

30th Birthday Recalls Early Days of WTIC

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Coincidental with commercial radio's observance of its 35th anniversary year, Station WTIC this month celebrates its 30th birthday. The Travelers station went on the air with a regular schedule on Feb. 10, 1925, after broadcasting experimentally during the previous year.

The Hartford station's records carry the names of many pioneer performers not mentioned on a recently televised tribute to radio. Stars who performed before WTIC microphones in the middle twenties included Phil Baker, Dr. Rockwell, Belle Baker, Eddie Foy, Bert Lytell and Billy Dale.

Actors, comedians and vocalists who became regular network stars were Will Rogers, Bing Crosby, Weber & Fields, Billy Jones and Ernie Hare, Amos and Andy, Vic and Sade, Parker Fennelly and Arthur Allen, and Joe White, the Silver Masked Tenor, to name but a few.

Among the biggest program attractions were "Roxy and His Gang," "Major Bowles' Capitol Family," "Eveready Hour," "A & P Gypsies," "Ipana Troubadors," "Atwater Kent Hour" and "Cliquot Club Eskimos." Oft-mentioned orchestra conductors were Nathaniel Shilkret, Cesare Sodero and Walter Damrosch.

IF THERE had been a "Telephone Hour" in 1925, a season's lineup of artists might have included John McCormick, Giuseppe de Luca, Renee Chernet, Emilio de Gorgozza, Titto Ruffo, Mary Garden, Arthur Middleton, Rosa Ponselle, Theodore Webb and Royal Dadum. However, a "Victor Hour" series did begin during WTIC's first year and all of the above-mentioned stars were heard either on that program or, in the years that followed, on broadcasts direct from the Travelers studios. Also engaged for local concert broadcasts were such top-ranking vocalists as Alma Kitchell, Gilta Erstinn, Helen Jepson, Fred Patton, Robert Simmons, Martha Atwood, Frederick Hufsmith, Judson House, Anna Kaskas, Earle Spicer and Lanny Ross.

A few of the well-known public figures heard over WTIC before 1930 were Herbert Hoover, Andrew Mellon, Judge Kenne-

saw Mountain Landis, Winchell Smith and William Lyon Phelps. The station carried the inauguration of Calvin Coolidge in 1925, introduced Rudy Vallee and Allie Wrubel to radio as early as 1927 and presented radio's first quiz show, "Ask Me Another," in that year. Graham MacNamee and Phillips Carlin were radio's top sportscasters in the twenties and both of them found occasion to announce over WTIC mikes.

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SOUSA'S and Goldman's were the "bands of America" in radio's early days, judging from WTIC's records and dance music was admittedly played best by the Vincent Lopez, George Olson and B. A. Rolfe orchestras.

WTIC was listened to over a large part of the globe in the 1920's and 1930's and it originated thousands of programs for coast-to-coast transmission by the Red Network of National Broadcasting Company. Fan mail was received from every state in the union, every province in Canada and as far away as Australia and New Zealand. The station did not begin operating on its present power of 50,000 watts until 1929, but even in the preceding years its 500-watt transmitter sent out a signal that was heard throughout the country. It is Hartford's oldest radio station, antedated only by Station WDAK which was operated by the Hartford Courant and whose license was surrendered in 1923.

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THE STATION, which has maintained a nation-wide reputation for excellence of programming, has a highly experienced staff of 75 members, including eight announcers, 21 engineers, three producers, six news editors, a farm program director and a director of woman's programs. It has two 30-year men, Walter Johnson, Secretary and Assistant General Manager, and Herman Taylor, chief engineer; five who have reached the quarter-century mark, including Vicepresident and General Manager Paul W. Morency, Program Manager Leonard J. Patricelli and Assistant Program Manager Paul Lucas. There are 12 20-year people.