

Collection #
M 1133
OM 0571
CT 2309–2317

**FLORABELLE WILSON
COLLECTION ADDITION, 1920–2002**

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Processed by

Jessica Frederick
September 2014

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

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 manuscript boxes, 1 flat file folder, 6 OM folders, 4 color photograph boxes, 4 black and white photograph folders, 1 bin 35 mm acetate negatives, 1 large slide box, 1 small slide box, 9 cassette tapes, 8 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1920–2002

PROVENANCE: Crystal Rhodes, Indianapolis, Ind., 2005–2008

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: M 0731

ACCESSION NUMBERS: 2005.0212; 2007.0321; 2008.0126

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Florabelle Williams Wilson (1927–2008) was the daughter of James S. and Hattie Virginia Hollis Williams. She attended the local public schools including School #26 and Crispus Attucks High School. Wilson graduated from high school in 1944. She received a BS in Education from Indiana Central College (now University of Indianapolis) in 1949. She taught at Indianapolis Public School (IPS) #23 for eight years, later returning to school to work on a graduate degree in library science. In 1961, Wilson received an MLS from Indiana University. She married John A. Wilson (27 August 1920–22 June 1990) in 1964.

From 1957 to 1971 Wilson worked as an assistant librarian at the University of Indianapolis. She was director of the library from 1971 until her retirement in 1982. The first full-time African American faculty member at the university, she was also the first black director of an academic library in Indiana. In 1971 she helped plan the interior design and select furnishings for what became the university's Krannert Memorial Library. A past member of the Indiana Library and Historical Board and the Soul People Repertory Board, she served on the Indiana Historical Society Library Committee for nearly two decades. She was a member of the Indianapolis chapter of Zonta International (a women's service organization), Indiana Library Association, and the American Library Association. She was also a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and an elder at Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

While at the University of Indianapolis, Wilson developed the exhibit and slide/lecture presentation "The Black Family in Indianapolis: Invisible Sinew." She was a contributor to other exhibits created during the 1980s including "This Far by Faith: Black Hoosier Heritage," edited by Emma Lou Thornbrough and "Bury Me in a Free Land," developed by Gwendolyn Crenshaw. Wilson also mounted exhibits in conjunction with her West African travels to Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast. She also traveled to France, England, China, Japan, Hong Kong, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Mexico, and the Caribbean. She presented talks and travelogues to schools, organizations, and historical societies. She created a puppet show titled "Let's Tell the Whole Story" that she used to present African American history programs to public school districts throughout Marion County. She did public service appearances on local television stations, WTTV-4, WFBM-6, WTHR-13, and WISH-8 and Indianapolis area radio stations, WIAN and WGRT.

The recipient of numerous honors, Wilson was named a distinguished alumnus of the University of Indianapolis in 1986 and awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters by the school in 1988. She received service awards from the Indiana Library and Historical Board and the Indiana Library Trustee Association in 1990. In 1993, IPS School #26 presented her with a Career Achievement Award.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Biographical sketch taken from M 0731 Florabelle Williams Wilson Collection, 1910–2001, Indiana Historical Society, written by Wilma L. Gibbs.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection is divided into four series: Black History/Heritage, Indiana Central University, Travel, and Community. Within Black History/Heritage, Indiana Central University, and Community, folders/items are listed in chronological order, with undated folders/items located at the end of each series. Within the Travel series, items are grouped in geographical order as follows: Africa, Asia, Europe, United States, and Other. Within these subgroups, items are listed chronologically.

Series 1: Black History/Heritage consists of items that Wilson collected related to black history and heritage. These items cover a wide range of topics, dealing with family connections, freedom, exhibits, and pride. Wilson would also perform programs that dealt with African American heritage for school groups. Wilson undertook a black history project, during which she conducted several oral history interviews on cassette tape.

Series 2: Indiana Central University contains items mostly from Wilson's time as a librarian at Indiana Central University. The photographs in the series include students, commencement, the library, and retirement parties. Honorary degree materials includes a graduation cap, a news release concerning the recipients, a letter concerning place and time, 2 copies of the program from the May 21 commencement event, a photocopy of the degree, and a letter (and reply) from Norman Merrifield to Gene Sease (president of Indiana Central) about the Black History exhibit with compliments about Wilson.

Series 3: Travel contains a variety of items from Wilson's travels, most of which are photographs and postcards from various locations within Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Series 4: Community is a slightly broader category that encompasses community events, neighborhoods, Wilson's business, and personal correspondence that does not fit into the other categories. Slides from Florabelle's presentations are included at the end of this series.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Black History and Heritage

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Photocopy of Flanner House photograph, ca. 1920.	Box 1, Folder 1
Perry Township Human Relations council, 1925–84.	Box 1, Folder 2
Copy of military photograph and service award, 1955.	Box 1, Folder 3
Sylvia Henricks, "The Story of Acton Camp Ground," <i>Indiana Magazine of History</i> , 1970.	Box 1, Folder 4
Notes on African American families, ICU Black History week programs, 1976–80.	Box 1, Folder 5
Description of Oral History project: Black Indianapolis, 1979.	Box 1, Folder 6
Wilson's genealogy notes, 1980.	Box 1, Folder 7
Mounted newspaper article: "Freedom," <i>Indianapolis Star</i> , Feb. 10, 1980.	OM 0571 Folder 1
Indiana Historical Society Black History project (long-range plans), 1980–84.	Box 1, Folder 8
<i>This Far by Faith</i> , 1982.	Box 1, Folder 9
Showings of <i>This Far by Faith</i> , 1982.	Box 1, Folder 10
<i>This Far by Faith</i> exhibit display board, ca. 1982.	OM 0571 Folder 2
Thank-you letters to Wilson for program presentations at Bunker Hill Elementary School, 1982.	Box 1, Folder 11
Curt Bryan Witcher, <i>A Bibliography of Sources for Black Family History in the Allen County Public Library Genealogy Department</i> , 1983.	Box 1, Folder 12
Lyles Station, 1984–86.	Box 1, Folder 13
Black history newspaper articles, 1984–93.	Box 1, Folder 14

"The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816–1865" newsletter, 1985.	Box 1, Folder 15
Gwendolyn Crenshaw, " <i>Bury Me in a Free Land</i> ": <i>The Abolitionist Movement in Indiana, 1816–1865, an Exhibit</i> catalog, Indiana Historical Bureau, 1986.	Box 1, Folder 16
"Bury Me in a Free Land" exhibit signs, 1986.	OM 0571 Folder 3
Black History celebration at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 1992.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
Flyer: International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in Azania, 1992.	Box 1, Folder 17
<i>Habari</i> (News), 199?.	Box 1, Folder 18
Homemade posters on black history, n.d.	OM 0571 Folder 4
"Freedom Now" poem by Howard Thurman, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 19
Photocopies of historical signs urging African Americans to buy lots in Indianapolis, n.d.	OM 0571 Folder 5
<i>Indianapolis Parks have People Pride</i> (pamphlet, n.d. that details the people for whom 13 Indianapolis parks were named)	Box 1, Folder 20
Kwanzaa Celebration invitation, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 21

Series 2: Indiana Central University

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
ICC Library, 1966.	Slides: Box 1, Slides 1–2
ICU correspondence, 1967–79.	Box 1, Folder 22
Programs, 1970–80.	Box 1, Folder 23
ICU newspaper articles, 1971–84.	Box 1, Folder 24
Postcards address to ICU Library Staff, 1972–74.	Box 1, Folder 25

Brown County Day, 1973, 81, 88.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2
Indiana Central University, 1974–86.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 3
Commencement photographs, 1975–88.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 4
ICU Library Construction, 1976–82.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 5
Construction/transition to new library building, 1977.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 6
ICU Krannert Memorial Library dedication, Sept. 1977.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 7
ICU Krannert Memorial Library, 1977–85.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 8
<i>ICU Alumni News</i> , Spring 1980. [2 copies]	Box 1, Folder 26
People/events at ICU, ca. 1980s.	Photographs: Folder 1
ICU Library black history exhibit, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 9
Organ Recital sign, James P. Lamberson, ICU, Jan. 22, 1982.	OM 0571 Folder 6
Retirement parties, 1982–86.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 10
Annual library reception, 1983.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 11
Wilson letter of retirement to ICU, May 21, 1984.	Box 1, Folder 27
Honorary degree materials, May 1988.	Box 2, Folder 1
Square graduation cap from presentation of Honorary Doctor of Letters degree to Florabelle Wilson by University of Indianapolis, May 12, 1988.	Artifact: 2007.0321
Class of '49 45th reunion, 1994.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 12

Note cards with names of ICU graduates/students, ca. 2002.	Box 2, Folder 2
Indiana Central "Mrs. Wilson" hard hat, n.d.	Artifact: 2007.0321
Imagining the Transformed Central Library informational pamphlet, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 3

Series 3: Travel

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

Africa

Postcards, Africa trip, 1981.	Box 2, Folder 4
Travel guides, Africa trip, 1981.	Box 2, Folder 5
Memo book pages, account from Africa trip, 1981.	Box 2, Folder 6
Itinerary: American Forum for International Study–Africa, 1981.	Box 2, Folder 7
Hotel receipt, Africa trip, 1981.	Box 2, Folder 8
Abidjan, Ghana, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 13
Caycaar, Senegal, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 14
Dakar, Senegal, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 15
Ghana, Togo, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 16
Goree, Senegal, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 17
Ife, Nigeria, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 18
Nigeria, Togo, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 1
University of Ibaden, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 2

Various locations, Africa trip, 1981.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 3
West Africa trip, 1981.	Slides: Box 1, Slides 3–105
Africa trip (group shots), 1981.	35 mm Negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 1
Africa trip (group shots), 1981.	35 mm Negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 2
Africa trip (plane shots), 1981.	35 mm Negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 3
Africa trip (outdoor shots), 1981.	35 mm Negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 4
Africa trip (buildings), 1981.	35 mm Negatives: Bin 1, Envelope 5
Jazz: Goree Island, Dakar, Senegal, Oct. 12, 1985.	CT 2309
Asia	
Postcards, Asia trip, 1985.	Box 2, Folder 9
Jinling Hotel stationary, China trip, 1985.	Box 2, Folder 10
Letters from Seminars International, Inc., China trip, 1985.	Box 2, Folder 11
Maps/pamphlets, Asia trip, ca. 1985.	Box 2, Folder 12
Programs/pamphlets, China trip, 1985.	Box 2, Folder 13
China, Japan, Hong Kong, 1985. Folder 1 of 3.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 4
China, Japan, Hong Kong, 1985. Folder 2 of 3.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 5
China, Japan, Hong Kong, 1984. Folder 3 of 3.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 6
China, 1985.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 7

Europe

Letter concerning funding from ICU for Florabelle's England trip, 1979.	Box 2, Folder 14
Tower of London, 1979.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 8
England and France, 1979. Folder 1 of 4.	Color Photographs: Box 2, Folder 9
England and France, 1979. Folder 2 of 4.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 1
England and France, 1979. Folder 3 of 4.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 2
England and France, 1979. Folder 4 of 4.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 3
France, 1979. Folder 1 of 2.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 4
France, 1979. Folder 2 of 2.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 5
France, 1984.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 6
Paris, France with Miss Bonnie, 1984.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 7
Folies Bergere program, France trip, 1984.	Box 2, Folder 15
Postcards, Finland trip, 1990.	Box 3, Folder 1
Notebook, Finland trip, 1990.	Box 3, Folder 2
Finland, 1990.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 8
Russian cities, 1990.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 9
Booklets and postcards, England trip, n.d. Folder 1 of 2.	Box 3, Folder 3

Booklets and postcards, England trip, n.d. Folder 2 of 2.	Box 3, Folder 4
Booklets, France trip, n.d.	Box 3, Folder 5
Postcards/sights, Russia trip, n.d.	Box 3, Folder 6
Stamps, Norway, n.d.	Box 3, Folder 7
Postcards and book, Spain trip, n.d.	Box 3, Folder 8
United States	
Washington D.C., 1969.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 10
New Orleans, ca. 1970s.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 11
Niagara Falls, ca. 1970s.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 12
New York, 1973.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 13
D.C. and Arlington, 1973.	Color Photographs: Box 3, Folder 14
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1974.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 1
Mackinac Island, 1977.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 2
Bus trip to California, 1979.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 3
Mackinac Island, 1980.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 4
Wared Fair, Knoxville, Tenn., 1982.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 5
Hawaii, 1984.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 6
Postcards, Hawaii Trip, 1984.	Box 4, Folder 1

Miami, Florida, 1984.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 7
Anchorage, Alaska, 1985.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 8
New Harmony, Ind., 1986.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 9
Atlanta, Georgia, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 10
Souvenir folders and postcard concerning MLK Jr., n.d.	Box 4, Folder 2
Miscellaneous postcards (political, travel), n.d.	Box 4, Folder 3
Other	
Bahamas Cruise, 1974.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 11
Postcards, Caribbean trip, ca. 1986.	Box 4, Folder 4
Bahamas, 1986.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 12
Travel postcard written by Florabelle Wilson to John Wilson, 1989.	Box 4, Folder 5
Islands Cruise, 1989.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 13
Unidentified locations, n.d.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 14

Series 4: Community

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
<i>Attucks</i> (yearbook), 1944.	Box 4, Folder 6
Beta Phi Mu membership certificate, 1961.	Box 4, Folder 7
Postcards addressed to Florabelle Wilson, 1972–96.	Box 4, Folder 8
Miscellaneous/unidentified photographs, 1973–84.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 15

"Celebrities," 1974–89.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 16
Receipt for Florabelle Wilson gift to NAACP, 1974.	Box 4, Folder 9
Various photographs, 1974–80. (most of Wilson with various others)	Photographs: Folder 2
Calendar, 1979.	Box 4, Folder 10
Oral History Seminar, 1979–81. (oral history methods, interviewee deeds of gift, notes from interviews)	Box 4, Folder 11
Photograph postcards from Marvin and Sylvia, 1979–82.	Photographs: Folder 3
Black History Project interview: Dotson, Mrs. Miriam (Miller), Jan. 31, 1980.	CT 2310
Black History Project interview: James, Mrs. Mattie (Smith), Jan. 21, 1980.	CT 2311
Black History Project interview: Osborne, Mrs. Edna, Mar. 19, 1980.	CT 2312
Black History Project interview: Wagner, Mr. Lanis, Feb. 1, 1980.	CT 2313
Music awards program at Children's Museum, 1980.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 17
"Outstanding Families–Southside" list, 1980. (list Wilson made, possibly for oral history interviews)	Box 4, Folder 12
Wilson's creative work, ca. 1980s.	Box 4, Folder 13
Correspondence about Indiana Avenue, Street of Dreams, 1981.	Box 4, Folder 14
People and Events, 1981–93. (events that Wilson was involved with, various photos of people)	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 18
Elderhostel, 1982.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 19
Florabelle Wilson's Florida friends, 1982.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 20

Wilma Rudolph on Channel 4 program, 1983.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 21
Black History Project cards detailing oral history interviewees, 1983–87.	Box 4, Folder 15
"Conversations" hosted by Florabelle Wilson, Guest: Cassie Sworn, Oct. 30, 1985.	CT 2314
Notebook pages about an overheard conversation and African American families, 1987 and 2002.	Box 4, Folder 16
Awards/certificates presented to Wilson by ABWA and Indiana Library Association, 1988.	Box 4, Folder 17
Mignon Wyatt, Nov. 8, 1988.	CT 2315
Letter from Cora Brinkley, 1994.	Box 4, Folder 18
Photographs of various people sent to Wilson by Cora Brinkley, 1994.	Color Photographs: Box 4, Folder 22
Mari Evans Literary Cafe, 1997.	Box 4, Folder 19
Mari Evans Literary Cafe bookmark, 1997.	Artifact: 2007.0321
Timeline from 1830–1998 of near Westside Indianapolis neighborhood, 1998.	Box 4, Folder 20
Monument Circle book entry, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 21
Notes with people's names and stories, underground railroad, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 22
Every Member Canvass program builder, n.d. (about programs at St. John's Missionary Baptist Church)	Box 4, Folder 23
Karen Presley, "Renovation Celebration at Walker Urban Life Center," n.d.	Box 4, Folder 24
Wilson's artwork and calligraphy business, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 25
Beta Phi Mu members(?), n.d.	Photographs: Folder 4
Explanation of Florabelle Wilson's presentations and newspaper article about school program, n.d.	Box 4, Folder 26

Five puppets from Florabelle Wilson's "Let's Tell the Whole Story" presentation, n.d.

Artifact: 2007.0321

Florabelle Wilson presents Brown Bag Puppet Theater with the Chocolate Chip Players, n.d.

Flat File: FF 15a
Folder 1

Concert for the Creator, Isaiah Jones (Presby. Minister) and Eli Wilson, Jr., n.d.

CT 2316

Tessie Hugo [?], concert, n.d.

CT 2317

Slides from Florabelle Wilson's presentations:

Unidentified slides–Africa trip?, 1981.

Slides:
Box 1, Slides 106–109

Unidentified slides–Africa trip, Ruth Lily Center, 1983.

Slides:
Box 1, Slides 110–130

Unidentified slides–Africa trip?, 1983.

Slides:
Box 1, Slides 131–151

Unidentified slides–Africa trip?, 1983.

Slides:
Box 1, Slides 152–174

Unidentified slides–trip to Europe?, 1984.

Slides:
Box 1, Slides 175–214

Slides: "Africa," "Black family/South Side," 1966–68.

Slides:
Box 1, Slides 215–325

"Black Elders," 1981.

Slides:
Box 2, Slides 1–13

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 1133).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.