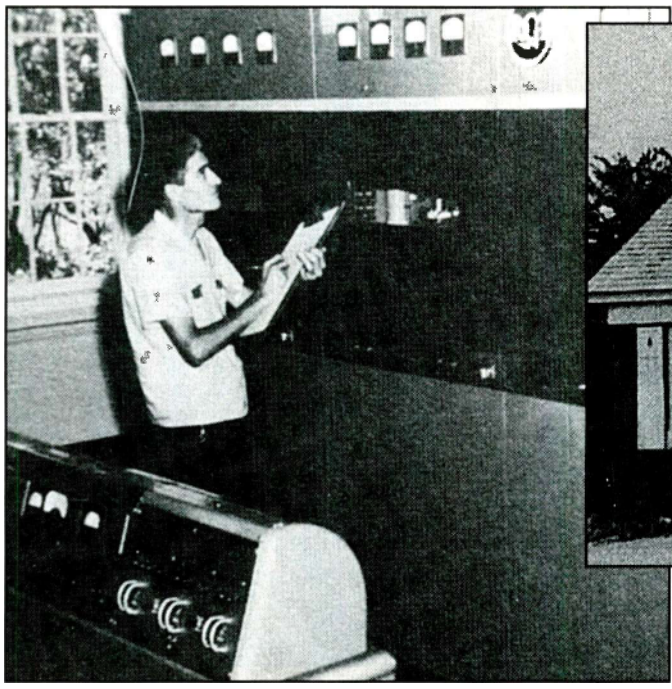
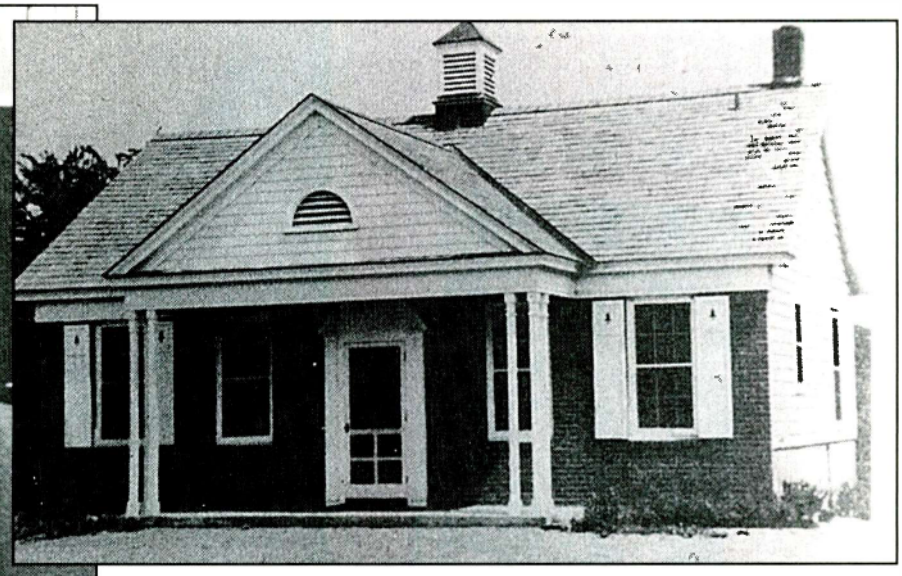


WXKW's Mike Capri logs a reading from the station's big 10-kW RCA transmitter. Figures from its related antenna phasing equipment were the numbers management most dreaded.



According to press reports, Champlain Valley Broadcasting converted its transmitter building from "a large brick farmhouse" it had bought with the 125-acre Selkirk, New York, spread months before the FCC granted the company a construction permit.

only outlet (then still under construction) into a full-time operation. Commission engineers agreed with Champlain Valley Broadcasting's request, though on a conditional basis—conditions that, when subjected to politics and physics, were difficult at best. Government regulators warned that the new station's hefty 10-kW output had to meet the satisfaction of Boston's WHDH, which was also authorized for critically directionalized high power (50 kW) on 850 kilocycles just a state away.

With the okay to roam the airwaves over "the upper Hudson Valley towns of Catskill, Saratoga Springs, Glens Falls, Hudson Falls, Gloversville, and Amsterdam, as well as Albany-Schenectady-Troy," day *and* night, management decided to tout its 10,000-watter with some mnemonically suitable call letters. Not long before debuting on August 9, 1948, the WRWR moniker (albeit having only been known on paper) was switched to WXKW, denoting via Roman numeral and abbreviation *10 kilowatts*. WRWR-FM was retained, however, for the company's frequency modulation identity through 1949. Early 1950s listings show it as simply WXKW-FM.

Problems In The Air

From the looks of WXKW's brochure, it sure appears like the station hit the ground running. Studios for "The Quality Station" were at the well-appointed First Trust Building in Albany's high rent district, around 444 Broadway. An aggressive mix of ABC and local programming got embedded into WXKW's signal. My guesstimate is that WRWR-FM served as a simulcaster for much or all of this fare.

Though the promotional literature did nicely feature the station engineering staff, one can assume that the techs' smiles for the camera quickly faded as soon as the photographer left. That's because the General Manager was no doubt on the Chief Engineer's case about charges of interference. Of course it wasn't the CE's fault, as he was simply trying to get the six-tower directional array to do what Champlain Valley Broadcasting's original application promised to the FCC. But things weren't performing as proposed. It's unlikely that WXKW clearly blanketed all of the communities previously listed and pledged to advertisers via its coverage maps.

Although a challenge to any new radio ad sales operation, some hinterland housewife's static-laden reception wasn't management's biggest burden. As soon as Champlain Valley's first FCC application had come to the attention of WHDH, the Boston station's top echelon worried that another 850 so close by would negatively impact 'HDH's fringe areas. Truth be told, WHDH was rather sensitive about its less-than-perfect coverage. And these Bean Town bigwig broadcasters weren't the only established radiomen angered over added competition.

Folks at General Electric's WGY 810 on the dial (in Schenectady) had major concerns about an additional station cutting up the Albany marketplace pie, especially a large AM cranking out 10,000 watts a mere 40 kilocycles away from the venerable GE giant. While FCC rules generally considered such spacing (WGY 810 to WXKW 850) acceptable, some say General Electric employed its Denver-based KOA 850 to declare war on even the smallest interference levels. Apparently the problem was in KOA's long-range, secondary skywave service then afforded to the dominant facilities (like KOA) on a given AM clear channel.

QRP Peanut-Power On The Hour

In an exposé about WXKW on the website <www.capital-gold.org>, Dan Strassberg recalled,

To answer the alleged interference, "the FCC required WXKW to install monitoring units at three (coverage pattern) null points [that protected WHDH and KOA]. In the nulls the unattended ground wave field [measurement] at 1 mile [from the transmitter] was supposed to be equivalent to [only] 15 watts non-directional. Three times a day, at 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 12:30 p.m., WXKW was required to cut its