



THE HARC SPARK



March 2026

Editor: W3AWC

The official Newsletter of the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club 501(C)(3) Charitable Organization
WM3PEN 146.685 MHz Repeater | K3RJG 444.9 MHz Repeater | Club Calls: K3FI – WM3PEN
Web Site <https://www.WM3PEN.org> | Groups.io <https://groups.io/g/WM3PEN> | WM3PEN@aol.com



Feature Photo – Courtesy of Andrew Chen W3AWC

A snapshot of an interesting project using a meshtastic device and a Harbor Breeze solar powered lawn light. In the left photo you can see the meshtastic board with the power cables soldered to the battery leads. Top right is the 900 MHz antenna poking out of a hole drilled into the solar enclosure. The panel was still attached to the light but hoisted into the air for a temporary test on the bottom left. Since the light comes with a charge controller to meter the voltage to the battery, this is a relatively cheap way to install a semi-permanent solar powered mesh node!

March Meeting Presenter K4SWL

This March promises to bring an interesting presenter and interesting topic to the club. Thomas Witherspoon (K4SWL) is set to present on "When the Grid Fails: A Ham's Experience Post-Hurricane Helene". Thomas may be known to some of you through his YouTube channel and his blog QRPer.com where on both platforms, Thomas documents many amateur radio activities which of course include portable operation and lower power. Stay tuned to the groups.io page for more information and a link to the virtual presentation which will take place March 18th.

In this Issue

Welcome to the first SPARK issue of 2026! The year has just begun and there is already a lot of activities on the docket for HARC. Don't miss all the exciting events lined up and detailed in this issue's Prez Says section.

We have an interesting article on special stations celebrating moments in US history and are looking forward to all the exciting activity this year that will honor the nation's Semiquincentennial year.

Also in this issue, an interesting pair of call and response articles on logging years ago and how one ham in particular approaches logging today. Don't miss this issue's reader survey and check back next time to see how your fellow Hams approach the hobby.

As always, we welcome all contributions from our readers. Don't hesitate to send your thoughts, a quick picture, or just tell us what's on the bench this month to spark@wm3pen.org.

Here's to warmer weather ahead and more exciting radio activities in 2026!

Andrew – W3AWC

Prez Sez!

I'm looking forward to our March 18th Zoom meeting, at which Thomas K4SWL of western NC will speak on "When the Grid Fails: A Ham's Experience Post-Hurricane Helene". Don't miss this. In April, we'll finally have our restaurant meal (date/venue yet to be chosen), after getting snowed out in both December and January. Also that month, on April 11, we will again have exhibit tables and a radio demo at the Northeast Philadelphia History Fair and on May 3rd we will have some tables at the Warminster Hamfest.

This year, our country's 250th birthday is being celebrated by the ARRL with a special Worked All States award. See <https://www.arrl.org/america250-was>.

There will also be special event call signs in use during the World Soccer Championship games. Some of the games will take place in Philadelphia, and we will use our WM3PEN call sign during those periods. Contacts with WM3PEN during the 13 Colonies week (July 1-7) will count for both 13C and the soccer special event. Interested operators may inquire about participation by contacting Bob WA3PZO.

https://groups.io/g/WM3PEN/topic/looking_for_operators_during/118018892

At the same time, our repeater will be among those used by our local ARES for coordination and emergency communications.

All in all a busy year...hope you can take part.

73,
Saul W3WHK
HARC President

Ham Radio Operators Celebrate Key Moments in US History

By John Campbell, W3MHZ

Ham Radio Operators Celebrate Key Moments in US History

Amateur Radio has a long tradition of celebrating key dates in U.S. history. Looking back to 1976, the U.S. Bicentennial, amateur radio operators were allowed to change their callsign for the year by placing specially allocated prefixes to their callsign. Those included calls beginning with W > AC, K > AD, WA > AA, WB > AB, WD > AE, WN > AK, and WR > AF. In addition, WM3PEN was on the air

for the Bicentennial Atlantic Division Convention.

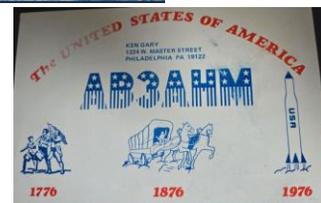
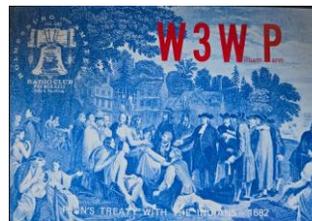
In October 1982 HARC and UPARC participated, as W3WP, in Century IV Philadelphia celebrating the City's 300th anniversary.

In May, 1987, Philadelphia area amateur radio operators celebrated the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. Stations in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania celebrated the meeting of the constitutional congress. NN3SI (the Smithsonian Institute) and W3DOS (the Dept. of State) were on the air from Washington, D.C. and in Philadelphia K3MTK (Suburban Amateur Radio Club) was on the air. Highlighting the event was a message sent over Amateur Radio from President Ronald Reagan to the Amateur Radio community. These stations were also active on July 4 and September 17, marking the acceptance of the Constitution by the assembled delegates. During the year W1AW used the Constitution text for its code practice sessions.

Through out 1987 and into 1988 amateur radio stations in each of the state capitals were authorized to replace the number in their call with 200. W1AW became W200AW for one week. These stations were registered in advance of their operating week. Clubs were encouraged to send a radiogram to the Bicentennial Commission 'ratifying' the Constitution. The radiogram used a special radiogram ARL200 standard message. It read: The ___ members of the _(club)___ have read and 'ratified' the US Constitution as a part of Amateur Radio's participation in the Bicentennial Celebration. Best Wishes.

As we celebrate America 250, ARRL is offering a special Worked All States award. In addition W1AW will be operating portable from various states, each for 2 - one week periods. See article for additional details.

In addition, QRZ.com is offering a USA250 award is granted upon the successful confirmation of 250 two-way contacts with US-based amateur radio stations. See QRZ.com for details.



Logging a Contact Back in the Day

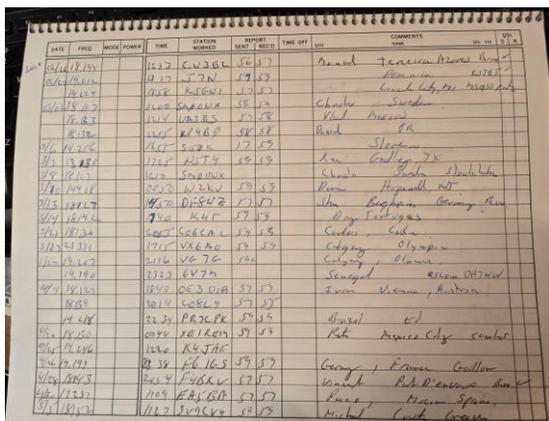
By Bob Josuweit, WA3PZO

I got my Novice license in 1970. For many years a logbook was required. At the time there was no computer logging. All of my contacts were in a paper log. Yes, every contact whether it was cw or later phone. It showed the basic info of call, name, date, frequency, time, and signal report but also had additional notes about the other person's equipment, the weather, interesting story, etc. If I was running a net the log listed everyone who checked in, how many pieces of traffic were passed and the end time of the net.

When working DX I actually had a conversation with the station. It wasn't a quick 5-9 report . 73. You had to search for the DX you wanted to work. Now a days with spotting networks the reports are quick and in many cases the pileups are huge.

There wasn't a Logbook of the World, EQSL, QRZ.com, Club log or other online logbook. If you were working towards DXCC or Worked All States you had to exchange QSL cards. Yes putting a stamp on the card, placing the card in the mail and then waiting for the mailman to deliver a card back to you.

So I filled about 10 logbooks over the years and finally switched to electronic logging in 2012. As I look back I'll ask who will look at my log on the computer for the past 14 years. Yet my paper logbooks are on the shelf and can be looked at by anyone who chooses.



Logging a Contact Today

By Andrew Chen, W3AWC

I got my General license in October of 2023. At no time since I have had a ham license has logging been required and electronic logging of one variety or another has always been available to me. Since at the time I was living in an apartment in West Philadelphia with no balcony, no roof, and no yard for an antenna, I was naturally drawn to taking my station outside of city and the QRM. With a radio, battery, and at least one type of antenna, there was not much more weight I wanted to bring with me, nor did I want to have to remember to charge one more battery. So naturally, all of my contacts were (and still are) in a paper log. Yes, every contact whether it was cw or phone. The one exception is digital since a log is generated the moment the QSO is finished. My logs show the basic info of call, date, frequency, time, and signal report (when I remember to note that...). Since my portable operations only run a limited time I rarely have a chance to exchange pleasantries or even names, I want to make sure I make as many QSOs as I can in the ~2-3 hours I have. When I do run a net I make note of everyone who checked in, what traffic was and the end time of the net. These days not for any official record keeping, but to allow me to make a comment or two during or at the end of the net summarizing the activity and injecting a little personality.

I don't chase much DX. Mainly because of the lack of a home base station. Operation time is limited, and propagation is never a known when the terrain, antenna setup and other variables are always in flux when you're portable. I'll transfer my paper logs using a program like HAMRS or even directly into ADIF Master, but QSL cards are a nice way to memorialize a fun DX contact, my first contact with a country etc. I will even take the time to write a personal note on each QSL "You are my first contact with Sweeden", "You are my first 30 m CW contact from GB". I like to think that a personal touch can help elicit more QSLs.

So far, I'm about 1/3 the way through one standard notebook I've turned into a logbook. All the electronic statistics and PDF awards are nice summaries of my activities. But it's fun to look back through my paper QSLs, and hope to digitize so others might be able to easily peruse all their unique designs and character. Eventually...

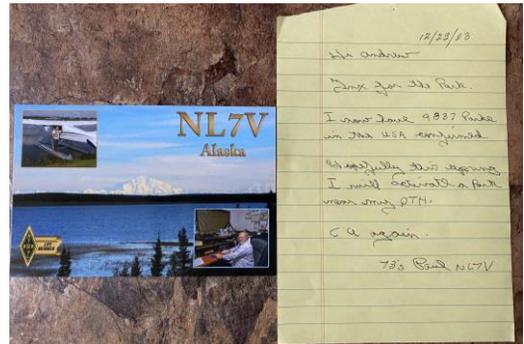
(continued on next page)

Time	Call	US-1352	my sig	Loc
23:44	KE8VU	58 (SSB)	14.245.2	69 MF
10:11:24	AR	CW		
00:07	KN4FVR		14055	
0:13	KG4IMI	" "		AL
0:16	KD9PHL	" "		
0:18	W9ALK	" "		
:20	WA7BRL	" "		
:21	N0DDR	" "		M0
:24	N7WPO	" "		
	N7D			
:30	LV4HC8	" "		
0:31	*K0AV		14.045	
0:39	KO4NTA	" "		
:36	NA7C	" "		
:38	N0TU	" "		
:40	W0STEE	" "		
:42	KO9YIN	559		559
:48	KB5TMU		14045	
1:30	KN0BAZ	" "		
1:34	N10CK	" "		C0
10:32	Z55T	14.325		(SSB) (59) (5)
	KE5OJZ	55	14.251	55 GK
12:14	WB9NDG	55	" "	55 FL
	T72CMM	" "		56 Contact
12:16	W4LWZ	55	" "	52
12:23	K14H		14.046	(W) FL
:25	K4NYX			

Sample portable paper log from W3AWC. Notice I use the lowercase "e" and "i" when I log CW contacts, only 1 and 2 pen strokes compared to 4 and 3 for uppercase print.



Nice message and stickers from Ham YouTube personality and CW enthusiast K17QCF



Additional anecdotal evidence from NL7V and VY2NX that a personal message garners a QSL with a personal message back. The secret I've found is to check QRZ and see who states they will return a paper QSL as well.



HARC Spark Reader Survey

We hope you have enjoyed this March 2026 edition of the HARC Spark. Last time we wanted to know how many QSLs is approximately the most you've made in a single 24 hour period. About 66% of respondents have made 100-200 QSLs and about 33% of respondents have made 200-500 QSLs.

Please follow [this link](#) to take this month's reader survey! Ever wondered how your fellow hams approach the hobby? Well here's your chance to find out! Come back to the next issue to see the results!

Don't hesitate to contact us at spark@wm3pen.org or post something on our groups.io page to give us feedback or suggest some things you're curious about your fellow hams!

Stamps for the Wounded

It's that time of the year, please save the stamps from your holiday cards for the Stamps For The Wounded program.

I can arrange to get them or you can mail them to me.

Rich Shivers - K3UJ
168 Crabtree Dr.
Levittown, PA 19055

Thank you for your participation.

Meetings

Club meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month 7:30 PM Eastern over Zoom. Please check the HARC groups.io page (groups.io/g/WM3PEN) for a meeting zoom link posted by our president the day before the meeting.

The Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club Weekly Net

The Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club's weekly net meets on Thursday nights at 08:00 PM. On the WM3PEN repeater in Philadelphia. Come and join us on 146.685 MHz, with a PL of 146.2 Hz. We now also link to the K3RJC repeater, 444.9 MHz, with a PL of 131.8 Hz. Bring your questions, announcements, and stories of your latest ham radio adventures.

Interested in being net control?

The net begins promptly at 8PM. Use the strongest radio you have to ensure a good net control signal into the machine. Be sure to have a pad and a good pen, or type quickly, because the check-ins come quickly (you can ask them to slow down and do phone cs if you'd like). When someone checks in, please acknowledge them by callsign, and name, and thank them for checking in, wishing good evening, make a joke, whatever suits the moment. Leave some space after asking for check ins, because we sometimes get groups of 3-4 at a time.

Opening: The Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club weekly net meets on Thursday nights at 08:00 PM. on the WM3PEN repeater in Philadelphia. Come and join us on 146.685 MHz, with a PL off 146.2 Hz. Bring your questions, announcements, and stories of your latest ham radio adventures. Information on the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club can be found on the Club website – www.wm3pen.org. You can check out the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club Facebook page or join the WM3PEN group on groups.io.

First – Is there any emergency or priority traffic. **(pause)** We will take check-ins from stations that are short on time. **(pause – acknowledge them)**

After check-ins are recognized we will have: Announcements Contests Comments from those checked in. A 73 round for final comments. Any additional check-ins before we start comments.

Call on each check-in for comments. If a lot of stations checked in pause after a few comments looking for additional check-ins. At the end of the list of check-ins indicate that there will be the 73 round. Once done. Close the net and turn the repeater back to regular use.

PHILA ARES INFORMATION

All amateurs interested in participating in ARES should check into the Phila ARES Net, Sunday's at 9:00 PM, local time, hosted on the Phil-Mont Repeater System; 147.030 MHz (+offset 91.5 PL) ;444.80 MHz (+offset 186.2 PL) When control operators are available, Echolink node 29742, WU3I-L, is on the repeater. Backup link is KB3IV-L.

All amateurs are welcomed and encouraged to check in for more information. There is always a different topic of interest to the amateur community discussed with an informal round table of comments and suggestions.

HARC member, Cliff – KC3PGT, is the Philadelphia Emergency Coordinator, Section 1, EPA Region.

We look forward to hearing everyone on Sunday nights @ 9:00 pm. See web site for more information.

- Visit the Philadelphia ARES web site

<http://www.phlares.org/>

HF AWARDS MANAGER

Are you getting close to having all 50 states confirmed for the Worked All States award or working enough grid squares for to qualify for the VUCC Award? As a HARC service you can now have your QSL cards verified by Bob, WA3PZO, and not have to ship the cards to ARRL Headquarters. You must be an ARRL member to qualify for the awards.

Additional information and links can be found on the HARC website
(www.WM3PEN.org)

Helping Hams

Would you like to assist your fellow club members? Do you have an expertise in any particular area and would like to make that available to other hams? If so, let the newsletter know and you will be added to our list here.

eMail spark – spark@wm3pen.org

Kit building. - I will offer assistance, finish something started or do a complete build for you.

Rich – K3UJ ab3eo@comcast.net

Antenna installation

Carl – N3ZZK Carl9521@aol.com

Dave – KB3AKK kb3akk@hotmail.com

CW & Contest operation

Saul – W3WHK saulbro@aol.com

Portable Operation – Are you trying to operate away from home? Looking to get into POTA? Maybe you're not sure what kind of antenna can fit in your car but can still deliver results. Let's chat!

Andrew – W3AWC callsign.w3awc@gmail.com

Associations

SKCC – Straight Key Century Club #24642 under both WM3PEN and K3FI.

Ten-Ten International #71057

PODXS 070 Club #1493 (PSK activity)

ARRL Special Services Club

Your Contributions

Please tell us what you are doing. Have you received any awards, upgraded your license, done any activations, (SOTA, IOTA, etc.), built something special. Or if you would like to write an article, a short comment or just have a photo or two you would like to share! We would be happy to receive all material.

The HARC SPARK is a publication of the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club. It is the policy of the editor to publish all material submitted by the membership provided such material is in good taste, relevant to amateur radio and of interest to HARC members, and space is available. Material is accepted on a first come, first serve basis.

Articles and other materials may be submitted in Word or Text format to SPARK@WM3PEN.ORG

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Next Issue: February 2025

Submission Deadline: January 15 2025

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