

Ham History SOS

At ARRL HQ, volunteer archivists work to preserve Amateur Radio's historic treasures.

Michael Marinaro, WN1M

Hiram Percy Maxim, Clinton DeSoto, Hugo Gernsback, Bill Orr and Mary Texanna Loomis. If you have been a ham for any amount of time you will know these names. If you are new to ham radio, you will soon hear of them.

While many activities conducted at the League's Headquarters are highly visible, some are in the background. One of the programs that does not receive a great deal of attention is the endeavor to preserve and conserve the many artifacts held in the ARRL archives. These archives contain paper documents, publications, media and equipment of those notables mentioned above and of many others.

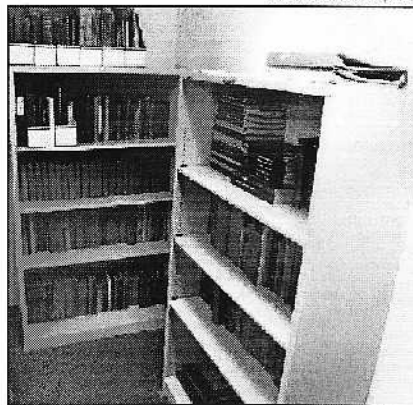
With the ARRL approaching its 100th anniversary, the ongoing effort to preserve this huge collection of historical material has taken on a new importance. The Historical Committee of the ARRL Board is responsible for preparing the League archive to be a valuable resource for our next hundred years.

The Historical Committee directs the ARRL Historic Preservation Fund (www.arrl.org/historic-preservation-fund). The Committee is presently chaired by Joyce Birmingham, KA2ANF. With the help of volunteers at Headquarters, the program is

focused on identifying and conserving the materials that pertain to the history of Amateur Radio and the heritage of the ARRL.

Putting It All Together

At the beginning of the 21st century historical artifacts were stored in a random manner in several locations throughout the Headquarters



MICHAEL MARINARO, WN1M

Part of the League's historical book collection. Some of the volumes go back to the 19th century and the very beginning of radio and electronics.

complex, with the majority in the third floor attic of the main building and the cellar of the W1AW building. Recognizing the need to centralize, identify, properly store and preserve these collections, the Board of Directors created the ARRL Historical Committee at its January 2000 meeting. Then-President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, appointed Director Tom Frenaye, K1KI, chairman and Director Jim Maxwell, W6CF, and staff member Steve Mansfield, N1MZA, members, with Steve acting as staff liaison. These three were later joined by Jim McCobb, K1LU, and external member Al Cohen, W1FXQ. The committee was assisted by volunteer "curator" Joe Carcia, NJ1Q, W1AW Station Manager.

The committee, aided by volunteers such as Charles Griffen, W1GYR, began the enormous task of inventorying the collections. By late 2001 the result of these inventories was an estimate that there were 450,000-600,000 sheets of paper contained in file drawers and open boxes — equivalent to more than 125 file drawers of material in the attic alone, not including photographic negatives, prints and publications.

From The Old Man to AMSAT

By July 2002, construction of a dedicated



S. SANT ANDREA, AG1YK

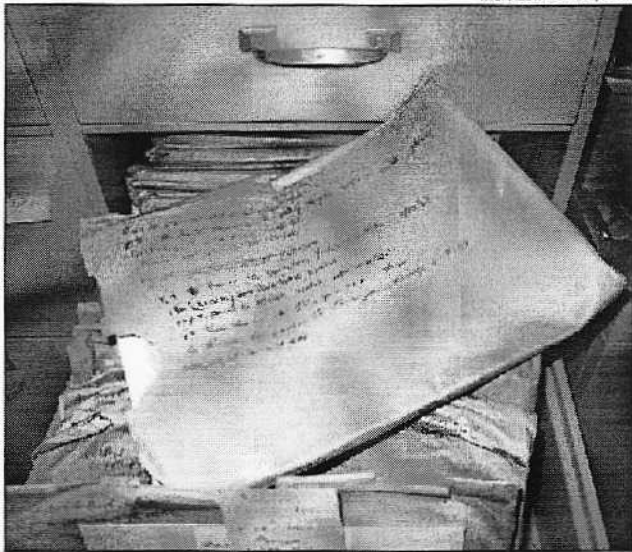
The effect of "vinegar syndrome" is clearly visible on this negative. Many negatives in the archive are in need of restoration.



S. SANT ANDREA, AG1YK

The negative of a QST equipment photo that is, so far, in pristine condition. Moving such negatives into a proper storage environment is a priority for the Historical Committee.

MICHAEL MARINARO, W1IM



One of the many folders of QST-related documents that make up the half-million pages that need proper archival storage.

Second Century Celebration

The Board of Directors and various committees at Headquarters are planning for the commemoration of the centennial and the League's second century. Our preserved collections will form the basis for exhibits, audio-visual programs and chronicles.

The many volunteers who have worked and are working on the project have accomplished much in the past 11 years, supported by leadership contributions from the YASME Foundation since 2006. In order to continue moving forward, to continue with our efforts to preserve the hundred years of ham history stored in the ARRL archive, support is needed. We have support from the volunteers who work here at Headquarters, but we also need support from you, the members of the ham community at large. If you believe our history is worth preserving then please help our efforts by making a contribution to the preservation project. For information please contact Mary Hobart, K1MMH, at mhobart@arrl.org or you can go directly to the donation form at www.arrl.org/arrl-donation-form to add your tax-deductible contribution to the Historical Preservation Fund.

MICHAEL MARINARO, W1IM



Here are a variety of QST negatives stored in archival packaging under cold conditions to help preserve them from the effects of "vinegar syndrome."

area, referred to as the "cage," was begun in the second floor warehouse area of the Headquarters building. This was made possible by a significant donation from Barry, W5GN, and Judith Spencer Merrill and an allocation from the League's Historic Preservation Fund. By September 2002,

most of the material had been centralized, the "cage" was opened and Perry Williams, W1UED, was on board as part-time archivist. The ongoing project was and is concerned with cataloging the paper collections using the system devised by Jim Maxwell, which identified files based on when they were first discovered. This is a sampling of the files to be found in the paper archives:

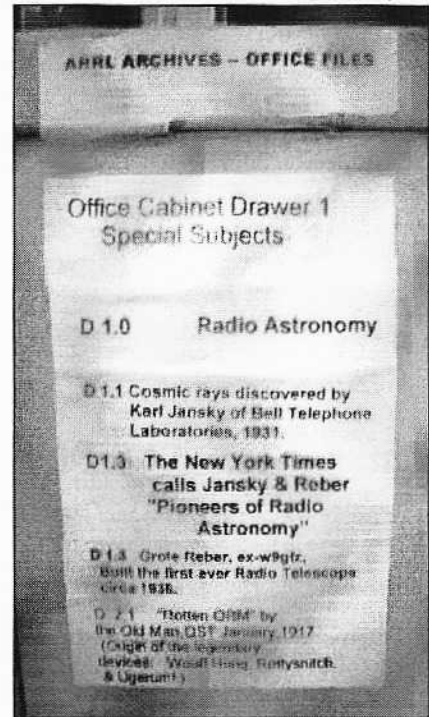
- Correspondence of Hiram Percy Maxim
- Correspondence of Clarence Tuska
- Minutes and Description of the First National ARRL Convention, Chicago 1921
- Correspondence of League Presidents and Directors, 1921-1964
- Information Concerning the MacMillan Arctic Expedition of 1924
- Amateur Radio Licensees, 1913-1917, History and Calls
- Early AMSAT Correspondence

My experience with this project since July 2009 has been as volunteer historian. As I have proceeded with my work I have developed an admiration and respect for the dedicated "historians" who preceded me and the donors who have supported them. Their accomplishments have made an unrecognized but significant contribution to the history of Amateur Radio.

New Ways to Preserve the Old

My initial assignment was to digitize the paper record collections and catalog them in a museum-type program known as *Past Perfect* under the tutelage of Art Goddard, W6XD. As mentioned above, archiving and basic cataloging of these documents had begun some 7 years prior with the direction and encouragement of Jim Maxwell, W6CF. The effort was sustained with generous funding by the YASME Foundation (www.yasme.org) and League fund raising campaigns. The

S. SANT ANDREA, AG1YK



The ARRL archive holds history in every drawer.

activities have been conducted by archivist Perry Williams, W1UED, and long-time volunteer Charles Griffen, W1GYR. Both Perry and Charles have recently retired and should be recognized for their exceptional service in archiving the paper records.

A computer, scanner and pertinent software were donated by the YASME Foundation specifically to complete the digitization project. After examination of all the collections it was discovered that other mate-

rials were seriously deteriorated and in more immediate need of stabilization and preservation. Foremost among the many deteriorating items were the more than 2000 sheet film and plate negatives. These negatives were made from cellulose triacetate, which degrades over time releasing acetic acid, the key ingredient in vinegar. This gives affected negatives an acidic smell, which resulted in the problem becoming known as "vinegar syndrome." Some of the League's negatives were badly affected and were literally cracking up; others were perfect and seemed unaffected. Unfortunately, the deteriorating negatives were contaminating the good ones.

These negatives represent the covers, equipment and other studio setup pictures that appeared in *QST* in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. The negatives are important not only for their images but as examples of fine photographic art. The equipment pictures, particularly, have a three dimensional quality created by the photographer "painting with light." These negatives, the good and the bad, have been placed in individual archival envelopes and segregated by condition. The envelopes were then placed in archival boxes and stored in a freezer. They are cataloged by *QST* issue on the League's internal network for ease of retrieval.

The Many Fronts of the Preservation War

Having taken steps to stabilize the League's collection of photographic negatives, we switched our efforts to other urgent projects such as:

- Preserving first issue copies of *QST* from inception through the 1920s and first issues of League publications that had been previously stored in a bank vault.

- Preserving and cataloging over 2000 journals issued by foreign radio associations such as the RSGB (Radio Society of Great Britain). These incomplete collections have been identified and boxed.

- Centralizing and shelving bound *QST* issues and other publications.

- Centralizing and cataloging over 200 antique hard cover books and pamphlets concerning electricity and radio, some from the 19th century. Included in this library are copies of *Electromagnetic Theory* by Oliver Heaviside (1891), the discoverer of the ionosphere; *Short Lectures To Electrical Artisans* by J. A. Fleming (1894), the inventor of the first practical vacuum tube, and *Father Of Radio — Autobiography Of Lee De Forest*, signed by the author (1950). These have been shelved and form a unique collection.

- Identification and preservation of ARRL and AWA slide/synchronized cassette tape programs and individual tapes, which were distributed by ARRL for educational purposes.

- Protection and preservation of the collection of mint ARRL 50th anniversary post-

age stamps and first day covers of Amateur Radio stamps issued by foreign countries.

As each of these projects was completed the collection was placed in a dedicated, partially climate-controlled room. The listings of the material contained in the collections established to date are updated as items are added. The ARRL history archive currently consists of the following collections:

- Antique Book and Pamphlet — Collection I
- ARRL Early Publications — Collection II
- Foreign Journals and Booklets — Collection III
- QST* Plate Negatives — Collection IV
- ARRL Slide/Cassette Programs — Collection V

Currently, we are preserving nine file drawers of black and white prints of images that appeared in *QST* in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Each issue's images are placed in an individual archival file and each print is separated by archival tissue. Concurrently, we are digitizing the ARRL's 35 mm slide collection utilizing a slide scanner donated by YASME. In the near future we will begin to identify and prioritize the accumulations of movie films and video tapes.

Preserving History Today for Better Understanding Tomorrow

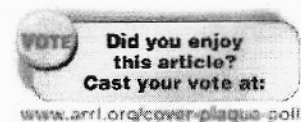
In addition to its many other roles, the ARRL is a public history institution. It is the League's responsibility to conserve those documents and artifacts pertinent to the history of Amateur Radio not only for ourselves but for the public. This extends beyond the curatorship and exhibiting of antique and vintage equipment. It involves the interpretation of significant events in Amateur Radio history in a manner meaningful to the public. I think

the "history" project pioneers were motivated by these concepts. Additionally, these are concepts to keep in mind as we reorganize the Headquarters museum and during preparations for the upcoming ARRL centennial.

The end of the League's second 50 years will be marked in 2014. The first 50 years saw the sound of the spark gap replaced by CW, the transatlantic tests, AM and amateurs serving in the armed forces during the silent periods of two world wars. These last 50 years have been marked by leaps in technology — the OSCAR satellites, digital radio, SSB, EME and the voices of astronauts from space. These archives preserving ham radio's past will provide us with a solid foundation and clear direction as we look forward to our next century of progress.

Michael W. Marinaro, WN1M, an ARRL member, was first licensed in 1952 as KN2CRH. He has been licensed continuously since then and now holds an Amateur Extra class license. Mike graduated from the City University of New York and worked in the financial industry till his retirement. He recently completed a master's degree in History from Central Connecticut State University. Mike has three stations, one of which is a Collins S-Line, that he uses to operate CW and RTTY on all HF bands.

Mike is currently the volunteer archivist working to organize and preserve the history of ham radio as told by the League's extensive collection. He can be reached at PO Box 404, 250 Cold Brook Rd, S Glastonbury, CT 06073-0404, wn1m@arrl.net.



New Products

REPEATER FINDER APPLICATION FOR THE ANDROID FROM W2CYK

◆ *Repeater Finder (R Finder)* is an application for the Android smart phone that allows the user to find repeaters based on current location or a specified location. It allows sorting by distance or by Trustee call sign as well as filtering by band and radius in miles or kilometers. *R Finder* taps into a user supported repeater database that includes information on repeaters as well as IRLP and Echolink connections in the US and other countries. The application only stores information for repeaters within approximately 80 miles of the current location to conserve resources on the handheld device. It uses geolocation via cell tower triangulation, GPS or manual location entry (to look up the repeaters used while traveling). Price: \$4.99. For more information, contact bobg@w2cyk.net or visit the Android Market at market.android.com (search for W2CYK).

