

**Collection #
M 1505
OM 0765
BV 5561-5563**

**FLORABELLE WILSON COLLECTION
ADDITION, 1907-2014**

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Processed by

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November 2022

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 5 manuscript boxes, 3 oversized folders, 3 bound volumes, 1 box photographs, 3 boxes cold storage color photographs, 2 photo albums, 2 folders OVA photographs, 1 folder OVB photographs, 2 folders OVB graphics, 1 panoramic photograph, 3 artifacts

COLLECTION DATES: 1907-2014

PROVENANCE: Crystal V. Rhodes, Indianapolis, IN

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Florabelle Williams Wilson Collection, 1910-1995 (M0731); Florabelle Wilson Collection Addition (M1133); Florabelle Wilson Collection Addition (SC3255); Florabelle Wilson Hadley Family Research Collection (P0835)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2015.0272; 2022.0110

NOTES: Color photographs are kept in cold storage and need at least four hours to acclimate to room temperature. Patrons are advised to call ahead if they wish to view those items.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Florabelle Williams Wilson (1927-2008) was the daughter of James S. and Hattie Virginia Hollis Williams. She attended the local public schools including School #26 and Crispus Attucks High School. Wilson graduated from high school in 1944. She received a BS in Education from Indiana Central College (now the University of Indianapolis) in 1949. She taught at Indianapolis Public School (IPS) #23 for eight years, later returning to school to work on a graduate degree in library science. In 1961, Wilson received an MLS from Indiana University. She married John A. Wilson (1920-1990) in 1964. John was a veteran of WWII and had worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps before that. He was a 35-year employee of the Indiana Bell telephone company. He had three sons from a previous marriage.

From 1957 to 1971 Florabelle Wilson worked as an assistant librarian at the University of Indianapolis. She was director of the library from 1971 until her retirement in 1985. The first full time African American faculty member at the university, she was also the first black director of an academic library in Indiana. In 1971 she helped plan the interior design and select furnishings for what became the university's Krannert Memorial Library. A past member of the Indiana Library and Historical Board and the Soul People Repertory Board, she served on the Indiana Historical Society Library Committee for nearly two decades. She was a member of the Indianapolis chapter of Zonta International (a women's service organization), Indiana Library Association, and the American Library Association. She was also a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and an elder at Immanuel Presbyterian Church.

While at the University of Indianapolis, Wilson developed the exhibit and slide/lecture presentation "The Black Family in Indianapolis: Invisible Sinew." She was a contributor to other exhibits created during the 1980s including "This Far by Faith: Black Hoosier Heritage," edited by Emma Lou Thornbrough and "Bury Me in a Free Land," developed by Gwendolyn Crenshaw. Wilson also mounted exhibits in conjunction with her West African travels to Senegal, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast. She also traveled to France, England, China, Japan, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Mexico, and the Caribbean. She presented talks and travelogues to schools, organizations, and historical societies.

The recipient of numerous honors, Wilson was named a distinguished alumnus of the University of Indianapolis in 1986 and awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters by the school in 1988. She received service awards from the Indiana Library and Historical Board and the Indiana Library Trustee Association in 1990. In 1993, IPS School #26 presented her with a Career Achievement Award.

Sources:

Wilma Gibbs Moore, Florabelle Williams Wilson Collection, 1910-1995 (M0731) Collection Guide

Materials in the collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of things collected throughout the life of Florabelle Williams Wilson. It has been arranged into three series.

Series 1: Personal. This includes items related to Florabelle's schooling up to high school (and reunions), her family, and a record of Indianapolis homes she lived in. Florabelle enjoyed compiling this type of material into albums or biographical binders about herself and each of her family members. Some of the binders were also compiled by the donor, Florabelle's niece, Crystal Rhodes. The collection includes two binders which have been preserved in their original context as Bound Volumes. The other albums and binders have been disassembled for preservation purposes. This series is arranged in the following order: Material related to Florabelle, followed by that of her parents, then her sisters and their children, and her husband and his children. Series I also includes some of Florabelle's artwork, which she enjoyed as a hobby, photographs of politicians and celebrities she met, and her end-of-life information. Some other highlights include Florabelle's high school diploma from Crispus Attucks High School in 1944, military correspondence from her nephew "June" prior to his death in Korea in 1952, a 10" x 13" print of a studio portrait of Florabelle and John (probably from an Immanuel Baptist Church directory), and panoramic group photos of John's CCC company and WWII company.

Series 2: Professional. This series includes Florabelle's college, careers both as a teacher and librarian, board service, and other scholarly endeavors. Some highlights include several academic papers she wrote in graduate school and her annual contracts at the Indiana Central University library. After her retirement in 1985, Florabelle served on the board of directors for the IPS Crispus Attucks Museum and helped that effort come to fruition in 1998. While on the board, she took it upon herself to research the opening of the school in 1927 within IPS original records. Her notes from that research as well as meeting agendas and minutes are included in this series.

Series 3: Travel. This series includes photographs, travel journals, and postcards from Florabelle's (and John's) extensive travels.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Personal

CONTENTS

Florabelle Wilson "Autobiographical Journey"

Florabelle Wilson "Life and Family"

2015/2017 Columbia Ave., 1984

Florabelle Williams high school diploma, Crispus Attucks High School, 1944

1722 N. Arsenal St., 1984-1986

Portraits, Florabelle Wilson, c. 1941-c. 2000

Portraits, Florabelle Wilson, 1972-1983

Florabelle and John Wilson studio portrait (church directory?), c. 1984

Portraits, Florabelle Wilson, c. 1984-1988

Portraits, Florabelle Wilson, 1990-c. 2006

Friends of Florabelle on ICU campus, 1948

Friends of Florabelle Wilson, c. 1975-1998

"Social events in Indianapolis, 1980s"

MSgt. Samuel W. Turner, 1959

CONTAINER

BV 5561

BV 5562

Color Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

OM 0765
Folder 2 of 3

Color Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

Color Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 3

OVA Cold Storage
Photographs,
Folder 1

Color Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 4

Color Photographs,
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Photographs,
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Color Photographs,
Box 2, Folder 2

Album Cold Storage
PAB

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 4

3512 N. Oxford St., c. 1964	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 5
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5344 N. Kenwood Ave., 1979	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 8
5344 N. Kenwood Ave., 1969-1986, n.d.	Color Photographs, Box 2, Folder 4
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John Hope School #26 reunion programs, 1993, 1995	Box 1, Folder 24
"Generations," Florabelle's extended family, 1980s- 1990s	Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 6
"Tom Thumb wedding," 1981	Color Photographs, Box 2, Folder 6
Esther Rolle in Indianapolis, 1986	Color Photographs, Box 2, Folder 8
Madam Walker Urban Life Center Fundraiser, 1987	Color Photographs, Box 2, Folder 9
Florabelle Wilson sketchbook, 1988-1994	BV 5563
Florabelle's artwork	OVB Graphics: Folder 1 of 2
7507 Brackenwood Circle N., c. 1992	Color Photographs, Box 2, Folder 10
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Hattie Williams, 1970s	Color Photographs, Box 1, Folder 7
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Siblings of Hattie Williams and their families	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 13
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Flora Ella Hollis with Virginia Williams, c. 1921	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 14
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Sterling Payne, Jr. (“June”)	Photographs, Box 1, Folder 16
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CONTAINER

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