

Broadcasting Station WWSW Pittsburgh

100 Watts. 1500 Kc. 199.9 Meters

By M. J. SARTORY, Manager, WWSW.

THIS morning we dedicate the new broadcasting station WWSW. This station is under the direction of the Walker and Downing Radio Corporation with studio at the Schenley Hotel. The first service to be put on the air is our Church service this morning. Through the courtesy of station WWSW First Church will broadcast morning and evening each Sunday for a year. We are deeply indebted to the Sponsor of the Sacred Song Concerts for the installation of the microphones and wires which connect us with station WWSW, and which are our own property through her generosity. We wish as ministers and officers of the Church to publicly express to the Sponsor and the Walker and Downing Radio Corporation our gratitude for making possible this enlarged sphere of our Church activity."

These words, delivered from his pulpit by the Rev. Dr. C. Wallace Petty, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Bellefield Ave. and Bayard St., in the fashionable Schenley Farms District of Pittsburgh at 10:45 on Sunday morning, May 31st, 1931, marked the formal opening of station WWSW, the first commercial station in the United States that, to our knowledge, was formally opened with a church service from a remote control point.

In spite of this auspicious opening, those guiding the destinies of the infant station had a tough row to hoe. To begin with the Radio Editors of Pittsburgh, the cradle of the Radio industry, considered a 100 Watt station far beneath their notice, and only through friendship was it possible to have their schedule included and listed on the same page with the four other Pittsburgh stations, the newest of which was at that time about 8 years old. "Stunt" broadcasts were tried, which on the chains would have attracted Nationwide interest. The owners of the sta-

tion prevailed upon some of their friends that broadcasting would help their business, and within a few weeks after the opening no fewer than six commercial programs were on the air. The Summer months however, were not very productive, and with the opening of the schools and colleges, new interests had to be created in the station. Sporting events seemed the logical outlet, as no other Pittsburgh station was broadcasting local sporting activities. The big colleges would not listen to the plea for permission to broadcast their regular football games, fearing, as they stated "It might hurt attendance". Basketball, however, was considered in the light of a minor activity, and permission was easily obtained to broadcast the games from the Carnegie Institute of Technology. "Tech" had a team that was "going good" and contrary to the prediction of the wisecracks, the crowds did not dwindle, but, as a writer for one of the opponent colleges put it, after an unsuccessful attempt on his part to get through a crowd of over one thousand basketball enthusiasts who, for lack of space were turned away from the Tech Gym, "I hied me home and listened to the game from WWSW." WWSW broadcast every one of Carnegie Tech's "Home" games, and received a letter of thanks from the Athletic authorities of the Institute for their valuable assistance in making basket-ball popular and the unprecedented increase in patronage.

Meanwhile, the "Yellow Jackets" Pittsburgh's representatives in the International Hockey League, were putting up an indifferent display of their abilities with the crooked stick, and seemed to be going nowhere in particular. Hockey games however, could be made interesting if properly described. The game is fast, and a word-picture of such an event would be a constant flow of language. Why not try to get the hockey games on

the air? A little persuasion convinced the owners of the "Yellow Jackets" that broadcasting the games would not hurt, and might help the attendance. The result was that when the Yellow Jackets returned from the northwest about Christmas time, Ed. Sprague was sitting on the sidelines with a pair of "Mikes" ready to tell the world what our noble representatives in the game of pushing the puck were doing on the ice at Duquesne Garden. The broadcasts proved to be a magnet. From a sparsely filled auditorium, the games at Duquesne Garden turned into the converging point of interest for sports enthusiasts from every section of the county. The "S.R.O." sign made its first appearance at the entrance gate, and stayed there throughout the balance of the season. Plans are now under way to enlarge the seating capacity of the Garden and WWSW has been invited to broadcast all home games from that location, in addition to the boxing bouts which it is hoped will be staged there during the coming fall and winter.

By this time, WWSW had attracted the notice of not only sport fans but also sports editors and the sports editors of the two evening newspapers accepted with alacrity an invitation from the Station to participate in the broadcasts of sports events. Boxing bouts were being staged in three different clubs in the city, but the promoters were rather stand-off-ish when approached regarding the privilege of broadcasting, and not until the station was taken over by Pittsburgh's only morning newspaper, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and some pressure brought to bear was it possible to get the necessary permission to "Air" the boxing bouts. Here again, patronage and attendance was increased after the first few broadcasts.

Meanwhile, however, the musical portion of the programs had not been neglected. The Nixon Restaurant,

Pittsburgh's outstanding supper and dance club, was featuring "Name" orchestras. Some of the best of the M. C. A. bands were appearing for weeks at a stretch. WWSW invaded the "downtown" section of the city, the studios of the two largest stations in the city being only one block apart. The Nixon Restaurant lies halfway between them, and both had their eyes open for the opportunity to broadcast the features offered on a sustaining program basis. Both had made overtures to run lines in but the proprietors "took a chance" and

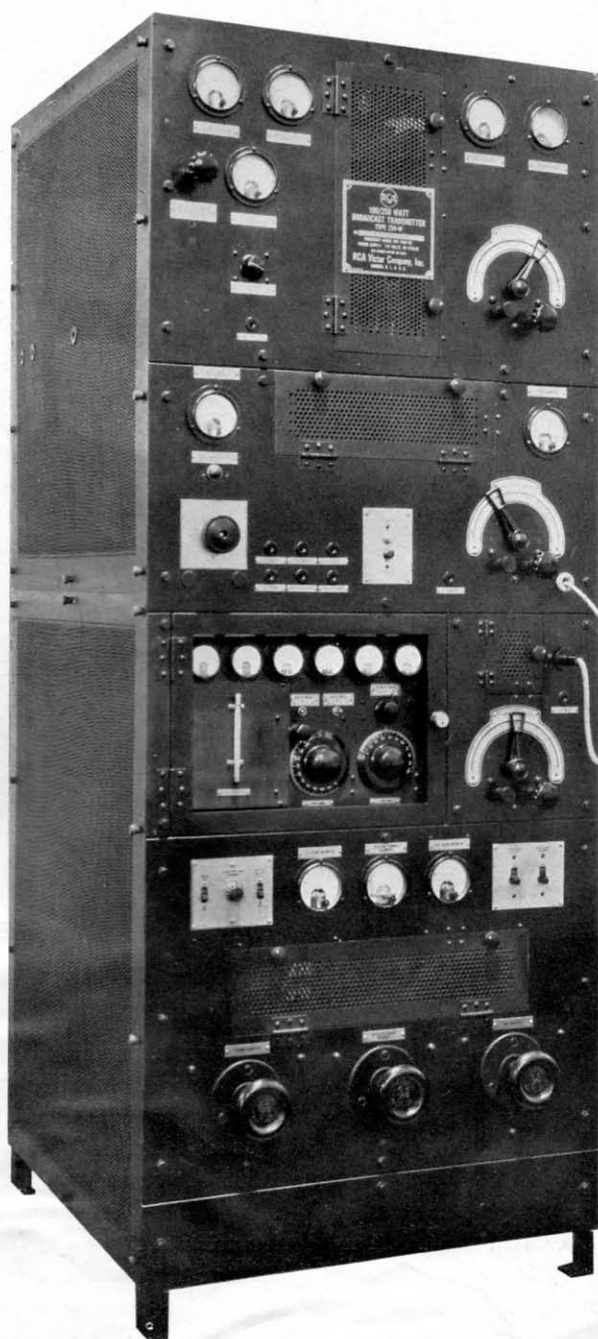
hooked up with the infant, and WWSW broadcast nightly from that point beginning November 10th, until the close of the season on May 17th, 1932. These broadcasts proved so satisfactory to the proprietors of the Nixon, who are also the proprietors of the "Willows" at Oakmont, about 14 miles from Pittsburgh proper, that when they opened the Willows for the summer season, WWSW just naturally went along, and are broadcasting nightly such orchestras as Lloyd Huntley and his Isle O'Blues Orchestra, Ted Weems,

Sleepy Hall and his Melody Boys, and orchestras of that rating from that point.

Dr. Charles Heinroth, director of Music at Carnegie Institute of Technology and organist at Carnegie Music Hall was giving free organ recitals Saturday evening and Sunday afternoons. A conference with the Trustees of the Carnegie Foundation resulted in WWSW broadcasting his recitals every Sunday afternoon, giving Pittsburghers quality in music such as few had the opportunity to hear prior to these broadcasts. Dr. Heinroth is now in New York and his place at the console will be taken by Dr. Marshall Bidwell, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. WWSW will continue the broadcasts. Each afternoon at three o'clock WWSW broadcasts a half hour recital from the Pittsburgh Musical Institute, which is really the School of Music of the University of Pittsburgh and the second largest recognized musical school in the state of Pennsylvania.

News is broadcast three times daily from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette studios of the station, and each afternoon at one o'clock a program of luncheon music by an outstanding trio is broadcast from the restaurant at McCreery's, one of Pittsburgh's largest better class department stores. WWSW numbers among its clientele Kaufmann's, Pittsburgh's largest department store, who present a shopping period under the title of "Babbette" from 10:45 until 11 o'clock each morning except Sunday; the Wood Street Ass'n., an organization of business men from the "Quality Thoroughfare" of Pittsburgh, in a half hour of high-class music and narration of historical events each week; manufacturers of Ginger Ale, Food Products, etc., that go to make up the best class of advertisers in Western Pennsylvania.

Among the features most prominent, and which have attracted probably the most listeners as well as the most comment are:—"Behind the Kitchen Door", the adventures of a young married couple with all the trials and tribulations that go to make up life in a flat. The program first took the air the day following the opening of the station, on June



THE RCA TRANSMITTER AT WWSW

1st, and was presented intermittently, alternating between morning and evening until September 1st, at which time the period 7:30 until 7:45 P. M. was selected. Haven Haas, regular announcer on the station and Margaret Leyda, a contralto, reader and mimic were selected for the characters and have never missed a program in 13 full months of broadcasting. The feature went commercial on December 4th, 1931, being sold for a twenty-six weeks' period to the Bauer Baking Company, who exercised their option of renewal before the contract had run three months, for an additional twenty-six weeks' period. Helen's Hi-Lights, a style and economy feature was added to the regular program schedule about the middle of June, under the supervision of Miss Helen Solomon. This feature has never failed to pay its way, and, for a time during the winter and spring months it was necessary to put on an extra period daily to take care of conflicting advertisers. These extra periods have been cut to three times weekly during the Summer months. Francis Owen was added to the staff as Program Director about February 1st, 1932, and brought with him that famous presentation which has been copied under one name or another in every part of the United States: "The Waste-basket", bits of poetry and prose with comments, original with Mr. Owen, the whole presented with a musical background which may be heard each Sunday afternoon at 1 o'clock. Many other features, each and every one worthwhile, are constantly being prepared and presented, and the station has the reputation of being "Up and Coming".

In the past WWSW got along with a composite set of 100 Watts power. Recently, however, an RCA Victor 100-250 Watt transmitter was purchased, and is now in operation. Frank R. Smith, Jr., is General Manager, M. J. (Joe) Sartory, Promotion Manager, and A. A. Lewis, Chief Engineer.

Negotiations are at present under way to broadcast open-air boxing bouts and perhaps semi-pro baseball from Greenlee Field, a new open-air baseball field and boxing arena re-

cently completed, and it is hoped that by the time this goes to print, WWSW will be bringing its fans this extra service during the open-air season. Negotiations are also just about completed to broadcast Pittsburgh's season of Grand Opera presentations from the Pitt Theatre, beginning about the middle of October and continuing on throughout the winter season, as well as Football, Basketball and Hockey, with a possibility of Polo as a diet for sports fans. An increase in power would, of course, make WWSW even more valuable to Pittsburgh and Allegheny County than it has already proven itself, and it is to be hoped that the Commission will see its way clear to grant this at an early date.

THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE MICROPHONE

SOME SPEED

Ed Wynn, NBC comedian, has his own ideas on speed. The other night he was discussing the subject with Graham McNamee and said: "The fastest thing I ever saw go was Mahatma Gandhi in a strip poker game."

RUNS IN THE FAMILY

Ted Weems' real name is Wilfred Theodore Weymes. The NBC orchestra leader is a descendant of the Angus Weymes, who invented the Scottish bagpipes. Weems, too, is an inventor having both the goofus horn and the mellohorn to his credit.

TOE BAD

Richard Gordon, NBC actor, was talking to his favorite boot-black recently and Tony started to tell him all about "his operation."

"I was carry a bigga rock," said Tony. "I drop him on my foot and when I taka off my shoe I find my big toe she's got a black eye."

PARKED PROSPERITY

Mr. E. K. Cohan, Technical Director of CBS, is sporting a new Chrysler. He calls it "Prosperity" because it's always parked just around the corner.

A NEW HIGH FREQUENCY BROADCAST TRANSMITTER

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"Class B" Modulators

This transmitter offers a particularly good example of the advantages of "Class B" modulators. If we suppose, for the instant, that the same general arrangement were to be used but the modulators were to operate (as formerly) as "Class A" amplifiers, we would find it necessary to use ten UV-849's as modulators in order to obtain 100% modulation. Similarly, if we were to consider an alternative low-level modulation system, the two UV-849's (as "Class A" amplifiers) would modulate the two UX-860's in the I.P.A., but we would then have to operate the power amplifier "Class B" and would require eight (instead of two) UV-861's. If, as a third alternative, we were to consider grid modulation we could eliminate the two UV-849 modulators but the power amplifier would still be essentially a "Class B" amplifier and would still require eight UV-861's—thus greatly overbalancing the saving effected by eliminating the modulators.

Power Supply

Plate voltages for this transmitter (except those for the first speech amplifier, which are furnished by a separate rectifier) are obtained from a single motor-generator set. Bias voltages for the r.f. stages are also obtained from this unit. Bias voltages for the audio tubes are furnished by a rectifier employing two UX-866's. All filaments are operated on A.C.—most of them from separate transformers.

Construction

High-frequency circuits particularly require finely developed mechanical construction. The new W2XE transmitter was designed on the basis of the experience gained by the RCA Victor Company, Inc. and its associated companies in building and operating many transmitters of similar type for marine communication services. It consists of two compact units housing, respectively, the radio and audio circuits.