

Collection #
P 0129
F1707–F1711

MARTIN'S PHOTO SHOP COLLECTION, 1906–1976

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:

- Approximately 500 scanned portrait images,
- 1 box of portrait photographs
- 322 boxes of photographs
- 1 box of color photographs
- 1 box of OVB photographs
- 5 rolls of microfilm

COLLECTION DATES: 1906–1976

PROVENANCE: Kenneth Martin.

RESTRICTIONS: The use of photographs from the collection for advertising purposes is prohibited for a period of fifty years after the date that the negatives were made, unless the requester obtains written release from the donor or his heirs.

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REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: *On the banks of the Wabash: a Photograph Album of Greater Terre Haute, 1900-1950.*
General Collection Folio: F534.T37 O5 1983

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1983.1207

NOTES: Due to the volatile nature of nitrate negatives some of the images from the portrait series in this collection were digitized. These are now available for viewing through the **Digital Image Collections** on the library website. Some images from the commercial series of the Martin Collection are also available through the **Digital Image Collections** on the library website. Future updates to the collection guide planned.

HISTORICAL/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

MARTIN'S PHOTO SHOP

Frank J. Martin established Martin's Photo Shop as a blueprint business and photography studio in 1906. Over the years and with the help of his seven children, the Martin's operated as photojournalists for the local newspapers and documented daily life in Terre Haute and Vigo County until it closed in 1976.

The studio stayed at 681 ½ Wabash for the duration of 70 years. In the years that the shop was at this location Frank Martin and his sons seldom discarded any of the images that they had taken. The only negatives that were destroyed were the ones made of glass. They were heavy and threatened the integrity of the building. There were over 100,000 prints and approximately 400,000 negatives that were carefully developed, organized, and stored at the studio. These include family portraits, Cirkut photographs, and different events that happened around the county. There had been little damage to the collection due to the fact that the studio was not afraid to try new technology and they kept high standards in place for the development of the film. Some of the new technologies the Martins introduced to their studio were the first electric blue printing machine, first contained flash powder cabinet, first fluorescent studio lamp, first flash bulbs, and the first electronic flash.

FRANK J. MARTIN

While employed at the Terre Haute Traction and Light Company Frank J. Martin saw a need to create blueprints for the growing Vigo County community. He opened a photography studio to fulfill this necessity in 1906. His enterprise evolved into Martin's Photo Shop, located at 681 ½ Wabash Ave. in Terre Haute, Indiana. It was here that he developed his skill behind the camera and went on to be a successful professional photographer. He took portraits of people, commercial enterprises, and events that happened in and around Terre Haute and Vigo County. Frank Martin trained all 7 of his children in the art of photography and each of them spent time working with him at his studio until 1933 when he was hit by a car on his way to photograph a prom at Indiana State University. After the loss of their father, Kenneth and Willard Martin took over the family business.

KENNETH MARTIN

Kenneth Martin was born on March 14 1909. He married the former Margaret Evinger in Terre Haute on July 6, 1929. They had two children, Robert and Marilyn. He received his undergraduate degree from Indiana State University and started working for his father at the studio in 1928. After his father's untimely death in 1933 Ken and his brother, Willard took over Martin's Photo Shop. Ken managed the commercial element of the business and Willard managed the portrait section of the enterprise until his retirement in 1969. After that Ken ran the business until he retired in 1976. He was a member of the Professional Photographers of America and its governing body the National Council, the American Society of Photographers, and was the past president of the Professional Photographers of Indiana, and the Daguerre Club of Indiana.

WILLARD MARTIN

Willard Martin was born on August 25, 1898. He married the former Margaret Landis on September 20, 1921 in Ephrate, Pennsylvania. They had two children, Millicent and Dorothy. Willard attended the Chicago Art Institute and the Winona School of Photography. He earned his masters degree in photography and taught at the Winona School. He served in the photographic section of the Signal Corps in 1918 and eventually taught for them in Washington D.C. from 1919 to 1921. After the death of his father he returned to Terre Haute and along with his brother Ken bought Martins Photo shop from their mother. Willard oversaw the portrait aspect of the business and Ken managed the commercial side of the business. He was a member and past president of the Daguerre Club of Indiana and the Professional Photographers of America

The collection was donated to the Indiana Historical Society by Kenneth Martin, the son of Frank Martin who opened Martin's Photo Shop in 1906.

Sources:

Bockner, Harold, ed. Terre Haute's People of Progress. 1970. Pp. 147,150,260,261.

Indiana Historical Society. "500,000 of Martin shop photo images now repose at state historical society." *Tribune-Star*. 22 July 1984, p. E3.

Mitchell, Penny Blaker, "Capturing life's images" *Tribune-Star* 28, December 1986, Pp. G1-G4.

Teller, Alan 1984. The Martin Family Collection. *Journal of American Photography* 2(2): 6-9.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Series 1 Selected Portraits This part of the collection contains a small selection of the approximately 200,000 portrait negatives in the Martin Collection. These portraits of men, women, children, and families are a record of hair and clothing styles as well as the stylistic conventions use by the Martin photographer's at that time. Unfortunately, the portraits taken during the 1920s and early 1930s were recorded on nitrate film, and due to their age and volatile nature

it was necessary to dispose of them. To preserve the essence of the portraits from this time period, approximately five hundred nitrate negatives were selected and digitally scanned. They are arranged alphabetically in the collection guide and each portrait is accompanied by a job number. The names of the individuals and numbers, along with some dates and addresses were transcribed by the processor from the envelopes that contained the negatives. These names and numbers can be utilized by researchers to view specific images through the **Digital Image Collections** on the library website. A few of the negatives were accompanied by photographs. These have been preserved and are noted in the collection guide with a box and folder location. The processor's comments are in square brackets [].

Series 2 Commercial Photographs This series of images makes up the bulk of the collection from the 1920s to the 1970s. There are approximately 100,000 black and white prints and a few color prints stored in 324 boxes. The Martin's kept daily records of each job in their commercial registers. There are 12 of these registers for the commercial photographs. They have been copied onto 3 rolls of microfilm. Two sets of the microfilms are available to researchers. The second set however is missing the first roll of microfilm that dates from 1921 to 1949.

The database project to document the subjects in the registers is in progress along with a detailed box and folder list for the boxes of photographs. The collection guide will be updated upon their completion.

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Helen Yeager, Prairie Creek	24810
Ralph O. Yeager June 12, 1928	17141
Mr. and Mrs. Ira Zaitman	15954

Series 2: Commercial Photographs, 1921–1975

CONTENTS

Commercial Registers: 1921–January 1949
Negative Numbers: 2000–45,361

Commercial Registers: January 1949–November 1960
Negative Numbers: 45,500–181,999

Commercial Registers: November 1960–September 1975
Negative Numbers: 182,000–218,063

Commercial Registers: January 1949–September 1964
Negative Numbers: 45,500–194,298

Commercial Registers: September 1961–September 1975
Negative Numbers: 184,501–218,063

Black and white photographs spanning the years 1921–1975 contained in 322 boxes

Oversized black and white photographs from banquet size negatives, 7 original and two copy photographs

Color photographs

CONTAINER

Microfilm: F 1707

Microfilm: F 1708

Microfilm: F 1709

Microfilm: F 1710

Microfilm: F 1711

Photographs:
Box 1: 104–11174

Box 322: 217760–223554

OVB Photographs:
Box 1

Color Photographs:
Box 1: 173,166–218,050

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, P 0129).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.