

Hugh Oliver Potter (1905-1986)

By Jerry Long
c.2025



Hugh Oliver Potter (1905-1986); wife, Clifforddean (1908-1994) & their son, Hugh O. Potter, Jr. (1933-2013)



“Daviness County Bicentennial Chronology: 200 Historical Events”, by Jerry Long, Daviness County, Kentucky, 1815-2015: Celebrating Our Heritage, Daviness County Bicentennial Committee (Evansville, IN: M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2015) pp.14 & 17:

1938, 2-7 Radio Station WOMI signed on the air at 7 p.m.; it was the 7th radio station in Kentucky. The broadcast was from the dining room of Hotel Owensboro. Mrs. Hugh O. Potter, wife of the station’s manager, was the first voice heard in its initial broadcast; she was one of the first women broadcasters in the country. There had

been one previous radio broadcast in the county. During the 1937 Flood an emergency broadcast was transmitted on AM radio station W9UKD for four days from January 22 to January 26.

1974 Hugh O. Potter (1905-1986) publishes book, A history of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky. He also compiled several historical booklets, Daviess County sesquicentennial historical factbook, 1815-1965: 150 years of progress (1965), A History of Settle Memorial Methodist Church, 1836-1966 (1967) and In the beginning --- historical facts about the earliest days of present Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky (1968).



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 29 April 2001, p.3E:

ON THE AIR

Potters put Owensboro on broadcasting dial

By Glenn Hodges, Messenger-Inquirer

On Monday night, Feb. 7, 1938, WOMI went on the air as Owensboro's first radio station with a remote broadcast of a dedicatory dinner from the Hotel Owensboro.

Hugh O. Potter was at the hotel as a newsman for the Messenger-Inquirer while his wife, Cliffordean, was in the radio station studio for the first broadcast, announcing the opening of a performance by the Saturday Musicale.

One year later Hugh would be general manager of the radio station. And Cliffordean, as the popular radio character "Joanna," would begin an enviable body of work as program director of WOMI and in 1940 become star of the "Stork News," one of the longest-running shows in the station's history.

Together, the Potters were radio pioneers who lighted the path for future local broadcasters in a partnership of a career that spanned more than 30 years. They also used their talents to reach out beyond the Owensboro community to make their own impressions on the state and nation.

The Potters were opposites that were supremely attracted to each other.

"They were two totally different personalities, but they worked together great as a team," said Edith Bennett, who began working at WOMI in 1950 as a receptionist.

"Joanna (Cliffordean) was always vivacious and outgoing, uplifting, a part of everything," Bennett said. "She was a very gracious, loving person and spontaneous.

"Mr. Potter was the stately type who talked real slow and would think before he spoke. He was very deliberate and thorough in his style, thinking about the future, what was best for his community, radio and the church."

Cliffordean Jo Hammond was born in Tell City, Ind., grew up in Owensboro and graduated from Owensboro High School, where she played on the girls' basketball team and performed with the Rose Curtain players. An accomplished musician and mezzo soprano, she was an understudy for Metropolitan Opera singer Grace Moore while she attended college. She married Potter in 1926 but didn't give up her singing entirely. She performed in the first Handel's Messiah presented in Owensboro in 1941 and was involved with the Saturday Musicale.

Hugh was the son of William Samuel (W.S.) Potter, who ran a grocery at the corner of Sixth and Center streets in Owensboro. He attended St. Francis Academy and Owensboro High School, where he met Cliffordean. Potter apparently took his first interest in newspapers as a boy when he worked as a paper carrier. He attended the journalism school at Northwestern University before joining the staff of the newspaper.

When Potter was named manager of the radio station in January 1939, the couple literally moved into the business of radio broadcasting, making their home in an apartment above the WOMI studios, which were near the corner of Byers Avenue and what was then called the Livermore Road (now Frederica Street).

Before becoming the station's manager, Hugh Potter had been city editor of the Messenger-Inquirer since 1929. "Don't let that (title) fool you," Potter told Evansville Courier and Press reporter Larry West in a 1972 interview. "Papers like to give you titles instead of money. I was the city editor, city hall reporter, did personal paragraphs and I always claimed I was the assistant janitor, too."

"They brought in an experienced manager to start (at WOMI)," Potter told West. "But that didn't work out. So they decided to bring in someone who didn't know anything. That was me."

The lack of any radio experience, however, didn't deter Potter from doing his new job well, and he quickly became one of the leaders in Kentucky radio broadcasting. He founded the Kentucky Broadcasters Association in October 1945, served as its president for its first two years and for the next 10 years as its secretary-treasurer.

Potter's on-the-air work focused on reading his editorials. "I have a lousy voice on the air," Potter once said. "But it's recognized that someone in authority has to do that sort of thing. Someone wrote once and said they ought to get rid of that guy; I agreed with him."

Potter used the editorials to crusade for better, bigger roads connecting Owensboro with the rest of Kentucky and the interstate highway system. In 1965, Potter received the Citizen of the Year Award from the Owensboro Civitans for that effort. In 1955, he was given the Kentucky Mike Award by the Kentucky Broadcasters in recognition of his outstanding work. Cliffordean Potter would also be given the award, making them the only couple in Kentucky to receive it.

Hugh Potter served as a member of Mutual Broadcasting Co.'s network affiliates advisory committee from 1951 to 1954 and was a member of the board of the National Association of Broadcasters from 1959 to 1963.

In addition, Potter was a local history buff who wrote several books, including "A History of Owensboro and Daviess County," and the "Daviess County Sesquicentennial Historical Fact Book." Potter helped organize the Daviess County Historical Society, was a commanding general on the Evansville Civil War Roundtable and once served as president and vice president of the Kentucky Historical Society.

But it was Cliffordean who was drawn to the spotlight. On Sept. 1, 1940, she became the director and producer of the program called "The Stork Express." Later known as "Stork News" in an expanded version, the initial 15-minute broadcast at 11:15 a.m. each day became what was believed to be the longest continuously running program with a single sponsor (Owensboro Ice Cream & Dairy Products Co.) in the history of broadcasting.

On the program she told the story of new births in Owensboro. Her beat was the local hospital and the homes of new mothers, where she got the parents' permission to describe the tot on the radio. She told about the color of the baby's eyes, how much it weighed, who it resembled and how happy the parents and grandparents were to tell about it. Each program usually featured

the story of three new babies, interspersed with transcribed musical numbers dedicated to the infants being discussed.

The two other characters of the program were Uncle Bill, who opened the show by calling the Velvet Milk Club to order and who also read the commercials, and Cousin Pete, who was conductor of the imaginary train that brought Joanna to the station with all the baby news.

"We have a recorded Stork News clock that ticks and tocks so many times for baby girls and so many times for boys," Mrs. Potter once said. "When I tell about the babies, it gives quite a thrill to dad and mother and all the relatives, especially the big brothers and sisters who are listening."

Each of the new babies received a good luck star. "We have all colors, soft silver ones and solid gold ones," she said. "I ask all my young listeners to bow their heads as we say a little prayer for the new babies to grow strong, healthy, happy and good." Then the program engineer launched the good luck star with a sound effect that became instantly familiar to two generations of young listeners.

In the first 15 years of the program, Joanna talked with more than 22,000 new mothers. The program drew the notice of the trade press and Kentucky newspapers, and gained such acclaim for Mrs. Potter that she was the first woman to speak to the members of Broadcast Music Inc. at a 1953 programming clinic in Louisville. Potter's speech there led to other speaking engagements for her in states throughout the East. In them she helped radio station programmers better direct their attention to women and their interests.

The program ended when the Potters retired in 1972 and moved to Florida. It had been on the air for 32 years and evolved into a family talk show for young mothers and their children, and for senior citizens.

When they retired, the Potters said the most difficult thing they did in their years of working together in radio was deciding to give it up.

Hugh Potter died in Sarasota, Fla., on June 9, 1986, at the age of 81. Clifford died in Owensboro on Sept. 7, 1994, at age 85. They were survived by their son Hugh Jr., and three grandchildren.

The Potters left a legacy to Owensboro radio that would be hard to match.

"I think they gave radio a voice in the community," said Bennett, who has worked at WOMI 50 years. "One of their slogans was 'WOMI is a Sound Citizen of Owensboro.' We were someone who could be trusted."

Bennett said Hugh Potter believed that if you used words the right way on radio they became so vivid in the listener's imagination that it was like actually seeing it. "He came up with the slogan, 'You saw it first on the radio,' " she said.

Potter was also inspiring to the young people who came to work at the station in the 1940s and 1950s, Bennett said.

In that period when the station enjoyed some of its best years, the staff included Bennett, who did a Sunday morning religious music program; Jack Murphree, who was an announcer and commercial writer; Harold Peters and Lester Earl Jones, who were engineers; T.D. Whittinghill, Army Armstrong, Pete Dooley, Marshall Bruner and Jim Wilkinson, announcers and newsmen; and J.W. Rates, the custodian, who also played jazz and blues songs on a Saturday morning program called Rates' Red Hot Records Review.

Wilkinson, now 74 and living in Gulfport, Miss., was a well-known sportscaster at WOMI from 1951 to 1968. "She was a very lovable lady, and I enjoyed working for him," Wilkinson said. "He was very fair and supportive of me. They made a huge contribution to Owensboro and the

state of Kentucky. He was a very knowledgeable person, the kind of a man I liked to work for. Very positive. As a former newspaperman, he wanted everything to be right and honest before we put it on the air.

"I worked there nearly 18 years, and it was one of the best times of my life. I loved them to death and am very glad they were a part of my life."

As station manager, Potter was driven by a strong desire to excel and tried to impress that high standard on his younger staff, Bennett said. "Whatever he did, he wanted to do a good, thorough job. He said if we are going to be in the business, we are going to be the best."

"He always had confidence in us," Bennett said. "That is the one thing we liked. We worked hard and long hours. He would stay and help us, and they would thank us for giving extra time. He always respected us."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 11 September 1994, p.2C:



Cliffordean H. Potter

Cliffordean "Joanna" Hammond Potter, of Hillcrest Health Care Center in Owensboro, died there Wednesday, Sept. 7, 1994. She was born in Tell City, Ind., to the late Raleigh and Anna Dietrich Hammond. She was reared in Owensboro, where she played basketball for and graduated from Owensboro Senior High School. An accomplished musician, she had been an understudy for a Metropolitan opera singer while attending college. She married Hugh Potter in the late 1920s and managed radio station WOMI for 33 years, from 1938-1972. She was Joanna on "Stork News" all those years. When she retired she had the longest running show in radio with the same sponsor, Velvet Milk. She was known as the First Lady of Broadcasting in Kentucky. She and her husband, Hugh, founded the Kentucky Broadcasters Association. She was the first woman to be invited to speak in the East and New York at radio conventions in the 1950s. Both Joanna and Hugh were active in the Daviess County and Tri State Historical Societies, Settle Memorial Methodist Church, League of Women Voters and Saturday Musicale. During retirement they were active in the Presbyterian Church, Sarasota Historical Society and Ringling Brothers Circus Museum in Sarasota, Fla. She was preceded in death by her husband, Hugh O. Potter, on June 9, 1986.

Survivors include a son, Hugh Potter Jr. of Oklahoma City; three grandchildren, Donna Sabet of Dana Point, Calif., Patricia Womak and William S. Potter II, both of San Diego; three brothers, Joe Hammond of Knoxville, Tenn., Richard Hammond of Owensboro and Curtis Hammond of Eureka Springs, Ark.; two sisters, Alice Stivers of Lewiston, Mont., and Mrs.

Maitland (Peg) Rice of Morgantown; and two special friends, Edith Bennett and Cliff Hagen, both of Owensboro.

Memorial services are at 1:30 p.m. Monday at James H. Davis Funeral Home in Owensboro. Burial will be in Elmwood Cemetery. Visitation is after 1 p.m. Monday at the funeral home. The family requests that expressions of sympathy take the form of donations to the Cliff Hagan Boys Club, 1512 Frederica St., Owensboro, Ky. 42301. Memorial contribution envelopes are available at the funeral home.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 10 June 1986, p.1C:

Local broadcasting pioneer Hugh O. Potter dead at 81

By Keith Smith, Messenger-Inquirer



Hugh O. Potter

Page 1C – Hugh O. Potter, a key figure in the development of radio in Owensboro and one of the founders of the Kentucky Broadcasting Association, died Monday at a Sarasota, Fla., hospital. (Obituary, Page 2C.)

Potter, 81, retired in 1972 and moved to Sarasota a after 33 years as general manager of WOMI. The station was Owensboro's first when it began broadcasting in 1938 – a year before Potter became the manager. He also worked as general manager for WOMI-FM before that.

Before working for the radio station, Potter had worked as the city editor of the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer for 10 years, starting in 1929 when the first combined edition of the newspaper was published. He had worked as a reporter for the Owensboro Inquirer for six years before that.

In 1945, Potter founded the Kentucky Broadcasters Association and he served as that group's first president. He was the association's treasurer from 1948-1957. He also served on the advisory committee of Mutual Broadcasting System's national affiliates and the board of directors of the National Association of Broadcasters.

Potter was also an avid local historian.

One of his books, "A History of Owensboro and Daviess County," traced the county's development starting with the area's prehistoric geography and ending with the beginning of Owensboro native Darrell Waltrip's racing career. He also wrote the "Daviess County Sesquicentennial Historical Fact Book," "In the Beginning" and the "History of Settle Memorial Methodist Church, 1836-1966."

Potter also contributed a number of articles to Kentucky Historical Society publications as well as news photographs to early editions of Life magazine.

He was active in both the Kentucky and Daviess County historical societies.

Potter was also well known for his radio editorials on WOMI, particularly those in the 1960s dealing with the lack of adequate highways leading to Owensboro.

In 1965, he was recognized for his highway editorial campaign when he received the Owensboro Civitan Club's "Citizen of the Year Award."

A memorial service for Potter will be held in Owensboro in about 4-6 weeks, according to an official with Lew Funeral Home in Sarasota, which is handling funeral arrangements there.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 11 June 1986, p.2C:

Page 2C – Hugh O. Potter, 81, of Sarasota, Fla., died Monday, June 9, 1986, at Doctors Hospital. He was born in Owensboro, was the retired general manager of WOMI and WOMI-FM radio stations, and was a member of Pine Shores I Presbyterian Church.

Survivors include his wife, Cliffordean Potter; a son, Hugh O. Potter Jr. of Oklahoma City, Okla.; and three grandchildren, Donna Louise King, Patricia Potter and William Potter, all of San Diego, Calif.; and a brother, John W. Potter, of Sarasota.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Thursday at Pine Shores Presbyterian Church, Sarasota. An Owensboro memorial service will be held in 4-6 weeks. There is no visitation. Haley-McGinnis Funeral Home is in charge of local arrangements.

[Note: Services conducted by Rev. Wendell H. Rone were held at Haley-McGinnis Funeral Home, in Owensboro, on 19 July 1986. Hugh O. Potter was buried in Owensboro's Elmwood Cemetery (section D lot 73) on 31 July 1986.]



**Daviess County Historical Quarterly,
Daviess County Historical Society, Owensboro, KY;
Volume V, Number 1, January 1987:**

The Editor's Page

The name of Hugh O. Potter will always be associated with the history of our county. David Orrahood and Edith Bennett have contributed a fond remembrance of Hugh O. Potter as a memorial to his tireless work for the Society.

Pages 13-17

“Hugh O. Potter and the Early Years of the Daviess County Historical Society”

By M. David Orrahood MD, and Edith Bennett

Hugh O. Potter's *History of Owensboro and Daviess County Kentucky- 1974* was tied closely to the activities of the Daviess County Historical Society established in late 1962. Mr. Potter died this past summer in Sarasota, Florida, at the age of 81. This article honors the members of the society and the work of Hugh O. Potter in their chief goal of preserving our history.

The charter members of the Historical Society were listed as Mrs. Alton Nation, Dr. & Mrs. M. David Orrahood, Miss Nina Jett, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh O. Potter, Mr. and Mrs. Ed. Shannon, Mr. and Mrs. James H. Robb, Mrs. T. C. Rouse, Mrs. W. W. Kirtley, Mrs. E. J. Fitzgerald, Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Robertson, Mr. and Mrs. Peter B. English, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Westerfield, Henry Taylor, Miss Elizabeth Gasser, Joe Ford, Dr. William G. Ward, Sidney A. Neal, Mrs. W. E. Daniel, Michael J. Edgeworth, William Ira Wood, Mrs. Robert Croy, Mrs. Connie Phillips, Mrs. C. V. Claypool, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Cornette.

... Mr. Potter had begun his WOMI editorials and through them had made contact with a number of people interested in local history.

... A number of active authors were involved with the Society in its early years. Hugh Potter's paper on Abraham Lincoln given at the Filson Club represented a lifetime study of Lincoln. The paper received high critical approval and was recognized as a definitive work. Potter had a premiere collection of Lincolniana including books, papers, and references. His favorite writing desk had been made from timber from the Pate House in Hawesville where Lincoln successfully argued his first legal case.

... In retirement after 1972, Hugh O. Potter spent the next two years coordinating the steps needed to publish his History. He felt that the History had been the combined efforts of the Society. In the preface and acknowledgements he cites those special contributors to the backing and initial financing, to those making individual contributions to the text, to the authors of special chapters, to others who made the project possible.



Hugh O. Potter in his office at WOMI in Owensboro in 1955

His manuscripts, written in longhand script, came in the mail, and few corrections needed to be made. Members of the Society met at Henry Etta Schauburger's home and farmed out the

task of typing, editing, and indexing the chapters of the book. Ruth Westerfield and Marjorie Schauburger were in charge of these important tasks. Dr. Orrahood arranged to have the printing done by a publisher in Louisville.

Potter insisted that footnotes and citations be held to a minimum. He felt that these detracted from the reading of the text. His years of newspaper and radio experience allowed him to remember, cite, and write in a precise and directed manner. His work was limited to Daviess County and was not directed to the surrounding counties or to regional history. The account was factual, not critical.

The financial accounting for the work was the task of Mrs. Schauburger. She joined the Society early and served as treasurer for thirteen years. In addition to accounting for the sales of some 700 of these histories, she set up a mailing department in her basement where the out-of-town sales were wrapped and prepared for mailing. Many copies of the work were sent to libraries all over the United States. Some \$7,000 was collected by these means which were donated to the Society for the on-going publishing program.

Hugh Oliver Potter, Sr., was an Owensboro native, born June 3, 1905. He died in Sarasota, Fla. On June 3, 1986. He attended the public schools of Owensboro, St. Frances Academy in Owensboro, the University of Kentucky and the University of Chicago. He worked as a reporter for the Owensboro Inquirer from 1924 to 1929; then served as city editor of the Messenger-Inquirer from 1929 through 1939 when he became general manager of radio station WOMI. He was instrumental in bringing WOMI-FM to the airwaves in 1948 and served as manager of both stations until his retirement in 1972. He was secretary of the Owensboro Broadcasting Company from 1957 until 1972.

He was founder of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, and served as its first president in 1945 and as secretary- treasurer from 1948 until 1957. He and his wife Cliffordean received the coveted "Mike" Awards from the broadcasters in the early 1960's and were honored at "Old Timers" night when the state convention was held in Owensboro in 1981. From 1951 through 1954 he served as a member of the board of directors of the Mutual Broadcasting System's Affiliates Advisory Committee. He was a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Broadcasters from 1958 through 1962.

In 1965 he was voted Man of the year by the Civitan Club. He was president of the Owensboro Lions Club in 1953-54 and the district governor of Lions International in 1958-59. He was a charter member of the Daviess County Historical Society, and served as commanding general of the Vanderburgh Court House Civil War Round Table, Evansville. He was a member of the Investigators Club; served in several capacities with the Kentucky Historical Society including the executive committee in 1967-71, vice president in 1971-1972, and president in 1973-1974. His publications include the Daviess County Sesquicentennial *Historical Fact Book: In the Beginning, the History of Settle Memorial United Methodist Church, 1836-1966; History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky*; and articles published by the Kentucky Historical Society, the Filson Club, broadcasting magazines, and new pictures to early issues of Life Magazine.

Hugh and Cliffordean Jø Hammond were married December 4, 1926. They had two sons, John Hammond, who died in infancy, and Hugh O. Potter, Jr., and three grandchildren, Donna Louise, Patricia and William Samuel Potter II, all of San Diego, California.



**The Register, Vol. 73, No. 4, October 1975
(Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society) pp.416-417:**

BOOK REVIEW

A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky. By Hugh O. Potter. (Montgomery, Alabama: Herff Jones, Paragon Publishing Company, for the Daviess County Historical Society, 1974. Pp. 265. \$13.50 to K.H.S. members; \$15.50 to non-members.

Hugh O. Potter's *A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky* is likely to find a prominent place on library shelves throughout the state. Its bright-blue cover is dominated by a primitive-style color reproduction of Col. Joseph H. Daveiss, for whom the county was named. Potter explains that the discrepancy in spelling between Col. Daveiss' name and that of Daviess County was a result of a spelling error in the 1815 legislative act which created the county.

Author-editor Potter, now retired from a long newspaper and radio career in Owensboro, gives the Daviess County Historical Society much credit, for it voted to publish his work if he "would put it together as a retirement project." Also, members of the Society contributed several chapters, such as Dr. M. David Orrahood's "Medical History," Mrs. Henry Etta Schauberger's "Financial Institutions," and Paul D. Bushong's "Crude Oil Story."

If the reader is looking for an integrated narrative of Daviess County history, he may be somewhat disappointed in the book's episodic approach. Potter himself acknowledges the problem in his preface when he quotes W. Foster Hayes' contention that "no one can write a complete history of any county or community. . . which is in constant process of change." The book's lack of integration, however, does not negate its very real contribution to state and local history.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *The History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky* is the impressive examination of the area's recent past. While the earlier history of frontier figures like William Smeathers (the first settler) and Josiah Henson (the original Uncle Tom?) is noteworthy, the book's ultimate contribution will surely be in its wealth of twentieth-century social, cultural, and intellectual history. Future generations will no doubt extol Potter's journalist's eye for the newsworthy event, and his skill in presenting it cogently.

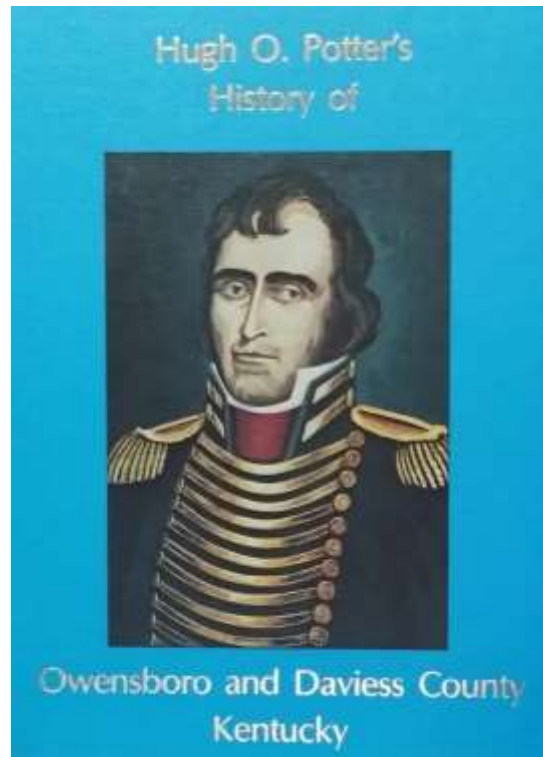
The inclusion of great numbers of local participants and groups is only one of the reasons the book should find a wide audience. In addition to its appeal for geneologists, historians will be pleased to find so much of the area's nearly 200 years of written history in one volume; librarians and researchers will praise its lengthy index; less serious readers will appreciate its large print, brief chapters, and copious illustrations. The photographs, though needing fuller captions, do indeed add an exciting visual dimension to the work.

Potter and his fellow-contributors have been indefatigable in their research, and have shown a spirit of critical inquiry often lacking in local histories. Although the internal documentation occasionally breaks the flow, the reader cannot miss the use of primary source materials, such as tax records, old newspapers, marriage records, cemetery records, deeds, and manuscript collections. In spite of the long excerpts from these sources, and sometimes even because of them, this is a valuable study of the growth and development of Kentucky's fourth-largest urban area.

Western Kentucky University

Helen Bartter Crocker





A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter, Daviess County Historical Society, Owensboro, KY (Montgomery, AL: Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing, 1974):

Introduction: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hugh O. Potter is a native of Owensboro, Kentucky, born June 3, 1905. He attended Public schools and St. Frances Academy in Owensboro, University of Kentucky and University of Chicago; was a reporter for the Owensboro Inquirer, 1924-29; city editor Messenger and Inquirer 1929-39; general manager of Radio Station WOMI in Owensboro, 1939-72; WOMI-FM 1948-72; secretary of the Owensboro Broadcasting Company 1957-72; the first president of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association for 1945-46; secretary-treasurer of Kentucky Broadcasters Association, 1948-57; member of Mutual Broadcasting System's National Affiliates, Advisory Committee 1951-54; member of the board of directors of the National Association of Broadcasters, 1958-62; president Owensboro Lions Club 1953-54; district governor of Lions International (43-K), 1958-59; commanding general (president) Vanderburgh Court House Civil War Round Table, Evansville, Ind., 1965-6; member of the Executive Committee of the Kentucky Historical Society, 1967-71; vice president Kentucky Historical Society 1971-73; president Kentucky Historical Society, 1973 and 1974; wrote the **Daviess County Sesquicentennial Historical Fact Book, In the Beginning, History of Settle Memorial Methodist Church, 1836-66**; contributed historical articles published by Kentucky Historical Society and The Filson Club in their quarterly magazine, and news pictures to early issues of Life magazine. Upon retirement from radio career in March 1972 moved to Sarasota, Florida, with his wife, the former Cliffordean Hammond, to whom he was married December 4, 1926. They have one son, Hugh O. Potter, Jr., and three grandchildren, Donna Louise, Patricia and William Samuel Potter II, of San Diego, California.

Pages 56-57: GOVENORS IDENTIFIED WITH DAVIESS COUNTY:
ALBERT SMITH MARKS

The first native of Daviess county to become a state governor was Albert Smith Marks who was born on October 16, 1836 on a farm south-west of the then small town of Owensborough (1830 U.S. Census, 229). At the age of 43, twenty-four years after leaving his Daviess county home, Marks was inaugurated the twenty-fourth chief executive of Tennessee.

The story of Governor Marks' life and career, and the way many 20th Century Owensboro area people learned about him, was told in the Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer early in 1971 by a staff writer, Pat Morrison. Using the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, published by James T. White and Company, New York, in 1897, as his chief source of biographical information, Morrison wrote:

"The story behind the placing . . . (of a) Kentucky Historical Society highway marker at the Owensboro-Daviess County Airport is an intriguing case study of how historical facts are brought to light.

"The story concerns . . . Albert S. Marks, who was governor of Tennessee (from 1879 to 1881.)

"This historical detective work began. . . (when) the Rev. Wendell Rone . . . was reading an article about Gov. Marks in a Nashville publication. The Rev. Mr. Rone (then) pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church and a longtime history enthusiast was quick to realize the significance of Marks' Daviess county birth, which was reported in the article.

"He alerted another local historian, Hugh O. Potter, (then) Radio Station WOMI general manager. In an Editorial of the Air on Jan. 8, 1970, Potter asked for information concerning Gov. Marks from anyone in Daviess county who had any knowledge of him, noting ironically that Tennessee seemed more appreciative than Kentucky of Daviess county's sons.

"The response to the WOMI editorial was almost immediate. Mrs. Alice Gene Lewis, Owensboro- Daviess County librarian, found a complete biographical sketch of Marks, listing his parents as Elisha Marks, originally from Virginia, and Elizabeth Lashbrook Marks, a native of Daviess county...

"Mrs. J. P. Shanks of 1516 Herr Ave., reported that Albert Marks was a relative of hers, having been a cousin of her grandfather, Daviess county farmer Olin Marks (1800-1878).

" second WOMI editorial on Jan. 20 reported these revelations, and again requested the aid of local citizens in pinning down further evidence of Gov. Marks' Daviess county heritage.

"Once again, the response was gratifying.

"H. Vernon Bosley, 515 St. Ann St., whose ancestors came to the county in 1836, said that the original Bosley farm had been adjacent to the farm of the Marks family. He identified the area as land on which the Owensboro-Daviess County Airport is now located.

"Mrs. Elizabeth S. Cox, Route 1, Utica, produced records indicating that Elisha Marks and Elizabeth Lashbrook were married in Daviess county on March 23, 1833.

"An examination of marriage license records in the courthouse showed that the two were married by John Pinkston, a pioneer Methodist minister in this area.

"Further examination of old records in the courthouse revealed that Elisha and Elizabeth Marks owned 656 acres of land 'about three miles from Owensboro' during the 1840's. This tract was next to 262 acres owned by James and Nicholas Bosley. The latter was identified by H. Vernon Bosley as his grandfather.

"On Jan. 20, a third WOMI editorial concerning Gov. Marks was aired, urging that a Kentucky Historical Society marker be erected at the airport, to identify the birthplace of the governor Daviess county furnished for Tennessee.

Pages 68-69: JOSIAH HENSON

Josiah Henson was all but a forgotten man in Daviess county for 137 years after he ran away from a life of slavery and started a career that brought him worldwide fame as the prototype of the title character in Uncle Tom's Cabin. ...

... Henson lived until May 5, 1883, when he died in Canada at 94.

The story of Henson's life in Daviess county was brought to light by Hugh O. Potter, after Miss Edith Bennett of the WOMI staff and Dr. David Orrahood, Owensboro pathologist and historian, had on two widely separate occasions brought to his attention information about Henson.

Miss Bennett was in Canada on vacation and had stopped at the Dresden location of the Uncle Tom Museum when a person there saw her Daviess county Kentucky, automobile license plate and told her Uncle Tom was also from her home county. Upon her return to WOMI Miss Bennett told Potter about her experience, but he discouraged her from accepting the information given her as being a fact. "They probably tell everyone that," was his comment at the time.

About three years later, on June 4, 1967, Dr. Orrahood and Col. Benjamin Hawes, former mayor of Owensboro, were in the Maceo-Yelvington section with a tape recorder, making oral notes about local historical points. They stopped at the home of Mrs. Sue Riley (Samuel) Hawes, a direct descendant of Amos Riley. During their recorded conversation with Mrs. Hawes, Col. Hawes asked Dr. Orrahood:

"Did you hear the story about Uncle Tom?"

To this, Mrs. Hawes commented: "Yes, he was an overseer of my great grandfather, and he was a smart darkie, and he played around with the other slaves' wives. So they ran him off, and he crossed the river into Indiana. My grandmother told me that."

Later in the conversation, Dr. Orrahood, in seeking confirmation of the Riley family tradition that "Uncle Tom" was forced to leave by other slaves, asked:

"The Negroes ran him away?"

"Yes, they did," replied Mrs. Hawes. "The Negroes ran him away. His name was Tom Henson."

Following the interview, Dr. Orrahood had a typed transcript of the recorded information made, and gave Potter a copy. When he read that part dealing with Uncle Tom, Potter recalled his earlier conversation with Miss Bennett and asked her to check through the pamphlets and other material she brought home from her Canadian trip. This she did, uncovering a booklet in which Josiah Henson was quoted as saying he arrived in "Davis" County, Kentucky in April 1825...

Page 203: DAVIESS COUNTY WRITERS

Here is what Sister Mary Carmel said of Owensboro writers...

"No one in Daviess county is more vitally interested in writing the history of Daviess county and Owensboro in particular than Mr. Hugh O. Potter, General Manager of the WOMI Radio Station in Owensboro.

"He accepts no historical rumor as a fact, but traces it to its primary source. His findings have unearthed some most interesting and valuable data concerning the pioneers and land owners of Daviess county. He is most generous in sharing his research with interested audiences. Mr.

Potter's lectures are accompanied with maps and original manuscripts which prove the authenticity of his search.

"Mr. Potter is now completing a companion book to his previously published Sesquicentennial Fact Book of Daviess County. It is entitled *In The Beginning* and reveals much valuable information about the foundations of Daviess county.

"His most recent publication is the *History of Settle Memorial Methodist Church*, of Owensboro.

"He is also an outstanding authority on Abraham Lincoln which his well-stocked Lincoln library reveals. He has completed a book-length manuscript entitled *Lincoln and His Kentuckians* which is ready for publication. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Kentucky Historical Society.

Page 214: DAVIESS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A history of Owensboro and Daviess county organizations would be amiss if it did not include the story of the Daviess County Historical Society, which is the sponsor of this publication. It was natural to turn to Mrs. G. Alton Nation, the first president of the society, for this contribution. Mrs. Nation wrote:

"On February 26, 1963 a group of interested people met at Radio Station WOMI for the purpose of organizing a Daviess County Historical Society. Those present were Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Potter, Mrs. G. Alton Nation, Mrs. David Orrahood, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Shannon, Mrs. James Robb and Miss Nina Jett. Mrs. Nation, acting as chairman of the group, presided.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 8 January 1972, p.1B:



Hugh O. Potter, general manager of radio station WOMI and WOMI-FM, announced his resignation effective March 31. He has plans, yet undisclosed, to pursue other interests.

Potter took over his duties at WOMI as manager in 1939, a year after the station went on the air on Feb. 7, 1938. Leaving with Potter will be his wife, Mrs. Cliffordean Potter who has served as both women's director and programming director for the station. She has directed and produced what is believed the longest continuously running program with a single sponsor in the history of broadcasting.

Her program started in 1939 as "Stork News" and has featured the now familiar radio character Joanna, who is Mrs. Potter. This program, once directed only to young mothers and their young children, is now directed to senior citizens as well. This program will be discontinued.

Potter is the founder of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, organized in 1945. He served as its president the first two years and for the next 10 years as its secretary-treasurer. He was also a member of the Mutual Broadcasting Co.'s Network Affiliates' advisory committee from 1951 to 1954 and of the board of the National Association of Broadcasters from 1959 to 1963.

Before entering the radio business, Potter was city editor for the *Messenger and Inquirer*.

Potter is a history buff, having written several booklets concerning local history and has written a manuscript he plans to publish on Abraham Lincoln. He helped organize the Daviess County Historical Society, holds the rank of general in the Civil War Round Table of Vanderburg Courthouse at Evansville and serves on the Kentucky Heritage Commission. Potter is presently first-vice president of the Kentucky Historical Society.

He is a member of the Owensboro Lions Club and served that organization as its president in 1953 and later as district governor. He was named Civitan Citizen of the Year in 1965 for his outstanding community service and especially for his work for good highways needed by Owensboro.

Potter, a shareholder of Owensboro Broadcasting Company which operates its radio stations, will continue to serve on the company's board of directors.

Mrs. Potter has been active in local music circles, being a member of the Saturday Musicale and the Kentucky Federation of Music Clubs. She was recently listed in the book "Foremost Women in Communications 1969-70".

In the 1950's she was actively engaged in Broadcast Music Inc., programming clinics, helping radio station programming departments to better direct their attention to women and their interests.

Both of the Potters have been singled out for the KBA's coveted mike award for their services to Kentucky Broadcasting. Lawrence W. Hager Sr., president of the company, said:

"The Potters have given 33 years of distinguished, quality broadcast service to the Owensboro area. Feelings of gratitude for this are shared by a large number of people besides their close business associates. Hugh and Clifford can rightly take great satisfaction in knowing this. We expect to be ready to announce Mr. Potter's successor to the post of general manager prior to March 31.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 31 March 1972, pp.1A & 12A:

Hugh and 'Joanna' Honored

Potters Given 'Starry' Sendoff

By GLENN HODGES, Messenger-Inquirer Staff Writer

A "good luck star," launched at a special Chamber of Commerce Rooster Booster breakfast, and reception Thursday, rocketed high above Owensboro, and burst into a galaxy of farewell tributes to Hugh and Clifford Potter.

Two hours of proclamations, presentations, telephone calls, poems, telegrams and fond reminiscing showered down upon the radio broadcasting couple, who retire today at the end of a 33-year career as manager and program director at Owensboro, Radio Station WOMI.

The list of persons honoring the Potters was almost of telephone book length, and included their son; Gov. Wendell Ford; a candidate for the U.S. Senate; and a roomful of old friends.

The tributes invariably reflected the community's appreciation for Hugh Potter's contributions as a radio editorialist and Kentucky historian, and Clifford Potter's service as producer of the longest running program with the same sponsor in radio history.

(Mrs. Potter, better known to her radio listeners as Joanna, has produced the Stork News at WOMI since 1938, a chatter line program which, over the years, has been geared to an audience of tiny tots and senior citizens. Joanna's "good luck star" or "good boy (or girl) star" wishes have become her radio trademark, and made her program a local broadcasting institution.

Potter founded the Kentucky Broadcasters Association (KBA) in 1945, and, as a history buff, helped organize the Daviess County Historical Society. He is presently a first vice president of the Kentucky Historical Society).

The Potters' son, Hugh Jr., and Gov. Ford expressed their good wishes yesterday by long distance telephone calls, which were amplified for all the breakfast audience at the Ponderosa Steakhouse to hear.

The younger Potter, speaking from Columbus, Ohio, described his mother as "gifted in giving" to her friends, business associates, and the young and old of the community, and his father as "honored in honesty" for his "tell-it-like-it-is" radio editorials.

From the governor's office in Frankfort, Ford applauded the couple for their accomplishments, and noted that Potter's editorial "prodding" has resulted in many major highway improvements for Owensboro and Daviess County. "Due to your efforts, many things, proposed years ago, are now beginning to come true," Ford told Potter.

The Potters thanked the governor, and Mrs. Potter, calling Ford the "best governor in the U.S.A.," gave him her first "good boy star" of the day.

Also paying tribute to the Potters and introduced to the breakfast audience yesterday were State Sen. Walter "Dee" Huddleston and his wife, Jean. Huddleston is a Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate this year, and a long-time associate of the Potters as an Elizabethtown radio station executive.

Lawrence Hager Sr., president of the Owensboro Broadcasting Co. and the Potters' "boss" for 33 years, recounted his association with the Potters, and presented them with the keys to a new automobile which, Hager said, they should use "to make frequent trips back to Owensboro." The Potters will move to Sarasota, Fla. after retiring today.

Mayor pro tem George Greer, appearing in behalf of Mayor Waitman Taylor who was out of town on business, read a proclamation from the mayor's pen, declaring March 30, "Hugh and Clifford Potter Day in Owensboro."

County Judge Pat Tanner, also unable to attend the breakfast due to a previously scheduled engagement, sent a special letter saluting the Potters for their achievements, and describing Potter as "a man of high motives and character." The letter was read to the audience by program emcee George Willis. State Sen. Delbert Murphy, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce President Bill Neal, Owensboro Symphony Orchestra Director Leon Gregorian, and Opportunity Center Executive Director Jack Whitmer paid tributes to the Potters, and made presentations.

Mr. and Mrs. Potter were made ambassadors-at-large and given lifetime honorary memberships in the Owensboro-Daviess County Chamber of Commerce.

The Potters also received a telegram from former University of Kentucky and professional basketball great, Cliff Hagan, and his family. The couple was a strong source of encouragement for Hagan during his formative years as an Owensboro schoolboy and athlete.

Also bidding farewell to the Potters yesterday was Mrs. Elmyra Montgomery, secretary-treasurer of the Owensboro Ice Cream and Dairy Products Co., which sponsored Mrs. Potter's Stork News program during its record-setting tenure on the air.

Former Broadway and Metropolitan Opera star, Mrs. Christine Johnson Smith of Owensboro, read to the Potters a poem of tribute, written by Miss Patti Dishman, a former member of the WOMI station staff. Mrs. Smith, a long-time friend of the Potters, described them as "people who combine dignity with their personal values."

When the tributes ended, the Potters were nearly speechless. Potter finally rose and thanked the audience. Driven to yesterday's breakfast in a special limousine, the Potters arrived fresh, some 12 hours after being honored at a dinner given Wednesday night by the board of directors of the Owensboro Broadcasting Co.

Potter friends from the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, including Sen. and Mrs. Huddleston and former Kentucky Commerce Commissioner Katherine Peden of Hopkinsville, attended the dinner. Also there were Doug Hamby, who succeeds Potter as station manager at WOMI, and the rest of the WOMI staff.



**The Register, Vol. 70, No. 1, January 1972
(Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society) p.75:**

NEWS AND NOTES
SOCIETY OFFICERS, 1971-1972

Frank G. Rankin, Louisville, was elected president of the Society at its Annual Business Meeting, held in the Old State House Friday, November 5, 1971. A native of Louisville, he has been general manager of Gold Proof Elevator Company since 1942. He has been a former president of the Louisville Board of Trade, Kentucky Derby Festival Association and the Louisville Civil War Round Table. In 1967 he was state chairman of the 175th Anniversary Celebration of Kentucky Statehood, and is now chairman of the Kentucky Historical Society Historymobile program.

Elected to hold office until November, 1972, were: Hugh O. Potter, Owensboro, first vice-president; Dr. Robert R. Martin, Richmond, second vice-president; Amos H. Eblen, Frankfort, third vice-president. Mr. Potter has been general manager of Radio Station WOMI for 31 years and helped organize the Kentucky Broadcasters' Association; he was its first president. He is a past president of the Owensboro Lions Club and is now its International Counsellor.



**The Register, Vol. 69, No. 1, January 1971
(Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society) pp.1-16:**

Article by Hugh O. Potter – "Owensboro's Original Proprietor",
about Brevet Brigadier General Richard Barnes Mason (1797-1850)



The Filson Club
INCORPORATED
118 WEST BRECKINRIDGE STREET
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40203
ORGANIZED MAY 15, 1884

January 27, 1969

The Filson Club will meet Monday, February 3, 1969, at 8:00 p.m.

MR. HUGH O. POTTER, Owensboro, Kentucky, radio broadcasting station executive, will be guest speaker. He will present a paper on THE MAKING OF THE SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT.

Mr. Potter, a Lincoln buff, is third vice-president of the Kentucky Historical Society; a past president of the Evansville, Indiana, Civil War Roundtable; a past president of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association; a past director of the National Association of Broadcasters, and a past district governor in Lions International. He has written recently two historical booklets on Owensboro and Daviess County and one on the first 130 years of the Methodist Church in Owensboro. His paper deals with Abraham Lincoln's important February 1860 speech at New York's Cooper Institute, and those delivered by two other natives of Kentucky who preceded him there — Cassius M. Clay and Congressman F. P. Blair.

RICHARD H. HILL, *Director*

Free parking in the parking lot on the north side of Breckinridge between First and Second streets — compliments of W. M. Cissell Manufacturing Company.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 8 February 1968, p.16B:

EDITORIAL AND OTHER COMMENT

**Owensboro Owes Thanks
To Mr. And Mrs. Hugh Potter**

On the night of February 7, 1938, a young Messenger and Inquirer reporter – photographer was covering the big opening night celebration for Owensboro's first radio station. His pretty wife was also in evidence since she had arranged for the evening's serious music, a voice ensemble and a violin sextet of the Saturday Musicale, and it was her duty to announce them. Neither had any idea at the time of the importance radio would assume in their lives.

They were Hugh and Cliffordean Potter, who for nearly 30 years have worked together as a radio team at WOMI, he has manager and she as program director.

Both have received the coveted "Kentucky Mike" award for outstanding service to broadcasting in the state. Both have been untiring in their efforts to promote Owensboro, to unearth potential tourist attractions, and to secure the necessary roads and air facilities to bring the touring public to this area. Hugh Potter's daily editorials have often been the spur that resulted in a change for the better in Owensboro and Daviess County.

Mrs. Potter's daily "Joanna" program has brought fun and comfort into the lives of young and old alike.

Potter was the organizer and first president of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association and served for 10 years as its secretary-treasurer. He was also on the board of directors of the National Association of Broadcasters and on the affiliate advisory board of the Mutual Broadcasting Company.

Mrs. Potter, for several years during the mid-fifties, spoke at training clinics for radio personnel in a number of eastern states, and told the Owensboro story to hundreds. The sessions

were sponsored by Broadcast Music, Inc., and she was the first woman invited to participate in such a program.

Both have made contributions to the community outside the broadcasting field; she through her work in the Saturday Musicale and the American Federation of Music Clubs, and he through his work in the Lions Club, the Daviess County Historical Society, the Evansville Civil War Roundtable, and through the publication of historical documents devoted to the lives and holdings of famous Daviess Countians.

So for the 30th anniversary of Radio Station WOMI, we salute Hugh and Cliffordean Potter for their untiring efforts on behalf of Owensboro, and for nearly 30 years at the helm of Owensboro's pioneer radio station.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 12 August 1966, p.9D:

Article by Hugh O. Potter – “Two Events in Lincoln’s Life Linked to Hancock County:
An Unlawfully Operating Ferry Charge Dismissed”



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 20 May 1965, p.1C:



CITIZEN OF YEAR - Hugh O. Potter, right, general manager of Radio Station WOMI and WOMI-FM, was presented the "Citizen of the Year" award by the Owensboro Civitan Club yesterday by Homer J. Tidwell Jr., Civitan member. The award is presented each year to an outstanding citizen by Civitan Clubs, whose motto is "Builders of Good Citizenship." Potter was given the award in recognition of his outstanding efforts in community service and especially for his untiring work for better roads to serve this community.



Hugh O. Potter in 1963



WOMI Radio Station, 3121 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 8 February 1953, p.1B:



PRESENT STAFF of the station on its fifteenth broadcasting birthday includes (seated left to right) Harold Peters, chief engineer; Pete Dooley, announcer; Hugh O. Potter, manager; Jim Wilkinson, sports announcer; (standing) Jack Murphree, announcer; Edith Bennett, secretary; T. D. Whittinghill, announcer; Mrs. Hugh O. Potter, program director ;and J. E. Jackson, engineer.



MEMBERS OF WOMI'S ORIGINAL STAFF, pictured on the station's first anniversary, Feb. 7, 1939, are (seated left to right) George Blackwell, commercial manager; Lyle Ludwig, manager; Hugh Potter, Ludwig's successor; Earl Jagoe, chief engineer; (standing) Lee Carl Meredith, announcer; Virginia Lee (now Mrs. Shelby McIntosh), secretary; Leroy Woodward, announcer; Edna Mae Brown (now Mrs. Dean Dowdy, Madisonville), bookkeeper, and Floyd Hubbard, engineer.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 8 February 1948, p.1B:



Cliffordean Potter with WOMI
announcer Norris Vincent



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 25 October 1945, p.1:



Hugh O. Potter

Heads Kentucky
Broadcasters

Louisville Ky (AP) — Delegates from radio stations located in Kentucky opened a two-day session here Wednesday to organize a Kentucky Broadcasting association.

Elected president at Wednesday's meeting was Hugh O. Potter station WOMI, Owensboro Other officers elected were: First vice-president, J. Ed Willis, station WLAP, Lexington; second vice-president Harry McTigue station, WINN, Louisville; and secretary-treasurer, Harry Callaway, station, WHAS Louisville.

Guest speaker at a dinner Wednesday night was announced as Leonard L. Asch, president of the Capital Broadcasting company, W-BC-A, F-M, Schnectady, New York. Paul A. Porter Washington, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission is scheduled to speak at 7 o'clock tonight.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 6 August 1939, p.1B:



Shown at his desk here is Hugh O. Potter, station manager. Prior to joining the staff of WOMI, he was city editor of the Owensboro Messenger.

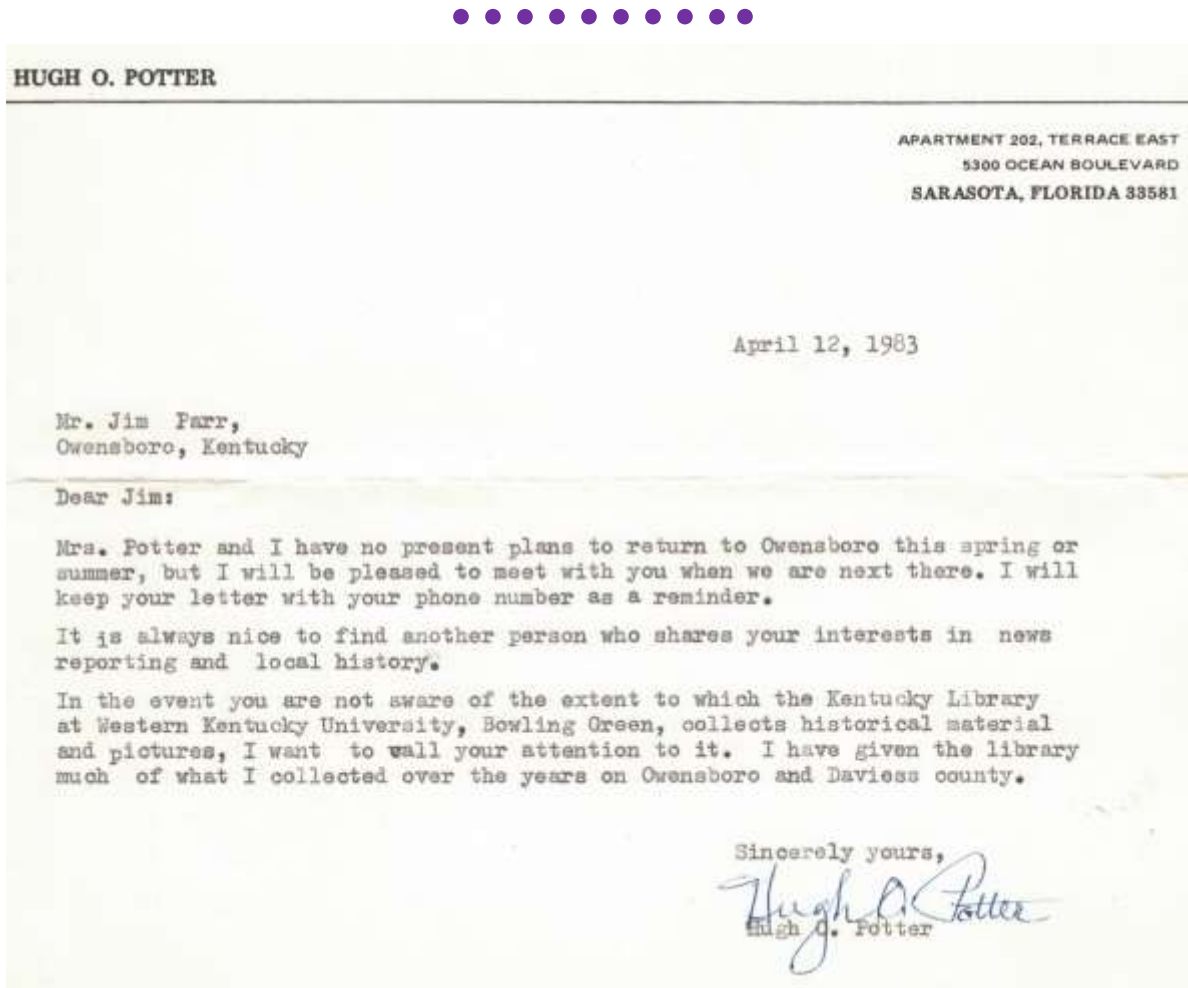


Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 8 February 1939, p. 9:



The first year of operation at WOMI has seen several changes in personnel. Two members left the staff during the year for positions elsewhere, Bob Clayton, versatile chief announcer, and "Ace" Adkins, efficient engineer, both going to station WJIM, Lansing, Mich. Bob is also doing quite a bit of singing at WJIM and composing songs in his spare time. Lee Meredith joined the

staff during the year, as did Miss Virginia Lee. Floyd Hubbard assumed the duties of Mr. Adkins. Hugh O. Potter, recently joined the station in the capacity of Director of Public Relations.



**Daviess County Public Library, Owensboro, KY
Card catalog (Kentucky Room Special Collection)
has the following resources compiled by Hugh O. Potter:**

- Daviess County Sesquicentennial Historical Factbook, 1815-1965 (Owensboro, KY: WOMI & Daviess County Historical Society, 1965), 48 pages, card catalog # KR 976.9864 Pott
- A History of Settle Memorial United Methodist Church, 1836-1966 (1967), 64 pages, card catalog # KR 287.6 Pott
- In the Beginning – Historical Facts About the Earliest Days of Present Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky (Owensboro, KY: Radio Station WOMI, 1968), 32 pages, card catalog # KR 976.9864 Pott

- *A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky*, Daviess County Historical Society, Owensboro, KY (Montgomery, AL: Herff Jones-Paragon Publishing, 1974), 265 pages, card catalog # KR 976.9865 Pott



**Manuscripts & Folklife Archives Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092**

POTTER, Hugh Oliver (1905-1986) Inventory MSS 602

Comments:: This collection is archived in the Manuscripts & Folklife Archives at Western Kentucky University; 270-745-5083, mssf@wku.edu; 10 boxes. 114 folders. 1,817 items. 1783-2008. Originals, slides, and photocopies.

Abstract: Finding aid only for Manuscripts Collection 602. Correspondence, research notes, book manuscripts, promotional material, and editorials related to Hugh O. Potter's career as a radio broadcaster and his interests in Kentucky history, specifically Owensboro and Daviess County, and Abraham Lincoln. Includes one box of original legal documents (1783-1953) related to the Massie family of Daviess County.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Hugh Oliver Potter (b. June 3, 1905-d. June 9, 1986) was a native of Owensboro in Daviess County, Kentucky. He studied at St. Frances Academy in Owensboro, University of Kentucky, and University of Chicago. During and after college, he had his first job as a reporter for the Owensboro Inquirer from 1924-1929. During his time at the Inquirer, he married Cliffordean Jo Hammond on Dec. 4, 1926. After the Inquirer, he immigrated to the Messenger Inquirer as the city editor from 1929-1939, when he jumped into radio broadcasting with WOMIFM.

In 1945, he founded and organized the Kentucky Broadcasters' Association. From 1945 to 1947, he served as the Association's first president; then for the next ten years, he was the treasury-secretary. Also in 1947, he obtained a permit for the construction of WOMI's FM radio broadcast, completed and on air 1948. He also served in the Mutual Broadcasting Company's Network Affiliates' advisory committee from 1951 to 1954, as well as on the board of the National Association of Broadcasters from 1959 to 1963. He was also secretary of the Owensboro Broadcasting Company from 1957 until his retirement from radio in 1972, though he continued to serve on the board of directors.

As general manager, Potter was instrumental in WOMI's growth and reputation as a public radio service. WOMI published radio editorials that commentated on political and social events around Owensboro and Kentucky in general. One specific focus of WOMI was the advocacy for highway infrastructure, a devotion that garnered him the Civitan Citizen of the Year in 1965.

Simultaneously, Potter had an affection for history. He had written many books concerning the local history of Daviess County. He also wrote several manuscripts on Abraham Lincoln and

his significance to Kentucky's history. During his time as WOMI manager, he wrote his initial version of "Lincoln and Kentucky," between 1961 and 1964. A later version, titled "Lincoln and his Kentuckians," surfaced c. 1967. Whether or not the latter version made it postpublication remains a mystery. A third version of the same content also surfaced, though this one does not have a date.

Potter's affection for history extended beyond writing. He was a collector of all things Lincoln or Lincoln related, aka "Lincolniana." In fact, he was an early active author in the Kentucky Historical Society. For a while, he also served as vice president of the Society. He was also instrumental in organizing the Daviess County Historical Society, held the rank of general in the Civil War Round Table of Vanderburg Courthouse in Evansville, and served on the Kentucky Heritage Commission.

In 1972, Potter retired from WOMI and public radio service in general. He died in 1986 at Doctors' Hospital in Sarasota, Florida, at the age of 81.

COLLECTION NOTE:

This collection donated by Hugh Oliver Potter contains information about his research on Abraham Lincoln and the history of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky. Box 1 reflects Potter's research interests with folders including data about Lincoln (Folders 3-4, 9); the remainder of the folders concentrate on local history topics, including distilleries (Folders 5), Josiah Henson (Folder 10), celebrities (Folder 12), and promotional material about the area (Folder 13). Box 2 includes similar information, highlighting material from the Daviess County Historical Society (Folder 1), Owensboro Regatta (Folder 4), report on historic properties in Daviess County (Folder 6), promotional material from local manufacturers (Folder 7), history of Settle Memorial Methodist Church (Folder 10), and a report on urban renewal in Owensboro (Folder 12).

Box 3 contains a large number of legal documents relating to a land suit: May, Bannister, etc. v. Adams & Mason heirs. Much of this material relates to the Massie family of Daviess County. Box 4 includes two drafts of a book Potter was preparing about Abraham Lincoln. The first draft was titled "Lincoln and Kentucky," and the second was titled "Lincoln and his Kentuckians." Boxes 5-7 contain material relating to Potter's broadcasting career, as well as his interest in the development of educational television. These boxes includes information about his long association with WOMI, one of Owensboro's oldest and largest radio stations. Of particular interest are radio editorials written by Potter for WOMI (Box 6, Folders 5-7; Box 7, Folders 1-3). Box 7 also includes a book manuscript titled "Kentucky Authors and Their Books." Box 8 contains the draft of Potter's book titled "History of Owensboro and Daviess County." Box 9 houses speeches and research notes on various local history topics, as well as another Lincoln related manuscript, albeit untitled.

Box 10 contains slides taken by or collected by Hugh Potter. Folder 1 includes slides taken of Civil War battlefields during the Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965. The remaining slides document the life of Abraham Lincoln and were part of an elaborate presentation that Potter presented on the assassinated President's life. Each folder contains slides and Potter's script that corresponds to them.

The Manuscript Special Collections catalog on the Western Kentucky University's website (<https://westernkentuckyuniversity.pastperfectonline.com/archive/>) has an itemization describing items found in each folder of the ten boxes in the Hugh O. Potter collection at WKU.