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# Jack R. Poppele, Radio Engineer

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*A radio engineer's career spanning from the early age of wireless to the age of television may certainly be considered to be "at the right time." For a radio engineer, the New York metropolitan area, with the nation's largest demand for radio and television, is "the right place to be." One man in this place and time was radio engineer Jacob "Jack" R. Poppele. From a ship's radio operator in WWI to his many firsts and successes as chief engineer of radio station WOR from 1922 to 1952, he was at the forefront in his field. During this time, Poppele managed a growing engineering team as his staff expanded over the years from a staff of one, when he was first hired as the only engineer and broadcaster, to a staff of 400 when he left WOR. He later demonstrated his management skills by successfully directing the Voice of America and starting new companies. Thanks to the donation of his papers and scrapbooks to the AWA Museum, we now have another view of his time in radio history. This view of the past shows that Jack Poppele was "the right man at the right time and in the right place."*

## Early Days

Jacob Robert Poppele, shown in Fig. 1, was born in 1894 in Newark, NJ. Like many a youngster growing up at this time, Jack was attracted to "wireless" communication. At the age of 12, he pursued this interest and began to build his own amateur "wireless set." He was soon able to harness this magic force speeding dots and dashes through the ether. Jack was hooked. He decided to make a career in wireless and soon set off from home to start his formal education at the Marconi Wireless School, which may have looked much like the classroom in the Marconi Wireless School in New York City in 1912 shown in Fig. 2.<sup>1</sup> Upon completion of the course Jack was hired on as a ship's radio operator.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 1. Portrait of Jack Poppele c. 1947. (*Proc. IRE*, Vol. 35, 1947, p. 859)

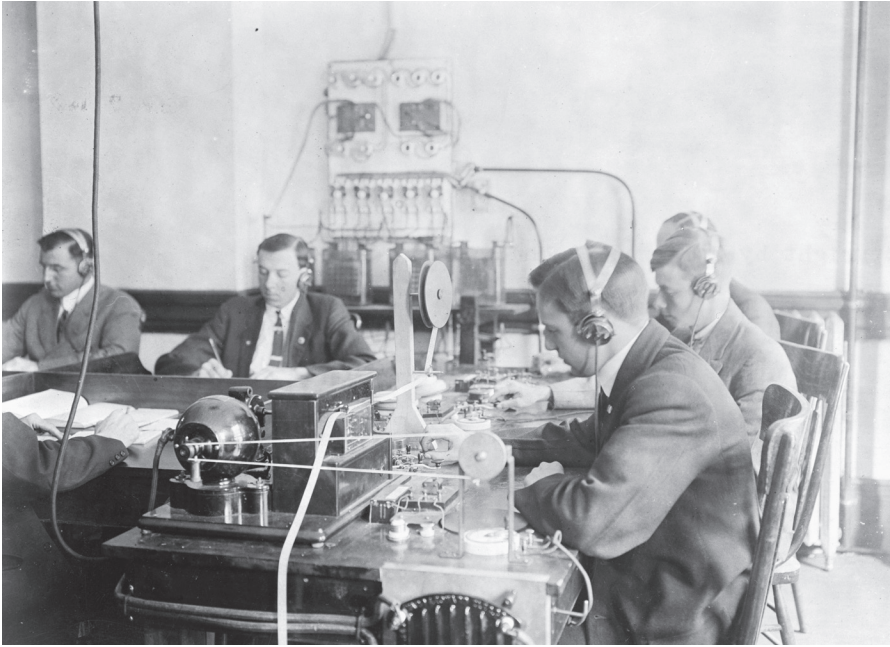


Fig. 2. Marconi Wireless School classroom in New York City, 1912. (Library of Congress)

As the United States became involved in WWI, Jack put his skills to work as a radio operator with the Army Transport Corps, the organization responsible for moving troops and materials required for the war effort. As the war came to an end, Poppele decided it was time to put his feet back on solid ground, and so he returned to Newark.<sup>3</sup>

## Station WOR

### *Establishing WOR*

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Newark was one of the leading cities in the country. Transportation by railroads and the Morris Canal enabled manufacturing to thrive. The city was known for leather production and breweries, but as many other businesses brought money into Newark, people wanted elegant

places where they could spend their money. An early innovator in retailing was Louis Bamberger, who built a major department store in Newark. Desiring to provide the latest products, Bamberger ran classes in wireless telegraphy and telephony as early as 1915 to teach young people the new technology. An example of such a Bamberger class is shown in Fig. 3. Naturally, Bamberger's store also had a radio department to sell receivers, transmitters, and associated parts to these enthusiasts. When Jack Poppele was seeking employment in the radio field, he found a position in Bamberger's radio department as a sales person (see Fig. 4). Jack Poppele is on the phone behind the counter in this photograph, a close-up of which appears in Fig. 5.



Fig. 3. Classroom in the Bamberger School of Wireless, 1915. (*The Sunday Call*, Newark, NJ, July 18, 1915)



Fig. 4. Radio department Bamberger's department store in Newark, 1922. (*WOR Radio 1922-1982*)

## Jack R. Poppele, Radio Engineer



Fig. 5. Jack Poppele on the telephone in the radio department at WOR, 1922. (*WOR Radio 1922–1982*)

In the early days before the broadcast era, customers in radio departments were generally ham radio operators. They would purchase components and assemblies to build their own sets. As radio broadcasting became popular, Bamberger's department store began to sell complete sets to a public that was eager to "listen in." Jack Poppele and others advised Mr. Bamberger that he would sell more broadcast receivers if he provided a working example in the store for potential customers to "listen in." Indeed, Bamberger listened, and Jack Poppele suddenly had a new assignment—he was asked to build a radio station, which Jack did. This station was assigned the call letters WOR, and while it was not the first broadcasting station, it was only the thirteenth station to receive a license. The station went on the air on February 22, 1922, with a power limitation of 250 watts.<sup>4</sup> When the station was "on air," Jack Poppele was both the

engineer and announcer, and when it was not on air, Jack was in the radio department selling receivers, parts, and other associated wireless equipment. The transmitter antenna atop the Bamberger building is shown in Fig. 6, and the first WOR studio is shown in Fig. 7.

After some time had passed, Mr. Bamberger concluded that he had spent enough money running the radio station and planned to shut it down. Poppele was convinced that the full potential of radio advertising had yet to be realized, so he convinced Bamberger to try an experiment. Jack Poppele met with the woman in charge of the Housewares Department at Bamberger's and found they were having difficulty selling certain dishes for



Fig. 6. Postcard depicting Bamberger's Department Store in Newark, NJ, in the early 1920s with a rooftop antenna. (Author's collection)



Fig. 7. First studio for WOR radio in the Bamberger's department store, 1922. (*WOR Radio 1922–1982*)

75 cents. He went on the air to praise the dishes at twice that price and they soon sold out. Mr. Bamberger and the housewares manager were sold on radio. Not only did Jack sell the manager of the Housewares Department on radio advertising, but he also sold her on himself. Jack married the manager, Pauline Bacmeister, on October 30, 1925.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Bamberger soon moved on to a bigger transmitter. WOR's second transmitter was located in Kearney, NJ, with an increase in power to 5 kW.<sup>6</sup> This strong signal and the station's new location between New York City and Newark greatly expanded the range of WOR after it went on the air in 1928. The second WOR studio is shown in Fig. 8, and the second transmitting antenna is shown in Fig. 9.

#### ***Directional Antenna for WOR***

The number of radio listeners in the later 1920s and into the 1930s continued to grow, and with that, so did the demand for better programming and better quality sound. The stations that could supply both would have their voice heard above the growing numbers of broadcasters. Jack Poppele and WOR decided to become leaders in this improved broadcasting. The station had started at 250 watts on the rooftop of the Bamberger's store, then upgraded to a 5 kW station with a large antenna system located between Newark and New York City, and by the early 1930s, plans were being made to increase the transmitter power to 50 kW.

Poppele had an idea to take this



Fig. 8. The second transmitter of station WOR in 1922. (*WOR Radio 1922–1982*)



Fig. 9. The second antenna system for WOR in Kearny, NJ, circa late 1920s. (*WOR Radio 1922–1982*)

upgrade another step forward by designing a new antenna. He took his idea for an improved antenna system to the scientists and engineers at Bell Laboratories,<sup>7</sup> and the result was a new directional broadcast antenna consisting of two towers, with the phase adjusted such that the main lobes were perpendicular to the plane containing the antenna (see Fig. 10). Despite the fact that there were only two towers, the antenna design was actually a phased array consisting of three monopole antennas:

“The one [antenna design] chosen, after considerations of flexibility, control of high angle radiation, and economy of structure, consisted of three quarter-wave antennas approximately one-quarter of a wavelength apart, driven in phase with substantially equal currents. These antennas are located on a line at right angles to the major or axis of the pattern. . . . The center antenna of the array is a copper cable suspended vertically from a steel messenger cable supported by the towers.”<sup>8</sup>

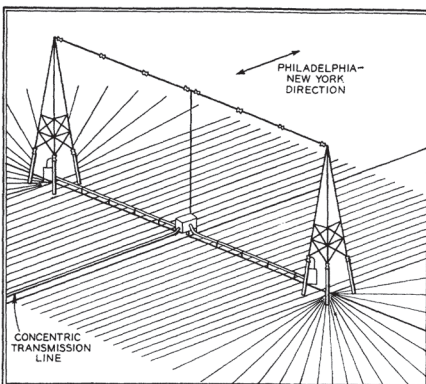


Fig. 10. Proposed directional antenna design for WOR. (*Proc. IRE*, Vol. 24, Aug. 1936, p. 1066)

Jack’s supervisor saw this untried antenna design as too risky, and he declined to request the funding. However, he told Jack that if he presented the plan to the board of directors and won their approval, he could get his antenna. In this way, his supervisor protected himself; if the antenna design failed, it would be Jack’s job that was on the line.<sup>9</sup> The board approved the plan, and land was purchased to place the antenna in Carteret, NJ, a location in a direct line between New York City and Philadelphia, PA—two of the largest media markets in the country at that time. Soon, the better part of 50 kW was beamed from these two antennas to large audiences in the New York and Philadelphia areas (see Fig. 11). The measured radiation pattern shown in Fig. 12 was just as predicted, and Poppele’s job was secure. By 1940, WOR’s revenue from advertisers had increased from \$385,000 to \$1.8 million.<sup>10</sup>

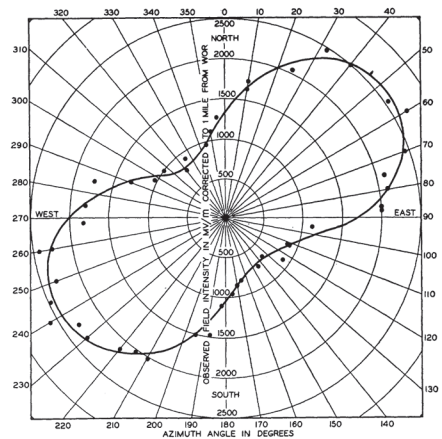


Fig. 11. Measured transmission pattern of the WOR directional antenna array in Carteret, NJ. (*Proc. IRE*, Vol. 24, Aug. 1936, p. 1081)

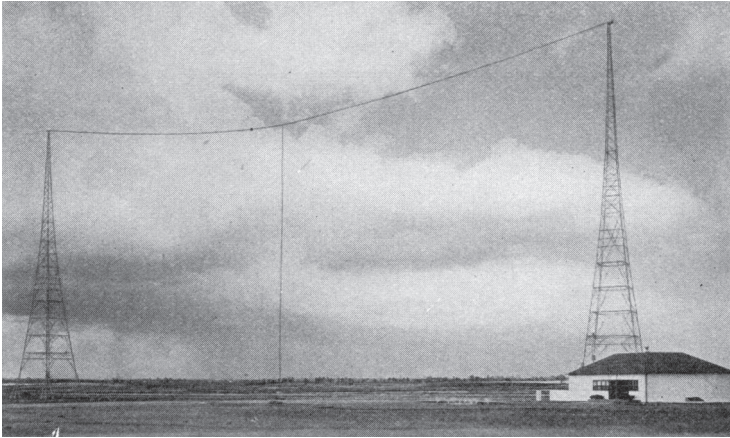


Fig. 12 . Directional antennas for WOR in Carteret, NJ. (*Proc. IRE*, Vol. 24, Aug. 1936, p. 1081)

### ***Facsimile Broadcasting***

While many broadcast stations were experimenting with various mechanical television schemes in the late 1920s and early 1930s, WOR was not one of them. It can be assumed that the management of WOR did not see any hope that these early television broadcasts could produce any revenue from advertising. However, Jack Poppele did see business opportunities for facsimile broadcasting. This radio service would broadcast pictures, information, and even a small newspaper to subscribers with a home receiver. In 1928, the first test at WOR was conducted by sending radio pictures using the Cooley system. This test has been recognized as the first time a commercial radio station broadcast a picture.<sup>11</sup> A receiver was set up as a demonstration in the Bamberger's store. Although other stations began to transmit images with the Cooley system on a regular basis, WOR chose not to continue, and soon the Cooley system faded away.

In the 1930s, Crosley Corporation began to transmit pictures and news items to owners of its Reado printer. WOR affiliated with Crosley, and was one of the stations regularly sending facsimile images after 2 a.m. Poppele made performance tests and forwarded results such as those shown in Fig. 13 to Crosley. Although the Poppele scrapbooks show many samples of Reado images, both good and bad, not enough people wanted to wake up to a pile of facsimile images each morning. After disappointing sales and advertising revenues, the Reado product was discontinued.

Not discouraged by the failure of the Reado, Jack Poppele's interest in facsimile continued. An improved facsimile system, shown in Fig. 14, was introduced by Finch Telecommunications Inc., and the WOR broadcast samples in the scrapbooks show a much-improved image (see Fig. 15). The business model was still to provide a subscription service to home receivers. Again transmissions



were made on WOR after 2 a.m., and also on shortwave bands, where there were no time restrictions. Soon facsimile experiments began on FM (frequency modulation). After many tests, the prospects for a profitable subscription service

faded. There was even less hope for a subscription service when commercial television broadcasting was introduced. Facsimile transmissions of commercial news photos and documents continued, but without WOR.

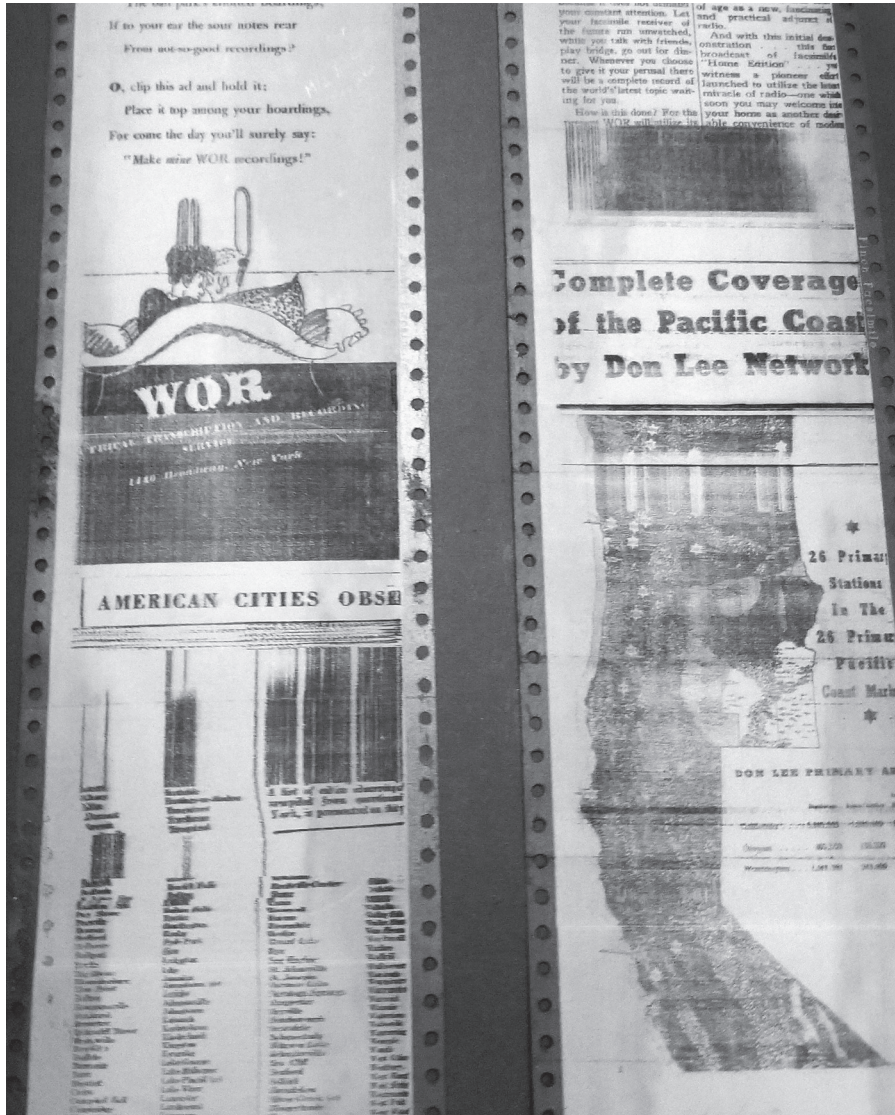


Fig. 13. Reado Company facsimiles transmitted by WOR with printing errors. (Jack Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)



Fig. 14. Jack Poppele checking images from a Finch system facsimile (*WOR Radio 1922-1982*)

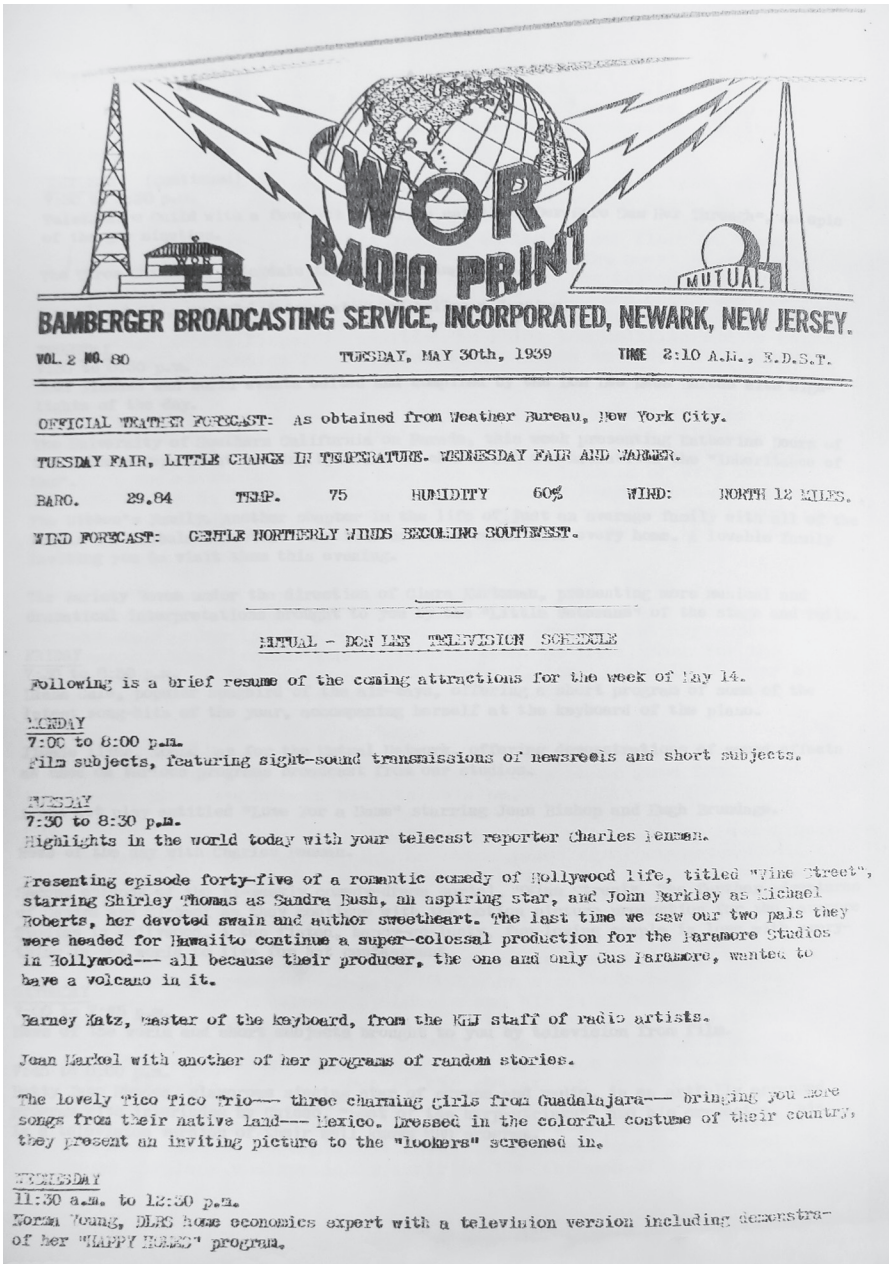


Fig. 15. Sample of a Finch system facsimile. (Popele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

### ***WOR and the Mutual Broadcasting System***

As radio programming and technology advanced, stations often banded together to form networks to share programming, production costs, and advertising revenue. RCA and their National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) had two powerful networks, the red and blue networks. Then, as legend has it, a special man came along—a man powerful enough to challenge these two networks. That man was none other than the “Lone Ranger.” Started at station WXYZ in Detroit, the program had strong appeal to listeners. Wanting to expand their coverage, other stations were contracted to broadcast the program. Soon WXYZ joined WOR, WGN, and WLW to form the Mutual Broadcasting System.<sup>12</sup>

The strong, clear channel, signal of WOR made it the flagship station of the new network, and Jack Poppele served on Mutual’s board of directors. As more programming was added, including the comedy “Lum and Abner” and the popular crime drama “The Shadow,” Mutual grew to have the most stations, and they served their member stations for many years. Although Mutual had more stations than NBC, the NBC networks were more powerful, since most members were larger stations in bigger markets.

### **Jack Poppele and FM broadcasting**

Poppele, as all radio engineers of the time, was well aware of the inventions of Major Edwin Howard Armstrong, and along with his colleagues, Poppele followed the progress of Armstrong’s

long battles against radio static. When Armstrong was ready to introduce his system of wideband FM to provide radio listeners with high fidelity and static free programs, Poppele and WOR were ready to take part. Poppele was a founder of the FM Broadcasters Association and often gave interviews and speeches on the upcoming introduction of FM. He also wrote an article entitled “Primer for FMers” outlining “the necessary steps that should be taken by newspapers and individuals planning to enter FM broadcasting” (see Fig. 16).<sup>13</sup>

In late 1939, Western Electric began the installation of a 1 kW FM transmitter for WOR in Carteret, NJ. This experimental FM station, W2XWI, went on the air on October 15, 1939, on the old FM band on 43.3 MHz. By March 1940, the station was relocated to the WOR studio location at 444 Madison Ave., New York, NY, where it received a new experimental license as W2XOR on 43.4 MHz. In August 1940, this station became the first full time New York FM station on the air from 9 a.m. to midnight, and its name appeared on the R.E.L. (Radio Engineering Laboratories of New York) list of the earliest FM broadcasters (see Fig. 17). Note that Armstrong’s station in Alpine, New Jersey was still in operation. Moving quickly, WOR began contracting with advertisers in December 1940 and placed a new 10 kW transmitter at the site. This new station, with call letters W71NY, began broadcasting on April 1, 1941, on 47.1 MHz. This station is recognized as the first commercial FM station to go on the air.<sup>14</sup> Sometime later, the FCC’s

changed their method of FM call letters allocation, removing numbers from FM station call signs, and W71NY became WOR-FM (see Fig. 18).



**J**ACK POPPELE, vice president and chief engineer of the 50 kw WOR, began service with that station almost at its inception—in early 1922. He has literally grown up with American broadcasting. Originally the station's only engineer, today he heads a staff of 60. In the New York-New Jersey area he has frequently been called upon by operators and prospective operators of local stations, AM and FM, for engineering counsel. Though not a consultant, he has been generous with his time and effort on their behalf. Latterly, they have asked him frequently about FM, and this article is a summation of the suggestions and advice he has given.

## PRIMER *for prospective FMers*

A basic outline of the necessary steps to be taken by newspapers or individuals planning to enter FM broadcasting

by Jack R. Poppele

**T**HE BLANK Evening Gazette has decided to go into FM.

Broadcasting has been completely foreign to its newspaper operation and the men who run it have no illusions about what it takes to operate a successful radio station. They have sized up their competition and they find it formidable.

They realize that they will be competing with people who have been in commercial radio for many years—people who can apply to this new art most of the lessons learned from standard broadcasting.

But they are going ahead, nonetheless, because they see radio as an important adjunct to their newspaper operation and because they are sold on the future of frequency modulation.

An attorney and consulting engineer are hired and an application is filed with the FCC for an FM station in the town of "Blank." The "sweating it out" period begins. Like the expectant father in the time-honored hospital corridor, the applicant for an FM station can do nothing but sit by and wait for

delivery of his conditional grant and, later, his construction permit. With the latter in hand, he is ready to shift gears and get rolling.

What is the next step?

Arrangements should be made immediately for the preparation of architectural plans for the transmitter, studios and property improvement. While there are excellent architects in the "big city" closest to the town of "Blank," it might prove both prudent and economical to procure the services of a local architect. The "Big City" architect would add to his services the cost of traveling to and from the town without actually being available to supervise the course and progress of construction. If a local architect is chosen, he should be supplied with sufficient technical data to develop adequately the plans.

### Securing the Property

The next step is to proceed immediately to secure the necessary property for the location of a transmitter building and antenna. If the town owns the

property, it will be essential to approach the Town Council for the purchase. But whether the property is purchased from the town or an individual, the matter should be given over to an attorney immediately so that he can take the necessary steps to procure title, and to know that the use of the property for a broadcast station conforms to local building codes and regulations.

A conference should be held with the local utilities companies for the supply of power to run the transmitter; for the tower lighting and other services. Arrangements should be made for drinking and toilet facilities. Provisions should be made for telephone service from the studio to the transmitter.

Incidentally, if the water supply line is too costly to install, alternate prices should be obtained, meanwhile, to dig a well on the property. Water can be pumped by an automatic electric pump.

Immediate application should be made to the town for a building permit to erect the transmitter building, tower and other appertenances. The issuance

*(Continued on page 31)*

Fig. 16. Poppele instructional article on FM radio. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

**Jack R. Poppele, Radio Engineer**

R.E.L. F-M Transmitters are no longer in the experimental stage, as proved by the following list of stations which are now servicing the public daily.

STATION	LOCATION	OWNED BY
W2XMN . . .	Alpine, N. J. . . . .	Maj. E. H. Armstrong
W2XAG . . .	Yonkers, N. Y. . . . .	C. R. Runyon, Jr.
W1XOJ . . .	Paxton, Mass. . . . .	Yankee Network
WEOD . . .	Boston, Mass. . . . .	Yankee Network
W3XO . . .	Washington, D.C. . . . .	Janskey & Bailey
W8XVB . . .	Rochester, N. Y. . . . .	Stromberg-Carlson
W2XQR . . .	Long Island City, N. Y. . . . .	J. V. C. Hogan
W9XAO . . .	Milwaukee, Wis. . . . .	The Journal Co.
W8XAD . . .	Rochester, N. Y. . . . .	WHEC, Inc.
W2XOR . . .	Newark, N. J. . . . .	Bamberger Broadcasting Service

*and many others are now being constructed*

Fig. 17. List of experimental FM broadcasters. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)



Fig. 18. Howard Armstrong at the controls of the first commercial FM broadcast on station W71NY; Jack Poppele is on the left and WOR's president, A. J. McKosker, is on the right. (*FM Magazine*, Vol. 1, Nov. 1940, p. 7)

## Jack Poppele and Television

### Early Television

Newspaper clippings from the scrapbooks reveal that Poppele kept a close eye on the development of electronic television, and it can be seen that WOR was preparing to add television to their broadcasting services. Correspondence from RCA and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) kept him advised of technical developments, as well as schedules for test broadcasts sent from the transmitters on the Empire State Building (see Fig. 19). Poppele was also monitoring the work of Allen B. DuMont, which included viewing test broadcasts and reviewing production of home television receivers. Encouraged by these developments, Poppele became a founding member and director of the Television Broadcasters Association.

The 1939 World's Fair announcement by RCA's David Sarnoff marked the official start of commercial television broadcasting. The scrapbooks contain clippings of the early TV broadcast schedules, and it can be seen there was little to offer. The ownership of WOR, L. Bamberger Broadcasting Service, was not a large research or manufacturing corporation. Poppele and the ownership took a wait-and-see attitude toward television. By 1941 more receivers were being sold to the public, and owners began to complain about the lack of programming. The DuMont television station W2XWV (an experimental designation), which would later become WABD (the initials of Allen B. DuMont), broadcast only once a week for a few hours. DuMont had to have staff from the factory in New Jersey travel to New York to

*Alan*

NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY  
TELEVISION STATION W2XWV  
(EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS)  
WEEK OF DECEMBER 29, 1941 to JANUARY 4, 1941

No 54

Video Frequency 51.25 MC) New York City  
Audio Frequency 55.75 MC)

Sunday	2:00-5:00 PM	Test Pattern
Dec 29	7:40-8:40 PM	Test Pattern
	8:40	PM HOCKEY - Direct from Madison Square Garden "N Y Rangers vs Toronto"
Saturday	2:00-5:00 PM	Test Pattern
Jan 4	7:15-8:15 PM	Test Pattern
	8:15	PM BASKETBALL - Direct from Madison Sq. Garden "Fordham U vs North Carolina" and "Long Island U vs Michigan State"

Fig. 19. Published weekly schedule of NBC television broadcasts. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

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run each broadcast. Limited advertising revenue at the time kept DuMont from doing more, and Poppele saw this as an opportunity for WOR. He proposed a plan to DuMont that WOR would send their staff to the DuMont station and run broadcasts on some of the days DuMont could not staff it. This not only satisfied a need for DuMont but also gave Poppele an opportunity to give his staff valuable

television experience before the time was right for WOR to begin<sup>15</sup> its own television broadcasting service. A picture in the Poppele scrapbooks commemorates the first broadcast by the WOR staff using the W2XWV facility on July 13, 1943 (see Fig. 20).

Soon after World War II, manufacturers and broadcasters turned their attention from the war effort to television.



Fig. 20. Crew of WOR's first TV broadcast using DuMont's WABD station. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)



The scrapbooks show many examples of Poppele monitoring the progress of television around the country so that WOR could choose the best time to join in. TV sales and broadcasting soon boomed, and that meant the time was right for WOR to make the move to television. Plans were announced and FCC construction permits were obtained for two stations, one for WOR in New York and the other for WOIC in Washington, D.C. Interestingly, the scrapbooks show that one transmitter was ordered from RCA and the other from GE. This may have been done to expedite construction, since the manufacturers were struggling to keep up with orders, and lead times were long. WOIC-TV began broadcasting

in January 1949, while WOR-TV started later on October 11, 1949, with a crude set up and a few problems, including a lack of audio for part of the program (see Fig. 21).

#### **Early Color TV**

There was a battle raging in the television business in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Two sides, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), fought for the same prize—setting the FCC standards for color television. CBS was promoting its Field-Sequential Color System, invented by Dr. Peter Goldmark, which used a color filter wheel rotated in front of a monochrome picture tube. This



Fig. 21. First broadcast of WOR-TV 9 from New York.

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tube produced a monochrome display of the red content of an image when the red filter passed in front of the tube, followed by the blue image with the blue filter, and then the green image with green filter. The viewer's eye blended these rapid sequential images into a quality color picture (see Fig. 22). The negative attributes of this system included a smaller screen, lower brightness—and worst of all, it was incompatible with all black and white televisions in use.

RCA was promoting a system using the tri-color picture tube that would be compatible with black and white TVs (see Fig. 23). The RCA system still needed

more development before it would be ready for introduction, while the CBS system was ready to go and CBS was seeking approval. At the same time, Allen DuMont and his company were promoting a waiting period before FCC approval until the technology was more fully developed.

Although WOR and Jack Poppele were not part of the battle, Poppele was courted by both sides of the fight. His endorsement, as head of the Television Broadcasters Association and as chief engineer of a radio station that was preparing to add television service, would be very valuable. The Poppele scrapbooks



**Color disc**, held by Inventor Peter C. Goldmark, spins in front of cathode-ray tube. Synchronized with color drum, disc transmits the successive single-color images picked up by camera. Persistence of vision in eyes blends separate color images into integrated full-color picture.

Fig. 22. CBS proposed its Field-Sequential Color System consisting of a colored disk spinning in front of the cathode ray tube that used the eye's persistence of vision to blend the images into full-color pictures; this system was not compatible with exiting black and white televisions. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

### THE RCA TRI-COLOR TUBE

The tri-color picture tube, developed in RCA Laboratories, is an outstanding feature of the RCA all-electronic compatible color television system.

*This tube reproduces images of objects and scenes in full color on its face in the same manner that pictures are shown by a black-and-white receiver. The same tube also reproduces black-and-white signals in black-and-white.*

With the tri-color tube, compatible color sets can be produced with all of the popular screen sizes, including 21-inch or even larger.

The tri-color tube eliminates the need for motors and mechanical spinning color wheels.

To advance the development of color television, RCA

has turned over the tri-color tube to the television industry for experimental use.

### MANUFACTURING AND PROGRAMMING

Unless there is an abrupt change for the better in world conditions, no really substantial number of color receivers will be in use for at least two years.

The requirements of national defense production have already placed a ceiling on the number of television sets that can be manufactured.

If these requirements increase, raw materials and manpower will become scarcer. The consequent curtailment in television production will probably cause black-and-white receivers to be in short supply.

Color television receivers require more material and labor than do black-and-white sets.

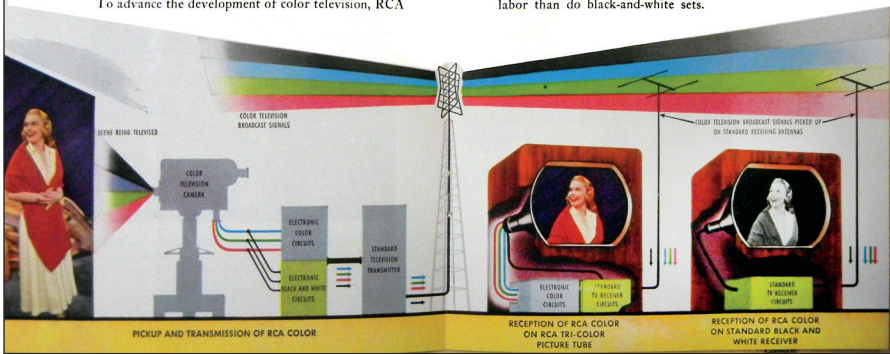


Fig. 23. RCA's Tri-Color System, which used a tri-color picture tube, was compatible with reception on existing black and white televisions. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

show many items related to this topic, including correspondence and invitations to demonstrations from both sides. He also received correspondence from DuMont and others promoting a delay in FCC approval.

### Jack Poppele in Later Years

In the span of 40 years, from building his own transmitter through his long career at WOR, Jack Poppele played a major role in the field of electronic communications. It would be a great experience for anyone to be present for the birth, growth, and beginnings of maturity of his chosen field. Jack Poppele was not only present but he was also a leader in his field, his early work having included introducing and improving AM broadcasting. Soon

after that, he was a pioneer in the introduction of commercial FM broadcasting in New York as well as facsimile broadcasting and television broadcasting.

To be successful in his career, Poppele had to develop more skills than engineering. He had to provide leadership for teams of engineers, manage personnel and departmental budgets, represent his company in professional organizations, and create press releases characterizing developments at WOR. These skills and many more were required during his years at WOR. Jack could not have predicted this future when he first came to sell radios in Bamberger's department store after World War I.

Jack Poppele did not leave WOR for what would have been a well-deserved

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retirement. In 1953, President Eisenhower, then waging the cold war against the Soviet Union, called on Jack Poppele to be director of the Voice of America (VOA) broadcasting stations. He served two terms at this important post, leading 83 stations broadcasting in 43 languages in a war against jamming and propaganda by the Soviet Union. In many countries, the VOA was the only window into the rest of the world. The console from the VOA station in Delano, CA, is now on display at the AWA museum in Bloomfield, NY (see Fig. 24). Included in this display is part of the special 250 kW Collins transmitter from VOA in Delano. There is a plaque on the console dedicating this station to Jack Poppele

and attesting to the fact that he was the director of VOA between 1953 and 1956 (see Fig. 25).

But Jack was still not ready for retirement. He then founded a company, Tele-Measurements Corp., providing equipment for broadcasters. During this time he also served as director or board member of a number of professional organizations and charities (see Table 1).

Jack Poppele passed away on October 7, 1986. He was memorialized by many of his peers and by many organizations. The memorial published by the Radio Club of America tells the many highlights of his personal life and career.<sup>16</sup> From a ship's radio operator in WWI to his many firsts and successes



Fig. 24. Voice of America station console on display at the AWA Museum in Bloomfield, NY. (Author's collection)

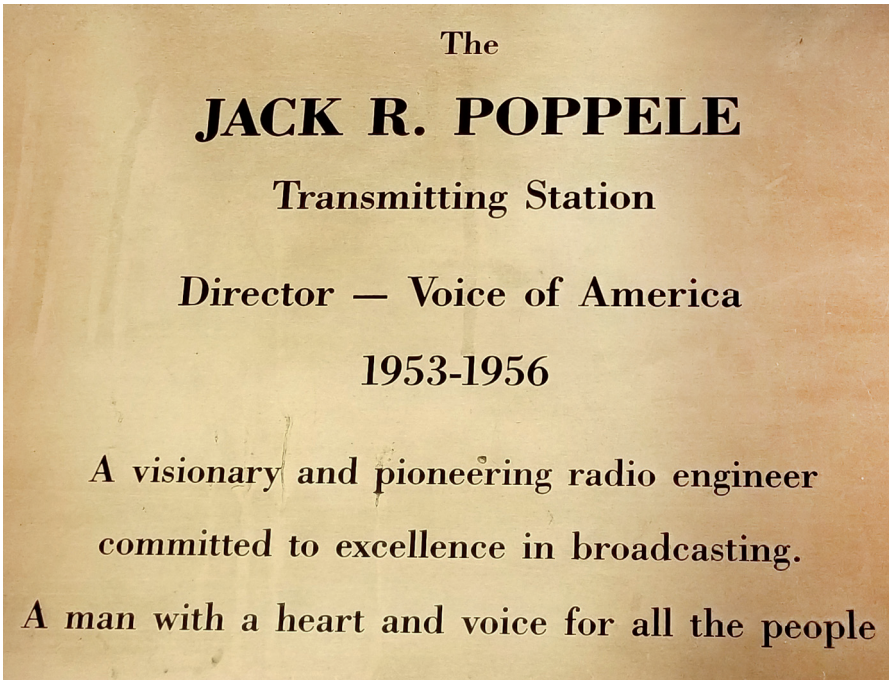


Fig. 25. Dedication Plaque at VOA display AWA Museum Bloomfield, NY. (Author's collection)

**Table 1. Organizations to which Jack Poppele belonged and his position and awards.**

Organization	Position and Awards
Institute of Radio Engineers	Fellow, David Sarnoff award (1974), Allen B. DuMont award (1984), Presidents Award (1980)
Television Broadcasters Association	Founder, Director, President (1945-1951)
FM Broadcasters Association	Founder
National Association Radio and Television Broadcasters	Executive Committee, Engineering
Veteran Wireless Operators Association	President, Director
DeForest Pioneers	President
American Cancer Society, Essex Chapter	Director
Boy Scouts of America, Newark Council	Director

as chief engineer of WOR from 1922 to 1952, he was at the forefront in his field. During this time, Poppele managed a growing engineering team as his staff expanded over the years from a staff of one when he was first hired (Poppele as the only engineer and broadcaster) to

a staff of 400 when he left WOR (see Fig. 26). He later demonstrated his management skills by successfully directing the Voice of America and starting new companies. All of this makes it clear that Jack R. Poppele was truly “the right man, in the right place, at the right time.”

# Poppele Wins Video Award

**WOR Official Honored for  
Contributions to  
Television**

Single out by the American Television Society, Jack R. Poppele of South Orange, vice president of WOR, has been cited as making "the year's outstanding contribution to television."

Poppele is president of Television Broadcasters' Association. He was among the guests of honor at the annual society dinner at the Hotel Barbizon in New York Thursday night.

The award, a plaque was inscribed with a tribute to the WOR executive in recognition of his varied activities in the progress of video during 1946 and 1947.

**Award to Guild**

Poppele, who three months ago was made a member of the board of directors of Mutual Broadcasting System, shared honors of the night

*Honored*



**Jack R. Poppele**

Fig. 26. Scrapbook article honoring Jack Poppele's accomplishments. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

### Postscript

Looking through the scrapbooks, the viewer begins to understand what was happening during the time when Jack Poppele was active, and also what he saw as important to him, which is evidenced by what he saved. One item Poppele saved was a simple postcard addressed to the Chief Engineer of WOR. The message on this postcard (see Fig. 27) makes

the reader wonder what Jack Poppele was thinking when he decided to save it in his scrapbook. After a remarkable career and many accolades, was the post card just a little something that helped keep him grounded in reality? Perhaps it made him remember that no matter how hard you work, you can't please everyone. I guess we will never know.

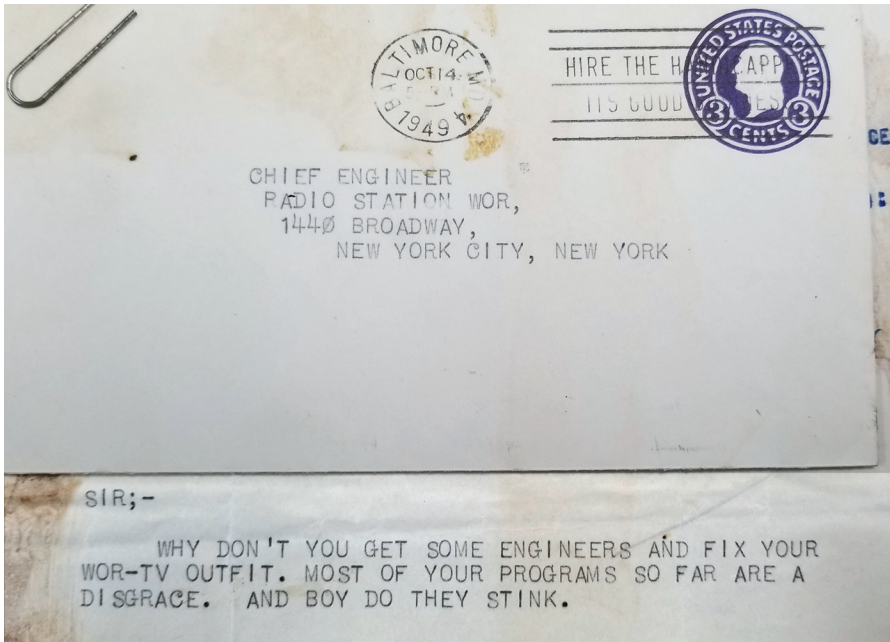


Fig. 27. Postcard from a disgruntled viewer of WOR-TV. (Poppele Scrapbooks, AWA Museum)

## Endnotes

1. Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-107409; <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c07409/>
2. *Proceedings of the Radio Club of America*, Vol. 60, No. 3, p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Marianne Macy; *WOR Radio 1922 – 1982 The First Sixty Years*, (Nightingale Gordon, NY, 1982), p. 4.
5. *Proceedings of the Radio Club of America*, p. 4.
6. Marianne Macy, p. 17.
7. J. R. Poppele, F. W. Cunningham, and A. W. Kishpaugh, "Design and Equipment of a Fifty-Kilowatt Broadcast Station for WOR," *Proc. IRE*, Vol. 24, No. 8, Aug. 1936, p. 1065.
8. *Ibid.*, 1064–5.
9. Marianne Macy, p. 26.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Marianne Macy, p. 16.
12. Gleason L. Archer, *Big Business and Radio*, (American Historical Company, New York, 1939) p. 407.
13. J. R. Poppele, "Primer for Prospective FMers," *Frequency Modulation Business*, Vol. 1, 1946, p. 11.
14. J. R. Poppele, *FM* (magazine) Vol. 1, No. 8, June 1941, p. 12.
15. David Weinstein, *The Forgotten Network: DuMont and the Birth of American Television*, 2004 (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 2006) p. 14.
16. *Proceedings of the Radio Club of America*, Vol. 60 No. 3, p. 5.

## About the Author

Author **Mike Molnar** founded Diagnostic Services Inc. over 35 years ago and it still keeps him very busy. His veterinary nuclear imaging systems are treating horses, cats, and dogs around the world. Two years ago, Mike was inspired to write these articles after he had his first look at the Poppele collection at the AWA museum and decided this should be shared with the AWA Review readers.

**Jack R. Poppele, Radio Engineer**

Also this year, the Red Mill Museum in Clinton, NJ, is continuing the display of over 50 radio items from Mike's collection, and now he will be adding several

pre-war televisions to the display. Mike's wife Pam can't understand why, after sending all of these "electronic fossils" to the museum, the house is still full.



Author Mike Molnar (right) and assistant Lila. Inspired by the Poppele collection, Mike and Lila started their own scrapbook.