

Collection #
M 0165,
BV 1501–1509,
F 1292–F 1299

INDIANAPOLIS ASYLUM FOR FRIENDLESS COLORED CHILDREN RECORDS, 1870–1922

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Originally processed in 1978

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

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 7 document cases, 9 bound volumes, 8 reels of film

COLLECTION
DATES: 1870–1922

PROVENANCE: The collection was placed on permanent deposit from the Friends Educational Fund for Negroes (First Friends Church, 3030 Kessler Blvd. East Drive, Indianapolis), December 17, 1977.

RESTRICTIONS: Permission to publish any material in the collection or to quote extensively from it must be obtained in writing from the Friends Educational Board for Negroes. Indiana Historical Society has permission to microfilm the collection and may lend the microfilm on interlibrary loan with the understanding that the film in whole or in part may not be copied.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: SC 1866: Friends Educational Fund for Negroes, [Financial Statement], 1945 April 30.
Admission Record, Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children, 1871–1900. Transcribed and arranged by Jean E. Spears and Dorothy Paul (Indianapolis: Family History and Genealogy Section, Indiana Historical Society, 1978).

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1977.1214

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children was founded in 1869 by a group of Indianapolis Orthodox Friends (or Quakers) who recognized the need for an institution to care for the dependent children of destitute ex-slaves who had moved to Indianapolis after the Civil War. The black population of the city, which before the war numbered only 500, had reached almost 3,000 by 1870, overburdening the city's charitable institutions which were reluctant to provide care for them in any case. The Quakers were already involved in running a white orphanage and, after being forced to turn away a number of black children, decided to open an institution specifically for them. The orphanage was established at 317 West 21st Street with donations from the Western Yearly Meeting, several Quaker philanthropists, and with a guarantee of support from the Marion County government.

Within a short time, the orphanage was accepting children from the entire state, as welfare officials in other counties found it more convenient to send their dependent black children to Indianapolis than to care for them at home. The orphanage accepted children from infancy to age fourteen. It had housed 18 dependents at the end of its first year and would care for over 3,000 in the course of its history up to 1922.

The Quakers ran the orphanage through a Board of Women Managers, whose president also served as director of the Asylum. The Board generally met once a month to decide on purchases and improvements for the institution. In addition to the Board of Women Managers, a Board of Directors, made up of male Quakers, oversaw the financial affairs of the orphanage. Although the institution was privately operated, most of its funds came from quarterly payments from Marion County rather than from private donations.

While the orphanage's operating funds were supplied by county government, its capital still had to come from private donations. The contributions were never numerous or large, and they were totally inadequate to permit the expansion necessitated by the large influx of blacks into Indianapolis during the World War I years. A 1918 report of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, sponsored by the Indianapolis War Chest, criticized the Asylum for its unsafe and overcrowded conditions, and recommended that it be taken over by the state. No action was taken on the recommendation until 1922, when the Quakers gave up control of the orphanage to the Marion County Board of Commissioners. The money remaining in the Asylum's endowment became the foundation for a Quaker scholarship fund for black students.

The orphanage was run by the county commissioners until 1939 when the county welfare department took control and, through a vigorous placement campaign, cleared the home of children within the year. It finally closed a few years later.

Sources:

Previous collection guide (1978)

Thomas W. Cowger, "Custodians of Social Justice: The Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children, 1870–1922," *Indiana Magazine of History* 88 (June 1992), 93–110

Thomas W. Cowger, "Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 766–767.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Administrative records (box 1) include minutes of the Board of Women Managers, records of admissions and deaths, records of children from counties other than Marion County, and treasurer's annual reports. The admission records give each child's date of birth, date of admittance, names of parents, and date and reason for leaving the home. Indications were sometimes given as to the child's legitimacy, his/her physical and mental condition, and the moral and mental condition of his or her parents.

In addition to the admissions books, the orphanage also kept a file of papers for approximately 675 children (boxes 2–7). Most of them were generated as the result of reforms in the Indiana child welfare system after 1897. In that year, a children's division of the State Board of Charities was established, authorized to appoint agents to investigate foster homes and file reports on their findings. In 1907, the child welfare laws were further reformed to invest the Juvenile Courts with the sole power to declare dependent children public wards. Because of these two reforms, the orphanage began regularly receiving reports and legal papers for each child entering the Asylum.

The papers for each child, or family of children, were kept in an envelope, on the outside of which were written the child's date of birth, date of admittance, and placement history. The papers usually included a copy of the juvenile court order declaring the child a public ward, and a copy of the order committing the child to the orphanage. A number of the children were admitted to the orphanage on a temporary basis because of parental illness, financial disability, or separation. These children's papers usually included a court order dated a few months after admittance releasing them to their parents or other relatives. No special papers were included for children who died while in the orphanage, but a notation of the date and cause of death was made on the envelope containing the admittance papers. Other papers often found in the files include letters from foster parents regarding the child's behavior, and letters from the child's natural parents or relatives giving family news. There are also papers dating from the 1880s and 1890s for a small number of children. These are generally either admission or indenture forms printed by the Asylum and filled with appropriate information.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Administrative Records

CONTENTS

Minutes, Board of Women Managers, 1871–1883

Loose papers from BV 1502, n.d.

Minutes, Board of Women Managers, 1883–1902

Loose papers from BV 1503: By-Laws and House Rule[s], n.d.

Minutes, Board of Women Managers, 1902–1916

Minutes, Board of Women Managers, 1916–1922

Loose papers from BV 1505, 1916–1922

Record of Admissions, 1871–1909. Includes Articles of Association and By-Laws (pp. 7–16); Death Record, 1894–1897 (p. 225) and 1896–1909 (pp. 420–423); and Tabulation of Annual Reports, 1894–1909 (p. 430).

Loose papers from BV 1506, 1906–1907, n.d.

Record of Admissions and Deaths, 1909–1922. Labelled "March 1st 1909. Names Transferred from old Record. Indianapolis Asylum Friendless Colored Children. Presidents Record."

Record of Children Supported by Commissioners of Other Counties, 1896–1912

Loose papers from BV 1507, 1911–1912

Record of Children from Counties Other than Marion, 1899–1922

Treasurer's Annual Reports, 1916–1922

Loose papers from BV 1501, 1921–1922, n.d.

Financial papers, 1921–1922

Miscellaneous. Includes: "Miscellaneous to be looked after later—with several [?] old ones at the Home" (contents dispersed to individual records); "Children released to Mrs. F. B. Costain to go to Tuskegee, Knox College and Lincoln College" (individual papers filed separately with Individual Records); Wards of Grant County, Indiana (individual papers filed in Individual Records); Vigo County Wards (individual papers filed separately with Individual Records); Wayne County Wards

CONTAINER

BV 1502

Box 1, Folder 1

BV 1503

Box 1, Folder 2

BV 1504

BV 1505

Box 1, Folder 3

BV 1506

Box 1, Folder 4

BV 1509

BV 1507

Box 1, Folder 5

BV 1508

BV 1501

Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 8

(individual papers filed separately in Individual Records); Report Concerning Wards of _____ County; Copy of indenture for Carrie Parker (1882); Letter of Mrs. Ella Squire Parks to Miss Trueblood regarding the indenture of "Harry" (1891)

Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children (pamphlet)

Pamphlet Collection:
HV995.I552 I52 1915

Series 2: Individual Records, 1884–1922

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Individual Records, Adams–Artis
Individual Records, Avery–Bailey
Individual Records, Baker–Bell
Individual Records, Benford–Boone
Individual Records, Bowman–Brooks
Individual Records, Brown–Bruce
Individual Records, Buckner–Burns
Individual Records, Burriss–Carroll
Individual Records, Carson–Childs
Individual Records, Christman–Collins
Individual Records, Cook–Cox
Individual Records, Cranshaw–Cummings
Individual Records, Curry–Daniels
Individual Records, Davenport–Davis
Individual Records, Deboe–Drake
Individual Records, Dudley–Durham
Individual Records, Easley–Elsey
Individual Records, Ennis–Founce
Individual Records, Fowler–Gladden
Individual Records, Goins–Greayor
Individual Records, Green–Grigsby

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Series 3: Microfilm of Collection

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Box 7, Webb–Zellers	F 1299

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, M 0165).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.