

Collection #
P 0454

CHARLES E. WEHR BICYCLING COLLECTION 1897–1950, CA. 1960S

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Barbara Quigley
1 March 2005

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box of photographs, 2 pamphlets
COLLECTION DATES:	1897–1950, ca. 1960s
PROVENANCE:	Purchased from Raymond M. Featherstone, Jr., in February 2002
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	

REPRODUCTION
RIGHTS:

Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection
must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE
FORMATS:

RELATED
HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION 2002.0317
NUMBER:

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bicycling enthusiast Charles Edward Wehr was born on 2 June 1879 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was the son of a German-born saloonkeeper, August Wehr, and his wife, Elizabeth Barbara Kuhn Wehr. Charles appears to have been the eldest of seven children.

At the time of the 1900 census, Wehr was working as a bookkeeper for a business college in Milwaukee. He had been entering bicycle races since at least as far back as 1897.

Wehr moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, around 1907, where he was employed by the Johns–Manville Sales Corporation for about twenty years. Later he went into business for himself as the Charles E. Wehr Company. Because of his knowledge of fire protection measures, he was in charge of the fire-fighting crew at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's 500-mile races for many years. He was a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

Wehr also served in the Park Board Racing Association, the Indianapolis Athletic and Canoe Club's cycling division, and was director of Indianapolis parks. He served on the board of directors of the Amateur Bicycle League of America from its organization in 1920 until his death, and served as a judge for bicycle races. He officiated at every National Road Championship from 1921 to 1940. He was an active cyclist right until his death, riding between twenty-five to fifty miles two or three days every week.

Wehr died on Sunday morning, 26 July 1942, collapsing from a heart attack on the steps of the Indiana World War Memorial in Indianapolis. He was survived by his mother, four sisters, and one brother, all of Milwaukee.

Sources:

Items in collection, including an obituary from the *Indianapolis Star* dated 29 July 1942, and an article from *American Bicyclist Magazine* dated October 1942.

Family Data Collection—Individual Records (<http://www.gale.ancestry.com>). Accessed 24 February 2005.

U.S. Census, 1900 (<http://www.gale.ancestry.com>). Accessed 24 February 2005.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection includes items from the estate of Charles E. Wehr pertaining to his interest in bicycling. Materials include photographs, photocopies of newspaper and magazine clippings, official racing programs, a race entry blank, tickets, and a business card. The majority of photographs show bicycle racers and officials (including Wehr), but there are also photographs of excursion cyclists, high-wheel cyclists, and of a poster announcing a bike race. Many of the newspaper clippings mention Wehr. The collection is arranged into five series, as detailed below.

Series 1, Charles E. Wehr: This series consists of a photograph of Wehr walking down an Indianapolis street in 1941, a few photocopies of newspaper and magazine articles that mention Wehr, and his obituary.

Series 2, Bicycle Races: This series includes two photographs of races in which Wehr rode in Wisconsin in the 1890s. The majority of this series consists of photographs and photocopies of newspaper clippings of races, mostly from 1919–1930s, in Indianapolis (including the first two international six-day races at Butler University’s fieldhouse); Shelbyville, Indiana; St. Louis, Missouri; and a European race. Also included are two official race programs – one from Buffalo, New York (1924), and one from the first six-day race at Butler (1937). Four printed half-tone photo cards of individual racers with advertising for race sponsor Marott’s Shoe Store on the back, two tickets, and a race entry blank are also contained in this series.

Series 3, Bicycle Racers: This series includes photographs of other individual racers not shown in an actual race, as well as some photocopies of newspaper clippings about them. Racers include William Pascoe (Sr.), John White, Jr., and cross-country cyclist Clarence Wagner.

Series 4, Bicycling Excursions: This series consists of three photographs and photocopies of two newspaper clippings of large groups riding in Monticello, Indiana, in 1949 and 1950. Most of the riders came from Chicago on a special Monon excursion train.

Series 5, High-Wheel Bicycles: This series is comprised of one photograph of five people riding high-wheel bicycles around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and one business card advertising high-wheel bicycles and other items for use in parades and festivals.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Charles E. Wehr

CONTENTS

Mounted photo of Charles E. Wehr, in suit and hat, walking down a city sidewalk. On back is written: “Chas E Wehr Indpls 1941 Director Indy Parks” (Indianapolis, 1941).

Photocopies of two articles that mention Charles Wehr from the *Indianapolis News*: “State Title Bicycle Races Set August 4” (6 July 1923, page 25); “Ten-Mile Bike Race at Fairground Saturday” (27 July 1923, page 14).

Photocopy of obituary from *The Indianapolis Star*: “Charles E. Wehr Rites Tomorrow” (29 July 1942).

Photocopies of two articles that mention Charles Wehr, written by Otto Eisele (president of the Amateur Bicycle League of America), on the

CONTAINER

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 1

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 1

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 1

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 1

“Wireless Pick-Ups” page of *American Bicyclist Magazine*: May 1941 (page number unknown); October 1942 (page 45).

Series 2: Bicycle Races

CONTENTS

Racine, Wisconsin (1890s): Mounted photo of racers and their “holders” at starting line of 1897 race (names written on back are **Virum, Wehr, Barnickel, Weber, Kelley, Muss, Bingenheimer,** and **Arndt**). Mounted photo of racers and their “holders” at starting line of 1898 Labor Day race (names written on back are O. **Weber** [1st], A. **Krueger** [of Chicago] [3rd], A. **Mueller**, E. **Kelly**, and C.E. **Wehr** [2nd]).

Indianapolis (1919): Photograph of unidentified racers with their bicycles and a few young boys lined up by the Indianapolis Athletic and Canoe Club building before a race on 17 May 1919 . Photocopy of article that mentions **Wehr**, “Bicycle Race Won by Gibson” (*Indianapolis Star*, 18 May 1919, page 26).

Buffalo, New York (1924): Official program for the National Road Bicycle Championship of the United States held by the Amateur Bicycle League of America on 5–6 September. Eight pages (including front and back covers) list the officials as well as the racers and events in different categories.

St. Louis, Missouri (1925): Mounted photo of eight officials, including Charles **Wehr**, for the Amateur Bicycle League of America championship race on 6 September.

Butler University, Indianapolis (1937): Overhead photo of racers during the first six-day bike race at Butler Field House on 15 February. Photo of Gustave **Kilian** and Heinz **Vopel**, winners of the six-day race, beside their bicycles. Photocopies of newspaper clippings: “Work Progresses on Building Bicycle Track at Butler Fieldhouse” (*Indianapolis Star*, 12 February); “Two More Riders Arrive for Races” and “Bicycle Champions at Marott’s Today” (*Indianapolis Star*, 12 February); “Bike Riders Tune Up at Motor Speedway” (*Indianapolis Star*, 13 February); “Bike Riders Ready for Starting Gun” (*Indianapolis Star*, 14 February); “Fieldhouse Track Ready for Start of Bike Races: Entrants Complete Training” (source

CONTAINER

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 2

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 3

Pamphlet Q: GV1049 .A6
1924

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 4

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 5

unknown, 14 February); “Six-Day Bike Riders Hit Trail at Butler Fieldhouse” (*Indianapolis Star*, 15 February); advertisement for the event (source unknown); “German Team Wins Six-Day Bike Race” (*Indianapolis Star*, 21 February).

Butler University, Indianapolis (1937): Official program for the Indianapolis First International 6-Day Bike Race held on 15–20 February at Butler University Field House. Sixteen pages (plus front and back covers) include a list of the officials, rules, profiles and photos of the racers, definitions of racing expressions, and advertisements.

Pamphlet Q: GV1049 .O43
1937

Shelbyville, Indiana (1937): Photo of boys on bikes at the starting line of the state amateur bike race at the Shelby County Fairgrounds. Photocopy of newspaper articles: “Make Ready for Opening of Fair” (*Shelbyville Democrat*, 7 August 1937, page 1); “Crowd Witnesses Bicycle Racing” (*Shelbyville Democrat*, 9 August 1937, page 1).

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 6

Butler University, Indianapolis (1938): Four printed half-tone photo cards of individual racers, with advertising for Marott’s Shoe Store on the back of each one: Jules **Audy**, Geary **May**, Henri **Le Page**, and Jackie **Sheehan**. Two tickets: “Indianapolis’ Second International 6 Day Bike Race at Butler Fieldhouse Apr. 3rd to Apr. 9th, incl. Continuous Day and Night” and “This Ticket Will Admit Bearer and Members of His Party to the 6 Day Bike Race 6 at 25¢ Each for a Regular 40¢ Seat / Good Only Wednesday, April 6 / Thursday, April 7 / Butler Fieldhouse.” Photocopies of newspaper clippings: photos of racers Freddie **Spencer** and Piet **VanKempen** (*Indianapolis Star*, 2 April); “20 Riders Ready for Start of Six-Day Race Tonight” (*Indianapolis Sunday Star*, 3 April).

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 7

Shelbyville, Indiana (1938): Unused official entry blank for the Indiana–Kentucky Association Amateur Athletic Union bicycle championships to be held at Shelbyville County Fair Track, 28 August 1938. (The form mentions C.E. **Wehr** as chairman of the Cycling Committee.)

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 8

Indianapolis (n.d.): Photo of a poster advertising “Bicycle Races / Riverside Park / July 4th / 10:30 A.M. / 3:30 P.M. / Free.”

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 9

Europe (early 20th century): Photo of European racers at the start of the Prix Henri Contenet, including Victor **Linart** of Belgium and his “handler” Woody **Hedspath**, a former champion

Photographs, Box
1, Folder 10

black racer from Indianapolis. Accompanying note states that Hedspath was better known in Europe at the time than Major Taylor, but has remained a mystery, and that he is little known in the United States racing circles.

Series 3: Bicycle Racers

CONTENTS

Photo of William **Pascoe** (Sr.) and John **White**, Jr., on their bicycles in University Park in Indianapolis in 1925. Photocopy of newspaper clipping that includes a photo of **Pascoe** and mentions Charles E. **Wehr**: “To Compete for Championship” (*Indianapolis News*, 5 September 1923, page 20).

Photo of coast-to-coast cyclist Clarence **Wagner** on his bicycle (Terre Haute, Indiana, n.d.). Photo of Clarence **Wagner** of Terre Haute in front of Hoffman Sporting Goods Company with C.E. **Wehr**, Wendell **Hoffman**, Frank **Kam[ps?]**, and others (Indianapolis, 27 August 1923). Photocopy of newspaper clippings: “Coast-to-Coast Biker Starts on Long Journey” (*Indianapolis News*, 9 August 1923, page 10); “Amateur Biker ‘Beats’ Through Indianapolis: Terre Haute Rider Far Ahead of Record of 28 Days Made Last Year” (*Indianapolis News*, 27 August 1923, page 18); obituary for Clarence **Wagner** (*Terre Haute Star*, 5 April 1936, page 2).

CONTAINER

Photographs,
1, Folder 11

Box

Photographs,
1, Folder 12

Box

Series 4: Bicycling Excursions

CONTENTS

Three photographs of bike riders from Chicago cycle train shows the group excursion biking around Monticello, Indiana, and gathered outside of a building (photos by Harry Knipp, Jr., 1949 and 1950). Photocopies of newspaper articles: “246 Bike Riders Invade Monticello Sunday For Tour of Lake Shafer” (unidentified Monticello newspaper, 10 October 1949, pages 1 and 4); “Chicago Cyclists Enjoy Day Here: 195 Chicagoans Pedal Around Lake” (*Monticello Herald-Journal*, 9 October 1950, pages 1 and 4).

CONTAINER

Photographs,
1, Folder 13

Box

Series 5: High-Wheel Bicycles

CONTENTS

Photo of five people riding high-wheel bicycles around the track at the Indianapolis Motor

CONTAINER

Photographs,
1, Folder 14

Box

Speedway (ca. 1960s?).

Business card of Sarah K. Melvin E. **Roler** advertising “high wheel autos, bicycles, grind organs, Irish mails, etc.” “for parades, festivals & centennials” (Greenfield, Indiana, n.d.). Written on the card is the name of Dean **Roler** of New Palestine, Ind.

Photographs,
1, Folder 14

Box

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0454).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.