



# Asheville Radio Museum Acquires Extremely Rare Mid-1930s Radio

*Only 40 out of 350 Zenith Stratosphere Radios Produced are Known to Exist*

**ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Aug. 23, 2022** – The Asheville Radio Museum, one of Asheville's premier specialty museums, has acquired a Zenith Stratosphere 1000-Z console radio, one of the most coveted models from the 1930s. Family members of the late Steve Melvin, an enthusiast of vintage Zenith radios displayed at his home near Beaufort, South Carolina, generously gifted the pristine Stratosphere to the museum.

When a radio's average price in 1935 was less than \$100 (about \$2,100 in today's dollars), the Stratosphere sold for \$750 – more than a new Buick sedan. So, while many radios were manufactured in the tens of thousands, Zenith's production of this expensive showpiece was only 350 units, of which only 40 are known to survive. The museum's model, built in 1935, is the 290th unit.

In its 1935 advertisements, Zenith claimed that the Stratosphere "incorporated every modern engineering advancement." While many period radios had only five tubes, the Stratosphere utilized 25. Its circuitry enabled superior sensitivity and selectivity to pick up distant stations with little interference. And its 1930s audio section produced a remarkable 50 watts of power, creating very high-quality sound.

The Stratosphere's console equals the quality of the radio's engineering. It is a true masterpiece in the Art Deco style, using a stunning blend of wood veneers, including walnut, Australian Laurelwood, and Carpathian elm burl wood veneer. A Greek key motif circles the radio's top section.

"We are so fortunate that the Melvin family chose our museum to be the recipient of one of the most sought-after classic console radios of the last century," said Asheville Radio Museum Curator Stuart Smolkin. "The Zenith Stratosphere is not only a technical marvel for its time but also an exceptional example of master woodworking by skilled artists. It is the centerpiece of the Asheville Radio Museum."

This Stratosphere radio is now on permanent display at the Asheville Radio Museum. Please consult the museum's [website](#) for hours and directions to plan your visit.

**Note for Editors:** Hi-resolution images are available for download at the museum's [Google Drive](#) or by emailing [ashevilleradiomuseum@gmail.com](mailto:ashevilleradiomuseum@gmail.com) with "Photos" in the subject line.

## **About The Asheville Radio Museum:**

Founded in 2001, the not-for-profit Asheville Radio Museum provides visitors of all ages with a personalized learning experience about radio technology's economic and cultural impact enabling cell

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phones, GPS, Bluetooth, and more. The museum holds more than 100 vintage amateur and commercial radios from the early to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Parking and admittance are free at the museum, which is located on the campus of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. Information on open hours and private tours by appointment is available at [avlradiomuseum.org](http://avlradiomuseum.org).

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