

Four Decades of Radio, Television
and Electronics

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exceptional tone and quite a reserve of volume. It had the feature of being portable, with its built-in aerial; it became a by-word in the radio field.

In 1947 General Motors of Canada put out tender requests for car radios for automobiles made in Canada. Stewart-Warner Canada successfully bid and secured the business for all Chevrolets while another firm built the radios for Buicks and Pontiacs. The big volume at that time was on the Chevrolet line. By 1950, nearly every second car was being purchased either with a radio in it, or one bought and installed later. Stewart-Warner Canada build the Chevrolet radios until 1952, producing several thousand each year. These were made to exacting specifications laid down by G.M.'s engineering. In that year, General Motors themselves set up a plant in St. Catharines to make all radios for cars sold in Canada.

In 1947 Stewart-Warner had engineered and made prototypes of a 10" T.V. set. Stewart-Warner Canada had access to these U.S. designs and redesigned the unit for a Canadian 12 1/2" console model. These were produced later that year in the Belleville Plant. These Canadian-made sets were some of the first, if not the first, T.V.'s made in Canada. In the course of the next nine years, Stewart-Warner Canada designed special Canadian models, but also used and redesigned some very advanced Stewart-Warner U.S.-lab models. One of the purely Canadian sets was a 17" upright portable unit made particularly for portability and lower cost to the consumer. Black-and-white televisions of that day, in console cabinet style, cost nearly as much as coloured televisions do now. One of the most unique and presentable models was a 19" console, the cabinet of which had full-length closing front doors.

In 1955, Stewart-Warner U.S.A. had decided, for economic reasons, to go out of the radio and television business. Merchandising was then costly, there were no exclusive dealers any longer, and competition became particularly keen, with a large number of companies which had gone into the trade -- most producing companies were selling merchandise at a loss. Dealers often had two, three and four lines of sets in their stores at the same time; Service was minimal; warehousing costs had escalated; the cost of tooling new models each year was prohibitive. Stewart-Warner Canada continued until 1956 and then brought to a close the most interesting phase of Belleville's operation.