



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Geoffrey O'Hara collection

Rachel Menyuk

2022

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Geoffrey O'Hara collection
Date:	1913-1957
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.287
Creator:	O'Hara, Geoffrey, 1882-1967
Source:	Densmore, Frances
Extent:	1 Linear foot 45 Photographic prints 3 Sound discs (vinyl)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection includes documents and photographs related to Geoffrey O'Hara's work as a music instructor between 1913-1957. This includes material from his appointment as "Instructor of Native Indian Music" among the Navajo Nation (Diné) in 1913 as well as his correspondence with ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated by Geoffrey O'Hara's daughter Nancy O'Hara to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in 1986.

Provenance

This collection had originally been processed with the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation records (NMAI.AC.001). The original box/folder numbers were Box 263, Folder 3 to Box 264, Folder 4.

Related Materials

Geoffrey O'Hara Cylinder Recordings and Lantern Slides of Navajo Indians. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (WA MSS S-2625).

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, 2022.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Geoffrey O'Hara papers, NMAI.AC.287, Box and Folder Number. National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Conditions/Access: 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

Conditions/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.

Biographical / Historical

Geoffrey O'Hara (February 2, 1882 – January 31, 1967) was a Canadian American composer, singer and music professor. O'Hara was born in Chatham, Ontario, Canada. He initially planned a military career. He moved to the United States in 1904, the same year he began performing in Vaudeville. He began recording for Edison Records in 1905. In 1913 O'Hara was appointed as "Instructor of Native Indian Music" by the Acting Commionner of Indian Affairs of the United States. He was recorded on phonograph cylinder lecturing about the complexity of the music as well as singing and playing several types of Navajo (Diné) traditional songs in 1914. During World War I, he was a singing instructor of patriotic songs for American troops.

O'Hara lectured on music and songwriting, and held positions at Teachers' College of Columbia University (1936–37), Huron College and the University of South Dakota, where he later received and honorary Doctor of Music degree in 1947. He lectured for the remainder of his life. In 1920, O'Hara helped organize The Composers' and Lyric Writers' Protective League. He also was a board member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), was the president of the Composers-Authors Guild, and served in the United Service Organizations (USO).

In 1919, he married Constance Dougherty from Massachusetts, and together they had two children; the same year, he became a naturalized citizen of the United States. O'Hara composed over 500 popular and patriotic songs, and hymns. He had some moderate popular music hits in the 1910s with songs such as *Your Eyes Have Told Me What I Did Not Know* (1913), *Tennessee, I Hear You Calling Me* (1914), *The Old Songs*, and *Over the Top: Military March* (1917). His one huge hit was his song *K-K-K-Katy* (1918), one of the most popular tunes of the World War I era. It was sung in both World War I and World War II, occasionally as "K. K. K. K. P."

[Redacted and edited from Wikipedia entry.]

Scope and Contents

Series 1: Navajo Indian Agency includes 45 photographic prints and .25 linear feet of documents from 1913-1914. Documents include correspondence between O'Hara and various officials in the Indian Affairs office, such as Acting Commissioner, Frederick H. Abbott. Much of this correspondence includes requests for funds, supplies and an interpreter for his work. The photographic prints include images made in the Navajo Nation, likely in 1913, at Fort Defiance, Arizona, Hubbell Trading post in Ganado, Arizona among other unidentified locations in Arizona and New Mexico.

Series 2: Correspondence with Frances Densmore and Others includes .6 linear feet of correspondence between Geoffrey O'Hara and Frances Densmore from 1926 to 1957. The majority of the letters are from

Densmore to O'Hara, though some copies of responses from O'Hara are included as well. There are also several articles, bulletins, journals and other works written by Densmore that she sent to O'Hara through the years. In addition to written materials, there are three audio recordings (LPs) produced by the Library of Congress edited by Densmore.

Arrangement

Arranged into two series. **Series 1: Navajo Indian Agency** has two subseries, 1.1: Photographs and 1.2: Documents, arranged by subject. **Series 2: Correspondence with Frances Densmore and Others** is arranged chronologically.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Anthropology -- Ethnomusicology
Diné (Navajo)

Cultures:

Diné (Navajo)

Names:

Densmore, Frances
United States. Bureau of Indian Affairs

Places:

Arizona -- Fort Defiance
Chelly, Canyon de (Ariz.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Navajo Indian Agency , 1913-1914

45 Photographic prints

0.25 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: This series includes 45 photographic prints and .25 linear feet of documents from 1913-1914.

Documents include correspondence between O'Hara and various officials in the Indian Affairs office, such as Acting Commissioner, Frederick H. Abbott. Much of this correspondence includes requests for funds, supplies and an interpreter for his work.

The photographic prints include images made in the Navajo Nation, likely in 1913, at Fort Defiance, Arizona, Hubbell Trading post in Ganado, Arizona among other unidentified locations in Arizona and New Mexico.

Biographical / Historical: Geoffrey O'Hara was appointed in March 1913 by the Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Frederick H. Abbott, as "Instructor of Native Indian Music." The stated goal of O'Hara's position was the recording of Navajo songs with the intent to teach them to Navajo students. O'Hara started at the San Juan school in Shiprock, New Mexico, spent June through August at Hubbell Trading post in Ganado, Arizona and then went to Fort Defiance, Arizona in September at the start of the school year. O'Hara requested re-appointment in September and was granted two additional extensions through November 1913. During this time O'Hara visited the following schools: San Juan (NM), Ft. Defiance, Tohatchi (NM), Chinle (AZ), Cornfields (AZ).

Culture: Diné (Navajo)

1.1: Photographs, 1913-1914

45 Photographic prints

Processing Information: Still in process.

1.2: Documents, 1913-1914

0.25 Linear feet

Box 1, Folder 1	Documents and Correspondence, 1913 March-May
Box 1, Folder 2	Documents and Correspondence, 1913 June-July
Box 1, Folder 3	Documents and Correspondence, 1913 August-November
Box 1, Folder 4	Final Report, 1913 October
Box 1, Folder 5	Murder Evidence, Fort Defiance, Arizona, 1913
Box 1, Folder 6	Vouchers and Expenses I, 1913-1914

Box 1, Folder 7

Vouchers and Expenses II, 1913-1914

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Series 2: Correspondence with Frances Densmore and Others, 1926-1957

0.6 Linear feet

Box 1, Folder 8	Philip Johnston letter and photograph, 1925
Box 1, Folder 9	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1926
Box 1, Folder 10	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1933-1934
Box 1, Folder 11	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1944-1946
Box 1, Folder 12	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1947-1948
Box 1, Folder 13	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1949-1951
Box 1, Folder 14	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1952 January-May
Box 2, Folder 1	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1952 June-December
Box 2, Folder 2	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1953 January-April
Box 2, Folder 3	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1953 May-December
Box 2, Folder 4	Frances Densmore Library of Congress LPs: recordings, pamphlets, song lists, 1953 December 3 Sound discs (vinyl) Notes: These include: Long-Playing Record L31 "Songs of the Papago"; Long-Playing Record L32 "Songs of the Nootka and Quileute"; Long-Playing Record L33 "Songs of the Menominee, Mandan and Hidatsa"
Box 2, Folder 5	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1954
Box 2, Folder 6	Frances Densmore correspondence, 1955-1956
Box 2, Folder 7	Frances Densmore sheet music for "Seminole Songs", undated
Box 2, Folder 8	Miscellaneous manuscripts, undated

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