

Register to the Papers of
James Mooney

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National Anthropological Archives
Smithsonian Institution

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Mooney (1861-1921) was an ethnographer with the Bureau of American Ethnology from 1885 to 1921. Mooney is a well-known author of works on the Cherokee and other Southeast tribes, the ghost-dance religion, the Kiowa, and other Plains tribes. He also researched in the Southwest among the Pueblos and the northern plains tribes.

James Mooney's formal education was limited to the public schools of Richmond, Indiana. In his knowledge of American Indians, he was self-taught in an endeavor that begun early in life. He read widely and began a compilation of tribal names. After working as a teacher and newspaperman, he sought employment with John Wesley Powell, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, who engaged him in 1885. At the BAE Mooney developed such a breadth and depth of knowledge that he came to be recognized as one of the most outstanding authorities on American Indians.

Mooney advocated meticulous field study and sought long association with his subjects. His work with the Cherokee began in 1887 and continued for the rest of his life. His other chief concern was the Kiowa tribes. He also spent considerable amounts of time studying and collecting among the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Apache, Dakota, Kiowa-Apache, Wichita, and Comanche and lesser amounts with the Hopi, Paiute, Shoshoni, Caddo, and small groups in northern Mexico and in the Southeast. His publications and field work also reveal interest in southern mountain people, the Irish, Florida aborigines and missionary efforts among the Indians.

Mooney's investigations led him to several cross-cultural studies, including most notably an investigation of the Ghost Dance Religion and the use of peyote. His study of the American population at the time that contact with Europeans was published posthumously. He also wrote many articles for Frederick W. Hodge's *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (BAE Bulletin 30, 1907 and 1910) and prepared several exhibits for international expositions.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Most of Mooney's papers are among the National Anthropological Archives's series of Numbered Manuscripts. Although this collection includes a few items concerning the American Indians (especially the Kiowa, Pamunkey, Nansemond and other Virginia Indians) it is notable because it includes biographical material and material concerning Mooney's non-Indian interests, particularly his interest in the Irish. Incorporated in the papers are material relating to Mooney's death and to biographies of Mooney.

The series of letters includes letters from Mooney's grandmother in Ireland to his father. Most of the correspondence is made up of incoming letters. Correspondents include Jeremiah Curtin, Natalie Curtis, Hamlin Garland, M.C. Knowles, Sister Mary Agnes Mooney, Thomas J. Shahan, Vilhjalmar Stefansson, H.C. ten Kate, C.C. Uhlenbeck, and Henry Voth.

PROVENANCE

The material in this collection was donated by Mr. John M. (Jack) Scott, a grandson of Mooney's, in 1991. 1 foot.

Box 1

LETTERS. 1859-1919. 1 in.

Mostly electrostatic copies of incoming letters. A few outgoing letters are included. Includes letters from Mooney's grandmother in Ireland to Mooney's father. Mooney's own letters includes one complaining of his being barred from field work by Jesse Walter Fewkes. Other correspondents include Jeremiah Curtin, Henry Voth, Thomas J. Shahan, Hamlin Garland, Sister Mary Agnes Mooney, Natalie Curtis, C.C. Uhlenbeck, M.C. Knowles, Vilhjalmar Stefansson, H.C. ten Kate.

ARTICLES AND TALKS. ca. 1 in.

Address before Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1/18/1910, on "The Indian Ghost Dance."

Address [before Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska?]. 1/18/[1910?], "In Kiowa Camps"

Remarks before Historical Society and Pioneers' Association, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1/19/1910, regarding the work of the Bureau of American Ethnology.

Address continuing previous remarks.

Remarks before the Missouri Valley Historical Association, June 1909, regarding BAE's plan to issue series of ethnology bulletins concerning the American states.

"The Gaelic Factor in the World's Population"

"The Gaelic Language of Ireland"

"Clan Origin" (notes concerning Ireland)

"The Passing of the Delaware Nation"

Manuscript review of George Bird Grinnell's *The Fighting Cheyenne* for the *American Historical Review*.

POETRY. Two items.

Electrostatic copies of poems in Mooney's hand and signed by Mooney.

MATERIAL CONCERNING THE GAELIC SOCIETY. 1910. 10 pp.

Electrostatic copies of newspaper clippings and announcements of meetings.

BIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTS. 1/4 in.

Include originals and copies of materials. This is a mixed groups of documents that include such items as notes on people with the surname Mooney, resolution by the Native American Church on the occasion of Mooney's death, James Mooney's father's affidavit seeking American citizenship.

PRINTED MATERIAL CONCERNING MOONEY. 1/4 in.

Obituaries and other brief biographical sketches. Includes some references to Mooney in other types of publications.

MISCELLANY.

Certificates, mementos, lecture notices, school grades, and other items.

FILE OF MATERIAL ABOUT MOONEY AND THE USE OF THE MOONEY PAPERS. 1921-1980. 1/4 in.

Material assembled by Mooney's wife and other family members. One letter from John Montgomery Cooper quotes an assessment by George A. Dorsey of Mooney as a man. Other materials concerns the work by George Lester Moses, William Colby, and Virginia Shaw in their work on biographies of Mooney.

PHOTOGRAPHS. 3 prints.

Two of the photographs are by Mooney and show Kiowa subjects.

Box 2

NOTEBOOKS. 2.5 inches

One notebook on many different groups of American Indians is inscribed as being the property of James Mooney and Ione Mooney. It is not in Mooney's hand. The other volume, which is in Mooney's hand, is marked as concerning the "Pamunkey, Nansemond, etc. (Va. Indians)."

Box 3

BOOKS. ca. 5 in.

Includes a copy of volume 1 of Frederick Webb Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* that includes a few annotations by Mooney. Also includes copies of book review and articles by Mooney. In addition, there are several books on Ireland and the Gaelic language.

Last Updated: January 14, 2008
Robert Leopold