

# *Nation's only early television museum is located in Hilliard*

**By Kathy Lucas**

*Staff Writer*

It's like step back in time.

For 59-year-old Steve McVoy, it's also a labor of love—a labor that began in November 2001 after he retired and sold his Eastside coaxial cable company.

That's when McVoy founded the Early Television Foundation Museum at 5396 Franklin St. in Hilliard.

"I was looking for something to do with my time that would be interesting, so I started collecting old sets," he said. "When I was a teenager I worked in a television repair shop after school and every once in a while we'd get some of the sets from the '40s and they always fascinated me."

McVoy's collection has grown to about 100 televisions, including several rear projections sets.

In fact, McVoy notes that there are only about 400 pre-World War II sets still in existence, half of them are American and the other half are British.

His collection also includes 28 pre-WW II sets, 21 of which he has working.

If he can get the parts—mostly hard-to-come-by picture tubes—McVoy plans to eventually get all of them projecting pictures.

He does the electronic restoration-work, while a Grandview company does the cabinet



The oldest set at the museum is a 1928 handmade mechanical set constructed by Murray Mercier of Columbus, now deceased.

McVoy says most people don't realize that television started in the 1920s and that television broadcasting began in 1928 in the United States.

"The theory of mechanical TV is just like electronic TV, the picture is made up of a series of lines and the camera—the light from the subject is converted into electrical energy and that becomes the TV signal, and on the other end, a picture is created," said McVoy. "The mechanical sets use a metal disk that is rotated by a motor and the disk has a series of holes, one hole for each line in the picture."

His newest sets are both 1955 color models made by Philco and RCA.

McVoy says the price of the pre-war sets average about \$10,000 each, while the newer models cost \$200 or less.

His biggest expense is the cost of acquiring them.

Just where does he find these rare items?

"Every once in a while, a collector runs

Messenger photos by Kathy Lubas

Hilliard resident Steve McVoy, founder of the Early Television Foundation and Museum, fiddles with a 1939 RCA TRK-9 pre-war TV set. The set is one of many displayed at the museum, which is the only early television museum in the United States.

out of room or needs money or something and puts one on the market, and we hear about it," said McVoy.

Many sets are discovered somewhere in people's homes—such as their basements, attics and garages—often times with the owners unaware of their potential value.

Because he has the only early television museum in the United States, McVoy said he is well-known among the estimated 100-150 early television (only) collectors in the world. McVoy said there is a similar museum in Toronto, Canada and two in England.

There are two sets which stand out the most, a 1951 Royal Sovereign and a telejuke. Both of these sets weigh about 400 pounds each.

Boasting a 30-inch metal picture tube, the Royal Sovereign is the largest black and white television ever made. It stands about four-and-a-half feet tall.

As its name implies, the 1946 Seeburg & Emerson telejuke is an eight-foot-tall, mirror-enclosed set which is a combination television and jukebox. For a nickel, you can select one of 20 songs from the jukebox. The 15-inch screen television is black and white. You can play either feature separately or at the same time.

McVoy believes he owns the only one of its kind in the world. He

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This 1951 DuMont Royal Sovereign is part of the collection on display at the Early Television Foundation and Museum, located at 5396 Franklin Street in Hilliard, which is the only early television museum in the United States. There are similar museums in Toronto, Canada and two in England.

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found his telejuke from a collector in Chicago.

Ninety percent of the non-profit corporation's funding comes from McVoy and his family. Donations make up the remaining 10 percent. Eventually, McVoy is hopeful the museum will be self-supporting.

So far, 1,500 people from 29 states and four or five foreign countries have toured the museum. McVoy said people who visit the museum usually fall into one of three groups: senior citizens, students and those with

an interest in the television industry, such as broadcasters or producers.

Admission is free. The hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

During the week, McVoy offers tours by appointment. His phone number is 771-0510. You can also reach him via e-mail at [etf@columbus.rr.com](mailto:etf@columbus.rr.com). His Web site can be found at [www.earlytelevision.org](http://www.earlytelevision.org).