

# Old Familiar Strains

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A newsletter for Collectors of Radio Strain Insulators and related items  
Volume 1 No. 4

October 1994

## NIA Western Regional Convention

by Dan Howard

On August 5th and 6th, my wife and I attended the National Insulator Association's 1994 Western Regional Convention in Auburn, CA. It was not only my first trip to the gold rush town of Auburn, but my first insulator show. As you would expect, the thrust of the show was oriented toward pin insulators and related items. Fortunately for me, Pat and Shirley Patocka and Jack Foote (all participants in this newsletter) were heavily involved in the show. They encouraged me to come and to bring some insulators for the show.

My strain insulators and lightning arrestors are displayed on framed pegboards which hang on the wall in my father's basement. After designing some carrying boxes, I was able to pack them into the trunk and take them on the road. The weather was sunny and hot (surprise, surprise). My wife seems to recall having a little more fun shopping the

air conditioned malls in nearby Sacramento than wandering the fairground building where the meet was held, but I had a ball.

Shirley brought some beautiful items from her collection to show me. Jack Foote also brought out some gorgeous pieces from his collection. While at the convention, I had the pleasure of talking with John McDougald from Crown Jewels of the Wire and swapping sample issues. Jeff Hogan, Mike Gay, Larry Shumaker, and I seemed to be following each other around vying for the few antenna insulators that did show up. I still wonder which one of them was the one that I kept hearing about "Well, I did have a few, but a fellow just bought them from me..."

# Editorial

by Dan Howard

The fourth issue of the newsletter marks the continuation of an effort begun by Keith Roloson which has now been transferred to my desk.

Meeting other collectors and creating a forum for exchanging information on antenna insulators and lightning arrestors has been a dream of mine for a long time.

I am committed to editing and producing a high quality periodic newsletter as long as my wife tolerates it, as long as the newsletter continues to be supported by your donations, and as long as I have information to print.

Your input is important to me and I am relying on each of you to supply articles, ads, letters, and copies of advertisements and catalogs when available.

I have already been in contact with some of you and look forward to getting to know the rest.

## Regarding the Name

This issue also marks the adoption of a new format and a new name. The name "Old Familiar Strains" seemed to embrace the concept of capturing strains of music from the ether with your vintage radio and trusty outdoor aerial while at the same time referencing the endearing (?) term "radio strains" by which our collections are

apparently known to the pin insulator collectors. I hope that you like it.

## Regarding the Finances

I understand that Keith Roloson was able to print the newsletter for free, and consequently was required to only cover postage and miscellaneous costs from donations. I have shopped around, but have been unable to locate someone in this area who could match Keith's price.

Sending this issue of Old Familiar Strains to all of the people on the mailing list would have virtually exhausted the donations to date. Some people have already donated up to \$5.00 and I wanted to have enough left over to print another issue before New Year's. Therefore, collectors who have made no donation to date got a postcard inquiring about their interest in lieu of this newsletter. If you have donated less than \$5.00 to date, but would like to continue receiving Old Familiar Strains please consider donating an additional \$3.00. If you have already donated \$5.00, I hope to have another issue to you before New Year's.

Beginning in 1995, I would suggest an annual donation of \$10.00 a year.

## Finally

I really appreciate the mail that I have gotten over the last couple of months. This issue includes an article by Bob Dennison. Other articles and letters will be included in future issues. Please keep them coming.

# Philmore Manufacturing

by Dan Howard

I recently had the chance to visit the Marvac Dow Electronics store in Pasadena, CA. Marvac currently stocks two types of antenna insulators, both Philmores.

Formerly located in New York City, Philmore manufacturing Company is currently located at 2240 1st St Rockford IL 61104. Radio collectors will recall that Philmore was once known for their crystal sets. Before I left Marvac, I asked to see their Philmore catalog.

The company currently catalogs two antenna insulators. The first is a petite, squared-off, white egg insulator made of steatite ceramic, part no. J852 (see figure 1). It is unmarked and measures  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " (31 mm) long and  $\frac{29}{32}$ " (23 mm) wide.

The second is a white tenite plastic strain insulator, part no. 2130CP (see figure 2). This insulator is also unmarked and measures  $2\frac{15}{32}$ " long (63 mm) and 1" (25 mm) in diameter. The catalog description indicates that this is a more durable plastic version of an earlier ceramic design.

In addition to these, my collection includes a Philmore aerial kit, part no. 2103. Although catalogued

separately, these kits were often sold to go with the company's crystal sets. The kit includes 2 unmarked ceramic strain insulators that may be the predecessors to part 2130CF.. The ad on the back cover of the newsletter shows my kit and is from Radio's Master 19th edition (1955).

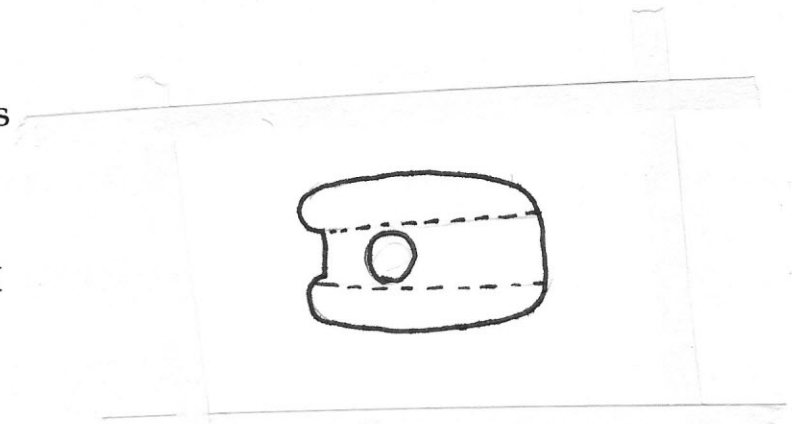


Figure 1

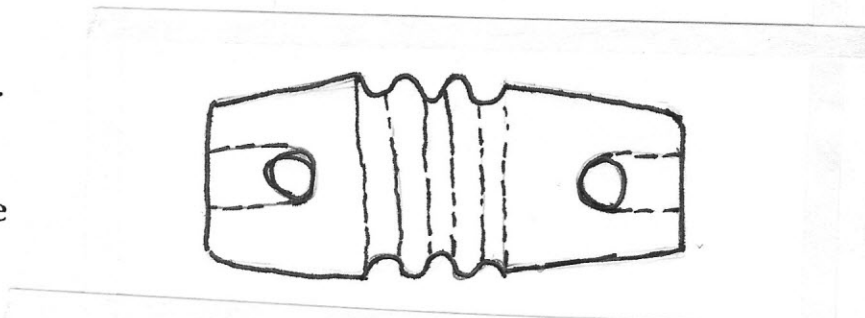


Figure 2

## Collecting Antenna Insulators

By Bob Dennison, W2HBE

About ten years ago, I found an old antenna insulator and decided it would be fun to start collecting them. Through an ad, I met Jim Singleton, K2IRO, who gave me many of his duplicates and this encouraged me to continue. I now have 129 different antenna insulators and 37 lightning arrestors. I prefer the glass and pyrex insulators. The rarest and most interesting ones are made of colored glass. I've been told that most of these were made in Mexico. The more common tints are lavender, pale green and light blue. But some collectors have found red, black, and other colors in saturated hues.

If you are lucky, you may find an insulator still in the box that it was sold in. Corwico insulators came in an attractive orange and blue box bearing an image of the insulator. The large Corning pyrex insulators also came in attractive boxes. It is always exciting to find insulators having unusual shapes or cross-sections. Also be on the lookout for insulators bearing the name or logo of the manufacturer or the city or country where it was made.

Antenna insulators have been made from glass, pyrex, porcelain, hard-rubber, electrose, steatite, and various plastics. Many made during the early wireless days were made of some sort of asphaltic compound that had a tendency to split or develop cracks. For an

interesting article on early insulators see QST, p. 24, May 1923.

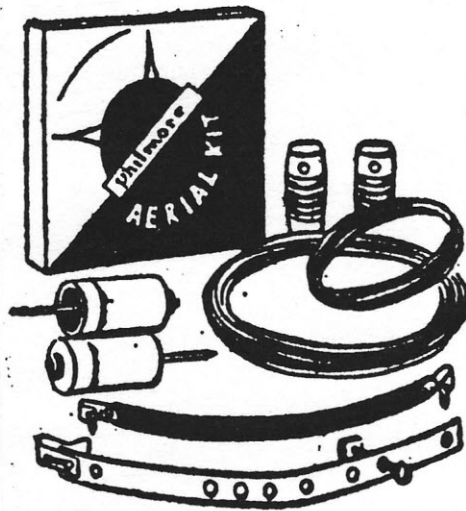
editor's note: according to his letter, Bob's article was originally published in the quarterly newsletter of the New Jersey Antique Radio Club.

## Patents: An Update by Dan Howard

The LA library (main branch) is one of the national Patent and Trademark Repositories. (Another is located in Seattle, WA at the University of Washington). During a recent visit, the librarians showed me how to look up patents by class and subclass numbers.

Due to the complexity of the patent system, I would recommend that you know the class and subclass numbers that you are interested in researching before you go. If you don't know these numbers, you can get them by taking along a known patent number and looking up the related class/sub class numbers that way.

In the 3rd newsletter, I reported that patent copies were available by mail for \$1.50 postpaid. During my visit I checked and inflation has been here, too. Copies are now \$3.00 each from the patent office. Copies are also available from the repositories. However, LA charges \$5.00 shipping and handling plus \$.25 per page for copies.



## **PHILMORE AERIAL KIT**

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- 1 Ground clamp.      2 Nail-it knobs.
- 1 Lead-in strip.      1 Instruction sheet.
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