
The Collins 4A Transmitter

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Many radio amateurs enjoy collecting manufactured transmitters and receivers of the early 1930s. However, very few of us have been fortunate enough to get their hands on the rig that is the subject of this article. I'm pleased to say I am one of them!

In 1931, Art Collins began assembling transmitters of quality and sound engineering design in the basement of his home. In his publication

in the October, 1933 issue, along with the Type 32B. The 4A pictured in both the *Collins Signal* announcement and *QST* ad bears only the designation "Collins 4A," which is engraved directly on the front panel.

This same advertisement shows a panel-mounted crystal socket, holes for relay rack or cabinet mounting, and small metal rectangular cursors above the power amplifier and crystal amplifier dial knobs.

Other distinguishing features, on the top of the chassis, are the single large electrolytic condenser and the black coil forms. Also, the larger of the two transformers is mounted with its laminations oriented at 90 degrees to the front panel.

The only other 4A transmitter I have seen, besides my own, is at the Gray Wireless Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio. Its model designation is on an attached rectangular metal name plate with the new company logo (the winged world). The small metal cursors above the tuning knobs are round. The hole pattern provided for cabinet or rack mounting is the same as before.

The crystal socket is now located on the chassis and there is an additional electrolytic capacitor. The two coil forms are white instead of black. The larger power transformer is mounted with its laminations parallel to the chassis.

There are some similarities and some differences between these two models of the 4A and version belonging to the author.

The panel information is engraved, as in the original ads, but there is more of it. It reads as follows:

TYPE 4A
C.W. TRANSMITTER
20 WATTS OUTPUT
COLLINS RADIO COMPANY
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA USA



Front and rear view's of author's 4A transmitter. Note engraved ID information, black coil forms.

Collins Signal dated April-August, 1933, he announced a new transmitter. The announcement read, in part:

The 4A transmitter marks the entry of the COLLINS line in the extremely low-priced field. The 4A uses a 47 crystal oscillator and parallel 46's in the power amplifier permitting an output of 18 to 20 watts on 1.7, 3.5, or 7 mc. The power amplifier is operated on the crystal frequency in each case.

The first 4A advertisement in *QST* appeared

The other difference in panel marking is that the author's is not labeled "plate" below the center switch in the 3-switch grouping. Also a 4th switch, same style as the other three, is located above the Westinghouse ma meter. The switch is wired in series with the meter and keying circuit (is there a plausible reason for this?). The panel is drilled for cabinet or rack mounting

as in the other two models; the dial cursors are round.

The crystal socket is mounted on the chassis and the large transformer is mounted with laminations parallel to the panel. The coil forms are black. At the rear of the chassis are two jacks, one for keying and the other is in series with one of the two insulated antenna terminals located on the left side of the chassis; it is apparently used for rf current measurement. These jacks are apparently original since they are the same vintage as the other components and all wiring to them, as well as the antenna terminals, comes from the existing wiring and main harness. At the center of the chassis, rear, is a grounding terminal.

Now that we can document variances in the 4A units, the question still remains regarding where the first ones were made. Did they come from the Art Collins home basement or from the larger manufacturing quarters on First Avenue, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to which he moved in early 1933?

One reasonable guess is that the engraved panel, black coil, transmitters were the earlier models and first made in the Art Collins home basement. The changes to a metal name label, white coil forms, etc., may have been made after the move to the new manufacturing facilities.

It is also interesting to note the many forms of the Collins Company name and address used in *QST* advertising during 1932 and 1933:

January, 1932	Arthur A. Collins Radio Laboratories, Inc W9CXX Cedar Rapids, Iowa
March, 1932	Collins Radio Transmitters Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Arthur Collins W9CXX)
September, 1932	Collins Radio Transmitters W9CXX Cedar Rapids, Iowa
November, 1932	Collins Radio Company Cedar Rapids, Iowa W9CXX (This introduction of the Collins Radio Company name was a formally-announced change)
December, 1932	Collins Radio Company Cedar Rapids, Iowa (No mention of "W9CXX")



The type 4A on permanent display at the Gray Wireless Museum. Note attached metal name plate, white coil forms.

October, 1933	Address as above; this is the first announcement of the 4A transmitter.
December, 1933	Second (and last) advertisement of the 4A transmitter.

The author couldn't find any additional *QST* advertising for the 4A after December, 1933. However, his research has turned up Collins sales literature dated January 2, 1935 and offering the 4A transmitter, complete with coils for one band, for \$73.00.

How many of these little "gems" are still in existence? The author would like to hear from anyone with additional documented information about the 4A transmitter so all present owners and other interested radio amateurs and collectors can learn more about this rare and interesting unit. 

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