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QST Issue: Sep 2004
Title: Ham Radio on the 1923 Farm (Harry S. Myers, Radio 8-BRC)
Author: John H. Dilks III, K2TQN

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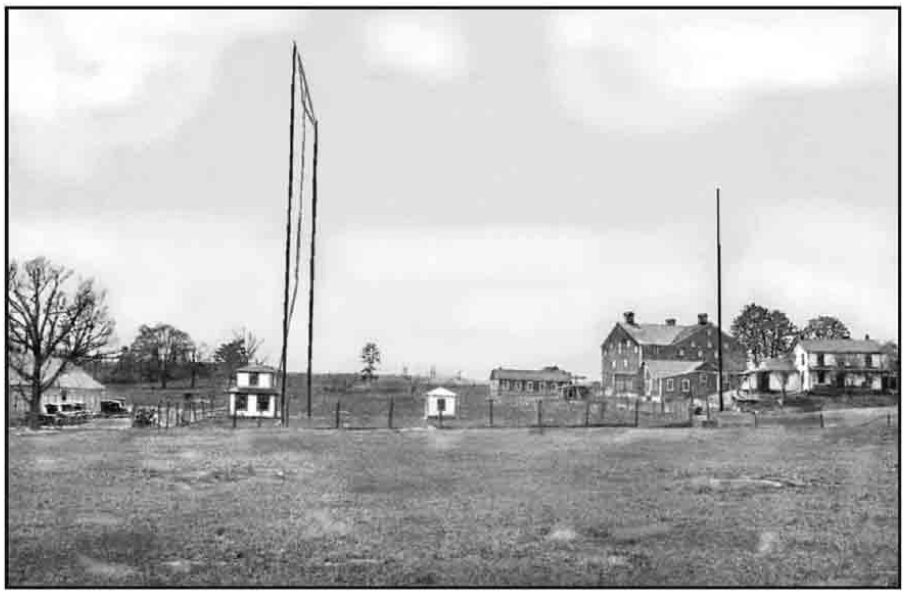
Ham Radio on the 1923 Farm

Today, almost every home has electricity. But in 1923 that wasn't the case, especially in rural areas. Country folks would wait many years to enjoy commercial electricity and all the convenient appliances that came with it.

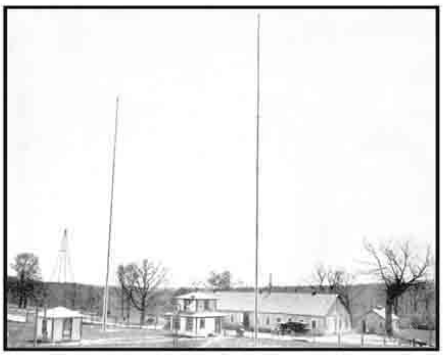
What was it like for the ham radio operator, living on a farm? Most of them struggled to find the money to purchase a few dry-cell batteries to light the tube in their set. Or if one was so fortunate, he had a wind generator to charge a string of wet-cell batteries.

Harry Myers was the exception to this. He lived in the middle of Pennsylvania's burgeoning oil industry. Like many hams, he was resourceful and inventive. He developed, patented and manufactured a winch that attached to a Ford tractor. The winch sold very well, providing Harry with the money to build an impressive station.

What follows is Harry's self-published 4-page brochure trying to get fellow hams to relay messages through his station, and also to promote his winch business. The great thing for us is, it gives a close look at a complete 1923 ham station in the country. Nothing has been edited, so enjoy his words as they were written.



View No. 1



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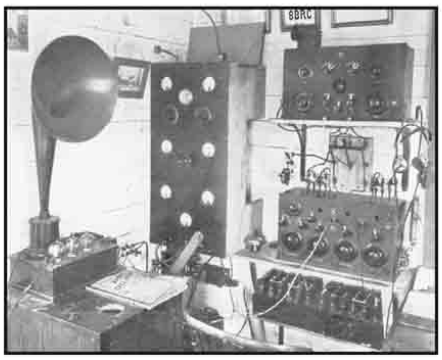


View No. 3

RADIO 8-BRC, Harry S. Myers

Located at Van, Pennsylvania, near Oil City.

View No.1 shows the Station at a broadside glance, also shows the Receiving Antenna at the residence, which is used for reception of Concerts, at the extreme right.

This antenna is of original design, and is of well insulated Fan type. The poles are of steel tubing welded at each joint making it practically a solid tube.

The Masts are insulated from the ground, also the guy wires are provided with porcelain insulators at 50 foot spacing, which does not materially add much to the cost of construction except the price of installation.

You will note by this scene that my station is located in the woods, and almost away from any electrical disturbances, except lightning, of which we are well supplied during the Summer months.

View No.2 gives a closer glance at the radiating system. The steel poles shown herewith are of steel tubes commencing at 6 5/8" dia. at the bottom and gradually reducing to 2 3/4" at the top. These sections are welded at joints, which make them practically one solid tapering tube. The total length of the poles, including the Flag Pole extension, is 137 feet.

A section 5 feet long having been first imbedded in concrete at the bottom of each pole which makes a very rigid base for the long poles.

The task of raising these poles was a very dangerous job, and took three days to complete. This job required a network of guys, and a very substantial tackle arrangement. The source of power was a FORDSON TRACTOR equipped with a Myers Winch, (home product), and the job was performed very satisfactorily without bending the poles.

Each pole was provided with integral pulley, and equipped with a 3/8" dia. galv. wire cable for pulling up the antenna.

The antenna is composed of 8 wires with a 4 wire lead in. These being joined 90 feet from the ground.

The huge counterpoise is a 180 degree 100 ft. radius, using 19 wires each equipped with a long porcelain insulator, aside from the main span wire being insulated from the steel posts set in concrete, and which are provided with adequate anchoring means or dead men.

This counterpoise is ten feet from the ground.

View No.3 gives a fair idea of the operating position of this Station which shows the W. E. Loud Speaker on top of a cabinet which has additional B. Batteries 100-V, same as shown under Receiver.

The hole to drop pennies in for new tubes, had to be made larger for dollars. In the center you will see the Transmitter, which is a combination fone and C. W. Transmitter. The coupled Hartley circuit with Heising modulation system being used.

At the right is the Grebe C. R. 6 receiver. Above is a C. R. 7 long wave receiver which works in connection with the lower two stage amplifier.

You will note a taped lever between the horn and transmitter. This is the main control lever. On and off everything. Note the key on the end of the receiver, and which is placed on side, this being a much more comfortable position for long continuous relay work.

View No.4 shows a 5 horse power air

John Dilks, K2TQN ♦ 125 Wharf Road, Egg Harbor Township, NJ 08234-8501 ♦ k2tqn@arrl.org

cooled Gas Engine made by the New Way Corp. which furnishes splendid steady reliable power for this Transmitting work. Of course you know in the country we hams have to make our juice, and this is one way to do it. And no doubt that is the reason the country A. R. R. L. stations are scarce, the equipment required for the non-profitable amusement runs up in considerable sums, while the average ham cannot afford to expend $3.000.00 for Radio.

This engine runs continuously while transmitting. The generator being stopped and started with a, clutch arrangement connected with the lever shown in View No.3. The generator belted direct over the fly wheel, is a 125-V. D. C. and is shown in view No.4. This engine runs on Natural Gas for fuel, which is a very convenient fuel.

View No.5 shows the storage batteries which furnish the juice for the filament of the Transmitting tubes, also the receiving sets for both the residence, and the station. The total average current drawn with all receiving sets, and horns in operation is in the neighborhood of 9 amps. The batteries are arranged in groups or rows in parallel.

The transmitting batteries are arranged in seven rows of six cells to the row, while the Receiving batteries have three rows, but divided in groups of three cells making a total of eighteen cells for receiving only. This furnishes ample capacity for continuous usage.

Heavy copper cables of No.4 or larger being used for the low voltage mains. The transmitter draws 7½ amps. alone, and at 12 volts, the life of one charge being three weeks operation.

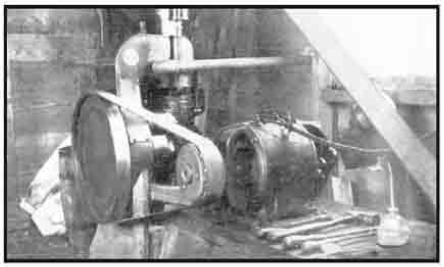
Above the batteries you will note a mess of switches, these being used to series the batteries for charging, and parallel for use. A separate group switch being to the right for separate charge means.

View No.6 shows the High Voltage source of my Station. Shown herewith is a E. S. Co. D. C. Generator, belt driven. This generator is a 2000 V. 1500 Watt. capacity, so you see I have juice to lend.

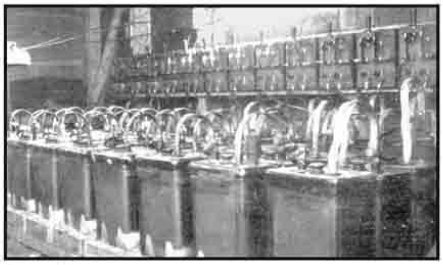
This generator is belted up to a countershaft above the Gas Engine which is started and stopped with a clutch.

For receiving everything is idle but the engine, thus doing away with all mechanical and electrical disturbances with exception to the Gas Engine ignition which is a Bosch H. T. Mag and which was reported by a friend as being heard a distance of 2 miles away. To put the kibosh on this noise I took a tomato can and turned it upside down over the sparkplug, which almost silenced the H. F. discharge entirely.

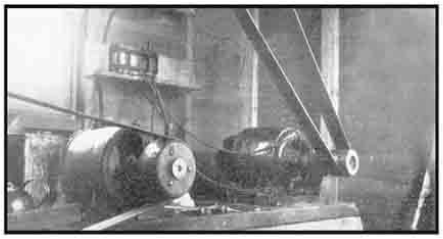
A brief summary of the Station is as follows: Located at a fairly central location for all A. R. R. L. relay work. Am eager to do all I can toward this entertaining and instructive amusement, while on the other hand I am very busy with my Manufacturing business and can only spare a portion of my time for this purpose. What I wish all you good spirited hams would do is co-operate with me and we can make this a bully good success. I have spent nearly two thousand dollars solely for the purpose of erecting this new Amateur Station in order to help put this A. R. R. L. traffic across. Now what I need is the help from you fellows who are willing to help me by arranging schedules and maintain a route in this direction for your traffic. I am going to try to dope



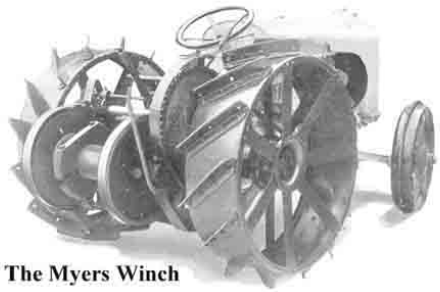
View No. 4



View No. 5



View No. 6



The Myers Winch

View No. 7

out a working time and ask you fellows who will, to write and we will try to get lined up for this summer, and for next winter. We have here all Uncle Sam will permit us Amateurs to use, although not a fraction has been used to date.

Any of you Brother Bugs who will come to visit me, I am sure will be welcome, and I would be delighted to get personally acquainted.

In view No.2 you will note the power house on the left which houses Engine, Batteries and Generators. All main leads and H. V. Lines leading from the power house to the upper story of the Office building located under the Antenna are placed in conduit buried three feet under the ground to avoid induction as far as possible

The top story of the Office building is Radio, and nothing else but radio. It has a complete work bench with all necessary tools and equipment for experimental work, provided with good light both day and night, and also a bunk for the weary operator to rest, and to sleep while the W. E. Horn gives concerts from various Broadcasting Stations from 7 to 10:30 E. S. T. It seems like a long time to wait when the Traffic hook is full. Anyway you won't hear a peep out of 8-BRC during that period.

And like all other stations the wall paper is composed of nearly a thousand different call cards from Brother Hams. And oh, by the way, before you forget about it will you please sit down and mail me a card with your call on it, and I will have a wonderful display to show you when you come to visit me. I have spent considerable money just to get this little sheet printed, not saying anything about postage to the round of Amateur Stations. If I have omitted you on my mailing list, please drop me a card and request one of these sheets.

Now, In order to defray expenses of this get-up, I am going to add a little line of my Product as presented in this picture. We build a hoisting drum or what is commonly known as a Myers Winch to attach to the Fordson Tractor, and with this combination the Oil Producer, Contractor and a hundred like users can make very good use of this winch for any and most all hoisting work which is normally required of a portable hoist.

The outfit is self contained and is very easily moved about without changing anything. Some day you may grow up and be a user for some equipment like this, and ask you kindly to remember about old 8-BRC and write to me should you need some machine like I make. If you have a friend who could possibly use something like this, I will thank you a thousand times if you would tell him about this outfit. We sell these all over the world thru the Ford Dealers. We also have other literature which we would be glad to mail out to other prospective customers. Now, Boys, let's all get our spirit up for A. R. R. L. and get a message ready to shoot over to 8-BRC for QSR. Thanking you for the time it took to read this dope, and hoping to C. U. on the air before long. Best 73s to all of you.

Harry S. Myers,
Van, Pennsylvania.
Near Oil City, Pa., Venango County.

Information is Sparse

In searching the Internet for information on Harry Myers, I found only one item, which I extracted from Dick Moon's Stories, by Sam Pees, from the Oil Industry Web page: "Another gent, long gone, built a winch, the Myers winch, had it patented. About every Fordson tractor had a Myers winch on the back for pulling wells. Someone else copied his winch so Myers went to Chicago with his lawyer. The other side had several lawyers, and Myers lost because the other man's winch had one more (or less) tooth on the main gear."

As always, if you have any additional information about Harry Myers, please let me know.—*K2TQN*