Reverend Fred Zimmerman, S.J., director of Dismas House, donated the records of Dismas House to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri-St. Louis on July 14, 1982.

An additional 33RPM record was donated by Tim Lloyd in March 2015.

Reverend Charles Dismas Clark, a Jesuit priest, and Morris Shenker, a prominent St. Louis attorney, founded Dismas House as a halfway house for ex-convicts in August, 1959.

Clark was born in Pennsylvania in 1901, one of thirteen children of a coal miner. St. Mary's College in Kansas ordained him in 1932. Clark taught at St. Louis University High School during the 1930s, served as an Army chaplain during World War II, and conducted missions and retreats in the midwest from 1945-1959. He met Judge D.W. Fitzgibbons of the Court of Criminal Corrections of St. Louis in 1933. Fitzgibbons invited Clark to visit the courtroom to see the "hopelessness and suffering of the offenders brought before the bench." This visit led to Clark's interest in the problems of prisoners. He began visiting jails and prisons and advocating prison reform and rehabilitation programs. By the time he decided to open a halfway house, prisoners and ex-convicts had affectionately nicknamed him the "hoodlum priest."

A Russian immigrant, Shenker became a nationally known defense lawyer in the 1950s. He felt that prisons did "one thing very well, they make criminals better criminals." He met Father Clark in the courts and both men realized they had the same perception of the criminal justice system.

In 1959 Clark received permission from the Missouri Jesuit Province to open a halfway house. Shenker offered financial assistance and bought the former Jefferson school building at 905 Cole street for $42,000 from the St. Louis Board of Education. Clark and Shenker renovated the school into a home for sixty men. They named it "Dismas House", after St. Dismas, the good thief who died next to Jesus. In spite of its name, and Father Clark's priesthood, the house was non-sectarian.

Dismas House opened on November 1, 1959. Clark and Shenker envisioned a place where "friendless, homeless, powerless men could have lodging, food, clothes, and a helping hand until they got a job." They accepted primarily men from the Missouri penitentiary, but also men from other prisons. Parolees and flat-timers (those who had completed their sentences) who had been approved by parole boards, prison officials, and the directors of Dismas, were accepted. Clark believed parole was the best way to rehabilitate prisoners because of the
lower recidivism rate among parolees versus flat-timers. Alcoholics, drug addicts, and psychopaths were not admitted, because of the special counseling they required. Clark saw himself and Dismas House as a liaison between the ex-convict and society. It offered counseling to help the released prisoners readjust to society and an employment agency to help them find jobs.

Father Clark and Dismas House received a lot of publicity, not all of it favorable. Local newspaper editorials criticized the halfway house approach and neighborhood residents complained about criminals living in their midst. Clark's charismatic personality ensured publicity, especially when he criticized the criminal justice system and called judges worse criminals than the men he served. He received his greatest notoriety after the release of the movie, "The Hoodlum Priest." United Artists produced the movie and Don Murray played the part of Clark. Location shots were filmed in St. Louis and the premiere of the film opened at the Loew's State Theater on February 28, 1961.

By the time of Clark's death in August 1963, over 2000 men had passed through Dismas House, and 95-98% of them had been successfully rehabilitated. Criticism had turned to praise and halfway houses were being established all over the country. The "hoodlum priest" was mourned by prisoners across the country.

Father Fred L. Zimmerman, S.J. became the director of Dismas House after Father Clark's death, and continued his predecessor's commitment to the former prisoners. Dismas House originally had relied on charitable donations from individuals. The Teamsters supported Dismas House with contributions, including a benefit show in 1965 which starred Frank Sinatra. As this kind of support diminished, Dismas House became more involved with federal and state correctional agencies. It was accepted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons in 1969 and the Missouri State Penitentiary in 1971 to take pre-releasees men who were released several months prior to parole and served the remainder of their sentences in halfway houses. Dismas House also applied for grants from the Missouri Law Enforcement Council and the Missouri Council on Criminal Justice. Father Zimmerman served as an advisor to both groups.

In 1972 Dismas House moved to 5025 Cote Brilliante. Over 11,000 men had been helped through counseling, shelter, or job placement. Dismas House continues the philosophy of Father Clark, rehabilitation takes place in society, not behind bars.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The records series reflects Dismas House's fund--raising efforts, rehabilitation programs and its contacts with various government agencies, private foundations, the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, other halfway houses, and individuals. Notable correspondents are Morris Shenker, Robert F. Kennedy, Jimmy Hoffa, Thomas Eagleton and Richard Nixon. The correspondence is particularly valuable for the insight it gives into Dismas House's relationship with the Teamsters, Anheuser-Busch and other private funding sources.
Testimonial comments from ex-convicts who were helped by Dismas House and newsclippings on the problems of ex-convicts are included. The series also contains material for the film, "The Hoodlum Priest."

The records series also shows Father Clark's successful attempts to publicize his work. Brochures, circulars, public relations letters and other literature published by Dismas House explain its mission and make appeals for funds. It also includes magazine and newspaper articles about Dismas House from 1956 to 1963 as well as articles written by Father Clark on corrections reform. Material from Father Clark's administration ends with his death in 1963.

Under Father Zimmerman's direction, Dismas House became increasingly involved with the Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council and the Missouri Council on Criminal Justice, two state agencies created to deal with problems of the criminal justice system. Material from this period includes grant applications, correspondence, funding requests and award notices from these agencies pre-release contract agreements with the federal government, and tax reform memoranda. The records series also contains annual reports from 1966 to 1972 and board of directors minutes from 1971 to 1973.

The scrapbooks include newsclippings on the activities of Father Clark as well as material on the premiere of "The Hoodlum Priest" film. Artifacts includes posters, certificates of appreciation, and a St. Dismas medal. The photographs include shots of Father Clark and Father Zimmerman, "The Hoodlum Priest" film premiere, the Dismas House building, the memorial dinner for Father Clark and the Teamster Charity Show. Tapes of interviews with and about Clark and his lectures are included.

There are two folders that predate the founding of Dismas House, containing Father Clark's military records, 1919 to 1952, and newsclippings from 1956.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

1. Records, Folders 1-228, 1919-1978. Arranged alphabetically. Correspondence, financial records, annual reports, minutes, newsclippings, bylaws, brochures, circulars, publications, articles, Clark's appointment calendars, reports, grant applications, pre-release agreements with prisons, fundraising material, and programs, premiere invitations, and correspondence from "The Hoodlum Priest."


3. Artifacts and photographs, Folder 229-238, 1959-1964. Posters, St. Dismas medal, certificates of appreciation, and photographs #5765-5948 (#5927-3934 are located in the mapcase).


FOLDER LIST

BOX 1 (021255)
1. Account of Successes, 1969-1973
2. Advisory Council, 1961
3. Mary Aiello, 1968
5. American Catholic Correctional Chaplains Association 1959, 1965
10. Applicant-Resident Report, 1968-1972
11. Application Questionnaires, 1963
13. Articles by Father Clark, c.1960
15. Articles about Dismas House, 1966-1975
16. Ira Baris, Correspondence, 1959
17. Better Business Bureau Questionnaire, 1973
18. Nicholas Blassie, Correspondence, 1962-1964
21. Brothers' Keepers, 1964
26. Louis Carney, Correspondence, 1972-1975
29. Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, 1961
30. Certificates of Appreciation, 1965-1968
32. Chicago Dismas House, 1961-1963
33. Christmas Greetings, 1959-1964
34. Circulars, Public Relations Letters, 1959

BOX 2 (021273)
39. City Hospital Policy Concerning Residents, 1960
40. Father Clark, General, 1960-1962
41. Father Clark, General, n.d.
42. Father Clark's Death, Newsclippings, 1963
43. Father Clark's Death, Sympathy Correspondence, 1963
44. Father Clark Eulogy, 1963
45. Father Clark Memorial, 1964
46. Father Clark's Military Records, 1919-1952
47. Clergyman's Luncheon, 4/25/61
48. Clothing Records, 1963
49. Coordinating Committee of Dismas House, 1965
50. Correspondence, 1958-1960
51. Correspondence, 1961
52. Correspondence, 1962
53. Correspondence, 1962
54. Correspondence, 1962
55. Correspondence, 1962-1963
56. Correspondence, 1963
57. Correspondence, 1963
58. Correspondence, 1964-1975
59. Correspondence, 1967
60. Correspondence, 1969-1978
61. Correspondence, 1972
62. Coro Foundation, 1972
63. Coronet, 2/61
64. Cote Brilliante Building Data, 1972-1973
66. Paul Crump, Article by Father Clark and Newsclippings, 1962
68. Al DeCaprio, Correspondence, 1966
69. Fred DeWitte, Correspondence, 1974

BOX 3 (021358)
70. Dismas Clark Foundation, Bylaws, 1967
71. Dismas Club, 1961
73. Dismas Day, Open House, 1959-1965
74. Dismas House Employment Bureau, 1959-1969
75. The Dismas House of St. Louis," by Harriet Naugle, 1963
76. Donors, 1967-1972
77. Father Dowling, 1960
78. E.P. Dutton, Correspondence, 1961
79. Thomas Eagleton, Correspondence, 1961-1964
80. Ex-Convict, Problems, Newsclippings, 1960
81. Federal Pre-Release, 1971
82. Financial Report, 1959
83. Financial Statement, 1961
84. Food Service Distribution Program, 1964-1970
85. Foundations, Correspondence, California, 1962
86. Foundations, Correspondence, 1962
88. Foundations, Correspondence, 1967
89. Foundations, Correspondence, 1967
90. Foundations, Correspondence, 1967-1968
91. Foundations, Correspondence, 1969-1970
92. Founders’ Names, 1962
93. Friends of Father Zimmerman, 1972
94. Fund-Raising, Hierarchy, 1960
95. Future Homes, 1959-1965
| 97. | Dismas House Goals, 1970 |
| 100. | Halfway House, Bibliography, Newsclippings and Contracts, 1971-1976 |
| 102. | Harper's Magazine, Correspondence, 1961 |
| 103. | Hierarchy, Correspondence, 1960 |
| 104. | "Hoodlum Priest," Correspondence, 1959-1963 |
| 105. | "Hoodlum Priest," Correspondence, 1962 |
| 106. | "Hoodlum Priest," Newsclippings |

**BOX 4 (021359)**

| 111. | Human Development Corporation, 1971-1973 |
| 112. | Illinois Department of Corrections, 1971 |
| 113. | Indeterminate Sentences, n.d. |
| 114. | International Halfway House, 1974-1975 |
| 115. | Jewish New Year Greetings, 1962 |
| 116. | Jewish War Veterans, Americanism Award, 1960 |
| 117. | KASHA-TV, 1974 |
| 118. | Robert F. Kennedy, Correspondence, 1961-1968 |
| 119. | Robert F. Kennedy, Correspondence, 1963 |
| 120. | KMOX, 1959-1960, 1962 |
| 121. | KSD, Correspondence, 1959-1951 |
| 122. | Labor Articles, 1959 |
| 123. | Labor Luncheon, 4/21/64 |
| 124. | Lane Bryant Annual Awards, 1962 |
| 125. | Lane Bryant Award, 1962 |
| 126. | Donald Latham, Correspondence, 1961 |
| 127. | Dismas Lawyers, List of Cases, 1959 |
| 128. | Lawyers, 1960 |
| 129. | Letter Critical of Father Clark, 1962 |
| 130. | List for Mr. Bauman, 1964 |
| 131. | Literature, 1963 |
| 132. | Father Lord, Biography, n.d. |
| 133. | Magazine Articles, 1961-1963 |
| 134. | Manpower, 1973 |
| 135. | Manpower Office, 1974-1975 |
| 137. | Meeting at Dismas House, 12/15/60 |
| 138. | Meetings at Dismas House, 8/3/59 |
| 139. | Meetings at Dismas House, 8/31/59 and 12/6/59 |
| 140. | Memorial Dinner for Father Clark, 1964 |
| 141. | Memorial Records, 1963 |
142. Charles E. Merrill Trust, 1961-1970
143. Miscellaneous Funding Requests, 1975-1976
144. Missouri Association of Community Residential Treatment Centers, 1973-1975
145. Missouri Association on Social Welfare, Committee on Corrections, 1960
146. Missouri Board of Probation and Parole, 1966-1975
147. Missouri Council on Criminal Justice, Correspondence and Memoranda, 1975
149. Missouri Department of Corrections, Pre-Release, 1970-1974
150. Missouri Department of Social Services, 1976
151. Missouri Division of Mental Health, 1973
152. Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council, 1977
153. MLEAC, 1971 to 1974
154. MLEAC, Application Grants, 1976
155. MLEAC, Correspondence, 1975
156. MLEAC Discretionary Grant Application, 1972
157. MLEAC, E010 Funding Request Forms, 1974
158. MLEAC, E042 Grant and Award Letter, 1974
159. MLEAC, Grant Applications, 1973
160. MLEAC, Grant Applications, 1973-1974

BOX 5 (021360)
161. MLEAC, Grant Applications, 1975-1977
162. MLEAC, Grant Awards, 1975-1977
163. MLEAC, Impact Grant, Division of Adult Service, 1973-1974
164. MLEAC, Impact Grant, 1975-1976
165. MLEAC, Guidelines and General Correspondence, 1970-1976
166. MLEAC, Monthly Service Statistics, 1977-1978
167. MLEAC and MCCJ, 1974-1975
169. Missouri Legislature, 1961
171. Missouri State Penitentiary, the Warden's Office, Correspondence, 1959-1960
175. Newsclippings, 1958-1961
177. Newsclippings, 1961-1962
178. Newsclippings, 1961
179. Newsclippings, 1961-1963
181. Newsclippings, 1963
183. Nixon Letter, 1972
185. Father Clark's Ordination Anniversary, Congratulatory Telegrams, 1962
186. Parole, 1959
187. Post Office Department, 1960-1961
188. Prayers to St. Dismas, n.d.
190. Pre-Trial Program, n.d.
191. President's Commission on Law Enforcement, 1967
193. Prison Art Exhibit, Newsclippings, 1966
194. Prisons and Corrections, Newsclippings, 1973
195. Probation and Parole, 1961-1963
196. Dismas House Programs, 1972
197. Proposed Organization to Aid Dismas House, 1964-1972
199. Public Defender Bill, Newsclippings, 3/8/64
201. Rehabilitation Materials, 1960-1965
203. Procedure for Accounting, 1963
204. Rules and Regulations, 1960
207. St. Leonard's House, Father Clark's Correspondence, 1962-1973
209. Sample Letters from Father Clark, 1970

BOX 6 (021365)
211. School Lunch Program, 1959-1963
212. Segregation in City Jail, Newsclipping, 1962
214. S.P.A.N. Service for Prisoners Aid in Nassau, Correspondence, 1961
215. Mother Seton Guild, 1961
216. Morris Shenker, Correspondence, 1959-1963
217. Morris Shenker, Correspondence, 1960-1969
218. Dismas House, Frank Sinatra Spectacular, 1965
220. Teamsters Citation, 1959
221. Teamsters, General, 1964-1973
224. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Thomas, Correspondence, 1959-1964
225. David Wolk, Correspondence, 1968-1973
226. Workshops and Conventions, 1971-1973
227. Charles Yalem, Correspondence, 1965-1968
228. Father Zimmerman, Biography, 1968

MICROFILM ROLL: SCRAPBOOKS, 1956-1961
230. Photographs, Father Clark, 192.1-192.46
231. Photographs, Catholic Youth Organization Conference, Little Rock, Arkansas, 5/5/63,
232. Photographs, "Hoodlum Priest," 192.55-192.76
233. Photographs, Dismas House, Exteriorland Interior, 192.77-192.103
235. Photographs, Memorial Dinner for Father Clark, 192.147-192.152
236. Photographs, Teamster Charity Show, 10/22-23/64, 192.153-192.157
237. Photographs, Father Zimmerman, 192.158-192.162
238. Photographs, Father Clark, 192.163-192.178
OVERSIZE: Photographs 192.179-192.186
OVERSIZE: 33 1/3 record, “Unions and Ex-convicts” address by Rev. C. Dismas Clark, SJ, before Teamsters Local 688.

TAPES
T-748 Father Clark at Western Illinois University, n.d.
T-749 Father Clark Lecture, Rayen Auditorium, 11/12/61, Part 1
T-750 Father Clark Lecture, Rayen Auditorium, 11/12/61, Part 2
T-751 Father Clark interview, 11/20/61
T-752 Father Clark Lecture, 11/26/61, Part 1
T-753 Father Clark Lecture, 11/26/61, Part 2
T-754 Father Clark interviewed by Bill Teague, WBNS-AM Radio, 5/62
T-755 Father Clark on "Community Forum," interviewed by Edward Schaefer, 7/15/62
T-756 Earle Voiles interviewed about Father Clark by Marian Prendergast, 1/4/67
T-757 Jerry Mabler and Vearl Harris, interviewed about Father Clark, 1/28/67

INDEX
Afro-Americans--Crime, f. 177
Aiello, Mary, f.3
Alcoholism, f. 4
American Catholic Correctional Chaplains' Association, f. 5
Anheuser-Busch, f. 88
Baumann, G. Duncan, f. 17, 31, 60, 130, 165
Better Business Bureau, f. 17
Board of Probation and Parole, f. 146, 186, 195
Brothers' Keeper, f. 21
Carney, Louis, f. 26
Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, f. 208
Chicago Dismas House, f. 32
City Hospital, f. 39
Clark, Father, f. 1-238, v. 1-2, t. 1-10
Coro Foundation, f. 32
Corrections, f. 226
Crime, f. 177, 198
Danforth Foundation, f. 88
DeCaprio, Al, f. 68
Department of Corrections, f. 149, 189
DeWitt, Fred, f. 69, 153, 163
Dismas Day, f. 72, 73
Dismas House, f. 1-238
Dowling, Father Edward, f. 77
Eagleton, Thomas, f. 79, 110, 198
Employment of Ex-Convicts, f. 134-136
Father Dismas Clark Foundation, f. 16, 70, 124
Fisher, Joseph, S.J., f. 176
Foundations, f. 27, 28, 85-90, 142
Freedom House, f. 99
Gaertner, Judge Gary, f. 69, 154, 161, 165, 167
Gibbons, Harold, f. 31, 65, 221, 222
Graham, R.W., f. 60
Grant, David, f. 17, 64, 69, 134, 148, 153, 154, 157, 158, 160, 161, 163, 167
Gurman, Isaac, f. 153, 165
Halfway Houses, f. 1-238
Heinecke, Otto, f. 164
Hoffa, James, f. 221, 222
"The Hoodlum Priest", f. 104-109, 133, 175, 176, 200
Human Development Corporation, f. 111
Hyland, Robert, f. 126
Illinois Industrial School--Shendan, Illinois, f. 226
Jesuits, f. 7, 170
Jones, Cleophus, f. 189
Kennedy, Robert F., f. 72, 118, 119
KMOX Radio, f. 120
Labor, f. 123
Labor Management Consultation, Inc., f. 221
Magdala House, f. 60, 100, 142, 162, 164
Meat Cutters Local 88, f. 18
Missouri Association of Community Residential Center, f. 144, 148, 149
Missouri Association on Social Welfare, f. 145
Missouri Council on Criminal Justice, f. 147, 148, 152, 154, 155, 158, 162, 167, 168
Missouri Department of Corrections, f. 100
Missouri Division of Mental Health, f. 151
Missouri Justice Association, f. 150
Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council (MLEAC), f. 69, 148, 152, 153-160, 163, 165-168

One More Chance, f. 184
Nixon, Richard, f. 183
Peters, Charlotte, f. 121
Pre-Trial Release, f. 162, 189, 190
Prisons, f. 23, 194
Rehabilitation, f. 201
Richards, Floyd, f. 60, 69, 152, 159, 160-162, 167, 168
St. Dismas, f. 14, 205
St. Leonard's House--Chicago, Illinois, f. 206, 207
St. Louis Commission on Crime and Law Enforcement, f. 163, 164
St. Louis Division of Adult Services, f. 163
Segregation, f. 212
Sertoma Club, f. 173, 213
Shenker, Morris, f. 16, 31, 45, 96, 97, 115, 118, 139, 216, 217, 221, 224
Sinatra, Frank, f. 218
Sunnen Foundation, f. 219
Teamsters, f. 31, 65, 122, 175, 218, 220, 221, 222
Thro, Father Linus, S.J., f. 129, 170
Toder, Harry, f. 60, 99, 150, 156, 160, 168, 196
Warshofsky, Fred, f. 63
Wohl Shoe Co. f. 88
Yalem, Charles, f. 227
Zimmerman, Fred, f. 1-238