

# HISTORY OF STATION WCCO

THE history of WCCO dates back to the pioneer days of radio in the United States. In 1922 Station WLAG was opened in Minneapolis. It was a combination of several attempts at radio broadcasting by newspapers, department stores, and others, and was chiefly sponsored by business interests of Minneapolis and St. Paul. WLAG operated with a 500-watt Western Electric transmitter and had studios in the Oak Grove Hotel, Minneapolis, and the Athletic Club, St. Paul.

Early in 1924 WLAG ran into financial difficulties, with the result that it went off the air in June. Various efforts were made to raise funds for its continuance. Finally, the problem was solved when Washburn Crosby Company purchased the existing equipment of WLAG, placed orders for a new 5000-watt transmitter, and guaranteed to contribute \$50,000 a year for a two-year period towards the operation of the station, if the business men of Minneapolis and St. Paul would contribute a like amount. Through the Minneapolis Civic & Commerce Association and the Saint Paul Association, this proposition was accepted. On September 1, 1924, WLAG resumed broadcasting, but under the new call letters of WCCO.

On March 4, 1925, WCCO went on the air with a new 5000-watt transmitter located near Anoka. Elaborate new studios in the Nicollet Hotel, Minneapolis, were also opened. A short time later new studios were opened in St. Paul. For the next two years the station operated under the guidance of a triumvirate composed of representatives of Washburn Crosby Company, and the Minneapolis Civic & Commerce Association, and the Saint Paul Association. At the end of that period the two civic associations dropped out of the picture and WCCO was continued by Washburn Crosby Company alone.

On September 1, 1929, after Washburn Crosby Company had become a member of General Mills, Inc., Northwestern Broadcasting, Inc., was formed to take over the ownership and operation of the station. General Mills retained two-thirds of the stock, while one-third was sold to the Columbia Broadcasting System. On October 24, 1931, the Columbia Broadcasting System purchased the remaining two-thirds of the stock.

Officials of the company actively connected with the operation of the station are H. A. Bellows, president of Northwestern Broadcasting, Inc., and vice president of the Columbia Broadcasting System; E. H. Gammons, vice president; and K. W. Husted, assistant secretary and assistant treasurer. Mr. Bellows was formerly managing editor of the Northwestern Miller, coming to WCCO in the spring of 1925. When the Federal Radio Commission was originally formed in 1927, Mr. Bellows was selected as a member, serving for nine months before he resigned. He still has the distinction of being the only person actively connected with a broadcasting station ever to have been appointed to the governing body of radio.

Mr. Gammons was in the publicity and advertising department of Washburn Crosby Company, joining the staff of the station in the fall of 1924 to handle publicity. He is now vice president. Mr. Husted joined the staff of WCCO as an announcer, and a short time later was made program and production manager.

WCCO was one of the original members of what is now the chain forming the red network of the National Broadcasting Company, having first been linked with New York in the early months of 1925, when the American Telephone & Telegraph Company owned and operated Station WEAJ, the key-station of the only network. In December, 1929, WCCO severed relations with the National Broadcasting Company, and became a member of the Columbia Broadcasting System network. During the past year WCCO was one of nine stations in the United States given permission by the Federal Radio Commission to install 50,000-watt transmitters and operate on that power.

Since 1924 radio broadcasting has been revolutionized many times. During all this time WCCO has always been one of the outstanding stations of the country. The mechanical equipment and studios have been improved and enlarged several times. The largest pipe organ ever built exclusively for radio broadcasting was installed in WCCO's studios late in 1929. The staff, which originally numbered but a few persons with a very sketchy idea of what broadcasting was all about, has constantly increased until now it is considered one of the most efficient and best informed of any station staff in the country. It includes specialists in practically every phase of radio broadcasting.

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