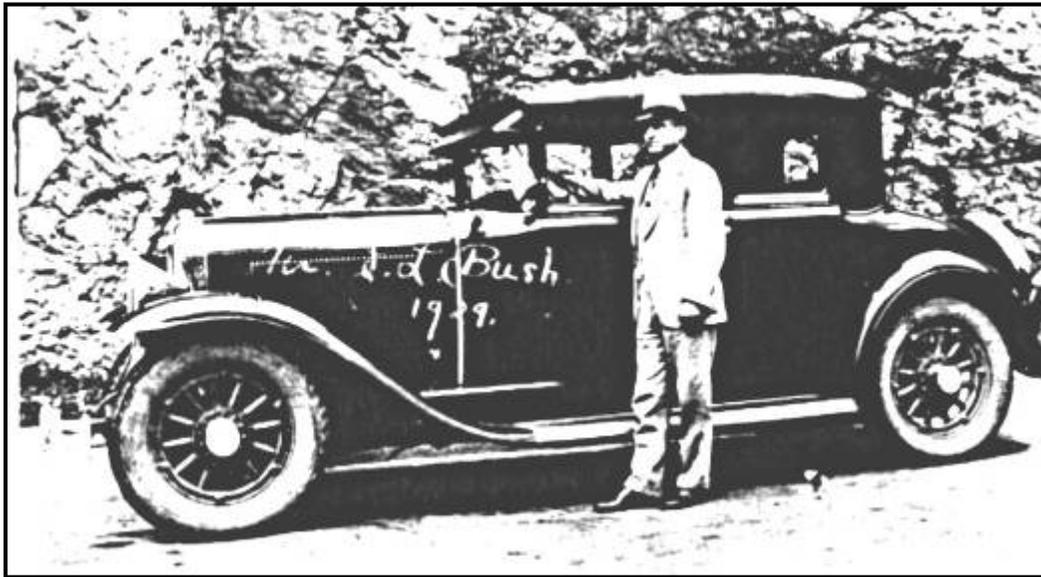


TUSCOLA HOME OF RADIO STATION WDZ

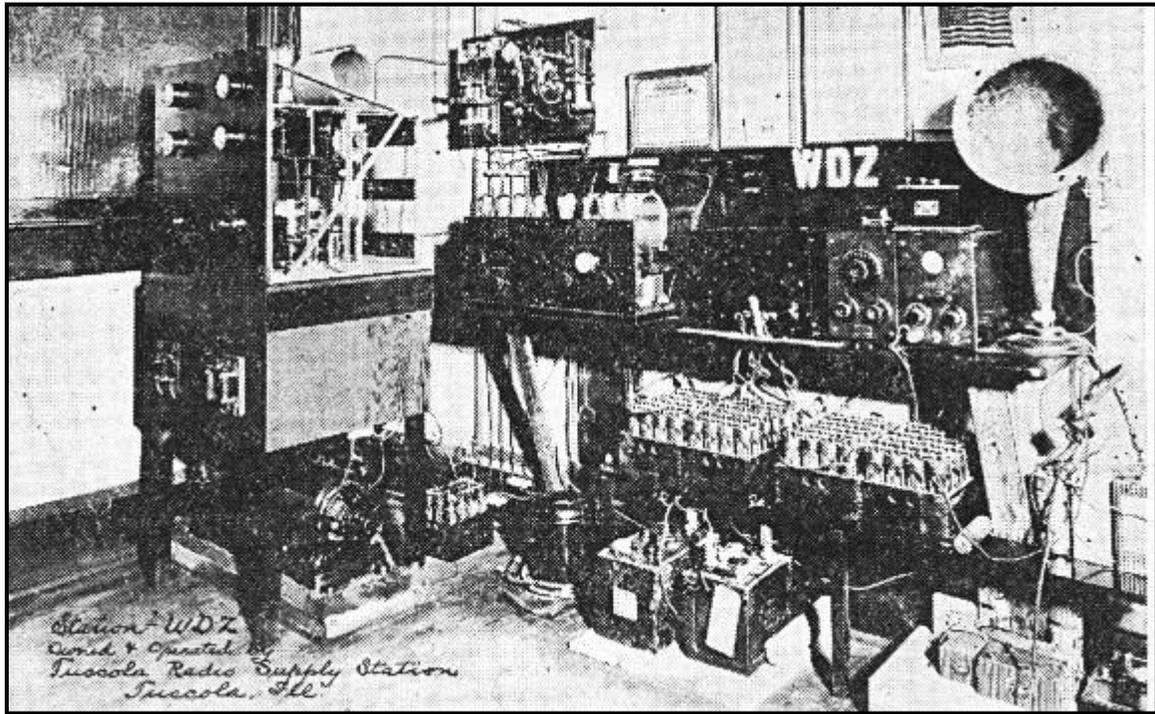
For many years, Tuscola was known over a wide area as the home of radio station WDZ. It was the third radio broadcasting facility in the nation. Only KDKA, Cleveland and KMOX, St. Louis predated the local station. Work toward establishing the station began in 1918, when James L. Bush, local grain broker encouraged Clyde Wiley to build a 10 watt transmitter. Mr. Bush planned to use radio communication with outlying elevators. He had been telephoning grain elevator operators with market quotations but started broadcasting the quotations which would be cheaper. In March or April 1921, experimental station 9JR began. Curtis Marsh, a 14 year old errand boy, would put on a record to signal an upcoming report. When he was handed the report, he would run to the microphone, stop the record, strike a gong, and then read the report. This whole process lasted less than five minutes. This happened twice an hour. The rest of the hour was dead air until 1929. Raymond Muir, the manager of the commodities company, gave the opening and closing market reports each day with Marsh presenting all others.



J. L. Bush - 1929

In the spring of 1927, the station was given a fulltime 100-watt license. The station slogan was "the buckle of the corn belt." The station was now given a license to broadcast at 1070 AM. and was confined to daytime only broadcasting.

In 1930, Edith Bush, wife of owner James Bush, became the station manager after the short tenure of the station's first manager, E. J. Donaldson. Ruth Moore became the assistant manager. In March, 1936, the WDZ's frequency again changed, this time to 1020 a.m. and power increased to 250 watts. In 1939 a final power increase took the station's power up to 1000 watts, still as a daytime only station.



This was the second of four transmitters used by the station. The 50-watt transmitter shown was used from 1923 until 1931. This station used A and B storage batteries. This was before electronics experts had learned how to convert alternating current into direct current.

Staff performers were local people with quality talent.



**Mary Key, Kay Key -
Mrs. Walt Schafer**



James Day



June Boyd Butler

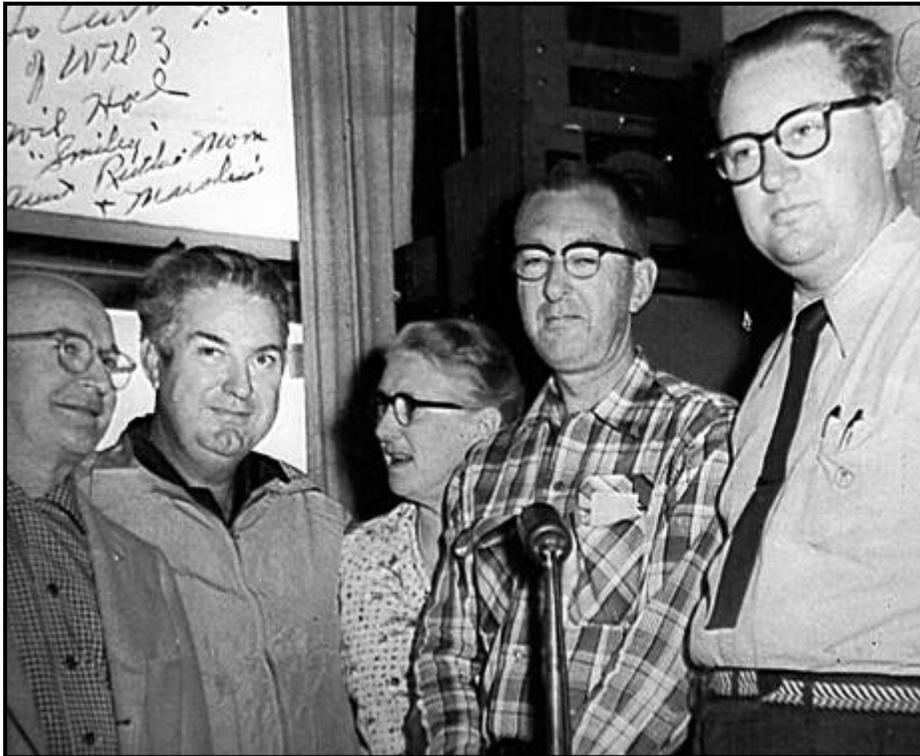


1st row: Linda Lee Barton, Clara Mae Barton, LaDonna Harrell, Betty Poulton, Ruth Moore, Eleanor Brimberry, Martha Hull, Niki and Joy Hull
 2nd row: Roy Freeman, Ozzie Denny, Fay Walls, Clair B. Hull, Fran Booton, Walter C. Schafer, Ray Livesay, Raymond Muir, James L. Bush
 3rd row: Don Wilson, Gordon Miller, Bob Mills, Bob McCracken, H. L. Johnston, Joey Johnston, Curt Poulton, John Barton, Wally Turner, and Merlin Bundy
 Not pictured: Rev. George Moody and son, Bud, and Eloise Mount

Lester Burnett began performing and announcing on WJZ in early 1930. It was on that show that he took a character name, "Mr. Smiley", a name with which he eventually became famous as: Smiley Burnette.



**Smiley Burnette
 with Mrs. Bush.**
 Smiley was later
 tagged to star in TV Show:
Petticoat Junction.



May, 1956

Wib Hoel, Smiley Burnette, Aunt Ruthie Moore, Curt Marsh, Sherman Marsh

Other members of the staff and entertainers included: Jimm Seaney who at ten years old sang with a church group on WFL and became a regular member of the staff after high school; Grace and Delbert Cooley. Delbert was the "Lonely Farm Boy" in 1935 until he married Grace and they formed a band called, "Suzanne and the Covered Wagon Boys." Cora Kennedy sang for Kennedy Hatcheries about 1931; Betty Lindenmeyer came in 1944 and played eight shows a day; Mary Kay Lamb was secretary for three years and when in seventh grade, she and Jean Burmeister played a clarinet duet; Georgiana Feeler Gire played her electric accordion when local girls began playing over the air in the late 30's and 40's; Ada Wells Farris and Opal Wells Barbee were once know on WFL as the Wells twins. They were in fact sisters, not twins. They sang on "Aunt Ruthie's Birthday Party" every Saturday morning. Albert K. Walls played the fiddle on the "Kitchen Barn Dance", "Ranch Hands" and "Al and Judy." Other names include: Fern Bialeschki, Johnny Ambrose, Bertha Milby Bratton, Dorothy Michael Newlin, James Musker Albin, Clarice Brewer LaBarr, Frank Jennings, Fay Walls, Troy Gibbs, Gib Buchanan, Kenneth and Goldie Hudson, Margaret, Mary and Daisy McQueen, Jerry Cassena, Martha Toopes Dales, Elwood Farmer, Juanita and Francis Beck and many others.

The station remained in Tuscola until 1949. After moving to Decatur, an auxiliary studio was operated in Tuscola by Curt Marsh until 1956. The studio was moved from the abstract office to the McCumber Building that year, and Rosemary Nussel operated it until 1958.