

The Federation of Civic Clubs

The Federation of Civic Clubs (FCC) was a early 1920s Indianapolis collection of civic/neighborhood groups, associations, and "leagues" basically made up of homeowners organized to look out for mutual interests. Realizing that a coalition of organizations would empower each one, the FCC was formed. The Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce embraced the idea and offered their space for the meetings.

During the **April 2, 1922** meeting, FCC president E. O. Snethen proclaimed,

"If you were not concerned for other people you would not be here. We are nonpolitical There are no fat offices to be handed out. This is a movement for the betterment of the city of Indianapolis. As civic bodies before the city council, we represent practically all the improvement issues that are brought up, and we will stand together. The FCC is going to be just what we make it. It is not a far distant future when Indianapolis will have half-a-million population. Let us make Indianapolis, the Beautiful, the best place in the world in which to live. Put your shoulder to the wheel and make this the best city in the United States. There is any doubt but that the work of the civic league of Indianapolis represents the real spirit of advancement and growth, and that the FCC will be the compact body moving towards a definite goal of better citizenship. We must first have a community spirit before we have a city spirit, and a FCC will express a united citizenship that cannot be ignored."

Racial, ethnic, and religious segregation in Indianapolis neighborhoods and schools

As the city was expanding during the post-WW I American Industrial Era, FCC members were intent on preventing the invasion of their neighborhoods by factories and other commercial interests.

Another issue around "invasions" was the change in demographics represented by the demand for labor and a growing population of African Americans in Indianapolis. During the First Great Migration (1916-1930), about 1,600,000 Blacks left the South. By 1910, Indianapolis had a Black population of 21,816. By 1920, the population grew to 34,678, an increase of 11%. Fear-ing racial strife happening in other cities (race riots in East St. Louis, 1917; Philadelphia, 1918; Wash-ington, DC and Chicago, 1919), city leaders began segregating neighborhoods, parks, hospitals, theaters, and our public schools.

Today's concerned citizens can learn a lot by viewing the first part of the documentary, *Attucks: A school that opened a city* (<https://video.wfyi.org/video/wfyi-education-programs-attucks-school-opened-city/>). Here they will see how the FCC joined forces with the Indy Chamber of Commerce, and the Citizens School Committee in 1922 to make up a trio of bigoted organizations which not only created an all-Black Crispus Attucks High School, but an entire segregated school system!

In fact, a review of the 1922 decisions by this trio of Indy's business, political, social, and cultural elites shows their efforts to keep Jewish, German, and Italian students south of Washington St. at Manual High School (501 South Meridian St.), The trio also help plan a Washington High School at West Washington St. and Belmont to keep Indy's ethnic Eastern European communities, such as the Slovenes, west of White River.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.26.22-IPS-discusses-Washington-Shortridge-and-Howe.pdf>

This was all to pave the way for the 3 group's decision to move Shortridge High School from downtown at Pennsylvania and Delaware to 34th and Meridian. The plan was an attempt to solve one aspect of the "The Negro problem." City fathers feared a continued co-mingling of the mainly white Anglo-Saxon Protestant student population with the diverse and growing array of Shortridge students from other racial, economic, ethnic, and religious groups if Shortridge was not relocated.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.28.22-The-Negro-Problem.pdf>

Shortridge opened in September of 1928 the same time Butler College moved from Irvington to its new campus in Fairview Park at 46th and Sunset--a move supported by FCC's Mapleton Civic Association.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/07.28.22-Mapleton-Civic-Association-IPS-Supt.-Graff-back-Butler-move-to-Fairview-Park.pdf>

To add to the FCC's legacy of supporting racial segregation, it supported the Butler relocation—a move which also reflected the segregated IPS school district. For example, in September of 1927, the same month Attucks opened, the college placed a quota on the number of Black students who would be admitted to the new campus to 10 per year. Each year's cohort of 10 Black students, were practically all female. Perhaps Black male students were excluded due to the fear of comingling that could lead to miscegenation.

Seen and mentioned in the April 28 FCC group meeting photo was none other than Paul Deeds resident of 248 Maple Rd. (38th St.), the home of Mr. Otto J. Deeds, whose wife Daisy Deeds was the leader of the White People's Protection League. Mrs. Deeds spoke to the IPS board regarding a segregated school district. This relationship shows the racist and segregationist tendencies of the Federation.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/06.14.22-Segregated-IPS-urged-by-Mapleton-Civic-Association-a-member-of-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

For an overview of education in Indy during the 1920s, see information of Part I of the IPS story at:

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Overview-of-A-Critical-History-of-Our-IPS-Parts-I-IV.pdf>

Important dates in the activities of the Federation of Civic Clubs throughout 1922

January 20, 1922 The idea of an Indianapolis FCC was first discussed informally during discussions at the Chamber of Commerce 28 South Meridian St.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/01.20.22-Plans-made-for-a-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

On February 2, 1922, the FCC is formed. This original FCC had around a dozen 12 community or neighborhood organizations and planned to meet monthly at the Chamber of Commerce.

March 13, 1922 *Indianapolis Star* p. 13 "Snethen heads civic bodies" At the first meeting of the FCC the original member organizations met and elected officers. Here are the organizations and representatives (what they do and where they live),

- Mapleton Civic Association, E. O. Snethen Attorney, 233 W. Maple Rd. FCC President
- Brookside Civic Association, A. Leroy Portteus, Cashier Indianapolis Life Insurance, 2113 Coyner FCC 1st Vice-President
- Southeastern Civic Improvement Club, L. L. Fellows, General Agent Lake Erie & Western Rail Road, 1221 College Ave., FCC 2nd Vice President
- College Avenue Civic Association, John F. White, Treasurer ??
- Parkview Boulevard Association, W. M. Sawin, Films, 2537 Parkway Blvd
- East Side Civic League, C. E. Paul, Barrel Dept. Standard Oil, 725 Wallace
- Brightwood Civic Association, Samuel W. Ingle, ??, 3178 N. Sherman Dr.
- North Central Civic Association, J. W. Cramer, ??
- Enterprise Civic League, J. Stephen Fullen, Real estate abstractor, 1029 Blaine
- Northeastern Community League, E. S. Moore ??

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/03.13.22-First-meeting-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/03.13.22-Officers-of-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

April 4, 1922

A non-political clearinghouse for will close to go to resolve issues any problems or the community needs met improvements band together

- Frank Turner, Enterprise Civic League
- Edgar F Brown, Brightwood Civic Association
- C H Bird, North Central Civic Association
- Robert F Sloan, City Market Master, President of Pleasant Run Boulevard Association and Belt Elevation League
- William E Jeffrey Riverside Civic Association

- Mrs. D. J. Hoss, Spades Park Protective Association,
- W. T. Quillin, Hustling Hundred Englewood Christian Church, President of Northeastern Civic Association
- W. Eberhardt, College Avenue Civic Association and Northeastern Civic Association
- T. P. Woodson, East Side Civic League
- C. E. Paul, Northeastern Civic Association,
- Southside Civic League

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.02.22-Community-group-doing-great-work-in-city.pdf>

April 5, 1922 Bios of chairs of the various committees of the FCC which represents 35,000 citizens..

- Sumner Clancy, Attorney, City Planning Committee: Keeps factories and other businesses out of residential areas. Member of the Northeastern Civic Association.
- William H. Moore, Committee on Public Improvement and Buildings: Covers issues with state and government buildings, hospitals, orphanages, asylums, other buildings, and all of the public improvements. Member of College Avenue Civic Association.
- George Beaman, Clerk, Public School Committee: Responsible for school affairs. Mr. Beaman has lifelong interest in school problems, teachers, buildings, curricula, and pertinent education matters. Member of Mapleton Civic Association.
 - George Beaman's membership on the FCC's education committee is most significant. He was an early leader in the move to create an entire segregated IPS school system. A November 6, 1921 ad for his attempt to become an IPS school commissioner (a bid which he lost) states: "I am for separate schools for white and colored, economy, lower taxes, less politics in our school affairs. Indorsed by all civic leagues in the city." The ad proves local civic associations were already involved in supporting racist school policies a year before the late December 1922 IPS decision to segregate the district.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/11.06.21Geo.-Beamans-ad-for-School-Board.pdf>

- J. Stephen Fullen, Public Utilities Committee: Represents the FCC's objection to a 7-cent street car fare increase. Member of Enterprise Civic of West Indianapolis.
- Dr. Robert Repass, Public Health and Sanitation Committee: Pushes health as vital to citizenship. Member of Mapleton Civic Association.
- John F. White, City Markets Committee: 12-year president of Southeastern Civic Improvement Club.
- Clarence McPherson, Miscellaneous Committee: Takes in issues not covered by other committees. President of Woodside Loyal Civic League.
- Leroy Portteus, Parks and Recreation Committee: Wants a park on the 128 acres between 13th and 34th on Dearborn. Today it's known as Washington Park, and 1st Vice-President of FCC.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.05.22-Bios-Committee-chairs-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

April 25, 1922 Information on the 17 civic clubs planning to attend the Friday, April 28 meeting at the Chamber of Commerce. New clubs are the:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| • South Side Civic League | • Hawthorne Community Association |
| • Woodside Loyal Civic League | • McClainsville Improvement Association |
| • East Side Civic League | • Riverside Civic Association |
| • Spades Park Protective Association | • Capitol Avenue Protective Association |

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.25.22-17-clubs-to-meet-at-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

It was a Capitol Avenue Protective Association that had a "spite fence" erected around the property/home of dentist Dr. Lucian Meriwether at 2255 N. Capitol to prevent people of color from buying property on Capitol

Ave. On January 6, 1921 the courts took the case under advisement. On April 29, the “spite fence” was ruled illegal and Dr. Meriwether got \$10,000 damages and the 6ft high fence removed.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/01.06.21-Spite-Fence-case-Capitol-Ave-Protective-Association.pdf>

April 26, 1922 “Club FCC leader adds members to each of the eight bodies

- School/Education Committee: C. H. Bird, North Central Civic Association and Edward J. Sexton, Southeastern Improvement Club
- Committee on Markets: Frank Turner, Enterprise Civic League, and Mrs. C. A. James, Brookside Civic Association.
- Committee on City Planning: River GC Baker, Hawthorne Community League, and J. H. Patton, Spades Park Protective Association.
- Committee on Public Utilities: Edgar Brown, Brightwood Civic League, and John M. Cain, Capitol Avenue Protective Association.
- Committee on Public Improvements and Buildings: LA Miller, Maclean’s McClainsville Improvement Association, and E. S. Moore, Northeastern Community League.
- Committee on Parks and Recreation: L. L. Fellows College Avenue Civic League, and J. C. Woodruff, Southern Civic League.
- Committee on Public Health and Sanitation: Dr. Walter F Kelly, East Side Civic League, and Dr. George R. Christian, Southeastern Improvement Club.
- Committee on Miscellaneous Affairs: C. E. Paul, East Side Civic League, and W. M. Swain, Riverside Civic League.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.26.22-Committees-of-Federation-Civic-Clubs-named.pdf>

April 28, 1922 Photo of and information on those who attended the April 28, meeting at the Chamber

- John F White, Secretary of the FCC, ??
- J. P. Woodson, College Avenue Civic Association, Chairman of the program committee, ??.
- A. Leroy Portteus, Vice-president of the FCC, Cashier Indianapolis Life Insurance 2113 Coyner Ave.
- Frank C Jordan, Chairman of the fire prevention committee of the Chamber of Commerce,??
- W.J. Curran Indianapolis Salvage Corps, ??
- E. O. Snethen, Lawyer, President of the FCC, 233 W. Maple Rd.
- C. A Johnson ??
- William H. Moore ??
- R. E. Logadon Director of Indiana Health Exposition ??
- Harry Myers, Guest ??
- John Hyman, Guest ??
- Carl J. Baker, Mail carrier, 1528 Edgemont Ave
- Robert Richardson, Printer, *Indianapolis News*, 1342 Edgemont.
- W. M. Swain ??
- W. F. Batley, Electrician, 3007 Hovey
- C. A. Bird.??
- C F Reighadt ??
- Joseph E Burke ??
- Paul Deeds ?? 248 W. Maple Rd., home of Daisy Deeds, Head of White People’s Protection League
- Mr. and Mrs. Louis Sharp, Broom maker, 1230 N. Gladstone Ave
- C. E. Paul ??
- S. M. Botts, Clerk, 1338 E. Gimber
- L. A. Miller ??

- Harry Waldketter ??
- Sumner Clancy, Lawyer, Clancy & Roller, 4198 Carrollton Ave
- P. H. Simmons, Vice President Mapleton Civic Association. Mutual Realty Corp—a subsidiary of Mapleton Civic Association, ??

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.28.22-Second-meeting-of-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

April 28, 1922 *Indianapolis Times* editorial, “The Negro Problem.” The editorial concerns the growing tendency of Blacks seeking homes in white residential sections. It discussed what the writer going as “... One of the indefensible anomalies of our educational system was on exhibition [at Shortridge High School]--the comingling of blacks and whites in the classrooms.” The editorial went on to assert, “The Negro is among us, and the race should be encouraged to progress, but that path should never lead to social mingling. Miscegenation has no advocate in decent circles. Sane leaders, white and black, must realize that each race must work out its separate destiny with a mutuality of interests but without amalgamation.”

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/04.28.22-The-Negro-Problem.pdf>

May 27, 1922 The *Indianapolis Times* headlines “Segregation of Negroes Urged.” On page 2 of the *Indianapolis Star* the story title read, “Urge separate Negro schools; Civic Clubs adopt resolution the [IPS] commissioners provide segregation plan.” A product of several weeks of work by George Beaman and FCC’s committee on schools, the resolution demanded separate schools taught by “colored teachers for colored children.” It also urged the county commissioners and health officers of the city and state provide additional facilities for the treatment of tuberculosis (TB) among Indy’s Black residents.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/05.27.22-Separate-Negro-schools-urged-by-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs-.pdf>

The stark racism behind the plan caused some apprehension and consequent lively debate at the meeting where some members expressed that the resolution could arouse “... racial hatred that might embroil the Federation in disputes” (Thronbrough, 2000). This prompted a response by the FCC leader, “There is no use going behind the bush on this proposition. We’ve all been afraid to get up and say what our sentiments are on this question for business and political reasons”-- that “... crowded classrooms with mixed enrollments were a menace to whites” (Thronbrough, 2000).

Also at the meeting, the Rev. CG Baker, pastor the West Park Christian Church, noted that the Hawthorne Community Association proposes a high school on the Westside to be built at a site at Washington St. and Belmont Avenue after the proposed new Shortridge high school was built at 34th and Meridian St.

June 13, 1922 FCC submits resolutions as committee on schools to Indianapolis board of county commissioners regarding the high rate of tuberculosis (TB) in Black neighborhoods. Noting that “The public schools have a large number of colored children in incipient stages” of TB, the situation was one of the factors FCC (and the Indy Chamber Of Commerce) used as excuses for a segregated IPS school system.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/06.13.22-TB-sanitarium-for-Blacks-urged-by-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

What makes this situation so tragic is the obvious characteristic of the Federation to be self-critical: “Ironically, members of the city clubs did not seem to recognize that their efforts to enforce residential segregation computer to the crowded and unsanitary conditions that may black neighborhoods breeding grounds for tuberculosis” (Thronbrough, 2000).

June 14 1922 George W. Beaman Resolutions urging race segregation in public schools, which have been passed by the Mapleton Civic Association (represented by George W Beaman) and the White Supremacy League (represented by Mrs. Otto J. Deeds) were presented to the IPS board and taken under consideration. “Announcement was made by the IPS board that school No. 4 630 West Michigan St., will be converted into a colored school next fall in order to accommodate the rapidly increasing colored population in that part of the city.” *Indy Star* p. 5

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/06.14.22-Segregated-IPS-urged-by-Mapleton-Civic-Association-a-member-of-Federation-of-Civic-Clubs.pdf>

July 28, 1922 Members of the Northeastern Civic Association hear IPS Superintendent Graff and Wallace O. Lee of the Mapleton Civic Association speak on the behalf of the move of Butler from Irvington to Fairview Park. Graff said the college had outgrown its original home, and Mr. Lee said the move would be good for a nap
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/07.28.22-Mapleton-Civic-Association-IPS-Supt.-Graff-back-Butler-move-to-Fairview-Park.pdf>

September 26, 1922 A proposal of support for Westside High School was submitted by Education Committee of the FCC led by George W. Beaman and C. H. Bird in behalf of Rev. Clarence G. Baker of the west Indianapolis Hawthorne Community Center.

Other members of the Federation of Civic Clubs

- Enterprise Civic League
- Mars Hill-Lafayette Heights Civic Association
- East 13th St. Community Center
- 13th Ward Civic League
- Brightwood Civic League

Other important dates and activities influencing the Federation of Civic Clubs

January 19, 1923 Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce list Education Committee members. One is E.O. Snethen, lawyer, president of the FCC. Others are J.W. Atherton (Butler administrator), Lee Burns (president of Burns Realty, Butler Board Member), Thomas Carr Howe, Chairman, Phillip Zoecher, James Ogden, and George Buck (Principal of Shortridge High School)

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/1923-Indy-Chamber-committees.pdf>

Now, E. O. Snethen becomes a member of the early 1920s oligarchy of Indianapolis education decision-makers.
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Early-1920s-Indianapolis-oligarchy-of-education-decision-makers.pdf>

February ?, 1923 “White Supremacy” *Indianapolis Times*, p. ? The editorial proclaims, “The question of white world supremacy is not a problem of the South, but is a national and world problem... “ It says, “Europe itself cannot maintain domination of the white race. “ It also proclaims, “The hope of the whole world lies in America and in the cooperation of 100% American men and women in their belief and coordinated voices raised in behalf of White Supremacy.” This public “proclamation” rationalizing racial bigotry by a respected member of the local press removed any moral barrier preventing Indianapolis residents and members of the Federation from discriminating against America citizens on the basis of the simple factor of skin color.

Note, this was not the Klan, but a local Indianapolis newspaper

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/02.20.23-White-Supremacy-Editorial-IndianapolisTimes.pdf>

?? Unable to find information on this person in 1921, 1922, and 1923 *Indianapolis City Directories*.

<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/collections/icd>

Thornbrough, E. (2000). *Indiana Blacks in the 20th Century*. Bloomington, IN: IU Press. pp. 54-58.

© 2019 None of the above information may be used without permission from the Charles E. Loflin & Virginia P. Vornehm-Loflin Center on the History of the Indianapolis Public Schools johnharrisloflin@yahoo.com