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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org
COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 46 manuscript boxes, 31 oversize manuscript boxes, 1 photograph box, 3 color photograph folders, 2 OVA photograph folders, 1 OVB photograph folder, 1 OVC photograph box

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1911-1986; Bulk 1960-1979

PROVENANCE: Helen Dickinson, South Bend, IN, 2 April 1987.

RESTRICTIONS: None

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

ALTERNATE FORMATS: 

RELATED HOLDINGS: 

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1987.0657

NOTES: A descriptive listing of the Dickinson scrapbooks is available in the IHS Library.

Most of the legislative correspondence in boxes 33-44 of the collection was transferred from the Indiana State Library.
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jesse L. Dickinson (1906-1982), an Indiana state legislator, was born in Chandler, Lincoln County, Oklahoma, the son of George and Fannie Junkin Dickinson. While an infant, he moved to Newton, Kansas. His mother died when he was five years old and he was reared by his grandmother. He graduated from Newton High School. He excelled as a tenor soloist in high school, winning a gold medal for being the best student in the state. He also played the viola, tuba, and trombone. He was a member of the debate and track teams.

In 1924 Dickinson married Helen Bledsoe. They had four sons, twins Coleridge Taylor and Roland Hayes, Valjean, and Carroll. Dickinson studied music at Bethel College in Newton and Western University in Kansas City. He attended South Bend-Mishawaka University Center and the LaSalle Extension School of Law. During the 1920s, he performed as a vocal and instrumental soloist on the Redpath Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits.

When Dickinson moved his family to South Bend in 1928 he continued with his musical activities. He produced many amateur shows. He organized and conducted the Dickinson Plantation Singers, a popular quintet during the 1930s. He conducted choirs at churches. He organized, trained, and conducted a 100-voice choir that performed at the South Bend Musical Festival.

After arriving in South Bend, Dickinson worked with the Hering House, where he supervised youth programs. He helped organize and later served as a supervisor of the St. Joseph County recreation program under the Works Progress Administration (WPA). He worked as a playground director for the city schools and parks. From 1930-1934, Dickinson owned a music studio. Later he owned and operated a shoe repair service and a leather dying business.

Dickinson, a Democrat, elected from St. Joseph County, served six terms in the Indiana House of Representatives (1943, 1945, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957) and two terms in the Indiana Senate (1959, 1961). As a legislator, he principally sponsored bills that had a social thrust. He served on many committees. Much of his work led to reforms in laws governing mental hospitals, prisons, schools, and the aged and aging. He was also instrumental in the passage of civil rights legislation. While a member of the state legislature, Dickinson served on the Indiana Advisory Board, United States Fair Employment Practices Commission, State Commission on Aging, Legislative Bureau Study Commission, Legislative Advisory Commission, Penal Institutions Study Committee, and the Mental Retardation Planning Committee. From 1958-1972, Dickinson was executive director of the South Bend Housing Authority. This agency developed and managed housing for low-income people. Soon after retiring from the Housing Authority, he became director of the Foster Grandparents Program in South Bend.
Dickinson's interest in the welfare of his fellow citizens both predated and postdated his time in the Indiana General Assembly. He was a member of numerous organizations, serving on many committees, commissions, and boards. Though his service was varied and his interest widespread, Dickinson's organizational affiliations can be divided into five major areas: education, health and hospitalization, aging, human relations, and urbanization. His organizational ties included the Mayor's Commission on Human Relations, United Community Services, South Bend Human Rights Commission, Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Model Cities Program, Model Neighborhood Planning Agency, North Central Indiana Medical Education Foundation, Mental Health Association of Indiana, Indiana Civil Rights Commission, United States Commission on Civil Rights--Indiana Advisory Committee, Indiana Commission on Aging, and the Committee for Higher Education in North Central Indiana. He was a board member of Goodwill Industries and the St. Joseph County Detention House. A director of United Way and the First Bank and Trust Company, he was also a regional trustee for Indiana Vocational Technical College.

The recipient of innumerable honors and citations for meritorious service in government and civic affairs, Dickinson was named Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Matthew Welsh. He also received special citations from governors George N. Craig and Otis R. Bowen. In 1963, he received a National Council of Christians and Jews award. Locally, he was honored when the Jesse L. Dickinson Middle School was dedicated in 1976.

Jesse L. Dickinson died on 5 June 1982.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The bulk of this collection consists of Jesse Dickinson's legislative correspondence and materials pertaining to his numerous organizational affiliations. It covers the period 1911-1986. The collection is organized with materials covering seven major parts: biographical information; correspondence; topics (includes legislative correspondence); speeches; programs; clippings; and scrapbooks.

The biographical information gives an overview of Dickinson's life. The first folder contains a biographical outline and a list of his musical career highlights. Additionally, there is a folder of biographical newscuttings. Dickinson graduated from Newton High School in Newton, Kansas in 1925. Yearbooks for 1922 and 1925 are contained in Box 1. The general and personal correspondence includes letters to and from family and friends and some business correspondence. Political ribbons, mostly from Democratic conventions; commendation plaques; and a resolution declaring 24 August 1985 Jesse L. Dickinson Day in South Bend complete box 1.

Dickinson belonged to and was affiliated with numerous organizations, agencies, and commissions. Materials related to his activities with over 75 organizations are contained in boxes 2-33. His work with the South Bend Housing Authority, Indiana Vocational Technical College, United Community Services, United States Commission on Civil Rights--Indiana Advisory Committee, and the Urban Coalition of St. Joseph County is documented in the majority of the 32 boxes of organizational records.

Boxes 33-44 are arranged alphabetically and topically. The bulk of this unit includes legislative correspondence (1942-1965), most of which was transferred from the archives of the Indiana State Library. These files had been given to the State Library by the Dickinson family at an earlier time. Other subjects included in this section are civil rights, mental health, and the Economic Opportunity Act.

During and following his tenure as a state legislator, Jesse Dickinson gave speeches and appeared on several programs. Many of his speeches are contained in box 44. Programs listing him as speaker are in box 45.

Boxes 45-46 contain cuttings from various sources covering a wide range of subjects including civil rights, mental health, the legislature, housing, and various organizations. The 73 Dickinson scrapbooks, contained in boxes 47-73 include correspondence, newscuttings, photographs, and various printed items.

Box 46 contains several additional photographs. Jesse L. Dickinson was an accomplished musician. Box 46, folder 15 contains a photograph of him playing the trombone. There are images of Dickinson with his family and during his tenure in the Indiana State Legislature (box 46, folders 16 and 17). Box 46 also contains photographs of ceremonies, individuals, and groups. There are several images of outdoor scenes and construction and demolition sites. The content and dates of many of these images, mostly acetate negatives, suggest that they may have been taken in conjunction with Dickinson's work.
with the South Bend Housing Authority. There are a series of negatives of predemolition sites labeled with street addresses. They are numbered 102 to 119 (see box 46, folder 24 for a list of the street addresses). A second series of negatives also denoting outdoor scenes and construction and predemolition sites are dated from 1958 to 1960, n.d. There are several unidentified photographs of outdoor scenes, many of them including people. The photographs are dated from 1959 to 1965. There are also aerial views of South Bend (box 46, folders 22 and 24) and a large map of the city (box 46, folder 26).

There are three oversize photographic reproductions (box 46, folder 25) for which the originals have not been located. They all pertain to Jesse L. Dickinson. There is a composite of the 1943 Indiana House of Representatives; a 1945 image of what appears to be a UAW-CIO labor group; and a merit award presented to Dickinson by the South Bend Civic Planning Association in 1971. Unless otherwise noted, folders designated VC (visual collections) contain black and white images sized 8”x10” or less.
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10 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-19 Jan. 1943

11 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 20-26 Jan. 1943

**BOX 34: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1943-1945**

FOLDER CONTENTS

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 27-31 Jan. 1943

2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-5 Feb. 1943

3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 6-11 Feb. 1943

4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 12-22 Feb. 1943
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 23-28 Feb. 1943
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, March 1943
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, April- Sept. 1943
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1943, n.d.
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1944- 5 Feb. 1945

**BOX 35: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1945-1951**

**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 6-14 Feb. 1945
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 15-21 Feb. 1945
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Feb. -March 1945
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, April 1945-1946
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1950
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-19 Jan. 1951
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 20-26 Jan. 1951
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 27-31 Jan. 1951
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-8 Feb. 1951
10 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 9-12 Feb.1951

**BOX 36: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1951-1953**

**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 13-20 Feb. 1951
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 21-28 Feb. 1951
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1951
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1951, n.d.
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1952- 27 Jan. 1953
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 28 Jan.-5 Feb. 1953
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 6-16 Feb. 1953
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 17-23 Feb. 1953
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 24-28 Feb. 1953

BOX 37: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1953-1955
FOLDER CONTENTS

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, March- Dec. 1953
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1954
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1954, n.d.
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-18 Jan. 1955
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 19-31 Jan. 1955
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 2-8 Feb. 1955
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 9-14 Feb. 1955
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 15-18 Feb. 1955
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 19-22 Feb. 1955

BOX 38: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1955-1957
FOLDER CONTENTS

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 23-28 Feb. 1955
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, March- 23 June 1955
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 24 June - 2 Dec. 1955
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 4-31 Dec. 1955
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Jan. - Aug. 1956
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Sept. - Dec. 1956
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-22 Jan. 1957
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 23-31 Jan. 1957
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-6 Feb. 1957
10 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 7- 13 Feb. 1957
11 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 14-18 Feb. 1957

BOX 39: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1957-1958
FOLDER CONTENTS

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 19-23 Feb. 1957
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 24-28 Feb. 1957
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-4 March 1957
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 5-6 March 1957
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 7 March- 30 June 1957
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, July- 24 Sept. 24 Sept. 1957
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 27 Sept.- Dec. 1957
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1957, n.d.
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Jan. - July, 1958
10 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Aug.- Oct, 1959

BOX 40: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1958-1959
FOLDER CONTENTS

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Nov.- Dec. 1958
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Dec. 1958, n.d.
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 3 Jan.1959-21 Jan.1959
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 22- 30 Jan. 1959
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-8 Feb. 1959
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 9-11 Feb. 1959
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 12-15 Feb. 1959
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 16 Feb. 1959

**BOX 41: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1959-1961**

**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 17-20 Feb. 1959
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 21-23 Feb. 1959
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 24 Feb. - 5 March 1959
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 6-31 March 1959
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, April- June 1959
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, July- 26 Aug. 1959
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 27 Aug.- Dec. 1959
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Dec. 1959, n.d.
9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Jan.- June 1960
10 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, July- Dec. 1960
11 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-22 Jan. 1961

**BOX 42: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1961-1962**

**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 23-31 Jan. 1961
2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1-12 Feb. 1961
3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 13-14 Feb. 1961
4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 15-24 Feb. 1961
5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 25-28 Feb. 1961
6 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, March- April 1961
7 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, May- July 1961
8 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, July- Oct. 1961

9 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Nov.- Dec. 1961

10 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Dec. 1961, n.d.

11 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1962

**BOX 43: LEGISLATIVE/ PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1963 TO STATE GOVERNMENT PROJECTS**

**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1963

2 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, 1964

3 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, Jan.- April 1965

4 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, May- Dec. 1965

5 Legislative/ Professional Correspondence, n.d.

6 Legislation, 1953

7 Legislation, 1956-1957

8 Legislation on Alcoholism

9 Legislation on Bureau of Motor Vehicles

10 Legislation on Civil Rights

11 Legislation on Aid to the Disabled

12 Legislation on Labor

13 Legislation on Senior Citizens

14 Legislation on Exemption Proposal

15 Legislation on Youth Council

16 Legislation on Study Commission

17 Politics- Local Returns
18 State Government Projects

**BOX 44: MENTAL HEALTH TO SPEECHES, 1960-1969**
**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Mental Health- After Release Study
2 Mental Health- Drug Abuse
3 Mental Health- Mental Hospital Administration
4 Mental Health- Forum on Aging
5 Mental Health- Regional Mental Health
6 Mental Health- Mental Retardation
7 Mental Health- St. Joseph County Affairs
8 Social Agencies and Councils
9 South Bend Quality of Life
10 Speeches and Reports
11 Speeches, 1943-1954
12 Speeches, 1955-1959
13 Speeches, 1960-1969

**BOX 45: PROGRAMS; CLIPPINGS- CIVIL RIGHTS TO MEMORIAL HOSPITAL**
**FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Programs, 1939-1973
2 Programs, 1974-1981, n. d.
3 Programs with Dickinson as Speaker
4 Clippings- Civil Rights, 1950-1964
5 Clippings- Civil Rights, 1965-1980
6 Clippings- County Home Info
7 The *Clipsheet* Newsletter

8 Clippings- Fair Employment Practices Commission

9 Clippings- Housing

10 Clippings- Indiana Commission on the Aging and the Aged

11 Clippings- Indiana Vocational Technical College

12 Clippings- Legislative Clippings

13 Clippings- Jury Duty

14 Clippings- Memorial Hospital

**BOX 46: CLIPPINGS- MENTAL HEALTH TO URBAN LEAGUE; VISUAL MATERIALS FOLDER CONTENTS**

1 Clippings- Mental Health

2 Clippings- Mental Health

3 Clippings- Poverty

4 Clippings- Reading Improvement

5 Clippings- Schools and Education

6 Clippings- Sequential

7 Clippings- South Bend Boy's Club

8 Clippings- Sucher's Suicide

9 Clippings- Unions

10 Clippings- United Community Services

11 Clippings- United Way

12 Clippings- Urban Coalition of Joseph County, 1969-1972

13 Clippings- Urban Coalition of Joseph County, 1972-1974
14 Clippings- Urban League

15 (OVA) Jesse L. Dickinson playing the trombone

16 (VC) Jesse L. Dickinson family

17 (VC) State Legislative

18 (VC) Identified Ceremonies (1 folder b/w; 1 folder color)

19 (VC) Unidentified Ceremonies (1 folder b/w; 1 folder color)

20 (OVB) Unidentified Individuals (1 folder b/w; 1 OVB)

21 (VC) Unidentified Groups (1 folder b/w; 1 folder color)

22 (OVA) Aerial View of South Bend (1 folder b/w; OVA)

23 (VC) Outdoor Scenes

24 (VC) Pre-demolition and construction sites (1 folder b/w; 101 negative envelopes)

25 (OVC) Exhibit reproductions pertaining to Jesse Dickinson

26 (OMB 0063) Map of South Bend (Flat File: FF 20-b)

BOX 47: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 1-4 (# 2, Box 1)

BOX 48: SCRAPBOOKS, # 5

BOX 49: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 6-7 (# 7, Box 1)

BOX 50: SCRAPBOOKS, # 8

BOX 51: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 9-12 (# 12, Box 2)

BOX 52: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 13-16 (# 14, Box 2)

BOX 53: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 17-18

BOX 54: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 19-22 (# 22, Box 3)

BOX 55: SCRAPBOOKS, # 23

BOX 56: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 24- 25
BOX 57: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 26-28

BOX 58: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 29-32 (# 31, Box 3)

BOX 59: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 33-35 (# 35, Box 4)

BOX 60: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 36-38

BOX 61: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 39-44 (# 39, Box 4)

BOX 62: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 45-49

BOX 63: (OMB 0063) SCRAPBOOKS, #s 50-52 (# 52, Box 4)

BOX 64: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 53-54

BOX 65: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 55-56

BOX 66: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 57-58

BOX 67: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 59-60

BOX 68: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 61-62

BOX 69: SCRAPBOOKS, # 63

BOX 70: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 64-66

BOX 71: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 67-68

BOX 72: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 69-71

BOX 72: SCRAPBOOKS, #s 72-73