BOOK REVIEW from The Radio Club of America

THE HAMMARLUND STORY

Edited version of a summary of the company's history written by the late Austin Lescaboura.

It was in 1882 that a young man arrived in the United States from Stockholm, Sweden. His name was Oscar Hammarlund. He was 22 years old. In Sweden, he had been a special tool designer and inspector of electrical instruments for the L. M. Erickson Company, leading instrument manufacturers and originators of the French-type telephone. He came to this country to accept a similar position with the Elgin Watch Company.

After four years with Elgin, he joined the Western Electric Company as superintendent of the Chicago plant. Six years later he became design engineer and plant superintendent of the Gray National TelAutograph Company (now known as TelAutograph Corporation) working closely with the founder, Elisha Gray, who is known as a co-inventor of the telephone.

This team of Gray and Hammarlund, was responsible for the development of the TelAutograph, a revolutionary machine which astounded the world. For here, for the first time, writing was transmitted by electric wire. Among the many Hammarlund features built into the machine was the stylus, which resembled our present-day "automatic" pencil.

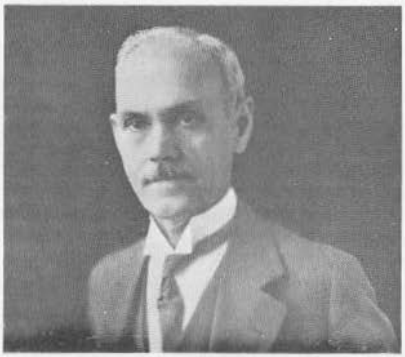
The company was originally located in a loft on Fulton Street in Manhattan. In order to operate and pay the skilled help, it built a seemingly wierd assortment of products. It was not until 1919, when broadcasting first started, that Oscar Hammarlund had an apportunity to put to practical use the results of his many early experiments. It was during these days, before most of today's radio and electronics manufacturers even existed, that every wireless enthusiast and dabbler in electricity knew of Hammarlund. Amateurs and experimenters turned to the organization for many of their requirements.

Joseph Klein, who was later in charge of the model shop, said that when he joined the company in 1919 at the Fulton Street shop, one of its more complex pieces of equipment, the Armagraph, was in manufacture. This phonograph-type piece of equipment, made up of a rotating disk in which notches were cut and over which glided a platinum tip contact, was used to train amateur radio operators in Morse code. As the disk rotated and the needle hit each one of the holes, it produced the sound of a dot or dash.

The first Hammarlund capacitor was developed in 1916, not as a product for a specific electronic application, but as a machined item for an experimenter who furnished the plans.

In 1920 the company moved up to 18th Street where about 50 persons were employed. In the 20's the company manufactured thousands of Western Union call-boxes. These small fixtures were installed in nearly every business office. When a company executive wanted to telegraph a message, a turn of the crank on the call-box would send a code signal to the nearest Western Union office. A boy would be sent over immediately to pick up the message.

In about 1925 the company moved to 424 West 33rd Street, where the first Hammarlund-Roberts radio kits were built. These kits, designed for broadcast listening by experimenters, incorporated capacitors, coils, and other items manufactured in the plant.



Oscar Hammarlund

In the same year the famous Midline variable condenser, an innovation designed by Oscar Hammarlund and his son Lloyd, was developed as the only practical solution to the tuning problem, and is now standard in nearly all home receivers. By 1931 three outstanding broadcast receivers—the Hi-Q-29, Hi-Q-30, and Hi-Q-31 were among the finest home-constructed receivers on the market. Some are still in use today.

The Comet-Pro, the first commercial shortwave superheterodyne, a Hammarlund pioneered product, was just undergoing final engineering touches in 1931. By 1936 the Comet-Pro was in use by the thousands all over the world by commercial operators, in broadcast stations, and by leading amateurs. All the important exploring expeditions included it as part of their standard gear. Early in 1936 the first "Super-Pro" was introduced after over four years of engineering.

The company's "Super-Pro 600" receiver is still in use by governmental, military, and commercial groups all over the world and has attained an outstanding reputation of which the company is justifiably proud.

Because Hammarlund had specialized in high precision capacitors for use in commercial and military equipment, nearly 90 per cent of this nation's electronic war equipment in 1941 employed Hammarlund capacitors. Thousands of Hammarlund communications receivers were used on all the battle fronts by the Army, Navy, and Air Corps during World War II. Many other military electronic products were designed and built in the company laboratories and factory, some of which more than ten years later were still in the "secret" category.

Later the company moved and occupied four floors of the huge 460 W. 34th Street Building, with additional space in nearby structures, plus a newly completed plant at Mars Hill, near Asheville, N. C. Still later, the company moved its general offices to 53 West 23rd Street, and in 1964 to Mars Hill.

The magnificent tradition of Oscar Hammarlund was carried forward by Lloyd A. Hammarlund, who served as president, and by Martin Koenigsberg and Stuart F. Meyer (Fellow of The Radio Club of America) who later served in that post.