

**Report of the Historical Committee
to the January 2008 meeting of the ARRL Board**

The Historical Committee cares for and administers the ARRL's considerable collection of preserved documents and donated artifacts. Most of these documents are located in a caged area on the 2nd floor of the League's offices in Newington, Connecticut, and many of the artifacts are displayed in the foyer and first floor hallway. Care and cataloging of the collection are provided by the part-time services of Perry Williams W1UED, and volunteers, principally Charles Griffin W1GYR.

In our last report to the board in July 2007, additional assistance was requested:

This level of investigation requires considerable experience and institutional memory. Otherwise the significance of some of the documents can be overlooked. While Mr. Williams and Mr. Griffin have considerable experience and depth of knowledge in this regard, it is important that more staff and volunteers become involved in this effort, and that they be educated in the procedures of institutional archiving and radio and League history. In the future as the committee as a whole examines these requirements, I would anticipate a forthcoming request for additional staff and volunteers to be funded/recruited. The target for this request to be formalized is the January 2008 board meeting.

Recently, in response to this summer's application, we have been honored by a \$25,000 grant from the YASME Foundation. This grant is earmarked for \$25k to be applied Mr. Williams's stipend, and for \$10k for digitization of the League's collection. Again to quote from the July 2007 Historical Committee report,

There is a need for a specialist to examine the collections in greater detail and assist in the preservation of both black and white photographs and film negatives. A good overview of the major preservation needs is outlined in "Caring for Your Photographic Collection" prepared by The Library of Congress. A copy of the document is attached to this report, and can be found on the Web at <http://www.loc.gov/preserv/care/photo.html>

Amateur and technical magazines – Little has been done with these collections except to house them in the archival room ("the cage") and outside on nearby shelving. These represent the equivalent of 40 boxes (15" x 20" x 10") in the collection. In addition, there are another approximately 5 shelves of magazines (perhaps 1500 items) in another area of the building. These probably amount to another 15 boxes.

While this \$25k grant may on the surface seem to solve the HR portion of this need, it in fact begs the question of what can be done to add staff to move the digitization process forward. Hiring additional staff at prevailing wage rates for HQ staff would encumber the entire \$25k at least twice over. So additional volunteer resources are needed, or additional funding needed to hire more part time staff. Such positions are needed for the digitization itself, and for cataloging of the League's considerable collections of physical artifacts (as opposed to documents). There are many boxes of uncatalogued treasures at HQ waiting for proper handling.

Finally, one of the goals of the digitization and cataloging projects should be to make the League's collection available online for scholars and other researchers. In the 21st century, the importance of making artifacts and

documents available online is at least as important as making them physically available for inspection. It is hoped that this goal can be reached by 2010 with the commitment of more HR resources at HQ.

Mr. Williams has sent the following comments on the progress in his area of responsibility:

The W1FH collection is not aboard yet. Bob Beudet, W1YRC, SM -RI is working with the family on that. Dave Patton is going to handle the ARRL end.

The QSO record in a steel case, reputedly put together by Allen Stratton and sent to us by Barry Allen, K1KQI, is here. But Allen showed W1BIH as Stratton's call--but since the 1950s by my personal knowledge and ARRL's records belong to LM John H Thompson, W1BIH, Inn on Silver Lake, 21 Chipman Way Apt 128, Kingston, MA 02364-1069.

I have asked Perry Green if he can track Stratton's call, I should hear on Monday.

The cataloguing is going along, but not fast. Charles has been working on files related to legislation 1918-to circa 1931. It's very fragile, and many pieces have had to be photocopied to be sure we don't lose their texts. I'm attaching one real gem, from Maxim to the families of amateurs in the service mailed on December 3, 1918. It's small type on blue paper so didn't scan too clearly. I'm going to send you a photocopy by regular mail for an easier read. But this body of lore is extremely important; ARRL staff and officers worked very hard throughout the period to get Congress to do the right thing. They networked other organizations with similar views toward the legislation, for instance. Here is a file item about the four Hoover Conferences of the early 1920s, an effort to govern the whole radio industry by consensus ["gentlemen's agreements"] when Congress did not produce a law.

Archivist's Note: The Hoover Conferences. In the 1920s, Herbert C. Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, had been trying fruitlessly to have Congress replace the Wireless Act of 1912 with new legislation reflecting the birth of the Broadcasting industry--and all the developments in radio technology, which had come about during World War One. When these efforts failed repeatedly, Hoover called a series of voluntary conferences of radio people from all segments of the industry, including Amateur Radio, to work out channels for the BC stations, and band assignments for other services. The "Gentlemen's Agreements" worked fairly well for a while, being a vast improvement over chaos. But the decisions made in the Conferences had, after all, no legal standing. One broadcaster, unhappy with his assignment, discovered that Secretary Hoover had no enforcement powers, and simply opened up on another station's frequency. Other BC stations did likewise--and chaos returned! (To their credit, Radio Amateurs stuck to the agreements made by the ARRL delegation on their behalf and thus earned new credibility when at last Congress finally began to work on legislation: the Radio Act of 1927.[Oral history via John Huntoon, W1RW, now backed up and amplified by documents newly uncovered, in December 2007/ January 2008. These files, covering the years right after World War I to the late twenties recorded interaction by the League with other like-minded organizations, to assure that the new radio law would be acceptable. *End of file 01-15-2008*

...Even after the US entered the war, ARRL in the person of Maxim was still working to preserve ham radio, though Tuska had closed the ARRL office and joined the service himself. Obviously—since no bill emerged from Congress until 1927—the right result emerged! The files Charles worked on so far this year covered post World War 1 legislation, from 1918 to circa 1927. ARRL was very involved with

all private radio interests compatible with ours. I believe I sent you an archivist note explaining the Hoover Conferences; a group picture of the group; hangs in the second-floor corridor, and Maxim & Warner are in view.

It is still just Charles and I where the rubber hits the road: Allison has been sick recently, and had a change in his real job which left him only available to us on Fridays—when Martha needs some daylight hours from me! Grant has been stolen away by the Circulation department, who are keeping him fully occupied other than when tours are here.

Perry Williams W1UED, Archivist

Thanks to Mary Hobart who has been instrumental in obtaining and coordinating the YASME Foundation grants - first for \$20k and now \$25k. And thanks to the Board of Directors and HQ staff for your continuing support of this important work.

Gary L. Johnston KI4LA, Chair

With assistance from
Perry Williams, W1UED, Archivist
Charles S. Griffen, W1GYR
Mary Hobart, K1MHH, Chief Development Officer

Attachment



Hartford, Connecticut, December 3, 1918.

DEAR FELLOW AMATEUR : —

A very serious situation has arisen. Unless all of us amateurs act quickly, a law will be passed in Washington which will wipe Amateur Wireless completely out.

I know you will find this hard to believe, BUT IT IS SO. A bill has been introduced in both the House and the Senate which may prohibit Amateur Wireless. It is GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP APPLIED EVEN TO OUR AMATEUR WIRELESS, and whoever introduced it is guilty of gross lack of appreciation of the patriotism of those amateurs who, not waiting to be drafted, VOLUNTEERED in those first dangerous days of unpreparedness when our Army and Navy were in desperate need of young men who knew wireless. Not only are these young men ignored, but the bill is likely to be pushed through while they are absent in their country's service and rendered mute by military regulations, and forbidden to appeal on their own behalf.

Our American Radio Relay League officers are fighting hard, but we are only a handful. Alone, we cannot make the Congressmen in Washington appreciate the importance of amateur wireless. You must help us. You positively must write a letter immediately upon receiving this card, and see that it is mailed before the sun goes down tonight to your Representative and also your Senator in Congress. You should say something like this:—

We protest against the injury that will be done many young men of this country if House Bill 13159 and Senate Bill 5306, which may prohibit amateur wireless, are passed without a full and free hearing. It will take time for the amateurs to present their case because most of them are in the Army or Navy and away from home. The Bills should be held up until the amateurs can be informed of what threatens them.

Copy these words if they will help you. If the amateur to whom this card is addressed is away, will his Father, or his Mother, or his Sister, or any one else who has his future welfare close to their heart, please write as indicated above, and do it today. If you do not know the name and address of your Representative or Senator, your Postmaster will tell you. You must help and today or good-bye to all amateur wireless and the valuable experience and education that comes with it. Who knows but what a future Edison, Westinghouse or Marconi is in the making in your very house if he is allowed to continue his amateur wireless work.

THE AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE, Inc.

Hiram Percy Maxim, President.