STEIGER FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS
CA. 1915, 1975

Collection Information 1
Biographical Sketch 2
Historical Sketch 2
Scope and Content Note 4
Series Contents 5

Processed by
Barbara Quigley
11 December 2019

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

www.indianahistory.org
## COLLECTION INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOLUME OF COLLECTION:</th>
<th>1 folder black-and-white photographs, 1 folder color photographs, 1 folder 35mm color negatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COLLECTION DATES:</td>
<td>Ca. 1915, 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROVENANCE:</td>
<td>Gift from Mary S. Garman on behalf of Mrs. Carl E. Steiger, 8 August 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTRICTIONS:</td>
<td>Any materials listed as being in Cold Storage must be requested at least 4 hours in advance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPYRIGHT:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:</td>
<td>Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTERNATE FORMATS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATED HOLDINGS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESSION NUMBER:</td>
<td>1988.0622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES:</td>
<td>See also: Indiana Hotels Photographs and Graphics (P 0638)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emil Herman Steiger (1871–1929) was a businessman from Wisconsin who was a frequent visitor to the French Lick and West Baden Springs area of Indiana in the early 1900s. His children accompanied him there during school vacations and revisited the area in 1975.


The 1900 census lists Emil H. Steiger’s occupation as dealer in wood in Fremont, Wisconsin. The 1912 Oshkosh, Wisconsin, city directory lists Emil H. Steiger as president of the Davis-Hansen Co., the Oshkosh Pure Ice Co., and the Phillips Co., and as secretary-treasurer of the Oshkosh Grass Matting Co. and the Oshkosh Steamboat Co. In the 1920s he was president of the Deltox Grass Rug Company. His son, Carl, in 1924 was vice president of the Davis-Hansen Pump Co. and later served as president of the Deltox Rug Company.


Sources:
Correspondence from Mary Steiger Garman, 31 July 1988
Ancestry <ancestrylibrary.com>. Accessed 4 December 2019:
  Find a Grave
  U.S. City Directories, 1822–1995
  United States Federal Census, 1900–1940
Wisconsin Historical Society. “William A. Steiger Papers”

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Dr. William A. Bowles built the first hotel in the French Lick area in 1845, which would later be known as the French Lick Springs Hotel. The hotel was expanded in the following decades and became a popular mineral springs health resort. The main hotel building was destroyed by fire in 1897 and was rebuilt on a grander scale. By 1905, Thomas Taggart -- former mayor of Indianapolis, U.S. senator, and national chairman of the Democratic party -- had become the sole owner of the hotel. He made many improvements and also convinced the Monon Railroad to lay track to the hotel's grounds and run daily passenger
service between the hotel and Chicago. The hotel offered mineral spring baths, horseback riding, tennis, swimming, bowling, billiards, a gym, fine dining, and dancing to music from its own orchestra.

In the 1850s, Dr. John A. Lane built the West Baden Springs Hotel nearby. Lee W. Sinclair gained a controlling interest in the hotel in 1888. The hotel burned to the ground in 1901, but Sinclair rebuilt it the following year. The new round structure was opulent, with an atrium that was 200 feet across and 100 feet tall and topped off with the world's largest dome. It was billed as the Eighth Wonder of the World. The hotel and its grounds included golf courses, an opera house, barber, and mineral spas purported to have curative properties.

In the heyday of the resort hotels at French Lick and West Baden Springs, the rich and famous came as guests or gave performances. Visitors included movie stars, musicians, politicians, and other wealthy socialites.

In 1955, the French Lick Springs Hotel was bought by the Sheraton Corporation. The new owners lowered some ceilings to cover ornate plaster cornices and covered wooden and marble floors as well as the mosaic tiles in the lobby with black and white linoleum square tiles and carpet. In 1979 Sheraton sold the hotel to the Cox Hotel Corporation of New York. The hotel continued to change ownership for the next few decades. In 1991 work began to undo some of the Sheraton’s renovations, including restoring the lobby’s mosaic floor tiles.

Sources:


SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is composed of photographs taken by and/or owned by members of the Emil H. and Sophia Faust Steiger family of Wisconsin during visits to the French Lick and West Baden Springs, Indiana, area. There are nine black-and-white photographs of people on the grounds of the French Lick Springs Hotel and the West Baden Springs Hotel taken ca. 1915. Only E. H. Steiger is identified in these photographs. There are also thirteen color snapshots taken in 1975 when Steiger’s sons Carl and Emil and daughter Sophia revisited these hotels. Sixteen 35mm color negatives accompany the 1975 snapshots.

The collection is arranged into two series:

Series 1, Black-and-white photographs, ca. 1915

Series 2, Color photographs, 1975
SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Black-and-white photographs, ca. 1915

CONTENTS
Four real photo postcards of casual portraits of people on the grounds of the French Lick Springs and West Baden Springs hotels. Two of these photos identify E. H. Steiger, shown with other people. None of the other people are identified.

CONTAINER
Photographs, Folder 1 of 1

Five snapshots of casual outdoor portraits. Four of them identify E. H. Steiger shown with other people. None of the other people are identified. In one photo people are gathered around a car. In another, people are with a farm implement, and another includes a small airplane.

CONTAINER
Photographs, Folder 1 of 1

Series 2: Color photographs, 1975

CONTENTS
Four snapshots of what was then known as the French Lick Sheraton Hotel and its grounds, including swimming pool.

CONTAINER
Cold Storage
Photographs, Folder 1 of 1

One snapshot of horse-drawn carriages [probably in front of the French Lick Sheraton Hotel].

CONTAINER
Cold Storage
Photographs, Folder 1 of 1

Eight snapshots of the West Baden Springs Hotel, including some interior views of the atrium as well as exterior views of the building and grounds. An unidentified man poses in one photo – this is likely either Carl E. Steiger or his brother, Emil Leander Steiger.

CONTAINER
Cold Storage
Photographs, Folder 1 of 1

Sixteen 35mm negatives of the French Lick and West Baden Springs hotels and surroundings. [Four strips of four negatives each; including the color images listed above.]

CONTAINER
Cold Storage
Stored in 120-film negative envelope