The Continued Search for the Origins of Telegraphy at the University of Michigan: Contributions of Five University of Michigan Law School Graduates Aided by Telegraphy

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, Cook would transfer to the University of Michigan to complete his undergraduate and then law school degree.

Following law school, Cook worked at a New York law firm. Considered a legal scholar on corporate law, focusing on the rights of stockholders, it is there Cook represented John W. MacKay. Cook would later leave the Firm to become the General Counsel for John MacKay's telegraph companies; 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 of Michigan 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 UM Dean Hutchins)
    c. Lawyer's Club Dormitory (NYC Lawyer's Club)
    d. Legal Research Building

Irvin "Cy" Huston, 1902 J.D.

From 1901-1905, Cy and his brothers Corwin and Roscoe parlayed bets on Fielding Yost's point-a-minute football teams. 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 the Michigan football games on a "Grid-graph" to those in attendance. This is likely the first use of the grid-graph on campus (shown below).


IRVIN HUSTON, d'00-'02
Better known as "Cy," who is President of the Recreation Building in Detroit and General Manager of the Huston-Mortenson Company

Later, Cy became the first General Manager of the NFL Detroit Lions following the team's purchase from Portsmouth, Ohio. Cy 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 (below). 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 athletic events. A story appearing in the Detroit Free Press (October, 2019) suggests that the cowbell "Go Blue" chant was started by 2 UM students; one during 1989 and the later in 1992. Link: https://amp.freep.com/amp/2458990001.


Cow-Bell listed on eBay


Clark 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 General 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, 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 the Bell Telephone Company to connect telegraph wires to the stadium and University Hall on campus. Jack telegraphed the play-by-play to radio operators, in University Hall, who transcribed the coded messages to the students. This marked the beginnings of "sports broadcasting". This was also the game where Michigan forgot their brown jug; "The Little Brown Jug".



Several years later, the "Grid-graph", a predecessor to the football scoreboard, was used to depict the plays, movement of the ball, players on the field, time and score. Originally located in University Auditorium, the Grid-Graph was later moved to Hill Auditorium in 1913. Students, paying 25 cents, would crowd the auditorium to listen, and watch, the Michigan away games "live".

Fred W. Albertson, 1934 J.D.

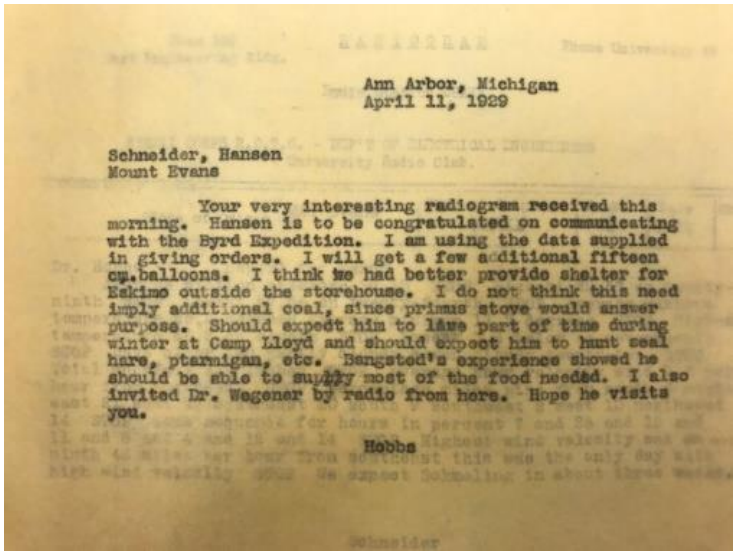
Fred Albertson must have spent many hours at the W8AXZ "wireless station" during his college years. Fortunately, the wireless station was located in West Hall just 1-block away from the Law School. His contributions advanced science in many ways. Fred had frequent scheduled contacts with Professor Hobbs Greenland Exploration exchanging messages between Greenland and faculty on campus. Fred also coordinated the exchange of messages with the Byrd Antarctic Expedition and simultaneously between the two expeditions; connecting both the Antarctic with Arctic Greenland for the first time.

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.

Following the unsuccessful 1928 flight of the Greater Rockford airplane, Robert McCormick, Chicago Tribune newspaper and WGN radio, Chicago, had ambitions of establishing inter-continental air travel between Chicago and Berlin with his plane the Untin Bowler. 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 in 1929. The pilots, "Shorty" Kramer and "Fish" Hassell and radio operator were later rescued by Professor Hobbs.



Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 11, 1929

Schneider, Hansen
Mount Evans

Your very interesting radiogram received this morning. Hansen is to be congratulated on communicating with the Byrd Expedition. I am using the data supplied in giving orders. I will get a few additional fifteen cu.balloons. I think we had better provide shelter for Eskimo outside the storehouse. I do not think this need imply additional coal, since primus stove would answer purpose. Should expect him to lose part of time during winter at Camp Lloyd and should expect him to hunt seal hare, ptarmigan, etc. Bangsted's experience showed he should be able to supply most of the food needed. I also invited Dr. Wegener by radio from here. Hope he visits you.

Hobbs

John Palmisano, KB8OIS
University of Michigan Amateur Radio Club / W8UM History Project. 2021

1. 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.
2. Clark Hyatt / Michigan Alumnus v.33: https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015071121183?urlappend=%3Bseq=314