

**Collection #
SC 3057**

**GOTTLOB GEIGER
PAPERS, 1885–1914**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 manuscript folder
COLLECTION DATES:	1885–1914
PROVENANCE:	Louis B. MacIntosh, Jr., Indianapolis
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2000.0054
NOTES:	

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gottlob Geiger was born in Germany in 1863. It is unclear what his town of origin was, but he embarked from Battenberg in 1883, landing in New York and eventually settling in Indianapolis. In 1885 he applied for United States citizenship, and in the following year enlisted in the U.S. Army for a period of five years. He served as part of an ordnance detachment, and spent at least part of his enlistment at the Indianapolis Arsenal. Having attained the rank of private first class, he was honorably discharged in 1890 due to “chronic Synovitis of right knee” (inflammation of the joint lining). On his discharge documents, Major Clifton Comly describes Geiger’s character as “excellent.”

Also in 1890, Geiger married an American-born woman named Sophia (maiden name unknown), with whom he had six children. He returned to his previous occupation of shoemaking, at which he seems to have been fairly successful. Census records in both 1900 and 1910 list him as owning his Highland Avenue home and shop on the near east side of Indianapolis.

Sophia Geiger died around 1909, and Gottlob Geiger died in 1917. He is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery.

Sources:

Collection Materials

Crown Hill Cemetery Records

Indianapolis City Directories, 1896–1917

United States Army Register of Enlistments

United States Census Records

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This short collection comprises six documents relating to Gottlob Geiger after his migration to Indianapolis from Germany: naturalization and citizenship documents; military furlough, discharge, and pension documents; and a purchase contract. They trace the life and career of a working class German immigrant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The two naturalization and citizenship papers show that Geiger waited two years after arriving in the United States to file a declaration of his intent to become a citizen. After a standard wait of five years, he became a U.S. citizen in 1890. The forms show that he fully renounced his allegiance to Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm. It may not be a coincidence that he married the same year he became an American citizen. American women who married foreign citizens automatically took on their husbands' citizenship status at the time, so it is possible that he and his wife waited until his naturalization to marry so that she would not have to temporarily give up her nationality.

Geiger's three military documents reveal that he initially signed on for a period of five years, but was discharged after four due to knee inflammation. His service at the Indianapolis Arsenal and as part of an ordnance detachment (responsible for artillery weapons) was probably uneventful, since the years 1885–90 marked a lull in active military engagements. The Indian Wars had mostly concluded by the 1880s, but the conflict at Wounded Knee, which marked the Wars' official end, did not occur until 1891. Though there were laws enacted after the Civil War enabling honorably discharged soldiers to apply early for naturalization, Geiger would not have needed this assistance, since he had already submitted his declaration of intent by the time he enlisted.

The purchase contract is for a piano from Rothschild and Company in Chicago. Geiger agreed in 1911 to pay \$255, at the rate of \$6 per month for an oak finish A12 model Meister piano. Rothschild advertisements from the same year mention a range of Meister pianos starting at \$175; Geiger's was a mid-range model. Based on a 1914 note on the back, he even appears to have paid it off a few months early. Census records show that he owned his own home and shop; this plus the purchase of an expensive musical instrument provide evidence that he was fairly successful in his business.

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CONTAINER

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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, SC 3057).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.