Collection #
M 0873

ANDERSON, INDIANA BIG FOUR RAILROAD MUSEUM COLLECTION, 1904–1997

Collection Information

Historical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

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William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	**Manuscript Materials**: 3 boxes **Visual Materials**: 4 folders of photographs, 5 folders of color photographs, 1 OVA graphic box, 1 OVA graphic folder, 2 OVA photograph folders, 2 oversize folders in flat file storage **Printed Materials**: 1 printed item **Artifacts**: 6 artifacts
COLLECTION DATES:	1904–1997

PROVENANCE:	Elsie K. Perdiue, Anderson, IN, February 2003
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2003.0153
NOTES:	

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The stretch of railroad between Indianapolis and Union City, Indiana (now part of the CSX System) is the oldest part of what was once the Big Four railroad system. It was originally built under the name of the Indianapolis and Bellefontaine Railroad. Chartered in 1848, the Bellefontaine consolidated with the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati & Indianapolis Railway, better known as the Bee Line. The Bee Line consolidated with two other railroad systems (the Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, and the Chicago, Indianapolis & St. Louis) in 1889 forming the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad, popularly known as the Big Four. As envisioned by the early builders of the Bellefontaine, this railroad was to become a link in the chain of roads that would connect St. Louis, Indianapolis, Sandusky and Cleveland, Ohio with the east.

When natural gas was discovered in 1887 in Madison County, a population increase occurred which brought more commerce to the area. Due to the increase, a passenger Depot was built in Anderson between Meridian and Main Streets.

Eventually, the Big Four Railroad, which consolidated with the Bee Line in 1889, took over the operation of the Depot. The line continued as one of the busiest tracks in the state. In 1930, over 350,000 railroad cars had stopped in Anderson on the Big Four Lines. However, the advent of the automobile caused a subsequent decline of rail travel and shipping. In 1940, the interurban made its last run through the streets of Anderson. The Big Four lines were absorbed first by the New York Central, Penn Central, Conrail and finally CSX Systems. In 1971 the last passenger train left the former Big Four Depot. The building was boarded up and left to decay for ten years.

In 1980, Anderson attorney, John Eisele rescued the dilapidated building and with extensive remodeling—a new roof was added, the inside was painted, and the floor was repaired—it became a gift shop. None of the interior walls were disturbed, but a display platform was added to the interior on the east end of the building. The shop was closed for unknown reasons in 1982.

In 1983, Elsie Perdue purchased the building from John Eisele. It was Elsie's dream to open a center for the performing arts. For two years, the Performing Arts Station hosted competitions for artists and poets, a street fair, poetry readings, and afternoon musicals. The center also offered music lessons and held art shows. The west end of the building was where the railroad museum was, and it displayed model trains and early railroad trivia. In 1985, the Anderson Young Ballet Academy signed a lease agreement with the owner and the Depot became an academy for the study of the dance arts. Patronage alone could not sustain the costs of operating the center and it reverted back to its

former owner, John Eisele, in 1993.

Sources:

Railroads of Madison County, 2006 [cited 18 May 2006]. Available from World Wide Web: (http://madisonrails.railfan.net/)

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is made up of items that were previously housed and on display at the Big Four Railroad museum in Anderson, Indiana. The collection is arranged in alphabetical order by topic, many of the topics coming from the folders the collection was in upon arrival. It consists of papers from the museum related to the day to day business—daily logs, correspondence, hiring summer help, and gift shop information—along with other items relating to exhibits or museum events. There are also newspaper clippings about the museum and people affiliated with, and clippings about Indiana railroads and railroads that run through Indiana. There are many photographs of the museum and railroad cars taken throughout the years, along with some drawings made, possibly, for exhibits at the museum. The second half of the collection includes items from the railroads that were part of the "Big Four." It has brochures, time tables, ephemera, and photographs of the railroads, among other items.

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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, M 0873).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.