

Collection #
P0136

GARDENERS BENEFIT SOCIETY OF INDIANAPOLIS PHOTOGRAPHS, 1901–1962

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Processed by

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May 2007

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

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| VOLUME OF COLLECTION: | 4 oversize composite photographs, 2 panoramic photographs |
| COLLECTION DATES: | 1901–1962 |
| PROVENANCE: | Indianapolis German Gardeners Benefit Society, c/o Edwin W. Summeier, Indianapolis, 1986 |

RESTRICTIONS: Due to the large size of the three framed composite photographs they cannot be moved. Special arrangements must be made for viewing through the Manuscript and Visual Collections staff.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1986.0792

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Gardeners Benefit Society of Indianapolis was founded by a group of German immigrants on 6 July 1867. Originally called "Deutscher Gartner Unterstutzungs Verein zu Indianapolis," it was one of many cultural and economic organizations that sprang up among immigrants to Indianapolis in the nineteenth century. By 1900 Indianapolis had over fifty "vereins" or clubs. These clubs provided social, cultural and, educational opportunities. In the case of the gardeners there was financial support for its members as well.

The club was made up of Germans who settled close to the White River on the southwest side of Indianapolis in the area bounded by Raymond, Banta, Madison, and Harding streets. The 1920 United States Census for Marion County tells us these people and their parents were mainly from the Westphalia area of Germany. Some were also from the Rhineland, Hanover, and Wittenberg.

The club name was changed in 1886 to the German Gardeners' Benefit Society of Indianapolis with adoption of amendments to the charter. In the 1930s 'German' was dropped and the final name of the group, Gardeners Benefit Society of Indianapolis was settled upon.

The society's purpose as stated in their constitution was "to promote the science of horticulture, floriculture, etc. and to raise it to the highest possible standard." One had to be between the ages of 21 and 50 to become a member and be physically healthy. If a member died, the society would pay \$100 to the heirs. If the member was sick and unable to work, the payment was \$4 per week. The Gardeners Benefit Society also made loans to members, which was particularly helpful to young men just arriving from Germany.

The member's truck farms and greenhouses provided year-round vegetables to the community. The main crops were tomatoes and leaf and bib lettuce; but beets, asparagus, green onions, spinach and kale were also grown. At its peak in the 1940s, this collective group of German gardeners had the largest concentration of greenhouses in the country with 80-85 growers, many along Bluff Road.

In 1920 the Marion County Greenhouse Growers Association was formed and included members of the Gardeners Benefit society. This organization promoted uniform quality of member growers' produce. As a larger group it was also better able to sell and buy vegetables. Its trade name was "Hoosier Boy." This association was a for-profit corporation which distributed stocks according to the members' square glass (greenhouse) footage owned. The

association bought trucks and members were able to ship their produce as far as St. Louis and Chicago.

A third association founded in this area of Marion County was the Indianapolis Vegetable Growers Association. Its purpose was to promote vegetables grown by its members in the Indianapolis area. Unlike the other group, members of this group grew outdoor vegetables only.

The Gardeners Benefit Society is still active and several family descendents of the original members still maintain their greenhouses, growing bedding flowers and plants for the Indianapolis community. To honor the legacy of these German immigrants and their descendants, the Indiana Historical Bureau erected a landmark in 1998 entitled "German Greenhouses and Truck Gardeners." The marker is located in Bluff Park, at 555 W. Hanna Avenue in Marion County.

Sources:

Aufderheide, Paul, interview by Cathy Born at the Indiana Historical Society in March of 2007.

Dan McFeely, "Greenhouse Goods Galore," *Indianapolis Star*, 9 June 2003, sec. B, p. 1-2.

Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Marion County Indiana.

Gordon, Donna Rosebrock, "German Greenhouses and Truck Gardeners Southwest Marion County, Indpls, Indiana," Section 5, Research Paper, October 1997, Indiana Historical Bureau

Indianapolis Gardeners Benefit Society Records, 1867-1985, Accession A91-50, Collection M46, IUPUI University Library, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives,

Peopling Indiana: the Ethnic Experience. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996. General Collection: F535.A1 P46 1996

Probst, George Theodore, *Germans in Indianapolis, 1840-1918*. Indianapolis: German-American Center & Indiana German Heritage Society, 1989.

General Collection: F534.I55 P76 1918.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains four composite photographs and two panoramic photographs of members of the Gardeners Benefit Society of Indianapolis. The images span the years from 1901 to 1962. Three of the composite photographs are framed and because of their large size cannot be moved from their location in the stacks.

The earliest photograph from 1901 does not list the member's names. There are two versions of the 1913 composite. The illustration on the larger framed version's mat was redrawn in 1962 but the photographs appear to be original. The final framed image from 1962 lists individual's names.

There are also two panoramic photographs. The earliest one is a German Gardeners family outing at Germania Park, dated Aug. 17, 1911, and the later one is a Vegetable Growers Association Convention in Indianapolis taken at Garfield Park in 1922.

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“Deutscher Gartner Unterstutzungs Verein zu Indianapolis 1867–1901”
Composite photograph of German Gardeners Benefit Society members
no names
4 ft. x 5ft. 8 inches, framed

“German Gardners Family Outing Germania Park Indianapolis August 17, '11, Losey Photographer 36 ½ W. Wash”
Families at an outing
10 inches x 3 ft. 9 inches

“Deutscher Gartner Unterstutzungs Verein Indianapolis Gegrundet 1867 Im Jahre 1913”
“Photos & Design by G. Koehler, 110 E. Washington St.”
Composite photograph of German Gardeners Benefit Society members with names

“Deutscher Gartner Unterstutzungs Verein Indianapolis Gegrundet 1867 Im Jahre 1913”
“Photos & Design by G. Koehler, 110 E. Washington St.”
“Redrawn 1962 by D. Rosebrock”
Framed composite photograph of German Gardeners Benefit Society members with names, larger version of the OVC photograph
4 ft. 9 inches x 5 ft. 9 inches, framed

“Vegetable Growers’ Association of America 1922 Convention, Indianapolis, Ind. Aug. 22–25”
“Cirkut by Bretzman, Indpls.”
Men, women, and children on steps of Sunken Garden at Garfield Park, conservatory in view

“Deutscher Gartner Unterstutzungs Verein Indianapolis Founded 1867–April 1962”
Composite photograph of German Gardeners Benefit Society members, with names
3 ft. 9 inches x 5 ft. 5 inches, framed

CONTAINER

Hanging Storage:
Aisle 14A, Section 6–7

Panoramic Photographs:
Aisle 12A

OVC Photographs:
Folder 1

Hanging Storage:
Aisle 14A, Section 4

Panoramic Photographs:
Rolled Storage,
Aisle 62B, Section 1

Hanging Storage:
Aisle 14B, Section 5–6

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, P0136).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.