

Information Sheet

**R Neathery, Robert F., 1908-
1112 Collection, 1903-2001.
 Sixty-five folders.**

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are the papers of Robert F. Neathery, a developer and operator of radio stations and cable television systems at West Plains in Howell County, Missouri. They consist of personal, family, and business papers, drafts and other papers concerning Neathery's memoir, *West Plains As I Knew It*, and miscellaneous topical files.

Robert F. Neathery was born in St. Louis in 1908, the son of R. Ferdinand Neathery and Nell Brennan. Ferd Neathery died in 1909 in St. Louis when Robert was barely a year old. In 1913, his mother married Jerome W. Boyer, the owner of the West Plains Telephone Company. With his mother and stepfather, Neathery moved to West Plains where he grew up and has spent most of his adult life.

Neathery attended the University of Missouri after graduating from West Plains High School in 1926. He was a work-study employee of Stromberg-Carlson, a telecommunications equipment manufacturing company, affording him an opportunity that corresponded with his early interest in radio. He returned to West Plains after graduation, opening Neathery Radio and Electric, a business soon expanded to include appliances and, later, televisions. In 1934, he married Louise Gambill of Mountain Grove, Missouri.

With war gathering in 1940, Neathery went to work in the turret division of Emerson Electric Company, designing turrets for B-24 bombers. Once war began, he became a commercial representative traveling to factories and airfields at Pueblo, Colorado, Pensacola, Florida, Patuxent River, Maryland, Willow Run, Michigan, and St. Paul, Minnesota to establish schools for the construction, installation, and maintenance of aircraft turrets. Following the war he took a position with Durakool, Inc., a manufacturer of electrical components at Elkhart, Indiana, but returned to West Plains in July 1947 to establish the town's first radio station.

Neathery's KWPM Radio began broadcasting in 1947. Later he opened radio stations at Thayer, Branson, Fredericktown, and Jackson, Missouri, and Mountain View, Arkansas. He pioneered the time-brokering of smaller radio stations to increase coverage areas, and described the practice in the *New York Times*, 30 June 1991. About 1956, he established the West Plains cable television company and went on to build cable television systems for Alton, Branson, and Hollister. Eventually he sold his cable holdings to Charter Communications and the Falcon Cable System. Neathery had sold much of his holdings by the 1970s, but maintained stations at West Plains, Willow Springs, and Thayer. With his friend and colleague, Paul Thompson, he was a partner in a horse-breeding venture known as Neathery & Thompson Stables. Neathery was one of the most prominent citizens of West Plains by the time KWPM celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1997.

Neathery's only son, Robert, Jr., died in 1988. His wife, Louise, died in 1992. The grandchildren have assumed operation of the family business since Neathery's retirement. His most

important project in retirement was publication of his memoir. Working with Marideth Sisco of West Plains, Neathery published his recollections in *West Plains As I Knew It* (Willow Springs, Mo.: Yarnspinner Press, 1994). He revised and reissued the memoir in 2001 (West Plains, Mo.: Elder Mountain Press).

The Neathery collection has been arranged in three sections: personal and family papers; drafts and other materials associated with *West Plains As I Knew It*; and miscellaneous topical files containing items of personal and business interest. Folders 1-16 include personal and family papers, correspondence, papers concerning Neathery's son and grandchildren, showbills for Neathery & Thompson stables, and several folders of miscellaneous historical notes and talking points evidently compiled for broadcast purposes. There are also three folders of photographs. The views are mostly undated and unidentified, although a few were published in *West Plains As I Knew It*. Some of the papers and photographs pertain to Neathery's stepfather, Jerome W. Boyer, and to his wife, Louise (Gambill) Neathery, and her hometown of Mountain Grove, Missouri.

Folders 17-33 contain undated drafts, research questions, and other material concerning Neathery's memoir, *West Plains As I Knew It*.

Folders 34-65 contain miscellaneous topical files. They include items reflecting Neathery's early pursuits and activities such as *Radio Home-Makers* magazine, a Stromberg-Carlson employee magazine, and printed material from Emerson Electric's turret division during World War Two. Files on KWPM Radio, cable television, and the West Plains Chamber of Commerce represent Neathery's business interests, and his personal activities are evident in the folders on the Howell County Fair, the Optimist and Rotary clubs, and the Car Club of West Plains. This section of the collection also includes many ephemeral items such as a Stromberg-Carlson employee magazine (1930), a postcard commemorating the last surviving Civil War veterans in Mountain Grove, Missouri (1940), and a program for the Cole Brothers Air Show (1960).

r724	12 July 1999	Robert F. Neathery	Gift
r757	27 July 2000	Robert F. Neathery	Gift

Shelf List

These are the papers of Robert F. Neathery, a developer and operator of radio stations and cable television systems at West Plains, Howell County, Missouri. They consist of personal, family, and business papers, drafts and other papers concerning Neathery's memoir, *West Plains As I Knew It*, and miscellaneous topical files.

Folders 1-16: Family and personal papers, 1913-2001

- F. 01: Boyer, J. W. and Nellie (Neathery), papers, 1913-1960
- F. 02: Gambill, Thomas Sylvester, papers, 1926-1973
- F. 03: Neathery, Louise, papers, 1934-1992
- F. 04: Neathery, Robert F., correspondence, 1930-1988
- F. 05: Neathery, Robert F., miscellaneous material, 1911-2001
- F. 06: Neathery, Robert F., Southwest Missouri State University, papers, 1986-2000
- F. 07: Neathery, Robert F., Jr., papers and photographs, 1955-1960
- F. 08: Neathery, Robert F., Jr., flight log, 1964-1981
- F. 09: Neathery, Shawn, papers, 1978-1988

- F. 10: Neathery & Thompson Stables, papers and photographs, ca. 1960s
- F. 11: Miscellaneous notes, n.d.
- F. 12: Miscellaneous notes, n.d.
- F. 13: Miscellaneous notes, n.d.
- F. 14: Photographs (mostly earlier views)
- F. 15: Photographs
- F. 16: Photographs (mostly later views)

Folders 17-33: *West Plains As I Knew It*, drafts and papers, n.d.

- F. 17: Introduction, drafts by Marideth Sisco
- F. 18: Part 1
- F. 19: Part 2
- F. 20: Part 3
- F. 21: Part 4
- F. 22: Part 5
- F. 23: Part 6
- F. 24: Part 7
- F. 25: Part 8
- F. 26: Part 9
- F. 27: Parts 10-12
- F. 28: Early draft
- F. 29: Early draft
- F. 30: Early draft
- F. 31: Research questions
- F. 32: Anecdotal material
- F. 33: Printing and publicity

Folders 34-65: Topical files, 1903-2001

- F. 34: All Saints' Church (West Plains, Mo.), papers, 1950-1987
- F. 35: American Guild of Variety Artists, membership cards, 1957-1958
- F. 36: Arkansas Broadcasters Association, papers, 1966
- F. 37: Cable television, miscellaneous papers, ca. 1957-1996
- F. 38: Drury College, papers, 1957-1982
- F. 39: Emerson Electric (St. Louis, Mo.). Turret Division, papers, 1943-1945
- F. 40: Fulton County Fair and Livestock Show (Salem, Ark.), program, 21-23 September 1961
- F. 41: Howell County Fair and Stock Show (West Plains, Mo.), premium catalogs and programs, 1958-1998
- F. 42: KWPM, Inc., papers and photographs, 1967-1992
- F. 43: Lake Norfolk (Ark.), advertisements, ca. 1960s
- F. 44: Missouri Broadcasters Association, miscellaneous papers, 1966-1995
- F. 45: Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association. Second Annual Celebration, Show, and First Sale, (West Plains, Mo.), 16-17 September [n.y.]
- F. 46: Mountain Grove (Mo.) papers, 1903-1940
- F. 47: Naval Air Station (Pensacola, Fla.), papers, 1950-1953
- F. 48: Obituaries and death notices, 1917-1999
- F. 49: Optimist Club of West Plains, miscellaneous papers, 1986-1990
- F. 50: Ozark Area Dance Academy (West Plains, Mo.), miscellaneous papers, 1996
- F. 51: Ozark Radio Network, advertising material, n.d.

- F. 52: Ozarks Medical Center (West Plains, Mo.), printed materials, 1986-1990
 F. 53: Radio, miscellaneous papers, n.d.
 F. 54: *Radio Home-Makers* [magazine], 1929-1931
 F. 55: Rotary International. District 609. Papers, 1956-1994
 F. 56: Sigma Nu Fraternity. Epsilon Beta Chapter No. 627 (Springfield, Mo.), clippings and membership card, 1965-1966
 F. 57: Southwest Missouri State University-West Plains, miscellaneous papers, 1987-2000
 F. 58: *Stromberg-Carlson Exchange* [employee magazine], November 1930
 F. 59: War Ration stamps, 1942
 F. 60: West Plains (Mo.), miscellaneous papers, 1905-2001
 F. 61: West Plains (Mo.), schools, miscellaneous papers, 1924-2001
 F. 62: West Plains Car Club, membership list, 1993-1994
 F. 63: West Plains Chamber of Commerce, maps, ca. 1950s-1960s
 F. 64: West Plains Chamber of Commerce, printed materials, 1950-2001
 F. 65: Willow Springs (Mo.), miscellaneous papers, 1968-1989

<i>r724</i>	<i>12 July 1999</i>	<i>Robert F. Neathery</i>	<i>Gift</i>
<i>r757</i>	<i>27 July 2000</i>	<i>Robert F. Neathery</i>	<i>Gift</i>

Index Cards

<u>Entry</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>
Adams, Alfred O.	4, 48
Aid, C. T.	4
All Saints' Church (West Plains, Mo.).	34
American Guild of Variety Artists.	35
Arkansas Broadcasters Association.	36
Bell, Myrtle Agnes.	48
Boone, Gayle.	48
Boyer, Jerome W.	1
Boyer, L. F.	1
Boyer, Nellie (Neathery).	1
Cable television.	37
Community Cable Company.	37
Challinor, Robert Henry.	34
Churches—Missouri—West Plains.	34
Clouse, J. C.	46
Clubs—Missouri—Howell County.	46, 49
Cole Brothers Air Show.	60
Drury College (Springfield, Mo.).	38
Emerson Electric Company. Turret Division.	39
Fox trotters.	10
Fulton County (Ark.).	40
Fulton County Fair and Livestock Show (Salem, Ark.).	40
Gambill, Thomas Sylvester.	2
Harkness, N. J.	1
Hogan, Robert Sanford.	48
Horse breeding.	10, 46
Howell County (Mo.).	
Howell County Fair and Stock Show (West Plains, Mo.).	41
KWPM (Radio station : West Plains, Mo.).	42
Lake Norfolk (Ark.).	43

McCallon, James Glenn.	48
Missouri Broadcasters Association.	44
Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association.	45
Moark Polled and Horned Hereford Association.	60
<i>Monterey</i> (Aircraft carrier)	47
Mountain Grove (Mo.).	46
Mountain Grove High School (Mountain Grove, Mo.).	46
Mountain Grove Rotary Club.	46
National Radio Home-Makers Club.	54
Naval Air Station Pensacola (Fla.).	47
Neathery, Louise (Gambill), 1909-1992.	3
Neathery, Robert F., 1908-	
Neathery, Robert F., Jr., -1988.	7, 8, 56
Neathery, Shawn.	9
Neathery & Thompson Stables.	10
Neathery family.	14, 15, 16
Optimist Club of West Plains (Mo.).	49
Ozark Area Dance Academy (West Plains, Mo.).	50
Ozark Radio Network (West Plains, Mo.).	51
Ozarks Medical Center (West Plains, Mo.).	52
Ozarks Resource Center (West Plains, Mo.).	60
Radio broadcasting.	53
<i>Radio Home-Makers.</i>	54
Reese, Anne (Jones).	48
Rotary International. District 609.	55
Schools—Missouri—Howell County.	61
Sigma Nu Fraternity. Epsilon Beta Chapter No. 627.	56
Sisco, Marideth.	17, 60
Southwest Missouri State University.	6
Southwest Missouri State University—West Plains.	57
Steger, Overton H.	46
<i>Stromberg-Carlson Exchange.</i>	58
Taylor, Elizabeth Street.	48
Thompson, Paul E.	10, 45
Thornburgh, A. H.	60
West Plains (Mo.).	17-32, 34, 49-52, 57, 60-64
West Plains Car Club (West Plains, Mo.).	62
West Plains Chamber of Commerce (West Plains, Mo.).	63, 64
West Plains Rotary Club (West Plains, Mo.).	55
West Plains Telephone Company.	48
Willow Springs (Mo.).	65
Willow Springs TV Cable Company.	37
Wright County (Mo.)—History—Civil War, 1861-1865.	46
Yarnspinner Press.	60