



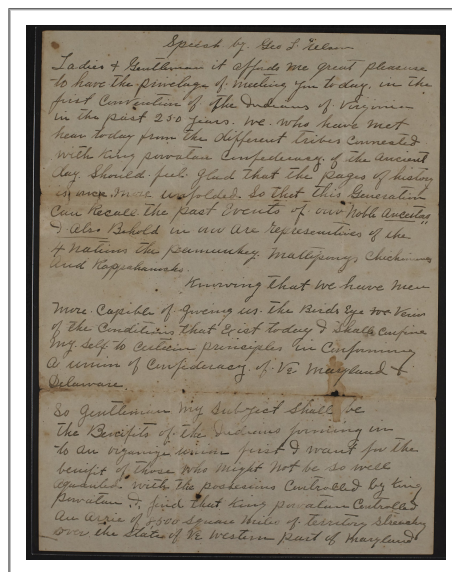
Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

George L. Nelson Papers

Rachel Menyuk

2018



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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	George L. Nelson papers
Date:	1920-1925
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.018
Creator:	Nelson, George L.
Extent:	0.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The George L. Nelson papers consist of documents belonging to Chief Nelson and left in the possession of his daughter Waneta Swain. The bulk of these documents relate to the work done by Chief Nelson in establishing the Rappahannock Indian Association in 1922 and the activities that led to the recognition of the tribe as part of the larger Virginia Indians Powhatan Confederacy. Chief George L. Nelson was born and raised in Indian Neck, VA.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Chief George L. Nelson papers were donated to NMAI in 2005 by the Estate of Waneta P. Swain, daughter to Nelson, along with an outfit worn by Nelson which can be found in the object collections (NMAI Object 265403).

Related Materials

Photographs of Chief George Nelson and family were taken both by Frank Speck and Frederick Johnson in the 1920's and can be found in their photo collections.

Frank Gouldsmith Speck photograph collection (NMAI.AC.001.032) Frederick Johnson photograph collection (NMAI.AC.001.038)

Available Formats

Copies of this collection were made for the family of Waneta Swain before the collection was donated in 2005.

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Archives Technician in 2012.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); George L. Nelson Papers, Box and Folder Number; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archive Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center. Please submit a written request to nmaiphotos@si.edu. For personal or classroom use, users are invited to download, print, photocopy, and distribute the images that are available online without prior written permission, provided that the files are not changed, the Smithsonian Institution copyright notice (where applicable) is included, and the source of the image is identified as the National Museum of the American Indian.

Biographical / Historical

Chief George L. Nelson (Rappahannock) was born circa 1883 in Indian Neck, Virginia to parents Samuel and Virginia Nelson. A member of the Rappahannock community, Nelson began working to incorporate his tribe under the state laws of Virginia. The Rappahannock Indian Association was founded in 1921 with George Nelson as Chief. In the early 1920's anthropologist Frank Speck spent time among the Rappahannock photographing Nelson and other community members.

Nelson married Polena Sensenbaugh daughter to Simon and Louisa born 1888 in South Whitely, Indiana in 1908. They became acquainted while Nelson was on his way home following a trip around the world with the Navy. George and Polena had 11 children, six sons and five daughters and the family eventually moved to Millville, New Jersey. Nelson died in 1960 in Cumberland, New Jersey. Nelson's daughter Waneta Swain Ackerman (born Waneta Pocahontas Nelson) bequeathed her father's papers to the National Museum of the American Indian in 2005.

Speck, Frank. "The Rappahannock Indians of Virginia," *Indian Notes and Monographs*, Volume V, No. 3. Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, 1925.

Scope and Contents

The George L. Nelson papers consist of documents belonging to Chief Nelson and left in the possession of his daughter Waneta Swain. The bulk of these documents relate to the work done by Chief Nelson in establishing the Rappahannock Indian Association in 1921 and the activities that led to the recognition of the tribe as part of the larger Virginia Indians Powhatan Confederacy. These includes letters, speeches, notes and membership lists. These papers also include letters and articles from Frank Speck, an anthropologist from the University of Pennsylvania, who maintained a relationship with Nelson and his family. Additionally these records includes notes and documents written by Chief Nelson regarding the Racial Integrity act (Bill No. 68) which was enacted in 1924. There are three family photographs which were accompanied by a newspaper clipping announcing the 50th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. George L. Nelson.

Arrangement

This collection has been arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Indians of North America -- Virginia
- Powhatan
- Race discrimination -- Law and legislation -- Virginia
- Rappahannock

Cultures:

- Powhatan
- Rappahannock

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Letters
- Speeches
- Writings

Names:

- Speck, Frank G. (Frank Gouldsmith), 1881-1950

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Family Photos and Wedding Anniversary Clipping, 1936, 1953, 1960
Box 1, Folder 2	Letters Received: Mooney, Lane, Goolnick, 1920-1922
Box 1, Folder 3	Letters Received: Baxter, Trairs, Nathasan, 1925
Box 1, Folder 4	Miscellaneous Articles, 1922-1923, 1928
Box 1, Folder 5	Racial Integrity Act (Bill No. 68): Petition and Notes, 1924
Box 1, Folder 6	Rappahannock Indian Association: Founding Documents, 1922
Box 1, Folder 7	Rappahannock Indian Association: Membership, undated, 1923
Box 1, Folder 8	Frank Speck: Letters and Articles, undated, 1925
Box 1, Folder 9	Virginia Indians Powhatan Confederacy: Enrollment, undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Virginia Indians Powhatan Confederacy: First Convention Speech, undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Virginia Powhatan Academy, 1924
Box 1, Folder 12	Writings: "Indian Revival in Virginia" and Miscellaneous, undated