

# GRAND BODY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY COLLECTION, 1912-1977

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Collection #:  
M 619

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Processed by:  
Wilma L. Gibbs  
8 June 1994

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## USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 5 manuscript boxes

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive, 1912-1977; Bulk, 1930s

PROVENANCE: Shirley Herd, Indianapolis, Indiana, 13 June 1985.

RESTRICTIONS: None

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

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 85.0622

NOTES: The Grand Body of Sisters of Charity Collection was donated during the Black Women in the Middle West Project.

The Black Women in the Middle West Project was a collecting effort to gather primary source materials of African-American women in Illinois and Indiana. The project, spearheaded by Darlene Clark Hine and Patrick Bidelman at Purdue University, was conducted in three phases from 1977-1985. Project records are located at five repositories within the two states including the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) [houses the project's administrative records],

Calumet Regional Archives, and the Chicago Historical Society and the Illinois State Historical Society in Illinois. (Although the implementation phase of the project was from 1984-1985, several of the collections were donated to IHS in 1986).

Additional information about the project is contained in *The Black Women in the Middle West Project: A Comprehensive Resource Guide, Illinois and Indiana* (E185.6 .B 53 1986), edited by Hine and Bidelman, et. al. and Wilma L. Gibbs's article "In Retrospect: The Black Women in the Middle West Project at the Indiana Historical Society," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays from Black History News & Notes* (E185.93 .I4 B52 1993).

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Grand Body of the Sisters of Charity was organized in 1876 in response to the needs of a migrant African-American population settling in Indiana from the South after the Civil War. Early founders and officers included Celeste Allen, Eliza Goff, Ada Goins, and Beulah Wright Porter, and Hulda Bates Webb. According to its constitution, the organization "was instituted after seeing the great suffering and need that existed among people of the state." It was supported with dues, fines, and donations from members and the general public. From its inception, the purpose of the organization was to provide general support to those in need. Soon after the turn of the century, the focus of the statewide organization was to establish a hospital in Indianapolis. According to a notice in the Indianapolis Recorder, the hospital opened in June, 1911. Many of the lodges that had been instrumental in raising funds for the construction of the hospital continued to support the institution once it opened.

The statewide organization was a network of lodges that dwindled in membership beginning the 1920s. Membership continued to languish through the Depression years and into the next two decades. By the mid-1960s, the organization's annual report was no longer listing juvenile departments. During an 1989 interview president Reverend Rubie Potter stated that the Grand Body of the Sisters of Charity consolidated into one lodge (No. 15) around 1980, after a disagreement among members about selling the state headquarters and discontinuing the organization. The building remains at 1034-1036 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive in Indianapolis.

Sources: Material in the Collection.

Joan Cunningham, "The Grand Body of Sisters of Charity," *Black History News & Notes*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Library, February, 1990.

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## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Grand Body of the Sisters of Charity collection contains the records of a charitable organization founded in Indianapolis during Reconstruction. The collection contains five manuscript boxes pertaining to records of the organization dated from 1912-1977. Box 1 contains correspondence, constitution and bylaws of the organization and Board of Directors minute books. Programs, memorabilia, clippings, and financial records are in boxes 2 and 3. One of the responsibilities of the Sisters of Charity lodges was to provide sick and burial benefits to their members. Members paid dues regularly into a burial fund to ensure a decent funeral. Records of the Mutual Burial Fund are contained in Box 3, folders 4-6, Box 4, and Box 5, folders 1-2. The remainder of Box 5 contain materials related to George and Ada Goins. Ada Goins who served as first state president of the Sisters of Charity (1901-1930) was an active club woman, who was also a member of the Woman's Improvement Club. The Sisters of Charity Hospital was built; the first state home was purchased; and most of the lodges were established during Goins's presidency.

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## BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

**BOX 1: Correspondence; Constitution, Board of Directors Minutes**

## **FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Correspondence 1912-1977, n.d.
- 2 History
- 3 Constitution and By-laws
- 4 Board of Directors 1930-1931
- 5 Board of Directors 1932
- 6 Board of Directors 1933-1962, n.d.
- 7 Board of Directors n.d.
- 8 Board of Directors minute books 1923-1930
- 9 Board of Directors minute books 1932-1934
- 10 Board of Directors minute books 1934-1939

## **BOX 2: Board of Directors Minutes, Programs, Memorabilia Financial Records FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Board of Directors minute books 1936-1955
- 2 Board of Directors receipt books 1933-1964
- 3 Annual Reports 1963-1965, blank
- 4 Annual Session programs 1934-1952
- 5 Annual Session programs 1953-1979
- 6 44th Anniversary Program
- 7 Applications 1930-1932, n.d.
- 8 Credentials 1933-1965, n.d.
- 9 Pledge sheets
- 10 Meal tickets
- 11 Clippings
- 12 Bank book
- 13 Receipts 1912-1978, n.d.
- 14 Financial records 1913-1964, n.d.
- 15 Financial record books 1931-1934
- 16 Financial record books 1942-1945

**BOX 3: Financial Records; Mutual Burial Fund  
FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Financial record books 1946-1968
- 2 Financial record books 1947-1953
- 3 Financial record books 1947-1954
- 4 Mutual Burial Board 1952-1968
- 5 Mutual Burial Fund reports 1932-1961 6 Mutual Burial Fund reports 1962-1963

**BOX 4: Mutual Burial Fund  
FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Mutual Burial Fund quarterly reports, 1964-1965
- 2 Mutual Burial Fund quarterly reports, 1966-1968, n.d.
- 3 Mutual Burial Fund bank statements 1946-1956
- 4 Mutual Burial Fund bank statements 1957-1961
- 5 Mutual Burial Fund bank statements 1961-1977
- 6 Mutual Burial Fund cancelled checks, 1954-1960
- 7 Mutual Burial Fund cancelled checks, 1961-1977
- 8 Mutual Burial Fund deposit slips 1961-1977

**BOX 5: Mutual Burial Fund; Other Organizations; George and Ada Goins  
FOLDER CONTENTS**

- 1 Mutual Burial Fund receipt books 1947-1951
- 2 Mutual Burial Fund receipt books 1951-1959
- 3 Federation of Associated Clubs directory 1955
- 4 Woman's Improvement Club 1903-1966
- 5 (VC) St. Pierre Ruffin Club photo (Beatrice Barton)
- 6 Ada Goins--Personal correspondence
- 7 Goins Family--Insurance
- 8 George Goins--Building license
- 9 Ada Goins--Receipts
- 10 George Goins--Receipts
- 11 Goins Family--Receipts

12 Miscellaneous Receipts

13 George Goins--Account book

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### CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Grand Body of the Sisters of Charity

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Grand Body of the Sisters of Charity

Goins, George

Goins, Ada

Sisters of Charity State Hospital

Woman's Improvement Club (Indianapolis, Ind.)

St. Pierre Ruffin Club

Black Women in the Middle West Project

Charities--Indiana

Afro-American women--Indiana--Societies and clubs

Afro-Americans--Indiana--Charities

Afro-Americans--Indiana--Societies, etc.

Friendly societies--Indiana

Charities, Medical--Indiana

Insurance, Burial--Indiana

Hospitals--Indiana--Indianapolis

Women in charitable work--Indiana

Women--Indiana--Societies and clubs

Indianapolis (Ind.)--Societies, etc.

END