

Collection #
SC 0099

**JAMES BLAKE
PAPERS, 1821-1831**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 manuscript folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1821-1831

PROVENANCE: Unknown, pre-1939

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Blake Family Collection, SC 3462; James Blake's Master Mason certificate, OM 0190; Leather and metal wallet belonging to James Blake, R 0304; Residence, James Blake House (Bass #91524-F), Bass Photo Company Collection. P 0130.

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1938.0013

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Blake (born March 3, 1791) was one of the first settlers and businessmen in Indianapolis, arriving from his home state of Pennsylvania in 1821. He was a member of many early cultural and philanthropic institutions in the city such as the Indianapolis Benevolent Society, the Agricultural Society, and the Indianapolis Polemic Society. He was also the founder of the first Sunday School in the city. Blake was a vice president at the State Temperance Convention in 1854 and influential on many topics of public concern, including the construction of the first Statehouse in Indianapolis in 1831. Despite his prominence and interest in public affairs, however, he never entered electoral politics.

Blake's business career in Indianapolis started with harvesting and processing ginseng in 1821 for export to China via Philadelphia. In 1823 he opened a tavern called Washington Hall. He was also a partner in Indianapolis' first steam mill in 1831, opened a dry goods store, and was on the board of directors of multiple railroad companies. Blake built the first plaster and frame house in Indianapolis and in 1831 brought the first piano into the city as a gift for his wife, Eliza. He remained an influential resident of the city until his death in 1870. Blake is buried in another Indianapolis institution he helped found, Crown Hill Cemetery.

Sources:

Materials in the Collection

Cierzniak, Libby. "Indianapolis Collected: The Old House on the Corner." Historic Indianapolis. December 19, 2016. <http://historicindianapolis.com/indianapolis-collected-the-old-house-on-thecorner/>

Vanderstel, Sheryl D. "Blake, James." In *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. <http://ulib.iupuidigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/EOI/id/3571>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains correspondence to and from Blake about political and business matters. It includes a typewritten transcript and the handwritten original of the constitution of the Indianapolis Polemic Society, of which Blake was a founding member.

Correspondence from 1821 to 1826 includes letters to Blake from the first Governor of Indiana, Jonathan Jennings and from Blake's brother Walter in New Philadelphia. Also included is correspondence from 1828 to 1831 mainly concerning Blake's business prospects in the ginseng trade.

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Correspondence, 1821-1826

Correspondence, 1828-1831

CONTAINER

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