

# Living in the Past

*Historical perspective*



## Crushing the gender stereotype



Born in 1880, [Mary Texanna Loomis](#) was quite the prodigy child, brought up in a middle-class American family. She mastered German, Italian, and French, then became interested in wireless telegraphy. Mary spent quite a lot of time learning the wireless art, being inspired by her cousin [Mahlon Loomis](#), who made the first wireless transmission in 1865.

In the early stages of World War I, Mary wanted to “do something useful for my country,” and became fascinated with wireless communication. Not only did she learn, but mastered telegraphy, enough to earn a First Class Telegrapher License, call sign 3YA. In 1920, once the war was over, Mary wanted to continue her pursuit of what came to be called *radio*, and spent nearly every penny to open a Washington, D.C., radio

school in honor of her cousin, whom she felt was not given the historical credit he was due. She called it the [Loomis Radio School](#), the first one to be founded and run by a woman, and the first successful civilian radio school ever.

### Her textbook

While running and teaching at her radio school, Mary singlehandedly wrote and published a 1000-page radio textbook, [Radio Theory and Operating](#) in 1930. It became the *de facto* radio operation textbook in the US, to be found in university classrooms and libraries across the nation, and [many radio schools](#) around the world. The textbook would probably have given today's *ARRL Handbook* a run for its money.



Mary designed and constructed nearly every piece of transmitting, receiving, filtering, aerial, and other radio equipment in the school. *How would I know, or how could I teach, the practical side of radio unless I knew all about the apparatus, both inside and outside? Nobody can graduate from my school until he learns how to make any part of the apparatus. I want my graduates to be able to meet any emergency or mishap that may arise some day.*

Since that day, many hundreds of broadcast radio announcers and amateurs have credited her school with their radio education. Mary passed away in 1960, and no records remain that explain what eventually happened to her school, but [her legacy has been preserved](#) by numerous benefactors.