

Collection #
P 0214

**FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON CONSTRUCTION
ALBUM, MAY–SEPTEMBER 1917**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 PAA size photograph album
COLLECTION DATES:	May to September 1917
PROVENANCE:	Kurt W. Schlicht, Indianapolis, 1996
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ACCESSION NUMBER:	1997.0058
NOTES:	

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Fort Benjamin Harrison was established as a training center for the Indiana National Guard in June of 1904. Shortly after the Spanish-American War of 1898 the Secretary of War added Fort Harrison to a group of new military installations for the expanded national army. The federal government purchased 1,994 acres in Lawrence Township of Marion County for the site. At the request of President Theodore Roosevelt the fort was named after Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd president of the United States and Indiana resident.

During World War I Fort Harrison, because of its proximity to major highways and railroads, became one of the largest Army training and mobilization sites in the country. In May of 1917 an Army training camp was established there to train 5,000 men to become officers in the reserve corps. Officer training camps were held at the fort from May to August and from August to November 1917 to prepare the leadership of the army headed for the battlefields of France. The new officers then in turn trained the thousands of recruits at the fort.

The Gaylord Engineering and Construction Company of Scranton, Pennsylvania was engaged exclusively by the government to erect barracks at Fort Harrison in May of 1917. The company opened an office in the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce building to recruit local workers for the project. As the men were hired they were sent to the fort to live and work. The company needed 3300 men including carpenters, plumbers, electricians, concrete finishers, and laborers. Only 1,000 men were recruited locally, the remainder were brought in from out of state.

On May 20, 1917 War Department consulting engineers arrived in Indianapolis from Washington D.C. with plans to enlarge the army post. A new sewage plant was to be constructed involving the erection of an Imhoff reduction plant and the laying of miles of sewer and water pipes. On May 31, 1917 Charles H. Hurd, the former chief engineer and vice president of Indianapolis Water Company, was selected by the War Department to take charge as consulting engineer of the reconstruction of the water supply system at the fort. The goal was to supply 3,000,000 gallons of water every day and rebuild a sewage disposal system. Before this water for the fort was obtained from wells; the new system would obtain water from Fall Creek about one mile above the government reservation and beyond Indian Creek. The project was to be completed in four to six weeks with Gaylord Engineering and Construction Company performing the actual construction.

Sources:

Encyclopedia of Indianapolis

Indianapolis Star, May 16, 20, and 31, 1917

Municipal Journal & Public Works, Jan. 25, 1917 Google Books Result

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is comprised of one photograph album that documents the construction of barracks, and sewage and water systems at Fort Benjamin Harrison by the Gaylord Engineering and Construction Company from May 17, 1917 to September 4, 1917.

Early images show open fields with barracks going up, and the Gaylord offices at the fort where workmen are assembled. Later images show workmen excavating and digging ditches by hand, building concrete forms, pouring and finishing concrete, trenching, laying pipe, building sewage and water treatment facilities, constructing a pump house and power house and a large circular wood and concrete water tank.

The 108 black and white photographs in the album are glued to linen backing. Each image has the hand-written caption "Gaylord Eng. & Const. Co. Ft. Benj. Harrison" along with the date and a report on the weather for the day. Most images are also numbered on the front. The photographer is unknown.

The processors transcribed the information that was written on each image: the date, weather report, and the photo number. None of the images had descriptions or names of people in the photos. The processors descriptions are in square brackets.

For easy access to specific images the processors numbered each photo on the verso of the upper left corner of each page sequentially from 1 to 110.

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trenching of a pipeline]

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[view of field with men in the distance working with
lumber around a house]

May 20, 1917, Cloudy
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[men constructing wooden barracks]

May 20, 1917, Cloudy
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[men constructing wooden barracks]

May 25, 1917, Fair
Photo number: no number
[view of field with men in the distance constructing
wooden barracks]

May 25, 1917, Fair
Photo number: no number
[view of field with men constructing wooden
barracks]

May 25, 1917, Fair
Photo number: no number
[view of dirt road with vehicle driving away]

June 4, 1917, Fair
Photo number: 123
[wooden office building with men lined up, sign on
top of building "Time Office / Gaylord Engineering
and Construction Co. / Quickest and Best Service /
Scranton, Pa., Binghamton, N.Y., Washington, D.C."]

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Photo number: 170

[interior of large circular water tank with wooden frame construction, in the center a wooden frame sits over a square hole in the ground, a trench surrounds the frame and hole; a straight trench leads to the outer wall of the circular structure]

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Photo number: 174

[interior of large circular water tank with wooden frame construction, in the center a wooden frame sits over a square hole in the ground, a trench surrounds the frame and hole; a straight trench leads to the outer wall of the tank, this view is taken from opposite side of the structure in photo 170]

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[interior of large circular water tank with wooden frame construction, in the center is a wooden frame over a square hole in the ground and the area around the frame and hole are two shallow round trenches with a straight trench leading to the outer wall of the circular tank, crane-like tower in the background]

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[construction site for large circular water tank, wooden frame being built, a car, men, and horses are at the site, crane-like towers are outside the structure]

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Photo number: 179

[crane-like tower outside of circular water tank under construction, men wait with shovels and brooms on a wooden ramp leading to the tower]

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Photo number: 173

[three women and a man standing by an automobile at circular water tank construction site, in the distance are crane-like towers and men working]

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