

Collection #  
P 0233

**EMMETT I. BROWN, JR.  
COLLECTION, CA. 1940–1959**

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Processed by

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Indiana Historical Society  
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 box of photographs 1 box of 4x5 acetate negatives 1 box of 5x7 acetate negatives
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 1940–1959
PROVENANCE:	Alta Jean Bellinger, 1980
RESTRICTIONS:	Negatives are in cold storage and require advance notification for viewing. They may be viewed only with the assistance of Library staff.
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RELATED HOLDINGS:	
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1980.0109
NOTES:	

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emmett I. Brown (1918–1959) was born in Indianapolis and educated at Tennessee A. and I. University (now Tennessee State University) at Nashville, where he was chaplain of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. In the late 1940's he opened his photography shop in the Hoosier capitol, "The Brown Show Case," at 808 Indiana Avenue. A strategic site at the time, it was the entertainment corridor of the Avenue. There Brown succeeded in recording images of the great and near-great musicians and celebrities who visited Indianapolis and Indiana Avenue.

In the mid-1950's Brown and his family moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he assumed editorial duties for *Sepia Frame* magazine, a photo journal which depicted the achievements of African-Americans—perhaps best described as "a first cousin" to *Ebony* magazine. After a brief spell with *Sepia*, the Hoosier-born Brown returned to Indianapolis in 1956, established his home at 3518 Schofield Ave., south of the State Fairgrounds, and assumed duties as Associate Pastor of the Martindale Ave. Church of Christ where his father served as the Senior Pastor. Still a photographer at heart, the bespectacled Brown established a new studio at Martindale and 19<sup>th</sup> streets where he concentrated on portrait and freelance photography. Open-heart surgery (1958) probably contributed to his death the following year on September 9, at the local General Hospital. Interment followed in Floral Park Cemetery, Indianapolis, on the city's west side. His wife, Alta Jean, two sons and two daughters survived him.

Indiana Avenue began to take shape at the close of the Civil War. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Southern migrants moved into the area, whites moved out. The area developed its own government and ethos, even after Prohibition (1919) and the stock market crash a decade later. Most of the Avenue's residents held unskilled jobs, but there were also a number of professionals and entrepreneurs. Whatever the class structure, residents looked with increasing pride at what they saw along the strip, an area which increasingly took on a life of its own with its residential units, restaurants, saloons, night clubs, groceries, barber and hair stylists, tailors, morticians, as well as physicians and lawyers, and one photographer—Emmett I. Brown.

Sources:

Clipping Files: Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis

Feather, Leonard and Ira Gitler, *Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

*Indianapolis News*, September 5, 1969; 6:1; *Indianapolis Star*, September 11, 1959; 13:3

Kirchner, Bill, *Oxford Companion to Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains mostly negatives, with a few original and copy photographs made by African American photographer Emmett I. Brown Jr., taken between ca. 1940 and 1959.

Researchers will find images of the great and near-great in jazz music, including Willis Dyer, Hammond organ artist and Buddy Parker and his tenor sax; Milt Buckner, the piano and organ wizard; Jimmy Cleveland, the trombone virtuoso who played with Lionel Hampton and recorded with Dizzy Gillespie; Les Fisher, the Michigan born drummer who later beat out the rhythms with Count Basie and who credited his father for his drumming skills and his mother for his vocal and composing acumen (Fisher played at George's Bar, next door to "Brown's Show Case" shop); the Hampton Sisters, products of Indianapolis' own jazz milieu; and the Ohio-born Mills Brothers (plus their father, John).

In addition to musicians, Brown's collection also includes images of Brown family members, local churches, and notable people in the African American community. There are images of Dr. Francis Hummons, a graduate of DePauw University and later a well known physician in Indianapolis; Mercer Mance a pioneer black judge; T.R. Murff, an itinerant evangelist. There are also images of nationally known boxers, Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson (born Walker Smith, Jr.).

The collection was organized by the processors into series by general subjects and the negatives and photographs were numbered to maintain the order. The numbers are listed in square brackets in the Contents section of the collection guide with names and brief descriptions.

Series 1: Brown Showcase and Brown family

Series 2: Churches and Church Groups

Series 3: Local Businesses and People

Series 4: George's Bar, Celebrities, and Musicians

## SERIES CONTENTS

### Series 1: Brown Showcase and Brown Family

#### CONTENTS

[1] "The Brown Show Case" on Indiana Avenue, ca. 1950, exterior view next door to "George's Bar"

[2] "The Brown Show Case" on Indiana Avenue, ca. 1950, exterior view, close up of front window

[3] Brown family member, man standing beside Hudson automobile, 1950

[4] Brown family, man and woman standing beside Chevrolet automobile, 1950 [Emmett and Jean?]

[5] Brown family, 2 men and woman standing beside Chevrolet and Hudson automobiles, 1950 [Emmett and Jean?]

[6] Brown Showcase dedication, 1665 Martindale Ave., Jas. L. Cummings and group in front of building, 5/31/59 [Emmett wearing glasses?]

[7] "The Brown Showcase"  
1665 Martindale Ave.  
exterior view

[8] "The Brown Showcase"  
1665 Martindale Ave., exterior view

[9] "The Brown Showcase" dedication,  
1665 Martindale Ave.,  
interior view with Jas. L. Cummings, 5/31/59  
[Emmett in glasses?]

[10] [11] "The Brown Showcase"  
reception area with Jean Brown

#### CONTAINER

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

5x7 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

5x7 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[12] [13] "The Brown Showcase" camera equipment	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 1
	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[14] [15] [16] "The Brown Showcase" interior view through door of reception area, photos on display	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[17] [Jean Brown? seated in chair]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[18] Dr. E. I. Brown and Dr. P.L. Brown's (D.D.S.) office exterior view	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[19] Dr. E. I. Brown and Dr. P.L. Brown's (D.D.S.) office exterior view with two Cadillac's	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[20] Dr. E. I. Brown and Dr. P.L. Brown's (D.D.S.) 1322 E. 24 <sup>th</sup> St. office exterior	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[21] [Dr. E. I. Brown (or Dr. P.L. Brown) in dental office scene with patient ]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[22] Dr. E. I. Brown (or Dr. P.L. Brown) in 1322 E. 24 <sup>th</sup> St. dental office, scene with patient	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[23] Dr. J. C. Brown dental office, scene at desk	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[24] Dr. J. C. Brown office, scene with dental chair	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1

## **Series 2: Churches and Church Groups**

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[announcement in her church group]  
01/30/1959

[26] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown  
[procession down church isle] 01/30/1959

[27] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown  
[Opening ] 01/30/1959

### **CONTAINER**

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[28] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown in front of group] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[29] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown [in front, listening to pastor] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[30] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown [two women approaching front] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[31] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown [woman presenting] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[32] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown [waiting for the next speaker] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[33] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown [woman presenting] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[34] This is your life Mrs. Alberta S. Brown [woman with large handbag approaches to speak] 01/30/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[35] Central Seminary (Past degrees) [eight people in cap and gown]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[36] Chantileer Choral Ensemble [group on church steps] 06/07/1959	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[37] Church of Christ, church building	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[38] Church of God Elder Eli Lewis [congregation in front of church building]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[39] Church of the Living God 3908 Rookwood, July, 1954 [congregation inside church]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[40] Church of the Living God, Pastor Patterson	5x7 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[41] Martindale Ave. Church, proposed building	5x7 Acetate Negatives: Box 1

[42] Evangelist Murff [tent scene]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2
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[43] Evangelist Murff [from the back of tent]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[44] Evangelist Murff [with staff group in tent]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[45] Elder Murff [with choir group in tent]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[46] Elder Murff [with group in tent]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[47] Elder Murff [with congregation in tent]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[48] Elder Murff [with congregation in tent]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[49] Tabernacle, 443 Blake, T.R. Murff, Minister	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[49a] Tabernacle, 443 Blake, T.R. Murff, Minister [Murff's face superimposed on church image]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2
[50] St. John's Church Group [woman at microphone singing]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[51] St. John's Church Group [eight men behind table]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[52] St. John's Church Trustees [eight men around table – two seated]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[53] St. John's Church Group [congregation in church]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[54] St. John's Church Women's Chorus	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[55] St. John's Church Choir	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1



[56] St. John's Church Group [6 women at a table]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[57] St. John's Church Ushers [10 women standing]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[58] St. John's Church Missionary Group [seven women at table]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[59] St. John's Church Treasurer [3 people at desk]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[60] St. John's Church Sisters of Help [3 women attending a sick child]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[61] St. John's Church Group [ten women at table]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[62] St. John's Church Group (Parsonage) Rev. H.A. Perry, 1669 Columbus Ave. [group of men women and children]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[63] St. John's Church Group [speaker at the pulpit] 1669 Columbus Ave	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2
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### **Series 3: Local Businesses and People**

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- [66] Patrick Chavis [four men behind desk]
- [67] Patrick Chavis [group – swearing in scene]
- [68] Patrick Chavis [two men swearing in scene]

#### **CONTAINER**

- 4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1
- 4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1
- 4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

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[70] Hellen (Fox) Walker [people around piano] 10/20/1952	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[71] The Cottage House bar [man in front of building]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[72] Bill McClure's Crosstown Used Car Lot	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[73] National Livestock & Meat Bd. [meeting or conference – from back of auditorium]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[74] National Livestock & Meat Bd. [meeting or conference - from front of auditorium]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[75] Vogue Beauty Supplies [show display]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
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[83] Dr. Frances D. Hummons [portrait] Dec. 1953	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 3
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[84] Hummons birthday party [large group of adults and children]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
[85] Mercer Mance [swearing in as judge]	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 3
	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1
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[88] [89] Xmas Card Display [elderly couple in living room]	4x5 Acetate Negatives: Box 1

[90] [91] [92] [Snow cone vendor, ca. 1950]  
[small negatives]

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[93] [94] [95] [96] [Downtown Indianapolis: Federal  
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4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

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##### **CONTENTS**

[97] George's Bar [Interior]

##### **CONTAINER**

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Box 1, Folder 4

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[98] Milt Buckner Group  
[musicians and female singer]

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[99] Milt Buckner with fans

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

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[100] Milt Buckner Trio

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Box 1, Folder 4

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
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Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

- [102] Jimmy Coe, David Oliver, on stage  
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Box 1, Folder 4  
  
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4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1
- [104] Jimmy Sharpe Presents ...Willis B. Dyer at the Hammond [group on stage, Dyer on keyboard]  
Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4  
  
4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1
- [105] Willis B. Dyer [group on stage, Buddy Parker on sax, Dyer on keyboard, bass player unidentified]  
Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4  
  
4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
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Box 1, Folder 4  
  
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Box 1
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Box 1, Folder 4  
  
4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1
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- [109] Les (Count) Fisher on drums at George's Bar, Jan. 1951  
Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5  
  
4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
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[110] Les (Count) Fisher on drums at George's Bar  
Jan. 1951

Photographs:  
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4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

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Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

5x7 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[113] Hampton Sisters, April 1954

Photographs:  
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5x7 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[114] Wynonie Harris singing on stage

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Box 1

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Joe Louis on golf course

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Box 1

[121] (Mills Bros.) Leo Lessen  
11/02/1952

Photographs:  
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Box 1

[123] Buddy Parker Composite

Photograph:  
Box 1, Folder 5

5x7 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[124] Sugar Ray Robinson  
[wearing a robe and shaking hands with fan]  
03/01/1953

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[125] [126] [127] [128] [129] 130]  
Sugar Ray Robinson  
[wearing robe and posing with fans] 03/01/1953

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[131] [132] [133] Sugar Ray Robinson  
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03/01/1953

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[134] [135] Sugar Ray Robinson  
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03/01/1953

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[136] Silvertone Jubilairs, President: Wallace Sanders  
01/09/1954, 1302 Roosevelt?

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[137] Les "Bear" Taylor, portrait with saxophone

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[138] Will & Will Combo, Nov. 1953  
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Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

5x7 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1

[139] [unidentified musician seated with two women]

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 5

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
Box 1