ELIJAH ROBERTS COLLECTION, 1832-1972

Collection # M 0325

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF 1 manuscript box

COLLECTION:

COLLECTION DATES: 1832-1972

PROVENANCE: Milton Baltimore, Jr., Indianapolis, IN, 20 December 1979

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection

RIGHTS: must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1979.1204

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Elijah Roberts (1795-1848) migrated west from Northampton County, North Carolina to western Ohio in 1825. By 1830, he and some of his relatives lived in Ripley Township in Rush County, Indiana. The family bought inexpensive

government lands and formed a community known as Beech Settlement. With an influx of mosty free blacks fleeing North Carolina and Virginia after the 1831 Nat Turner Rebellion, the unclaimed lands of the Beech area had been depleted by the mid-1830s. Residents of the Beech and newcomers, many whom were relatives, began to seek out new lands further north and west. Elijah Roberts and his cousins, Willis and Hansel Roberts and Micajah Walden ventured to Jackson Township in Hamilton County. During the summmer of 1835, they made initial land purchases in the area. An abundance of the settlers in the community were surnamed Roberts and the area became known as Roberts Settlement. Although ten black farmers had purchased over 900 acres of government land by 1838 in the settlement, Stephen Vincent cites three reasons why the area settled relatively slowly, as compared to the Beech. At least three men, Stephen and Richard Roberts and Byrant Walden, maintained residences in Rush County, while they awaited further development of their new community; the Panic of 1837; and the tapering off of black immigrants from the South.

Elijah Roberts had come west with his wife, Kessiah, and a few of their children. (Most of their children were born after their arrival in Indiana.) After his death in 1848, she continued to farm their land. The Roberts descendants also purchased or inherited land and continued their forebearers' tradition of land ownership. Outmigration from both settlements increased significantly by the beginning of the 20th century. The Roberts and Beech settlements have ceased to be vibrant communities, but the descendants return annually during the summer to celebrate with homecoming reunions.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

Conkling, Edgar C., "Roberts Settlement--A Mixed-Blood Agricultural Community in Indiana." Masters Thesis, University of Chicago, 1957.

Cord, Xenia, "Black Rural Settlements in Indiana before 1860," *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays from Black History News & Notes*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993.

Vincent, Stephen, "African-Americans in the Rural Midwest: The Origins and Evolution of Beech and Roberts Settlements, ca. 1760-1900. Ph.D dissertation, Providence, R.I.: Brown University, 1991.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Elijah Roberts Collection (1830-1972) consist of one manuscript box. The materials are mostly items pertaining to Roberts (folders 1-6) and other family members, son Peter (folders 7 and 8), and daughter Martha (folder 9), and granddaughter, Almary Roberts Wallace (folder 10). Elijah Roberts' papers include a copy of his 1820 freedom papers and his last will and testament. His many business papers, spanning the middle third of the 19th century, include tax receipts and land appraisals, along with numerous promissory notes. Though the Elijah Roberts family lived in several places, most of his collection materials relate to Roberts Settlement, a rural community in Jackson Township, Hamilton County, Indiana.

Folder 12 contains a handwritten history of Cabin Creek AME church, location unknown. Clippings and a news journal that pertain to Roberts Settlement are contained in folders 13 and 14. Photographs and newsletter related to the community are in the last two folders.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box 1: Freedom papers, business papers, last will and testament, Roberts Settlement Reunion

FOLDER CONTENTS

Freedom papers, 1820

2		Promissory notes, 1832-1847, n.d.
3		Tax receipts and land appraisals, 1841-1859
4		Real estate receipt, 1835
5		Land deed, 1837
6		Last Will and Testament, 1848
7		Peter Roberts: promissory notes, tax receipts, and land appraisals, 1850-190
8		Peter Roberts: stock certificate for Arcadia Turnpike Company, 1875
9		Martha Roberts: tax receipt, 1885-1886
10)	Almary Roberts papers, 1888-1893, n.d.
11		Miscellaneous papers, 1834-1889, n.d.
12	2	Cabin Creek A.M.E. Church, 1838-1914
13	3	Amateur news journal, 1886
14	Į.	Clippings, 1946-1950, n.d.
15	5	Roberts Settlement Reunion 1972
16	ó	(VC) Roberts Settlement Reunion, n.d.

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
- 2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
- 3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
- 4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

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