

Collection #  
P 0895

**STEARLEY AND RINGO FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS,  
CA. 1904-1957**

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 12 digital photographs

**COLLECTION DATES:** Ca. 1904-1957 (digital images made in 2012)

**PROVENANCE:** Gift from Kirby Stearley of Indianapolis, 2012

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

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**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:**

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2012.0031

**NOTES:**

## BIOGRAPHICAL / HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Stearley family, headed by John (1819–1888) and Rosena (1827–1897), immigrated from Germany to Ohio in 1851 or 1852. By 1860, they had settled in the Jackson Township of Clay County, Indiana. One of their sons, George Stearley, founded the village of Stearleyville in the southern part of Jackson Township in 1891. George's brother, John Jr., was the father of Roy Stearley, who married Maude Ringo.

**George Stearley** was born in Württemberg, Germany on 27 January 1848. As a young man he worked as a blacksmith; later in life he was a farmer. In October 1870, he married Elizabeth Josephine Dutell (1852–1910), daughter of August Dutell and Josephine Egler Dutell. George and Elizabeth had ten children, but by 1900 only one son and five daughters were still living. In 1876 George was elected trustee of Jackson Township, serving four years. He was elected sheriff in 1882. He retired to his farm where he founded **Stearleyville** in 1891 on land he owned on the line of the Center Point division of the Vandalia Railroad. A post office was established on 3 March 1893; it closed on 31 January 1902. George was its fourth postmaster. George and Elizabeth lived on that farm until 1900 when they and some of their daughters moved to Oklahoma. At least two of the daughters were teachers, and George was elected to the School Board in Oklahoma City in 1907. George died in Oklahoma City on 4 April 1930.

**Stearleyville** was once a thriving community with a railroad, a depot, and several stores. Its St. John's United Church of Christ had been founded on 31 December 1864, by German immigrants and descendants. The church was built with two doorways – one for men, the other for women. In 1899 a large addition was added to the front of the church, which included a tower with a bell. All services were conducted in German until 1899. From 1899 to 1902, English was used bi-monthly. Beginning in 1902, all Sunday morning services were in English with a German service every two weeks in the afternoon. The German service eventually ceased.

George Stearley's brother, **John Stearley Jr.**, was born in Ohio in January 1856. He grew up on his father's farm near Center Point in Clay County. In July 1879, he married **Anna Catherine Dutell**, sister of George's wife Elizabeth. John and Anna's children included Frederick, Bertha (Dierdorff), Rosa, Charlie (a.k.a. Carl), George, Roy, Robert, and Anna Marie (Mace Schilling). Robert died as an infant; he was Roy's twin. (It appears that there may have been another daughter, Josephine, but conflicting information has been found.) John Stearley Jr. died 28 January 1940. Anna Dutell Stearley was born in Ohio on 2 February 1863. Her family had moved near Center Point in Clay County, Indiana, by 1870. She died one day before her sixty-ninth birthday, on 1 February 1932. John and Anna Stearley were buried at St. John's Cemetery in Brazil, Indiana.

**Roy Verney Stearley**, son of John Jr. and Anna Dutell Stearley, was born on 1 May 1894. He grew up on his parents' farm in Jackson Township, Clay County. Roy married Maude Ringo in September 1915. They had three children: Robert June (1916–1989), Nila Mae (Mace) (1927–2008), and James John Stearley (b. 1930). At the time of the 1920 census, Roy was a farmer in Jackson Township. For about eight years in the 1920s through the early 1930s, Roy was the sales manager of the Hoover vacuum cleaner department of The Root Store in Terre Haute, Indiana. By 1935 the family had moved back to Clay County where Roy again farmed in Jackson Township. The family were members of St. John's United

Church of Christ. Roy was a past master and 50-year member of Center Point Lodge 597 Free & Accepted Masons, and a member of Brazil chapter 59 Royal Arch Masons. Roy Stearley died on 17 February 1974.

**Maude Ringo** was born on 26 September 1897 to James Albert Major Ringo and Elnora Winters Elliott Ringo. Maude grew up on her family's farm in Posey Township in Clay County. Her siblings included Clifford Wilkinson, **Cora** Edith (Gibbens) (16 November 1888–10 August 1969), **Hallie** Elizabeth (Swearingen) (3 March 1894–27 May 1973), **Eva** Augusta (Stearley) (21 October 1895–6 June 1957), Harvey William, Ramon Elliott, and twins John Wesley and James Stanley. Eva Ringo married Harold Earl Stearley (1896–1982), son of George and Elizabeth's son William, around 1919. Maude Ringo Stearley died in Brazil, Indiana, on 24 September 1974, two days before her 77<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Nila Mae Stearley** was born on 4 February 1927 in Vigo County, Indiana. After her family moved back to Clay County, she attended Vinegar Hill Elementary School and in 1945 graduated from Brazil High School. In August 1949 she married Wayne Mace. They had a son, **Daniel**, and a daughter, Mary.

**Wayne Carleton Mace** was born on 26 August 1921 to Alva Leroy Mace and Essie Pearl Sutton Mace. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He worked as a coal miner, a farmer, and a truck driver. He was a member of St. John's United Church of Christ near Stearleyville, of VFW 1127 of Brazil, and the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge 780 in Brazil. He died on 24 October 1985 in Indianapolis. Alva Mace's brother, Lumma Clifford Mace (1891–1935), married Anna Marie Stearley (1899–1977) in 1916.

**James Kirby Stearley**, known by his middle name, was born to James John Stearley and Mary Catherine Robison Stearley (1934–2010). Kirby is the donor of this collection.

The **Ed Stearley** represented in this collection may be Roy Stearley's cousin, the son of Fredrick A. Stearley (1862–1929), who was a brother to George and John Jr. Edward Stearley was born on 9 December 1891. He married Bess Byers in April 1921 and was a farmer in the Jackson Township of Clay County. Edward died in Brazil on 16 August 1969.

#### Sources:

Ancestrylibrary.com (Accessed 26 October 2024):

- Find a Grave
- Germany, Select Births and Baptisms, 1558–1898
- Indiana, U.S., Death Certificates, 1899–2017
- Indiana, U.S., Marriage Index, 1800–1941
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- United States Federal Census, 1850–1950
- U.S., Appointments of U.S. Postmasters, 1832–1971
- U.S., City Directories, 1822–1995
- Württemberg, Germany, Family Tables, 1550–1985

Baker, Ronald L. *From Needmore to Prosperity: Hoosier Place Names in Folklore & History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 311–312. Reference Room Collection: F524 .B33 1995

*Clay County, Indiana History 1880–1984*. Compiled and edited by the Clay County Historical Society. Reference Room Collection: F532 .C6 C5 1985, pp. 80–81.

“Election Goes Democratic.” *Oklahoma City Daily Pointer*, 3 April 1907, p. 1.

Obituary for Roy Stearley. *The Terre Haute Tribune*, 18 February 1974, p. 2.

Travis, William. *A History of Clay County Indiana*. New York and Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1909. Volume I, pp. 170, 253. Reference Room Collection: F532 .C6 T73 1973

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection consists of twelve digitized black-and-white photographs of the Stearley and Ringo families of Clay County, Indiana. Except for one photo of a Sinclair gasoline station near Brazil, Indiana, all photos are portraits – either posed or showing family members engaged in farm work.

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Roy Stearley's Sinclair gas station outside of Brazil, Indiana, on State Road 59, ca. 1940.

Mary Stearley (age 23) and son Kirby Stearley (age 2) in Clay County with Santa Claus, 1957.

Minstrel show cast including Roy Stearley (top row, second from left), either in Brazil or Terre Haute, Indiana. This was possibly a Masonic show; ca. 1920.

Roy Stearley on tractor and Ed Stearley with a bucket, working sugar water from maple trees in Roy's maple woods in Clay County, February 1955.

Roy Stearley on left and Ed Stearley on right, inside Roy's boiler room, making maple syrup, February 1955.

Maude Ringo Stearley in Clay County, ca. 1920.

Group portrait at the home of Roy and Maude Stearley – Kirby Stearley (front left), Dan Mace (front center), Roy Stearley (seated next to Dan), Wayne Mace (seated right), Nila Mae Mace (standing left), and Maude Stearley (standing right), 1959.

Maude Ringo Stearley in Clay County, ca. 1912.

The four Ringo sisters: Maude Ringo Stearley (top left), Hallie Ringo Swearingen (top right), Cora Ringo Gibbens (bottom left), and Eva Stearley (bottom right), ca. 1912.

Confirmation class at St. John United Church of Christ in Stearleyville, Indiana, with Roy Stearley seated in the center, ca. 1904.

Portrait of Roy Stearley (photo taken in Terre Haute, ca. 1920s).

John Stearley Jr. and Anna C. Dutell Stearley on their porch on State Road 42 in Stearleyville, ca. 1930.

### CONTAINER

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