A Short History Of Broadcasting
A SHORT HISTORY OF BROADCASTING
W. Ray Mofield, Ph.D.

The Jackson Purchase Historical Society held its winter meeting on Saturday, December 2, 1978, at Marshall County High School. Following the dinner at 6:00 p.m., Dr. Mofield spoke to the group and showed several films of old time radio programs, including Jack Benny, Fred Allen, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Fibber McGee and Molly, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and others. Dr. Mofield extemporized his speech, entitled "A Short History of Broadcasting," from this outline:

640 B.C. Thales of Miletus observes that after being rubbed, amber acquires the electric property of attracting straws.1

1600 A.D. William Gilbert of England, expanding upon Thales' and his own work, does a treatise called, "Of the Magnet and Magnetic Bodies."2

1654 Englishman Robert Boyle discovers that electric or magnetic attraction can occur in a vacuum.3

1676 Olaus Roemer, a German, discovers that light travels at a finite speed. Later, the Englishman, Sir Isaac Newton, computes the speed at 186,300 miles a second.4

1725 Englishman Stephen Gray discovers that electricity can be conducted 500 feet along a damp hemp thread.5

1733 Frenchman Charles Du Fay observes two types of electricity, one from sealing wax rubbed with cat's fur, the other from rubbing a glass rod with the fur. He names one, "vitreous," and the other, "resinous." Later, American Benjamin Franklin changes the terms to "positive" and "negative" charges.6

1749 Franklin with his kite experiment proves that lightning is electricity.7

1819 Hans Christian Oersted, a Danish professor of physics, discovers the relation between electricity and magnetism, opening the door to new experiments.8

1820 Andre Marie Ampere, a Frenchman, takes the results of Oersted's work and makes enough discoveries to be called the "Newton of Electricity."9

1825 George Ohm discovers the principles of electrical resistance and formulates "Ohm's Law."10

1832 Samuel Finley Breese Morse, an American portrait painter, began work on the telegraph. By 1837 it worked. Congress was persuaded to build the first line from Washington to Baltimore, and on May 24, 1844, Morse in the U.S. House sent this message to Alfred Vail in the B & O Railroad Station in Baltimore: "What Hath God Wrought?"11

1858 American Cyrus Field opens the first Atlantic cable on August 16, exchanging greetings between President James Buchanan and Britain's Queen Victoria.12

1867 James Clerk Maxwell, professor of Physics at Cambridge University, predicts the existence of radio waves and outlines their theory.13

1878 German Heinrich Hertz demonstrates radio waves in the classroom although his famous paper was not published until 1888.14

1892 Nathan B. Stubblefield of Murray, Kentucky, talks by radio telephone to Rainey T. Wells.15

1884 German Paul Nipkow demonstrates the scanning disc as the first television transmitter-receiver using wires.16
1901 Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian, who had been working with wireless telegraphy, picks up the Morse Code letter “S” in Newfoundland, sent from Poldhu, England.  

1902 In Murray on January 1, Nathan B. Stubblefield demonstrates radio to 1,000 persons with his son Bernard playing the harmonica and Dr. Rainey T. Wells speaking. A St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter was on hand. 

1902 Stubblefield travels to Washington, D. C. and on May 20 broadcasts from the steamer Bartholdi in the Potomac to an assembled crowd of Congressmen and others on shore. 

1902 On May 30 Stubblefield holds another public demonstration at Fairmont Park in Philadelphia. 

1902 Stubblefield gains national recognition when his system is described in the Scientific American magazine. 

1906 Lee deForest invents the Audion or Vacuum tube, expanding the range of radio. 

1920 Dr. Frank Conrad builds KDKA Pittsburgh for Westinghouse, and receives commercial license No. 1, (October 27). Regular programming begins November 2, covering the Harding-Cox election returns. 

1922 WHAS Louisville becomes Kentucky’s first radio station, July 18, 1922. 

1926 The NBC network begins regular programming on November 15. 

1927 CBS becomes the second national radio network on September 18. 

1927 On January 7, Philo Farnsworth patents electronic television. 

1927 The Bell System demonstrates wire television from New York to Washington on April 7, with Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover talking to Walter Gifford, president of AT and T. 

1928 General Electric starts the world’s first regular television broadcast schedule May 11 at WGY Schenectady, which later becomes channel 6, WRGB. 

1929 On June 7, the Bell System shows color television by wire. 

1930 On August 23 Pierce Lackey puts WPAD on the air from the Ritz Hotel in Paducah — the first regular broadcast station in West Kentucky. (Now third oldest in state). 

1931 NBC puts its experimental TV station on the air April 26 (now WNBC, channel 4). CBS does the same on July 21, (now WCBS, channel 2). 

1935 Professor Edwin Armstrong of Columbia University demonstrates FM, November 6. FM was licensed for commercial operation January 1, 1941. 

1939 Many Americans see their first television at the New York World’s Fair which opened April 30. 

1941 Commercial operation of TV with today’s standards of 525 lines and 30 frames starts July 1. There were only 5,000 sets to watch the seven stations in New York, Chicago, Schenectady, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, and World War II kept it that way till 1947 when KSD St. Louis became the first post war station. WAVE Louisville was Kentucky’s first in 1948. 

1948 In July Murray finally gets a regular broadcast station with the call letters WNBS honoring Nathan B. Stubblefield. FM was added in June 1967. Dr. Glenn C. Wilcox is now president of the company. 
1957 Operation begins May 28, 1957, for the first television station in the Jackson Purchase, WPSD, channel 6. Call letters were derived from the name of the owner, the Paducah Sun-Democrat.37

1978 Five of the eight Jackson Purchase counties now have radio stations. Only Ballard, Carlisle, and Hickman are without. The first service for Graves County came in July 1946 with WKTM Mayfield (now defunct). WFUL Fulton went on the air July 8, 1951, with FM added in September 1954. December 13, 1954, was debut time for the Marshall County station, WCBL Benton, with FM added, March 3, 1966. In addition the following stations now operate: In Mayfield, WNGO which came on the air January 7, 1947, with FM added November 2, 1955; and WYMC, October 18, 1976; in Murray, WKMS-FM, an educational station operated by Murray State University, May 11, 1970; and WSJP, September 12, 1978; in Paducah, WKYX (originally, WKYB) November 27, 1946, with FM added in 1947; and WDXR, December 24, 1957. For about five years, Paducah had a second TV station, an independent UHF on channel 29. WDXR-TV took the air on May 31, 1971 but closed due to the death of the owner and economic difficulties.38 WKMU, channel 21, Murray, an educational station that is part of the Kentucky Educational TV Authority Network began operations on October 9, 1968.

2. Ibid., p. 23.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 23.
5. Ibid., p. 23.
6. Ibid., p. 23.
7. Ibid., p. 23.
8. Ibid., p. 24.
10. Ibid., p. 24.
12. Ibid., p. 84.
15. University of Kentucky Stubblefield Collection, Lexington, Kentucky; an undated brochure called "Fraternal Monitor," probably published in 1892 by the Woodmen of the World, Omaha, since Dr. Wells was an officer in this organization.
17. Shurick, op. cit., p. 27.
25. Ibid., p. 169.
27. Greenfield, op. cit., p. 32.
28. Lichte & Topping, op. cit., p. 175.
33. Ibid., p. 361.
34. Ibid., p. 368.
35. Broadcasting Yearbook, op. cit., passim.
36. Ibid., p. C-89.
38. Ibid., passim.
Murray, Ky., March 12, 1979

Dr. Glenn Wilson,

Murray, Kentucky

Dear Sir:

I received your request through Martha, my daughter, to write an historical story for the Jackson Purchase Historical Society yearbook for 1979. Thank you for your compliment in asking me to write the story, and I accept the assignment.
ment, and I choose to write the historical story of the New Madrid earthquake because of the historical interest to the Jackson Purchase Historical Society. I choose also to write the story of the New Madrid earthquake because of my unique relation with it. As far as I know I am the only living person who
ever saw anybody, man or woman, who lived through everyaurus
running shock and tremors
of the seventy-seven days
of it, and lived to tell
the story to a great
grandson. I am that
great grandson. My story
will tell be one you have
never heard.

Respectfully

I. W. T. Stouter