

Collection #s
M 1067
OM 0528

***INDIANAPOLIS RECORDER* NEWSPAPER
COLLECTION, 1893–1990**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box; 1 photograph box; 1 oversized manuscript folder; 1 OVA folder; 3 color photograph folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1893–1990

PROVENANCE: Transferred from the Indiana State Museum

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: M 0556 George P. Stewart Papers; P 0303 *Indianapolis Recorder* Newspaper; SC 1886 Hortense Harlin, "The Indianapolis Recorder: A History of a Negro Weekly Newspaper" (Masters thesis, 1951)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2007.0283

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The black press began in New York City with the publication of *Freedom's Journal* by Samuel Cornish and John Russworm in 1827. Another partnership, George P. Stewart and Will Porter, co-founded the *Indianapolis Recorder* about seventy years later. The forerunner of the *Recorder* was a news sheet, a church and business directory. By 1897, the co-founders of the newspaper decided to expand their already successful news sheet into a weekly newspaper. The earliest existing issues of the *Recorder* (on microfilm) date to 1899-the year Porter sold his share of the newspaper to Stewart for \$300.

Realizing the importance of local news, Stewart captured that market, outdistancing his competitors, the publishers of the *Freeman* and the *Colored World*. Both the *Freeman* and the *Colored World*, published in Indianapolis, had national reputations. With its emphasis on Indianapolis local news, the weekly set itself apart from other black newspapers. It had an immediate and an enduring impact on the Indianapolis community. Though the focus of the newspaper was local people and events, the early *Recorder* also reported national events. It solicited news from communities throughout the state, as well as from around the country. Sales agents, who dually served as local correspondents, sold issues in their cities and hamlets. The early *Indianapolis Recorder* correspondence files (in M 0556 George Stewart Papers at the Indiana Historical Society) are replete with letters to and from sales agents and reporters.

The *Indianapolis Recorder* first located its office at 122 W. New York Street. In 1900, it moved to 414 Indiana Avenue. From there it relocated to the Knights of Pythias building at 236-40 West Walnut St. By summer 1918 the newspaper was at 518-20 Indiana Avenue, where it remained for over half a century. In 1975, it moved from downtown to its current eastside location at 2901 N. Tacoma.

The evolution of the *Indianapolis Recorder* for the period that George P. Stewart was publisher/editor (through 1924) can be seen by examining copies of the newspaper for changes in physical appearance and content. The earliest available issues contained four pages. Each page had six columns, with the last column used as advertising space. Much of the content revolved around ministers, churches, and religious news. During the early years national news with a limited amount of local news was contained on the first page. National news often took the form of an appeal. For example, one article in 1904 announced a "call for organization to teachers...This appeal is made to Negro teachers all over the country." Many of the articles that promoted and examined black progress were corralled in a column labeled "Race News." Church news was found on page two, and society activities were on page four. An outlet for information about local African-American communities in other cities was published in a section on page three entitled "From around Indiana."

After George Stewart's death in August 1924, Fannie Caldwell Stewart, his widow, became owner and publisher of the *Recorder*; his son Marcus C. Stewart became managing editor; and his daughter, Joyce Thompson continued in her role as business manager--a position that her son George Thompson acquired in later years.

Eunice Trotter's purchase of the *Indianapolis Recorder* in 1988 marked the first time in the paper's ninety-one-year history that the George Stewart family did not own controlling interest. She computerized the news operation. The paper went to full color and had multiple sections. Current owner and businessman William Mays assumed control of the *Indianapolis Recorder* in September 1990. Under Mays' ownership, his niece Carolene became the general manager. The company's staff and profits increased, and the equipment continued to be updated. The newspaper earned a coveted Casper award for general news reporting in 1992. Like earlier issues of the *Recorder*, today's newspaper has a strong editorial paper with weekly columns by general manager, Shannon Williams (who replaced Carolene Mays) and radio personality, Amos Brown. The paper continues to cover education, health, religion, business, and sports.

The *Indianapolis Recorder* served as a training ground for many reporters who later worked at the daily newspapers or other weeklies. Lynn Ford, Kim Hooper, and Eunice Trotter left the *Recorder* and worked for the *Indianapolis Star*. Steve Hammer became a columnist at *NUVO*, and Opal Tandy became publisher of the *Indiana Herald*. William Raspberry, a former nationally syndicated *Washington Post* columnist, received early training at the *Recorder*.

The *Indianapolis Recorder* has a legacy of articles and columns written to report the activities and promote the achievements of African Americans. It is the single, most important publication that captures a panoramic view of twentieth-century black Indianapolis. It has supplied remarkable help to graduate students working on theses and dissertations, news reporters looking for historical perspectives and photographs, and the general public seeking details about an event, not provided by the dailies.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Hortense Harlin, "The *Indianapolis Recorder*: A History of a Negro Weekly Newspaper" (masters thesis, 1951), Indiana Historical Society, SC 1886

M 0556 George P. Stewart Collection Guide, Indiana Historical Society

<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/IRecorder> (Digital database of extant *Indianapolis Recorder* issues developed by Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis) accessed on 9-23-2013.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains materials related to the *Indianapolis Recorder*, an African American weekly newspaper. It includes five series that examine ownership and administration of the newspaper and provides information about individuals, businesses, institutions, and organizations.

Series I: Ownership and the Administration of the *Indianapolis Recorder* The *Indianapolis Recorder* began in the late 1890s. The series includes materials pertaining to the ownership and staffing of the business and the administration of the company.

Series II: Individuals The series includes photographs and information pertaining to several people, many who graced the pages of the *Indianapolis Recorder* as newsmakers. For example, James C. Cummings, Jr. (a former sports writer for the *Indianapolis Recorder*), Andrew J. Brown (pastor of St. John Missionary Baptist Church and president of the Indiana Christian Leadership Conference), and Charles R. Williams (minister and president of Indiana Black Expo) were instrumental in the founding or administration of IBE. William Pickens (educator and orator) was an early spokesperson for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Series III: Businesses, Institutions, Organizations, Groups, and Papers There are several items in the collection that pertain to various businesses, institutions, and organizations including the American Negro Emancipation Centennial Authority, Indiana Division; Freeman Publishing Company; and the Knights of Pythias, Marion Lodge No. 5. It appears that a 1960 paper, "The Indianapolis Negro Community: A New Marketing Opportunity" was commissioned by the *Indianapolis Recorder*.

Series IV: Stock Certificates George Stewart and his wife invested in many companies that sold stock certificates. The collection contains certificates from some of those businesses including the Industrial Savings and Investment Association, Original Star Celery-Seltzer Co., and the Sea Bird Gold Mining Co. There are also certificates from the Union Amusement Company, an outgrowth of the Supreme Lodge Entertainment Corporation, an entity that was affiliated with the Knights of Pythias. Stewart served as treasurer of the corporation, which ran the Union Amusement Theatre, located at 326 Indiana Avenue in Indianapolis.

Series V: Receipts The collection contains several receipts from companies that had early business dealings with the *Indianapolis Recorder*.

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