

Collection #
M 0888
OM 0441

JOHN A. CEJNAR COLLECTION, 1928–1947

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	Manuscript Materials: 1 box, 1 oversize folder Visual Materials: 1 box photographs, 1 box glass negatives Artifacts: 2 artifacts
COLLECTION DATES:	1928–1947
PROVENANCE:	Jack Cejnar, 1967

RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	None
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1967.0021
NOTES:	One box of nitrate negatives was discarded because there were prints of the negatives.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John A. Cejnar (Jack) was born 23 February 1895, in Pilsen, Bohemia Czechoslovakia, the oldest son of Vaclav and Anna (Bartak) Cejnar. The family immigrated to the United States and settled in Scotland, South Dakota. After graduating high school Jack enrolled at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, South Dakota but did not graduate.

In 1917 he joined the National Guard at Dallas, Texas. His unit was absorbed into the Army and in July 1918 they sailed for France. From September–November, 1918, he saw fierce combat at Meuse-Argonne, France. After the war he enrolled for a year at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland). Upon returning home in 1919 he joined the American Legion, and registered at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, graduating in 1921. While in school he started a social organization which eventually became part of Lambda Chi Alpha. In 1923 he married Esther Jones, a Nebraska University classmate, who had worked her way through school.

More importantly for him, a stimulating class in journalism launched him on a writing and news-gathering career. While in the Nebraskan capital he worked on the staff of the University newspaper, a job which led to night work as a cub reporter for the *Nebraska State Journal*—at a stipend of \$15.00/week. An early promotion took him to the position of Night City Editor with a raise to \$25.00/week. Later on while living in Omaha, Jack worked for the Associated Press and then for the International News Service (INS) which in time was absorbed by the United Press. With the INS in Indianapolis he became Bureau Chief and served in that capacity from 1926–1934. Over the next quarter-century his work as journalist and photographer took him and his wife to several cities in the Midwest.

In 1934 he joined the national staff of the American Legion, starting as Assistant Director of Public Relations, later becoming the Director. During the 1960s he commanded the local Indianapolis Post and edited the *Hoosier Legionnaire* (1960–64). When Congress passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (1944), Jack was the first to call it the “G.I. Bill of Rights.” In 1967, a heart attack left him with breathing problems complicated by earlier diagnosed emphysema forcing his resignation from all Legion responsibilities the following year. He and his wife moved to San Jose, California in July 1969 to live with Esther’s twin sister, Mrs. Ruth (Jones) Thompson. Esther died in March 1970 and Ruth continued to care for Jack until his death on 28 February 1975.

Jack Cejnar reportedly had a mind capable of total recall. The *Hoosier Legionnaire* (April 1975), quoting an earlier edition of the *Indianapolis Times*, described him as nearly attaining the stereotype of a “dashing, press-stopping, bullet-dodging, trenchcoated, brash hero,” in large part because of the “scoops” he managed—scoops regarding Indiana University women wearing bloomers, John Dillinger, Public Enemy No. 1 (almost a face-to-face encounter in Mooresville, IN), a bank robbery (in Clinton, Indiana), and more. Cejnar’s first-on-the-scene arrival at headline-

breaking events like murders, bank robberies and deaths baffled competing news services. His secret, at least for bank robberies, stemmed from his discovery that the fine print in their insurance policies required the banks to notify their insurance companies *before* they contacted the sheriff. Using that as leverage, he agreed to provide the insurer with a detailed report of the holdup if the banks would call him before they called the sheriff.

Sources:

Hoosier Legionnaire, issues 1960–64 and April 1975. Indiana State Library

Indiana Biography Series, [microform] lxxxii (1974–75). Indiana State Library

The Indiana Publisher, [microform] xxxix, No. 3 (March, 1975), p.9. Indiana State Library

The Indianapolis Star, March 3, 1975; p.18, col. 1. Indiana State Library

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains many news articles and fictional stories written between 1930 and 1939 by reporter and photojournalist, John A. Cejnar. In his papers and writings he refers to himself as Jack Cejnar. Most of the writing has to do with crimes that took place in Indiana. Cejnar’s fictional stories were based on actual crimes, such as “The Jinx that Stalked the Outlaws,” “Feud Ambush on Indiana’s Maul Ridge,” and “Solving the Gunsaulie Murder Grave Horror.” Cejnar also wrote stories on oddities or strange occurrences, such as; “Monster Catfish,” “Two Girls Guard Mightiest Fallen Star,” and “The Hollow Log Automobile.”

Along with the articles written by Jack Cejnar, there are approximately 130 black and white photographs. Some of them were taken by Mr. Cejnar, including a visit to Indianapolis by President Herbert Hoover, an undated picture of Ernest Patrick a young Hoosier who developed an early tubeless radio; and an unchanged (though fading) calendar (with an accompanying Cejnar story) hanging in the Wabash County Courthouse indicating the day that President Lincoln was shot. There are also detailed pictures of the moving of the Bell Telephone Building taken by Voorhis in 1930. The manuscript and printed material related to the photographs includes clippings and manuscripts of “true crime” stories submitted to popular magazines by Cejnar.

The manuscript materials and photographs are arranged by date when possible. Articles that have photographs relating to the story are listed together in the collection guide. The collection also contains personal ephemera (invitations, cards, parking tickets, etc.) once owned by Jack Cejnar. There is one box of six glass negatives documenting President Hoover’s visit to Indianapolis. An article written by Cejnar titled “Two Girls Guard Mightiest Fallen Star” is in flat file storage.

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News Stories Written by Cejnar, 1928–1934

Great Clinton, IN Bank Robbery, 1930 – Story –
“The Jinx that Stalked the Outlaws”

Great Clinton, IN Bank Robbery, 1930 – Story –

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3

“Feud Ambush on Indiana’s Maul Ridge”

Great Clinton, IN Bank Robbery Photographs, 1930
Pictures of both people and places involved with the bank robbery.

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 1

Meteor Shower - Crawfordsville, IN, 1930

Box 1, Folder 4

The Indianapolis Commercial, editorials, 1930–1931

Box 1, Folder 5

Correspondence, 1930–1942, n.d.

Box 1, Folder 6

Herbert Hoover visit to Indianapolis, 1931

Box 1, Folder 7

Herbert Hoover visit to Indianapolis, 1931
Photographs of President Hoover, his wife, the governor, both downtown and at the fairgrounds, photograph of cooks with 5,000 chickens for the banquet at Manufacturers’ Hall,

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 2

Herbert Hoover visit to Indianapolis, 1931

4x5 Glass Negatives:
Box 1

[1] Hoover in convertible

[2] Unidentified man

[3] Mrs. Hoover in convertible during the parade

[4] Hoover, Mrs. Hoover, and Governor Leslie in convertible during the parade

[5] Unidentified group walking in parade

[6] Parade crowd with policeman

Poer’s Auto Theft Trial – Newcastle, IN, 1931

Box 1, Folder 8

Poer’s Auto Theft Trial – Newcastle, IN, 1931
Two photographs of the Disciples Church (also called the South Christian)

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 3

Gibson-Spurlock Feud, 1931

Box 1, Folder 9

Gibson-Spurlock Feud, 1931
Photograph of the Jackson County jail at Brownstown where the Spurlocks were tried.

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 4

Miniature Racing Car, 1931

Box 1, Folder 10

Miniature Racing Car, 1931
Photographs of L.F. Angerine and his miniature racing car.

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 5

Cyrus Gates’ Hollow Log Automobile, 1931

Box 1, Folder 11

Cyrus Gates’ Hollow Log Automobile, 1931
One photograph of the truck made out of a large hollow log with three men inside.

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 6

Relocation of Indiana Bell Telephone Company’s Building, article written ca. 1932

Box 1, Folder 12

Relocation of Indiana Bell Telephone Company's Building, 1930 Various stages of moving the Bell building, Aerial shots of downtown, and workers moving the building	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 7
Story – "Solving the Gunsaulie Murder Grave Horror," 1932	Box 1, Folder 13
Correspondence – Ku Klux Klan Research, ca. 1932	Box 1, Folder 14
Miller Duel Murder, Wabash, IN, ca. 1932	Box 1, Folder 15
Miller Duel Murder, Wabash, IN, ca. 1932 Photographs of a love letter, photograph of an unidentified man and woman.	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 8
Elmer Taflinger Mural Law Suit, 1933	Box 1, Folder 16
Elmer Taflinger Mural Law Suit, 1933 Mostly portraits of Elmer Taflinger at work in his studio, some with other people.	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 9
126 th Anniversary of President Lincoln's Birthday in Wabash, 1935	Box 1, Folder 17
126 th Anniversary of President Lincoln's Birthday in Wabash, 1935 Photographs of a calendar that had not been changed since Lincoln's assassination, photograph of the clerk at the Wabash circuit court in 1865	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 10
"Two Girls Guard Mightiest Fallen Star," Article by Jack Cejnar, 1937	OM 0441 Flat File 11-j
Presbyterian Church Printed Materials, 1939; 1948	Box 1, Folder 18
Correspondence-Juvenile Court Committee, 1938–1943	Box 1, Folder 19
Newsletters, 1943; 1945	Box 1, Folder 20
Income Tax Return, 1947; Statement of Borrower	Box 1, Folder 21
Coffee Pot Filling Station, Scott, IN, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 22
Coffee Pot Filling Station, Scott County, IN, n.d. Outside view of the filling station shaped like a coffee pot in Scottsburg	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 11
Article-"Pro Patria," by Henry Hering, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 23
Newsclippings, 1931; n.d.	Box 1, Folder 24
Monster Catfish, Jefferson County, IN, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 25

Monster Catfish, Jefferson County, IN, n.d. Photograph of a woman holding an 83 lb. catfish, postcard of the catfish hanging in front of a store.	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 12
Business Brochures, Advertisements, Coupon Books	Box 1, Folder 26
Club Memberships, Licenses, Parking Tickets	Box 1, Folder 27
Invitations, Event Tickets, Business Cards, Political Ads	Box 1, Folder 28
Press Pass Ribbons	Artifacts: 1967.0021
Travel Information	Box 1, Folder 29
Indianapolis Business Brochures	Box 1, Folder 30
American Legion/Veteran Papers	Box 1, Folder 31
Lil Dagover and Center of Population Marker, 1931 German actress Lil Dagover placing the stone marker at Linton, IN to mark the center of population in the United States, photographs of Lil Dagover with Mayor of Linton, E.V. Bull and Governor Harry Leslie.	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 13
Warranty Deed, 1931; America's Bridegroom Given Away Free, n.d. Photograph of the deed that made John W. Chambers youngest landlord in Indiana, photograph of a poster for women to win a bridegroom and \$5,000.	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 14
Cicoe Hotel Murder, Indianapolis, n.d. Photographs of the Cicoe Hotel at 124 E. New York St. Indianapolis	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 15
Roberta West Nicholson, Indiana's Only Female State Representative, 1934	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 16
Elizabeth Davis, Butler University Editor, n.d. Formal portrait.	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 17
Ernst Patrick and Radio Invention, n.d. Photographs of Ernst Patrick and "an all-electric, all- wave one-tube radio receiver – with a trans Atlantic range."	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 18
Unidentified Individuals: Photograph of a handgun, woman in graduation cap and gown, a man reading <i>The DePauw</i> , portrait of woman with pearls on, two photographs taken at the same desk – one with a man sitting at a desk with a cane and the other a woman sitting at the desk, photograph of a policeman and other man inspecting	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 19

a dead body with a derailed train in the background.

Identified Individuals:

Photocopied photographs of J.C. Sullivan in military uniform, Chief Detective Fred Summ holding a hammer, Detective Arthur Fields and Tom Barnaby in 1934, Patrolman Owen Tevlin and Harry Hayes in 1934, William H Settle in 1933, Sheriff of Newcastle in 1932, Fred S. Duesenberg in 1932.

Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 20

Unidentified Building:

Two story house

Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 21

Identified Buildings:

New Castle Courthouse in 1931, home of [Ormilong?] sisters, Middlesboro Chamber of Commerce, [Jack Cejnar's home] 5132 Carrolton Ave, Indianapolis, collapsed house [Marion Bowlings?] in 1930, Harbison's Drugstore where employee William Bright was murdered in 1937

Photographs:

Box 1, Folder 22

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, M 0888).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.