

Calvin Coolidge

Our First Radio President



by Jerry L. Wallace

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Acknowledgments

As anyone who has done it knows, writing and preparing a book for publication is no easy task. It certainly is not a solo undertaking. While the author, of course, is always responsible for the final product, there are many indeed who assist him along the way.

This volume, short though it be, is no exception. It would not have made it into your hands, my readers, without the help and support of many individuals. First and foremost, I am sincerely grateful to The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation for allowing me to publish this work under its auspices. In this connection, a special word of thanks is due to Cyndy Bittinger, The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation's Executive Director. She not only recognized the value of this project and urged me on with it, but she also spent countless hours in reviewing the manuscript, providing editorial advice, and in coordinating publication. I also must thank the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation's Communication Committee members, Greg Soula, Chair, Charles Buell, and William Brooks, for their assistance and helpful suggestions. Let me offer a special word of praise to H. Donald Kroitzsh for the well-done layout and printing of the book. I must also express my appreciation to the librarians of the Memorial Library of Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, the Winfield (Kansas) Public Library, and of the Ablab Library of Wichita State University for making available their resources to me. Finally, I thank my wife, Delia, who, over many months and without undue complaint, encouraged and helped me with this project.

Above I spoke as author, now I am charged with speaking on behalf of the Coolidge Foundation. All the support cited above, while essential, would have been without end if certain supportive individuals had not stepped forth to underwrite this

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Jerry L. Wallace
Oxford, Kansas
April 12, 2008

Cover Photograph

President Calvin Coolidge addressing a Memorial Day gathering at the Amphitheater, Arlington National Cemetery, Washington, DC, Saturday, May 30, 1925. In the forefront are seated old and honored veterans of the War of the Rebellion. Note the presidential speaking stand with its two microphones. The stand was designed especially for the President's use in delivering radio addresses.

Credit: Library of Congress

Preface

The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation is pleased to publish this book about President Calvin Coolidge and the radio. Historian Jerry Wallace tells the story of a President, conservative in nature, who eagerly and fully embraced radio, the cutting-edge medium of his day, and went on to become our first radio President. Thanks to radio, President Coolidge was able to communicate directly with millions more of his fellow countrymen than any of his predecessors. We learn from Jerry that “Silent Cal” was a most successful radio communicator and skillful pioneer in that medium. At the start of his presidency in August 1923, radio was in its infancy, with his predecessor, Warren G. Harding, having given the first presidential address over the airwaves in the spring of 1922. By Coolidge’s departure from office in March of 1929, the radio industry had matured with radio networks and regular programming in place.

Calvin Coolidge was more than a pioneer in radio—he excelled at using it, and he knew it. He had an expert from a local radio station to teach him “radio manners” and he worked at his speaking style and voice pitch. He became a radio personality. Graham McNamee, one of the great radio announcers of the 1920’s, praised him for his radio presence. In this, Coolidge was an exception. Many of his contemporaries, with their flamboyant 19th Century oratory, came across badly over the air.

The radio enabled President Coolidge to speak directly to the American people, bypassing Congress and the newspapers, and he made the most of it. For example, he spoke twice annually over the air about the fiscal affairs of government, thereby keeping the pressure on Congress for “constructive economy” and away from wasteful boondoggles. The requests for national hook-ups by the White House staff became so frequent that AT&T officials were compelled to urge restraint.

Radio was a primary campaign tool for Coolidge in the presidential election of 1924. His opponents, John W. Davis,

Democrat, and Robert LaFollette, Progressive, did the same but on a smaller scale. The contest of 1924 ranks as the first presidential campaign on the airwaves!

Jerry also explains that the Coolidge administration put in place the regulatory philosophy that governs radio broadcasting to this day. This involves the concepts of the public ownership of the airwaves, prohibition of monopoly, periodic licensing of broadcasters, no censorship of programming, and reliance on commercial radio to provide free programming to the public. If radio had come in a few years earlier or later, it would have most likely taken a much different form.

Coolidge Foundation members are often history experts, and in Jerry Wallace, we have one par excellence. A Foundation member since 1973, he was an archivist with the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC for 30 years. Jerry's Coolidge Foundation projects include *Real Calvin Coolidge* articles on the President's March 4, 1925, inauguration and Coolidge's visit to Kansas City, Missouri, for the dedication of the Liberty Memorial. Also, since the advent of the internet, Jerry has been providing answers to inquiries from staff and Coolidge Foundation members. He is the "go to guy" on history questions and if he does not know the answer, he combs his library, old newspapers, and the internet to find it.

Now Jerry has provided us with *Calvin Coolidge: Our First Radio President*. He tells us that he wrote it to ensure that historians - especially those of early radio - have available to them a source of information documenting that Calvin Coolidge was our first radio President. This fact, he observes, is often overlooked or not sufficiently emphasized. Rectifying this situation has an added importance, he says, because of the approaching centennial of commercial radio. The Coolidge Foundation Communication Committee was so pleased with his work that they created this book. Tune in and read this probing and insightful story.

– Cyndy Bittinger
Executive Director
The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation
Managing Editor

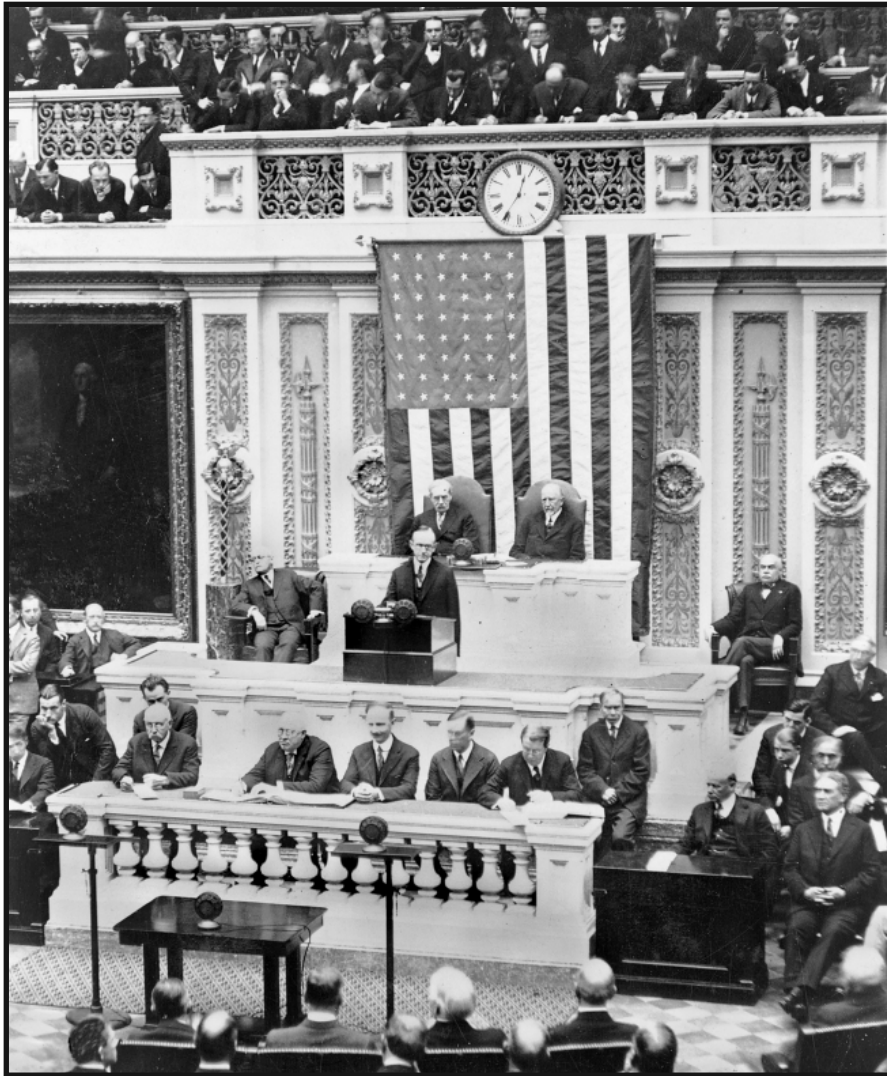
Dedicated to the Memory of

MARY WALTON LIVINGSTON

1914 – 2007

Mentor and Friend

Mary Walton Livingston (1914-2007) was a career archivist with the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC, and was much involved in community affairs and church work. As an archivist, she shall always be remembered for her testimony before Congress during the Watergate controversy that brought about the denial of President Nixon's \$450,000 tax break for the donation of his vice presidential papers to the National Archives. For her resolute stand in this matter, the Society of American Archivists presented her with an award for "conscientious performance of duty." A dedicated civil rights activist, she fought to keep the Fairfax, VA, schools open during the turbulent era of "massive resistance." The local NAACP later recognized her efforts. She was a founding member of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill in Alexandria, VA, where she was Sunday school superintendent and taught for many years. Mrs. Livingston, a graduate of the National Cathedral School and Sweet Briar College, was descended from a long line of distinguished Virginians. Her Uncle Walton Moore was a Democratic representative from the Old Dominion, 1919-31. As a young girl, she accompanied him in paying a courtesy call on former President Coolidge at his Massasoit Street home. In June 1927, after his return from Paris, Col. Charles A. Lindbergh favored her with an aerial tour of the Capital. It was through Mrs. Livingston's efforts that the author joined the National Archives. Throughout his career, she remained his counselor and friend. She was the first person he talked to on entering the Archives and the last on departing it. Mrs. Livingston died in March 2007 at the age of 92.



Library of Congress

President Coolidge delivers his first Annual Message (now called the State of the Union Address) to the members of Congress on December 6, 1923. Note the microphones before the President and on the Speaker's dais, as well as three places in the well of the House. Listeners reported they could hear the President turn the pages of his manuscript. This was perhaps the most important speech of Mr. Coolidge's presidency. In it, he introduced himself and his political program to the American people. Behind the President on the right is Speaker of the House, Frederick H. Gillett, and on the left, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Albert B. Cummins. Coolidge's address is frequently cited as the first annual message to be broadcast. This is incorrect. The Annual Message of President Warren G. Harding on December 8, 1922 was the first to be sent out over the airwaves. The difference between the two is that the Harding address was heard by only a few thousand individuals in the Washington metropolitan area, while Coolidge's was carried on a nationwide hook-up and heard by millions.

Calvin Coolidge: Our First Radio President

“I am very fortunate that I came in with the radio.”¹

– Calvin Coolidge in a conversation
with Senator James Watson (R-IN)

*“It is so often that the President is on the air that almost any one
who wishes has ample opportunity to hear his voice.”²*

– Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography* (1929)

*“The invention and development of the radio has been one of the
most wonderful incidents of the advance of civilization.”³*

– Calvin Coolidge

Letter of Greeting to the Radio Manufacturers' Association
Atlantic City, New Jersey, May 11, 1926

On Thursday, December 6, 1923, a little over four months after assuming the presidency upon the death of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge made his radio debut as President of the United States. During his presidency, August 3, 1923 to March 4, 1929, running five years and seven months, Mr. Coolidge would make more than 40 radio addresses, becoming, as C. Bascom Slemple, Secretary to the President, put it, “the first President to communicate directly with all the people.”⁴ These addresses comprised over 30% of the 135 addresses and messages that the President generated in the course of his administration.⁵ His radio speeches were formal, were normally delivered before a live audience, covered a variety of subjects,

and were made mostly from venues in the Washington, DC, area, with the Washington Auditorium being a favorite.

His appearances before the microphone became increasingly frequent from 1925 on, although he continued to rely primarily on the nation's newspapers to get out his message.⁶ By 1928, his last full year in office, he spoke over the radio no less than 16 times. This figure compares favorably with the four-year annual average of 18 for his successor, Herbert C. Hoover.⁷ According to popular writer Charles Merz, President Coolidge, the man known as "Silent Cal," spoke an average of 8,688 words per month over the radio as early as 1925.⁸

Radio came of age during the eight years, 1921-29, when Mr. Coolidge resided in Washington.⁹ To illustrate this, on November 1, 1921, as Vice-President, he dedicated the site for the construction of the World War I Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri. There was no radio or amplifier system that day; he had to rely on voice power. Of the sizable audience gathered for the event, only a small number immediately around the platform could hear his words. The program itself that day focused on an elaborate, colorful visual display rather than on the spoken word. Five years later, on Armistice Day 1926, Coolidge returned to Kansas City and that site for the dedication of the completed Memorial. This time, not only a vast crowd of spectators heard his voice thanks to amplifiers, but Americans from all sections of the country also listened in to the ceremony via a multi-station radio hook-up. What a remarkable change technology had wrought!¹⁰

Calvin Coolidge has the distinction of being the first President to make full and effective use of the radio, which he and his Secretary of Commerce, Herbert C. Hoover, did so much to nurture.¹¹ From the beginning of his presidency, Mr. Coolidge understood the importance of radio for himself as a public figure, as well as for the nation's economy and cultural

development. As President, he took full advantage of the new medium, which seemed to have been invented for him, as it evolved from primitive hook-ups with carbon microphones to network broadcasts with condenser mikes. Both historical firsts and technological breakthroughs frequently highlighted his broadcasts. He made a purposeful effort to develop his radio skills and burnish his radio personality. Broadcasting became a role in which he shone. He also sought to use radio to get his message across to the public directly, bypassing Congress and the newspapers. He was rightly proud of his radio accomplishments and later presidents would build and expand upon what he had begun. By the end of his administration, most Americans, as well as many Canadians, could easily recognize the President's Yankee twang as it resonated from their radio receivers.¹² Mr. Coolidge rightly deserves the title: "Our First Radio President."¹³

While appreciating fully the value of radio, President Coolidge claimed to have little time himself for listening to the new device. In talking to reporters in late November 1926, he said, "I don't use the radio in the White House very much. My wife uses it a great deal. I am most usually in the evening engaged in some kind of work that keeps me in the library."¹⁴ We do know that when he did listen, he listened in to political broadcasts. *The New York Times*, for instance, reported that at the time of the Republican convention in June 1924, radio speakers were placed about the White House so that he could listen in wherever he might be.¹⁵ There is even a questionable account of him enjoying the antics of "Amos 'n' Andy," which has him instructing his aides not to interrupt him while the popular show was airing (7:00 to 7:15 each weekday) and even excusing himself from State dinners to listen in.¹⁶

When he choose to listen, he certainly had the best equipment on which to do so. In early 1924, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) and the Radio Corporation of American (RCA), each vying for the new President's attention,

donated a new radio receiver to the White House. It was reported that the large, magnificent AT&T superheterodyne set was “much admired by the recipient.”¹⁷ In the fall of 1925, the President was reported as using a powerful 6-tube radio receiving set.¹⁸ His wife, Grace Coolidge, was an ardent and early radio fan. *Radio Age* reported that before she became First Lady, she had, for some time, a radio of the better type in her room at the New Willard Hotel. She took this set with her to the White House in August 1923.¹⁹

Perhaps of a lesser importance, but still worthy of historical note, is the fact that Mr. Coolidge was the first Vice-President to speak over the radio. When or where he made his maiden broadcast is not known but it most likely occurred during the 1922 mid-term election campaign.²⁰ One early documented broadcast took place on Christmas Eve 1922 (the first radio Christmas), over WGY (Schenectady, New York). It was unusual in that it made use of a General Electric Pallophotophone sound recording, made for the occasion a few days earlier by C. A. Hoxie. The technology involved recording voice signals photographically on a moving tape (a process later used in talking-films). The Vice-President’s holiday greeting was aired, along with those of Secretary of War, John W. Weeks, and Secretary of the Navy, Edwin N. Denby. When Coolidge heard his voice reproduced, it was said that he was shocked. Mrs. Coolidge, however, assured him that the recording was “quite natural.”²¹

Radio brought profound changes to American life in the Twenties.²² Most notably, it offered a wonderful, new medium of entertainment and enlightenment for all Americans, regardless of geographical location or economic status.²³ Along with the automobile and good roads, it freed millions of American families from the isolation and loneliness of their rural home.²⁴ Moreover, it helped to bring together a people long divided by geography and by ethnic and cultural differences. The Al Smiths of that day might say “rad-dio,” but not their children. And it certainly

was a blessing for the homebound and blind. Recognizing this, President Coolidge accepted, in 1924, the chairmanship of the National Committee to Provide Radio Sets for the Sightless Poor.²⁵ By the end of the Coolidge administration, serious thought was being given to making available to the public broadcasts of Congressional debates and even cabinet meetings. Plans were also made to utilize the scientific and educational possibilities of the government departments and Smithsonian Institution. Sam Pickard, who had served on the Federal Radio Commission under President Coolidge, was closely involved in these efforts.²⁶

Summing up, radio opened the door to the outside world for its listeners, giving them a new outlook on life and the world about them. As for politics, it brought political matters to a new level of public awareness and understanding. The progress radio represented is one reason why the men and women of the New Era, as the Twenties came to be called, looked to the future with confidence and such high expectations.

Equally important was radio's significant impact on the nation's economy. Sales of radios and radio equipment boomed as the industry grew during the decade. A look at a *Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalogue* from this period reveals that their Silvertone radio sets were available in a wide range of prices and on easy payment terms.²⁷ When President Coolidge entered office in 1923, sales of sets and parts totaled \$136,000,000; by 1929, when he left, they had climbed to \$842,542,000, a 520% increase.²⁸ During this period, the number of families with radio sets increased from 400,000 to 10 million.²⁹ The index number of production for radios (1937 = 100) rose from 2.6 to 69.³⁰ On the New York Stock Exchange, the stock of RCA, which investors referred to simply as "Radio," had become one of the premier equities, a focus of market speculation, rising ever higher and higher as the Twenties advanced.³¹ Most significantly, radio

opened new markets for merchandisers as well as a new way of advertising goods and services.³²

The coming of radio, along with current newsreel films, instant wire service photos, and expanded newspaper and magazine coverage, changed the nature of the presidency during Mr. Coolidge's years in Washington. They combined to make him into a familiar, popular human figure, almost like the neighbor next door. Coolidge himself seemed to have welcomed and encouraged this process. None of his predecessors in the presidency, not even the personable Theodore Roosevelt, had enjoyed such a close, intimate relationship with the public. In this respect, Calvin Coolidge was undoubtedly a modern President.

Mr. Coolidge was not, however, the first President to speak over the radio. That honor goes to his predecessor, Warren G. Harding, under whom commercial radio broadcasting had its beginnings.³³ Most accounts list Mr. Harding's address at the dedication of the Francis Scott Key Memorial in Baltimore, which was broadcast locally over WEAR (now WJFK) on June 14, 1922, as the first presidential radio speech. In fact, President Harding had spoken over the radio two weeks prior on May 30, 1922, when he dedicated the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. He used a microphone placed in a white box as to blend in with the white columns of the Memorial. The Naval Aircraft Radio Laboratory's was responsible for that broadcast.³⁴ It should be mentioned that Mr. Harding's address at Arlington National Cemetery on Armistice Day 1921, in connection with the burial of the Unknown Soldier, was heard on the east and west coasts as it was delivered. The airwaves, however, were not the medium of transmission. Rather, Mr. Harding's words were sent over telephone lines to amplifiers on stage at "great American Legion meetings" in New York City's Madison Square Garden and San Francisco's Civic Auditorium. Never before had so many heard simultaneously a single human voice.³⁵

To Mr. Harding also goes the distinction of being the first President to have his Annual Message to Congress (since 1935 called the State of the Union Address) broadcast on December 8, 1922; however, it was broadcast locally, not nationally, as would be the case in the following year with President Coolidge's address.³⁶ He also has the honor of having made the first nationally broadcast presidential speech. It took place from the Coliseum in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 21, 1923, while on his ill-fated westward "Voyage of Understanding." Significantly, President Harding opened this speech, in which he called for United States membership in the World Court, with these words of greeting: "My countrymen *all* [my Italics]." Actually, his voice did not reach "all" his countrymen, for in those early days of radio, radio stations and receivers were still rare. In this first presidential hook-up, which was considered as a test, only two stations - both of which, however, employed powerful Western Electric transmitters - were linked: KSD in St. Louis, with its signal beaming to homes in the heartland; and WEAJ in New York City, reaching out to the populous eastern half of the nation.³⁷

President Harding was also the first President to have a radio in the White House. On February 8, 1922, he had one placed in the second-floor library on a bookcase nearby to his desk. Navy "wireless experts" handled the installation of the powerful receiver, capable of picking up stations from faraway Hawaii and Panama. Its aerial ran from the White House roof to a tall tree on the south lawn (later it was replaced by an indoor "cobweb" antenna). It was reported that "Scarcely, a day goes by that he does not 'listen-in'" and that he had "become something of an expert...in tuning his set, whirling the knobs of the 'tickler' and the 'vernier adjustment' with assurance."³⁸

By February 1922, radio had become a national "craze."³⁹ There were then three radio stations in the District of Columbia; their number would double by April; and after a year, the total

had grown to eight. Nationally, between February 1, 1922, and February 1, 1923, the number of radio stations exploded from 36 to 576, a 1,600% increase.⁴⁰ Given his interest and involvement in radio, it was appropriate that when death took President Harding on August 2, 1923, the airwaves went silent in respect for his memory. It also reveals how radio, still seeking to define itself, was then viewed as a source of entertainment and pleasure, not unlike the theater, rather than news.⁴¹ This would soon change, however.⁴²

As for ex-Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, having died in January 1919, never had an opportunity to speak over the new medium. One can only imagine what use he would have made of it! Woodrow Wilson, however, beat President Coolidge to the microphone. On the evening of November 11, 1923, less than a month before Mr. Coolidge's first radio appearance as President, the ex-President put aside his dislike of the radio to deliver a short Armistice Day talk from the library of his Washington home on "S" Street. "Mr. Wilson will now say a few words," intoned the announcer. President Coolidge, listening in, heard the ex-President rebuke his fellow citizens for having withdrawn from the world "in sullen and selfish isolation." "That is all, isn't it?" said Mr. Wilson as he finished, not realizing that the microphone was still "live." The significance assigned to this broadcast is revealed in the fact that stations not carrying the speech agreed voluntarily to go off the air during broadcast, thereby improving reception for listeners. This was a common practice when an important program was aired. Less than three months later, on February 3, 1924, Mr. Wilson died; his funeral on February 6 was broadcast from the Bethlehem Chapel of the National Cathedral in Washington. It was estimated that three to four million receiving sets picked up the broadcast.⁴³ Former President Taft was late in making his radio debut. His voice was first "radiated" on Inauguration Day, March 4, 1925, when, as Chief Justice of the United States, he administered the

presidential oath to Calvin Coolidge. It was not until April 20, 1927, that Mr. Taft made his first radio address before the Yale Club in Washington, DC.⁴⁴

A future President, Herbert C. Hoover, is credited with having made the first public address on radio on January 15, 1921. The broadcast was aired over KDKA, the Westinghouse station, which had made radio history on election night in 1920 by announcing the triumphant Republican victory of the Harding-Coolidge ticket. His subject was an appeal for funds to support European relief work at a dinner at the Duquesne Club, the oldest and most prestigious of Pittsburgh's clubs.⁴⁵ A short time later, on March 4, 1921, Hoover would become Secretary of Commerce, a post he held throughout most of the Harding and Coolidge years.

As head of the Commerce Department, Hoover played a significant role in the development of radio, overseeing its rise from infancy to a modern industry.⁴⁶ If radio had come into being a decade before or later, the radio (and television) we enjoy today would be significantly different in form. Rejecting state-controlled radio as found in old Europe, the Harding and Coolidge administrations implemented the "American system." Their approach to the control and regulation of the radio industry was based upon the free enterprise system while, at the same time, it was designed to protect the public's interest.⁴⁷ At its heart, it was democratic in nature, encouraging programming that people wanted to hear. Showing its soundness and the wisdom of its proponents, this basic approach has survived all major challenges and remains in place to this day, one of the enduring accomplishments of the Harding and Coolidge administrations.⁴⁸

To encourage the radio industry and address problems arising from Secretary Hoover's limited legal authority to regulate broadcasting, the Commerce Department sponsored

a series of four annual radio conferences. They were held in Washington, DC, in February 1922, March 1923, October 1924, and November 1925, and usually attracted more than a thousand attendees. They represented the positive cooperation of business and government in bringing ordered growth to the airwaves. By encouraging a discussion of mutual concerns and arriving at consensus on critical issues, they furthered the development of the radio industry and benefited the listening public.⁴⁹

On October 8, 1924, speaking to the delegates at the Third Radio Conference, President Coolidge made this important statement setting forth his administration's fundamental principles regarding the ownership and control of the airways:

The Administration, though Secretary Hoover, has from the beginning insisted that no monopoly should be allowed to arise, and that, to prevent it, the control of the channels through the ether should remain as much in the hands of the Government, and therefore of the people, as the control of navigation upon our waters; that while we retain the fundamental rights in the hands of the people to the control of these channels we should maintain the widest degree of freedom in their use.⁵⁰

In February 1927, at the administration's urging, Congress passed the Federal Radio Act. This act incorporated the principles cited by the President: the government was to control the airwaves and license stations to use them; the standards for licensing would be "public convenience, interest, or necessity"; nothing in the act was to be taken as giving any licensing authority the power of censorship over radio communications; and licenses were to be given for specified periods of time and no licenses were to be given to any company judged by a federal court guilty of seeking to monopolize broadcasting. The act created the Federal Radio Commission, a quasi-judicial agency, and assigned it powers to license stations, allocate channels, and regulate broadcasting.⁵¹ While finding the legislation acceptable,

President Coolidge would have preferred that supervisory controls over radio remain within the established executive departments, rather than lodged in an independent regulatory commission.⁵²

Rural America, in particular, as well as those parts of the country, such as the Southland, that had lagged in securing operating licenses, benefited from the Federal Radio Act and its 1928 revision, known as the Davis amendment. This amendment led to the reallocation of the airways, making available more stations and clearer reception. This was a reform of major importance. The Federal Radio Commission, whose members had been named by the President, was praised for its handling of the matter.⁵³

Let us now go back to December 1923 and the national broadcast of President Coolidge's first Annual Message to the 68th Congress. It was an extremely important moment for him and his political career, for neither he nor his program were then well known to the public. He used this State occasion and the communication opportunity offered by radio to introduce himself and define his program for the American people. Pointing to its importance, this was the only occasion on which President Coolidge delivered in person his Annual Message to the Congress. The extensive and detailed agenda he presented contained around 33 items, among them were these proposals: entry into the World Court, tax reduction, assistance to disabled soldiers, limitations on immigration, opposition to the soldiers' bonus, civil service reform, waterways development, and new cabinet offices of education and welfare. Concerning League of Nation membership, he declared the issue closed.⁵⁴

The President's radio address was timed for delivery at noon, Eastern Standard Time. This was done so that the largest possible audience – workers in plants, clerks in stores, children in schools, for radio was not yet common in the home – could

hear his words.⁵⁵ Stations linked in the broadcast hook-up were: WEAJ (New York), WCAP (Washington), WJAR (Providence, RI), KSD (St. Louis), WDAF (Kansas City), and WFAA (Dallas)⁵⁶ “Almost overnight,” wrote one authority, “the President was established as radio’s leading personality and attraction.”⁵⁷ Two days after the broadcast an obviously pleased Mr. Coolidge wrote the following to President Harry B. Thayer of AT&T, which had arranged the radio hook-up:

Reports have come from all over the country of the success which attended the broadcasting of my message to Congress, and I want to take this opportunity of thanking you and the other officials of the company who cooperated so efficiently in assuring the satisfactory results obtained. It was an achievement of which you may well be proud and I should be interested to know in a general way how far the address was clearly heard.⁵⁸

The reaction to the speech itself was quite positive – just what the President and his friends desired – although there were, of course, the usual Democratic complaints.⁵⁹ Chauncey M. Depew, a Republican Party statesman, who had helped nominate Lincoln, heard some railroad men discussing the speech and saying: “We understood every word of it and it is all right. We’ve got a leader for President.”⁶⁰ Two days afterwards, a confident and assured Coolidge would announce his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination before newsmen at the Gridiron Club dinner.⁶¹ By mid month, William Howard Taft was writing, “It looks now as if Coolidge were going to be nominated without much real opposition.”⁶² In June 1924, at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, that high honor came to him, and in November of that year, his presidency was confirmed overwhelmingly by the vote of the people.

At first, Mr. Coolidge had not been enthusiastic about broadcasting – but, while a cautious man, he certainly was not blind to progress and its benefits. He also listened to his

advisors, especially Bruce Barton, one of the most influential advertising men of the XXth Century, on the virtues of radio for him as President. Indeed, he quickly came to appreciate radio's possibilities for reaching the people.⁶³ Four days after his speech to Congress, on December 10, 1923, the President again took to the airwaves, this time to eulogize the late Warren G. Harding. This was a historical event, being the first presidential broadcast from the White House. The address, it was noted, "was especially remarkable for having been read aloud by the President in his own study with a view to its reception by listening radio audiences." The occasion for the talk was the opening of Harding commemorative week and an effort to erect a memorial for the late President at Marion, Ohio.⁶⁴ On Lincoln's birthday, 1924, the President, joined by his cabinet, participated in a broadcast tribute to the Great Emancipator over WCAP.⁶⁵ On February 22, speaking again from the White House, he gave the first of four annual radio addresses honoring George Washington, whom he so much admired.⁶⁶

Then, on April 19, his foreign policy address at the Associated Press luncheon in New York City was sent out over the air. For the first time, Wall Street brokerages used radio to obtain instant presidential news. Mr. Coolidge's words were scrutinized as they were received – his hopes, for instance, for the Dawes plan and support of German loans – and analysis and comment sent out almost instantaneously to speculators and investors via the news ticker. As he spoke through the air, the President's words moved the great financial markets of the nation and the world.⁶⁷

Mr. Coolidge also came to realize the impact of radio in his personal life. When Tige, his tabby cat, wandered away from the White House in April 1924, word that the cat was missing was broadcast by radio. In a short time, Tige was found at the Navy Yard and return to his happy custodian.⁶⁸ Then there was that most sad occasion, the death of the President's 16-year old son, Calvin, Jr., on July 7, 1924, at 10:30 p.m., from blood poisoning.

Millions of Americans got their first word of his passing while listening in to the Democratic National Convention. At 11:45 p.m., Chairman Thomas J. Walsh interrupted the convention's proceedings and announced to delegates, spectators, and a vast radio audience, "News has been received of the death of Calvin Coolidge, Jr., son of the President of the United States." A sorrowful moan went up from the gathering, which was echoed in homes across the land. The convention then adjourned out of respect for President and Mrs. Coolidge.⁶⁹ On July 10, 1924, the day the young boy was laid to rest, New York City's newly opened municipal radio station, WNYC, broadcast his memorial service.⁷⁰

During the 1924 presidential campaign, for the first time, extensive use was made of the new technology, making it the first radio election. Coolidge's advisors planned a campaign making full use of radio.⁷¹ (It was at this time that Charles Michelson, chief Washington correspondent of the *New York World*, observed that Coolidge "doesn't look as if he had the physique to stand the strain of an old fashioned campaign."⁷²) For the first time, millions of voters listened in to the Democratic and Republican national conventions, and both parties used the radio to carry their message directly into the home.⁷³ The President himself gave several broadcast addresses during the campaign, commencing with his acceptance speech on August 14, 1924, at the D.A.R. Memorial Hall in Washington. Among the personalities who spoke through the ether on behalf of the President was Miss Ethel Barrymore, star of stage and screen.⁷⁴ In addition, as the campaign neared its end, Ernest C. Carpenter, who taught Calvin Coolidge as a child, took to the air to recount the President's boyhood days in Plymouth Notch.

On election eve, Mr. Coolidge took to the airwaves to urge his countrymen to vote. This broadcast is best remembered, however, for the President's closing remarks, in which he, as a good son, dutifully wished a "Good night" to his aged father,



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Col. John C. Coolidge, father of the President, listening to his son's acceptance speech for the Republican nomination in his Plymouth Notch, Vermont, parlor on Aug. 14, 1924. With Col. Coolidge are (from l to r): Mrs. Guy Mayo, Verna Mayo, Florence Cilley, Col. Coolidge, Flora Smith, Ruth Aldrich, John Reed, and Aurora Pierce.

Col. John C. Coolidge, and the home-folks listening in, up in Plymouth Notch, Vermont.⁷⁵ There was speculation at the time as to how many votes were garnered among the sentimental by that presidential “Good night.” It was commonly said after the election that Coolidge owed his victory to radio.⁷⁶ The *Literary Digest* opined, “It is not far-fetched in the least to say that radio reelected Calvin Coolidge.”⁷⁷ While possibly exaggerated, this attitude does reveal the significance attached by the public to radio in the 1924 campaign.

As radio proved itself, AT&T officials, whose long distance lines made possible radio hook-ups, received an ever increasing number of requests “from high quarters,” that is, the White

House staff, for nationwide hook-ups for presidential addresses.⁷⁸ These requests came not only from the White House but also from civic and other private groups. Eventually, AT&T found it necessary to discourage them by pointing out the disruption hook-ups caused to regular long distance customers and their business activity as well the considerable costs involved in their implementation.⁷⁹

Over the years, President Coolidge's appearances before the microphone were happy ones for him personally, for the broadcasters, and for the listening public.⁸⁰ In his memoirs, Senator James Watson of Indiana correctly observed:

The truth about it is that every body heard him with keen pleasure, because they felt that they were listening to an honest man who was giving them his sincere thoughts on the questions under discussion.... Nobody ever doubted Coolidge's sincerity on any proposition.⁸¹

The President's only untoward incident occurred when the line went dead during a radio speech at the Washington Auditorium. Afterward, officials had the unhappy task of informing Mr. Coolidge that he had spoken for more than 40 minutes into a dead microphone.⁸²

The President particularly appreciated the directness and immediacy radio offered in reaching the public on important issues, without the difficulty of long and tiresome speaking trips across the country by train.⁸³ Early in his presidency, Mr. Coolidge spelled out to French Strother, a popular journalist, that he had no intention of gallivanting about the country by train; rather, he planned to stay close to his desk in Washington, carrying out the country's business and making a few major addresses nearby on important occasions.⁸⁴ As early as February 1924, the National Association of Broadcasters had urged the President to use the radio to preserve his health.⁸⁵ It was, of course, a long rail trip on behalf of the League of Nations that

broke President Wilson's health in 1919. Radio's arrival during his presidency was surely a blessing for Coolidge.

It is well to recall that Mr. Coolidge's administration was the first to come under the scrutiny of radio political commentators. The first weekly political talk program began early in his administration. Their focus was on reviewing the political doings of the day, with little attempt being made at in-depth analyses of men or issues; that would come later during the Depression when a desperate nation sought answers to what had gone wrong. Frederic William Wile was one of the first to offer political commentary over the air; joining him later were William Hard and David Lawrence.⁸⁶ Both Wile and Hard appeared on a program called, "The Political Situation in Washington Tonight," which was distributed over the WJZ (Newark, New Jersey) network.⁸⁷ All these gentlemen came to radio from a newspaper background.⁸⁸

We do not know if these political commentators ever irritated Mr. Coolidge with their commentaries. If they did so, he could have always exercised "listener sovereignty" by turning the radio dial. We do know that H. V. Kaltenborn, a feisty commentator and an editorial writer on the *Brooklyn Eagle*, a Democratic paper, interviewed him on one occasion in 1924 from the Oval Room in the White House. It apparently went off without incident.

On another occasion, however, Kaltenborn was not so lucky. He was presenting "a series of current events talks" in which he was "pretty outspoken" over WEAJ, the AT&T station in New York. These broadcasts were "piped" to WCAP in Washington, where he was heard by city's political elite. Early in 1924, Kaltenborn took up the topic of the relations of the United States to the Soviet Union. President Coolidge's Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, had just rejected the Soviet Union's bid for recognition. Focusing on this, Kaltenborn criticized Secretary Hughes for the abrupt manner in which he had handled the

Russian overture. As it happened, Secretary Hughes was listening in to Kaltenborn's broadcast in the company of several prominent guests. Being embarrassed and angry at what he heard, he called in the Washington representative of AT&T, which operated both WEAF and WCAP, and "laid down the law to him." The result was that Kaltenborn's commentary was banned from WCAP, although his broadcast continued to go out over WEAF.⁸⁹

There were many memorable broadcasts of presidential addresses during the Coolidge era. However, before turning to them, mention must be made of a more prosaic, but an exceptionally important, radio series, "The Semiannual Meeting of the Business Organization of Government," staged by the Bureau of the Budget.⁹⁰ This nine-part radio series, starting in January 1925 and continuing through January 1929, consisted of regular January and June broadcasts focusing on the status of government finances.⁹¹ Most likely, in the President's mind, these programs were more significant and useful than most of his other broadcasts; it is worth noting that he never missed even one.

The programs originated from one of Washington's large auditoriums during the evening hours. General Herbert M. Lord, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, presided and the Marine Corps Band provided music. On a few occasions, they had the air of a gala. The audience consisted of a gathering of mid- and top-level departmental bureaucrats and occasionally their wives; attendance varied from 500 to well over a 1,000. As an indication of their significance, these broadcasts were sent out over a national radio hook-up. President Coolidge's address, of course, was the centerpiece of the program. He always used these occasions to "inspire the troops," calling for "a rigid economy," emphasizing the need to meet budget goals and expressing the hope for a tax cut if all went well in meeting objectives and in cutting the debt. Introduced by the President, General Lord

would follow up, urging the bureaucrats to “make every dollar sweat.” (Given the President’s concern with economy, it should come as no surprise that the President’s appointment books reveal that the individual he met with most frequently and for the longest period was Lord.)⁹²

These meetings served a broader purpose than exhorting Federal bureaucrats to economize. By broadcasting them, the public became better aware of what their government was doing in managing its fiscal affairs and spending their tax dollars. The semiannual broadcasts were the administration’s direct channel to conveying its message of “constructive economy” to the American people. The broadcasts also gained the public’s support for the administration in its battle for spending restraint with a Congress that was hell-bent on spending freely, as seen, for instance, in the battle over Mississippi River flood control. With the administration’s end in March 1929, these semiannual broadcasts ceased. They were unique to the Coolidge administration.

As for memorable broadcasts, the one that always stands out is the President’s welcoming-home address for Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, the “Lone Eagle,” who had just returned to the United States from Europe following his historic New York to Paris flight. The address – “President Coolidge eulogized him in one of the most feeling speeches of the statesman’s career”⁹³ – was made at a grand ceremony held at the base of the Washington Monument on a warm day in June 1927. The occasion was one of the truly great moments in American history and stands as the high-water mark of the Nineteen-Twenties. Even a radio reporter, whose job it was to play on his listeners’ emotions, was so over come that he broke down and sobbed.⁹⁴

A 50-station hook-up, the largest up to that time, carried the Lindbergh broadcast. Anyone, who had a radio and could, listened in that day. Graham McNamee, who covered the



Library of Congress

Before a crowd of more than 250,000, President Coolidge welcomes home Col. Charles Augustus Lindbergh after his death-defying flight from New York to Paris in his monoplane the "Spirit of St. Louis." The location is the Mall, Washington, DC, on Saturday, June 11, 1927. Surrounding the President and Lindbergh are Cabinet members and high ranking government and military officials, along with the First Lady, Grace Coolidge; the aviator's mother, Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh; and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, the widow of the late President. Thanks to radio, the American people – an estimated 25,000,000 of them – were able to join in on this memorable occasion. They heard both President Coolidge and Col. Lindbergh speak, and the announcer describe in words the moment when the President pinned on the "Lone Eagle" the first Distinguished Flying Cross. All those present that day wore broad happy smiles, including the President. Note that the boxes below the Presidential Seal contain pigeons, the "48 Home Comers," each carrying a message, which were released to fly to each of the states.

ceremony for NBC, headed a team of announcers carefully placed about Washington, including one perched atop the Capitol and another on the Washington Monument. What follows is McNamee's on-the-air account of Colonel Lindbergh as he came forward to greet the President: "Here's the boy! He comes forward; unassuming, quiet, a little droop to his shoulders, very serious; he's tired out, and awfully nice."⁹⁵

Another notable broadcast was President Coolidge's address to the Pan American Conference in Havana in January 1928. This broadcast made history as the first time a President of the United States spoke by radio to the American people from foreign soil. (No record could be found that President Harding's speech at Vancouver, British Columbia, on July 26, 1923, was broadcast.) It was also quite an elaborate broadcasting feat. President Machado spoke first to the Conference. His words in Spanish were transmitted to two stations in the United States. One of these stations, WEAF in New York, sent out a translation of his words to the American public via a national hook-up; the other, a powerful short-wave facility in Pittsburgh, beamed the Cuban President's Spanish words southward to America's friends in Latin America. When President Coolidge spoke in English, the reverse was done.

At first, President Coolidge's words came through loud and clear. Then, the connection with Havana sputtered and went dead. Fortunately, the night before Miss Bertha Brainard, the WEAF program manager, awoke with an uneasy feeling that something might go wrong with the broadcast. The next morning she obtained from the press association a full text copy of the President's speech. Thus it was that Graham McNamee, an experienced and popular announcer, who was overseeing the broadcast from New York, had a copy of Mr. Coolidge's speech before him, which he was following, word-for-word, as the President spoke. When the wire went dead, the quick-witted McNamee explained the situation to the audience, and commenced reading where Mr. Coolidge had left off. He continued to do so until the line to Cuba came alive and the President's familiar voice returned to the airwaves. Amazingly, at that point, McNamee was exactly at the same sentence as the President down in Havana. Such were the challenges faced by the radio pioneers.⁹⁶



Library of Congress

President Coolidge delivering his inaugural address at midday, the Capitol, Washington, DC, Wednesday, March 4, 1925. This historic inaugural ceremony was the first to be broadcast. A national audience, estimated at 22,800,000, many of whom were school children, listened in. Chief Justice William Howard Taft (the former 27th President) administered the oath of office.

Another notable Coolidge era broadcast was the presidential inauguration at the Capitol on March 4, 1925, the first ever to be broadcast. AT&T arranged a national hook-up of 22 radio stations. The audience for the event was estimated at 22,800,000. The nation's schools had made a special effort to insure that their students, along with parents, heard the broadcast. It included full coverage of the oath-taking and the President's lengthy inaugural address, along with related ceremonies and events.

No event better reveals the amazing changes brought by the new radio technology in just a few short years. In March 1917, when Woodrow Wilson took the presidential oath for the second time, he relied on voice power, as had all his predecessors

since Washington, to reach those assembled before him. Of all those present, only those gathered nearby to him could hear his words distinctly. Four years later, in 1921, when Warren Harding was sworn-in, amplifiers first made their appearance. For the first time, the vast gathering in the great plaza before the Capitol could hear the new President's speech as if standing next to him. Now, in 1925, eight years after Wilson had hurled his words into the March winds, for the first time, nearly all Americans could hear their President inducted into office in one of the great ceremonies of the republic. Looking ahead to March 4, 1929, Hoover's inauguration would be heard not only at home but also around the world, thanks to short wave. Even Admiral Richard Byrd, floating on a block of ice down in Antarctica, would be able to listen in. And, even more impressive, consideration would be given to an experimental broadcasting of the ceremony using television, the development of which had made considerable strides during the Coolidge years, but doing so proved impractical.⁹⁷

The broadcast of Mr. Coolidge's inauguration was a historic moment in what was truly a new era in communications. Mr. Coolidge was aware of these changes and their impact on society and seems to have followed their development with interest into his post-presidential years. On February 13, 1931, the ex-President addressed the "new social force" being wrought not only by radio and radiophotograph but also by television in his daily newspaper column, "Calvin Coolidge Says." He wrote:

The time may not be far away when it will be possible to have a receiving set in the home that will produce a sound motion picture. Central stations may be able to receive and broadcast to the eye and ear events taking place all over the world It is difficult to comprehend what an enormous power this would be.⁹⁸

Mr. Coolidge then went on, as was his way, to discuss the possibilities for good or evil arising from these new forces,

concluding that “If moral development keeps step [with them], peace and good will have gained new allies.”⁹⁹

To assist him in the use of the new medium, Mr. Coolidge received special training in radio “microphone manners” from H. M. Craven, Supervisor of Broadcasting of WCAP in Washington.¹⁰⁰ He was always pleased to note that his voice was one that “cut through” the ether, as the airwaves were then called. The observant journalist Charles Michelson thought that radio seemed to soften the “wire edge to his voice.” Indeed, the *New York Times* spoke highly of his excellent radio voice, as did many others.¹⁰¹

Then, there were these words of praise from one radio professional, Graham McNamee, the most famous radio announcer of his day, to another, Calvin Coolidge:

I wonder if listeners noticed...how his voice came over in a perfectly even flow all the time, and never a syllable or tone being lost...because the President is a very calm, deliberate man, and stands at the proper distance from the mike, literally “keeps his distance” as it were; because he has very great respect for it, and for the simple reason that he realizes it is carrying his message to millions of people.¹⁰²

Mr. Coolidge’s notable skills in broadcasting were not shared by many of his political contemporaries. Most still practiced the old-fashion stump style of oratory, characterized by a powerful, resonant voice, sweeping gestures, and strolling about the speaker’s platform. They had difficulties adjusting to the demands of radio broadcasting. Consequently, their performances were less than satisfactory.¹⁰³ Alfred E. Smith, as described by one historian, “was notorious for forgetting the microphones and wandering away from the lectern, and at times he would even move the microphone away – a cardinal sin to all radio technicians – in order to make direct eye contact with his audience. Smith’s radio advisers...resorted to fencing him into microphone range with a corral of chairs.”¹⁰⁴

And then there was Mr. Coolidge's Vice-President, Charles Gates Dawes, a man of vigorous disposition, who could not restrain himself in using powerful gestures while speaking over the air. His pounding caused "the microphone, not attuned to such vehemence, to set forth only squawky vibrations." During a broadcast in support of the World Court initiative, the Vice-President used a speaking stand constructed especially for the President. He banged away at it, as was his wont. The President's stand, it was reported, "was almost shattered by raps from his fists."¹⁰⁵ One can only wonder what Mr. Coolidge thought about that.

On a more positive note, the Vice-President did participate in one of the more notable international broadcasts of the Twenties. This was the dedication of the Peace Bridge across the Niagara River at Buffalo, New York, on August 7, 1927. The Vice-President and H.R.H., Edward, Prince of Wales, cut the ribbons opening the span in the presence of a throng of dignitaries. Thanks to an elaborate radio hook-up, including short wave, listeners in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and distant parts of the British Empire heard the impressive ceremonies.¹⁰⁶

In a conversation with Senator Watson, after having noted his good luck in coming in with radio, Mr. Coolidge had this to say:

I can't make an engaging, rousing, or oratorical speech to a crowd as you can, and so all I can do is stand up and talk to them in a matter-of-fact way about the issues of the campaign; but I have a good radio voice, and now I can get my messages across to them without acquainting them with my lack of oratorical ability or without making any rhetorical display in their presence.¹⁰⁷

Watson went on to note that Mr. Coolidge "laughed about as heartily as I ever knew him to do over what he regarded as his singular good fortune in this respect."¹⁰⁸

The President's assessment was indeed accurate. Robert Sobel in his biography of Coolidge provides this information: "In a 1927 poll rating radio personalities, Coolidge came in fourth, behind John McCormack, Walter Damrosch, and Madame Schumann-Heink (all musicians), but ahead of Will Rogers, who was in seventh place."¹⁰⁹

At the end of his term, Mr. Coolidge declined to make a farewell address to the nation, saying that Washington's address had no parallel and should stand-alone.¹¹⁰ His last radio address as President was his annual George Washington birthday address, which was delivered on the night of February 22, 1929, at George Washington University. In it, he observed that our foreign relations had rarely been better situated. On this occasion, the listening public heard the University's president award both President and Mrs. Coolidge honorary degrees of Doctor of Law.¹¹¹

On March 2, 1929, as he prepared to leave office, Graham McNamee, who had announced many of the President's speeches, and Ralph Edmunds, manager of WRC, Washington, presented President Coolidge, on behalf of NBC, with the microphone he has used in many of his broadcasts.¹¹² On that same day, President Coolidge signed an Executive Order, assigning two radio frequencies for broadcasting to Central and South America from the Naval radio station NAA at Arlington, VA. Secretary of State Kellogg, who was also chairman of the governing board of the Pan American Union, had requested the action. The channels would allow for the exchange of cultural programs between the Americas.¹¹³

On March 4, 1929, after having turned over the presidency to Herbert C. Hoover, former President and Mrs. Coolidge had some departing words as they boarded the train at Washington's Union Station for their Northampton, Massachusetts, home. The following description is from the *New York Times*.

When Mr. and Mrs. Coolidge arrived at their car at the railroad station, they found there a radio hook-up arranged by the National Broadcasting Company for a farewell word from the retiring President to the nation. David Lawrence, Washington political writer, introduced Mr. Coolidge, who said:

“At the request of my friend, David Lawrence, I take this occasion to bid good-bye to all those who may be listening, and hope they will enjoy the future as much as I have enjoyed the past.”

Then a rival radio system demanded a word. Into this microphone Mr. Coolidge expressed his gratification that the \$2,000,000 endowment fund for the Clarke School for the Deaf had been raised just as he and Mrs. Coolidge were about to leave Washington.¹¹⁴

In his account of the departure, Claude M. Fuess, Coolidge’s official biographer, offered a differing story. He wrote, “Coolidge would speak only one sentence, ‘Good-by, I have had a very enjoyable time in Washington.’”¹¹⁵ While Mr. Coolidge may have said this, he did make the other comments cited in the *New York Times* as well.¹¹⁶

At one point in the proceedings, the ex-President made this off the air comment to a radioman, “I’m not getting much private life.”¹¹⁷ Then, it was the former First Lady’s turn at the microphone. This was a first, for, while Mrs. Coolidge enjoyed listening to the radio, especially baseball games, she had never permitted herself to speak over it; indeed, it was said she had a bias in general against women’s voices over the air.¹¹⁸ Holding Tiny Tim, her red chow tightly in her arms, she said in her cheery way, “Good-by, folks,” and both the Coolidges gave a final bow and wave to the crowd as the “Montreal Flyer” pulled out. Radio listeners across the country then heard the “mighty roar” from “thousands of throats” of “Good-bye, good luck!”¹¹⁹

The crowd’s demonstration of affection for Mr. Coolidge was reflective of the popular feeling for the man, who had

given the nation peace and prosperity and helped the world as best he could recover from the trauma of the Great War. Dr. Fuess observed, "Seldom, perhaps never, has a President gone out of office with his popularity less diminished." Writing at the time in *The Review of Reviews*, Albert Shaw presented the former President this verbal accolade, "So far as the country is concerned, no President has left public office with more general esteem, approval, and affection than Calvin Coolidge."¹²⁰

After leaving the presidency, Mr. Coolidge usually succeeded in his attempt to avoid making speeches and attending public gatherings. Nevertheless, from time to time, his familiar voice returned to the airwaves. As a director of the New York Life Insurance Company, he spoke on occasion over the radio in regards to insurance matters. In one instance, in October 1931, he urged his listeners to beware of agents always pressing them to change policies. To Mr. Coolidge's dismay, his remarks resulted in a suit against him and New York Life by a disgruntled private agent, who claimed his reputation had been damaged. The matter was settled out of court.¹²¹

Mr. Coolidge took part in various public functions that were broadcast, at which time he usually made brief remarks, instead of speeches. For instance, at the American Legion National Convention in Boston in the fall of 1930, immediately following President Hoover's address, the Legionnaires called upon Mr. Coolidge to address them. After an ovation of over 10 minutes, he rose and stepped to the microphone, and said simply but movingly: "Gentlemen, I charge you to be true to the laws and Constitution of the United States."¹²² On June 16, 1931, the former President did make an important radio address - a long delayed one, said some - at the dedication of the Warren G. Harding Memorial in Marion, Ohio; it was described as "brief and not effusive."¹²³

As for political broadcasts, the ex-President went on the air on October 30, 1930, at the time of the midterm elections, to defend the Hoover administration's efforts to deal with the nation's economic distress.¹²⁴ Then, during President Hoover's reelection campaign in 1932, worried Republicans, hoping to tap his popularity, called upon Mr. Coolidge on two occasions to support his party's cause over the airwaves. On October 11, 1932, before 19,000 cheering Republicans at Madison Square Garden, he spoke on the behalf of the Hoover administration. In order to quiet the cheering crowd - who, in the midst of the Great Depression, recalled him and his days of prosperity fondly - Mr. Coolidge held up his gold pocket watch, indicating that valuable radio time was awasting. He was not well and had difficulty making it through the speech.¹²⁵ Anxious party officials had requested that he make another radio address at Chicago, but President Hoover, on learning of his weak physical condition, asked him not to undertake the effort.¹²⁶ On election eve, November 7, 1932, at the urging of, by then, desperate Republicans, Mr. Coolidge went before the microphone for the last time. From his home at Northampton, over a nationwide hook-up, he delivered a 15-minute appeal for the ill-starred Hoover-Curtis ticket.¹²⁷

On Sunday, January 1, 1933, radio listeners were probably surprised to hear coming in over their receivers a New Year's message from Mr. Coolidge. An announcer read it, not the ex-President himself, who was spending the day at his home in Northampton. As fate would have it, this message was to be his last public statement to the American people. He had composed it on December 28, 1932, in response to a request from Bradley Kelly of the American Radio News Corporation. The brief message, revealing the ex-President's concern for those suffering from the Depression, was as follows:

For the year 1933 it seems to me that we need cooperation and charity. The resources of our country are sufficient to meet our requirements if we use them to help each other. We should cooperate to promote all kinds of business activity. We should do what we can in the way of charity. If all that is implied in these two words could be put into operation not only would our economic condition begin steadily to improve but our destitute would secure ample relief. I can think of no better resolution for the New Year than to work in these directions. With kindest regards, I am, very truly yours, Calvin Coolidge.¹²⁸

Four days later, on January 5, 1933, Calvin Coolidge died. He was 60 years of age.

The radio industry was born and took its form during the 1920's. Mr. Coolidge was the first President to use extensively this marvelous tool of the electronic age to communicate directly with the American people. His skillful and pioneering use of the new medium is a distinctive feature of his administration. For Mr. Coolidge himself, radio was a great asset. It suited well his personally and speaking style. It played a significant role in the success of his presidency, including his election in 1924. While he was indeed lucky to have come into office with radio, radio itself was equally fortunate to have had him to nurture it in its youth. Drawing upon free market principles, the Coolidge administration established policies and a regulatory framework for its control, which would shape not only radio's development, but eventually television's as well. His successors, Herbert C. Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, would build and expand upon his legacy. It is Calvin Coolidge, however, who is rightly remembered as – Our First Radio President.

Endnotes

- ¹ James E. Watson, *As I Knew Them* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1936), p. 239.
- ² Calvin Coolidge, *The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corp., 1929), p. 219.
- ³ “Coolidge Promises Support of Radio,” *New York Times*, May 12, 1926, p. 30.
- ⁴ “Radio Records Prove ‘Silent Cal’ A Myth,” *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1929, sec. IX, p. 18; and C. Bascom Slemph, *The Mind of The President* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926), p. 10. On May 11, 1931, the *New York Times* ran an article contrasting the number of times Coolidge and Hoover had spoken over the air. In this instant, it said that Mr. Coolidge “made 37 radio speeches in 7 [sic] years.” Based upon my own count of 43 speeches, I accept as more reliable the figure of “more than forty addresses” that was reported in the March 3, 1929, *Times* article. I also believe that this number is low, not including informal and local broadcasts, for instance, public service messages, such as for the Community Chest or Red Cross; the annual lighting of the Christmas Tree; and occasions when he was vacationing out West. Perhaps, someday, a definitive listing of Coolidge’s presidential radio addresses will be compiled for him, as has been done for President Hoover.
- ⁵ “Talk of Coolidge for Supreme Bench,” *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1929, p. 1.
- ⁶ Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 146; and the *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1925, p. 18. Between June 22, 1925, and Feb. 22, 1929, President Coolidge gave 59 formal addresses, of which at least 13 related to the economy and consumerism. Of course, only some of them were broadcast. See Library of Congress, “Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929: Coolidge Speeches: Index from the Everett Sanders Papers,” retrieve from: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?ciikbub:1:/tem/~ammem_xnsy::

- ⁷ Radio Records Prove ‘Silent Cal’ A Myth,” *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1929, IX, p. 18; and *Public Papers of the President: Herbert Hoover, 1932-33*, Appendix F. Herbert Hoover made 71 radio addresses as President, 1929-33. Of course, the broadcasting industry was further developed in Hoover’s day than in Coolidge’s.
- ⁸ Charles Merz, “The Silent Mr. Coolidge,” *The New Republic*, Vol. XLVII (June 2, 1926), p. 51.
- ⁹ Isaac Lippincott wrote: “Radio is largely a creature of the decade from 1920 to 1930, although much of the pioneering work...had been done in the previous ten years”; see *Economic Development of the United States* (3rd edition; New York: D. Appleton, 1933), p. 515. According to another source, following a stage of initial rapid growth, during 1920-22, the period 1923-26 was a transitional one, marked by the beginnings of commercial broadcasting, the development of new equipment, and the introduction of basic types of programming. The years 1927-1930 saw commercial radio become a reality, the formation of networks, and commercial sponsorship for network programs. See Radio 1920s; retrieved: <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/mbensman/public/bc20.html>
- ¹⁰ Jerry L. Wallace, “Calvin Coolidge and the Liberty Memorial” in Issue No. 18 of *The Real Calvin Coolidge*, a publication of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, Plymouth Notch, Vermont (Lebanon, New Hampshire: Hanover Printing Co., 2005), pp. 18-19.
- ¹¹ “Coolidge Will Get Microphone as a Memento Of His Public Addresses Sent Over Radio,” *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 7.
- ¹² Slep, *The Mind of The President*, pp. 10-11; and *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1928, sec. III, p. 2.
- ¹³ Dr. Robert Sobel concluded, “It was Coolidge, and not Franklin Roosevelt, who truly was the first President of the radio age”; see *Coolidge: An American Enigma* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1998), p. 301. In his study of Coolidge’s speaking style, Arthur F. Fleser states that Coolidge “was the first President to use radio extensively in presenting his ideas to the public”; see *A Rhetorical Study of The Speaking Of Calvin Coolidge* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p. 84. The distinguished historian Daniel J. Boorstin observed that “The

first President to become a radio personality was Calvin Coolidge,” and, moreover, he notes that radio made Coolidge into “a distinctive human figure.”; see *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 474. Of course, others disagree. For instance, historian Douglas B. Craig sees Herbert Hoover as the first radio President, with Franklin D. Roosevelt as “the first political star of the radio age”; see *Fireside Politics*, pp. 150, 154. Based on my research, I side with Sobel.

- 14 Howard H. Quint & Robert H. Ferrell, eds., *The Talkative President: The Off-The-Record Press Conferences of Calvin Coolidge* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1964), p. 47
- 15 *New York Times*, June 7, 1924, p. 2; see also the *Times* for June 21, p. 3; June 26, p. 4; and June 28, p. 1.
- 16 *It Sounds Impossible* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 76; and Norman H. Finkelstein, *Sounds In The Air: The Golden Age Of Radio* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), p. 24. This story falls under the category of “Coolidge myths.”
- 17 Erik Barnouw, *A Tower In Babel: A History of Broadcasting in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 161.
- 18 *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1925, IX, p. 16.
- 19 *Radio Age*, Sept. 1923, p. 19.
- 20 The author has seen a photograph of Mr. Coolidge purportedly making a radio broadcast on October 24, 1922, from the studio of WDAK in Hartford, Connecticut. His talk perhaps involved the current election campaign. This statement accompanied the photo: “*Legend* [my Italics] has it that Coolidge was so disconcerted from the flash of the photographer’s flash powder that he said, ‘I hope they never put those damned things in the Senate.’ Of course, he was on the air when he said it.” Retrieved from: <http://cgi.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=2165690375>.
- 21 *New York Times*, December 20, 1922, p. 3, and Dec. 25, 1922, p. 13; and Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, p. 153.

- ²² Some of these changes and their impact on the American people are discussed in Chapters III, IV, and XVIII of *Recent Social Trends in the United States: A Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends*, Vols. I & II (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933).
- ²³ With a little skill and ingenuity, an individual, often a young person, could build his or her own receiver avoiding the expense of a retailed, manufactured set. Beginners usually favored the crystal type. The several radio magazines of the period regularly included detailed instructions for building sets and related equipment from the simple to the complex. In the Lynds' *Middletown* (i.e., Muncie, Indiana), the Lynds reported the following: "With but little equipment one can call the life of the rest of the world from the air, and this equipment can be purchased piecemeal at the ten-cent store." Consequently, radios were found among all classes; they were never a monopoly of the rich, or "a rich man's toy," as were automobiles when they first appeared. "In a count of representative sections of Middletown [done in 1924, early in the radio boom], it was found that, of 303 homes in twenty-eight blocks in the 'best section' of town, inhabited almost entirely by the business class, 12 percent had radios; of 518 workers' homes in sixty-four blocks, 6 percent had radios." See Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929), p. 269.
- ²⁴ For an early and interesting account of the value of the radio for the farmer's wife and women in general, see "Domestic Uses For The Radio," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXVII (Aug. 1922), p. 202, and this website reproducing a Agriculture Department report, dated April 1927, on the use of radio on the farm: <http://www.rtvf.unt.edu/people/craig/farm/better.html>. What follows is a representative excerpt:

J. H. Bruce of Fremont, Alabama, thinks that radio "brings the brains of the United States into our homes. We have heard this season, President Coolidge, several United States senators and governors of States, and other men of note." Mr. Bruce says that his radio provides entertainment for himself and his family, for his neighbors, and "keeps the children home nights, and makes the long evenings short." He also gives the radio credit for educational programs which brings into his own home "good literature, read and explained... religious services on Sunday...and information relating to better farming and housekeeping practices."

- ²⁵ *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1924, IX, p. 14. Grace Coolidge's concern for the handicapped led Mr. Coolidge to give special attention to programs aimed at helping them. At the time of his death, he was working with Helen Keller on a project for the blind. See Ishbel Ross, *Grace Coolidge and Her Era: The Story of a President's Wife* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1962), p. 312.
- ²⁶ "Two Networks Are Active in Washington - Congress Gets Offer of Time on the Air," *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1929. See also the biographical sketch of Senator Robert Howell (R-NE), 1921-40, in the *Congressional Biography*; retrieved: <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H000868>. It contains an interesting discussion of his pioneering but unsuccessful efforts during the Twenties to bring radio to the United States Senate. Regular radio and television coverage of Senate floor proceedings did not come until 1986. It is worth noting that in 1925, for the first time, the League of Nations permitted "certain speeches" in the assembly to be broadcast throughout Europe; see "Radio and World Peace," *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, Feb. 15, 1926.
- ²⁷ The fall 1922 *Montgomery Ward Catalogue* offered that store's first receiver for \$49.00 (\$535.00 in current inflation adjusted dollars). The 1927 *Sears, Roebuck & Co Catalogue* offers a variety of Silvertone receivers priced at \$24.95 (\$275.00), \$34.95, \$39.95, \$49.95 (551.00), \$54.95, \$59.95, \$72.50, and \$87.50 (\$965.00). These radios were being pitched to farmers, laborers, and middle class folks. They could all be had on an easy payment plan, as was generally the case in such purchases. In February 1928, in Winfield, Kansas, you could buy the new RCA Radiola 17, complete with tubes, aerial, and a 100-A speaker - "the world's best Radio set" - for \$197.50 (\$2,226.00). This set must have been top-of-the-line. Again, financing was available. See *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, Feb. 8, 1928.
- ²⁸ Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1931), p. 165.
- ²⁹ Robert H. Ferrell, *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), p. 33.

- ³⁰ George Soule, *Prosperity Decade: From, War to Depression: 1917-1929* (Vol. VIII of *The Economic History of the United States*; New York: Harper & Row, 1947), p. 147. It was not until 1923 that figures for radio set production first appeared.
- ³¹ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash: 1929* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 17, 51; on Sept. 3, 1929, the last day of the Great Coolidge-Hoover Bull Market, RCA stock stood, adjusted for earlier stock split-ups, at 505, pp. 88-9; Robert Sobel, *The Great Bull Market: Wall Street in the 1920s* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1968), pp. 46-7. It is interesting to note that at the 1924 Republican Convention, the name of RCA's CEO, James Harbord, who was also a World War I military figure, was mentioned as a possible running mate with President Coolidge; see Sobel, *Coolidge: An American Enigma*, p. 286.
- ³² For a good account of the radio industry during the Harding-Coolidge years, see Waldemar Kaempffert, "The Progress Of Radio Broadcasting," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXVII (Sept. 1922), pp. 303-8; Earl Reeves, "The New Business of Broadcasting," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXXII (Nov. 1925), pp. 529-32; and Oliver H. P. Garrett, "Broadcasting as an Industry," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXXVI (Nov. 1927), pp. 517-23.
- ³³ President Harding was concerned with the development of radio. He believed that the Federal government should regulate all radio transmitters. He turned to his Secretary of Commerce, Herbert C. Hoover, to develop policy and regulation. See Eugene P. Trani and David L. Wilson, *The Presidency of Warren G. Harding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1977), p. 88. As a point of interest, in my research, I came across an account of President-elect Harding having been "heard on KDKA" on February 18, 1921, about two weeks before his inauguration. The account went on to say that this would make Harding the first President-elect to appear on radio. There is a problem, however: Mr. Harding at this time was happily vacationing in Florida; it would have been physically impossible for him to appear in person on KDKA. Perhaps KDKA aired a recording of a Harding political speech from the recent campaign. Of course, a recording of a speech is far different from making a personal appearance on the air.

- ³⁴ Joseph Nathan Kane, *Facts About The Presidents* (New York: Ace Books, 1975), p. 316; and *History of Communications-Electronics in the United States Navy*, Captain Linwood S. Howeth, USN (Retired), U.S. G.P.O., 1963, pp. 513-546, retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arc_converter; “2,000,000 To Hear Lincoln Address: Great Amplifier and Navy Radio Will Be Used at Dedication Rites Tomorrow,” *Washington Post*, May 29, 1922, p.2; “Lincoln Memorial To Be Dedicated Tomorrow,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 29, 1922, p.5; and “Communications News: All That Is Past Is Prelude, A Brief History of Communications,” p. 5, retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0CMN/is_n9_v21/ai_569355/print. The radio station broadcasting the memorial dedication ceremony may have been NOF, the Navy experimental station at Anacostia.

While President Harding is rightly credited with making the first presidential radio address, an earlier attempt – involving a point-to-point radio transmission between ships, not broadcasting – should be noted, for you will find references to it. This account of the occasion comes from “United States Early Radio History” by Thomas H. White:

...Woodrow Wilson was President...[H]e almost made the first radio broadcast by a sitting President. Wilson was aboard the U.S.S. *George Washington* on July 4, 1919, and it was planned to transmit [to soldiers and sailors on nearby ships] his Independence Day speech over a shipboard radio transmitter. However, when Wilson gave the speech he was located too far from the microphone to be heard, and the sailors were too intimidated to ask him to move into the proper location. Thus, Wilson’s successor, Warren G. Harding, would be the first President to give a radio speech....

Retrieved from <http://www.angelfire.com/nc2/whitetho/1919prs.htm>. For another account of this broadcast, see “Radio” in *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1955 edition), p. 6759. While noting that reception was poor, it states: “This was the first time a President of the United States had ever talked over the radio.” Also, as part of radio communications demonstration, President Wilson gave directions by radio to a pilot circling over the White House grounds; again, this was a point-to-point transmission. IEEE Xplore: Retrieved from: ieeexplore.ieee.org/iel5/62/27526/01226530.pdf.

- ³⁵ “Millions To Pray For Peace Today...Hear Harding’s Voice Here...,” *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 1921, p. 2; and Francis Russell, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), p. 479. Of the event, Will Peck Banning reported that President Harding wrote to the President Harry B. Thayer of the Bell System as follows:

I have not been quite able to realize even yet the marvel of having spoken on this occasion to vast audiences in New York and San Francisco as well as to the great concourse which was before me. The wonder of it has been magnified in my own mind by the reports which have come from those cities describing the attitude of the people; of how they followed the exercises in every detail, even to joining in the singing and in the words of prayer at the conclusion of the address.

See *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer: The WEA F Experiment, 1922-1926* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), pp. 56-7.

- ³⁶ Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives. HOUSE HISTORY: Joint Meetings, Sessions, Inaugurations. Retrieved from: http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/Joint_Meetings/60to79.html#18. There is a photograph of President Harding giving this address in Willis Fletcher Johnson’s *Life of Harding* (1923), p. 149; it shows four microphones present, one on the podium, one on the Speaker’s dias, and two in the well of the House. I am puzzled that Harding’s biographers have overlooked this “first.” As it is, President Coolidge is credited with having made the first broadcast of an Annual Message in December 1923.
- ³⁷ Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., “When the President Broadcasts,” *Scientific American* (July 1927), p. 36; see also Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, pp. 166-9. Due to his soon to be fatal illness, President Harding was unable to deliver a speech scheduled for July 31, 1923, in San Francisco. It would have made radio history by linking six major stations - KPO (San Francisco), WOAW (Omaha), WNAQ (Chicago), WMAF (Round Hills, Massachusetts), WEA F (New York), and WCAP (Washington) - and reaching an estimated three to five million listeners.
- ³⁸ Kane, *Facts About The Presidents*, p. 316; and “President Enthusiastic Radio Fan ‘Listens-in’ Almost Daily,” *Telephony*, Apr. 8, 1922, p. 16.

³⁹ Frederick Lewis Allen stated: “You will remember that there was no such thing as radio broadcasting to the public until the autumn of 1920, but that by the spring of 1922 radio had become a craze....”; see *Only Yesterday*, p. 164-5. Eric Barnouw observed: “The year 1922 opened with exhilaration. Business was improving and radio zooming. In broadcasting, euphoria was at the controls.... Along with radio parts, full sets were coming on the market: the Grebe, the Aeriola, the Radiola, and a flood of others – first crystal sets, then tube sets. Makers of sets and parts couldn’t produce fast enough.” See *A Tower in Babel*, p. 91. On November 2, 1920, KDKA (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania) broadcast the Harding-Cox election returns. This broadcast, and another a few weeks later featuring a speech by Herbert C. Hoover, created a national sensation and are credited with bringing radio to the attention of the public. See Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 51. Some contend, however, that the beginning of real radio broadcasting and the broadcasting of the first event of importance took place in July 1921 with the Dempsey-Carpentier fight in Jersey City, followed in October by the World Series games; see Stanley Walker, *City Editor* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1934), pp. 236-7.

⁴⁰ Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 135. Banning has a table, “Distribution of Radio Broadcasting Stations by States: January 1, 1922, to February 1, 1923,” showing the fantastic growth in radio stations during this period.

⁴¹ “Today’s Radio News,” *The Boston Post*, Aug. 3, 1923; see below:

Broadcast programmes of the two local stations WNAC, The Shepherd Stores, and WGI at Medford Hillside have been practically suspended except for the Sunday religious services, until after the funeral of President Harding.... Officials in both of these stations announced yesterday that in respect to the memory of the late President their regular programmes today would be canceled. Early yesterday John Shepherd 3rd, made the announcement that WNAC would cancel their programmes for Friday and Saturday [Aug. 3-4]. These programmes scheduled consisted in a large part of popular music including jazz dance music.... Later, it was stated at WNAC, that a special broadcast would be given at 9 o’clock, which would consist of a eulogy of President Warren G. Harding to be delivered by James T. Williams, editor-in-chief of the *Boston Transcript*. This broadcast is all that is scheduled and except for some special news

announcements, will be the only time that WNAC will be “on the air” until Sunday [Aug. 6].

- ⁴² Stations soon began providing news as part of their scheduled programming, but the programs were produced locally. Regular network newscasts would not appear until 1930. See Broadcast History; retrieved: http://www.olderadio.com/current/bc_1sts.html.
- ⁴³ Dunlap, “When the President Broadcasts,” *Scientific American* (July 1927), pp. 36-7; Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, pp. 177; Gene Smith, *When The Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1964), pp. 227-9; and Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, pp. 177-8. Wilson was again heard over the air – or, so it was claimed. On a radio séance in 1927, over station WGL (Philadelphia), the deceased President Wilson returned from the spirit world to visit the living. He was heard beating a drum. His message, according to the Reverend Mary Freeman of the Liberty Spiritual Church, was that “Only a Democrat must be elected in 1928.” See “Gives Radio Séance,” *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, July 14, 1927.
- ⁴⁴ Dunlap, “When the President Broadcasts,” *Scientific American* (July 1927), p. 37.
- ⁴⁵ Preston William Slosson, *The Great Crusade And After: 1914 - 1928* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 389; and “A Chronology of AM Radio Broadcasting, Part 1: 1900-1922,” p. 7, available at <http://members.aol.com/jeff560/chrono1.html>.
- ⁴⁶ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and the Presidency: 1920 - 1933* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), pp. 140-2, 145-6; the chapter, “Development and Control of Radio Broadcasting,” pp. 139-48, contains much information on Secretary Hoover’s role in this area. While Hoover is rightly praised for his role in the development of radio, we should not forget that other government officials and departments – Agriculture, Post Office, and especially Navy, along with the Weather Bureau and Bureau of Standards – played a role, too, and made their own significant contributions over a long period of years. Another interesting point is that the Harding-Coolidge administration’s focus on radio use – especially in the broadcasting of weather reports and livestock and financial information – began immediately after Mr.

Harding's inauguration (state governments, such as Missouri's, were also interested in this aspect of broadcasting). In 1921, a Post Office official was even sent to Europe to study innovative uses of radio; German innovations were of particular interest. See "Widespread Use Of The Radio Telephone," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXVII (Jan. 1922), pp. 102-3.

- ⁴⁷ For information about the control and regulation of radio, see Barnouw's *A Tower In Babel*; Craig's, *Fireside Politics*, particularly Part I; and Marvin R. Bensman, *The Beginning of Broadcast Regulation in the Twentieth Century* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2000). The following editorial appeared in the *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier* on April 7, 1926. It reflected popular thinking of time on the radio situation.

LET RADIO DEVELOP NORMALLY

In this country, the government interferes with and manages radio much less than in European countries. This, Secretary Hoover holds to be very commendable. He declares himself against any censorship on the broadcasters, except such as can be exercised by the listeners-in through the ordinary legal agencies.

It is recognized that all problems of distribution of equipment and broadcasting cannot be solved at once, and care should be taken not to move too fast in establishing of rules. It is remarkable, indeed, that in this country so much of real worth is being broadcast. Of course, there is much that is not worth listening to on the air, but the night is rare when a patient fan can't get something worthwhile.

- ⁴⁸ The Federal Communications Act of 1934 made no significant changes in the Radio Act of 1927 other than the establishment of a Federal Communications Commission on a permanent basis and putting telephone communication under its control. The latter was the only reform sought by the Roosevelt administration through this legislation, and President Hoover had originally proposed it. See Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 352-3. Craig has this to say about radio and the New Deal: "FDR could not escape Hoover's legacy of radio regulation, for his suggestions for radio reform followed closely ideas that the former President had urged during the last years of the 1920s. Like so much of the New Deal, FDR's communications policy owed more to the New Era

than he cared to admit.” See *Fireside Politics*, p. 83. Bensman observed: “A comparison of the Radio Act of 1927 with the Communications Act of 1934 *show no substantive changes* [my Italics]. The Communication law of 1934, as amended, has been the major communication law for the last two-thirds of the 20th century.” See Bensman, *The Beginning of Broadcast Regulation*, p. 220.

⁴⁹ Hoover, *Memoirs: The Cabinet and the Presidency*, pp. 140-2, 145-6; and Barnouw, *A Tower In Babel*, pp. 94-5. The first radio licensing law was passed by Congress in 1912. Although it was passed years before modern commercial radio broadcasting came into being and focused on point-to-point transmissions, it remained the authority under which radio was regulated by the Secretary of Commerce. President Harding had requested updated legislation but Congress did not act, which, probably, was good given the developing state of radio at the time. Under these circumstances, Hoover did remarkable job maintaining order in the ether, squeezing 600 stations into 89 channels. The radio conferences played a significant role in his success, giving him the broad backing he needed to support his regulatory actions. This situation was brought to an end in mid 1926 when a federal judge ruled against the federal government in *U.S. v. Zenith*. The ruling left Secretary Hoover with no authority to stipulate conditions in licenses. Thus, he could no longer set frequencies or allocate broadcast times. The Radio Act of 1927 aimed to end the ensuing chaos. See *Ibid.*, pp. 31-2, 180; and Craig, *Fireside Politics*, pp. 36, 48-49

⁵⁰ C. Bascom Slemph, ed., *The Mind of the President: As Revealed by Himself in His Own Words* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926), pp. 197-8. In this same address, President Coolidge also had this to say:

In its broad aspects radio is a new agency brought by science to our people which may, if properly safeguarded, become one of our greatest blessings. It should render possible a more complete understanding of our national problems. It should bring to the fireside large contributions toward entertainment and education. With all its great possibilities, it is accompanied by a most intricate technology and a most intricate relationship to the Government.

⁵¹ Hoover, *Cabinet and the Presidency*, p. 142; Jules Abels, *In The Time Of Silent Cal* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1969), p. 196; Cremin, *American Education*, p. 351; and Wikipedia, “Federal Radio

Commission,” retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Radio_Commission. In 1934, the Federal Radio Commission became the Federal Communications Commission, which today has jurisdiction over all communication systems.

- ⁵² Quint & Ferrell, *The Talkative President*, pp. 69-70. President Coolidge had this to say on the subject of an independent commission:

I think it would be a wise policy to keep the supervision over radio or any other regulatory legislation under some of the present established departments. Otherwise, the setting up of an independent commission gives them entire jurisdiction without any control on the part of the Executive or anywhere else. That is the very essence, of course, of bureaucracy, an independent commission that is responsible to nobody and has powers to regulate and control the affairs of the people of the country. I think we ought to keep as far away from that as we can, wherever it is possible.

- ⁵³ “Work of the Federal Radio Commission” under “Radio,” *The Americana Annual: An Encyclopedia of Current Events: 1929* (New York: Americana Corp., 1929), p. 624. President Coolidge, as noted, appointed the Federal Radio Commissioners, but Herbert C. Hoover stated that “President Coolidge asked me to select its members, which I did. They were all men of technical and legal experience in the art, and none of them were politicians”; see *Cabinet and the Presidency*, p. 145. That he was capable of picking such excellent men was, of course, one reason that the President permitted his secretary of commerce to choose them. Upon accepting Secretary Hoover’s resignation in August 1928, President Coolidge, summing up Hoover’s contribution, wired him this message: “I wish to express to you my appreciation of the character of the service you have rendered.... It has been of great benefit to the commercial life of the nation and has given a new impetus to our entire business structure.” See Albert Bushnell Hart, “The United States,” *Current History*, Oct. 1928, p. 134.

- ⁵⁴ Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, pp. 178-9; Claude M. Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge: The Man from Vermont* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1940), pp. 332-4; and Philip R. Moran, ed., *Calvin Coolidge, 1872 - 1933* (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, 1970), 33 - 47. It was C. Bascom Slemph, Secretary to the President, who worked out the arrangements for the broadcast; see Ira R. T. Smith, *Dear Mr. President...: The Story Of Fifty*

Years In The White House Mail Room (New York: Julian Messnere, 1949), p.123. It may be recalled that Harry S. Truman ascended the presidency suddenly as did Mr. Coolidge. He, too, was not well known at the time and had no distinguishing program of his own. About five months after coming into office, on September 6, 1945, he, like Coolidge, went before Congress and the American people and delivered a message, in which he introduced himself and defined his domestic program.

- ⁵⁵ “The Progress of the World,” *The American Review of Reviews*, LXIX (Jan. 1924), p, 3.
- ⁵⁶ Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 178, 264. In 1923, these six stations, operating with Western Electric transmitters, reached a large geographical area.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 179.
- ⁵⁹ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 334; and “The Progress of the World,” *The American Review of Reviews*, LXIX (Jan. 1924), p. 3.
- ⁶⁰ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 334.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 336.
- ⁶³ “Coolidge Will Get Microphone as a Memento of His Public Addresses Sent Over Radio,” *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 7; Richard M. Fried, *The Man Everybody Knew: Bruce Barton And The Making Of Modern America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005), p. 123; and Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, pp. 178-9. Banning wrote, p. 179, of the December 6th speech, “To a vast public” – and to Mr. Coolidge, no doubt – the broadcast “showed that from broadcasting could come a quick and awakening knowledge of the activities of the government and of great national events.”
- ⁶⁴ “The Progress of the World,” *The American Review of Reviews*, LXIX (Jan. 1924), p, 3. The full text of the President’s talk is found in Joe Mitchell

Chapple, *Life and Times of Warren G. Harding: Our After-War President* (Boston: Chapple Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 384-6. Stations carrying the broadcast were: WEAJ (New York), WCAP (Washington), and WJAR (Providence, Rhode Island); see Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 179.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, Feb. 23, 1924, p. 1. The years in which Coolidge did not broadcast his annual tribute were 1925 and 1928.

⁶⁷ "Wall Street Reassured," *New York Times*, April 23, 1924, p. 1. An excerpt from the article follows:

A large part of Wall Street tuned in by radio on the remarks of President Coolidge delivered yesterday.... Private radios caught the words of President Coolidge in the offices of Carden, Green & Co, Clark, Childs & Co., and Redmond & Co.... This was the first time that the radio had been used by downtown brokerage shops as a news-carrying agency.... The news ticker services in the financial district yesterday virtually suspended carrying regular financial news during Mr. Coolidge's talk and devoted their space to the President's remarks.... Another evidence of the importance of Mr. Coolidge's remarks was seen in the highly sensitive foreign exchange market. This market enjoyed a rally in the forenoon that carried five important foreign bills to new high levels for the year....

⁶⁸ *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Free Press*, April 3, 1924, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Robert K. Murray, *The 103rd Ballot: Democrats And The Disaster In Madison Square Garden* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 195; and Margaret Jane Fischer, *Calvin Coolidge, Jr.* (Rutland, Vermont: Academy Books, 1981), pp. 26-7.

⁷⁰ *New York Times*, July 10, 1924, p. 21.

⁷¹ *New York Times*, June 18, 1924, p. 3. For a brief, interesting history of radio and the campaign, see Don Moore, "The 1924 Radio Election," *Monitoring Times*, July 1992; retrieved from: <http://www.swl.net/patepluma/genbroad/elec1924.html>. A more scholarly account, emphasizing Coolidge's awareness of the importance of radio in politics

and his skill in using it, is found in John L. Blair's "Calvin Coolidge and the Advent of Radio Politics," *Vermont History*, XLIV (Winter 1976), pp. 28-37.

⁷² Craig, *Fireside Politics*, p. 142.

⁷³ "Radio Broadcasting: The Stage and the Rostrum of the World" under "Radio," *The Americana Annual: An Encyclopedia of Current Events: 1925* (New York: Americana Corp., 1925), p. 626. The following gives something of the feelings of the time; note that the author definitely believed the 1924 election to be the first radio election.

The foremost broadcasting attainment of 1924 must remain the handling of the Presidential nominations and the thrilling election campaign. Never before has the American public been taken into the confidence of the political parties as it was in the recent campaigns. The radio audience was brought right into the great Republican and Democratic convention halls and permitted to hear...the entire process of selecting a Presidential nominee. Then each voter was brought "face to face" with the Presidential candidates in speech after speech. And they were heart-to-heart talks, those broadcast speeches, and not the impersonal and unconvincing political speeches of the old stump days. *Truly, the 1924 election must always stand as the first radio election* [my Italics].

Radio coverage of the Democratic National Convention – ever famous for its 103 ballots and battle over the Ku Klux Klan – left a negative impression with listeners. Of the Klan debate, Robert Murray wrote: "No Republican oratory could have damaged the Democratic party's image or heightened latent general public prejudices as effectively as the on-the-spot radio accounts of the happenings on Saturday evening"; see *The 103rd Ballot*, p.161.

⁷⁴ Margot Peters, *The House of Barrymore* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), p. 596.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 246-7; Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 353; and Graham McNamee, "Behind The Mike," *American Magazine*, April 1928, p. 190. McNamee offered this: "...President Coolidge...concluded by saying good night to all the folks, 'including my father, up on the Vermont farm listening in.'" It appears that Col. John C. Coolidge was not listening in to his son in

his parlor on election eve. His housekeeper, Aurora Pierce, a woman of strong opinions, disliked radio and did not want to be “bothered with it,” and so, to accommodate her, no radio was installed at the Coolidge homestead. For the same reason, there was no telephone. See “Coolidge’s Father Hears His Son’s Speech Over Radio,” *New York Times*, April 24, 1924, p. 1. There are, however, photographs of Col. Coolidge listening to the radio in the parlor of the Homestead; they may represent one-time affairs, when a radio was brought in for a special broadcast and then removed, or perhaps, at some point, a radio was permanently installed. It is unclear. However, in October 1931, when Mr. Coolidge spoke over the air on behalf of the Hoover-Curtis ticket, Mrs. Coolidge, who was at Plymouth Notch at the time, listened to the address over a radio “in the back room of the Cilley store,” across the road from the Homestead; see Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 460.

John L. Blair “Calvin Coolidge and the Advent of Radio Politics,” *Vermont History*, XLIV (Winter 1976), pp. 32. Later, Carpenter published *The Boyhood Days of President Calvin Coolidge* (Rutland, Vermont: The Tuttle Co., 1926), an excellent account of life in old Plymouth.

- ⁷⁶ James C. Malin, *The United States After The World War* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1930), p. 167. Graham McNamee, who was involved in most of the major broadcasts of the 1924 election, observed later that the vote in that presidential election was 2,400,000 greater than in 1920 and that 30 million votes were cast, the greatest in our history up to then. He saw this as “largely attributable to the immense interest stirred by the radio, beginning with the remarkable show staged by the Democrats in the McAdoo-Smith fight”; see Graham McNamee, “Behind The Mike,” *American Magazine*, April 1928, p. 152.
- ⁷⁷ *Literary Digest* (Jan. 10, 1925), p. 63.
- ⁷⁸ Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 221.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 220-1
- ⁸⁰ Coolidge Will Get Microphone as a Memento Of His Public Addresses Sent Over Radio,” *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 7.
- ⁸¹ Watson, *As I Knew Them*, p. 239.

- ⁸² “Coolidge Will Get Microphone as a Memento Of His Public Addresses Sent Over Radio,” *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 7.
- ⁸³ Sobel, *Coolidge: An American Enigma*, p. 301-2.
- ⁸⁴ French Strother, “The Change in Coolidge,” *The World’s Work*, Vol. L (June 1925), pp. 166-7. Radio certainly helped to make this plan reality by letting the President reach a national audience when the occasion warranted.
- ⁸⁵ *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1924, VIII, p. 15.
- ⁸⁶ Walker, *City Editor*, p. 241.
- ⁸⁷ “Wile Political Talks On Columbia Network,” and “Coolidge To Speak Over Radio Friday,” *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1929.
- ⁸⁸ Walker, *City Editor*, p. 241
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; Barnouw, *A Tower In Babel*, pp. 139-41; and Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 156. Note: The account of this incident found in Banning is incorrect in that his source mistakenly identified Coolidge as the principal involved rather than Hughes.
- ⁹⁰ The Budget Bureau had been created under the Budget and Accounting Act, signed by President Warren G. Harding on June 10, 1921. This act established for the first time a Federal budget system, bringing a profound change to how the government managed its fiscal affairs. Charles Gates Dawes was named the Bureau’s first director. He instituted the Business Organization of Government, calling its first meeting on June 29, 1921. President Harding spoke to the gathering, telling the attendees that “The present administration is committed to a period of economy in government.... There is not a menace in the world today like that of growing public indebtedness and mounting public expenditures.... We want to reverse things.” Director Dawes had earlier warned Harding: “You must realize that you are the first President to tackle the job of a coordination business control over the departments. I doubt if you recognize the strength of the 150 years of archaisms which you must fight.” See Robert K. Murray, *The Harding Era: Warren G. Harding and His*

Administration (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), pp. 174-5.

- ⁹¹ The dates of these broadcasts were: Jan. 26 and June 22, 1925; Jan. 30 and June 21, 1926; Jan. 29 and June 10, 1927; Jan. 30 and June 11, 1928; and Jan. 28, 1929. Accounts of these meetings, along with, in some instances, the text of the President's speech and editorial comments, can be found in the pages of the *New York Times*.
- ⁹² *New York Times*, June 11, 1927, p. 8; "No Talk of a Tax Slash for Present: Coolidge Wants to Test Out New Revenue Bill During Coming Year," *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, June 22, 1926; "Coolidge to Speak: Tonight President and Director Lord Will Give Addresses," and "Radio Programs," *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, Jan. 30, 1928; Murray, *The Harding Era*, pp. 172-9; and Library of Congress, American Memory, "Business Organization of the Government," retrieved: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov:8081/ammem/amrlhtml/dtbusorg.html>. These semiannual meetings started under President Harding on June 29, 1921, when General Charles Gates Dawes was Budget Director - but they were not broadcast nationally until Coolidge came into office and then not until 1925. All together, there were 16 meetings of the Business Organization of Government during the Harding and Coolidge years, the latter half of which were aired (see above). This organization also had local branches among Federal bureaucrats around the country; its members no doubt listened in to these Washington broadcasts for guidance and inspiration. (In Oct. 1926, the Kansas City Federal Business Association established a monthly magazine, *Heart Beats* - the local U.S. Marshal was editor - which featured "incidents showing how denial, thrift and frugality reduced government expenses in the 'little things'"; see "A Paper For Federal Men," *Star*, Oct. 19, 1926.)...Not everyone praised the broadcasts. Representative Loring M. Black, Jr. (D-NY) in attacking Coolidge's use of the term "official spokesman" in his press dealings had this to say: "The voice of the official spokesman is the same voice the folks hear over the radio from station B-U-N-K when the President is making one of those give-me-credit-for-prosperity speeches." See "A Slap At Coolidge," *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, Feb. 4, 1926.
- ⁹³ Chelsea Fraser, *Heroes Of The Air* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1930), p. 457.

- ⁹⁴ My favorite account of the Lindbergh's Washington reception is found in "The Eagle's Return to the Homeland" in Richard J. Beamish, *The Story of LINDBERGH: The Lone Eagle* (1928), pp. 239-58; Lindbergh himself describes the occasion in his "WE" (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1927), pp. 265-96; a more recent account is in A. Scott Berg, *LINDBERGH* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1998), pp. 152-5. Note: Berg stated that Mr. Coolidge "most uncharacteristically...orated for several minutes." All the President's major addresses ran around 40 minutes.
- ⁹⁵ Tom Lewis, " 'A Godlike Presence': The Impact of Radio on the 1920s and 1930s," *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 6 (Spring 1992), p. 14; retrieved: <http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/communication/lewis.html>.
- ⁹⁶ Graham McNamee, "Tell Us About The Game!" *American Magazine*, May 1928, pp. 27, 151. The long lines between Florida and Cuba, over which the President's voice was carried, were dedicated to service in April 1921 by President Warren G. Harding; see Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 53. See also articles in the *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1928, p. 1, for plans to broadcast the President's speech; and Jan. 17, 1928, p. 28, for an account of the marred transmission.
- ⁹⁷ Jerry L. Wallace, "Calvin Coolidge's Third Oath: Washington, March 4, 1925: The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary" in Issue No. 16 of *The Real Calvin Coolidge*, a publication of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, Plymouth Notch, Vermont (Lebanon, New Hampshire: Hanover Printing Co., 2001), pp. 5-6; Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 247; and "Sound Movies to Record Hoover's Ceremonies," *New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1929, and "Oppose Television on Broadcast Band," *New York Times*, Feb. 15, 1929.
- ⁹⁸ Calvin Coolidge, *Calvin Coolidge Says: Dispatches Written by Former-President Coolidge and Syndicated to Newspapers in 1930-1931*, with an introduction by Edward Connery Lathem (Plymouth, Vermont: Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, 1972), see column for Feb. 13, 1931. It is worth noting that in 1928, the General Electric Company inaugurated scheduled television broadcasting from station WGY at Schenectady, New York. GE may have broadcast by television the notification ceremony for Governor Alfred E. Smith from the New York Assembly Chamber at Albany on August 22, 1928; while there were no doubt plans to do

so, it is unclear as to whether the broadcast actually took place. By 1932, there were 12 regularly operating television stations, reaching an estimated 30,000 homes, in the United States. See Thomas H. Johnson, *The Oxford Companion to American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 777.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Banning, *Commercial Broadcasting Pioneer*, p. 174.

¹⁰¹ *New York Times*, Mar. 20, 1932, sec. VIII, p. 14; Craig, *Fireside Politics*, p. 142; and *New York Times*, June 17, 1924, p. 2.

¹⁰² Graham McNamee, "Behind The Mike," *American Magazine*, April 1928, p. 27. These words of praise come from a man who may well have been a Democrat. His father, John McNamee, served as a legal advisor to Secretary of the Interior Lamar during the first Cleveland administration.

¹⁰³ "Coolidge Will Get Microphone as a Memento Of His Public Addresses Sent Over Radio," *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 7. Graham McNamee wrote, "A man cannot make a speech over the radio the way he does under ordinary circumstances. The most successful orator may not by any means prove to be even a good radio speaker"; see "One-night Stands on the Air," *American Magazine*, Sept. 1928, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Craig, *Fireside Politics*, pp. 168-70.

¹⁰⁵ "Senators' Tactics Raises Ire of Dawes," *Winfield (Kansas) Daily Courier*, Jan. 20, 1926.

¹⁰⁶ *New York Times*, Aug. 6, 1927; and Charles G. Dawes, *Notes as Vice President, 1928-1929* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1935), pp. 102-6. Speakers on the occasion were the Prince of Wales, Vice-President Dawes, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin of Great Britain, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, and Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York State.

¹⁰⁷ Watson, *As I Knew Them*, p. 239.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Sobel, *Coolidge: An American Enigma*, p. 302.

¹¹⁰ “Coolidge ‘Sums Up’ His Achievements,” *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 1. At his last press conference on March 1, 1929, the President did offer this: “Perhaps one of the most important accomplishments of my administration has been minding my own business”; see Quint & Ferrell, *The Talkative President*, p. 19.

¹¹¹ “Coolidge To Speak Over Radio Friday,” *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1929, p. 2; and “Radio Records Prove ‘Silent Cal’ A Myth,” *Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 1929, p. 18. Dr. Sobel noted that in this speech, he made favorable remarks regarding an association of nations, which were taken by some as endorsement of the League of Nations, but these words received little notice in the press, coming as they did from a departing President; see Sobel, *Coolidge: An American Enigma*, p. 379.

¹¹² “Coolidge Will Get Microphone as a Memento of His Public Addresses Sent Over Radio,” *New York Times*, Mar. 2, 1929, p. 7. While Mr. Coolidge gained a microphone, he lost a radio. It seems that during the transition period, a handmade radio set vanished from the White House. No doubt, the President was not pleased. See *New York Times*, Mar. 17, 1929, sec. X, p. 20.

¹¹³ “Latin America Gets Waves,” *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1929, p. 36.

¹¹⁴ “Coolidge Gives Up Cares of Office,” *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1929, p. 1, 3. Mr. Coolidge met his future wife while she was teaching at the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts. He took an interest in the school and had become a trustee while governor of Massachusetts. To honor Grace Coolidge, the departing First Lady of the Land, as well as her husband, their friends and admirers formed a committee to raise \$2,000,000 (about \$23,000,000 today) to aid the Clarke School in its worthy work. Earle P. Charlton, a merchant and manufacturer, was chairman of the fund. Clarence W. Barron of *Wall Street Journal* fame collected the first \$1,000,000. Mr. Charlton informed the Coolidges that the \$2,000,000 goal had been reached as the couple prepared to depart Washington for Northampton. To assist with the fund raising, the President permitted the sale of his personal bookplate, at \$5.00 each,

by Goodspeed's Book Shop of Boston. See "Clarke Fund Raised As The Coolidges Go," *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1929, p. 22; "President Allows Sale Of Book Plate," *New York Times*, Feb. 13, 1929; and "Timothy Cole Made Coolidge Bookplate," *New York Times*, Feb. 14, 1929.

- ¹¹⁵ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 441.
- ¹¹⁶ Ishbel Ross followed the *Times*' account closely, citing both good-byes, see *Grace Coolidge and Her Era: The Story of A President's Wife* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1962), p.257.
- ¹¹⁷ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 441.
- ¹¹⁸ *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 1929, sec. X, p. 13; and Lillian Rogers Parks, *My Thirty Years Backstairs at the White House* (New York: Avon Book, 1961), p. 153.
- ¹¹⁹ "Coolidge Gives Up Cares of Office," *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1929, p. 1, 3; and Ross, *Grace Coolidge and Her Era*, p. 257.
- ¹²⁰ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 440; and Albert Shaw, *The Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXXIX (April 1929), p. 33.
- ¹²¹ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 452.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 456.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ *New York Times*, Oct. 31, 1930, p. 1.
- ¹²⁵ Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 460.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 460-1.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 461. During the Coolidge years, the length of broadcast political speeches decreased significantly. In the early days of broadcasting, speeches running one hour were not uncommon; Coolidge himself averaged 40 minutes. By the early 1930s, the length had shrunk to 30 or

15 minutes. Cost and listener satisfaction were factors resulting in this change. See Craig, *Fireside Politics*, p. 139.

- ¹²⁸ *New York Times*, Jan. 2, 1933, p. 21. A friend of Mr. Coolidge dined with him on New Year's Day. He found him in a gloomy mood. "The world, said Coolidge, was in a perilous state. Nothing was permanent or enduring except religion, which fortunately outlasted elections and depressions." See Fuess, *Calvin Coolidge*, p. 462.

About the Author



Jerry L. Wallace resides in Oxford, Kansas, with his wife, Delia. For almost three decades, he was an archivist with the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC. Among the highlights of his career was his appointment as historian-archivist for presidential inaugural committees in 1973, 1981, and 1985. Since his retirement from federal service, he served for a time as archivist for a small liberal arts college, in Winfield, Kansas, and is now actively involved in documenting and preserving the history of his area.

Mr. Wallace's interest in Calvin Coolidge and the Nineteen-Twenties dates from his grade school days. Over the years, he has accumulated an extensive library on President Coolidge which he consults in his research and writings but also loans to others for their studies. He has been a member of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation since 1972, has served as a trustee, and is now a member of its National Advisory Board. Among his writings, he has contributed two other articles to the *Real Calvin Coolidge* series, one on Coolidge's 1925 Inauguration and another on his dedication of the World War I Liberty Memorial. He has also written "Thoughts on Calvin Coolidge: Living On In The Public Memory" and "Thoughts on Calvin Coolidge: Politician and Office Holder." Both appear on the Foundation's website.

History And Purpose Of The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation. Inc.

The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation was established in 1960 as a non-profit educational organization. The Foundation's membership is over 800 individuals of every stripe and all political parties from throughout the nation who recognize the sterling character and remarkable accomplishments of President Coolidge and who work together to preserve the memory of his life and career. The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation seeks to inspire the public to appreciate and study the legacy of President Coolidge - his personal life, values, and ideals, and his public career - in order to understand our nation's history and to forge a stronger society for the future.

Through educational programs, publications, public presentations and preservation of historical collections, the Foundation strives to present a balanced portrait of Calvin Coolidge.

President Coolidge's legacy lives on due in large part to the close cooperation between the foundation and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site is considered the best-preserved presidential site in the nation. Today, the village is open to the public from Memorial Day to mid-October. Thousands of people tour the site each year, while many others visit via the websites of the foundation and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. The Coolidge Foundation and the Division work together on events and on educational programs for students.

An Invitation

As the only membership organization devoted to President Coolidge, the Coolidge Foundation warmly welcomes new members. For information on membership, contributions, publications and public events, please write to The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, P.O. Box 97, Plymouth Notch, Vermont 05056 or visit www.calvin-coolidge.org.