

IN REVIEW:

The Early Shortwave Stations — A Broadcasting History Through 1945

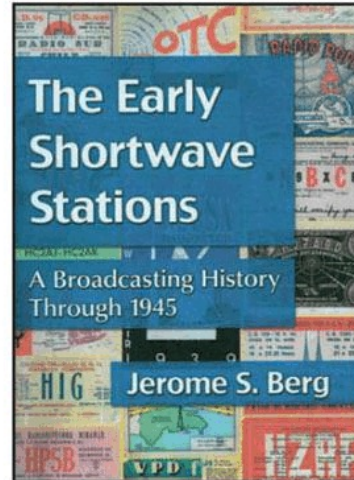
REVIEWED BY GERRY L. DEXTER, WPC9GLD

*The Early Shortwave Stations —
A Broadcasting History Through 1945*
By Jerome S. Berg
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I have to wonder if Dr. Emmett “Doc” Brown, Christopher Lloyd’s character in the movie *Back to the Future*, had DNA similar to that of Jerome (Jerry) Berg.

I’ve known Jerry for something like 40 years and he never told me he was an inventor. And yet he must be because, like Doc Brown, **Photo A**, Jerry has gone back in time as far as 1901 and took us back to the earliest days of shortwave, beginning when Marconi first transmitted the letter “S” from England to Newfoundland that December.

Jerry must have employed his own version of Doc Brown’s “flux capacitor” in order to throw us back to those days and later to the earliest amateur efforts at communicating via radio with equipment that today looks like jury-rigged arrange-



ments that wouldn’t even cut it as an old-fashioned decent electronics repair shop today.

Following a look at the various early efforts to communicate by radio, Berg moves into the field of commercial wireless and then the beginnings of “real radio:” U.S. medium-wave broadcasters using AM, coupled with a shortwave service — sort of a precursor to today’s relay arrangements, without the satellites.

KDKA in Pittsburgh, **Photo B**, was soon followed by several of the other big stations, among them WBZ (Boston), **Photo C**; WJZ (Detroit), **Photo D**; WOC (Davenport); and

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Photo A. Watch and listen as the inimitable Dr. Emmett Brown (Christopher Lloyd) reveals his time-traveling DeLorean to Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) in the classic 1985 movie “Back to the Future.” Link to the video at <<http://bit.ly/18y3CRD>>. (Internet screen grab)



Photo B. KDKA and a Mutual (MBS) microphone are displayed at the National Museum of American History. (Courtesy of Sagie via Wikimedia Commons)



Photo C. According to the WBZ Radio website <<http://cbsloc.al/1IsIrUZ>>, "WBZ Radio and WBZ-TV moved to the existing studios back in 1948. About a year earlier, the building's cornerstone was placed. Along with it, a time capsule was buried. It's said to contain a taped transcription of a WBZ program, some 1947 Boston newspapers, a copy of the popular book "Tom Swift and his Photo Telephone," and predictions about the future of radio and TV by various editors of newspapers and magazines." (Internet screen grab)



This Photo Shows the Well-appointed Artists' Room at the Westinghouse Station in Newark, N. J., from Which Laboratory Wireless Telephone Music, Speeches and Daily News Items are Broadcasted Day and Night to Thousands of Radio Amateurs.



This Photo Shows Mr. H. Gernsback Giving His Wireless Talk Via Radio Telephone from the Westinghouse Laboratory in Newark, N. J., on the Night of November 10th. His Radiophone Speech was Heard by Thousands of Amateurs.

Jazz from the Air

By ROBERT E. LACAULT

THANKS to radio telephony, the audience of a lecturer is no longer confined to the number of seats in a room, and thousands and thousands of people may, at the same time, listen to a lecturer without even leaving their homes. While staying near the fire on a cold, winter night, a simple adjustment of a radio receiver brings in the news, a radio concert, or an interesting lecture, which everyone can enjoy.

To many people, this may sound impossible, or only a vision of the future, but it is, in fact, a vision of the present and for the benefit of those people who do not yet know the wonderful possibilities of radio telephony, we shall give in this article a little practical information to enable them to benefit by the lectures, concerts, news, etc.

Recently Mr. H. Gernsback, Editor of this magazine, and also of "Radio News" and "Practical Electricity," delivered the following lecture through the Radiophone Broadcasting Station of the Westinghouse Company, installed at Newark, N. J., and within a radius of over 100 miles, thousands of miles.

DO you know that it is possible now with a Radio outfit costing not more than \$100 to receive free of charge every day radio telephone concerts by the best opera artists, violin and piano music, lectures, stories for the children in the evening, jazz music, etc.? The Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company maintains broadcasting radio telephone stations at Pittsburgh, Pa., Newark, N. J., Springfield, Mass., and Chicago, Ill., from which stations the Radio telephone entertainments are broadcasted every day from 10 A. M. to 10 P. M. Anyone within range can receive this entertainment. If you are not as yet known by the Radio Club, we would greatly advise you to get busy. A world of information and entertainment is yours for the asking.—Editor.

Those were the wild and woolly days of radio. I, who am responsible for the words RADIO AMATEUR, and who was a dyed-in-the-wool radio amateur, and still am, may be pardoned for trying to work in a few reminiscences of the good old days. In those days of the coherer, when wireless detectors had not, as yet, been invented, we had our one inch spark coils, and we were lucky if we transmitted one mile with our little outfit.

put his message through or not. Not that it mattered a whole lot, because the messages in those days were mostly of the now famous variety of "How do you get my spark?" and other similar exciting news. Of course in those days we had quite a good deal of trouble selling wireless outfits, for the simple reason that few people believed that there was such a thing, and branded it as a fake.

I remember the time when the police department of the city of New York investigated my company to find out whether the outfit was a fake, or whether we were really selling a bona fide wireless set for \$10.00. I will remember the day when the stalwart mission of the law walked into the office and critically inspected our little outfit, operated by four dry cells, and a one inch spark coil. In order to make it work at all, we had to have a miniature antenna on the spark coil, and a similar miniature one on the receiver, the latter composed of a coherer, detector, and a dry cell. We demonstrated the outfit to OUR satisfaction, but not to that of the policeman. He was not at all convinced, because he was not at all convinced.

WGY (Schenectady), which had two shortwave relays — 2XAF using 9150 and others and 2XAD on 11370 and others.

In rapid succession, the following years saw the further development of shortwave, with signals coming from Australia, South Africa, Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, England, Holland, Germany, and several others. Shortwave was springing to life everywhere.

It's a delight — married to a pang of envy — when one looks at the national advertisements sporting lines like "Hear Stations the World Over" and "DX From All The World" featured in widely read newspapers and magazines.

In those days everyone knew about radio and DXing — and you weren't looked upon as some sort of oddball geek who spent all your hours hanging out in the basement with earphones clamped on your head. Today, guys like that are computer freaks, (some of them pulling in big bucks) and not subsisting on weekly allowances from their parents.

Many of the most well-known radio receiver manufacturers (GE, RCA, Crosley, Westinghouse, and others) were actively engaged not only in the manufacture of radios but also were providing programs to broadcast to those receivers. It was as if ICOM had its own station, in the hope you were listening to its programming on an ICOM R-3200f.

Personally, I was rather taken aback to find mentions of and QSL reproductions from so many stations that I had heard, verified, and remember fondly. (NOTE: I'm not THAT old! — WPC9GLD.)

For example, the likes of PCJ (Holland), South Africa's SABC, Cable and Wireless Ltd., La Voz del Tropic (Costa Rica), All India Radio, VLQ (Australia), Radio Clube de Angola, and a number of others. In addition there were QSLs or photographs of government-owned stations that were familiar to me but, whose names or call letters had been changed before I got around to logging them.

Yes, the book is a bit pricey, but you are buying years of enjoyment and information. With 340 pages and lots of illustrations this is a fastidiously-researched book. It is one to be read, treasured, and referred to often, if only for the memories it generates.

"Flux capacitor" or not, this is one heck of a work. Let's hope it's not Jerry Berg's last!

Photo D. Renowned radio expert Hugo Gernsback gave a talk on Westinghouse radio's WJZ on November 10, 1921 about the history of radio broadcasting. The broadcast was covered in Science and Invention magazine. (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)