

DISCOVERIES ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE RICHMOND ARC: 1916-1948

When the Titanic struck an iceberg on April 15, 1912, the confusion and failures of communications by wireless radio contributed to the loss of many lives. Late in 1912, the U.S. Congress enacted legislation to bring order out of chaos on the airwaves. All radio stations were required to register with the U.S. Department of Commerce. A list was published of all stations that had registered as of July 1, 1913. There were five amateurs in Virginia who had registered, and three of them were in Richmond.

Department of Commerce, Bureau of Navigation, Radio Stations of the United States
Edition July 1, 1913 [Amateurs listed on pages 88-147]

3FY Core, Christopher W. 907 East Leigh St., Richmond, Va. 32 Watts [page 111]
3HU Falconi, Louis 617 Crawford St., Portsmouth, Va. 100 Watts [page 112]
3JN Korab, Harry E. 418 West Clay St., Richmond, Va. 490 Watts [page 114]
3GX Robinson, George C. 607 North Tenth St., Richmond, Va. 18 Watts [page 116]
3JD Wolcott, Roger G. 224 Forty-first St., Norfolk, Va. 104 Watts [page 119]

"Their number grew until one April day in 1916 a formal meeting was held and a name was adopted. The Tri-County Radio Club was born." [Richmond News Leader, April 16, 1948]

From April, 1917, through September/October, 1919, no amateur radio transmissions were allowed, and antennas had to be taken down. Many amateurs served in the military, since they knew the Morse code and they were already trained for communications. The same was true in World War II. Getting home from military service, finding work, marrying and finding a place to live would have taken time. It is not surprising that once they settled down, they wanted to pick up their lives again, including amateur radio.

QST March, 1921, p. 47:

"The amateurs of Richmond, Virginia, met at the John Marshall High School January 17th, 1921, and formed the Tri-County Radio Club. There were forty men present, and Mr. C.D. Blair, A.R.R.L. Supt. Central Virginia was elected Advisory Chairman, Mr. George C. Robinson elected Permanent Secretary, and Mr. Orris M. Selph Acting Chairman."

The name of the Club remained the Tri-County Radio Club from 1916 until sometime between 1921 and 1926, as will be noticed in the next item from QST in 1926.

QST July 1926, page 51, Club Activities

"VIRGINIA -- The Richmond Short Wave Club is progressing nicely. There are now 20 members in good standing. A committee takes care of banquet arrangements each month. Director Gravely has approved the organization officially so that it may become affiliated with the A.R.R.L. With the cooperation of the old timers and with the new policy of the Club we expect to see lots of doings at Richmond."

[The Richmond Ham, December 2001]

In October 2001, The ARRL VA Section Affiliated Club Coordinator, W4IM, presented a certificate to the Richmond ARC for seventy five years as an affiliated club, beginning September 20, 1926, and this certificate is in the Club's archives.

The name of the Club was the Richmond Short Wave Club from sometime between 1921 and 1926, until it was changed again in 1938 to its present name as the Richmond ARC. This change was reported in the "ARRL Affiliated Club Bulletin," January, 1970:

"The Richmond ARC is a fine example of a loyal, durable affiliate. The club was first affiliated under the name of The Richmond Short Wave Club way back in 1926. The club name was changed in 1938, but not the esprit de corps. Here's club prexy W4DSW (right) presenting a beautiful trophy, on behalf of the RARC, to member W4QCW - [Bob Eshleman, now W4DR] first qualifier for the ARRL 5BDXCC Award."

There was a reorganization and election of new officers in 1929. [The Richmond Ham, which quotes the following article in its issue of November, 1979, page 1, saying it appeared in the Richmond News Leader in 1929. It goes on to say the 50th anniversary since 1929 was celebrated with a banquet on Friday, November 9, 1979, at Emmanuel Episcopal Church.]

"LOCAL SHORT WAVE CLUB REORGANIZED – Approximately Forty Attend, With Grether Chosen Chairman. –

"Reorganization of the Richmond Short Wave Club, composed of a group of code radio enthusiasts, was perfected last night at a meeting in the Central Y.M.C.A. J. L. Grether was elected chairman; O. M. Selph, sub-chairman, and T. T. Mathewson, secretary and treasurer.

"About forty operators were present and thirty-six signed as members of the organized club. It was decided to hold weekly meetings, gathering each Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock. For the present the sessions will be held at the Central Y. M. C. A.

"A suggestion that permanent quarters may be obtained where a transmitting and receiving station can be established is being investigated and a report is expected to be made at the next meeting. With this move in prospect, Gordon Hammond, of Ashland, offered the club the use of his two transmitters, which are of 7.5 watts and 75 watts of power.

"G. L. Whitehorn was awarded the 50-watt tube donated by WRVA, and M. J. Duke, of Rocky Mount, N. C., received the screen grid receiving tubes for having come from the greatest distance to attend the meeting."

There was a burst of energy and action in the following years:

1. The Club met weekly, on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 o'clock at the Central Y.M.C.A.
2. There was a long article in QST, December, 1930, describing the meeting in Richmond of the Virginia ARRL Convention.

"With real Southern hospitality the Richmond Short Wave Club, through its chairman, 'Bob' Eubank, welcomed the delegates attending the first Virginia A.R.R.L. Convention at the Hotel Richmond, Richmond, Virginia on September 19th and 20th."

3. The newsletter "Virginia Radio Bulletin" was published each month by the Richmond Short Wave Club, beginning January 1, 1931, with Bob Eubank, W3AAJ [later W4WT], as Editor. In 1934 it was named "The Virginia Ham." The Club's archive contains copies of issues from 1931 to 1934.

4. A.R.R.L. Field Day activities were held.

There are six items in the following newspaper report that support April, 1916, as the date the Club was founded.

Richmond News Leader, April 16, 1948, "Radio Hams To Observe Anniversary"

1. The headline reads *"Radio Hams To Observe Anniversary."*
2. *"Their number grew until one April day in 1916 a formal meeting was held and a name was adopted. The Tri-County Radio Club was born."*
3. *"... the amateurs stuck together, becoming the Richmond Short Wave Club in the late 1920's, and finally the Richmond Radio Club."*
4. The celebration on April 16, 1948, was *"...to observe the thirty-second anniversary of that group, one of the oldest of its kind in the country" [1916 + 32 = 1948].*
5. Four charter members were eye-witnesses of the events in 1916: *"Among them [who will be present at the anniversary celebration] will be four original members, one of them a founder and first president, George C. Robinson, who is still active in the organization, along with Charter Member R.A. Frayser. Two others, Ralph Chappel and Drewry Blair; honorary members, now live in Baltimore."*
6. The President of the ARRL came to celebrate the anniversary: *"...George Bailey, president of the American Radio Relay League, Richmond's parent organization..."*

The meeting of the Richmond ARC in April, 2012, will be its 96th anniversary, and April, 2016, will be its Centennial Anniversary.

Submitted by Art Williams, W4TY,
with "Pip" Sager, WB4FDT (SCM of the Virginia Section of ARRL, 1982-84)

Radio 'Hams' To Observe Anniversary

By LARRY GOULD
APR 16 1948

Some Richmonders felt radio's growing pains early and were tinkering with small sets prior to World War I, long before air-wave fever had reached epidemic proportions.

While Dr. Lee DeForest was perfecting the audion, Richmond enthusiasts were holding weekly meetings. Their number grew until one April day in 1916 a formal meeting was held and a name was adopted. The Tri-County Radio Club was born.

Radio advanced. Broadcasting came to Richmond and local stations affiliated with the networks; but the amateurs stuck together, becoming the Richmond Short Wave Club in the late 1920's, and finally the Richmond Radio Club.

Saturday, approximately 300 radio "hams" from seven States will convene at the Hotel William Byrd to observe the thirty-second anniversary of that group, one of the oldest of its kind in the country.

Among them will be four original members, one of them a founder and first president, George C. Robinson, who is still active in the organization, along with Charter Member R. A. Frayser. Two others, Ralph Chappel and Drewry Blair, honorary members, now live in Baltimore.

'HAM' ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Discussing the accomplishments of "hams" throughout the nation, R. N. Eubank, president of the local club, said they were responsible for development of the entire short wave band. Frequencies originally assigned to them by the government were considered useless, Mr. Eubank said.

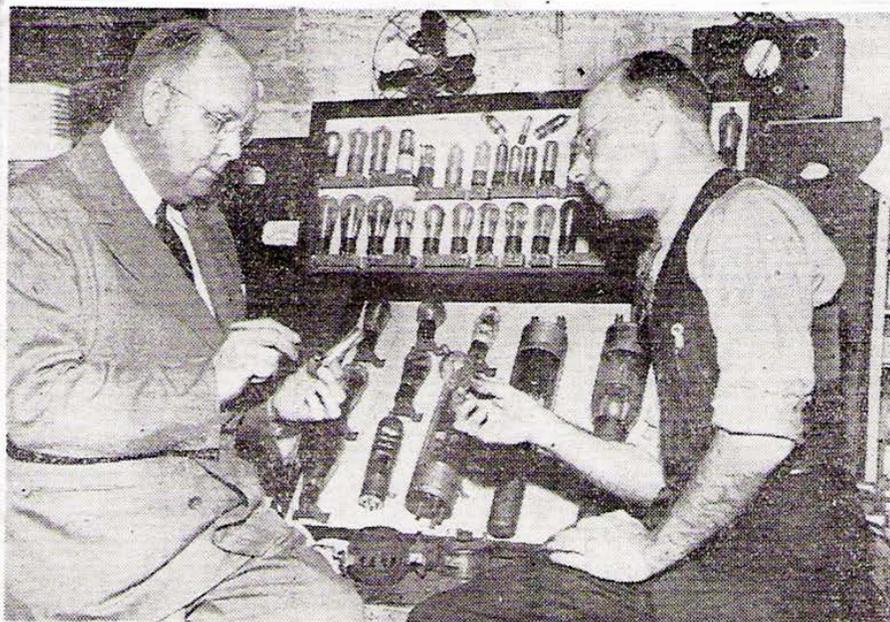
These "useless" bands later turned into the proving grounds for radio-telephone, blind flying, blind landing, radar, television and other branches of electronics, he added.

Backing him up, George Bailey, president of the American Relay League, Richmond's parent organization, and registrar of scientific personnel in the Office of Research and Development, said 70 per cent of all men working on radio and electronics equipment at one time were amateurs. Mr. Bailey will be guest of honor at Saturday's "hamfest."

Twice each year, local amateurs participate in a nation-wide test of emergency equipment, keeping an all-night vigil with their sets.

INCIDENT RECALLED

In one instance, Mr. Eubank said, a Richmond amateur helped relay a distress call from DeKalb, Ill., to Springfield, Ill., a distance of 70 miles. A "ham" in DeKalb had discovered an electric line crew marooned in a snowstorm and the only possible help was in Springfield, with no telephone communications between the two.



(Staff Photo)

39 YEARS OF HISTORY—George C. Robinson (left), founder and first president of the local radio amateurs' club, holds a tube dating from 1914 while L. W. Hinton, a member of the organization since 1922 and owner of the collection, holds one dating from 1909. Tubes in the background, divided into receiving (upper shelf) and transmitting (lower shelf), indicate technical improvements since 1917. The two are among those planning a week-end convention here of the American Radio Relay League.

by a Boston "ham," the message was telephoned to Springfield by him. The Richmonder today holds a lifesaving certificate, issued by the ARRL, after verification.

Locally "hams" have been pressed into service quite frequently, Mr. Eubank said, particularly during floods and high winds.

Several times, complete operating crews and stations were transported to Columbia, Fluvanna County, where rise in the river was measured and its possible effect here radioed to Richmond.

SCHEDULES PREARRANGED

At present, many Richmonders talk on prearranged schedules with relatives in one of the services overseas through amateur

stations, Mr. Eubank said. He modestly apologized because local "hams" are unable to take care of all of the requests they receive. Many countries prohibit use of amateur radios, he added.

He recalled how the Richmond founder, Mr. Robinson, was in contact with the first Byrd Expedition to the Antarctic, in 1928-29. One conversation with the expedition station lasted an hour and a

half, and witnesses said "we could hear as well as if the operator had been in the next room."

Many railroad men are amateurs, and have been responsible for prevention of numerous train wrecks, when bridges or tracks were damaged, Mr. Eubank said. A number of roads now are installing radio equipment to keep in touch with their trains at all times.

THE DOCUMENT COMPANY
XEROX



ARRL

the national association for Amateur Radio

HEADQUARTERS, NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT, U.S.A.



Charter of Affiliation

75 Years

Whereas it is the desire of the ARRL to establish bonds of affiliation with noncommercial Amateur Radio organizations of kindred aims and purposes to make possible unity of action in matters affecting the welfare of Amateur Radio and lend mutual strength; and *Whereas*

Richmond ARC

has declared its sympathy with and allegiance to the aim's and policies of the League in its efforts to strengthen and advance Amateur Radio Communication and Experimentation, and has expressed its willingness and desire to cooperate therein:

Now Therefore, under the policies of its Board of Directors, the ARRL as of this date hereby declares the said organization to be an affiliated body, and issues this charter in token thereof.

September 20, 1926

Affiliated

David Sumner

Secretary

Jeri Hegel

President

LOCAL SHORT WAVE CLUB REORGANIZED

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1929

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About forty operators were present and thirty-six signed as members of the reorganized club. It was decided to hold weekly meetings, gathering each Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock. For the present the sessions will be held at the Central Y. M. C. A.

A suggestion that permanent quarters may be obtained where a transmitting and receiving station can be established is being investigated and a report is expected to be made at the next meeting. With this move in prospect, Gordon Hammond, of Ashland, offered the club the use of his two transmitters, which are of 7.5 watts and 75 watts power.

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YOUR HOSTS

MEMBERS OF THE RICHMOND RADIO CLUB

J. B. Adams		Ev. E. Kregel	
Wm. B. Alderman.....	W4JUF	Ernie P. Lang	WN4TQQ
Edward C. Anderson		Norman Lassiter	W4TPW
Frank S. Anderson.....	W4KAO	Alan M. Leake.....	W4BCI
Ray E. Anderson.....	W4OYP	Howard Lipsius	W4OSB
Larry H. Arnold.....	W4JOT	Adolph Marks	W4OZA
U. H. Auckerman		Jimmy Martin	W4CYW
David L. Avery.....	W4PRK	Ted Mathewson	W4FJ
Betty Avera		Danny McKeel	WN4VRT
Wm. W. Bell	W4JLS	Doc Meistroff	W4TFA
Karl Boettcher	W4URM	Forrest Mitchell	W4SHK
Gene Bossieux	W4IWW	W. Vernon McCoy.....	W4MZR
Cecil C. Bozarth		Bill C. O'Brien.....	W4KVP
Frank Bullington	W4JQW	Jim F. Pearsall	
Monk Bullington	W4JHK	Tommy Pollock	W4KRX
Marion M. Causey	W4MK	Art. L. Pond	W4JLV
Wayne Cartee	W4YMX	Stuart Powell	
Leroy R. Cohen.....	W4KMU	Rudy W. Raabe	W4ZV
J. O. Dickinson.....	W4LLF	R. M. Roberts	W4MYI
James R. Driver		Wilmer Royall	W4JXN
Slim P. Eld.....	W4QF	Billy Sampson	W4NAD
Chas. P. Epps, Jr.....	W4RJW	Emmett Seay	W4LLU
Bob N. Eubank	W4WT	Myron Steffy	W4IYC
C. M. Fulcher		Bill Stiefbeld	W4WY
Joseph Galeski	W4IMP	Max Sussman	W4JQX
Fred Hamilton	W4KQN	Hardy Sydner	W4JUE
Lynn Hinton		R. M. Thompson	
Lloyd Huckstep	W4BSM	Jimmy Tyler	
E. L. Hudgins	W4JAC	A. L. VonCannon	
L. C. Hull	W4PS	A. L. Waguespack.....	W4SNH
D. L. Hunt	W4TXT	Dick Waters	W4NEV
Joseph Johnson	W4RSB	Ed G. Willingham	
Neal Johnstone	W4ITK	Sheldon Powell	W4MMG
Tommy S. Jones.....	W4BZE	Cecil Sheets	W4CSI
Deacon W. Jones		San T. Terry.....	W4AGH
Wylie Jones		George S. Robinson.....	x3FE
Charles Justice	W4JUJ		

DISCOVERING THE HISTORY OF THE RICHMOND ARC SINCE 1916

In April, 2016, the Richmond Amateur Radio Club will be 100 years old.

The first official list of registered amateur radio stations was published by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1913. Three amateurs were listed as being in Richmond, Va.-- George C. Robinson, 3GX; Christopher W. Core, 3FY and Harry E. Korab, 3JN.

- The number of amateurs "...grew until one April day in 1916 a formal meeting was held and a name was adopted. *The Tri-County Radio Club was born.*" [Richmond News Leader, April 16, 1948]

- From April, 1917, through October, 1919, World War I closed all amateur activity.

- "*The amateurs of Richmond, Virginia, met at the John Marshall High School January 17th, 1921, and formed the Tri-County Radio*

- *Club. There were forty men present... Mr. George C. Robinson elected Permanent Secretary, and Mr. Orris M. Selph Acting Chairman.*"

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- There was a burst of energy and action in the following years:

1. The Club met weekly, on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 o'clock at the Central Y.M.C.A.

2. The Club sponsored the very first Virginia ARRL Convention, and it was held in Richmond on September 19-20, 1930. [QST, December, 1930]

3. The Club published a newsletter, "Virginia Radio Bulletin," each month, 1931-1934, with Bob Eubank, W3AAJ [later W3WS/W4WT], as Editor. [Club archives]

4. A.R.R.L. Field Day activities were held.

- On April 17, 1948, the Richmond ARC observed "*...the thirty-second anniversary of that group, one of the oldest of its kind in the country.*" George Bailey, President of the American Radio Relay League, and four charter members from the meeting in 1916 were present, including "*...the first president, George C. Robinson, who is still active in the organization...*" [Richmond News Leader, April 16, 1948.]

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(SCM of the Virginia Section of ARRL, 1982-84)