

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Minor House

and or common Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs

## 2. Location

street & number 2034 North Capitol Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Indianapolis

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana

code 018

county Marion

code 097

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Club house

## 4. Owner of Property

name Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs

street & number 2034 North Capitol Avenue

city, town Indianapolis

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office

street & number City-County Building

city, town Indianapolis

state Indiana

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes  no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
excellent	deteriorated	unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
good	ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	moved    date
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs maintains its home at 2034 North Capitol Avenue. Located on a major southbound street near downtown, the house is surrounded by private residences to the north and a major hospital complex which encroaches on the south. The two and one-half story frame Colonial Revival building, sheathed in asphalt siding, rests upon a brick foundation and has basically a "T" shaped plan.

Located on the main (east) facade on the long side of the gabled roof are two identical hipped roof dormers with three double-hung sash windows on each (photo 1). Below the dormers, the roofline is highlighted by a decorative wooden frieze of modillions and dentils. The bay window of the second story originally extended to the first floor until the porch was enclosed c. 1950 to provide more interior space. Immediately south of the bay window, on the second story, are two small fixed sash windows with two double-hung sash windows to their south. The flat-roofed, one-story porch has two, three part picture windows. The original front door is now located under an awning on the enclosed porch. Its original multi-light window was destroyed and replaced by a single piece of glass (photo 2).

The south facade shows the gable end, divided in half by the very simple design of the exterior corbeled chimney (photo 3). Double-hung windows flank the chimney on all three floors. The side porch (enclosed c. 1950), located to the west of the gabled section, has a low-hipped roof and screen door. The room now serves as a bathroom. The gable has a plain frieze molding and a horizontal cornice matching that on the front. A two-story gabled wing extends from the rear (west side) of the house. Windows on the wing's south side are conventionally situated on the first and second floors, except for a window centered between the first and second floor. This is located at a staircase landing. A fixed sash window over the enclosed back porch is at the top of the stairway which leads into the attic (photo 2).

Photo 5 shows the gable of the west facade which has a plain frieze and cornice. The centrally located exterior brick chimney is flanked by two fixed sash windows at the attic level. A one-story plywood addition which rests upon a brick foundation is attached to the house on this facade. To the right of the chimney is a double-hung window on each floor. A sidewalk extends to the rear of the lot where a carriage house formerly existed.

The north facade (photo 4) shows an oriel window at the main stair landing supported by wooden brackets and lit by two single, fixed sash windows over two double-hung windows. There are two double-hung windows in the gable, and two more on the second floor to the west of the oriel. On the west end of the first floor is a group of three double-hung windows. To the west of the gable is an intersecting hipped roof, which does not occur on the south gable, and which fills in part of the "T" shape. The length of the hipped roof is equal to the length of the enclosed back porch.

The interior on the first floor has a large room at the front where the front walls were torn down at the time of the porch's enclosure (photo 6). The fireplace on the west side of the room is surrounded by classical detailing in the form of Corinthian pilasters framing the mirror, and Ionic columns flanking the fire box (photo 7). A similar fireplace with Classical surrounds connects with the south exterior chimney (photo 8) at the south end of the room. The front stairway is made of oak (photo 9); the rear staircase, which extends to the attic, is made of fir (photo 10). Windows and doors throughout the house have single entablatures.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion	
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science	
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture	
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social	X
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian	
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	theater	
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics/government	transportation	
		invention		X other (specify) Ethnic heritage (black)	
<b>Specific dates</b> 1897	<b>Builder/Architect</b> Shellhouse & Company/Unknown				

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Minor House is important for its strong association with the formation and federation of black women's clubs in Indiana around the turn of the century. Serving since 1927 as the headquarters for the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (ISFCWC), the house has been a significant part of the black history of Indiana. Influenced by a national movement of the organization of black women's clubs, the federation was formed in 1904 to allow individual clubs to benefit from their association with one another. The club home was purchased from its original owners, John and Sarah Minor, in 1927, and continues to be maintained by the ISFCWC.

### National Movements

The formation of black women's clubs in northern states was largely influenced by the formation of antislavery, women's rights and literary societies in the 1830s and 1840s. The American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in 1833 with black and white women members. White women, black women, and several black men, including Frederick Douglass, were involved with the first Woman's Rights Convention in 1848. Many of the same people concerned with abolition were also in favor of the improvement of women's rights and vice versa. White women's clubs were often formed for the study of literature, a trend that was also true for black women. In both northern and southern states, the clubs which black women formed were concerned with upholding and promoting moral and religious values, improving the status of black women and of the race, and with the education and welfare of black children.

Also important in the formation of black women's clubs were the groups formed within the sphere of church-sponsored activities. These missionary societies and ladies aid clubs helped the women to perfect their organizational, fund raising and executive skills, and taught them to work together. It was a natural outgrowth of their experience with these church organizations that the women moved to establish other organizations with broader goals and memberships. As is reported by Darlene Clark Hine in her history of black women in Indiana, "The founding of black Hoosier women's clubs during the first two decades of the 20th century, at the peak of black urban migrations from the South, mirrored a national trend among black women. With persistent, and enthusiastic determination, black women founded clubs in virtually every city and state in the country." This was part of a larger trend which saw Americans involved in a frenzy of forming and joining clubs, associations, and societies in the years between 1895 and 1905.<sup>1</sup>

The black women's clubs were guided by the philosophies of two great black activists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Booker T. Washington and William E. B. DuBois. Washington, an ex-slave who became a spokesman for other freed slaves, advocated the teaching of manual skills to blacks and a social separation of the races.<sup>2</sup> This philosophy

<sup>1</sup> Darlene Clark Hine. When the Truth is Told: A History of Black Women's Culture and Community in Indiana, 1875-1950. Indianapolis: The National Council of Negro Women, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Richard A. Long and Eugenia W. Collier, eds., Afro-American Writing: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1985) p. 137.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation page

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Indianapolis West

Quadrangle scale

1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	6	5	7	1	7	8	0	4	4	0	4	9	8	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

C 


D 


E 


F 


G 


H 


## Verbal boundary description and justification

Metzger's Subdivision, Sub Lot 28 of S. Henderson's Edition

## List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name title Suzanne T. Rollins, Preservation Historian  
Tiffany Hatfield, Preservation Intern; Eric Utz, Director

organization Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana date July 15, 1986

street & number 1028 North Delaware telephone 317/638-5264

city or town Indianapolis state Indiana 46202

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Richard Maty for J. M. Redmon*

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 1-30-87

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Photo 11 shows the dining room. A fireplace with a classical mantel is located to the south, flanked by doorways. A Dutch door, with infill above, leads to the Butler's pantry to the west (photo 12). Through the butler's pantry is the kitchen (photo 13).

Photo 14 shows the wooden door with entablature, typical of the woodwork throughout the house. The wood on the second and third floors is fir.

The attic (photo 16) has two rooms, each lit with a dormer.

The Federation's home is structurally sound and in fair condition. The building is currently threatened by the northward expansion of nearby Methodist Hospital. The lot immediately north of the house was purchased and cleared by the hospital. Restoration to the original exterior by removal of the asphalt shingles is planned to reveal the original clapboard. Further restoration plans for the house include the reconstruction of the original porch, as well as an interior renovation which will provide office and library space.

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is reflected in the clubs' promotion of trade schools for black youths, training programs for domestic science, and day schools and kindergartens for black children. DuBois, born and educated in the north and said to be the most brilliant and influential black scholar of the 20th century,<sup>3</sup> advocated a "Talented Tenth" concept, whereby the ten percent of educated blacks should be responsible to advance the situation of the remaining 90 percent.<sup>4</sup> The philosophy of DuBois is reflected in a quote from Fannie Barrier Williams, a late 19th century author: "Among colored women the club is the effort of the few competent on behalf of the many incompetent."<sup>5</sup>

The organization of black women was a truly amazing accomplishment considering that slavery was only completely abolished with the Fourteenth Amendment in 1865. A mere 30 years later, in July, 1895, at the calling of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, president of the Woman's Era Club of Boston, representatives from black women's clubs across the country convened in Boston and formed the National Federation of Afro-American Women. The gathering was precipitated by an inflammatory letter which contained degrading statements about blacks, written by the president of the Missouri Press Association to the secretary of the Anti-Lynching Committee of Great Britain. The author proclaimed that "the Negroes of this country were wholly devoid of morality, the women were prostitutes and all were natural thieves and liars."<sup>6</sup> Fifty-five clubs were in attendance at the convention, including the Young Ladies' Trilby Club of Evansville, Indiana. The National Federation of Afro-American Women and the Colored Women's League (organized by Hallie Quinn Brown in 1893 after she was denied participation in the Chicago World's Fair Board of Lady Managers) convened in July, 1896, and merged to become the National Association of Colored Women, also known as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC).

While black and white women did form segregated clubs, a general reflection of existing societal norms, an attempt was made by Ruffin and her Women's Era Club of Boston to join the white General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), which grew out of the first convention of white women's clubs in 1889. (Five women's clubs from Indiana were in attendance at the 1889 convention.) The by-laws did not mention race exclusion; however, the question of black women being admitted to the GFWC arose shortly before the Fifth Biennial Convention of the GFWC in 1900. The Women's Era Club was given a certified membership by the president of the GFWC, but the president had not consulted the Board of Directors and apparently did not know that the club had black members. Ruffin, as president of the club, was chosen by the Massachusetts State Federation as a delegate for the convention to be held in Milwaukee. When it was discovered that Ruffin and other club members were black, the club's dues were returned and the club's certificate of membership was requested returned on the grounds that the Board of Directors had not approved the membership.<sup>7</sup>

The general consensus among northern women was that establishing a color line for the GFWC would be a step backwards. The general consensus among southern women was that the by-laws should be amended to specifically exclude non-whites. The issue was finally resolved in 1902 with a compromise resolution proposed by the Wednesday Club of St. Louis, which was then adopted into the by-laws.<sup>8</sup> It stated that:

. . .clubs containing colored women shall be eligible to the General Federation in those states and territories in which they are eligible to membership in their state or territorial Federation, and . . . where these organizations do not exist, race eligibility shall be declared by a three-fifths vote of the clubs.<sup>9</sup>

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In addition to its own activities, since its 1904 founding the ISFCWC has been instrumental in fostering community-conscious activities among its member clubs. For instance, the Woman's Improvement Club of Indianapolis, established in 1903 by Lillian Thomas Fox, founded and maintained an outdoor tuberculosis camp from 1905 to 1916. From 1922 to 1935 they operated a home for the care of tuberculosis patients, and after 1935 continued financial assistance to individual cases.<sup>12,13</sup>

Clubs have traditionally supported other charitable concerns with financial contributions, and have set up scholarship funds for both girls and boys.<sup>14</sup> They have also given of their time and resources by providing food, clothing and lodging for flood victims or indigent families. During World War I, Bibles were distributed to departing soldiers by the Thursday Afternoon Coterie Club in Indianapolis.<sup>15</sup>

There are currently 35 member clubs in ten Indiana cities. Four of the cities have city federations which unite the clubs, within the cities of Indianapolis, Gary, Fort Wayne and East Chicago.

The Minor House

The house at 2034 North Capitol Avenue was not obtained for the ISFCWC's use until 1927. The original owners were John W. and Sarah P. Minor. Shellhouse and Company was contracted in July, 1897, to build the home.<sup>16</sup> John Minor was a Perry County native, self-taught in law. He organized the Sentinel Printing Company of Indianapolis in 1883, and served as secretary-treasurer for the company from 1884 to 1922. Minor later became president and remained at this position for two years until his death in 1924.<sup>17</sup> His daughter, Mrs. Caroline Rodecker, and his widow, Sarah P. Minor, lived in the house until it was bought by the ISFCWC in 1927.

The ISFCWC president in charge of the fund raising for the house's purchase was Mrs. Carrie Crump. Meetings were previously held from house-to-house. Mrs. Crump and a group of Indianapolis women met and decided to solicit funds from door-to-door. This group collected a sum of \$1500 which served as a down payment. Due to the onset of the Depression that year there was no work, and consequently no money in circulation. The ISFCWC's members kept up payments as much as possible. Mrs. Grace Wilson served as president during the Depression era and collected \$400. This was quite an accomplishment for the black women of the 1930s. When few Hoosiers had any money, much less the black population, fighting racism's exclusion from whatever jobs did exist was an added struggle for the Federation's members.

Despite their hard work, the mortgage was still scheduled for foreclosure by 1940. Under the presidency of Mrs. Lena Harris, however, the debt of \$7900 was reduced to \$2100 in four years. The responsibility for Mrs. Harris' success was due to the fact that she broadened her program. Adding four districts and 50 departments widened the scope of possible charitable donations to the Federation. Mrs. Harris' previous experience of serving nationally under Mrs. Booker T. Washington gave the members confidence in their president and themselves to accomplish this feat. The mortgage was finally burned in July, 1945, under Mrs. Helen Jefferson's leadership. Mrs. Jefferson was one in a line of many leaders and members whose diligence kept a home for the betterment of the black Hoosier woman.

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The NACWC also became an affiliate member of the GFWC.<sup>10</sup>

Formation of the Indiana Federation:

Lillian Thomas Fox, the first black newspaper reporter for the Indianapolis News,<sup>11</sup> was the State organizer for the NACWC in Indiana. She was involved in bringing members of the executive committee of the NACWC to Indianapolis in January, 1904, to influence local clubs to form a state federation. (Some Indiana clubs did already belong to the NACWC.) In February, 1904, an article appeared in the Indianapolis Recorder, a black newspaper, about the proliferation of black women's clubs—more than 25 were listed for Indianapolis—which concerned themselves mainly with social functions. The author, "R.H.B.," called for the many clubs to join forces in order to better serve the race. On April 26 and 27, 1904, a state convention of black women's clubs was held at the Bethel A.M.E. church in Indianapolis for the purpose of forming a state federation. Fox gave the opening address and she and others gave speeches on the need for a federation in the state. Lynching, prejudice and disenfranchisement of blacks were denounced and the need for improving the situation of less fortunate blacks was acknowledged. Officers and committees were appointed at the convention and the first annual meeting of the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs was scheduled for the following year in Marion. The following clubs were in attendance at the 1904 convention:

Indianapolis: Mary Campbell Missionary; Flora Grant Missionary; East End Needle Club; Research Club; Woman's Club; Alpha Home; Anna Douglass Club; Willing Workers Club; Kings Daughters; Woman's Improvement Club; Middendorf Club; Woman's Auxiliary; Mother's Kindergarten Club.

South Bend: St. Pierre Ruffin Club

Anderson: Culture Club

Marion: Eurydice Club, Sorosis Club

Muncie: New Century Benefit Club

Terre Haute: Women's Central Union

The federation grew to include as many as 56 clubs in 1933, from 49 cities throughout Indiana. The statewide federation of clubs helped to stimulate intellectual activity; broadened the scope of clubs' programs; improved the visibility and credibility of the clubs by giving black women in Indiana a political force to wield in their favor; and gave club women a forum for exchanging ideas and realizing the importance of their individual club work through the annual meetings. Other activities have included an ISFCWC-sponsored scholarship fund to which each of the member clubs contributes. In addition, financial awards have been given to outstanding members of girls' clubs in the girls' branch of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC), known as the National Association of Girls' Clubs (NAGC). The ISFCWC has made contributions to the Fredrick Douglass Home in Washington, D.C. The organization has also published Hoosier Women, in order to communicate information and ideas among the Indiana clubs.



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In the years since the mortgage burning, club activity has so waned that an important current goal among club members and with the federation is to recruit younger members into the clubs. At present, the club state home is not being used during the winter months. The federation has begun planning for the restoration of the home. The various rooms would be used for conference rooms, a library and a room for the federation president to stay in when in Indianapolis on federation business. It is the intention of the federation to maintain the home as its headquarters for years to come and to strengthen the federation through the restoration.

In summary, the Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs represents the culmination of the development of black women's clubs in Indiana which, in turn, reflected what was happening nationwide during the decade spanning the turn of the century. As the headquarters of this organization for 60 years, the former Minor House symbolizes, perhaps better than any other resource, the banding together of black Hoosier women to improve their own status, to elevate the race, and to provide better homes and better education for their children.

Footnotes - continued

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Darlene Clark Hine, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Harris Wesley, The History of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs: A Legacy of Service (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc., 1984) p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Darlene Clark Hine, op. cit. pp. 34-35.

<sup>7</sup>Mary I. Wood, The History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (New York: General Federation of Women's Clubs, The History Department, 1912) pp. 129-131.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, pp. 154-157.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 345.

<sup>10</sup>Indianapolis Recorder, January 30, 1904, p. 4, c. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Darlene Clark Hine, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>12</sup>Lou Ella King, The History of Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs (Gary: Harris Printing Company, 1953) p. 24.

<sup>13</sup>Darlene Clark Hine, et. al., The Black Women in the Middle West Project: A Comprehensive Resource Guide Illinois and Indiana: Historical Essays, Oral Histories, Biographical Profiles and Document Collections (Indianapolis: Purdue Research Foundation, 1986) p. 60.

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Footnotes - continued

<sup>14</sup>Lou Ella King, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup>Mechanic's Lien, #15539. (Marion County: Recorder's Office, 15 October 1897),  
book 27, p. 502.

<sup>17</sup>"J.W. Minor Found Dead at Home," Indianapolis News (October 11, 1924, p.2, c.7).

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Book 27, page 502.

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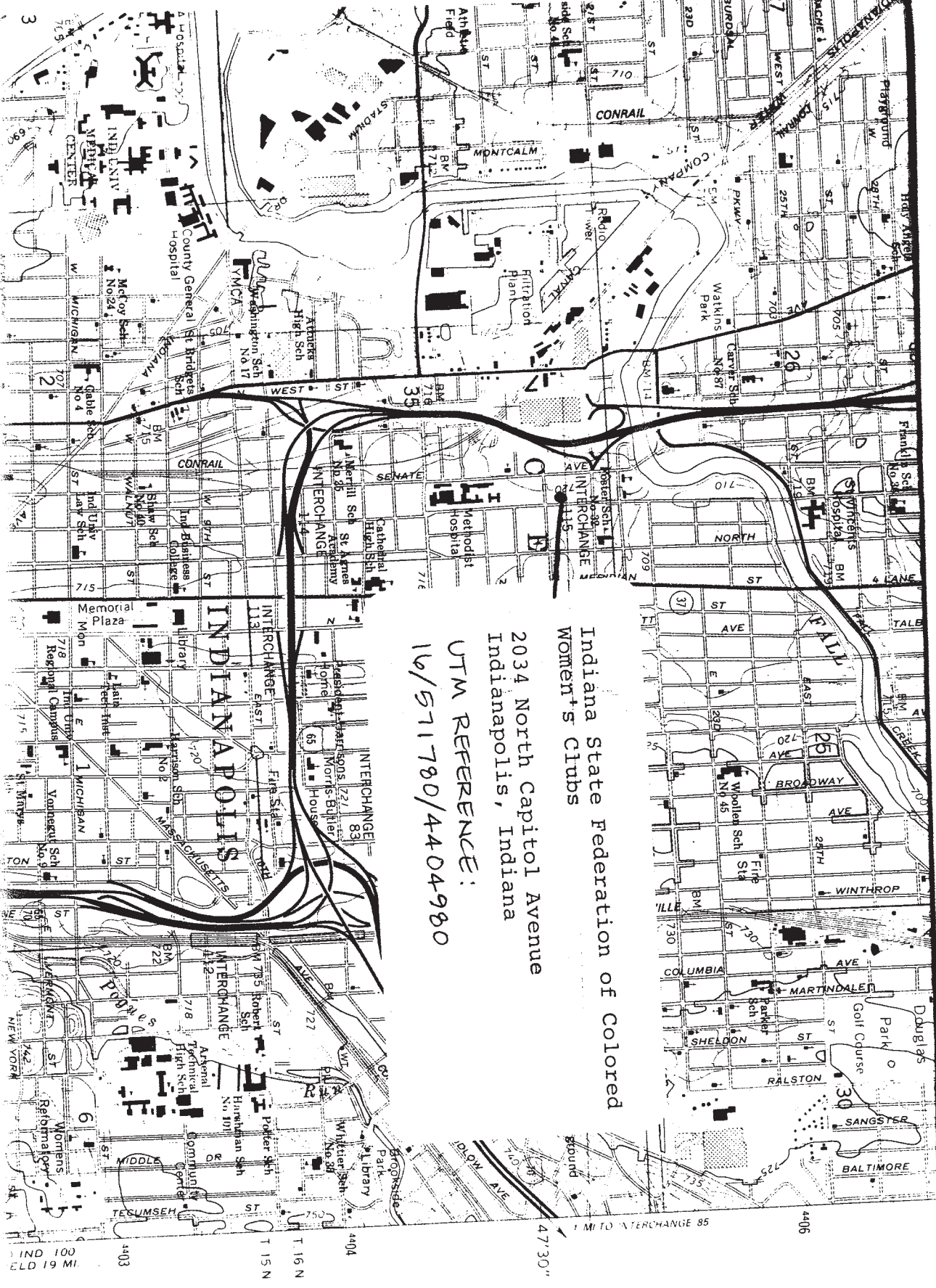
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Indiana State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs

2034 North Capitol Avenue  
Indianapolis, Indiana

UTM REFERENCE:  
16/51780/4404980

IND 100  
ELD 19 MI

1403

T 15 N

1404

47°30''

4406

1 MI TO INTERCHANGE 85