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Did you know?

...that the city's first Kroger store was located in the Hicks Manor Shopping Center?

...that Big Daddy's Roast Beef was on Magie and Holiday before Arby's entered town?

...that Levy Drive was named in honor of residents Mark and Pam Levy, parents of quintuplets in 1975?

WCNW Radio Has Served the City Well

After 58 years of thriving as a city and experiencing a nation-wide radio station consolidation beginning in the 1990s, the City of Fairfield can still boast that it has two radio stations. The birth of modern radio originating in Fairfield began when John F. Kennedy was President, Johnny Carson was getting ready to take over the Tonight Show and gasoline was selling for 25 cents a gallon at the Sohio station at Route 4 and Symmes Road. The city was celebrating the opening of the U.S. Post Office branch on Patterson Blvd. across from the Fair Plaza Shopping Center.

In March 1962, local road contractor Walter Follmer, Sr. set up a 30,000 watt FM radio station in a leased building on State Route 4 near what is today the Jungle Jim's International Market. Walter's son, Walter L. Follmer Jr. was named general manager. The Follmer Broadcasting Company constructed a 350-foot transmission tower on Mack Road near the site of Mercy Hospital.

On September 20, 1962, WFOL debuted at 94.9 on the FM dial and became the area's first full-time radio station to broadcast in stereo. The station's format was "beautiful" or easy listening music. The area had eight FM stations at the time including WCPO, WFFM, WKRC, WSAI and WAEF in Cincinnati, WHOH and WQMS in Hamilton and WPFB in Middletown. The AM side of radio was the place to listen to the Top 40 and Middle of the Road music with WSAI leading the way in Cincinnati and WING in Dayton.

On February 14, 1964, WFOL-AM made its debut playing country music with 1000 watts of power. Shortly afterwards, power was increased to 5000 watts. Nationally known country music artist Luke "Pappy" Tipton became the Program Director of the AM station and hosted "Hillbilly Hit Parade" six nights a week as well as his own show on Saturday mornings.

In 1965, the call letters of both stations were changed to WCNW with country music being simulcast on the FM side. The popularity of WCNW-AM grew in the Greater Cincinnati area so quickly that by 1966 WCNW-AM had 51% of the country music listenership in the tri-state area.

In 1970, the station moved to a new building at the end of Michael Lane adjacent to their AM towers. A number of local talent began their careers at WCNW including Johnny Wade Brown from 1970 thru 1975. Brown, who also elected to the Fairfield City Council in the mid-1970s left for Hamilton's WMOH. Fred Slezak began his long career in broadcasting in 1969 as a DJ and in the news department and did high school play-by-play sports. He left the station in 1974 for WUBE-FM in Cincinnati, WCNW's major competition at the time.

Other notable air personalities included Charlie Gore, Eve Keane, Harry Hald, Kaye York, Ray Pennington, Jim Young, Uncle Teddy Richardson, Bruce Sommers (later to be known as the Truckin' Bozo Dale Sommers on WLW-AM), John Thomas Stoltz, Gary Gabbard, Vernon Howard, Bill Ratliff, Fuzzy Fred Hubbard, Glen Scott, Mary Wallace, Mike Smith and Vaughn Allan.

Perhaps the most beloved DJ that blessed the airwaves was Cincinnati television personality Bonnie Lou, otherwise known as Mary Jo Okum. Bonnie Lou was known for her work on TV as co-host of the Paul Dixon Show, performing regularly on the Ruth Lyons 50-50 Club and the Bob Braun Show and as a regular performer on the Midwestern Hayride shown on WLWT-TV. Bonnie Lou left the station in 1974 so that she could devote more time to her on-air duties on the Bob Braun Show.

WCNW aired Little League games from the Fairfield Waterworks Park complex during the early 1970s. The station even sponsored a farm league team in 1975 that became division champions. WCNW also aired Fairfield High School Indians football and basketball teams in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Will Tieman, John Eric, Johnny Wade Brown and Fred Slezak, provided play-by-play action.



In 1972, Cincinnati's WUBE-FM took over as the area's leading country station. As a result, WCNW recruited on-air talent Jim Howard from WMOH-AM and appointed John McNally as the new Operations manager. McNally had been part-owner of WQMS-FM in Hamilton. Martin Dean was named News Director after serving time with WPFB-AM in Middletown. Besides Howard, the on-air staff consisted of Fred Slezak, Rob Moser, Johnny Wade Brown, Pappy Tipton and Joan Elkins. "Cousin" Vern Baldwin was a major sponsor on WCNW. Baldwin was the owner of Tidy House Furniture (later known as Plaza Home Furnishings) and would buy time for his store and play gospel records. He invited his customers and potential customers to "come on down and see Cousin Vern." Baldwin constructed a studio inside the store that permitted him to broadcast his commercial spots.

In November 1975, Follmer sold both stations to Broadcast Management Corporation of Cincinnati. After a \$150,000 facilities renovation that added a second floor, the call letters for WFOL-FM were changed to WLTV and the format was changed to easy listening music, billing itself as Love FM 95. On July 30, 1979, BMC changed the format of WCNW to southern gospel.

In 1980, BMC sold WLTV-FM to Heftel Broadcasting and the station became WYYS-FM, "Yes 95," playing top 40 rock music. Included in the sale was the transmitting tower located on Mack Road. The new station operated out of a studio in Forest Park. The FCC's dual city designation remained and the station today still bills its self as "Fairfield - Cincinnati," officially making it Fairfield's second radio station although the studios and tower are located in Hamilton County.

In 1985, BMC sold WCNW-AM to Vernon Baldwin who changed the format to religion. Baldwin acquired other stations and formed a regional network including WNLT-FM (104.3), WKLN-FM (Wilmington), WVRB-FM (Nicholasville/Lexington, Kentucky), WWLT-FM (Manchester/London, Kentucky.) and WKYB-FM (Burgin, Kentucky). The exception to Baldwin's religious programming was the acquisition of WMOH-AM in Hamilton. That station's format of news, sports and talk was kept intact and he enlisted his family to manage the station. Baldwin passed away in 2011 after a lengthy battle with Parkinson's disease. Today, WCNW-AM continues to broadcast Christian programming and his dream of a religious network of stations remains intact.

Suspicious Fire at Pleasant Avenue Mansion

How many times have you driven on Pleasant Avenue near the entrance to Harbin Park and saw the grey decorative stone fence partially obscured by landscaping?

The fence represents a part of the city's past when Fairfield Township was laced with farms and dirt paths. The fence was installed as part of the front entrance to the country home of Hamilton industrialist Colonel John C. Hooven.

Hooven was originally from the Dayton area and lived in Hamilton on B Street at the corner of Main Street. He invested personally and financially in Hamilton industries, the railroads and electric lines. His fortune enabled him to get away from his residence and spend quiet time in the country at his 18-room mansion.

On September 1, 1909, the mansion was destroyed by fire. According to the only published report that could be found appeared in the Brownsville, Texas Daily Herald. It stated that the loss was \$50,000 and was partially covered by insurance.

The report also stated that a jewelry case containing \$7,000 worth of jewels belonging to Hoover's wife, Jennie, was stolen during the fire.

Unfortunately, there were no reports found in any Hamilton or Cincinnati area newspaper so it is not known if the fire was considered arson or if the jewels were ever recovered. The mansion was apparently never rebuilt. Hooven is credited for cultivating the very first blue spruce in the City of Fairfield at his mansion.

Fairfield Schools Spotlight

If you are a fan of FHS football then you just recognize a familiar face on the sidelines for the 2013 season. Coach Krause has added former Cincinnati Bengal linebacker Landon Johnson. Landon spent four seasons with the Bengals from 2003-2007. He left the Bengals to sign with Carolina Panthers. He last played in 2010 with the Detroit Lions. Landon will be teaching science at the high school



Fairfield Trivia

The only instance that the City of Fairfield has experienced a direct hit by a tornado occurred June 2, 1990. During the early morning hours, a tornado touched down near the Today Homes complex on Winton Road destroying over a dozen homes. The storm moved to the Bluffs of Wildwood. A total of 19 homes were destroyed, 13 suffered major damage and 45 suffered minor damage. There were no deaths or injuries reported.