



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of the American Indian*

Ambrotype of Chief Okemos

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2019

National Museum of the American Indian  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Museum of the American Indian
<b>Title:</b>	Ambrotype of Chief Okemos
<b>Date:</b>	1858
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAI.AC.385
<b>Creator:</b>	Smith, Henry H. (Photographer)
<b>Source:</b>	Imhof, Joseph, 1871-1955 (Collector)
<b>Extent:</b>	1 Ambrotypes (photographs)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	Ambrotype of Chief Okemos [Anishinaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwa)] photographed by Henry H. Smith in 1858.
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): Ambrotype of Chief Okemos</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This ambrotype was formerly in the collection of Joseph Imhof (1871-1955, Western artist); lent to MAI by Joseph Imhof in 1930; donated to MAI by Joseph Imhof's widow Sarah Imhof (1872-1966) in 1961.

### Related Materials

There are only 3 other known photographs of Chief Okemos. Two are in private collections and the third is an ambrotype held in the Archives of Michigan (Record Group 2005-13).

The NMAI Archives Center also holds other photographs (NMAI.AC.142) and objects collected by artist and collector Joseph Imhof.

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Emily Moazami, Supervisory Archivist, 2019.

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Ambrotype of Chief Okemos, P12521, NMAI.AC.385; 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](mailto:nmaiarchives@si.edu)).

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

There is conflicting information about the details of Chief Okemos' biography including his birth year. It is believed that Chief Okemos was born circa 1769 possibly in the Anishinaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwa) settlement of Ketchewandaugoning on the Shiawassee River (near present day Bloomfield, Michigan). Other spellings of his name included Okemus, Okemans, Ogimaus, Okemos, O-ge-mah, and O-Gee-Manse.

He fought in several battles including the battle of Tippencanoe, Indiana (1811), the War of 1812, the Battle of Sandusky (1813), and the Battle of the Thames (1813). During the War of 1812, Okemos suffered an injury, which left him with a large scar on his forehead. Chief Okemos also signed several treaties on behalf of the Anishinaabe including the Treaty of Saginaw (1819).

His family included his wife Waindegoquayzance; his son Paymechewaysawdung (1829-1899; also known as John); his son Waygeshegome (1845-1902; also known as James); his daughter Kawbaishcawmoquay (1845-1896); and his daughter Shawusquahbenoquay (d.1852). Chief Okemos died on December 5, 1858 in Michigan.

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## Scope and Contents

P12521

This collection contains one 1/4 plate ambrotype depicting Chief Okemos [Anishinaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwa)], photographed by Henry H. Smith of Cheboygan, Michigan in 1858. The upper, right hand portion of the ambrotype glass is broken and missing. The ambrotype is housed in a leather case and features a brass mat and preserver.

Inside the case is a handwritten note that reads, "See back of picture for photographer and date." However, due to the photo's fragility, current NMAI Archives staff have not removed the ambrotype from its case to confirm the photographer and date.

Also included in the case are two newspaper clippings about Chief Okemos that are glued together. The first appears to be from the Lansing Journal and reads, "Old Okemus. —Our friend [paper missing] has left on our table a very fine ambrotype of Okemus, the well known chief of the Chippawas, whose residence in this part of the State has made his name and fame familiar to most of our readers. The old Chief paid a visit to our village a few days since. He is not far from one hundred years old, and although his step is feeble, yet he is as erect as in his palmier days. He has heretofore objected to having his likeness taken, under the impression it would shorten his life. At best he has but a few more days on earth. He carries scars upon his head and shoulder into which a man could lay his finger, which he claims to have received at the battle of Thames and while he was aiming his tomahawk at the head of Col. Johnson, just after he had shot Tecumseh. He also claims to have held a captain's commission in the British government. His position as chief has been usurped by younger hands. — Lansing Jour[word cut off]"

The second clipping is from Springfield (Mass) Republican on December 22, 1858 and reads, "The Potawatamie Chief Okemos, who has for a long time lived near Lansing, Michigan died on Sunday last. His precise age was not known, but it is supposed to have been over one hundred years".

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## Arrangement

This ambrotype is housed in an archival phase box.

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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:

Anishinaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwa)

Cultures:

Anishinaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwa)

Names:

Imhof, Joseph, 1871-1955

Okemos, Chief