



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Lillian Samuelson papers relating to Ernest Smith, 1963-1991, bulk (1964-1976)

Lea Sellon

September 2022

National Anthropological Archives
Museum Support Center
4210 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, Maryland 20746
Business Number: Phone: 301.238.1310
Fax Number: Fax: 301.238.2883
naa@si.edu
<http://www.anthropology.si.edu/naa/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical Note	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	3
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Lillian Samuelson papers relating to Ernest Smith
Date:	1963-1991 (bulk 1964-1976)
Identifier:	NAA.2017-08
Creator:	Samuelson, Lillian, 1926-2011 (Creator)
Extent:	.5 Linear feet (1 box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Lillian Samuelson papers relating to Seneca artist, Ernest Smith, mainly comprise information pertaining to Smith and business dealings between Samuelson and Smith. Samuelson owned a shop which sold contemporary Native American art; after acquiring a small collection of Smith's paintings, Samuelson formed a close relationship with Smith and eventually acted as his manager. The collection comprises correspondence between Samuelson and Smith and documentation of Smith's paintings, Iroquois stories, and personal history. It also contains photographs pertaining to Smith. Samuelson's papers also include publications and other materials concerning Samuelson's involvement with various organizations. This collection consists of correspondence, writings, publications, press clippings, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was part of a larger donation of objects to Anthropology Collections by Lillian T. and Dale S. Samuelson in 2007 (Accession Number 2037467). The collection was transferred to the National Anthropological Archives in 2017.

Related Materials

The National Anthropological Archives holds paintings by Smith in MS 4398, Materials relating to The Iroquois Eagle Dance, an Offshoot of the Calumet Dance, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 156.

The American Philosophical Society holds interviews concerning the paintings by Ernest Smith (Mss.Rec.126).

Processing Information

Samuelson's original organization has been retained. Her folder titles were mostly retained. Some folder titles have been shortened or created by the archivist and are placed within square brackets.

Processed by Lea Sellon, September 2022

Preferred Citation

Lillian Samuelson papers relating to Ernest Smith, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

Access to the Lillian Samuelson papers relating to Ernest Smith requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Lillian Samuelson (1926-2011) held a lifelong interest in Native American cultures. She received her B.S. from Illinois Institute of Technology in 1947 before permanently residing in the Capital District area of New York. From 1967 to 1990, Samuelson owned and operated American Indian Treasures, Inc in Guilderland, NY, where she sold contemporary Native American art. During this time, she became close with Seneca artist, Ernest Smith, after acquiring a collection of his paintings. Samuelson eventually acted as Smith's manager and influenced the production of his later paintings. Lillian Samuelson worked closely with the Indian Arts and Crafts Association and in 1981, she became their first female president. She was also involved with the Rocky Boy's Reservation in Montana, donating a portion of the proceeds from her store to the reservation. She was married to Dale Samuelson, who held some involvement in her business. Samuelson died of multiple myeloma cancer in 2011.

Ernest Smith (1907-1975) was a Seneca artist who depicted Iroquois life and legends through his watercolor paintings. Employed by the Works Progress Administration's Artist and Writers Project, Smith produced a series of paintings from 1935-1941 for the Rochester Museum and Science Center. Smith returned in 1973 to join a research project between the Anthropology department of the State University of New York at Albany and the Rochester Museum, primarily working with anthropologists Jeannette Collamer and William Fenton. After taking a break from painting, Smith was encouraged to return to producing art later in life by his manager and friend, Lillian Samuelson. His works include over 240 paintings which reside in several collections including the Rochester Museum and Science Center and the National Museum of the American Indian. Smith was named Iroquois of the Year in 1972. Ernest Smith died in 1975 at the age of 68.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of Lillian Samuelson's documentation of and information pertaining to Ernest Smith. It includes correspondence between Samuelson and Smith, originals and copies of stories written by Smith, documentation of Samuelson's Smith collection, communication about book proposals, publications which feature Smith's work, and copies of Iroquois stories pertaining to the subjects of Smith's paintings. There are photographs of Smith and his paintings. Lillian Samuelson's papers also include newspaper clippings with information about her business and projects she was involved in. There are also two folders of material not relating to Smith. One folder is dedicated to the Rocky Boy Reservation which Samuelson held some involvement in, and the other contains miscellaneous material pertaining to the Iroquois.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Arrangement

The materials in this collection are arranged according to Samuelson's original organization.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Iroquois
Seneca

Cultures:

Iroquois
Seneca

Names:

Smith, Ernest, 1907-1975 (Seneca)

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence between Samuelson and Smith, 1964-1975
Box 1, Folder 2	[Smith original stories]
Box 1, Folder 3	Copies of Iroquois stories by Ernest Smith
Box 1, Folder 4	Samuelson Collection of Ernest Smith paintings, 1975-1982
Box 1, Folder 5	Smith book arrangements, 1973-1980
Box 1, Folder 6	[Publications], 1969-1976
Box 1, Folder 7	[Stories not by Smith], 1972-1991 (bulk 1972-1976)
Box 1, Folder 8	Miscellaneous other material, 1963-1983
Box 1, Folder 9	Rocky Boy Guild, 1974-1975
Box 1, Folder 10	[Photographs (prints and negatives) of Ernest Smith and his paintings], 1969-1975
Box 1, Folder 11	[Photographs (Slides) of Ernest Smith and his paintings], Circa 1965-1974