

Collection #
M 1201
OMB 0156

**THOMAS W. BINFORD
COLLECTION, 1894–2003**

[Collection Information](#)

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Processed by

Paul Brockman
October, 2015

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 9 manuscript boxes; 1 oversized manuscript box; 1 box black and white photographs; 1 box color photographs; 1 folder OVA black and white photographs; 1 folder OVA color photographs; 1 folder OVB black and white photographs; artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1894–2003

PROVENANCE: Florence Binford Kichler, Indianapolis, Indiana, October, 2014

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Florence Flickenger Wolff Diaries (M 1176)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2014.0243

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas Wyatt Binford (1924–1999) was born in Indianapolis and educated at Park School. Upon graduation he entered at Philips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire with the prospect of entering Princeton University. World War II interrupted Binford's education. He served with the U.S. Army and was stationed in the Pacific Theatre and spent the majority of his time in the Philippines. After the war, Binford continued to serve in the reserves until 1956. Binford resumed his education at Princeton in 1946 and graduated in 1948 where he was Phi Beta Kappa.

Upon graduation from Princeton, Binford went to work with his father, Frank, at the Burnet-Binford Lumber Company and D-A Lubricant, a product used by companies for track rollers and heavy equipment. When Frank Binford died in 1954, Tom became president and general manager of D-A Lubricant, a position he held for 19 years. In 1975 D-A was sold and merged with the Premier Industrial Corporation of Cleveland although Binford continued to manage the company for another year. In 1976 Binford was hired to become CEO and president of the Indiana National Corporation after it had become financially troubled over bad real estate investments. Under his leadership, the company recovered and was eventually sold to NBD Bancorp of Detroit in 1992. Binford then formed his own consulting company, Binford and Associates, and served as its CEO until his death. He also served as interim president of DePauw University for one year, 1975, and was visiting professor of business at IUPUI in the 1980s.

Binford is probably best known for his connection with the Indianapolis 500 and his work with Indianapolis civic organizations. From 1955–1969 he served as president of the United States Auto Club, the race's governing body, and from 1974–1995 he was Chief Steward for the Indianapolis 500. He also was the founding president of Indianapolis Raceway Park in 1959 and helped to keep the Indiana Pacers in Indianapolis while serving as the general manager for the 1975–1976 season.

Among Binford's civic activities was helping to establish the Indianapolis Urban League in 1965, working with the Anti-Defamation League, the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, and The United Way. In 1975 he was named the Indianapolis *Star's* man of the year.

Sources:

Information in collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is broken down into the following series: Education and military materials; business materials; philanthropic and community service materials; and auto racing, family items, and artifacts.

Items from Tom Binford's early life include letters written to his parents while at summer camp, 1934–1935, photographs and records from his years as a student at Park School in Indianapolis, now Park Tudor, and Philips Exeter Academy, 1931–1942, and correspondence and records from his years in the military and the reserves, 1943–1954.

Prominent among the auto racing materials contains Binford's Chief Stewart's reports for the Indianapolis 500 from 1974–1992 and correspondence and legal documents for the 1980 race. Also included are scrapbooks and some printed items. Also included are correspondence, papers, and printed items regarding Binford's involvement with the founding of Indianapolis Raceway Park, 1962–1968.

Most of the items in the section on civic involvement consist of correspondence congratulating Binford on his civic accomplishments and awards for his work with organizations such as the Spirit of Philanthropy Award from IUPUI and the Abacus Award.

The majority of business records in the collection deal with D-A Lubricant, 1919–1970s. Among the materials are correspondence, reports meeting minutes, stock certificates, printed items and scrapbooks. There is also a scrapbook the company's involvement with auto racing in the 1950s.

Family materials center around Binford's father, Frank A. Binford (1886 –1954.) Among the items are personal correspondence, mainly from his brother, 1912–1920, business correspondence and documents, and photographs, 1901–1940, and letters of condolence upon the death of his wife, 1924. There also are general family photographs and correspondence for "Mary Binford Day," 1961, honoring her years of service as an Indianapolis realtor.

Among the artifacts are items caps, pins, and tickets to the Indianapolis 500 and Indianapolis Raceway Park, 1960–1990s and a variety of awards including induction into the Automobile Racing Hall of Fame, the Tony Hulman award, 1995, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, 1989, and the Circle City Classic award, 1993.

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Series 1: Early Life, 1931–1954

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Correspondence, 1931–1941; 1952	Box 1, Folder 2
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Park School Sports, 1936–1939	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
<i>Red and Black</i> (Park School Newspaper,) 1940–1941	Box 8, Folder 2
<i>PEAN</i> (Philips Exeter Academy Yearbook,) 1942	Box 8, Folder 4
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Tom Binford Sketch, 1977

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Box 1, Folder 3

Tom Binford Portraits, ca. 1980s

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 4

Color Photographs, 1950s–1990s

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Box 1, Folder 1

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Color Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 2

Indianapolis Skyline, ca. 1960s

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Box 1, Folder 3

The Best Old Place of All, Princeton University
Class of 1946 50th Reunion

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Series 2: Auto Racing, 1962–1999

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Indpls. 500 Chief Steward Reports, 1974–1980

Indpls. 500 Scrapbook, 1974

Indpls. 500 Scrapbook, 1979

Indpls. 500 Chief Steward Reports, 1981–1992

1980 Indpls. 500 (1 of 5)

1980 Indpls. 500 (2 of 5)

1980 Indpls. 500 (3 of 5)

1980 Indpls. 500 (4 of 5)

1980 Indpls. 500 (5 of 5)

Scrapbook, Indpls. 500, 1981

CONTAINER

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Box 2, Folder 2

Box 7, Folder 1

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Box 1, Folder 2

Box 2, Folder 3

Box 2, Folder 4

Box 2, Folder 5

Box 2, Folder 6

Box 2, Folder 7

Box 2, Folder 8

Box 6, Folder 1

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Indpls. Raceway Park, 1962–1968	Box 2, Folder 12
<i>My Way (End of the Golden Age of Auto Racing,)</i> 1990; 1995 (play)	Box 2, Folder 13
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Series 3: Community Service; Tributes, 1960s–2003

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Step Ahead Panel Appointment, June, 1991	Box 8, Folder 6

Series 4: Business Records, 1894–1998

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Letters of Condolence, May–June, 1924

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Frank Binford, Certificates and Related Items, 1906–1942

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24 Racing Decals and Patches

3 Chief Steward Caps

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Tony Hulman Award, 1995

Automobile Hall of Fame Award

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NAACP Lifetime Membership Plaque

Military Service Stripes

D-A Playing Cards

Honorable Discharge, 1946

Oratory Medal (high school?)

Indianapolis Business Journal Plaque, 1998

Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, 1989

Circle City Classic Award, 1993

Indianapolis *News* Plaque, Binford, all county
quarterback, 1940

CONTAINER

Artifacts: 2014.0243

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