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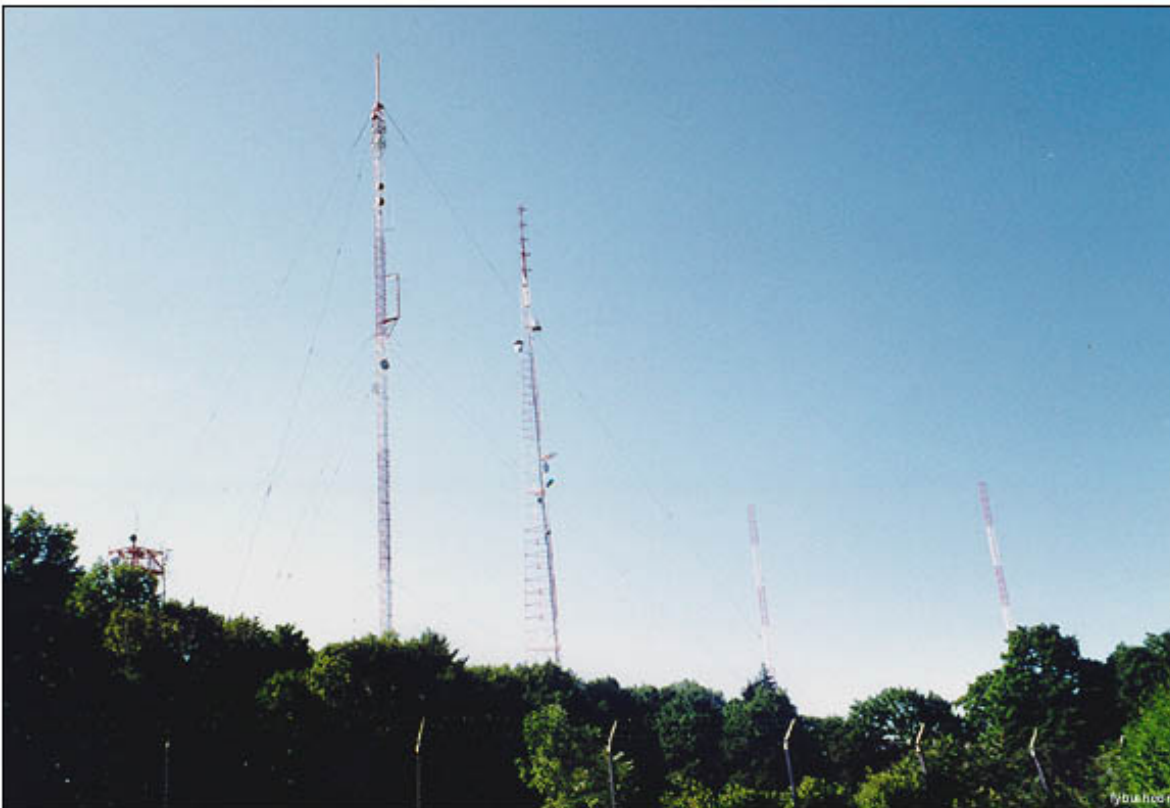
TOWER SITE OF THE WEEK

September 26 - October 3, 2002

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Talcott Mountain, Connecticut



(This feature originally appeared on Tower Site of the Week January 17, 2001; we're happy to present it here again in honor of the 45th anniversary of the debut of channel 3, WTIC-TV [now WFSB], on September 23, 1957.)

Welcome to Avon Mountain, about 10 miles west of downtown Hartford! This site may well be the oldest transmitting facility in constant use in New England, though the players here have changed somewhat over the decades.

This site (commonly referred to as "Talcott Mountain," though that's actually a bit to the north, on the other side of US 44) was first put into broadcast service back in 1929 by WTIC.

The RCA 50,000 watt transmitter that fired up from Avon on August 2, 1929 replaced a 500 watt facility that had operated from the roof of a building on Grove Street in Hartford owned by WTIC's parent company, Travelers Insurance. At the time, WTIC operated on 1060 kHz, sharing time with Baltimore's WBAL on the channel. In 1934, WTIC moved down the dial to 1040, sharing the channel with Dallas' KRLD. (I suspect, but don't know with any certainty, that this would be when the two-tower directional array here was built.)



The big frequency shift of 1941 gave WTIC a channel of its own: 1080 kHz, where the station has operated ever since.



WTIC(AM), and a tree

Non-directional by day, WTIC switches to directional mode at Dallas sunset to protect KRLD, which shares the 1080 frequency.

Not shown here -- simply because I don't have a still picture of it -- is the transmitter building at the site. It's the original 1929 structure, a massive brick building that could be mistaken for a church or a school if not for all the towers surrounding it.

(You can see the building at Mike Fitzpatrick's [NECRAT](#) site, which also has close-ups of the TV and FM antennas here, as well as many more tower pictures for aficionados. Click on "Tower Pictures" and "Hartford Area" to get to his WTIC shots.)

The AM station is just one of the attractions at the Avon site. FM radio was next here, with the 1940 debut of W1XSO. The station moved to commercial operation on 45.3 MHz on December 15, 1941 as W53H, then became WTIC-FM two years later. The move to the 88-108 MHz FM band a few years later sent WTIC-FM to 93.5 (though it never actually used that channel), then to its current 96.5 MHz frequency, where it has operated since 1948. (Was the Avon site used for WTIC's early FM operations? Again, I don't know with any certainty.)

What I *do* know is that TV came to Avon Mountain on September 23, 1957, with the debut of WTIC-TV (Channel 3) from the tower shown to the right.



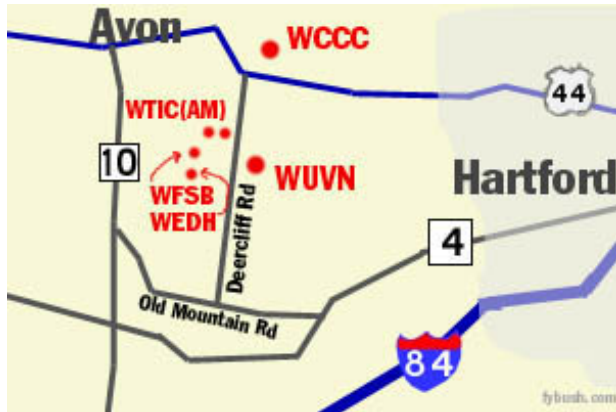


45 years in Avon: Channel 3

WTIC had been fighting for a TV allocation for more than a decade. While it could have had a UHF channel any time it wanted one, Travelers held out for a VHF channel, persuading the FCC to move channel 3 from New London to Hartford in the process.

The arrival of WTIC-TV on the scene spelled trouble for a neighbor across Deercliff Road. Channel 18 had been operating from a tower just across the street for several years, first as WGTH-TV and then as WHCT. That tower, though not shown here, still stands and is still home to channel 18, which was recently reborn under the WUVN calls and will soon be a Univision affiliate.

WTIC-TV and WTIC-AM/FM were sold to separate owners in the early seventies, with the TV side becoming WFSB, the calls it has used ever since.



Two more stations also use the WTIC/WFSB facilities on Avon Mountain. Look carefully at the tower on the left side of the the picture at the top of the frame, and you'll see a UHF antenna. That belongs to Connecticut Public TV's flagship station, WEDH Channel 24, which has been there since its debut in the early seventies. The WTIC-FM antenna's two bays are just below the WEDH antenna, almost impossible to see in this photo. The more visible set of two bays below that belong to the University of Hartford's WWUH (91.3), and are also available for used as a backup antenna for WTIC-FM.

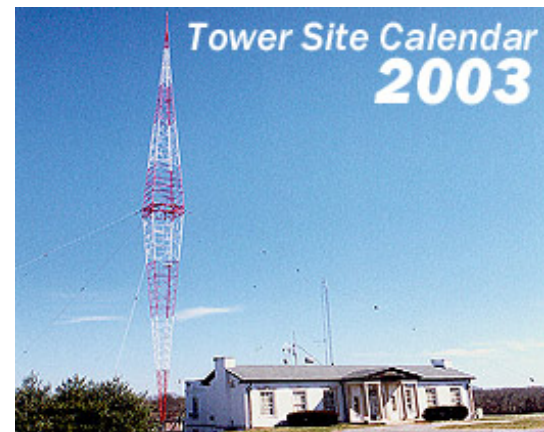
The pictures shown here were taken in 1995, before the latest arrival on Avon Mountain. WFSB-DT operates on channel 33 from this site, and will eventually be joined by WEDH-DT on channel 32.

One more neighbor, also not shown here, is a few miles north on Deercliff Road. WCCC-FM (106.9) has used Talcott Mountain for decades; it was joined by WCCC(AM) (now WTMI) on 1290 from the same tower a few years ago.

Like the picture at the top? It's one of the more than a dozen Tower Site images featured in the 2003 Tower Site Calendar, coming this fall from Tower Site of the Week and fybush.com.

If you liked last year's edition, you'll love this one: higher-quality images (in addition to Avon Mountain, this year's edition includes Providence's WHJJ; Mount Mansfield, Vermont; Buffalo's WBEN; KOMA in Oklahoma City; the legendary WSM, Nashville and many more), more dates in radio history, a convenient hole for hanging - and we'll even make sure all the dates fall on the right days!

This year's calendar will go to press in late October, and if you order now, you'll have yours in hand by mid-November, in plenty of time for the holidays. And this year, you can order with your Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express by using the handy link below!



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