

CASSIUS M. C. WILLIS COLLECTION, 1895-1956

Collection #s:

M 630

OM 291

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Processed by:
Wilma L. Gibbs
6 December 1993

USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 9 folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1895-1956

PROVENANCE: Jessye Davis Conn, Indianapolis, Ind, 1 February 1993

RESTRICTIONS: None

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

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: None

ACCESSION NUMBER: 93.0214

NOTES: None

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cassius M. Clay Willis was born in Kirkwood, Missouri in 1851. As a young man he moved to Indianapolis. He and his wife, Kate Barnes Willis (1859-1940) had several children. They included Estella (1880), Beulah (1882), Jessie (1884), Adele (1888), twins Arthur and Ada (1893), and Herbert (1894).

Willis founded the C.M.C. Willis Mortuary in 1890. In 1895, he graduated from the Massachusetts School of Embalming. Two of his children worked with him in his business. His daughter, Beulah, worked as an embalmer and his son, Herbert worked as the funeral director, running the business after their father's death in 1920. Though no longer in the Willis family, the mortuary continues to operate at its longtime location, 632 N. West Street.

Willis was a founding member of the local Negro Business League and an officer of the Afro-American Realty Company, an organization designed to improve home and business real estate conditions for blacks.

Sources: Materials in the Collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection is comprised of 6 folders and 3 oversized folders. It consists of biographical notes from family genealogical research, information about the Afro-American Realty Company, newspaper advertisements for the Willis Mortuary, and photographs related to the Cassius M. Clay Willis family and the mortuary. More specifically, there are individual photographs of C.M.C. Willis; his wife, Kate Barnes Willis; and their children, Stella Willis Hatch, Adele K. Willis Davis, and Herbert Willis. Additionally, there is a group photograph that includes his granddaughter, Jessye Davis Conn. Also there are two photographs pertaining to the Willis Mortuary--an exterior view of a frame building that was replaced by the current brick structure located at 632 N. West Street and an interior view of the current structure that includes Paul Haizlip and Herbert Willis. Three oversized folders (OM 291) contain C.M.C. Willis's 1895 diploma from the Massachusetts School of Embalming; a 1931 Indiana State Board of Embalmers License for the Willis Mortuary; and a biographical pictorial of Herbert Willis.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

BOX 1: Cassius M. Clay Willis Collection **FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Biographical Materials
- 2(OM 291, f.1) Massachusetts School of Embalming Diploma
- 3 (VC) Adele K. Willis Davis
- 4 (VC) Family Photographs
- 5 (OM 291, f.2) Herbert Willis Biographical Pictorial
- 6 Willis Mortuary
- 7(VC) Willis Mortuary
- 8 (OM 291, f.3) Indiana State Board

of Embalmers License

9 Afro-American Realty Company

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Willis, Cassius M. C., 1851-1920

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Willis, Cassius M. C., 1851-1920

Willis, Beulah A., 1882-1905

Willis, Herbert C., 1894-

Willis Mortuary (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Afro-American Realty Company (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Funeral homes--Indiana--Indianapolis

Funeral homes--Indiana--Indianapolis--Pictorial works

Undertakers and undertaking--Indiana--Indianapolis

Embalming--Licenses--Indiana--Indianapolis

Afro-Americans--Indiana--Indianapolis

Afro-Americans--Indiana--Indianapolis--Pictorial works

Afro-American business enterprises--Indiana--Indianapolis

Afro-Americans--Indiana--Indianapolis--Societies, etc.

Real estate business--Indiana--Indianapolis--Societies, etc.

Afro-American business enterprises--Indiana--Indianapolis, Societies, etc.

Afro-Americans--Indiana--Indianapolis--Genealogy

END