

# ALBANY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION: A HISTORY



Researched and Written by  
Highlighting History Inc.

## INTRODUCTION

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1952 the Albany Amateur Radio Association filed for incorporation, citing a radius of 100 miles in all directions from Albany, NY as its territory for radio operations. At the time of incorporation, the Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) had emerged from a decade dominated by World War II which had seen the suspension of club activities while members enlisted to serve their country and the government ordered amateur radio operations to cease. It had pulled its membership back together following the conclusion of the terrible conflict and successfully hosted the Hudson Division of the American Radio Relay League's annual convention in 1948. In 1952, the AARA was perched at the beginning of a decade that promised increasing success as an amateur club. Just four years after the 1948 convention, AARA was again hosting the Hudson Division at the Ten Eyck Hotel in downtown Albany. Frequent press coverage of AARA events and activity were being cut from the pages of the Albany Times Union and the Knickerbocker Press and carefully preserved by a future minded member. The Association was cultivating its status as a service organization and club that welcomed and encouraged all amateur radio enthusiasts with their inherent fascination with the world of radio waves.

In little more than half a century, radio communication had grown in technology and numbers by leaps and bounds. In 1952, Marconi's historic 1901 transatlantic achievement, hearing of the Morse code letter "s" at his radio station at St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada from his radio station at Poldhu, Cornwall, England, was a not so distant memory for many Albany Amateur Radio Association members who would have been young adults and children at the time. Yet amateur radio operating had assumed more layers of complexity from its early days as a new technology. While still appealing to the scientific spirit of enquiry most amateur radio operators nurtured, ham radio's evolution into a federally licensed skill set with participants engaging in voluntary public service was coming into its own in the 1950s and 1960s, bolstered by its ability to demonstrate its value during war time.

The Preamble of the Association's 1990 Constitution and By-Laws show this evolution as compared to AARA's 1935 Constitution. In 1935 it was written:

We, the undersigned, desiring to secure for ourselves the pleasures and benefits of the association of persons commonly interested in amateur Radio, by furthering co-operation among its members, develop individual efficiency, and furthering the interests of radio in the general community, do hereby constitute ourselves the Albany Amateur Radio Association and do enact this Constitution as our governing law.

In 1990:

We, the membership do hereby constitute ourselves as the Albany Amateur Radio Association...It shall be our purpose to further the exchange of information and cooperation between members; to promote radio knowledge, fraternalism, and individual operating efficiency; to so conduct club programs and activities as to advance the general interest and welfare of amateur radio; and provide services to the community when needed.

The additional elements expressed in the 1990 version of providing services to the community, promoting radio knowledge and advancing its welfare, reflect the transition of a club from one that sought to “secure...pleasures and benefits” to its members, to one that recognized a higher purpose for amateur radio communication.

In the following pages, the history of the Albany Amateur Radio Association will be explored in sections. Section I will discuss the early history of radio clubs in Albany from which AARA claims its heritage, using archival documents including an early club history and primary sources from newspapers and publications of the time. Following this early history, Section II will encompass the decade of the 1930s, where one first encounters the Albany Amateur Radio Association by name. World War II and its immediate aftermath form the basis of Section III. Section IV includes the functions of the club itself: setup, meetings, fundraising, events, education and its monthly publication, B-Plus. Section V and VI will look at the roles women have inhabited in this largely masculine organization, as well as AARA’s relationship with and status within the Albany Radio Relay League (ARRL). Section VII will cover the

extensive history of the Association's public service in times of war, natural disaster and non-emergency community events. Section VIII contains short biographies of two of AARA's notable members, Elmer Wirsing and Dave Marks. Wirsing was a life-long member of the AARA and the source of many of the early records in the AARA archives. Dave Marks, or Uncle Dave as he was affectionately known locally and in the international world of ham radio was a larger than life character whose history of service to the community and amateur radio was well documented within the Association's archives. Also included within this section are the names of those AARA members who were bestowed the Association's highest honor - lifetime membership in the club. Section IX contains available lists of Association officers from 1917 through 2006.

The year 1952 is only a stopping point in the long and substantial history of amateur radio in the Albany area. That history continues to be made each day as the Albany Amateur Radio Association maintains its enduring commitment to service, education and enjoyment of the singular art known as amateur radio.

## METHODS AND SOURCES

### Explanation of Method

Highlighting History Inc.'s *History of the Albany Amateur Radio Association* is as complete a picture of the Association as Highlighting History Inc. was able to produce based on the currently available archives of the Association with some supporting material from outside sources.

Highlighting History Inc.'s compilation of the *History* was completed after careful review of numerous manuscripts, photographs, newspaper clippings and ephemera contained within the Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) archives as well as material from additional outside sources. The Association's archival material spans a date range from 1917 to 1921 and from 1933 to 2006. It offers a mostly complete picture of the Albany Amateur Radio Association's history and its antecedents, although a sizable gap in the records of the archive, dating from between 1922 and 1932 has rendered the early history of the Association incomplete. Augmenting the Association's available archival material, Highlighting History Inc. has also sought primary and secondary sources from outside repositories to use in the creation of the history. Sources of information not obtained from the AARA archives are listed on the following page.

Most images which appear in the history have come from AARA's archival collection. Those images used from outside sources will be labeled as "Non-AARA archival material". All research material discovered during the course of this project will be handed over to the AARA for inclusion in their records or to do with as they see fit.

Highlighting History Inc. has relied on the veracity of the documents contained within the Albany Amateur Radio Association archives for dates, names and information and has, when possible, verified information before using it in this history. Highlighting History Inc. apologizes for any information in the history that may be proven erroneous or

## Methods and Sources

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false at a future date. Every effort was made to present an accurate and documented portrayal of the history of the Association.

## Sources

"Albany Radio Club," *The Wireless Age* Vol 7. (1920): 41.

Bartlett, Richard A. *The World of Ham Radio, 1901-1950: A Social History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007.

Coe, Lewis. *Wireless Radio: A Brief History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1996.

*Daily Sentinel*, December 16, 1919.

Haring, Kristen. *Ham Radio's Technical Culture*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007.

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*Modern Electrics and Mechanics* Vol. 28 (1914): 90

*Modern Mechanics and Popular Electricity* Vol. 30 (1915): 284.

"New Club in Capital," *The Wireless Age: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Radio Communication* Vol. 1 (1913): 85.

"Radio Group to Meet," *Albany Evening News*, May 1, 1933.

The Wire Club's Radio Station Near Completion," *Albany Evening Journal*, February 5, 1917

*The Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony*. Marconi Press Agency, Limited, 1915.

*The Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony*, Marconi Press Agency, Limited, 1917.

"Wireless Men to Organize," *Albany Evening Journal*, April 25, 1916.

## SECTION I: Early History

Long before radio hams had contesting, packet radio, state of the art transceivers, the FCC and Field Days, there were spark gap sets, quartz crystals, little government regulation and threats from the Ku Klux Klan. Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF, a young ham operator in the early 1920s (and future AARA member), bore the brunt of public displeasure which many of his peers in amateur radio operation were becoming increasingly familiar. A letter to Elmer dated February 2, 1924, signed "From a member of the order of the Ku Klux Klan," expressed sentiments shared by many BCLs (broadcast listeners) of the 1920s:

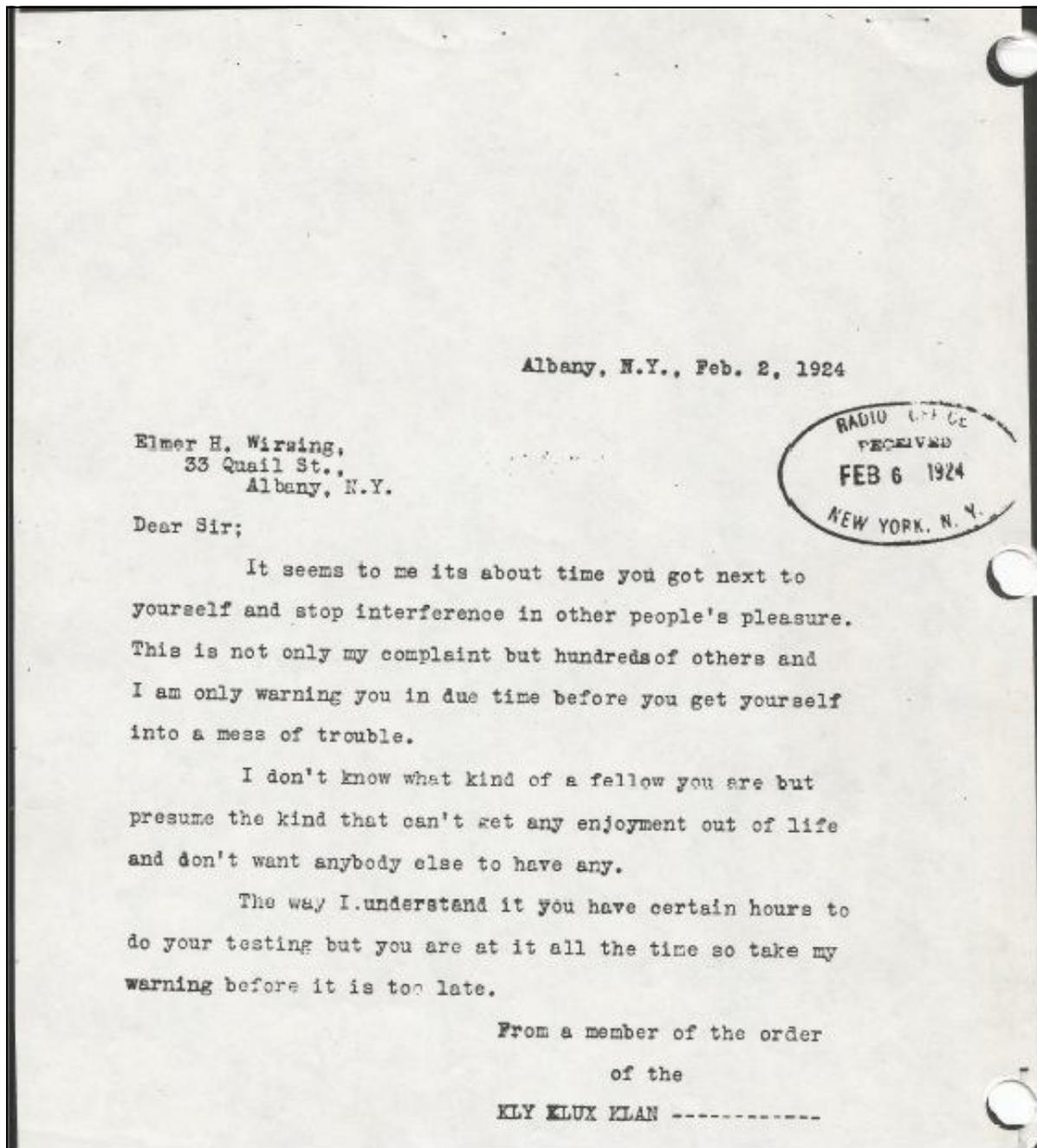
...stop interference in other people's pleasure. This is not only my complaint but hundreds of others and I am only warning you in due time before you get yourself into a mess of trouble. I don't know what kind of a fellow you are but presume the kind that can't get any enjoyment out of life and don't want anybody else to have any. The way I understand it you have certain hours to do your testing but you are out it all the time so take my warning before it is too late."<sup>1</sup>

Whether the author of this letter was truly a Ku Klux Klan member as purported or was instead a frustrated BCL at the end of his rope hoping the intimidation factor accompanying a Klan member's letter of outrage would be successful, the basis of his complaint is significant and consistent with the growing pains of the relatively new technology called amateur radio operation. But to understand the context of the times when this letter was written, and to understand the early years of amateur radio clubs in Albany, one must consider what radio communication was like in its infancy.

Radio communication was originally known as wireless communication. The reasoning was fairly straightforward. Telephones and telegraph systems used wires to transmit information. Communication along radio waves did not use wires, hence,

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<sup>1</sup>Albany Amateur Radio Association Archives (AARA Archives), To Elmer Wirsing, February 2, 1924.



*This is a copy of the letter Elmer Wirsing received in 1924, signed "From a member of the order of the Ku Klux Klan". AARA Archives.*

wireless communication. While an international conference in Berlin in 1906 decided to begin using the word “radio” instead of wireless, it still took some time before the change caught on. Derived from the Latin word radius meaning a ray or beam of light, the term radio encompassed a multitude of services besides simply the public broadcasting of voice and music.<sup>2</sup>

The success of radio operating in maritime settings inspired amateur enthusiasts across the United States and elsewhere to attempt to master radio communication. Operating on spark gap sets whose high voltage generated the Hertzian waves needed to send out signals, amateur operators radiated a broad signal which early receivers picked up fairly easily because they lacked the ability to reject strong local signals. A BCL, whose only interest was to receive signals from early broadcasting stations for his own enjoyment, would find his receiver inundated with the transmission of a local ham practicing his Morse code. The problem was compounded when a multiple number of radio stations tried to operate in close proximity.<sup>3</sup> The Radio Act of 1912, coming on the heels of the Titanic maritime disaster, ensured that some government regulation was instituted. Amateur operators were required to be licensed and their radio activity was confined to below 200 meters. As radio operators became more sophisticated in their radio work and as receivers were better designed, some of the conflict between hams and BCLs over sharing the radio waves began to dissipate. For young hams like Elmer Wirsing and the BCLs they were interfering with, that was welcome news.

It is in this environment when the push and pull of government, technology and personalities were shaping the future of amateur radio operations, that amateur radio clubs begin to spring up in cities and countries across the world, with amateurs leading the way in the United States. The question to be asked is where does the Albany Amateur Radio Association fit in? The short answer is that it does not fit in anywhere.

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Coe, *Wireless Radio: A Brief History*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Coe, *Wireless Radio*, 7-8.

Research into the early history of the club has failed to yield any mention of the AARA during the time period of 1912 to 1922. It is safe to assume that is because the AARA did not exist as a club during that time. Two questions must now be answered. What clubs existed in Albany during the above mentioned time frame, and is there a direct connection between early clubs and the AARA?

Information regarding the early days of the AARA within the archives is vague and at times pure speculation. While member interest in the Association's history is recorded in minutes of various meetings during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, no AARA members are able to provide definitive answers. In a February 1980 *B-Plus* article it is noted that older AARA members claim that AARA may be the oldest radio club in existence but that known documentation dates back to 1916 and no earlier.<sup>4</sup> Other members noted that they knew of original members of the AARA from 1912 and could produce a book with a roster, but no such roster exists within the archives and there is no supporting evidence for the use of the name Albany Amateur Radio Association in 1912. Then there is the March 4, 1980 letter from a member of the Schenectady Amateur Radio Association (SARA) to an AARA officer in which the SARA member communicated the following information he found in a May 1933 issue of a SARA newsletter:

A new radio club has been formed in Albany which is to be called the Albany Radio Amateur Association. R. Menands was made the first President...A group of SARA members were at the last meeting and had a very fine visit with the gang.<sup>5</sup>

The author of the 1980 letter also wrote, "This is the best I can do for you in my research. Probably, like Schenectady, you had an older club that went out of business before the AARA was formed."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> William Lowenberg, W200J, "AARA Oldest Club? Well, One of the Oldest," *B-Plus* Vol. 9 No. 2 (February 1980): 1, 3.

<sup>5</sup> AARA Archives, To Bill, March 4, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> AARA Archives, To Bill, March 4, 1980.

SECTION 1: Early History

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1138 North Country Club Drive  
Schenectady, N. Y. 12309  
March 4, 1980

Dear Bill,

While going through some old SARA records, I found the following mention of the Albany Club in an old SARA NEWS dated May 1933:

Albany Radio Club

"A new radio club has been formed in Albany which is to be called the Albany Radio Amateur Association. R. Menands was made the first President R. Alrich Vice President. The Secretary is W2EN. Meetings are held on the first and third Tuesday of the month at the YMCA. A group of SARA members were at the last meeting and had a very fine visit with the gang".

This is the best I can do for you in my research. Probably, like Schenectady, you had an older club that went out of business before the AARA was reorganized. We had an older club that became defunct around 1928 and SARA was organized in February 1930.

I'll keep digging!!

Sincerely and 73,



George, W2EFU

*This is a copy of the March 4, 1980 letter indicating that there is evidence that AARA was a "new club" in 1933.*

A club history written in the 1960s by Omer Martratt, W2ITQ, was the first attempt by the AARA to settle the question of the Association's "birth" year. According to Martratt, "In 1912, the Albany Amateur Radio Association was organized. Regular meetings were held in the chemistry room of the Albany High School." Martratt states the founding year unequivocally however there is no record of the source he used for this information and research has already determined that in 1912 there is no existing record of the Albany Amateur Radio Association's existence. Several other discrepancies were discovered in Martratt's recording of some of the early history of the club including officers listed for the year 1920 as compared to the actual minutes listing officers of the Albany Radio Club in 1920.<sup>7</sup>

Without a firm lead to follow, it was necessary to delve into outside sources for information that would reveal an answer to the question of what radio clubs were operating in Albany in the time period between 1912 and 1922. Research into contemporary newspapers yielded no mention of a radio club of any sort in Albany in 1912. It wasn't until October 1913 that mention was made of an Albany amateur club. In Volume I of *The Wireless Age: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Radio Communication*, a periodical published by the Marconi Publishing Corporation, an article is featured entitled "New Club in Capital" which details the creation of an amateur radio club in Albany, New York:

A club, composed of amateur wireless operators, has recently been formed in Albany, N.Y. to further the science of radio communication and to bring together amateurs who are operating stations in Albany and vicinity. The idea of such a club assumed definite form in Albany when a small group of operators obtained permission from the Board of Education to use a room in the Albany High School for semi-monthly meetings.<sup>8</sup>

The club was called the Hudson Valley Wireless Association (HVWA). Similar to Martratt's claim that the 1912 AARA met in the science room of Albany High School, the Hudson Valley Wireless Association met in a room at Albany High School. Some of the

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<sup>7</sup> O.L. Martratt, W2ITQ, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*, AARA Archives.

<sup>8</sup> "New Club in Capital," *The Wireless Age: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Radio Communication* Vol. 1 (1913): 8

Oct., 1913 THE WIRELESS AGE 85

**NEW CLUB IN CAPITAL**

A club, composed of amateur wireless operators, has recently been formed in Albany, N. Y., to further the science of radio communication, and to bring together amateurs who are operating stations in Albany and vicinity. The idea of such a club assumed definite form in Albany when a small group of operators obtained permission from the Board of Education to use a room in the Albany High School for semi-monthly meetings. Burr V. Dietz led the movement, and the formation of the club was guided by Professor F. P. Huested, head of the science department of the Albany High School.

The first meeting was attended by ten persons. A constitution was drawn under the direction of Edward Long, an enthusiastic wireless amateur. "The Hudson Valley Wireless Association" was decided upon as a name for the club.

Under the guidance of Professor F. P. Huested and Professor Brien O. Burgin and an active set of officers, the

sound technical advice being given by experts from the outside, and theses on practical problems being prepared by members. Some of the amateurs are entering upon the science as a vocation, and a few are engaged in commercial work.

At a recent meeting, an illustrated lecture was given before the club by Mr. Beebe and Mr. Pohlman, representatives of the Schenectady Wireless Club.

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**BREAK KEY FOR LOOSE COUPLER**

For readers using a loose coupler, a break key, devised by H. W. Dickon, of San Francisco, Cal., will be of interest. The accompanying diagram is self-explanatory, and it can be seen that when the key is pressed down the detector is cut out of the circuit and shunted at the same time. When released the detector is put back into the circuit.



Excerpt from the October 1913 publication of *The Wireless Age* that mentions the Hudson Valley Wireless Association. [SOURCE](#)

names listed in this article are familiar names within the AARA of later years, including Clayton B. Le Gallez, W2JGM, whose death in 1951 was mentioned in Martratt's *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*.<sup>9</sup> The constitution drawn up for the Hudson Valley Wireless Association was done so under the direction of amateur radio operator Edward Long. A photograph of a radio station purported to belong to Edward Long is found within the AARA archives.

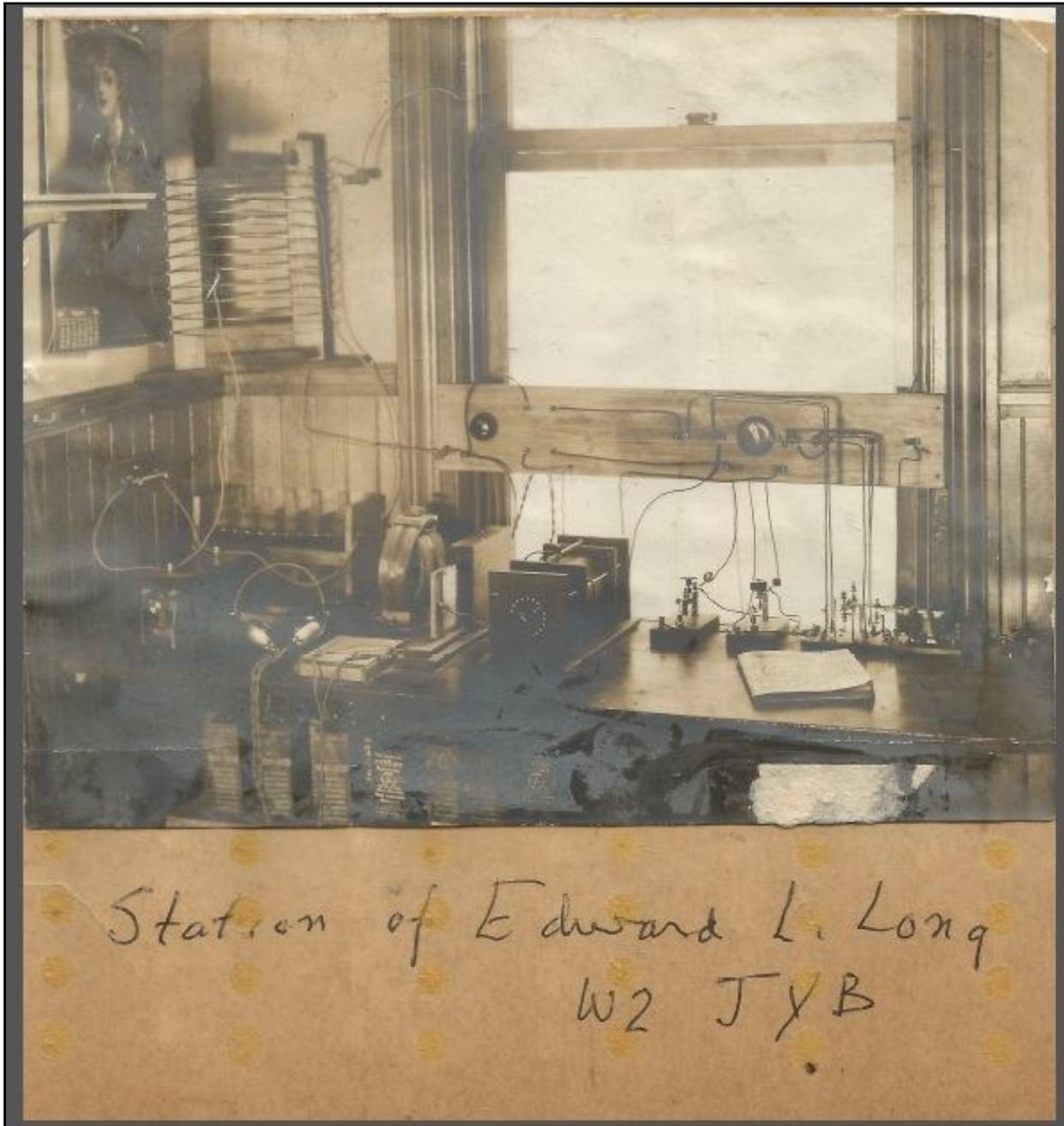
It appears that for a few years, the Hudson Valley Wireless Association was the

<sup>9</sup> Martratt, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*.

<sup>8</sup> "New Club in Capital," *The Wireless Age: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Radio Communication* Vol. 1 (1913): 8

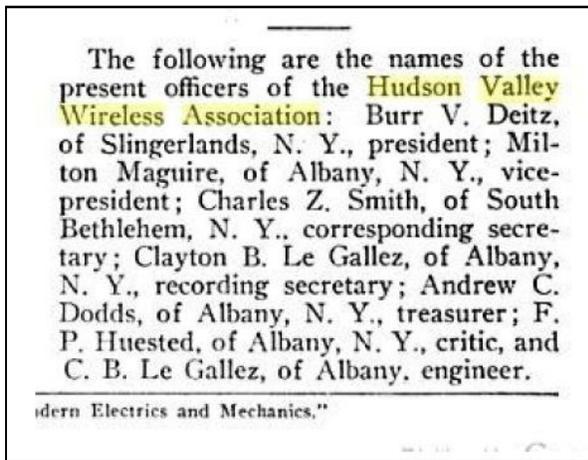
SECTION 1: Early History

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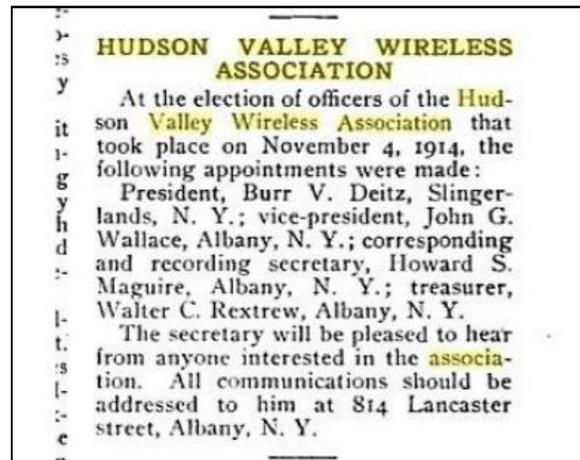


*A photograph of a radio station purported to belong to Edward Long. AARA archives.*

only radio club in Albany, or at least the only organized club that was publishing information about its members and activities. The organization's officer listings appeared in a January 1914 issue of *Modern Electrics and Mechanics*<sup>10</sup> and a January 1915 issue of *Modern Mechanics and Popular Electricity*. Included in the slate of officers elected in November 1914 and published in 1915 was Howard S. Maguire, W2AAO, a later AARA member. He was the newly elected Corresponding and Recording Secretary for the club.<sup>11</sup>



*Hudson Valley Wireless Association's officers list which appeared in the January 1914 issue of Modern Electrics and Mechanics.*



*Hudson Valley Wireless Association's officers list which appeared in the January 1915 issue of Modern Mechanics and Popular Electricity.*

The Hudson Valley Wireless Association printed a meeting notice for the coming year on December 24, 1914 in the *Albany Evening Journal*. Headquarters for the HVWA were located at the Central Y.M.C.A. building in downtown Albany and the group planned to talk about wave meter and wireless telephone at their first winter meeting.<sup>12</sup> An article in the same paper several days later announced that the members of the HVWA were interested in building a large aerial on the roof of the Y.M.C.A. building that would enable the Association to receive messages from upwards of 2,000 miles away although their sending capacity would be limited to 200 or less miles.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Modern Electrics and Mechanics* Vol. 28 (1914): 90.

<sup>11</sup> *Modern Electrics and Popular Electricity* Vol. 30 (1915): 284.

<sup>12</sup> *Albany Evening Journal*, December 24, 1914, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Albany Evening Journal*, December 30, 1914, 12.

## WIRELESS ASSOCIATION TO ERECT STATION IN CITY

Members of the Hudson Valley Wireless association are interested in the plan for a large aerial to be built on the roof of the Central Y. M. C. A., North Pearl and Steuben streets, where the association has its headquarters. The work of construction was authorized at a meeting held last night, and will be undertaken at once. The plant will be able to receive messages from places about 2,000 miles away, but the sending capacity will be limited to 300 miles or less.

Enthusiasm marks the meetings of the association, and after the installation of the new apparatus it is expected that the membership will grow so as to include owners of wireless outfits in Albany, Troy, Schenectady and other nearby places.

At the meeting last evening George Lauterborn of this city was elected a member. The committee named to supervise the erection of the new station is made up of Hurr V. Deltz, Howard S. Maguire, Will L. Lloyd, Jr., Russell Hoff and William P. Husted. The next meeting will be held on Friday evening, Jan. 15.

*Article from the Albany Evening Journal on December 30, 1914 talking about the Hudson Valley Wireless Association and their interest in building an aerial on the roof of the Y.M.C.A. in downtown Albany, NY.*

The 1915 volume of *The Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony* listed the Hudson Valley Wireless Association in its Directory of Wireless Societies of the United States. This publication began in 1913 without a Directory. In 1914 the Directory was first introduced but there was no listing for the HVWA. The Directory grew larger each year as more and more amateur radio clubs in the United States and other parts of the world came into existence. The 1915 Directory listed HVWA and H.S. Maguire of 814 Lancaster Street in Albany, NY was the contact for the radio club.<sup>14</sup> HVWA was listed again as the sole Albany, New York club in the 1916 Year Book but in the same year the local press reported the appearance of another radio club on the amateur radio scene.

A notice of “Wireless Men to Organize” appeared in the April 25, 1916 *Albany Evening Journal*. A meeting was to be held at the Central Y.M.C.A to organize the Albany Wireless Club.<sup>15</sup> A later article in the *Albany Evening Journal* of August 2, 1916 noted the Albany Wireless Club’s plan to erect a wireless station at the roof of the Central Y.M.C.A. and to suspend wires between the Y.M.C.A. rooftop and the roof of the new Kenmore Hotel in Albany. The similarity of this plan and the plan expressed by the HVWA in late 1914 to erect an antenna on the same Y.M.C.A. building rooftop suggests that the same club members were part of both clubs. So did HVWA change its name to Albany Wireless Club? The AARA archives have photocopies of original meeting notes starting November 21<sup>st</sup> c. 1916 for the Albany Wireless Club. The notes of November 21<sup>st</sup> are brief and refer to a previous meeting for which there are no notes in the archives. A report on the aerial, presumably the one that was to be built in August of the same year on the Y.M.C.A. building , was recorded as well as the appointment of a committee to revise the Club’s constitution and the acquisition of Edison Cells. The following month, December 19, 1916, meeting notes recorded a report on the aerial including the Club’s successful attempt to secure permission from the Kenmore hotel to erect the aerial.

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<sup>14</sup> “Directory of Wireless Societies– United States,” *The Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony*, 1915 (Marconi Press Agency, Limited, 1915), 791.

<sup>15</sup> “Wireless Men to Organize,” *Albany Evening Journal*, April 25, 1916.

The 1917 publication of *The Year Book of Telegraphy and Telephony* and its directory of wireless societies lists three amateur radio clubs in Albany in that year: the Albany Signal Corp. (Volunteer), the Albany Wireless Club with H.S. Maguire listed as contact, and the Hudson Valley Wireless Association. This entry in the directory makes it clear that the Hudson Valley Wireless Association did not change its name to the Albany Wireless Club but that instead a split of some sort occurred, with original members of HVWA forming their own club. Professor Husted was listed as the contact for the HVWA in 1917 and the location for the club was Albany High School. Husted was involved with the HVWA's formation in 1913. H.S. Maguire, who had previously been the point of contact for the HVWA in the Directories of 1915 and 1916, was now the contact for the new Albany Wireless Club.<sup>16</sup>

The path of Albany Amateur Radio Association tracing its antecedents back to the Hudson Valley Wireless Association of 1913 is problematic. While some members of the HVWA formed the Albany Wireless Club, as the Club's incomplete records housed in the AARA archives attest to, the Hudson Valley Wireless Association continued in existence concurrently with the Albany Wireless Club, making it difficult to legitimately trace Albany Amateur Radio Association back to a 1913 year of origination. It is appropriate then to follow the 1916 Albany Wireless Club forward in time to establish a connection to the Albany Amateur Radio Association of today.

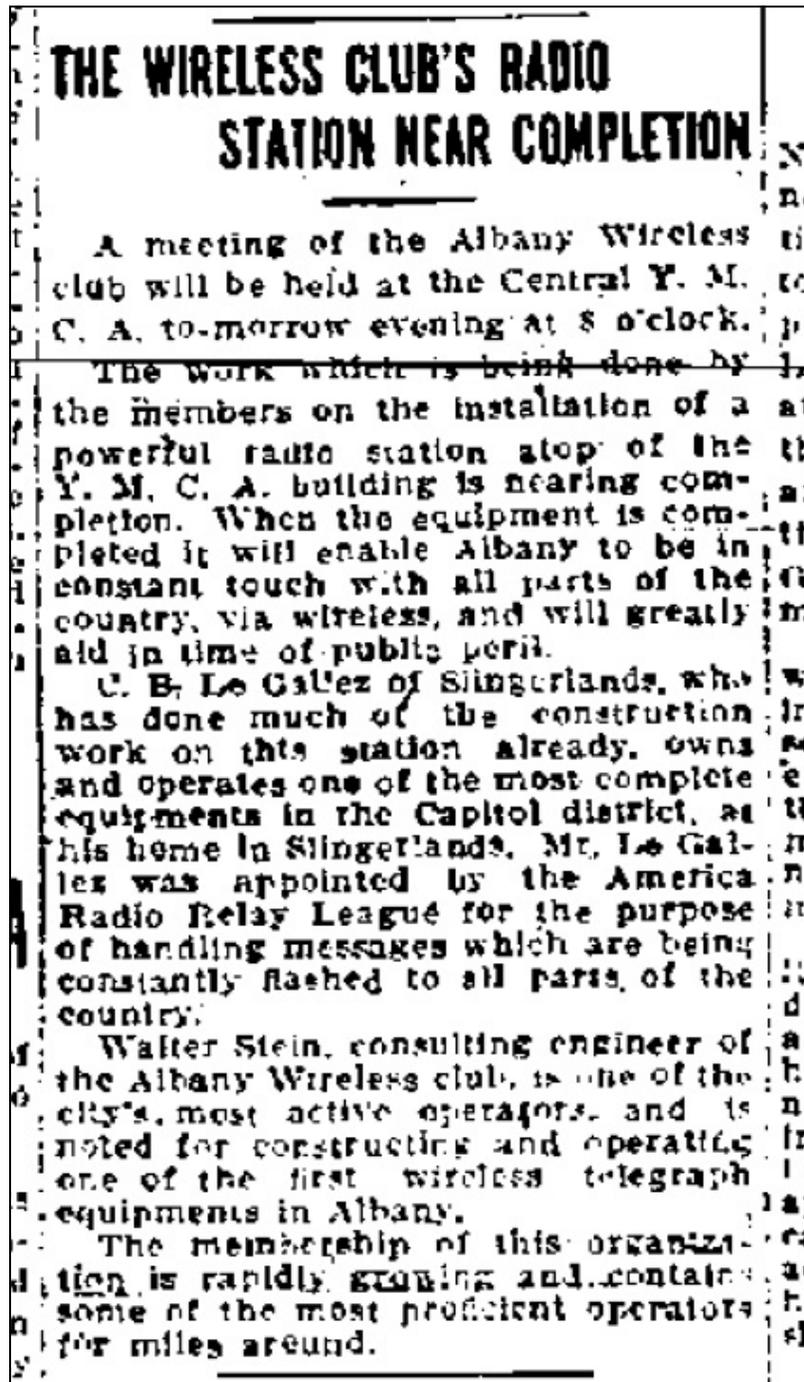
In 1917, the Albany Wireless Club had a membership arrangement with the Y.M.C.A. and the Club secretary reported 22 active members of the organization in January 1917. Notices of meetings ran in the papers throughout the early months of 1917. The Club proudly announced its growing membership numbers and boasted that it contained "some of the most proficient operators for miles around."<sup>17</sup> Work continued on the club station atop the Y.M.C.A building. In an *Albany Evening Journal* article of February 5, 1917, it was reported to readers that once the installation was

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<sup>16</sup> "Directory of Wireless Societies—United States," *The Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony, 1917* (Marconi Press Agency, Limited, 1917), 913, 916.

<sup>17</sup> "The Wire Club's Radio Station Near Completion," *Albany Evening Journal*, February 5, 1917, 1.

complete "...it will enable Albany to be in constant touch with all parts of the country via wireless and will greatly aid in time of public peril."



Article from the Albany Evening Journal on February 5, 1917 about the activities of the Albany Wireless Club.

The significance of the amateur radio group's attempt to establish itself as a provider of essential services for the public in times of peril cannot be missed. On April 6, 1917, the United States entered the major armed conflict that at the time was called The Great War but came to be known as World War I. With a nation at war movements were quickly made to secure and curtail amateur radio operations in the interest of national security. For ham operators and their amateur clubs, war meant the potential cessation of their leisure activities. Attempts to demonstrate the value of radio operation to the American public, the government and the military might have been a method to maintain restricted access to the radio waves in event of war as opposed to complete cessation. The Club appointed four members to a relay line, organized by the American Radio Relay League (which formed in 1914 and served as a spokesman for some of the amateur hams in the United States), to handle and flash messages to all parts of the world. The Club also granted permission to the Albany Signal Corps. (Volunteer) to use their room for instruction work.

The minutes of the April 3, 1917 meeting of the Albany Wireless Club noted that a motion was passed approving correspondence between the Club Secretary and the Chief Radio Inspector of the United States government to offer Albany Wireless Club's services in providing any necessary information and/or assistance needed regarding the radio situation locally and to help enforce any ruling the government passed concerning radio operation. A couple of weeks later Club members were compelled to dismantle the Club's station "in accordance with police orders."<sup>18</sup> The Federal government had ordered that all aerials be lowered, all grounds removed, and all transmitters and receivers sealed, effectively ending amateur radio operation for the duration of the war.<sup>19</sup>

The skill set of amateur operators was highly select and those trained in amateur radio operation were in high demand in the United States military. 4,000 licensed amateurs joined the Navy or Army Signal Corps., while others donated their

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<sup>18</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Wireless Club Minutes, April 17, 1917.

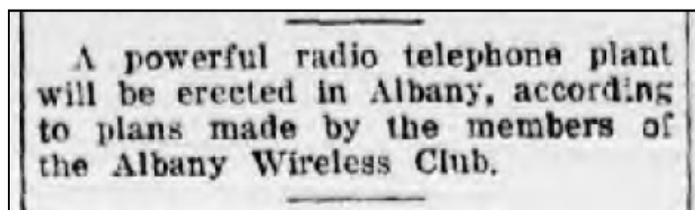
<sup>19</sup> Richard A. Bartlett, *The World of Ham Radio, 1901-1950* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), 49-50.

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station equipment.<sup>20</sup> Those 4,000 amateurs who served the country during World War I made up almost 80% of the population of radio amateurs in the United States at the time.<sup>21</sup> With the suspension of amateur radio operation and the dispersal of so many amateurs into branches of the armed forces, the Albany Wireless Club suspended club meetings and activities for the duration of the war, although it maintained an entry in *The Year Book of Telegraphy and Telephony* of 1918 and 1919, as did the Hudson Valley Wireless Association.

On October 1, 1919, almost a year after the cessations of hostilities on the Western Front in the war and an Allied victory, the Federal government lifted all restrictions on amateur operators and amateur radio stations.<sup>22</sup> The Albany Wireless Club wasted very little time reconvening its members. The first meeting was held on October 28, 1919 with 16 members present. With very few months remaining in the year, the Albany Wireless Club immediately set about mounting an antenna between the Y.M.C.A. building and the Kenmore Hotel. The Club had again taken rooms in the Y.M.C.A. and had secured the permission of the organization to partition off part of one of their rooms to install a radio station. *The Daily Sentinel* of Rome, New York printed the announcement of the Club's plan to erect a "powerful radio telephone plant."<sup>23</sup> But the biggest move the Club made came with a motion on December 16, 1919 to change the name of the club from the Albany Wireless Club to the Albany Radio Club. The vote was carried and the Club's name officially changed.<sup>24</sup>



*Mention of the Albany Wireless Club on page 12 of The Daily Sentinel of Rome, New York on December 3, 1919.*

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<sup>20</sup> Kristen Haring, *Ham Radio's Technical Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 96.

<sup>21</sup> Bartlett, *The World of Ham Radio, 1901-1950*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Bartlett, *The World of Ham Radio, 1901-1950*, 61-62.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Sentinel*, December 3, 1919, 12.

<sup>24</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Wireless Club Minutes, December 16, 1919.

Although the Club had changed its name, the Albany Wireless Club continued to appear as an entry in the 1920 and 1921 directories of *The Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony* although in this case it is not believed that the Albany Wireless Club continued its existence, but that the Albany Radio Club could not or did not update its entry for the directory. The Club continued to grow, noting three new members at its April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Similar to the reasoning behind the complaint that Elmer Wirsing received from an irate BCL, club member Mr. Stein reported experiencing “interference of some amateur near him who is trying very hard to learn the code.”<sup>25</sup> The Club was interested in experimenting with newer and more powerful technology and supported the training and encouragement of less experienced members. As an article in *Experimenter’s World* reported, the club:

“has installed a modern receiving set and a number of distant stations have been heard. Temporarily, a six-inch coil is to be used for transmitting, but it is expected that this will be replaced by a transformer in the near future. Other equipment includes a number of buzzer sets which have been installed to help the younger members to master the code.”<sup>26</sup>

The President of the club, E.C. Fasoldt, gave concerts every Saturday evening on his private radiophone set to amateur operators within a radius of 15-20 miles. The notes of one May 1920 meeting give a humanizing glimpse at these radio amateurs from almost 100 years ago: “Recess for a mouse hunt - - - - funeral to be held later.”<sup>27</sup> Meetings were held regularly through 1921 but the last recorded minutes the AARA archives have for the Albany Radio Club is for a December 14, 1921 meeting. Nothing within the notes indicates an intention to disband the group. However the very next year, the directory of wireless societies in *The Yearbook of Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony* does not list any entry for clubs from Albany. Nor are any entries listed in 1923 either. The years 1924 and 1925 of the Year Book do not list any directories and there are no volumes available at the New York State Library beyond 1925 which suggests the edition itself might have ceased publication.

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<sup>25</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Wireless Club Minutes, January 20, 1920.

<sup>26</sup> “Albany Radio Club,” *The Wireless Age* Vol. 7 (1920): 41.

<sup>27</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Radio Club Minutes, May 24, 1920.

It is here where the AARA archives exhibit their largest, gaping hole which makes it difficult to answer the second question posed earlier, is there a direct connection between early clubs and the AARA? There are no records in the archives for the years 1922 to 1932. The memories of AARA club members, as recorded in the archives, indicate that the club continued during this time. Omer Martratt wrote that the records for the time period were destroyed but that it “is recollected however, that the Association continued, although many amateurs dropped out because of the new commercial broadcasting interference.”<sup>28</sup> He listed a number of men who were active amateur operators between 1922 and 1932 and later were AARA members although there is no corroborating proof that these men belonged to an actual club during the above mentioned time period. Longtime AARA member Frank Scrafford, W2DSK recalled, as recorded by the Association’s secretary at a February 1980 meeting, that “the records from 1922-1933 are missing but he hopes to trace them.”<sup>29</sup> Whether destroyed or missing, both men recollect an active club during the decade of the missing records. But then there are the words of Elmer Wirsing, that young amateur ham of the early 1920s. At a 1970 meeting of the AARA, Elmer “recalled the three times the club broke up and went back.”<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately the three times referenced were not recorded by date. It is known that the Albany Wireless Club suspended activities in 1917 because of World War I, and again in the 1940s because of World War II. Nothing in the AARA archives suggests that the AARA disbanded at any other time between 1933 and 1970. Perhaps then, Elmer was referring to a time when the club disbanded sometime in the 1920s because the chaotic mix of hams and BCLs on the radio waves made many Albany Radio Club members abandon the club, an idea that was partly posited by Martratt. With membership too low to continue, perhaps the Albany Radio Club suspended or ended the club. Some members, like the ones Martratt listed in his *Historical Summarization*, may have continued to meet informally until interest picked

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<sup>28</sup> Martratt, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*.

<sup>29</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Amateur Radio Association Minutes, February 9, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Radio Association Minutes, March 13, 1970.

up again in the 1930s.

It is impossible to definitively answer the question of whether the Albany Amateur Radio Association has a direct link to the earlier clubs of the 19-teens and 1920s. However it is reasonable to consider that perhaps an informal group survived during those lost years, bridging the gap between the Albany Radio Club and the founding of the Albany Amateur Radio Association, waiting for the right time to reassemble a new club. It is possible to say that there is no existing proof that the Albany Amateur Radio Association can trace its origins back to 1912. The evidence of both the AARA archives and contemporary newspapers and journals of the day demonstrate that the Albany Wireless Club formed in 1916 independent from and concurrent with the earlier Hudson Valley Wireless Association. If the AARA claims an inheritance from the Albany Radio Club, which is not unreasonable to do, than it cannot claim an earlier club origination date than 1916 because of lack of supporting evidence.

But whether the AARA was formed in 1913, 1916 or 1933, amateur operators of the time cooperatively contributed to the growing understanding of amateur radio's place of importance in society.

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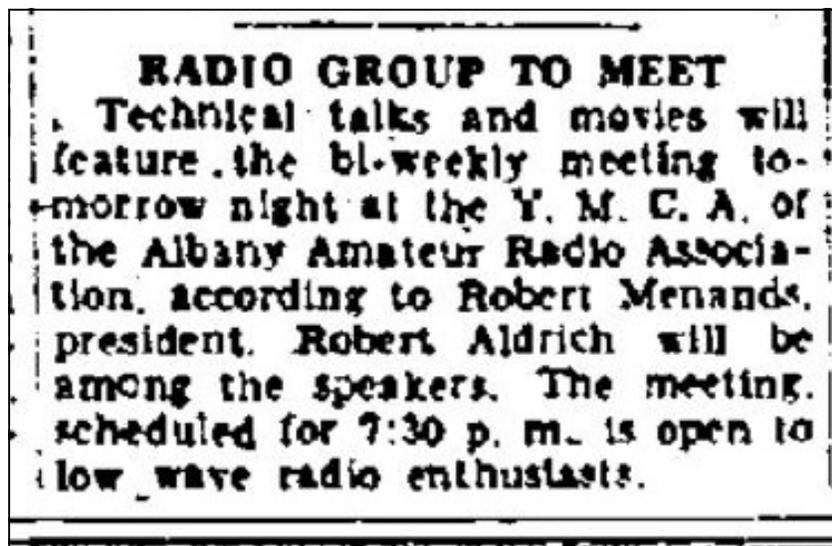
<sup>25</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Wireless Club Minutes, January 20, 1920.

<sup>26</sup> "Albany Radio Club," *The Wireless Age* Vol. 7 (1920): 41.

<sup>27</sup> AARA Archives, Albany Radio Club Minutes, May 24, 1920.

## SECTION 2: Albany Amateur Radio Association and the 1930s

A notice appeared in a May 1, 1933 edition of the *Albany Evening News* announcing “Radio Group to Meet.”<sup>1</sup> There is nothing about the notice to indicate that it was the first meeting of the newly formed Albany Amateur Radio Association, but in the absence of any other evidence, it serves as one of the earliest dates found thus far which mentions the Albany Amateur Radio Association by name. The content of the notice infers that previous meetings had already taken place for the AARA.



*Notice in the May 1, 1933 edition of the Albany Evening News. [Page 3]*

This coupled with further documentary support from the Association’s own archives, provides strong support for a 1932 AARA origination date. That is not to say that there isn’t any existing evidence that complicates the question of when the AARA formed.

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<sup>1</sup>“Radio Group to Meet,” *Albany Evening News*, May 1, 1933, [3].

Several pieces of undated letterhead found within the archives has “Founded in 1929” printed at the top, although no other information to support this date has surfaced. Additionally, a document with a list of approximately 39 names includes a label which reads “Prior to 1933.” [See next page] This may be interpreted to mean the people listed were members of AARA prior to 1933. But perhaps those are the names of the amateur radio operators who maintained a loose relationship after the Albany Radio Club ceased activity, and then became charter members of the newly founded AARA of the 1930s. As Section I of this history has shown, educated guesses may be the closest anyone is able to get to the truth about Albany Amateur Radio Association’s beginnings.

It can be safely stated that by May of 1933 the Albany Amateur Radio Association was in existence. Documentary evidence from the archives and simple math argues that 1932 is the probable year of formation, despite the contradictory material already mentioned above. A letter written in June 1933 from Robert Menand to the members of the AARA included his resignation as Association president: “At a time when the club seems to be getting underway nicely I am compelled to resign from office as your President.<sup>2</sup> Typically officers were elected in the fall for service in the next year in the Albany Wireless Club, the Albany Radio Club and the Albany Amateur Radio Association, which could mean the group was meeting as early as 1932. A letter from AARA President George W. Sleeper and Vice President F. Eugene Young in 1934 to the Times Union Short Wave Club further supports the suggestion that 1932 is the starting year of the AARA:

There does however seem to be a slight misunderstanding in that the impression has been gained that this is the only organization [referring to the Times Union Short Wave Club] of its kind in Albany...For two and one half years the Albany Amateur Radio Association has been in active existence. The Club was originally sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Meetings have been held regularly...in the Y.M.C.A. The membership totals about 50 men and women, about half of whom are active licensed amateurs...Our aim is the mutual enjoyment of a highly worthwhile hobby and the promulgation of any action or

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<sup>2</sup> Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) Archives, From Robert Menand, June 4, 1933.

SECTION 2: Albany Amateur Radio Association and the 1930s

**ALBANY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION**  
ALBANY, NEW YORK

Founded 1929 ARRL Affiliated

CHAIRMAN & ACTIVITIES MGR.

GEO. A. JONES  
182 Clinton Ave.,  
Albany, N. Y.

GEO L. ROGERS. 28 Euclid Av  
 Jim braydon. 17 Morris st  
 Frank Hammell. Shkr Rd, Wtvl  
 Bob Hainer. 103 So Pine St  
 Jim Bates. 657 Hudson Ave  
 Jack Houser. 23 Wash Av, Renss.  
 Ed Barends. 44 Rose Court.  
 E H Wirsing. 33 Quail St.  
 Alan Burgess. 107 Lancaster.  
 paul Waterson. 463 N Scotlad.  
 Art Were . 17 Northern Blvd.  
 Stewe Grant. Y.M.C.A.  
 Walt Langley. 1214 Brdwy  
 F Scrafford. 863 3d st  
 Ed Melanson. 15 Bennon st  
 R S Harper. 68 S Swan St.  
 Manson McNamara. 435 Clinton.  
 O.L. Martratt. 1088 Cortland st  
 J. P. Murphy. 3 Danker Ave  
 Warren Waterman. 130 Eagle.  
 R S Klein. Stop 38, Schdy rd.  
 J.W Snieyet . 50 Watvlt st  
 S J Pawlic 295 2nd St.  
 Ellery Snyder. 24 Marion.  
 Lester Glenck. 19 Twiller St.  
 WM Schoenberger. 125 Kent St.  
 G.A. Jones. 182 Clinton Av.  
 Bro Jarvis, Lasalle School  
 .  
 Wm Schoenberger 125 Kent St  
 Berger, 167 Broad St  
 Lowal Christman 28 Sloan  
 M.P. Lazarus 159 Western Ave  
 WM Cerutti 204 Elm St  
 H Droox , 75 Pine/South..  
 Gordon Brower , 84 Sheridan Av  
 Thos Flyne 40 Fleetwood Av  
 Robert Hidley 225 S Main  
~~Ed D. Van Durne~~  
 Leslie Couch 310 Hamilton  
 C D van Alstine 37 New Sotland Av

*pp malseed  
127 Delaware*

*John Paris  
391 Wesley*

*R F Karsin  
96 Ontario*

*Grant H. Colket  
69 N main*

*R B Landay.  
233 S main*

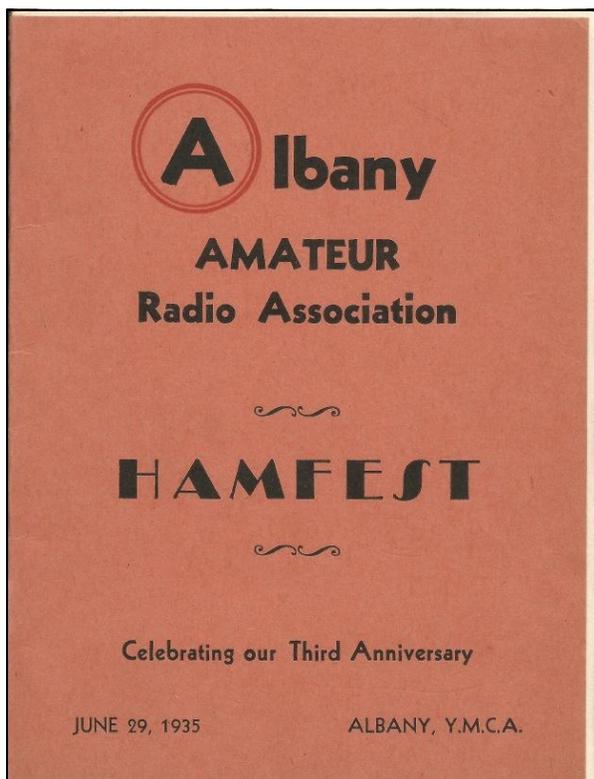
*Leslie Glenck  
Elm*

PRIOR TO 1933

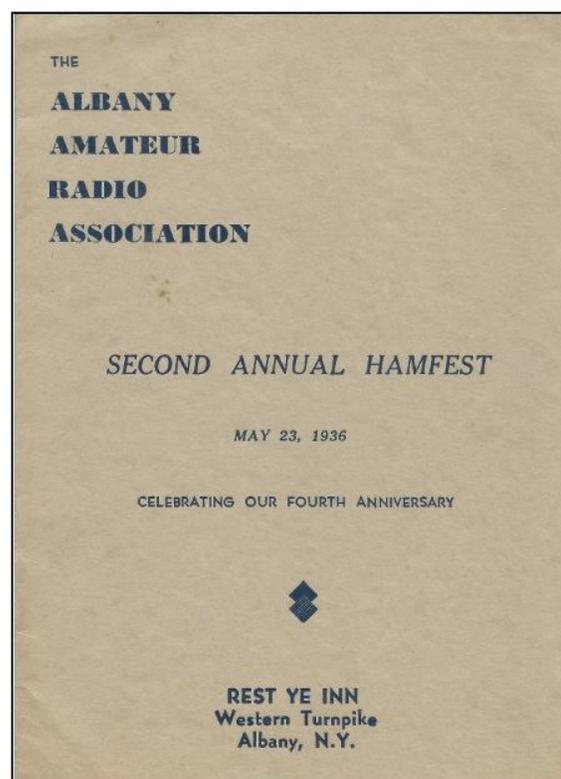
One of the clues in the AARA Archives: A list of members of the Albany Amateur Radio Association prior to 1933?

actions which may be for the benefit of best interests of amateur radio. At the present time considerable work is being done in the advancement of the technical knowledge of the members, suppression of amateur radio interference to broadcast listeners and toward the complete suppression of amateur 'call boot leggers' who are operating unlicensed stations in Albany and vicinity.<sup>3</sup>

AARA's first Annual Hamfest in June 1935 marked the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Albany Amateur Radio Association as was noted on the cover of the booklet for the Hamfest. Likewise, in 1936, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hamfest pointedly proclaimed "celebrating our Fourth Anniversary" in its related materials.<sup>4</sup>



*1935 AARA Hamfest Program.*



*1936 AARA Hamfest Program.*

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<sup>3</sup> AARA Archives, From George W. Sleeper and F. Eugene Young, November 26, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook, No. 1, 2nd Annual Hamfest, May 23, 1936.

While the Association's birth year is obscured, it is obvious that the AARA and its members were active during the balance of the years in the 1930s. As mentioned previously, two Hamfests were planned and executed by the organization. The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Hamfest, held at the Y.M.C.A., included a demonstration by a Mr. McElroy, a speed champ who gave "demonstration of speed and valuable instruction on the proper adjustment of Bugs and straight keys." The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Hamfest was held at the Rest Ye Inn at Western Turnpike in Albany. The club was growing in the 1930s with approximately 55 members in 1935. Cooperation with other amateur radio clubs like the Colonial City Radio Club of Kingston, NY who requested to QSO with Albany "fellows" on 5 meters and the RPI Radio Club to which AARA wrote asking about potential speakers, indicates the AARA maintained a harmonious relationship with outside hams and amateur groups.<sup>5</sup>

The group initially met at the Y.M.C.A. building, the site for meetings of the Albany Radio Club, its earlier incarnation the Albany Wireless Club and the Hudson Valley Wireless Association. Whether out of necessity or Association inclination, during 1935 the AARA began casting a net in search of new meeting rooms.



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<sup>5</sup> AARA Archives, From Colonial City Radio Club, January 2, 1935.

Letters from Albany Mayor John Boyd Thacher, II and the Albany Chamber of Commerce President, William E Fitzsimmons indicated that neither man was able to locate a place to house the AARA members for meetings.<sup>6 7</sup> In May 1935, the Albany Amateur Radio Association was declared “a duly affiliated society” of the American Relay Radio League and the club received its charter that same month.<sup>8</sup>

Positive press was a good thing for the AARA and the Association began to court the local papers in earnest in the 1930s. In a clipping from the Times Union in March 1938, the newspaper covered an AARA demonstration of the Association’s 5 meter or ultra short radio. One member, William Heffner, W2CYW was stationed in the Times Union newsroom while another member, Warren Waterman drove around in a car with a Times Union reporter. The goal of the demonstration was to show mobile wireless communication. This public demonstration was one of the first in a long line of demonstrations whose purpose was to educate and promote radio operation’s reputation within the local community.

Association meetings tended to include non-professional speakers, namely different members of the group taking turns talking about their experiences, both technical and anecdotal, with radio operating. The Association members took it upon themselves, as was described in the letter to the Times Union Short Wave Club, to suppress amateur radio interference with BCLs. A letter sent to amateur operator station W2HOK at 826 Jay Street in Albany from the AARA informed the recipient that his transmitter was “causing undue interference in and around Albany,” and included a suggestion from the Association that the operator properly tune his rig or attend a meeting to find out how to do that.<sup>9</sup> This voluntary policing of the radio waves was a legitimate offer of service from the Association. The AARA wrote the Federal Radio Commission in 1933 to offer its services to assist any amateur in Albany, “who is found causing broadcast interference.”<sup>10</sup> This represented a departure from the free-for-all manner that had characterized amateur radio transmission and receiving in the 1920s.

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<sup>6</sup> AARA Archives, From Mayor John Boyd Thacher, II August 5, 1935.

<sup>7</sup> AARA Archives, From William E. Fitzsimmons, September 14, 1935.

<sup>8</sup> AARA Archives, Correspondence, May 13, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> AARA Archives, From Albany Amateur Radio Association, November 21, 1934.

<sup>10</sup> AARA Archives, From Albany Amateur Radio Association, November 27, 1933.

## SECTION 2: Albany Amateur Radio Association and the 1930s

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Closing out the decade of the 1930s, the Albany Amateur Radio Association had established itself within the local community. It had seen its membership grow, courted popular opinion with positive newspaper coverage and voluntary broadcast policing. By the end of the 1930s, the affairs of national powers in Western Europe threatened on the horizon of amateur radio operation in the United States and shortly into the new decade of the 1940s, war would once again disrupt the amateur world.

## **SECTION 3: Albany Amateur Radio Association and the 1940s**

September 1, 1939 Hitler's army invaded Poland and set world powers on a collision course that would eventually take the lives of an estimated 60,000,000 people worldwide. The United States did not immediately enter the fray but it was only a matter of time before its neutrality was shattered. Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued a formal order on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941 suspending all amateur radio transmissions with certain exceptions. By January 9, 1941, all amateur activity was eliminated for the duration of the war.<sup>1</sup> But even before the U.S. was forced into the war, the FCC began to take measures that curtailed amateur radio operations.

FCC Order 75 was issued in August of 1940. It placed ham operators under the strictest regulations they had ever faced in the history of the technology. While communication between U.S. stations and U.S. territories was still allowed, Order 75 made it illegal for American hams to hold conversations with foreign operators. It severely limited the frequencies available for communications via mobile equipment with exceptions for emergency communications and drills preapproved by FCC inspectors. Finally it required all commercial and amateur radio operators to submit proof of citizenship, information on military service and foreign trips, proof of citizenship of close relatives, passport style photographs and a set of fingerprints. The identification data had to be certified by municipal, state or federal officers. To ensure that the new regulations were enforced, the FCC hired 500 new employees and added 100 additional patrol units to monitor the airwaves. In June 1941, 19 hams lost their licenses for communicating with foreign radio amateurs.<sup>2</sup>

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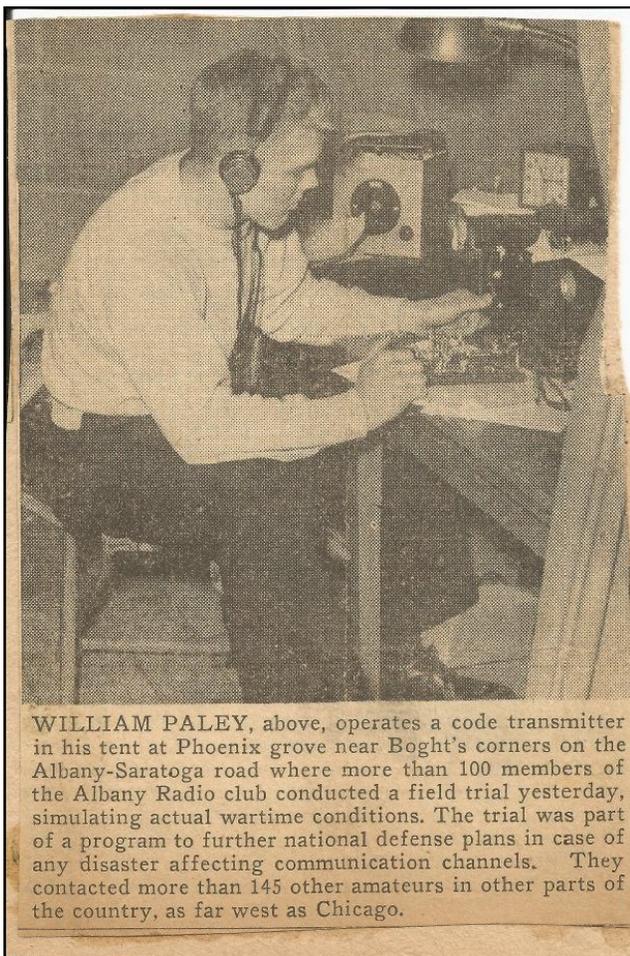
<sup>1</sup> Lewis Coe, *Wireless Radio: A Brief History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 1996), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Kristen Haring, *Ham Radio's Technical Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 100.

As the self-anointed voice of amateur radio in the United States, the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) began a campaign to foster positive public opinion toward amateur radio in the hopes that Federal government curtailment of radio operation would be less severe than it had been during World War I. Amateur radio clubs began to stress the valuable service hams could provide to Americans during the war. A 1940 clipping in the AARA archives from an unidentified newspaper explained:

In a move to further national defense plans in case of any disaster affecting communication channels more than 100 members of the Albany Radio Club will conduct a trial field test today at Phoenix grove, near Boght's Corners, Albany-Saratoga road.<sup>3</sup>

The event was organized by the ARRL and was a precursor to the annual peacetime field days that would become a regular feature of amateur radio clubs after the war. Members were to contact every section of the nation during the exercise. More than 65,000 amateurs throughout the country participated in the event.



WILLIAM PALEY, above, operates a code transmitter in his tent at Phoenix grove near Boght's corners on the Albany-Saratoga road where more than 100 members of the Albany Radio club conducted a field trial yesterday, simulating actual wartime conditions. The trial was part of a program to further national defense plans in case of any disaster affecting communication channels. They contacted more than 145 other amateurs in other parts of the country, as far west as Chicago.

*Unidentified newspaper clipping about a field-test day in the Capital District in 1940.*

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<sup>3</sup> Unknown, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 1, 1940.

According to Omer Martratt, W2ITQ, the Albany Amateur Radio Association suspended club functions and activities. Remaining members "...met twice weekly at the Glass House, a part of the Vincentian Institute and taught elementary radio to prospective service men."<sup>4</sup> According to Martratt, Brother Eric, W2ONE, of the Vincentian Institute Faculty taught radio and electrical theory. Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF, designed and built a code oscillator capable of providing code practice for 30 or 40 students and taught the code classes. Several members of the AARA assisted Wirsing with his teaching duties. War time conditions and the school's inability to provide heat resulted in the abandonment of the code and theory classes in the spring of 1943.

April 8, 1945 was designated VE Day and Japan formally surrendered on September 2, 1945. ARRL moved to reopen amateur radio communications shortly after Japan's surrender. Amateurs were allowed back on the air on September 21, 1945 on the single 112-Mc band. Additional bands, which had been requisitioned for army use during the war, could not be granted to amateurs as they were still in use by the armed forces. On November 15, 1945 the FCC permitted amateur radio operation on the 28 Mc band. Additional bands were released to the amateurs in 1946.<sup>5</sup> Locally, amateur radio operators were eager to begin preparations for their return to the radio waves. A Times Union article of November 16, 1945 explained the state of the AARA following the end of the War:

At least half the members of the Albany association are still serving in the armed forces. A majority of them were placed in the signal corps. Because of their knowledge of short wave radio.

And as a contribution toward the war effort, leaders of the Albany group conducted many classes in radio at Vincentian Institute to offer partial training to scores of young men who eventually entered the armed forces.<sup>6</sup>

Omer Martratt explained that Elmer Wirsing and another member called a meeting of the membership to reactivate the Association in January 1946. This first post-war meeting was held at the Albany Institute of History and Art with approximately 10 to 15 hams in attendance.<sup>7</sup> An article announcing this meeting appeared in the *Times*

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<sup>4</sup> Omer Martratt, *A Historical Summarization of Albany Amateur Radio Association*, AARA Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Richard A. Bartlett, *The World of Ham Radio, 1901-1950* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2007), 225.

<sup>6</sup> *Times Union*, November 16, 1945.

<sup>7</sup> Martratt, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*.

*Union* on January 8, 1946. The article noted that the AARA had been suspended for almost four years. In the article, Elmer Wirsing explained that the FCC had only lifted a few bans which limited radio communication. A 10 meter band would permit communication with points 1,000 miles from Albany, but not with nearer points such as NYC. Other bands available could be used for transmission to Schenectady, Troy and other parts of the Albany area.<sup>8</sup>

The first meeting in January 1946 only drew 15 or less members of the Albany Amateur Radio Association. But a later 1946 member list showed approximately 62 members, and by 1947, the AARA had 82 members. Although that number dipped slightly in 1948 and 1949, it represented respectable membership growth over a short period of time. Numbers were doubtlessly augmented as service men returned home to resume their former lives, complete with their amateur radio operations.

With the realities of World War II slowly fading into an unpleasant nightmare, the Albany Amateur Radio Association turned its focus onto club activities and publicity. Several AARA members appeared in "The Inquiring Reporter" column of a February 1946 newspaper. Elmer Wirsing, Omer Martratt and several others were asked "What was your biggest thrill as a radio ham?" Stephen Stanley, W2FQG, responded:

I came home from work late one night and tried to call some "hams" within 100 miles. The Northern lights were very active and I wasn't able to establish contact locally. Then my thrill came a few weeks later when I received a card from Dover, England, reporting that my signal had come in there that night, very loud and clear. My power was only 75 watts on the 75-meter band.<sup>9</sup>

Elmer Wirsing described making contact with Canton, China just before the Japanese attacked and captured the city in 1938:

I go in for working distant stations, DX, as we call it. I've contacted 100 different countries and China was the hardest to get and gave me the biggest thrill. When I contacted Canton, China, it was just before the Japs attacked the city. I was sure

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<sup>8</sup> *Times Union*, January 8, 1946.

<sup>9</sup> "The Inquiring Reporter," Unknown, February 10, 1946.

*The* **Inquiring Reporter**

**THE QUESTION**

*What was your biggest thrill as a radio "ham"?*

**Asked of:**  
Members of Albany Amateur Radio Association

**ANSWERS:**

**STEPHEN STANLEY**, 24 Emmet street, supervisor of engineering at WTRY. Call W2FQG:

"I came home from work late one night and tried to call some 'hams' within 100 miles. The Northern lights were very active and I wasn't able to establish contact locally. Then my thrill came a few weeks later when I received a card from Dover, England, reporting that my signal had come in there that night, very loud and clear. My power was only 75 watts on the 75-meter band."

**ELMER VIRSING**, 33 Quail street, radio serviceman, Call W2AWF:

"I go in for working distant stations, DX, as we call it. I've contacted 100 different countries and China was the hardest to get and gave me the biggest thrill. When I contacted Canton, China, it was just before the Japs attacked the city. I was sure I never would get a card from the Canton amateur to confirm my contact because of the Japs, so you can imagine what a thrill it was to get a card from there a month later."

**OMER L. MARTRATT**, 1088 Cortland street, Western Union employe, Call W2ITO.

"I talked with someone on the 10-meter radio-phone and the receiving operator recorded my voice and played it back to me. It was the first time I had heard my voice as it sounds over the air and it was quite a thrill."

**THOMAS McDERMOTT**, 2341 Sixth avenue, Troy, WA6Y engineer. Call W2HOA:

"Four of us were working a station in the Armory in Troy. One night we hit on a good way to see who would pay the check for our after-work snack. We would each call CQ, the general call, and answer the first reply we received. Whoever got an answer from nearest the Armory paid. The other fellows got answers from outside the state but mine was from only two blocks away. Some fellow there was on the air for the first time in two months so he could make his three contacts necessary to renew his license . . . All kidding aside I guess my greatest thrill came when a sub-chaser picked up boats from the torpedoed tanker from which I sent an SOS. That was in 1942 when I was in the Merchant marine—so I guess that wasn't a "ham" experience. We were adrift three and one-half days."

*FEB. 10, 1946*

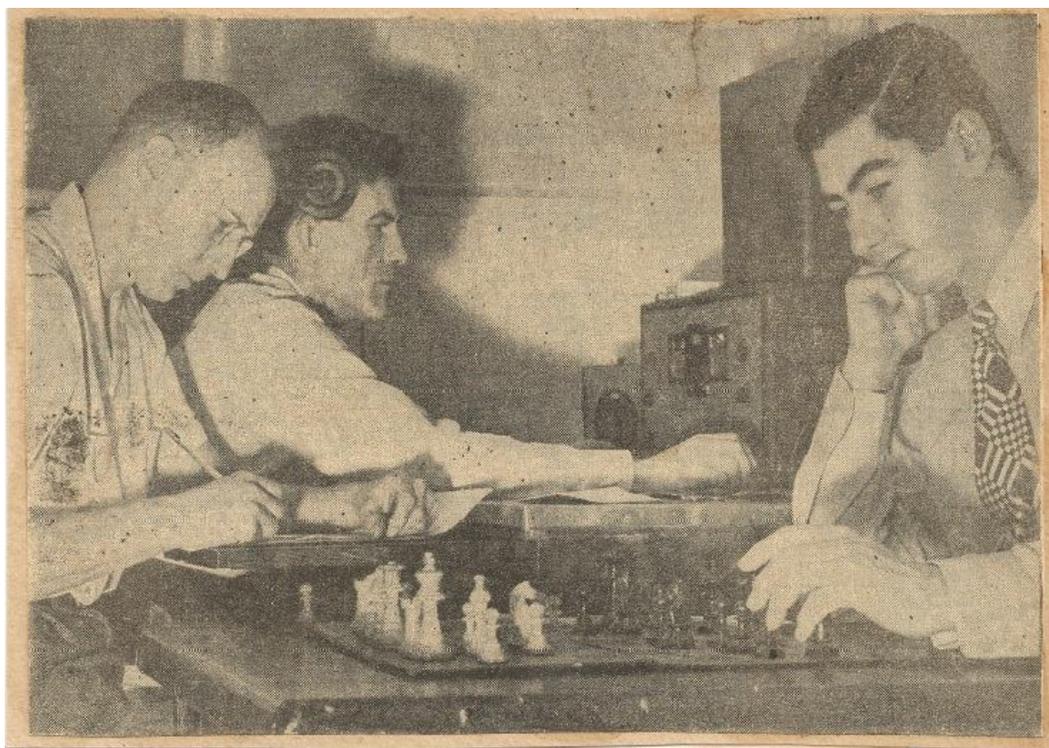
*The Inquiring Reporter, February 10, 1946.*

I would never get a card from the Canton amateur to confirm my contact...so you can imagine what a thrill it was to get a card from there a month later.<sup>10</sup>

Thomas McDermott, W2HOA, recounted an experience that was not technically that of a radio ham:

...I guess my greatest thrill came when a sub-chaser picked up boats from the torpedoed tanker from which I sent an SOS. That was in 1942 when I was in the Merchant marine – so I guess that wasn't a 'ham' experience. We were adrift for three and one-half days.<sup>11</sup>

From November to December 1946, AARA facilitated a chess game over the airwaves between the Albany and Buffalo chess clubs. The game took place at the home of Elmer Wirsing and received significant newspaper coverage before ending in a tie.<sup>12</sup>



ELMER WIRSING, William J. Barnes and Arthur Fox (top left) as they start play in Albany in a game of chess over the airways to Buffalo.

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<sup>10</sup> "The Inquiring Reporter," Unknown, February 10, 1946.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Unknown, November 1946 and December 1946.

The Association made news again in 1948 when AARA members attempted to contact 12 Air Force men rescued from a Greenland Ice Cap, ostensibly to provide news of 2 of the airmen whose families lived in the area. It didn't hurt press relations that the Times Union stood to profit from any exclusive news that was transmitted over the wire and could be shared with the reading public.<sup>13</sup> One of the youngest members of the AARA in 1946 was featured in an article in the Times Union on December 8, 1946. Brown Pulliam, W2VDO, was a 16 year old Albany High Student. Just two years later, Brown would be elected as Vice President of the Association at the young age of 18.<sup>14</sup>

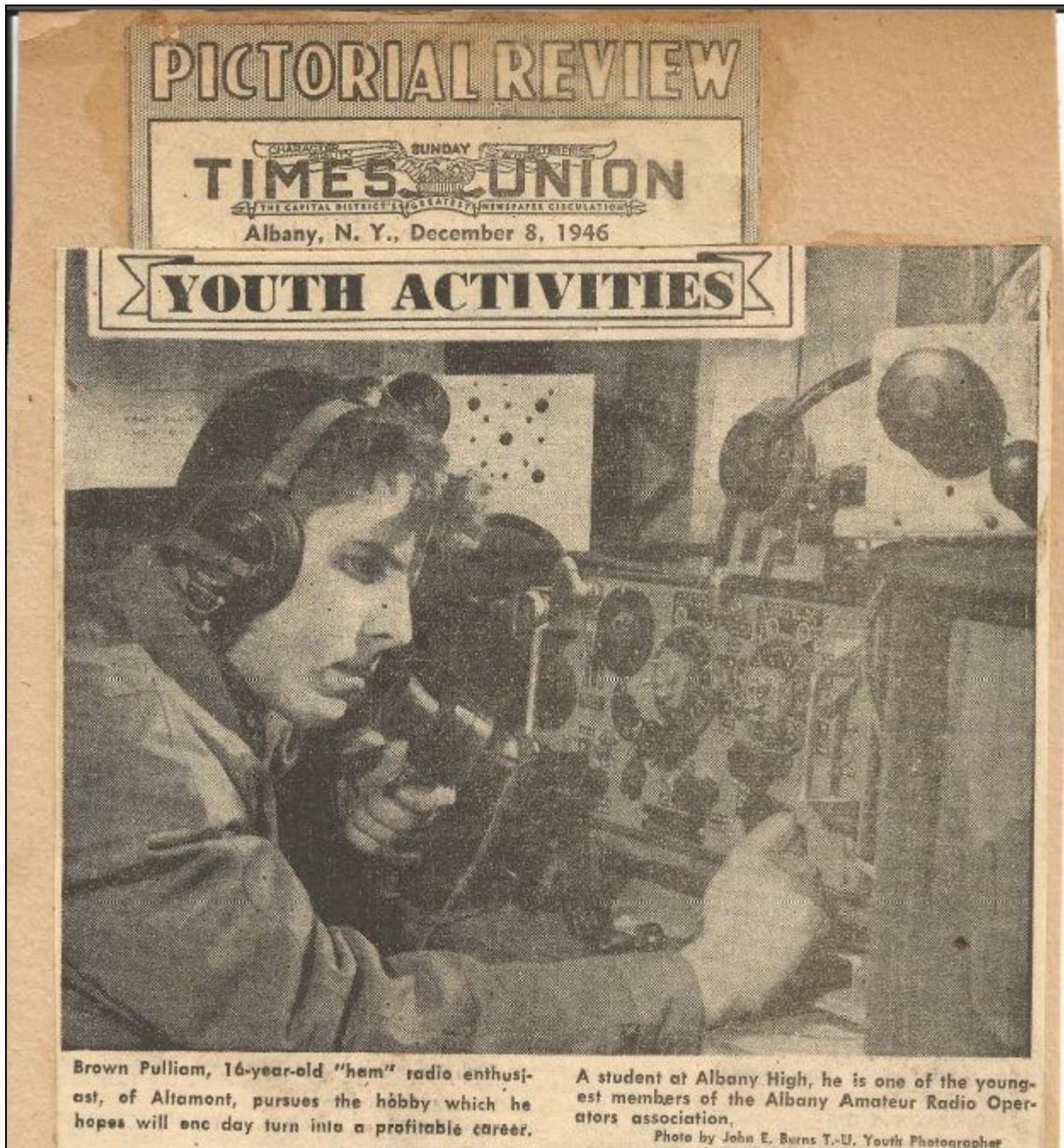
One of the biggest club events of the 1940s was the Hudson Division of the ARRL convention held in Albany at the Ten Eyck Hotel. It was an enormous challenge for an organization that was just beginning to see its membership numbers climb as it emerged from the black hole of amateur radio during the war years. Held over the course of several days in October 1948, it was an opportunity for Albany Amateur Radio Association to show its hospitality and organizational success to fellow radio clubs in the Hudson Division and was a heartening booster to a club which, like so many others in the 1940s, was finding its way again. The convention earned the Association positive press coverage and the chance to host the event again in a few short years.

The close of the 1940s saw the Albany Amateur Radio Association poised to continue its successful growth as an amateur radio club. The AARA offered camaraderie, technical advice, instruction and encouragement to local longtime hams and newcomers. Additionally it had established a legacy of service derived from the experiences of World War II that charted a course of public service to the local and world community that would be followed with enthusiasm in the coming decades.

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<sup>13</sup> *Times Union*, December 30, 1948.

<sup>14</sup> "Youth's Activities," *Times Union*, December 8, 1946.



*This Pictorial Review from the Times Union features Brown Pulliam, the 16-year-old "ham" radio enthusiast and one of the youngest members of the Albany Amateur Radio Operators association who was later elected to be vice president of the group when he was only 18 years old.*

SECTION 3: Albany Amateur Radio Association and the 1940s

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*Hudson Division of AARL Convention in Albany, New York in 1948.*

SECTION 3: Albany Amateur Radio Association and the 1940s

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*Hudson Division of AARL Convention in Albany, New York in 1948.*

## SECTION 4: Albany Amateur Radio Association Functions

The Albany Amateur Radio Association's 1935 constitution decreed that there would be a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and an Activities Manager. By 1990, amendments to the constitution made in the 1950s (when a new method of electing officers was introduced among other minor changes)<sup>1</sup>, and 1970s had changed the face of the organizational structure. Added to the original positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, was a Trustee for the Association's call sign, the editor of the Association's publication, *B-Plus*, and three elected Directors. Elections were typically held in December to fill the ranks of officers for the following year.<sup>2</sup>

The Association held general member meetings as well as board member meetings. The AARA archives contain minutes for meetings starting in 1967 and ending in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. They are a good source of information regarding the general operations of the Association. It is not known what happened to earlier recorded minutes. Bi-monthly meetings in the early days of the organization eventually changed to monthly general member meetings, held between September and June, with a cessation of meetings during the summer months of July and August.

It cost \$.25 to be a member of the Albany Amateur Radio Association in 1935.<sup>3</sup> The number of membership levels increased as the years wore on from one general membership level in 1935, to multiple levels including Honorary Life Membership, Full Membership, Junior Membership and Family Membership by 1990. This change reflected the diversity and lifestyle changes of AARA members as well as the evolving needs of the organization. For example, the AARA began to offer Family Membership to both encourage and take advantage of the increased interest and participation by the

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<sup>1</sup> Omer Martratt, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*, Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) Archives.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution and By-Laws of the Albany Amateur Radio Association, Inc.*, AARA Archives, February 1990.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitution of the Albany Amateur Radio Association*, AARA Archives, October 1, 1935.

families of AARA members. Understandably, dues have risen in price from the \$.25 members paid in the 1930s. At various times in the minutes of AARA meetings, proposals to raise the cost of membership were raised. A need for increased revenue to cover the cost of postage, increased cost of insurance and meeting space were some of the reasons cited to justify the increase in membership cost.<sup>4</sup> 2013 dues for the AARA are \$15 for members electing to access *B-Plus* online and \$20 for members who choose to have the publication mailed to their home.

The Albany Amateur Radio Association used several different locations over the years for meeting and activity space. The initial meetings in the 1930s were held at the Y.M.C.A building in Albany. Immediately following World War II, the group held their first meeting at the Albany Institute of History and Art. By the 1970s, the Association had rooms in the Red Cross Building in Albany. Minutes of a Board Meeting in January 1972 noted that an AARA member's car was stolen from the parking lot of the Red Cross building during a meeting. "The object of the theft was the CB radio for resale."<sup>5</sup> Despite the theft, the organization enjoyed a mutually respectful relationship with the Red Cross for whom they performed many public service functions. The AARA maintained meeting space with the Red Cross until 1991 when they moved to the Colonie Community Center. In 2013, the AARA meets at the Bethlehem Town Hall in Delmar, NY.

#### MEETINGS

The first official action made by the newly elected President, Ben KA2WEI was to cancel the January meeting, thus preserving for himself a place in history for being the first President to cancel a meeting.<sup>6</sup>

Whether the distinction that Ben Lanzo seemingly earned when he canceled that meeting in January 1996 was in fact the first time an AARA President had cancelled a meeting is uncertain, but the light-hearted tone of the note in the abbreviated minutes

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<sup>4</sup> *B-Plus*, AARA Archives, August 29, 1991.

<sup>5</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, January 21, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, January 12, 1996.

suggests an organization with a sense of humor and self-deprecation which may in part account for the Association's longevity.

Meetings generally covered the happenings of the AARA. Notice of workshops, novice classes, contests and club gatherings, the latest public service project, upcoming ARRL tests, show and tell with unique or funny QSLs, request for books for the Association library - all of this was communicated to members amidst coffee and donuts before meetings adjourned to allow a scheduled speaker to take the floor. Speakers were solicited from the ranks of AARA members as often as they were from the outside world. Some hams would show slides of a recent vacation they took, or give a technical presentation about the newest radio technology. Once in a while the AARA would host a joint meeting with another area radio club. In 1953 a speaker addressed a joint meeting of the AARA and the Schenectady Amateur Radio Association.<sup>7</sup> Meetings provided a forum for education, for community involvement and for socializing.

Meetings of the membership were instrumental in engaging hams in conversations about important issues that affected radio operating. Legal challenges affecting other amateurs were brought to the attention of the membership as a call to action. In the 1970s, the Association followed the case of a ham operating in Westchester, NY. The group voted to donate \$75 to the Harmonic Hill Radio Club to help with the Westchester ham's legal expenses as he defended himself against a lawsuit related to his radio operating.<sup>8</sup> The idea that every legal battle won by one amateur ham was a legal battle won by all amateur hams was a motivating factor behind AARA decisions to provide financial and technical support to embattled amateurs everywhere. In 1994 one of AARA's own members, after being consistently denied a building permit to erect an antenna tower by the Town of Clifton Park, resolved to file a law suit in Federal Court against the Town. The ARRL recommended a lawyer and AARA members together with other area radio clubs contributed money for legal fees.<sup>9</sup> His efforts were successful and by 1995 he had received a building permit

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<sup>7</sup> AARA Archives, October 28, 1953.

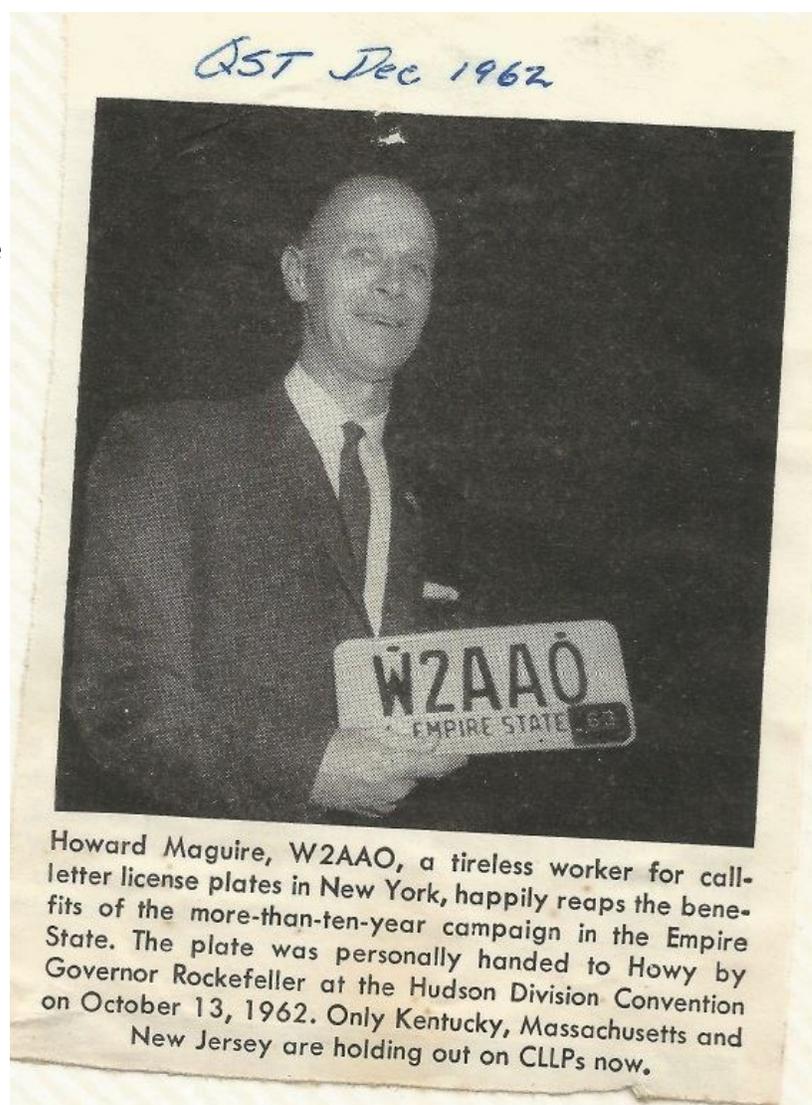
<sup>8</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, June 14, 1974.

<sup>9</sup> AARA Archives, 1994.

to erect a tower at his QSO in Clifton Park.<sup>10</sup>

The membership took up the fight for the passage of a bill by New York State's government to allow for the issuance of special amateur call license plates to licensed radio amateurs in the 1950s. Writing campaigns were led by Howard S. Maguire, W2AAO, Chairman of the AARA's License Plate Committee. Bolstering the request for the bill's passage was the argument that amateurs provided valuable emergency services free of charge to authorities in emergency situations. Special amateur call licenses would enable hams to quickly reach the scene of an emergency situation to begin providing help instead of being held up by authorities unaware of the licensed skill set of the driver in front of him. In 1962 after a very long battle, the hams claimed victory and Howard Maguire was personally handed his special amateur call number license plate by Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller.<sup>11</sup>

*Howard Maguire proudly displays his call-letter license plate. 1962.*



<sup>10</sup> AARA Archives, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> AARA Archives, From Howard S. Maguire, January 20, 1956.



Times Union, December 24, 1962.

With the United States Operation Desert Storm in full swing, AARA members discussed the local role radio operations might have to play at the January meeting in 1991. The Albany Veteran's Administration Hospital was a designated distribution facility for United States battle casualties. There was the potential for a significant number of volunteers to provide communications for armed forces personnel.<sup>12</sup> The brevity of the Gulf War precluded any action needed by local amateur radio operators, but had their assistance been necessary, the Albany area was prepared for any emergency. The Schenectady and Saratoga amateurs were to cover airport positions while the Rensselaer and Albany amateurs were to cover communications at the VA hospital.<sup>13</sup>

As modern technology has joined traditional communications methods, the hams have used their meetings and newsletters to keep up with the changes. Packet radio and the "World Wide Web" appeared hand in hand with the increased popularity and availability of computers in the 1990s and the club worked together to master challenges these new technologies represented. Packet radio was a new mode of communication that allowed for error free transmissions by combining a radio with a computer. The internet offered the AARA a new forum for advertising the Association and its activities. The October 1995 issue of *B-Plus* announced to the membership that the AARA was online and had become "the first capital district non-academic amateur club on the www!"<sup>14</sup> The organization's website was hosted at the private expense of one of its members on his AOL subscription. Questions about broadband over Power line (BPL) were addressed in a 2004 meeting. Many preferred fiber to the home, cable, DSL and wireless broadband.<sup>15</sup>

Controversies like CB radio versus amateur radio incurred the wrath of the membership publicly. The FCC established Citizens Band radio service (CB) in 1945 as a way to allow for communication in large businesses or between central offices and traveling employees. The two-way radio communication did not require either

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<sup>12</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, January 11, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, February 8, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, October 1995.

<sup>15</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, 2004.

specialized knowledge or orderly behavior. The FCC granted a CB license to every adult citizen of the United States who requested one, without any examination. CB operations of more than 150 miles were banned by the FCC and adjustments to transmitters were only to be made by commercial radio license holders. By 1963, there were 450,000 licensed CB operators, outnumbering amateurs by 9 to 5. It was no longer a tool of businesses but a hobby in its own right. The CB craze really hit in the late 1960s and estimates put the number of CBers as high as 15 to 20 million people during the peak of its popularity in the mid-1970s. The culture of CB radio was very different from that of amateur radio and CBers earned a reputation of engaging in subversive and illegal activities while communicating by CB. There were instances of people using CB to attempt to circumvent the law, for example, by alerting fellow drivers about police speed traps along highways. This working against authority was a very different notion from amateur radio's commitment to working in conjunction with authority to serve the public.<sup>16</sup> The clash between the two groups was contentious at times, with amateur operators defending the legitimacy and usefulness of their hobby against the incursion of CB radio.

AARA members fearlessly waded into the debate, sending letters to the Editor of the Times Union to argue the case for Ham radio against CB. AARA member William Lowenberg, Jr., W200J wrote a response in 1964 to a published letter by the President of Capital District Citizens' Band Radio Club Inc., addressing the complaints and claims made by the CB president. The gist of Lowenberg's argument was that CB radio was not for use as a hobby but for businesses. He claimed hobby radio was the domain of hams: "Unable or unwilling to take and pass the FCC amateur radio examinations, these citizen banders are playing illegally at being hams. They want the privileges, but they are not willing to earn them."<sup>17</sup> Another AARA member wrote,

...the amateur radio examinations are available to every citizen in the United States and it only requires a minimum knowledge of electronics and Morse Code to pass them. But to possess the knowledge, one must have enough intestinal fortitude to acquire it. CBers are trying to become hams the easy way.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kristen Haring, *Ham Radio's Technical Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 155-156.

<sup>17</sup> *Times Union*, September 5, 1964.

<sup>18</sup> *Times Union*, September 9, 1964.

But for every ham vs. CB debate or legislative fight for specialized licenses, there were just as many fun and fascinating projects that the Association participated in. A 1983 issue of *B-Plus* had a section devoted to Space Shuttle STS-9. A 2 meter hand held transceiver and antenna designed to fit into the shuttle was to be operated by Astronaut Owen Gamott during his off hours while aboard the Shuttle. Members were informed and encouraged to work the shuttle if they could.<sup>19</sup>

The AARA opened a radio station at Hudson Valley Community College in 1988 and invited members to visit the station and work the radio waves from there.<sup>20</sup> And when Albany was celebrating its Tri-Centennial in 1986, AARA “launched a year-long program to tell the world, via ham radio, of the City of Albany’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.”<sup>21</sup> The idea was that members were to try and contact sister cities around the world and invite the officials of those other Albanys to attend the July 22, 1986 Tri-Centennial celebration of the city.<sup>22</sup>

## EDUCATION

Considered to be one of its most important functions, education has always remained a top priority for the Albany Amateur Radio Association. The Association’s dedication to educating amateur ham radio operators is chronicled in the minutes preserved within the organization’s archives. During World War II, those hams who were not enlisted to serve in the armed forces had provided classes to potential radio operators who would be called to service. AARA members taught courses on behalf of the Albany Civil Defense organization in the 1950s and 1960s to teach people how to become ham radio operators.<sup>23</sup> Issues of *B-Plus* have advertised both the classes available to members as well as the need for teachers to Elmer the less experienced in the group. In 1985 when budget cuts caused the FCC to discontinue administering amateur radio operator license exams, an act of Congress allowed members of the AARA as well as other radio club members nationwide to offer the exams instead.

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<sup>19</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, October 1983.

<sup>20</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, January 1988.

<sup>21</sup> AARA Archive, *B-Plus*, February 1986.

<sup>22</sup> *Times Union*, February 18, 1986.

<sup>23</sup> AARA Archives, February 17, 1953.

## SECTION 4: Albany Amateur Radio Association Functions

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The FCC issued licenses to successful license applicants after volunteer examiners certified the results of the exams to the Commission.<sup>24</sup> ATVET, Albany/Troy Volunteer Examiner Team, marked 13 years of administering tests on behalf of the FCC in 1997.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to educating existing amateur radio operators, the AARA engaged in public demonstrations to introduce the local non-ham population to the world of amateur radio. Almost every decade some public demonstration was scheduled that provided AARA members with an opportunity to de-mystify the hobby and entice people into learning more. In the 1950s, the AARA set up a display at Albany Junior Chamber of Commerce Hobby Show,<sup>26</sup> the Albany Crafts and Hobby Show located at the New Scotland Avenue Armory<sup>27</sup> and the Albany Home Show Exposition.<sup>28</sup>



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<sup>24</sup> AARA Archives, From William Lowenberg, Jr., December 28, 1985.

<sup>25</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, April 1997.

<sup>26</sup> *Times Union*, December 1, 1950.

<sup>27</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook Vol. 1, November 1951.

<sup>28</sup> AARA Archives, March 22, 1953.

SECTION 4: Albany Amateur Radio Association Functions

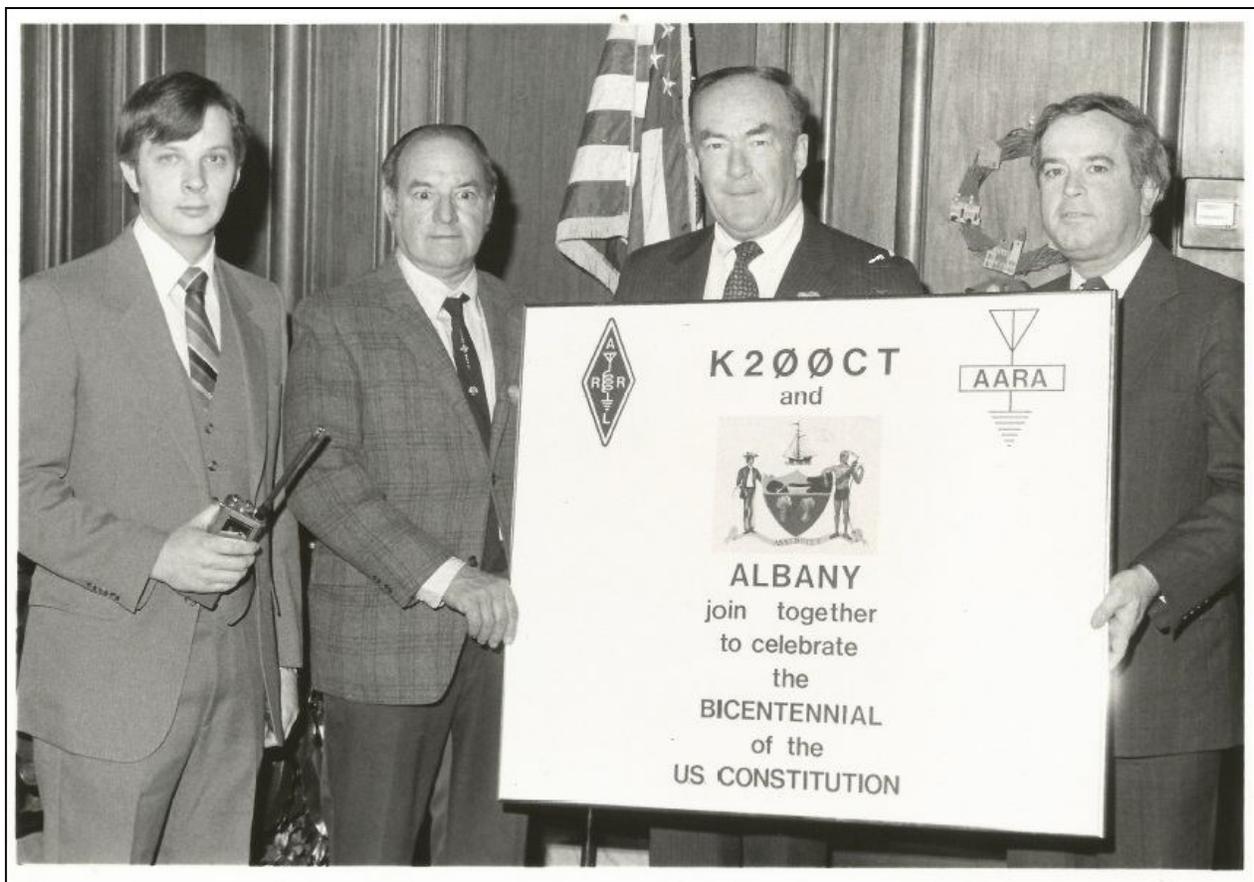


*Photographs of the AARA table at a 1951 Hobby Show (left and above).*

## SECTION 4: Albany Amateur Radio Association Functions

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Exhibitions at the Altamont Fair in 1974 and the Colonie Center Mall in 1976 and again in 1979 were very public locations where the organization hoped to cash in on a large amount of foot traffic. The AARA returned to the Altamont Fair in the 1980s and 1990s, offering a message fair where AARA members would send out messages free of charge on behalf of the public to their family and friends. Similar message fairs were held at the McDonald's in Delmar, NY around Christmas time for a number of years. In 1986 112 holiday messages were sent out by AARA members from the McDonald's.<sup>29</sup> Members manned a display at the New York State Museum to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of New York State's ratification of the Constitution of the United States and participated in Albany's First Night celebration in 1994.<sup>30 31</sup>



*AARA and the commemoration of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution.*

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<sup>29</sup> *Times Union*, December 31, 1986.

<sup>30</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, March 1988.

<sup>31</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, January 1995.

## MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

As with all organizations, membership levels within the AARA rose and fell from year to year and decade to decade. The Association experienced rapid levels of growth following the cessation of hostilities that marked the end of World War II. Member numbers were around 143 members in 1955 and 104 in 1957.<sup>32</sup> Within the decade of the 1960s, there were approximately 87 members in 1962, 104 in 1966 and up to 142 in 1967.

While the number generally went up, the Association's minutes were telling a different story. During a meeting in February of 1968, "An avid discussion of the direction in which the club is going took place. . . . DOWNHILL!"<sup>33</sup> At the February 1970 general meeting, Clifford Dodge, WA2DTE, moved to dissolve the Albany Amateur Radio Association due to a lack of interest and attendance.<sup>34</sup> At the next meeting of the group, Clifford started the discussion, as the minutes recorded:

He noted many people who are here tonight haven't been here in years. The purpose of the radio meeting in the past was to help amateurs with their building projects, but now with all the commercial equipment available and the specialization in fields of ham radio, the club is becoming passé. He said the club has disbanded before and has started up again. He would like to see the club keep going, but not in the same direction."<sup>35</sup>

The meeting continued with a large portion of discussion about ways the Association could reinvigorate interest in its activities to entice inactive members to take a more active role. Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF, said, "We need more of a social life. We shouldn't let ourselves be influenced by people that don't come to meetings."<sup>36</sup> The AARA secretary recorded, "The meeting was adjourned somewhere around 10:30 for coffee, donuts and whatever. And I might add, with an air of renewed enthusiasm."<sup>37</sup>

The lack of attendance and perceived disinterest in amateur radio was not in the

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<sup>32</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook, No. 2, 1955, 1957.

<sup>33</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, February 9, 1965.

<sup>34</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, February 13, 1970.

<sup>35</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, March 13, 1970.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

minds of the AARA members alone. They were giving voice to an actual declination in the number of people who were electing to become ham radio operators. Between 1965 and 1975, the arrival of the computer age and the accessibility of CB radio dulled interest and enthusiasm in amateur radio. The number of licensed hams during this ten-year period increased at the slowest rate in the history of the hobby, experiencing a growth of only .5% over ten years. 1972 to 1974 was the only period of time of consecutive years of decline. AARA member numbers did not crawl out of the low 100s until 1976 when the roles of membership reached 184. By 1980 there were approximately 304 members of the AARA. This increase in membership was on par with the national trend. The ham community grew by 40% between 1975 and 1980. This increase was certainly affected by the sudden collapse in CB popularity. Increased sun spot activity in the late 1970s made short range CB conditions unpredictable while at the same time improving long range ham radio contacts. In 1976 the FCC doubled the number of channels allotted to CB radio. This eased the crowding on the previously available channels but CBers needed new transceivers to take advantage of the expansion but the expenses involved meant many CBers stuck with their older, obsolete models.<sup>38</sup>

Numbers of AARA members began to decline in the 1980s from the 1980 high of approximately 304 members. In the 1990s issues of improving the lack of member participation and support for the club was being mentioned in B-Plus issues while minutes of the January 1997 meeting included ideas such as new member packages and efforts to change AARA's image of being an elitist group.<sup>39</sup>

### EVENTS

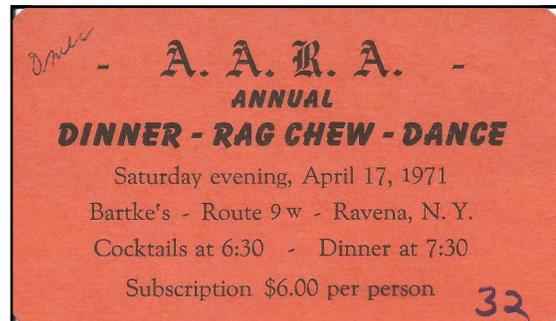
Association events served multiple purposes. They generated much needed revenue for the AARA budget. Some had an educational component. Often they gave the organizational levels of the Association a forum to honor fellow members. But

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<sup>38</sup>Haring, *Ham Radio's Technical Culture*, 156-157.

<sup>39</sup>AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, January 15, 1997.

above all, association events provided an opportunity for individuals to “eyeball” the people they often only communicated with over the air waves. The Annual Dinner was one of the events sponsored by the Albany Amateur Radio Association. It was held at various restaurants over the years like the Bavarian Chalet, the Italian American Center and the Polish American Club. Dinners were as simple as a meal with a speaker or as elaborate as a dinner with dancing and rag chewing. They presented the AARA with an opportunity to recognize individual members for their service or achievements in the past year.



1971 AARA annual dinner ticket. AARA archives.

The annual auction was a crowd pleaser according to the AARA archives. The auction allowed members to sell radio equipment they no longer wanted or used to other hams. The auction brought in a 10% commission on all items sold for individuals into the coffers of the Association.<sup>40</sup> Members were able to support the organization while making money to purchase new or used equipment to improve their radio operations in their ham shacks at home.



1993 Field Day with AARA.

Raffle ticket sales were introduced as another way to earn money for the organization. Field Day, to be discussed in more detail in a later section, was an event that allowed members to test their radio equipment in an environment that simulated the conditions of a real emergency situation, to compete with

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<sup>40</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, December 1985.

other amateur radio clubs nationwide in attempting to make the most contacts with other hams and to spend a continuous block of time doing what the hams loved best with their fellow members.



Times Union/STEPHEN WEAVER

STEVE WATSON, left, and Dennis Bulger build a radio antenna for American Radio Relay Field Day Saturday.

## Ham radio operators tune in to relay day

Capital Region amateur radio operators roughed it Saturday for the nation's largest ham radio on-air outdoor event, the American Radio Relay Field Day 1995.

Hundreds of hams in Albany set up at Thacher Park and scores of others tweaked their radios at the Glenville Hills Fire Station and in Frear Park in Troy.

They started at 2 p.m. Saturday and will be at it until 2 p.m. today. During that time, the ham radio operators must work under emergency conditions, using power generators or batteries and only portable

antennas. They will try to contact thousands of other operators throughout the United States and Canada.

"Other events are distance contests, but this is to get the best volume in emergency situations," said Tim Long, field day coordinator for the Schenectady Amateur Radio Association.

"Field Day is a way for hams to get outdoors and have fun under some difficult situations," said Ernie Popp, president of the Albany Amateur Radio Association. "But it's also a chance for them to fine-tune emer-

gency communications skills."

Members of formal emergency organizations, such as Amateur Radio Emergency Services and Radio Amateur Communication Emergency Services, regularly participate in the nationwide event. The league estimates that more than 35,000 hams participated in the yearly field day.

The American Radio Relay League's field organization has been effective in establishing emergency communication networks during floods, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes and other major disasters.

AARA

Various other events have been held throughout the history of the AARA. As mentioned in Section II, a Hamfest was held in 1935 and 1936. Clam bakes in the early 1950s afforded an opportunity for relaxed socialization. “Homebrew Night” was a popular event that took place at various times over the Association’s history. As the January 1986 issue of *B-Plus* explained “Homebrew Night is the time to bring your latest home-built projects to show and describe, and maybe even win a prize.”<sup>41</sup> In the early days of amateur radio operating, commercially produced radio equipment was far too expensive for the budgets of most amateur operators. Amateur enthusiasts resorted to creating their own equipment using material found in the home and local scrap yards. Once radio equipment became more affordable, there was less and less need for amateurs to build their stations from scrap. AARA’s Homebrew Nights encouraged ham operators of all ages to return to the early days of amateur radio. Many advances made in radio technology were the result of the scientific minded amateurs whose tinkering and experimenting drove improvements in the field and Homebrew Nights harkened back to that legacy.

AARA held an Old Timers Night in June of 1969. Omer Martratt, W2ITQ and two other “old timers” used a 1929 vintage key hooked up to a 75-year old sounder.<sup>42</sup> To be considered an “old timer,” an AARA member had to present sufficient evidence of being a licensed amateur radio operator for 20 years or more.<sup>43</sup> An Old Timers Night dinner was given in honor of Harry C. Condon, W2JQI at the Petit Paris restaurant in Albany in 1951. Harry was honored for being a charter member of the organization.<sup>44</sup> Another Old Timers Night in 1965 honored senior members of the AARA including Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, January 1986.

<sup>42</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, June 20, 1969.

<sup>43</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, March 1995.

<sup>44</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrap Book Vol. 1, November 28, 1951.

<sup>45</sup> *The Knickerbocker News*, November 20, 1965.

## HONORS

The AARA has awarded various honors to members over the years. The Harry C. Condon Award was given to two club members in 1962 for their achievement of being outstanding hams in the Albany region.<sup>46</sup> Members with at least 25 years of membership in the AARA received certificates of recognition in 1962 as well.<sup>47</sup> The President's Award was given to recognize a club member for outstanding service to the Association. Starting in 1992, an annual AARA Service Award was given each year to deserving members.<sup>48</sup> The highest honor that the club can bestow is Honorary Life Membership in the Association. It has been awarded only 10 times in AARA's history.

## CONTESTS

“For a club that is not particularly contest-oriented as an organization, AARA has produced some of the top testers in the U.S...” the *B-Plus* stated in a June 1984 issue. Part of the article included results for a number of contests. In the 1983 CQ WPX SSB test, John Yodis, K2VV placed 1<sup>st</sup> and Mike Kardos, K2QF placed 11<sup>th</sup> in the country. John Yodis placed 9<sup>th</sup> and Ira Stoler, K2RD placed 19<sup>th</sup> in the United States in the 1983 CQ WWCW, and John Yodis and Saul Abrams, K2XA placed 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in the United States in the 1983 CQ WWSSB test.<sup>49</sup>

A regular component of the Association's official publication, *B-Plus*, were announcements of ongoing, upcoming and recently ended contests and columns were featured with headings such as “A Report on Contesting in Capitaland” and “Capitalize on DXing in Capitaland.” The organization hosted its own contests, like the 10 Meter WARM sprint and it notified members of national contests as well. Many AARA members relished the challenge contests brought to their radio operating experience.

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<sup>46</sup> *Times Union*, December 18, 1962.

<sup>47</sup> AARA Archives, November 1962.

<sup>48</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, May 14, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, June 1984.



Times Union, *December 1962.*

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<sup>41</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, January 1986.

<sup>42</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, June 20, 1969.

<sup>43</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, March 1995.

<sup>44</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrap Book Vol. 1, November 28, 1951.

<sup>45</sup> *The Knickerbocker News*, November 20, 1965.

SECTION 4: Albany Amateur Radio Association Functions

ALBANY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

MAY 28, 1964 MEETING: at this Fridays meeting, everyone bring some little gadget that you built and think the fellows might be interested in. Please DON'T FORGET. VOL. I NO. I

Here is something that we should all get behind. Its about time AARA had a paper or bulletin all its own, so lets support it all the way. We're not sure what you fellows want, so we're going to fill this issue with what we can scrouge up. as a result of a great many phone calls, we got hold of what comes next.

#2100 is running a class at the VA hospital. There are about twenty in the class that includes 12 AD's. The class is being held once a week at the hospital. Edward's been off the air a little, lately, because he's been fooling with a little 6L6 transmitter.

Doctor Woolsey, #28GZ invited us over to see the rig at the VA hospital. They have a very nice line up there consisting of a Viking 2 on 80-10, a Gonset Communicator on 2, and for the station receiver there is an HRO-60. On the roof there is an 80 meter dipole fed with coax, a twenty meter dipole coax fed also, a five element 2 meter beam, and plans for a twenty meter beam with a rotator. There is also a two meter ground plane in use too, I believe.

#2114 is a little inactive right now because of spring cleaning. He's planning to get a 522 and a two meter converter if his deal works out, and then he'll be on two. Omar has been experimenting with UHF antennas and their directional effects using a Granco converter. States definitely that he's not a TV addict. Omar has been taking his stand at the VA hospital rig too. He says that he has lots of small parts to sell. The result of years of hoarding.

#210H has also been taking his stand at the VA hospital rig. Steph has a nestak signal generator for sale (SG-6), factory calibrated with the instruction book, very good condx \$12.50. He also has a Vibroplex bug original model \$5.50, and a small metal filing cabinet, 12x18 1/2, for \$2.00. Call Stan Cranker, phone 9-4292.

#211A has a 6C-696 converted for 807's for sale--\$15.00. He has the power supply and the modulator for the 696 (80 mtr arc 5) for \$7.00. He's also got a million more that he wants \$15.00 for. Call Alko and ask for Stan Pawlic.

#21VF & #21RF now are the proud owners of amateur Extra Class licenses.

#2FMA just got his 2nd class phone commercial license. He also has a newly acquired model 12 teletype machine that will be on the air in two or three weeks.

On April 22 at the Sneezy Palmer VFA post, area men in CD had an evening of fun and instruction. Col. Jacobson and Elmer Wirsing gave interesting talks on CD. 35 men were present including many novices. 24 hour clocks were given out to the key area CD stations.

#2AV4 is looking for a tube tester. Doc's been pretty active on two lately using a Gonset.

Elmer Wirsing is looking for CD stations around Anox and Berne.

It seems that teletype may possibly be picking up in the area. Gary, #2LAF has a model 14 printer working and John #2ARB has a complete model 26 TF machine that he expects to have on the air shortly. #2FMA now has a model 12 TF machine that should be on the air shortly, too.

well, I hope that the new bulletin meets with your approval. I'd appreciate any comments that might help out. Has anyone got anything that he wants to swap, sell or trade? If you have, lets hear about it. Call 62-5275, #2FMA and ask for Bill.

Vy 73,  
Bill

### B-PLUS

A precursor to the first issue of *B-Plus* was created in May 1954.<sup>50</sup> The first issue of Albany Amateur Radio Association's official publication was on April 15, 1955. The newsletter has been produced monthly since then. It featured a mix of information: salutations from officers of the group; announcements of speakers for upcoming meetings; information on contesting; news from the ARRL and FCC; notice of classes and license exams; lists of items up for sale; mention of silent keys and pleas for members to pay their dues. When the cost of postage became an undue consideration on the Association's finances, the option of viewing *B-Plus* on AARA's website was offered to members with a lower price for membership. The AARA archives houses a large number of *B-Plus* issues from 1976 to 2006.

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<sup>50</sup>AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook Vol. 1, May 28, 1954.

## SECTION 5: Albany Amateur Radio Association and Women

One XYL defined amateur radio as “...a pursuit in which one spends ridiculous amounts of money, time and energy to talk to people you never met and wouldn’t even pass the time of day with if they were sitting next to you on the bus.<sup>1</sup> Is that the only role women have played in relation to the Albany Amateur Radio Association? That of a long-suffering wife whose husband only leaves his ham shack for dinner and the annual AARA auction?

There is not much information available in the AARA archives which shed light on the history of women in the Association. The archives show that the Albany Amateur Radio Association had its own auxiliary group under the leadership of the XYLs and YLs of OMs in the AARA. The auxiliary group played an important role at the 1948 Hudson Division of the American Radio Relay League Convention and again at the 1952 Convention. The auxiliary members scheduled activities and outings for the wives of the ham operators attending the Conventions, which seems to indicate that more ham wives than female hams attended the weekend long meetings.

A survey of the available early member lists of the Association shows that c.1935 a Mrs. L. King, W2OSM, was a member of the organization along with her husband Lawrence.<sup>2</sup> Information about the 1940 officers of the Association, while incomplete, shows that a woman named Dorothy Knapp, W2MIY, was elected Treasurer of the AARA. Assuming this information is correct, this is the earliest date of a female officer for the organization.<sup>3</sup> But a further search of the member lists available in the 1940s do not show Dorothy Knapp listed again. If this information is correct, a

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<sup>1</sup> Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) Archives, “Informals For the Net,” *B-Plus*, April 1982.

<sup>2</sup> AARA Archives, c. 1935.

<sup>3</sup> O.L. Martratt, W2ITQ, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Associations*, AARA Archives.

**ALBANY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION AUXILIARY  
OFFICERS, 1952**



MRS. STEPHEN J. NEASON  
*President*



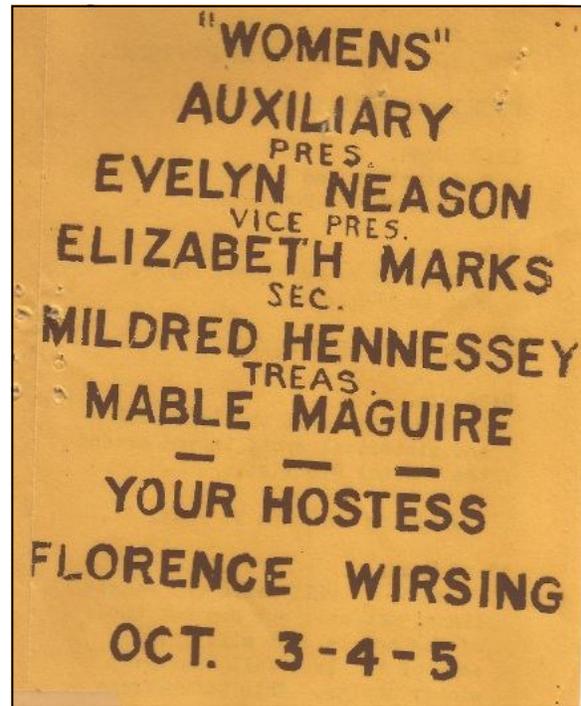
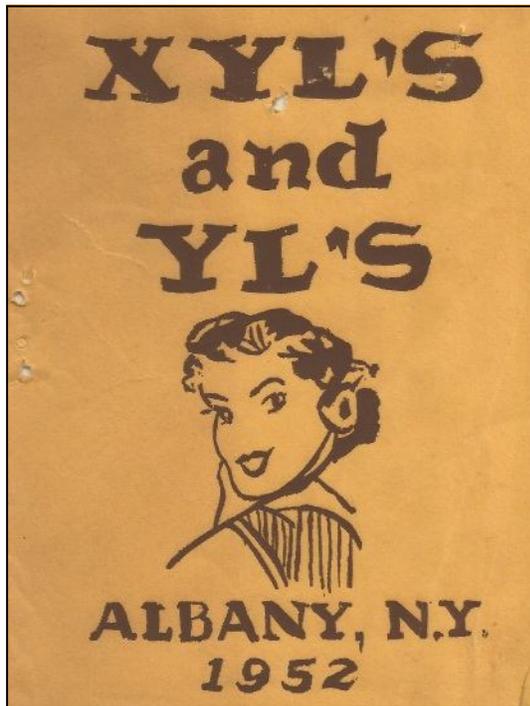
MRS. DAVID MARKS  
*Vice-President*



MRS. JAMES HENNESSY  
*Secretary*



MRS. HOWARD MAGUIRE  
*Treasurer*



*Images from the AARA Women's Auxiliary group booklet (1952).*

woman is not elected to a position in the AARA again until 1969 when Nina Israel, WB2CLF was voted into the position of Secretary of the AARA. She held the position for 1970 as well and in 1971, JoAnn Valvo, WB2OHQ replaced Israel. In 1972, Valvo was elected Treasurer of the Albany Amateur Radio Association. Other women held elected positions in the club in the 1970s, but only as Treasurer or Secretary and again in the 1980s but only as Secretary.

Traditionally women in the amateur radio world played the role of the XYL whose definition of amateur radio appeared at the beginning of this section. Article titles like "Wife's Eye View" and "Ham Shackles" appeared in major ham magazines of the 1940s and 1950s, bolstering the characterization of an XYL who barely tolerated her husband's hobby at best, or openly despaired of its effect on her marriage and family at worst.<sup>4</sup> The 1960s and 1970s appeared to usher in change regarding the

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<sup>4</sup>Kristen Haring, *Ham Radio's Technical Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 120.

## SECTION 5: Albany Amateur Radio Association and Women

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strict separation of the sexes which seemed to coincide with a relatively larger female population of ham operators beginning to join amateur radio clubs like the AARA.

Future study of the history of women and the Albany Amateur Radio Association is recommended to improve this section.



*AARA Field Day (1958).*

## SECTION 6: The Albany Amateur Radio Association and the American Radio Relay League

The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) was founded in 1914 originally as a club for radio amateurs, but it quickly took on the role of official advocate of ham radio in the United States.<sup>1</sup> In the early days of amateur radio in order to send messages over great distances, amateurs organized relay routes where messages could be sent from one station to another in a large relay line. It is from this early activity that the ARRL claimed its name. The ARRL's function has been that of a parent organization. It produces a monthly magazine called *QST* and it is the only effective voice that ham operators and clubs have representing amateur radio concerns to the FCC. While the League has no legal status to govern amateur radio and while amateurs do not need to join the League, ARRL advocates on behalf of the interests of ham operators across the country.<sup>2</sup>

The Albany Amateur Radio Association sought affiliation with ARRL fairly quickly after it formed in the 1930s. By March 1935 the AARA Secretary was corresponding with the League for particulars about affiliation.<sup>3</sup> The AARA received its charter as a "duly affiliated society" in May of the same year.<sup>4</sup> As an affiliated organization, the AARA was expected to conform to the standards of the League. A 1978 copy of the ARRL Code of Ethics was distributed to the AARA and other radio clubs to be signed by amateur members:

The legal use of amateur radio transmitting equipment requires an amateur license. We support the Amateur Radio Service and its long tradition of operating in the public interest. Therefore it is the policy of this organization that amateur radio transmitters, transceivers and amplifiers be sold at retail only to persons who can show that they are properly licensed to operate that equipment.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) Archives, "Informals For the Net," *B-Plus*, April 1982.

<sup>2</sup> AARA Archives, c. 1935.

<sup>3</sup> O.L. Martratt, W2ITQ, *A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Associations*, AARA Archives.

The relationship between the AARA and the ARRL seems to be one of mutual respect judging from the documentation in the archives. The Association often solicited League representatives to serve as speakers at general member meetings. The AARA had the opportunity to host the Hudson Division of the ARRL Conventions on three separate occasions: October 1948, October 1952 and October 1958. The Association contributed monetary support over the years to the ARRL for different initiatives. For example the AARA made a significant contribution to the American Radio Relay League to support the costs related to the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC-79), an inter-governmental meeting whose decisions have the force of an international treaty.<sup>6</sup> The 1979 meeting was the first time in twenty years that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) had met to reexamine and modify existing ITU Radio Regulations.<sup>7</sup> In return, the League provided the Association with support in a variety of ways. One example includes an amateur operator's plans to erect an antenna system at his home. The ARRL provided the ham with legal case studies to bolster his request for a building permit from the Town of Guilderland, NY.<sup>8</sup>

In May 1986, the Albany Amateur Radio Association received a certificate noting its 50<sup>th</sup> year of affiliation with the League. Over a decade later, the Association was awarded Special Service Club Status with the ARRL. This status is awarded to clubs that have achieved goals and continue to set high standards in areas such as public service and technical achievements.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> AARA Archives, January 5, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> [www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int), "WARC-79: Thirty Years and still significant," December 2009.

<sup>8</sup> AARA Archives, Amateur Radio Legal, 1973.

<sup>9</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, May 1998.

## **SECTION 7: The Albany Amateur Radio Association and Public Service**

Public service is a thread that runs throughout the archival records of the Albany Amateur Radio Association, closely entwined with ham radio's history of self-regulation and voluntary assistance which has characterized the hobby from the beginning. Public service can take many forms. For the amateur radio operators that made up the membership of the AARA, it took the form of civil defense, disaster services and non-emergency support to the local community.

### **CIVIL DEFENSE**

While amateur radio rights were suspended during the two World Wars, amateurs were allowed to continue their rag chewing and DXing during subsequent instances of international conflict like the Korean War and the Cold War. Despite the vital role amateur radio operators played during the armed conflicts in the preceding decades, the Cold War era with its attendant paranoia and fear of government infiltration by subversives placed hams under intense scrutiny. Many Americans looked askance at these amateurs and their habits of conversing with unknown foreign elements. To safeguard their rights, amateur radio groups across the country proactively publicized their participation in local civil defense programs to reassure a wary public.

In 1950, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) was formed marking civil defense as a national priority. Despite American Radio Relay League (ARRL) interest in amateurs playing an important role on the Federal level of the country's

safety while maintaining open recreational two-way radio communications for their own enjoyment.

The Albany Amateur Radio Association participated in the simulated emergency tests which were sponsored by ARRL as well as the civil defense emergency tests. The Association made good use of the local press in advertising their activities to the community at large. In 1948, AARA members participated in one of ARRL's disaster response tests before the FCDA was even established. In preparation for the 1948 response test, members were vigilant to prevent "...a situation similar to the one created a few years back when people were hiding in their cellars after hearing Orson Welles' program built on an invasion from Mars."<sup>1</sup> Fears of mass hysteria aside, local hams carried off the 1948 test successfully and participated in Operation Disaster (part of the ARRL nationwide disaster response test) the following year. Albany Amateur Radio Association was awarded a Certificate of Meritorious Service from the Civil Defense Council of Albany County:

...in recognition of unselfish assistance to the consolidated Civil Defense organization of Albany County, for having demonstrated generous and outstanding patriotism and service in the civil defense of effort of the citizens of Albany County.<sup>2</sup>

The AARA supplied emergency communications for the Red Cross as part of Civil Defense Alert in 1969.<sup>3</sup> The Association continued to heed the call for volunteers each year to take part in ARRL and RACES sponsored simulated emergency tests.

The ARRL sponsored Field Day was an annual event that the Association participated in each year. It represented an opportunity for AARA members to test their emergency preparation while participating in an informal contest and enjoying the company of fellow ham operators.

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<sup>1</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook Vol. 1, October 4, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 2, October 4, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> *The Knickerbocker News*, April 18, 1969.

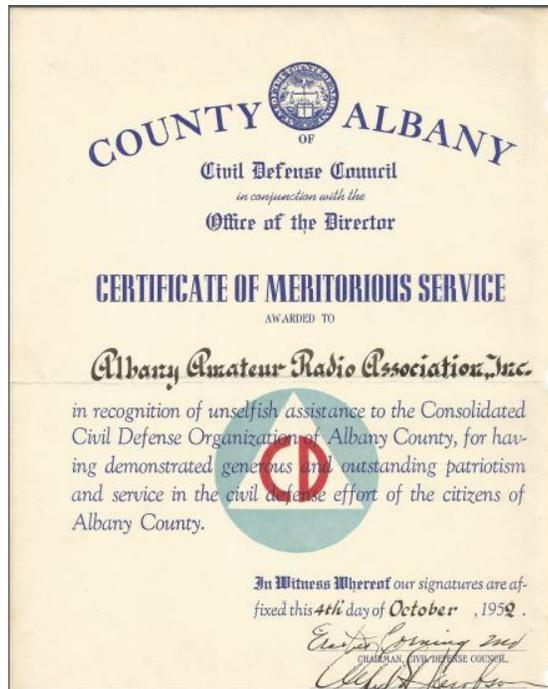
SECTION 7: The AARA and Public Service

# Ready for 'Operation Disaster'



C. Ray Wagner, left, 12 New Scotland Ave., is shown with his emergency station of a surplus receiver and a transmitter of his own design. The station operates on commercial power or an automobile battery. Grouped around Mr. Wagner, left to right, are Kenneth G. Haggerty, 271 Myrtle Ave.; Edward H. Bill Jr., 28 Bancker St. and Spencer L. McCarty, 98 Delmar Pl., Delmar.

Operation Disaster, May 3, 1949.



(Left) October 4, 1952

The AARA archives contain references to Association Field Days for almost every year since 1940. The first location frequented by the AARA as the site of their Field Day operations was Phoenix's Grove off of Route 9 near Boght Corners in Latham, NY. Members had an opportunity to test their outdoor skills as they installed antenna towers, hooked up generators to radio equipment and maintained a more than 24 hour vigil contacting radio operators across the country. In 1967 Field Day operations took place on Woodstock Road near Rensselaerville, NY.<sup>4</sup> The AARA ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the country following 1971's Field Day for the number of radio contacts made during the proscribed time period.<sup>5</sup> The Field Day location for 1974 through 1979 was Bluestone Quarry on Cole Hill in the Helderberg Mountains near East Berne. After a brief stint in a field off of Werking Road in East Greenbush in 1980 and 1981, the AARA began to use Thacher State Park as the site of their Field Day activities. Since 1982, the group has met at the State park for the annual June weekend of operations .



*AARA Field Day (1949)*

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<sup>4</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 3, June 28, 1967.

<sup>5</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, December 10, 1971.

SECTION 7: The AARA and Public Service

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*AARA Field Day (1953)*



*AARA Field Day (1954)*



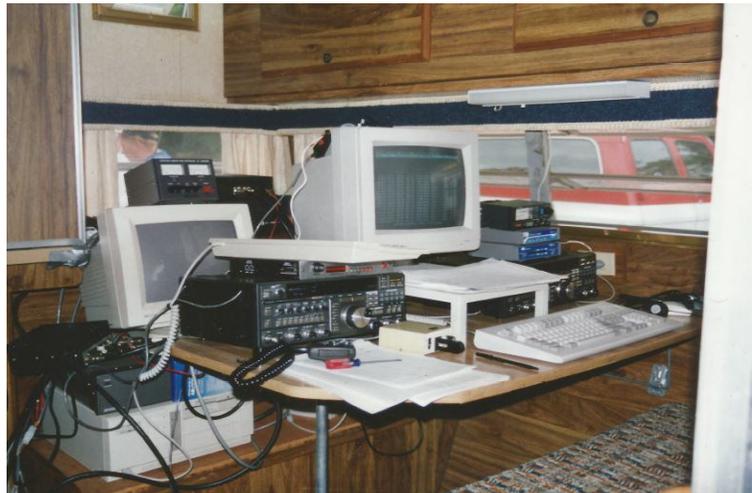
*AARA Field Day (1966)*

## SECTION 7: The AARA and Public Service

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*AARA Field Day (1974)*



*AARA Field Day (1993)*



*AARA Field Day (1996)*

### DISASTER SERVICE

Amateur Radio Association members were prepared to offer their services to the authorities in times of severe weather and man-made disasters:

Perhaps not all are aware that a Memorandum of Understanding exists between ARRL and the American National Red Cross under which Amateur Radio provides emergency communications to the Red Cross in time of national disaster...<sup>6</sup>

AARA worked closely with the American Red Cross to provide communication services to the relief organization. The Association rented room space within the headquarters of the Albany Red Cross, made financial donations to the organization and assisted the Red Cross whenever requested. For example, in 1978 the Red Cross asked the AARA for their assistance in providing communications during the flooding season.<sup>7</sup>

Members of the AARA established an early and continuous record of donating their time and services when natural disaster struck. As early as 1937 the Association was sending messages to relatives of people in flood districts.<sup>8</sup> Images circa 1972 of several amateur radio operators working at the New York Civil Defense RACES at the State Campus in Albany show the men at radio stations. They worked 24 hour shifts maintaining radio communication with amateurs at civil defense amateur stations in the flood disaster areas of southwestern New York State, probably as a result of Hurricane Agnes.



*c. 1972, New York Civil Defense RACES at the State Campus in Albany*

A couple of decades earlier, AARA members David L. Marks, W2APF, and Maurice Rosen received certificates of merit from the ARRL after both men spent 4 days in flood stricken areas in Pennsylvania following Hurricane Diane. The mobile unit in

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<sup>6</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, February 1980.

<sup>7</sup> AARA Archives, March 9, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> *Albany Evening News*, 1937.

Marks' car was the only source of power for transmitting messages from the disaster area.<sup>9</sup>

A massive snowstorm with a reported 23" of snow fell on the village of Cobleskill cutting off all forms of communication with the outside world in 1947. The plight of the village was revealed when an AARA member was able to make contact with an amateur in the snowed in region. The needs of the villagers were communicated to the appropriate authorities so that help could be sent.<sup>10</sup> During the October ice storm of 1987 amateur operators radioed information to meteorologists at the airport who were unable to receive incoming phone calls about snowfall and road conditions because of service disruption caused by the storm.<sup>11</sup> Albany County RACES was activated in December 1992 by the State Emergency Management Office in Albany to provide communication with the Long Island area during severe weather conditions.<sup>12</sup> The following March of 1993 members of AARA along with personnel from a host of county and state agencies were activated because of severe weather.<sup>13</sup> Not all disasters were manmade and the AARA proved equal to the task of helping out. Amateurs participated in the emergency response to the 1980 Port Albany fire when several of the multi-million gallon fuel storage tanks at the Port erupted into flames.<sup>14</sup>

#### NON-EMERGENCY SUPPORT TO LOCAL COMMUNITY

While ever ready to respond when a disaster struck, the majority of public service rendered by the Albany Amateur Radio Association was non-emergency support. Whether the members volunteered to provide radio communications during walk-a-thons like the March of Dimes, Multiple Sclerosis Walks or Muscular Dystrophy Great Walks or during marathons like the Corporate Challenge, Freihofer's Run for Women or the Brugger's Bagel Run, the AARA's services to large community fundraising events

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<sup>9</sup> *Times Union*, October 16, 1955.

<sup>10</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 1, March 3, 1947.

<sup>11</sup> AARA Archives

<sup>12</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, January 1993.

<sup>13</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, April 1993.

<sup>14</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, October 1980.

were all-encompassing and a regular part of club activities. The organizations mentioned are a small number of the many organizations the AARA has served. Members helped out at the Empire State Games, the Special Olympics and the 1996 Olympic Torch Relay. They participated in an annual Pumpkin Patrol. Through coordination with the New York State Troopers, the Pumpkin Patrol began Halloween of 1983 with a handful of AARA members monitoring Thruway overpasses to guard “against the idiots who think it’s fun to drop pumpkins, rocks and other lethal objects on the cars passing below.”<sup>15</sup> The program grew in size and eventually coordinated radio communication coverage spanned the distance of the Thruway from Albany to Syracuse.

Dedication to serving the local community stretched back to 1934. During the summer hiatus of AARA meetings, two members of the AARA volunteered to build and operate an amateur radio station at the Y.M.C.A. Camp during the summer months.<sup>16</sup> In December 1959, the AARA helped create a message center at the National Savings Bank located at 90 State Street in Albany to let bank customers send messages free of charge to family and servicemen in other parts of the country and world.<sup>17</sup>



*VA Hospital Amateur Radio Station, March 1954*

In the 1950s, AARA volunteers manned the radio station located in the Veteran’s Administration Hospital in Albany. They helped patients communicate with friends and relatives in the United States and across the globe. Association members volunteered as instructors to teach the recuperating patients about ham radio and loaned equipment to be used in the code classes.<sup>18</sup>

Operation Good Will was the setup of a ham radio station in downtown Albany for the purpose of transmitting freedom messages around the world, “...to

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<sup>15</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, December 1984.

<sup>16</sup> AARA Archives, Correspondence, June 6, 1934.

<sup>17</sup> *Times Union*, December 21, 1959.

<sup>18</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 2, VA Hospital Newsletter, March 19, 1954.

beam a bit of sunshine into the otherwise drab propaganda appeal of the Communists on May Day.”<sup>19</sup>

There are numerous instances recorded within the AARA archives of the many ways in which the Albany Amateur Radio Association, as a group or as individual members, provided much needed communication services to the community at large. But the Association also provided support in the form of monetary donations to organizations that included the Red Cross, WMHT, ARRL and Albany County AREC. Even radio equipment was donated as the minutes from a March 1981 meeting show, “Old equipment is being collected to be sent to Caribbean Area to be put into service during Hurricane season.”<sup>20</sup>

The organization’s efforts did not go unnoticed by the local non-profit organizations benefiting from AARA’s public service. The American Red Cross awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM, “for interest and cooperative support in behalf of the American Red Cross toward the effective delivery of Red Cross Services to the Community.”<sup>21</sup> The March of Dimes submitted AARA’s name to receive The Golden Rule Award from the J.C. Penny Foundation in 1994 for its contribution to public service. The AARA, which had been providing communication services to the March of Dimes annual walk since the 1970s, was a finalist for the award and received a certificate and gift of money.<sup>22</sup> For providing communication services during preparations for Equinox’s annual Thanksgiving Day Dinner, the Association received a certificate of appreciation of the volunteer work and effort expended to make the dinner possible.

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<sup>19</sup> AARA Archives, Unidentified Clipping, Loose Papers, April 21, 1960.

<sup>20</sup> AARA Archives, Meeting Minutes, March 13, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> AARA Archives, Certificate of Appreciation, September 22, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> AARA Archives, Certificate, 1994.

## Section 8: The Albany Amateur Radio Association Notable Members

While there are many names lining the pages of the Albany Amateur Radio Association's archives, two hams stand out as deserving of a short biography of some of their accomplishments. These are listed in this section. Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF was a long time member of the Albany Amateur Radio Association as well as a long time ham radio operator in the city of Albany. His scrapbooks, which are currently housed in the Association's archives, form the basis for most of the early documentary evidence available about the AARA. Without his efforts, much of the earlier years of the organization's history would be lost. David L. Marks, W2APF, was another long time AARA member. His significance lies in the body of accomplishments he achieved in his long career as a ham. He was known widely, and fondly, for his dedication to amateur radio and to public service. A list of the names of Honorary Life Members in the Albany Amateur Radio Association is listed below as found in the archives up to 2006.

Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF

Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF was a lifelong resident at 33 Quail Street in Albany. He was born in the home in 1905, and lived at 33 Quail his entire life, even operating a business, Wirsing's Radio and TV Repair, from it.<sup>1</sup> An undated newspaper article about Wirsing's radio communications with a friend in South Africa included a description of his ham shack. At the time of the article, his ham shack was located at the rear of his home, and included his radio equipment and his 67' aerial.<sup>2</sup>

Bitten by the "radio bug" at a young age, Wirsing had earned his amateur radio license in the early 1920s and during his first few years of radio operating, he incurred the wrath of local BCLs who resented his transmission intrusion into their broadcasts.

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<sup>1</sup> Albany Amateur Radio Association (AARA) Archives, *B-Plus*, February 1993.

<sup>2</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 1, No Date.

Their complaints drew the attention of the authorities to Wirsing. An August 29, 1922 letter from James N. Northup to Herbert Hoover, the Secretary of Commerce, opened angrily as Northup demanded action. "I am writing to ascertain if relief cannot be had from local amateur radio fiends...," Northup stated, before specifically singling out 17 year old Elmer and his callous disregard of the time signal periods when amateur hams were prohibited from plying their keys.<sup>3</sup> Wirsing was asked to furnish a report in answer to the complaint lodged by Northup and an inspector of the Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Commerce had to make a personal inspection of Wirsing's radio set.<sup>4,5</sup> Wirsing received at least two other angry letters from BCLs who were upset with his transmission interference with their broadcast listening. But despite Elmer's rocky start as a ham, by the end of his life, he was a well-respected amateur operator, always ready to lend a hand or an ear to newly licensed hams.

He held the position of Chief of Radio Communications for Albany County Civil Defense from 1954 to 1968. In 1962 Wirsing was awarded with a certificate recognizing at least 25 years of membership in the AARA and he was awarded Honorary Life Membership in the Association. His death on January 4, 1993 ended a life that was passionately dedicated to the enjoyment, understanding and promotion of the technology of amateur radio. Following his death, the Albany Amateur Radio Association voted to make a donation of \$50 from the AARA's funds in addition to any individual contributions members wanted to make to the American Radio Relay League scholarship fund in Elmer's name and The Elmer Wirsing W2AWF Award was created for AARA recognition of the abilities of new hams.

David L. Marks, W2APF

Born in 1903, David L. Marks was known more famously as Uncle Dave to local, national and international hams. He owned the Fort Orange Radio Corporation and served the needs of most of his contemporary ham operators. What he is best known

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<sup>3</sup> AARA Archives, Correspondence, From James N. Northup, August 29, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> AARA Archives, Correspondence, From Office of Radio Inspector, September 12, 1922.

<sup>5</sup> AARA Archives, Correspondence, September 18, 1922.

for is the lifetime of service he gave to others. Amateur radio gave Marks the means to contribute to the public good and to help those in need.

As a young ham, he appeared in a 1924 Times Union story alongside Elmer Wirsing as the pair of young men searched the city of Albany for an electric leak that was interfering with signal reception. Interestingly, Marks is identified in a handwritten note by Elmer Wirsing as David Markowitz but no other information exists within the archives to elucidate the discrepancy.<sup>6</sup> His record of public service was long and varied. His obituary in the February 1992 issue of *B-Plus* noted that “W2APF appears in the logs of virtually all disasters over the past 50 years.”<sup>7</sup> In December 1964 Marks relayed messages with the mobile radio equipment in his car from areas hard hit by an ice storm to send messages to loved ones and offers of support.<sup>8</sup> He maintained a radio vigil for the flood victims in Rapid City, SD and victims of Tropical Storm Agnes, delivering messages to flood victims’ families and helping route food and supplies to areas in need.<sup>9</sup> He was the driving force behind Operation Goodwill, a public service effort he oversaw in the 1960s and 1970s. Messages were sent to service men overseas free of charge from family members, government officials and religious communities during the holiday season.<sup>10</sup> His work with Operation Goodwill was acknowledged with a letter from President Richard Nixon.<sup>11</sup>

Marks was honored numerous times over the course of his life for his efforts to serve his fellowman. He received 3 public service awards from the American Radio Relay League, the U.S. Navy, and the Albany Veteran’s Hospital for his work relaying messages between servicemen and their families.<sup>12</sup> He was awarded Honorary Life Membership in the AARA in 1952,<sup>13</sup> the Blackburn Distinguished Service Award from the International Center of the Capital Region for recognition of his contributions to international friendship and understanding in 1986<sup>14</sup> and he

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<sup>6</sup> *Times Union*, February 20, 1924.

<sup>7</sup> AARA Archives, February 1992.

<sup>8</sup> AARA Archives, December 1964.

<sup>9</sup> *Times Union*, June 28, 1972.

<sup>10</sup> *Times Union*, November 24, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 3, March 29, 1972.

<sup>12</sup> *Times Union*, June 3, 1970.

<sup>13</sup> AARA Archives, Elmer Wirsing Scrapbook No. 1, February 20, 1952.

<sup>14</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, June 1986.

received the Albany Variety Club Humanitarian of the Year Award with his Operation Goodwill work cited as one of his many contributions.<sup>15</sup> These are just some of his honors.

He traveled the world many times over, always stopping to meet fellow hams in person who had before been just a voice on the radio waves. His 75<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 1978 was remarked upon in an issue of *B-Plus* as well as in local newspapers.<sup>16</sup> His death on January 10, 1992 marked the passing of a great ham operator and great humanitarian.

#### Honorary Life Membership

Ernie Popp, K2EP  
David L. Marks, W2APF  
Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF  
Frank Scrafford, W2DSK  
Harry C. Condon, W2JQI  
Robert Rasche W2NC  
William Lowenberg, W200J  
Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM

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<sup>15</sup> AARA Archives, No Date.

<sup>16</sup> AARA Archives, *B-Plus*, October 1978.

## Section 9:

### Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

*[Note - The officer information for the Albany Wireless Club and Albany Radio Club is included for the years 1917 to 1921 and some of the information is incomplete. Some officer information for the Albany Amateur Radio Association is also incomplete.]*

#### 1917

President - Fasoldt  
Vice President - Ammenhauser  
Secretary and Treasurer -Lauterboro

#### 1919

President - Fasoldt  
Vice President - Stein  
Acting Secretary - Hoffman  
Corresponding Secretary - Ammenhauser  
House Committee - Mulligan, Stein, Fry, Dillenbeck, Lewis, Long

#### 1920

President - Stein  
Vice President - Ammenhauser  
Secretary and Treasurer - Hoffman (12/15/1920 William Colclough elected to replace Karl Hoffman who left to attend college.)  
Corresponding Secretary - Murphy

#### 1921\*Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President - Harry Mulligan  
Vice President - LeRoy J. McCarty  
Code Instructor - James B. Murphy, 2ABQ

#### 1933

President - Robert Menand (resigned 6/4/1933)  
Vice President - [Jim Brush] (resigned 6/4/1934)  
Treasurer - Kenneth G. Haggerty (resigned 5/31/1933)  
Secretary - Harold D. Whitney

SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**1934**

President – George Sleeper, W2CLL

Vice President – F. Eugene Young ([Jim Brush] resigned 6/4/1934)

Secretary – Harold Whitney, W2ANV

**1935**

President – George Sleeper, W2CLL

Vice President – F. Eugene Young, W2EBK

Treasurer – Robert Aldrich, W2KIH

Secretary – Harold Whitney, W2ANV

**1936**

President – Arthur Were, W2HLB

Vice President – Allan Burgess

Treasurer – Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

Secretary – Robert Haner, Jr., W2FBA

**1937\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Paul Teter, W2GF, George Jones, W2HYO (President part of the year)

Treasurer – Robert Haner, W2FBA

Secretary – Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

**1938-1939\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – James Murphy, W2HCS

Treasurer – Dorothy Knapp, W2MIY

Secretary – Edward Perry, W2GTP

**1940\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – James Murphy, W2HCS

Treasurer – Dorothy Knapp, W2MIY

Secretary – A.J. Sobeck, W2LLK

**1941\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Omer Martratt, W2ITQ

Treasurer – Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF

Secretary – George Jones, W2HYO

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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### 1946

President – Arthur Jones, W2IKM  
Vice President – Charles Zollinger, W2JSQ  
Treasurer – Omer Martratt, W2ITQ  
Secretary – Stephen Stanley, W2FQG

### 1947

President – C. Ray Wagner, W2FEN  
Vice President – George Mattison, W2PXY  
Treasurer – Omer Martratt, W2ITQ  
Secretary – Howard Maguire, W2AAO  
Activities Manager – Alexander Hudson, W2OMD

### 1948

President – George Sleeper, W2CLL  
Vice President – Brown Pulliam, W2VDO  
Treasurer – Stephen Neason, W2ILI  
Secretary – George Snyder, W2SUL  
Activities Manager – Alexander Hudson, W2OMD

### 1949

President – George Sleeper, W2CLL  
Vice President – Daniel Murray, W2PKY  
Treasurer – Stephen Neason, W2ILI  
Secretary – George Snyder, W2SUL  
Directors – Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF; James Murphy, W2HCS; Omer Martratt, W2ITQ;  
Arthur Jones, W2LKM  
Activities Manager – Alexander Hudson, W2OMD

### 1950

President – Daniel Murray, W2PKY  
Vice President – William Barnes, W2GM  
Treasurer – Frank R. Vadney, W2OVY  
Secretary – C.D. Van Alstyne, Jr., W2IWI  
Directors – Arthur Jones, W2LKM; James Murphy, W2HCS; George Sleeper, W2CLL  
Activities Manager – Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

**1951**

President – Howard Maguire, W2AAO

Vice President – Stephen Neason, W2ILI

Treasurer – Paul West, W2DIF

Secretary – Omer Martratt, W2ITQ

Directors – Arthur Jones, W2IKM; James Murphy, W2HCS; George Sleeper, W2CLL

Activities Manager – Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

**1952**

President – Stephen Neason, W2ILI

Vice President – Donald Morey, W2PGV

Treasurer – Henry Schultz, Jr., W2WIK

Secretary – Albert P. Fredette, WN2EOM

Directors – William Barnes, W2GM; Harry C. Condon, W2JQI; Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF;

Howard Maguire, W2AAO

**1953**

President – Donald Morey, W2PGV

Vice President – Garrett Dillenbeck, W2LXP

Treasurer – L. Paul Delong, W2YXE

Secretary – William Andrews, W2ONE

Director – Howard Maguire, W2AAO

**1954**

President – Garrett Dillenbeck, W2LXP

Vice President – William Andrews, W2ONE

Treasurer – L. Paul Delong, W2YXE

Secretary – Arthur DeLuca, W2GPC

Director – Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

**1955**

President – William Andrews, W2ONE

Vice President – Arthur DeLuca, W3GPC

Treasurer – Harry Hiller, K2CT

Secretary – John A. Naughton Jr., [K2HQI]

Director – Howard Maguire, W2AAO

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**1956\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – William A. Andrews, W2ONE

Vice President – Arthur DeLuca, W2GPC

Treasurer – Harry Hiller, K2CT

Secretary – A.P. Fredette, W2EOM (resigned 1/1956), James Hennessy, W2ZOY

Director – Elmer Wirsing, W2AWF

**1957**

President – Arthur DeLuca, W2GPC

Vice President – James Hennessy, W2ZOY

Treasurer – [Henry] Geisenhoner, W2BKH

Secretary – Claude Reed, W2YDP

**1958\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Paul Patterson, M.D., K2BTS

Vice President – S.T. Marks, K2OTQ

Treasurer – Herman Levy, K2OTB

Secretary – Claude Reed, W2YPD

**1959**

President – William Barnes, W2GM

Vice President – David Marks, W2APF

Treasurer – Howard Maguire, W2AAO

Secretary – Robert Levy, K2LET

Sergeant of Arms – S. Laird Robinson, K2EJV

Director – Arthur DeLuca, W2GPC

**1960\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

Vice President – Claude Reed, K2YDP

Treasurer – Herbert Insley, K2KZN

Secretary – David Loeb, K2HPQ (resigned 2/29/1960), Jack Platt, WA2KBO (resigned 9/9/1960), Burt Pomplun, K2HUG

Director – (3yrs.) James Murphy, W2HCS

SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**1961**

President – Edward Driscoll, K2ACB

Vice President – Ralph DeGraff, W2HUB

Treasurer – Herbert Insley, K2KZN

Secretary – Burt Pomplun, K2HUG

Director – (3 yrs. to replace Dave Marks) James Hennessy, W2ZOY; Sam Marks, K2OTQ (to replace James Murphy who passed away)

**1962**

President – Sam Marks, K2OTQ

Vice President – Richard Forsey, WA2BLC

Treasurer – Herbert Insley, K2KZN

Secretary – Burt Pomplun, K2HUG

Director – (3 yrs.) Benjamin Ginsberg, WA2JWK, Ray Schelling, WA2DTF (to replace Sam Marks)

**1963**

President – Allan Cheren, WA2HFT

Vice President – Richard Forsey, WA2BLC

Treasurer – Herbert Insley, K2KZN

Secretary – Robert Delaney, K2BUF

Director – (3 yrs.) Ray Schelling, WA2DTF

**1964**

President – Robert Delaney, K2BUF

Vice President – Richard Forsey, WA2BLC

Treasurer – Roger Farley, WA2YRF

Secretary – John Stapleton, WB2BZE

Director – (3yrs.) S. Laird Robinson, K2EJV

**1965\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Robert Delaney, K2BUF

Vice President – Richard Forsey, WA2BLC

Treasurer – Roger Farley, WA2RYF

Secretary – John Stapleton, WB2BZE

No Director Elected

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**1966\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Robert Delaney, K2BLF  
Vice President – Richard Forsley, WA2BLC  
Treasurer – Roger Farley, WA2RYF  
Secretary – John Stapleton, WB2BZE  
Director – (3yrs.) Ray Schelling, WA2DTF

**1967\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Ernest Fischer, WA2WSY  
Vice President – Gordon Cohen, WB2MOX  
Treasurer – Dennis Kagel, WB2MHH  
Secretary – Harry Hovey, WB2OGN  
Director – Clifford Dodge, WA2DTE

**1968\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Ernest Fischer, WA2WSY  
Vice President – Harry Hovey, WB2OGN  
Treasurer – Dennis Kagel, WA2JWO  
Secretary – Gordon Cohen, WB2MOX

**1969\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Clifford Dodge, WA2DTF  
Vice President – Roger Farley, WA2YRF  
Treasurer – Irving Solomon, WB2TIN  
Secretary – Nina Israel, WB2CLF  
Directors – Harry Hove, WB2OGN; Stanley Israel, WA2BAH  
Convention Fund – Melvin Agans, WB2CUX

**1970\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Clifford Dodge, WA2DTE  
Vice President – Robert L. Delaney, K2BUF  
Treasurer – Kenneth Kroth, WB2VJB  
Secretary – Nina Israel – WB2ICZ  
Director – (3yrs.) Ernest Fischer, WA2WSY

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**1971\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Kenneth Kroth, WB2VJB  
Vice President – Elwin McNamara, WB2KLY  
Treasurer – Robert Raffaele, WB2DXM  
Secretary – JoAnn Valvo, WB2OHQ

**1972\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Kenneth Kroth, WB2VIB  
Vice President – Al McNamara, WB2KLY  
Treasurer – JoAnn Valvo, WB2OHQ  
Secretary – Dean Stout, W2CDQ  
Director – (1yr.) Edward Driscoll, K2ACB; (3yrs.) Claude Reed, K2YDP

**1973\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – John Longley, W2ANB  
Vice President – Herbert Insley, W2KZN  
Treasurer – John Adams, WB2BDX  
Secretary – J. Dean Stout, W2CDQ  
Director – Philip Valvo, WA2ETB (1973-1975)

**1974\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – William Lowenberg, W200J  
Vice President – Robert Raffaele, WB2DXM  
Treasurer – John Adams, WB2BDX  
Secretary – Dean Stout, W2CDQ  
Director – (3yrs.) Frank Jordan, [WA2KUL]

**1975\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – William Lowenberg, W200J  
Vice President – Howard Smith, WB2EON  
Treasurer – John Adams, WB2BDX  
Secretary – Al McNamara, WB2KLY  
Director – (3yrs.) John Yodis, WA2EAH; (1yr.) Robert Raffaele, WB2DXM  
Director ex-Officio – John Langley, W2ANB

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**1976\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – Robert Raffaele, WB2DXM

Vice President – John Yodis, WA2EAH

Treasurer – Sina Jordan, WB2CQK

Secretary – Diana Boos, WA2WNJ

Director – (3yrs.) J. Dean Stout, W2CDQ; (3yrs.) Frank Simon, WB2PUH

Director ex-Officio – William Lowenberg, WXCDJ

**1977\***Info. Taken from Omer L. Martratt's "A Historical Summarization of the Albany Amateur Radio Association"

President – James Barrett, W2GFP

Vice President – Frank Simon, WB2PUH

Treasurer – Sina Jordan, WB2CQK

Secretary – Diana Boos, WA2WNJ

Director – (3yrs.) Frank Jordan, WA2KUL; (2yrs.) John Adams, WB2BX

**1978**

President – Frank Jordan, W2UU

Vice President – Frank Simon, WB2PUH

Treasurer – Sina Jordan, WB2CQK

Secretary – Diana Boos, WA2WNJ

Director – Robert Raffaele, WB2DXM; (3yrs.) Alan Boos; John Adams, WB2BDX

**1979**

President – John Sokol, WB2KDC

Vice President – Fred Parker, WB2SMR

Treasurer – Gene Coyne, WA2AHL

Secretary – Diana Boos, WA2WNT

Director – (3yrs.) William Lowenberg

**1980**

President – Michael Kardos, K2QF

Vice President – John Fritze, KB2CR

Treasurer – Arnold Plue, KA2DDQ

Secretary – Sylvia Dickstein, WA2GYW

Director – (3yrs.) Harry Hovey, KB2FC

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**1981**

President – John Fritze KB2CR

Vice President – Jim Langley, N2AZM

Treasurer – Arnold Plue, KA2DDQ

Secretary – Sylvia Dickstein, WA2GYW

Director – (3yrs.) Seymour Miller, N2AIF, (1yr.) Michael Kardos, K2QF

**1982**

President – John Fritze, KB2CR

Vice President – John Covey, KC2IX

Treasurer – Arnold Plue, KA2DDQ

Secretary – Sylvia Dickstein, WA2GYW

Director – (3yrs.) Michael Kardos, K2QF; (1yr.) Frank Scrafford, W2DSK

**1983**

President – John Fritze, KB2CR

Vice President – Robert Raffaele, W2XM

Treasurer – Arnold Plue, KA2DDQ

Secretary – Beverly Fritze, KA2EBI

Director – (3yrs.) Peter Buttner, (1yr.) Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM

**1984**

President – Frank Simon, WB2PUH

Vice President – Ernie Popp, KA2HTU

Treasurer – Arnold Plue, KY2I

Secretary – Lucille Sicko, KA2PHD

Director – (3yrs.) Robert Raffaele, W2XM; (1yr.) John Fritze, KB2CR

**1985**

President – John Fritze, KB2CR

Vice President – Anthony Pazzolo, WB2BEJ

Treasurer – Robert Spencer, WA2GYY

Secretary – Doris Williams, KA2SOL

Director – (3yrs.) William Lowenberg, W200J; (1yr.) Frank Simon, WB2PUH

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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### 1986

President – Michael Kardos, K2GF  
Vice President – Anthony Pazzola, WB2BEJ  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – William Michne, KN2Q  
Director – (3yrs.) Seymour Miller, N2AIF; (1yr.) John Fritze, KB2CR

### 1987

President – Michael Kardos, K2GF  
Vice President – John Spagnuolo, WA2CKW  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Gail Morro, WB2FMB  
Director – (3yrs.) John Fritze, KB2CR; (1yr.) Robert Raffaele, W2XM

### 1988

President – Ernie Popp, KA2HTU  
Vice President – John Yodis, K2VV  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Gail Morro, WB2FMB  
Director – William Lowenberg, W200J; Robert Raffaele, W2XM

### 1989

President – Ernie Popp, KA2HTU  
Vice President – Dennis Wheeler, NW2J  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Greg Lawrence, KB2EIK  
Director – Robert Raffaele, W2XM; John Yodis, K2VV

### 1990

President - Ernie Popp, KA2HTU  
Vice President – Jim La Porta, N1CC  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AIF

**1991**

President – Guy Hoose, WK2H  
Vice President – Steve Anderman, WA3RKB  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AIF  
Director – (3yrs.) Nathaniel Greenman, KB2HPX; (1yr.) Greg Lawrence, KB2EIK;  
George Wilner, K2ONP; Ernie Popp, KA2HTU  
Trustee – John Yodis, K2VV  
*B-Plus* Editor – Jim La Porta, N1CC

**1992**

President – George Wilner, K2ONP  
Vice President – David Univerhau, N2DU  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2YA  
Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AIF  
Director – Sy Syvertsen, N2IUL; Guy Hoose, WK2H; Nathaniel Greenman, KB2HPX; Michael Bergman, WD2AJS  
Trustee – John Yodis, K2VV  
*B-Plus* Editor – Jim La Porta, N1CC

**1993**

President – George Wilner, K2ONP  
Vice President – Ernie Popp, KA2HTU  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AIF  
Director – Sy Syvertsen, N2IUL; Dave Univerhau, N2DU; Nathaniel Greenman, KB2HPX; Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM  
Trustee – John Yodis, K2VV  
*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**1994**

President – Robert Raffaele, W2XM  
Vice President – Dave Jones, WB2YLR  
Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA  
Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AJF  
Director – John Yodis, K2VV; Sy Syvertsen, N2IUL; Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM; Nathaniel Greenman, KB2HPX  
Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP  
*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS  
*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

## SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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### 1995

President – Ernie Popp, KA2HTU

Vice President – Dave Jones, WB2YLR

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AIF

Director – Robert Raffaele, W2XM; Bernard Lanza, KA2WEI; Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM;

Nathaniel Greenman, KB2HPX

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

### 1996

President – Bernard Lanza, KA2WEI

Vice President – William Nettleton, WB2KDD

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – Seymour Miller, N2AIF

Director – Ernie Popp, KA2HTU; Nathaniel Greenman, KB2HPX; Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM; William Liporace, KB2HUN

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

### 1997

President – William Liporace, KB2HUN

Vice President – Walt Legowski, WA1KKM

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, WB2KDD

Director – Bernard Lanza, KA2WEI; Jack Donnelly, WA2YBM; Jim Noble, WA2MKJ; Seymour Miller, K2XF

### 1998

President – George Wilner, K2ONP

Vice President – Ernie Popp, K2EP

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – William Liporace, N2AZNA; Scott Eutermarks, N2MQQ; Jim Noble, K2ZP; Seymour Miller, K2XF

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editors – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS; April Stack, KA2QIG

**1999**

President – George Wilner, K2ONP

Vice President – Ernie Popp, K2EP

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Jim Noble, K2ZP; Scott Eutermarks, N2MDQ; Dave Patti, KB2HPW; Seymour Miller, K2XF

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**2000**

President – Ernie Popp, K2EP

Vice President – Jerry Murray, WA2IWW

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Scott Eutermarks, N2MQQ; Dave Patti, KB2HPW; Sue Rothschild, N2CBR

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**2001**

President – George Wilner, K2ONP

Vice President – Ernie Popp, K2EP

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Dave Patti, KB2HPW; Sue Rothschild, N2LBR; Ed Gosch, K2UV; Seymour Miller, K2XF

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**2002**

President – John Naberezny, WE2F

Vice President – Dave Jones, W2GDJ

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Ed Gosch, W2UV; Nels Williams, WB2SBO; Sue Rothschild, N2LBR; Ernie Popp, K2EP

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

SECTION 9: Albany Amateur Radio Association Officers

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**2003**

President – John Naberezny, WE2F

Vice President – Dave Jones, W2GDJ

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Ed Gosch, W2UV; Nels Williams, WB2SBO; Walt Legowski, WA2KKM

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**2004**

President – Ernie Popp, K2EP

Vice President – Guy Hoose, WK2H

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Seymour Miller, WB2SBO; Walt Legowski, WA1KKM; John Naberezny, WE2F

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP4

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**2005**

President – John Pritt, N1JP

Vice President – Ernie Popp, K2EP

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Seymour Miller, K2XF; Guy Hoose, WK2H; Walt Legowski, WA1KKM

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS

**2006**

President – George Wilner, K2ONP

Vice President – Fred Fitte, WAMMX

Treasurer – Saul Abrams, K2XA

Secretary – William Nettleton, K2BX

Director – Seymour Miller, K2XF; Guy Hoose, WK2H; Sue Rothschild, N2LBR; John Pritt, N1JP

Trustee – George Wilner, K2ONP

*B-Plus* Editor – Michael Bergman, WD2AJS