

The Russell L. Powell Materials: Two Generations of the Powell Family, 1876–1984

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The Russell L. Powell collection at the Indiana Historical Society's William H. Smith Memorial Library is composed of only one folder. It contains a map of Wells County, Indiana; a letter written in 1900; a few Spanish-American War-era newspaper articles; an oral history interview report; and several railway transit personnel cards issued over several years to Russell Powell.

Though the collection is small, we are still able to form a general impression of Russell Powell's life through its materials: Powell worked on the railway for most of his adult life, and he was interviewed about it. His father, Charles Powell, was stationed in the Philippines for two years and continually communicated with his family in Wells County, Indiana.

Armed with this information, we are able to use other sources to trace his lineage and learn more about him. Russell L. Powell was born on October 29, 1903, to Charles and Lula (Wagner) in Wells County, Indiana. Russell was the eldest of three children; his siblings were Mildred and Lee, who were born circa 1907 and 1912. Charles fought in the Philippines in the Spanish-American War and later worked as a contractor on the Northwestern Division of the Terre Haute, Indianapolis and Eastern Traction Company. At age fifteen, Russell started his own career on the railroad as a water cooler, later graduating to brakeman, motorman, and track operator. Once passenger rail declined, he served as a bus driver and a forklift operator.¹

After moving from Wells County with his parents early in life, Powell remained in central Indiana for the majority of his first thirty years. This also is where he married Avis May Huffman on December 30, 1923, and where he established his own home.² However, the 1940 census found him in Huntington, nearer his birthplace, with his family, which now included his children, Hildreth and Lewis. Powell worked as a bus driver, and his routes took him daily to Fort Wayne and Indianapolis.³ After leaving the post of bus driver, he worked another twenty-

one year at a milk plant and later as a forklift operator. He retired in 1966. At some point, Powell moved to Arthur, Illinois, where he later died.⁴

The family lineage below includes information on two generations of the Powell family, indicating dates and locations of births, marriages, and deaths, and is intended as a springboard for further research. Information on living persons has been omitted.

Notes

1. Russell L. Powell Materials, 1876–1984 (SC 2805), William H. Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society.
2. Entry for Russell Lewis Powell and Avis May Huffman, December 30, 1923, Boone County, Indiana, *Indiana Select Marriages, 1780-1992* database, Ancestry.com.
3. 1940 U.S. Census, Indiana, Huntington, Huntington Township, enumeration district 35-7, page 9A, household 194, Russell L. Powell; digital images, Ancestry.com, citing NARA microfilm publication T627, roll 1055.
4. Russell Powell Materials, 1876–1984.

Lineage

Charles Eugene Powell

b. October 22, 1877, in Wells County, Indiana

d. June 16, 1960, in Indianapolis, Indiana

m. December 1900 **Lula Esmay Wagner**, b. June 6, 1883, in Wells County, Indiana;

d. April 15, 1973, in Logansport, Indiana

Children:

1. **Russell Lewis Powell**

b. October 29, 1903, in Ossian, Indiana

d. October 7, 1994, in Arthur, Illinois

m. December 30, 1923, in Lebanon, Indiana, **Avis May Huffman**, b. February 20, 1905, in Milledgeville, Indiana; died September 15, 1965, in Ossian, Indiana

2. **Mildred M. Powell**

b. ca. 1907 in Indiana

d. October 31, 1995, in Springfield, Ohio

3. **Lee Vear Powell**

b. ca. 1912 in Indiana

d. June 25, 1998, in Lebanon, Indiana

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