

The First California High School Radio Station

by Bart Lee, K6VK, CHRS Archivist

San Diego High School hosted what appears to have been the first high school radio station in California, in 1924. The “Grey Castle Radio Club” operated it. (That was the name by which the school was known).

The new radio club also got some press, in the *San Diego Union* newspaper. *Pacific Radio News* (San Francisco)* reported on that article and wrote one of its own:

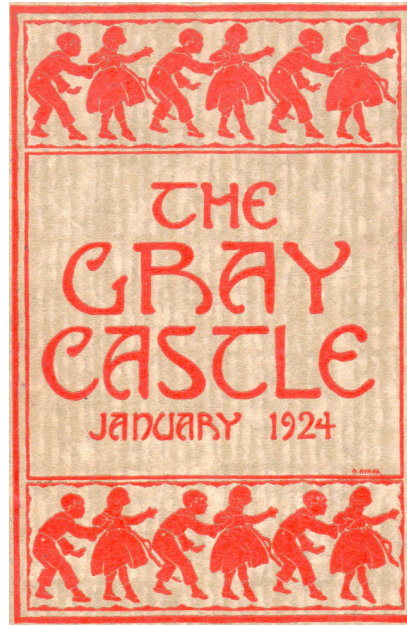
HIGH SCHOOL RADIO CLUB DECLARED TO BE UNIQUE

The newly formed Radio Club at the San Diego high school is declared to be unique in that no similar organization will give the embryo scientists an opportunity to learn wireless telegraphy and allied subjects.

In 1924 the club provided “Noon Radio Concerts” for the student body. It planned to get a one hundred watt continuous wave transmitter on the air by its “cage” antenna on the roof of the school’s “technical building.”

* *Pacific Radio News*, April 1921 at page 309.

The club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League for amateur radio activity. Thus, it declared: “Through this station, members of the student body and faculty will be able to send messages to almost any part of the world free of charge...” [Any other type of message then, other than a penny postcard, had to get out at market rates.]

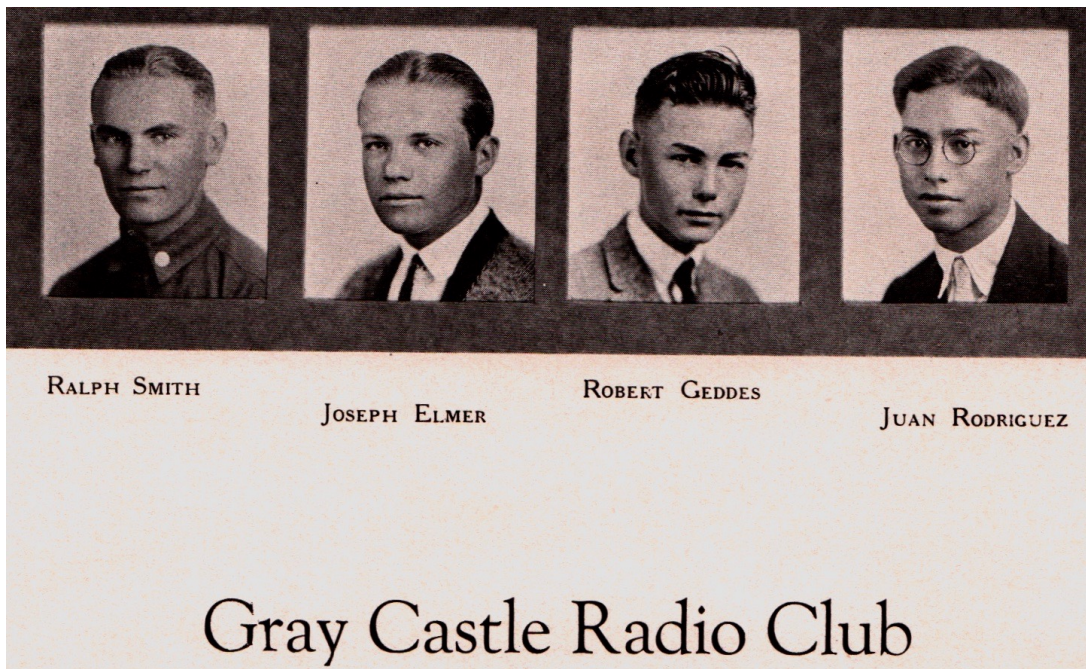


Yearbook Cover

Broadcasting, it would seem, provided a popular dimension to the then new radio technology that the school adopted. By 1924 the “Radio Fad” had captured many an imagination, both in terms of entertainment and especially also the electro-mechanical aspects of transmitting and receiving radio signals. Learning about it was likely a wide student interest.[†]

[†] The foregoing information comes from the 1924 yearbook of the school, “The Grey Castle,” January 1924. Hence the radio concerts may have been broadcast in 1923. This yearbook has been donated to the CHRS Archives on behalf of a former student, Albert Simmons, later a California Highway Engineer.

The *San Diego Union* lists by name 24 students making up the club. The yearbook shows its officers.



Mr. Rodriguez may have come from an old California family in the San Diego area.

For the earl twenties, now a century ago, several high school radio stations have been recorded,[‡] but not the one at the Grey Castle:

[‡] <https://wmthalumni.com/blog/2020/02/first-high-school-radio-stations/> relying on <http://www.radiosurvivor.com/2015/04/22/where-is-the-oldest-high-school-radio-station-in-the-united-states/> ; RadioSurvivor also notes: “North Central High School (Spokane, WA) from around 1921...”

Earliest AM Stations at High Schools

1923 Savannah High School, Savannah GA
1923 KBPS-AM Benson Polytechnic HS, Portland OR
1923 Lane Tech HS, Chicago IL
1923 Moberly HS, Moberly MO
1924 Omaha Technical HS, Omaha NE
1924 Parker HS, Dayton OH
1924 Petoskey HS, Petoskey MI
1925 Dayton Coop HS, Dayton OH
1925 Gardenville HS, Gardenville NY
1926 Atwood Township HS, Atwood IL

High school *FM* stations appeared about 1949, after World War Two and the commercial development of FM radio. The FCC made the lower end of the then new FM band (88 MHz to 108 MHz) the educational and cultural (and largely commercial free) mecca.

21st Century technology had now enabled high schools to provide radio programming in various ways, including old-fashioned radio.

(02 VI '22 de K6VK) ##