

Collection #  
P 0266  
BV 3559

**O. JAMES FOX  
COLLECTION, 1945–2002**

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7 November 2002  
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May 2007

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Indiana Historical Society  
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 box of photographs, 4 OVA photograph boxes, 1 OVA box of color photographs, 12 color slides, 6 color negatives, 1 bound volume

COLLECTION DATES: 1945–2002

PROVENANCE: O. James Fox, 2191 Atkins Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio.

RESTRICTIONS: Slides and negatives may be viewed with assistance of library staff.

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REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society. Please credit photographs and poems to O. James Fox.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1988. 0359, 1990.0133, 2000.0243, 2002.0686, 2003.0021

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

O. (Oscar) James Fox was born 2 October 1914 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and raised in Lakewood, Ohio. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Miami University in 1937 and a master's degree in education at Western Reserve University, Cleveland, in 1964.

Fox arrived in Indianapolis in 1945 as a volunteer with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). He was assigned to an urban work camp, part of Flanner House, a community center on the near west side of the city. Flanner House provided childcare, recreation, crafts and vocational training to Indianapolis' African-American community. Fox would later work for Flanner House and the Marion County Health Department.

Fox was a freelance journalist before World War II. One of his first jobs in Indianapolis was to photo document the slum area of the near west side of the city. Fox became a familiar figure to the families living in the near west side neighborhood. This area was bordered by the Central Canal and Sixteenth Street, and included Indiana Avenue. Indiana Avenue was the cultural and commercial center for the African-American community until the early 1960s. Fox photographed buildings, street scenes, children, and families over a period dating from 1945 to circa 1960. He also wrote poetry associated with the photographs and his experiences living in an urban neighborhood.

In 2000 the Indiana Historical Society exhibited a series of Fox's photographs as a gallery show, *Gone But Not Forgotten*.

### Sources:

Correspondence, O. James Fox to Wilma L. Gibbs, 4 September 1999. Wilma L. Gibbs: Office Files.

*Gone But Not Forgotten, Photo Poems by O. James Fox*. Introduction by Wilma L. Gibbs. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2000. Pamphlet Q Collection: F534.I55 F72 2000.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection includes black-and-white and color photographs and color slides made by O. James Fox between 1945 and circa 1960. The photographs depict scenes of African-American families, children, and the urban environment of the near west side of Indianapolis. The children were often photographed playing in yards, alleys, or along the Central Canal. Most photographs include at least one individual, sometimes at a distance or visible in a shadow. Neighborhood scenes, particularly those depicted in the color photographs, include views of Indiana Avenue. Other color photographs document activities in the Flanner House Cannery and a party involving women and children.

Other images related to Flanner House consist of eleven photocopied items. The images document construction of homes financed by Flanner House and family scenes. Families depicted include the Cleo Blackburn family. One image shows the office staff at Flanner House.

Photographs from this collection were used in a gallery show, *Gone But Not Forgotten*, at the Indiana Historical Society in 2000. Visitors identified a number of people and places in the photographs. Folder 15 in Box 1 photographs contains photocopies of identified images. These copies were made from images printed in the exhibit publication, also titled *Gone But Not Forgotten*.

Also included are nine individual poems and a book of poetry written by Fox. The individual poems were hung with images used in the 2000 exhibit. These pieces were written following his period of residence in Indianapolis. The book of poetry, *Falling Leaves*, contains non-Indiana images, including street scenes and landscapes in Fox's native Ohio.

## SERIES CONTENTS

### Series 1: Photographs, 1945–circa 1960

#### CONTENTS

[Old Man with Pipe]

[Clergyman in front of mural]

Dr. Walter Maddux

[Girls Dancing]

[Boys Boxing]

[Scenes Along the Canal]

[Scenes Along the Canal]

[Neighborhood Scenes] (1 of 3)

[Neighborhood Scenes] (2 of 3)

[Neighborhood Scenes] (3 of 3)

[Neighborhood Scenes] (1 of 2)

[Neighborhood Scenes] (2 of 2)

Indiana Avenue, 7 May 1956 (1 of 2)

Indiana Avenue, 7 May 1956 (2 of 2)

#### CONTAINER

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 3

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 6

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 7

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 8

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 3

OVA Color Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

OVA Color Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

[Scenes at a Party]	OVA Color Photographs: Box 1, Folder 3
[Scenes at a Party Negatives]	4x5 Color Polyester Negatives: 1-6
[Portraits of Children] (1 of 3)	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 9
[Portraits of Children] (2 of 3)	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 10
[Portraits of Children] (3 of 3)	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 11
[Portraits of Children] (1 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 4
[Portraits of Children] (2 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 5
[Portraits of Children] (3 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 6
[Portraits of Teenagers]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 12
[Portraits of Teenagers] (1 of 4)	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 7
[Portraits of Teenagers] (2 of 4)	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 8
[Portraits of Teenagers] (3 of 4)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 1
[Portraits of Teenagers] (4 of 4)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 2
[Group Portraits]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 13
[Group Portraits] (1 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 3
[Group Portraits] (2 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 4

[Group Portraits] (3 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 5
[Portraits of Young Women] (1 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 6
[Portraits of Young Women] (2 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 7
[Portraits of Young Women] (2 of 3)	OVA Photographs: Box 2, Folder 8
[Indiana Dentists]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 15
People's Revelation Spiritual Temple exterior (photocopy) [Office, Flanner House] (photocopy) [Children in costumes] (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 1
The Builder (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 2
In the Shop (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 3
Taking Shape (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 4
Cutting Stone (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 5
Masonry Work (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 6
Ready to Move In (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 7
A Happy Home (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 8
Safe When Nighttime Comes (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 9
Ready to Read (photocopy)	OVA Photographs: Box 3, Folder 10

Good Night Prayers (photocopy)

OVA Photographs:  
Box 3, Folder 11

Cleo Blackburn Shows his Project to Fellow Ministers  
(photocopy)

OVA Photographs:  
Box 3, Folder 12

## **Series 2: Color Slides, Flannery House Cannery, 1956**

### CONTENTS

12 color slides

### CONTAINER

Slide Storage:  
Slide bin 1

## **Series 3: Exhibit Photographs, 1945–Circa 1960**

### CONTENTS

Star Reaching

### CONTAINER

OVA Color Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

A Flower Grows on Missouri Street

OVA Color Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

The Canal, 1948 [Boys Fishing]

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 1

Something of Value, 1946 [Girl with Doll]

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 2

Fishing for Crayfish, 1946

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 3

Newly Beloved, 1951 [Mother and Child]

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 4

106<sup>th</sup> Summer, 1947 [Old Woman]

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 5

The Garden Party, 1945

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 6

Carnival, 1945 [Night Shot of Ferris Wheel]

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 7

Alllll Rrrright [Three Boys at 12<sup>th</sup> Street Crossing]

OVA Photographs:  
Box 4, Item 8



Twin, 1945	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 9
Anniversary, 1950 [Party with Women, Children and Maid]	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 10
Spring Festival, 1948 [Girls Dancing as Flowers]	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 11
Winter Day II, 1946	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 12
Blizzard, 1947	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 13
12 <sup>th</sup> Street Crossing, 1946	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 14
The World's A Stage, 1946 [Children in Shadow, Clothes Line in Yard]	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 15
Emergency Run, 1947 [Old Fire Truck and Curious Onlookers]	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 16
Elk's Parade, 1952 [On Indiana Avenue]	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 17
Ike Takes a Beach Head, Indiana Avenue, 1952	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 18
Diz to Play the Sunset, 1949	OVA Photographs: Box 4, Item 19

**Series 4: Canal Photo Poems, 1987**

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
"Another Day, Another People"	BV 3559
"A Flower Grows on Missouri Street"	BV 3559
"Star Reaching"	BV 3559
"View from a Bicycle"	BV 3559
"Spring Will Come"	BV 3559

“I Want to be Loved”	BV 3559
“The Avenue as a Magician”	BV 3559
“Children’s Party”	BV 3559
“Now That Time Has Had It’s Say”	BV 3559

**Series 5: Printed Material**

CONTENTS

[Exhibition, Background and Identification]

Fox, O. James, *Falling Leaves*. Lakewood, Ohio:  
Rocket Stories, 2000.

CONTAINER

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 14

BV 3559

## 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, P 0266).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.