

**THE
LIBERTY CORPORATION
ARCHIVES
MSS 160**

**Register
of the
COSMOS BROADCASTING CORPORATION RECORDS
1930-1984**

**Record Group 7.1
14.5 cubic feet**

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**REGISTER OF THE
COSMOS BROADCASTING CORPORATION RECORDS,
1930 – 1984**

Mss 160, Record Group 7.1, 13.5 cubic feet including photographs and oversize material

INTRODUCTION

This Record Group documents the history of Cosmos Broadcasting Corporation and various predecessor companies such as The Broadcasting Company of the South and The South Carolina Broadcasting Company. The collection charts the rise of this firm from a single radio station in Columbia, South Carolina, to its ownership of three radio stations and six television stations throughout the United States. These records are a valuable source of information for the development of American mass communication and the history of twentieth-century South Carolina.

Record Group 7.1 consists of accessions 82-52, 83-14, 85-1, and 86-5. Other material related to Cosmos can be found in the records of the Legal Department (RG 3.1) and the papers of Francis Hipp (RG 1), W. Frank Hipp (RG 4), B. Calhoun Hipp (RG 5), and Herman Hipp (RG 6). The collection was transferred to The Liberty Corporation Archives from 1982 to 1986 and processed by Susan Hult and Curtis Morgan in 1985. It was accessioned by Special Collections as 94-54 and reboxed by Kristina Cathcart in 1999. This register was drafted by Joey Keaton in 1986 and revised by Bryan F. McKown in 1988 and James Cross in 2000.

CORPORATE HISTORY

The origins of Cosmos Broadcasting Corporation date on July 1930, with the establishment of WIS radio in Columbia, South Carolina by entrepreneur George T. Barnes. In an effort to bolster the finances of his struggling radio station with an infusion of capital, Barnes and several other investors formed South Carolina Broadcasting Company in November 1930 as the parent company, or licensee, of WIS. The fledgling enterprise continued to founder, and it was sold within a year to W. Frank Hipp and The Liberty Life Insurance Company.

Hipp and his lieutenants promptly reorganized the affairs of WIS. Its parent company was re-chartered in 1932 as The South Carolina Broadcasting Company and placed under the capable direction of G. Richard Shafto. For the next 37 years Shafto guided the Hipp family's radio (and later, television) operations to profitability and prominence. Several radio stations were bought and sold during the 1930's and 1940's, including WNOX (Knoxville), WFTI (Athens, Georgia), and WCSC (Charleston).

All Hipp family radio interests were put under the corporate umbrella of Surety Life Insurance Company in 1942; Surety Broadcasting Company was formed in 1946 as a subsidiary to administer more effectively these operations. In 1950, a separate broadcasting entity was created with the name of The Broadcasting Company of the South.

The decade of the 1950's witnessed dramatic changes in the broadcasting industry. In line with these changes, The Broadcasting Company of the South successfully branched into television with the advent of WIS-TV in 1953. WSFA-TV of Montgomery, Alabama was acquired in 1959, and the scope of The Broadcasting Company of the South's operations grew to national stature in 1965 with the purchase of major-market station WTOL-TV of Toledo, Ohio, for \$11.6 million. As a result of this expansion, the company changed its name to Cosmos Broadcasting Corporation.

Cosmos constantly strove to stay abreast of technological advances and sought opportunities for strategic expansion. The 1960's brought the arrival of cable television, and Cosmos was a pioneer in the new industry when it formed Cosmos Cablevision, Inc. and Cox-Cosmos, Inc. The acquisition of WSDU-TV (New Orleans) in 1972 and Orion Broadcasting (including television stations WAVE in Louisville and WFIE in Evansville, Indiana, and two radio stations) in 1981 further enhanced Cosmos' standing in the broadcasting industry and its contributions to the profit picture of its parent holding company, The Liberty Corporation. In 1986, Cosmos sold its radio operations and acquired two additional television stations, KPLC-TV in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and KAIT-TV in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Cosmos Papers span a period from the first air date of WIS radio in 1930 to the merging of Orion Broadcasting in the early 1980's. The collection consists mainly of correspondence of corporate officers such as G. Richard Shafto, Charles A. Batson, W. Frank Hipp, Francis M. Hipp, Dixon Lovvorn, and Macon G. Patton, as well as station managers, stockholders and law firms. This record group also contains legal files dealing with Cosmos' relations with the Federal Communications Commission, including several volumes of testimony by Cosmos officials in 1962 concerning the possible deintermixture of UHF and VHF television signals. In addition, the collection holds numerous FCC regulations for the cable television industry.

The establishment and early history of WIS is well documented, including a manuscript history of the station, "So Rich a Heritage," written by Miss Louis Lang in the 1960's. Many publications of Cosmos and its predecessors are found in the collection, such as *COSMOPOLITAN*, the corporate newsletter, and annual reports to stockholders.

Apparently a compilation of file systems, the collection is arranged by series and thereafter alphabetically by folder title.