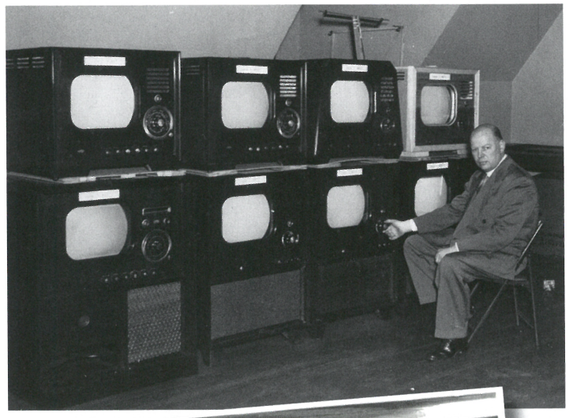
Allen B. Du Mont

An Inventor and Entertainment Pioneer with Roots in Montclair

CONTRIBUTED BY HELEN FALLON, TRUSTEE, MONTCLAIR HISTORY CENTER

WHILE Montclair boasts a long list of residents acclaimed either for their inventions or for their success in the television business, Allen Balcom Du Mont's achievements span both.

Du Mont (usually spelled DuMont for business purposes) was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1901. Stricken with polio at age 10, he was quarantined in his home for nearly a year. With no Netflix to binge or Zoom classes to attend, he delved deeply into science on his own, inspired by books and magazines his father brought home for him. He was especially interested in wireless radio communication. His father also bought him a crystal radio receiver which the young Du Mont assembled, disassembled and reassembled several times, improving it each time. He later built a transmitter, which his father erected atop a 30-foot-high receiving antenna on the roof of their Brooklyn apartment building. In 1914, when the family was advised that swimming would help strengthen Du Mont's legs, they moved to Montclair, where the YMCA (then located on Bloomfield Avenue) offered year-round access to a pool.



Top: Allen B Du Mont, pictured, is sometimes referred to as the "Father of TV," due to his improvements to the cathode ray tube which made television sets accessible to the home market.
Photo courtesy of Montclair Public Library Local History Collection
Bottom: Ad touting the inventor's superior DuMont Cathode Ray Tube

The following year, at age 14, Du Mont became the youngest American to obtain a first class commercial radio operator's license. He graduated from Montclair High School in 1919, attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and worked for the Westinghouse Lamp Company in Bloomfield upon graduation. Du Mont eventually worked for Lee de Forest, a radio pioneer, where he substantially improved radio tube production. Du Mont then turned his attention to television tubes, and he realized the need for a longer lasting cathode ray tube. In 1931, when de Forest rejected Du Mont's request to fund related research, Du Mont resigned and started his own company.

Du Mont Laboratories was first located in the garage of the home he shared with wife Ethel on Bradford Way, on the ridge of First Mountain near the Montclair/Cedar Grove town line. Du Mont's company soon outgrew his garage. In 1934-35, he moved the operation to 532 Valley Road in Upper Montclair (where Brick Lane Curry House is today) and later to a factory at 2 Main Avenue in Passaic. In 1938, having successfully introduced a longer-lasting cathode ray tube, Du Mont turned his attention to producing television sets. Du Mont sets were noted for their handsome design and high quality.

In a laboratory Du Mont built near his home, he also explored radar applications for the cathode ray tube. Acquiescing to a U.S. government request in the early days of World War II to keep the technology secret, Du Mont did not patent his radar technology. Instead, Du Mont Laboratories shared valuable technical information with other companies working in the war effort.

Meanwhile, the television side of the business continued to progress. On May 2, 1944, the television station WABD, named for Allen B. Du Mont's initials, received its commercial license and was assigned to Channel 5 in New York City. It operated until 1956 and broadcast shows including The Ernie Kovacs Show; The Original Amateur Hour; Flash Gordon; sports programming; DuMont Evening News and other news programs; and many others. (The Honeymooners was produced at Du Mont studios in New York but aired on CBS.)

In 1951, Du Mont donated equipment and provided grant funding to Montclair State Teachers College (today's Montclair State University) to produce the nation's first educational broadcasts.

On Wednesday, April 30, 1952, 10 half-hour programs telecast by the College TV Workshop were "beamed" to 12 schools in Montclair and Bloomfield, including Montclair's Edgemont, Grove Street (now the private Deron School), George Inness Junior High, Nishuane, Mt. Hebron, and Senior High. Programs were grade-appropriate and included: a guided tour of a model of a town and a civics lesson delivered by Bloomfield Mayor Donald Scott and Montclair Mayor Howard Deyo; Spanish language instruction; music appreciation and a band concert; a map making demonstration; a photography class; and current events programming. Observers and teachers who participated gave it very high marks and noted the broadcast's potential, yet programming was not sustained.

A small, non-descript building on the eastern edge of the Montclair State College/MSU campus housed the DuMont Television Center and a plaque inside detailed his contributions. The building has since been razed and the broadcast and news curriculum is now incorporated into MSU's School of Communication and Media.

Allen Du Mont died in 1965 and is buried in Mt. Hebron Cemetery in Upper Montclair. Du Mont's year-long medical quarantine as a child as well as his later contributions to remote learning are curiously relevant today during the pandemic. His engineering feat—developing a longer-lasting cathode ray tube—revolutionized television production, greatly impacted the entertainment business associated with it, and was integral to WWII radar defense systems, making his a career worth revisiting. ■

This article was adapted and expanded, with permission, from an article written by Jean Jaeger for the Cedar Grove Historical Society newsletter.

3 Top Treatments for Pain & Injuries

CONTRIBUTED BY NJ SPINE & JOINT

DR. GLENN SORRENTINO of NJ Spine & Joint is an expert at solving patients' pain and injury problems. His unique protocols include the most advanced non-surgical healing treatments and technologies that help even the most difficult cases. Here's a look at three of the highly effective treatments provided at the Cedar Grove multi-specialty practice.

Dr. Glenn Sorrentino of NJ Spine & Joint in Cedar Grove

1 NORMATEC RECOVERY SYSTEM

The NormaTec recovery system uses air compression massage technology to increase circulation and accelerate recovery time. This innovative technology helps the rehabilitation process by reducing both inflammation and fluid accumulation.

"The leg system is good for any knee injury, as well as ankle, shin, calf, quadricep and hamstring problems," explains Dr. Sorrentino. "The arm system facilitates range of motion and is great for shoulder injuries, forearms and elbows. Our athletes love this technology for the quick recovery it provides. But you certainly don't have to be an athlete to benefit from it."

2 MR4 COLD LASER THERAPY

Cold laser is a highly advanced technology that repairs damaged tissue by emitting targeted beams of light energy deep into the tissue to activate natural regeneration. The laser provides healing for a variety of conditions and injuries from head to toe.

"Our MR4 cold laser is a state-of-the-art treatment that is safe and painless with no side effects," says Dr. Sorrentino. "The light reaches the mitochondria of each cell to stimulate the production of ATP, which is the body's energy source. Our patients are testimonies to how extremely effective this technology is."

3 PRP (PLATELET-RICH PLASMA) THERAPY

PRP therapy is a regenerative treatment that utilizes the healing power of a patient's own blood to repair tissue that has been damaged due to age, injury or wear-and-tear. PRP is good for many areas of the body, such as shoulders, knees, hips and back.

"The patient's blood is centrifuged to isolate the platelet-rich plasma, which contains high concentrations of proteins and growth factors," he explains. "The platelet-rich plasma is then injected by our medical doctor into the injured area, which stimulates the body's healing process." ■

Complimentary Consultation: For a free consultation with Dr. Sorrentino, call 973-433-0889 to schedule an appointment. "We'll get to the root of your problem and determine which treatments are best for you."