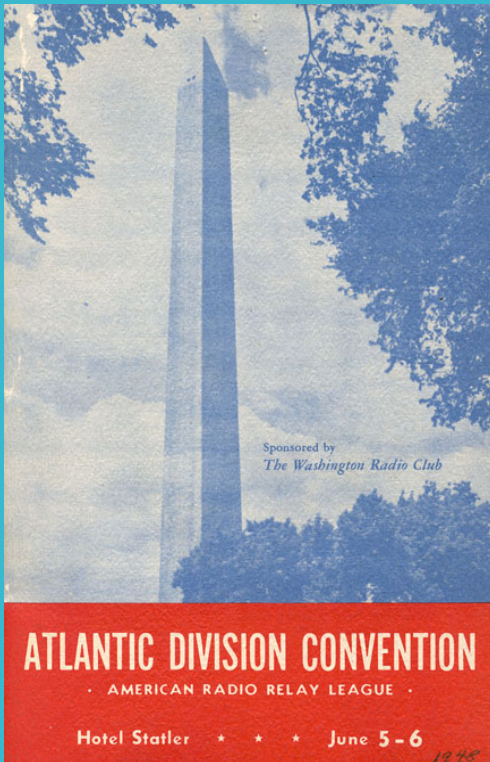


HAMFEST DAY!

See you at the MARC hamfest July 15, 2001



Hamfests and conventions have a long history in Amateur Radio, as this program cover from the 1948 ARRL Atlantic Division convention suggests. ARRL HQ's historical collection includes a photograph of participants ... dressed in business suits! ... at the first ARRL Atlantic Division Convention, in New York state, in the 1920's.

Like hams and ham radio, hamfests have changed over the years. Today at most hamfests in the eastern USA, there is less emphasis on formal programs and more emphasis on commerce and hanging out with friends. No Philadelphia-area hamfests have formal programs today.

Other changes in hamfests can be attributed to changes in family lifestyles affecting our time for hobby activity on weekends. Attendance at hamfests, even the big ones, even Dayton, is lower than it was ten or fifteen years ago. Also, hamfests are increasingly a morning activity instead of an all-day affair. Few hamfests last much past the lunch hour, except for the big multi-day events and the tiny ones way out in the country where life moves at a less hectic pace.



Dayton is in a class by itself ... a 2 1/2 day extravaganza that draws more than 25,000 people. Here you see just one of several indoor display areas jam-packed with people to see and products to buy. There are also more than 2,500 tailgate spaces. Dick K3ITH took this picture and has more Dayton photos on-line for you to enjoy (they'll be miniatures ... click on them to expand them to full size).

Large regional hamfests include Baltimore ARC's 2-day event in March, Miami Hamboree in February, Dallas Ham Com in June, and Rochester, NY, in June. To find a hamfest near your summer vacation spot, check out the calendar on ARRL's web site.

Did you know ... that in the western states, the typical east coast "hamfest" (no program, lots of tail-gaters) would probably be called a "swap meet"? Many western clubs sponsor monthly tail-gate swap meets. The western "hamfest" has a formal program of forums, more like something we would call a "convention." What west-coast hams call "conventions" may have no commerce at all ... just forums and displays. Relatively few western events are called "hamfests" or "conventions" and publicized in *QST*.



Though hams gripe if there are no vendors of new radio gear at a hamfest, searching for treasures and bargains in the flea market is great fun. It's an old joke that some of the boat anchors get to look pretty familiar as the years go by. You know you're in trouble when you find yourself buying something you sold ten years ago! If you really want to learn the history of our hobby, get an old-timer to walk you through the flea market at one of the larger hamfests.

**Did you know ... that hams down south have a colorful name for the hamfest flea market?
They call it "the bone yard."**

Shopping for "stuff" is only one part of the hamfest experience. Hams also shop for information. Radio clubs and groups such as ARES/RACES use hamfests to inform local hams about what the organizations have to offer. Whether or not there is a formal program, information is a valuable product you can get at a hamfest. MARC is happy that some other local clubs and several public service communications groups set up information tables at our hamfest. This photo shows the Rochester VHF Group's display at the Rochester, NY, hamfest.



