

# CURRICULUM GUIDE

## Going to Town: How the Automobile Changed Indiana

*by Janet Brown*

*for the Indiana Historical Society Indiana Experience*

## You Are There 1924: *Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies*



INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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This lesson coordinates with the *You Are There 1924: Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies* component of the *Indiana Experience* at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center. In this experience, visitors are invited to step back in time to 1924 to visit the re-created Liniger brothers' plumbing, tinning, and roofing shop in Hartford City, Indiana. Auto mechanics from the George Greenlee Ford dealership next door worked in this space through an agreement Greenlee had with the Linigers. The Linigers conducted most of their work in homes and businesses around town, leaving the space available for use by Greenlee's mechanics. The curriculum is intended to provide historical context for life in Indiana and, in particular, life in Blackford County and Hartford City, Indiana, in the 1920s. The lesson may be used to prepare students for a visit to *You Are There 1924: Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies* or it may be used as a follow-up to a visit. In addition, the historical context and themes will be relevant to classroom instruction even if a visit is not possible. *You Are There 1924: Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies* opens March 20, 2010, and will remain open until February 27, 2011.

### Overview/Description

This lesson looks at the ways the automobile changed rural and urban areas and resulted in new types of businesses.

### Grade Level

Elementary (grades 4 and 5) and middle/intermediate school (grades 6, 7, and 8)

### Academic Standards

- Indiana Standards
  - Grade 4
    - English 4.4.4—Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarities and differences, and posing and answering a question.
- Science 4.1.7—Discuss and give examples of how technology has improved the lives of many people, although benefits are not equally available to all.
- Grade 5
  - English 5.4.4—Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarities and differences, and posing and answering a question.
  - Science 5.1.6—Explain how the solution to one problem may create other problems.
- Grade 6
  - Social Studies 6.1.15—Describe the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the lives of individuals and on trade and cultural exchange between Europe and the Americas and the rest of the world.
  - Social Studies 6.1.17—Compare the opportunities and dangers related to the development of a highly technological society.
  - English 6.4.4—Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarities and differences, and posing and answering a question.
  - Science 6.1.9—Explain how technologies can influence all living things.

- Grade 7
  - English 7.4.4—Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarities and differences, and posing and answering a question.
- Grade 8
  - Social Studies 8.1.27—Give examples of scientific and technological developments that changed cultural life in the nineteenth-century United States, such as the use of photography, growth in the use of the telegraph, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and the invention of the telephone.
  - English 8.4.4—Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarities and differences, and posing and answering a question.
- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies)
  - I Culture
    - Compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.
  - II Time, Continuity, and Change
    - Identify and use key concepts such as chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity.
  - III People, Places, and Environment
    - Examine, interpret, and analyze physical and cultural patterns and their interactions, such as land use, settlement patterns, cultural transmission of customs and ideas, and ecosystem changes.
  - Describe ways that historical events have been influenced by, and have influenced physical human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings.
- VIII Science, Technology, and Society
  - Examine and describe the influence of culture on scientific and technological choices and advancements, such as in transportation, medicine, and warfare.
  - Show through specific examples how science and technology have changed people’s perceptions of the social and natural world.

### **Social Studies/Historical Concepts**

Effects of inventions on daily life, technology, and the automobile

### **Learning/Instructional Objectives**

Students will use primary sources to see how the development of the automobile caused many changes in rural areas.

### **Time Required**

One class period

### **Materials Required**

- Paper to create books
- Writing and drawing materials
- A copy of *The Little House* by Virginia Burton (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1942.) This is a picture book that describes how a house in a rural area becomes part of a city as the city grows.
- Copies of the following images from the Indiana Historical Society collection. See pages 7 through 16 of this lesson.
  - Image of women pushing an automobile (Indiana Historical Society, Indiana Extension Homemakers Association, M0828, Visual Collections, Photographs, Box 2, Folder 4)

- Image of mules pulling an automobile (Indiana Historical Society, Indiana Extension Homemakers Association, M0828, Visual Collections, Photographs, Box 2, Folder 4)
- Michigan City gas station (Indiana Historical Society, Consumer Service Company Photographs, ca. 1915, P0274)
- Rural gas station (Indiana Historical Society, Consumer Service Company Photographs, ca. 1915, P0274)
- “Terre Haute House Garage,” 1929 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_N\_009506)
- “Small Town Road with Businesses and Homes,” ca. 1930 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_N\_012896\_005)
- “Mobil Gas Station,” ca. 1920 (Digital Image Collection Item ID P0129\_N\_012896\_001)
- “Business District Street Scene,” 1914 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0391\_BOX3\_MONTPELIER\_002)
- “Automobile Station, Frankfort, Indiana,” 1905-1950 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0391\_BOX2\_FRANKFORT)
- “Wabash Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana,” ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_EXHIBIT\_BOX\_FOLDER1\_101)
- “Charles Rogers Huckster Wagon Converted to an ‘RV’ ” (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 1994\_1297X\_001)

## Background/Historical Context

By the 1920s, the automobile was beginning to have a profound impact on the Indiana landscape. This was true for rural areas, towns, and cities alike. Today, the automobile is such a ubiquitous part of our culture that it is hard to imagine what the landscape looked like before the automobile age transformed it. Previous forms of transportation, such as railroads and streetcars, had affected the shape and layout of cities as well, but automobiles completely changed the nature of the city core/outlying suburb relationship.

City growth might be characterized by three phases: the “walking city” (pre-1880), the “streetcar city” (1880–1920), and the “automobile city” (post-1920).<sup>1</sup> “Walking cities” were very compact and residences and businesses were located close together at the city center. Many cities prior to 1880 had a city square that served as a meeting place, location for a city market, and the parade grounds for special occasions. Streets in “walking cities” were narrow and could only accommodate pedestrians or riders on horseback. Late in the “walking city” era, omnibuses, cablecars, and horse-drawn streetcars appeared as a means of mass transit.<sup>2</sup>

The Industrial Revolution brought about the “streetcar city” as thousands of people—both migrants and immigrants—flocked to the cities to work in factories. Industrial cities continued to have a recognizable city center, which was the place for businesses, commerce and trade, retail ventures, hotels, and cultural activities. During this time (1880s–1920s), the middle and upper classes began to move their residences from the city center to suburbs. Working classes remained in city centers so that they had easy access to their workplaces. By the 1880s, electric streetcars and light rails (to surrounding towns) were replacing

<sup>1</sup>Martin V. Melosi, “Automobile in American Life and Society: The Automobile Shapes the City,” University of Michigan: [http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environmet/E\\_Casestudy/E\\_casestudy.htm](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environmet/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy.htm) (accessed December 10, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Melosi.

the omnibuses, cablecars, and horse-drawn streetcars of the “walking city” era.

The “automobile city” came into being in the post-World War I era. During this time, the city center ceased to exist as the place of business, social, and cultural life. People who could afford to move relocated their residences to the suburbs, leaving inner cities to low income, often minority residents. This dispersal of population did not occur based on a fixed pattern of rail lines as it had during the “streetcar era,” but rather as a general expansion of the city’s borders, and eventually as fragmented “sprawl.” The automobile created a trend toward what historian Joseph Interrante calls a “supercommunity,” an enlarged city that swallowed up independent towns, villages, and rural communities as it grew.<sup>3</sup>

The automobile made the countryside accessible for city folk. People living in towns and cities began to take country drives. Camping, hunting, fishing, and taking vacations in the national parks added a new dimension to leisure activities for people in the late 1920s. (These changes in leisure activities are further discussed in the lesson.)

Rural areas were also profoundly affected by the automobile. Initially, many rural residents were very skeptical of the automobile. They saw it as a “devil wagon” that frightened their livestock and rutted up roads.<sup>4</sup> However, farmers were actually among the first to adopt the automobile in large numbers. Automobiles enabled farmers to make frequent trips to town and to travel to more villages (rather than just to the closest one).<sup>5</sup> Farmers used automobiles to transport livestock or crops to market. They also used it to gain access

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Interrante, “The Road to Autopia: The Automobile and the Spatial Transformation of American Culture,” in *The Automobile and American Culture*, David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, editors. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1980. p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Walsh, “Gender and the Automobile in the United States: Gender and Automobility: The Pioneering and Early Years,” *Automobile in American Life and Society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan [http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environmet/E\\_Casestudy/E\\_casestudy.htm](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environmet/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy.htm) (accessed December 4, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Interrante, 95–97.

to commercial services, such as department stores. No longer did they have to rely on goods they made themselves or those delivered by mail order. Furthermore, the automobile spurred the creation of consolidated schools and established churches (rather than itinerant preachers who held services in a local schoolhouse). Whereas cities tended to become decentralized as a result of the automobile, rural areas experienced a “centralization of institutions and activity.”<sup>6</sup> Activities that once took place on individual farms and in institutions that served only a few farm families shifted to larger villages that drew families now able to travel more easily due to the automobile.

In particular, the lives of rural women were transformed. The isolation of farm life affected women most profoundly. Women, busy with farm chores, only infrequently left the farm for the long trip to town in a buggy or wagon. The automobile gave rural women the means to reach town more quickly for shopping, selling farm produce, and attending farm clubs. It also enabled them to visit more with other rural friends and family members.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, the automobile seemed to threaten traditional rural family life. It was particularly worrisome that the rural family home was no longer the center of entertainment. Leisure time was spent searching for fun and excitement in the nearest city instead of within the family. For young people, courting no longer took place in the family home, but in the automobile where there was less supervision and control from parents. Rural residents increasingly felt they were losing control of family life to outside influences.

Along with these changes to the very nature of the city and rural environment came new automobile-related businesses that dotted the landscape. Motorists needed places to fill their automobiles with gas and oil; purchase replacement parts, tires and batteries; or to store their automobiles. They also needed service stations where repairs might be made to their vehicles. In the early days of the automobile, these amenities were hard to find.

<sup>6</sup> Interrante, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Walsh.

However, as automobiles grew in popularity, gas stations, service stations, and parts stores began to dot the landscape. By the 1920s, more than 60,000 service stations were in business, and by 1935 more than 200,000 gas stations could be found across America.<sup>8</sup> In Hartford City, Indiana, for example, the George Greenlee Garage and the Auto Accessory and Vulcanization Company, owned by George J. Overmyer and C. H. Overmyer, grew out of the use of the automobile.

Drivers also required better roads for their automobiles. Particularly in rural areas, dirt roads could become impassable due to mud or ruts. Henry Ford tried to address this problem in the design of the Model T, which sat high up and was designed to conquer rough roads. In the 1920s, the federal government increased funding for road improvements, as did state and local governments. By 1930 approximately 23 percent of the nation's total road mileage was surfaced.<sup>9</sup>

Traffic signs and signals, parking meters, roadside restaurants, and motels round out the list of physical changes to the landscape that came about as a result of the automobile. Virtually everywhere we look today we see the imprint of this technology. Many of these changes were in full swing by the 1920s.

## Teacher's Instructional Plan

### Introduction

Read the classic book, *The Little House*, to the class (if time is a consideration, reading the first half will suffice). Discuss with students how the house in the book was once located in a rural area, but became part of a growing city.

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<sup>8</sup> "Fill 'er Up," America on the Move: Smithsonian Museum of American History, [http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/exhibition/exhibition\\_8\\_5.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/exhibition/exhibition_8_5.html) (accessed December 5, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Walsh.

## Procedure

- Show students the Indiana Historical Society images provided in this lesson and, as a class, list the various automobile-related changes to the culture and landscape depicted in the photographs. Items that the class might note include women pushing a car stuck on a muddy road, gas stations, repair shops, automobile sales shops, crowded streets, traffic signals, street lights, policemen, parking considerations, tire and other supply stores, restaurants, hotels, road paving, etc.
- In small groups, have students brainstorm the opportunities created as well as the problems caused by the automobile.
- Each small group will write and illustrate a book showing at least three ways that the automobile changed everyday life. The group may choose to write their book from the perspective of an individual living in a rural area or from the perspective of an individual living in a town. Students should consider both the benefits and negative consequences of the automobile.

## Assessment

The teacher will assess each group's book, looking for three appropriate ideas and supporting details. Benefits for the farm family could include: less isolation, ease of shopping for supplies, getting crops to market, or access to church and other social activities. Benefits for the town dweller could include: increased job opportunities, vacations, and leisurely country drives. Negative consequences for the rural resident might include: damage to their property, worries about outside influences on the family, and concerns about businesses taking farmland. Negative consequences for the urban person might include: worries about a car breaking down, traffic hassles, or danger to children who were used to playing in the streets.

## Suggested Modifications

- Students may look in their local community for contemporary businesses and industries that are driven by the automobile.
- Students may talk with grandparents or older people in the community to discover what they remember about the community when they were young. How has the landscape changed? How have automobiles affected the community?
- Students might draw a mural showing the chain of events that made their community what it is today. They should consider what might have been in the community before current businesses or housing developments. What would have preceded those businesses or residences? Students should add a sentence explaining each section of their mural. You might ask local historical societies to help students in their research.
- Students might write an editorial as if they had been present at the time that a certain business or housing development in the community was built. Students should present an argument for or against this new business or housing development. They should try to persuade readers to agree with their point of view.

## Additional Resources

### Publications

Drummond, Allan. *Tin Lizzie*. New York: Farrar Straus, and Giroux, 2008.

Grandpa passes along the history of the automobile and its effects.

Kornely, MaryAnn. *On the Move*. New York: Bulfinch Press Book, 2000.

Twentieth-century transportation as depicted in *Life* magazine.

Sandler, Martin W. *Driving Around the USA: Automobiles in American Life*. New York: Oxford Press, 2003.

The history and effect of the automobile on American life and culture.

Whitman, Sylvia. *Get Up and Go: a History of American Road Travel*. New York: Lerner Publishing Company.

Examines how people travel the United States from Indian trails to interstates and the impact on society.

### Web Sites

Automotive Trade Literature Collection. "From Horses to Horsepower: Studebaker Helped Move a Nation." Smithsonian Institute Libraries. <http://www.sil.si.edu/ondisplay/studebaker> (accessed October 15, 2009). The story of and artifacts about the Studebaker car.

Berger, Michael. Federal Highway Administration. "Farmers, Flivvers, and Family Life: The Impact of Motoring on Rural Women and Their Kin." <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/womens/chap7.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2009). Article outlining the effect of the automobile on culture and life of American women and families.

National Museum of American History. "Americans Adopt the Automobile." Smithsonian Institute. <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ONTHEMOVE/exhibition/exhibition81.html> (accessed October 15, 2009). Supporting materials from the Smithsonian's On the Move exhibit about how the automobile affected American culture and daily life.

University of Michigan. "Automobile in American Life and Society." Dearborn and Benson Ford Research Center. <http://autolife.umd.umich.edu/> (accessed October 15, 2009). Articles about suburbanization and the environmental impact of the automobile.





Image of women pushing an automobile (Indiana Historical Society, Indiana Extension Homemakers Association, M0828, Visual Collections, Photographs, Box 2, Folder 4)



Image of mules pulling an automobile (Indiana Historical Society, Indiana Extension Homemakers Association, M0828, Visual Collections, Photographs, Box 2, Folder 4)



Michigan City gas station (Indiana Historical Society, Consumer Service Company Photographs, ca. 1915, P0274)



Rural gas station (Indiana Historical Society, Consumer Service Company Photographs, ca. 1915, P0274)



“Terre Haute House Garage,” 1929 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_N\_009506)

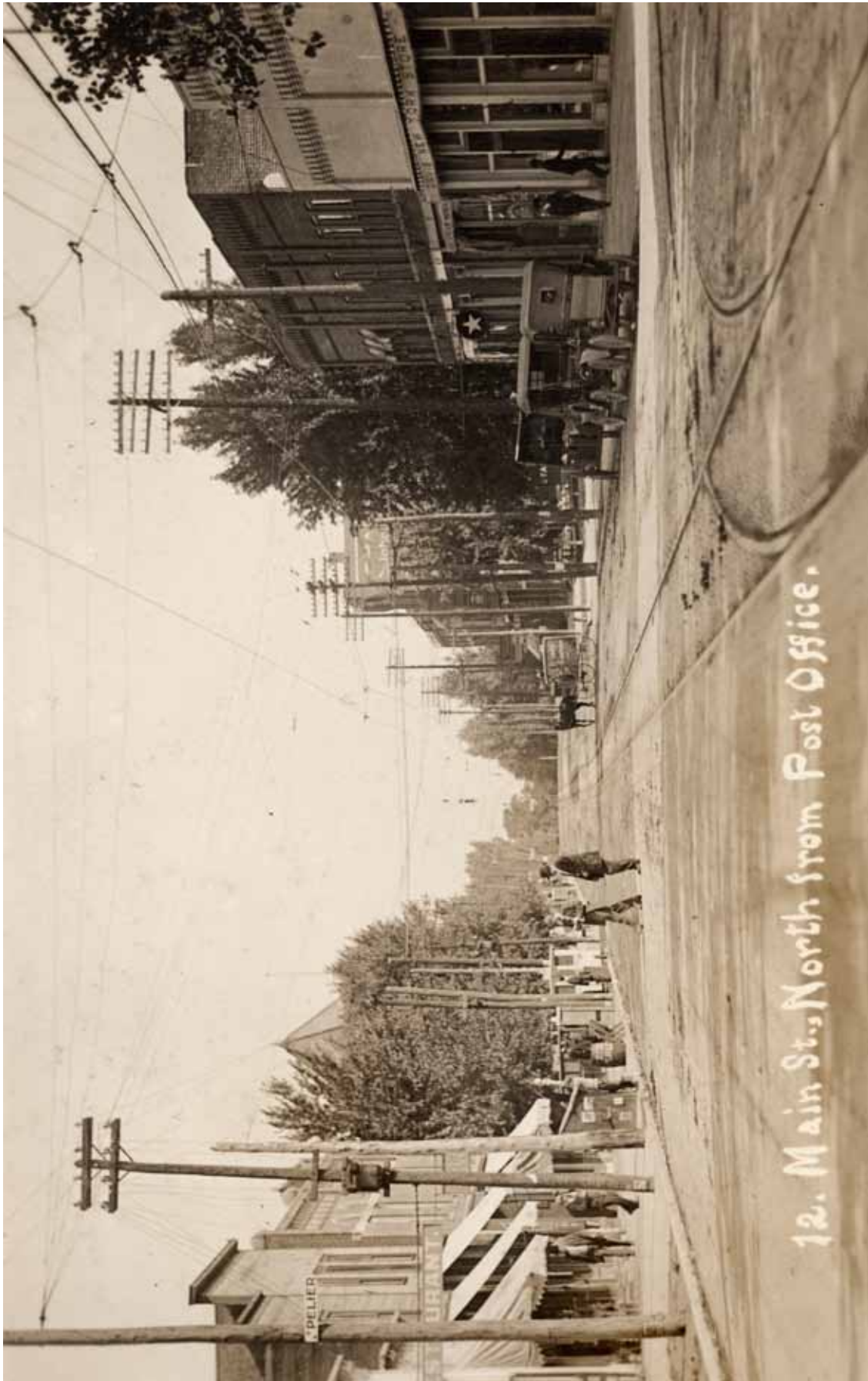




“Small Town Road with Businesses and Homes,” ca. 1930 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_N\_012896\_005)



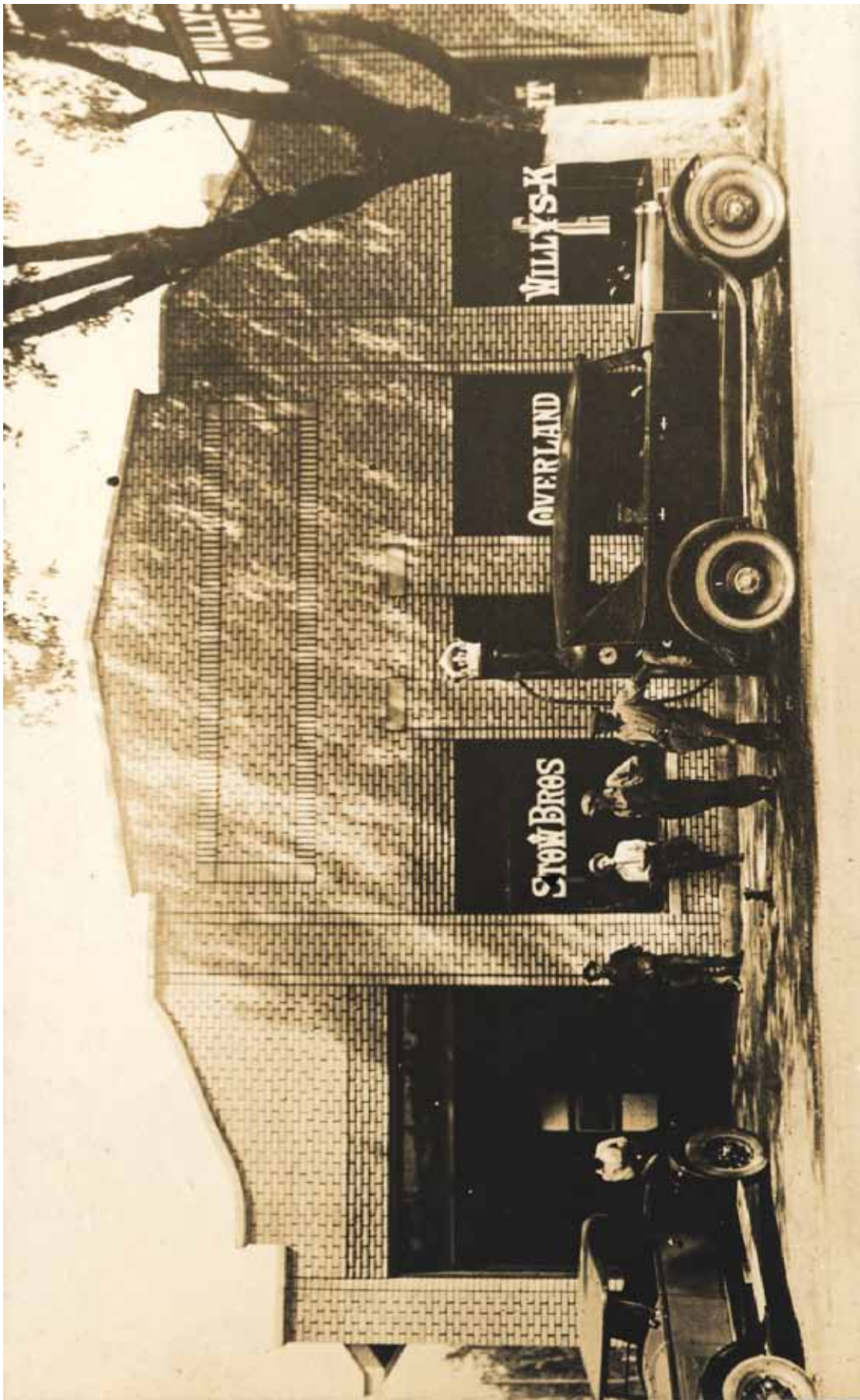
“Mobil Gas Station,” ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_N\_012896\_001)



12. Main St., North from Post Office.

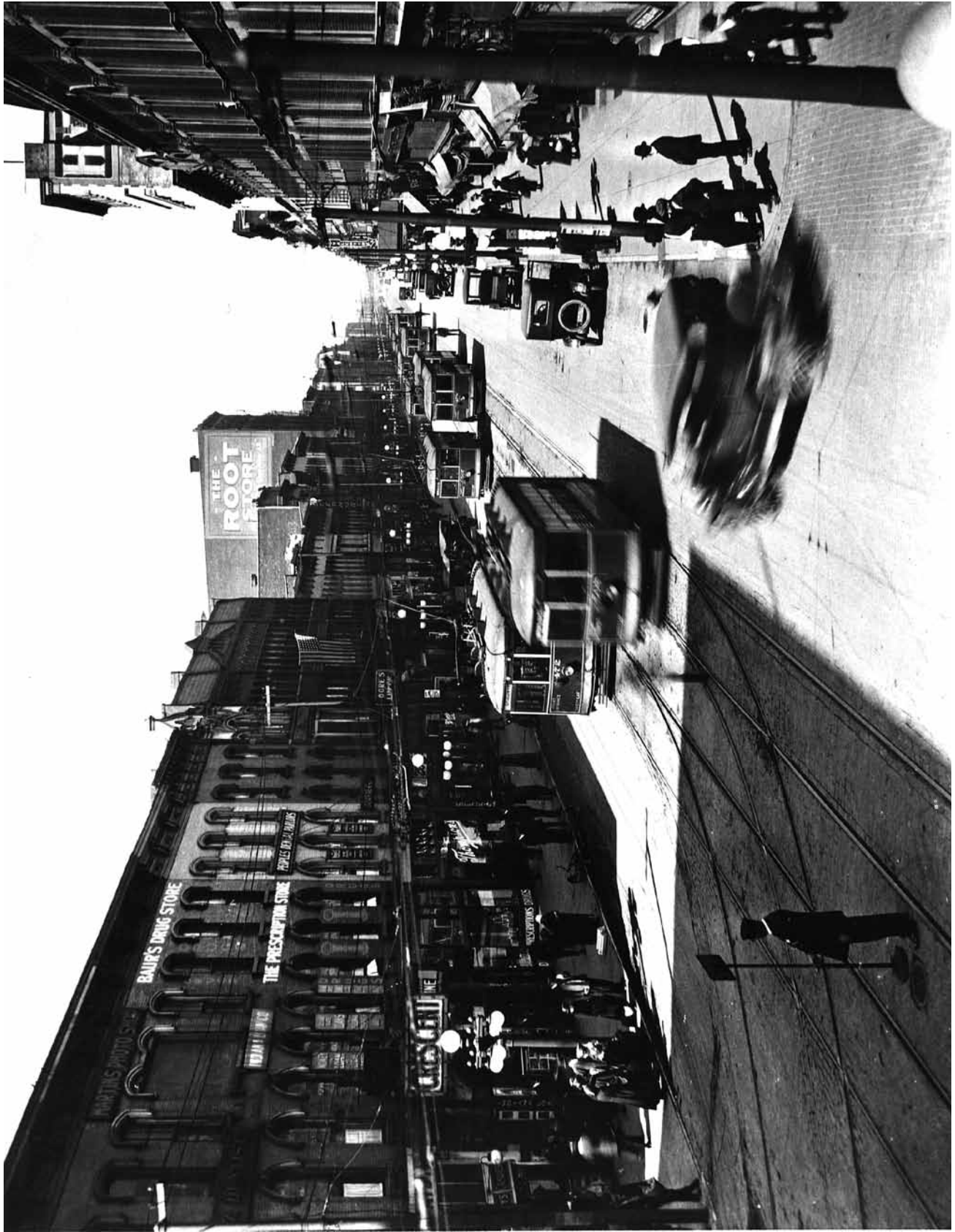
“Business District Street Scene,” 1914 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0391\_BOX3\_MONTPELIER\_002)





“Automobile Station, Frankfort, Indiana,” 1905-1950 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0391\_BOX2\_FRANKFORT)





“Wabash Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana,” ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129\_EXHIBIT BOX\_FOLDER1\_101)



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