

MSS 294 Chief Oskenonton Collection, ca. 1923

Restrictions: none

Amount: 4.6 lin ft (3 boxes and 1 oversized)

Biographical note: Oskenonton (1886-1955) was a member of the Bear Clan of the Mohawk Tribe in Canada. As an adult, he inherited the title of sachem. He also inherited musical talent from his parents, and knowledge of tribal traditions from his medicine woman grandmother. Orphaned at an early age, he spent his formative years living with relatives and in missionary schools, with intervals of residing in nearby forests. In 1915, a group of white campers overheard him singing, and he was invited to perform at the Christmas tree lighting in Madison Square Garden that December. Thus began a singing career that brought Oskenonton international acclaim. In the course of his subsequent travels, he studied the musical traditions of other tribes, while spreading those of his own tribe. In later years, he also became a noted spiritual leader, founding the Spiritual Center, in Lily Dale, New York.

Scope and content: This collection spans 1920- 1949, but most of the material seems to be from 1923. It includes many photographs of Natives from various locations in the United States, obtained by Oskenonton during his travels. In addition, there are photographs of Oskenonton with musical collaborators, and five 78 RPM phonograph records containing Native American related music.

The accession record contains a detailed inventory, and a finding aid for this collection can be found in Box 1 as well.

Box # / Oversized	Folder/Item	Description
1	Item 1	Framed, color picture of Chief Oskenonton.
	Item 2	Framed B+W photograph of Anson Lang Pavoy (?), signed "To my good friend Os-Kenon-Ton, in remembrance of the first of July, 1934."
	Item 3	Framed photograph of Oskenonton and two other young men, all in formal evening attire [early 1920's].
	Item 4	Steel plate printing block of Chief Oskenonton, wearing plains-type headdress.
	Item 5	Steel plate printing block of Chief Oskenonton. Complimentary plate to above Item 4- provides additional engraved detail.
	Item 6	Steel plate printing block. This is a smaller plate for printing side bar details, see Item 1 for an example of the print.
2	Folder 1	Color lithograph of a Native American sitting on a horse.
	Folder 2	24 B+W photographs. This folder includes promotional photographs taken by Graphic Photo Union (London), Fox Photos, Ltd. (London), and Walter Brydon (Selkirk). It also includes a series of B+W photographs taken at the Riverside Stage, "where the Indian play Hiawatha was first produced".
	Folder 3	20 B+W photographs. This folder includes various promotional photographs and assorted snapshots. Items of interest include a group photo of the performers at the Toronto Exhibition of 1937, and a photo of Oskenonton with Chiefs Fish Wolf Robe, Eagle Calf, Night Gun, and Bull Child. Also included is a signed photograph of Eunice Norlov.
	Folder 4	Framed photograph of a Native American.
3	Item 1	78 RPM Record: "From the Land of Sky Blue Water" sung by tenor Evan Williams (Victrola: 1908).
	Item 2	78 RPM Record: "Tribal Prayer" (Omaha), "Love Call" (Iroquois), "Hiawatha's Departure" (Ojibway), and "My Bark Canoe" (Ojibway) sung by Bently Ball (Columbia: 1909).
	Item 3	78-RPM Record: "By the Weeping Waters" composed by Thurlow Lieurance, sung by Princess Watahwaso. Piano played by Thurlow Lieurance, flute by Hubert Small. "Aooah" (love song from the Red Willow Pueblos) and "Her Blanket" (Navajo), sung by Princess Watahwaso (Victor: 1908).
	Item 4	78 RPM Record: "Chant of the Eagle Dance" and "Chant of the Snake Dance" sung by the Hopi Indian Chanters

		(Victor: 1908).
	Item 5	78 RPM Record: "Dreamy Hawaii Waltz" composed by F. W. Vandersloot, performed by the Waikiki Hawaiian Orchestra (Edison Re-Creation: n.d.).
Oversized	Item 1	A hand-drawn theater lobby poster of Oskenton, done in ink and pastels, set in a wooden frame (31" x 17" overall), ca. 1923.

AEL 7/29/03