



PARAGON

by Alan Douglas



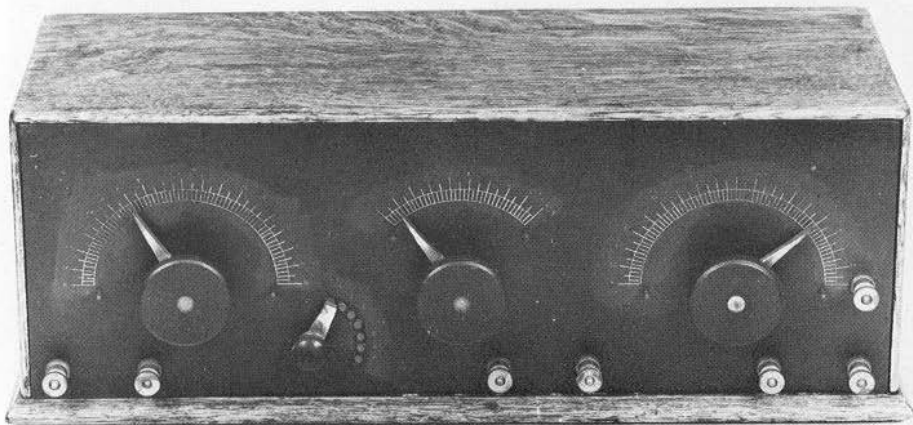
PART I

The story of Adams-Morgan/Paragon closely parallels that of Clapp-Eastham.¹ Both companies began around 1910 and built their reputations during the teens with a mail-order business in wireless components. Both were early Armstrong licensees who saw a great future with the dawn of radio broadcasting in the twenties. Both were initially successful in this field, but clung to the regenerative circuit too long, and both tried to be big-time radio manufacturers without a dealer organization or advertising. Both wound up on the scrap heap.

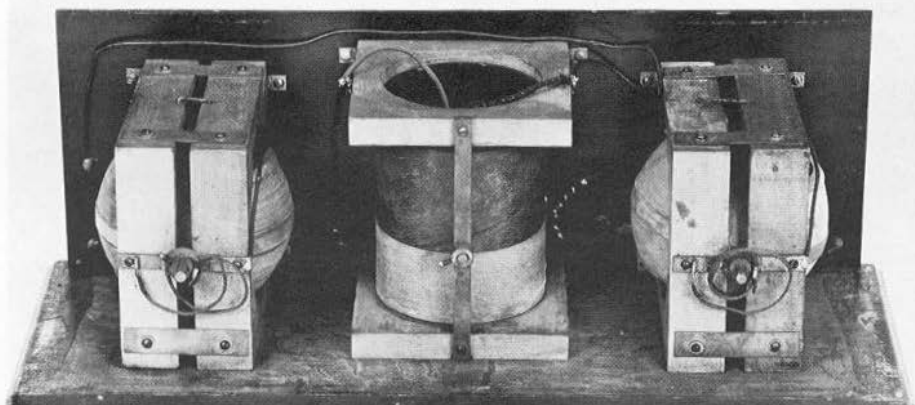
For a few facts and anecdotes of Alfred P. Morgan's early career, I am indebted to Serge Krauss who interviewed him informally a number of years ago. Al started the firm of Adams-Morgan about 1910 as a mail-order house. He attended MIT for a year but never graduated; on one occasion he bragged so much about a Poulsen arc generator he had built that he was requested to bring it to class. Preparing to demonstrate it, he was pushed aside by the professor who said, "*This is my class and I do the demonstrations.*" But the professor didn't allow enough time to purge the air from the arc chamber, resulting in an explosion that blew the lid off and knocked over some front-row students. Luckily no one was hurt.

Al Morgan was a prolific writer. "*The Boy Electrician*" of 1913 was the first of many such books, published all during his life. The 1912 "*Wireless Telegraph Construction for Amateurs*" went through several editions, and he also wrote many pamphlets on wireless topics for the publishing partnership of Cole and Morgan. "*The Pageant of Electricity*" from 1943 is one of the better historical-survey books of its type. Al also wrote, for a time, a *Question-and-Answer* column for one of Gernsback's magazines, but quit when he failed to pay him. He worked for de Forest, and obtained his first Audion for \$5 when de Forest needed money quickly to buy Tesla dinner.

Adams-Morgan's entry into the receiver-manufacturing field, and its subsequent line of Paragon sets, was the work of another New Jersey man, Paul Godley.² Godley had been to Brazil in 1913 installing government radio stations; on his return in 1914 he met Armstrong at a Radio Club meeting and was amazed to learn that Armstrong had consistently been able to hear these stations. The secret, of course, was the regenerative circuit. Since Armstrong was only interested in the commercial applications and in any case had not been able to make his circuits work on short waves, Godley adapted the regenerative principles to short wavelengths and the Paragon receiver was born.



PARAGON RA-6 (New England Wireless Museum)



Rear view of PARAGON RA-6

Looking around for a way to manufacture and market his new creation, Godley invested some of his money in a share of the local firm Adams-Morgan. The October 1916 issue of *QST* announced the Paragon RA-6, for a reasonable \$35.³ It wasn't long before many of the better ham stations had RA-6s, as the pages of *QST* will testify.

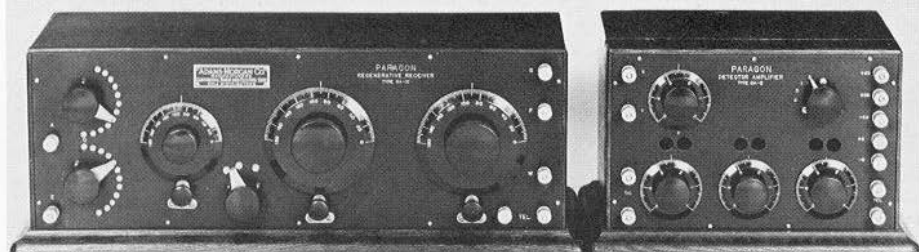
May of 1917 saw the last RA-6 ad, and soon Adams-Morgan was working on wartime orders. Paul Godley went to American Marconi at

Aldene, New Jersey, for the duration. After the war there is a curious hiatus in the Adams-Morgan chronology. They did not advertise themselves, yet they do seem to have made receivers for hams. Chicago Radio Labs was selling RA-6s in October 1919, and there is other evidence that RA-6s continued to be made, as well as a model RA200 "*Universal Range*." Perhaps, after a taste of wartime contracts, A-M was not too anxious to go back to

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The Adams-Morgan factory building is now occupied by a theater group.



The popular Paragon RA-10 (tuner) and DA-2 (detector and amplifier).

the limited ham market, already saturated with RA-6s in any case.

But radio broadcasting was something else. Godley returned to A-M and designed the RA10. Preferring to be a manufacturer only, not a sales agency or dealer, A-M joined with Continental Radio & Electric Company, a New York distributor recently formed by well-placed radio men⁴ which also had an RCA franchise. Continental did all the advertising for the RA10, and indeed many existing RA10s bear Continental nameplates as well as Adams-Morgans.

Footnotes:

1. Clapp-Eastham history: OTB 20-2, Sept 1979
2. Biographies of Paul Godley can be found in Radio Broadcast, June 1922, and the March 1975 Proceedings of the Radio Club of America (transcript of a 1971 AWA talk).
3. A detailed electrical description of the RA-6 and its performance is in an article by David Stout in the SCARS Gazette 4-1.
4. QST May 1920, p. 88

Part II will describe later Paragon models and the end of a famous company.



Navy detector (1919) made by Adams-Morgan (Dan Gaidosz collection).



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Paragon RD5 S A2 Amplifier [Collection of Ted Phillips]

PART II

A January 1921 ad stated that "*1000 RA10s are now ready.*" Continental promoted the RA10 vigorously, and many thousands of them must have been made. But they had other lines to promote too, and as time went on, and the unchanging RA10 faded from their ads, A-M may have regretted their exclusive agreement that apparently prevented them from advertising. A-M began advertising components for the ham market once again, and in November 1921 brought out their two-tube radiotelephone transmitter 2-5-U. By March 1922 a companion DA2 detector-amplifier to the RA10 made its appearance, and a small flurry of Continental ads featured both units until June when the "radio boom" collapsed.

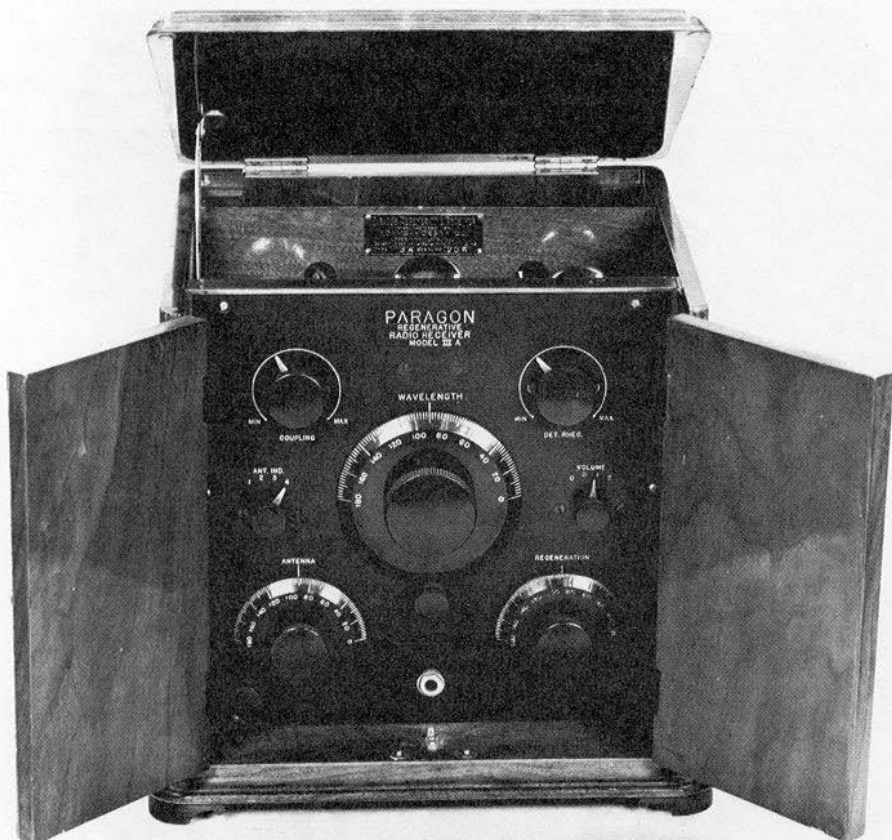
The RA10, excellent as it was, couldn't last forever. In December 1922, Continental ads in *QST*, *Radio News*, and *Popular Radio* introduced the RD5 and A2, a somewhat simplified version of the RA10-DA2, split into a one-tube receiver and two-step amplifier as was more conventional by that time. This setup was advertised sporadically through 1923. To pep up

its performance, the 10R one-tube RF amplifier was designed to match the RD5, and was available for \$40 in June. Many 10Rs were also used with the RA10, as shown in contemporary photos of "high-class" radio installations.

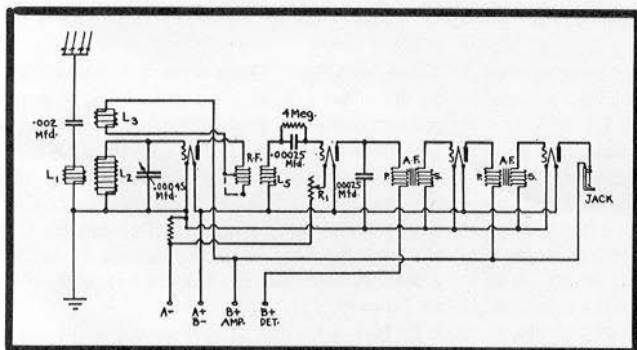
December 1923 (A-M did pretty well in having new models in time for Christmas) saw the



Paragon Type 10-R RF amplifier.



The Paragon Model IIIA. Beautiful in appearance but antiquated in design. It never gained popularity.
[New England Wireless Museum]

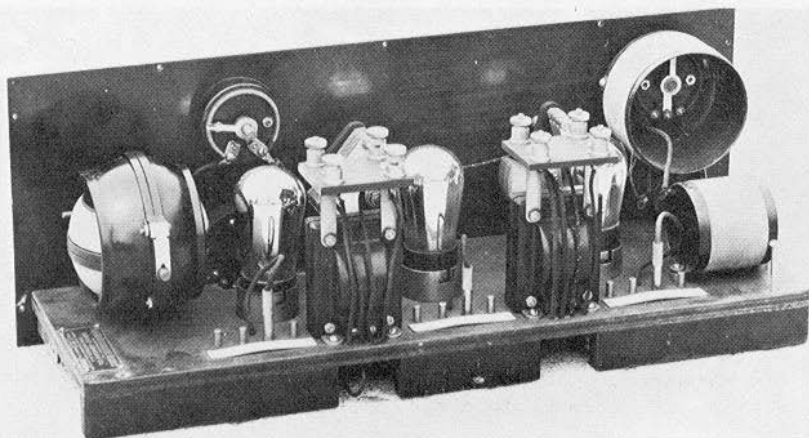


The Paragon "4" broke tradition by having a tuned regenerative RF stage and an un-tuned detector.

The PARAGON FOUR



Paragon Type RB-2 receiver (Rick Weibezahl collection).



Rear view of RB-2 receiver.

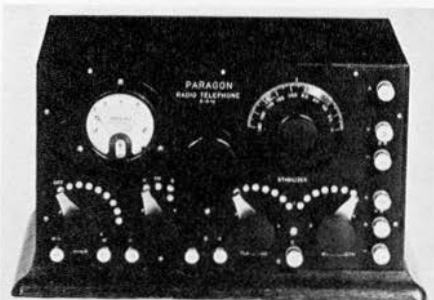
\$135 RB2 introduced, and later there was an RB2A. The same circuit went into a larger cabinet with doors, the \$175 III and later IIIA). This was the last Paragon that Paul Godley had a hand in, but to tell the truth, it was an antiquated radio. Few were sold, and by May the price of a IIIA had come down to \$83.50 at the large New York store of Haynes-Griffin. Instead of advertising more, A-M shrank its ads in *Radio News* to the minimum size, and cut out other magazines entirely.

In the January 1925 *Radio News* (which came out a month before its cover date) was announced the new Paragon line: the Two,

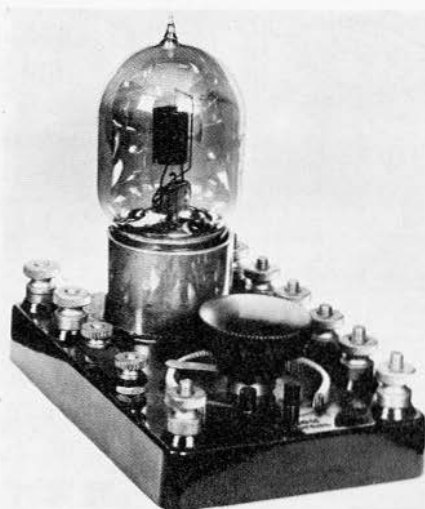
Three, and Four. These were real throwbacks to the older regenerative models, and were priced much lower, probably emulating Crosley. Unfortunately A-M did not understand Crosley's use of advertising or merchandising, and the new models fell flat. In two months the *Radio News* ads reverted to tiny name-only ads, and after May 1925 they disappeared altogether. Adams-Morgan went into receivership on January 21, 1926.

In December 1926, the old company was purchased by a local financier and went back into business with some of its former employees,

(Cont. on next page)



The popular 2-5-U Radiophone first shown at the 1921 ARRL Convention. A 1-tube modulated oscillator, it gained favor with the radio amateur.



Adams-Morgan manufactured components in the early 20's. Typical is this Vacuum-Tube Control Unit.

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as the Paragon Electric Corporation.⁵ It advertised a couple of times in the trade magazines in 1927,⁶ but otherwise didn't amount to much. In June 1928 *Radio Retailing* carried the announcement that Paragon had moved to 200 Varick Street, New York, becoming a test lab for manufacturer's servicing.

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3. A detailed electrical description of the RA-6 and its performance is in an article by David Stout in the *SCARS Gazette* 4-1.
4. *QST* May 1920, p. 88
5. *Radio Retailing* Dec. 1926; *Radio World* Nov. 20, 1926.
6. *Radio Retailing* June 1927, p. 151; *Radio Dealer* Sept. 1927, pp. 123 & 129.

Comments:

Wilson Norwood supplied these details about the Adams-Morgan operation, where he worked from June 1922 to August 1923: There were perhaps 50, but not over 100, employees, including a large machine shop on the first floor. Upstairs about 20 girls worked at small jobs and assembling. Wiring was done in a garage across the street (since torn down). Most everything except transformer coils was made on the premises.

See March, 1983 issue of AWA "Old Timers Bulletin" for Part I of this series.

-- ADVANCE NOTICE --

AWA will make note of your club meetings and other functions PROVIDING you notify us at least 4 months in advance. The notice will NOT appear in the OTB unless a written request is received. -- Editor

Radiofest '83

August 13, Holiday Inn, Elgin, Ill. Flea market, Equipment Contest, Programs and banquet. For info, write: Joe Willis, 525 Oakdale #524 Chicago, Ill. 60657

SCARS

The Southern California Antique Radio Society will hold their annual summer meet on Saturday, Aug. 20. Location: Lockheed Employee's Recreation Club, 2814 Empire Ave., Burbank, Calif. There will be the usual big swap meet, contest and other activities. For more info, write: Floyd Paul, W6THU, 1545 Raymond Ave., Glendale, CA. 91201 (Tele. 213-242-8961)

CHRS Sorry we missed the CHRS Meet announcement at Foothill College in May but the information was received too late.