

Swedish Radio Directors visit Rocky Point June 29-30, 2015
by Natalie Aurucci Stiefel

Directors of the famous SAQ Transmitting Station in Sweden visited the area to tour the RCA Radio Central site in Rocky Point. The Rocky Point Historical Society hosted a reception and tours for them on June 29th and 30th, 2015 to meet local radio historians including members of the Long Island Radio and Television Historical Society and Radio Central Amateur Radio Club. Mr. Lars G. Johansson serves as the present CEO of the SAQ Grimeton Station in Sweden and as a former archaeologist with the Swedish National Heritage Board. Mr. Kjell Markstrom is the former CEO of SAQ and the former Director of the Swedish Telcom cell phone company.

RCA built the SAQ station in Grimeton, Sweden in 1922, just one year after they established their transmitting station in Rocky Point. The Swedish station has become a museum and declared by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage Site. This museum is still functioning, as their archival 200 kw Alexanderson alternator and six 420' high long-wave towers are still in operation. The alternator is the only functioning one in the world. The station is used by the Swedish Navy which brings some revenue for the museum. Mr. Johansson explained that each of the six towers require painting every ten years at a cost of one million dollars each. Volunteers from the Alexanderson Society help maintain the station museum. Over 20,000 visitors and 5,000 young students tour the station museum each year.

Communication and cooperation was vital between the SAQ Station in Sweden and the RCA Radio Central Station in Rocky Point. The Rocky Point station especially played an important part in communication during the World War II era.

The inventor of the alternators, Ernst Alexanderson, originally worked at the Swedish SAQ station, was employed at General Electric in Schenectady, New York and became Chief Engineer and Consultant at Radio Central in Rocky Point. Alexanderson, who was an engineer and radio pioneer, was noted for his work with the award of the IRE Gold Medal in 1919, IRE President in 1920, entrance in the Inventor's Hall of Fame and the Edison Medal in 1945.

Grimeton's (call sign SAQ) still transmits a message to the world twice a year: at the yearly "Alexanderson Day" (Sunday at the end of June/beginning of July) and at Christmas Eve. The frequency is 17.2 khz CW.