



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Thomas Henry Tibbles papers,
1850-1956 [1875-1905]

by Rachel Menyuk

2014

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National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center
4220 Silver Hill Rd
Suitland , Maryland, 20746-2863
Phone: 301.238.1400
nmaiarchives@si.edu
<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/archive/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center
Creator:	Tibbles, Thomas Henry, 1840-1928
Title:	Thomas Henry Tibbles papers
Dates:	1850-1956
Bulk Dates:	1875-1905
Quantity:	2 linear feet 41 photographs
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Thomas Henry Tibbles papers were originally donated to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in 1960 by Vivien Barris, wife of Tibbles's grandson Chester Barris.

Separated Materials

The photographs have been moved to cool storage.

Related Materials note

The dress of Susette "Bright Eyes" LaFlesche, wife to Tibbles, was also donated by Vivien Barris in 1984 and is a part of NMAI's Ethnology object collection. It has catalog number 25/2192.

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Archives Technician, in 2014.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Thomas Henry Tibbles papers, Box and Folder Number; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

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Biographical Note

Thomas Henry Tibbles was born May 22, 1840, near Athens, Ohio to parents William and Martha (nee Cooley) Tibbles. In 1856, at the age of 16, Tibbles fought with anti-slavery Free-Staters in the Bleeding Kansas conflicts under James Henry Lane. Lane's troops disbanded the same year and Tibbles went on to study at Mt. Union College in Alliance, Ohio from 1858-1861. During the Civil War Tibbles served as a scout and newspaper correspondent in Missouri and Kansas and continued newspaper work until 1871 when he became a circuit preacher. Between 1874 and 1879, Tibbles worked on the staffs of various newspapers in Omaha, Nebraska eventually reaching the post of assistant editor of the *Omaha Daily Herald*. It was during his time at the Herald that Tibbles was instrumental in bringing the case of Standing Bear and the Ponca Indian people before the United States District Court at Fort Omaha. Standing Bear, along with thirty other Poncas, had returned to their home in Nebraska after being forcibly removed to Indian Territory 1878. They were being detained at the Omaha Reservation on an order from the Secretary of the Interior and Tibbles began to circulate the story of the plight of the Ponca to major newspapers gathering the support of the public. Eventually Tibbles had attorneys John L. Webster and A.J. Poppleton help Standing Bear petition the court with a writ of habeas corpus. On April 30, 1879 Judge Elmer Dundy declared that an Indian is a person within the law and that the Ponca were being held illegally, setting Standing Bear and the Ponca free. Following the trial, Tibbles continued to report on violations against Native American rights. Tibbles was a witness to the aftermath of the massacre of Native Americans at Wounded Knee in 1891, and reported this tragedy to the world. From 1893-1895, he worked as a newspaper correspondent in Washington D.C. On returning to Nebraska, Tibbles became editor-in-chief of *The Independent*, a weekly Populist Party newspaper. He was the Populist Party nominee for Vice President of the United States in 1904. Though unsuccessful in this campaign Tibbles continued to write on Populist issues as well as editing *The Investigator* from 1905-1910 and returning to the *Omaha World Herald* from 1910 to his retirement.

Tibbles had two children with his first wife, Amelia Owen whom he married in 1861. Eda, born in 1868 in Kansas City, married Herbert Bates in 1894 and May, born in 1870 in Danville Iowa, married Allen Barris in 1891. Amelia died of peritonitis in 1879. On June 29, 1882, Tibbles married Susette "Bright Eyes" LaFlesche (Omaha), daughter of Joseph "Iron Eye" LaFlesche. Susette LaFlesche worked closely alongside Tibbles during the Standing Bear's trial in her role as chief interpreter. Together, LaFlesche, Tibbles and Standing Bear carried out a successful lecture tour in England and Scotland in 1886-1887 speaking on issues of Indian rights. LaFlesche became well known as an eloquent writer and orator. Following her death in 1903 she was eulagized in the US Senate and was later inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Tibbles remarried for a final time in 1907 to Ida Belle Riddle. She remained by Tibbles side until his own death in 1928.

During his career, Tibbles wrote three books which included *Ponca Chiefs* (1880), which was written under the pen name "Zylyff", *Hidden Power* (1881) and *The American Peasant* (1892). Tibbles had also composed his memoirs titled *Buckskin and Blanket Days* which were eventually published in 1957 through the efforts of his grandson Chester Barris.

Scope and Content Note

The Thomas Henry Tibbles papers include documents that span Tibbles' career as a journalist and lecturer on Indian rights from the 1870s until his death in 1928. Of particular note are the documents related to his work on the Standing Bear vs. George Crook Habeas Corpus trial. This includes articles, essays and talks written by Tibbles as well as copies of a lecture given by Susette LaFlesche Tibbles. Notable correspondents include; Robert Clarkson, Joseph Cook, General George Crook, Robert N. Price and William Jennings Bryan. Examples of materials related to the Ponca land case and Standing Bear trial include reports from the Ponca Relief committee, a petition from the Ponca people, minutes from the Council Concerning Ponca Land Right and additional documents and writings sent out by Tibbles to gain support from both the church and politicians. Also included in these papers are several drafts of *Buckskin and Blanket Days*, Tibbles' autobiography that was written in 1905 and published in 1957. There is a significant amount of correspondence between Chester Barris, grandson to Tibbles, and publishing houses between 1939 and 1956 in the search for a willing publisher. There is also correspondence between Barris and his aunt Theadora "Dora" Cogswell who worked on editing the manuscript. Cogswell conducted a large amount of research on the historicity of the events described by Tibbles and her notes are included in the collection. The photographs in this collection include portraits of the Tibbles/LaFlesche family as well as portraits of friends and acquaintances. These include photographs of Edward Everett Hale, General George Crook, Governor Benjamin Butluer, Wendall Phillips, Thomas Watson, William Jennings Bryan and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into three series. **Series 1: Subject Files** and **Series 2: Buckskin and Blanket Days** are both arranged alphabetically. **Series 3: Photographs** is subdivided into three subseries; **Subseries 3A: T.H. Tibbles Portraits**, arranged chronologically, **Subseries 3B: Family and Friends** and **Subseries 3C: Presentation Portraits to Bright Eyes**, both arranged alphabetically.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Habeas corpus--United States--Cases.
- Ponca Indians--Legal status, laws, etc.
- Wounded Knee Massacre, S.D., 1890

Cultures:

- Omaha
- Ponca

Types of Materials:

- Articles
- Autobiographies
- Book drafts

Correspondence
Essays

Names:

Bryan, William Jennings, 1860-1925
Crook, George, 1829-1890
La Flesche, Susette, 1854-1903
Omaha World-Herald Company.
Standing Bear, Ponca chief
Watson, Thomas E. (Thomas Edward), 1856-1922

Container Listing

Series 1: Subject Files, 1867-1939

1 linear foot

The materials in this series span the life and career of T.H. Tibbles from 1867 until his death in 1927. This includes articles, essays and talks written by Tibbles relating to both his work among the Ponca and Omaha tribes as well as his later political work as a member of the populist party. There is a small amount of correspondence in this series including letters from Robert Clarkson, Joseph Cook, General George Crook, Robert N. Price and William Jennings Bryan. Materials related to the Ponca land case and Standing Bear trial include reports from the Ponca Relief committee, a petition from the Ponca people, minutes from the Council Concerning Ponca Land Right and additional documents and writings sent out by Tibbles to gain support from both the church and politicians. Also included in this series are essays and lectures written by Susette "Bright Eyes" LaFlesche Tibbles (Omaha) who served as Standing Bear's interpreter during his trial.

Box 1, Folder 1	Articles of Agreement, 1871
Box 1, Folder 2	Book List: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1932
Box 1, Folder 3	Bright Eyes, Susette La Flesche: Law is Liberty, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Bright Eyes, Susette La Flesche: Letters, 1879 Includes letters dictated to Bright Eyes by Joseph "Iron Eye" LaFlesche and several Ponca Chiefs.
Box 1, Folder 5	Bright Eyes, Susette La Flesche: Speeches, 1880
Box 1, Folder 6	Bright Eyes, Susette La Flesche: Statement by White Eagle, 1879
Map-case 12, Folder 1	Certificate: State of Nebraska, 1901
Box 1, Folder 7	George Crook: Letters and Clippings, 1871, 1879, 1882
Box 1, Folder 8	Department of the Interior: Council Minutes, 1879
Box 1, Folder 9	Department of the Interior: Omaha Documents, 1883, 1899
Box 1, Folder 10	Department of the Interior: Standing Bear Certificate, 1877
Box 1, Folder 11	Grasshopper Scourge Aid, 1873-1875
Map-case 12, Folder 2	"His History" Folio and Cartoon of Standing Bear, undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Letters of Introduction: Ponca Aid, Jun. 1879
Box 1, Folder 13	Letters of Introduction: Ponca Aid, Jul. 1879-1880
Box 1, Folder 14	Letters of Introduction: Miscellaneous, 1886-1887
Box 1, Folder 15	Letters Received: A-C, 1879-1907

Correspondents: Allen, Bourke, Bryan, Buffalo Chip, Cabot

Box 1, Folder 16 Letters Received: D-J, 1880-1905
Correspondents: Davis, Dawes, Edgren, Goddard, Hale, Harsha, Jackson

Box 1, Folder 17 Letters Received: K-T, 1879-1881
Correspondents: Kingsley, Lincoln, Price, Riggs, Stickney, Thomas

Box 1, Folder 18 Letters Received: V-Y, 1879-1905
Correspondents: Vincent, Watson, Webster, Yellow Horse

Box 1, Folder 19 Letters Sent, 1885, 1887

Box 1, Folder 20 Letters to the Editor, 1881-1897

Map-case 12, Folder 2 Map of Omaha Reservation, undated

Box 1, Folder 21 Medicine Lodge Creek Indians, 1867

Box 1, Folder 22 Omaha Ponca Relief Committee, 1880

Map-case 12, Folder 2 Omaha World Herald: Cartoon of Tibbles, 1939

Box 1, Folder 23 Pamphlets by Other Authors, 1880, 1888, 1906

Box 1, Folder 24 Ponca Land Dispute: Clippings and Articles, 1879

Box 1, Folder 25 Ponca Land Dispute: Clippings and Articles (Photocopies), 1879

Box 1, Folder 26 Ponca Land Dispute: Scrapbook, 1879-1880

Box 2, Folder 1 Ponca Land Dispute: Statements and Petitions, 1879

Box 2, Folder 2 Ponca Land Dispute: Writings, 1879

Box 2, Folder 3 Petitions, 1880, 1886

Box 2, Folder 4 Religious Sermons, undated

Box 2, Folder 5 F. Schwerzer: "The Limitations of the Law"1905

Box 2, Folder 6 Standing Bear: Letter to the Editor, 1879

Box 2, Folder 7 Standing Bear vs. Crook: Argument of G.M. Lambertson, 1879

Box 2, Folder 8 Standing Bear vs. Crook: Argument of A.J. Poppleton, 1879

Box 2, Folder 9 Standing Bear vs. Crook: Argument of J.L. Webster, 1879

Box 2, Folder 10 Standing Bear vs. Crook: Notice of Appearance, 1879

Box 2, Folder 11 Standing Bear vs. Crook: Testimonies, 1879

Box 2, Folder 12 Writings: *The American Peasant* , 1892

Box 2, Folder 13 Writings: "A Chapter of Moral Science"undated

Box 2, Folder 14 Writings: "Colonel Spotted Tail"undated

Box 2, Folder 15 Writings: "How a Poet Wrote History"undated

Box 2, Folder 16 Writings: "On the Need for Civil Law Among the Indians"1885

Box 2, Folder 17 Writings: "One Man's Part in the Making of a Nation"undated

Box 2, Folder 18 Writings: "Pipe Dancing the Sioux"1881

Box 2, Folder 19 Writings: Poetry, Miscellaneous, undated

Box 2, Folder 20 Writings: *The Ponca Chiefs* , 1879

Box 3, Folder 1 Writings: "Riding Through the Hostiles"undated

Box 3, Folder 2 Writings: "Social Life Among the North American Indians"undated

Box 3, Folder 3 Writings: "The Story of Sunshine"undated

Box 3, Folder 4 Writings: "Three Professors"undated

Box 3, Folder 5 Writings: "Two Reporters Try High Finance"undated

Box 3, Folder 6 Writings: "Wrong Principles in Indian Government"undated

Box 3, Folder 7 Writings: Untitled, Miscellaneous, undated

Box 3, Folder 8 Writings: Untitled, Story on Inflation, 1895

Series 2: Buckskin and Blanket Days, 1934-1956

1 linear foot

This series contains material related to the publication of Tibbles' autobiography *Buckskin and Blanket Days* in 1957. This includes several drafts of the manuscript as well as correspondence between Chester Barris and publishing houses between 1939 and 1956 in the search for a willing publisher. There is also correspondence between Barris and his aunt Theadora "Dora" Cogswell who worked on editing the manuscript. Cogswell conducted a large amount of research on the historicity of the events described by Tibbles and her research notes, including clippings and articles related to events described in the book, are included in this series.

Box 3, Folder 9	Agreements: Barris and Cogswell, 1936
Box 3, Folder 10	Biographical Preface, undated
Box 3, Folder 11	Correspondence: Barris and Cogswell, 1939
Box 3, Folder 12	Correspondence: Barris and Cogswell, 1940
Box 3, Folder 13	Correspondence: Barris and Cogswell, 1941-1951
Box 3, Folder 14	Correspondence: Barris and DeFrance, 1936-1937
Box 3, Folder 15	Correspondence: Publication, 1934-1938
Box 3, Folder 16	Correspondence: Publication, 1942-1947
Box 4, Folder 1	Correspondence: Publication, 1947-1950
Box 4, Folder 2	Correspondence: Publication, 1951-1956
Box 4, Folder 3	Correspondence: Research, 1939
Box 4, Folder 4	Foreward, Biographical Sketch Questionnaire, undated
Box 4, Folder 5	Manuscript I, p.1-57, undated
Box 4, Folder 6	Manuscript I, p.58-123, undated
Box 4, Folder 7	Manuscript I, p.124-164, undated
Box 4, Folder 8	Manuscript I, p.165-232, undated
Box 4, Folder 9	Manuscript I, p.233-315, undated
Box 4, Folder 10	Manuscript I, p.315-364, undated
Box 4, Folder 11	Manuscript II, p.1-77, undated
Box 4, Folder 12	Manuscript II, p.78-156, undated
Box 5, Folder 1	Manuscript II, p.157-229, undated
Box 5, Folder 2	Manuscript II, p.230-309, undated
Box 5, Folder 3	Manuscript II, p.310-380, undated

Box 5, Folder 4	Manuscript III, p.306-380, undated
Box 5, Folder 5	Manuscript III, p.381-447, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Research: Eda Bates Recollections, 1935
Box 5, Folder 7	Research Notes: Bright Eyes and "A Continent Lost"undated
Box 5, Folder 8	Research Notes: "Hidden Power" and <i>Ponca Chiefs</i> , undated
Box 5, Folder 9	Research Notes: "Indian Life"undated
Box 5, Folder 10	Research Notes: Sitting Bull, Wounded Knee, Circuit Riding, undated
Box 5, Folder 11	Research Notes: Miscellaneous, undated
Box 5, Folder 12	Research Notes: Miscellaneous, undated

Series 3: Photographs, 1861-1920

41 photographs

Location note: There are four oversize prints that are located in Box 6 of the collection. The rest of the prints are located in folders in climate controlled storage.

The photographs in this series have been organized into three subseries. The first subseries includes portraits of T.H. Tibbles from the 1860s until late in his life. This includes photographs of Tibbles with family members as well as populist presidential running partner Thomas Watson. The photographs are of varying formats through the years and of particular note are two tintypes of Tibbles from the 1870s. The second subseries includes photographs of the Tibbles and LaFlesche families including photographs of Tibbles' daughters Mae and Eda. There are also photographs of family friends such as William Jennings Bryan and family. The final series is comprised of portraits inscribed to Bright Eyes and presented as gifts. These include portraits of Edward Everett Hale, General George Crook, Governor Benjamin Butler, Wendell Phillips, Thomas Watson and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Subseries 3A: T.H. Tibbles Portraits

Folder 1	T.H. Tibbles and Amelia Owens Tibbles, 1861 <i>1 photograph</i>
Folder 1	T.H. Tibbles, 1860s <i>1 photograph</i>
Folder 1 (photos); Box 6 (photos)	T.H. Tibbles, 1870s <i>4 photographs</i>
Folder 2	T.H. Tibbles, 1886 <i>3 photographs</i>
Folder 3	T.H. Tibbles, 1900s <i>4 photographs</i>
Box 6	T.H. Tibbles and Susette La Flesche with Friends, 1901 <i>1 photograph</i>
Box 6	T.H. Tibbles and Tom Watson, 1904 <i>2 photographs</i>
Folder 4	T.H. Tibbles and Ida Riddle Tibbles, 1910s <i>1 photograph</i>
Folder 4	T.H. Tibbles with Eda and Friends, 1910s <i>1 photograph</i>
Folder 4	T.H. Tibbles in Nebraska and on Farm, undated <i>2 photographs</i>

Subseries 3B: Family and Friends

- Folder 5 Mr. and Mrs. William Jennings Bryan and Grandchildren, undated
4 photographs
- Folder 5 Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Davis, undated
2 photographs
- Folder 6 Rosalie and Marguerite La Flesche, undated
2 photographs
- Folder 6 Eda and May Tibbles (Daughters), 1889, 1893
3 photographs
- Folder 7 Ida Riddle Tibbles (Wife), undated
1 photograph
- Folder 7 Martha Tibbles (Mother), Eliza Tibbles (Sister) and Husband, undated
3 photographs

Subseries 3C: Presentation Portraits to Bright Eyes

- Folder 8 Henry Beecher, Gov. Benjamin Butler, Joseph Cook, George Crook, Edward Everett Hale, 1887, undated
6 photographs
- Folder 9 Rev. W.J. Harsha, Mrs. Higgins (Teacher), Wendell Phillips, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Unlabeled, 1880, 1886, undated
5 photographs