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Author: John H. Dilks III, K2TQN

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OLD RADIO

Finding M. H. Dodd's 1912 Wireless Station

Imagine for a moment that you just received a telephone call from your friend Steve, who buys household antiques. He tells you that he just purchased a whole bunch of old radio parts and one old Radiola radio for you from the 1920s for \$275, and says to come over tomorrow and pick them up at this yard sale in Reno. Steve adds, "You get all of the radio equipment and all of the parts in this deal." This actually happened to Henry Rogers, WA7YBS, last November.

Arriving early the next morning, Steve said, "All of your radio stuff is in that corner of the yard covered with an olive-drab tarp." Pulling away the tarp, Henry saw a nice Radiola 26 and matching battery box, a decent Atwater-Kent 40, three 1920s crystal sets and many boxes of radio parts from the 1920s.

Henry then struck up a conversation with Pat Doherty, who was running the yard sale.

"Oh, you have a radio museum," Pat said. "Well, you know, my stepfather had a radio station before World War I. He was a balloonist and in the Signal Corps during WWI." Pat continued, "He was interested in radio up into the twenties, but then dropped it. He was always trying new things." Pat paused for a second and then added, "You know, I think he had some old tubes in a trunk in that shed over there," pointing to an old metal backyard storage shed that had been "off limits" to the yard sale.

Discovering a 1912 Wireless Station

They followed Pat into the shed. On the floor amidst old furniture and junk car parts were three large steamer trunks, all with several layers of sheet metal and debris piled on top. Rogers gave this account, "After moving the obstacles from the top of the first trunk, we found it contained personal papers, letters and envelopes. The second trunk was found to be empty. After moving the miscellaneous junk from the top of the third trunk, I opened its lid. Wow! The first thing I saw was an enormous spark era helix! Then spark coils and a large antenna switch! It was extremely difficult to remain composed! The trunk was literally full to the top with the parts comprising a very early wireless station. I asked Pat if this equipment went with all of the parts we had already purchased and loaded in the van?"

"Sure," Pat replied. "If you don't take it, it's going to the dump."

The following Monday, Henry received



Dodd's station as it looks today.

another call from Steve. "I found you another part that goes with that station and some photographs too!" He was excited.

Another call from Steve came the next day. "You have to get with Ted Moore. He bought a photo album at that yard sale that has pictures of the station. He says there's even one of Dodd with headphones on!"

Putting the Station Back Together

Having actual 1912 photographs of

Dodd's Wireless Station will provide Henry with the opportunity to recreate the station, set up as accurately as possible, for display in the Virginia City Radio Museum in Nevada, which he runs. It is set up temporarily now.

"It is difficult to express the eerie feelings that one has when first viewing the 1912 photographs," Henry said. "And then looking at exactly the same items in person." His attention to detail will give visitors the unique opportunity of seeing Dodd's wireless station almost exactly as it was in 1912!

Seeing it Yourself

The Virginia City Radio Museum, privately owned by Henry and Sharon Rogers, is the result of over 36 years of collecting. They display wireless and radio apparatus from 1910 through the 1950s. It is located at 109 South "F" St, Virginia City, Nevada. The mailing address is PO Box 511, Virginia City, NV 89440; tel 775-847-9047; hands@radioblvd.com.

Profile: Marion Henry Dodd

By Henry Rogers, WA7YBS

Marion Henry "Hank" Dodd was born in 1890 in Cortland, New York. His family moved to southern California in 1907, settling around San Bernardino.

Hank Dodd became interested in wireless about 1910, probably when going to Baptist College in Westlake, California. One of his first jobs was with the San Bernardino Fire Department. His wireless interest was just one of many hobbies. Others included photography and taking trips on his Indian motorcycle. When the US became involved in WWI, Hank Dodd joined the Army and became a lieutenant in the 316th Field Signal Battalion, 91st Division.

After WWI, radio was still his primary interest and Dodd became involved in a radio business in Los Angeles. Dodd's interest in the fast-evolving radio technology business was soon replaced when he became involved in an automobile dealership for the "Wood's Mobilette." Only seven Mobilette automobiles were built and the business went under. Again, moving on to other interests, Dodd went into real estate.

After many years of taking trips into the Sierras, the Dodd family moved to Lake Tahoe, Nevada in 1945. Dodd Realty Company was quite successful in the Tahoe area for many years. Entering his senior years, Hank found that the harsh Tahoe winters were too much for him. He moved to Reno sometime in the 1960s, bringing along a lifetime collection of material and equipment that he had saved and stored in trunks since before WWI. Dodd died in 1985, well into his 90s, leaving the bulk of his well-documented lifetime of hobbies and interests stored in his Reno house and the backyard shed.



QST