

federal regulations added the letter "K", for the United States, to the original call sign creating KPH, one of the most famous radio call signs in the world.

Radio operators ashore and afloat came to regard KPH as the "Wireless Giant of the Pacific". Only the best operators worked at KPH. They were at their telegraph keys 24 hours a day, every day of the year, ready to help with everything from the mundane messages of maritime trade to urgent requests for assistance from ships in distress. When those three most electrifying letters, "SOS", were heard weakly through the crackling static radio operators suddenly sat up straight and pressed their earphones close to hear the message from their colleague in peril on the sea.

The KPH signal literally spanned the globe. Radio operators on ships in the far corners of the world were comforted by the steady drone of the reliable signal from KPH in their earphones.

As technology progressed the end of Morse code was predicted many times. But the operators at KPH soldiered on providing good, reliable service to the maritime community. The end finally came in 1997 when long time competitor Globe Wireless purchased the KPH license. The big transmitters in Bolinas were shut down and left for dead. The operators at Pt. Reyes turned out the lights and walked away from not only their jobs but their careers. On July 12, 1999 Globe Wireless sent what was then thought to be the last commercial Morse code message from their master station in Half Moon Bay. It was the last time the famous call sign KPH would be heard on the air – or so it was thought.

Today the former KPH facilities are part of the Point Reyes National Seashore which has a strong interest in the important role this station played in the history of radio. With their permission and support the Maritime Radio Historical Society has restored the transmitters, receivers and antennas of KPH to full operation.

In an event that we call the "Night of Nights" KPH returns to the air on its original frequencies and with its original equipment each year on July 12. It is a moving experience for those at the station and for listeners around the world who wait to once again hear the signals they heard during their careers as radiotelegraph operators, a profession they made one of honor and skill. As many as seven other coast stations now join us on the air for this event as once again the marine radio bands come alive with Morse signals.

The Maritime Radio Historical Society has obtained its own coast station license with the call letters KSM. We operate this station every Saturday using all the original KPH equipment. Our objective is to preserve the skills, traditions and culture of the men and women who worked at who worked at KPH and on ships and coast stations around the world.

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