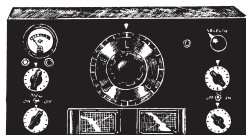


THE COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVER

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The National Company Model RPW-3 Communications Receiver

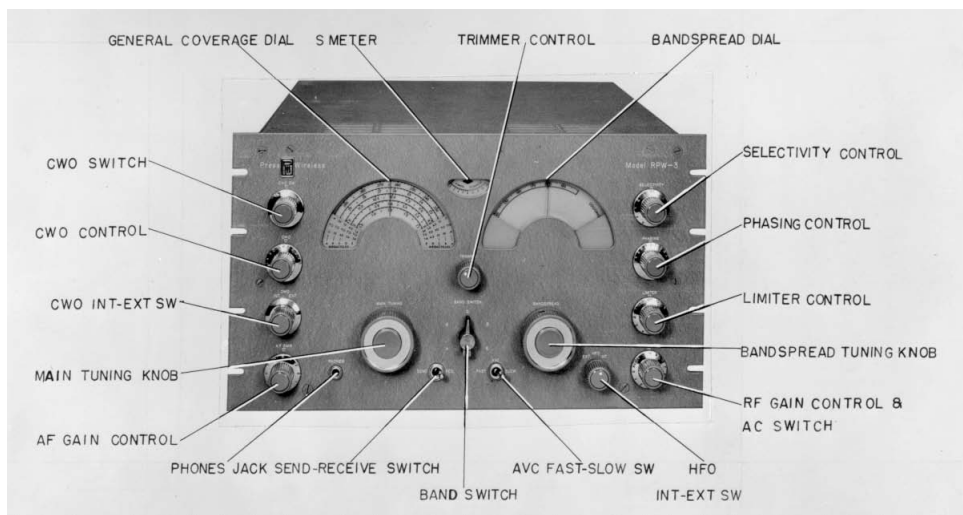
When I first discovered the three photos shown here, my impression was that this was a very unusual commercial receiver, and at first glance it does appear so. The fact that it has the logo of the Press Wireless company, coupled with the massive customized tuning capacitor and the 17 tubes shown in the top view, reinforced that impression.

Then reality set in, and the more I studied the photos (I don't have the receiver) the more it became apparent that this was nothing more than a slightly modified NC-183R. However, that does not detract from the fact that it is a superb piece of craftsmanship, and I am sure that it must have worked very well for its intended commercial purpose, at least when new. This would be before the old-design paper by-pass capacitors and other components, such as resistors, over which Na-

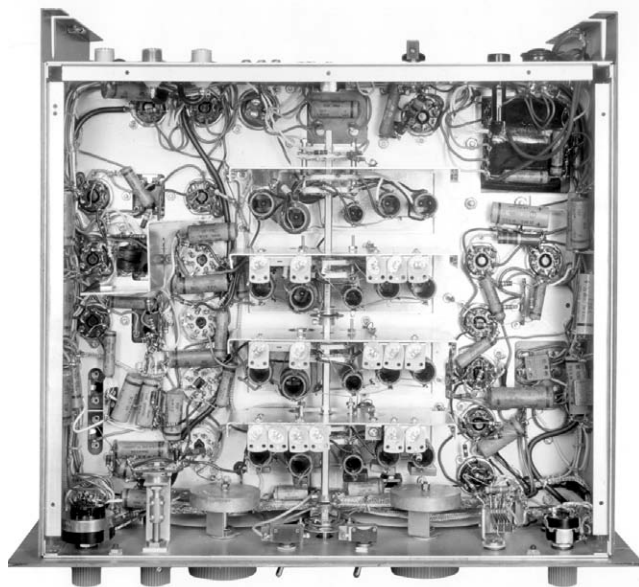
tional had little control, had a chance to degrade.

So I did some quick comparisons of the two receivers. Both have five band positions, the 183 covering 540 kc to 31 mc in four bands with the 5th being the 6-meter band. The RPW-3 covered 540 kc to 30 mc in four bands, with the 5th covering 200 to 400 kc. Thus the most obvious modification, the changing of the coil specifications for one band, must have been a relatively easy job for the experienced National design engineers.

Other differences? Not much except for the bandspread dial which had only a 0-200 division logging scale, as opposed to the 183 with its detailed amateur bands. The tube layouts and the below-chassis appearances are the same, and both are single-conversion receivers with a 455 kc IF and a standard National crystal filter.



The RPW-3 is basically a slightly modified National NC-183R.



Under-chassis view shows typical National craftsmanship.

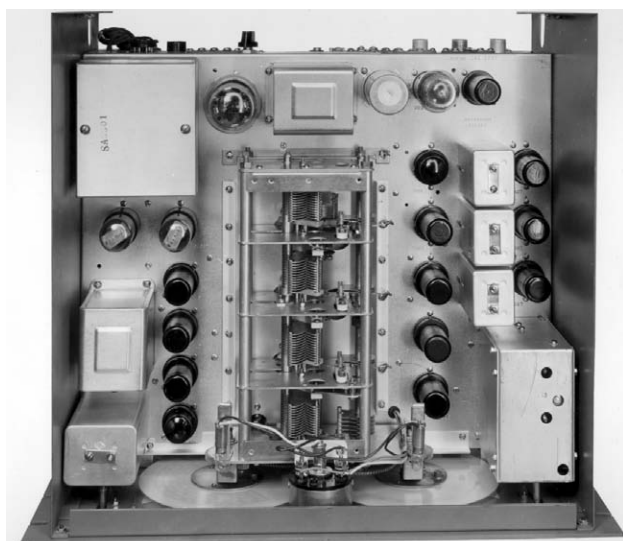
Note: Sharp eyed readers may note that the 183, which came out in 1947, is advertised with 16 tubes, while the RPW shows 17 in the top-view photo. It appears that at the time of taking the photo someone decided that the accessory socket looked better with something plugged in...thus an extra tube appeared. Even the knob design is the same.

The 183 was first advertised in 1947 for \$269 for the receiver, complete with a matching 10" speaker. Later the price rose to \$279, with the 10" speaker for \$16 extra. It might be interesting to know the price that National intended to charge the Press Wireless company. Both table and rack versions were available. The rack version, mounted in a customized National rack with the speaker above the receiver, finished in black wrinkle, and with satin-black finish side trim strips, was an imposing product. Today the sight of one is enough to make the heart of any confirmed boat-anchor enthusiast beat just a bit faster.

Were many of the RPW-3 receivers made? I rather doubt it, and it is even possible that these National Company marketing department photos were taken of a shop model. After all, all they had to do was modify a stock NC-183, change some engraving on the front panel, make up new dial scales, and change one set of coils from the stock 6-meter set to one for 200-400 kc, items they probably already had in stock. (Assuming, of course, that the 183 came first...it might have been the other way around, and National decided to market the 183 as a spin off from the Press Wireless model.)

But from a collector's point of view, owning one of these RPWs would be a wonderful thing. And just what did RPW-3 stand for? Perhaps...Receiver, Press Wireless, Version 3. Incidentally, does anyone have one? 📷

Photo credits: Alan Douglas, taken from his National collection. With thanks.



Here you can see the receiver's massive customized tuning capacitor