



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Merl LaVoy photographs from Alaska

Mikaela Hamilton

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Merl LaVoy photographs from Alaska
Date:	1920
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.163
Creator:	LaVoy, Merl
Extent:	27 Photographic prints 26 Copy negatives
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection includes 27 prints and 26 copy negatives taken by Merl LaVoy among the Inupiaq in Alaska during the 1920s.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of Merl LaVoy, 1927

Processing Information

Collection record written by Mikaela Hamilton, Archives Center Intern in 2020.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Merl LaVoy photographs from Alaska, image #, NMAI.AC.163, 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).

Photos N34398, N35398, P08505, and P08505 are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

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Biographical / Historical

Merl LaVoy, one of the first internationally famous news photographers, was born in 1886. He was a Wisconsin native, but after his parents died when he was still a young boy, LaVoy moved to Oregon to live with his uncle. In 1907, LaVoy worked for the Great Northern Development Company, which was prospecting for copper on the Kotsina River in Alaska. In 1910, LaVoy agreed to join Herschel Parker and Belmore Browne as an expedition photographer for their 1912 hike of Mt. McKinley (the highest peak in North America, also known as Denali) in Alaska. This trip marked the beginning of his professional pursuit of photography; he subsequently marketed his Alaskan photographs to newspapers and magazines, and soon established himself as a photographer, documentary film maker, and cameraman for Pathé News, a British company that produced documentaries, newsreels, and cinemagazines (1910-1970). He also traveled across Europe to document World War I. During the 1920s, he carried out a detailed photographic study of native Alaskan life. LaVoy died in 1953 in South Africa, where he was working as a freelance photographer.

Scope and Contents

Copy negatives include N35373-N35398. Photographic prints include P08480-P08506.

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:

Inupiaq (Alaskan Inupiat Eskimo)
Inupiaq (Alaskan Inupiat Eskimo) [Nuwukmiut/Point Barrow]

Cultures:

Inupiaq (Alaskan Inupiat Eskimo)
Inupiaq (Alaskan Inupiat Eskimo) [Nuwukmiut/Point Barrow]

Places:

Barrow, Point (Alaska)