STATION PIONEER IN THIS SECTION; HISTORY TRACED

Progress And Popularity Have Grown Steadily Since Founding

“Serving Western North Carolina since 1927.”

That is one of Radio Station WWNC’s most potent identifications. It is a short summary of a progressive program of which it is proud.

A pioneer in this portion of the country, WWNC has an interesting background, a continuity of gradual progress and popularity, and a future assured of increasing influence and scope of service, highest of air entertainment officials have said.

Although the letter identification—WWNC—was first thrown on ether waves a dozen years ago, there is an interesting story about its origination and subsequent use. Stars in the realm of radio shine through magic letters, and WWNC had its incipience under a lucky one—WABC.

In an eight-by-twelve foot room, in the back portion of the old Asheville Battery company, at 19 Haywood street, in 1923-24, there was a broadcasting unit of 20-watt power known as ABC. It was operated by “Gosch and his Gang” (G. O. Shepherd and artists) and was primarily on the air for the pleasure of shut-ins here. The American Business club, with the same initials, developed a band known as the WABC band. This band became identified with ABC and the little station adopted the full call letter identification of WABC. Later these letters were transferred to the Atlantic Broadcasting company and subsequently were taken over as the key station letters of Columbia Broadcasting company, of which WWNC became a subscriber in 1929.

FIGURED IN START OF WWNC—Holmes Bryson, left, was president of the Asheville chamber of commerce when the chamber began operating Station WWNC in 1927. Frank A. Barber, right, was chairman of the chamber’s radio committee, and did much work in getting the new station started.

The original permit for the call letters WABC was taken out by the little station and when the chamber of commerce established the station here in 1927 the letters were changed to WWNC—Wonderful Western North Carolina. It just so happened that these assigned letters fitted the occasion and location, since radio station call letters do not always signify a “full name.” The home of WABC now—the Columbia Broadcasting company—is on Madison avenue at 52nd street, New York city. The magic call letters of WABC have risen from an eight-by-twelve foot room here on Haywood street to the largest radio broadcasting institution in the world.

The original WABC was built by E. H. Jackson, Jr., pioneer radio man, and was primarily on the air for the pleasure of shut-ins here. The American Business club, with the same initials, developed a band known as the WABC band. This band became identified with ABC and the little station adopted the full call letter identification of WABC. Later these letters were transferred to the Atlantic Broadcasting company and subsequently were taken over as the key station letters of Columbia Broadcasting company, of which WWNC became a subscriber in 1929.

Times on Tuesday, February 22, 1939

“The voice of WWNC, hurrying down out of the Land of the Sky in its inaugural program Monday night, paid Western North Carolina’s respects to North America.

“An official welcome on the part of the United States department of commerce was extended the new broadcasting station at its christening by Major W. N. Van Nestland, federal supervisor of radio for the territory south of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi rivers, who came to Asheville especially for that purpose.”

Comments on Opening

Of the station on the event of its opening program, Major Van Nestland said: “The entrance of this new station on the already over-burdened ether seems to me to be fully justified in the South. Among the first WABC fed, not only by the fact that WWNC will serve a locality not heretofore covered by the existing stations, but because this is the first and only broadcasting station in the state of North Carolina employing standardized equipment.”

Radio entertainment continued an intermittent and desultory sort of WWNC’s christening program beginning here until 1927 when the gang at 7 o’clock when a dinner was served at the Asheville chamber of commerce, with program and concert, broadcast from the ballroom of Vanderbilt hotel by Spencer’s orchestra to radio station WSM in Nashville, Tenn., and established a record. The reporter then observed WWNC. A report of the station’s operations was ready at 8 o’clock, the new
began its career.

At the time of the station's inauguration here, it broadcast nights a week, full programs being given on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, with a slightly different program on Sundays. The original program of music and news was transmitted from the George Vanderbilt hotel and the Knollwood Inn, with the Langren hotel joining the group early in the station's existence. J. Dale Stenzel, who was director of the station for the chamber of commerce, was the air during the first year of the station were as follows:

Mr. and Mrs. Crosby Adams, Charles E. Burnham, C. H. Crawford, Arnold Dann, Joseph DeNardo, Mrs. William DePuy, Raymond Griffin, Dorothy Hancock, Frank Kramer, J. W. Martin, Perry Jones, Maude Kirgore, Alvah H. Lowe, Bascom La-Program heard in Asheville.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank LaBar. On the evening of August 22, 1928, Mrs. Ancille McInturf, Horace Seeley, Marguerite Smathers and Alfred E. Smith, candidate for the presidency of the United States, was broadcast through the National Telephone Company.

When Station WWNC opened, four-broadcast company hookup telephones and one telegraph wire. Mr. Shepherd then devoted his entire time to the station, making all night and day-time commercial announcements. He also held part-time to the station daily.

In February 1928, more than 400 phones and telegraphs were visited in the studio on top of the hospital daily and successfully operated the station. The more than 1,000 messages and telegrams sent in this field were small telephone calls were received. Telegrams were the business people of the community with the least expensive rates. Three telegrams possibly the first message of Canada. At the time of the opening in December, 1928, the station was able to hear the news from outside the city The Citizen Broadcasting company United States. Telegrams came from the Asheville chamber of commerce artists from Brownsville, Texas, and Mr. Shepherd remained as the Mexican border, and as far west as Denver, Colorado. From the northwestern message was headed to national commercial programs required a great deal of effort, but it was accomplished.

The work of getting the station started was accomplished. The first commercial program was the morning show, which was broadcast from 9 to 10 o'clock on Sunday evenings. This program started on January 6, 1929, and marked a new departure for Station WWNC.

The development of other programs was rapid. The full broadcast of the inauguration of President-elect Hoover was heard around the network.

The next big step occurred several months later when on October 8, 1929, the station began its full program of musical and information periods, as well as the Columbia Broadcasting system programs. This part of the station's schedule was financed by the program's audience and commercial programs. Conflicts of interest were common in the community who were faced with the problem of choosing the station to which to listen.

In January of 1929, WWNC became affiliated with the Columbia Broadcasting system. By this move, the station made rapid progress in the art of salesmanship and operation in the area of salesmanship. The station continued to grow in popularity until it ceased to be recognized as a local station and became one of the key stations of the country, reaching an important territory and serving a vast audience of local fans.

It was the loyalty of these fans, their willingness to write letters and articles in the station's favor, that enabled the management of the station to form a later network with the National Broadcasting company. The first program the station broadcast from the NBC hookup was broadcast in the chamber of commerce, putting the station in a leadership role in the growth and development.

Twelve years of service is a long time. It is now 12 years and a half since Radio Station WWNC "hit the air." The station celebrated its 12th anniversary on the night of Feb. 21, 1929, Texas Guinan's night club in New York city was raided; Mae West was thrown out of jail after a one year sentence; the Moffet tunnel was completed in Colorado; Miss Ernestine Schumann Heink appeared here in concert; Pollock's shoe store was featuring the "black bottom" shoes for girls; Clara Bow was playing at the Imperial Theater in a film called "It!"; Norma Shearer was here in a film called "The Latest From Paris" and Bette Davis was being seen in "The Divine Woman." That was 12 years ago.

When WWNC was born through WABC at 19 Haywood street, it was to be a radio gift by Mr. Jackson to the city of Asheville, which chose the chamber of commerce. Just two years ago, on the tenth anniversary of Radio Station WWNC, Mr. Jackson and many other pioneers in the radio field were heard over a station celebration broadcast. Among them were Mrs. Louise Lorick, coloratura soprano, and her husband, James Lorick. Waves of the station, representing the largest family association with the station.

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director and as vice president of the Citizen-Times company, with Ezra McIntosh as program director, a position he has held several years.

The two latest forward steps left to report in this brief sketch of the station's very active life happened in the past few weeks. The first was when the station moved from the Flat Iron building to the new Citizen-Times-WWNC building between the Arcade building and the post office in Battery Park plaza. The second is its resumption of affiliation on April 1 with the Columbia Broadcasting company, a natural "WABC" connection in spirit and in truth.

Radio Station WWNC has grown from a few hours on the air a few times a week to a full-time business and entertainment medium, not only for Asheville, but for all of North Carolina and this section of the United States. It now occupies the entire top floor of the new building and is one of the best equipped stations in the South. The transmitter remains on the top of the Flat Iron building and plans are being made for still further development in the station arrangements, both as to equipment and service on the air.