

WALL

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City of license	Middletown, New York
Broadcast area	Newburgh-Middletown
Slogan	<i>1340 True Oldies Channel</i>
Frequency	1340 kHz
First air date	1942
Format	Oldies
Power	1,000 watts
Class	C
Facility ID	3137
Transmitter coordinates	41°27′25.00″N 74°26′24.00″W﻿ / ﻿41.456944°N 74.440000°W﻿ / 41.456944; -74.44
Affiliations	True Oldies Channel
Owner	Cumulus Media (CUMULUS LICENSING LLC)
Sister stations	WCZX, WDVY, WEOK, WKNY, WKXP, WPDA, WPDH, WRRV, WZAD
Website	Trueoldieschannel.com ^[1] WALL Has It All (Mark West) ^[2]

WALL (1340 AM, "1340-WALL") is a radio station licensed to Middletown, New York that serves Orange County, New York. WALL is owned by Cumulus Media and broadcasts at 1340 kHz with 1,000 watts, daytime and nighttime, both nondirectional.

WALL is an affiliate of Scott Shannon's True Oldies Channel, and has a brokered local morning show. WALL flipped to this format in 2010, after a five-year run as a Radio Disney affiliate.

Early history

WALL came to air on August 6, 1942, the first radio station in the western part of Orange County, part of a series of low-powered local stations that took to the air in the period after the 1941 North American Radio Broadcasting Agreement and realignment. According to legend, WALL originally sought the call letters WMID (for **MID**dletown), but a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) mixup led to another station at 1340 MHz in Atlantic City, New Jersey to get the WMID calls, while the Middletown station got the WALL calls that Atlantic City wanted (after that city's sea WALL). Other stories insist that the call letters were indeed correct, and WALL was named for the Town of Wallkill, which neighbors the city while WMID was named for nearby Middle Township, New Jersey, where the station owner resided.

Identity crisis aside, WALL signed on with a full-service popular music format with a heavy amount of local news, and with only newspapers as competition, were very successful. The station was owned by the Community Broadcasting Corporation whose partners were Roger Clipp, an executive with Triangle Publications (WFIL in Philadelphia) and John Morgan Davis, who ultimately served as Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania.

In 1950, WALL hired Jim Patt from WNBH in New Bedford, Massachusetts, as General Manager; he ran the station until 1972. On-air personalities included Bill Swanwick ("Breakfast With Beaming Billy"), Jerry Wax ("The Wax Works"), longtime staffer Joe Ryan and Big Jim Pappas; Al Larson served as news director, with Johnny Zaines in charge of sales.

Dominance in the 1960s and 1970s

The station was sold to R. Peter Straus, owner of WMCA in New York City ("home of the Good Guys"). Straus, who had aspirations to become a United States Senator, bought WALL as well as stations in Utica and Geneva, New York, so his editorials could be heard throughout the state. In 1964, however, Robert F. Kennedy decided to run for the Senate, ending Straus's plans (he ultimately sold the stations). Patt stayed on to run WALL for Straus, putting WALL-FM on the air, but when Straus sold out Patt decided it was time to retire to Fort Myers, Florida, where he teamed up again with Roger Clipp to put a station on the air in that market.

By mid-decade, WALL had evolved into a Middle of the Road format, and on November 11, 1966 would add FM service at 92.7 MHz (today's WRRV). It was with the FM launch that WALL switched to Top 40: from 1967-77 (under program directors Larry Berger, Dave Charity, Art Livesay, and Jim Frey), WALL was virtually unbeatable in the ratings despite new local sign-ons (such as Warwick's WTbQ in 1969) and serious competition from New York signals including WABC and WNBC.

In 1974, WALL staffers (among them Randy West) recorded a satirical tape known as "NINE!", a parody of industry marketing pitches and radio programming in general. The tape, which takes place at fictional radio station AM 900 WVWA/Pound Ridge, New York, documents the progression of the top 40 station from earlier, awkward years (with odd sound effects, rambling disc jockeys, dead air, and wildly inaccurate weather forecasts) to a finely-tuned, professional-sounding station with various gimmicks, catch-phrases and promotions popular at the time. However, the WVWA determines it must go one step further and strip out *all* spoken-word content, leaving only a rapid-fire, barely intelligible station identification once an hour and the word "NINE!" exclaimed between each song. Radio industry insiders of today consider the tape to be both ironically humorous and inadvertently prophetic for foretelling the adoption of elements such as rapid-fire station IDs, station branding, increased automation and less emphasis on local DJs. (Fybush ^[3])

The fire and beyond

At about 8pm on Sunday, December 21, 1975, WALL suffered a devastating fire which gutted its North Street studios, killing several residents in a third-floor apartment, and forcing the station to move to an abandoned, block-long Armory building in Middletown. Surprisingly, WALL was off the air less than half an hour; using remote broadcast equipment that was stored at the transmitter site on Monhagen Avenue, the station quickly began broadcasting from the transmitter building using records borrowed from employees. The old Armory building had already been purchased by then-owner Orange Communications, with the intent of moving the radio station there within a year; instead, the move happened overnight while flames and smoke still rose from the North Street studios. WALL signed on from the Armory at 6am the morning after the fire, using remote equipment borrowed from sister station WHVW in Hyde Park, New York. Temporary studios were quickly constructed in a basement gym, with permanent studios constructed as originally planned on the second floor of the Armory, with offices on the first floor.

In 1979, WALL and sister WKGL (the former WALL-FM) were purchased by a consortium headed by media mogul Robert F.X. Sillerman and legendary New York air personality Bruce Morrow ("Cousin Brucie"). Headquartering their group in Middletown at the Armory (now re-christened "Broadcast Plaza"), major changes took place with WALL flipping first to a top 40/adult contemporary hybrid format, and later to Adult Standards; WKGL went to an oldies format. The drastic change was not a long-term success, and Morrow sold WALL and WKGL to Bell Broadcasting.

1980s and 1990s

By 1985 WALL began to regroup by bringing in program director Rob Dillman and flipping to a higher-energy oldies format. With this change came the acquisition of sports programming such as New York Mets baseball, New York Giants football, and various local sports and other community events. Additionally, WALL rehired some of the air talent from its Top 40 heyday, including Joe Ryan. These changes proved successful and WALL once again achieved ratings not seen since the early 1970s.

One of the most successful promotions in station history was WALL's "45th Anniversary Reunion Broadcast", on the weekend of August 2–3, 1987. The station looked back to its past and reunited air personalities including "Cousin Brucie", Howard Hoffman, Dave Charity, John Fisher, Ray Arthur, Randy West, Gene Pelc, Al Faust, Art Livesay, Alex Miller, Dick Wells, Jim Frey, Mark West, Ray Arthur, Jim Brownold, Jon LeMieux, Jimmy Howes, Jim Pappas and Al Larson.

The community-mindedness of WALL would be short-lived, however. In September 1988, local power company Orange and Rockland Utilities purchased WALL and WKGL (now WKOJ); with the sale came a mass purge of staff with WALL flipping to a satellite news/talk format in all but mornings. There would be no fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1992: Joe Ryan died, as did news man Al Larson.

In 1994, Orange and Rockland would sell WALL and WKOJ to the Poughkeepsie-based Crystal Radio Group. Despite slumping ratings, WALL's news/talk format continued undisturbed for most of the rest of the 1990s. WKOJ's format was changed to modern rock and its calls to WRRV; the station remains the same as of 2011.

WEOK simulcast history

(for a detailed history on these formats, see the article on WEOK)

While WALL was left alone and did moderately well given its signal and status in the market, Crystal Radio had problems with WEOK given the aging demographics of that station's longtime adult standards format. Looking at an opportunity to fortify their holdings, in August 1999 Crystal decided to join WEOK with WALL and renovate WALL's talk format into a station that would target all of the Hudson Valley. On September 6, 1999, WEOK dumped pop standards and joined with WALL to simulcast talk, a format known as *NewsTalk 13*. John Moultrie, WALL's morning man since switching to talk, was dumped in favour of WEOK's Larry Hughes. (Moultrie later turned up doing afternoons on WTBQ; and mornings at WVOS.)

Up against the highly rated WABC in New York (and sharing much of its programming), the NewsTalk 13 simulcast struggled to find an audience, especially in Middletown; many listeners there thought the new station was too "Poughkeepsie-centric". In August 2000, the ESPN Radio programming that the station aired nights and weekends became the full-time format of the station. Soon, Aurora Communications would purchase the assets of the Crystal Radio Group. Both NewsTalk 13 and the ESPN Radio simulcast featured a large amount of sports rights including Yankees baseball, Giants and Jets football, and Marist College basketball.

Aurora's ownership of the station would prove to be short-lived; in October 2001 they would be purchased by Cumulus Media. At 2pm on September 15, 2002 (following the rueful announcement "This was ESPN Radio"), WALL and WEOK would flip to a Spanish language Hot AC format as *El Ritmo* ("The Rhythm"), the first Spanish-language station in the Hudson Valley.

Poor ratings and revenues led Cumulus, in March 2005, to flip the stations again, this time to Radio Disney; Cumulus had actually considered switching to Disney three years earlier.

True Oldies Channel and return to live radio

On February 22, 2010 the WEOK and WALL simulcast dropped Radio Disney for Scott Shannon's The True Oldies Channel, a syndicated format ironically very similar to the Top-40 WALL of the 60s and 70s (and the high-energy oldies format of the mid-80s). With the switch, WEOK and WALL stopped being a true simulcast, running liners, jingles and commercials specific to each station.

On April 11, 2011, former WALL personality Mark West brought live radio back to Middletown for the first time since 1999 when he began programming a local morning show from a studio in New Hampton, New York. West leases the morning shift from Cumulus and sells commercials; the program airs 6am to 10am weekdays. Bob Schaeffer, formerly of WVOS, does local news.

External links

- Official Website for Mark West Morning Show ^[4]
- Query the FCC's AM station database for WALL ^[5]
- Radio-Locator Information on WALL ^[6]
- Query Arbitron's AM station database for WALL ^[7]

References

- [1] <http://www.trueoldieschannel.com/>
- [2] <http://www.wallhasitall.com/>
- [3] <http://www.fybush.com/NERW/2009/090914/nerw.html#ny>
- [4] <http://www.WallHasItAll.com>
- [5] <http://www.fcc.gov/fcc-bin/amq?call=WALL>
- [6] <http://www.radio-locator.com/info/WALL-AM>
- [7] <http://www1.arbitron.com/sip/displaySip.do?surveyID=W112&band=am&callLetter=WALL>

Article Sources and Contributors

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