

THE HOWARD/SILVER/ HALLICRAFTERS TIME LINE

There has been considerable confusion about the earliest history of Hallicrafters, evidenced by the fact that of the several accounts in print, no two agree. In particular, no one agrees on who actually made the radios (Hallicrafters had no factory or RCA license until moving to the Case plant in Marion, Indiana in mid-1936).

Things start to fall into place if one constructs parallel time lines for the three Chicago companies in question: Hallicrafters, McMurdo Silver, and Howard. It then becomes evident that Silver's factory was transferred to Howard when RCA sued Silver for lack of a license, and that for a couple of years thereafter, Howard had the only license and made radios for both Silver and Hallicrafters. There is documentation for this: in an "open letter" in the *McMurdo Silver Times* for Dec. 1936, answering charges by Scott in his promotional literature, Silver states that "Masterpiece V radios...were built by men trained by me and upon the Howard payroll in its plant." In a letter to William Orr dated July 12, 1978, Halligan said "We picked up some other private label business and even Mac Silver got us to build his special set."

RCA seems to have been less than enthusiastic about riding herd on a bunch of unruly licensees scattered around the country, a job involving travelling to each company and auditing the books to assess royalties. RCA solved the problem in California by letting Gilfillan hold the primary license and take care of the details. Indeed all the smaller manufacturers were eventually required to build their sets under Gilfillan's roof. It looks as if RCA had a similar idea for Chicago, after suing Silver. Howard had always been above the fray, content to make a small number of high-quality sets, and to simply sign up for whatever licenses were available. In 1929 his company had been bought by the

Everett Piano Co. and moved to South Haven, Michigan. They had continued to make good radios during 1932 and 1933 (even a peewee set, probably the only one to use a power transformer) but the Everett owners may have been glad to sell the radio business back to Austin Howard in 1934. At any rate, Howard took over the old Silver plant on Belmont Ave., and had an RCA license when neither Silver nor Hallicrafters did. The timing is too coincidental to have been chance.

By mid-1936 both Hallicrafters and Silver had broken away from Howard and had their own factories. Neither is still standing: 2900 Michigan Ave. is a parking lot, while the old Echo-phone plant at 2611 Indiana Ave. has given way to a condo/apartment complex. 1731 Belmont is still there, however. Silver's place of exile on North Paulina St. is still the same old terra cotta office building/store. Hallicrafters' first locations are now the Marriott Courtyard Hotel (417 N. State St.) and a funeral home (3001 Southport Ave.). The Case plant in Marion, Indiana has been demolished. I am extremely indebted to our esteemed Editor, Marc Ellis, for making pilgrimages to these, as of course I have no knowledge of things Chicago. Thanks also to Bill Orr for forwarding copies of old correspondence via Hank Olson.

Here are some notes, keyed to the numbers at each transition point on the chart:

❶ Hallicrafters was formed on Jan. 1, 1933 according to Max de Henseler's book "The Hallicrafters Story" (p. 21), although this actually says "New Year's Eve 1933" which is incorrect. In a letter written to H.L. Chadbourne on July 3, 1980, Halligan states that he left his sales-representative partnership and struck out for himself after Silver Marshall had gone bankrupt and commissions had ceased, which would also put

Hallcrafters' founding at early 1933.

The Rider manuals show schematics for Silver-Marshall Mfg. Co. (Halligan's outfit) from 4/26/33 to 1/29/34. Silver-Marshall Mfg. Co. was a paper corporation which held stock in Silver-Marshall.

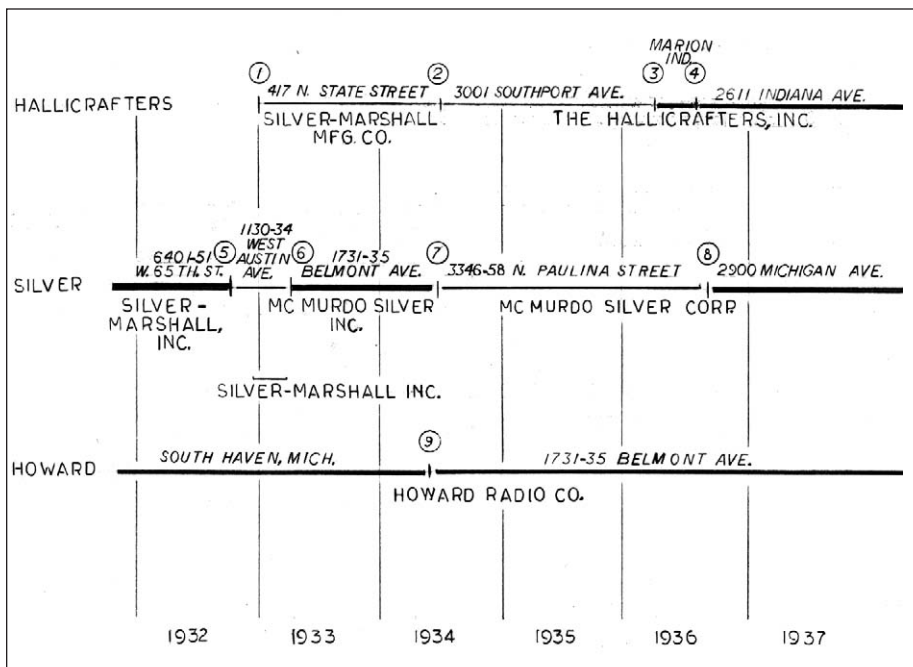
From Halligan's letter dated July 3, 1980 to Chadbourne: "I started selling things by mail under the name Halligan & Company. Silver's lawyer told me they owned a company named Silver-Marshall Manufacturing Company and I could use that name on some of the things I was selling at 15 cents a nameplate."

From a letter by Halligan to William Orr of July 12, 1978: "Meanwhile, I had made a deal with Mac Silver's mother, who owned a name 'Silver Marshall Manufacturing Company,' and I proceeded to put that name on various radio sets that I was able to get from some of the local manufacturers and sold this stuff by mail. I also put this Silver Marshall name on the first set designed by Ken Clough and sold that by mail too." (the S-1)

② This date is unclear. As noted in (1) above, the last dated schematic for the Silver Marshall Mfg. Co. is January 1934. The first Hallcrafters short-wave model (S-1) appears in Radio News in April 1934. Radio News appeared about a month before its cover date, and ads had to be submitted two months before. The original 8-page flyer for the Skyriders is marked "Form no. 10M 334" which could mean he bought ten thousand on March 1934. Other than showing "Hallcrafters" on the nameplate, this brochure gives no manufacturer at all; it merely has a blank space labelled "distributed by."

From a letter to me from H.L. Chadbourne dated Feb.15, 1980 recalling recent telephone conversations with Halligan: "Bill Halligan told me (according to my notes) that Howard made his original sets. Then he leased space in the basement of the Howard building and started building his own. Subsequently Hallcrafters expanded to occupy two floors of the building."

By the way, I stated in my Vol. 3 (p. 61) that
(continued on page 61)



Time line for Howard/Silver/Hallcrafters. Bold lines: manufacturing plant; thin lines: sales office only. (Graphic by John W. Haught)