

Collection #
P0164

WEST BADEN SPRINGS HOTEL CIRKUT PHOTOGRAPHS, CA. 1920

[Collection Information](#)

[Historical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Robert W. Smith, Shirley Yegerlehner, Dorothy A. Nicholson
May 2010

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

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	17 Cirkut photographs are stored in 2 folders
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 1920
PROVENANCE:	Clay Stuckey, Bedford, Indiana, 1981
RESTRICTIONS:	None
COPYRIGHT:	
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1981.0006
NOTES:	Historical sketch researched and written by volunteer Robert W. Smith.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

French explorers discovered mineral springs during the eighteenth century in the frontier area that was to become Orange County, Indiana. The following century sanitariums sprang up to accommodate patrons and invalids who came for relief from arthritis, rheumatism, and stomach ailments. In 1851 Dr. John Lane, an itinerant medicine peddler, erected the first resort in the town of Mile Lick and renamed it West Baden, for the famous spa in Germany. In 1881 when the Monon Railroad completed its line to the springs, the guest roster came alive. Wealthy guests from near and far visited the resort.

After Lee Wiley Sinclair of nearby Salem visited the hotel he liked what he saw and gained controlling interest of it in 1888. Sinclair, born in Cloverdale in Putnam County, Indiana, had moved to Salem, Indiana, where he established a large woolen mill. He foresaw the potential in the area for a national health and recreation resort.

In 1901 a fire completely destroyed the hotel. Tom Taggart, owner of the nearby French Lick Hotel and an influential Democratic National Committeeman, was determined that West Baden would not rebuild, thus competing with his own facility. Sinclair had other plans. He hired Harrison Albright to build his dream hotel. Albright was born near Philadelphia and educated there in his early years. He apprenticed for a while in the City of Brotherly Love, but moved (1891) to West Virginia where he worked for the state. The goateed architect specialized in steel and reinforced concrete buildings, a valuable asset for the hotel because of their superior strength and fire resistance.

After 277 days Albright finished the hotel, including the large free-standing dome encircled with guest rooms, and it opened in September 1902. The formal dedication on April 16, 1903, brought Indiana Governor Winfield Durbin and Sen. Charles W. Fairbanks (the next year elected U.S. Vice President) to do the rhetorical honors. A Phoenix to early twentieth century guests, this "Eighth Wonder of the World" had risen from ashes to the delight of thousands.

Sinclair died in 1916 at which time his daughter and son-in-law assumed ownership and operations. They completed the renovation of the hotel begun in 1913 in the beaux arts style. Guest rooms looked out over the light filled domed atrium, now called the "Pompeian Court," with its tiled mosaic floor, gilded wall paintings, and classical statuary.

In time they sold it to Charles Ballard of West Baden under whose leadership the hotel flourished until the stock market crash in 1929, sending the suddenly poor back home. In December 1930 the average daily number of guests was five, forcing the closure of the facility the following year. Some feared a permanent demise.

In 1934 the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) assumed ownership and converted it into an educational institution for the Order's students called West Baden College. They removed all items bespeaking luxury or a worldly spirit. Inner rooms were stripped of furnishings, and bookshelves replaced ornate wallpaper. Two classrooms and a large auditorium emerged from the former ballroom, while the dining room, without its carpet,

accommodated a large centrally placed pulpit from which the Scriptures and other religious books were read during mealtime.

In June 1964 the Jesuits closed the doors and in 1966 it was donated to a private college, the Northwood Institute. The college maintained a campus there until 1983. The facility was then sold to a real estate developer but the site continued to deteriorate even though it was elevated to National Historic Landmark status in 1987. Beginning in 1992 a massive effort between Indiana Landmarks and the Cook Group restored the buildings and grounds with much of the expense born by William and Gayle Cook of Bloomington, Indiana. In May 2007 the hotel finally opened and today is an upscale resort with casino.

Sources:

Dunn, Jacob Piatt, *Indiana and Indianans*. Chicago: American Historical Society, 1919, II, 853

Indiana Magazine of History. 1 (1954), 139ff; liv (1958), 342 and 365-80

Journal of San Diego History xliii, No. 2 (1997)

Structure Magazine (September, 2007).

<http://www.historiclandmarks.org/Pages/default.aspx>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of 17 copies of Cirkut photographs showing West Baden Springs and the West Baden Springs Hotel in Orange County, Indiana ca. 1920. Images include interior views of the rotunda and atrium, and exterior views of the hotel, outbuildings, gardens, and golf course. The village of West Baden Springs is also seen at a distance from the hotel. The photographer is unknown.

The photographs were numbered on the verso by the donor and are arranged in numerical order along with a brief description of each image in the collection guide.

The original Cirkut photographs were owned by a third party who allowed the donor, Clay Stuckey to make copies from the originals. Mr. Stuckey donated these copies to the Indiana Historical Society Library. He was negotiating with the owner of the originals at the time on I.H.S. behalf. The library never received the originals.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

View of atrium interior of hotel, showing seating grouping of floor, looking south.

View of atrium interior of the hotel, showing dome looking south towards exit to mineral springs.

View of atrium interior of hotel, showing seating grouping of floor, looking south.

Exterior view of hotel and outbuildings.
Left to right, north to east to south:
garage?, hotel, driveway fountain, Apollo Spring Tholos, Sprudel Springhouse, Hygeia Springhouse, Billiard and Bowling Pavilion.

Exterior view of hotel and outbuildings.
Left to right, west to northwest:
Hygeia Springhouse, fountain, chapel on hill, hotel, Apollo Spring Tholos.
Winter view

Exterior view of hotel grounds and outbuildings.
Left to right, southwest to northwest:
Billiard and Bowling Pavilion, Hygeia Springhouse, fountain, chapel on hill, hotel, Apollo Spring Tholos.
Summer view

Exterior view of hotel and outbuildings.
Left to right, southwest to northwest:
Billiard and Bowling Pavilion, Hygeia Springhouse, fountain, chapel on hill, hotel, Apollo Spring Tholos.
Landscaping has matured, one small unidentified outbuilding is now gone (south of the Hygeia Springhouse).

Exterior view of hotel grounds and outbuildings.
Left to right, west to northwest:
Hygeia Springhouse, fountain, chapel on hill, hotel, Apollo spring Tholos.
Summer view

CONTAINER

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 1B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 2B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 3B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 4B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 5B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 6B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 7B

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 8B

Exterior view of hotel and outbuildings.
Left to right, west to north to east:
unidentified outbuilding, Hygeia Spring, chapel on
hill, hotel, Sprudel Springhouse.
Summer

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 1, Photo 9B

View of gardens and outbuildings.
Left to right, east to south:
Sprudel Springhouse and Billiard and Bowling
Pavilion.

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 10B

View of grounds and outbuildings.
Left to right, east to south to west:
road with esplanade out to town, Apollo Spring
Tholos, bridge to track structure (running and
bicycling), Sprudel Springhouse, Billiard and Bowling
Pavilion, Hygeia Springhouse.

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 11B

View of grounds and outbuildings.
Left to right, east to south to west:
Road with esplanade out to town, Apollo Spring
Tholos, bridge to track structure (running and
bicycling), Sprudel Springhouse, Billiard and Bowling
Pavilion, Hygeia Springhouse.

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 12B

View across undeveloped site of golf course and town
of West Baden
Left to right, northeast to southeast

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 13B

View across golf course and town of West Baden.
Left to right, northeast to southeast:
foreground, pergola and gazebo; at right, roadway with
esplanade and arched entry gate.

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 14B

View of golf course.

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 15B

View of golf course

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 16B

View of golf course.

Panoramic Photographs:
Folder 2, Photo 17B

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P0164).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.