

New Books

The Early Shortwave Stations — A Broadcasting History Through 1945

Jerome S. Berg

Reviewed by Rick Lindquist, WW1ME

While many radio amateurs of a certain age began as shortwave radio listeners (SWLs), it's far less likely that today's relative youngsters discovered the hobby via that route. Nonetheless, the bond between HF broadcasting and Amateur Radio is firmly established in history, and many early shortwave experimenters and SWLs were active hams.

Among many other surprising facts I learned by reading this book was that my hometown, Oradell, New Jersey, was home to the Universal DX Club, one of many such organizations that catered to a broad membership of shortwave broadcast aficionados. Back in the day, DXing did not necessarily extend to contacting stations, and, as many of us recall,

shortwave broadcasters around the world often welcomed listeners with QSL cards. Berg's book — his fourth volume on shortwave broadcasting history — is replete with images of cards (some quite elaborate) and photos from the era.

In the 1920s and 1930s, regular commercial Standard Broadcast (AM) Band broadcasters fielded a shortwave station as an adjunct to their regular signal, giving them access to a far greater listenership. Stations often re-broadcast programs received via shortwave. A program of an originating station in, say, England would be picked up and retransmitted for domestic audiences on the AM band. US stations used shortwave relays to share programming in the days before wired networks were feasible and affordable.

Early on, ham radio operators observed evening "quiet hours" to rein in interference to broadcasters, thus enabling SWLs of the day to catch a "new one." The reader can envision the 1930s DXer sitting at a Pilot Super Wasp

or early Hallicrafters attempting to tease HS8PJ in Bangkok, Siam, on 19.02 megacycles, or SPW in Warsaw on 13,635 kilocycles, or "Happy Station" PCJ in Hilversum, Holland, on 9690 kilocycles, out of the noise.

The detailed end notes, which reference many radio amateurs past and present, make nearly as interesting reading as the text. Anyone with an interest in radio history will find Berg's latest book fascinating reading.

McFarland, Jefferson, North Carolina (www.mcfarlandpub.com; tel 800-253-2187). ISBN 978-0-7864-7411-0; softcover, 7 × 10 inches, 340 pp. Available from Amazon.com; softcover: \$42.75; Kindle edition: \$16.19; or visit www.mcfarlandpub.com/customers/ebooks.

