

EARLY HISTORY

On October 14, 1920, a radio broadcast came from Union College via “wireless telephone,” as reported in the Schenectady Gazette. This was the first broadcast for public entertainment in the United States.⁽¹⁾ The development of radio at Union College can be attributed to many individuals, many of whom worked for General Electric and cooperated with students and faculty on campus. As it developed, it encountered frequent interruptions and changes.

General Electric had set up a wireless communication link from Schenectady to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and had constructed a 100-foot mast for the project. They abandoned this project in 1910 and gave it to Union College for experimental work, which is presumed to have been underway on campus at the time.⁽²⁾ This mast was located near the Electrical Engineering Building. A wireless telegraph station was constructed by Howard Olwin Thorne and Gustave Huthsteiner, both of UC Class of 1911.⁽³⁾ The station was completed in 1912, with a 250-foot antenna.⁽⁴⁾

In October 1915, the College purchased a Marconi wireless set consisting of a two-kilowatt sending set and a cabinet receiving set.⁽⁵⁾ The Radio Club at Union first met on October 29, 1915.⁽⁶⁾ In addition to recreation, the club focused on education. Lectures on radio theory complimented growing research on aerials, batteries and equipment. The club continued to expand and in November 1916, it was incorporated as the Union College Section of the Radio Association of America.⁽⁷⁾

In 1917, radio transmissions were halted by the Federal Government with the start of the U.S. entry into World War I.⁽⁸⁾ Once restrictions were lifted, radio became increasingly popular. Call letters 2XQ were assigned to Union College, and 2ADD were assigned to Wendell King, Electrical Lab, Union College.⁽⁹⁾ Wendell King was the first Black student to attend Union College for a significant duration, and he was very involved in the earliest broadcasts of the Radio Club.⁽¹⁰⁾



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