

## MSS. Collection #54

**WBIG Radio Collection, 1926-2004 [bulk 1944-1969]. 2 boxes (59 folders), ca. 585 items.**

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

### INTRODUCTION

The WBIG Radio Collection consists primarily of photographs, printed materials, and scrapbook contents relating to the operations of a local radio station that played a significant role in the daily lives of Greensboro citizens for many years. The bulk of the collection, dating from the 1940s through 1960s, highlights radio programs and their personalities. Researchers interested in local history, as well as radio and television, will find items of interest in this collection.

**Arrangement:** This collection is arranged into six series by subject and document type. The series are: **Business**, 1926-1969; **Miscellaneous**, 1946-1953; **Photographs**, 1944-1971; **Printed Materials**, ca. 1946-2004; **Recordings**, 1949-1986; and **Scrapbook**, 1944-1948.

**Provenance:** Several individuals donated the items in this collection over an extended period of time. The photographs, newsletters entitled *WBIG News* and *WBIG Radio News*, and most of the printed materials were donated by former business manager Wanda Pearce and assigned the accession number 1986.153.7. The one page history of WBIG and items pertaining to WGBG were donated by Eric Clark and assigned accession numbers 1991.129.1-3. The three 45 RPM records were donated by Wanda Pearce in 1986 (1986.153.3), Stephen Payne in July 2011, and Jim Schlosser in 2015 (2015.1.1).

**Processing:** This collection was organized by volunteer Alice Bailey in the spring of 2014, and the finding aid was completed by volunteer Kim Lanham in July 2015.

### HISTORICAL NOTE

Greensboro's first radio station, WBIG went on air under the call letters WNRC on May 2, 1926. Owned by Wayne Nelson and leased to the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, the station operated from the Jefferson Standard Building. In 1930, the call letters were changed to WBIG for "We Believe in Greensboro."

Despite its popularity with the small local population, WBIG was unable to generate enough revenue from advertising. After a 1934 lightning strike destroyed the transmission tower atop the building, Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, at the urging of Joseph Bryan, purchased the now-bankrupt radio station for \$10,000. The station became a CBS affiliate, moved its studios to the basement of the O.Henry Hotel, and soon began to thrive under the leadership of Edney Ridge.

In the 1940s, WBIG played a significant role in the war effort in Greensboro and led a statewide fundraising campaign to build a polio hospital during the polio epidemic. During the 1950s and 1960s, announcer Bob Poole was a prominent local media personality. Allen Wannamaker took over as general manager in 1952, and the station moved to a larger and more up-to-date facility on Battleground Avenue in 1956. An AM station and unable to compete in the FM market in the 1980s, Jefferson-Pilot Communications made the decision to sign-off the air on Thursday, November 20, 1986.

**Historical Sources:** The historical information was obtained from materials in the collection, *Greensboro: A Chosen Center*, by Gayle Hicks Fripp (Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press, 2001), and *Jefferson Pilot Financial, 1903-2003: A Century of Excellence*, by Jeffrey L. Rodengen and Richard F. Hubbard (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Write Stuff Enterprises, Inc., 2003).

## **SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE**

The types of materials in this collection include business records, correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, newsletters, recordings, and a scrapbook relating to WBIG Radio. The majority of the collection consists of photographs and printed materials pertaining to radio broadcasts, on-air personalities, and the promotion of the station in the 1940s through 1960s. Of particular note are a copy of the station's 1926 license (1:4), photographs of the studio locations (3:16), program schedules (4:27), and recordings relating to Bob Poole's program and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the station (5:1-3). A few items pertain to other radio and television stations, including WGBG (2:1-2), and to various Greensboro businesses and civic organizations (4:12, 4:19).

## **SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**

### **1. Business. 8 folders (50 items). 1926-1969.**

This series contains materials relating to the business operations of WBIG. Correspondence consists of letters from the station to various advertisers and sponsors (1:1-2), over two dozen of which are addressed to regional furniture stores about the show "Moon River" and its sponsor, Southern Spring Bed Company. Other business materials include population and advertising numbers (1:3), memoranda concerning programming (1:5), background on the program "Poole's Paradise" (1:7), and a biography of general manager Allen Wannamaker (1:8). Also of note are a copy of the station's 1926 license (1:4) and an organizational chart (1:6).

### **2. Miscellaneous. 2 folders (8 items). 1946-1953.**

The miscellaneous series consists of a WGBG Station Audience Report from March 1946 (2:2) and program logs and schedules for WGBG Radio between December 1952 and September 1953 (2:1).

### **3. Photographs. 17 folders (ca. 140 items). 1944-1971.**

The photographs feature radio broadcasts (3:4-10), advertising and endorsements (3:1-3), and the WBIG offices (3:16). Shown are both radio broadcasts made from the studios and on location, with the latter including broadcasts at Ralph's Food Palace (3:7, 3:10), the Carolina Juniors Golf Championship (3:7), and the grand opening of the Golden Gate Shopping Center in 1951 (3:10). Many local companies advertised with WBIG, and in particular Bob Poole, but national and international sponsorships such as Coca-Cola, Tide, and Renault can also be found in the photographs of advertising and endorsements (3:3). Multiple images show the WBIG buildings, both at the earlier downtown location and the later Battleground Avenue site (3:16). Also included are a few photographs of the offices of WBBQ (3:12) and WBTV (3:17), which was also owned by Jefferson Standard Life.

### **4. Printed Materials. 27 folders (ca. 320 items). ca. 1946-2004.**

Newsletters and newspaper clippings comprise the majority of materials in this series. Most newspaper clippings highlight select WBIG employees. Those featured include musician and singer John Ademy and his work with the Greensboro Oratorio Society (4:2); newscaster Lloyd Gordon through his awards, accolades and obituary in 2004 (4:3); and radio personality Bob Poole in an interview (4:5). Clippings about president and general manager Allen Wannamaker cover his election as president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1967 and also include his 1987 obituary (4:8).

The WBIG newsletters entitled *Everything WBIG* (1950-1952) contain articles on programming, station announcements, and the upcoming show schedule (4:14-18). *WBIG News* (1955-1959) and *WBIG Radio News* (1968-1969) appear to have replaced the earlier title (4:20-24). The miscellaneous newsletters (4:19) include a bulletin of the Greensboro Lions Club (November 7, 1966) and issues of *Greensboro Business* (November 1964), *The Jaycee Projector* (August 11, 1968), and *The Home Office Journal* of Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Co. (March 12, 1971).

Also in this series are a few CBS program schedules from 1946 and 1947 (4:1) and maps showing the region served by WBIG (4:13). A pamphlet entitled "WBIG: One of radio's great stations!" contains a profile of the station and biographical sketches of its staff. The event programs include those for a Carolina vs. Princeton basketball game at the Greensboro Coliseum on December 27, 1965, the 90<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce (December 7, 1967), and a naturalization ceremony on June 6, 1969 (4:12).

### **5. Recordings. 3 folders (5 items). 1949-1986.**

This series consists of recordings from WBIG. A 16" LP record contains a rebroadcast of "Bob Poole Spots" recorded on October 13, 1949 (5:1). Three copies of a 45 RPM record hold two popular musical themes heard on WBIG: the sign-in/sign-off theme called "White Azaleas" and the theme for Bob Poole's show called "Poole's Paradise" (5:3). A cassette contains the 1986 WBIG 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary show (5:2). This recording of the Ken Karnes afternoon call-in show on August 19, 1986, recalled the 60-year history of WBIG with special guests Lloyd Gordon and Jim Light. The show featured reminiscences about WBIG history, particularly focusing on the "Night Lights" with Jim Light and "Poole's Paradise" with Bob Poole.

**6. Scrapbook. 2 folders (ca. 60 items). 1944-1948.**

The bound scrapbook contains newspaper clippings featuring WBIG (6:1). The clippings range from program mentions, to announcements about personal achievements of the employees, news covered by WBIG, events hosted by WBIG, and the appointment and changes brought on by new music director Margaret Banks in 1944. A considerable number of clippings highlight war bond drives and local involvement in the war effort. In 1946, a well-covered story was the birth of African American quadruplets in Reidsville, with WBIG following the progress of the quadruplets on its radio programs. A big story in 1947 was the college radio station farm. Clippings featuring the station's efforts in fundraising to fight polio take prominence in 1948. The folder of loose scrapbook materials consists of printed materials pertaining to promotional and advertising matters at WBIG primarily in 1945-1946 (6:2). These items include calendars, postcards, event programs, and letters regarding sponsors. Also of interest are two issues of *Everything WBIG* (June 13 and September 5, 1946) and a *Bulletin of A&T College* (April 1945) with images of the campus and student organizations.

**FOLDER LISTING**

<b><u>Series</u></b>	<b><u>Folder</u></b>	<b><u>Contents</u></b>	
1	1	Business	-- Correspondence -- Advertising (1961-1966)
	2	“	-- Correspondence -- “Moon River” (1946)
	3	“	-- Financial (n.d.)
	4	“	-- License (copy; 1926)
	5	“	-- Memoranda (ca. 1965)
	6	“	-- Miscellaneous (ca. 1960-1969)
	7	“	-- “Poole’s Paradise” (n.d.)
	8	“	-- Wannamaker, Allen (1968)
2	1	Miscellaneous	-- WGBG Program Logs & Schedules (1952-1953)
	2	“	-- WGBG Station Audience Report (March 1946)
3	1	Photographs	-- Advertising & Endorsements
	2	“	-- Advertising & Endorsements -- Ademy, John
	3	“	-- Advertising & Endorsements -- Poole, Bob
	4	“	-- Broadcasts from studio
	5	“	-- Broadcasts from studio – Ademy, John
	6	“	-- Broadcasts from studio – Poole, Bob
	7	“	-- Broadcasts on location
	8	“	-- Broadcasts on location -- Ademy, John
	9	“	-- Broadcasts on location -- Gordon, Lloyd
	10	“	-- Broadcasts on location -- Poole, Bob
	11	“	-- Miscellaneous
	12	“	-- WBBQ
	13	“	-- WBIG Employees
	14	“	-- WBIG Employees – Gordon, Lloyd
	15	“	-- WBIG Employees – Poole, Bob
	16	“	-- WBIG Offices
	17	“	-- WBTV
4	1	Printed Materials	-- CBS Program Schedules (1946, 1947)
	2	“	-- Clippings -- Ademy, John (1966, 1970)
	3	“	-- Clippings -- Gordon, Lloyd (1965-1967, 2004)
	4	“	-- Clippings -- Greensboro Chamber of Commerce (ca. 1960s)
	5	“	-- Clippings -- “The Humor of Bob Poole” ( <i>Greensboro Free Press</i> , ca. 1958)

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
4	6	Printed Materials	-- Clippings -- Miscellaneous (ca. 1960s)
	7	"	-- Clippings -- Poole, Bob (ca. 1965-1978)
	8	"	-- Clippings -- Wannamaker, Allen (1967-1987)
	9	"	-- Clippings -- Washam, Clara Martin (ca. 1965-1967)
	10	"	-- Clippings -- WBIG (1955-1986)
	11	"	-- Clippings -- WBIG employees (ca. 1964-1977)
	12	"	-- Event Programs (1965-1971)
	13		-- Miscellaneous (ca. 1947, n.d.)
	14	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>Everything WBIG</i> (September-December 1950)
	15	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>Everything WBIG</i> (January-June 1951)
	16	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>Everything WBIG</i> (July-December 1951)
	17	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>Everything WBIG</i> (January-June 1952)
	18	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>Everything WBIG</i> (July-October 1952)
	19	"	-- Newsletters -- Miscellaneous
	20	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>WBIG News</i> (1955)
	21	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>WBIG News</i> (1956)
	22	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>WBIG News</i> (1957)
	23	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>WBIG News</i> (1958-1959)
	24	"	-- Newsletters -- <i>WBIG Radio News</i> (1968-1969)
	25	"	-- Pamphlets (1946-1947, ca. 1970)
	26	"	-- WBIG Ads
	27	"	-- WBIG Program Schedules (ca. 1960s)
5	1	Recordings	-- "Bob Poole Spots" (16" LP; October 13, 1949)
	2	"	-- WBIG 60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary (cassette, 1986)
	3	"	-- WBIG Musical Themes -- "White Azaleas" and "Poole's Paradise" (45 RPM)
6	1	Scrapbook	-- Bound (1944-1948)
	2	"	-- Loose Materials (bulk 1945-1946)