



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Melvin R. Gilmore photographs

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2012, 2019

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Melvin R. Gilmore photographs
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.001.027
Date:	1923-1924
Extent:	69 Negatives (photographic) (black and white; 5 x 7 inches.)
Creator:	Gilmore, Melvin R. (Melvin Randolph), 1868-1940 Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection contains 69 black-and-white acetate negatives taken by Melvin R. Gilmore in 1923-1924. The images depict scenes of everyday life among the Sahnish (Arikara) Indians of the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Field collections from Melvin R. Gilmore received by the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in 1923 and 1924.

Related Materials

The Melvin R. Gilmore papers (Call number: 0384 Aa 2) can be found at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. There are also photographs in this collection that were shot during the time period Gilmore worked for the MAI, Heye Foundation.

Additional Gilmore manuscript materials may be found in the Melvin Randolph Gilmore Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society, and Curator's Correspondence, State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Processing Information

Processed by Heather Shannon, Photo Archivist, in 2012. Updated by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Melvin R. Gilmore photographs, image #, NMAI.AC.001.027; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Biographical Note

Melvin R. Gilmore was a noted ethnologist dedicated to the study of the material culture and ethnobotany of Plains Indians. Born in 1868 in Valley, Nebraska, Gilmore graduated from Cotner College in 1903. At Cotner, he taught biology while he completed post-graduate studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. In 1909 and 1914, he received a Master's degree and then a doctorate in botany. From 1923 to 1928, Gilmore served on the staff of the Museum of the American Indian and from 1929 to 1939 was the curator of ethnology at the University of Michigan. He authored several books on botany and Native Americans, including his best known "The Use of Plants by Indians of the Missouri River Region."

Scope and Contents

The Melvin R. Gilmore collection consists of photographic negatives made by Gilmore on behalf of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in August 1923 and July 1924 on the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota. The negatives depict the Sahnish (Arikara) engaged in agricultural activities, house building, food preparation (cooking and butchering), building and checking fish traps along the Missouri River, and weaving and potting. In addition there are several views of an apparent traditional buffalo drive. Gilmore identified and recorded the names of several individuals, including Mrs. Sitting Bear, Mr. and Mrs. Four Rings, Mrs. Red Tail, and Shteshta-kata. The catalog numbers include N08694-N08761, N08852, N09420.

The majority of the negatives from July 1924 were destroyed and are no longer a part of this collection. These included catalog numbers N09412-N09419, N09420-N09427. Descriptions of these images are still available.

The acetate negatives are copy negatives made from the original nitrate during a large photograph conservation project at the Museum of the American Indian in the 1960s. There are also contact prints that were made during this project.

Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Arikara Indians -- Fishing -- Photographs
Arikara Indians -- Social life and customs -- Photographs
Indians of North America -- North Dakota
Sahnish (Arikara)

Cultures:

Sahnish (Arikara)

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white negatives

Geographic Names:

Fort Berthold Indian Reservation (N.D.) -- photographs