The Continued Search for the Origins of Telegraphy at the University of Michigan: Contributions of Five Attorneys

No attorney jokes. While researching various events related to the origins of telegraphy and W8UM, there were five graduates of the University of Michigan Law School who made significant contributions aided by the telegraph. This is a brief look into their backgrounds and contributions.

William W. Cook, 1882 J.D.

If you are an university law graduate, you are likely familiar with the name William W. Cook. Cook, born 1858 in Hillsdale, Michigan, was the son of a banker and founder of Hillsdale, Michigan. Spending his first two years attending Hillsdale College, where he choose not to take classes in telegraphy, he then enrolled at the University of Michigan to complete his undergraduate and then law school degree.

William W. Cook, following law school, worked in a New York law firm. Cook was considered a legal scholar on corporate law focusing on the rights of stockholders. It is there he represented John W. MacKay and his telegraph companies. Afterwards, Cook left his firm to become General Counsel for MacKay and his companies. The MacKay companies included; the Commercial Cable Company, Postal Telegraph Cable Company, Commercial Pacific Cable Company, Eastern Telegraph Company and the Federal Telegraph Company.


WILLIAM WILSON COOK
GEN'L COUNSEL POSTAL TELEGRAPH CO. AND COM'L CABLE CO.
AUTHOR "COOK ON CORPORATIONS"

Cook's generous donation to the university, in 1930, was used to build and support the;

1. Martha Cook Dormitory (to honor his Mother)
2. Law Quadrangle consisting of the;
    a. John Cook Dormitory (to honor his Father)
    b. Harry B. Hutchins Hall (to honor Dean Hutchins)
    c. Lawyer's Club Dormitory (NYC Lawyer's Club)
    d. Legal Research Building

Irvin "Cy" Huston, 1902 J.D.


IRVIN HUSTON, d'oo-'oz
Better known as "Cy," who is President of the Recreation Building in Detroit and General Manager of the Huston-Mortenson Company

From 1901-1905, Cy and his brothers Corwin and Roscoe parlayed bets on Fielding Yost's Wolverine point-a-minute football team.

Following law school, the brothers opened a Bowling Alley at 311 Maynard, a Billiards Hall at 312 S. State Street, Cigar & Tobacco Store at 118 E. Liberty and a Candy Store at 307 S. State. Each were popular among university students and employed many Michigan football players. Inside their billiards hall, the Huston Brothers had a direct telegraph wire allowing them to display Michigan football games on a "Gridgraph" to those in attendance. This is likely the first use of the gridgraph on campus.

Cy later became the first General Manager of the NFL Detroit Lions following the team's purchase from Portsmouth, Ohio. He was also responsible for choosing the Honolulu Blue and Silver colors that Lions wear to this day.

Roscoe B. Huston, 1904 J.D.



During a 1925 UM football bust, in Detroit, Roscoe gave the diners at his table cow-bells to emphasize the yells during the banquet. Sitting at his table was a Clark C. Hyatt. Clark said "I shall endeavor to have my bell heard at every contest when a Michigan team comes on the field". This was the earliest documented origin of the "Cow-Bell" at Michigan games.


CLARK C. HYATT
With his Cow-bell

While a student, Roscoe is credited with changing the name of campus newspaper from the *U of M Daily* to the *Michigan Daily* and then selling it to the University. He is also credited in forming the "secret" Honor Society "Michigamua" that had been located in the Michigan Union Tower.

Roscoe was later appointed as Detroit's Postmaster by President Franklin Roosevelt. Roscoe, and his brother, maintained a close friendship with Fielding H. Yost and the Michigan football teams.

Floyd "Jack" Mattice, 1905 J.D.

In 1903, both the University of Michigan and Minnesota football teams were undefeated and competing for the championship. Because of its importance, Jack, who had experience as a telegraph operator, made arrangements with Bell Telephone Company to connect telegraph wires to the stadium and University Hall. Jack telegraphed the play-by-play to radio operators, in University Hall, who transcribed the coded messages to the students. This marked the beginning of "sports broadcasting". This was also the game where Michigan forgot their brown jug; "The Little Brown Jug".

The Michigan Stadium Story

The First "Broadcast" of a UM Football Game

Interest in Michigan football grew steadily among the student body and the state's population at large during the 1890s and reached new heights with the success of Fielding Yost's "point-a-minute" teams. Special fan trains were arranged for many away games, but only a few supporters were able to make the trips. Those left behind could get full accounts of the action in the next day's newspaper, but for many that was not quick enough. For a number of years the *Michigan Daily* maintained a scoreboard on campus. Reporters telegraphed results to the *Daily* office which were then posted on the scoreboard. For big games, sizable crowds would gather at the scoreboard to get "up-to-the-minute" results.

In 1903, a UM student, the Athletic Association and the Bell Telephone Company teamed up to bring Wolverine fans in Ann Arbor a nearly "live" account of the Minnesota game played on October 31 in Minneapolis; a game that would determine the "Champion of the West." Reporting the game from a specially built tower at Northrop Field, Floyd (Jack) Mattice, Law 1905, could lay a justifiable claim to being one of the first broadcasters of a college football game.



Floyd (Jack) Mattice, UM-Law 1905, provided first "live" play-by-play account of a UM football game in 1903.

A native of Lima, Ohio, Mattice learned the Morse telegraphic code as a youngster, and he could handle it well enough to hold down summer jobs as a telegrapher with the railroads and Western Union.

As a Michigan student with a keen interest in Wolverine football, he turned this knowledge to use. He sold Western Union

The "Gridgraph", a predecessor to the football scoreboard, was used to depict the plays, movement of the ball, players on the field, time and score. Originally in University Auditorium later moving to Hill Auditorium in 1913. Students, paying 25 cents, would crowd the auditorium to listen to the Michigan games.



Fred W. Albertson, 1934 J.D.

Fred Albertson must have spent many hours at the W8AXZ "wireless station" during his college years. His contributions advanced science in many ways. Fred had frequent scheduled contacts with Professor Hobbs Greenland Exploration exchanging messages between Hobbs and faculty on campus. Fred also coordinated the exchange of messages with the Byrd Expedition and simultaneously between the two expeditions; connecting both the Antarctic and Greenland.

In 1929, Robert McCormick, Chicago Tribune newspaper and WGN radio, Chicago, had ambitions of establishing inter-continental air travel between Chicago and Berlin. W8AXZ and Fred were instrumental in communicating with the pilots of the Untin Bowler. The plane, having landed for fuel, eventually sunk after its pontoon was punctured by an iceberg in northern Canada. The pilots and radio operator were later rescued by Professor Hobbs.

Chicago Tribune, July 7, 1929



INTO THE MORNING SKY, above Chicago's front yard, the 'Untin' Bowler climbed last Wednesday morning in a take-off as thrilling as it was perfect, and the great adventure of the flight to Berlin and back was on. Cameras clicked here as the Tribune plane swung over the Field museum, soaring and circling above the crowds that gathered to wish the big amphibion godspeed.

KB8OIS – John Palmisano

N.B. Cowbell photo was listed on eBay® as a "Vintage 1930's University of Michigan Cowbell, Rare, Football". Item was listed for $179.95.

Clark Hyatt / Michigan Alumnus v.33: https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015071121183?urlappend=%3Bseq=314