

Collection #s:
M 0067
BV 0672-0712

INDIANAPOLIS BELT RAILROAD AND STOCK YARDS COMPANY RECORDS, 1874–1968

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 10 manuscript boxes, 40 bound volumes, 12 reel audio tapes, 3 photograph folders, 2 OVA photograph folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1874-1968

PROVENANCE: David L. Chambers, Indianapolis, IN, 21 June 1968

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: Reel audio tapes

RELATED HOLDINGS: Samuel & Charles Rauh Papers (M 0406)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1976.0619

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Indianapolis Belt Railway Company was incorporated on 28 June 1873 for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining a railroad around the city from North Indianapolis to Brightwood. A movement for the erection of a stockyard near the west bank of the White River took shape a short time later and was contingent upon the railroad's construction.

Both ideas were not new. In 1870, Joel F. Richardson proposed a belt line be constructed around the city to relieve the downtown track congestion. The first need for a stockyard occurred in 1863 when Kingan and Company opened the world's largest pork producing plant. Kingan later opened a small stockyard operation near their plant. Prior to that time, livestock were sold in the private yards of packers and butchers. Nicholas McCarty furthered the argument for a large, central stockyard complex after touring the facilities in Chicago and St. Louis.

The panic of 1873 and legal right-of-way battles delayed the construction of the railroad and the stockyards a short time later, but the company formed its articles of association in 1876 under the name of the Union Railroad Transfer and Stock Yards Company. In the fall of 1876 the city of Indianapolis agreed to loan the firm \$500,000 to complete the project. Indianapolis mayor John Caven, who viewed the railroad and stockyards as a stimulant to the economy, was chiefly responsible for the loan's approval and solution to the right-of-way problem. The railroad and stockyards opened on 12 November 1877 with over 200 freight cars passing over the fourteen miles of track on the first day. The new livestock buildings had the capacity for holding 25,000 hogs and 3,000 head of cattle or mules and was located on eight acres of former river bottom land acquired from the heirs of Nicolas McCarty, Sr.

In 1881 the firm's name was changed to the Indianapolis Belt Railroad and Stock Yard Company, and the following year, the Belt Railroad facilities were leased to the Indianapolis Union Railway Company for 999 years. Founded in the early 1850s, the locally operated Union Railway Company owned and maintained the Union Railway Passenger Station (Union Depot) and approximately one mile of track around the facility. The Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central systems (now Conrail) later acquired the company, but the railway continued operating as a distinct organization while leasing the track, equipment (engines and cars), and facilities from the Belt Railroad.

A second Indianapolis Belt Railroad Company was formed in May 1883, to construct, maintain, and operate a small section of track on the city's outskirts. In December of the same year, the operation was consolidated with the Indianapolis Belt Railroad and Stock Yard Company to form the Indianapolis Belt Railroad and Stock Yards Company. The rail facilities were then leased to the Union Railway Company.

A fire in 1904 nearly destroyed the entire stockyard complex with the exception of the Livestock Exchange Building but new and enlarged structures were soon erected. A truck

department was added to the stockyard operation in 1919 and a hog division followed in 1926. Over the years, the stockyards expanded to encompass 147 acres, 60 of which were used for the livestock industry. At its peak in the 1930s and 1940s, the stockyards handled three million animals a year. In 1964, the company's name was altered to the Indianapolis Stockyards Company, Inc.

The decline of the Indianapolis meat packing industry resulted in a substantial decrease in shipments in the late 1950s and 1960s, and in 1967 Indianapolis Stockyards, Inc. was sold to Eli Lilly and Company, and they, in turn, leased the area to the United Stockyards Company of Chicago. In 1973, the stockyards were moved from their original location at 1400 Kentucky Ave., to a new sixteen acre site at 2577 Kentucky Ave. The old stockyard area was also razed in 1973 to make way for Lilly's Kentucky Ave. Industrial Center.

The Rauh family directed the Indianapolis Stockyards' operation from 1897-1967. Samuel E. Rauh assumed the corporate presidency in 1897 and continued to direct the company until his death in 1929. His son, Charles S. Rauh succeeded him and continued to direct the corporation until his death in 1956, at which time David L. Chambers, Jr., a grandson-in-law of Samuel Rauh took over the operation. Chambers remained in control of the stockyards until it was sold to the Lilly Company in 1967. Previous company presidents included William Riley McKeen, 1876-1889; William Putnam Ijams, 1889-1897; and Deloss W. Minshall for one month in 1897.

Sources: Sources in collection.

Indianapolis Star, 27 September 1953, p. 2H; 22 November 1967, p. 1; 7 November 1971, Sec. D, p. 21; 19 February 1978 (*Star Magazine*).

Dunn, Jacob P., *Greater Indianapolis*, Vol. 1, pp. 256-263.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records of the Indianapolis Belt Railroad and Stock Yards Company cover the period from the period from the Articles of Association in 1874 to 1968, one year after the sale of the Indianapolis Stockyards Company, Inc. to Eli Lilly and Company. The largest portion of the records includes the company's management, capital stock, and property documents. The majority of the records deal with stockyard proceedings since the Belt Railroad and Stock Yards Company leased its rail properties to the Union Railway Company in 1882. Most of the railroad records pertain to dealings prior to 1882 and in the agreements with the Union Railway Company (Box 7).

Included in the Belt Railroad and Stock Yard's Company's management records are documents relating to the firm's organization, mergers, and general operations along with annual reports and director's meetings. The collection contains annual presidential reports, 1917-1967, as well as appraisal reports, expenses, expenditures, tax reports, and audits, 1870s-1960s. There are also two volumes of the financial records of the Union Reduction Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, 1913-1921, a firm that had ties to the Rauh family.

The records also contain the firm's capital stock records including stock certificates and ledgers, 1877-1931. There are also items relating to the purchase, sale, and transfer of stock, including investment diversification material. Also included among the stockholder records are meeting minutes and reports, 1876-1967.

The collection also contains a significant amount of material regarding property sale, leasing, and the granting of right-of-ways. Included in the records are acquisition and sales document such as deeds, correspondence, diagrams, and blueprints. Among these items are neighboring businesses obtained by Belt Railroad and Stock Yards Company, 1876-1967; land leased, sold, or right of way to the city for municipal purposes, 1915-1967; and right of way agreements between the Stock Yards Company and the Union Railway Company, 1878-1958.

Among the other materials in the collection are historical related items, labor records, the construction and expansion of stockyard property, and the records of the Indianapolis Stock Yards Marketing Institute. Historical related materials include newspaper clippings and scrapbooks, 1920s-1950s, and items relating the company's 50th anniversary celebration, 1927. The records of the Stock Yards Marketing Institute include corporate organizational materials as well as financial records, and advertising and media promotions, 1954-1968. Labor records center on the company's pension plan with some payroll files and scattered dealings between labor and management, 1891-1967. Construction and expansion records include the erection and remodeling of stockyard buildings, 1920s-1950s.

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CONTAINER

BV 0672-0675

BV 0676-0698

BV 0699-0701

BV 0702-0703

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Visual Collection:
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