

It was December 12, 1901. In an old barracks on Signal Hill at the mouth of the harbor at St. John's, Newfoundland, two men sat before a strange apparatus. Over their ears they wore headphones. From their equipment a wire led to a kite floating four hundred feet overhead. They listened intently. Suddenly, at just about noon, they heard a faint, crackling series of sounds. It came again. The sounds were unmistakable—three quick buzzes—repeated over and over. The letter “S” in Morse code. It was a long-awaited signal emanating from Poldhu, Cornwall, on the southwest tip of England. For the first time, a signal had been transmitted and received across two thousand miles without wires. The man responsible was Guglielmo Marconi, whose name quickly became famous around the world.

Our next scene takes place in March 1914. The locale, Hartford, Connecticut. Another inventive genius—in a quite different field—and also an ardent radio amateur had a problem. His name was Hiram Percy Maxim and he was trying to contact a fellow amateur in Springfield, Massachusetts, less than thirty miles away, without success. On an impulse, he switched his effort and made contact with another amateur located midway between Hartford and Springfield, and arranged to have him relay the message. The next day, still thinking about the experience, it dawned on Maxim that here was exactly the spark that could launch an organization of radio amateurs across the country.

And so it began. The American Radio Relay League was born with Hiram Percy Maxim as its first president and a young man named Clarence Tuska as its secretary, and later as the first editor of *QST* magazine.