

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Let's Have Some Fun: Leisure Time in the 1920s

by Janet Brown

for the Indiana Historical Society Indiana Experience

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



Cover Image: “George Greenlee Ford Garage” (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0114_G_AR12)

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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 will examine primary sources to see how people in the 1920s spent their leisure time.

Grade Level

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

Academic Standards

- Indiana Standards
 - Grade 4
 - Social Studies 4.1.11—Identify and describe important events and movements that changed life in Indiana in the early twentieth century.
 - Social Studies 4.1.12—Describe the transformation of Indiana through immigration and through developments in agriculture, industry and transportation.
 - Grade 5
 - 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.
 - Music 4.9.1—Explore and perform music associated with historical periods, events, and movements in Indiana such as music of specific American Indian tribes, songs of the Civil War, or songs of the Underground Railroad.
 - Grade 6
 - Music 5.9.1—Investigate and perform music associated with historical periods, individuals, events, and movements in the United States such as songs of the railroad, American heroes, the American Revolution, or a specific decade.
 - Music 5.9.3—Recognize and experience styles and genres of American music such as blues, jazz, and musical theatre and identify their role in history and society.
 - Grade 7
 - Science 6.1.9—Explain how technologies can influence all living things.
 - Science 7.1.10—Identify ways that technology has strongly influenced the course of history and continues to do so.
 - 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.

- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies)
 - I Culture
 - Explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.
 - II Time, Continuity, and Change
 - Identify and use processes important to reconstructing and reinterpreting the past, such as using a variety of sources, providing, validating, and weighing evidence for claim, checking credibility of sources, and searching for causality.
 - IV Individual Development and Identity
 - Relate personal changes to social, cultural, and historical contexts.
 - Describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity.

Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Daily life and culture in the 1920s

Learning/Instructional Objectives

Students will:

- Use primary sources to understand developments in leisure activities for ordinary Hoosiers in the 1920s.
- Analyze how the increase in leisure time changed the culture and the role of women.

Time Required

One class period

Materials Required

- Several pads of small sticky notes
- Pencils
- Copies of the following sheet music from the Indiana Historical Society collection. See page seven through ten of this lesson.
 - “Automobiling with Molly,” 1905 (Indiana Historical Society, IN Harmony ID ihs-SHMU 39 34-01-01, 34-01-02, 34-01-03, and 34-01-04)
- Copies of the following images from the Indiana Historical Society collections. See pages 11 through 16 of this lesson.
 - “Dance Hall, Bass Lake,” ca. 1928 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0649_G5x7_Box 21_257)
 - “Circle Theater Crowd Mingles on the Sidewalk after the Show, 1926” (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0130_BOX65_FOLDER3_99599-F)
 - “Broad Ripple Park Beach Scene,” 1921 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0130_P_BOX45_FOLDER3_74750-F)
 - “Men with Bicycles,” 1922 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0130_P_BOX7_FOLDER6_80532-F)
 - “Young People Preparing for Egg on Spoon Race at Picnic,” ca. 1920s (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129_N_011176_001)
 - “Mt. Comfort, Indiana High School Basketball Team Group Portrait,” 1926 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 2008_0197_002)

- Copies of the following images from the Hanover College collection, courtesy Hanover College. See pages 17 and 18 of this lesson.
 - “Spend Your Vacation at Madison, Indiana,” ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 2009_7_25)
 - “Madison Indiana: Playground of the Middle West,” ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 2009_7_26)

Background/Historical Context

Following the industrial revolution in America, the nature of leisure time and activities changed for many citizens. Many factors contributed to this change. Beginning in the mid-1890s, Americans began to have more leisure time due to decreased working hours.¹ Also some employers began to offer employees unpaid vacation time. Many workers, emotionally drained by monotonous industrial work and crowded urban environments, took advantage of these opportunities to engage in more leisure activities.² Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Progressive reformers campaigned for increased leisure time as well, noting the health benefits of some time away from work. Finally, the addition of electric lighting, both on the streets and indoors, facilitated nighttime leisure activities.³

Historians describe a “commodification” of leisure beginning in the 1890s and lasting into the 1940s. By this they mean that people took advantage of commercial forms of leisure activities, for example, going to the Nickelodeons or movies, viewing Vaudeville performances, and patronizing professional sporting events. People paid to participate in leisure activities more than ever before. These commercial forms of leisure did not replace, but added to, previously popular

free forms of leisure, such as ice skating, hunting, reading, storytelling, and visiting with friends.⁴

Another trend in leisure between 1890 and 1940 is the increase in corporate forms of leisure as compared to private forms of leisure. Beginning in the 1880s, fraternal and civic clubs saw an increase in membership. In the 1920s, luncheon service clubs, such as Kiwanis and Rotary, grew in popularity. Organized activities such as card games, playing sports, and club meetings also increased in the 1920s.⁵ Organized sports, particularly high school and college basketball, gained popularity among both men and women. Golf and tennis also boomed during this time. Women’s organizations, having achieved a victory in getting women the vote, turned to more leisurely pursuits in the 1920s, focusing on book discussions or flower arranging.⁶

In the 1920s one particularly popular communal activity was dancing. Dances were held at hotels, clubhouses, and dance halls. Hartford City youth likely attended dances at the nearby Adelphia Gardens Dance Hall. Jazz music filled the air at these dances, provided by local or regional bands.

It was not only the increased availability of leisure time that fueled these changes, but also new technology. In particular, the automobile allowed for increased mobility and thus access to places such as dance halls and movie theaters, especially for rural residents. The automobile meant freedom for young people, who used it to escape the watchful eyes of their parents. As automobiles took courting couples away from the confines of the home, parents became concerned about what the unsupervised youth were doing. They feared morality was in danger. These fears played out as young women began to wear short skirts and sport bobbed hair-dos, earning the era the nickname the “Roaring Twenties.”

Automobiles also popularized leisure travel and

¹ Library of Congress, “America at Work/America at Leisure, 1894–1915,” Library of Congress, <http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/awlhtml/awlleis.html>.

² “America at Work/America at Leisure”

³ “America at Work/America at Leisure”

⁴ Claude S. Fischer, “Changes in leisure activities, 1890–1940,” *Journal of Social History*. FindArticles.com. 04 Dec, 2009. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_n3_v27/ai_15324637/

⁵ Fischer

⁶ Fischer

camping. In the early 1900s, long-distance automobile travel could only be afforded by the wealthy, who almost certainly would have been driven by a chauffeur. However, with the advent of the Model T, which Henry Ford made affordable to working classes, automobile travel became more democratic. Consumers could purchase accessories for their vehicles such as trunk carriers, roof luggage racks, tent attachments, and more to make their camping experience more enjoyable. Municipalities eventually set up designated camping areas that were initially free of charge. These gave way to better furnished private campgrounds, travel trailers equipped with beds, kitchen basics, and sometimes showers and chemical toilets. Cabins and motels also sprang up to accommodate automobile tourists.⁷

Automobiles also facilitated travel to beaches, amusement parks, national parks, world's fairs and expositions, and countryside picnics. Through these venues, people were able to experience new environments and different people. The automobile allowed people to broaden their horizons in ways not previously possible. In particular, automobiles freed women from the confines of their home. As the industrial revolution and emerging technologies offered quicker and easier ways for women to complete their household tasks, the automobile offered them access to leisure opportunities outside of the home.

Radio appeared in the 1920s, though many American households did not own a radio until at least 1930. "By 1930, 40 percent of American households could listen to one or more of hundreds of stations; a decade later, 80 percent could. By 1938, movie-going and radio-listening had become among Americans' favorite pastimes," noted one historian.⁸

The prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcohol, in effect from 1920 to 1933, did not affect leisure activities as much as might be thought.

⁷ Petersen Automotive Museum, "From Autocamps to Airstreams: The Early Road to Vacationland," Petersen Automotive Museum, <http://www.petersen.org/default.cfm?docid=1066>.

⁸ Fischer

Nightlife flourished in the 1920s. Because it was almost impossible to enforce Prohibition, "speakeasies" covertly served alcoholic beverages and some people even made their own "moonshine." While it had some benefits, Prohibition also encouraged "bootleggers" and "rum runners" who illegally traded or sold their much sought-after product. Largely deemed a failure, Prohibition was repealed in 1933.

Teacher's Instructional Plan

Introduction

Introduce the lesson by telling students that the decade of the 1920s is sometimes referred to as the "Roaring Twenties." Ask them to offer suggestions as to why that nickname might be applied to this time.

Procedure

- Write the term "Daily life" on the board. Below it, make two columns, one labeled "Before 1920" and the other labeled "After 1920."
- Distribute sticky notes to the students. Ask the students to recall what they know of daily life and culture prior to the 1920s. The students should write one item or topic on each sticky note. The teacher may need to provide suggestions. For example, the teacher may suggest "planting a garden" and attach a sticky note with this activity on it below the column "Before 1920."
- Students should place each of their sticky notes below the proper heading. After everyone has finished, the teacher should review the posted items, discussing what is correct, and removing duplicates. (Most of the time was spent at home preparing food, making clothes, gardening, working, reading, etc.)
- Distribute copies of the "Automobiling with Molly" sheet music. As a group, read the lyrics and discuss the kinds of leisure activities the author describes. Have students use their sticky notes to record these activities. The lyrics suggest that there was time in the 1920s to

drive around, swim, boat for fun, and go out for ice cream. Students should place their sticky notes under the “After 1920” heading on the board. The teacher will review the posted items, discussing what is correct and removing duplicates.

- Show each of the Indiana Historical Society and Hanover College images of 1920s leisure activities. Students will add the leisure activities depicted in these images to their sticky notes and post them on the board. Among the activities depicted or inferred from the images are: dancing, camping, organized sports such as basketball, movie-going, picnicking, bicycling, swimming, hunting, and fishing. The teacher should point out to students that women’s participation in these leisure activities is especially important since prior to the late 1800s, women had not been able to pursue leisure activities due to the time involved in taking care of their families’ needs.
- As a group, discuss why students think that the decade of the 1920s is sometimes referred to as the “Roaring Twenties.” What seemed to be important to people during this time? How did the role of women change?

Assessment

The teacher will informally gauge students’ understanding of the following concepts based on participation in class discussion and answers written on the sticky notes.

- People had more leisure time in the 1920s as a result of several factors.
- People engaged in new leisure activities made available through expanding technologies such as the automobile and radio.
- People engaged in more “communal” forms of leisure with groups of people in the 1920s.
- Women were more able to take advantage of leisure time as technology facilitated the completion of their responsibilities within the home.

Suggested Modifications

- During the 1920s there was a concern by some that new inventions and activities were threatening traditional American values. Can students find any evidence to support this idea?
- Would the word “frantic” describe this time? Find evidence to support your opinion.
- Pretend that you are a woman in the 1920s. Write a journal entry describing your typical day.
- Use art to illustrate the ways people used leisure time during the 1920s.

Additional Resources

Publications

- Bobek, Milan. *Decades of the 20th Century: 1920s*. Arizona: Eldorado Ink, 2005.
Details important world events of the 1920s.
- Feinstein, Stephen. *The 1920s: From Prohibition to Charles Lindbergh*. New Jersey: Enslow Publishing, 2001.
Popular culture of the period.
- Gail, Stewart B. *1920s*. New York: Crestwood House, 1989.
History, trivia, and fun through photos and articles showing life between 1920 and 1929.
- O’Neil, J. Michael. *America in the 1920s*. New York: Stonesong Press. 2006.
From *Facts on File* books with general information about the time.
- Tames, Richard. *The 1920s*. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1991.
Picture history about the time.

Web Sites

- “American Jazz Culture in the 1920s.” University of Minnesota Duluth. <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/tbacig/studproj/is3099/jazzcult/20sjazz/> (accessed October 16, 2009).
Information on jazz music.

“Clash of Cultures in the 1910s and 1920s.” Ohio State University: Department of History, Harvey Goldberg Center for Excellence in Teaching. <http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/mmh/clash/NewWoman/newwomen-page1.htm> (accessed October 16, 2009).

Online exhibit about women of the 1920s including lifestyle and image.

“Having Fun: Leisure and Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century.” National Endowment for the Humanities: EDSITEment. http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=676 (accessed October 16, 2009).

Lesson plan about use of leisure time in the early 1900s, contains a list of reference Web sites.

Kay Carlile, Ashleigh Hoslett, and Joe Herz. “Hats off to History: A Project Linking Clothing to Social and Political Influences.” California State University Sacramento: Internet Masters of Educational Technology. <http://imet.csus.edu/imet2/herzj/websites/fashion/main.htm> (accessed October 16, 2009).

Internet cooperative research project for ninth through twelfth graders showing clothing of the past.

“Kissing Rudy Valentino: A High-School Student Describes Movie Going in the 1920s.” American Social History Project. “History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web.” Center for Media and Learning CUNY.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/21> (accessed October 16, 2009).

In 1933 sociologist Herbert Blumer conducted a study called *Movies and Conduct*, in which he asked 1,500 college and high school students to contribute “autobiographies” of their experiences going to the movies.

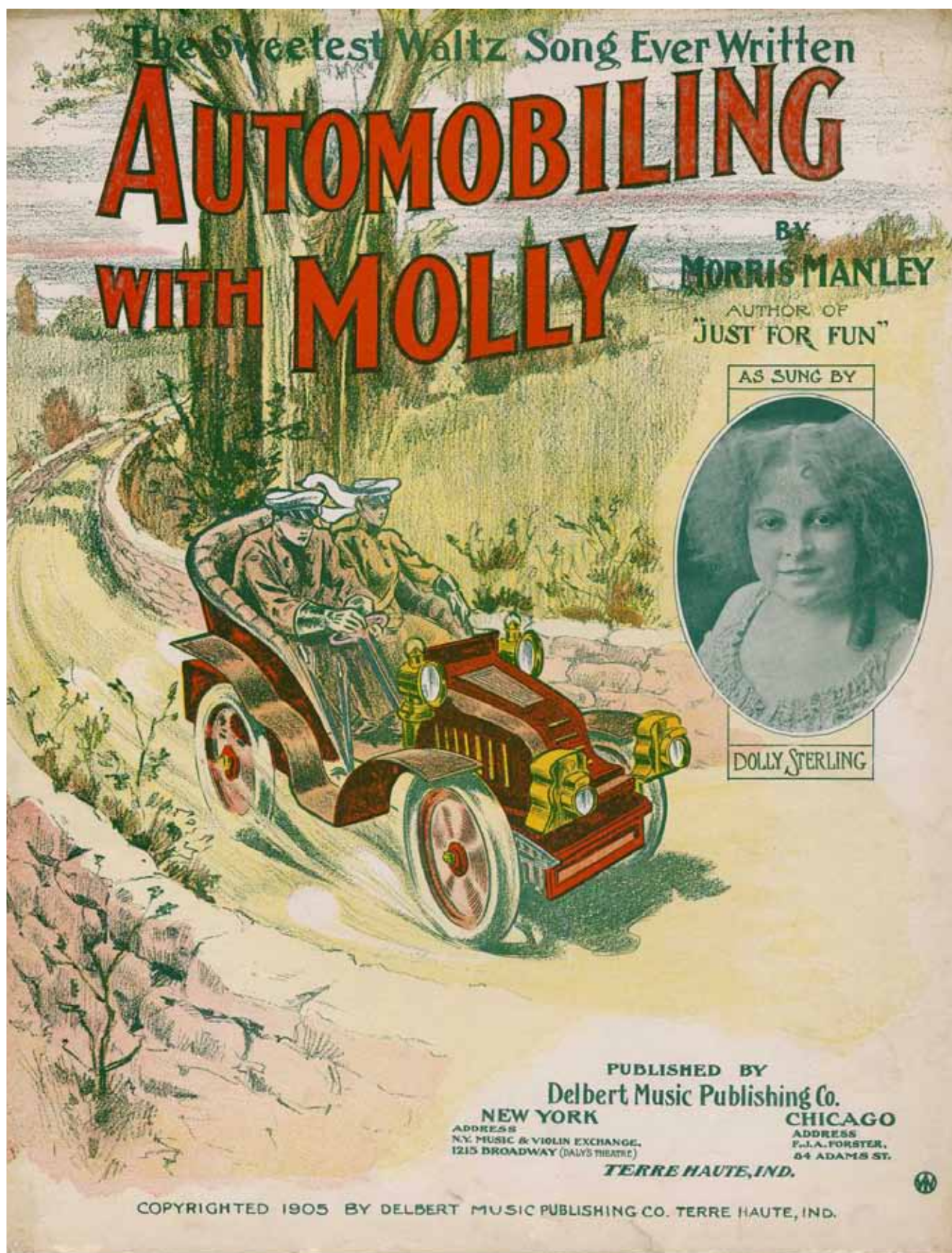
This is one high school student’s account.

Middleton, Ken. “American Women Through Time: 1920s.” Murfreesboro, TN: Middle Tennessee State University. <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~kmiddlet/history/women/time/wh-20s.html> (accessed October 16, 2009).

Women in the 1920s time line and Web sites.

Scott, Robert. “The Roaring Twenties: A Historical Snapshot of Life in the 1920s.” <http://www.1920-30.com> (accessed October 16, 2009).

Culture of the 1920s with pictures and information about art, literature, music, fads, fashion, and entertainment under the topics people, events, and inventions.



"Automobiling with Molly," 1905 (Indiana Historical Society, IN Harmony ID ihs-SHMU 39 34-01-01)

"AUTOMOBILING WITH MOLLY"

3

INTRO.

Tempo de Valse.

By MORRIS MANLEY.

Author of "Just For Fun"

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It begins with an introduction in 3/4 time, marked 'Tempo de Valse'. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The introduction features a strong piano (ff) accompaniment. The main melody is in the right hand, with lyrics written below it. The piano accompaniment is in the left hand, with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic marking. The lyrics are as follows:

There's all sorts of pleas-ure in sum-mer And diff'rence in
Some peo-ple they stroll in the moon-light And oth-ers to

peo-ple that's true Some like to go bath-ing or
White Ci-ty go And some like to ride on a

boat-ing When the boat is just built for two
troll-ey When the cool eve-ning breez-es blow

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"Automobiling with Molly," 1905 (Indiana Historical Society, IN Harmony ID ihs-SHMU 39 34-01-02)

Some like the green sha - dy ma - ples ——— When best girl is
Some boys they go to the dan - ces ——— And waltz with their

close by their side ——— There's one thing that makes me feel
girl - ys you see ——— But Mol - ly and I when to -

hap - py ——— Is to get in an Au - to and ride. ———
geth - er ——— Are as hap - py as a - ny could be. ———

CHORUS.

Au - to - mo - bil - ing with Mol - - ly Out in the cool summer breeze ———

p ff

Automobiling - 3

"Automobiling with Molly," 1905 (Indiana Historical Society, IN Harmony ID ihs-SHMU 39 34-01-03)

That is the time to be jol - - ly As you spin by the green sha-dy

trees — You tell her love stories so sweet - - ly She is con-

ten-ted you see — For she nev-er miss-es her Ice cream and

Kiss-es When Au-to-mo-bil-ing with me. — me. —

1. 2.

Automobiling - 3

WALTON PROCESS CHICAGO.

“Automobiling with Molly,” 1905 (Indiana Historical Society, IN Harmony ID ihs-SHMU 39 34-01-04)



“Dance Hall, Bass Lake,” ca. 1928 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0649_G5x7_Box 21_257)



“Circle Theater Crowd Mingles on the Sidewalk after the Show, 1926” (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0130_ BOX65_FOLDER3_99599-F)



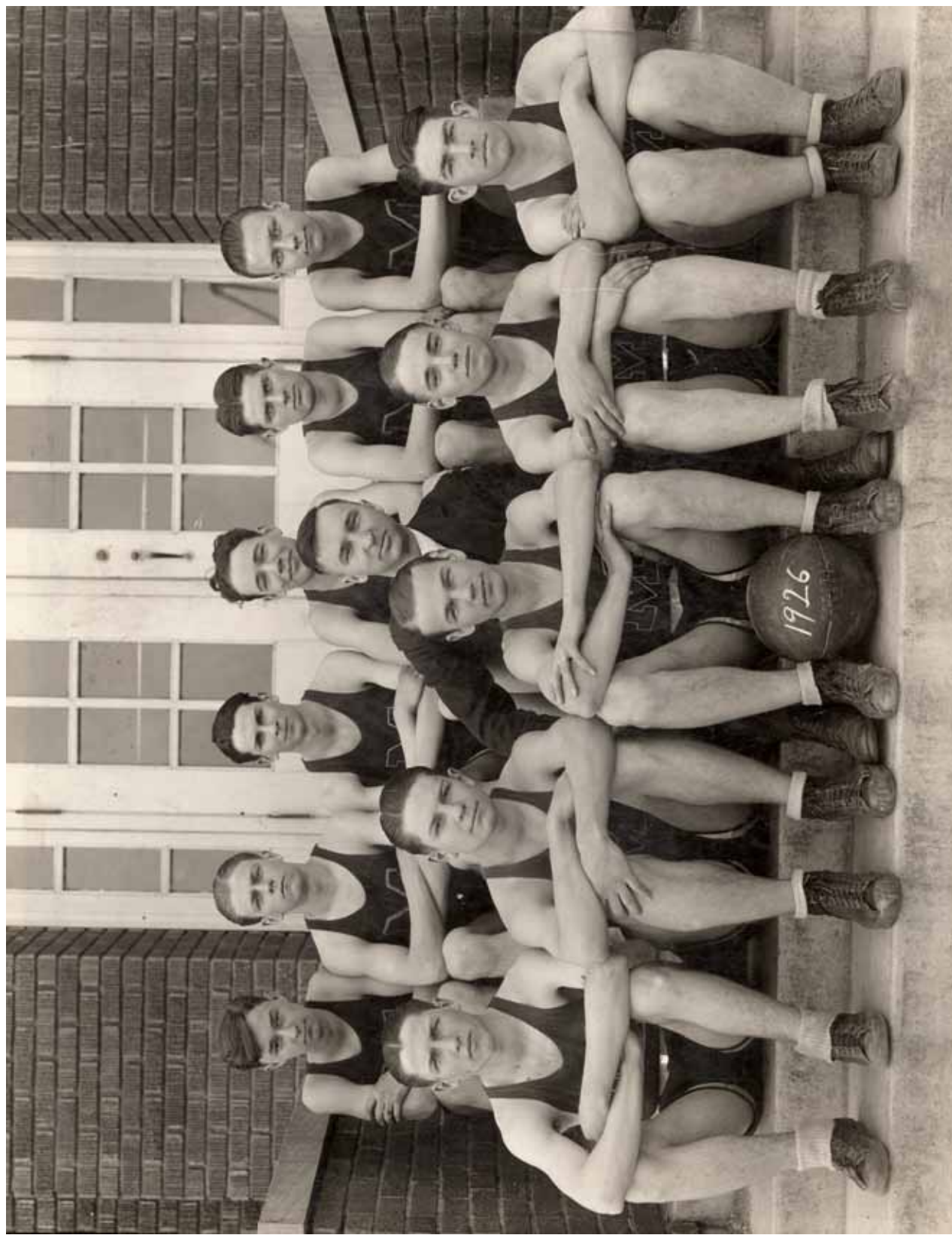
“Broad Ripple Park Beach Scene,” 1921 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0130_P_BOX45_FOLDER3_74750-F)



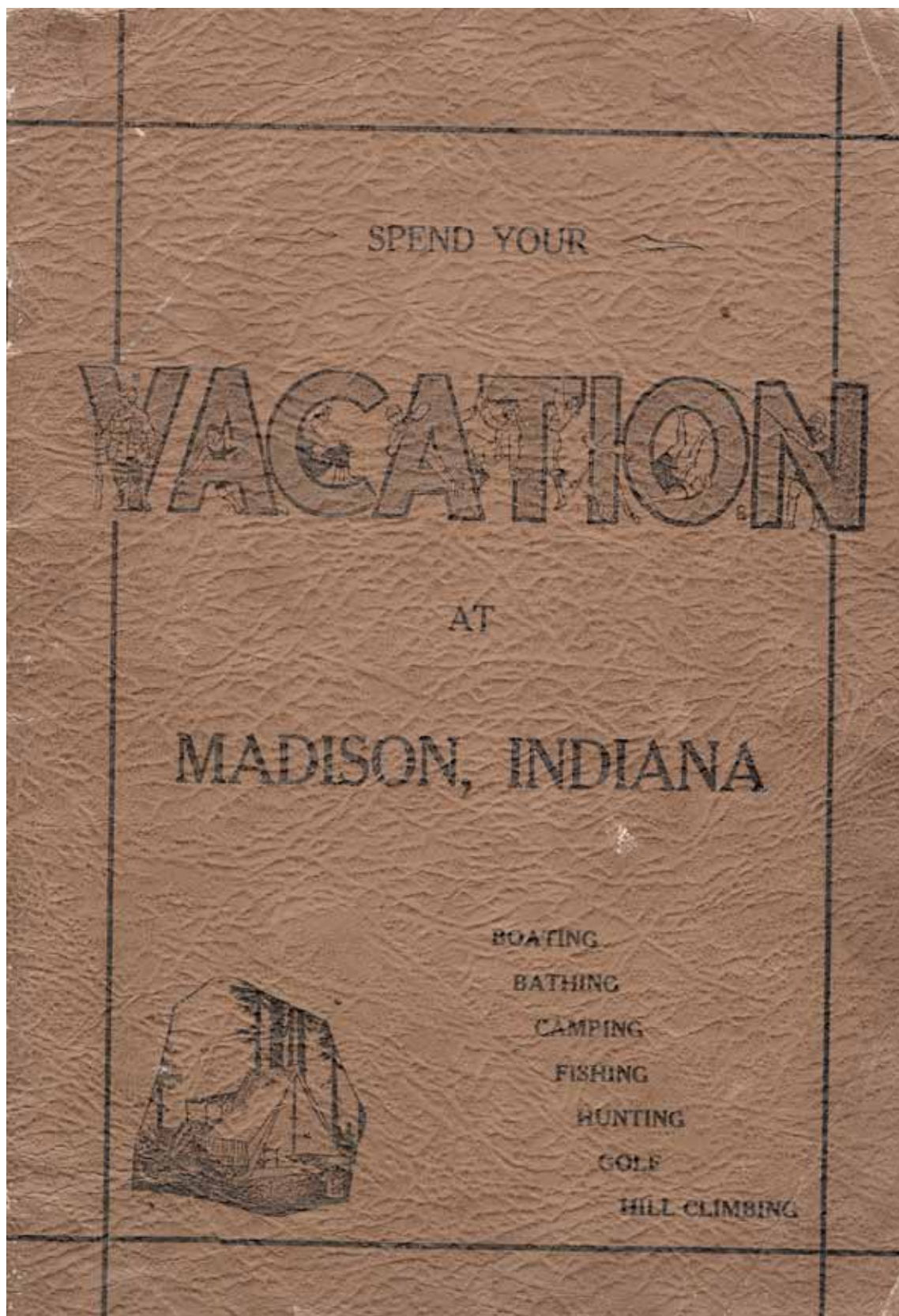
“Men with Bicycles,” 1922 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0130_P_BOX7_FOLDER6_80532-F)



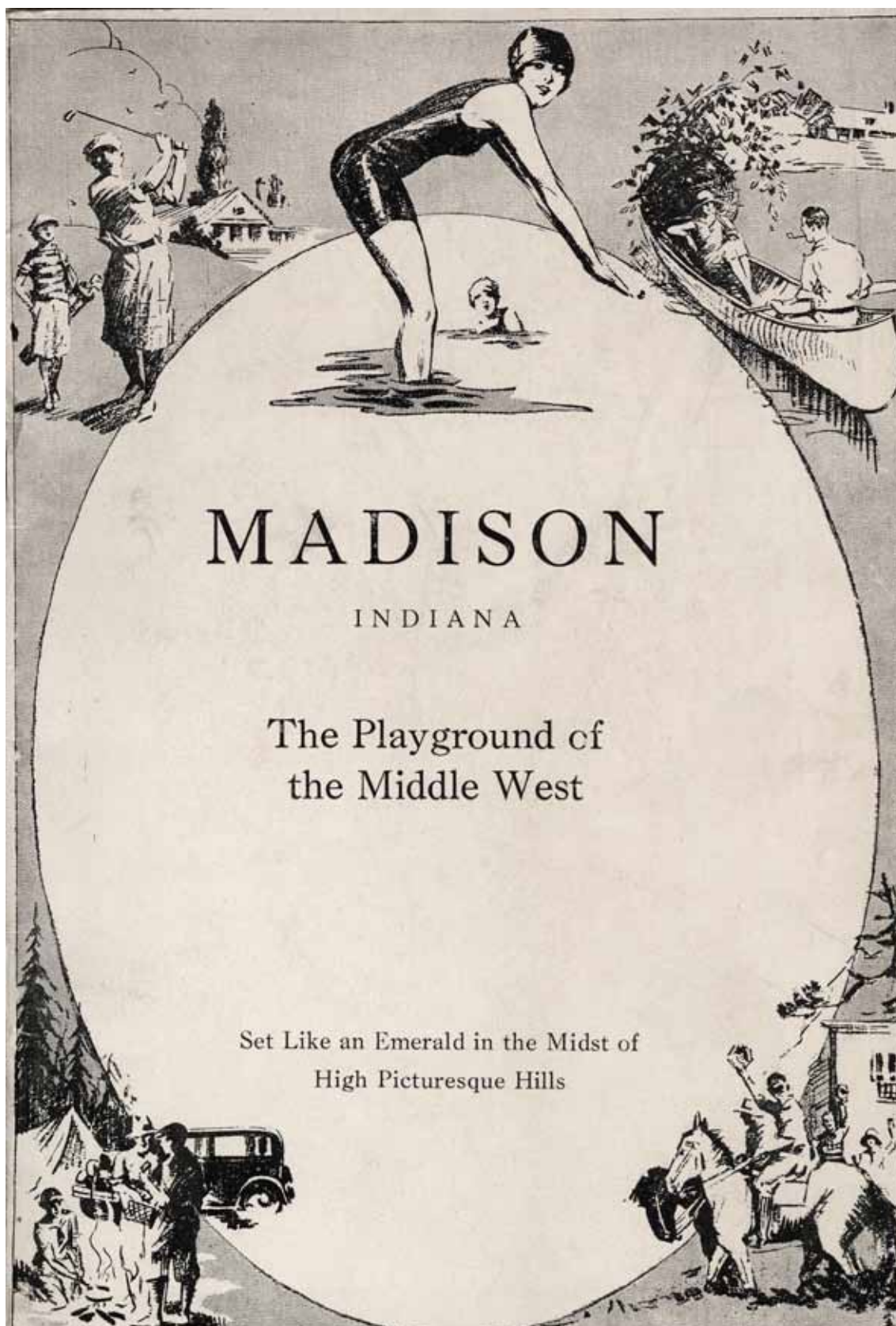
“Young People Preparing for Egg on Spoon Race at Picnic,” ca. 1920s (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0129_N_011176_001)



“Mt. Comfort, Indiana High School Basketball Team Group Portrait,” 1926 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 2008_0197_002)



From the Hanover College collection, courtesy Hanover College, "Spend Your Vacation at Madison, Indiana," ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 2009_7_25)



From the Hanover College collection, courtesy Hanover College, "Madison Indiana: Playground of the Middle West," ca. 1920 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID 2009_7_26)