



BHC-MSS 0125  
Guide to the Records of Project OWN  
By Meg Rinn  
January 2021

**Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Project OWN Inc.

**Title:** Records of Project OWN

**Dates:** 1969-1976

**Quantity:** 1 manuscript box

**Abstract:** Project OWN, began in 1968 under the name of the West End Corporation and was an offshoot from the major organization Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD). These records focus on the beginnings of Project OWN including their lobbying for closed sewer tanks following the death of Gary Crooks and their mini-store which helped address the food dessert of the West End.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

**Administrative History:**

Project OWN, began in 1968 under the name of the West End Corporation, and was an offshoot from the major organization Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD). Both organizations focused on improvement and social services for Bridgeport residents as the worst of white flight began in the city, with Project OWN focusing on issues in Bridgeport's West End.

The area at the time was well known for blight issues, open sewage tanks, and inadequate and sub-par housing. Project OWN was one of several neighborhood groups focused on addressing these issues.

One of Project OWN's biggest successes, accomplished through partnering with others, was insisting that all sewer tanks be closed in the city. The death of child Gary Crooks, who fell into one such tank on April 27, 1970, was the catalyst for change. Project OWN would go on to name their neighborhood center the Gary Crooks Memorial Center (which still functions to this day.) The Gary Crooks Center later served as a hub for other Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD) projects, including the Cultural Arts Center.

The death of Gary Crooks helped Project OWN successfully argue for a park in 1971. They also worked to run a mini-store near the P.T. Barnum apartments, helping to address the fact the area was a food dessert. Plans within the collection indicate that Project OWN wanted to open a full shopping complex to include a grocery store both to provide jobs and alleviate blight, but this seems to have never come to fruition.

According to tax filings, Project OWN ceased to be as of 1993. The Bridgeport History Center is currently working to understand the rest of Project OWN's history.

Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD) continues to this day, now known as Alliance for Community Empowerment.

**Scope and Content note:**

This collection should not be understood as a comprehensive collection of Project OWN. It is not. It is a selection of files that contain brochures, newspaper clippings, studies, and board documents along with some correspondence that focus on the earliest projects of Project OWN. This includes studies of land use, results of the mini-store, and work towards providing a park following the death of Gary Crooks.

**Arrangement Note:**

Subject files arranged alphabetically

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** Gift of Kathryn S. Porter, a member of OWN's Board of Directors, 1980.08

**Preferred Citation:**

Records of Project OWN (BHC-MSS 0125) Bridgeport History Center, Bridgeport Public Library.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

*Personal names*

Moses, Fred  
Johnson, William O.  
Crooks, Gary

*Corporate names*

Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD)  
Project OWN Inc.

*Subject tracings*

Food deserts  
Gary Crooks Memorial Center  
P.T. Barnum Apartments  
West End (Bridgeport, Conn.)

**Detailed box and folder listing**

Box 1

1. Alternate strategy for redevelopment, 1970
2. Annual meeting, 1974
3. Board of Directors, 1975
4. Bridgeport and Fairfield general files, 1969-1975
5. Brochures, 1970-1973
6. By-laws, undated
7. Contributions by corporations, 1976
8. Economic development, 1970-1972
9. Gary Crooks Center, undated

10. General, 1969-1972
11. Johnson, William O., undated
12. Land Use plan, 1970
13. Mini-store, 1976
14. Neighborhood facilities center, 1972
15. News clips, ABCD, 196-1976
16. Park, 1971
17. Photographs, 1969-1973
18. Sewer treatment plant and death of Gary Crooks, 1970
19. Shopping center, 1969-1976
20. Shopping center, interim report group II, 1969
21. Shopping center, land use, 1970
22. Shopping center and First National, 1971