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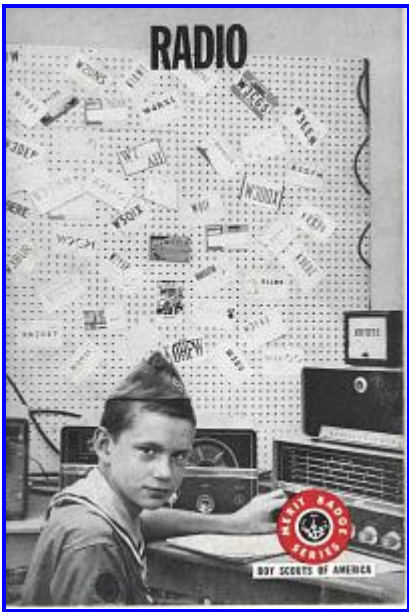
## The Evolution of Boy Scout Headquarters Station K2BSA

By M. Walter Maxwell, W2DU  
October 20, 2006

The Boy Scouts of America was founded in 1910, based upon Lord Baden-Powell's vision and the group he started in England in 1907. The Boy Scouts even have their own HQ amateur station, K2BSA. This tradition continues this weekend with Jamboree on the Air (JOTA), an opportunity for Cub, Boy and Girl Scouts and Guides, as well as non-Scouts, to communicate via Amateur Radio, with Boy Scouts even earning requirements for the Radio merit badge. But how did K2BSA get its start?

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The front cover of the Boy Scouts of America Radio merit badge booklet from 1965. This booklet listed all the requirements for Boy Scouts to earn the Radio merit badge. The cover featured the K2BSA station in New Jersey.



Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the

In 1907, Briton [Lord Baden-Powell](#), a retired Lieutenant General in the British army, founded the [Boy Scout movement in England](#). Boy Scouts soon caught on in the [US](#), and its original headquarters was located at 2 Park Ave, New York City until the early 1960s. After World War II, three top executives at Boy Scout headquarters were radio amateurs who desperately wanted to have a Boy Scout headquarters' club station, but there was no room in the crowded office complex for such a frill. These amateurs were Lloyd Everhart, K2CVT, then publisher of all Boy Scout publications, the late Harry Harchar, W2GND, editor of [Boys' Life](#), and E. E. "Hoisy" Hoisington, K2GDR (now W4YTA), Chairman of the Safety and Health Department.

**The Beginning of an HQ Station**

Around 1960 these amateurs came upon some exciting news: due to increasingly cramped office space, a move from New York was essential. To make the move possible, headquarters had just acquired some pristine wooded acreage in North Brunswick, New Jersey, at the intersection of US 1 and

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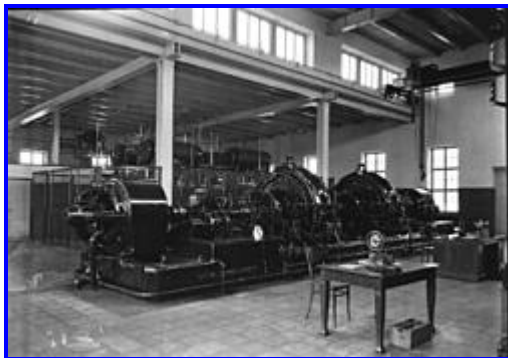
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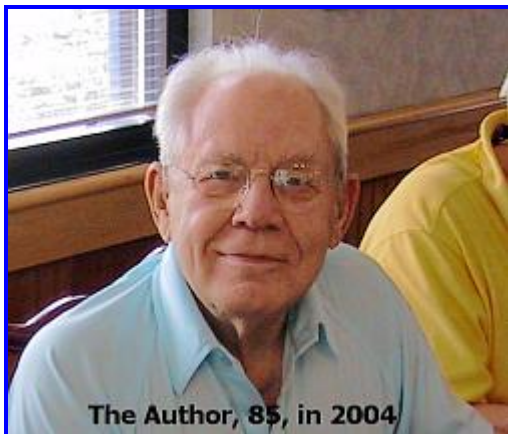
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Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouting movement. A British war hero in the Boer War, upon his return to England he wrote a book, [Aids to Scouting for NCOs and Men](#) (published in 1899), and later, [Scouting for Boys](#) (published in 1908). He organized a group of 20 young men and took them to [Brownsea Island](#) the week of August 1, 1907. There they learned campaigning, observation, woodcraft, chivalry, lifesaving and patriotism -- all the things Baden-Powell later wrote about in *Scouting for Boys*. This week-long event was the basis for the Boy Scouting movement all over the world. [Photo, [Wikipedia](#)]



One of the two remaining Alexanderson alternator transmitters. One similar to this one was at the first BSA amateur station in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This one is located at Grimeton, Sweden. [Photo, [Ernst Fredrik Werner Alexanderson](#)]



The Author, 85, in 2004

A photo of the author, Walt, 86 years

US 130, just south of New Brunswick. This was also the location of station [WII](#) with its [200 kW Alexanderson alternator transmitter](#) operating on 21.8 kHz. This was the station used to transmit President Wilson's ultimatum to Germany that resulted in the ending of World War I.

These three amateurs descended onto the property with glee, because in addition to a long nature trail and large office complex building housing the headquarters' business operations, a large, magnificent museum was built to display Boy Scouting memorabilia from all over the world; the main display room was about the size of a standard basketball court. They immediately thought, "What a neat place to operate and display ham radio!" At one end of the room an attractive console was constructed in clear maple for the long-desired amateur station.

Various manufacturers of amateur gear generously donated equipment to the station. Hallicrafters was the first, donating an [SX-111 receiver](#), an [HT-37 transmitter](#) and an HT-33 RF power amplifier. The late Al Kahn, K4FW (then with Electro-Voice, and later owner of [Ten-Tec](#)), donated an [EV-664 microphone](#), and [Telrex](#) donated a tower and its then top-of-the-line 3 band beam and rotator. Later on, [Hammarlund](#) donated its latest transceiver, and then still later, [Heathkit](#) donated an [SB-101 transceiver](#) and an [SB-200 RF power amplifier](#).

### K2BFW Is On the Air

It was my good fortune to live in Dayton, only eight miles south of the new headquarters on US 130 (800 miles east of that other Dayton, site of [Hamvention](#)). By sheer coincidence Hoisy, K2GDR, moved in just down the street from me, and naturally, both being hams, we became good friends. What was even more fortunate for me was that he invited me to join with him, Lloyd and Harry to assemble the station. Guess what? Among other tasks, they gave me the responsibility for the antennas! What joy that task was.

does and now it does it.



[US Amateur Radio Bands - ARRL Frequency Chart \(50 pk\)](#) -- 50 pack.

Full color, size 8.5 x 11 inches.



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-- Get on the air now! A guide to your first Amateur Radio station.

A photo of the author. wait, 86 years young, is still active in Amateur Radio. [Photo, Walt Maxwell, W2DU]



A photo of Walt and his three sons: John, K4JRM, Bill, W2WM, and Rick, W8KHK. [Photo, Walt Maxwell, W2DU]

We four then formed the *Boys' Life* Radio Club, and the original call assigned to the new station was K2BFW.

The station operation was very successful. Not only did the four of us enjoy operating the club station, but all Scouts and Scouters visiting the museum who were also licensed amateurs (and other visitors who were licensed) were given the opportunity to operate the station in the same manner as those who visit [W1AW](#) at the ARRL Headquarters.

But as luck (?) would have it, the K2BFW operations seemed to go awry during the annual October worldwide event known as Jamboree on the Air ([JOTA](#)). This was the time when we expected to have an exciting bit of operation with the new station, when Boy and Girl Scouts visit nearby amateur stations to talk with other Boy and Girl Scouts over Amateur Radio. And every year, we at headquarters had licensed Scouts and Scouters lined up for 24 hour operation of K2BFW throughout the entire JOTA weekends.

But a distressing problem arose during JOTA -- and continued for several years after. A Scoutmaster, a licensed amateur in Pennsylvania right across the Delaware River from us, obtained a special event call sign for JOTA -- K3BSA! Wow, the pileups he drew! Everybody thought he was the headquarters station. Old K2BFW was left in his dust, and when we announced during every contact that we were the headquarters station, many of our contacts disbelieved us, and told us to get off headquarters' frequency. Even so, we still made many successful contacts, including lots of DX. We were always able to work [HB9S](#), World Scouting Headquarters, in Geneva, Switzerland, where some of our own Scouting executives had the opportunity to talk with their counterparts in Geneva.

### A New Call Sign

After several years of competing with K3BSA, I decided we needed more recognition and visibility than we could possibly get with the call sign K2BFW. So I decided to get us a new call sign that would give us the clout we needed. On checking the [Radio Amateur Callbook](#), both W2BSA and K2BSA were in use. Well, W2BS wasn't.

As a former monitoring officer with the Radio Intelligence Division of the FCC, I was personally acquainted with [Rosel H. Hyde](#), then Chairman of the FCC. I told him of the situation and asked his advice on how to proceed in obtaining a permanent assignment of the call sign W2BS to the Boy Scout headquarters station. He suggested that I present the situation in the form of a draft petition that he would take to the Chief of the Safety and Special Services Bureau for his comments (at that time, the Amateur Division fell under this Bureau's jurisdiction). Chairman Hyde was in complete agreement with our request; however, the Bureau Chief rejected the petition, saying there were no administrative rules allowing a special call sign to be assigned permanently in cases such as ours. In addition, he stated that old timers who already had two-letter calls would object to a Boy Scout station having a two-letter call. This last comment seemed to me to be a lame excuse.

After learning of this response, Chairman Hyde suggested that I revise the petition to include some means for overcoming the Bureau Chief's objections. He also advised me to submit the revised



petition directly to the seven FCC Commissioners.

I then started some research. I pored over old *Callbooks* between 1921 and 1928, and to my surprise I found more than 50 two-letter calls assigned to Boy Scout troops all over the country during that early era.

The revised petition included a report on my findings concerning the two-letter calls assigned to Boy Scout troops in those early days. By this time, Chairman Hyde's tenure had expired, and he was replaced by Chairman [Dean Burch](#). Chairman Hyde remained as my advisor, however, and heartily approved of the revised petition.

As Chairman Hyde had advised, this time I submitted the new petition directly to the FCC Commissioners on April 16, 1971. One of our arguments in the new petition for a permanent assignment of a call sign for the headquarters' station that I thought would help our position was, that in addition of its use at headquarters, the call could also be used by other Scouting groups for their activities in all parts of the country, simply by obtaining permission from the current trustee of W2BS. The group would then have to apply the appropriate /n for the district in which the operation would occur. This aspect of the permanent call sign would then relieve the FCC staff from the paperwork required to process special event call signs for other official Scouting activities, such as Jamborees. (I later took some lumps from the FCC staff on this issue, because some [Jamboree](#) leaders later ignored that aspect of the petition and requested special call sign WJ7WSC for World Scouting.

### **K2BSA Moves South**

After the usual long wait for bureaucratic action, on April 1, 1969, I received a letter directly from FCC Chairman Dean Burch. He said the Commission believed the call sign K2BSA would give Boy Scout headquarters the recognition and prestige required to let the amateur community know who we were every time we went on the air. Petition request granted!

It seems that during the time I was doing the research, the call sign K2BSA had become inactive, and was therefore available. K2BSA was then assigned to the club station of the Boy Scouts of America headquarters! As word got around concerning the new call sign, our local Scouts and Scouters started increasing our visibility by putting in more time on the air, and the positive responses we received proved that our recognition as Scouting National Headquarters was also increasing dramatically.

During the first years of operation with the call sign K2BFW, Harry Harchar was trustee of the station, but from the time of the new call sign until headquarters moved to Dallas, I was the trustee, as well as the National JOTA coordinator. As JOTA coordinator, I was principally a public relations man, publishing the pertinent operating information in the October issues of the various amateur publications, including *QST*, *Ham Radio*, *CQ* and *73*.

All did not bode well for the headquarters' move from New York to New Jersey. It appears that Scouting organizations in the Western portion of the country felt that the new location should have been more centrally located between East and West to provide a more equalized service to the West. The situation simmered until the 1990s, when the tough decision was made to move to Dallas. For the operation of K2BSA, it was not only a tough call, but a fatal one -- but fortunately, only temporarily.

A firm, unbendable high-level headquarters decision was made that there would be no amateur operation and no antennas erected at the new building in Dallas. [PRB-1](#)? Then only in an amateur's dream. What then should become of the present equipment? It was decided to distribute it among

the four of us, Lloyd, Harry, Hoisy and myself. As an aficionado of early equipment, it was my good fortune to inherit the original Hallicrafters SX-111 receiver, the HT-37 transmitter and the HT-33 power amplifier; I still have all of these in my collection.

## K2BSA Back in Operation

Quite some time after the move to Dallas, a Dallas Scouter who was also an ardent amateur, and then the Section Communications Manager for the North Texas ARRL Section, the late Walter "Dan" Dansby Jr, W5URI, considered it untenable that K2BSA operation was killed simply by bureaucratic executive order. Dan started a search for a suitable location to house K2BSA and get it back into operation. He initially found a place to house the station at Camp Shuman on Lake Worth near Azle, Texas, and the station was later moved to its permanent home at Camp Wisdom in Dallas. The station's trustee is Ray Moyer, WD8JKV, and the station manager is Frank Krizan, KR1ZAN. K2BSA's equipment consists of two HF operating positions, a VHF/UHF satellite position, VHF/UHF voice and packet position and amateur TV (ATV) operating position. The station is operated during Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) and several other weekends of the year. Maintenance is done by [Venture Crew 73](#) members and Advisors of Richardson, Texas.

Beginning in September 2000, K2BSA is operating and open certain Saturdays of each month for visiting Scout groups to tour and talk with other hams and, perhaps, other Scouts around town, around the country and, often, the world. Watch the [K2BSA Web site](#) for details, or call the [Circle Ten Council](#) reservations desk at 214-902-6764 to schedule a visit.

It is comforting to finally know that through the operation of K2BSA, Amateur Radio is being kept alive within the Boy Scout movement, giving its youth an introduction to our hobby and service, hopefully instilling a desire for them to become a part of our great Amateur Radio community.

*M. Walter Maxwell, W2DU, is an ARRL Technical Advisor ([TA](#)) working with antennas and transmission lines. A life member of the ARRL and QCWA, as well as a Fellow of the Radio Club of America, he was licensed at age 14 as W8KHK in 1933, and has been licensed continuously ever since. He earned a BS in mathematics and physics from Central Michigan University. In 1949, Walt joined the RCA Laboratories in Princeton, New Jersey as an engineer, later becoming a charter member of its new Astro-Electronics Division. From 1960 until retirement in 1980, he was in charge of Astro's Space Center Antenna Laboratory and Test Range. Walt has also held call signs W4GWZ, W8VJR and W2FCY; he earned his Amateur Extra class license in 1967 and the call sign W2DU in 1968. He served as antenna consultant for AMSAT, as a member of the FCC's advisory committee for WARC-79 and as trustee for K2BSA at National Headquarters, Boy Scouts of America. After retiring from RCA in 1980, Walt moved to Florida where he writes and edits, and still enjoys music; he plays string bass in small jazz combos and in a professional 14-piece 1940s Glenn Miller-style Big Band. A three-generation family of hams, Walt's father was W8YNG, and three sons Bill, W2WM; Rick, W8KHK (Walt's original call), and John, K4JRM. His daughter Sue was KC4UBZ (license expired) and son-in-law Keith is WD9JCA.*

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