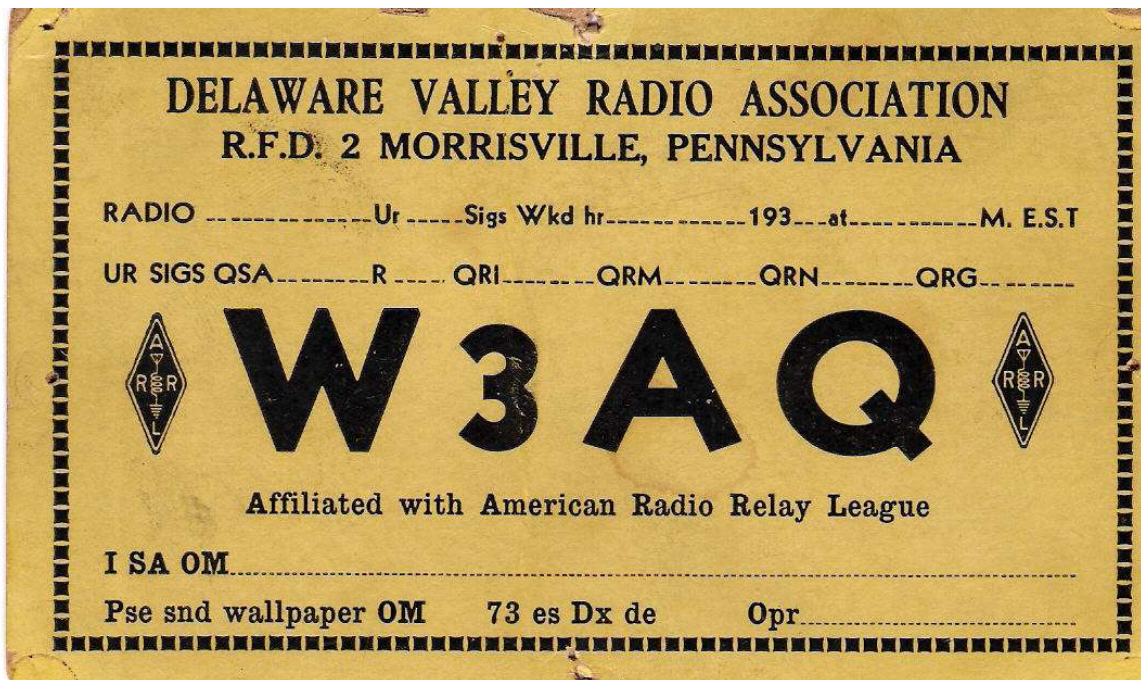


It's All in the Cards

By Gary Wilson, K2GW

I was going through some of the QSL cards at the DVRA shack in reply to a question posed by Don Wright and found some interesting things about the club's history there. So much so, I figured I'd share them with the club in a series of short articles.

First of all, let's explain what a QSL card is. For those who haven't worked much HF, QSL is the Q signal used in CW meaning "I acknowledge receipt of your message". When talking over long distances (DX), early hams would exchange letters with each other to prove that they had exchanged messages. Later they found that pre-printed "fill in the blank" post cards were quicker to complete and cheaper to mail. These pre-printed post cards became known as QSL Cards.



Let's start with one of the earliest ones I found. As can be seen by the 193__ spot, this was used in the 1930's by the DVRA. Also note that the club's callsign is W3AQ. Prior to World War II, the southern and western counties of New Jersey were regulated and assigned call letters by the Philadelphia office of the Federal Radio Association. Of course, since the first station was in Pennsylvania, a 3 call was automatic.

With the assignment of the W prefix to the US in 1927, this means that the DVRA received about the 16th license issued by the Philly office. After the war when the Trenton based DVRA was moved by the FCC to the second call area, W2AQ was already issued, so we got the W2ZQ call we still use today.

Some other things to note was that the station was actually located on the Pennsylvania side of the river back then on RFD 2 in Morrisville. I wonder if we have any Rural Free Delivery routes around here any more? (Note- This was at the “Moon Farm”for which we have a copy of the lease in the archives)

Also note that folks were still mostly talking locally and logged their QSO’s in EST. The signal report (everything was mostly CW then) was QSA (the same as S), R, and QRI (the same as T). QRN (noise) and QRM (interference) were so common they were numbered in the report as well!

I also like the flowery “I say Old man” preceding the comments area. And it appears back then that “wallpaper” referred to QSL cards instead of the various awards around today.

Finally, on a very strange personal coincidence, I’m the current trustee of W3AEQ, an old university club call one letter removed from the DVRA one. That’s it for this time.

73

Gary, K2GW