

SOME OLD rusted coils of twisted wire, broken pieces of concrete, and a concrete slab that juts out over the eroded bank toward the ocean at South Wellfleet, Cape Cod, are all that remain of the first wireless station to be erected in the United States. Actually, in a sense, these relics are a monument to the audacity of Guglielmo Marconi, who dared to think that he might span the Atlantic with radio signals.

For the benefit of "old-timers," in whose memory the station is established forever, it should be recalled that at first, in the early 1900's, it was called "CC," changed to "MCC" in 1910, when all Marconi stations were given the prefix "M," and to "WCC" later on when international regulations required American stations to use the prefix "W" or "K."

In 1901, Marconi had two powerful radio transmitting and receiving stations erected, one at Poldhu, England, and the other at South Wellfleet. He also set up receiving equipment in Newfoundland, where, in the same year, he received the historic first signal (the letter "S") from across the ocean. A storm wrecked the first station at South Wellfleet, and it had to be rebuilt. It was formally opened on January 19, 1903. After years of service, it was dismantled by a force from the First Naval District in 1919.

MCC was especially noted for its dispatches of press every evening, the news of the day being prepared at the AP office in New York, wired to MCC, and thence "broadcast" by wireless. As the news came in on the Cape Cod wire it was punched on tape for automatic transmission, and then run through the reproducer at 10 p.m. at very slow speed. To any old-time operator or amateur who ever listened to that low-pitch, yet rich-sounding spark, the memory will never depart. But none of them will equal the thrill of the old lady on shipboard, who was privileged to listen in to the signal and who was told all about the modus operandi of the tape transmission. She said that she could understand all that very clearly, but what she could not see was how the paper tape could reach from shore to ship without getting wet!

Could she have seen the actual trans-

mission she would have been even more enthused. At the relay in the transmitter room streams of fire a foot long were thrown off by the powerful air blowers. The spark could be heard through the air for several miles, and the light cast by it could be seen even as far as fifteen miles.

Cape Cod was a station for stern men. It was one of the outposts of civilization. So heavy were the blasts of sand blown up by the wind that it often brought blood to the operators' faces. The station was quite a distance from

"civilization," and the men had to amuse themselves by the methods of the day. Eminent among these was the phonograph; anyone using profane language was fined in "records," and anyone going to Boston on leave had to bring back six records as "expiation." Nor was it without its dangers. The chef was struck by lightning in the kitchen, though not fatally, on one occasion, and his life thereafter was made miserable by the engineers who offered to give him a shock of 50,000 volts any time he wanted it.

## "CC"/"MCC"/"WCC"

By George Clark



SOUTH WELFLEET STATION IN 1904



RELIQ OF SAME STATION IN 1942.