

Radio Stations

by
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Radio! It's a part of everyone's life—in the car, at home, in restaurants, etc. I haven't watched TV in almost 20 years, but I listen to the radio every day...

The idea of wireless communication predates the discovery of "radio" with experiments in "wireless



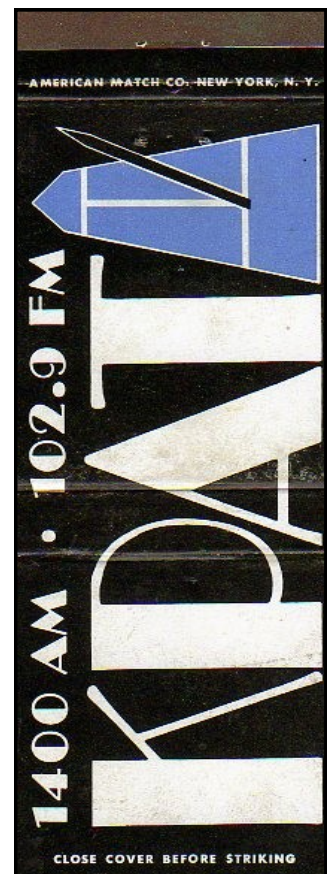
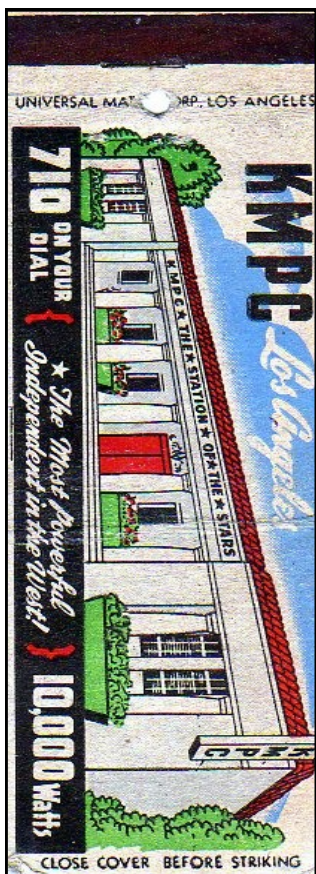
telegraphy" via inductive and capacitive induction" and transmission through the ground, water, and even train tracks from the 1830s on. But, let's get to the 'radio' that we know.

It starts with the vacuum tube detector, invented by Westinghouse engineers. On Christmas Eve 1906, Reginald Fessenden used a synchronous rotary-spark transmitter for the first radio program broadcast, from Ocean Bluff-Brant Rock, Massachusetts. Ships at sea heard a broadcast that included Fessenden playing O Holy Night on the violin and reading a passage from the Bible. This was, for all intents and purposes, the first transmission of what is now known as amplitude modulation or AM radio.

In June 1912 Marconi opened the world's first purpose-built radio factory at New Street Works in Chelmsford, England.

The first radio news program was broadcast August 31, 1920 by station 8MK in Detroit, Michigan, which survives today as all-news format station WWJ under ownership of the CBS network. The first college radio station began broadcasting on October 14, 1920 from Union College, Schenectady, New York under the personal call letters of Wendell King, an African-American student at the school.

That month 2ADD (renamed WRUC in 1947), aired what is believed to be the first public entertainment broadcast in the United States, a series of Thursday night concerts initially heard within a 100-mile radius and later for a 1,000-mile radius. In November 1920, it aired the first broadcast of a sporting event. At 9 pm on August 27, 1920, Sociedad Radio Argentina aired a live performance of Richard Wagner's opera *Parsifal* from the Coliseo Theater in downtown Buenos Aires. Only about twenty homes in the city had receivers to tune in this radio program. Meanwhile, regular entertainment broadcasts commenced in 1922 from the Marconi Research Centre at Writtle, England.



Sports broadcasting began at this time as well, including the college football on radio broadcast of a 1921 West Virginia vs. Pittsburgh football game.

In 1954, the Regency company introduced a pocket transistor radio, the TR-1, powered by a "standard 22.5 V Battery." In 1955, the newly formed Sony company introduced its first transistorized radio. It was small enough to fit in a vest pocket, powered by a small battery. It was durable, because it had no vacuum tubes to burn out. Over the next 20 years, transistors replaced tubes almost completely except for high-power transmitters.

The question of the 'first' publicly targeted licensed radio station in the U.S. has more than one answer and depends on semantics. It is commonly attributed to KDKA in Pittsburgh, PA, which in October 1920 received its license and went on the air as the first US licensed commercial broadcasting station on November 2, 1920 with the presidential election results as its inaugural show, but was not broadcasting daily until 1921.

On August 20, 1920, 8MK, began broadcasting daily and was credited by famed inventor Lee De Forest as the first commercial station. 8MK was licensed to a teenager, Michael DeLisle Lyons, and financed by E. W. Scripps. In 1921, 8MK changed to WBL and then to WWJ in 1922, in Detroit. It has carried a regular schedule of programming to the present and also broadcast the 1920 presidential election returns just as KDKA did. In August 1921, teenagers Michael DeLisle Lyons, his younger brother Francis and Ed Clark (founder of WJR - Detroit) put the first radio in a police car in Toledo, Ohio.

There are currently 15,330 radio stations in the United States. The biggest radio stations, not surprisingly, are in the larger cities, such as: WHTZ-FM New York, KIIS-FM Los Angeles, WBMP-FM New York, KAMP-FM Los Angeles, WKSC-FM Chicago, WBBM-FM Chicago, and so on.

