

Troy's First Ham Radio Club Recalled

Established About 1911

By JOSEPH A. PARKER

Two early day wireless telegraphy fans recently recalled the formation of the first amateur radio club in Troy.

The two men are Albert Page, president of Trojan Electronic Supply Co., and Malcolm Williams of Germantown, Md., who retired recently from the Movie-tone Newsreel organization in Washington, where his assignments included coverage of presidential activities from Calvin Coolidge to John F. Kennedy.

At Mr. Page's suggestion Mr. Williams rummaged through his scrapbooks and photos to gather information on the activities of the early radio "hams" dating back 56 years.

According to Mr. Williams, the first amateur wireless station in Troy of any power was that of Wendell W. King of First Avenue, Lansingburgh, near 122nd Street, who was issued the call sign of 2QD.

First 'Ham' In 1910

He went on: "That was in 1910. Wendell was about 12 then. He was transmitting Morse code to other stations, perhaps as far as 100 miles.

"About the same time, however, several other boys in Troy and Lansingburgh were reading about the new gadget called wireless in what few publications were available on the subject, and building equipment of their own. Their progress understandably was slow."

Mr. Williams said that word of King's station spread quickly. With his help other experimenters formed a group to compare notes and assist each other. Thus the Troy Wireless Club was formed about 1911. Meetings were held in the homes of members



ORIGINAL TROY WIRELESS CLUB—Members of the city's first "ham" radio organization gathered around some of their equipment at Beman Park in 1915. Launched about 1911, they had just established a station in the attic of Troy High School

Charles Everingham, Wendell King and John Mahoney.

(then on Fifth Avenue between State Street and Broadway). From left, in rear, Malcolm Williams, Nathan Haberman, Harold Stapleton and Albert Page. Clockwise around the equipment, William LeMay, Simon Carman, William A. Gunn, Samuel Weiss, Wendell King and John Mahoney.

Post Office Building at 4th Street and Broadway had a high tower. With permission of all concerned, an 800-foot wire, 125 feet high, was strung between the two buildings.

"A mighty formidable wireless antenna in those days. But it was short-lived. A heavy snow storm brought it down

low-powered transmitter and receiver there.

War Forced Disbanding

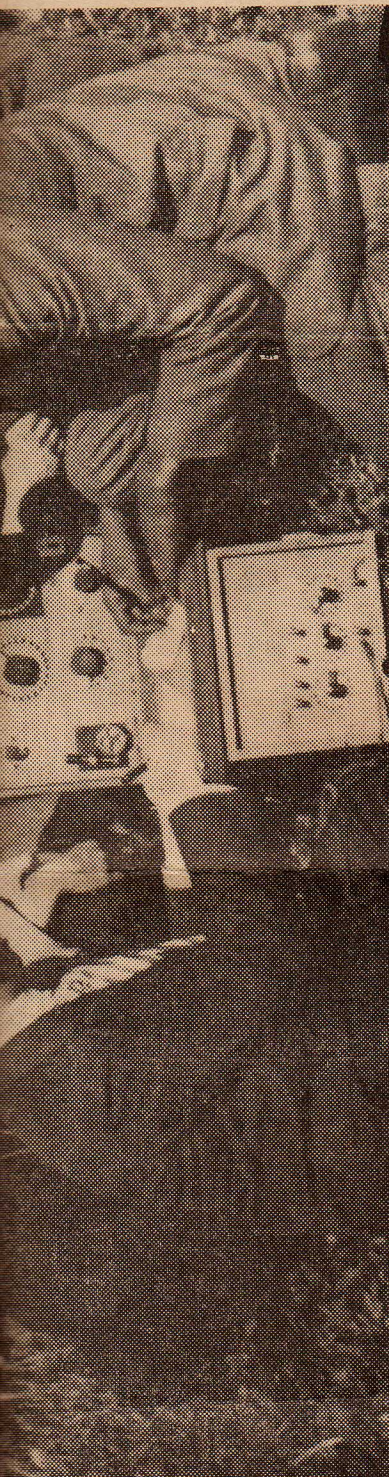
The club was forced to disband in 1917 by government order because of World War I and the danger of spies. Since most of the members were of draft age, the majority entered military service, and most

Street granted permission to erect one mast on its roof and another was put up on the YMCA roof.

With the installation of a 3/4 kilowatt spark transmitter and the latest design of a short wave receiver using vacuum tubes, which were then new, the station was granted the call

wireless stations in more than 20 states, to be relayed on to more distant points.

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About the same time Lansingburgh High School and Troy High formed small wireless clubs, the latter under the sponsorship of the Science Club.

In 1913 enough elementary equipment was available from the physics laboratory of Troy High School to assemble a low-power transmitter. Mr. Williams built the receiver and work was begun on an antenna.

Long Antenna Strung

In those days large antennas were required for transmission and receiving, he explained. "The old Troy High School was on 5th Avenue then and the old

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"A mighty formidable wireless antenna in those days. But it was short-lived. A heavy snow storm brought it down over the trolley car wires on Broadway. A new antenna was then erected entirely on the roof of the high school, which worked just as efficiently."

With its new antenna, the station, its call letters ZAGN, was on the air almost nightly during 1914 and 1915. Many contacts were made with area stations, and as far as Pittsfield, Mass., and down the Hudson to Yonkers.

Many youngsters constructed their own sets. By 1916 the Troy Wireless Club had expanded to such an extent that it needed a larger meeting place. The Troy YMCA came to the rescue and the club built a

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With the installation of a 3/4 kilowatt spark transmitter and the latest design of a short wave receiver using vacuum tubes, which were then new, the station was granted the call sign of 2SZ and was ready for long distance transmission.

Music Broadcasts Heard

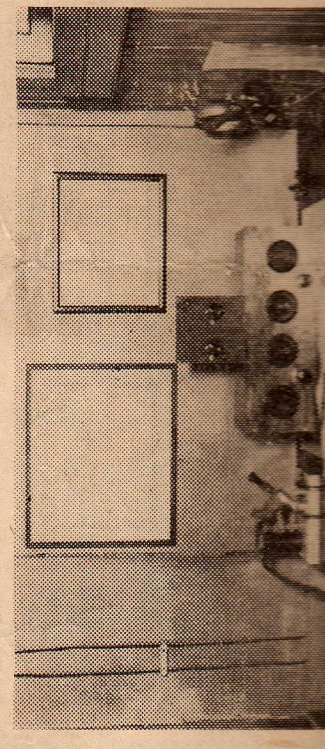
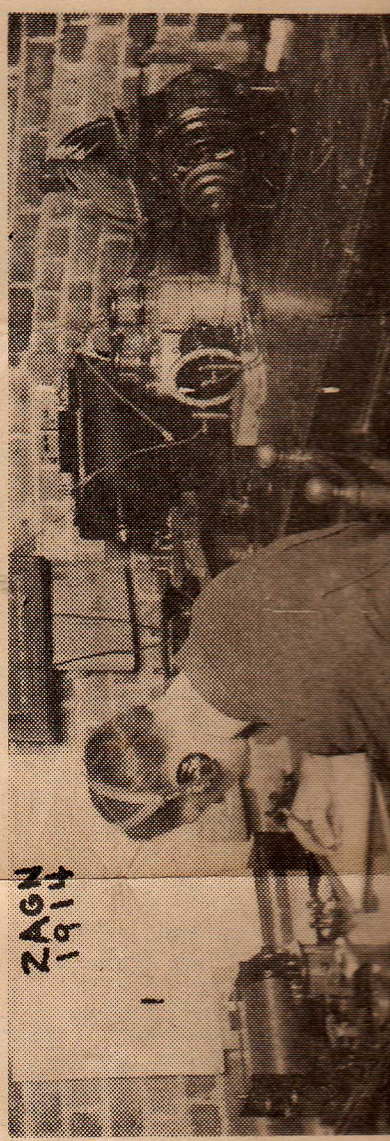
Stations as far away as Iowa and Kansas, about 1,300 miles, were contacted. Open nights for the public were scheduled, during which pioneer broadcasts of music from the Union College Radio Station were heard.

News was picked up and time signals from the Naval Station at Arlington. In addition, hundreds of messages were originated here and transmitted over 2SZ to amateur

wireless stations in more than 20 states, to be relayed on to more distant points.

As older members graduated from RPI undergraduates took their place. Eventually the membership became almost all RPI. As a result, activities eventually were transferred to the campus where the club still exists as the RPI Radio Club and still uses the call letters W2SZ.

Besides Mr. Williams, Mr. King and Mr. Page, other early amateurs included William A. DuBois, who recently retired from Cluett, Peabody & Co.; William A. Gunn, Troy photographer who died recently; Charles E. Everingham, who later became research engineer with Bliley Electric Co.; Samuel B. Weiss, who became president of Detroit Supply Co., and Dr. Frank M. Sulzman, who recently died.



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wound up as wireless operators who were in demand.

Transmitting privileges were restored to all licensed radio amateurs in 1919 and the Troy Club lost no time in reorganizing.

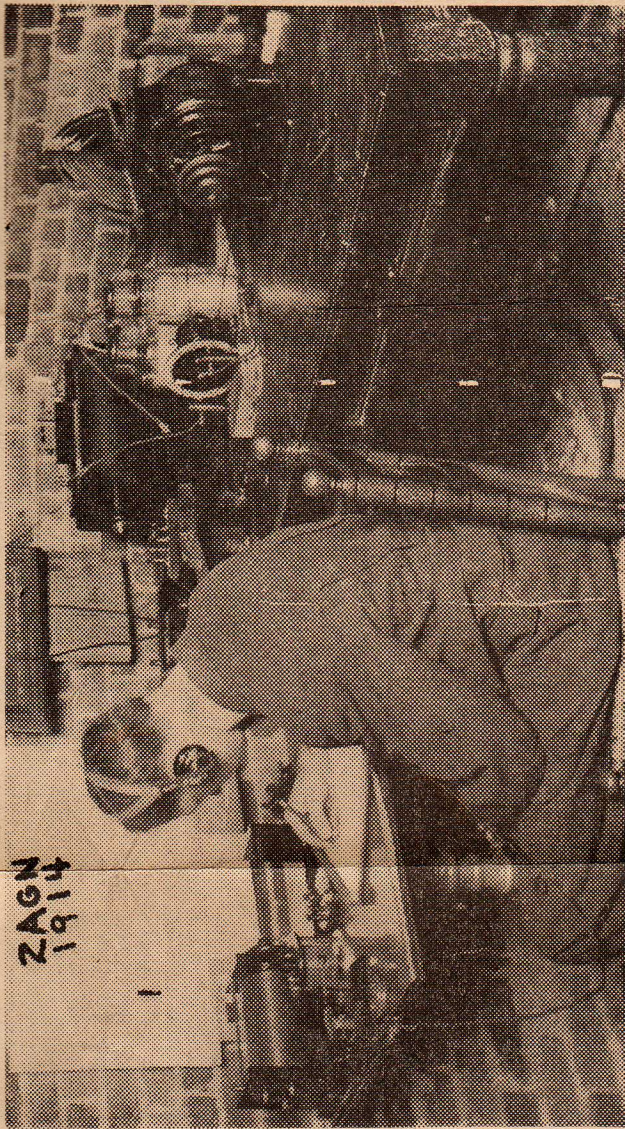
The club's membership rose to 50 in the fall of that year when many RPI electrical engineering students joined.

It was renamed the YMCA Radio Club. With additional engineering know-how its members set out to build a larger station and a bigger antenna. The Troy Gas Co. on Second

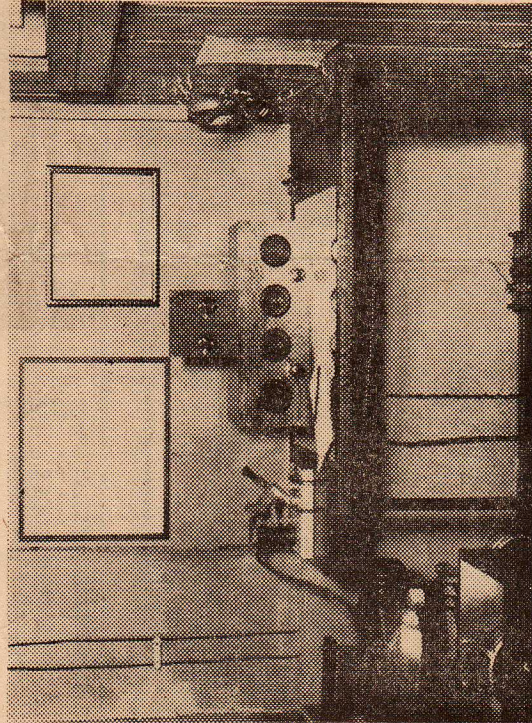
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ZAGN
1914



AT TROY HIGH STATION—Malcolm Williams, Class of 1915, here copies messages and time signals from Navy Station NAA, as member of the amateur radio club under auspices of the Troy High School Science Club. The radio hams' call letters were 2AGN during 1914 and 1915.



IN 1919 AT TROY YMCA—After World War I forced dispersion of the radio club, it was reconstituted at the Troy "Y" with call letters 2EH and 2SZ. Later it moved to RPI and retains the call letters W2SZ.