

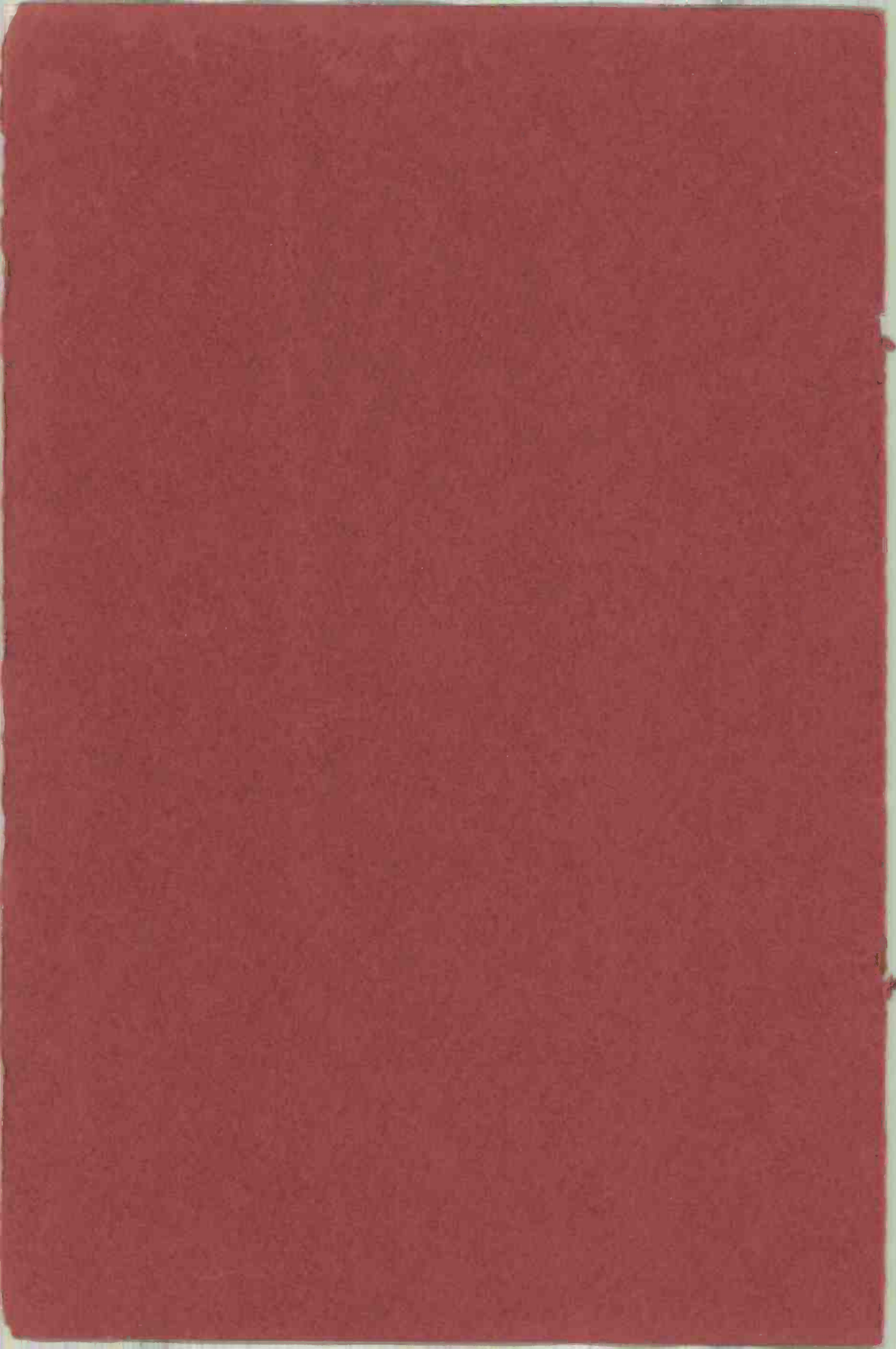
W. H. Avery Assoc. Boston

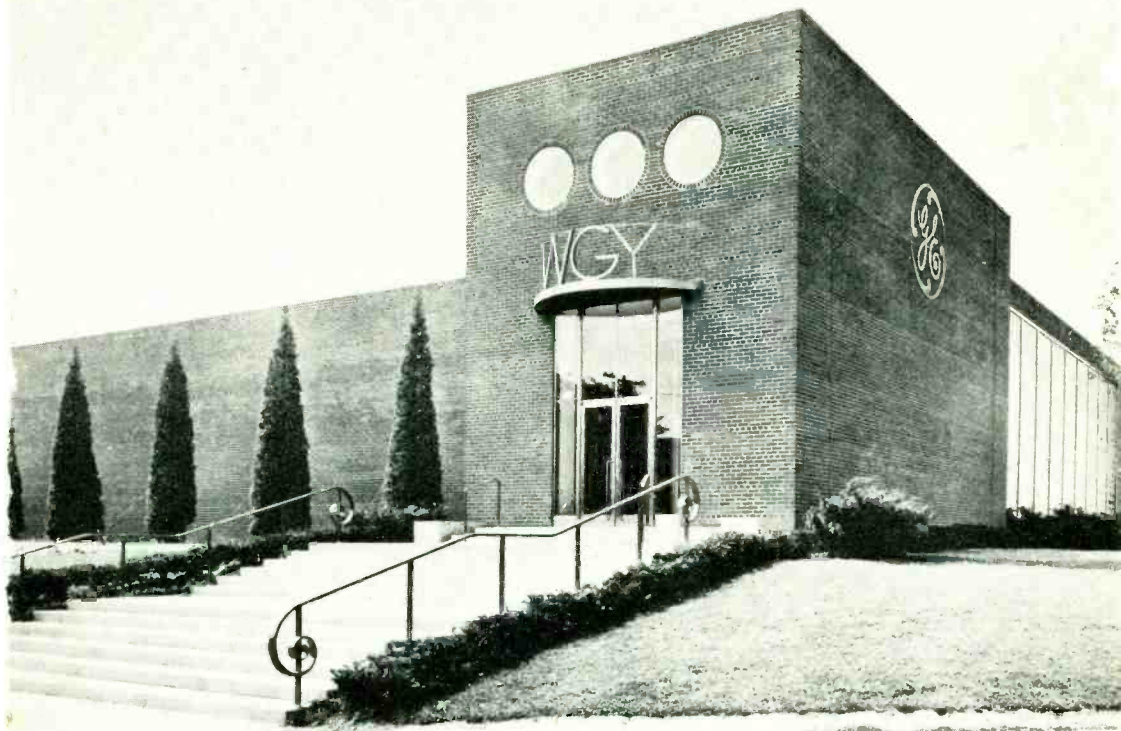
AMG-88



WGY-Up the years
from '22

GENERAL  ELECTRIC





*From this modern radio center come programs serving millions of people
of every race, creed, and color*

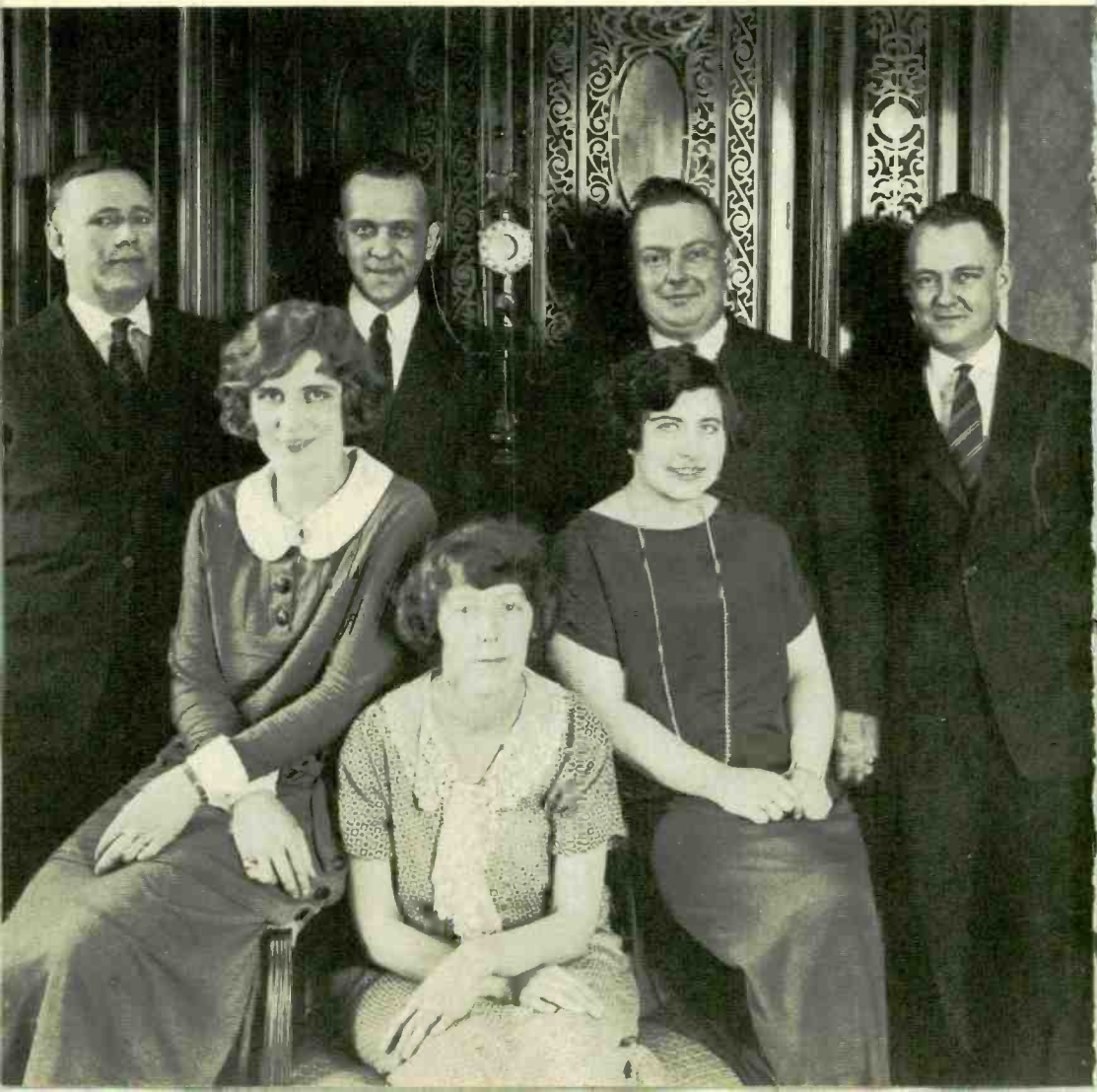
★

**WGY - Up the years
from '22**

★

It was on a Monday evening—7:47 on February 20, 1922—that WGY first went on the air. Nobody knows how many people listened to that first broadcast. But we can be sure they sat close to a home-made receiver, slid coils of wire in and out, and periodically shifted a “cat whisker” to a new spot on a chunk of galena in the hope of getting a louder signal in the ear-phones clamped to their ears.

In 1922 a staff of seven kept the programs running smoothly





The "WGY Players" presented the first radio drama, used the first sound effects to go out over the air

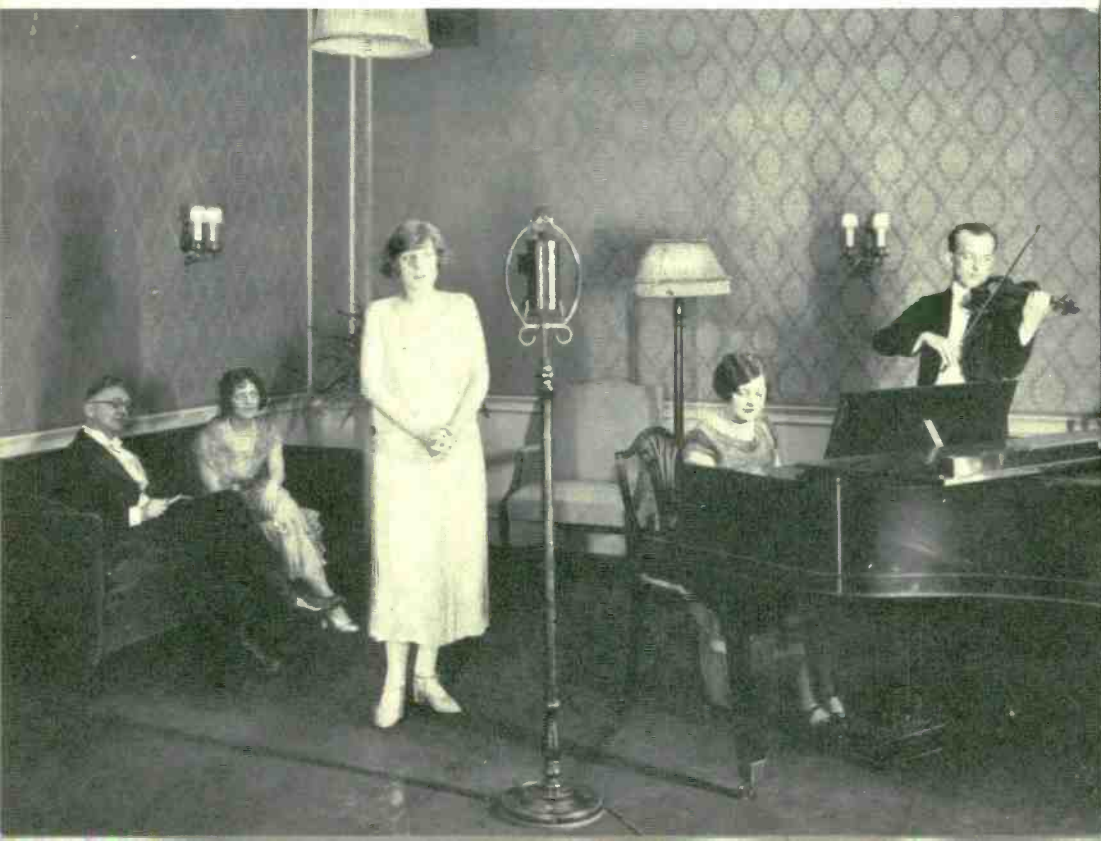
For those were the days when loose-couplers foreshadowed push-button tuning, when less scrupulous set makers walked off with the listening end of many a public telephone, and when fans sat up half the night carefully logging the call letters (announced every five minutes for their convenience) of the stations farthest away.

WGY was not the first station in the country to broadcast, but it soon became one of the best known. On the technical side, it served as the experimental laboratory where Dr. E. F. W.



The Rice String Ensemble in 1925

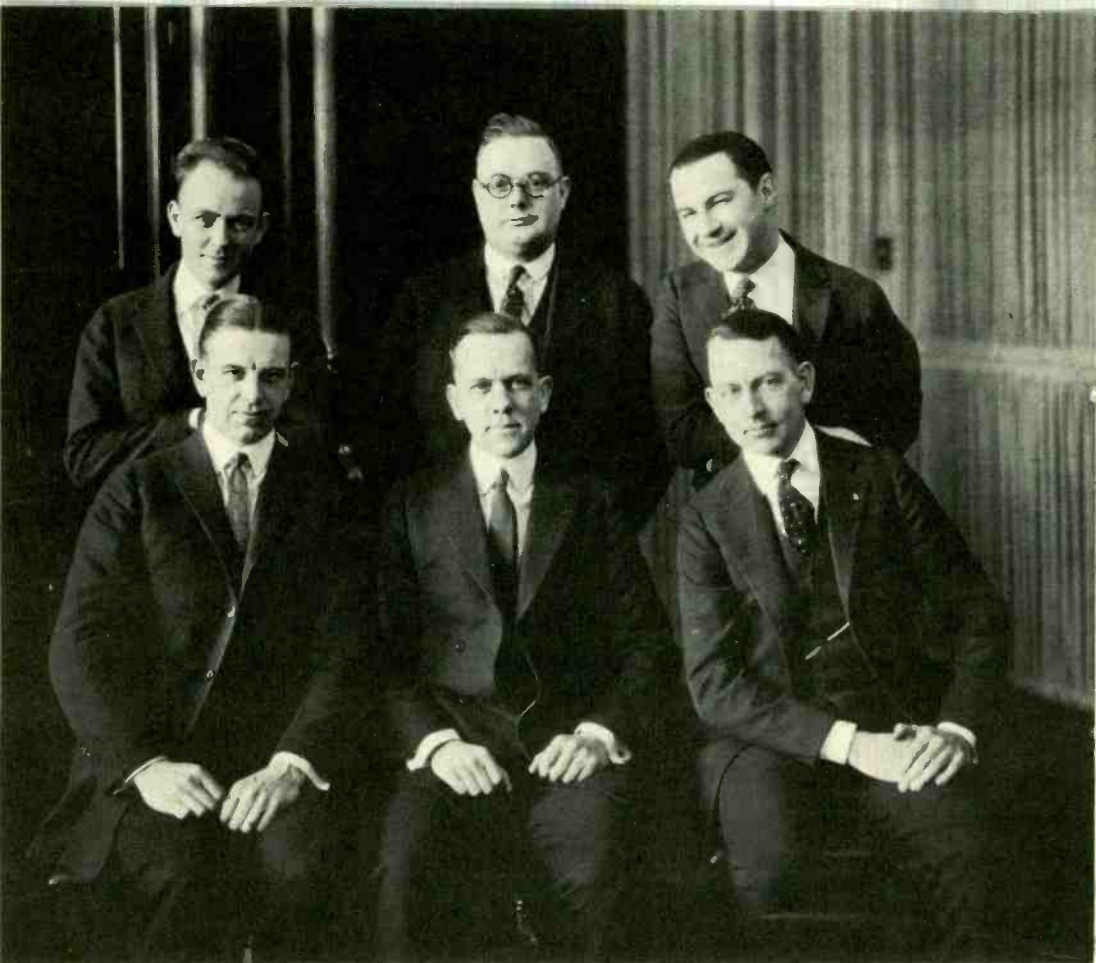
*By 1926 the "lampshade" was removed
from the microphone*



Alexanderson, Dr. W. R. G. Baker, and other radio pioneers worked out equipment and techniques that have become standard in the industry.

There were adventures in programming, too. Schenectady was the home of many persons proficient in music and dramatics, and they first faced a microphone at WGY. When "microphone fright" was discovered, that little black box was hidden behind the fringe of a lampshade. And, going farther afield, stars of stage and opera and concert hall, intrigued by the novelty of radio, considered it an adventure to come to Schenectady to broadcast. Control room operators and transmitter men were having a few adventures, too. Nobody could guess when a weary sparrow might rest on one of the transmitter wires and take the station completely off the air.

In those early days, WGY concentrated on music and dramatics, much to the delight of people all over the Great Northeast who lived too far away from metropolitan centers to hear much good music or see many plays. August 3, 1922, was an important day at WGY and in the radio industry as well, because the "WGY Players," a newly organized group, presented the first drama adapted especially for radio. As there was no rigid schedule to follow, listeners heard the whole thing at one sitting—albeit a long one of two and one-half hours. The play, "The Wolf," written by Eugene Walter and directed by Edward H. Smith, was broadcast as a complete theater performance. The studio orchestra was on hand for musical interludes between acts, and as much theater atmosphere as possible was injected into the presentation. Listeners asked for more, and in September of that year the first dramatic series for radio, featuring the "WGY Players," began. Dramatic groups bearing this name have been heard on WGY throughout its 25 years and are currently presenting "The F.B.I. in Action" each Friday evening at 7:30.



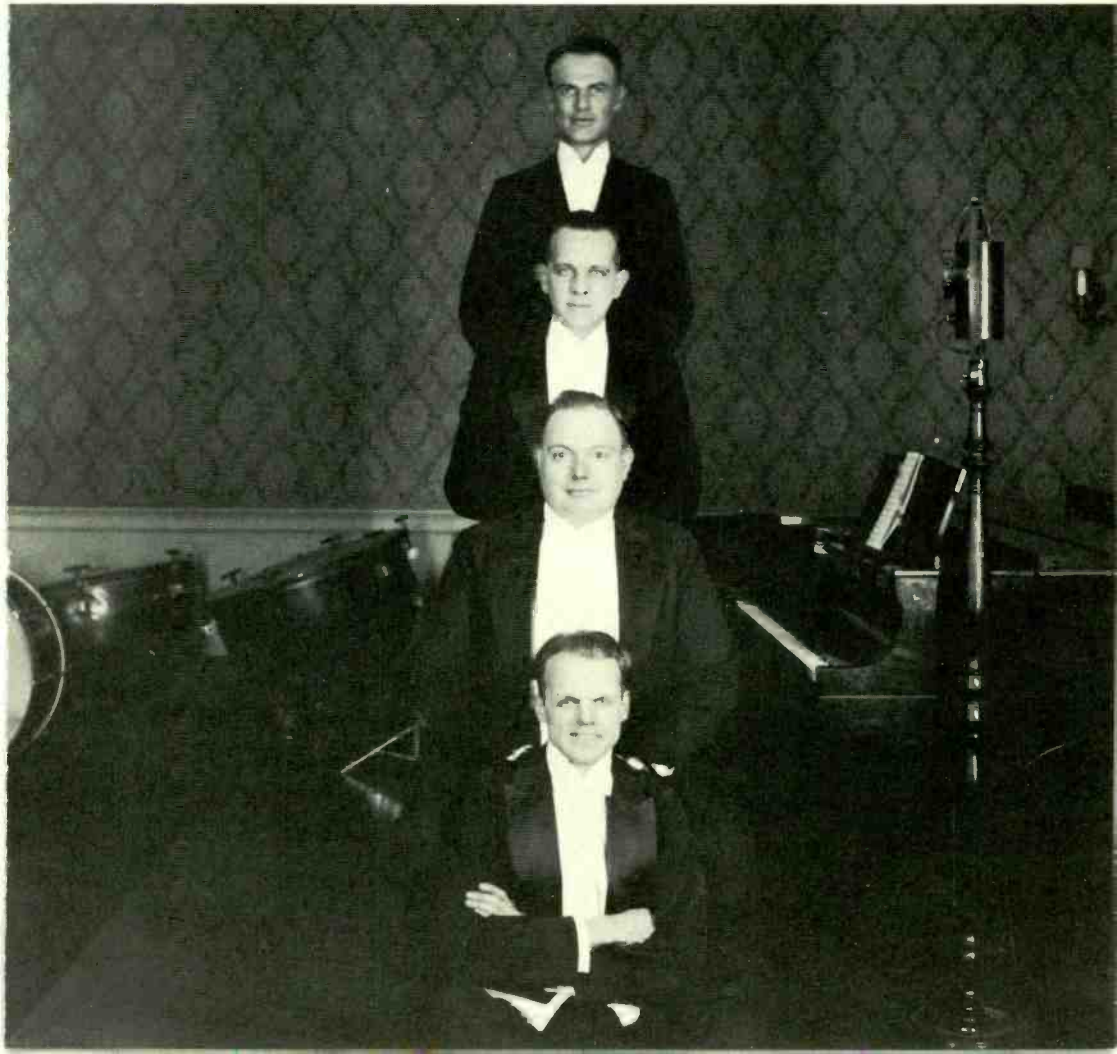
*The original six announcers: Robert Weidaw,
Kolin Hager, Carl Jester, William Fay,
A. O. Coggeshall, Edward Smith*

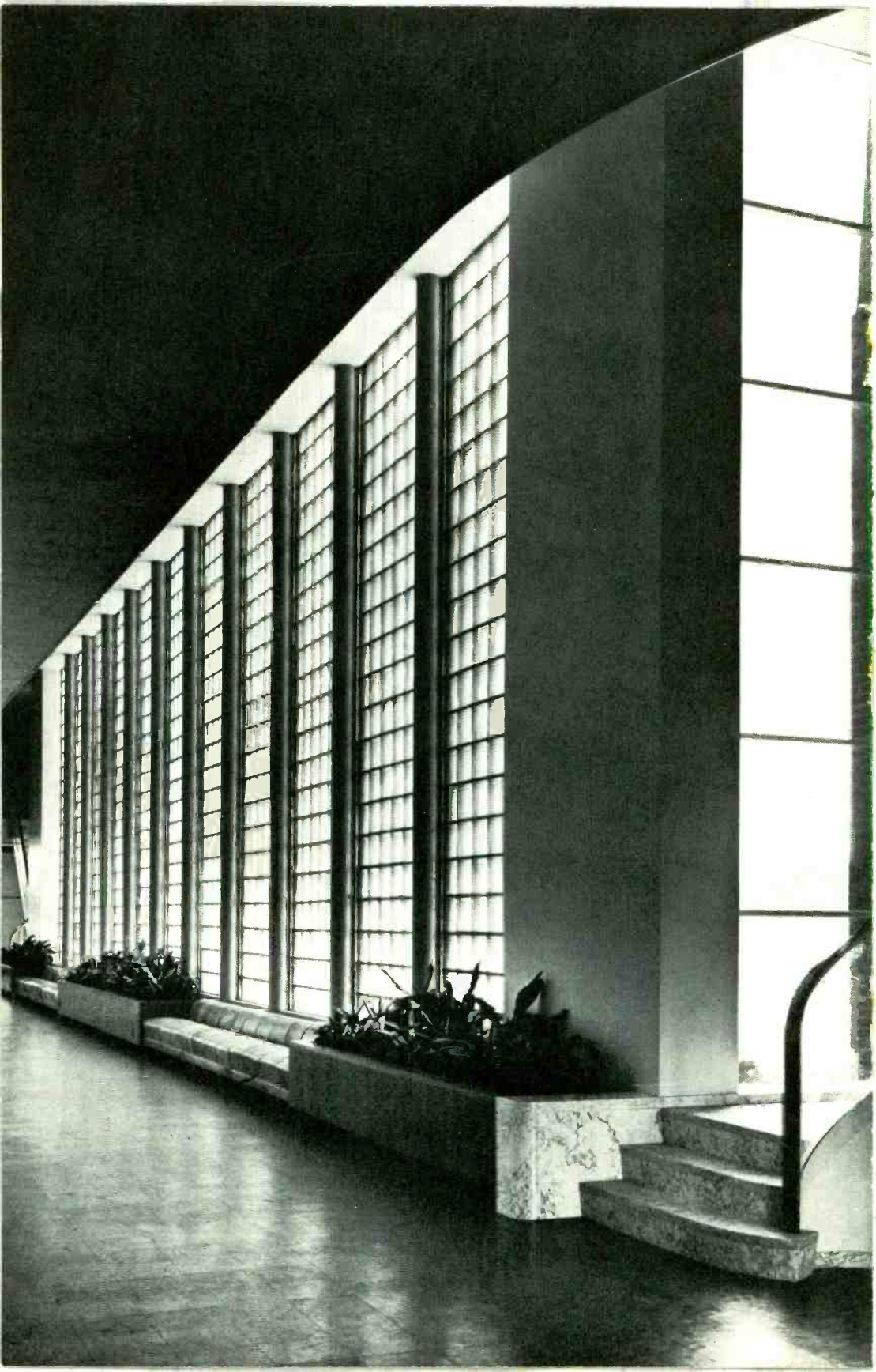
On the night that WGY went on the air, a part of the program consisted of music by a string ensemble under the direction of a young Schenectady musician, Edward A. Rice. A few weeks later a large symphony orchestra began broadcasting. These two musical groups are as popular today on "Silver Strings" and "The Music Builders" as they were 25 years ago.

From the studios on the first floor of the International General Electric Building came programs which made history in the

broadcasting world. It was from these studios that Franklin D. Roosevelt, Alfred E. Smith, Amelia Earhart spoke; that the first television production, "The Queen's Messenger," was broadcast with small, stationary cameras. In those studios, with their flowered wall coverings and Brussels carpets and drawing-room furniture, the Farm Forum, the Science Forum, and the Farm Paper of the Air came into being to serve listeners in the Great Northeast.

"The Radio Four" brought hours of quartet harmony to listeners





The first voice to announce the call letters, "WGY," was that of Kolin Hager, for 20 years manager of the station and now assistant to the president of SESAC, Inc., in New York City. Soon working with him were "AOC" (A. O. Coggeshall), current supervisor of music for the three General Electric stations in Schenectady; William Fay, now vice president of WHAM, the Stromberg-Carlson station in Rochester; Carl Jester, Edward Smith, and Robert Weidaw. Each was a friendly voice greeting radio listeners, and known by initials alone—because announcers "doubled in brass" as soloists, actors, and musicians.

In the quarter century following, a score or more of WGY's announcers' and artists have risen to fame in radio, advertising, and motion pictures. Jimmy Wallington gained a great deal of fame on NBC and is currently heard on one of the network's most popular programs; Tom Lewis is a vice president of the Young & Rubicam advertising agency; David Buttolph is a musical director at 20th Century Fox in Hollywood; Frank Singiser rose to fame as a news commentator of three of the four major networks and is again on WGY as commentator for Wulf Brothers; Clyde Kittell is well known as a free-lance announcer and is heard on many transcribed programs; Radcliffe Hall is heard regularly on WNBC, NBC's flagship station in New York City, as a newscaster; Lewis Avery conducts his own station's representation agency; and Winslow P. Leighton is president of his own radio station and advertising agency here in Schenectady.

*The corridor of WGY today—glass
bricks and shining brass*



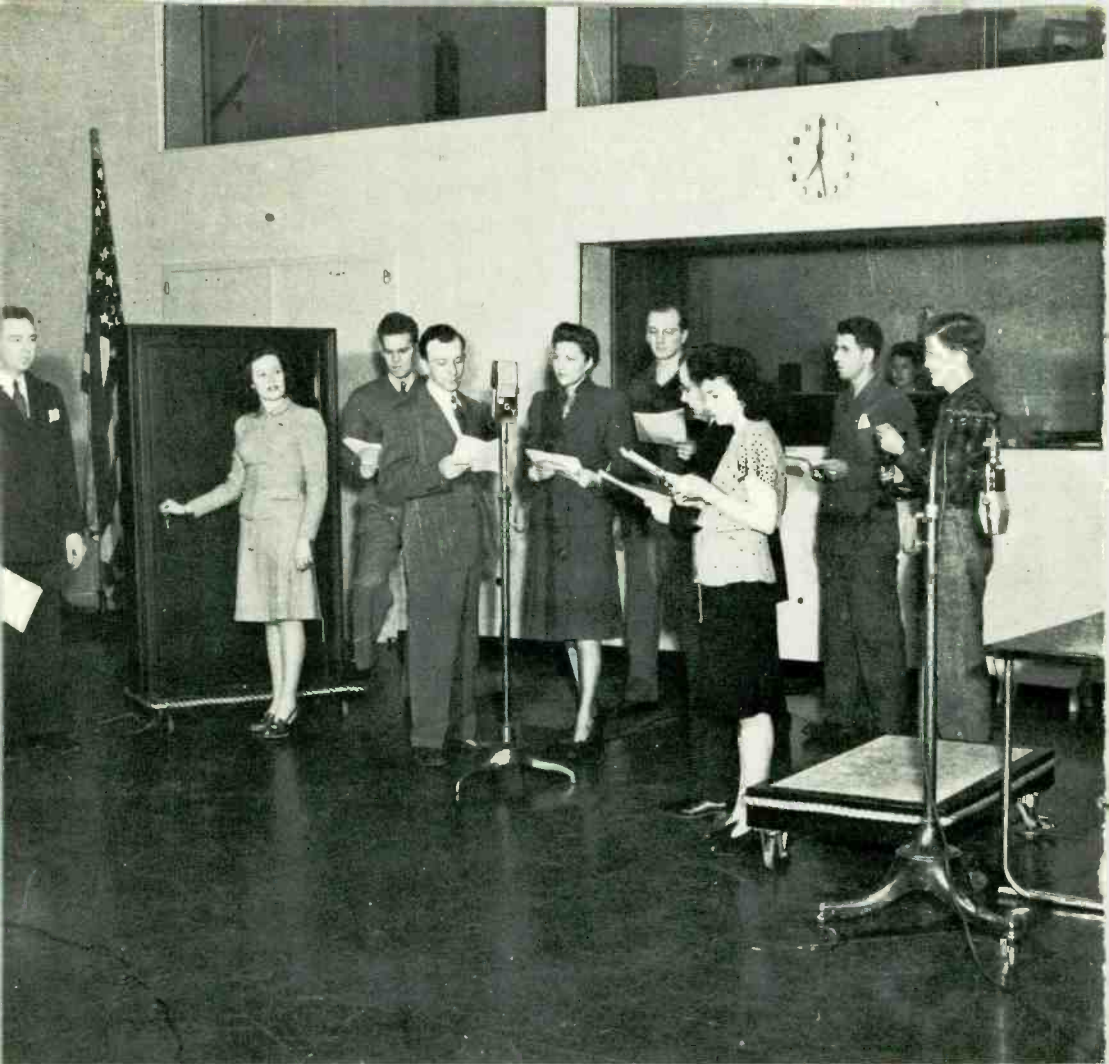
*"The Music Builders" heard each
Saturday evening at 7:30*

By 1932 many of the technical difficulties had been erased from broadcasting and WGY's new 50,000-watt transmitter was put into use. Thousands of new listeners were added to the station's audience. But those farthest away, who lived surrounded by mountains and on the outer edges of the area, complained that they couldn't always get a good clear signal from WGY. Plans were made to build a new transmitter tower, and it was dedicated on May 14, 1938, at that time the tallest in the country—625 feet high (half as high as the Empire State Building). Termed an engineering marvel, not only because of its height, but because of radiating copper strips, 18 inches wide, which extend 625 feet from the base in a complete circle, it has been referred to as "a monument like a gigantic tent with its center

structure of spectacular steel, its roots in the earth, its canopy in the heavens within whose confines are people of every race, creed, and color—bringing a daily parade of the world's greatest artists, musicians, opera stars, orchestras, singers, educators, philosophers, and statesmen.”

Three months later, on July 9, 1938, WGY's new studios were opened. The dedication of WGY's new home marked another milestone in broadcasting history. The building, of red brick, with a wide expanse of glass blocks bordered with shimmering chromium, is architecturally perfect. Five completely soundproof studios furnish broadcasting facilities usually found only in metropolitan areas. Studio "A," the auditorium studio, seating 150 persons, "floats" on especially constructed foundations. This suspension prevents even the slightest vibration which might result in interference with the reception in home receivers. Opening ceremonies, sponsored by the General Electric Company, owner of the station, and the National Broadcasting Company, then programming it, were a gala affair. An "Alumni Reunion" of past announcers was broadcast. Owen D. Young, chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Electric Company, and Lennox Lohr, then president of the National Broadcasting Company, expressed their hopes for the future of broadcasting and related the story of the past. From Rome, Italy, Guglielmo Marconi's son flashed the original letter "S" to Dr. E. F. W. Alexanderson in Schenectady.

The Schenectady Chamber of Commerce officially proclaimed July 9 as "WGY Day" and staged a parade of area children in papier-mâché carnival masks. People from hundreds of miles away flocked to Schenectady to see the most modern radio center outside of New York, and nationwide broadcasts over the "Red Network" of the National Broadcasting Company announced to the world that WGY was officially settled in a new and modern home.



*"The F.B.I. in Action" features the
"WGY Players" each Friday evening
at 7:30*

December, 1941, brought changes all over the world; and WGY, now operated and programmed by the General Electric Company, turned to the serious business of planning its programs to do more than entertain and educate. For a year the station remained on the air 24 hours a day as an air-raid warning center. Special series of programs were begun. Blood donor programs,

War Bond shows, and a variety of presentations designed to help housewives in difficult times were scheduled daily. The latest news reports from NBC, the Associated Press, and the United Press were broadcast at frequent intervals. Programs were interrupted with special bulletins. Entertainment was keyed to lift morale at home and abroad.

*Helen Spann and John Seagle appear each Sunday morning at 10:30 on an NBC network program from WGY—
"Voices Down the Wind"*



With the end of the war came many changes at WGY. Programs were rescheduled and new ones added to give the listeners the best in radio. G. Emerson Markham, whose voice is familiar to the thousands who listen to WGY's Farm Programs and the Science Forum, became station manager of three of the General Electric stations in Schenectady—WGY, WGFM, and WRGB.

Eleven announcers are the "friendly voices" on WGY today



But this is only the beginning—a quarter of a century ago broadcasting was an uncertain business, called by many “a fly-by-night adventure.” Today it is one of the nation’s great industries. Rapidly taking their places beside WGY are WGFM, the frequency modulation station, broadcasting from the same building, and WRGB, the television station at 60 Washington Avenue. But FM and television do not mean the end for the nation’s great stations, and WGY looks forward to even greater service to the people of the Great Northeast in the years yet to come.

*Only half of the present WGY staff
could take time out for a picture*

