



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Milford Chandler and Richard Pohrt papers

Mattie Lewis

National Museum of the American Indian
4220 Silver Hill Rd
Suitland, Maryland 20746-2863
Business Number: Phone: 301.238.1400
Fax Number: Fax: 301.238.3038
nmaiarchives@si.edu
<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/archive/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Milford Chandler	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	2
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Milford Chandler and Richard Pohrt papers
Date:	1919-1989
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.074
Creator:	Chandler, Milford G., 1889-1981 Pohrt, Richard A.
Extent:	.42 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection includes item sketches, collection inventories, and an account of Milford Chandler and Richard Pohrt's history collecting Native American items.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Lucinda Stevens in memory of Betty Chandler Stevens, 2013.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Mattie Lewis, Archives Technician in 2024.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Milford Chandler and Richard Pohrt papers, image #, NMAI.AC.074; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archives 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 Archives 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 modified in any way, 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. For more information please see the Smithsonian's [Terms of Use](#) and NMAI Archive Center's [Digital Image request](#) website.

Milford Chandler

Milford Chandler (1881-1981) was born in Walnut, Illinois. As a teen he developed interest in cars and became an automotive and aircraft engineer after graduating the Armour Institute in Chicago. He had several patents for engine parts. After World War II, he worked in a gun shop fixing antique firearms in Detroit until he retired in 1961. Chandler began collecting Native American items in 1915 and was particularly interested in bead and quillwork. He was interested in the different tribes' cultures and built strong friendships within the communities he visited. He became known as a friend to Indian people and was trusted as a fair buyer and was often offered rare items or items of great personal significance. In addition to building his own collection, Chandler would collect and trade on behalf of museums including the Field Museum in Chicago and the Museum of the American Indian-Heys Foundation in New York. Chandler sold parts of collection to several museums before Richard Pohrt, a friend and mentee, acquired the rest.

Richard Pohrt

Richard Pohrt (1911-2005) was born in Flint, Michigan. He worked in for General Motors in the AC Spark Plug plant personnel department and served in the military during World War II and the Korean War. Pohrt met Milford Chandler as a teenager in 1926. His father worked with Chandler and introduced the pair because of their shared interest in Native Americans. During their first visit, Chandler shared stories of his visits to nearby tribes and showed off his collection. At the end of the night, Chandler gifted a pipe and beaded pouch to Pohrt, which started their long friendship and mentor/mentee relationship. Pohrt would often visit with Chandler to look at his collection and would travel with him as an assistant when he would go to museums. Pohrt took a similar approach to Chandler, visiting communities and building friendships with those he traded or bought items from. In 1966, Pohrt purchased what was left of Chandler's collection. In the 1970's-1990's, Pohrt used his knowledge of Native materials to co-curate several exhibits including one focused on his and Chandler's shared collection.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains an account of Milford Chandler and Richard Pohrt's relationship and collecting history written by Pohrt. It also contains inventories, correspondence to Chandler, item sketches, and information related to the collection of Native American material.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged alphabetically in one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- A'aninin (Gros Ventre)
- Assiniboine (Stoney)
- Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Menominee (Menomini)

Meskwaki (Fox) [Tama, Iowa]
Numakiki (Mandan)
Potawatomi
Sac and Fox (Sauk & Fox)
Sahnish (Arikara)

Cultures:

A'aninin (Gros Ventre)
Assiniboine (Stoney)
Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
Menominee (Menomini)
Meskwaki (Fox) [Tama, Iowa]
Numakiki (Mandan)
Potawatomi
Sac and Fox (Sauk & Fox)
Sahnish (Arikara)

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	1910's Chandler and Pohrt History, After 1988 Notes: History summary written by Richard Pohrt discussing Chandler's engineering interest and patents as well as his early interest in Native items.
Box 1, Folder 2	1920's Chandler and Pohrt History, After 1988 Notes: History summary written by Richard Pohrt discussing first meeting Chandler, starting his own collection, Chandler making facsimilies, and Chandler's collection moves.
Box 1, Folder 3	1940's Chandler and Pohrt History, After 1988 Notes: History summary written by Richard Pohrt discussing being in the miliary, moving his collection, and Chandler working in a gun shop.
Box 1, Folder 4	1950's Chandler and Pohrt History, After 1988 Notes: History summary written by Richard Pohrt discussing taking care of Chandler's collection and collecting new items.
Box 1, Folder 5	1960's Chandler and Pohrt History, After 1988 Notes: History summary written by Richard Pohrt discussing Chandler's retirement and buying his collection.
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1921-1952 Notes: Letters to Chandler about his work with different museums, including a letter from George Gustav Heye at the Museum of the American Indian. Also includes letters from Native individuals he befriended while travelling.
Box 1, Folder 7	History of the Pottawattamis, 1927 Notes: Diary excerpts circa 1850 from Judge John Dean Caton of the Illinois State Supreme Court on the history of the Potawami (which he spelled Pottawattamis) and a recounting of a war dance. The excerpts were sent to Chandler by a friend in 1927.
Box 1, Folder 8	How Chandler Collected, undated Notes: Notes written by Pohrt on how Chandler went about collecting Native items and a list of his acquaintances with an interest in Native American objects.
Box 1, Folder 9	Indian Fellowship League, undated Notes: Statement of purpose, membership options, and a bibliography for the Indian Fellowship League.
Box 1, Folder 10	Indian Rights Address, 1919 Notes: Address by Robert Yellowtail to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs defending the rights of Native Americans.

Box 1, Folder 11	Interview with Richard Pohrt, 1989 Notes: Richard Pohrt interview by David Penny. They worked together on an exhibit called "Art of the American Indian Frontier: The Collecting of Chandler and Pohrt" at the Detroit Institute of Art.
Box 1, Folder 12	Inventory, undated Notes: An inventory of items in Chandler's collection. No notes on when it was written or where the collection was located.
Box 1, Folder 13	Inventory with appraisal letter, 1941 Notes: Inventory of Chandler's collection in 1941. He was trying to sell it to a museum and Arthur C. Parker appraised it.
Box 1, Folder 14	Inventory at University of Michigan, 1929 Notes: Inventory of Chandler's collection while it was being stored at University of Michigan.
Box 1, Folder 15	Item Sketches, undated Notes: Pencil sketches Chandler did of items in his collection.
Box 1, Folder 16	Medicine Bundle (RESTRICTED), undated Notes: Description of a medicine ceremony and a medicine bundle that was part of Chandler's collection. Folder is restricted for cultural sensitivity.
Box 1, Folder 17	Natural Dyes, undated Notes: Notes Chandler took on natural dyes used by Native communities.
Box 1, Folder 18	Obituary, 1981 Notes: Obituary for Chandler written by Pohrt.
Box 1, Folder 19	Plains Indian Art Symposium, 1983 Notes: Information and flyer from the third annual Plains Indian Arts Symposium. The theme was honoring Milford Chandler.
Box 1, Folder 20	Report to the Field Museum, 1925 Notes: Report Chandler wrote for the Field Museum in Chicago when he went on an acquisition trip among Algonquian communities.
Box 1, Folder 21	Statement on Pohrt, undated Notes: Statement given by George Horse Capture about Richard Pohrt and his collection. They worked together on an exhibit for the Detroit Institute of the Arts.
Photo-folder 1	Unknown photographs Notes: Three black and white 8x10 photographs of a group. No information is known about the photographs.