

Collection #  
SC 2693

**FREETOWN VILLAGE:  
SEAMSTRESS, WASHERWOMAN,  
BARBER, ROOTWOMAN,  
1998**

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**COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF  
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION  
DATES: 1998

PROVENANCE: Freetown Village, P. O. Box 1041, Indianapolis, IN 46206

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Freetown Village Project Collection (SC 1981); Research for Freetown Village, Old Ward Four (SC 2542)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2001.1041

NOTES:

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Freetown Village is a living history museum that explores the lives of African Americans in an 1870 mythical community in Indianapolis. The members of the museum company depict composite characters that lived during the post-Civil War era. Conceived by founding and executive director, Ophelia Umar Wellington, in 1980, for many years Freetown Village had a permanent exhibit at the Indiana State Museum where costumed interpreters interacted with the Museum visitors. The exhibit included a church, school, barbershop, and front porch. A controversy between the two organizations caused the relationship to be discontinued in 2002 when the State Museum opened a new facility in the White River Parkway in downtown Indianapolis.

The Freetown Village touring troupe has given historical plays throughout the Midwest. As part of their special events programming, Freetown has presented an 1870 wedding and Christmas, and an evening dinner. The organization has also taught several nineteenth-century homemaking crafts including quilting, butter churning, candle making, printing, and rag-rug weaving. Traditionally, some of the Freetown Village characters have included Reverend Strong, barber Isaiah Cuffee, seamstress Sarah Elizabeth Brown Cuffee, washerwoman Eliza Moore Freeman, and root woman Mother Endura.

The Freetown Village administrative office and museum store is located at the Madam Walker Theatre Center in Indianapolis.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

“Freetown Village: A Living Experience in Black History,” *News & Notes* (published by the Indiana Humanities Council), February/March, 1991.

Ophelia Umar Wellington, “Bringing Black History to Life,” *Guideposts*, December 1995, pp. 20–23.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

“Freetown Village: Seamstress, Washerwoman, Barber, Rootwoman” was completed in compliance with an Indiana Heritage Research Grant awarded to Freetown Village. The project title was “Nineteenth Century Trades.” The grant number was #98–3047.

The collection contains one project abstract and a forty-five-page research paper authored by Lisa Lewis during 1998. The abstract provides the search strategy used to research the four trades. The research paper examined the role of the trades giving them some context related to late nineteenth century African Americans. Lewis’s research yielded the

least information on the root woman. Most of the information she found on the nineteenth-century African-American barber was statistical. The seamstress and washerwoman were often linked in sources. She used mostly secondary sources to complete her research.

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### **CONTENTS**

Research Paper: "Freetown Village: Seamstress, Washerwoman, Barber, Rootwoman"

### **CONTAINER**

Folder 1

## **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://157.91.92.2/>
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, SC 2693).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.