

Report of the Historical Committee
to the July 2009 meeting of the ARRL Board

The Historical Committee cares for and administers the ARRL's considerable collection of preserved documents and donated artifacts. Most of these documents are located in a caged area on the 2nd floor of the League's offices in Newington, Connecticut, and many of the artifacts are displayed in the foyer and first floor hallway. Care and cataloging of the collection are provided by the part-time services of Perry Williams, W1UED, Curator, and volunteers, principally Charles Griffen, W1GYR.

Since January 2009 the Historical Committee has been very active, spurred on by a desire to complete the YASME grant task of protecting and preserving critical documents and photographs, interest by the board in moving forward, staff commitment to the HC projects, new committee members and the imminent ARRL Centennial in 2014.

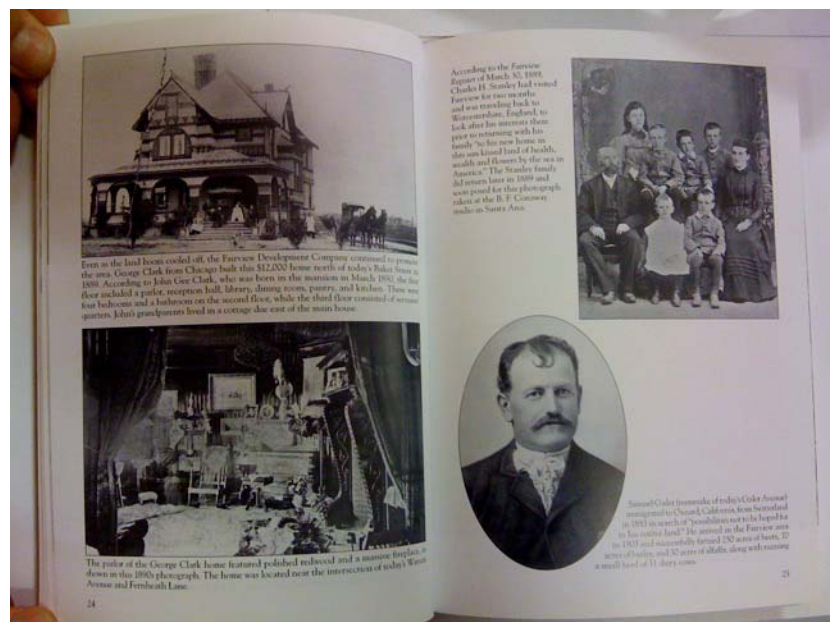
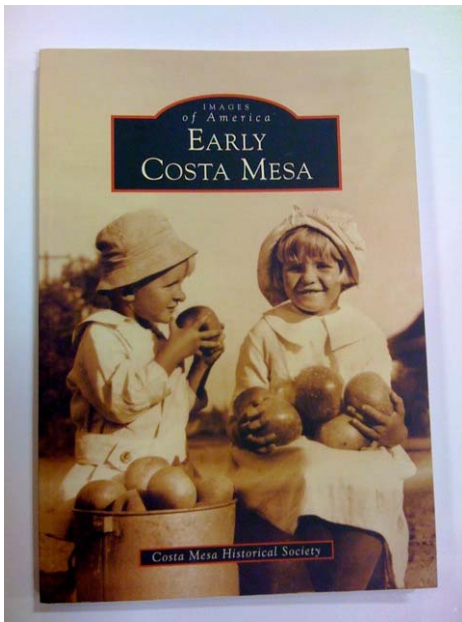
The members of the 2009 HC are:

Jay Bellows, K0QB
Tom Frenaye, K1KI
Art Goddard, W6XD
Charles Griffen, W1GYR
Gary Johnston, KI4LA, Chair
Dick Norton, N6AA
Dave Sumner, K1ZZ
Perry Williams W1UED, Curator

I should note that Director Dick Norton along with former Director Art Goddard have contributed greatly to the committee both in the scanning project and the initial planning for the ARRL Centennial. And Past Director Goddard spent a week at HQ this June assessing the collection and working with staff. Thanks very much to you both.

Relative to the Centennial, at the Dayton HamVention this year, Director Norton brought a book from the Costa Mesa Historical Society sent by Art Goddard, whose wife is associated with the Society's museum with the suggestion that the ARRL might use this format as a template for our own Centennial book. Art did the scanning and layout for the Costa Mesa book, and is willing to help the League with ours. These books, I might add, are in a nationally accepted format, including size and page count. In passing the book around to various staff members, a general acceptance was reached that we too would like to produce such a book for the Centennial. Editor Steve Ford also lent his support citing the historical value of such a publication, even if it were not a profitable undertaking. Historical books seldom are.

Below is a sample of the cover and two inside pages from the Costa Mesa book.



Part of the value of undertaking such a publication is not only for its historical significance and value to the members. It also is in line with the photograph/document scanning project, as quality scans are necessary for such a publication.

Executive Secretary Dave Sumner has summarized staff work at HQ thus far. His summary appears below:

We have acquired a computer, scanner and software to convert photographs and documents to digital master images and to catalog these and other items in our collection. We are using PastPerfect software for cataloging. The IT Department has set aside server space to store the images, which average about 45 MB in size. Data storage may be a budgetary issue down the road depending on how quickly the conversion proceeds. The equipment is set up in a recently vacated office on the second floor of the HQ building, separate but not far from the cage area where most of the archive is housed. The room is large enough to accommodate at least three people working together on a project.

Experienced photo archivist and Past Southwestern Division Director Art Goddard, W6XD, contributed a week of his time in late June to helping us get set up. Art is an active volunteer with the Costa Mesa Historical Society and has been through the process we are going through now; Art's willingness to share his experience and expertise is absolutely invaluable. Local volunteer Mike Marinaro, WNIM (a recent retiree who is working on a Master's degree in public history at Central Connecticut State University) worked with Art for the entire week. I spent considerable time with them to make sure I understand the basics.

After surveying the collection and doing a bit of online research, we determined that the most urgent need is to physically preserve the photographic negatives. These are going through a slow chemical process of deterioration, the telltale symptom of which is a vinegary smell. This process can be arrested by freezing, but because a deteriorating negative will contaminate others the first step is to segregate the negatives into separate archive-quality envelopes without losing any of the information about the images that might now accompany them. We estimate there are about 2,000 such negatives. Envelopes and storage boxes are on order; we anticipate starting this project in early August. We will order a freezer once we know the size requirement.

Mike, WN1M has thrown himself into the project with great enthusiasm. The knowledge of the archive and of ARRL history possessed by Perry Williams, W1UED is very important and Perry's cooperation is greatly appreciated. Longtime volunteer Charles Griffen, W1GYR is also extremely helpful and cooperative. A couple of other local volunteers have expressed interest in the project; I'm confident that once the fruits of the effort become evident we will be able to maintain a small corps of volunteers to assist Mike and to keep it going.

Once preservation of the negatives has been taken care of we will begin scanning them, and the photographic prints and documents in most immediate need of attention, in earnest (we have done some scanning of various kinds of images already, but on a somewhat experimental basis in an effort to learn how to use the equipment and software).

Aside from preservation and archiving we now envision two valuable outputs from this process: sharing some of the gems in our collection via the Web, and contributions to a publication to mark the League's Centennial in 2014. While the default approach to digital conversion is to do the oldest material first, the Centennial is likely to cause us to want to work on more recent material as well.

David Sumner, K1ZZ
Chief Executive Officer, ARRL

Thanks again to all who have contributed thus far to make this a very productive time for the Historical Committee.

Gary L. Johnston KI4LA, Chair
ARRL Historical Committee