

Windy City Highlights

WHEN NBC built the world's finest broadcasting center at Chicago, it did so largely because of the mass of business piled up in the country's second city by a hustling young Georgian, Niles Trammell by name.

Mr. Trammell went to Chicago in 1928, only a few months after he had joined the National Broadcasting Company. He had a dozen people working for him then. To-day he directs the efforts of a staff of more than two hundred workers, in addition to the sixteen hundred artists who go on the air from the Chicago network center each month. He was made a vice-president of the company in March, 1929.

Born in Marietta, a little town in northwest Georgia, he was educated at the University of the South at Sewanee, Tenn. He entered the service during the World War and emerged with the rank of lieutenant. Before joining NBC, he was for four years in various sales-executive positions with the Radio Corporation of America on the Pacific Coast.

He rules a radio network stretching from Canada to the Gulf, and from the Alleghenies to the Rockies, yet his name is known to few of the millions who dial in nightly on the programs originated under his direction at Chicago. He has a genuine distaste for personal publicity, or "trumpet-blowing," as he calls it, his associates say.

No longer do orchestral conductors, appearing in the new studios of the Columbia Broadcasting System in Chicago, teeter idly on their heels, in movie master-of-ceremonies fashion.



NILES TRAMMELL, manager Chicago office, and vice-president, NBC.

When they go on the air nowadays, new responsibilities are heaped on their shoulders. On their music-stand is placed a dial, a duplicate of the tone-control indicator which is before the eyes of the operator in the studio's control booth. By watching the indicator needle as it rises and falls, it is now up to the conductor to regulate the volume of his orchestra, to keep it at the proper strength for broadcasting. The operator, who formerly did this electrically, now merely checks up on the conductor's efforts.

The new tone-control system is typical of the whole idea around which the Columbia engineers built the new studios—that of an entertainment workshop where mechanical perfection is considered first; the appearance to the spectator who may visit the studio, second.

In the new studios, which are otherwise triumphs of modernistic design, the microphones are slung from the ceiling by a complicated system of ropes and pulleys. Arthur M. Clarke, the sound engineer who supervised the construction of

the studios, explained them, saying:

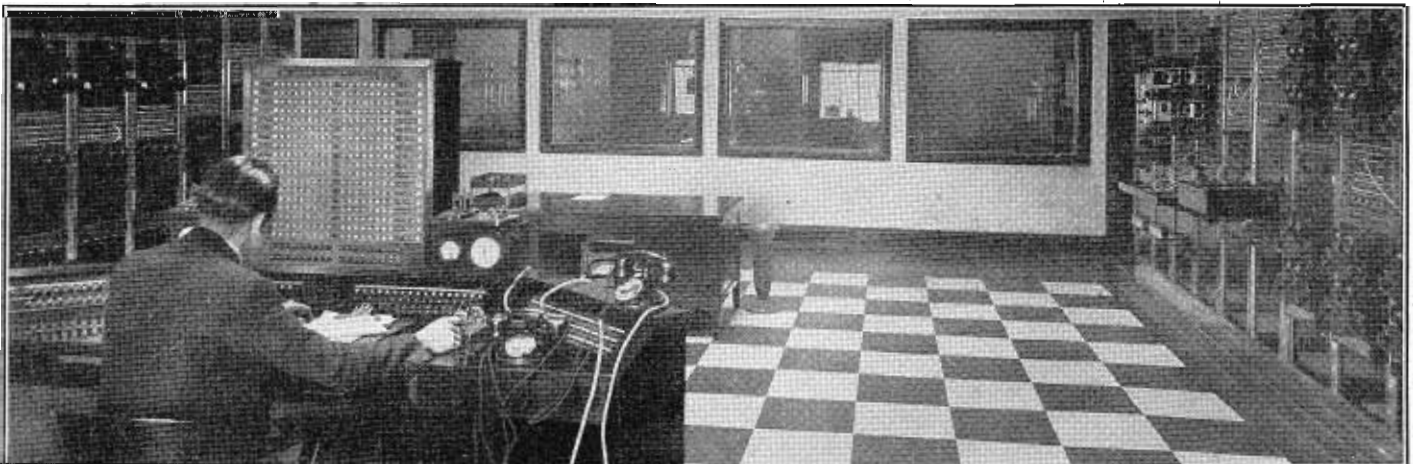
"The radio studio is a workshop. It serves one, and only one, purpose—the setting for a program pick-up. If that pick-up is to be perfect, mechanical requisites must come first, and decorative niceties last. The ropes allow us to adjust to perfection a particularly sensitive microphone. If log-chains would have served better, we would have used log-chains."

The microphones, incidentally, are so delicate that, tuned to their full capacity, they could pick up the ticking of a conductor's wrist-watch and put it on the air with the volume of a grandfather clock, the engineers assert.

The Columbia studios serve the double purpose of an originating-point for network programs and of local studios for WBBM, the Columbia-owned station in Chicago. They were put into operation shortly before the first of the year.

A. W. ("Sen") Kaney, one of the veterans of radio broadcasting in Chicago, comes out of a recent shake-up of positions in the Chicago offices of the National Broadcasting Company with added honors and responsibilities. As the new program manager of the Chicago division, much of the work of arranging for the transfer and new set-up of the many programs which NBC is moving from New York to Chicago will fall on his shoulders. Kaney, starting as an announcer on KYW, Chicago's first broadcasting station, was an early leader in, if not the originator of, the extemporaneous school

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Control room, Chicago NBC headquarters. Control board in foreground has facilities for handling programs from eighteen studios.