

Diamond Chain Company Complex (096-296-01485; NR-0782)

State Register-listed (1986)

402 Kentucky Avenue

IHSSI Rating: Outstanding

Description: Constructed in segments beginning around 1917, the Diamond Chain Company complex is sited at the three-point intersection of West Street, Kentucky Avenue, and South Street, which together serve as the eastern boundary. The complex is also bounded by Gardner Lane to the north, White River to the west, and Henry Street to the south. The setting contained a mix of residential and industrial buildings in the early twentieth century. The oldest portion of the complex consists of a four-story main building constructed of reinforced concrete and topped by a flat roof with parapet. Some large hopper windows from the original portion are extant while others have been filled with glass block or covered. This original portion housed offices, a restaurant, inspection areas, and various manufacturing and finishing departments.¹

A one-story concrete building with monitors, also completed around this time, connected to the larger building via two small hyphens. The one-story facility housed the raw stock room, hardening, and rattling departments.²

The oldest portion of the complex is largely obscured on the West Street elevation, where a 1929 addition rises five stories at its highest point and is the tallest portion of the complex.³ Like the oldest portion, this addition has a poured concrete foundation and reinforced concrete walls that are painted light gray. This addition serves as the building's façade, holding an entry in its central bay. The opening has a newer, double-door glass entry in a frame surrounded with new large side and transom lights. Beneath this newer enclosed entry are the circa 1929 wood doors and fluted pilasters. Many of the building's window openings are original casements, some hold glass blocks; others are glazed. A nine-bay concrete block garage was also constructed west of the main building around 1929.

Several additions were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s, including the southern addition which extends on a diagonal from the oldest section.⁴ This addition is composed of six parts which vary from one to five stories. The one-story sections are topped by saw tooth

¹ O.F. Fiecmán, "Diamond Chain & Mfg. Co. Indianapolis, Indiana," Survey, Surveyed May 18, 1920; "Diamond Chain Co., 1920 (Bass #71874-F)," Indiana Historical Society, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://images.indianahistory.org/digital/collection/dc012/id/1815/rec/30>.

² "Diamond Chain & Mfg. Co. Indianapolis, Indiana."

³ T. M. Salisbury, "Diamond Chain Company, Indianapolis, Indiana," Survey, Factory Mutual Engineering Division, Factory Mutual System, Norwood, Mass., Surveyed June 24, 1970.

⁴ Salisbury, "Diamond Chain Company."

monitors while the taller sections are flat roofs with parapet. The addition is generally smooth concrete, with pilasters at the edges and the words “DIAMOND CHAIN COMPANY INC” flanked by small diamond shapes at the parapet. This addition housed maintenance and machine shops, as well as manufacturing, assembly, and forming departments.⁵ The one-story bullnose concrete and glass addition and the small block guard house on the south elevation were probably completed around this time. In addition, a switch for the Pennsylvania Railroad was modified in this period, though the tracks have largely been obscured by paving for the parking lots and drives. (See enclosed plans).

A circa 1968 building is appended to the complex at the south and connects to the diagonal addition via a small hyphen. On the west side, a gable front garage and shed roof garage were added in the 1990s.

Significance: According to the State Register nomination, the Diamond Chain Company is significant for its association with the Indianapolis automobile industry and as “one of the early major industrial structures constructed of reinforced concrete.”⁶ In addition, the Diamond Chain Company was determined eligible for the National Register as part of the Section 106 process for the Proposed Bridge over the White River from Henry Street to South White River Parkway West Drive, LRL-2021-560-sjk. It is significant under Criterion A, for its connection with the early automobile industry and under Criterion C as an early example of a reinforced concrete industrial building in Indianapolis.

Indianapolis became home to a significant number of automotive and related industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷ Some of these companies, like General Motors, remain familiar to modern audiences while others, such as Marmon, Cole, and Stutz, are perhaps less well known today.⁸

In this era, Arthur C. Newby (later a principal in the founding of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway), Glenn Howe, and Edward C. Fletcher established the Indianapolis Chain & Stamping Company.⁹ The company produced bicycle chains and by 1892, employed sixty

⁵ Salisbury, “Diamond Chain Company.”

⁶ Conant et al, “Indianapolis Automobile Industry Thematic Resources,” 220.

⁷ “Automobile Industry,” Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, accessed November 17, 2022, <https://indyencyclopedia.org/automobile-industry/>; Alan Conant, William L. Selm, Susan Slade, and Todd Mozingo, “Indianapolis Automobile Industry Thematic Resources,” Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures Form, 1984, pg. 10.

⁸ “Automobile Industry,” Encyclopedia of Indianapolis.

⁹ “Arthur C. Newby,” Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, accessed November 23, 2022, <https://indyencyclopedia.org/arthur-c-newby/> and “Diamond Chain Company,” Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, accessed November 23, 2022, <https://indyencyclopedia.org/diamond-chain-company/>.

men and women at a facility on South Street.¹⁰ The company continued to grow and by 1895, moved to a facility at Georgia and Missouri Streets where it expected to employ five hundred employees.¹¹ Bicycle shop owners Wilbur and Orville Wright sold the company's chain at their shop and used it on their first successful flying machine in 1903.¹² A year later, L. M. Wainwright purchased the chain company and incorporated the company's trademark, a diamond, into its new name, the Diamond Chain & Manufacturing Company.¹³

As the twentieth century progressed, Diamond Chain's timing and drive chains were used in "automobiles, bicycles, motor trucks, tractors, and general power transmission."¹⁴ The company was one of many "light industries" that supplied the Indianapolis automobile industry.¹⁵ In 1917, after years of planning, the company completed a new facility along Kentucky Avenue, just across the White River from the Parry Manufacturing Company (which later became a Chevrolet factory and then the GM Stamping Plant).¹⁶ Prior to moving operations, the Diamond Chain Company hosted the Indianapolis Auto Show at its new building in February 1917.¹⁷ The building was designed by Diamond Chain's engineering department, and Bedford Stone & Construction Company was the general contractor.¹⁸

The new facility was innovative for its time and was built of structural reinforced concrete. The reinforcing steel was supplied by Hugh J. Baker & Company whose structural steel frames and "Baker Forms" were used for the Test Building, Circle Theater, Circle Tower, and L.S. Ayres and Company.¹⁹ The factory design was intended to produce an organized

¹⁰ "Industrial Notes," *Indianapolis Journal*, December 12, 1892, p. 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/322176980>.

¹¹ "Will Employ 500 People," *Indianapolis Journal*, November 4, 1895, p. 3, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/322149043>.

¹² Conant et al, "Indianapolis Automobile Industry Thematic Resources," 222.

¹³ "Diamond Chain Company," Encyclopedia of Indianapolis.

¹⁴ Conant et al, "Indianapolis Automobile Industry Thematic Resources," 220-222.

¹⁵ Conant et al, "Indianapolis Automobile Industry Thematic Resources," 220-222.

¹⁶ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 6, 1915, Sheet 662, Map, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn02371_012/.

¹⁷ Frank B. Bull, "Auto Show Will Meet Feb. 11-16," *Indianapolis Star* December 30, 1917, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/118507919>.

¹⁸ Advertisement, *Indiana Construction Recorder*, vol. 2, no. 50 (March 1921): 24, <https://books.google.com/books?id=bKE1AQAAMAAJ&pg=RA49-PA24&lpg=RA49-PA24&dq=Hugh+J.+BAker+and+company+diamond+chain&source=bl&ots=qJzC6CUS4h&sig=ACfU3U0gFsPqTjP4xt6njVt5Cj6btEdlVA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjDgpvt7bX7AhV4j4kEHfBaBtkQ6AF6BAgoEAM#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹⁹ "Hugh J. Baker and Company," Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://indyencyclopedia.org/hugh-j-baker-and-company-1911-1984/>.

flow of production with standard open, twenty-foot-bays (separated by columns). Facilities like restrooms and elevators were placed on the building's edges to allow for open production bays. The facility also had a welfare office as well as a grocery store where employees could place orders to be picked up at the end of the workday.²⁰ The operation expanded with both large and small additions to the facility in the 1930s through the 1960s, with much of the design completed by the Bohlen Architectural Firm.²¹

In 1950, AMSTED Industries of Chicago purchased the company, which by that time produced roller chain for industrial uses and power transmission chain. In 1993, the company had six hundred employees at the Indianapolis plant on Kentucky Avenue.²² In 2019, the Timken Company acquired the business and announced plans the next year to shut down the facility.²³ In 2022, the Indy Eleven announced plans for a mixed-use development and soccer facility at the site.²⁴

This photo documentation is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Louisville District, the Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer, and the City of Indianapolis Department of Public Works.

²⁰ Charles Lundberg, "How A Chain Factory was Built and Then Occupied," *Iron Age* vol. 101: no. 20 (June 20, 1918), 1589, https://archive.org/details/sim_chiltons-iron-age_1918_101_index. e

²¹ Bohlen Architectural Firm Records, ca. 1867-1978, M 1204, Box 32, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana, <https://indianahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/bohlen-architectural-firm-records.pdf>.

²² "Diamond Chain Company," Digital Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://indyencyclopedia.org/diamond-chain-company/>.

²³ Justin L. Mack, "Century Old Diamond Chain Plant to Close in Downtown Indianapolis," *IndyStar.com*, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/local/indianapolis/2020/02/04/indianapolis-diamond-chain-plant-closing-moving-illinois/465557002/>.

²⁴ Mickey Shuey, "Developer buys Diamond Chain site for Indy Eleven soccer stadium, mixed-use district," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.ibj.com/articles/developer-buys-site-for-soccer-stadium>.

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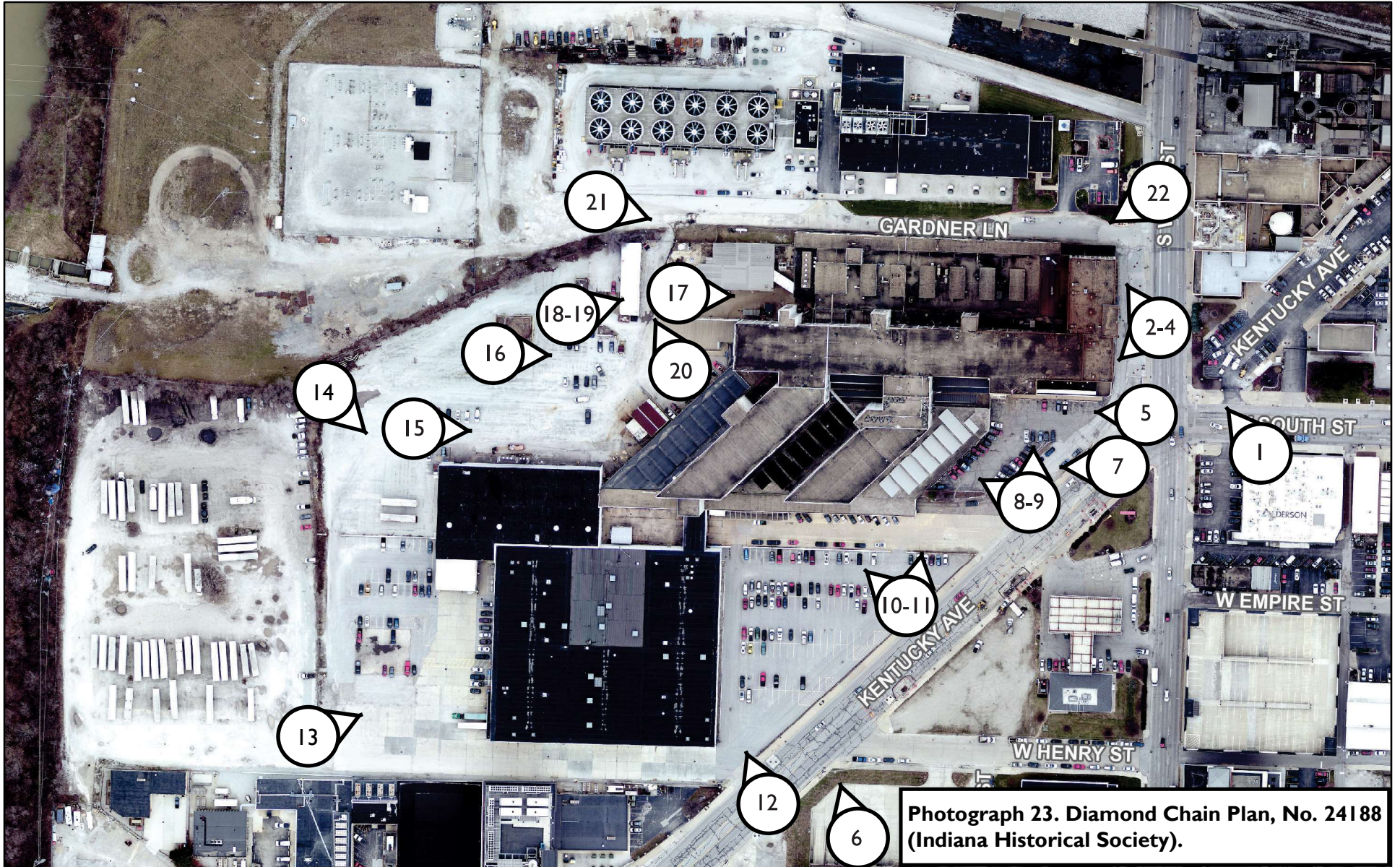
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Photograph Location Map: Diamond Chain Company Complex



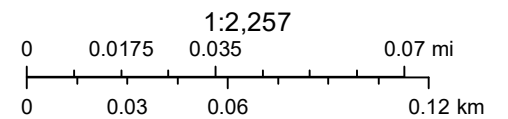
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Streets

2018 Aerial Photography



Photograph Location



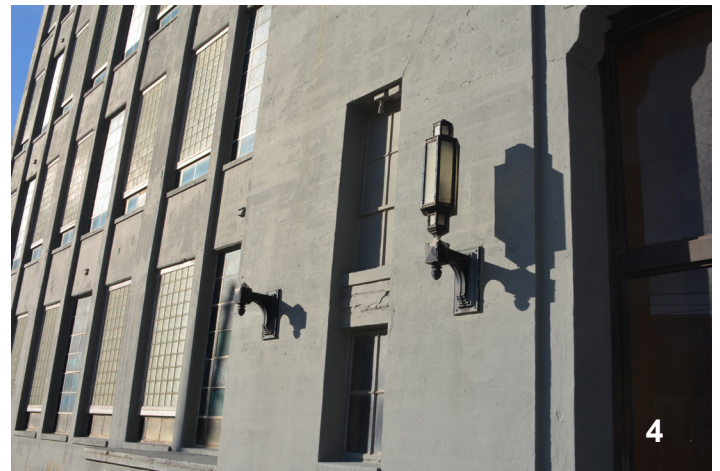
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community



Diamond Chain Photo Documentation Report Photographs

January 2023









Diamond Chain Company Complex
402 Kentucky Avenue

In the City of Indianapolis, Center Township, Marion County, Indiana

Proposed Bridge over the White River from Henry Street to South White River Parkway West Drive

LRL-2021-560-sjk | DHPA No.: 28221

Photographs taken August 18, 2021 and December 1, 2022, by Bethany Natali, Weintraut & Associates, Inc.

Photo No.	Image File Name	Description of View
1	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain1	Looking northwest to West Street from South Street. The 1929 addition is painted light gray; the 1917 portion of the building is painted white. The smaller one-story bullnose addition probably dates to the 1940s or 1950s.
2	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain2	Looking north-northwest to the east elevation of the 1929 addition. The newer double door and glass surrounds shelter wood doors and fluted pilasters.
3	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain3	Looking north-northwest to the paired lights north of the main entrance.
4	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain4	Looking south-southwest to the paired lights south of the main entrance. The southernmost light is missing. Many of the original casement windows are present; some have been painted others are covered with glass block
5	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain5	Looking northwest to the circa 1940-1950 one-story addition. This glass and concrete addition has a bull nose corner parapet.
6	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain6	Looking northwest across Kentucky Avenue. The circa 1968 addition is on the far left of the photo. The southern diagonal addition was added circa 1940-1950. The 1917 portion is visible to the left of the diagonal addition. A portion of the 1929 addition is to the far right.
7	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain7	Looking west across Kentucky Avenue and showing from left to right: Circa 1940-1950 diagonal addition including one-story saw tooth monitor section; circa 1940-1950 one-story concrete block guard house; 1917 portion (with flag behind parapet); circa 1940-1950 addition with bull nose corner.
8	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain8	Looking north from parking lot to circa 1940-1950 one-story concrete block guard house; 1917 portion (with flag behind parapet).

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9	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain9	Looking northwest from parking lot to circa 1940-1950 diagonal addition; circa 1940-1950 one-story concrete block guard house; 1917 portion is on the right.
10	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain10	Looking north from parking lot to circa 1940-1950 diagonal addition; 1917 portion (with flag behind parapet).
11	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain11	Detail view looking north to the circa 1940-1950 diagonal addition showing "DIAMOND CHAIN COMPANY INC" signs on the south and northeast elevations.
12	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain12	Looking northwest across Kentucky Avenue to the south and east elevations of the 1968 addition.
13	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain13	Looking east from parking lot to the west and south elevations of the 1968 addition.
14	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain14	Looking southeast from parking lot to the west elevation of the complex.
15	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain15	Looking east to the 1917 section (left) and the circa 1940-1950 addition (middle) and the 1968 addition (right). The gable front garage bay and shed roof garage were added circa 1990.
16	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain16	Looking east to the 1917 section and painted "DIAMOND CHAIN COMPANY" sign. A circa 1990 shed roof addition is in the foreground. The circa 1940-1950 addition extends to the right.
17	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain17	Looking east to the circa 1919 one-story portion (left), the larger four-story 1919 section; and the shed roof addition from circa 1990.
18	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain18	Looking northeast from a parking lot to the circa 1929 garage, west and south elevation
19	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain19	Looking east to windows on the 1929 garage, west elevation.

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Photo No.	Image File Name	Description of View
20	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain20	Looking northwest to the south and east elevations of the garage (1929).
21	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain21	View from Gardener Lane looking southeast to the original sections of the building (1919).
22	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain22	Looking southwest from West Street and Gardner Lane to the east and north elevations.
23	IN_MarionCounty_DiamondChain23	Diamond Chain Plan, No. 24188, 1948 (Indiana Historical Society).