

Milestones: One-Way Police Radio Communication, 1928

Detroit, MI IEEE [Historical Plaque](#) - Dedicated May 1987

"At this site on April 7, 1928 the Detroit Police Department commenced regular one-way radio communication with its patrol cars. Developed by personnel of the department's radio bureau, the system was the product of seven years of experimentation under the direction of police commissioner, William P. Rutledge. Their work proved the practicality of land-mobile radio for police work and led to its adoption throughout the country."

The plaque can be viewed on Belle Island of Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., at the front south-west corner near the main entrance door to the police building.

In the 1920s gangster era, bank robbers and bootleggers made clean getaways time after time, to the great consternation of police.

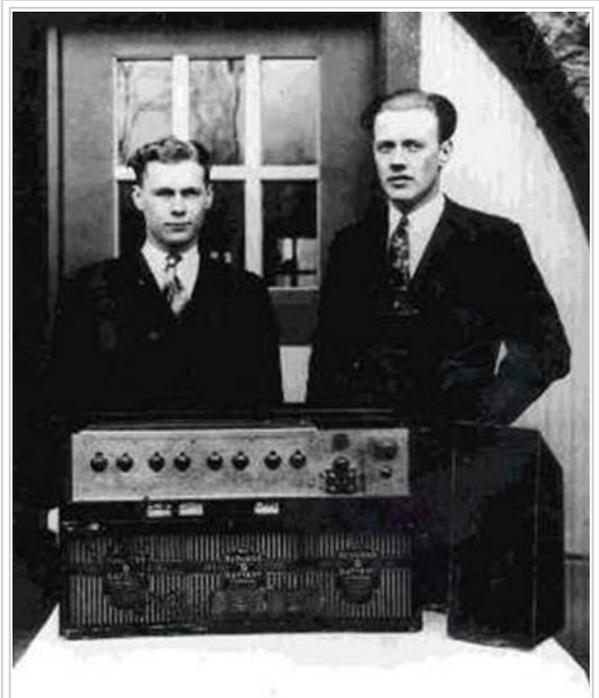
But in 1928, a dedicated Detroit patrolman and an electronics buff devised the first successful one-way radio link between police headquarters and cruisers. Critical news of crimes in progress could now be transmitted from the stationhouse to police cars as they drove.

Electronics was a fledgling science when Detroit Patrolman Kenneth Cox and Robert L. Batts, an engineering student, built a stable radio receiver and antenna system. Their successful one-way radio, coming after years of trial and error, was installed in April 1928. The Detroit Police Department made history as the first to dispatch patrol cars regularly by radio. Many city police departments shortly followed suit with their own systems.

Between 1921 and 1927, radio buffs Kenneth R. Cox, Walter Vogler and Bernard Fitzgerald, all Detroit police officers, experimented with radio sets they had installed in the back seat of a Model T Ford police patrol car.

The receivers picked up signals, but not very consistently. Frequently, broadcasts would fade out as the car passed large buildings or under railroad bridges. Also, police had no designated band on which to broadcast, so the system operated like any radio station. The station was appropriately called KOP and listed locally as an entertainment station.

To meet FRC (Federal Radio Commission, predecessor of the FCC) licensing requirements, police officers broadcast recorded music in between lists of stolen vehicles and descriptions of missing children. Persistent work by Cox and Robert Batts led to the development of an improved receiver in 1927. A broadcasting station, W8FS, was set up on Belle Isle and regular dispatches began in 1928.
(Source: Detroit Free Press).



Belle Isle Radio Day:

In 1928 the first radio broadcast to police car radios began at the police station on Belle Isle. (See the above 1928 Detroit Free Press article.) We are now preparing to celebrate the 90th anniversary of that achievement.

50 years ago the IEEE placed a historical plaque at the Belle Isle police station building. Approximately 10 years ago the APCO (<https://www.apcointl.org/about-apco.html>) also supported the placement of a historical marker near the building.

Plans are in place for member of the local IEEE Section, the APCO, and members of the Amateur Radio community (<http://www.arrl.org>) to visit to Belle Isle between

10 AM and 4 PM on April 7th to hold re-dedication ceremonies for both plaques. (See http://ethw.org/Milestones:One-Way_Police_Radio_Communication,_1928.)



Belle Isle



Belle Isle Police Station

Bill Boyke (N8OZV) of the Ford Motor Company, Tin Lizzy Amateur Radio Club has registered special event Amateur Radio Station, 'K0P' (Kilo Zero Papa) with the FCC, and is working on commemorative QSL cards.

We expect to see participation from several local Amateur Radio clubs in the form of operation of low power (QRP) emergency radio communication equipment and simple wire, loop or vertical antennas. All this equipment is small, easily portable and will be unobtrusive and completely removed at the end of the day.

Antennas:

The DNR's rules, in the "Michigan State Parks on the Air" program prohibit using trees in state parks to hang antennas. There's very good reason, disease spores can easily live on wire or rope that can be transmitted from tree to tree.

Reference: <http://www.mspota.org/protect-our-parks/>

So, we should see lots of Verticals and Loop antennas, along with Poles & Inverted 'Vs', etc. But, no antennas in trees on Belle Isle!

This is a unique opportunity to see Amateur Radio at work and to view its place in emergency communications at this re-dedication event on Belle Isle. It can also be a great 'pre Field Day' event to help Hams get emergency equipment, antennas, generators, etc. out of moth balls and back to work.

Plans are for a 10 AM setup and operate through 4 PM for pack up.

The original station call sign from the FCC for this station was W8FS. That call is now held by Lowell Price of Grand Blanc, and he has been invited as a 'special representative' for the day.

The gathering arrangements are:

- Time - 10:00 AM through 4 PM.
- Location - Parking lot & grounds around the Belle Isle Police Station building.
- **NOTE:** A Michigan State Park pass on your vehicle license plate is needed to enter Belle Isle, (*unless entry is by foot or bicycle or public transportation.*)
- Water & Rest Rooms at the Aquarium, about 0.36 miles, or about a 15 minute walk away....so...
- Plan for a picnic type day and bring water, food, sunscreen and a shade hat.

For the Amateur Radio Community, as you arrive, we have some organizational business to conduct:

- Talk-in 2 Meter Repeater "GM Machine" WW8GM - 443.075Mhz (-) w/123Hz - Echolink #99846
- Once you arrive please switch to Simplex Frequency 146.52
- We plan to operate "Station K0P" with multiple rigs and operating frequencies / Times / Modes / so we are developing a Scheduling system to maximize everyone's on-air time.
- Collecting contact information for the QSL cards.



Belle Isle Radio Day:2

Driving Directions:

Entrance to the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle is at the junction of E. Jefferson Ave. and E. Grand Blvd.
(The nearest Interstate highway junction appears to be the I-375 spur from the I-75, and E. Jefferson Ave.)

Note: Most major roads on the island are one way, so pay attention to the signs.

Cross the bridge, and stay to the right avoiding the construction.

As you enter Belle Isle proper, you are directed to the right onto Sunset Drive.

Stay to the left as Sunset Drive divides to become Casino Way. Stay left!

Turn left onto Central Ave.

Follow Central Ave. past Muse Road, Picnic Way and Fleming Street.

Approach the statue of Major General Alpheus Starkey Williams (no relation) at the junction of Central Ave. and Inselruhe Ave.

Stay to the right of the statue, and circle to the left around the statue, effectively turning left onto Inselruhe Ave.

Inselruhe Ave. is a two way street, so traffic can approach from both directions!

Discover the old Belle Isle police station building immediately on your right. (GPS coordinates of 42.340419, -82.986598)

You are there!

The map below should help with navigation and map shows the location of the police station.



The link below to a map gives a good overview of the entire island with all the roads.

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/belle_isle_map_color_461800_7.pdf

