

# THE eQRM

**THE HISTORY OF THE BVARA**

# THE 1920s

BY RICH SOLTESZ, K3SOM

# THE eQRM

MARCH 2013



## 5 THE HISTORY OF THE BVARA, PART 1: THE 1920s

The beginnings of the BVARA are told. By Rich Soltesz, K3SOM

### THIS MONTH

3

#### Bulletins

Hamfests and general announcements

4

#### The Month Ahead

Contests, VE testing, and Presentation Series

5

#### The History of the BVARA

Digging into the past for our 90th anniversary

10

#### Propagation Charts

Propagation charts for the East Coast

11

#### Who We Are

Membership information, club officers, and meetings

12

#### Next Month

Get a preview of next month's story

### CHECK INTO THE NETS

Wednesday 2 Meter  
8:30PM on 145.310 MHz

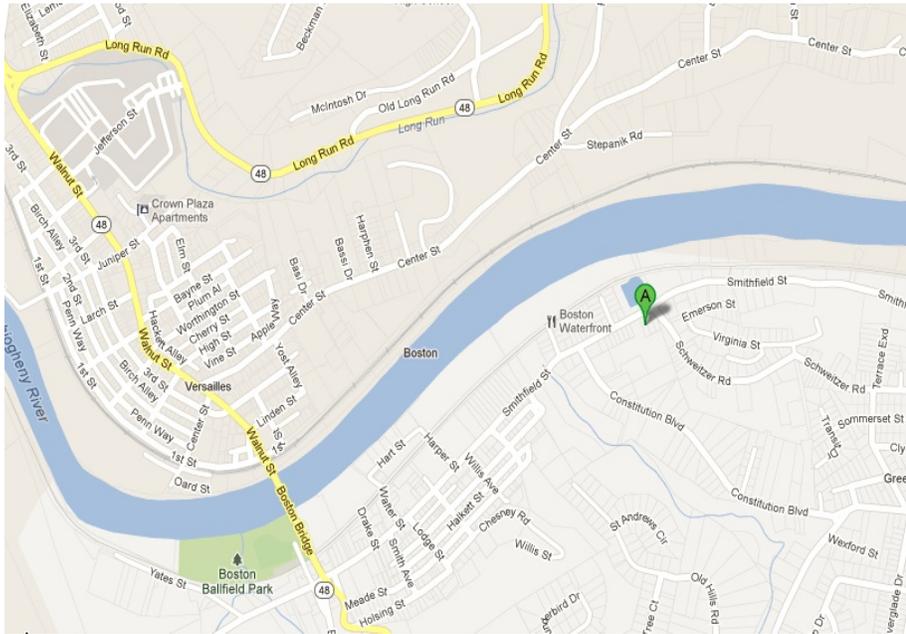
Wednesday 10 Meter  
9:00PM on 28.470 MHz

# Bulletins

HAMFESTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS / CLUB NEWS

## Hamfest/ TRARC Hamfest 2013

Sunday, April 28, 2013. 8AM - 2PM



### The Facts:

**Date:**

Sunday, April 28th , 2013

**Time:**

8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**Location:**

The Spectrum  
6001 Smithfield St.  
Boston, PA 15135

**Talk-In:**

146.73 MHz Repeater  
Mobile Check in: 146.52 MHz

**Admission:**

\$5.00

**Sponsored By:**

The Two Rivers Amateur Radio  
Club, Inc.

## Club Event/ Special Event Station

Saturday, April 13, 2013

To commemorate the 90th anniversary of The Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Association, our amateur radio club will be hosting a Special Event Station on Saturday, April 13, 2013. The station will be run for nine hours, in honor of our nine decades of operation. Detailed information will be posted on [www.w3sgj.org](http://www.w3sgj.org).

If you would like to participate in this event, please contact our club Trustee, Rich K3SOM, or email [w3sgj@w3sgj.org](mailto:w3sgj@w3sgj.org).

### Frequencies:

**SSB:** 3.97, 7.24, 14.28, 21.38,  
(28.35) MHz

**CW:** 3.535, 7.030, 14.040, 21.030  
and (28.030) MHz

**PSK31:** 3.580, 7.035, 14.070,  
21.080, (28.120) MHz

Frequencies subject to change

# The Month Ahead

Contest Information, VE Testing and Presentation Series

## CONTEST



**Breeze Shooters 10m  
Groundwave Contest  
Mar. 16, 2013 (SSB)**

**OBJECTIVE:** Contact as many 10 Meter stations as possible within the 49-square grid provided by Breeze Shooters.

**BANDS:** 10 Meter. High Power is restricted to not more than 125 watts output.

**Contest Period:** Saturday, March 16, 2013 from 7:00 PM EST until 12:00 Midnight.

**Log Submission:** If possible, use the log sheets provided at [breeseshooters.org](http://breeseshooters.org), or logging software.

**Exchange:** Call and contest grid number. All contacts must be acknowledged two-way contacts.

For more information on this contest, detailed rules, and log submission addresses, please visit [breeseshooters.org](http://breeseshooters.org)

## VE TEST SESSION

The next test session will be at the Beaver County Emergency Operations Center  
351 14th Street  
Ambridge, PA 15003

**Time: 5:00 P.M.  
(walk-ins allowed)**

**Date: Thursday, March 14**

All candidates wishing to take the test should bring **ALL** of the following:

1. Two (2) forms of identification. One should be a Photo ID.
2. A pencil and a blue or black pen.
3. Your original **AND** a photocopy of your current license (if any).
4. Your original **AND** a photocopy of any C.S.C.E's (if any).
5. The test fee of \$15.00.

All classes of amateur radio license tests will be administered.

**Note:** No question pool updates or releases will take place in 2013.

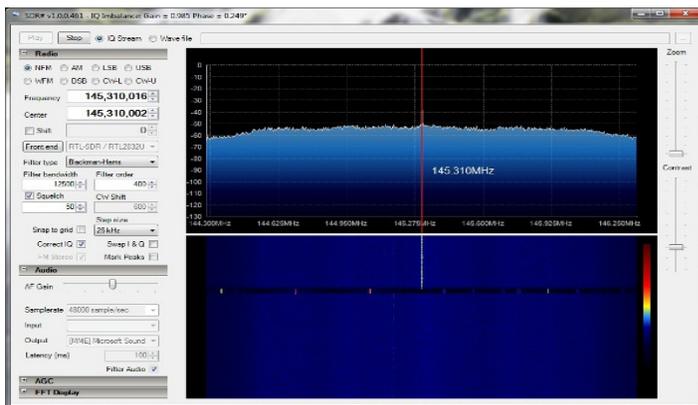
For more information, please contact our VE Test Coordinator:

**Chris Moratis, W3OUF**  
1199 Highland Avenue  
Ambridge, PA 15003  
**PHONE: 724-266-2866**  
[cjmoratis@verizon.net](mailto:cjmoratis@verizon.net)

## MONTHLY

# Presentation Series

The BVARA Presentation Series provides a vast array of topics and discussions, with a new topic every month at our club meetings.



**March 14, 2013 @ 6:30PM**

At Beaver County 911 Center, 351 14th Street, Ambridge PA

**Speaker:** Rich Soltesz, K3SOM

**Topic:** SDR with a DVB-T Dongle and Up-Converter

**Including:** Our BVARA Presentation Series this month is a hands-on demo of the inexpensive SDR (Software Defined Radio) technology that was described in the January 2013 issue of QST. The SDR USB device, equipped with free software, works on VHF and UHF, is relatively inexpensive to purchase and make, and can be set to a variety of bands and modes. With an up-converter, 0.1 to 30 MHz can also be covered. Come check it out!

**Rich's Background:** Extra Class Ham, licensed since 1962; Volunteer Examiner (VE); B.S. Electrical Engineering

## WEEKLY

# Thursday Morning Breakfast

The BVARA meets every Thursday at Steak n Shake in Center Township, by the Beaver Valley Mall, at 10:30 AM. All area amateurs are invited and encouraged to attend the Thursday Morning Breakfast. See you at Steak n Shake!



# THE 1920s

In the early twenties, 1922 or 1923, a group of radio amateurs banded together and founded the Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Club.

In those days, very little technical knowledge was available so these Beaver County amateurs gathered principally to exchange ideas and opinions concerning amateur radio. In fact, very little is known about those three radio pioneers. We do

know about the culture, the current events at that time, both locally and globally, and some of the obstacles those inquisitive individuals faced with radio technology. From a practical point of view, there were still many homes without electricity.

In 1923 Calvin Coolidge became our 30th US president after the death of Warren Harding. The last of our US troops left the Rhineland (Germany) after World War I. The first presidential address was broadcast on radio in 1923. Vladimir Lenin's last article appeared in Pravda and the USSR was formed that same year. Jean Sibelius' 6th Symphony premiered. In Egypt, Tutankhamen's burial chamber was opened by archaeologist Howard Carter.

Closer to home, Yankee Stadium opened its doors. "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "The Ten Commandments" were successful movies in 1923. "Runnin' Wild" (introducing the Charleston dance) opened on Broadway. Astronaut Alan Shepard, Senator Bob Dole, actor Charlton Heston, and writer Norman Mailer were born in 1923. Walt and Roy Disney founded the Disney Company in 1923 and the Hollywood sign on the hill overlooking Los Angeles was officially dedicated that same year. Transcontinental airmail service began. Insulin became generally

available for diabetics as well in 1923.

#### EVENTS IN BEAVER COUNTY IN 1923

In Beaver County, the Ambridge Chamber of Commerce began in 1923. That same year West Mayfield became incorporated. Geneva College became accredited by the Commission on Higher Education in 1923. St. Ladislaus Church was founded in Beaver Falls that same year. Snyder Brothers & Baker, Inc. on 3rd Street in Beaver was selling a 1923 four-passenger Chevrolet Sedanette for \$850. This smart-looking vehicle was equipped with drum-type head lamps with legal lenses.

#### RADIO TECHNOLOGY IN THE 1920s

The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) was founded in May 1914, only nine years before the Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Club. The 1920s saw tremendous technical growth in radio. Pushed both by wartime demands and by the growing commercialization of radio, equipment rapidly

improved. The use of spark gap technology quickly disappeared as the more efficient continuous wave system of generating radio-frequency energy and transmitting Morse code became standard.

In 1923 a two-way contact between Connecticut and France bridged the Atlantic Ocean for the first time. All this led to rapid growth in both the number of amateurs and membership in the League. Perhaps this was the "spark" that inspired those three Beaver County men to join together and share their common interest in this new radio technology.

With government uncertainty as to how to allocate both commercial and amateur frequencies, the ARRL kept discipline in amateur ranks so that spectrum was not unnecessarily occupied. They worked with Washington and the result was that amateurs received the orderly series of harmonic frequency bands that they largely hold today (originally 1.8, 3.5, 7, 14, 28, and 56 MHz; other bands have since been added and the 56 MHz allocation was changed to 50

## A YEAR IN THE ROARING TWENTIES

1923

Runnin' Wild, introducing the Charleston dance, opens on Broadway.



The Walt Disney Company is founded.

Yankee Stadium opens.

Calvin Coolidge becomes the 30th President of the United States.



The last U.S. troops leave Germany after World War I.



In Egypt, King Tutankhamen's burial chamber is uncovered by archaeologist Howard Carter.

MHz). The League also began to act in an advisory capacity for the American delegations at international radio conferences. In 1925 the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) was formed, and it remains headquartered at Newington, Connecticut.

Back in the 1920s, the call signs of hams in Western Pennsylvania began with the number "8" followed by two or three letters. Some of these early radio hobbyists in Western Pennsylvania included 8ARB (1928) in Ben Avon, 8AYH (1929) in Bridgeville, 8BBF (1932) in New Brighton, 8COX (1923) in Pittsburgh, 8CUG (1926) in Emsworth, 8DHJ (1926) in Pittsburgh and many others including 8XK, Frank Conrad, who was a radio broadcasting engineer and Assistant Chief Engineer for the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. The year following their call sign represents the year on the QSL card that they sent to another ham to confirm a two-way communication or QSL. That card became known as a QSL card. In January 1928 there were 17,000 licensed hams in the United States.

The Elser-Mathes Cup was



Elser-Mathes Cup from 1928, ARRL HQ Museum

AMERICAN RADIO RELAY LEAGUE

# RADIOGRAM

CITY OF ORIGIN	STATION	NUMBER
TO:--		
REC'D AT STATION	PHONE	TIME
ADDRESS	DATE	

*This Message was transmitted free of charge by Amateur Radio Stations of the American Radio Relay League. Answer will be sent free by filing at this station.*

FORM 4 PRINTED IN U.S.A.

ARRL Radiogram from 1925, Wikipedia Commons File

created in 1928 by U.S. Amateurs Fred Johnson Elser (W6FB/W7OX) and Stanley M. Mathes (7OE/K1CY) to be awarded for the "First Amateur Two-Way Communication between Earth & Mars." The cup is a Philippine Igorot wood carving, a bowl supported by two standing figures. News of the loss in December 1999 of the Mars Polar Lander renewed interest in the Elser-Mathes Cup. Visitors to ARRL HQ may recall having seen the unusual trophy on display. Col Fred Johnson Elser, W6FB, recalled meeting League founder Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW, in the 1920s. He learned that Maxim had an interest in Mars and even owned a globe of "The Red Planet." Perhaps a future BVARA member will claim that prize!

#### HAM EQUIPMENT

Back in the 1920s, Beaver County had a number of businesses to cater to the specific needs of the

radio enthusiast – whether the radio was for family listening and enjoyment or for the amateur radio operator and his special needs. From the pages of the Beaver Falls Tribune of January 9th, 1925 we can envision the amateur radio operator reading these ads and visiting these establishments in the area (see sidebar, p. 8).

With mud slides and impassable roads at times, hams in Beaver Falls were fortunate not to have to travel too far for needed supplies for their equipment. Perhaps they even took a streetcar to these radio stores. As we look at the old pages of QST we gain insight into some of the equipment and techniques that hams used. By examining what hams wrote on their QSL cards about the kinds of equipment they were actually using our knowledge of their equipment increases. And as we review the performance characteristics of these sets, we can only conclude that our early club members must have been quite

# EXTRA, EXTRA! RADIO NEWSPAPER ADS

In the 1920s, the pages of local newspapers contained many advertisements for amateur radio equipment and services. The ads below are taken from the pages of the Beaver Falls Tribune on January 9th, 1925.

**A New Radio Station**

We have recently opened a Radio Service Department under the management of a competent radio man.

The object of this department is to keep your radio set in working order at all times, regardless of the make of the set or where it was purchased. One of our men will make a regular monthly call at your home to inspect your set, make necessary adjustments and give you any radio advice you desire. This service will be furnished you for less than one dollar per month. We feel this a service that many have been looking for and that the owner of a radio will be glad of an opportunity to avail himself of such a service. Just call Beaver Falls 999.

**BENTLEY'S Service Station**

Sixth Avenue and Fourth Street Beaver Falls, Pa.

**COMPLETE LINE OF Radio Sets at All Prices**

Payments can be Arranged

**FULL LINE OF BATTERIES, TUBES, AND PARTS ALWAYS ON HAND**

Repair Work Promptly Attended to

**W. H. BONNAGE**  
1508 SEVENTH AVENUE  
BEAVER FALLS, PA.

**Radio Supplies**

**A and B Batteries, Head Phones, Tubes, Cabinets, Bradley-Stats, Battery Chargers and Radio Mats**

If you are expecting to build a set, we have parts to build a reliable 1, 2, or 3 tube outfit.

**ROOM 8, FIRST NATIONAL BANK BUILDING  
ROCHESTER, PA.**

Open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday Evenings

**Special Offer On Grebe Radio Receiver**

GREBE CR9  
3-A Batteries, 2-B Batteries 90V, 2-WD12 Tubes, Brandes Speaker, Aerial Equipment Complete for only **\$100.00**

Should you wish to use storage battery and UV201A Tubes the price will be **\$110.00**

RADIOLA III  
2-WD11 Tubes, 1-PR Brandes Phones, Complete Aerial Equipment, all batteries **\$39.75**

RADIOLA III-A  
4-WD11 Tubes, 1-PR Scientific Phones, 1 Brandes Speaker, Complete Aerial Equipment, all batteries . . . . . **\$79.80**

**WOLF ELECTRIC CO**

1104 Seventh Ave. Beaver Falls, Pa.

OLDEST ELECTRICAL DEALERS IN BEAVER COUNTY

Advertisements (clockwise from upper left): Bentley's Service Station; radio supplies at the First National Bank in Rochester; Wolf Electric ad offering Grebe and Radiola radios; W. H. Bonnager ad for radios, parts and service.

enthusiastic about their hobby and their achievements.

Transceivers did not exist then. Hams had radically different circuitry for receiving and for transmitting. The availability of vacuum tubes made these circuits perform. Although very low power stations could be run from batteries, AC electric power was required if the 1920s ham wanted to run any more than a few watts of power. Some hams in Western Pennsylvania had Westinghouse M-G sets (motor-generators with a common shaft) that could provide up to a kilowatt of power for their transmitters. The fortunate ham already had his home wired for electricity.

Ham receivers spanned the gamut from simple one-tube sets with headphones to early superheterodyne configurations of considerable complexity for the 1920s. One popular configuration consisted of a Reinartz tuner followed by two stages of audio amplification. This ingenious circuit included a regeneration loop to "amplify" through feedback at the RF level the signal being tuned. Very high gains were possible and the set could be made to oscillate so that CW signals could be received. Tuning was "touchy" and coil coupling was critical to successful operations, particularly as the frequency went higher. With a good antenna and a strong signal being received, the audio from the receiver could adequately drive a loudspeaker if the ham could afford one. Tubes

like the W11 and W12 were very popular.

Ham transmitters during this period were largely home-constructed from various articles and with possible collaboration from other hams in the area. This need for discussion of ideas and concepts may have had a great deal to do with the formation of the Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Club. The paper trail from this period is extremely difficult to obtain. Monthly magazines, QSL cards, newspaper articles (a paucity of them about ham radio!), and antique auctions have provided most of the available information about this time period.

Popular transmitter circuits typically employed Hartley oscillators followed by an amplifier stage. Sometimes the amplifier tubes were operated in parallel to achieve higher output levels. For phone operation, Heising modulators were frequently used with the final amplifiers to create the amplitude modulated (AM) signals. These signals were then coupled to the parallel wires connecting the transmitter to the antenna. Antennas could be end-fed or center-fed designs and frequently utilized cage-style designs of multiple wires. Frequently the feedlines were also of cage design. Many antenna configurations incorporated a counterpoise of wires below the antenna at a height of six to twelve feet.

One can only imagine what the ham of the 1920s could hear

## AM PROGRAMS

There were very few AM broadcast stations in the 1920s. Below is the radio schedule for KDKA and WCAE for January 6th, 1928.

### RADIO NEWS

**WDKA**

4—Telechron time. Closing stock comment, weather report, report of butter and eggs, fruits and vegetables Baltimore grain and Chicago grain and provision, Toledo seed, Pittsburgh hay and grain.

5—Telechron time. Markets, livestock, Boston wool, principal cotton markets, New York sugar and closing comment on Chicago grain.

5:10—Talk sponsored by the International Oil Heating company.

6—Telechron time.

6:10—Yellow Cab theatrical calendar.

6:15—KDKA Little Symphony orchestra playing in the lobby of the William Penn hotel, Pittsburgh.

7—Telechron time. University of Pittsburgh address by Dr. John G. Bowman chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh.

7:15—Week-end tours with probable weather conditions to be encountered by the Automobile Club of Pittsburgh, A. A. A.

7:30—Castoria Rock-A-Bye Lady from WJZ, New York.

8:30—Hampton Institute quartet from WJZ, New York.

9—Wrigley revelew from WJZ, New York.

Longine time from WJZ, New York.

10—Reymer's R. V. D. trio. Telechron time and weather forecast.

**WCAE**

4:30—Orthophonie recital.

5—"Happy hour," period for children.

5:30—Farm school.

6—Dinner concert from Hotel Waldorf-Astoria.

7—Frank Maggio's New China Restaurant orchestra.

7:30—Correct time.

7:30—Uncle Kaybee.

7:45—Motor talk and highway report by C. H. Roth, secretary of Pittsburgh Motor club.

8—Concert by Cities Service concert orchestra and Cities Service Cavaliers.

9—Howard correct time.

9—Whittall Anglo-Perstians.

9:30—La France orchestra, directed by Anna C. Byrne.

10—Program sponsored by the Palmolive-Peet Co.

11—Ben Bernie's Hotel Roosevelt orchestra.

through his headphones. There were fewer stations on the air and interference from other stations was probably far less than today. Noise sources were probably also less prevalent, but when they were present, they could have been really nasty to deal with!

Radiogram and message handling for some hams was a primary activity. Much like today, hams were individuals with their own preferences for equipment, styles of sending Morse code, operating goals and objectives, and a desire to succeed and enjoy this great hobby. After a successful CW contact on 80 meters, our early BVARA member may have picked up his telephone, waited for the party line to clear, and then dialed the three-digit phone number of his "buddy" to brag about his DX!

Perhaps before turning on the ham radio set, our ham and family enjoyed listening to the family radio by tuning in to one of the few AM broadcast stations in the area.

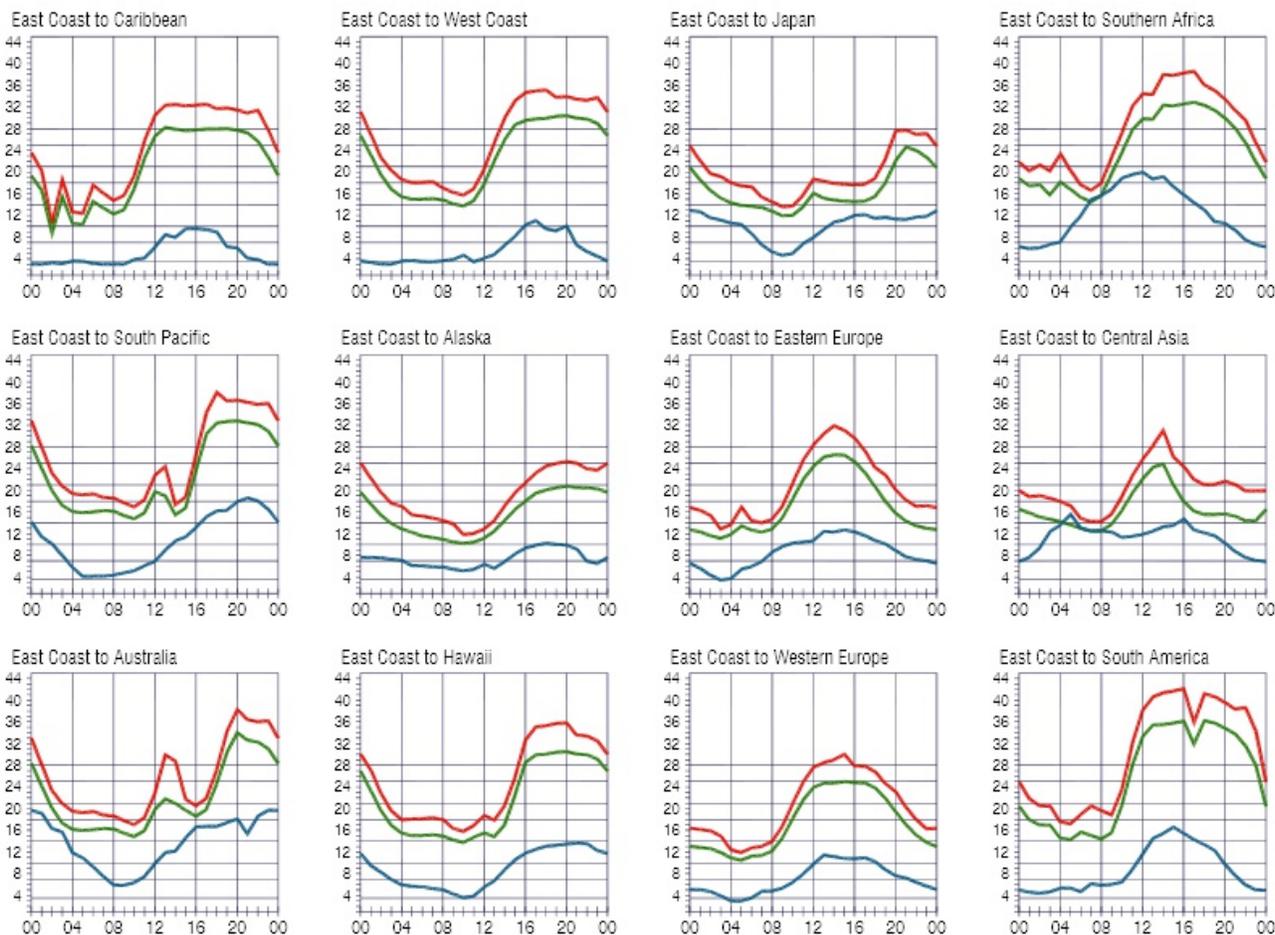
---

### NEXT MONTH

Next month we'll move ahead to the 1930s and continue our journey as we follow the early history of the BVARA. A second club was formed and activities everywhere in ham radio began to pick up. We'll look at what was happening around the globe and locally during the 1930s. In addition, as technology continues to change, we'll examine the effect on equipment and operating practices. Stay tuned! →

# Propagation Charts

From the ARRL



## RACES / ARES

### eQRM Urges All County Hams to Participate

As a matter of editorial opinion, the eQRM urges all Beaver County licensed amateurs to participate in the County's RACES and ARES programs. Any Beaver County Amateur that is interested in participating in the RACES/ARES programs can do so by checking into the Beaver County Public Service Net which meets every Monday evening at 8:30 PM local time on the N3TN 146.850 MHz repeater (131.8 PL)

#### PROPAGATION

The East Coast propagation chart listed above is for March 2013.

If you would like more information on how to read these charts, or for more information on propagation in general, please visit <http://arrl.org/propagation>



# Who We Are

Membership Information and Club Officers

BY BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE BVARA, YOU CAN HELP SECURE THE FUTURE OF AMATEUR RADIO IN BEAVER COUNTY. ADDITIONALLY, THE BVARA RECEIVES A PORTION OF EACH ARRL AND/OR WORLD RADIO SUBSCRIPTION YOU PURCHASE!

## Join the BVARA, ARRL and World Radio

Sign up for:	Price	Quantity
<input type="checkbox"/> BVARA FULL MEMBERSHIP	20.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> BVARA STUDENT MEMBERSHIP	15.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> BVARA ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP	10.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> CHILD UNDER 21 IN HOME	5.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> ONE YEAR ARRL MEMBERSHIP	39.00	

ARRL MEMBER? YES NO Subtotal: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Donation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Your License Class (if any):  
 Novice Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Technician Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 General \_\_\_\_\_  
 Advanced Email Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Extra Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Your Call Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Make Check or Money order payable to:  
 The Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Association, P.O. Box 424  
 South Heights, PA 15081

### 2013 BVARA OFFICERS

- President:** Jack Spencer, KZ3Z  
**Vice President:** Jeff Waite, K3SLK  
**Second Vice Pres.:** Mark Kavic, KB3LED  
**Treasurer:** Pam Spencer, W3PMS  
**Secretary:** Norm Trunick, K3NJT  
**Director:** Adam Horniak, KG3L  
**Director:** Denny Herbuth, KR3DX  
**Trustee:** Rich Soltesz, K3SOM

### MONTHLY MEETINGS

**E-Board meetings are now held the Saturday before the monthly club meeting. VE testing begins at 5:00. Regular meetings are at 6:30.**

**All meetings are held at**  
 Beaver County  
 Emergency Operations Center  
 351 14th Street  
 Ambridge, PA 15003  
**on the second Thursday of every month (unless otherwise stated).**

### MEETING DATES

- 2013  
 March 14  
 April 11  
 May 9  
 June 13  
 July 11  
 August - **No meeting (Corn Roast, Date TBA)**  
 September 12  
 October 10  
 November 14  
 December 7 - **BVARA Christmas Party**
- 2014  
 January 9  
 February 13  
 March 13

QSL CARD

**Beaver County**

**W3SGJ**

Beaver Valley Amateur Radio Association  
 P.O. Box 424  
 South Heights, PA 15081, USA  
 ITU 8, CQ 5, Grid EN90ur, Beaver County

**NEXT MONTH**

APRIL 2013

# THE HISTORY OF THE BVARA CONTINUES INTO THE 1930s