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1921 Transatlantic Test Re-enactment by The Radio Club of America

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On December 11, 1921 radio amateurs, led by members of the Radio Club of America (RCA) used modest wireless equipment to cross the Atlantic Ocean for the first time. With the newly chosen 'shortwaves', a transmitter in Connecticut and a receiver at Scotland, logged signals travelling 3,176 miles with a power only 1/250 that of the Marconi stations of the day. The era of 'smaller/ cheaper/ farther' was born, giving rise to modern telecommunications and 100 years of wireless progress.

In celebration of the centennial of that historic event, the Radio Club of America will re-enact this, with a special transmission that can be recorded and copied by hams and radio listeners in the UK, much of North and South America, and Africa.

The re-enactment will take place on Saturday December 11th in the U.S. at 9:52 PM eastern time (in the U.K. it will be December 12th at 02:52 GMT/Scotland time).

The president of the Radio Club of America will send out two messages in Morse Code (CW) at that time, at a speed of about 12 words/minute. The first message will be the exact same message that was sent 100 years ago. Then a second message will be sent, also in Morse Code, with a modern theme for the next 100 years. These messages will be sent on a frequency of 1825 MHz on the 160-meter amateur radio band (close in frequency to the 1921 transmission). The transmissions will come from the amateur radio station of Tom Frenaye, K1KI, in Connecticut.

Radio amateurs are encouraged to listen-in and copy the messages. Also, shortwave listeners (SWLs) can receive these messages on short wave receivers and decode them by using free Morse code software on their computers. Special certificates that recognize copying the messages will be available. Details can be found on the RCA Website www.radioclubofamerica.org.

After the event, the two Morse Code keys used to transmit the messages will be raffled to the highest donor to the Radio Club of America, along with a certificate of authenticity. Details on this will be found on the RCA website.

In today's world of instant 5G cellular communications, this event might seem trivial. But the context of history is very important. In 1901, exactly 20 years earlier, Guglielmo Marconi succeeded in getting a Morse code signal across the Atlantic. But Marconi had huge antennas, a very powerful transmitter, hundreds of thousands of dollars in investment, and spent many months in planning and preparation. Wireless was in its infancy, very expensive, often unreliable. When the "unsinkable" Titanic hit an iceberg in April 1912, wireless proved its worth because the Titanic's distress call was heard by the RMS Carpathia which sailed to the rescue. During WW1, which ended in 1918, wireless was to prove an increasingly important means of communication. But it was still in its infancy, not always reliable, and expensive. So, in1921, when radio amateurs built a station for around $1000 dollars and were able to cross the ocean, a wave of further wireless experimentation and development began. The result today is the ubiquitous presence of wireless in our daily lives: 5G smartphones, wireless Internet, smart-homes, TV programs from satellites, and Bluetooth connectivity. This re-enactment by the Radio Club of America will commemorate this event and the subsequent development of wireless technology.

For more information on this and other events taking place with RCA, ARRL, RSGB, and AWA, go to https://www.radioclubofamerica.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=500767&module_id=475160

About RCA

Founded in 1909, the Radio Club of America is the oldest, most prestigious group of wireless communications professionals in the world. Members are dedicated to the wireless art and science for the betterment of society. The Radio Club of America is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, visit www.radioclubofamerica.org.