O. JAMES FOX
COLLECTION, 1945–2002

Collection Information
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Cataloging Information

Processed by
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revised by Dorothy Nicholson
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: Visual Materials: 1 box of photographs, 4 OVA photograph boxes, 1 OVA box of color photographs, 12 color slides, 6 color negatives
Manuscript Materials: 1 bound volume

COLLECTION 1945-2002
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

O. (Oscar) James Fox was born 2 October 1914 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and raised in Lakewood, Ohio. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Miami University in 1937 and a master’s degree in education at Western Reserve University, Cleveland, in 1964.

Fox arrived in Indianapolis in 1945 as a volunteer with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). He was assigned to an urban work camp, part of Flanner House, a community center on the near west side of the city. Flanner House provided childcare, recreation, crafts and vocational training to Indianapolis’ African-American community. Fox would later work for Flanner House and the Marion County Health Department.

Fox was a freelance journalist before World War II. One of his first jobs in Indianapolis was to photo document the slum area of the near west side of the city. Fox became a familiar figure to the families living in the near west side neighborhood. This area was bordered by the Central Canal and Sixteenth Street, and included Indiana Avenue. Indiana Avenue was the cultural and commercial center for the African-American community until the early 1960s. Fox photographed buildings, street scenes, children, and families over a period dating from 1945 to circa 1960. He also wrote poetry associated with the photographs and his experiences living in an urban neighborhood.

In 2000 the Indiana Historical Society exhibited a series of Fox’s photographs as a gallery show, Gone But Not Forgotten.

Sources:
Correspondence, O. James Fox to Wilma L. Gibbs, 4 September 1999. Wilma L. Gibbs: Office Files.
The collection includes black-and-white and color photographs and color slides made by O. James Fox between 1945 and circa 1960. The photographs depict scenes of African-American families, children, and the urban environment of the near west side of Indianapolis. The children were often photographed playing in yards, alleys, or along the Central Canal. Most photographs include at least one individual, sometimes at a distance or visible in a shadow. Neighborhood scenes, particularly those depicted in the color photographs, include views of Indiana Avenue. Other color photographs document activities in the Flanner House Cannery and a party involving women and children.

Other images related to Flanner House consist of eleven photocopied items. The images document construction of homes financed by Flanner House and family scenes. Families depicted include the Cleo Blackburn family. One image shows the office staff at Flanner House.

Photographs from this collection were used in a gallery show, *Gone But Not Forgotten*, at the Indiana Historical Society in 2000. Visitors identified a number of people and places in the photographs. Folder 15 in Box 1 photographs contains photocopies of identified images. These copies were made from images printed in the exhibit publication, also titled *Gone But Not Forgotten*.

Also included are nine individual poems and a book of poetry written by Fox. The individual poems were hung with images used in the 2000 exhibit. These pieces were written following his period of residence in Indianapolis. The book of poetry, *Falling Leaves*, contains non-Indiana images, including street scenes and landscapes in Fox’s native Ohio.

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Series 5: Printed Material

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[Exhibition, Background and Identification]
CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:  http://opac.indianahistory.org/
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the “Search In:” box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0266).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.