

John W. Ogilvie papers

1121

Finding aid prepared by Kate Pourshariati.

Last updated on March 02, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

11/26/2013

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Summary Information

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| Repository | University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives |
| Creator | Ogilvie, John W. |
| Title | John W. Ogilvie papers |
| Call number | 1121 |
| Date [inclusive] | 1913-1920 |
| Extent | 0.4 linear foot (the collection is contained in one archival box) |
| Language | English |

Biography/History

Details of John W. Ogilvie's biography are scant, what we know of him begins in 1913 at the time of his meeting with the University of Pennsylvania anthropologist William Curtis Farabee, near the Rupununi river in (then) British Guiana, today (the Co-operative Republic of) Guyana. Born in Scotland, Ogilvie may have traveled widely before heading toward South America to establish his fortune in gold prospecting and rubber tapping. Unlike many other colonial period prospectors however he seems to have developed a strong working relationship with native people of the region, especially the Wapishana [Wapisiana], and was said to be fluent in their language as well as several others, including Macusi, Waiwai, Parikutu, Chikena, and Diau, of the Arawak and Carib language groups. When Farabee, on the Amazon Expedition of 1913-1916, met Ogilvie at home at the Dadanawa ranch, (at that time belonging to Mr. H.P.C. Melville, ("magistrate and protector of Indians")), Farabee persuaded Ogilvie to take him deep in to the forests in a much more ambitious plan than the expedition originally entailed. This they did together with a large party of Wapishana people connected with Ogilvie. This portion of the expedition which had begun in Manaus, Brazil ended finally at Georgetown, capital city on the coast of then British Guiana. The purpose of this expedition was chiefly an ethnological survey, that is, determining the

identities of the tribes that still lived in the region, (“salvage ethnography”), and collection of artifacts. Farabee was impressed with Ogilvie’s grasp of local traditions and languages, it is speculated that these formed the basis of Farabee’s two books subsequently published, “The Arawaks of Northern Brazil and Southern British Guiana” and “The Central Caribs”.

Ogilvie was said to have grown comfortable after many years living among the Wapishana, perhaps marrying there as well. He was fully immersed in the traditional fishing and hunting practices of the area, and describes these food gathering and hunting ways in an unpublished manuscript, contained within this collection, complete with hand-drawn illustrations. In addition there is a complete manuscript of Wapishana mythology.

Ogilvie demonstrates a clear respect for the cultures that he was exposed to in over 20 years of living and travels in the area, much of which is captured in the six manuscripts in the collection, including three works of fiction loosely based on his observations of life in the Amazon. In his business dealings, Ogilvie was one of the earliest Europeans to develop the industry of balata tapping in this savannah region, providing rubber like substances. There is an entire manuscript devoted to balata in the collection. Eventually Ogilvie retired from his work and returned to Scotland, settling in Edinburgh in a home that they named Rupununi. In 1975 his widow transferred his papers to the University Museum

Scope and Contents

The John W. Ogilvie papers consist of one archival box (.04 linear feet) containing 16 folders, chiefly of manuscripts pertaining to Ogilvie's life work in British Guiana. These collections came to the Penn Museum in 1974 from Mrs. L. Ogilvie, the widow of John Ogilvie, then living in Edinburgh Scotland. The collection is arranged in series beginning with Mythology and continuing with non-fiction manuscripts about Amazonian Indians who worked with Ogilvie, and later fiction manuscripts derived from his experiences there.

Administrative Information

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Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Manuscripts for publication

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Farabee, William Curtis, b. 1865-d. 1925
- Ogilvie, John W.

SUBJECT(S)

- Ethnology--Indigenous peoples
- Wapisiana Indians

Collection Inventory

CORRESPONDENCE, 1974.

| | Box |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Ogilvie, Mrs. John (L) 1974. | 1 |

MANUSCRIPTS, FOLKLORE 1913-1920.

| | Box |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Wapishana and Taruma Myths. | 1 |

MANUSCRIPTS, NON-FICTION, 1913-1920.

Arrangement note

Regarding the non-fiction manuscript entitled "Factual account of Indian life", the first few chapters of the original manuscript were missing, however we were able to recapture the content due to a second copy discovered later. This will explain why the pagination does not seem to line up correctly in this manuscript Also, regarding folder 4 of the same manuscript, pp. 121-203 some drawings made by a Wapishana man were separated from the folder and moved to larger scale storage.

| | Box |
|--|-----|
| Factual account of Indian life (1 of 6). "The white Indians" pp. 1-19 "The Taruma" pp. | 1 |

20-38 “Yarns by the riverside” pp. 39-56 .

Factual account of Indian life (2 of 6). “In the forests and jungles” pp. 44-77 “In the mountains” pp. 78-109 “A day’s march nearer--food” pp. 110-120 . 1

Factual account of Indian life (3 of 6). “The Waiwai” pp. 121-129 “A day of rest” pp. 130-142 “Round the village” pp. 143-151 “Kiwiniik’s father” pp. 152-161 “Negocio - business” pp. 162-168 “Nothing to do” pp. 169-177 “Ceremony” pp. 178-185 “Litany” pp. 186-192 “The slatt of light” pp. 193-203 . 1

Factual account of Indian life (4 of 6). “Pot-pourri” pp. 204-215 “Beer! Glorious beer!” pp. 216-225 “Indian life—in general” pp. 226-251 “Observation!” pp 252-269 “Settlement of disputes” pp 292-303 . 1

Factual account of Indian life (5 of 6). “Medical practice” pp 304-321 “Poison” pp. 322-347 “Piainen” pp. 348-364 “Music” pp. 365-374 “Amusement” pp. 374-392 “Indian mythology” pp. 393-408 . 1

Factual account of Indian life (6 of 6). Addendum. An extra section on fishing. . 1

Aboriginal Indians.

Balata. An account of balata rubber tapping..

Miscellaneous manuscripts. Mabba tiu, Notes on fish poisons, The Rupunumi, Addenda..

MANUSCRIPTS, FICTION, 1913-1920.

| | Box |
|---|-----|
| The Lucky Jim. | 1 |
| River Shark [Ms. and incomplete transcription]. Murder mystery. | 1 |

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| Suss (manuscript, part 1). | 1 |
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| Suss (transcription, part 1). | 1 |
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| Suss (manuscript, part 2). There does not appear to be a transcription for this section. | 1 |
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