sufficiently developed to step into be-

Gunman... For a Day

Anything can happen in "Hawkins Falls," NBC-TV's daily drama sent to the nation from WNBQ-Chicago Mondays through Fridays at 4:00 p.m. EDT.

As example: A scant hour before one July program, one of the featured actors failed to appear. Beating his head as he tried to think of a replacement for the part of the frightened gangster, the key to the plot of the day and absolutely indispensable, the director took a second look at Ernie Santell, "Hawkins Falls" production coordinator.

"Santell, you're it!" the director, Frank Pacelli, shouted, shoving a script into the startled Ernie's hands.

With the help of veteran actors Bernadine Flynn and Bert Bertram, who also were in the scene, and some off-camera prompting, Santell came through with flying colors.

He confessed later that none of his experiences during three-and-a-half wartime years in the Pacific terrified him as much as appearing on the coast-to-coast telecast. During the scene, when actress Flynn fed him the line, "You're the one who's frightened," Ernie confesses that he almost ad-libbed, "You are SO right!"



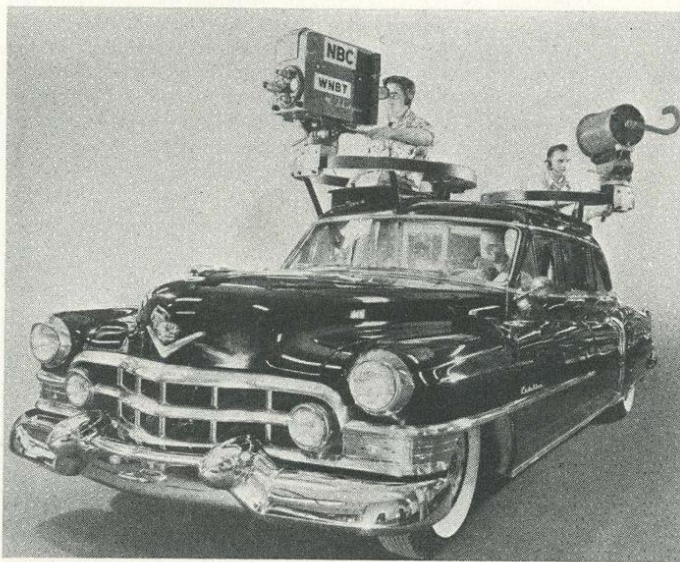
Ernie Santell (center), production coordinator on WNBQ's "Hawkins Falls," get applause from veterans Bernadine Flynn and Bert Bertram, following his last-minute replacement on the TV show for a missing actor. Ernie played a frightened gangster.



One of the highlights of the visit the Color Caravan paid to Cleveland was the televising, in all the natural color, of a group of Clevelanders of Slavic descent performing native dances in full costume.

Just for fun, here is NBC's \$70,000 1953 Cadillac Parade Car.

Sedan Designed for Televising Parades



Sedan engineered specially for televising inauguration parade accommodates four technicians and driver. Camera man works through a turret opening that is cut through top at front right corner while transmitters send beamed wave to receiver worked by man in turret opening at left rear of car. Picture is then relayed to fixed receiver and by coaxial cable to network

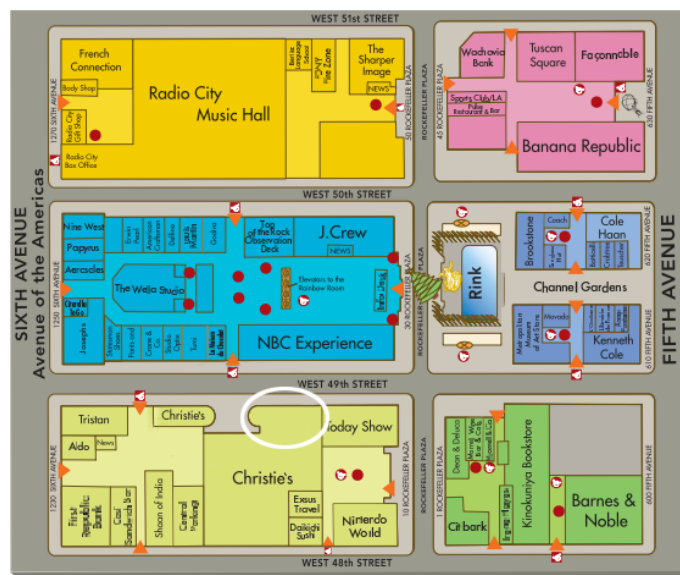
Of Current Interest

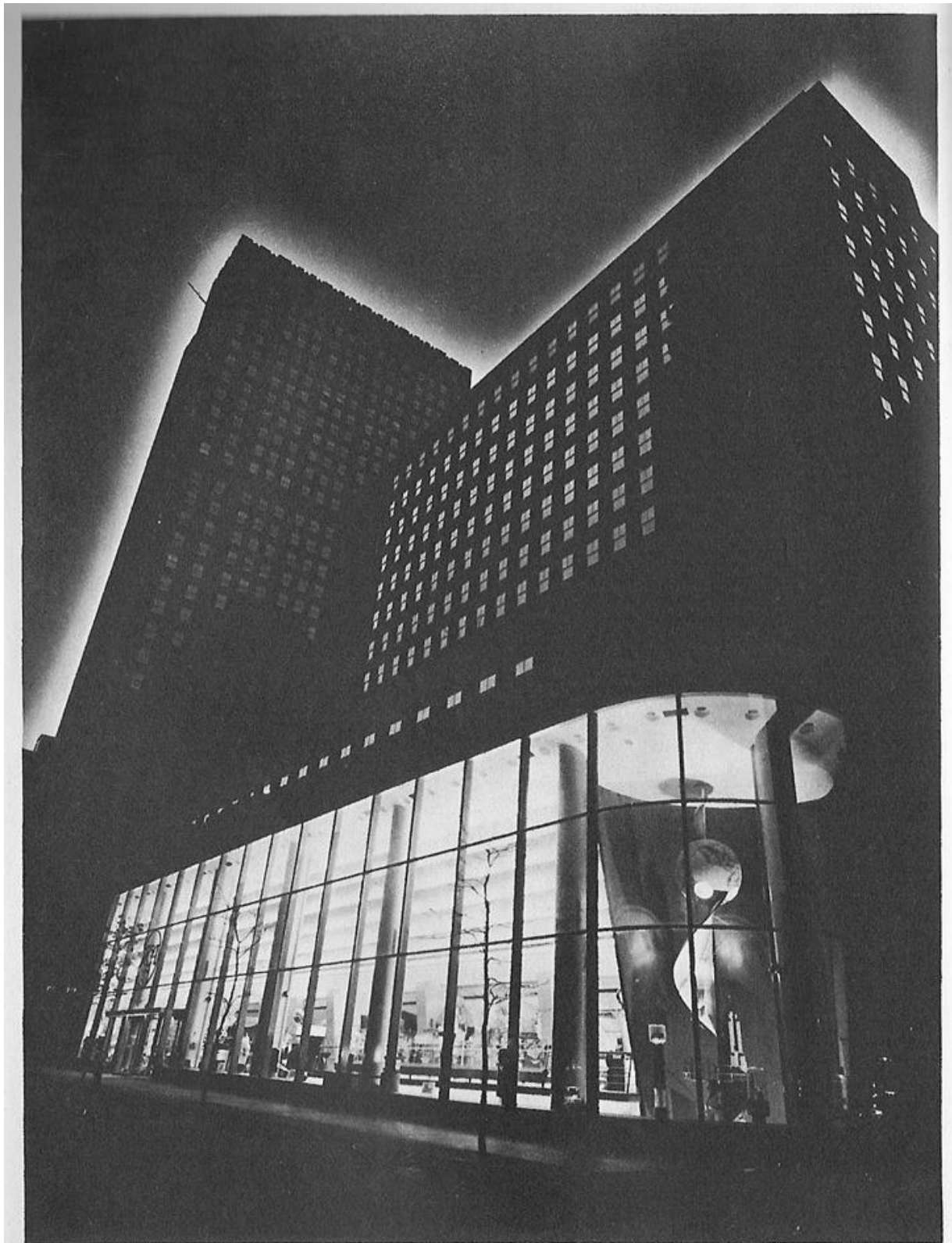
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

Part 20...The “Today” Show Street Side Studio Locations



Circled here in white is the studio that “Today” debuted from January 14, 1952. Just to the right the words “Today Show” indicate the current location of the studio. Since 1947, this space had been the home of the RCA Exhibition Hall where all their products were on display for visitors to New York. This is directly across 49th Street from 30 Rockefeller Plaza, home of NBC and RCA. During the experimental color years, there were closed circuit color telecasts to 4 or 5 hand built color television sets located here.





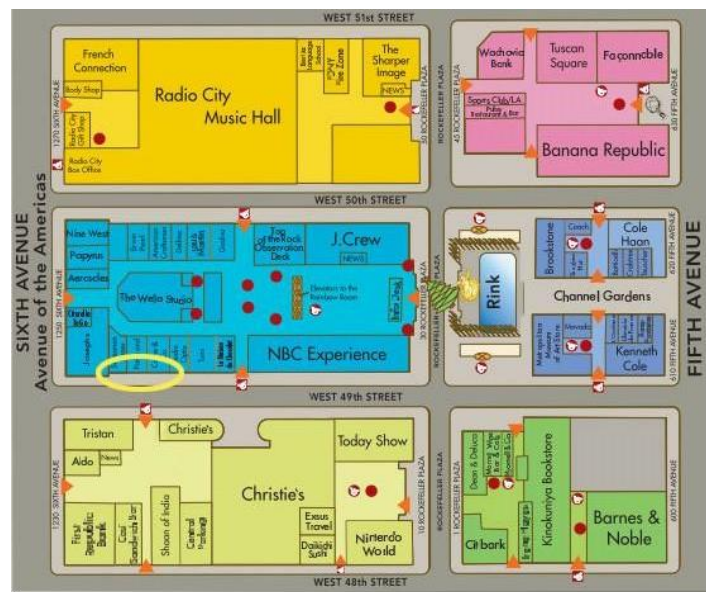
The Eastern Air Lines Building at dusk proves to be a “modernistic” subject of impelling power. The ground floor is given over to an exhibition by the Radio Corporation of America.

In the summer of 1958, television manufacturer Philco complained that staging “Today” in a studio explicitly called the RCA Exhibition Hall was unfair. The network bowed to the pressure, and on July 7, 1958, the show moved across the street to Studio 3K in the RCA Building, where it remained through the early 1960s.

On July 9, 1962, the program returned to a street-side studio in the space then occupied by the Florida Showcase. Each day, the production crew would have to move the Florida related tourism merchandise off the floor and wheel in the “Today” news set, desks, chairs and cameras. When the show wrapped at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time, the news set would be put away and the tourism merchandise returned to the floor.



Above left is the original Florida Showcase and on the right is the space today. Now you know where it was.





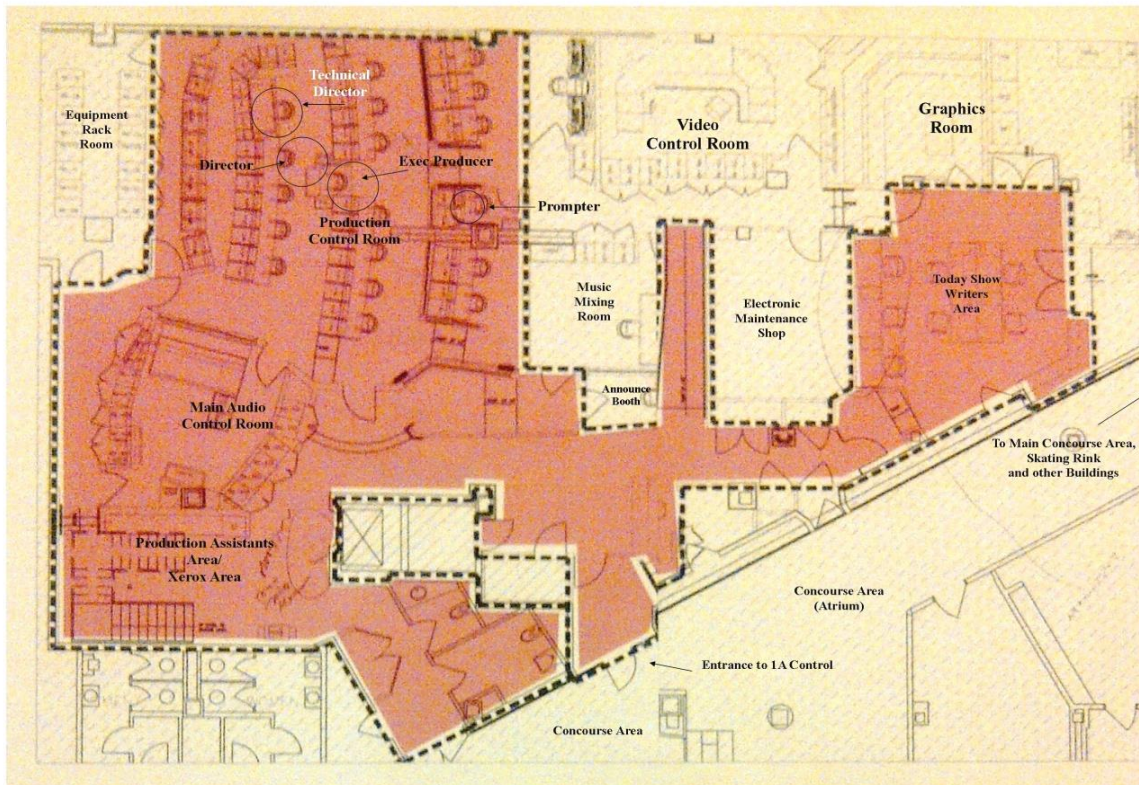
After three years in the Florida Showcase (where the photos on the left were taken), “Today” moved back to the RCA Building on September 13, 1965.

The network's news programming went to all-color broadcasts at that time, and NBC could not justify allocating four color cameras to the Florida Showcase studio.

For the next 20 years, the show occupied a series of studios on the third, sixth, and eighth floors of NBC's headquarters; most notably Studio 3K in the 1970s, Studio 8G in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and finally Studio 3B from 1983 to 1994.

“Today” moved to the current street-side studio on June 20, 1994. This is called Studio 1A with the control room on the basement level.

This is the layout of the control areas under Studio 1A.



Not far from where it started, here is Studio 1A on 49th Street, just across from the plaza.



“Today” Technical Firsts....

Obviously, the first network morning show will have some firsts, but the firsts I am talking about are not format related. I may be wrong, but as you watch this debut broadcast footage, it seems to me that “Today” was the first network news show to use the lower screen news crawl. The time bug may have been added later by NBC News archives.

<https://eyesofageneration.com/today-show-debut/>

In this photo, we see two more of what I think are firsts...the brand new Houston Fearless TD 3 counter weighted pedestal, and a camera mounted teleprompter.



There may actually be three firsts in this top photo, but we see it better here in the bottom picture. On the front is a brand new RCA Electra Zoom lens. In 1951, the design was bought from Hollywood cameraman Joseph Walker and with help from Zeiss, RCA began to make the first electronic zoom lens.



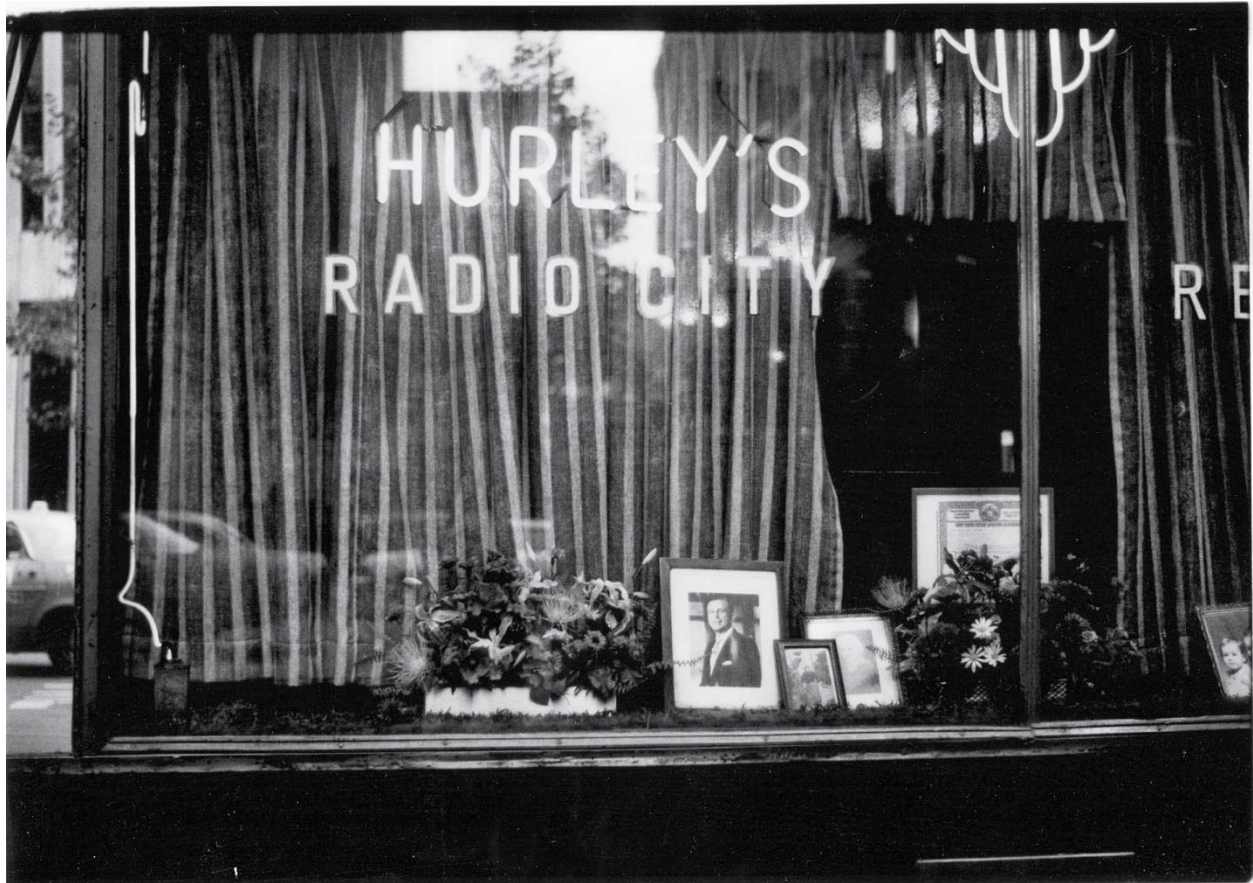
Notice the teleprompters are so new, they are strapped to the camera. The devices were made by the TelePrompter Corporation. This is a very early script scroll, made before the special one-inch high bold font was made available along with its proprietary typewriters. That development eliminated the need for the magnifying glass shown here.

To be fair, Zoomar was the first zoom lens and as you can see here, the exceptionally long, 23 element Zoomar field lens was used by NBC in Chicago on "Kukla, Fran And Ollie" in 1949.



Part 21...Studio 1H...Hurley's Saloon

The night Jack Paar walked OUT of the “Tonight” show; this is where he walked IN!



Notice Jack's photo in the window. Hurley's was where Jack Paar went the night of February 11, 1960...the night he walked off “Tonight” when a network censor edited out one of his jokes from the previous night's taped broadcast. Paar wasn't really hiding, but didn't want to be inside NBC or talk to the people calling him on the special NBC phone on the bar.

I think this picture was taken between February 11 and March 7, 1960 while Paar was on hiatus from the show. Hurley's kept his picture in the window the whole time Jack was away and had a huge pool on just when he would return.

This amazing photo is one of the few of the original Hurley's Saloon that we know of. On October 15, 1975, Hurley's closing, after 70 plus years was covered on NBC's “Tomorrow With Tom Snyder.” Below is the NBC description of that episode.

“This show marks the end of Hurley's, a local bar on 49th Street in NYC frequented by NBC personalities and employees, which is closing after 70 years. This also begins the third year for the “Tomorrow” show, with the whole broadcast originating from Hurley's where Tom talks with Steve Allen about the changes that have taken place in New York.

Then Dave Garroway, Jack Lescoulie and Frank Blair talk about the old days. They started with “Today” on January 14, 1952. Blair explains that he got up so early for the show by the time he got to Hurley’s it was his lunch time. Therefore he had a drink and furthered his reputation in that area. Comedians Bob & Ray and announcer/news man Ben Grauer talk with Tom about the days of radio and their transition to television. Kenny Delmar, Don Pardo, Bill Wendell and Lanny Ross tell stories of their careers. Hurley’s was known as “Studio 1H” or Hurley’s beach. There was an NBC phone on the bar where employees could be reached.”

As you can see in the photo below, Hurley’s (which opened in 1892) was just a half a block away from NBC’s 49th Street studio entrance, making it the nearest watering hole for everyone from stars to stage hands. It became the favorite for radio, television, newspaper and sports celebrities as well as tourists and midtown workers.



The old-fashioned saloon atmosphere, as well as the convenient location in Rockefeller Center, made Hurley’s a favorite. Liz Trotta noted, “You never knew who would be standing next to your lifting elbow at Hurley’s. Jason Robards, Jonathan Winters, jazz musicians from the local clubs, starlets, football players, the whole lot.” Johnny Carson made the Hurley name nationally familiar while he did his show live from Studio 6B in Rockefeller Center. It was the bar in all of his Ed McMahon drinking jokes. David Letterman did several on-air visits to the bar.

Hurley’s was known as a place where status was left at the door. Mayor John Lindsay stopped in once, only to be hissed by the patrons. When Henry Kissinger and two bodyguards got noisy, they were ejected by the bartender “for rowdy behavior.”

But this is only half of a great "David & Goliath" story. The bar had been here since 1892 and had always done well, even during prohibition when a florist shop was used to disguise the bar and its new back door.

In 1930, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. had begun aggressively buying up a staggering twenty-two acres of midtown property, right in the middle of Fifth Avenue's most exclusive district, for a seemingly implausible project: Rockefeller Center. One by one he purchased buildings from Fifth to Sixth Avenue between 48th and 51st Streets. In the stranglehold of the Great Depression, none but the city's wealthiest property owners could resist the offer to convert real estate to cash.

None except John F. Maxwell, grandson of John F. Boronowsky who owned the three story building at the opposite end of the block from Hurley's and, of course, the feisty Irishmen themselves. In June 1931 Maxwell sent word to Rockefeller that he would not sell "at any price." Construction had already begun on the gargantuan Art Deco complex of nineteen buildings on May 17, 1930. The block of 49th to 50th Streets, Sixth Avenue to 5th Avenue was eventually demolished, leaving only the two brick Victorian buildings standing on opposite corners of a devastated landscape.



Hurley's is circled in red. The turquoise arrow is 49th Street and the yellow line is 6th Avenue.

The 70 story RCA Building rose around Hurley's, diminishing the bar building only in height. But nothing in New York City is permanent and in 1979 the Hurley Brothers and Daly sold.

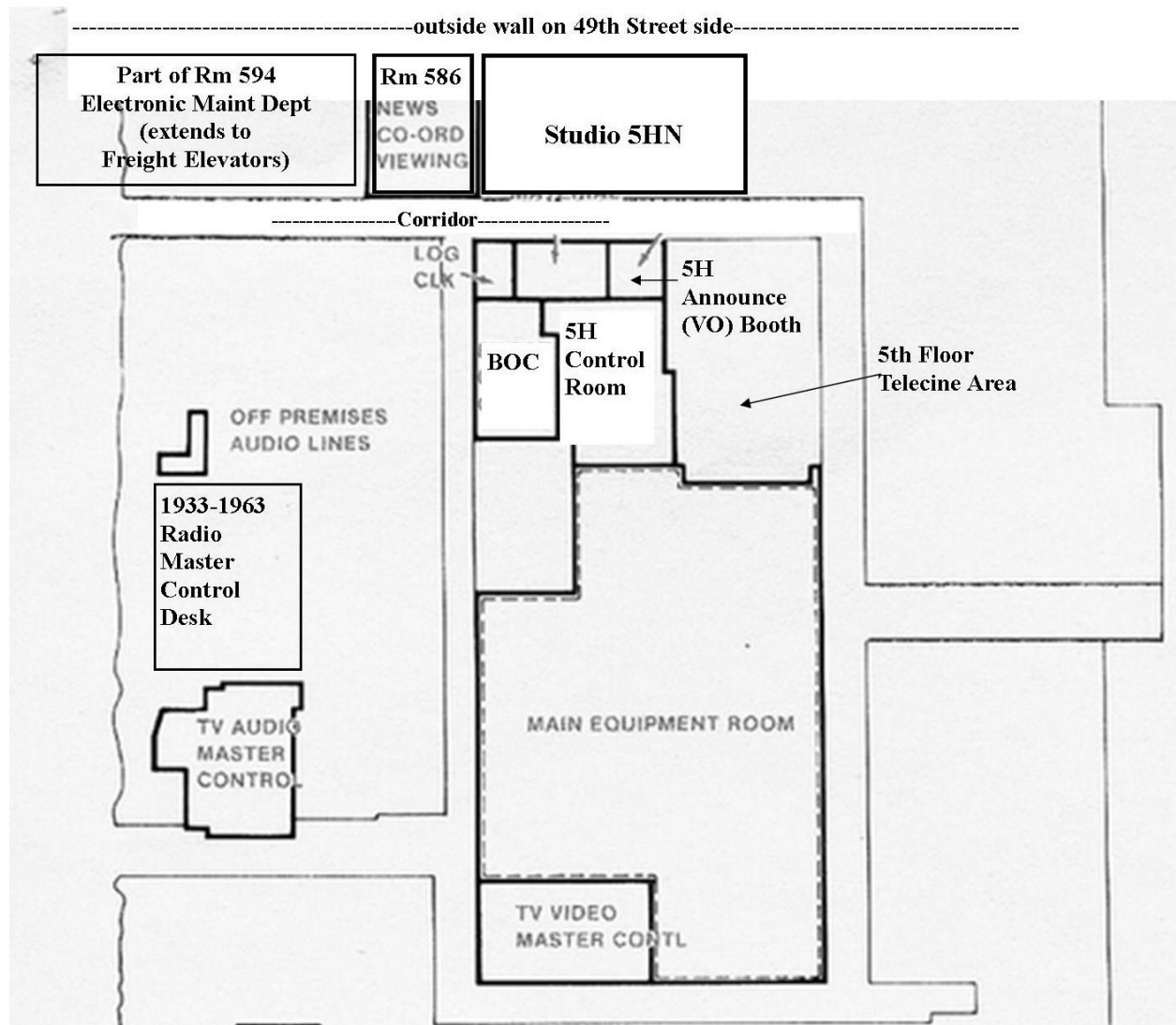
Journalist William Safire spoke for New Yorkers in an article mourning the loss. The mahogany bar was removed to a Third Avenue restaurant and, as Nancy Arum wrote in her letter to *New York Magazine*, that year “a pretend old-fashioned bar now stands where the real old-fashioned bar once was.”

The pretend old-fashioned bar took the Hurley’s name and, most likely, tourists never noticed the change. But proximity, tradition, or habit still brought the Rockefeller Center workers and celebrities into the bar until September 2, 1999. That night owner Adrien Barbey served the last glass of beer in the bar that had stood at Sixth Avenue and 49th Street for 102 years.

Today, at this location is The Magnolia Bakery, and the building at the north end of the block is a 9 West store. Hurley’s Saloon is now located at 232 West 48th Street, in the heart of the theater district. I’m proud to say a couple of cameramen from “Tonight” took me there for lunch. It wasn’t like the old Hurley’s but with them there with me, I got an idea of how it must have felt.

Part 22...NBC Studio 5H And 5HN, The Breaking News Studio





Studio Building 5th Floor Layout 1950s to 1974

Thanks to Joel Spector, we see a markup that finally gives us the detail of the fifth floor area as it was from the 50s till 1974.

This is a two part story...the story of Studio 5H and Studio 5HN. Much like CBS had caused a great deal of confusion to historians by naming two of their Grand Central control facilities Studio 43 and 44, NBC did the same with Studio 5H. Studio 5H was actually a coordinating control room. Studio 5HN was the live facility associated with 5H.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyAv1llkiHQ&ab_channel=JFK1963NEWSVIDEOS

At the link above is perhaps the most memorable of events that took place in Studio 5HN...the opening moments of President Kennedy's assassination coverage.

From the December 1953 *Radio Age*, here is the article on the debut of Studio 5H.



NBC Studio 5H at opening in December. Technicians man console while broadcast coordinator occupies glass-paneled booth at left, facing large monitor panel at right of picture.

New Flexibility for TV in NBC Studio 5H

By Leonard Hole

Director of Production, National Broadcasting Company

FOR the first time in television history, the National Broadcasting Company last month placed at the fingertips of one man the ability to weave into a unified program the fast-breaking elements of a news story or major public event involving widely scattered locations throughout the country, and to break into any outgoing television program with news bulletins or emergency announcements.

The revolutionary control is built into a compact suite known as TV Coordinating Studio 5H at the heart of the NBC television complex in Radio City, New York. Its entry into service solves a combination of needs that had become apparent to the NBC broadcast operations and engineering staffs over the past few years. From the standpoint of news coverage, for example, the facilities of Studio 5H embody lessons learned in television treatment of the political conventions and the election campaign of 1952, when rapidly shifting action underlined the need for a central point at which a single coordinator might view material picked up by various cameras and switch the outgoing program from one to another to keep pace with developments of greatest interest. Frequently, too, important news flashes were delayed by the somewhat complicated job of cutting into studio programs being broadcast over automatically pre-set circuits.

The solution to these two problems, among others, has been built into Studio 5H. The result for the television viewer will be more rapid handling of important news flashes, more complete and smoother presentation of major news events, conventions and campaigns, sports roundups and other far-flung features calling for simultaneous coverage in several widely separated areas. For the future, it will make a practical reality of program concepts that have been up to now only a planner's dream.

Originally Planned as a Film Studio

The finished studio was several years in the making. Originally, 5H was planned principally as an additional television film studio to cope with increased program schedules. Before the NBC staff had finished with its planning, however, the project had grown into a complex \$375,000 unit capable of originating film programs and integrating film with live programs, originating substitute film programs in case of scheduled program failure, broadcasting network identifications, local spot commercials and apology announcements when necessary, originating spot news bulletins or emergency announcements, combining incoming programs from sources outside Radio City, and coordinating all broadcast transmission so that emergency changes in program routine could be handled swiftly and smoothly. The circuits through which these processes are accomplished are

capable of handling compatible color as well as black-and-white television programs.

The nerve center of the completed studio is a glass-enclosed booth occupied by the broadcast coordinator. Spread out before him, beyond the glass, is a long console with positions occupied by a program producer, a director and technicians controlling sound and picture signals. All face a large monitoring panel, studded with an array of monitor screens presenting a constant view of outgoing programs and of incoming signals from as many as ten outside cameras.

In the event of a major news development, the coordinator can see on the ten receiving monitors the pictures being picked up by NBC news and mobile units covering the story, and, with the help of the technicians, he may select and put on the air at any moment the action of greatest interest. A special 10-position telephone communications systems allows him at the same time to maintain direct contact with the camera units for advice and direction.

Studio 5H also is equipped with a "live commentary" booth for a commentator or announcer who may be called upon to play a part in any special events program. The booth is fitted out with a console for the announcer and a television camera which focuses upon him while

he talks, feeding the picture to one of the incoming program monitors from which the coordinator selects his program material.

Vidicon Cameras Used

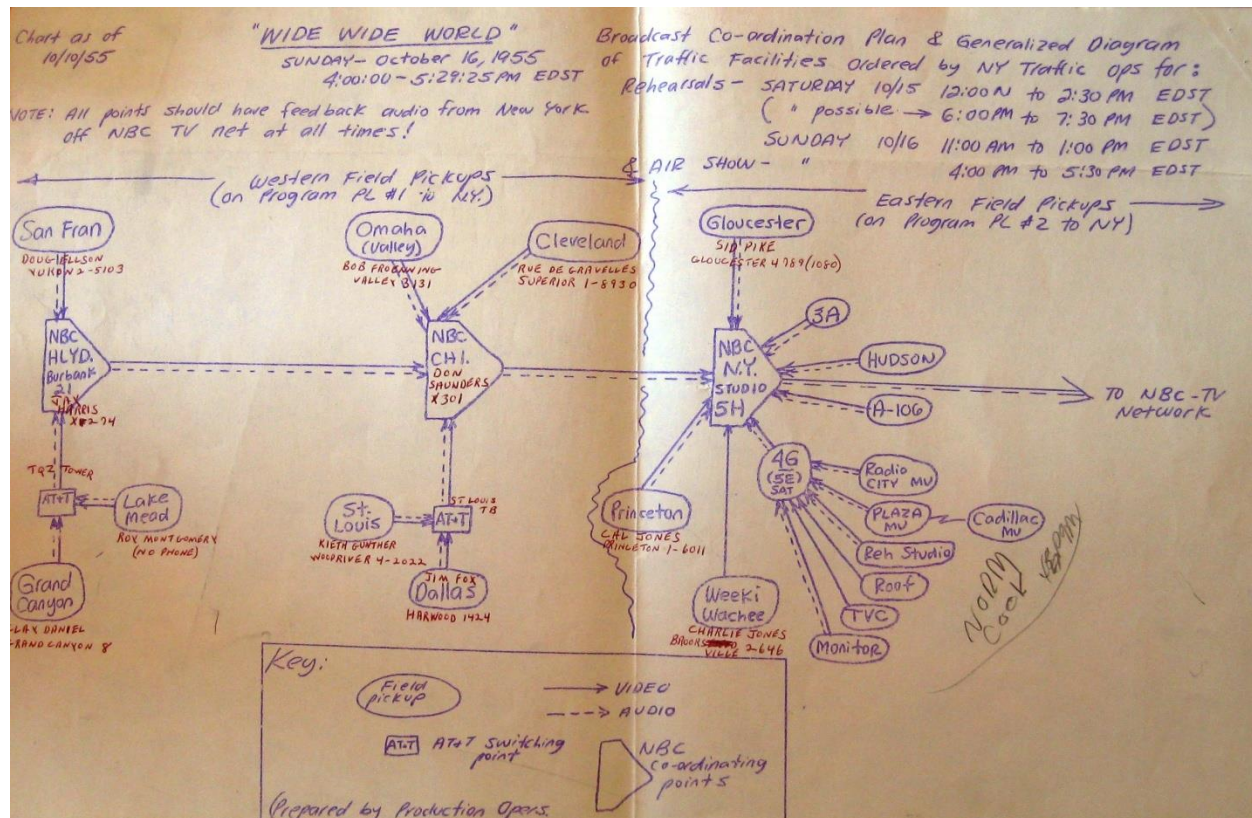
The film equipment of Studio 5H includes two iconoscope film camera chains, two Vidicon film pickup cameras and their associated projection devices. The whole unit can handle both 16mm and 35mm film, film strips, opaques and transparencies.

The tiny Vidicon used in two of the cameras is the smallest television camera tube ever developed for broadcast use. A product of the Tube Department of the RCA Victor Division, the Vidicon was used for the first time in regular broadcasting on Oct. 12, when NBC employed it in two local and network film programs. The tube is only one inch in diameter and six inches long, and its small size and simplicity make possible a simpler, more compact and lower-cost television film camera for broadcast use. As used in the broadcast film camera, the Vidicon is a refinement of the tube originally developed by RCA and now widely used in industrial television. The Studio 5H installation has left room for two more Vidicon cameras in the future.



Above is a photo of Studio 5H being put through its paces on October 16, 1955 during the debut of Dave Garroway's "Wide Wide World" that used 73 live cameras and 1,800 technicians from coast to coast, and a lot in between. Below is a link to the intro of at debut show.

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



This is the broadcast coordination plan and diagram for the debut of "Wide Wide World."

5H Control was created in December 1953, and functioned as a coordinating studio which could integrate elements from remote points, live and other "film/co-ord" studio outputs and release them to the TV output channels 21 through 28 (WNBC-TV, "A" Net which fed the Eastern Time Zone, "B" Net which fed the Central Time Zone etc.), without tying up another live studio control room or TV Master Control.

5H was often referred to as "5H Break-In" or "5H-BI" because it could seize control of any of the aforementioned channels without the use of the TV Master Control Room facilities. This lessened the workload on TVC during very busy times. The majority of work done in 5H Control did not involve the use of Studio 5HN.

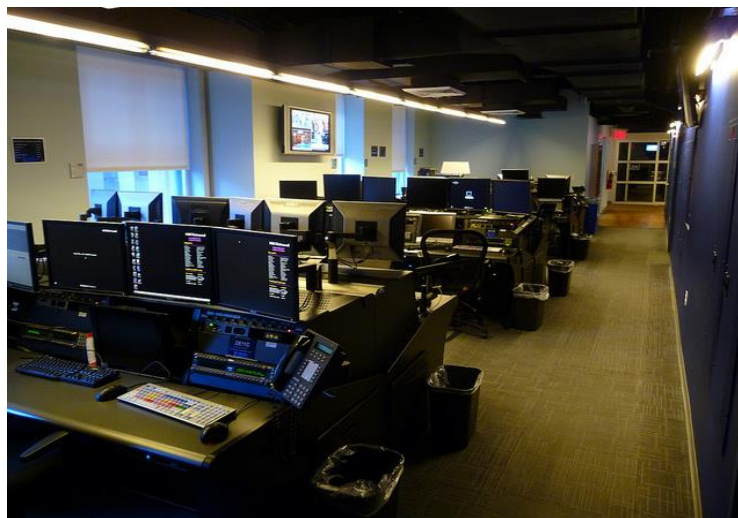
At some point, two rooms were created across the 49th Street corridor from 5H Control. The first was Room 586, a News Executive Viewing Room (see drawing on page 85, and photo below,) where the decision-makers could monitor and be in contact with various remote points. They would not be "in the way" in BOC, 5H or some other hot spot and could talk as loudly and as much as needed to get the job done. They would pass their decisions on to the various producers involved.

The second was Studio 5HN. In that news could break at any hour of the day, and news show sets were often dark with personnel and equipment unprepared or immediate use, this "always hot" facility was created. There was one camera here that was always on and ready and if need be, as in the Kennedy Assassination coverage, another camera could be brought in.

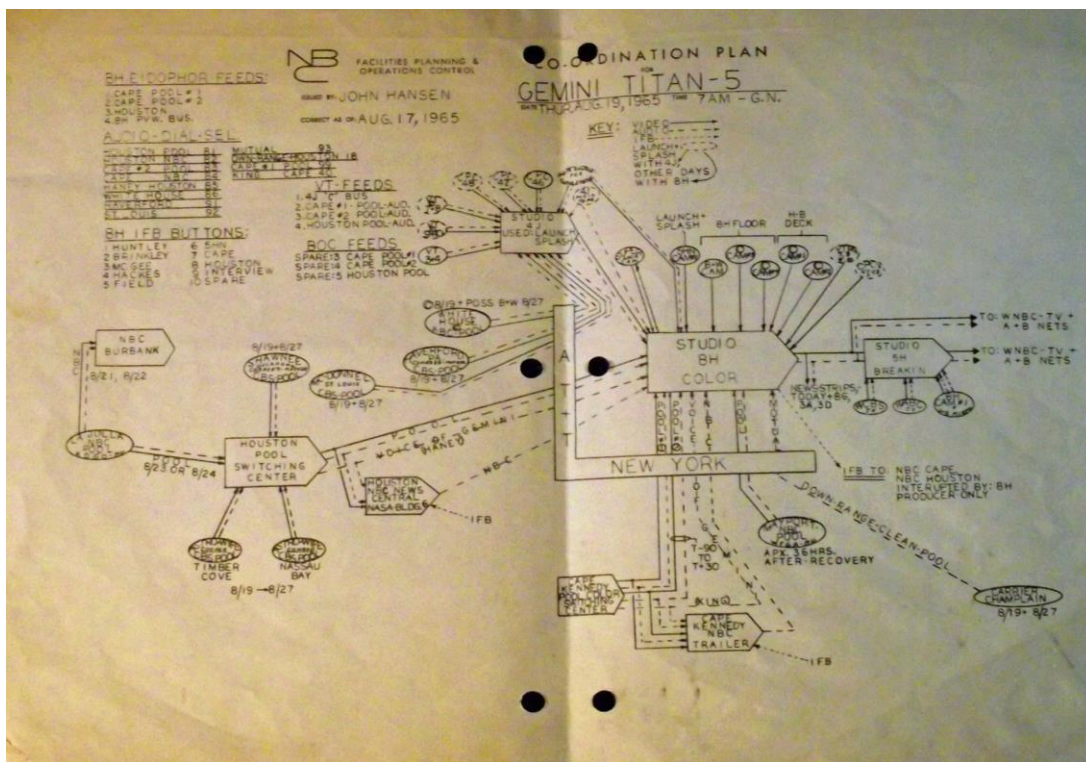


As mentioned above, this is Room 586, the Executive Viewing Room on Election night, 1964.

Baffling was added to the pre-existing windows in the 5HN space to keep out most of the noise from 49th Street. This was the only “studio” in 30 Rock which was not enclosed in 2-foot-thick walls, as this area was designed as office space. Those windows, now unbaffled, are seen in this photo. The area is now a producers’ screening area, near the 5th floor windows that look out onto 49th Street. In addition to screening material, producers can rough-edit their material using Desktop Editing tools at these stations. Most think that the back wall of the 5HN set here was against the windows. Behind the blue wall on this right is what is now NBC’s Ingest area.



Below is a 1965 Gemini space mission Operations Chart that shows Studio 8H as the primary origination studio, but to the right, we see 5H is the go to control studio in case of breaking news.



This is a rare shot of the studio thought to be from around 1967 that shows an RCA TK41 color camera in use in Studio 5HN. Around this time, WNBC was doing a 1 AM news summary from here just after the 'Tonight' show.



Date Summary:

First Use, Conversions & Debut As A Television Studio

Converted should be understood as the debut date of the facility as an exclusive TV studio, now equipped with its own control room. In some cases, 1st use and Converted occurred on the same date like with 6B. 1st use means television remote broadcasts were done while the facility was still a radio or theater property.

Studio 3H...Converted 1935, Became part of 3K September 12, 1955

Studio 8G...1st use May 9, 1946, Converted April 22, 1948

Studio 3A & 3B...1st use Summer 1948, Converted September 4, 1950

Studio 6B...Converted June 8, 1948 for “Texaco Star Theater”

Uptown Studios...Converted from film studio to TV, December 1948

International Theater...1st use January 29, 1949, Converted August 1949

Studio 6A...1st use December 24, 1948, Converted May 22, 1950

Center Theater...Converted September 1, 1950

Hudson Theater...Converted September 25, 1950

Studio 8H...1st use September 5, 1949, Converted January 30, 1951

New Amsterdam Theater...1st use April 9, 1950, Converted September 19, 1951

Colonial Theater...Converted November 8, 1952, NBC’s first color studio

67th Street Studios...1st use August 1953, Converted March 4, 1954

Brooklyn I...Purchased September 1951, Converted September 12, 1954

Century Theater...1st use March 25, 1954, Converted June 6, 1954

Studio 3K...Converted September 12, 1955, 1st color studio inside 30 Rockefeller

Ziegfeld Theater...Converted September 22, 1956

Brooklyn II...Converted November 29, 1956, an all new facility built by NBC

The End! For now...

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.

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