



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Photographs of Princess Atalie Unkalunt collection

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Photographs of Princess Atalie Unkalunt collection
Date:	1900-1950
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.117
Creator:	Hall, Dale, Mrs.
Source:	C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa
Extent:	75 Photographic prints
Language:	English .
Summary:	The photographs of Princess Atalie Unkalunt collection includes 75 photographic prints and postcards of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee) taken by various photographers throughout her life and career. Princess Atalie Unkalunt, nee Iva J. Rider, (1895 – 1954) was a Cherokee opera singer, artist, author, and community activist.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Mrs. Dale Hall to the C.H. Nash Museum (Chucalissa) in 1967. Donated by the C.H. Nash Museum (Chucalissa) to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in 1978. It is unclear how Mrs. Hall came into the possession of the photographs though it is possible she was a friend of the family or a distant relative.

Related Materials

Three photographs in the collection include images of objects currently in the NMAI collection. These include Princess Atalie wearing a Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce) hide dress (NMAI 029996), a Ute beaded hide dress (NMAI 050958) and Ute mocassins (NMAI 006986) and Ethyl E. Schellbach wearing a Niumam (Comanche) beaded hide dress (NMAI 021803) and Niumam (Comanche) legging moccasins (NMAI 021132).

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, in 2017 and 2023.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Photographs of Princess Atalie Unkalunt collection, Photo Number; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Princess Atalie Unkalunt, nee Iva J. Rider, (1895 – 1954) was a Cherokee opera singer, artist, author, and community activist. Also known as Sunshine Rider, Atalie was born in Stilwell, Oklahoma to Thomas L. Rider (Domgeske Unkalunt), a Cherokee state senator and chairman of Indian affairs, and Josephine Pace Rider. As a child attending Indian schools, Atalie saw the need for a cultural missionary to educate the world about Native people and their place in history. She developed a gift for song at a young age and after finishing her high school studies spent time in California where she gained experience in film and then moved to Boston to begin vocal studies. After the U.S. entered World War I, Atalie joined the Business Women's Unit of the Y.M.C.A. secretly advancing her age several years in order to meet the age requirements. She served 18 months overseas working as an entertainer and secretary. Upon her return to the United States, she settled in New York City to continue her vocal studies and quickly became an acclaimed opera singer. She sang at concert venues around the country and performed at the White House.

Her desire to be a cultural missionary never wavered and she became a lecturer for the New York Board of Education where she spoke to audiences about Native American customs and songs. She broadcasted a radio program to countries in Europe singing both classical arias as well as Native songs. She founded the Society of the First Sons and Daughters of America Foundation whose mission was to recognize and promote the contributions of Native people and give them opportunities to promote their talents in the arts. In addition to her vocal talents, she was a skilled painter and designer and in 1942, she wrote and illustrated the book "The Earth Speaks", a collection of tales adapted from Cherokee legends. In the late 1940s, Atalie moved to Washington D.C. where she spent her time digging through government archival records in order to research claims due the Cherokee Indians from the United States government. Atalie passed away in 1954.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of the collection contains photographic prints and postcards of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee) taken by various photographers throughout her life and career. Many of the photographs are undated but it is likely that most were taken between 1920 and 1950.

Included in the collection are studio portraits of Princess Atalie, both headshots and full length shots. In many of the studio shots Princess Atalie is wearing a beaded headband, or a full headdress, a hide dress and moccasins and is frequently posed with additional props. However there are a number of studio portraits where she is wearing non-native dress, often wearing a hat and stole. Princess Atalie was also photographed at the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, circa 1920, modeling hide dresses and moccasins from the collection (see related materials note). There are also photographs of Princess Atalie posed with groups or individuals she met throughout her career. This includes photographs with Jim Thorpe (Sac and Fox), famed Olympian and athlete;

Charles Curtis (Kaw), Vice President to Herbert Hoover; the Girl Scouts of East Orange, Oklahoma; as well as several groups of unidentified children.

Of note are several postcards from Princess Atalie (signed Iva) written to her sisters from her time in the Business Women's Unit of the Y.M.C.A during WWI. There are also photographs that include a note to Atalie's sister Mary as well as a portrait of Mary that had previously been mis-identified as Atalie. In addition to photographs of Princess Atalie, there are portraits of other opera performers who were contemporaries of Princess Atalie. These include portraits of Chief Yowlachie (Yakama), a bass singer and soloist with the Seneca Orchestra; and Yma Sumac, a Peruvian-American soprano.

Known photographers and photo studios include—Albert R. Dupont, Jack Gordon, Del Ankers, Bryant E. Sherman, Albert Green Heath, Pierson Studio, Strand Studio, Chdnoff Studio, Underwood and Underwood Co., Watton Studio (Oklahoma City), Apeda Studio, Sands Studio and Roege Photo.

Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number P23844-P23911.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Oklahoma Cherokee
Opera

Cultures:

Oklahoma Cherokee

Types of Materials:

Photographic prints
Studio portraits

Names:

C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa
Curtis, Charles, 1860-1936
Thorpe, Jim, 1887-1953
Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Container Listing

Series 1: Early Life and Family, 1900-1952

8 Photographic prints

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23844: Faculty members at the Cherokee Female Seminary, circa 1900

1 Photographic print

Notes: Outdoor group portrait of eight faculty members at the Cherokee Female Seminary in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. This includes A. Florence Wilson, principal from 1876 to 1901, sitting leftmost in the middle row. Other teachers and assistants include Miss Eugenia Thompson, Miss Cora McNair (possibly also known as Lizzie), Miss Lella Morgan, Miss Callie Eaton, Miss Okla Spradling and Miss Bluie Adair (later Lawrence). Atalie Unkalunt's sister Mary Rider graduated from the Cherokee Female Seminary in 1902.

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23845: [Students at the Cherokee Female Seminary, circa 1900](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Outdoor group portrait of 26 young women sitting and standing on stairs in front of the Cherokee Female Seminary in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Arrow pointing to "Mary," Atalie Unkalunt's sister Mary Angeline Rider, indicates the young woman right most in the bottom row. Also pictured-- Golda Barker, Fannie French, Susie McClellan, Carrie Freeman, Lucy Starr, Clara Tyler, Byrd Faulkner, Mary Lattimor, Susie Sevier, Ada Foreman, Lola Ward and Allie Grffin. Many of the girls, including Mary Rider, were from the 1902 graduating class. The teachers include Miss Cora McNair and Miss Bluie Adair. On the back there is a note that says "Look at the button shoes aren't they cute?"

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23889: [Atalie Unkalunt on the train in France, 1919 March 18](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano. on a train from Paris to Nice following World War I. Handwritten note on the back states "after a long illness with pneumonia during the war---suppose I look it too. March 18, 1919"

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23894: [Postcard of Atalie Unkalunt with her sister, 1910 June 2](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Photographic postcard of Princess Atalie Unkalunt as a young woman (Iva Rider) possibly posed with her sister Pheobe (Rider) Barbre. The postcard is addressed to Atalie's nephew, Jesse Barbre, Jr., Phoebe's

son in Delaware, Oklahoma. The front has writing which states "Look at the big bow of ribbon isn't it lovely you darling!" on reverse: June 12th 15 I'll be. My dearest little son- How are you hun? When are you coming after your rabbits? I'll be up there in about three wks. I'm hungry to see you. Kiss your mama + papa for me and _____ne. your auntie"

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23895: [Postcard of Atalie Unkalunt \(Iva Rider\) in Y.M.C.A. uniform, circa 1918](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Photographic postcard portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Iva Rider), in her uniform from the Business Women's Unit of the Y.M.C.A during WWI. The postcard is addressed to her sister Pheobe (Rider) Barbre in Muskogee, Oklahoma and states "Sister Pheob the second - Just a little card not very good- Lots of love Iva."

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23897: [Postcard of Atalie Unkalunt, 1920-1940](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Photographic postcard portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, on a city street. There is no writing on the postcard, unknown photographer and location.

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23901: [View of Atalie Unkalunt's former home, 1952](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of a two story clapboard house, possibly in Oklahoma. Handwritten on the back states: "Here's your old home place. I was mistaken about the fence. 1952 TL." The T.L. is possibly Atalie's nephew, Major T.L. Rider.

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23902: [Atalie Unkalunt and her sisters \(possible\), 1920-1950](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, standing with three other women, possibly her sisters, in front of porch in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Atalie on left.

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

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Series 2: Portraits of Princess Atalie Unkalunt, 1920-1940

48 *Photographic prints*

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

Subseries 2.1: Studio Portraits, 1920-1940

16 *Photographic prints*

Image(s)

Scope and Contents: Catalog numbers: P23848, P23849A, P23849B, P23851, P23854, P23855, P23858, P23860, P23862, P23863, P23864, P23865, P23872, P23888, P23900, P23911.

Includes studio portraits made by the following photographers; Pierson Studio (Muskogee, Oklahoma), Chidnoff Studio (New York City), Del Ankers, Harris & Ewing, Greene Studio (Muskogee, Oklahoma), Watton Studio (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), Sherman Bryant (New York City), Sands Studio (Brookline, Massachusetts).

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

Genre/Form: Studio portraits

Subseries 2.2: Studio Portraits in Native Dress, 1920-1940

21 *Photographic prints*

Image(s)

Scope and Contents: Catalog numbers: P23850, P23852, P23853A, P23857, P23859, P23873, P23876, P23877, P23877A, P23878, P23879, P23879B, P23881, P23883A, P23883B, P23885, P23899A, P23899B, P23899C, P23904, P23905.

Includes studio portraits made by the following photographers; Strand Studio (New York City), Albert R. Dupont, Underwood & Underwood Co. (New York City), Reddy Studio (New York City).

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

Genre/Form: Studio portraits

Subseries 2.3: Outdoor Portraits in Native Dress, 1920-1940

8 *Photographic prints*

Image(s)

Scope and Contents: Catalog Numbers: P23856, P23884A, P23884B, P23886, P23887, P23903, P23909, P23910.

The photographers and locations are unknown for the photographs in this series. Atalie Unkalunt is wearing "Native" dress in all of them, either a beaded headband or a feathered headdress. She is pictured on a lawn, among trees, with a horse, and in front of a doorwat labeled "The Homestead."

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

Subseries 2.4: Artistic Portraits and Other, 1920-1940

3 Photographic prints

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents: Catalog numbers: P23861, P23874, P23875.

Contents:

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

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Series 3: Events with Princess Atalie Unkalunt, 1920-1940

15 Photographic prints

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee
Sac and Fox (Sauk & Fox)
Kaw (Kansa)

P23846, P23870: [Atalie Unkalunt with Jim Thorpe and others, 1930-1950](#)

2 Photographic prints

Notes: Group portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt, soprano, seated with seven men, most likely taken in New York City. The man to the right of Princess Atalie is Jim Thorpe [Sac and Fox (Sauk & Fox)]. The other six men are wearing headresses and are as of yet unidentified.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954
Thorpe, Jim, 1887-1953

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee
Sac and Fox (Sauk & Fox)

P23867: [Atalie Unkalunt with the Girl Scouts of Oranges and Maplewood, New Jersey, 1920-1940](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Group portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, surrounded by a group of children at Muir's Department Store in East Orange, New Jersey. The event was for the Girl Scouts of Oranges and Maplewood to learn about "Indian Lore." Atalie Unkalunt is wearing beaded headband and Pendleton jacket and is holding a drumstick over a drum. Shot by Knight Photo News Service.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23868: [Atalie Unkalunt and Charles Curtis shaking hands, 1929](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Outdoor portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, shaking hands with Charles Curtis (Kaw), Vice President for Herbert Hoover, on steps of a building while holding a bouquet of roses, possibly in Washington, DC.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954
Curtis, Charles, 1860-1936

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee
Kaw (Kansa)

P23869: [Atalie Unkalunt and Unknown Man shaking hands, 1920-1940](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Outdoor portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, shaking hands with an unidentified man. The man is holding a hat and stick that has "International Harvester Co. of America Inc. Little..." printed on it. Unknown location, shot by Mo. Parr, staff photographer of unknown organization.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23882: [Atalie Unkalunt at a meal table, 1920-1940](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, sitting next to man under a tent eating a meal. She is wearing a beaded headband and fringed dress, the man is wearing a suit. Other men and tables can be seen in the background under the same tent.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23890: [Atalie Unkalunt with group of boys, 1920-1940](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Outdoor view of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, wearing headband, dress. She is standing in front of a large group of boys with arms outstretched, possibly part of an educational program. Unknown photographer and location.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23891, P23892, P23893: [Atalie Unkalunt with group in Native dress, 1920-1940](#)

3 Photographic prints

Notes: Outdoor portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, standing with a group of children and adults in wearing hide clothing and headbands, and blankets. These are the same children as seen in P23891 and P23892. Unknown photographer and location.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee

P23896, P23898: [Atalie Unkalunt and Chief Chibirboos from Indian Love Call, 1929](#)

2 Photographic prints

Notes: Photographic postcard portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, with "Chief Chibirboos--Chippewa Tenor," posed in front of tipi. The postcard states "Scene from Indian Love Call." Unknown photographer and location. See also P23896.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954

Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee
Anishinaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwa)

P23906, P23907, P23908: [Atalie Unkalunt and Ethyl Schellbach wearing MAI, Heye Foundation objects, circa 1930](#)

3 Photographic prints

Notes: P23906: Full length portrait of Ethyl E. Schellbach (Mrs. Louis Schellbach), modeling a Niuam (Comanche) dress (NMAI 021803.000) and Niuam (Comanche) legging moccasins (NMAI 021132.000) at the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in New York, City.

P23907: Full length Portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, modeling a Niimípuu (Nez Perce) dress (NMAI

029996.000), beaded belt and moccasins at the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in New York, City.

P23908: Full length portrait of Princess Atalie Unkalunt (Oklahoma Cherokee), soprano, modeling a Sioux dress (NMAI 050958.000) and Ute moccasins (NMAI 006986.000) at the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in New York, City.

Names: Unkalunt, Princess Atalie, 1895-1954
Culture: Oklahoma Cherokee
Niuam (Comanche)
Niimfipuu (Nez Perce)
Ute

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Series 4: Portraits of Other Performers, 1910-1940

4 Photographic prints

P23847: [Portrait of Chief Yolawche \(Yakama\), 1932 February](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Chief Yolawche (Yakama), a famous bass singer who was a Soloist with Seneca Orchesta. Atalie Unkalunt and Chief Yolawche performed "The Coming of Pa'yatuma" together at John Golden Theatre in February of 1932 for the First Sons and Daughters of America.

Culture: Yakama (Yakima)

P23866: [Portrait of Yma Sumac, 1940-1950](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of the Peruvian singer Yma Sumac in elaborately decorated clothing and coin headband from a performance at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. Zoila Augusta Emperatriz Chavarri del Castillo (1922–2008), was best known by her artistic name, Yma Sumac.

Names: Sumac, Yma

P23871: [Portrait of Katherine MacDonald, 1921](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Studio portrait of Katherine MacDonald, a stage and film actress, shot by Apeda Studio, New York. There is a note on the front "With much love Kathleen" and her address on the back.

P23880: [Unidentified portrait , undated](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Studio portrait of an unidentified woman with bobbed hairdo, wearing stole.

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