# W.H. BASS PHOTO COMPANY COLLECTION, CA. 1897–CA. 1970

"Preliminary" Collection Guide (see "Notes" on next page)

**Collection Information** 

**Historical Sketches** 

Scope and Content Note

**Bass Subject Headings** 

**Cataloging Information** 

Processed by

I.H.S. Visual Collections February 2012

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 **Photographs:** 90 boxes of photographs, 11 boxes of OVA

COLLECTION: photographs, 4 boxes of OVB photographs

**Negatives:** approximately 180,000 negatives

COLLECTION

DATES:

Ca. 1897-ca. 1970

PROVENANCE: W. H. Bass Photo Company, Inc.: 1983, 1988

RESTRICTIONS: Negatives may be viewed only with the assistance of library

staff.

COPYRIGHT:

**NUMBER:** 

REPRODUCTION Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection

RIGHTS: must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE CONTENT dm Collection: <a href="http://www.indianahistory.org/our-">http://www.indianahistory.org/our-</a>

FORMATS: collections/digital-image-collections/photo-studios-and-

photogs

RELATED Sutton, Susan S., *Indianapolis : the Bass Photo Company* 

HOLDINGS: collection / General Collection F534.I55 S88 2008

ACCESSION 1983.0914, 1988.0861

NOTES: Processing of the collection is a work in progress. As work

is completed the collection guide will be updated. In the interim, please contact <a href="mailto:reference@indianahistory.org">reference@indianahistory.org</a> for questions and to view a number of digital images at: <a href="http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/digital-">http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/digital-</a>

image-collections/photo-studios-and-photogs

# HISTORICAL SKETCHES

**The W.H. Bass Photo Company** traces its beginnings to 1897, when the James Bayne Company, a photographic firm in Grand Rapids, Michigan, opened a satellite operation in Indianapolis at 308-310 South New Jersey Street. The Bayne Company photographed local industrial products and produced trade catalogs that were distributed to merchants by traveling salesmen.

Two years after the Indianapolis office was established, Walter T. Woodworth and William H. Bass, acquired the local operation. Woodworth had been a photographer with James Bayne Company and Bass was a teacher and an independent photographer. The two operated the business under the name Woodworth and Company. By 1901 they changed the company name to Bass and Woodworth and worked together until 1905 when Woodworth sold his interest in the company to Bass. It then became the W. H. Bass Photo Company.

In 1912 Bass Photo incorporated with William H. Bass, Charles C. Branson, and Edwin H. Schafer as directors. When Mr. Bass died in 1936 the board consisted of Charles Branson, his wife Sadie Branson, and Theodore (Ted) Abel. Abel was an accountant for the company and was married to Branson's daughter Margaret. When Mr. Branson died in 1948 the Abel family held the majority ownership in the firm. In 1963 Fred Abel joined his father at Bass and when Schafer retired Fred stepped in to work in the darkroom and behind the camera. In 1984 Fred left Bass Photo to concentrate on his own company, Firehouse Colorlab. By 1978 the current owner, Gerald Abel, Ted's other son, joined the business. Ted retired in 1982 and today Gerald and his wife Kathy continue to run the business.

William H. Bass (20 January 1851–3 November 1936) was the son of Thomas W. Bass and Mary Jane Crane Bass of Bartholomew County, Indiana. Bass worked as a miller in Edinburg, Indiana from 1867 to 1872 when he contracted tuberculosis. He graduated from the Indiana State Normal School at Terre Haute and taught at Shortridge High School and helped start Manual Technical High School. He married Jane McCormick Wood in October 1879. The couple had no children. Bass was a member of the Indianapolis Rotary Club, the Capital City Lodge, the Scottish Rite, the Caravan Club, the Indianapolis Real Estate Board, and the Advertising Club. He lived at 847 East Drive, Woodruff Place, from ca. 1908 until the time of his death.

# Sources:

Lutholtz, M. William. "The City's Family Album," *City Magazine*, February 1988, 29–33. Pulliam, Myrta. "Photo Firm's Files Hoosierland's 'Family Album,' "Indianapolis Star, 13 August 1978, sec. 5, p. 2.

Swartz and Tedrowe's Annual Indianapolis City Directory, 1873. Indianapolis: Swartz and Tedrowe, 1873.

"William H. Bass, 85, Prominent As Teacher and Photographer, Dies," Indianapolis Star, 3 November 1936, p. 15, col. 2.

# **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

William H. Bass and his successors specialized in photographing the infrastructure and built environment of Indianapolis. The Bass Photo Company not only made photographs for corporate clients and individuals, but also instructed the staff photographers to document local events, disasters, and daily scenes in Indianapolis. The collection is an accumulation of images whose subjects include: street scenes, homes, memorials, parks, and public institutions such as schools and hospitals, streetcar and railway lines, disasters such as floods and fires, and the Indianapolis 500 race. The company also made portraits of prominent individuals, including Indiana governors. Group portraits consist mainly of sports teams such as the Indianapolis Capitols hockey team, the Indianapolis Indians baseball team, and figure skater Sonja Henie.

The collection contains approximately 180,000 negatives, 12,000 black-and-white photographs, and 1500 cyanotype photographs. IHS acquired the Bass Photo Company Collection in two groups: Bass Photo Company donated 34,800 negatives in 1983, and IHS purchased the remainder of the collection from Bass Photo in 1988. Most negatives and photographs include a negative number assigned by the Bass Photo Company.

The collection came with two separate indexing systems of customer card files. One set is arranged chronologically by negative numbers, the other is alphabetical by client name. The cards list each negative number and provide the negative size, date, and client name. The alphabetical set is organized by client name, and also includes the negative numbers, negative sizes and dates. These card files are stored in the Processing Area of the Library and can be accessed by library staff when researchers require information on a specific image.

For conservation reasons the negatives are stored in the negative storage area of the Department of Visual Collections and are not readily available to researchers. The Library Reference Department maintains two in-house computer databases on the Bass Collection. The (ArchIE) database includes references to architectural structures in the Bass Collection. The other database is still growing as volunteers enter information from the Bass negatives. Patrons may request searches in these two databases from the Library Reference Department.

**Series 1 Photographs:** When the photographs arrived they were arranged alphabetically by subject headings created by the Bass Company. Processors at the Indiana Historical Society maintained the original order of the photographs and placed the items in acid-free file folders and boxes. The folders were labeled according to the Bass subject headings.

The Bass photographs have been scanned and are available online through the Digital Image Collections page on the IHS Web site.

http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/digital-image-collections

Researchers may use subjects from the following list when searching the scanned images.

# List of Subject Headings for Bass Photo Co. Collection

Aerial Views

Airports and Airplanes

Animals

**Apartments** 

**Art Schools** 

Artwork

Automobiles

Automobiles (Showrooms, Sales Offices, Plants)

Ayres, F. M. Estate

**Banks** 

**Bicycles** 

Boats

Bridges

**Brown County** 

**Buildings** 

Buildings, Industrial

Buses

Canals

Cemeteries

Churches

Civil War

Clark, George Rogers-Memorials

Clouds

Clubs and Lodges

Clubs and Lodges: Independent Athletic Club, Hoosier Athletic Club

Colleges & Universities

Construction

Courthouses

Crowds

Crown Hill Cemetery

Dams

Eli Lilly & Co.

Farm Views

Farmer's Market

Filling Stations

Fire Stations

Firemen & Fire Equipment

Fires

Fireworks

Floods

Florida

**Flowers** 

Food

Fort Benjamin Harrison

Fort Harrison (Terre Haute)

Fruit

**Funerals** 

Garages, Parking

**Golf Courses** 

Government Buildings

Government Buildings-Interior

Sonja Henie

**Historical Markers** 

Hockey Players: Indianapolis Capitols

Hospitals Hotels

Hotels: Claypool Hotel Hotels: English Hotel Hotels: Marott Hotel Hunting and Fishing Indianapolis 500

Indianapolis Home Show

Indianapolis Indians: Baseball Team and Bush Stadium

Indianapolis Neighborhoods: Brendonwood

Interurban Railroads

Laundries Libraries

Libraries: Indianapolis-Marion County (Main Branch)-Interiors

Lilly, Josiah K. Estate-Apple Orchard

Manuscripts

Maps: Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio

Monument Circle

Monuments & Memorials

Nature Views

Night Scenes

**Non-United States** 

Noyes, N.H. Estate

Old Etchings

Old Etchings: Indianapolis

Parades Parks

People

**Police Stations** 

Policemen

Printed Material

**Printing Companies and Publishers** 

**Prisons** 

**Prominent People** 

Prominent People: Harrison, Benjamin and William

Prominent People: Lincoln, Abraham

Prominent People: Riley, James Whitcomb

**Public Utilities** 

Railroad and Interurban Tracks

Railroads

Railroad Bridges

Railroads: Illinois Central Railroad Engines

Railroads: Illinois Central Railroad Pullman Accommodations Railroads: Illinois Central Railroad-Railroad Fair, 1948-1949

Railroads: Illinois Central Railroad-Ext., Publicity

Residences Schools

Schools: Cathedral High School, Shortridge High School Schools: Ladywood High School-Stoughton Fletcher Estate

Schrader, Christian-Drawings

Scottish Rite Cathedral State and City Institutions

State Fair Stockyards

Street Scenes

Streetcars

**Swimming Pools** 

Theaters

Theaters: Circle Theater-Exteriors Theaters: Circle Theater-Interiors Theaters: Indiana Theater-Exteriors Theaters: Indiana Theater-Interior Thorntown, Indiana-Centennial

Tornadoes and Storms Towers: Radio, TV, etc.

**Traction Railroads** 

Train Wrecks

**Trains** 

Trains: Interiors
Trees and Plants

**Trucks** 

Union Station (Indianapolis) United States Government

Wagons

War Interests

War Memorial (Indiana World War Memorial)

War Memorial-Interiors (Indiana World War Memorial)
Warehouses
Water towers
Woodruff Place
YMCA

# **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, P0130).
- 5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.