

## An Early Chinese Radioman in Tianjin, China

By Bart Lee, K6VK, a Fellow of the California Historical Radio Society, copyright 2014.



Front of photo postcard from Harold P. Wang, *circa* 1924

Harold P. Wang was among the pioneers of early radio in Asia, as his photo testifies. Little else is known about Wang in the Western world, or in China either as far as can be determined.

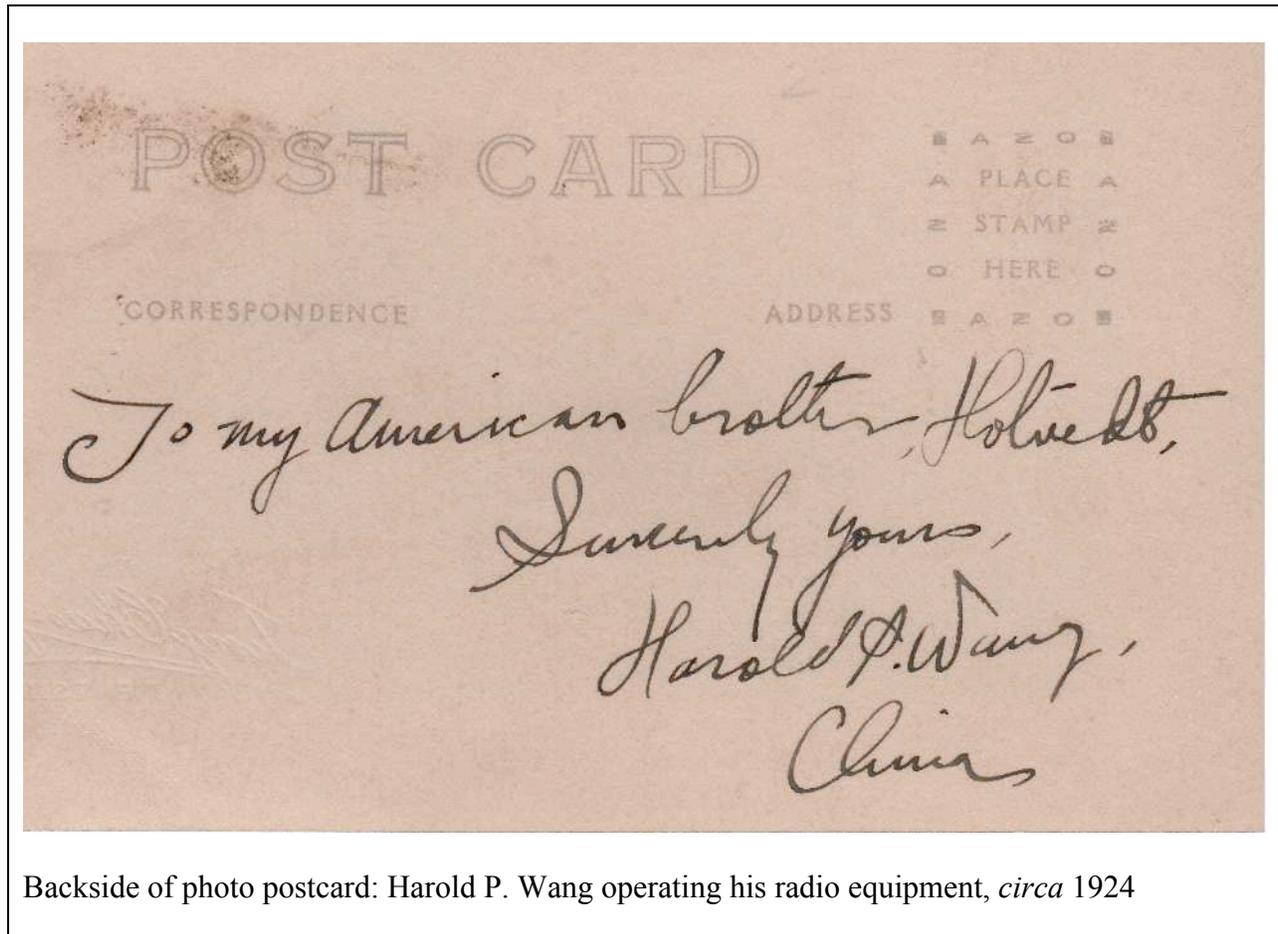
Wang seems to have been an adept young radioman in Tien Tsin, China (now Tianjin) in the 1920s and likely an amateur radio experimenter. He is also very well dressed in European tweeds, so he (or his family) likely could afford the then state-of-the-art gear shown.

His left hand (note the ring) is on a double-pole knife switch, near another upraised switch. The rig to the left looks to be a three stage vacuum tube receiver (at least). The four tubes look like 201s, the most common in the early twenties.

There are what looks like several audio transformers in a multi-stage receiver. The four knobs probably control the rheostats (variable resistances) to regulate the filament

voltages to the tubes. In the background is a large dry cell (1.5 volts). There is perhaps a spherical vacuum tube in front of the black cylinder (battery).

The large black box in the back could hold "B" batteries. The rod at left is mysterious, although sometimes such rods prevented hand-capacity from detuning circuits by physical isolation. The earphones look like Brandes, top of the line.



Backside of photo postcard: Harold P. Wang operating his radio equipment, *circa* 1924

On the back of the card in ink in a fine hand it says: "To my American brother, Hotveld, Sincerely yours, Harold P. Wang, China [.]" ("Hotveld" is a Scandinavian name, found, for example, in Minnesota). The card back is a standard American postcard. Postcards with photographs on the front are known to the ephemerists as "realphoto postcards." This card was not, however, mailed as a postcard.

On the front of the card is embossed the photo studio photographer's name as a logo in script: "Jing Chang" and then "TIEN TSIN." (Tianjin, then spelled "Tien Tsin" is the port city just South East of Beijing, and North of Shanghai).

Chinese interest in radio broadcasting flourished as early as 1922. "After the first radio broadcast in China on 26 January 1922, the Astor House Hotel was among the first to install a receiving set to hear the inaugural broadcast, locating it in the Grill

room." So says Wikipedia, so there at least Mr. Wang's skills could be useful. (Wireless had come to China with Fung Yee from Oakland, California in about 1911 and before that as early as 1906 by government planning (according to [wenku.baidu.com](http://wenku.baidu.com))).

"In Winter 1922, American journalist E. G. Osborn established the first radio broadcast station in China, a 50 watt radio tower located on the rooftop of [the] Robert Dollar Building on Guangdong Road, Shanghai \*\*\* In August 1924, the Ministry of Transportation announced interim provisions for broadcast radio receivers, allowing the public to assemble and use radio receivers." So says RadioMuseum.

By 1922 Federal Telegraph of San Francisco had joint ventured with the Chinese government as China-Federal Radio Company, to build a nationwide wireless network, according to [earlyradiohistory.us/1922fed.htm](http://earlyradiohistory.us/1922fed.htm) quoting *Moody's*, 1922. The Robert Dollar Steamship line also headquartered in San Francisco, at 311 California Street in the Dollar Building.

73 de K6VK ##