



THE DOG HOUSE

Many of the very-old-timers on the roster of our Society, particularly those of the 1912-1916 era, vividly recall the little third-rate flop-house in San Francisco affectionately dubbed "The Dog House." But I'll wager my prized piece of galena against your cherished de Forest Audion or Moorhead Tube that few, if any of you, remember the origin of the lowly title bestowed upon our favorite home-port abode.

The Dog House was leased and operated by a one-time land-line telegrapher named L. B. O'Brien, and a friend of his named Hamilton. Do you remember either of them? One or the other was at the desk, where we registered while on the beach, or between sailings. The advertised room rates were 50 cents to \$1.00 per day, or \$2.50 to \$5.00 per week. The Dog House was located at 480 Pine Street, just a few blocks from the Marconi headquarters in the Merchant's Exchange Building, where many steamship operating companies, brokers and insurance carriers had their offices.

When O'Brien and Hamilton first set-up shop, they hired an artist to design an appropriate letterhead for the hostelry, which they named The Alpine Hotel. The finished product was a realistic sketch of the Swiss Alps with a large St. Bernard dog in the foreground. And the prominence of famed dog on the hotel's stationery was the reason why it was dubbed "The Dog House." Its name and fame were worldwide. On the seas, and in the ports, from the far corners of the world, one brass pounder would tell another that upon reaching San Francisco they would meet at The Dog House.

During the first strike of the wireless operators on the Pacific Coast, a time when not a few of the Marconi men were unable to afford the luxury of a 50-cent room at The Dog House, it was commonplace for O'Brien to carry the unemployed on the cuff. They were the true "guests" of the hotel, for many of them were never seen again by the management. But O'Brien did not complain. On one occasion he permitted six men to occupy a single bedroom. Some slept on the bed, some on chairs, and others on the floor. The striking operators subsisted on sandwiches purchased from a Greek restaurant across the street. The going price was ten cents each.

Occasionally, a trans-Pacific liner would arrive in port, her wireless operator beating a path to The Dog House with his worldly possessions--a valise containing an extra shirt and pair of socks--and a bottle or two of the best whiskey purchased in the Orient for a pittance. Only those who lived at The Dog House during those early years can know the exhilaration exhibited by the arrival of a fellow brass-pounder with a fat paycheck in his wallet, and a bottle or two to help elevate the spirits of a downcast group of unemployed operators.

How many of you remember The Dog House? And the light-well into which we dumped the "dead soldiers" after an honorable "tour of duty?" It wasn't much of a hotel by today's standards, but to the old wireless pioneers it was a home, a hangout, a free lunch parlor, and a place to bum a drink from a more fortunate telegrapher. It was the place where you could meet the men who helped write the pages of wireless history - Bob Carlisle, Les Grogan, Red Roy, Loren Lovejoy, Dave Kennedy, Russ Carroll, John Sabo, Bob Hatch, George Hubbard and his brother Irv, D. Mann Taylor, Carl Soderstrom, Way Stirling, to name but a few.

If you were there, add your name to the list.

--H. W. Dickow



ALPINE HOUSE
480 Pine Street
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.