

Arthur Atwater Kent

Video

In his first studies, Arthur Atwater was warned by one of his professors “without a diploma from “Tech” you would never amount to anything”. This was not confirmed.

In 1895, Arthur Atwater Kent founded the Kent Electric Manufacturing Co. in the back room of his father’s machine shop. He designed, made, and sold small electric motors and fans.

In 1902, the Atwater Kent Mfg. Works were founded in Philadelphia, which later, in 1919, became the Atwater Kent Manufacturing Company.

In 1905, Kent purchase his first one-cylinder automobile and begin making systems to improve its behavior. One of systems was the Unisparker, an improved ignition system which gave a single hot spark at once, The Unisparker consisted of contact points, centrifugal advancing mechanism, distributor, and condenser in a single unit, to work with a spark coil. This system was used for more than half a century, until electronic ignition took over. Atwater Kent received the John Scott Legacy Medal in 1914 to reward his invention.

In 1919, Atwater Kent had already 25 U.S. patents. After the First World War, the automobile market had a huge reduction and Kent realized that the market of the future would be the Radio. He had all the equipment for Bakelite molding, metal forming and electrical coil winding need to produce first class equipment for radio.

In 1921, Kent started to engage in radio, producing Bakelite variocouplers, RF and audio transformers. In 1922, he offered the first breadboard radio series, the 39xx types. These radios, when one of their variocouplers was added, became a regenerative radio, but this idea, patented by Armstrong, was the responsibility of the user and without Kent's responsibility.

To avoid infringing patents, Kent forgot the idea of regeneration and opted to add more RF stages to his radios.

Kent sold the components necessary for an amateur to manufacture their radios using the bread cutting board as a support, (Breadboard radio) but he also sold the radios already assembled.

In 1924, Kent began producing radios packaged in wooden boxes and, in 1926, introduced radios packaged in a metal box (similar to the bread box used at the time) Breadbox radio.

In 1924, Kent produced the first loudspeaker (model 4645L). In 1925 Kent produced variants of this model. In 1927, Kent made Model E, the first Atwater Kent free-edge cone loudspeaker.

Atwater Kent became the leading radio manufacturer. The production figures are impressive: from 1923 to 1927 not less than 1,317,766 sets have been produced.

In 1933, Kent produces his first car radios.

In 1936, Arthur Atwater Kent, being fed up from struggling cheap competition and unions, closed down the factory.

Some Iconic Atwater Kent devices.

