

Collection #:  
M 0786

**LOCKEFIELD GARDEN APARTMENTS  
(INDIANAPOLIS, IND.)  
RECORDS, 1935–1954**

[Collection Information](#)

[Historical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Wilma L. Gibbs  
14 November 2002

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

**COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 box, 1 oversize folder, 1 artifact
COLLECTION DATES:	1935–1954
PROVENANCE:	Unknown
RESTRICTIONS:	None

**COPYRIGHT:**

**REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:** Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:** Lionel F. Artis Papers, M 0762, OM 0401

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2002.0087X

**NOTES:**

**HISTORICAL SKETCH**

The Lockefield Garden Apartments were built during the late 1930s, as part of the Public Works Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal era. The first housing project in Indianapolis, it was one of about fifty federal apartment complexes developed in twenty states to address slum clearance and the need for low-rent housing during the time period. In addition to clearing an area of substandard housing and providing new, low-income rentals, the project provided nearly 9,000 part-time jobs for building trade workers. Citing a concern that the federal government would be in competition with private enterprise, Indiana congressmen did not support the construction of the housing project.

Designed by the architectural firm of Russ and Harrison, Lockefield Garden Apartments was located on twenty-two acres bound by Indiana Avenue on the north, Blake Street on the east, North Street on the south, and Locke Street on the north. Based on a European prototype of large-scale housing and urban design of the 1920s, it was recognized as a federal model for its innovative site plan and high quality of construction. Constructed of brown and tan brick with a modest trim of brown brick and limestone, the 24 fire-resistant buildings contained flat roofs of varying heights and metal casement windows.

The project boasted 748 units offering African-American residents a modern, community-oriented, and modestly priced place to live. The overall plan for the project incorporated a pre-existing elementary school (William D. McCoy Public School #24, located at 908 W. North Street) with the apartment buildings, commercial properties, offices, a landscaped mall, four playgrounds, and many open spaces. The buildings occupied less than one-fourth of the total area. Constructed from 1935 to 1937, the racially segregated project opened as a showplace in February 1938. By the fall 1938, almost 500 certified families were on the waiting list for occupancy.

The N. P. Severin Company of Chicago served as the general contractor for the project. Prior to its opening until his retirement in 1969, Lionel Artis was the housing manager at the apartments.

Lockefield Garden Apartments suffered a serious decline during the late 1950s after other housing options became open to blacks. To the chagrin of remaining residents who thought they were being temporarily dislocated, the apartment closed during the 1970s. Following some political controversies, in 1980 several entities including Midtown Economic Development Industrial Corporation (a neighborhood-based organization), Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, and Wishard Memorial Hospital agreed to a plan that demolished and replaced most of the buildings, and made land available for the expansion of IUPUI. (Public School #24 was torn down in 1977.) The 1983 demolition of seventeen buildings happened amid the protest of preservationists and concerned citizens.

Under a long-term lease agreement, the Sexton Companies acquired the property from the Indianapolis Housing Authority and refurbished the apartments in 1987. Richway Builders served as general contractor, and William A. Browne, Jr., with HDG Architects, Inc., designed the project. Seven of the original structures remain—a commercial

building (with four units) and six apartment buildings. Eleven new apartment buildings and a club house were added when the buildings were rehabbed. Of the 497 units at the apartment complex, 192 have been restored. Since reopening, Lockefield Garden Apartments has attracted a multi-ethnic tenant population. Many of the residents are students or downtown workers.

Lockefield Garden Apartments was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

Darbee, Leigh. "Lockefield Gardens." In *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows, 926–27. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994. General Collection: F534.I55 E4 1994

Alfred Fellheimer, "Planning American Standards for Low-Rent Housing," *American Architect*, February 1935.

[Gibbs, Wilma], "Crispus Attucks High School on the National Register," *Black History News & Notes*, May, 1989. Reference Room Collection: E185.93 I4 B5 1979–.

*Historic Area Preservation Plan, Lockefield Gardens, HA-18 (LG): A part of the Comprehensive Plan for Marion County*. Indianapolis: Historic Preservation Commission, 1985. General Collection Folio: HT177. I4 P74 HA-18 1985.

Telephone interview with Dennis Jones, Lockefield Garden Apartments Office. Telephone interview with Glenn Christian, Sexton Companies Office. (Both interviews conducted by Wilma L. Gibbs, 29 October 2002.)

Telephone interview with Janus Moncur, Lockefield Garden Apartment Office, conducted by Wilma Gibbs, 30 October 2002.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The collection is contained in one manuscript box and one oversize folder. The materials are from the management files of the Lockefield Garden Apartments, a 1930s federally funded housing project. A small representation of the office files date from 1935 through 1954. They provide a glimpse of the beginning of the building project and the early development of the apartment complex as a community-oriented residence center.

Folders 1 through 4 contain correspondence to and from housing manager Lionel F. Artis. Many of the letters are to the United States Housing Authority (successor to the Public Works Administration, Housing Division) and pertain to the management of the local apartment project. Topics covered include protocol for communication between offices, estimates and authorization for capital expenditures, and certification of invoices. There are also several letters and a drawing that pertain to a bronze tablet for the project. The George P. Mayer Company of Indianapolis was commissioned to manufacture the tablet.

In 1935 as part of a slum clearance project, 383 residential structures were demolished to provide land for Lockefield Garden Apartments. The collection contains a three-dimensional model of the area before demolition.

The N. P. Severin Company was the general contractor for the project. Certification of insurance for the company, along with proof of insurance for many of the sub-contractors are in folders 5 through 9. The daily statement of operation (1946–54) of the project, arranged by month, is contained in folders 10 through 23.

Copies of the *FPHA Bulletin*, a weekly newsletter published by the Federal Public Housing Authority are in folders 24 through 26. The issues dated from 1942 to 1944 address several subjects including the administration of the Housing Authority, architecture of homes, adapting housing needs of existing structures, war projects, and federal housing legislation.

## **SERIES CONTENTS**

**Series 1: Correspondence, 1937–43**

## CONTENTS

General Correspondence, 1937–38

General Correspondence, 1939

General Correspondence, 1940–43

Correspondence–Bronze Tablet, 1937–38

Drawing–Bronze Tablet, 1937

## CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 3

Box 1, Folder 4

Flat Files: FF 14-a

### **Series 2: Building Model, ca. 1934**

## CONTENTS

Model of Lockefield Garden Apartments area prior to demolition, ca. 1934

## CONTAINER

Artifact: 2002.0087X

### **Series 3: Insurance, 1935–37**

## CONTENTS

Certificate of Insurance, 1935

Certificate of Insurance, January–June, 1936

Certificate of Insurance, July–November, 1936

Certificate of Insurance, 1937

Insurance Policies, 1935–36

## CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 5

Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 8

Box 1, Folder 9

### **Series 4: Daily Statement of Operation, 1946–54**

## CONTENTS

Daily Statement of Operation, January 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, February 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, March 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, April 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, May 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, June 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, July 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, August 1946

Daily Statement of Operation, September 1946

## CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 10

Box 1, Folder 11

Box 1, Folder 12

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14

Box 1, Folder 15

Box 1, Folder 16

Box 1, Folder 17

Box 1, Folder 18

Daily Statement of Operation, July 1954	Box 1, Folder 19
Daily Statement of Operation, September 1954	Box 1, Folder 20
Daily Statement of Operation, October 1954	Box 1, Folder 21
Daily Statement of Operation, November 1954	Box 1, Folder 22
Daily Statement of Operation, December 1954	Box 1, Folder 23

### **Series 5: Publications, 1942–44**

#### CONTENTS

*FPHA Bulletin*, 1942

*FPHA Bulletin*, 1943

*FPHA Bulletin*, 1944

#### CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 24

Box 1, Folder 25

Box 1, Folder 26

### **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://157.91.92.2/>
2. Click on the "Traditional Search" icon.
3. Click on the "Call Number" radio button.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0786).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.