The Storied History of the Ham Radio Call sign

Mike Ritz, W7VO

August 2017



Every legal amateur radio operator in the world has a government issued call sign, and many hams are better known to their radio friends by their call sign than they are by their given birth name. The uniqueness and prestige of a call sign is indeed one of the most important things that provide the persona that IS amateur radio. Remember when you first received license news from the FCC, it was not unlike Christmas day as you learned what your new call sign would be. From then on, you would be known by that call sign. "Hey look, there's VO!"

Call signs are important indeed. Think of the call sign **W1AW**, and 99% of ARRL members would know that this once identified Hiram Percy Maxim, the founder of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). That call sign was so important that it later became the official call sign of the ARRL. But, if one thinks about it, we don't really *own* these call signs, they're *leased* to us by the FCC for our use as long as we remain licensed. We are the caretakers, and when we become a silent key they are passed along to the next caretaker. (This author is the fifth caretaker of the **W7VO** call sign. The seventh, if the original **7VO** (circa 1922) nomenclature is considered.) However, this begs the question; where did our treasured call signs first originate,

and what is the evolution of this most important moniker? Of course, one cannot discuss call signs without covering some of the storied history of amateur radio itself in the process.

The origins of amateur radio call signs go back to the earliest days of radio, informally at first, then more formalized as major world events transpired that changed the face of amateur radio itself. This evolution can be broken down into five distinct periods of history:

- 1) The Pioneer Years, pre 1918
- 2) The Reconstructive Years, 1918 1927
- 3) The Pre-War Years, 1928 1941
- 4) The Post-War Years, 1945 1975
- 5) The Modern Era, 1975 present

The Pioneer Years, pre 1918, "The Days of Anarchy"

The very early days of ham radio was an interesting time, not completely unlike the untamed wild-west itself. Prior to 1912 there were no real laws governing the new communications medium known as "wireless", it was for the most part completely unregulated. The airwaves of the time consisted of signals emitting from crude spark gap transmitters, by a combination of governmental, commercial interests, and fledgling ham radio operators (who mostly were employed by these other interests). The Marconi Company was among the first to use three letter call signs to identify their transatlantic coastal wireless telegraph stations, and to identify their company owned shipboard stations. Coastal station call signs started either with a "V" (for "Voice of (somewhere)", or "M" (for "Marconi"), while the shipboard stations just used the starting letter of "M". Amateur radio operators for the most part started off by using just names as identifiers, such as "BILL" or "MAC", then that evolved into a combination of two or three letters, a mixture of letters and numbers, or even just numbers! It would be easy to see that there ended up being a LOT of overlap in call signs, both commercially, and among hams themselves. Was "MAC" a Marconi Company owned shipboard station sailing off the coast of Newfoundland, or Miles A. Cornwall (using the call sign "MAC"), the ham radio operator in New York? With such a limited range for the spark gap transmitter (often around a hundred miles or so), this wasn't much of an issue, (at least at first.)

However, as the airwaves became more and more congested it was clear that more needed to be done to coordinate and publish established call signs to reduce conflicts. While there were publications that listed known commercial wireless stations, the May 1908 publication of <u>Modern Electrics</u> magazine published one of the very first lists (a "wireless registry"), of known amateur wireless radio operators, their associated call signs, and also the approximate

wavelength they operated on. (One could argue that these are really the first ten documented ham radio operators!) Most of these hams used two letter identifiers signifying their initials, but one ham, Otto Curtis of Rochester, New York was simply known as "**Q**", long before the letter became associated as fictional James Bond's technical advisor!

NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER.	CALL LETTERS.	APPROXIMATE WAVE LENGTH <u>IN METERS.</u>	SPARK LENGTH OF INDUCTION
1—A. C. Austin, Jr., Hasbrouck Hgts, N. J.	AU	200	2 ins.
2Otto E. Curtis, Rochester, N. Y.	Q	152	1 "
3–M. D. Douglas, Hasbrouck Hgts, N. J.	MD	100	1/4 "
4–Harry Gross, Hackensack, N. J.	HG	125	1/2 "
5-Albert Higson, Jersey City, N. J.	AH	75	1 "
6–Harold E. Peck, Providence, R. I.	PE	40	1 "
7–J. Peters, Jr., Florissant, Mo.	PI	125	4 "
8—L. S. Stevens, Marlboro, Mass.	LS	60	1½ "
9–Newell A. Thompson, Brookline, Mass.	KN	400-700	½ KW
10Earl Vogel, Ashton, Ill.	AN	56	2 ins.

From : Modern Electrics, May 1908

By May of 1909 the "wireless registry" listed many more amateur wireless stations and their call signs, most listed were using three letters by now. (It's interesting to note that many used two letters followed by the third letter of "**M**" to denote that they were employees of the Marconi Company). Some hams were listed with a combination of letters and numbers, such as J.C. Randall of Albany, New York who was listed signing as "**S4**", and F.W Harris of Renton, Washington, who signed simply as "**3B**". One special call sign listed was that of Earl C. Hawkings of Minneapolis, Minnesota who utilized the call sign of "**HAM**". I guess one could argue that he was the first *real* "ham"!

In such an unregulated environment that had many wireless stations competing, (all utilizing transmitters with very broad emission spectrums), and coupled with crude receivers on the other end, conflicts caused by both unintentional and intentional interference were commonplace. This was getting worse by the day, and one day it all came to a head. That day was April 15, 1912.

On that fateful day, the seemingly impossible happened. The "unsinkable" RMS *Titanic* (call sign: **MGY**), with 2,200 passengers aboard hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic, and was sinking fast. While there were hundreds of passengers eventually rescued by the RMS *Carpathia* (call sign: **MPA**), several problems with wireless radio communications of the day reportedly played a key role in delaying the rescue effort, and undoubtedly added to the *Titanic*'s fatality totals. For one, the shipboard wireless station aboard the *Titanic* was owned and manned by employees of Marconi Company. Marconi's main competition for the ship wireless telegraph market was bitter rival Telefunken, based in Germany. At the time Marconi Company owned stations were not allowed to have any contact with Telefunken owned stations (call signs beginning with a "**D**"), and as a result messages from the competition were largely ignored. In addition, there was both unintentional and intentional interference from other commercial stations (and hams alike), making for even a more chaotic scene. Many thought the distress signals from the doomed ship were fake. After all, how could the "unsinkable" *Titanic* actually be sinking? It must be "fake news"!

There was also a third issue. The Marconi Company early on had established the "**CQD**" ("CQ Distress"), message. The now familiar "**SOS**" had actually been made the worldwide standard at the second <u>International Radiotelegraphic Convention</u>, was signed in 1906, and became effective on July 1, 1908. This was a full four years earlier than the *Titanic* sinking Only the Marconi Company equipped ships still used "**CQD**" as the standard distress message when the *Titanic* ran afoul of the icebergs in the North Atlantic.

While the above is a nice narrative about a well-known disaster, what does this *really* have to do with amateur radio call signs? When the dust settled, the US Congress began investigations into how to keep this historic disaster from repeating itself. Besides the sole remaining *Titanic* wireless operator, Harold Bride, the radio pioneer and tycoon Guglielmo Marconi himself was called before Congress to explain his company's practices. The end result of these hearings became what is known as the <u>Radio Act of 1912</u>, written into law on August 13, 1912. This historic act had the following provisions, among others:

- 1.) It established a Federal law that mandated that all ships constantly monitor distress frequencies, (the primary one at that time set at 600 meters (500 kHz))
- 2.) Mandated that the familiar Morse "SOS" be the defacto standard for distress calls
- 3.) Mandated that all radio stations in the US be inspected and licensed by the federal government.
- 4.) Provided the possibility of fines for intentional or malicious interference
- 5.) Limited experimenters (amateurs) to 200 meters wavelength (about 1.5 MHz) and lower, (as frequencies higher than that were considered "useless"!)

The end result of the new licensing requirements dramatically dropped the number of amateurs from about 10,000 to around 1,200 almost overnight, and almost killed off the hobby. This was a win for the Navy and commercial wireless interests, as they really didn't want any "amateurs" on the air anyway interfering with *their* airwaves. While US stations, (including amateurs) had to be inspected and licensed by the US government this act didn't really do much for formalizing call signs per-se.

On the international front, the <u>International Radiotelegraph Convention of 1912</u> established the first internationally recognized call sign standards, based on the country. This standard replaced the random three letter call signs prevalent then. Major world powers were given single prefixes such as "**N**", " **W**", and half of the "**K**" prefix allocations (**KDA-KZZ**) (United States), "**A**", "**D**", and "**KAA-KCZ**" (Germany), "**F**" (France), "**B**", "**M**", and "**G**" (Great Britain). The convention was signed at the <u>International Radiotelegraph Conference</u> in London on July 5, 1912. It is important to note that while these international standards were applied to commercial wireless stations, amateurs for the large part were still left on their own.

On May 9, 1913, the official United States Policy for Radio Call Letters was published:

"The call letters for amateur stations in the United States will be awarded by radio inspectors, each for his own district, respectively according to the following system:

(a) The call will consist of three items; number of radio district; followed by two letters of the alphabet. Thus, the call of all amateur stations in New England (which comprises the first district) will be the figure "one" in Continental Morse, followed by two letters; in California (in the sixth district) the figure "six" followed by two letters; in South Carolina the figure "four" followed by two letters; in Missouri the figure "nine" followed by two letters, etc. The letters "X", "Y", "Z", must not be used as the first of the two letters.

The territory of each district was as follows:

(b) The three items; a given figure first, followed by two letters of the alphabet, thus may be combined in 598 different calls, which will probably suffice for the amateur sending stations in most districts for some time to come.

(c) Radio inspectors will insert amateur station calls in station licenses according to this system, and will keep a permanent chart, of 598 squares, lettered with the alphabet from left to right and from top to bottom ("A" to "W"), inserting in the appropriate square the serial license number of the station to which the call letters were awarded. Within these limitations radio inspectors will use their discretion in the award of calls, avoiding, of course, duplications.

(d) When a station is abandoned and the license canceled, or if a license shall be forfeited for violation of law, the call assigned to it may be allotted to another station.

(e) If the entire 598 calls have been exhausted, radio inspectors will issue additional calls, consisting of the figure of the district followed by three letters. From such combinations should be excluded the combination **SOS**, and **PRB**, all three-letter combinations beginning with **QR** or **QS**, all combinations involving the repetition of the same letter three times, three-letter combinations beginning with "K", "N", "W", "X", "Y", "Z", and other combinations, which, for various reasons, international, national, local, or individual, may be objectionable."

The "official" US amateur ham radio station call sign was officially born, but what is interesting to note here was that the Department of Commerce, who was responsible for these regulations, thought that 598 call signs per district were plenty "for some time to come." Little did they know that the number of US amateurs would balloon to the almost three-quarter million we have now!



US Call Districts, 1912

Then on April 7th, 1917 the entire world of amateur radio was turned upside down, when by executive order amateurs were told to "dismantle and render inoperable radio wireless equipment, and antennas" as the United States formally entered "The Great War", World War

One. This mandate applied to both receivers and transmitters, and all amateur licenses that were issued to date were immediately cancelled. Amateur radio was dead, and radio itself became a government monopoly utilized strictly for the war effort. To ignore this mandate could be considered an act of treason, so it was not taken lightly.

Radio amateurs, while no longer licensed, were a valuable asset for the war effort. They were encouraged by the government to help man coastal wireless stations and enlist in the Signal Corps for field radio operations.

The Reconstructive Years, 1918 - 1927, "Starting Over"

At the conclusion of the war the US Navy put together a very large push with the Congress to ensure that future amateur radio activity remained silent, so the military could continue to have the airwaves for themselves. Mostly due the effort of Hiram Maxim and the ARRL that effort was defeated, and amateurs could once again be licensed and back on the air starting in early 1919.

Since all licenses had been cancelled at the start of US involvement in the war, all previous call signs were forever lost. When the nine district radio offices once again opened for business, amateurs lined up in an attempt to ensure low letter suffix assignments. (Are things really different now outside Apple stores these days when the new phones come out?)

As early as 1920 some of the call districts had run out of two letter suffix assignments, so began the three letter suffix call sign. (That said, there were some reassignments of two letter call signs, if you knew the right person!)

By 1923, as both receiver and transmitter technology greatly improved, international contacts between amateurs were becoming commonplace. Amateur stations, for the most part, still didn't follow the call sign prefix standards set by the <u>International Radiotelegraph</u> <u>Convention of 1912</u>, so there were again problems related to duplication of call signs. (Only this time on a worldwide scale!) Remember that the policy established in 1913 did not cover call sign prefixes for amateurs, only the district assignments and suffixes. There could be a **2AL** in New York working a **2AL** in Brazil, or another one in England. Amateurs, (being inventive as they are), took the matter in their own hands, and sometime starting in the mid 1920's US amateurs began using an unofficial "u" or "U" as a prefix on call signs to denote they were from the US. By 1927 the prefix "nu" (North America, United States) became commonplace on QSL cards (example: **nu6AA**), while a ham in Canada would use "**nc**" (North America, Canada) as a prefix, (ie: **nc7AA**).



Sample QSL Cards

In 1925 the Department of Commerce opened up the "Z" letter suffix for assignment, and allowed the "Y" letter suffixes to be used for educational institutions. Examples of the latter are still in use to this day; Stanford University is often on the air with W6YX (originally 6YX), and down the road San Jose State University is still on the air (since 1928) with the W6YL call sign. The "X" letter suffix remained for "experimental" stations, and was not released as a 1X2 (ie: W7XQ), standard call sign until 1977. Two-by-three letter "X" suffix call signs remain to this day reserved for experimental stations. Not exactly as the Convention of 1912 dictated, but better than nothing!

The Pre-War Years, 1927-1941, "Amateur Radio is Here to Stay!"

The <u>Washington Conference / Radio Act of 1927</u> established formalized US amateur radio bands, and finally put US amateurs under international prefix rules that were loosely established in the international conference of 1913. As a result of this act a new commission was formed, the Federal Radio Commission. The commission was assigned the task of issuing licenses, including amateur radio. Also part of this latest act, the US was finally going to follow the already established International Telegraph Union (ITU) call sign standards.

The ITU standards were upgraded to grant the entire "K" prefix to the US, in addition to the existing "W" and "N" prefixes. (Remember that Germany had the "KAA" to "KCZ" prefixes issued previously). The Navy was reserved the "N" prefix, while starting in 1928 the "W" and "K" prefixes were authorized for civilian services, such as amateur radio. As new amateur licenses were issued, and old ones were renewed, the "W" prefix was simply added to the existing call sign. For example, the call sign of 6UO, (or the unofficial nu6UO), became W6UO. The "K" prefix at that time was reserved for US possessions, such as Alaska (K7), Hawaii, (K6), and other islands, such as the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico (K4). (Note that "A" block letters were unassigned until 1947, when the US received the additional "AA" through "AL" prefix blocks). The US amateur radio call sign had finally taken its modern shape we all know today.



Example: nu2ATZ became W2ATZ

Unrelated to amateur history, (but a question that always seem to arise), is the history of how the US commercial broadcast stations got geographically divided into "**K**" (for stations West of the Mississippi), and "**W**" for Eastern stations. This oddity goes back to early Federal Radio Commission regulations, and was originally applied to ships operating either in the Atlantic, ("**K**" prefixes), or Pacific or Great Lakes area ("**W**" prefix). Eventually, this was applied to land based commercial stations as well, (but somehow in reverse order), using (with exceptions) a rough line matching the course of the Mississippi river.

In 1933 President Franklin Roosevelt requested the Secretary of Commerce to appoint an interdepartmental committee for studying electronic communications. A recommendation was made by the committee for the establishment of a new agency that would regulate *all* interstate and foreign communication by both wire and radio, plus telegraphy, telephone and broadcast, under one umbrella. This resulted in what became known as the <u>Communications</u> <u>Act of 1934</u>. A key part of this act was the creation of a new federal organization known as the Federal Communications Commission, (FCC) to replace the Federal Radio Commission that was previously established in 1927. Amateur licenses were now moved under this new commission, and this act also created many of the laws that still govern the hobby to this day.

Then, on December 7, 1941, the "day that will live in infamy", the world of amateur radio was upended for the second time as the US was drawn into the Second World War. All amateur activity was officially suspended January 9th 1942 for the remainder of the war.

FEDERA	AL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION 56928-A
SERIAL NO. 13	Washington, D. G. JAN. 9, 1942
	ORDER_NO87-A
At a sess	ion of the Federal Communications
Commission hel	d at its offices in Washington, D. C.
on the eighth	day of January, 1942;
Whereas c	onsiderations of national defense
require the co	mplete cessation of all amateur radio
operation:	
IT IS ORD	ERED. That all special authorizations
granted pursua	nt to Order No. 87 BE, AND THEY ARE
HEREBY, CANCEL	LED.
By order	of the Commission
2, 01401	FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
	T I Slowie
	Constants
	Secretary

The big difference here though, was that the FCC continued to issue, and were allowed to renew, amateur radio *operator* licenses. After all, that gave the government a ready pool of trained and *certified* radio operators and technicians for the war effort. There were no *station* licenses issued, and existing ones were considered revoked. Once again hams were forced to silence their stations but at least this time, unlike the previous war, receivers were still allowed to be used.

This lasted until the war officially ended in September 1945, and shortly afterwards amateurs were granted limited permission to get back on the air in November of 1945 This was with only the ten and two meter bands to start. The US amateurs were back, even if only in a limited capacity at the time.

The Post-War Years, 1945-1975 "The Glory Years of Amateur Radio"

The <u>Atlantic City International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Conference of 1947</u> (the ITU had changed its name in 1932), reallocated some call sign blocks, and granted a few developing island nations their own prefixes. Meanwhile in the US, the call sign districts were moved around to equalize ham populations.

During the war the Midwest , and West coast industrial centers had greatly increased the amateur radio populations in those areas. As a result, a new 10th call district formed for the central Midwest, allowing Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana to have the 9th district all to themselves. The 6th district was changed to encompass California only. The remaining states that used to be part of the 6th district (Nevada, Arizona and Utah), were moved into the lesser populated 7th district. As licenses were renewed, the new call sign districts were mandated, and often entire call signs changed as a result. A new call was assigned to denote the new district, but one "might" keep their old suffix if it was currently unassigned in the new district. If the suffix was already assigned to somebody in the new district, a new suffix was assigned as well. For example, pioneer Charles Newcombe, **6UO**, in Yerington, Nevada became **W6UO** in 1928, but had to change to **W7VO** when the state became part of the 7th district in 1947 as **W7UO** was already in use. The rule allowing special call sign suffix dispensation lasted until 1978, when the systematic call signs program began. (More on that program later.)

Also at this time US Possessions had own unique prefixes assigned, ie: **KP4** for Puerto Rico, **KH6** for Hawaii, and **KL7** for Alaska.

In 1951 there was a big push to create an "entry level" amateur radio license, so in response the FCC created a new Novice amateur radio license class. This originally was a one year, nonrenewable, low power, and CW only license. These new "novices" were assigned either a **WN** or a **KN** prefix, but the "**N**" would be dropped form the call sign once the licensee upgraded. (For example, new novice **WN7XYZ** would get a new call sign of **W7XYZ** once he upgraded.). When the FCC ran out of "**KN**" and "**WN**" call signs, they began issuing "**WV**" prefixes for novices, which became "**WA**" or "**WB** prefix calls when upgraded. US Possessions used "**W**" for the first letter of the novice prefix, (ie: **WH6ABC** to denote a novice call sign, which changed to **KH6ABC** when upgraded).



Modern US Call Districts, post 1947

Another interesting thing happened at the same time. Another new class of license was created, called the "Technician" class. It was a new VHF/UHF/microwave (220 MHz and higher) licensed designed to encourage experimental exploration of these frequencies, (but not intended as a communicators license!) The call sign assignments for the Technician class license followed the same rules as all of the other amateur classes, except Novice. Since Novice and Technician privileges didn't overlap, it was possible to hold two different call signs at the same time. There was also another rule that if an amateur had homes, (such as a "snowbird"), in two different FCC districts, he or she could hold call signs that reflected the numbers of both districts. So, technically, one amateur could potentially hold four amateur call signs simultaneously! It is unknown whether anybody ever took advantage of this loophole, but it *was* technically possible. When the Novice license was upgraded, the Technician license was forfeited, as the General class already included all Technician privileges. This system was in force until sometime in the 1960's.

As the number of licensed amateur operators greatly increased in the boom years following the war, "**W**" prefix call signs started to run out, so starting in 1947 the first "**K**" prefix calls began to appear in the continental US. By 1953 most districts were issuing them, and some still were until 1964. (The 9th call district area was reportedly the first to implement the new "**K**" prefix)

By the late 50's/early 60's all of the possible combinations of 1X3 format "K" were all assigned in some districts, so "WA" and "WB" (2X3 format) call signs started appearing. "WB" call signs were issued from 1965 to 1975, but in the mid 1970's some districts were also running out of "WB" calls, so the FCC began recycling old "WA" calls that were expired or otherwise unused in the system. (The author's first call sign was one of these, WA6HKP). The amateur ranks were filling up fast!

However, the recycling of old call signs was not new when they began reissuing unused "**WA**" call signs. Starting in 1966, (and until 1977), Extra Class licensees, licensed for 25 years or more, could apply for unused 1X2 call signs.

The Modern Era, 1975 to Present "Things get complicated"

The issuance of the recycled call signs was a lot of extra work for the FCC, so it began issuing new "**WD**" prefix call signs in the 8th, 9th and 10th area call districts, starting around 1976. (In 1978 the "**WD**" prefix was replaced with the "**KA**" prefix, as systematic licensing was put into place). But what happened to the "**WC**" prefix, which logically should have come after "**WB**"? The answer is; those prefixes were reserved for Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) stations at the time. VHF and UHF club owned repeaters also had their own 2X3 format call signs issued, starting with the "**WR**" prefix. At least one "**WT**" (**WT6AAA**) call sign is known to have been issued in the 1970's, as a "temporary" call after a FCC mix-up denied a prospective amateur's new license. (He had the same first and last names as somebody who previously had their license revoked, and once cleared up a temporary license was issued until the standard license could be processed).

In 1975 the FCC released special 1x1 call signs for special event stations, choice 1x2, and "AA-AL" and "N" prefix call signs. Starting in 1977 the 25 year licensing requirement was dropped for Extra Class upgrades to unused 1X2 call signs, and in addition, the 1X2 "N" (ie: N1AA) prefix call signs were added to the mix. Also, the new 2X2 "AA-AL" prefixes (ie: AA7CR) became available for Extra class licensees. There were certainly a lot of new "Extra Class only" call signs to choose from, and many licensees took advantage of the opportunity!

However, just as things seemed to be running smoothly for the issuance of call signs, in early 1977 a FCC employee at the 3rd District office in Gettysburg, PA was indicted for taking bribes offered by amateurs wanting special call signs, and who did not have the license class to be awarded the change, (among other issues). This unfortunate event resulted in the termination of all then informal FCC processes for issuing call signs. The new rules implemented on February 23, 1978 required that all amateur call signs must be issued only by the "systematic" process as

specified in the rules. No specific call signs could be assigned; call signs were instead assigned consecutively, via a computer database. There were a few other sweeping changes:

- Amateurs were no longer required to change their call sign when moving to a new district.
- Secondary, Repeater, Control, and Auxiliary Station licenses were discontinued
- Call signs were now going to be assigned by Groups, and by license class

The Groups were defined as:

Group A -- Amateur Extra Class

Contains all "K", "N" and "W" 1x2, most 2x1, and most "AA-AK" prefixed 2x2 call signs

Group B -- Advanced Class

Contains most "K", "N", and "W" prefixed 2x2 call signs

Group C -- Technician & General Class, (and later, the Technician Plus Class)

Contains all "**N**" 1x3 call signs. Unassigned "**W**" and "**K**" prefixed 1x3 call signs are not issued under the sequential call sign system, but are available under the later Vanity call sign system

Group D -- Novice Class

Contains most "**K**" and "**W**" prefixed 2x3 call signs. The letter "**X**" may not be the first digit of the suffix.

Note that no provision had been made for the issuance of **AA-AL** and **NA-NZ** prefixed 2x3 call signs, and these call signs are not currently issued to anyone.

In 1995 the Vanity "for a price" program opens, consisting of four "gates":

Gate 1: 5/31/96, for those amateurs that had held a call before, or eligible for "in memoriam" calls

7/22/96, for Club station trustees that were eligible for "in memoriam" calls

Gate 2: 9/23/96, Amateur Extra requests

Gate 3: 8/6/97, Advanced Class requests

Gate 4: 12/2/97, Everybody else

So now we have the full history of the ham radio call sign, from the infancy days of amateur radio, until the present day. What does the future hold for our call signs? Who knows? Eventually, the "**N**" and "**A**" 2X3 call sign formats will have to come into play as the "**K**" and "**W**"

prefixes run out. There also have been other ideas floated out there that include authorizing a mixture of letters and numbers for Extra class call signs, similar to what is in use in Europe. (ie: **W71VO**), or even the "sale" of 1X1 call signs to Extras, now reserved for special event stations.

In conclusion, please take the time to appreciate the past efforts and tenacity our forefathers, and especially the gallant early efforts of the ARRL, had to ensure that the hobby we all enjoy as radio amateurs even exists today. Our unique call signs define who we are as amateurs, and have from the start. Please remember to take good care of our special call sign heritage for future generations of amateurs.

Bibliography:

http://earlyradiohistory.us/1913call.htm http://legisworks.org/sal/37/stats/STATUTE-37-Pg302b.pdf http://www.americanradiohistory.com/Archive-FCC/Federal%20Radio%20Act%201927.pdf http://www.rollanet.org/~n0klu/Ham_Radio/History%20of%20Ham%20Radio.pdf https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amateur_radio_licensing_in_the_United_States