

WOMAN'S IMPROVEMENT CLUB COLLECTION, 1909-1965

Collection #s:
M 0432

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Processed by:
Wilma L. Gibbs
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 manuscript box
COLLECTION DATES:	1909-1965
PROVENANCE:	Kathleen Ransom Radford, Indianapolis, Indiana, 23 February 1984
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	None
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1984.0211
NOTES:	The Woman's Improvement Club Collection was donated during the Black Women in the Middle West Project. The Black Women in the Middle West Project was a collecting effort to gather primary source materials of African-American women in Illinois and Indiana. The project, spearheaded by Darlene Clark Hine and Patrick Bidelman at Purdue University, was conducted in three phases from 1977-1985. Project records are located at five

repositories within the two states including the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) [houses the project's administrative records], Calumet Regional Archives, and the Northern Indiana Historical Society in Indiana and the Chicago Historical Society and the Illinois State Historical Society in Illinois. (Although the implementation phase of the project was from 1984-1985, several of the collections were donated to IHS in 1986).

Additional information about the project is contained in *The Black Women in the Middle West Project: A Comprehensive Resource Guide, Illinois and Indiana* (E185.6 .B 53 1986), edited by Hine and Bidelman, et. al. and Wilma L. Gibbs's article "In Retrospect: The Black Women in the Middle West Project at the Indiana Historical Society," in *Indiana's African-American Heritage: Essays from Black History News & Notes* (E185.93 .I4 B52 1993).

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Woman's Improvement Club (WIC) was established in Indianapolis in 1903. According to its constitution, the purpose of the organization was "mutual improvement of its members, the care of tubercular persons, and all other uplift work." The organization was especially active in the care of local black tuberculosis patients, establishing an outdoor camp at Oak Hill in the Brightwood area in 1905. Founded by Indianapolis journalist and elocutionist, Lillian Thomas Fox, the club's early roster boasted the names of community activists, Ida Webb Bryant, Ada Harris, Rose D. Hummons, and Beulah Wright Porter.

In more recent years, the WIC has continued its mission in the form of support of educational projects and charity work. A member of the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the organization's membership and activities have dwindled significantly. The daughters and granddaughters of early members no longer form the nucleus of the organization as their mothers once did.

Sources: Materials in the collection.

Ferguson, Earline R., "The Woman's Improvement Club of Indianapolis: Black Women Pioneers in Tuberculosis Work, 1903-1938," *Indiana Magazine of History*, September, 1988.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Woman's Improvement Club Collection consists of one manuscript box. It contains records of the organization that date 1909-1965. Two minute books (folders 1 and 2) span the period 1909-1918, with missing years from 1912 to 1915. The constitution is located in folder 3. Brief handwritten histories, apparently written for presentations are contained in folder 4. Rosters with addresses for 1919-1920 and 1966-1967 suggest neighborhood patterns of the club's membership and can be found in folder 5. The limited correspondence in folder 6 are mostly thank-you notes and solicitations. Folders 7-11 contain the club's financial records, spanning 1924-1965, with a broad gap from 1932-1958. The records include account statements, account books, information on dues and disbursements, and receipts. There is a clipping in folder 12. The WIC was a life member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A plaque in folder 13 commemorates the membership.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

BOX 1: Minute books, club history, correspondence, financial records, clipping

FOLDER	CONTENTS
1	Minute book, 1909-1911
2	Minute book, 1916-1918
3	Constitution
4	History
5	Membership and Officers
6	Correspondence, 1918-1984, n.d.
7	Account Book, 1924-1931
8	Account Book, 1959-1965
9	Account Statements, 1964-1965
10	Dues and Disbursements
11	Receipts
12	Clipping
13	(ART) NAACP Life Membership Plaque, 1962 (R1394)

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](#)
2. Click on the "Local Catalog" icon.
3. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and **four** digits (e.g., M 0715, SC 2234).
4. When you find the collection, go to the "Holdings" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.

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