

Collection #  
P 0736  
DVD 1500–1504

**FLANNER HOUSE  
SLIDES AND AUDIO, CA. 1969–2013**

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Processed by

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 2 35mm slide boxes, 1 manuscript folder, 5 DVDs

**COLLECTION DATES:** Ca. 1969–2013

**PROVENANCE:** Julie Slaymaker, Indianapolis, IN

**RESTRICTIONS:** Slides and negatives in cold storage need at least 4 hours to acclimate and must be requested in advance. They may be viewed by appointment only and with the assistance of library staff.

DVD items have files that are stored in the collection folder.  
See library staff for assistance.

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**REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:** Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:** Dora Atkins Blackburn, M0634; Flanner House, M0513; Flanner House Laundry, SC 2692

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2014.0037

**NOTES:**

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

During the settlement movement of the Progressive Era, Flanner Guild (later Flanner House) was established in 1898 by the Charity Organization Society of Indianapolis, a white settlement house. The original property located on Rhode Island Street was donated by reformer and businessman Frank W. Flanner. The organization initially operated under the direction of social worker Sarah Colton Smith and Dr. W.T.B. Williams, with Dr. Harold Morgan assuming responsibility around 1899.

Flanner House provided social services to Indianapolis's large African American population, many of whom had recently migrated from southern states. Racial prejudice and discriminatory practices resulted in a lack of economic opportunity for African Americans in Indianapolis. In response, Flanner House stressed practical, self-reliant solutions to problems of unemployment, poor housing, and lack of health care. Upon its incorporation in 1903, the organization's constitution emphasized "training and moral improvement" as well as the "promotion of social, spiritual, moral and physical welfare" of African Americans.

Early Flanner House programs were often limited by a lack of funding and confined to a children's playground and domestic training classes in millinery, sewing, and cooking skills. In 1908, the Flanner Guild Rescue Home for unmarried mothers and children opened. In 1909, with additional property contributed by Frank Flanner and increased donations, services to the community began to grow. An orchestra was established and new programs emphasized thrift and savings and the prevention of juvenile crime. Children's services included boys' and girls' clubs, a day care nursery, and a Child Development Center. Financial difficulties eased again around 1911 when Flanner House became associated with the Christian Women's Board of Missions (CWBM). In 1912, after the death of Frank Flanner, the CWBM changed the name of the organization from Flanner Guild to Flanner House. At this time, Robert L. Brokenburr became administrator of Flanner House, succeeded by Charles Otis Lee in 1914.

In 1918, Flanner House relocated from the worn-out structures on Colton Street (formerly Rhode Island Street) to a series of buildings at 802–814 North West Street. Expanded programs at this central location included a tuberculosis clinic, desperately needed due to the prevalence of the disease in poor neighborhoods and the exclusion of African Americans from hospitals. An employment bureau provided help for the many African American women working as domestics, oftentimes the only employment available in a white-dominated society. Increased local financial support in the early 1920s provided for the opening of a laundry school to train black women, followed by programs offering training in home economics (including the "Make-Over Shop") and maid service. Reverend Henry L. Herod assumed management of these programs from Lee in 1925.

In 1935, Flanner House was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. That same year, Cleo W. Blackburn began his forty-year tenure as director of Flanner House, replacing Reverend Herod. In conjunction with Blackburn's new leadership, a group of African American women established the Flanner House Guild in 1936. The Guild helped further develop Flanner House programs through fundraising events such as the Guild teas. Plans were revealed for a new Flanner House location at 16th and Missouri Streets in 1941. In 1942, work camp volunteers from the American Friends Service Committee helped clear

the new property and assisted with other neighborhood improvements. In 1944, the new Flanner House headquarters, designed by prominent African American architect Hilyard R. Robinson, opened at 333 West 16th Street.

With Blackburn's leadership and the results from the 1939 *Indianapolis Study*, which analyzed the socio-economic situation of the city's African American residents, Flanner House tailored its programs to target key community issues. By 1944, the organization consisted of Social Services, Vocational Aids, Self-Help Services, Health, and Housing divisions. New services included dental, well-baby, and maternity clinics; the establishment of the Herman G. Morgan Health Center in 1947, headed by Dr. Walter H. Maddux; continued education in domestic arts, nutrition, nursing, and job training; and self-help projects such as garden cultivation, food preparation and preservation, and carpentry. A new cannery and shop opened in 1949, providing local residents with a way to save on their food bills. Families could cultivate land set aside for growing produce, can their own food, and purchase ready-to-serve food through the co-op store. The programs in all of these divisions fell under the category of "fundamental education," defined as "the attempt to apply the educational process to community needs and resources." Cleo Blackburn eventually established a Board of Fundamental Education, chartered by Congress in 1954.

The housing division of Flanner House homes grew exponentially in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1945, the Indiana Redevelopment Act established a plan for ridding cities of blighted or slum areas and redeveloping those areas. In conjunction with this act, the Indianapolis Redevelopment Commission (IRC) designated certain areas of Indianapolis for improvement. The IRC's first project (Project A) included razing 178 acres on the city's west side bordered by 10th, 16th, West, and Milburn Streets. This plan was not without controversy due to the protests of some neighborhood residents claiming their houses were not substandard. These residents also worried that dislocation would leave them homeless. Their protests were eventually overruled and demolition of the first slum house in the redevelopment area took place in the summer of 1948.

In accordance with its self-help ideology, the Flanner House organization helped found Flanner House Homes, Inc. and the accompanying self-help home building program, purchasing newly cleared Project A land from the IRC. Established to provide low-cost housing to lower-income families, Flanner House Homes, Inc., hoped to build a stronger community through this program of "sweat equity." Initially focusing on veterans of the armed services, the self-help program enabled selected families to pool their labor and work 20 hours per week building homes, including their own, in the new neighborhoods. The first group of 21 families (mostly veterans) organized themselves into a group called "Fall Creek Homes." Trained in all aspects of the construction process, the team worked under the guidance of Fred Reeve, director of Flanner House's Self-Help Services Division. Work campers from various organizations also participated in the program. Groundbreaking on the first self-help home, that of veteran John I. White, took place on 24 August 1950. The program resulted in the building of approximately 181 homes. Flanner House Homes, Inc. also participated in the construction of apartment buildings in the various IRC redevelopment areas.

Throughout the next decades, Flanner House continued to emphasize programs for community improvement and self-initiative through improved health, social service,

employment, better education, community development, and recreation. Services established included a Catering Service and Cooking School, Social Hygiene Clinic, Urban Life Services, Job Mobile, Residential Youth Center, Veterans Service Center, Northwest Multi-Service Center, Library, Senior Citizens Center, Community Athletic/Recreation Program, Legal Service Outreach, Healthy Baby Program, Homemaker Service Program, Guardianship Assessment Program, and many other community outreach programs. In 1975, Flanner House headquarters relocated to 2110 N. Illinois Street. They moved again in 1979 to the present location at 2424 Northwestern Avenue (later named Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street).

Sources:

Taken from *Flanner House Records*, M0513 Collection Guide

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection contains five magnetic audio tape reels (transferred by IHS to DVDs) which contain audio primarily of Cleo and Walter Blackburn but also of David W. Snyder and audio related to the Apollo moon landing. There are over 600 slides showing images mostly related to Flanner House and the neighborhood in the early 1970s. A set of the slides show a convention (mostly people sitting at tables) where Cleo Blackburn spoke though the slides do not identify the name of the convention. Another set of slides show various examples of training given by the Board for Fundamental Education as well as various logos used by the group. There are also slides showing images from various locations in Indianapolis in 1973. There is one newspaper clipping from 2013 which mentions the Flanner House Homes Historic District.

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Flanner House Model, ca. 1970s; Flanner House Scenes, ca. 1970s; Flanner House Homes, ca. 1970s; Track Meet, ca. 1970s; Flanner House, Martial Arts, ca. 1970s; Flanner House Paint-in, 1973; River House Model Apartment, 1973; Indianapolis Scenes, ca. 1973; The Indianapolis Experience, n.d.

Cleo Blackburn, Speaking Event, ca. 1970s; Board for Fundamental Education Training, ca. 1970s; Flanner House and Board for Fundamental Education Training Logo Slides, ca. 1970s; Herman G. Morgan Health Center, ca. 1970s; Indiana Reformatory, ca. 1970s; Indiana Women's Prison Sign, ca. 1970s; Unidentified People, ca. 1970s; Cuiculco Mexico Trip, ca. 1970s; Unidentified Location, ca. 1970s

Flanner House, News Clipping, 2013

*Reel-to-Reel Audio:* Cleo Blackburn, n.d.; Apollo 11 Lands on Moon, n.d.; Apollo's Armstrong and Aldrin on "Moon Walk", July 20, 1969

*Reel-to-Reel Audio:* Walter Blackburn, SBA Concepts, December 17, 1970

*Reel-to-Reel Audio:* David W. Snyder, SBA Concepts re: Architecture, December 17, 1970

*Reel-to-Reel Audio:* Cleo Blackburn #1, n.d.

*Reel-to-Reel Audio:* Cleo Blackburn #2, n.d.

### CONTAINER

Cold Storage:  
35 mm Slides,  
Slide Box 1

Cold Storage:  
35 mm Slides,  
Slide Box 2

Folder 1

DVD 1500

DVD 1501

DVD 1502

DVD 1503

DVD 1504