



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Robert Joseph Flaherty photographs
of Arctic peoples, circa 1914-1922

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2013 March 11

National Anthropological Archives
Museum Support Center
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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Anthropological Archives |
| Title: | Robert Joseph Flaherty photographs of Arctic peoples |
| Date: | circa 1914-1922 |
| Identifier: | NAA.PhotoLot.90-17 |
| Creator: | Flaherty, Robert Joseph, 1884-1951 |
| Extent: | 1 Print (platinum) 13 Prints (possibly aquatint) |
| Language: | Undetermined . |

Administrative Information

Provenance

The photographs were collected by Rose Grayson and Charles Gelb, an assistant editor for Robert Joseph Flaherty's film. They were donated by Rose and Gloria Grayson, 1990.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library holds the Robert Joseph Flaherty papers, 1884-1970.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Material relating to Flaherty held in the Archives of American Art in the Lotte Jacobi Place printed materials and the Preservation and utilization of documentary film footage shot by Robert Flaherty of John Howard Benson : typescript, 1978.

Preferred Citation

Photo Lot 90-17, Robert Joseph Flaherty photographs of Arctic peoples, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Access to the collection requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Robert Joseph Flaherty (1884-1951) was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan, and spent his childhood traveling with his family to the mining regions in Michigan, Minnesota, and Canada. Formally educated at Upper Canada College and Michigan College of Mines, he mostly studied geology and engineering subjects. After leaving the Michigan College of Mines and marrying Frances Hubbard, Flaherty settled in Port Arthur

(Thunder Bay), working as a surveyor and prospector across Canada. His father introduced him to Sir William Mackenzie, who was building a trans-Canada railroad (now the Canadian National Railway), and Mackenzie commissioned Flaherty to study the Nastapoka Islands. During this expedition (1910-1911), Flaherty developed a relationship with the Great Whale Inuit Camp. He completed three more expeditions (1911-1912, 1913-1914, and 1915-1916) for Mackenzie, during which he took numerous photographs and filmed the Inuit during his later expeditions to Baffin Island and Belcher Islands. In 1920, Flaherty met Captain Thierry Mallet of Revillon Freres and convinced him to support a filmmaking expedition to the company's sub-arctic fur trading post, Port Harrison on Cape Dufferin. By the 1920-1921 expedition to Port Harrison (Inukjuak), Flaherty was focusing almost exclusively on film documentation, and most of his photographic work appears oriented toward the production of the film. Ultimately, Flaherty produced the first commercially successful feature length documentary film and the pioneering ethnographic film, *Nanook of the North* (1922).

Scope and Contents

Photographs relating to Arctic peoples that were part of a set made in connection with Robert Joseph Flaherty's documentary, *Nanook of the North*. They consist primarily of portraits of Arctic peoples, as well as images of a kayak in Hudson Bay, an man in the ice fields, and a close up image of a husky dog.

Local Call Number(s)

NAA Photo Lot 90-17

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Arctic peoples
- Eskimos
- Indians of North America -- Subarctic

Cultures:

- Arctic peoples
- Eskimos
- Indians of North America -- Subarctic

Types of Materials:

- Photographs