RADIO AGE

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A New Radio Age AK Series

IDENTIFYING THE EARLIEST ATWATER KENT COMPONENTS

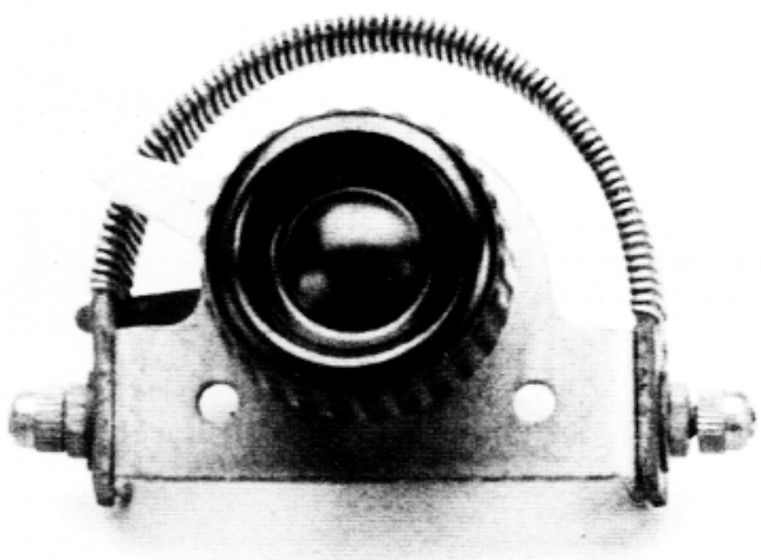
BY RAY THOMPSON AND LEIGH BASSETT

We were getting concerned, after the passing of Ralph Williams, whether more AK collectors' information would be forthcoming. Now, Ray Thompson, with the able help of Leigh Bassett, has stepped forward, and here is the first in their series on Atwater Kent, surely a series that should be treasured along with those memorable Ralph Williams articles of an earlier Radio Age time.

THE Atwater Kent Manufacturing Company was already well established when it decided to enter the radio business in 1921. AK was a manufacturer of high quality ignition and electrical parts for automobiles, and had built a nation-wide network of vendors to distribute this product line. This distribution network was a major factor in AK's success in the early radio field.

AK also benefited greatly from manufacturing techniques developed for its automotive business. Precision molding of Bakelite was key to the success of its products in both fields, and AK was highly proficient in this technology. Metal forming, stamping, and machining were used in both product lines, as were coil winding, high-voltage fabrication and test, and electrical assembly.

Following on the success of its headphones, first produced in 1919, AK entered the radio field by manufacturing individual components which could be assembled into primitive radios. This chapter will discusses these components, while later chapters will describe the complete radios and their evolution.



The Atwater Kent Model 3530 Rheostat with black knob

Many of the components initially incorporated both black and brown Bakelite parts. The product line soon changed to all brown, discontinuing the black parts. A collector finding AK components with black parts can be sure he has some of the earliest components made. It's not always easy to tell with the all-brown ones. This chapter will point out the components that were available in black.

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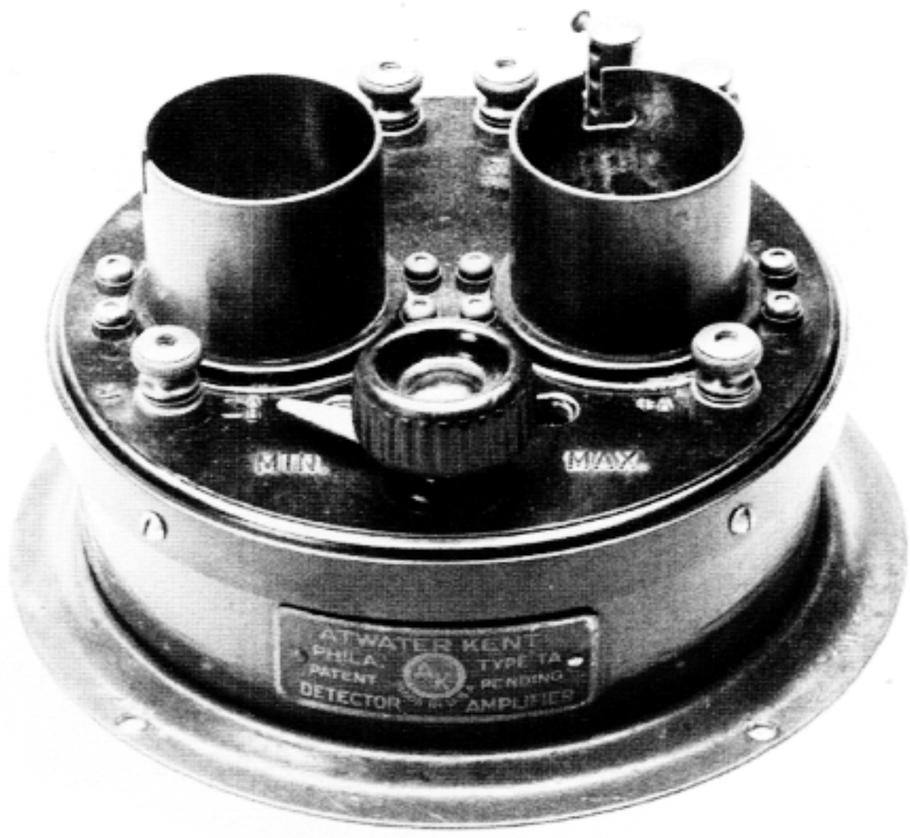
The listing which follows is keyed to the photographs by the catalog number of the component.

3612 Mounted variocoupler with black panel, black knob and pointer.



3676 Detector Amplifier for the 1-amp type 200 (detector) and 201 tubes, with black knob.

3634 2-Stage amplifier for the 1-amp type 201 tubes, with black knob.

Note: Information for this article was derived from two primary sources. First was the Atwater Kent price list dated February 19, 1923. The second was from examination of the actual A K products, many of which are shown in the accompanying photographs.

List #1 – Atwater Kent Components available with black phenolic parts, in part number order.

3530 – Rheostat for panel mounting –with black knob.

3568 – Rheostat for table mounting –with black knob.

3612 – Mounted Variocoupler with black panel, black knobs and pointer. See also #3731 below.

3634 – 2-stage Amplifier – with black knob.

3676 – Detector 1-stage Amplifier – with black knob.

3731 – Mounted Variocoupler with brown panel, black knobs and pointer are found frequently.

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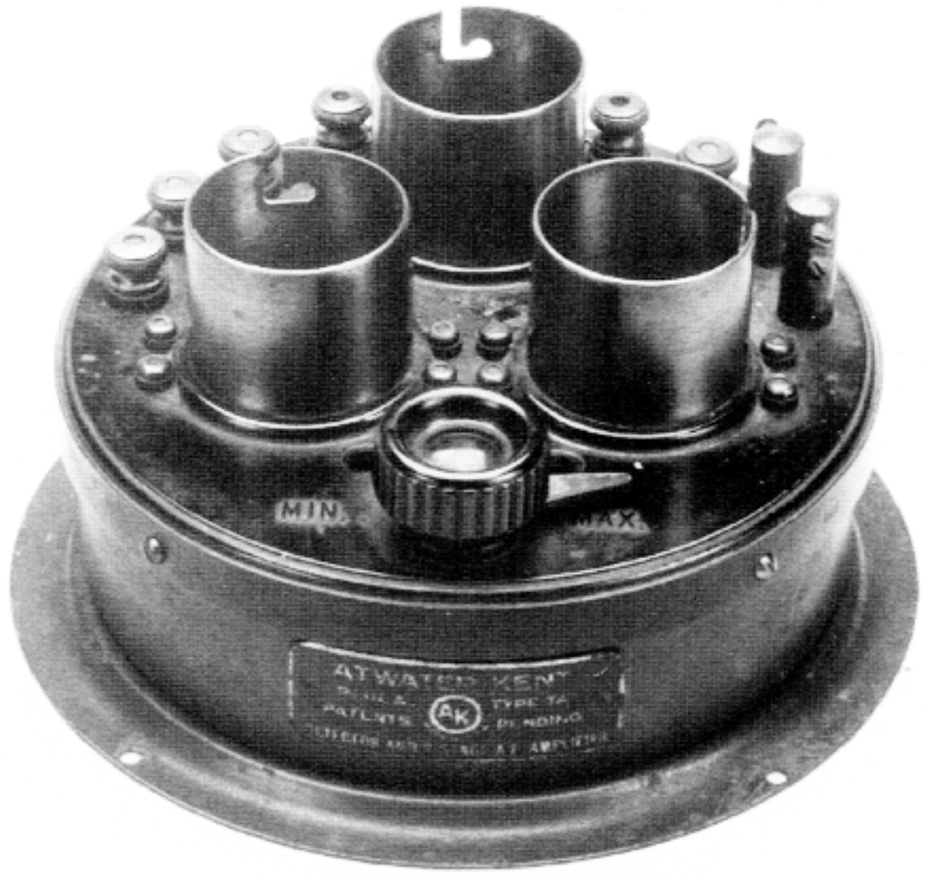
In This Issue

A 3714 Mounted variometer in brown. The same component with black panel and knob was sold as part number 3838. Unfortunately it was not available to photograph.



3812 Detector-plus- 2-stage Amplifier for the 1-amp type 200 (detector) and 201 tubes, with black knob.

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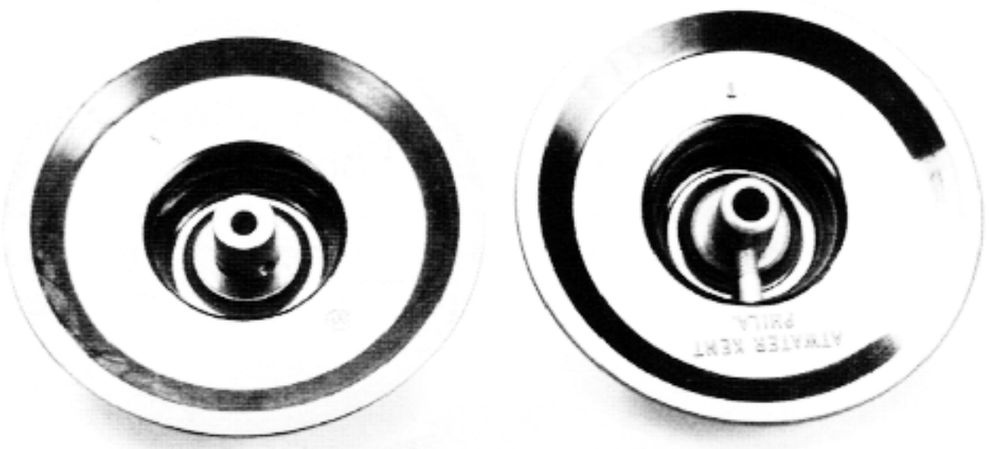
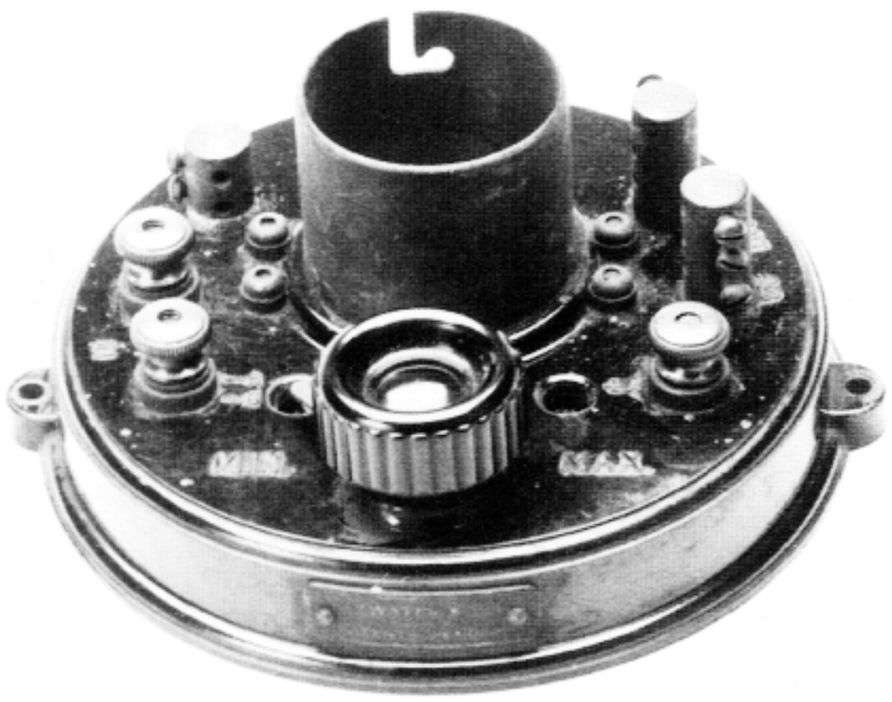
3736 – Knob with 3/16" shaft for variometer – black.

3737 – Knob with ¼" shaft for non-AK condenser units – black – AK did not have condenser units on the market when this knob was made. Not to be confused with the black knob used on the later Model 40 radio, with gold colored graduations.

3812 – Detector/2-stage amplifier – with black knob.



3736 (left) and 3737 knobs from the rear. The 3736 is for 3/16" shafts, while the 3737 accommodates ¼" shafts.



3902 detector with black knob, for the 1-amp type 200 or 201 tube.

3824 – Black panel for variometer.

3838 – Mounted variometer with black panel.

3902 – Detector unit for standard tubes – with black knob.

3978 – Potentiometer for table (board) mounting – with black knob.

4024 – Tube unit – with black knob.

4030 – 1-stage amplifier – with black or brown knob, three variants: 1) The black knob unit has an ID tag with the "2" milled off and a "1" stamped in the milled space. 2) An early brown knob unit has an ID

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4024 Tube Unit for 1-amp tubes, with black knob

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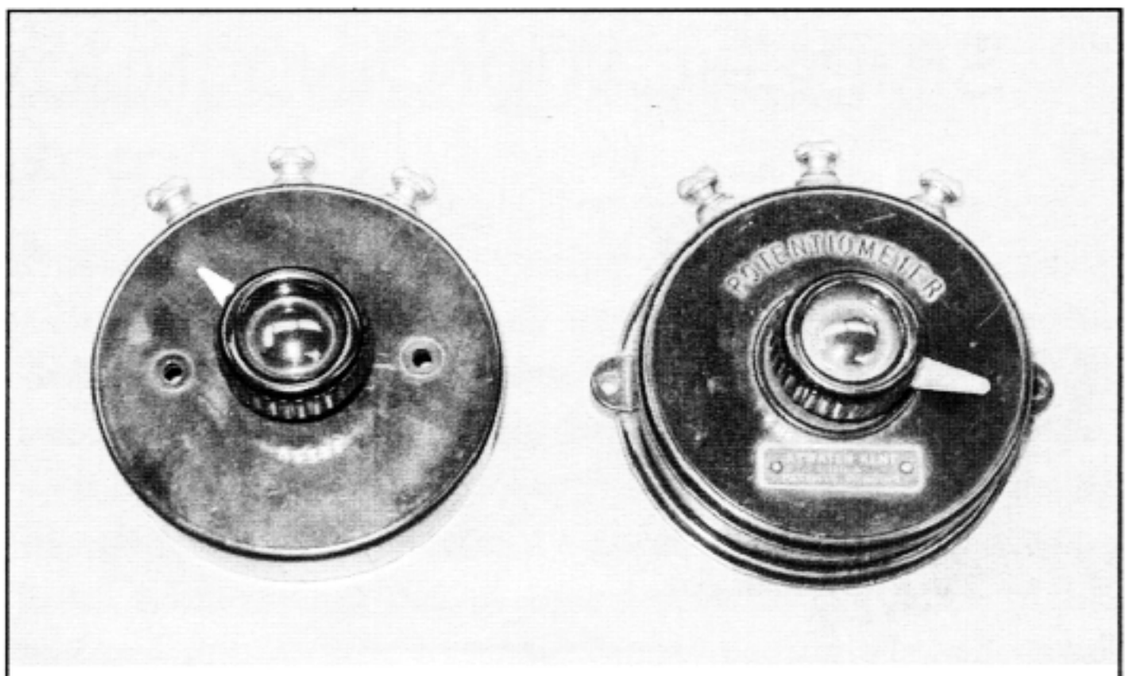
tag with the "2" painted out. 3) A later brown knob unit has an ID tag made for this unit with a "1" etched in the proper position.

4095 – Potentiometer for panel mounting – with black knob.

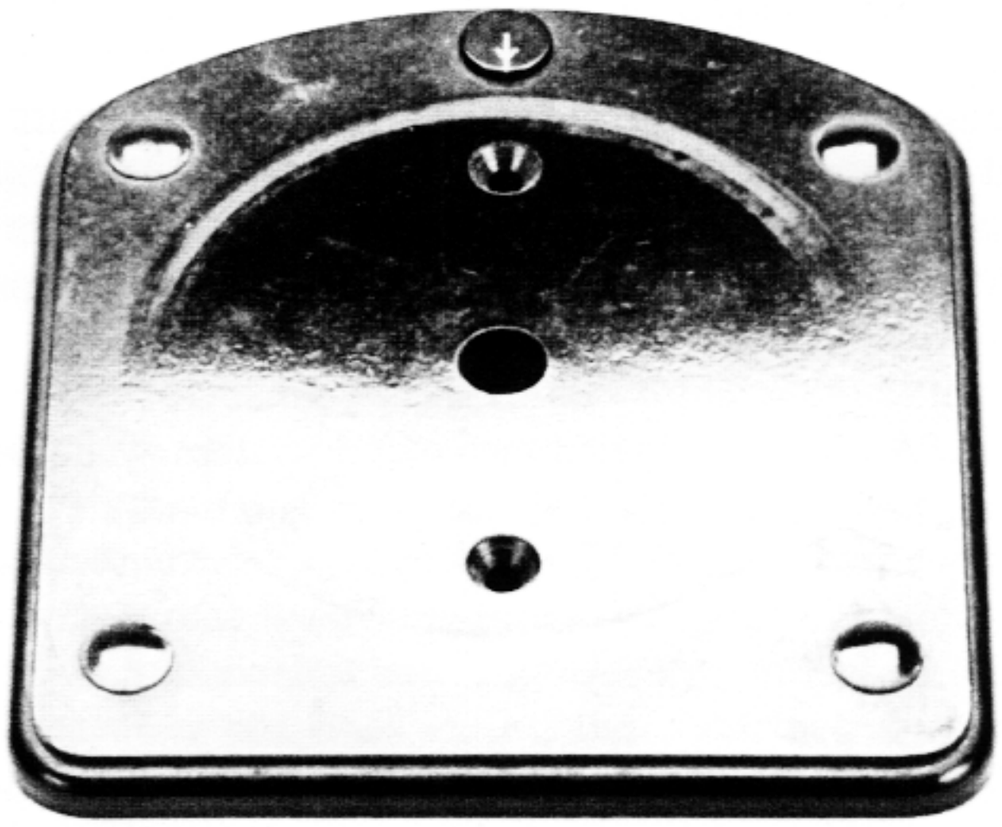
4030 1-Stage AF amplifier for 1-amp tubes, with black knob

We hope these descriptions and pictures will help readers identify some of the less well known Atwater Kent components, whether they turn up in flea markets or are sought by collectors trying to restore a breadboard. More later……..♦♦♦



3978 table mount (right) and 4095 panel mount 200-ohm potentiometers.

3568 Rheostat with black knob.



3824 Variometer panel in black.