

Robert Meyer
Fourth Generation Steelworker

My great-grandfather, John Meyer, moved to Indiana Harbor to work at Inland Steel in 1913. His brother, George, was already working there, and presumably recruited him. I don't know the occupation or term of service of either of them. John Meyer brought his family to Indiana Harbor with him.

My grandfather, Forest Meyer, was the oldest son and he worked almost all of his life, after high school, at Inland. All of his employment was in various clerical jobs in the Payroll Department. At retirement he was employed as the Bonus and Tonnage Clerk, the top job in the Time Office, a division of the Payroll Department.

Kenneth Meyer was the next oldest son. He was a lifetime employee of Inland Steel. He was a Provider at one of the hot mills, the 76 in. HSM. He died at his desk in the mill of either a stroke or heart attack.

The third son, John Blaine Meyer, (known to all as JB) worked to retirement at Inland. He worked in the Time Office at the time of his retirement.

Emmet Meyer, the youngest son, (who preferred to be called Bud), was a lifetime Inland Steel employee. At the time of his retirement he was the Shearman on one of the Continuous Pickle Lines.

During World War II, my grandmother, Elizabeth Meyer, began working at Inland Steel. She worked at various clerical jobs in the Blast Furnace Department from about 1943 to 1946.

In 1945, at the age of 16, my father, William Meyer, worked through the summer at Inland Steel in the Electric Shop, which was then in Plant 1. He worked with 6 other high school age kids doing mostly clean up work in the shop and the shop scrap yard. Occasionally he did shop work such as stripping coils from burnt out motors and melting and pouring insulating compound in lifting magnets.

In 1946, William began working weekends at the Indiana Harbor Works of the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. He was attending Chesterton High School then and got the job through one of his classmates, Ralph Colley. His father was the Labor Foreman in the No.1 Tin Mill. He worked for him in the labor gang until he finished high school in 1947. The labor gang comprised mostly high school kids, especially on the weekends! They did general cleanup work; employees under the age of 18 were not allowed to operate machinery but wheel barrows and jack hammers were not included in this prohibition. The labor gang also served as the labor pool for the rest of the mill. Whenever a department was short an employee for one turn, the labor gang sent a temporary replacement. He worked at least one turn in almost every department in the Tin Mill.

A few weeks before my father's graduation in 1947, the Gary Sheet & Tin Mill, part of USS, sent recruiters to his school. They were pushing an Instrument Repair Apprentice Program

which would include both classroom and on the job training. He applied, was accepted, and began work that summer. He spent most of my time in the Meter Shop. The Sheet Mill had not been converted to continuous mill operation and all of the processes; hot and cold rolling, annealing, pickling and galvanizing were still batch operations; one sheet at a time. He worked mainly as catcher and sometimes as feeder and inspector helper on the No.2 galvanizing pot. This was the heavy gauge pot and the only one that needed a catcher. The catcher stood on a platform on the exit end of the pot, caught the leading edge of the sheet with a hook on a long rod, and pulled it down onto a conveyor. As the trailing edge went by the hook was used to wipe off the drippings.

In the autumn of 1947 he quit USS and enrolled at Purdue University, Gary Extension and went back to working weekends in the labor gang at Youngstown Sheet & Tube in Indiana Harbor. He worked many turns in the Cold Strip Mechanical Department as a millwright helper, building work rolls for the five stand and the temper mills. In the summer of 1948, while still officially employed in the labor gang, he worked full time as a millwright helper, filling in for vacationers. In March of 1952 he went back to Y.S. & T to work as a draftsman in the Engineering Department and worked there until September. He transferred to the Electrical Department in the Y.S.&T. Steel Plant and worked weekends there.

After graduation he began work as a Test Engineer (a typical entry level position) at USS Gary Works. As a Test Engineer he worked in almost every department in the plant. After about three years he left USS and went to work at Taylor Forge and Pipe Works in Gary as an electrical Engineer in the Plant Engineering Department. He worked there about three years. In 1966, he started working for Superior Engineering and retired from that firm in 1995 while working as a contract employee at Bethlehem Steel in Burns Harbor.

I, Robert Meyer, began my steel career at Bethlehem Steel in Burns Harbor in 1990. I started in the labor gang at the 80" Hot Strip Mill. After completing the millwright acceptance test, I began my millwright training in 1992. After completing the millwright training and testing program, I was assigned to the Roll Shop, a department within the Service Shops and Technical Maintenance Division. I spent my early years in the #1 Roll Shop, which serviced the Cold Strip Mill. Later, I transferred to the #2 Roll Shop, which services the Plate Mills and the 80" Hot Strip Mill. During my time at the #2 Roll Shop, we were absorbed by the 80" HSM, where I remain today, a fourth generation, Northwest Indiana Steelworker! I currently serve on the Board of Directors of the Calumet Heritage Partnership and I'm the President of the Northwest Indiana Steel Heritage Project. Both of these organizations are concerned with preserving the local steel heritage.