



WARCI

NEWSLETTER

Wisconsin Antique Radio Club, Incorporated

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EARLY RADIO IN MILWAUKEE

I found this article in a collection of radio material at the Milwaukee Historical Society. When it was written, and by whom, is not indicated. It had accompanying documents including a copy of the permit to erect the tower on the Railway Exchange Building, and a newspaper article including a photo of the tower at McKinley Beach dated 1920. In 1920, it was still being operated by the Navy. The photo is unintentionally amusing. Along with the tower, there is an insert of the officer in charge, appearing as large as the tower, standing roused straight, seemingly floating about ten feet off the ground.

It is said that the first radio transmitter operated in Milwaukee was operated by the Great Lakes Telegraph Company, atop what is now the Railway Exchange Building. The towers were erected in January, 1909, and went into operation February 4, 1909. It remained in operation until 1912 under the direction of the Great Lakes Radio-Telegraph Company. Thereafter, it became the Milwaukee Wireless School which took possession February 6, 1912 and operated by them until November 1912. It became the property of the American Marconi Company after November 1912 and was operated by them until the World War. By an Act of Congress all of the Marconi stations in America were leased by the government during the World War. In 1918, the government offered to purchase the Marconi stations in America from the Marconi Company and were purchased for the sum of approximately \$1,500,000.

While the station was being operated by the Marconi Company, its call was WJME. As a result of the War and the government taking over the station, the station was operated under the naval call number of N1K. After removal of the station from the Railway Exchange Building it was in operation for several years at the Life Guard Station near McKinley Beach.

It is said by some that there was an

earlier station in Milwaukee, which information appears to be doubtful. This supposed station was supposed to have been located atop the Schütz Brewery up on Third Street. Old Schütz employees have no recollection of such a station, but it is advisable that we check further

before we definitely drop that matter.

There was another early radio station operated by the United Wireless Company, in Whitefish Bay, prior to 1914. This station used a power of 50 Kilowatts which even today would be considered a large radio station. The existence of this station is an established fact. The exact location, as yet, we do not know.

FROM THE EDITOR

I want to thank everyone for their participation in the last meet. Especially appreciated was John Erigi bringing in the Nann-Landon radio and Vera Teske having the Nann recording.

I'd like to make a correction in my article on Irving Nann. Glen Trischan informed me that I had the wrong location for the Nann-Landon factory. As some of you know, almost all the addresses in Milwaukee were changed in 1930. I was aware of it, but was wrongly informed by a librarian as to the new address for Nann-Landon. The correct address is in the 2800 block of North 4th Street. As Glenn Trischan indicated it was right behind the factory for Nann Bush shoes, his father's factory.

Recently, I came across a voluminous amount of information on the Milwaukee Journal Radio and TV stations. Since John Erigi wrote something on the early Journal history, I'll be doing the same thing on their experimental work with Apex radio, FM, fax, and TV in the future. John Erigi has also indicated he interviewed Phillip Laeser after he retired. He was an engineer involved in all of the early broadcasting experiments for the Journal.

Finally, those of you who are familiar with other Wisconsin radio makers, let me encourage you to write something about a Wisconsin company or at least let us know what you know about them so that other members of the club can enjoy Wisconsin's rich radio history.



Here is a photo of the tower set up by the American Marconi Company. The date is June 1st, 1909. The location is just north of Lake Park. The event is the first successful transmission between Milwaukee and Chicago. Participating were the mayor of Milwaukee and the mayor of Chicago. Even by standards of that time, this is a flimsy tower. Two lashed forty foot tall, it seemingly is made of two poles welded or bolted together. Is it the first radio tower in Milwaukee? Maybe not... but more on that in a future issue.

The Dynamic Microphone

Various inventors had developed dynamic or "moving coil" Microphones between 1877 and 1930. Unfortunately, the dynamic microphone was a little ahead of its time. The main problem was the very low output voltage, which required amplification.



Figure 1
Not model

The telephone industry had developed the carbon microphone, which was not only a microphone but an amplifier as well. It would deliver much more power output than was derived from the sound waves striking the diaphragm, due to the battery in the microphone circuit. Since the microphone at that time was being used primarily in voice circuits and close talking applications, noise and frequency

response were not major factors.

As we approached the mid twenties, the radio industry was growing rapidly and in need of amplifiers and better quality microphones. The recording industry was transferring from acoustical to electrical recording.

The movie industry was being pressured into talking motion pictures, as public address systems were on the rise as equipment became available.

Western Electric engineers had developed loudspeaker drivers in 1928 using a special dome shaped diaphragm with aluminum alloy and aluminum ribbon wire for the voice coil. (Their model 555 receiver) This same

basic design was used in their first dynamic microphone. A small number of these microphones were made for engineers involved in broadcasting, public address and movie equipment. These microphones were tested in all these areas before they put the design into production.

Western Electric introduced this microphone in 1931 as the model 618A moving coil microphone. It was the first dynamic microphone produced for commercial use. Figures 2, 3 and 4 show a few photos of this microphone in its manufactured version.



figure 2



figure 3



figure 4

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Official year: Jan. 1 - Dec. 31.
Dues are NOT prorated.

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Wisconsin Antique Radio Club

Milwaukee, WI 53224

Sunday
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8a.m. - 12:00p.m.
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Club: Membership dues are \$12 per year (January 1 to December 31)

Information: For information contact: Davey Boyce,

██████████, Milwaukee, WI 53224(414) ██████████



Disclaimer: Neither the organizers of this event nor the owner of the property are responsible or liable for any personal injury, property damage or loss by theft or other means of any merchandise brought into the building by attendees of the swap meet.

MILWAUKEE GOT AN EARLY START IN BROADCAST RADIO

by John Burg

The book, *The Milwaukee Journal: An Informal Chronicle of Its First 100 Years*, by Robert W. Wells, gives an excellent summary of the history of Milwaukee radio stations, especially of WTMI.

WTMI was not Milwaukee's first radio station, according to Wells. The Wisconsin News beat the Milwaukee Journal by putting a small station on the air in the early 1920s, broadcasting from a rental room in the Pfister Hotel.

Journal publisher Harry J. Grant (whose lunch had saved him from a trip on the Titanic) was impressed, but cautious about his paper getting into radio. Still, other newspapers were doing it, the Chicago Daily News put WMAQ on the air with classical music and educational programs in 1922. Milwaukee listeners also listened to WTAS in Elgin, Illinois, which broadcast dance music.

Gimbels put WAAK on the air on April 26, 1922, to convince people to buy radios. This encouraged Grant to ask Walter Damm, the Journal's talented advertising expert, to line up a program for WAAK, which featured Lionel Barrymore, who happened to be playing at the Davidson Theater. The program was played over loudspeakers at several places, including the downtown Journal building, where people

who didn't have radios could hear it.

On June 16, 1922, another station, WCAY, began broadcasting in Milwaukee, and two weeks later, Marquette University put WHAD on the air. (Note that these call letters are now used by the state radio network station in Delafield; many radio station call letters have been moved around the country, with no connection with the company that previously used them.)

WHAD grew out of experiments in the M.U. physics lab. The Milwaukee School of Engineering also put a station on the air starting out with the call letters WHAD, then changing to the more fitting call letters, WSCE.

Incidentally, all stations east of the Mississippi were assigned call letters beginning with a "W", and all stations west of the Mississippi were to use call letters beginning with a "K". But at least two stations had their call letters established before that rule went through. That included of course, KDKA, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and one you may not have heard of, because it has very low power. It's KFIZ in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, still on the air after three-quarters of a century, at 1370 on the dial. So if you're driving near Fond du Lac, and pick up that station, don't ask where the mountains are. You're not out West.

By 1924, there were 12,471 radio sets in Milwaukee. The Journal had started regular broadcasts over WCAY, which had moved to the Argyle Hotel, then changed its call letters to WKAF. The Journal started a

radio section in the paper, and held its first annual Radio Exposition at the Argyle. On January 25, 1925, the Journal took over the programming of the Marquette University Station, WHAD.

On April 20, 1927, with several years of radio experience under its belt, the Journal dropped WHAD and bought WKAF. The problem had been, the paper couldn't do any advertising on the university-owned station. Since advertising is the lifeblood of a newspaper (and most radio stations), a change had to be made in order to pay the bills. Immediately, the call letters were changed to WTMI, which perfectly fit the newspaper's name. To this day, the paper, now the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, is a blood brother of the radio stations, which now includes WTMI and its (m. counter-part) WTKT.

You are encouraged to read Robert J. Wells' book, which is probably still available from the Journal Sentinel, since it gives many more details of the development of radio in the Milwaukee.

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Wausau, WI 54401 (715) [redacted] before

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Ayer [redacted] Mequon, WI 53097

(262) [redacted]

2001 Calendar Wisconsin Antique Radio Club

Please note: The newsletter is the reliable
source for dates of your club's swap meets.

Wisconsin ARC

March 25 Outdoors/Indoors

8am - 11am

Illinois Meets

April 1st

Radio Resources

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[www. antique-radio.com](http://www.antique-radio.com)

The website for

Antique Electronic Supply is

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Other addresses & web sites:

Antique Radio Club of Illinois

[redacted]@aol.com

Northland Antique Radio Club:

www.gowebinc.com/televisions/ty4344

This Newsletter is published quarterly
in March, June, September &
December. Deadlines for ads and
articles are the 1st of the month of
publication. The club welcomes letters
and comments. Address them to:

Ralph Larsen c/o Wisconsin
Antique Radio Club, Inc.

[redacted]
Milwaukee WI 53202

[redacted]@hotmail.com

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Vice President: Bob Evans (414) [redacted]

Secretary: Steve Lutz (414) [redacted]

Treasurer: Bob Gotschman (262) [redacted]

Director: Ralph Larsen (414) [redacted]

Director: Scherrie Atty [redacted]

Wisconsin Antique Radio Club Inc.

Purpose: The Purpose of the club is to preserve the
history and enhance the knowledge of radio,
television and related disciplines.

Wisconsin Antique Radio Club, Inc.

Attn: Ralph Larsen

[redacted]
Milwaukee WI 53202



"Geminole" Radio Meets

