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# 730 KPIK AM Alexandria

Entertainment radio made its debut in the United States around 1910. Soon radio stations played a variety of comedies, dramas, game shows and music formats for millions of listeners around the country. The first broadcasts used AM signals, and Alexandria's first radio station, WPIK broadcast in AM, despite the recent popularity of FM broadcasts. WPIK's 730 kHz signal continued to broadcast well into the 21st century, even though its call letters changed multiple times.

Early wireless radio transmissions in the Washington,

DC area belonged to the U.S. Navy and Post Office. The first commercial stations in the area began to broadcast around 1921, and by 1923, stations began to spread across the AM dial. The 1920s to 1950s are considered the Golden Age of Radio in the United States, and it was in 1945 that WPIK signed on as a country music station. Television's popularity exploded in the 1950s, which hurt radio stations' hold on the American public.

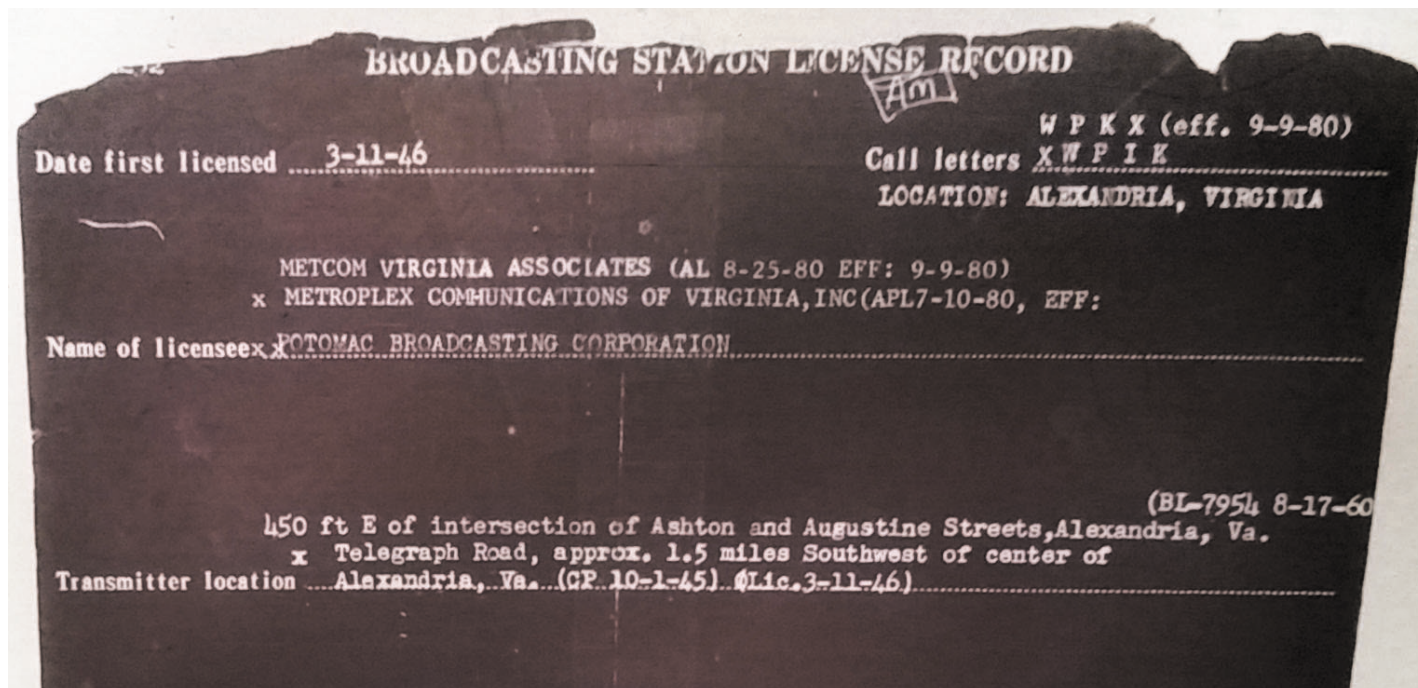
WPIK broadcast from 1945 through 1980. Legend has it that Jimmy Dean, of sausage

fame, debuted his hit "Big Bad John" on WPIK in 1961. The song about a drifter named John, who died saving his fellow miners, was the first country song to go gold. Dean was nominated for a Grammy as Best Male Vocalist of the Year in 1962, and the song was nominated for Song of the Year. Ultimately, it won the Grammy for Best Country & Western Recording. Dean had to re-record the song with altered lyrics, since the original included the line, "At the bottom of this mine lies one hell of a man-Big John." The definitions of

profanity required that Dean change the line to, "At the bottom of this mine lies a big, big man-Big John."

After 1980, AM 730 frequently changed call signs and formats. Some highlights include a soul-oldies format, an oldies station, a business news financial advice format, ESPN Deportes Radio, a conservative talk-radio station, and in this century a Spanish-language music station.

*Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.*



An early permit for WPIK.

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