



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of the American Indian*

## Photographs of Princess Atalie Unkalunt collection

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Museum of the American Indian
<b>Title:</b>	Photographs of Princess Atalie Unkalunt collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAI.AC.117
<b>Date:</b>	1900-1950
<b>Extent:</b>	75 Photographic prints
<b>Source:</b>	C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa Hall, Dale, Mrs.
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	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.

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## 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 Niuam (Comanche) beaded hide dress (NMAI 021803) and Niuam (Comanche) legging moccasins (NMAI 021132).

### Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, in 2017.

### 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

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](mailto:nmaiarchives@si.edu)).

## 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.

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## 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.

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## Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number P23844-P23911.

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## 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