

History of WOBU/WCHS, Charleston

Heterodyning in the Hills - The WOBU Story

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PREFACE

The author expresses heartfelt appreciation to Robert H. Fredericks for providing necessary data and details, to Mrs. Walter Fredericks for her hospitality and for being receptive to the project, allowing me to peruse documents and photographs, to Jeff Miller for knowing more about West Virginia radio than anyone else, and to Richard and Deborah Fauss, of the Archives section in the Cultural Center, for being extremely helpful and interested in the truth.

Apologies are extended to the West Virginia Broadcasters Association. I believe their work was a long overdue noble gesture, but, sadly it is filled with many inaccuracies and contradictions. Journalists and broadcasters have many times (and rightfully so) been accused of misrepresenting the facts. We, of all people, need to be extra careful in the dissemination of information. For as Marshall McLuhan so appropriately stated "the medium is the message." (Head, Broadcasting in America, p. 506)

The pursuit of truth has prompted this researcher to replace tertiary and secondary sources, when available, with those that are of a primary nature. Finally, this account is dedicated to Walter Fredericks (1894-1974), a man with a vision towards the future.

INTRODUCTION

History has devoted little space to Charleston, West Virginia radio station WOBU. The written account of what would eventually become WCHS-AM is often riddled with error. The 1989 publication of *Broadcasting in West Virginia, A History* inaccurately records the early years of this pioneer radio station. The book, which was written by the West Virginia Broadcasters Association, focuses only a portion of one paragraph to WOBU.

"WCHS-AM Radio went on the air September 15, 1927 at 580 khz. [sic] The station was the third station in West Virginia to go on the air. Its first call letters were actually WOBU, with the first location being the Ruffner Hotel on Kanawha Boulevard. It was founded by Walter Fredericks who had an electric shop, but couldn't sell radios with no local stations. [sic] So he built one, later calling it WCHS (acronym for Charleston). Fredericks was a contractor who built homes in the Charleston area for many years." (1)

WOBU was not West Virginia's third radio station. It did not sign on the air on September 15, 1927. Its initial studio location was not in the Ruffner Hotel. Walter Fredericks did not later name the facility WCHS and its first broadcast did not originate on WCHS-AM's current frequency of 580 kHz. (2) Clearly, an accurate portrayal of this very important radio station is needed. An account that not only depicts WOBU's historical record, but describes radio's impact in the 1920s on West Virginians.

II. WEST VIRGINIA'S THIRD RADIO STATION?

History generally cites the November 2, 1920 broadcast of the Harding-Cox election returns by KDKA in Pittsburgh as the genesis of commercial broadcasting. (3) However, KDKA was not the first station on the air. KQW in San Jose, California started broadcasting in 1909 and followed a regular schedule in 1912. (4) New Rochelle, New York's amateur station 2ZK broadcast music on a regular schedule in 1916. (5) Even in KDKA's hometown of Pittsburgh, station KQV had an earlier sign on date of 1919. (6) The importance placed on KDKA (former amateur station 8XK) is that it was the first station to be licensed by the United States Commerce Department specifically for commercial broadcasting. (7) Radio was no longer a toy for the amateur broadcasters, radio would become an entertainment medium and a business that would permeate into every state of the nation, including West Virginia.

When consulting a copy of *Broadcasting-Cablecasting Yearbook*, it would be easy to surmise that what is now WCHS-AM was West Virginia's third radio station. Current editions of the yearbook list only 2 older radio stations: WRVC-AM (formerly WSAZ) Huntington and WWVA Wheeling. (8) However, the *Broadcasting-Cablecasting Yearbook* only lists stations that have continued broadcasting to the present.

Ironically, *Broadcasting*, which identifies WOBU as the third radio station in the state, also lists seven radio stations being licensed in West Virginia from 1922 to 1925. (9) The first, WHD in Morgantown was licensed by the Commerce Department on March 16, 1922. (10) Little is known concerning this facility except that it continued broadcasting through 1923. (11) West Virginia native and broadcast historian, Jeff Miller suggests that WHD was probably licensed to the Science Department of West Virginia University and was sporadically operated by students. (12)

WHAJ in Bluefield was started by brothers Jim and Hugh Shott, Jr. in 1922. Operating out of their father's office in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph, the Shotts infrequently broadcast live and recorded music. When battery acid spilled on a treasured rug belonging to their father, Hugh I. Shott, Sr. suspended their operations. The Shott brothers would return to broadcasting in 1929 with WHIS. (13)

Other early stations included WAAO Charleston (1922-1923), WAAR Huntington (1922-1923), WPAZ Charleston (1922 or 1923-1925), WHAK Clarksburg (1922 or 1923-1925) and WIBR Weirton (licensed to Thurman A. Owings: 1925). (14) Information is lacking concerning these stations. Even when WOBU signed on the air in 1927, Walter Fredericks, the licensee, and the Charleston newspapers may have been ignorant of the Kanawha Valley's two previous stations: WAAO and WPAZ. The Charleston Gazette recorded "Radio Station WOBU, Charleston's first radio station will go on the air. . . tonight." (15) Jeff Miller suggests that the other stations, including WAAR and WPAZ, "could have operated for only a short period of time, been on the air for a limited broadcast schedule, or an amateur's unsuccessful brief encounter with commercial broadcasting. (16) Miller also hypothesized that "these stations were licensed to individuals, call letters assigned, yet never went on the air." (17) Prior to 1925, West Virginia newspapers, the various city directories, and editions of the West Virginia Legislative Hand Book and Manual ignored the subject of local radio stations. The particulars of these outlets can only be conjecture.

On December 6, 1926, the Commerce Department granted Wheeling physics teacher John C. Stroebel permission to broadcast with fifty watts of power on 860 kHz. (18) Within ten days, WWVA Wheeling was on the air. (19) During WWVA's first year of operation, Stroebel broadcast from his home on Sunday mornings starting at 2:15 AM for a short period of time, Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 3:00 PM and Monday evenings 7:30 to 11:00 PM. (20) In April 1927, WSAZ Pomeroy, Ohio moved to Huntington. (21) Glenn E. Chase, owner of Chase Electric Company, signed the station on the air on October 16, 1923. In February 1927, Chase leased the station's equipment to Huntington's McKellar Electric Company. (22) The station's power change from 50 to 100 watts, frequency change from 1230 kHz to 1240 kHz, and change of location occurred prior to the formation of the Federal Radio Commission and were unauthorized by the government. (23) Both WWVA and WSAZ would later figure into developments at Charleston's WOBU.

When Fredericks signed on WOBU, it was at least the tenth station to be assigned a broadcast license in West Virginia. However of the facilities that remain, WCHS-AM (the former WOBU) is the state's third oldest in existence. WOBU would become the third permanent station in West Virginia.

III. WOBU: ONE MAN'S DREAM COME TRUE

Walter Fredericks, personal secretary to Charleston real estate magnate S. A. Moore, had a dream to put music across the airwaves and not just talk. Fredericks, according to his son Robert, had played in orchestras and bands throughout Kentucky and Ohio as well as having published a book of his original poetry. It was natural that he would take advantage of the new medium sweeping

the country. (24) In 1926, Fredericks started the Charleston Radio Supply Company operating out of the Moore Building at 1021 Quarrier Street. (25) At the time Fredericks started his business, eleven other radio dealers existed in Charleston. (26)

Charleston Radio Supply Company sold Crosley brand radios, from the small battery sets with headphones to, as Robert Fredericks relates, "the super-duper console type with vacuum tubes and loudspeakers." (27) To give that personal, competitive edge, Walter Fredericks would travel to perspective customers residence in the afternoon, string a wire antenna, set up the battery powered receiver, and wait till nightfall to tune in distant radio stations. (28) An advertisement confirms Fredericks desire to satisfy his customer: "Our expert will call at your home. . .to test and adjust your Atwater Kent or Crosley Radio receiver, without charge. This service will be rendered to all Atwater Kent and Crosley owners regardless of where you purchased your receiver. (29)

In 1927, Walter Fredericks applied to the newly formed Federal Radio Commission for permission to start a broadcasting facility in Charleston. Former WOBU newsman Sol Padlibsky wrote in his Charleston Daily Mail column that "Charleston got its first radio station because Mr. Fredericks, then in the radio business, had to find more outlets for his merchandise. (30) On June 16, 1927, Fredericks signed an agreement with S. A. Moore to lease additional space in the Moore Building for the Charleston Radio Broadcasting Company. (31) According to his son, the elder Fredericks could not get sufficient financial backing for this new project. (32) This would lead to a termination of additional rental space. In a letter to Moore, dated August 30, 1927, Walter Fredericks apologized by saying "I am sorry to advise that due to the fact that financial arrangements have not been completed on the Charleston Radio Broadcasting matter, and due to the absence of finances, the matter cannot be carried on further until I dig this money up myself. (33) Fredericks, eventually, received a loan from Kanawha Valley Bank and his dream would soon be reality. (34)

Both Broadcasting in West Virginia, A History and the Broadcasting-Cablecasting Yearbook list September 15, 1927 as the station's sign on date. (35) WOBU, however, would not take to the air until nearly a month later. A September 20th advertisement for the Charleston Radio Supply Company states that it was the "home of Radio Station WOBU - now under construction." (36) Broadcast historian, Jeff Miller suggests that the September 15th date was "probably the date the Federal Radio Commission granted WOBU's license." (37) Of his father, Robert H. Fredericks states that "he probably put the station on the air even before he got his license." (37) No matter what date is given, WOBU would officially take to the airwaves at 7:00 PM on Columbus Day and Walter Fredericks would repay the Kanawha Valley Bank within thirty days. (38)

IV. RADIO FANS WITHIN A THOUSAND MILES

On October 12, 1927, The Charleston Daily Mail reported "Radio fans within a radius of 1,000 miles tonight will be hearing, if their dials are properly adjusted, the words: "This is WOBU at Charleston, West Virginia." (40) The Charleston Gazette announced that WOBU would "go on the air at 7 o'clock tonight, barring unforeseen accidents." (41) The originating studios were in the Moore Building

with a wire strung antenna across the structure. (42) The public was invited to tune to 1120 kilocycles (now known as kiloHertz or kHz) for this first broadcast. Installation engineers urged "all Charleston radio fans whose sets are not extremely selective to disconnect the set from the antenna and then tune in on the station with the idea of hearing the station programs which come in from a distance." They also advised that "to get the station too loud will spoil the reception." (43)

Both Charleston daily newspapers listed the schedule for WOBU's initial broadcast. Lutheran minister, Rev. Harold Rose would deliver the invocation. L. E. Hoke of the City School of Music introduced Charleston Mayor W. W. Wertz. WOBU's first musical selection was "Hail West Virginia," performed by the WOBU Orchestra featuring a solo by Billy Burke. The remainder of the evening would consist of impromptu speeches by Governor Howard M. Gore and Senator Walter B. Hallanan and other musical selections.

Scheduled performers, besides Burke and the WOBU Orchestra, that night included:

Solo vocalists: Perli Barti, G. Holt Steck, Mrs. Potten, and Mrs. Jack Goldstein,
Solo violinists: Dorothy Smith and Betty Williams,
Sax and accordion Duo: Stanley Gill and Bill Schadel,
The WOBU Trio, The WOBU Happy Harmonizing Four, and Professor L. E. Hoke on Piano,

The evening's closing number of "West Virginia Hills" was promised to be used as the conclusion to every broadcast. (44) Though currently, no documentation exists concerning how far away WOBU's inaugural program would be heard, Walter Fredericks would receive confirmation of the signal from a distance of over a thousand miles.

Distant AM radio signals travel far distances during night, this is due to the hardening of the upper ionosphere when it cools. The lack of solar radiation, causes favorable conditions for slow moving AM signals to bounce off of the ionosphere. (45) WOBU would receive long distance confirmation letters even when they only broadcast with fifty watts of power. Conditions were extremely favorable on the morning of June 6, 1928. WOBU received two confirmation letters both requesting an Ekko reception stamp. The Ekko company sold a stamp album for "dxers" (long distance listeners) to obtain a reception verification from the station and thus attempt to fill up their album. (46)

C. S. Morgan of East 179th Street in New York City writes: "Were you dedicating a new station, Sunday January 6 at 1:10 AM E. S. T. with "Hail, Hail the Gangs All Here?" "Static was wicked." (47)

William Weber of Brooklyn, New York comments "On January 6, 1928 at 2:05 A. M., Eastern Standard, I heard your station. . . broadcasting. . . Orchestra playing "Turkey in the Straw." "Announcer regretted that he did not have two more hour's time, but due to batteries heating the filament of the tubes, the time was exhausted and had to sign off." (48)

Alvin Nebb of Belleville, Illinois writes concerning January 8, 1928: "I tuned in on your station tonight about 10:30 PM and your reception was good. I heard you announce your contest in which you are awarding the most distant party tuning in

on your station, a dynamic speaker and therefore I am one to enter that contest."
(49)

Within a year after the initial broadcast, WOBU would receive federal authorization to increase power to 250 watts. (50) The new power would generate further long distance listeners.

A. H. Fasolas of Turtle Creek, PA responded on January 7, 1929: "At 12:15 early Sunday morning I heard your station for the first time and sure did enjoy the program. I heard the oldtimer musicians play "Turkey in the Straw." The reception was clear and loud. Will tune in your station often." (51)

L. S.. Cranse of Summit, N. J. commented concerning the same morning: "Picked up your station early Sunday morning, January 6th, and heard "Kiss Me Again," at 1:32 A. M. E. S. T. (52)

Ione Hunker of Superior, Wisconsin was also listening: "I tuned your station in about midnight last night. There was some static but otherwise it came in good. The orchestra was best on the air. The chief surly knows his music. I am in hopes I will get to hear the orchestra real often." (53)

By 1930, the most westerly report would come from Chula Vista, CA, the most easterly and northern from Halifax, Nova Scotia and the most southerly confirmation was from Havana, Cuba. (54)

V. THE DREAM CONTINUES

Within several months following the initial broadcast, an early morning fire forced Walter Fredericks to move his studios and transmitter. The studio and offices relocated to the mezzanine of the Ruffner Hotel. The new studios were made soundproof with the walls covered in green burlap drapes. (55) The transmitter and antenna was moved to a building on John Moore's property on Ferry Branch Road (the present location of Oakwood Road and Corridor "G"). (56) Walter Fredericks and the musicians would dress in tuxedos to perform for an invisible audience. (57)

The studios were much like modern day radio stations with a double turntable set-up. This was used, primarily, for transcription broadcasts. (58) Since WOBU was not a network affiliate, transcription programs were scheduled. This gave Fredericks a break and provided programming when live music was not available. (59) From 11:15 to 11:25 AM, "Aunt Sammy's Housekeeper's Chat," a transcription disc, gave recipes, explained the National School Lunch Program and provided canning tips for housewives. (60)

The Meadows Manufacturing Company hosted, the weekly program, "The Sunny Meadows Show." Meadows would provide music from Ray Miller and his Orchestra with classic songs of the period as "The Royal Garden Blues," "You're the Cream in My Coffee," and "Digadigadoo." Interspersed within the show were advertisements for the Meadows Eight Speed Washing Machine. The announcer's pitch included gems as "have happiness fifty-two weeks a year" and "You can't appreciate what money can buy until you have seen the Meadows

Eight Speed Washer demonstrated." "Your Meadows dealer would cheerfully demonstrate the product in your home." (61)

Other products advertised on WOBU would include local businesses as Piggly Wiggly, Krogers, and Charleston area Dodge, Chevrolet and Packard dealerships. (62) Kanawha Cash Grocery provided an innovative form of advertising. Listeners were invited to submit jingles to the radio station with the hope of winning a prize. Several examples were found among Walter Frederick's personal papers.

When I was buying on credit
We was always on the rocks
My husband couldn't save enough
To buy him a pair of socks
but now I'm buying at the Kanawha Cash
At South Charleston, it isn't far
And next year we will save enough
to buy ourselves a car."
Mrs. Wirt Runner
St. Albans (63)

When you give your boy some money,
Take a peep and you will see,
Down the street he'll swiftly hasten
to the store called K. C. G.
There you find the choicest groceries,
cheapest prices in the town.
With a courteous smile they great you
never with a snarl or frown.
July 7, 1929
D. E. Tinsley
St. Albans (64)

I'm a K. C. G. booster, I crow like a rooster
And I tell everyone, so I do.
To go to their store and you'll always go more
And if you don't deal at Orts, you ought to."
July 2, 1929
Mrs. Lizzie Johnson
East Bank, WV (65)

Besides transcription programs, live services from various churches and the Union Mission could be heard weekly on WOBU. (66) A broadcast schedule dated January 19, 1930 lists "Report: Charleston Police Department" scheduled from 11:01 to 11:05 AM. (67) Robert Fredericks explained that his father "frequently aired messages intended for Charleston city police cars equipped with AM radios." He adds that the "aerials for these early car radios were wire strung between insulators attached to the underside of the running boards. "When rain or snow hit those wires - that was it." (68) Fredericks not only provided a service to the local police department, WOBU was the only outside communication source to hundreds stranded by high water during the July 4, 1929 Elk River flood. (69)

WOBU was a haven for many talented performers in the Kanawha Valley. Always innovative, Fredericks added "Dickey," the trained canary, to the lineup of the program "Old Mountain Ballads." "Dickey" received as many fan letters as his human co-hosts, the Kessinger Brothers and Raymond Kiefer. (70) As his son recalls, Walter Fredericks was pretty proud of his station - he put all of what he had into it." (71) WOBU was a success, however, outside forces would challenge Fredericks and he would divorce himself from the broadcast industry.

VI. THE END OF A DREAM

Walter Fredericks' dream began to crumble with increased Federal Radio Commission regulations. On November 11, 1928, the Commission forced an extensive frequency reallocation plan upon American broadcasters. With the reassignment of stations, WSAZ in Huntington would share broadcast time with WOBU on 580 kHz. Within a month, WSAZ would also raise power to 250 watts. (72) This allowed WSAZ to have the 580 kHz frequency part of the day and then the remaining time belonged to WOBU. Early WOBU broadcast schedules indicate that the station was on the air during the following time periods:

Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 12 Noon
1:30 PM to 3:00 PM

Monday Wednesday and Friday

7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Tuesday and Thursday

8:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Saturday

9:00 PM to 11:00 PM

Sunday

11:00 AM to 12 Noon

5:00 PM to 7:30 PM. (73)

WSAZ would operate during the times that WOBU was not on the air. This arrangement, which was common on a national scale, went smoothly until 1930. Early that year,

WSAZ requested that the government give them fulltime status and a raise in power. When the request was denied, tactics changed. On March 27, 1930, WSAZ applied to the Federal Radio Commission for fulltime operating privileges on 580 kHz regardless of a power increase. Such fulltime applications were, usually, granted without a hearing. However, former Congressman Frank D. Scott announced that he would fight this proposed change. (74) WSAZ's request would eventually be denied. WSAZ and WOBU would continue to share time on 580 kHz until 1933. On March 21, 1933, the Federal Radio Commission granted fulltime status to both stations with WOBU (at this time WCHS) on 580 kHz and WSAZ on 1190 kHz. (75)

During the late twenties, Fredericks considered investing in Wheeling station WWVA. However, the great distance between the two cities, compounded with the lack of a good direct travel route, were influential in his decision to turn down the offer. (76) On July 1, 1929, WWVA was sold to the West Virginia Broadcasting Corporation who was granted permission to move the station to Charleston and set up studios in the Daniel Boone Hotel. WOBU fought this proposed change and won; WWVA would remain in Wheeling. (77) Arguments for this proposed change may or may not have occurred while Fredericks owned the station. The West Virginia Broadcasting Corporation owned WWVA from July 1, 1929 to March 19, 1931. (78) With increased pressure from WSAZ (and possibly WWVA) Fredericks sold WOBU to the Long family, owners of the Huntington Publishing Company. The Long's also controlled a large interest in WSAZ. (79) An agreement was signed by Fredericks on May 12, 1930 that guaranteed three investors a return on their involvement. This granted both his former employer S. A. Moore and banker M. E. Moore, each \$750.; banker A. R. Eckman would receive \$500. (80) By June 1, 1930, WOBU was under the control of its new owners. (81) Robert Fredericks relates that the WSAZ conflict, compounded by the depression, gave his father the opportunity to divest his interest at the best possible time. To remain in the business, he would take the chance of "getting bigger or getting covered up completely." (82) The facility would remain as WOBU until late 1932 or early 1933 when the call letters were changed to WCHS. (83)

VII. WOBU'S IMPACT UPON THE COMMUNITY

In an early 1929 edition of Radio Digest-Illustrated, the article "WOBU Livens Up A Dead Spot" stated why a station was needed in West Virginia's capital which "boasted the distinction of being the richest city in the U. S." "None of the powerful stations could be heard before dark and their night programs seemed to have an awful struggle to reach. . .Charleston." "Besides, the moonshiners in the mountain(s) began to complain they were too busy to come out. . .to get the news and such, so there had to be a local station." (84) Robert Fredericks adds that radio was popular because it "beat story telling and looking at the moon. . .it's human interaction." (85)

The popularity of the medium is witnessed in a combined effort by Charleston area radio dealers from September 5th through the 7th, 1929. The dealers united to present a "Radio Show" at the Charleston Armory. Twenty five different radio models would be displayed and they would give away approximately a thousand dollars worth of prizes. The show was augmented by performances by "radio artists." Performers included national stars as Dancin' Eddie "Clayton" Jones of Hollywood and Vocalion recording artists The Reynolds Brothers, as well as, a host of local artists familiar to WOBU listeners. Area talent would include Gill and

Schadel, Bill Cox and (at this time) "Charleston's only phonograph recording artists," The Kessinger Brothers. (86)

Walter Fredericks would encourage talent and several of WOBU's performers would achieve greater fame. The Kessinger Brothers (Clark and Luches) recorded fifty-eight songs for the Brunswick Company and Clark Kessinger released twelve solo fiddle tunes for Vocalion. (87) Pianist Bill Fogelson, who performed as a thirteen year old on WOBU's "Children's Hour," would later be a member of the Dell Staton Trio. The trio would appear on Ed Sullivan's "Toast of the Town" and "Arthur Godfrey's Friends." (88)

The most popular Charleston area recording artist was Bill Cox. Robert Fredericks comments that "Bill was a reprobate from the word go." "To get him to perform, the first thing you would have to do, would be to sober him up." (89) It was because of his reputation for not showing up for scheduled live radio shows that Walter Fredericks suggested that he make some records that could be played in his absence. Like his mentor Jimmie Rodgers, "The Singing Brakeman," Bill Cox would also take a nickname - "The Dixie Songbird." Between 1929 and 1940, Cox would record a least 148 sides (sixty of those would be with Cliff Hobbs). (90) During the depression years, he would record under his own name on the Gennett, Perfect and Columbia labels while using the pseudonyms Luke Baldwin (for Champion) and Charley Blake (for Supertone), no doubt, to maximize his exposure and income. (91) Comedy songs like "Alimony Woman" (Champion 16254 A) and "Don't Ever Marry A Widow" (Test pressing 1/8/31) are examples of his wit and his musical talent, featuring guitar, harmonica, vocal and yodeling. (92) Cox's closest brush with national fame happened when numerous artists recorded his song "Sparklin' Brown Eyes." Tex Ritter would even sing it in a film. (93) Ritter would later display Bill Cox's beat-up guitar in the Country Music Hall of Fame. (94) Shortly before his death in 1968, Cox was living in a shack in a Charleston slum. (95)

By the end of 1928, other stations were exerting their influence in West Virginia. Fifty watt WIBR would move across the Ohio River to Steubenville and share time on 1420 kHz with Weirton's newer, sixty watt outlet, WQBJ (owned by John Raikes). J. H. Thompson was operating WQBZ in Clarksburg (sixty-five watts at 1200 kHz). On December 22, 1928, the Holt-Rowe Novelty Company of Fairmont signed on WMMN (operating with 500 watts at 890 kHz). At the beginning of 1929, Wheeling's WWVA was operating with five thousand watts of power and sharing time with WOWO in Fort Wayne, Indiana. (96) By Spring, Bluefield's WHIS would be on the air sharing time with Roanoke, Virginia's WRBX (1420 kHz). (97)

The 1930 U. S. Census lists the percentage of families that own radio sets. For the entire country, 40.3 percent of the population owned a radio. West Virginia's figures can be compared to its neighboring states as follows:

STATE	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WITH RADIOS (98)
West Virginia	23.3
Pennsylvania	48.1

Ohio	47.7
Maryland	42.9
Kentucky	18.3
Virginia	18.2

According to the Radio Digest-Illustrated, of these states, only Kentucky had less radio stations than West Virginia. (99) West Virginia's stations were younger than those found in the five other states. (100) Only Virginia and Kentucky have similar rural populations. Therefore, by comparing West Virginia to Virginia (which has more urban areas, more radio stations and older radio stations), the stations within West Virginia were more influential than those in neighboring rural states.

Eighteen West Virginia Counties exhibited a higher percentage of radio sets than the state's average (23.3%). Certain Mountain State stations would exert more influence. This can be inferred by a higher percentage of radio sets listed in neighboring counties. The following counties have a greater than average percentage of receivers:

COUNTY ALPHABETICALLY	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WITH RADIO SETS (101)	NEAREST STATION
Berkeley	26.9	NONE
Brooke	39.8	WWVA/WQBJ/WIBR
Cabell	31.9	WSAZ
Hancock	37.7	WQBJ/WIBR/WWVA
Harrison	27.4	WQBZ
Kanawha	29.8	WOBU
Marion	33.6	WMMN
Marshall	34.5	WWVA
Mercer	24.5	WHIS
Mineral	25.3	WTBO
Monongalia	28.3	WMMN
Ohio	46.7	WWVA
Pleasants	24.5	NONE
Preston	24.1	WMMN

Taylor	28.7	WMMN
Tyler	26.8	NONE
Wetzel	24.8	WMMN
Wood	29.4	NONE

NONE is defined as no radio station in that or an adjacent county. Because of the short air mile distance between Wheeling and Hancock County, WWVA's influence extends to this non-adjacent county. Likewise, Preston County was affected by WMMN. WTBO is a Cumberland, Maryland station (50 watts at 1420 kHz). (102)

The four counties that did not appear to be directly influenced by any radio station are border counties. While WOB, WSAZ, WQBZ and WHIS show no influence outside of their respective counties, WWVA and WMMN affected neighboring counties. WQBJ Weirton's two county effectiveness is negligible; Weirton is in both Brooke and Hancock. Only assumptions can be made for the reasons for WWVA and WMMN's strength. Both were more powerful, existed in less mountainous terrain, and their time share relationship. WMMN did not share its frequency and WWVA only shared at night with distant WOWO. (103)

Of the state three most populous cities, Charleston had a higher percentage of receivers than Huntington.

CITY LISTED BY POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WITH RADIO SETS (104)	NEAREST STATION
Huntington	35.7	WSAZ
Wheeling	47.6	WWVA
Charleston	40.8	WOB
Parkersburg	38.6	NONE
Clarksburg	36.0	WQBZ
Fairmont	41.8	WMMN
Bluefield	37.0	WHIS
Morgantown	40.0	WMMN
Martinsburg	34.9	NONE
Moundsville	37.4	WWVA

Even with nominal power, a time share arrangement with WSAZ, and mountainous terrain of the state's largest county, WOB would cause a

significant portion of the population to buy a radio. WOBU launched the careers of several performers. The history of Walter Fredericks' dream, WOBU, is an important part of past West Virginia social culture. An influence that is felt today with the operation of WCHS and the other AM, FM and television stations located within the Kanawha Valley.

FOOTNOTES

1 Martha Jane Becker and Marilyn Fletcher, *Broadcasting in West Virginia: A History* (South Charleston, WV: West Virginia Broadcasters Association, 1989), p. 46.

2 Ibid., p. i. To be fair, The West Virginia Broadcasters Association stated that they could not guarantee the accuracy of their publication.

3 Sydney W. Head, *Broadcasting in America*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p. 109.

4 Ibid., p. 112.

5 Ibid.

6 Broadcasting Publications, *Broadcasting-Cablecasting Yearbook 1985*. (Washington, DC: Broadcasting Publications, 1985), p. B-232.

7 Sydney W. Head, *Broadcasting in America*, p. 113.

8 Broadcasting Publications *Broadcasting-Cablecasting Yearbook 1985* (Washington, DC: Broadcasting Publications, 1989), pp. B-322-326.

9 Martha Jane Becker and Marilyn Fletcher, *Broadcasting in West Virginia: A History*. pp. 28, 42.

10 Ibid. p. 28

11 Ibid.

12 interview with Jeff Miller, *Broadcast Historian*, Tampa FL (by telephone) 13 November 1989.

13 Martha Jane Becker and Marilyn Fletcher, *Broadcasting in West Virginia: A History*. p. 42.

14 Ibid. p. 28.

15 "WOBU to Take Air Tonight," *The Charleston Gazette*, 12 October 1927 p. 8.

16 Interview with Jeff Miller.

17 Ibid.

18 Martha Jane Becker and Marilyn Fletcher, *Broadcasting in West Virginia: A History*. p. 77.

19 R. L. Polk and Company, *Polk's Wheeling (West Virginia) City Directory 1928* (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Company, 1927), p. iv.

20. Ibid.

21 *Broadcast Pro-file, Station Profile of WGNT*. (Hollywood, CA: Broadcast Pro-file, 1973), p. 1.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Interview with Robert H. Fredericks, Son of Walter Fredericks, Charleston, WV (by telephone) 18 November 1989.

- 25 R. L. Polk and Company, Polk's Wheeling Greater Charleston (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Company, 1926), pp. 332-336, 885.
- 26 Virginia Gandy, ed., Charleston Business Directory 1924-1925 (Charleston, WV: Virginia Gandy, 1924) pp. 924-925.
- 27 Interview with Robert H. Fredericks.
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