

The Zenith Trans-Oceanic: The Royalty of Radios, by John H. Bryant and Harold N. Cones, Schiffer Publishing, 1995.

review by Nick Hall-Patch

The Zenith Radio Corporation manufactured a number of different portable radios under the name "Trans-Oceanic" between 1941 and 1979. In general, these radios featured bandspread SW broadcast bands as well as AM BCB; some featured general shortwave bands, longwave or FM as well. Nearly all were manufactured in the U.S., and designed to a high standard both in external appearance and in their electronics. The majority were designed for use in rugged environments yet were attractive enough to be used in the home.

These radios were initially highly priced, and have since become collectors' items. This 160 page book was written for those collectors, but is also a good introduction to the history and design of the Trans-Oceanic.

The book is divided into three major sections. The first describes the development of the portable radio, with an emphasis on the history of the Zenith Radio Corporation and its founder, Eugene F. McDonald. This history leads to a description of the development of the Trans-Oceanic in its many forms. In addition, the rise and fall of Zenith as a manufacturer of high quality portable radios is used as a model for the history of the American consumer electronics industry. The second and largest section describes in detail the various Trans-Oceanics along with many photographs and reproductions of testimonials and magazine advertisements from the time. The final section is a compendium of hints concerning the collection and restoration of these radios. There are also appendices which list tools needed for restoration, as well as parts suppliers and collectors' clubs.

Given the academic credentials of the authors, it isn't surprising that a great deal of research went into the preparation of this book, as evidenced both in the text and in the endnotes. In addition, the book is well written and attractively laid out with many monochrome and color plates. There might be a quibble with the relatively small print used, given that many collectors don't have the sharp eyesight they may once have had.

A problem with a book of this sort is that it cannot be all things to all people, and still be affordable. I would have liked to have seen a couple of block diagrams of the Trans-Oceanic circuits, and maybe have a clearer picture of the types of batteries and vacuum tubes used. In general, however, the technical descriptions are clear and well-informed, and the emphasis on safety when powering up old radios is commendable.

The Zenith Trans-Oceanic: The Royalty of Radios costs US\$24.95 and is available from Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 77 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, PA 19310 as well as from radio-related hobby outlets. The authors are also selling numbered, autographed copies of the book along with a mail order catalog of Zenith memorabilia for the above price plus a \$2 shipping and handling fee. Their address is The Radio Professors, P.O. Box 592, Stillwater, OK 74076, USA.