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Pierre and Wright Architectural Records 1920-ca. 1961 DADA 003

Title: Pierre and Wright Architectural Records

Creator: Pierre and Wright Architects, Indianapolis [Ind.]

Inclusive Dates: 1920-ca. 1961

Extent: 21.2 cu. ft.

Containers: 1 manuscript box, 8 OVA boxes, 4 OVB boxes, 8 OVC boxes, 3 flat file drawers

Language of Materials: Materials entirely in English.

Preferred Citation:

Pierre and Wright Architectural Records, Drawings and Documents Archive, Archives and Special Collections, Ball State University Libraries

Biographical Note:

Edward D. Pierre was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1890. He entered Valparaiso University in 1911 but transferred one year later to the Armour Institute, now the Illinois Institute of Technology, from which he received an architecture degree in 1915. After graduating, he received a travel scholarship from the Chicago Art Institute and worked for two years in the office of Albert Kahn in Detroit. Following service in the Army Engineering Corps from 1917 to 1919, Pierre moved to Indianapolis. He worked for a short time for the McGuire & Shook firm, then practiced on his own for six years before partnering with Wright. After the partnership ended, Pierre practiced independently under the name Edward D. Pierre and Associates until 1961. That practice involved mostly residences and small commercial structures.

Pierre uniquely linked good design with patriotism and good citizenship. In the 1930s he organized the Civic Pride Committee of the Indiana Society of Architects, proposed "The All American Plan" for Indianapolis, and initiated "Christmas on Monument Circle." In the 1940s and 1950s he unveiled his "Cross Roads Plan" for Indianapolis, promoted "Civic Pride Begins in Your Back Yard," and produced an exhibit prepared for L. Strauss & Co. called "Indianapolis...25 years hence." As chair of the Indiana Beautiful Committee of the Indianapolis Sesquicentennial Commission, he promoted celebrating the city's sesquicentennial and the U.S. Bicentennial through forward-looking community and city planning. His many

other public service activities include membership on the civic affairs committee and the traffic and parking committee of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, advisor to the Governor's Housing Committee, founder and president of the American Legion Peace Symbol Foundation, director of the Indianapolis Home Show, president of the Indianapolis Architects Association, president of the Indianapolis Construction League, director of the Indiana Society of Architects, and member of several national committees of the American Institute of Architects.

Upon his death in 1971, Pierre was eulogized by then-mayor Richard Lugar as "one of the most significant and imaginative thinkers in regard to the beauty of Indianapolis" and by the executive director of the Indiana Society of Architects as "the greatest architect the state of Indiana ever produced and probably the greatest visionary architectural professional Indiana has ever known." The Indiana Society of Architects created an award in Pierre's name, bestowed annually to recognize members of the Society "who have attained significant stature in the profession and who have contributed to its advancement."

George Caleb Wright was born in Libertyville, Illinois, in 1889. He attended the University of Illinois, from which he received a bachelor's degree in architecture in 1912. Between 1918 and 1923, he was a construction supervisor for architects George C. Nimmons, architects, in Chicago. He moved to Indianapolis in 1923 and was associated there with architect Herbert Foltz until 1925, when he began his collaboration with Pierre.

When Pierre and Wright split up, Wright joined Bernard Vonnegut in the firm then known as Vonnegut and Wright (succeeded by Vonnegut, Wright & Yeager; Vonnegut, Wright & Porteous; and Wright, Porteous & Lowe). At various times he served as president of the Indiana Economic Council, the Construction League of Indianapolis, and the Indiana Society of Architects. He chaired the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Commission and served on its Board of Zoning Appeals. He was president of Wright, Porteous & Lowe for six years prior to his retirement in 1961 and Indianapolis building commissioner between 1963 and 1969. He died in 1973.

Historical Note:

Architects Edward D. Pierre and George Caleb Wright teamed up in 1925 to form what quickly became one of the best known architectural firms in Indianapolis. Soon after its founding, the firm was commissioned to design five substantial homes, each in a different historical revival style, for the Indianapolis News corporation's "Ideal Homes" project at Williams Creek Estates. The success of the project established the firm's early reputation for high-quality period houses. Pierre and Wright also won competitions for the design of several prominent civic and commercial buildings, including the Indiana State Library and Historical Building and the Milo Stuart Memorial building at Arsenal Technical High School. The firm also designed several Indianapolis-area fire stations and public schools. Talented architect Leslie F. Ayres worked for Pierre and Wright for several years. Ayres evidently was responsible for much of the firm's Art Deco-style work, including a drive-in grocery store for Kroger Company, reportedly the first such store in the country, and a series of elegant gas stations for National Refining Company (En-Ar-Co). In the late 1930s and early '40s, much of the firm's energy went into the design of small homes for developers of suburban housing subdivisions.

In addition to their architectural work, Pierre and Wright were active in civic affairs, leaders of the architecture profession in Indianapolis, founders of the "civic improvement" movement which lies behind the recent transformation of Indianapolis, and officers in several civic and

professional organizations. Both men were named Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in recognition of their accomplishments.

The Pierre and Wright partnership dissolved in 1944. The partners continued their careers separately thereafter.

Scope and Contents:

The collection includes records of projects by Indianapolis architects Edward D. Pierre, the Pierre and Wright partnership, and the firm of Edward D. Pierre and Associates. Some employees and associates of those firms whose work is represented are Leslie F. Ayres, Richard E. Bishop, Kenneth B. Curtiss, John W. Ittenbach, James O. Lewis, James M. Merrifield, J. Parke Randall, Schlegel, Robert M. Tate, J. Scott Williams, Orval E. Williamson, and Richard C. Zimmer. The records date from 1920 to ca. 1961. The Pierre and Wright partnership was formed in 1925 and dissolved in 1944.

Most of the records are preliminary design drawings, working drawings, and renderings. Generally these are original tracings or presentation boards though in several cases only prints or Photostat copies survive. Over 100 photographs (negatives or prints), a model of "Indianapolis.....25 Years Hence" (1953), and models of 11 small houses (ca. 1942) are included. Also in the collection are a scrapbook (1926-1930), scrapbook material (1940s and 1950s), reference material (plans and details collected from magazines and other sources), and a very few personal papers. Neither specifications nor office records were available for acquisition.

Conditions Governing Access:

This collection is open for research.

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Custodial History:

The Pierre and Wright Architectural Records were received by Drawings and Documents Archive as a donation from Indiana State Museum in 1969.

Accruals: No additions are expected.

Processing Information:

Collection processing completed 2005/4/28 by Daniel Hartwig and Ashley Rosenthal.
Finding aid created 2007/7/16 by Andrew Seager; 2011/12/1 revised by Carol A. Street.

Arrangement:

The Pierre and Wright Architectural Records are arranged chronologically.

Controlled Access Headings:

Houses--Indiana—1920s
Houses--Indiana—1930s

Houses--Indiana—1940s
Houses--Indiana—1950s
Houses--Indiana—1960s
Architecture, American
Architecture--Indiana--Indianapolis
Pierre, Edward D., 1890-1971
Wright, George Caleb 1889-1973
Fire stations
Architecture, commercial
Art Deco
Drawings, architectural (visual works)
Elevation drawings
School buildings
Diners (Restaurants)
Documents
Photographs
Ayres, Leslie F.
Scrapbook
Bungalow
Buildings, residential
Buildings, school
Buildings, commercial
Architecture, Modern--20th Century
Ephemera
Architecture--Designs and plans--Presentation drawings
Architecture--Designs and plans--Working drawings
Blueprints