

Collection #
P 0171

**BIG FOUR SHOPS, BEECH GROVE, IND.
PHOTOGRAPHS, 1919, 1923**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 half size document case of photographs
1 Cirkut photograph

COLLECTION DATES: 1919, 1923

PROVENANCE: Unknown 1995; Brian E. Mayer, Indianapolis, 2003

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1995.0821X, 2003.0014

NOTES: This is an artificial collection

HISTORICAL SKETCH

On June 8, 1889 in Indiana, the Cleveland, Columbus (OH), Cincinnati and Indianapolis Railway combined with the Indianapolis and St. Louis Railway and the Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Chicago Railway to form the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway—the “Big Four” or C.C.C. & St. L RR. Over the next few years it continued its expansion, so that in 1892 it owned 468 locomotives, just over 440 passenger cars and nearly 20,000 freight cars, all of which moved over the company’s 1850 miles of trackage, much of which lay in Indiana. In 1906 the company, parts of which were already headquartered in Indianapolis, acquired the New York Central RR and later Penn Central.

The company recognized the need for larger repair facilities than the smaller facilities they inherited in the 1889 venture. Indianapolis provided easy access to existing tracks with Beech Grove the specific site selected. The community of Beech Grove in south eastern Marion County was hardly existent until the C.C.C. & St. L RR selected the small hamlet and started its four-year building program. The name for the emerging company town grew out of a grove of beech trees bounded by Alton and Churchman avenues and Sixth and Eighth streets, the equivalent of two city blocks. Today the town of some 15,000 residents has been annexed (1967) to Indianapolis.

The layout of the yards covered a 600 acre plot that in time placed more than 700,000 square feet under roofs. It was drawn up by the New York Central’s mechanical department that was chaired by William Garstang, the English-born Master Mechanic, overseer of the Beech Grove construction, and the Big Four’s superintendent of motive power. Shops in the newly designed compound included facilities for boilers (before the era of diesels), foundry, storehouse, trim, paint, offices, planning, and more. By 1908 the larger Beech Grove shops replaced the earlier and smaller facilities located in Brightwood for the repair of locomotives, freight and passenger cars in all six divisions of the Big Four. The repair compound was completed in 1910 and during the early twentieth century more than 700 locomotives and 4600 cars could be repaired annually.

AMTRAK took charge of passenger rail service in 1971 and the Beech Grove shops became part of that entity. Today (2010) the shops occupy the same buildings constructed over a century ago and the workers there continue restoring passenger cars and locomotives but on a more modest scale.

Sources:

American Engineer and Railroad Journal, lxxxiii (1909; no author noted), 133ff

Bodenhamer, David J and Robert G. Burrows, eds. *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994

Melville E. Ingalls Collection, M 0754, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN

Howson, Elmer T., et al. *Biographical Directory of the Railway Officials of America*
(NYC: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Co., 1922)

Leonard, John W., ed., *Who’s Who in Finance and Banking* (Brooklyn, NY: Who’s Who in Finance, Inc., 1922)

Manual of Statistics: Stock Exchange Handbook (no editor noted; NYC: Nicoll and Roy, 1893).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of black-and-white photographs of the management and employees of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway (Big Four) shops at Beech Grove, Indiana for the years 1919 and 1923. The images include group portraits of track crews, workers beside heavy equipment, men and women office workers and management at their desks, and one interior view of the facility.

There are no captions, names or dates on the photographs. Calendars in some of the photographs show the date as being Friday, November 3, 1923. The panoramic photograph of employees at the Beech Grove facility is dated February 6, 1919.

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Office and plant interior views with workers

Railroad yard exterior views with workers

Employee group portraits

Caption: Men of the Car Dep't. Big Four Shops,
Beech Grove, Ind. February 6, 1919

Photographer: Kirkpatrick

Size: 10 x 40 inches

Description: Cirkut photograph, group portrait

CONTAINER

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 3

Panoramic Photos:
Folder 1