

Golden Star RADIO 星金

In 1953, the Golden Star Radio Chinese Hour boasted an audience of 25,000 Bay Area listeners.

GOLDEN STAR RADIO

The first Chinese language radio broadcast in North America was by the Golden Star Radio Company, founded by Tommy and May Chin Tong. From 1939 to 1979, the Golden Star Radio Chinese Hour provided Chinatown with the latest news and entertainment. This special Cantonese language radio show was a special feature of local stations KBRG, KLOK, and KSAN. Families tuned in on weeknights and Saturdays to hear May Chin Tong's Chinese Hour radio show on events about China, the US, and the Chinese American community.



TOMMY TONG

The Golden Star Radio neon sign is remarkable because it was made of such high-quality materials and has survived many decades perched on the side of the Tong Family building that now includes the Golden Star Tattoo business. The nested stars within the star are an expert example of neon "tube bending" and the "Noviol" gold glass was the most expensive kind of neon glass, handmade in Italy. It is easy to imagine that the stars would animate whenever the Chinese Hour was broadcast!

For more stories and signs like the Golden Star Radio, take a SF Neon twilight walking tour to discover neighborhood history and fascinating vintage neon signs, hidden in plain sight.



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MAY CHIN TONG

May realized her dream of being a radio broadcaster when Tommy built the family radio station at 846 Clay Street. May was a native English speaker born in San Francisco and perfected her Chinese language skills as an adult. Her son, Ron Tong, says his mother's Cantonese was always 1000% correct. The Tong's Golden Star business was more than a radio station. It included a shop that sold radios and a recording studio that produced Chinese records. (Thanks to the Tong family and the Bay Area Radio Museum for photos and history.)