

Collection #  
P 0880

**STARK, WETZEL & COMPANY PHOTOGRAPHS  
1947–1972, 1981, N.D.**

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Processed by

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 half-size box of photographs; 10 Polaroid photographs

COLLECTION DATES: 1947–1972, 1981, n.d.

PROVENANCE: Gift from Robert L. Heid of Indianapolis, 2018

RESTRICTIONS: Any materials listed as being in Cold Storage must be requested at least 4 hours in advance.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: *Cracklins* (Stark, Wetzel & Company newsletter). Volumes VII–XII (1957–1963). General Collection: HD9410.1 S73

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2018.0284

NOTES:

## **HISTORICAL / BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Stark, Wetzel and Company was a meat packing firm in Indianapolis that specialized in luncheon meat and sausage. It was founded in 1936 by George W. Stark and Erwin K. Wetzel, both of whom previously had been employees of Armour and Company.

Also known as “Stark & Wetzel,” the company slaughtered hogs and cattle, operated a rendering facility to produce animal feeds, and eventually went into the food marketing and distribution business. It produced a variety of meats ranging from bacon to the “Grand Duchess Steak,” which the company claimed could go from the freezer to the plate in three minutes. It was the first meatpacking firm in Indiana to produce skinless wieners. The company also patented frozen beef patties that were distributed nationally.

Stark and Wetzel began running advertisements in the newspaper in 1936 to sell their “hi-grade sausages and luncheon meats.” At that time, they were operating from 735 W. Henry Street. They purchased their first plant at 725 Gardner Lane in 1937. Five years later the company expanded with its Capitol plant at Kentucky Avenue and White River. A Frankfort plant was acquired in 1950. In August 1953, Stark & Wetzel purchased the closed Armour plant at 602 W. Ray Street. At that time, there were 400 employees at Gardner Lane, 300 at Capitol, 400 at Frankfort, with 400 more to be hired at Ray Street by the end of 1953.

The company became involved with the promotion of the Indianapolis 500. Beginning in 1952, the firm sponsored the Stark & Wetzel Rookie of the Year Award. The winner received \$500 and a year’s supply of meat. George Stark and his wife Maribel were founding members of the 500 Festival Associates.

By 1958 the company had grown into a \$50 million operation. A subsidiary was established in 1959 to blend spices for Stark & Wetzel’s products. In 1972 the firm’s name was changed to Stark, Wetzel Foods, Inc. North American Laboratory (NAL). NAL later began to produce seasoning spices for other companies as well as meat sauces and soy protein mixes.

The company changed names again in 1974, becoming SW, Inc., and closed its Indianapolis location at 502 W. Ray Street. The same year, Rath Packing Company, headquartered in Waterloo, Iowa, purchased SW, Inc. Rath ceased operations in 1985.

### **George W. Stark**

George William Stark was born in Chicago, Illinois, on 13 January 1910 to George Stark and Amalia Schmidt Stark. He graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign, where he was a member of the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity. It appears that he moved to Indianapolis by the mid-1930s, where he married Maribel Snider (1916–2011) in March 1939. Their children included Marcia Susan, Mary Lou, Margery Ann (Martin), and Dale Ellen (Leff). George ran Stark, Wetzel & Company from its founding until it was sold to Rath in 1974.

George was a founding member of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church and served as elder and deacon at First Presbyterian Church. He served as a member of the Indiana State Police Board for seventeen years and as chairman of the American Meat Institute. He was on the original board of the 500 Festival in 1957 and served on the boards of Merchants National Bank and the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. He was a member of Scottish Rite, Murat Shrine, and Mystic Tie Masonic Lodge. He received the Distinguished Citizen Award from

the 11<sup>th</sup> District of the American Legion and was named a Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Harold W. Handley. George died on 29 November 1989 in Indianapolis.

### **Erwin K. Wetzel**

Erwin Karl Wetzel was born in Germany on 23 July 1897. He began his career in the meat business when, at age 15, he enrolled in the Sausage Makers Trade School at Riegenwalde, Germany, where he earned a master's degree in sausage making. He immigrated to the United States in 1926 and moved in with his younger brother in Indianapolis, who had immigrated in 1923. Erwin got a job as a laborer at the Allerdice & Sons plant, and within a year became its sausage manager. Soon afterwards, he went to work for Armour & Co., where he managed the sausage department for seven years, before partnering with Stark to form their own company. Erwin became a U.S. citizen on 29 June 1934. When he and George Stark began their own company, there were three employees: Erwin made the sausage, George sold the product, and Erwin's wife Gerda was the shipping clerk and kept the company's books. Erwin retired from the firm on 1 January 1958.

Erwin and Gerda had two sons, Carl and Nick. Erwin owned a farm near Mooresville where he bred Guernsey cows. He served as director of the International Dairy Show, was a member of the Downtown Kiwanis Club, Scottish Rite, Murat Shrine, and the Zion Evangelical United Church of Christ. He was instrumental in establishing the Indiana Heart Foundation in 1949 and was a member of the management board of the YMCA. Erwin died on 25 September 1975 in Indianapolis.

### **John L. Heid**

John Lionel Heid was born on 8 December 1909 to Louis F. Heid and Smyra Shannon Heid in Indianapolis. He attended Emmerich Manual High School. His father co-owned a butcher shop and grocery store with John Mezger, known as Heid & Mezger, with locations at 1310 E. 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 716 E. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. By 1930, John Heid was working as a butcher for Heid & Mezger. (Louis's brother, Harry Heid, was also in the grocery business with Walter W. Lorenz as Heid & Lorenz at 2201 S. Meridian Street.)

In July 1933 John Heid married Katharyn Morris (1910–1992). They had two children, Robert and Karen (Gordon). By 1939 John owned Heid's Market, a meat market and grocery at 715 E. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street.

In 1947 John went to work for Stark, Wetzel and Company as a salesman. He became assistant sales manager in charge of city sales in 1953. Two years later he was named provisions manager and served in that capacity until being elected as vice president in charge of the Pork Division in February 1958. A year later he was elected to the company's Board of Directors, serving as director of operations. Beginning in the mid-1960s, his son Robert worked in the personnel department at Stark, Wetzel for a few years. In 1972 John retired as senior vice president for Stark-Wetzel Foods, Inc., after twenty-six years of working for the firm.

John was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Southport, Murat Shrine, Center Masonic Lodge, and Scottish Rite. He died on 17 March 1984.

Sources:

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Ballard-Barnett, Jessica. “Sunday Adverts: Stark, Wetzel, & Co.” *Historic Indianapolis*  
<https://historicindianapolis.com/sunday-adverts-stark-wetzel-co/> Accessed 10 April 2024.

Chenoweth, Shelly. “Stark, Wetzel and Company.” *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*  
<https://indyencyclopedia.org/stark-wetzel-and-company/> Accessed 10 April 2024.

*Cracklins* (Stark, Wetzel & Company newsletter). Volumes VII–XII (1957–1963).  
General Collection: HD9410.1 S73

“Erwin K. Wetzel Of Meat Company.” *The Indianapolis News*, 25 September 1975, p. 35.

“Erwin Wetzel Dies; Food Firm Co-founder.” *The Indianapolis Star*, 26 September 1975,  
p. 59.

“George W. Stark was founder of local meatpacking company.” *The Indianapolis Star*,  
30 November 1989, p. C-10.

“G.W. Stark, founded meat packing firm.” *The Indianapolis News*, 29 November 1989,  
p. F-2.

*Indianapolis City Directory Collection*. Indiana University Library, Indianapolis  
<https://ulib.iupui.edu/digitalcollections/icd> Accessed 11 April 2024.

“John L. Heid dies here; was retired executive.” *The Indianapolis Star*, 18 March 1984,  
p. 10B.

“Sausage Manufacturers.” Stark & Wetzel, Inc. advertisements in *The Indianapolis Star*,  
various dates in 1936.

“Stark, Wetzel Keeps Growing Fast.” *The Indianapolis Star*, 9 August 1953, sec. 3, p. 2.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection consists primarily of photographs pertaining to Stark, Wetzel & Company, which were collected and kept by John L. Heid, from his twenty-six years as an employee and officer of the firm. The photographs were removed from two albums: 1) "Pictorial History / Stark, Wetzel & Company" and "John Heid's Employment and Retirement Pictures," and 2) "Stark / Wetzel Board of Directors Meeting / September 1964." Most of the photographs are black-and-white 8x10 prints except for those from John Heid's retirement party in 1972, which are smaller color snapshots and Polaroid prints. There is also one folder that holds ephemera and photocopies of items that could not be easily removed from an album, such as newspaper clippings. There is also a photocopy of a 1981 news clipping that has a photo of John Heid and others who were fifty-year members of the Scottish Rite.

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Group of approximately 30 men at a banquet, including John Heid and Erwin Wetzel, 1947.	Box 1, Folder 1
Second annual sales conference, 6 March 1948, shows large group of men and one woman at tables (photo by Jones of Indianapolis).	Box 1, Folder 1
John Heid and three other men standing in front of Stark, Wetzel advertising [ca. 1948–49].	Box 1, Folder 1
Sales meeting, April 1949, shows nineteen men, including John Heid, and one woman.	Box 1, Folder 1
John Heid, Harry Huston, and Bill Stewart – “3 highest meat salesman for the year,” April 1950.	Box 1, Folder 1
Sales meeting, April 1952, shows approximately 28 women seated at tables.	Box 1, Folder 1
Sales meeting, 21 January 1956, shows fourteen men, including John Heid, standing on staircase.	Box 1, Folder 1
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M. E. “Gene” Turner, Joe Buscemi, and John Heid (photo by Bill Ehrich of Indianapolis, 17 January 1958).	Box 1, Folder 1
Photocopy of news clipping announcing Stark, Wetzel & Co.’s three new vice presidents: M. E. “Gene” Turner, Joe Buscemi, and John Heid (clipping from <i>The National Provisioner</i> , 1 February 1958).	Box 1, Folder 4
Bill Stewart (“Speedy”), John Heid, and George Stark, standing in front of sign that reads: “Heid’s Heaven / Freezer Hours / Open Midnight to Midnight,” n.d.	Box 1, Folder 1

<p>Photocopy of one page from album that included a photo of three men and a newspaper clipping that includes a picture of Gene Denari, John Heid, A. David Budd, and Frank Crabb in Stark, Wetzel &amp; Co.'s new quality control and research laboratories at 725 Gardner Lane (clipping from <i>The Indianapolis Star</i>, 26 June 1958, p. 32).</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 4</p>
<p>Quality Control Lab's open house with members of the Indiana Section, Institute of Food Technologists, including: Al Ruminger of Bessire &amp; Co.; Douglas Sherow of Stokely-Van Camp; Verne Walters of Pest Control Service, Inc.; Dr. Gale Ammerman of Purdue University; Frank Crabb; Ned Droudt of Purdue University; Lee Truman of Pest Control Service, Inc. and president of Indiana Institute of Food Technologists; Craig Eckmeyer of Standard Brands; Dave Budd; Harold Hartley of <i>Indianapolis Times</i>; Joe Weber; John Heid; Joe Buscemi; and Gene Denari [this photo appeared in the Stark, Wetzel newsletter, <i>Cracklins</i>, July 1958, p. 7].</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 1</p>
<p>Twenty-two men in suits standing before an audience at the 1959 sales conference (photo by Ray Conolly).</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 1</p>
<p>President Dwight Eisenhower, Homer Davidson, and George Stark at a White House press conference, 1959.</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 1</p>
<p>Joe Buscemi, John Heid, and Joe Weber standing at a podium, each with one arm stretched out in front of them, taken at the 1959 sales conference.</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 1</p>
<p>Paul Furimsky, John Heid, and Julie Pratt (1960's 500 Festival queen), and others at a banquet in May 1960.</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 2</p>
<p>John Heid's 51<sup>st</sup> birthday celebration in George Stark's office, with Harry Huston, Frank Stark, George Stark, Jim Baker, Paul Furimsky, Bill "Speedy" Stewart, Dick Linder, John Heid, John Ashby, and Gene Turner, 8 December 1960.</p>	<p>Box 1, Folder 2</p>
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Silver anniversary sales meeting, 6 May 1961, shows men and women seated in chairs.	Box 1, Folder 2
Silver anniversary celebration, 6 May 1961, shows Lee Jontz, Jim Baker, George Stark, Maribel Stark, John Heid, Katharyn Heid, and Pauline “Polly” Jontz.	Box 1, Folder 2
Silver Sales Jubilee, 6 May 1961, shows eleven men seated at a table with a podium and microphone, including John Heid, Paul Furimsky, and Joe Buscemi.	Box 1, Folder 2
Enlarged printout of newspaper clipping announcing the appointment of John Heid as general manager of Stark, Wetzel, & Co. (clipping from <i>The Indianapolis Star</i> , 16 November 1961, p. 65).	Box 1, Folder 4
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Canadian and American Meat Institute meeting in Toronto, Canada, 21 June 1962 – shows 39 men in suits posed outdoors (photo by Robert C. Ragsdale of Toronto).	Box 1, Folder 2
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John Heid standing by a Chevrolet Corvair Monza convertible with a woman seated in it; the car is parked in front of Stark–Wetzel’s general offices building – May 1964.	Box 1, Folder 2

- John Heid and another man presenting “the Golden Days Sweepstakes award” – a Plymouth Valiant automobile – to a Terre Haute couple – August 1964. Box 1, Folder 2
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- Page from album that includes four photomechanical images of groups of people at tables [occasion unknown, n.d.]. Box 1, Folder 4
- Several men at a sales meeting – 3 June 1967 [this photo has some damage]. Box 1, Folder 2
- Ground-breaking ceremony for a new truck terminal in March 1969 shows eleven men standing in a grassy area, one with a shovel. The group includes: Eddie Ellis, John Heid, Joe Weber, Mayor Richard Lugar, Merrill Reece, and Gene Turner. Box 1, Folder 2
- Fourteen photos of Board of Directors meeting in September 1964, show the exterior of a Stark, Wetzel plant, men touring it, and meeting in an office. Men shown in these photos include: John Heid (Director & Executive Vice President), Ed Fillion (Director & Attorney), Ray Burns (Superintendent of Gardner Lane plant), Joe Weber (Company Superintendent), Frank Stark (Director), Nick Beucher (Director from Chicago), Jim Baker (Director from Milwaukee), George Stark (Director), Jack Sullivan, Nick Frenzel, and others. Box 1, Folder 3
- Photocopy of newspaper clipping announcing John Heid’s appointment as president of the Indiana Meat Packers Association (clipping from *The Indianapolis News*, 6 January 1969, p. 22). Box 1, Folder 4

Seven color snapshots taken at John Heid's retirement party on 29 December 1972. Includes photos of John Heid, Gene Turner, Russell Haehl, George Stark, Joan Moneymaker, Jean Fitzpatrick, Millie Sexson, and Jack Smith.

Box 1, Folder 5

Color portrait (5x7) of John Heid, ca. December 1972.

Box 1, Folder 5

Ten Polaroid snapshots taken during John Heid's retirement party on 29 December 1972. Includes photos of John Heid, George Stark, Katharyn Heid, Annie Anderson, Maribel Stark, Jean Turner, Wilma Stewart, Bill Stewart, and others.

Cold Storage:  
Polaroids, Folders 1-10

Photocopy of page from album shows a news clipping with a photo of fifty-year members of the Scottish Rite in spring 1981, including John Weinhart, John Heid, Eric Langdon, D. Clay Cook, Orville Gossman, Noble W. Hiatt, Grover C. Reasner, Edward C. Pettigrew, John A. Randall, Elmer Erickson, William A. Clabaugh, Sparroid Orwing, J. Ralph Pike, Forrest A. Dicks, Marley A. Lasiter, Hiram E. Stonecipher, Paul E. Beam, Earl F. Beam, Fred H. Knauer III, and W. Clark Rogge.

Box 1, Folder 4