

Ridley Bell/WRBL Collection (SMC 63)

Organizational Note

WRBL was the first radio station to operate in Columbus, Georgia. It was begun by Bill Lewis, making its inaugural broadcast on May 10, 1928. No one is sure of the origin of the call letters WRBL. The most common view is that it stands for "Radio Bill Lewis", with the "W" being the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designation that indicates that a radio broadcast origin is east of the Mississippi River. Lewis became interested in radio in the early 1920s when the field of electronics was still young. Monte Moore, who had been a motion picture operator, was also a part of the early venture. Moore was employed by Roy E. Martin, Sr.

Shortly after the station went on the air, the Columbus Junior Chamber of Commerce became interested in it and purchased it for \$250. In the spring of 1929 financial problems led to the closure of the station, but by November of 1929, WRBL was back on the air with Mr. Parmer (of Parmer's Office Equipment Co.) as the owner-manager.

In 1931 James W. Woodruff, Sr. acquired an interest in the station. In 1936 Woodruff acquired full interest and turned the reins over to his son, J. W. Woodruff, Jr. The decade of the 1930s also saw WRBL get into the field of sports broadcasting. The first baseball games of the Columbus Red Birds were broadcast play-by-play beginning in 1937.

On March 15, 1939 WRNL became an affiliate the Columbia Broadcasting Company (CBS). The Woodruffs also established WRBL-FM, the first FM radio station in the city and the first commercial FM radio station in Georgia.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of one copy of the radio newspaper **Cycle**, celebrating the silver anniversary of WRBL. There are articles that focus on various departments associated with the station, such as live broadcasts, including the First Baptist Church early Sunday morning service to baseball games. There are also photo of the early staff members, including Ridley Bell, Rozell Fabiana, and J. W. Woodruff, Jr. May 10, 1953 1 folder (.1 l.f.)

Permission to Publish

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Provenance

Deposited by Craig Lloyd from Joseph Mahan, acting on behalf of Ridley Bell, January, 1986.

Note to Researchers

See also: James Waldo Woodruff Sr. and Jr. Collection (MC 96)

Folder List

- Folder 1 - **Cycle**, May 10, 1953