

Collection #  
P 0377

**REPUBLICAN CORNFIELD CONFERENCE PHOTOGRAPHS  
27 AUGUST 1938**

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 folder of photographs

COLLECTION DATES: 27 August 1938

PROVENANCE: Gift from John and Susan Piper of Virginia, 2006

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2006.0381

NOTES: *See also: Homer E. Capehart Papers (M 0817)*

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

On 27 August 1938, businessman Homer E. Capehart (1897–1979) hosted a Republican party rally known as the "Cornfield Conference" on his Daviess County farm. It was attended by twenty thousand precinct committeemen and county chairmen and their families as well as dignitaries from other states. The event received front-page news coverage across the country. It also revived the Republican party in Indiana and launched Capehart's political career.

Twenty-eight blue and white striped tents were set up on a 120-acre freshly mown alfalfa field on Capehart's farm for the event. The field had previously grown corn, and corn was growing on an adjacent field that summer. The largest tent accommodated 10,000 people seated at tables. There were tents for each of the twelve Indiana district Republican delegations, four tents for food preparation, one for headquarters, and one each for radio broadcasters, the press, and Republican literature. Small tents sheltered a first aid station and soft drink concessions. The parking area provided space for thousands of cars and buses.

Organized by Capehart, the rally included live music and other entertainment, a noon dinner, and speeches by prominent Republicans who criticized President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Guests were served five thousand barbecued chickens, seventy thousand steamed clams, and three tons of corn on the cob, along with mashed potatoes and watermelon. Following the meal, speakers included party national chairman John D. M. Hamilton, U.S. Senate candidate Raymond E. Willis of Angola, former Senator from New York James W. Wadsworth, and Capehart.

Capehart, who had become a millionaire as a leader in the phonograph and jukebox industry, spent \$25,000 on the Cornfield Conference. His financial support and skills as an impresario gave an energetic boost to the Republican party in Indiana. Following the rally, he was an ardent campaigner for the party. He was elected as U.S. Senator from Indiana and served three terms from 1945 to 1963. His run for a fourth term ended in defeat by Birch Bayh.

### Sources:

Indiana Historical Bureau. "Homer E. Capehart / GOP Cornfield Conference"  
<https://www.in.gov/history/markers/391.htm> Accessed 7 May 2019.

Pickett, William B. "The Capehart Cornfield Conference and the Election of 1938: Homer E. Capehart's Entry into Politics." In *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. 73, no. 4 (December 1977), pp. 251-275. Reference Room: F 521 .I52 v. 73  
<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/imh/article/view/10041/13794?fbclid=IwAR2YB9yWaib9jAFwuLaFgScmBWotAqLFroEsMeBBTOY1niABU6965vK4mOA>  
Accessed 7 May 2019.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of eight small black-and-white photographs that show the crowds in attendance at the Republican party rally known as the Cornfield Conference that was held on Homer E. Capehart's farm in Daviess County, Indiana, on 27 August 1938. Seven of the photographs show the many tents, cars, and buses on one of the farm's fields. One photo shows a crowd of people inside a large tent. All photos are stamped on the back by the photographer, William F. Scudder of 515 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Vincennes, Indiana.

## CONTENTS

### CONTENTS

Photo of a crowd of people seated at tables under a large tent.

Four bird's-eye views of many striped tents, people, and vehicles.

Two photos showing many cars and buses parked, with striped tents in the background. One bus has a banner that reads "Lapel Republicans."

Bird's-eye view of many cars and buses with a farm house and barn in the background.

### CONTAINER

Photographs, Folder 1 of 1

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