



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Tintypes of Robert Meldrum and Medicine Tree

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Tintypes of Robert Meldrum and Medicine Tree
Date:	1858-1865
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.386
Source:	Allen, J. I., -1929 (Collector)
Extent:	2 Tintypes (prints)
Language:	No linguistic content; Not applicable .
Summary:	Tintypes depicting fur trader Robert Meldrum and his wife Medicine Tree [Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke); also known as Margaret].
Digital Content:	Image(s): Tintypes of Robert Meldrum and Medicine Tree

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Formerly in the collection of Jirah Isham Allen (Colonel Ike Allen, 1839-1929, a Montana prospector, pioneer, and storekeeper) and probably collected by him between 1862 and about 1920; purchased by MAI from Jirah Allen in 1926.

Separated Materials

The National Museum of the American Indian also holds other objects from Jirah Isham Allen's collection (object catalog numbers 147472 to 147486).

Related Materials

The Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives also holds a photograph of Robert Meldrum.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Emily Moazami, Supervisory Archivist, 2019.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Tintypes of Robert Meldrum and Medicine Tree, P08166, NMAI.AC.386; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

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Biographical / Historical

Robert Meldrum (1802-1865) was a fur trader and interpreter for the Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke) tribe.

Born in 1802, Meldrum and his family emigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1812 and eventually moved to the United States. By the late 1820s, Meldrum was living in St. Louis, Missouri and working in the Rocky Mountain fur trade industry.

The American Fur Company hired Meldrum in 1833 to act as a liaison between the company and the Crow community in Montana. He was stationed at various American Fur Company trading posts and commercial forts along the Yellowstone and Upper Missouri Rivers including Fort Cass, Fort Alexander, Fort Sharpy, and Fort Sharpy II. At these posts, Northern Plains tribes brought various furs to be traded for guns, ammunition, clothing, beads, and other goods.

Meldrum also learned to speak the Apsáalooke language and served as an interpreter between the tribe and U.S. Government. The tribe conferred Meldrum the status of chief and gave him the name "Round Iron" because of the iron trinkets he gifted. Meldrum reportedly married several Apsáalooke women over the years, including Medicine Tree (Margaret), although very little was written about them.

On July 10, 1865, Meldrum died at the American Fur Company's Fort Union on the Upper Missouri River.

Scope and Contents

P08166

This collection contains two circular gem tintypes pasted to a mat board. The tintypes depict Robert Meldrum and his wife Medicine Tree [Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke); also known as Margaret]. The photographs were shot by an unidentified photographer in St. Louis, Missouri, circa 1858-1865.

According to the original inventory, the tintypes were part of a jewelry locket. At some unknown point in time, the tintypes were removed from the locket and pasted to a mat board.

Arrangement

The tintypes are arranged on a mat board inside an archival phase box.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke)
Fur trade--Montana

Cultures:

Apsáalooke (Crow/Absaroke)

Names:

Allen, J. I., -1929
Medicine Tree
Meldrum, Robert, 1806-1865