

Fowler R-390A manufacturing – Larry Haney, 3/31/2022

I went through the 'History' file in the 'Pearls' and found the following interesting information on Fowler Industries:

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From: trinit69@... (Tom Marcotte N5OFF)  
Date: Sat Jan 17, 1998 5:48 am  
Subject: [R-390] All 390A's not created Equal

In speaking with a former EAC engineer, he said that they spent a considerable amount of money "redesigning" (his words) the R-390A assembly practices to allow wiring of the modules in the open, that is to say that the flanges on the boxes were not yet folded up, simplifying the assembly considerably. He commented that Collins had not designed the thing with mass production in mind in his opinion. If you examine a EAC IF next to a Collins, you'll see differences in the sheet metal folds. Apparently Radiomatt has never received a F on an engineering paper for jumping to conclusions (been there, never going back). Fowler actually produced the parts for the 1986 production run. Few people see as many R390A's as Rick Mish. He rebuilt one of the Fowlers, and commented to me that the parts and assembly were different than he'd seen on any others. The xtals and caps were mostly 1986 (although the big caps in the audio module were older, like the 70's). The wiring was less than neat, and the wafers on the switches was thinner than other makes. The filters were late production Dittmore Freimuth. The pots were made in Mexico.

This was not a congressional conspiracy to get 390A's for Goldwater, it was plain and simple, the use of an old spec for LSD ships which had not been updated for modern use. The Navy later replaced all of the 390A's on these LSD ships with R-1051's and RF-590's.

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Date: Wed, 18 Jul 2007 21:23:16 -0500  
From: "Mac McCullough"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler Industries R-390A on eBay Now

I had FOWLER s/n. 1 I know exactly what is and is not genuine.. several others here do as well ... BTW FOWLER s/n 1 did come out of the St. Julian's Creek STASH as did several other fowlers ... but they are very identifiable.

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Date: Wed, 18 Jul 2007 23:47:47 -0500  
From: "Mac McCullough"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler Industries R-390A on eBay Now

As I previously stated I did buy Fowler sn. 1 there was no, absolutely no doubt, it was genuine, as well all of its modules, when you see a Fowler and an opportunity to perform a cursory look, you will or will not have a sense if it is genuine, as for the specific nuances of them, I have been asked to write a feature article about this subject for the upcoming CCA SIGNAL news letter, in that I will identify the numerous points or ways it can be identified.. Additionally from the St Julian's haul, I think there were 2 additional Fowlers found , George Rancourt will know for sure, as well the sn.'s and as I recall from the 98-99' era #5 had already been found and was offered for sale, look thru ER in that era, and I think it will appear listed in the classifieds, that was VERY early Ebay times and ER was the predominate medium for selling and buying of equipment like this, the HTYS was waning, if not passé by that time .. and at the time the #5 was listed, none of the others had been identified, at least publicly, and I suspect in actuality 'found' there were a lot of radios to go thru from St Julian's, many more, if you were expressly looking for a Fowler.. As I mentioned last week when I asked about the current trend in better shipping methods for 390's, I have been away from

the 390 subject for 4-5 years ... but at last count 4 of the 5 had been found or identified, I will add, on sn. 1 it is original in every module, none were exchanged or mixed as was so often the case once the receivers were in the field for a long enough period .. In no. 1's case all were specific Fowler identified.. I had 465 of the St Julian sets, and I checked each one before sending them in batch's of 100 to Phil at Fair Radio, Phil bought these in lots of 100 as his sales dictated, it was my original goal to restore these individually, that was about the second biggest pipe dream I had in my life As an index point, I paid 37.50 for a few, 65.00 for most, and in a few instances 100.00 for a few, so averaged in I was at about 60.00 ea. Now that was not the case for ole # 1 believe me.. I paid dear for that one ..but it was 1998-99 and we were entering the "false sense of economic euphoria" era... so money was little obstacle... not like now ... One question I will leave the reader to ponder, why were 5 built and ordered, when only 4 were required, only 2 ships were being constructed... Tom M, has pretty well determined why .. but it is an interesting question or plausible answer. thanks for the read ..

mac/mc w5mc

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Date: Thu, 19 Jul 2007 00:01:23 -0500  
From: "Mac McCullough"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler Industries R-390A on eBay Now

One more "small point" as being the first long term owner of Fowler # 1 I did receive a very formal letter from Fowler Industries of the time, as I recall Mr. Charles Hungadunga was the acting President... the letter was quite stern, and directed me to do several things with reference to owning # 1 ... I later had a long talk with Mr. Hungadunga and it was all cleaned up ..

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Date: Thu, 19 Jul 2007 00:51:15 -0500  
From: "Mac McCullough"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler Industries R-390A on eBay Now

If any of you are seriously bidding on this, I offer several comments, although the seller has a few points incorrect, they are very small to the extent of his overall effort and research he did in preparation for this listing, he has done a good job.. And I clearly believe this set is indeed a GENUINE Fowler R-390A, as I made mention, if you get really serious and near the auction end, 1 day or so, and your bid is listed, I can quickly give you many points to look for to discern that this is a genuine Fowler.. As a information tidbit, I have no knowledge of this seller, dont know him, and would only presume him if he were in a room with one other person that I do know ..

mac/mc w5mc

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Date: Thu, 19 Jul 2007 03:15:01 -0700 (PDT)  
From: "Tom M."  
Subject: [R-390] How to Tell Fowler Frame

When Fowler made the back panels they misspelled SYNC OSC as SYWC OSC I believe. The W was "repaired" to make a N. The one on ebay has this flaw. I do seem to recall Mac being contacted by Charles H. Hungadunga of Hungadunga,Hungadunga,Hungadunga,Hungadunga and McCormick (I it was the most important Hungadunga of the bunch, too) as to the need to return his Fowler radio to the factory to remove radioactive materials. I thought that was pretty funny (from a distance, of course).

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Date: Thu, 19 Jul 2007 08:13:16 -0500  
From: "Les Locklear"  
Subject: [R-390] Fowler S/N 2

I've been reading the archives with interest concerning the Fowler R-390A s/n 2. I no longer subscribe to the list, but several friends told me of the activity about this particular R-390A and I wanted to clear up a few things, so I subscribed this morning to attempt to do that. The story about this particular receiver was originally published in Electric Radio Magazine issue 71 in March, 1995. A close-up photo of the nomenclature tag was in issue 72 in April, 1995. That is the "Real McCoy Tag" Speculate about made up tags etc. One wasn't made for this receiver except when it was built for the U.S. Navy by Fowler Industries. I know the owner, Victor Hatharasinghe who was mentioned in the original article and it is indeed a "genuine" Fowler and is s/n 2. Tom Marcotte reviewed the pictures of this receiver back in 1995 and knows of the validity of this particular receiver, as do several other people. Tom Marcotte did quite a bit of research with personnel from Fowler Industries and Avondale Shipyards regarding the five R-390A's built. That information was published in subsequent issues of Electric Radio Magazine.

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Date: Thu, 19 Jul 2007 08:15:51 -0500  
From: "Mac McCullough"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler Industries R-390A on eBay Now

FACT : fowler's price was in excess of mid 30k ea. as I recall and tom didn't they [ fowler ] have issues making them meet spec on sensitivity or such, whatever it was no home run for them, with such limited qty.

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Date: Thu, 19 Jul 2007 08:19:17 -0500  
From: "Les Locklear"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler Industries R-390A on eBay Now

\$35K according to the purchasing records from Avondale Shipyards.

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Date: Fri, 20 Jul 2007 00:12:59 -0400  
From: rbethman  
Subject: Re: [R-390] "Fowler S/N Tewfer"

I've read ALL the ER articles regarding the Fowler R-390As. As Mac has already pointed out: The rear panel has the VERY distinct error in the word spelling of "SYNC". Click on the picture of the rear. The click where it indicates for a larger view. Lo and Behold! "SYWC", as noted in the ER articles. Gentlemen, I may NOT be the \*most\* brilliant one on the list, NOR am I the dumbest or most dense. But from everything that I've read and now seen of the item of discussion, IT is the \*real\* deal!

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Date: Fri, 20 Jul 2007 06:40:25 -0700 (PDT)  
From: "Tom M." Subject: [R-390] Fowler Parts

I want to give you all a couple of example of unusual parts on the Fowler. >From the photos the seller sent me, I noted two CAGE codes on the audio transformers.

97102 is for Sterling Transformer of Brooklyn  
72149 is for Electronic Transformer of Patterson, NJ

I've never seen transformers from these companies before on 390As. I've seen lots of Amercian Trans Coil, etc. These two are new to me. The radio is legit and so far the only Folwer to not come from SJC (St. Julian's Creek) (i.e. the best one).

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Date: Fri, 20 Jul 2007 10:36:13 -0700 (PDT)

From: "Tom M."  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler IF Filters

It was Dittmore Freimuth of Milwaukee.

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Date: Fri, 20 Jul 2007 10:41:46 -0700 (PDT)  
From: "Tom M."  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Fowler IF

Where do I start? The R-390As were made from US Army Signal Corps drawings. The parts had to comply with the specific drawings and specifications, not a certain supplier. The filters are Dittmore Friemtu. He says that in the ebay listing.

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Date: Fri, 20 Jul 2007 12:54:49 -0500  
From: "Les Locklear"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Rare R-390 radios

Fowler: When Tom Marcotte spoke with the Plant Manager he commented that they had particular problems obtaining JAN tubes, in particular 26Z5W's and 3TF7's. Remember, that they were considered "unobtainium" in the late 80's early 90's. Then the government released surplus tubes and Fair Radio was selling them at reasonable prices (they went quickly). The potentiometers were made in Mexico, the meters were A & M Instruments, the quality of the wafer switches were not as robust as the runs during the 50's and 60's, Dittmore-Freimuth made the mechanical filters (as they did on many later versions), as well as the ones they built themselves, which were 67 EAC receivers with Dittmore's filters. I can't say if what they obtained, but can assure you they didn't purchase any in the crate R390A's. Even though they were available at various locations throughout the country. When you bid on a contract the Government lets, you fill the requirements, and they inadvertently left the R-390A spec in the bid offering. Avondale Shipyards probably didn't think to do a search for "in the crate" R-390A's and put out a request for bids to build five R-390A's. Fowler Industries was Clavier and prior to that Capehart, so they had experience building R-390A's and supplying R-390A spare modules (Clavier). Tom Marcotte can pick it up from here, as that is about I can remember or verify from back when we did the ER articles.

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Date: Fri, 20 Jul 2007 11:16:41 -0700 (PDT)  
From: "Tom M."  
Subject: [R-390] More Fowler Fodder, Letterhead, Map

Les is correct. They made the whole radio. I spoke with the plant manager many years ago. He told me they used the Thomas Register to find parts. One of the Fowler guys I spoke with was Pete Kozak. I have his phone number but will resist posting it here lest he get bombarded with ebay type questions. I remember one of his quotes, "look, this operation was no Collins Radio." He said the building barely had a sign. It was called Fowler Industries because it was on Fowler Street (corner of Front and Fowler). Sounds like I'm making this stuff up but I'm not. I got a copy of a letter from them which is posted here:

**LINK:** <http://www.r-390a.net/fowler-ltr.pdf>

This is the google map link [http://www.google.com/maps?q=78+Front+St,+Port+Jervis,+NY+12771,+U SA&sa=X&oi=map&ct=title](http://www.google.com/maps?q=78+Front+St,+Port+Jervis,+NY+12771,+USA&sa=X&oi=map&ct=title)

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Date: Wed, 7 Apr 2010 14:50:20 -0500  
From: "Les Locklear"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] eBay NOS R-390A

Well, the Fowler serial number 2 was found at the LBTF (Land Based Test Facility) at the Long Beach Shipyard.....a small piece of history there

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Date: Tue, 22 Feb 2011 18:56:30 -0600  
From: "libbysales"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] The rare bears

5 were built.. not four, there is no doubt on this, s/n 1,2,3,4 and 5 have been found and verified ...

they did serve aboard ships, I have serial number 1 and it came from the SJC (St. Julian's Creek) stash as well at least 2 others ..although I cant prove they did serve aboard the express ship they were built for, it does make logical sense that they were a part of the commissioning... Fowler did make them and ship them to the Pascagoula or however it is correctly spelled, and they were built under order from the ship yard for the 2 ships under construction and would therefore be tied at least at the outset to be a part of the original fixed ships inventory...

I offer this as fact and confirmed by personal experience...ownership of one, reviewing previous ones { Fowler } that have been posted and sold on either the eBay medium or Electric Radio

I feel very comfortable in my report and offer it to for inclusion and as supplemental information..

mac/mc w5mc

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Date: Wed, 23 Feb 2011 05:59:25 -0800 (PST)  
From: "Tom M."  
Subject: Re: [R-390] The rare bears

Mac is correct. Five were made for the LSDs built at Avondale. LSD 44 Gunston Hall was one of the ships. One can look up the similar ships in the class at Avondale. I spoke with the Avondale purchasing agent at the time of discovery and also with a couple of Fowler people.

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Date: Thu, 10 Mar 2011 14:29:12 -0500  
From: Nick England  
Subject: [R-390] 1980's Navy R-390A's

I have a 1986 document on the radio equipment aboard the Navy's FFG-7 class frigates. Shown on an equipment layout amongst the R-1051's and other modern stuff is an R-390A Last night I found some photos of the communications center on a couple of these ships and sure enough, there's a familiar face. These particular two ships were commissioned in 1984 and 1986 - the 51 ships in the class were built between 1977 and 1989 by Bath and Todd shipyards. OK, I know about Avondale and the Fowler R390A's - but where did these 50 or so R-390A's come from??? Did the shipyards buy them on ebay or what? I checked with a fellow aboard FFG40 and he says there is now a modern receiver in that rack. Photos for your amusement and edification at

**LINK:** <http://www.navy-radio.com/ships/ffg7.htm>

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Date: Thu, 10 Mar 2011 14:02:24 -0600  
From: "Les Locklear"  
Subject: Re: [R-390] 1980's Navy R-390A's

Fantastic find, Nick! I was absolutely amazed when I helped uncover the 1984 Fowler R-390A story. Not we've got a whole new chapter. I wonder where they procured their 390A's from? There were plenty in military inventories at that point in time. I would bet they purchased a bit smarter than Avaondale Shipyard did.....

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Date: Thu, 10 Mar 2011 13:17:44 -0800 (PST)  
From: "Tom M."  
Subject: Re: [R-390] 1980's Navy R-390A's

I think the difference here was between "GOVT SUPPLIED" material and "CONTRACTOR SUPPLIED" material. The 390As for Avondale were contractor supplier according to my discussion with them. I have a copy of the book "THE YARD" about Bath Iron Works. They go into that in the book. Really good scooped pics! I really like them. Interesting that this setup had all sorts of cats and dogs for HF receivers.

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Date: Wed, 20 Apr 2016 14:27:45 -0400  
From: Nick England  
Subject: Re: [R-390] Interesting Radio

I've pulled a batch of hi-res photos off the National Archives showing the FFG-7 series of frigates under construction. <http://www.navyradio.com/ships/ffg7.htm> Nice shots of M28 TTY gear, R-1051 rcvrs, etc in their native habitat. And a good ole R-390A installed in each ship 1980-87 See for instance

**LINK:** <http://www.navy-radio.com/ships/ffg7/ffg43-06808.jpeg>

These were not the 1984 Fowler units, but evidently ones refurbished or pulled from stock (or somewhere) and installed in ships under construction as late as 1987. They are shown in the 1988 FFG-7 class Radio Communications System manual.

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Date: Fri, 26 Jun 2020 10:08:36 -0500  
From: Cecil  
Subject: Re: [R-390] R: Wow! Fowler R-390A

From Mac... I'm disappointed in what I think is being said that Rick Mish was portraying owning and or selling s/n 1 ---snip--- he never saw the original Fowler plate, I didn't send it to him for this express reason.

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Date: Fri, 26 Jun 2020 13:54:32 +0000 (UTC)  
From: Thomas Hoyer  
Subject: Re: [R-390] R: Wow! Fowler R-390A

While the front name plate may be a reproduction and the reproducer didn't use the correct contract number (shame on them), all of the internal modules are Fowler S/N 1 and have been vetted by several people with intimate knowledge of this radio as well as the other existing Fowlers .

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Date: Fri, 26 Jun 2020 18:23:05 -0500

From: "Les Locklear"

Subject: Re: [R-390] R: Wow! Fowler R-390A Will some one write one for Wei-i Li and the Pearls of Wisdom.

Well, I'm going to try to answer this despite my brain saying leave it alone... The U.S. Navy neglected to remove the R-390A/URR requirement for the LSD (not LPD) Gunston Hall Class ships Gunston Hall 44 and Comstock 45. The purchasing department at Avondale shipyards sent out a bid for five (5) R-390A/URR receivers. Fowler Industries won. They built five. Fowler originated from Clavier Corp. that was once Capehart. So, they had the knowledge to build them. No aliens or any conspiracy to sneak them in were used in the process and the spare parts were going to be included, but they got waylaid to the B-29 base that was being built on the moon. But the Air Force found out that tubes wouldn't operate in those conditions, so the receivers and spares ended up in the Gunston Hall class LSD (Landing Ship Dock) ships being built in Avondale shipyards. That's all I have to say...

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Date: Sat, 27 Jun 2020 00:04:18 +0000 (UTC)

From: "Tom M."

Subject: Re: [R-390] R: Wow! Fowler R-390A Will some one write one for Wei-i Li and the Pearls of Wisdom.

Makes a lot of sense Les. Thanks

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Date: Sat, 27 Jun 2020 19:14:19 +1200

From: Ken

Subject: Re: [R-390] R: Wow! Fowler R-390A Will some one write one for Wei-i Li and the Pearls of Wisdom.

Good evening all, I found this article while doing some research into the current epy listing and I thought this article might be interesting to some... It starts on page 8 then continues on page 11. I hadn't come across this before and figured some of you might not have either.

**LINK:** <http://w3kwh.com/newsletters/SCARC-KH-09-2007.pdf>

Enjoy your weekend!

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Date: Mar 3, 2022, 9:29 AM

From: Tom Marcotte via R-390 <r-390 at mailman.qth.net>

Subject: [R-390] A&M R-390A meter NSN's

A&M made meters for the R-390A; they were used on the Fowler radios in the 80s.

Audio Meter 6625-01-127-4037

and the S meter (I think) 6625-00-510-1815

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