

INDIANAPOLIS RAILROAD COLLECTION, 1891-1929

Collection #
M 0232

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Processed by
Charles Latham
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	4 manuscript boxes (2 linear feet)
COLLECTION DATES:	inclusive 1891-1929; bulk 1895-1910
PROVENANCE:	Unknown; probably from Indianapolis Board of Public Works
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	None
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1994.0349x

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The period following the Civil War witnessed one major change after another in transportation. First, the steam railroads ran out their main lines and branches until a network of lines covered Indiana. As cities grew, they began to feel a need for public local transportation; this was first served by mule-cars; electric city railways began a rapid growth after Frank J. Sprague developed a successful system in Richmond, Virginia, in 1887-1888. Lafayette had streetcars in 1888, and Indianapolis had a functioning system by 1895.

The next development was of electric railway lines (interurbans) between nearby cities. These were first found in northern Indiana, but by 1901 the lines of the Union Traction Company of Indiana had reached Indianapolis. During the next ten years there was a rapid growth of traction lines in the state, under the leadership of Hugh J. McGowan, who had started as a mule-car driver in Kansas City. In 1904 a large nine-track interurban terminal was built on Market Street between Illinois Street and Capitol Avenue, and by 1910 Indianapolis was served by four hundred trains a day. In 1920 Indiana had 2600 miles of interurban lines, in a network extending from Indianapolis west to Terre Haute, south to Louisville, and north and east to Richmond, Fort Wayne, Goshen, and Lafayette.

Meanwhile Indianapolis was growing, from 105,000 inhabitants in 1890 to 169,000 in 1900 and 134,000 in 1910. At the same time that streetcar tracks and poles were being installed, streets were being paved and sewer and water mains extended. Though the tracks of the steam railroads were gradually being elevated from 1905 to 1923, the interurban lines generally entered the city on the tracks and using the electric power of the street railways. All these changes needed to be regulated, and the city's Board of Public Works was kept busy during the period hearing petitions and issuing ordinances to make some sort of order out of the welter of applications.

After 1920 the interurban was challenged by the development of highways and the proliferation of the automobile. By 1930 the remaining interurban lines were in receivership, and the receiver converted them to bus lines.

Sources: Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition, 1880-1920*, pp. 251-158

James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way*, pp. 157-159

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection, filling four manuscript boxes, contains some correspondence, along with applications to the Board of Public Works and Board ordinances, from the period 1891-1929. Most of these applications and ordinances concern routes and rights of way in Indianapolis. They are arranged alphabetically by company. Two short series at the end of the collection concern applications for switching permits, and some general correspondence; these are arranged chronologically.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box 1: Beech Grove to Indianapolis, Logansport Chicago Folder Contents

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Beech Grove Traction Co. |
| 2 | Belt Railway |
| 3 | Central Indiana Traction Co. |
| 4 | Chicago, Indianapolis Eastern RR |
| 5-6 | Citizens Street Railway 1893, 1896 |
| 7 | City Railway Co. of Indianapolis 1893 |

8	Consolidated Traction Co. 1903
9	Grand Central Traction Co. 1907
10	Indianapolis Eastern RR 1902
11	Indianapolis Martinsville Rapid Transit 1902
12	Indianapolis Plainfield RR 1902
13	Indianapolis, Crawfordsville Western RR
14	Indianapolis, Greenwood Franklin RR 1901
15	Indianapolis Interurban Terminal Co.
16	Indianapolis, Lebanon Frankfort RR 1902
17-20	Indianapolis, Logansport Chicago RR 1892-1903

**Box 2: Indianapolis, New Castle Toledo to Indianapolis Union Railway
Folder Contents**

1-3	Indianapolis, New Castle Toledo RR 1904-1912
4-5	Indianapolis, New Castle Winchester RR 1904-1907
6	Indianapolis Northern Traction Co.
7	Indianapolis, Shelbyville Southeastern RR 1902
8-9	Indianapolis Southern Railway 1905-1906
10	Indianapolis Street Railway Co. 1899-1902
11-13	Indianapolis Traction Terminal Co. 1891-1914
14	Indianapolis Union Railway

**Box 3: Indianapolis Union Traction Co to Vandalia RR; Switching 1896-1903
Folder Contents**

1-6	Indianapolis Union Traction Co. 1901-1917
7-9	Union Traction Co. of Indiana 1900-1923
10	Vandalia RR 1906-1907
11-15	Switching 1890-1903

Box 4: Switching 1905-1929; Correspondence 1895-1914

Folder Contents

1-5	Switching 1905-1929
6-9	Board of Public Works correspondence 1895-1896, 1901-1904, 1913-1914

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](#)
2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

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