

Collection #
P 0767

**STALEY SIGNS, INC.
COLLECTION, 1920S–1980S**

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July 2019

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 half-sized photographs box, 12 boxes OVB photographs, 1 folder OVA graphics, 1 box OVB graphics, 1 box OVC graphics, 1 manuscript folder, 1 artifact

COLLECTION DATES: 1920s–1980s

PROVENANCE: Gifts from Staley Signs, Inc., 2008 and 2018

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBERS: 2008.0268, 2018.0066

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

F. Durward Staley was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1888, the first son of Alice and Charles P. Staley. As a boy he worked selling copies of the *Indianapolis News* on downtown streets. For a time, Staley employed the help of a goat he named Billy to carry the papers up and down the blocks. Around 1906, Staley moved to Los Angeles, where he worked as a tailor's assistant. When he returned to Indianapolis two years later, he briefly continued in the clothing line, working for the local firm of Paul H. Krauss.

In October of 1908, Staley and a skilled artist named Cecil D. Crabb founded the Staley & Crabb sign company. As perhaps a motivating factor, Durward Staley's younger brother Hubert had been killed by a train on the Monon bridge north of Broad Ripple just two months earlier. Staley and Crabb provided painted show cards to motion picture theaters, and later, billboards and lighted signs to businesses around the city. In 1918, the burgeoning company joined up with Floris Thomas, another sign painter, and for a couple of years it was known as Staley, Crabb, & Thomas. At that time the three operated out of a storefront leased by Thomas at 346 S. Pennsylvania Street. By 1921, Thomas was out and in 1925, Staley & Crabb settled into its longtime headquarters at 515 Park Avenue (called Liberty Street at that time).

Around 1926, the company began manufacturing neon signs in Indianapolis, including prominent ones on the Indiana Theater, Circle Theater, and several downtown hotels. Soon afterward, Staley & Crabb patented the "Zeon" sign, which widened the color potential of neon tubes. Also around this time, F. Durward Staley, Sr. invented and patented the "Lum-On" sign, which imitated the look of neon but with more durability for outdoor use. In the late 1930s, the company also attempted to establish a standardized sign for beauty shops, which it hoped would become as recognizable and ubiquitous as barber poles were for barber shops.

The founder's son F.D. Staley, Jr. began working at the firm around the time of his graduation from Shortridge High School in early 1935. According to the company's website, the younger Staley became the youngest person in Indianapolis to ever qualify for the designation Master Electrician. In 1940, the Staley & Crabb corporation was dissolved, continuing as a regular business under the name Staley Signs. After Cecil Crabb sold his share of the company, it was re-incorporated in the late 1940s as Staley Signs, Inc.

During the World War II years, the company operated under the name Staley & Son Industries, manufacturing tank treads to aid the war effort and doing sign maintenance in the evenings. After the war, neon signs grew in popularity, and Staley Signs provided hundreds of them around Indianapolis. The company even experimented with neon in the "Walk/Wait" pedestrian signs on city corners. Plastic-faced signs illuminated with fluorescent tubing appeared in the 1950s, adding another type of professional sign expertly provided and installed by Staley.

In 2000, the Staley office building on Park Avenue was purchased by a developer and the company moved into a 27,000 square foot facility nearby on Burdsal Parkway. As of 2019,

Staley Signs remains in the family, with F. Durward Staley's grandson Doug Staley as president, and great-grandson Doug, Jr. acting as account manager.

Sources:

"Former carriers of the *News*" *Indianapolis News* March 3, 1939.

"Sign firm marks birthday event" *Indianapolis News* October 9, 1939.

"Notice of Dissolution" *Indianapolis News* August 8, 1940.

"Proposal would revitalize corner" *Indianapolis Star* December 19, 2000.

Staley Signs www.staleysigns.com

Materials in the collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of materials produced by the Staley Sign company through the normal operation of company business. It is chiefly made up of photographs of businesses (and surrounding exterior areas) for which Staley Signs was hired to produce signage. In some cases, the photographs depict finished signs or billboards. In others, the work has yet to be done. Most of the OVB photographs have mockups of proposed signs painted directly onto them, allowing the client to easily envision the finished product. These mockups are extremely detailed, full color paintings on black and white photographs. Many also have measurements and notes included, written either on the photographs themselves or on an attached overlay of newsprint.

The processor has identified addresses for most of the buildings shown. The vast majority of the businesses depicted in the collection are (or were) in Indianapolis or the immediate area. Exceptions are noted in the address field. The dates range from the 1920s to the early 1980s, with the 1960s represented the most heavily. Entries appearing in italics represent buildings that have since been demolished.

The graphics portion of the collection also consists of painted sign proposals. However, these items lack the context of a photograph and are painted onto plain white illustration board. Since they lack that context, addresses for those businesses were not pursued.

The manuscript folder contains various letterheads, blank forms, and advertising materials from the company. There are twelve "Staley Signs, Incorporated" stickers.

The artifact is a permit plate for sign erection from 1954. Evidently the plate would have been hung nearby while the work was being done. It is made of lightweight metal and measures approximately 2.5" x 4".

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Important note: Buildings that are no longer extant are listed in italics.

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AFNB [Riddick Bldg., 1440 N. Meridian St., 1950s]

AFNB [Riddick Bldg., 1440 N. Meridian St., 1950s]

Aqua-quip [4910 W. 16th St., Speedway, 1950s]

Best Universal Lock Co. [6161 E. 75th St., 1960s]

Best Universal Lock Co. [6161 E. 75th St., 1960s]

Bowers Envelope & Lithograph Co.
[5331 N. Tacoma Ave., 1960s]

Bridge Insurance Agency [sign only]

Charles L. Walker Cleaners [1841 E. 46th St., 1970s]

Circle Theatre [45 Monument Circle, 1949]

Colonial Stages bus terminal [104 Monument Circle,
1929]

Continental Die Set Co. [6450 State Road 37,
Martinsville, 1960s/70s]

Darko & Sons Cleaners [2851 Madison Ave., 1957]

Daugherty's Real Cakes [billboard only, 1920s/30s]

CONTAINER

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Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs,
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Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 2

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<i>Hare Used Cars [540 E. Washington St., 1950s]</i>	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 4
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Kahn Tailoring [sign only, 7 N. Meridian St., 1940s?]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 5

Kentucky Terrace Motel [Henderson, KY?]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 5
<i>The Ladies' Shop/Russ' Men's Shop</i> [1549-1557 N. Meridian St., 1950s]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 5
Merchants National Bank [sign only, Speedway]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6
Market Square shopping ctr. [2200 Elmwood Ave., Lafayette, 1957]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6
Market Square shopping ctr. [2200 Elmwood Ave., Lafayette, 1957]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6
Nicholas Shaheen Rugs [45 Monument Circle, 1929]	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6
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American Fletcher National Bank (AFNB) [5503 E. Washington St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
AFNB [2600 W. Michigan St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 1
AFNB [Franklin, 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
AFNB [20 W. 16 th St., 1970s (this view looking up Illinois St.)]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
AFNB [sign on Meridian St. for 20 W. 16 th St. location]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 2
AFNB [706 Broad Ripple Ave., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
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AFNB [706 Broad Ripple Ave., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 3
AFNB [3000 Southeastern Ave., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 4
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AFNB [5326 N. Keystone Ave., 1950s]	OVB Photographs, Box 1, Folder 4
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Broadway Christian Center [1654 Broadway St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 3, Folder 1
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<i>Charles L. Walker Cleaners [7205 N. Keystone Ave., 1960s]</i>	OVB Photographs, Box 3, Folder 3
Chuck Martin's [4966 ½ W. 15 th St., Speedway? 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 3, Folder 3
Circle Engraving Co. [151 E. Maryland St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 3, Folder 3
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Flaming Hearth Steakhouse [Greenwood Shopping Ctr., circa 1970]	OVB Photographs, Box 4, Folder 3
First Bank & Trust [5300 Crawfordsville Rd., Speedway, circa 1980]	OVB Photographs, Box 4, Folder 4
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Florsheim Shoes [9 N. Meridian St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 5, Folder 1
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Gooding Custom Shirts [23 E. Maryland St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 5, Folder 2
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Greiner's Sub Shop [Algonquin Bldg., 225 N. Delaware St., 1976]	OVB Photographs, Box 5, Folder 3
Harry Oliver Fine Tailoring [When/Ober Bldg., 38 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 5, Folder 3
Hibben, Hollweg & Co. [752 E. Market St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 5, Folder 3
Hornblower & Weeks-Hemphill Noyes [123 E. Market St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 5, Folder 3

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Indiana National Bank	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 2
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Indianapolis Life Insurance [2960 N. Meridian St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 3
Indianapolis Office Supply [119 E. Ohio St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 3
Indianapolis Paint & Color Co. [Art partially missing. 640-644 N. Capitol Ave., 1950s]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 3

<i>Indianapolis Star</i> [301 N. Pennsylvania St., 1949]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 3
Jamaican Peddler [6251 N. College Ave., 1962]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 4
Janet Bingham's Charm School [824 N. Meridian St., 1962]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 4
Joe O'Malia Food Market [56 th St. & Fall Creek Pkwy., 1976]	OVB Photographs, Box 6, Folder 4
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L. Strauss & Co. [Greenwood Mall]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 1
L. Strauss & Co. [Greenwood Mall]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 1
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La Scala's Back Door [135 S. Illinois St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 1
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Lorraine Hotel [201 W. Washington St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 2
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Magenheimer Motors [1233 N. Meridian St., circa 1960]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 3
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Merchants T-V Bank [1964]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 3

Merchants T-V Bank [1964]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 3
Moran Electric Service [1931 Andrew J. Brown Ave. (Martindale Ave.), 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 4
Ober Books [When/Ober Bldg., 36-40 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 4
Ober Books [When/Ober Bldg., 36-40 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 7, Folder 4
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Paul's Deli [Kuhn-Herron Bldg., 15 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 1
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Paul Harris [Columbus Ctr., Columbus? 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 1
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People's Bank & Trust Co. [6909 E. 38 th St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 2
People's Bank & Trust Co. [4940 Madison Ave., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 2
People's Bank & Trust Co. [7355 W. 10 th St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 2
People's Bank & Trust Co. [130 E. Market St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 2
People's Bank & Trust Co. [130 E. Market St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 2
People's Outfitting Furniture [2909 S. Meridian St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 3

Perkins Furniture Transport [1202 N. Pennsylvania St., 1968]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 3
<i>Pierson Cleaners [2025 E. 10th St.]</i>	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 3
Pink Palace Salon [5101 E. 10 th St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 3
Pitman-Moore Co. [1200 Madison Ave., 1950s]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 4
Plant Farm [143 E. Market St., 1977]	OVB Photographs, Box 8, Folder 4
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<i>Railroadmen's Federal Savings & Loan [21 Virginia Ave., 1960s]</i>	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 1
<i>Railroadmen's Federal Savings & Loan [21 Virginia Ave., 1960s]</i>	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 1
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Riley Towers [221 E. North St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 1
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<i>Sheraton-Lincoln Hotel [107-125 W. Washington St., 1960s]</i>	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 2
Skeffington's Formal Wear [2000 N. Shadeland Ave.]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 2
Speedway State Bank [4830 W. 16 th St., Speedway, 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 3

Speedway State Bank [1522 N. Main St., Speedway]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 3
Speedway State Bank [5300 Crawfordsville Rd., Speedway]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 3
Speedway State Bank [5300 Crawfordsville Rd., Speedway]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 3
Speedway gas station [Wabash? 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 4
Speedway gas station [Wabash? 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 4
Sportsman's Cleaners [15 N. State Ave., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 9, Folder 4
Stanley Jewelers [7 E. Ohio St., 1960]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 1
Standard service station [1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 1
Standard Food Stores [art missing, 3718-20 E. 38 th St., 1950s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 1
Starlite Lounge [6125 E. 38 th St., 1961]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 2
State Life Bldg. [15 E. Washington St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 2
Stewart's Stationery [808 Broad Ripple Ave., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 2
Taylor's Bakery [3760 N. Illinois St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 3
Thomas Super Market [2507 W. Washington St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 3
Ted's Barber Shop [3730 E. 38 th St., 1962]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 3
The Top Hat [3919 Lafayette Rd.]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 3
Tuchman Cleaners [54 th St. & College Ave., 1970]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 4

Tuchman Cleaners [3930 N. Illinois St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 4
Tuchman Cleaners [2954 N. Kessler Blvd., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 4
Tuchman Cleaners [3802 English Ave., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 4
Underwood's Studio [2323 N. Meridian St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 5
United States Automobile Club [2413-15 N. Meridian St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 5
U.S. Postal Service [Broad Ripple Branch, 6555 Carrollton Ave.]	OVB Photographs, Box 10, Folder 5
Union Federal Savings [626 Main St., Beech Grove, 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 1
Union Federal Savings [1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 1
Union Federal Savings	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 1
Union Federal Savings [50 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 1
Union Federal Savings [7 E. 38 th St., 1975]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 1
Vernon Insurance [2011 N. Meridian St., circa 1960]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 2
Wabash Fire & Casualty Insurance [3637 N. Meridian St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 2
Wabash Life Insurance Co. [2929 N. Meridian St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 2
Wabash Life Insurance Co. [2929 N. Meridian St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 2
Wally's Grill	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 3
Walrod Drugs [6002 N. Michigan Rd., circa 1960]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 3

Walrod Drugs [6002 Michigan Rd., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 3
Warren Hotel [123 S. Illinois St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 3
Wasson's [1 W. Washington St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 11, Folder 4
Westlane Shopping Ctr. [7129-53 N. Michigan Rd., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 1
WFBM [rear of building, 1330 N. Meridian St., 1966]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 1
WFBM [1416 N. Meridian St. [1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 1
WFYI [Riddick Bldg., 1440 N. Meridian St., 1975]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 2
WFYI [Riddick Bldg., 1440 N. Meridian St., 1975]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 2
Wilking Music Store [120 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 2
Wilking Music Store [120 N. Pennsylvania St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 2
Wills Furniture & Appliance [5320 W. Washington St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 3
Wills Furniture & Appliance [5320 W. Washington St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 3
Wills Furniture & Appliance [5320 W. Washington St., 1965]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 3
WISH [Riddick Bldg., 1440 N. Meridian St., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 4
Woodcroft Shopping Plaza [5349-51 Madison Ave., 1970s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 4
WRTV 6 [1330 N. Meridian St., 1960s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 4
[unknown truck rental, S. Sherman Dr. & Raymond St.]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 5

[residence, 1565 N. Park Ave., 1950s]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 5
[unknown residence]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 5
[street scene, S. Pennsylvania St. looking north from Chesapeake]	OVB Photographs, Box 12, Folder 5
Prince Hall Masonic Temple, Bane-Clene Carpet Cleaners	OVA Graphics, Folder 1 of 1
American National Bank, Baldwin Pianos, Chantilla E. White, Jr. Inc., Dadies' Cleaners, The Denison	OVB Graphics, Box 1, Folder 1
Edwards Variety, Emerten Seafood Restaurant, Frakes Electric Co., Indianapolis Flea Market, Lilly Paint Products, Inc.	OVB Graphics, Box 1, Folder 2
Martha Washington Candies, Mechanics' Laundry ("office" sign only, Midwest Appliances	OVB Graphics, Box 1, Folder 3
Merchants Downtown Drive-In Bank	OVB Graphics, Box 1, Folder 4
"Parking", Penn Liquor, Post Photo	OVB Graphics, Box 1, Folder 5
Stewart-Carey Building Materials, Union Building Association, Wheeler's Restaurant, Whitaker Funeral Home	OVB Graphics, Box 1, Folder 6
Amato's Italian Restaurant (front and back), Black Lumber Co., Buckley's Restaurant	OVC Graphics, Box 1, Folder 1
Ed Schock Toy & Hobby, Guardian Loans, Indiana National Bank, Lafayette Rd. Outdoor Theatre	OVC Graphics, Box 1, Folder 2
National China & Equipment Corp., North Park Masons, Skeffington's Formal Wear, Standard/Red Crown gasoline, Town & Country Market	OVC Graphics, Box 1, Folder 3
Victor Furnace, Walrod Drugs, Wills Feed & Supply Co., [unknown] "1904-1954"	OVC Graphics, Box 1, Folder 4
Manuscript materials	Visual Collection Manuscripts, Folder 1 of 1

Sign erection permit plate

Visual Collection
Manuscripts, Folder 1 of 1