

Collection #
M 0573
OM 253
BV 3532

GIBSON COMPANY (INDIANAPOLIS, IND.) RECORDS, 1895–1998

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION:

Manuscript Materials: 11 Boxes, 7 Oversize folders, 1 Bound
Volume
Visual Materials: 2 Boxes of Photographs, 1 Box of Oversize

Photographs, 1 Oversize Photo Album
Printed Materials: 7 catalogs
Artifacts: 6 Artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1895–1998

PROVENANCE:

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1991.0107, 2001.1141, 2006.0084, 2007.0027

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Gibson Company of Indianapolis was established by Cecil Gibson in 1898 as a bicycle shop. With the rise of the automobile industry, it became chiefly concerned with the distribution of automotive accessories. Gibson also operated the Empire Automobile Company. In 1911, Gibson merged his business with that of Carl G. Fisher of Indianapolis Motor Speedway fame to form the Fisher-Gibson Company, which was owned by Fisher and Gibson, and was located at 424 N. Capitol Avenue. The following year, the business was acquired by Joseph M. Bloch, Charles B. Sommers, and Aaron Waldheim and reverted to the Gibson Company.

In 1916, a new building was constructed at 433 N. Capitol. Although the new structure was designed to also serve as an automobile assembly plant for the Willys Overland, that part of the operation did not materialize and the Gibson Company continued to sell and distribute automotive accessories and later replacement parts to auto dealerships and service stations.

The company expanded and at one time operated 23 branches in Indiana, Ohio (Lima), and Michigan (Kalamazoo). From 1931-1955 the Gibson Company distributed home appliances. The Capitol Motors Division of the Gibson Company sold automobiles at the Indianapolis location to 1963, starting with the Willys-Overland to 1931, the Hupmobile, 1931, and Dodge cars and trucks, 1931-1963, at which time the dealership was sold to Palmer Dodge of Indianapolis and was moved out of the building.

The Gibson Company also started Atlas Securities in the 1930s to serve as a finance company for dealers. The company later evolved into an export subsidiary, which sold a line of automotive replacement parts worldwide. "Atlas" was used as the name on the parts that were distributed by the Gibson Company until after World War II. Around the 1960s Atlas became the warehouse distribution operation while the Gibson Company served as the jobbers because of legal restraints.

In 1958, the Gibson Company maintained 400 employees and four operating divisions conducting business in four surrounding states and many foreign countries through Atlas Manufacturing. In that year, it served 4,000 customers ranging from independent automotive jobbers to car dealers, service stations, and fleet operations. It also stocked 40,000 different auto parts ranging from cotter keys to hydraulic lifts. Among the other types of goods that were distributed by the Gibson Company were Norge refrigerators (1931-ca. 1953), Hamilton dryers, and Arvin televisions.

Joseph M. Bloch (1884-1976), who came from Selma, Alabama, to serve as secretary and manager of the Gibson Company in 1912 while Cecil Gibson operated the Empire Automobile Company, continued with the company in similar capacities until his retirement in 1968. Bloch was also the founder of the Starlight Musicals series in Indianapolis. His son-in-law, J. William Julian, entered the business in 1949 and became company president in 1960.

The Gibson Company facility was sold to the Mermont Corporation in 1967 and the former Gibson operation dealt primarily with the distribution of exhaust systems. Mermont was divested around 1970 because of vertical integration and Julian obtained the original company and its Indiana outlets in 1971. Julian changed the name of the company to ADP Auto Parts. The company ceased operations in 1984.

Sources:

Fisher-Gibson Company Minute Book, 1911-1937.

Indianapolis *News*, 28 June 1958, p. 12.

Indianapolis *Star Magazine*, 17 April 1966, p. 13.

Indianapolis *Star*, 18 April 1976, sec. 3, p. 10, c. 1.

Indianapolis *News*, 19 April 1976, p. 11, c. 1.

Other information obtained from conversations with J. William Julian in 1990 and 1991.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection, made up of several individual donations of materials, contains the records of the Gibson Company and related operations and is divided into eight series.

Series 1: Ledgers and Minute Books

Minutes of Fisher-Gibson and Gibson companies, 1911-1937, ledger books, 1911-1913 1923-1924, and a company payroll book, 1913-1918.

Series 2: Contracts

Contracts and correspondence with automotive parts production companies for sales through the Gibson Company of such items as carburetors, spark plugs, batteries, tires, lights, and horns, 1910-1929. Also included are salesmen's contracts, 1912-1917, and other contracts in such areas as advertising, building maintenance, shipping, transportation and general company operations, 1910s and 1920s, including a list of the number and type of cars in Illinois, Ohio, and every county in Indiana, 1914 (Box 3, Folder 52).

Series 3: Catalogs

Catalogs from the Fisher Automobile Company (1908), the Fisher-Gibson Company (1912), the Gibson Company (1913-33), and the Atlas Manufacturing Company (1963).

Series 4: Newsletters

Sets of company newsletters for salesmen, dealers, and overseas distributors, including a complete set of "The Gibsonian" (1916–17), incomplete Volumes 1 and 2 of "The Gibson Raider" (1917–18), several issues of "Gibson Tips" (1934) and complete years of "The Gibson Company News" (1950–67). Issue 2:4 (January 1918) of "The Gibson Raider" includes a list of all the Gibson men who enlisted in the Armed Forces; a second copy has been annotated by hand to revise and expand the list.

Series 5: Scrapbooks and Company History

The series features two scrapbooks, one compiled by the Sidener-VanRiper Advertising Agency for the 1914 "Gibson Raiders" campaign, and a second, probably compiled by Mr. Bloch, covering the 1916 "Gibson Raiders" and Willys-Overland material through 1929. Other materials include photographs of the building, company operations, and staff, 1903–38, and articles, order books, and price lists. There is also information from the company Christmas parties, 1935 and 1952–63, and material, prepared by Mr. Bloch and others, on the history of the Gibson Company and the automobile industry.

Series 6: Advertising Photographs

The photographs in this series are from sets of professional photographs taken 1916–18 and 1923, apparently for advertising and promotional use. Selected photographs were bound into two albums, one showing the company's North Capitol building and the other; compiled about 1923, providing an overview of operations. There are two copies of the 1923 album; one is in much better condition but the other has had many of the people in the pictures identified. This second copy was the property of Bill Martin, who was manager of the Gibson Company's Lima, OH branch by 1923, but is shown packaging parts for shipping in the 1918 photographs. The series includes additional, loose, copies of many of the photographs, and some photographs from the same periods not used for albums.

Series 7: Architectural Drawings and Building Specifications

Architectural blueprint drawings and specifications for the construction of the Gibson Company building, 1916, and plans for the J. William Julian residence, 1953.

Series 8: General Operational Records

The records also contain stockholders information such as meetings and proxies, 1930-1954, and permission to conduct business in the surrounding states of Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan.

The records also include those of the Gibson Company international subsidiary, Atlas Manufacturing Company/Atlas Securities including insurance receipts, invoices, policies, and related materials, 1924-1933, and company stocks and bonds, 1931-1933.

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Series 1: Ledgers and Minute Books, 1911–1937

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Ledger, 1923-1924	Box 1
Payroll Book, 1913-1918	Box 2
Ledger, 1911-1913	Box 2

Series 2: Contracts, 1910–1917

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William Lynn Co. (heavy chemicals), 1910
Indianapolis News Advertising Contract, 1910-1911
Central Union Telephone Co. Contract, 1911-1915
Randall Faichney Co. Contract (horns), 1911
Pinter Pump Co. Contract, 1911
J.J. Peterson Co. Contract (metal polish), 1911
Ohio Metal Product Contract (portable garages),
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Mound Tool Scraper Co. Contract, 1911
Wheeler Schebler Contract (carburetors), 1911
Detroit Twist Drill Co. Contract, 1912
Weed Chain Tire Grip Co. Contract, 1912
Mutual Printing Co. Agreement, 1912
B.F. Goodrich Co. Contract, 1912
Emil Grossman Co. Contract (spark plugs), 1912-
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Varney Electric Co. Contract (dry cells), 1912-1913
Double Fabric Tire Co. Contract, 1912
Duff Manufacturing Co. Contract (jacks), 1912
General Electric Co. Contract, 1912
Lovell-McConnel Mfg. Co. Contracts (horns), 1912-
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Lake Erie Western Railroad Co. Contract, 1912
A.R. Mosler Co. Contract (spark plugs), 1912-1913
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Stromberg Motor Devices Co. Contract (carburetors),
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Frank Selmire Towel Supply Co. Contract, 1912	Box 3, Folder 29
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H. L. Sanders Contract (suits & uniforms), 1915	Box 4, Folder 13
A. R. Mosler & Co. Contract (spark plugs), 1915	Box 4, Folder 14
Railroad Transfer Co. Contract Cancellation, 1916	Box 4, Folder 15
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Advertising Printing Contracts, 1911-1918	Box 4, Folder 41
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Motor Car Accessories Catalog for the Fisher-Gibson Co., 1912

Gibson Automobile Company Motor Car Accessories Catalog, 1913

1914 Catalog of Motor Car Accessories, Gibson Automobile Company

1917 Gibson Company Motor Car Accessories Catalog

“The Gibsonian” Catalog, February 1918

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment Catalog No. 21, (1919)

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment catalog and updates, in binder, 1920–22

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment Catalog No. 23, (1921)

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment Catalog No. 24, (1922)

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment Catalog No. 27, (1925)

Super-Service Aeronautical Supplies and Avigation Equipment Catalog, 1929

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment Catalog No. 32, (1930)

Gibson Company Automotive Equipment Catalog No. 32, (1930, J.M. Bloch’s personal copy)

“The Gibsonian” Catalog No. 35, 1933

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General Collections: TL159 .G522

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Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (2of 8)

Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (3of 8)

Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (4of 8)

Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (5of 8)

Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (6of 8)

Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (7of 8)

Scrapbook of “Gibson Raiders” publicity campaign prepared by Sidener-Van Riper advertising agency, 1914 (8of 8)

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Scarborough's Official Tour Book for Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Trunk Lines, cover imprinted "Jos. M. Block," 1916

Certificate from the War and Navy Departments of the United States, ca. 1918

A.S.I.A. Distinguished Service Award, n.d.

Correspondence with D.J. Feutz, 1921

Contract with D.J. Feutz

Instruction book for the Gibson Company Accounting System, ca. 1920

Ford Owners' Supply Book, 1925–26

Letter from Ogyensu Kweku Fitter of the Gold Coast, 1930s

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"Automobile Facts and Figures" pamphlet, 1956

Authorization to Conduct Business in Illinois, 1915-1920

Authorization to Conduct Business in Ohio, 1926

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Stock Proxies, 1954

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Atlas Securities, Insurance Invoices and Receipts, 1927-1930

CONTAINER

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General Collection:
GV1024.S33 I63

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Artifacts: 2007.0027

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Atlas Securities, Insurance Policies and Related Materials, 1927-1931	Box 11, Folder 18
Atlas Securities, Insurance Policies and Related Materials, 1927-1930	Box 11, Folder 19
Atlas Manufacturing Co. Stocks, 1932-1933	Box 11, Folder 20
Atlas Securities, Bonds Sold, 23 Sept. 1931	Box 11, Folder 21
Atlas Parts jobbers' price lists, January 1934	Box 11, Folder 22
Bulletin to Atlas representatives re price changes, 10 May 1934	Box 11, Folder 23
Permite Parts catalog for Ford-Chevrolet-Plymouth, 1 June 1934	Box 11, Folder 24
Supplementary Price List for Ford and Chevrolet parts, 10 June 1934	Box 11, Folder 25
Simmons Parts net price list for dealers, 20 June 1934	Box 11, Folder 26
Price list of cylinder re-conditioning, July 1934	Box 11, Folder 27
Revised price list for Atlas Replacement Parts for Ford and Chevrolet, 20 September 1934	Box 11, Folder 28
Bulletin to Atlas representatives re price war on cylinder heads, 24 August 1934	Box 11, Folder 29
Acme Machine Products Co., Inc. jobbers net price list, 1 June 1934	Box 11, Folder 30
Bulletin to Atlas salesmen re Jambor's price list, 22 October 1934	Box 11, Folder 31
List of Atlas representatives and their territories, ca. 1934	Box 11, Folder 32
List of suggested jobbers' stock of Plymouth parts	Box 11, Folder 33
Atlas Parts for Ford and Chevrolet, Catalog No. 115, ca. 1933	Box 11, Folder 34
Personalized Automotive Care script, 1966	Box 11, Folder 35
Personalized Automotive Care medallion	Artifacts: 2007.0027
J. William Julian, correspondence and papers, 1980s	Box 11, Folder 36
J. William Julian correspondence re: Prayer Breakfast, 1937	Box 11, Folder 37

Correspondence with retiring salesmen, 1983–5	Box 11, Folder 38
Flyer for Asia 59er's Party, 1986	Box 11, Folder 39
Noblitt-Sparks Advertisement, Tribute to Gibson Company, n.d.	OM 0253, Folder 4
Roller directory of telephone extensions for Gibson Company Building	Artifacts: R2404
Box of one dozen Carbide Gas Burners by the American Lava Company, Chattanooga, TN [3 remaining]	Artifacts: R2405

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, M 0573).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.