

Algot Lange papers

1119

Finding aid prepared by James R. DeWalt.

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

2017

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Lange, Algot, 1884-
Title	Algot Lange papers
Call number	1119
Date	circa 1912 - 1914, 1915, 1967
Extent	0.2 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Algot Lange (1884-) was a Swedish/Danish adventurer and amateur anthropologist who visited the Amazon River basin in 1910 and 1913. During the 1910 expedition Lange documented the rubber trade and the native peoples of eastern Peru. During the 1913 expedition he undertook the initial preparation for the University of Pennsylvania's South American (Amazon) expedition. Lange was replaced as leader of this expedition by William C. Farabee, who continued the project from 1913 to 1916. The Algot Lange records consist of one series of three notebooks concerning the Tupi (Nheengatu) language and culture of the Amazon basin compiled by Lange while at the University of Pennsylvania sometime between 1912 and 1914.</p>

Cite as:

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Algot Lange papers. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date]

accessed].

Biography/History

Background information for Algot Lange, with the exception of his career with the University of Pennsylvania Museum and the South American (or Amazon) expedition, is exceedingly sparse.

Algot Lange was born Ake Mortimer Lange May 10, 1884, in Stockholm. He later changed his name to that of his father, Algot Lange (1850-1904), an opera singer. His mother was Finnish-born pianist and author Ina Forsten; he had a brother Einar. In 1885 the family moved to Copenhagen; Lange considered himself Danish. There is no information concerning Lange's academic training or career. In 1904 he emigrated to New York City. From about 1908 to 1910 he was employed as the official photographer for the pathological department in the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane on Ward's Island. He was married and living in Brooklyn in 1912.

In 1910 Lange participated in an expedition to the upper Amazon region of Peru accompanied or led by a Dr. Willard Morrison. The purpose of the expedition was to survey the rubber plantations and the native peoples and conditions of the region. No academic or commercial sponsorship link has been found, although it appears that he may have been in the employ of a local rubber plantation owner, Colonel Rosando da Silva, who financed all or part of the expedition. Lange describes a harrowing episode of a trek into the jungle in search of new plantation sites where nearly all of the team perished. He was found and nursed back to health by a tribe of headhunters, the Mangeroma. He later wrote an account of this episode as *In the Amazon jungle: adventures in remote parts of the upper Amazon River* (1912). Portions of this account were found by several critics to lack credibility.

Lange then went into the business of promoting "The Algot Lange Amazon Lectures" to popular audiences. In December of 1911 he presented two lectures on his Amazon adventures at the University of Pennsylvania Museum that impressed Director George B. Gordon and other museum officials. The museum had for some time been considering an expedition into the Amazon basin to document the native peoples of the region, now threatened by the encroaching rubber trade. Initially, Dr. William C. Farabee of Harvard was approached to lead the expedition, but he declined. The position was then offered to Lange, who accepted and began preparations. It was also sometime from this period to 1914 that Lange compiled a series of notebooks on the Tupi or Nheengatu language of Brazil and neighboring regions. (In July of 1914, Lange wrote to George G. Heye, Chairman of the American Section, that he would return "certain vocabularies and data collected while I was working at the University Museum.")

Sometime later, Dr. Farabee accepted the position to lead the Amazon expedition, and Lange was kept on as a liaison to make preparations for the expedition in Brazil. Lange's relations with the University Museum and his colleagues began to deteriorate at this point, and evidence was obtained that Lange may have been attempting to obstruct the Farabee expedition. Lange was recalled and resigned from the expedition February to March 1913. In May of 1913 he was at Marajo Island, an archaeological site at the mouth of the Amazon, collecting pottery specimens. In 1914 he published *The lower Amazon: a narrative of explorations in the little known regions*.

In February of 1915, now back in America, Lange wrote that he intended to return to the Amazon in a few months. In March of 1915 he mounted an exhibition of Marajo pottery at the Municipal Art Gallery, City

of New York (16th Street and Irving Place). He offered to sell the pottery to the University of Pennsylvania Museum. An article in the *New York Times* (July 4, 1915, p.10) stated that he was threatening to dump all of his prehistoric artifacts in the East River, because no one wanted to buy them. Later that month he was planning an expedition to the Amazon in search of the “Rivers of Doubt,” and searching for a companion to accompany him. There is no evidence that this expedition ever took place. In 1915 Lange became a naturalized citizen of the United States. During World War I he registered for the draft, probably during the June or September 1918 registration, according to his age group. He lists his home in New York City and his profession as “unemployed.” We have no further information concerning Algot Lange.

Scope and Contents

The Algot Lange records consist of one series of notebooks compiled by Lange sometime between 1912 and 1914 concerning the Tupi (Nheengatu) language and folklore. These are further described under the series scope and contents statement.

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

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Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Correspondence, news articles, reports and related documentation concerning Lange's relation to the University of Pennsylvania Museum's South American (Amazon) expedition can be found in the William C. Farabee expedition records (PU-Mu. 1120), Amazon expedition correspondence series, from March 1911 through March 1915.

Controlled Access Headings

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Brazil

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Lange, Algot, 1884-

SUBJECT(S)

- Ethnology--Indigenous peoples
- Nheengatu language
- Tupi Indians
- Tupi language

Collection Inventory

TUPI (NHEENGATU) NOTEBOOKS, CIRCA 1912-1914, 1915, 1967.

Scope and Contents note

The Tupi (Nheengatu) notebooks series consist of three notebooks that Lange compiled concerning the Tupi or Nheengatu language and culture while in the employ of the University of Pennsylvania Museum sometime between 1912 and 1914. Nheengatu is a language of the Tupi-Guarani family used as a common system of communication (*lingoa geral* in Portuguese) among several peoples of the Amazon basin. It is not related to the Carib or Arawak linguistic groups also documented during this period by William C. Farabee, but it is used by these people.

The notebooks are labeled as sections A, B, and a third unlabeled notebook. Section A contains a Portuguese-English-Tupi verb list, with some Tupi folktales and songs appended. Section B is a Tupi-Portuguese vocabulary, with another folktale. The third section is an English-Tupi vocabulary, not alphabetically arranged. J. Alden Mason, former Curator of the American Section, noted in 1967 that large sections of these notebooks were likely extracted from Karl F. P. von Marius' *Beitraege zur Ethnographie und Sprachenkunde Amerikas, zumal Brasiliens* (1887). The initial folder of the series contains an analysis and evaluation of the notebooks by Mason.

	Box
History and evaluation of Lange's linguistic notebooks 1915, 1967.	1
Tupi (Nheengatu) notebooks, section A circa 1912-1914.	1
Tupi (Nheengatu) notebooks, section B circa 1912-1914.	1
Tupi (Nheengatu) notebooks, section 3 circa 1912-1914.	1