

VIRTEA DOWNEY COLLECTION, 1913-1985

Collection #s:

M 511

BV 2497-98

OM 333

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Processed by:
Wilma L. Gibbs
11 August 1995

USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1913-1985; Bulk 1970-1985

PROVENANCE: Virtea Downey, 3601 N. Capitol Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46208

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:

OTHER FINDING AIDS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 95.0623X

NOTES: The Virtea Downey Collection was donated during the Black Women in the Middle West Project.

The Black Women in the Middle West Project was a collecting effort to gather primary source materials of African-American women in Illinois and Indiana. The project, spearheaded by Darlene Clark Hine and Patrick Bidelman at Purdue University, was conducted in three phases from 1977-1985. Project records are located at five repositories

within the two states including the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) [also houses the project's administrative records], Calumet Regional Archives, and the Northern Indiana Historical Society in Indiana and the Chicago Historical Society and the Illinois State Historical Society in Illinois. (Although the implementation phase of the project was from 1984-1985, several of the collections were donated to IHS in 1986).

Additional information about the project is contained in *The Black Women in the Middle West Project: A Comprehensive Resource Guide, Illinois and Indiana* (E185.6 .B53 1986), edited by Hine and Bidelman, et. al. and Wilma L. Gibbs's article, "In Retrospect: The Black Women in the Middle Project at the Indiana Historical Society," *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays from Black History News & Notes* (E185.93 .I4 B52 1993).

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Virtea Maletta Washington Downey (9 August 1913-), the daughter of Fred and Anna Pauline Washington was born in Indianapolis. She is the widow of Cassie Downey, an electrical mechanic from Earl, Arkansas. Two children were born of this union.

Downey completed studies at Tennessee State Normal College, Lewis Business College, and Butler University. In 1981, she ended a 25-year teaching career with the Indianapolis Public Schools. She, along with fellow schoolteacher, Shirley Herd, and under the auspices of the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. Indianapolis Section helped to launch the Black Women in the Middle West Project (see page 1).

The recipient of numerous awards, Downey has several organizational affiliations including Church Women United, the Church Federation of Indianapolis, Masonic Order of the Eastern Star, and Sigma Gamma Rho sorority. In 1988, Downey and Herd were honored by the Midwest Archives Conference for their work with Darlene Clark Hine and the Black Women in the Middle West Project.

Source: Materials in the collection.

Darlene Clark Hine, Patrick Bidelman, et. al., *The Black Women in the Middle West Project: A Comprehensive Resource Guide, Illinois and Indiana* (E185.6 .B53 1986).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Virtea Downey Collection consists of .5 manuscript box, one oversize manuscript, and two bound volumes. Downey collected the materials as part of her work with the Black Women in the Middle West Project. As the church relations consultant, she gathered program booklets, histories, and newsletters relating to several churches and religious organizations in Indianapolis. Downey's family were longtime members of Mount Paran Baptist Church. Her mother, Anna Pauline Washington, was a founder of the church's True Vine Missionary Circle. The collection contains a record book (BV 2497, 1924-1929) that includes minutes and financial data of the missionary circle and a 50th anniversary book (BV 2498, 1956) of the church.

There are program booklets (folders 3-6) depicting the activities of the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, National Council of Negro Women, Inc. Indianapolis Section, religious organizations, and several Indianapolis churches including Saint Philips Episcopal (1980), Second Baptist (1982), and Metropolitan Baptist (1983). Of special note are the 1913 official proceedings of the 16th annual session of the Indiana Baptist Woman's Home Foreign Missionary Convention and the 1984 Indiana annual conference booklet of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church contained in folder 4. The AMEZ conference booklet includes short histories of member churches in Indianapolis and Evansville.

Folder 7 contains newsletters from several churches and church organizations. Downey collected biographical and historical information about individuals and organizations--along with miscellaneous documents (folders 8-11). There are histories, mostly of Indianapolis institutions, including Allen Chapel AMEZ Church and its Flora Grant Missionary Society; City Hospital (now Wishard) and Flower Mission; Lewis Business College, originally located in Indianapolis;

Flanner Guild; and Lost Creek Baptist Church in Terre Haute. The biographical sketches (folder 9) and obituaries (folder 12) relate, chiefly, to local individuals with various religious affiliations. There are several miscellaneous newsclippings (folder 13) including information about Weaver Settlement in Grant County and slum clearance in Indianapolis. Photographs in the collection are in folder 15. Subjects include Anna Pauline Washington, Metropolitan Baptist Church Choir, Mount Paran Baptist Church Vacation Bible School, Union Baptist Church Jubilee Chorus, Baptist ministers and their wives.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

BOX 1: Mt. Paran Baptist Church records, Programs, Newsletters, Histories, Obituaries **FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 (BV 2497) True Vine Missionary Circle Record Book, 1924-1929
 - 2 (BV 2498) Mount Paran Baptist Church 50th Anniversary Book, 1956
 - 3 Program Booklets, 1946-1984
 - 4 Program Booklets of Religious Organizations, 1913-1985
 - 5 Church Program Booklets, ca. 1920-1976
 - 6 Church Program Booklets, 1980s, n.d.
 - 7 Religious Newsletters, 1921-1983
 - 8 Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs Treasurer's Report, 1969-1970
 - 9 Biographical Sketches
 - 10 (OM 333) Crispus Attucks High School Diploma, 1931 (Audrey Pierson)
 - 11 Organizational histories
 - 12 Obituaries
 - 13 Newsclippings
 - 14 Photocopied Visuals
 - 15 (VC) Miscellaneous Photographs (Nine b/w photographs. Subjects include: Anna Pauline Washington, church choirs, and various church groups.)
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CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Downey, Virtea Washington, 1913-

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Downey, Virtea Washington, 1913-

Black Women in the Middle West Project

National Council of Negro Women. Indianapolis Section

Indiana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs
Mount Paran Baptist Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)
Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)
Metropolitan Baptist Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)
Saint Philip's Episcopal Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)
Second Baptist Church (Indianapolis, Ind.)
Lost Creek Baptist Church (Terre Haute, Ind.)
African Methodist Episcopal Church--Indiana
Lewis Business College
Afro-American women--Indiana--Indianapolis
Churches--Indiana--Indianapolis
Afro-Americans--Indiana--Indianapolis--Religion
Afro-Americans--Indiana--Indianapolis--Charities
Afro-American women--Indiana--Indianapolis--Societies, etc.
Women and religion--Indiana--Indianapolis
Women in church work--Indiana--Indianapolis
Church charities--Indiana--Indianapolis
Afro-American Baptists--Indiana--Indianapolis
Church newsletters--Indiana--Indianapolis
Church bulletins--Indiana--Indianapolis
Weaver Settlement (Ind.)
Indianapolis (Ind.)--Church history

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