

Collection #
BV 4985–86

**INDIANAPOLIS ASYLUM FOR FRIENDLESS
COLORED CHILDREN
ADDITION, 1869–1958**

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 bound volumes
COLLECTION DATES:	1869–1958
PROVENANCE:	Lilly Library, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, 2001.
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:	M 0165
ACCESSION NUMBER:	2001.0794
NOTES:	This accession also contained M 1146, which was separated from this collection.

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 African American 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 funding 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 African Americans 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 Asylum's closing balance of \$4,304.22 became the basis of a Friends Educational Fund for Negroes, a scholarship fund for black students administered by the First Friends Meeting of Indianapolis.

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:

Sketch taken from M 0165 Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children Records, 1870–1922, Indiana Historical Society.

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

The spine on BV 4985 reads: "Friends Educational Fund for Negroes- Minutes, 1896-1956." The great majority of the minutes in this volume are from the Board of the Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children; however, in 1955 the meeting minutes switch from the Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children Board to the Friends Educational Fund for Negroes Board, continuing through 1956. In addition to Board meeting minutes, the volume contains financial updates and reports of amendments.

BV 4986 is titled: "Friends Educational Fund for Negroes- Audit Reports, Legal Papers, Correspondence, through 1956." Again, all papers concern the Indianapolis Asylum for Friendless Colored Children until 1955, when the papers switch to the Friends Educational Fund for Negroes. This volume contains legal papers, historical data on the Asylum, audit reports, and correspondence.

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Minutes, Board of Directors, 1869–1956.

Audit Reports, Legal Papers, and Correspondence,
1927–58.

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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, BV 4985).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.