

Collection #
M 0485
OM 0185
F 0997-1010
BV 2373-2387

**INDIANAPOLIS YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN
ASSOCIATION
RECORDS, 1896-1986**

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Processed by
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20 July 1987
Updated 21 January 2005

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 11 manuscript boxes; 1 oversize folder; 15 bound volumes, 14 rolls of microfilm, 1 photograph folder, 1 PAC photograph album

COLLECTION DATES: 1896-1986

PROVENANCE: Indianapolis Young Women's Christian Association, 4460 N. Guion Road Indianapolis IN 21 September 1986

RESTRICTIONS: Copyright is held by the YWCA. Permission to publish must be obtained from the YWCA through 1996.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1987.0000

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

In 1894 the plans of incorporation of the Indianapolis Young Women's Christian Association were filed. The first meeting was held 6 May 1895--the date now considered the Indianapolis YWCA's official birthday. When the Indianapolis Association had secured 400 members it opened rooms at 139 N. Meridian Street. Their lunches were served to the women workers of the neighborhood, and offered classes in physical education, bible study and music. Lodging and a reading room were also available.

The Indianapolis YWCA moved several times in the next few years, finally settling at 329 N. Pennsylvania Avenue. The buildings on that site were leveled and new ones built, one of which included the first indoor swimming pool in the state of Indiana, constructed in 1909. This same building would remain the YWCA's headquarters until 1976, when the association moved to Guion Road.

The Association had offered lodging to women since its opening in 1895. In 1915, tiring of the cramped rented rooms that had been used until then, the Indianapolis YWCA began a campaign to raise \$200,000 for a new residence. Until that time the YWCA had been renting houses on Michigan and Pennsylvania Streets for lodging. There were no lodging rooms at the Pennsylvania St. headquarters. Plans were drawn up and property purchased but World War I intervened and prevented the scheduled completion of the project. The new residence, called the Blue Triangle, did not open until 1924. It stayed open in the same building until 1971, when it closed for lack of occupants. The YWCA no longer offers permanent lodging as it did at Blue Triangle.

During World War I the YWCA did war work, helping women fill the positions left vacant by men departed for war. It provided job training, placement, and housing to the women involved in this work. It also opened hostess houses at military bases and camps to provide recreation for the soldiers. During World War II the Association continued in this type of work, as well as working with the USO and the American Red Cross. In both wars many YWCA women went overseas either with the hostess houses or the Red Cross.

YWCA programs included something for women and girls of all ages. The Girl Reserves, organized in 1918, was designed to offer education and recreation to girls ages eight to eighteen (later twelve to eighteen). The YWCA also organized groups in the factories and department stores to give help and friendship to working women.

The types of classes it offered to its members illustrate the association's interest in training and educating women in useful skills. There were classes in cooking and sewing, as well as in shorthand, typing and office skills. The physical department ran the gymnasium, which was a real innovation at the time it was built, and offered classes in fitness and hygiene. Classes in foreign languages, bible study groups, and skills such as metalworking and astronomy rounded out the program.

The YWCA has also had charitable programs as well as educational ones. The Traveler's Aid program which met visitors to the city and helped them with their problems, was run by the YWCA from 1908 to 1918, when it was taken over by a branch of the National Traveler's Aid Association. In more recent times the Association has featured programs like Mother's Morning Out, which provided babysitting and entertainment for mothers in the 1950's and 1960's. The YWCA also offers programs and counseling to single parents and their families.

In 1914 a group of black women in Indianapolis began working to establish a Negro branch of the YWCA. The group had the support of Madame C.J. Walker, who allowed them to meet in the Walker Manufacturing Company building. Considerable community opposition killed the project in 1916. After the First World War the YWCA began to segregate its facilities and the idea of a Negro branch met with more success in 1922. The branch took up residence in rented quarters at the corner of North and Northwest Streets and was christened the Phyllis Wheatley Branch YWCA. It retained the name when it moved to a new building in 1929. The new building at 601 N. West Street stayed open until 1959, when the YWCA integrated.

The religious aspect has never been the most prominent part of the Association's work. When it was first formed the YWCA demanded that its members also be members in good standing of a Christian church, but after 1924 this requirement was dropped. The YWCA continued to offer religious classes, such as bible study and missionary work, but they were not considered to be more important than any other classes. The religious component has been dropped altogether in recent years.

The YWCA has attempted to address current issues with its work. In recent years its imperatives, or resolutions, have included statements against racism and sexism. The Association had also changed its tone from that of a charitable and educational group to that of a more recreational organization, offering camps and classes for enjoyment as well as education. It has relaxed its prohibition against men in its programs, and has cultivated a more family-oriented tone to its activities.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The YWCA records include three types of materials: 1) minutes and documents in manuscript form, 2) bound minutes and 3) scrapbooks. The manuscript portion of the collection consists of correspondence, minutes, departmental reports, and legal papers such as contracts for YWCA buildings and. The earliest correspondence is letters received by Miss Flora Shank, YWCA state secretary. These five hundred items cover March through December of the year 1896 and discuss the planning of the Indiana state convention and procedural ideas from the YWCA's home state of New York.

The organizational minutes of more recent years are a large portion of the collection. The Board of Trustees minutes from 1920-1963 are complete save for the period 1958-1961. The minutes of the Board of Directors were stored in two locations by the YWCA: the Board workbook and the Board permanent record. The portion of the permanent record in the collection contains the minutes for 1963-1964. The workbook contains material presented to the board at its meetings, such as correspondence and drafts of policy memos to the staff. It also contains meeting minutes for 1962-1974. The minutes of the Program Planning Committee and the Nominating Committee of 1960-1971 are also included in this portion of the collection.

The reports of various departments from a much earlier period, 1912-1919, are included as well. Some of the departments represented in these documents include the Girl Reserves department, the Industrial Department, the Physical Department, the Religious and Educational Departments, and reports from the residence and the cafeteria as well. These reports are not complete. All reports for the year 1913 are missing, as well as some departmental reports from the other years. Contracts, leases and construction plans for the various YWCA branches throughout the city, the publicity and invitations for anniversaries and special events make up the remainder of the manuscript portion of the collection.

The collection also includes fifteen bound volumes and thirty-four scrapbooks. Seven bound volumes contain committee minutes from the Phyllis Wheatley branch of the YWCA. Also included among these items are receipt books, bound copies of the YWCA newsletter *The Association Message* and scrapbooks covering the years 1895-1974. The scrapbooks contain clippings, invitations to YWCA functions, and mementos of special events. The scrapbook series is not complete; most of the gaps are at the earliest part of the collection.

Photographs are stored in Visual Collections.

Architectural drawings have been transferred to be included in the architectural archives.

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Board of Directors Permanent Record, 1963-1971

Board of Directors Permanent Record, 1972-1974

Board of Directors Workbook, 1962-1964

Board of Directors Workbook, 1965-1969

Board of Directors Workbook, 1970-1974

Program Planning Committee Minutes, 1962

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| Long Range Plan 1964 | Box 9, Folders 9-14 |
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