

Guide to the Esther Lightner Matson and Frank A. Matson autograph albums MSS 16486

Esther Lightner Matson and Frank A. Matson autograph albums
1880-1899

Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16486

Unit ID

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Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/985

Unit Date

1880-1899

Mixed Materials

BW 30 (box)

Container

1-2 (folder)

Mixed Materials

2 (folder)

Language

English

Creator

Matson, Esther Lightner, 1869-1936

Creator

Matson, Frank A., 1866-1927

Extent

.06 Cubic Feet 2 letter sized folders

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Jeffrey Rovenpor, Carolinian by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on November/December 2020.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16486, Esther Lightner Matson and Frank A. Matson autograph albums, Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

This collection contains an autograph album of Esther Lightner Matson from her attendance at the Santee Normal Training School in Niobrara, Nebraska and an autograph album of her husband, Frank Matson who attended the Genoa Indian School in Matson, Nebraska. The albums, both from the 1880's, contain some entries with the original language of the Dakota Sioux.

Esther Matson was the daughter of Isaiah Lightner, a Quaker who served as an Indian Agent of the Santee Reservation between 1877 and 1884.

The Santee Normal Training School was founded by The Reverend Alfred L. Riggs, a Congregational missionary, in 1870 for members of the Santee Sioux Tribe who had been exiled from their ancestral home in Minnesota following the Sioux uprising of 1862. After the Dakota War of 1862, the government displaced many of these people. They were punished by hanging, condemned to prisons in Davenport, Iowa or forcibly removed from their home territory.

Reverend Riggs was strongly convinced of the importance of teaching in the Dakota language. As an educator and linguist, he understood that thought and philosophy were closely related to the spoken Dakota words. Government agencies were strongly opposed to the use of the Dakota language in classroom instruction. The Episcopal Church, the American Board of Foreign Missions, and the Federal Government suspended the classes because they were almost entirely in the Dakota language. Government aid to the school ended in 1893. The school closed in 1936. Like the Santee Normal School and other Native American Schools of the same time, the missionaries with government influence wanted to christianize the Genoa Industrialize School and eradicate their native Omaha language. The Genoa School operated from 1884 to

1934.

Sources: Dealer notes

Website of Original Santee Normal Training School retrieved 9/17/21

http://www.santeedakota.org/santee_normal_training_school.htm Wade, Jess, "Exploring the scarred, "tragic history" of Nebraska's Genoa Indian School" Omaha World-Herald, August 6, 2021. Updated December 20, 2021. Retrieved 9/17/21 https://omaha.com/news/state-and-regional/exploring-the-scarred-tragic-history-of-nebraskas-genoa-indian-school/article_000e9546-f489-11eb-8105-5fb3160d2108.html

For more information and photographs of the Genoa Indian School from History Nebraska: History Nebraska Blog retrieved 9/17/21 Flashback Friday: The Tragedies and Successes of the Genoa Indian School <https://history.nebraska.gov/blog/flashback-friday-tragedies-and-successes-genoa-indian-school>

For additional information about the Relocation of Sioux: Source Wikipedia: retrieved 9/17/21 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sioux>

See also The Genoa Indian School Digital Reconciliation Project is a new effort to tell the story of these children through record digitization, oral histories, community narratives and artifacts. The project is a collaboration between the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Genoa U.S. Indian School Foundation; community advisers from the Omaha, Pawnee, Ponca, Santee Sioux and Winnebago tribes of Nebraska; and descendants of those who attended the school.School

For more information on the project, visit genoaindianschool.org or email genoadigitalproject@unl.edu.

Content Description

This collection contains two similarly designed autograph albums belonging to Esther Lightner Matson and her husband Frank A. Matson. The albums contain inscriptions to Esther Lightner Matson from fellow students and teachers at the Santee Normal School and to Frank A. Matson from the Genoa Indian School, both Native American Residential schools in Nebraska and taught by Quakers in the 1880's. The albums look like typical nineteenth century autograph albums except for the page(s) that are written using Sioux Dakota language. The albums measure 7.5x 6.25 with raised papermache flowers on the covers. The albums are also beautifully illustrated inside the album with flowers and other small drawings. The title page of Frank Matson's album is decorated with a handwritten design of tiny tree logs in the lettering. Most of the names in the entries seem to be English names and were probably changed from their Sioux names. According to Wikipedia,

American Indian boarding schools denigrated Native American culture and made children give up their languages and religion. Schools forced removal of indigenous cultural signifiers: cutting the children's hair, having them wear American-style uniforms, forbidding them from speaking their indigenous languages, and replacing their tribal names with English-language names (saints names under some religious orders) for use at the schools, as part of assimilation and to "Christianize" them. Inscriptions in the albums are by some of these individuals: (probably not their original names) Mary Eugenia La Moure, Cora Rulo, Nancy Doctor, and Lucy Lovejoy were Sioux students at the Santee Normal Training School. H. M. Jones was a Sioux member of the Santee Agency with a four- line inscription in Dakota Sioux. Isaac Bettelyoun (1886), a teacher at the school, wrote a four-line inscription in Dakota Sioux that begins "Kola Frank" which is an especially intimate male to male greeting. Carroll P. Rouse, a disciplinarian and clerk at the school used the language in his inscription "Herneyeye Lo" Charley Rulo (1884) wrote "In this quite little spot I plant a sweet for get me not your truly Charley Rulo Ponka". The Ponca are a midwestern tribe. Mary L. North (1885) was an Arapahoe woman who worked in the school. Carrie Anderson (1885) was a Sioux Woman from the Yankton Agency, Dakota Territory at the Indian Industrial School. William Hunter (1886) was Winnebago clerk at the Genoa Indian School. w their financial Sources: American Indian boarding Schools. Wikipedia. Accessed January 2022 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Indian_boarding_schools

Keywords

Indians of North America Education

Autograph albums.

Genoa Indian Industrial School (Genoa, Neb.)

Santee Normal Training School (Santee, Neb.)