

Collection #
P 0870

**LYNN HIGH SCHOOL LATIN CLASS PHOTOGRAPHS,
CA. SPRING 1948**

Collection Information	1
Historical / Biographical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	4
Contents	4

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 folder of photographs

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. Spring 1948

PROVENANCE: Gift from Joyce E. Overman Bowman of Indianapolis, March 2023

RESTRICTIONS: None

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RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2023.0048

NOTES:

HISTORICAL / BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In the early twentieth century, the educational system in Randolph County, Indiana, was transformed into a national model for rural school consolidation due to the efforts of county superintendent of schools, Lee Driver. Randolph County's schools became known for their excellence, and this was especially true at Lynn High School, where courses were available in foreign languages, including Latin, as well as advanced mathematics and science.

Jim Jones, notorious cult leader of the Peoples Temple who, in 1978, led more than nine hundred of his followers into a mass murder-suicide in Guyana, South America, that became known as the Jonestown Massacre, grew up in Lynn, Indiana. He attended Lynn High School before he and his mother moved to Richmond in Wayne County, where he graduated from high school.

He was born James Warren Jones to James Thurman Jones and Lynetta Putnam Jones on 13 May 1931 in the tiny rural community of Crete in Randolph County. His home life was plagued with a variety of problems. His father was disabled with severe respiratory problems due to a gas attack he was exposed to during World War I, leaving him chronically unemployed. His mother was viewed as uncaring, odd, and immoral. When Jim was about three years old, his family lost their farmhouse. His paternal grandparents found a small house for the family in nearby Lynn, a crossroads town of about 950 people that provided services for the surrounding farm communities. The grandparents also provided limited financial assistance to Jim's family. In the summer of 1948, Lynetta Jones left her husband and moved with her son to Richmond, Indiana, as Jim was about to start his senior year in high school. Due to his superior education in Lynn, he was academically ahead of the Richmond students and was able to graduate a semester early, in December 1948.

Violet Squier Myers (1912–2001) attended Ball State Teachers College in Muncie, Indiana, and became a language teacher at Lynn High School in Randolph County. She was Jim Jones's Latin teacher. She was born Violet Bower Squier in Adams County to George Squier and Bessie Bower Squier. She married Revilla Myers in 1932.

Sara Lou Harlan (1931–1957) was the popular daughter of the town dentist, Dr. Wilbur H. Harlan, and Alverda Maxwell Harlan. Jim Jones pursued a relationship with her in high school but failed at this attempt. She attended Earlham College and Miami University and later was a teacher in Ohio. She married Paul E. Morrow.

Marilyn Kircher was born in Lynn in 1931 to Raymond Kircher and Ruth Newman Kircher.

William "Bill" Morris (1932–2013) was born in Lynn to Keith Morris and Hattie Howell Morris. He fought in the Korean War and graduated from Ball State Teachers College. He married Eleanor Miller in 1967. He taught in Geneva in Adams County and was a school administrator in Geneva and later with the South Adams School System.

Joyce Esther Overman was born in 1932 in Randolph County to Dr. Vernon Overman, a veterinarian, and Esther Thomas Overman. She married Edward Bowman in 1955 and graduated from Earlham College in 1956. She also attended Ball State University and Indiana University and became a nurse.

Donald Lee Pearson was born in 1932 in the Washington Township of Randolph County to Lynn residents William Azle Pearson and Clara Skinner Pearson. In 1956 he married Marilyn Seeker.

Edith “Edie” Marie Spencer (1931–2005) was born to Forest W. Spencer and Dora Updegraff Spencer in Fountain City, Wayne County, but grew up in Lynn. She worked as a program director for an electrical manufacturing company and lived in Phoenix, Arizona, but died at her brother’s home in Richmond, Indiana.

Ralph Sterling was born in Ohio in 1932 to John Sterling and Ora Thompson Sterling. He grew up in Lynn and then attended Ball State, Franklin College, and Butler University. He married Beverly Hendrickson in 1955 in Indianapolis.

Harry Francis Ward (1931–2009) was born in Bloomingport, Randolph County, to Clarence Ward and Helen Taylor Ward. As an adult he lived in Hawaii and in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he died.

Phyllis Wilmore was born ca. 1931 to Charles Wilmore and Ruby Lentz Wilmore in Kansas but grew up in Lynn. After Jim Jones failed to have a relationship with Sara Lou Harlan, he moved on to Phyllis, who was considered a smart girl. They read books together on her family’s porch and went to church together. They did not last long as a couple but remained on friendly terms. She later married Leon Zimmerman with whom she had three children.

Sources:

Ancestrylibrary.com (Accessed 27 November 2023):

Find a Grave

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Indiana, U.S., Marriages, 1810–2001

United States Federal Census, 1940, 1950

U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900–2016

U.S., Selected Quaker College Yearbooks and Alumni Directories, 1896–2003

Carpenter, Dan. “Countdown to Armageddon: The Reverend Jim Jones and Indiana” in *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, vol. 30, no. 2, Spring 2018, pp. 34–45.

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of two copies of a photograph taken of Mrs. Violet Myers's Latin class at Lynn High School in Randolph County, Indiana, in the spring of 1948. One copy has names added to identify individuals. It shows ten students posing with Mrs. Myers outdoors. One student is Jim Jones, future cult leader of the Peoples Temple who, in 1978, led more than nine hundred of his followers into a mass murder-suicide, which became known as the Jonestown Massacre.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Two copies of a photograph taken of Mrs. Violet Myers's Latin class at Lynn High School, ca. spring of 1948. One copy has names added to identify individuals: Harry Ward, Jim Jones, Phylis [Phyllis] Wilmore, Ralph Sterling, Violet Myers, Joyce Overman, Marilyn Kircher, Donald Pearson, Sara Harlon [Harlan], Bill Morris, and Edie Spencer.

CONTAINER

Folder 1 of 1