

Collection #  
P 0524

## WOWO RADIO STATION PHOTOGRAPHS CA. 1927–1940S

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 98 black-and-white photographs removed from an album

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1927–1940s

PROVENANCE: Purchased from Heritage Photo Services in January 2001

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2001.0232

NOTES:

## HISTORICAL/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Radio station WOWO first signed on the air on 31 March 1925 with 500 watts at 1320 kilocycles. The year before, some musicians had gathered in the home of Harold Blosser at 2708 South Wayne Avenue in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for an experimental radio broadcast. Using a 5-watt transmitter, the broadcast had a limited range, but it was a hit. Fred Zieg, owner of the Main Auto Supply store in Fort Wayne, received "hundreds" of calls. He had wanted to promote the sale of Dayfan radios at his store. K.D. Ross, a radio salesman there, convinced Zieg that for \$150 he could build a radio station above his store. Thus, the radio station WOWO was born. A listener contest came up with the slogan "Wayne Offers Wonderful Opportunities."

The same year that WOWO presented its first broadcast, General Electric, Westinghouse, and RCA organized the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to provide radio programming. Radio stations provided their own local programs for a few hours a day and then through affiliation with a network such as NBC would fill other hours with national programming. WOWO became known as "The Voice of a Thousand Main Streets" and became one of Indiana's best-known stations.

On 18 September 1927 WOWO became a pioneer station of the CBS network along with 15 other stations. In 1928 Fred Zieg bought another station that became WGL (What God Loves) and operated it from the WOWO facilities. Zieg and his associates sold the stations to Westinghouse in 1936.

In the 1930s WOWO was the first station to broadcast a basketball game and the first to air a *Man on the Street* program, which it did from the lobby of the Old Indiana Theater.

*The Hoosier Hop* was a weekly half-hour show on WOWO beginning in 1932 that aired for more than fifteen years except for an interruption during World War II. The show had a rural flavor and offered such fare as traditional American folk music, square dance music, and yodeling. It was revived in July 1943 as a studio broadcast with a cast of about 15 people. By October of that year it was moved to the Shrine Auditorium in Fort Wayne where a cast of more than 30 people performed to crowds of 4,000. The cast also appeared at fairs, bond rallies, and other civic functions. On 5 May 1944, the *Hoosier Hop* began to air on the Blue Network (part of NBC and a predecessor of ABC) to a wider national audience with a full 55-minute show.

*Modern Home Forum* was a homemaker show that aired from 1937 to the early 1960s. It had a live studio audience most of the time and offered household hints and cooking lessons. It was hosted by "Jane Weston," which was an air name used by several different women at WOWO over the years in homage to Westinghouse, the station's owner. The name was used on a number of Westinghouse stations for local homemaker programs. WOWO's first "Jane Weston" was Dorothy Wright, who was born in West Lafayette, Indiana, the daughter of Reverend Manfred C. Wright.

WOWO moved into new studios at 925 S. Harrison Street in May 1937. Over 10,000 listeners visited the studios in the two-day open house and congratulatory messages were received from around the world, including from President Franklin D. Roosevelt. On 30 April 1952, the station moved to the Gaskins Building at 128 W. Washington Boulevard in downtown Fort Wayne. In the winter of 1977 the station moved to 203 W. Wayne Street on the fourth floor of the Central Building. WOWO moved to Federated Media's Maples Road broadcast facilities on the southeast edge of Fort Wayne in 1995.

The station also increased its power over the years and switched back and forth from AM to FM. There were also changes in ownership and programming format. In 1941 the North American Radio Broadcasting Agreement required most AM stations to change frequencies. This resulted in a massive shifting of radio station dial positions across the country. A photograph in the collection shows WOWO staff as the station moved from 1160 to 1190 kilocycles at 2:00 am Central Time on 29 March 1941. That same year WOWO was authorized to stay on the air continuously full-time. It aired national shows such as *Fibber McGee and Molly* and *The Lone Ranger*. Some of WOWO's local shows were also broadcast more widely through networks.

Franklin Tooke was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1912. A graduate of DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, he began his broadcasting career at WOWO in 1935. He became a Westinghouse employee the next year when the company bought the station. Beginning in 1946 he worked as program director and general manager at other Westinghouse stations in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston, and Cleveland. He was involved in various civic affairs in Philadelphia and taught communications at Temple University there. He was named "Person of the Year" in 1973 by the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, and was inducted into its hall of fame in 2003. He died in Philadelphia in 1999.

Howard D. "Tommy" Longworth was born in Ohio on 3 March 1909. He was hired as a staff musician at WOWO in 1936 and later served as the music librarian. He was a regular performer on *The Hoosier Hop* during its days as a nationally broadcast network show. Longworth retired in 1972 as the station's general sales manager. He died in Fort Wayne on 26 February 2002.

Eldon Campbell was born in Alert, Indiana (Decatur County) on 8 January 1916. He was hired as an announcer at WOWO in 1938 and became program director in 1941. He worked at WOWO until 1945 when he moved on to a station in Portland, Oregon. From 1950 to 1956 he was an executive sales representative with Westinghouse Broadcasting in New York City. In 1957 Campbell became vice-president and general manager of WFBM radio and television (now WRTV), a position he held until 1973. He also taught a radio and television management course at Butler University. In 1974 he became director of the Department of Commerce for the State of Indiana. He was active in Indianapolis civic affairs including the 500 Festival committee, the Boy Scout Council, and Junior Achievement. He was presented the Jefferson Award for outstanding public service in 1987 by the *Indianapolis Star*. Campbell died on 19 April 1991.

Sources:

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"The History of WOWO Radio 1190" (<http://historyofwowo.com/index.html>). Accessed 28 October 2013.

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"WOWO Hoosier Hop." Hillbilly-Music.com (<http://www.hillbilly-music.com/programs/story/index.php?prog=270>). Accessed 28 October 2013.

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## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of 98 black-and-white photographs that show the facilities and staff members of radio station WOWO in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The majority of photographs are not dated but have been determined to be from the late 1920s through the 1940s. Some programs that were performed in the presence of audiences are shown, including *The Hoosier Hop* and *Modern Home Forum*. Musicians, comedic performers, and announcers are shown. The first broadcast of a basketball game play-by-play in the studio via Western Union ticker, the *Man on the Street* program in front of the Patterson-Fletcher store, and a quiz show called *Do You Know the Answer* are depicted. There are also photographs of staff Christmas parties and of a wedding of an unidentified couple. At least two of the photographs were taken by Dick Galbreath, who was also a member of a band that played on the station.

The photographs in this collection were previously removed from an album by a former IHS staff member and put into folders according to page number. The order in which the photos appeared on the page is not known. That former staff member noted that the last twelve pages of the album were blank but looked like photos had once been attached to them.

## CONTENTS

### CONTENTS

1) Bus with a banner advertising WOWO's presentation of the Hoosier Hop at the State Fair. Bus is in front of the Westinghouse WOWO / WGL building. Group of people standing by the bus: ninth from left is Tommy **Longworth**; far right is Franklin **Tooke** [ca.1930s]. 2) Bus with a banner advertising "Indiana's Most Powerful Radio Station / WOWO Hoosier Hop" at the State Fair, with 19 people standing by the bus [ca. 1930s].

1) WOWO staff by equipment as station made the switch from 1160 to 1190 kilocycles: Jack **O'Mara** (publicity director), Franklin **Tooke** (program director), Carl **Vandagriff** (staff announcer/writer), Steve **Conley** (general manager), Hilliard **Gates** (announcer), Bruce **Ratts** (engineer), Leo **Yoder** (engineer), 29 March 1941. 2) First broadcast of basketball game play-by-play with Western Union ticker: John **Hackett**, Eldon **Campbell**, Carl **Vandagriff**, Franklin **Tooke**, and Western Union operator. 3) Franklin **Tooke** at WOWO/NBC microphone. 4) Halftone postcard of WOWO Morning Round-up Crew with tractor: Tommy **Longworth** holding large bass, Herb **Hayworth** [1930s]. 5) Unidentified woman at microphone.

1) Franklin **Tooke** standing at microphone. 2) Photo postcard of the "Man on the Street" first birthday party in front of Patterson-Fletcher's store with Franklin **Tooke** and John **Hacha**, 14 October 1936. 3) Woman singing into microphone, woman playing piano, man standing by piano in studio built in 1937. 4) Man sitting on porch.

1) Franklin **Tooke** and another man at microphone (photo by Bill Latz). 2) Franklin **Tooke** playing piano in studio built in 1937. 3) Two women and a man at piano with NBC microphone in studio built in 1937.

### CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3

Box 1, Folder 4

1) The *Hoosier Hop* show: Franklin **Tooke** and a stage full of musicians in front of an audience [ca. 1930s]. 2) Group of children and teenagers with announcer and pianist in studio built in 1937. 3) Franklin **Tooke** at microphone with two others and a pianist with adults holding babies and children around tables in studio built in 1937.

Box 1, Folder 5

1) Franklin **Tooke** standing at microphone in studio built in 1937. 2) Group of musicians (some in cowboy clothes) including Tommy **Longworth** (third from left) (photo by [Dick] **Galbreath**). 3) Aerial view of Main Auto Supply Co. and surrounding businesses with WOWO transmitter tower being erected on the roof [ca. 1927].

Box 1, Folder 6

1) Group of four musicians including Tommy **Longworth** with upright bass. 2) Musicians and chorus at WOWO/WGL microphone at Christmastime. 3) Group of eleven people by a xylophone, including Tommy **Longworth** with upright bass and Franklin **Tooke**.

Box 1, Folder 7

1) WOWO's first studio with Baldwin piano and Kellogg microphones [ca. late 1920s]. 2) Woman with guitar at microphone. 3) Man wearing a mask.

Box 1, Folder 8

1) WOWO's first studio with announcer's desk, Kellogg microphones, and Baldwin piano [ca. 1927]. 2) Two men at piano. 3) Group of musicians in studio, one wearing a dunce cap, another wearing a graduation cap and gown.

Box 1, Folder 9

1) Franklin **Tooke** at microphone. 2) Two men wearing hats and with drinks in their hands who appear to be acting out a comedy scene (on left is Bob **Shreve** as his *Hoosier Hop* character "Uncle Elmer."

Box 1, Folder 10

1) Franklin **Tooke** with WGL microphone interviewing a man. On back is written: "Shrine Auditorium / Louis **Schwan** – YMCA." 2) Bob **Shreve** as Uncle Elmer of the *Hoosier Hop*, 1938. 3) Performers getting makeup and hair done; Eldon **Campbell** (program director) is holding a WGL microphone to interview a performer; Carl **Vandagriff** (staff announcer/writer) is in back to the left of Campbell's hat.

Box 1, Folder 11

1) WOWO-NBC broadcasting from the parade of the Peony Festival in Van Wert, Ohio, n.d. 2) Musicians in costume on a stage.

Box 1, Folder 12

1) Performers, including Franklin **Tooke**, on a stage, with woman (possibly Jeanne **Brown**) playing piano. 2) Man sleeping near microphone. 3) Seven people, including Franklin **Tooke**, standing by WOWO/WGL microphone.

Box 1, Folder 13

1) Singer and guitarist on a stage. 2) Audience (appears to be in the same room as the stage), including Steve **Conley** (general manager), possibly at a live broadcast of the *Jane Weston Show*, a homemaker show [ca. 1940s]. 3) WOWO staff Christmas party [ca. late 1930s].

Box 1, Folder 14

1) WOWO staff Christmas party, including Franklin **Tooke** and Hilliard **Gates** [probably December 1940]. 2) Group photo with some people, including Franklin **Tooke**, in costume. 3) Group photo with people holding humorous signs, including Franklin **Tooke**.

Box 1, Folder 15

1) Crowd gathered outside of the Patterson-Fletcher store for cutting of a cake, with Franklin **Tooke** holding a WOWO microphone (this appears to be the same sort of event as shown in the postcard in folder 3, but possibly a different year). 2) Crowd gathered outside of a building, with Franklin **Tooke** holding microphone to interview a man. 3) Crowd gathered outside of a store with a refrigerator. Franklin **Tooke** and 2 women are at WOWO/WGL microphone.

Box 1, Folder 16

1) Franklin **Tooke**, 2 women, a WOWO/WGL microphone, and a refrigerator outside of a store. 2) Crowd gathered outside the Patterson-Fletcher store with Franklin **Tooke** for a cake cutting (same crowd as in photo in folder 16). 3) Franklin **Tooke** and others onstage with Frank's Porta-bilt Home Kitchen in front of an audience.

Box 1, Folder 17

1) People onstage with Frank's Porta-bilt Home Kitchen in front of an audience. 2) Three women in a kitchen setting. 3) Franklin **Tooke** in chef's hat and apron onstage with a group of women in the studio that was built in 1937. 4) Portrait of Franklin **Tooke** wearing chef's hat and apron.

Box 1, Folder 18

1) Franklin **Tooke** and 3 other men looking over papers at a desk. 2) Man at desk. 3) Three men seated at desk with WOWO/WGL microphone. 4) Franklin **Tooke** and another man seated with their feet on top of a desk. 5) Four men seated at a table with a WOWO microphone. 6) Franklin **Tooke** and 3 other men standing at WOWO/WGL microphone in the studio built in 1937.

Box 1, Folder 19

1) Franklin **Tooke** and others in the studio built in 1937 gathered for *DYKTA (Do You Know the Answer)* [quiz show]. 2) WOWO staff Christmas party in the studio built in 1937.

Box 1, Folder 20

Three photographs of Franklin **Tooke** and others during broadcast of *DYKTA (Do You Know the Answer)* in studio built in 1937. One is a smaller print of the image in folder 20.

Box 1, Folder 21

1) Man in a hat (possibly Franklin **Tooke**). 2) Eldon **Campbell** interviewing Franklin **Tooke** who is posed in an iron lung for a segment about polio (ca. 1939). 3) Two men in slips or dresses apparently in a comedy routine with another man at a piano. 4) Three men in shorts and undershirts holding fans apparently in a comedy routine with another man at a piano.

Box 1, Folder 22

1) Man playing a keyboard instrument with the keys all dislocated. 2) Unidentified woman. 3) Unidentified woman. 4) Franklin **Tooke** sitting on a doorstep.

Box 1, Folder 23

1) Portrait of unidentified man. 2) Portrait of same man with his hand to his nose. 3) Portrait of same man with teeth blacked out and eye rolled back. 4) Close-up of a mouth.

Box 1, Folder 24

Four portraits of individual unidentified women.

Box 1, Folder 25

Four portraits of individual unidentified people: 2 men, 2 women.

Box 1, Folder 26

Four portraits of individual unidentified men; at least two appear to be portraying characters -- one of these might be Franklin **Tooke**.

Box 1, Folder 27

1) Man seated at an organ. 2) Bride and groom. 3) Bride and groom on sidewalk. 4) A woman and man sitting together.

Box 1, Folder 28

1) An audience outside of a house at night with most seated on the ground. 2) Crowd gathered outside the Patterson-Fletcher store with Franklin **Tooke** for a cake cutting (photo by [Dick] Galbreath; same image as in folder 17). 3) A table with several places set, some food, a camera, and a cake with "Happy Birthday Cornhead" written on it.

Box 1, Folder 29

Franklin **Tooke** and another man seated with their feet on top of a desk (same image as in folder 19).

Box 1, Folder 30

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:  
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0524).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.