

ALBANY INSTITUTE OF HISTORY & ART

A Guide to the Tom Dorsey (Tom Two Arrows) Collection, 1935-2007

Summary Information

Repository

Albany Institute of History & Art Library

Creator

Tom Dorsey

Title

Tom Dorsey (Tom Two Arrows) Collection, 1935-2007

Identifier

MG 252

Date

1935-2007

Physical Description

2 boxes

Physical Location

The materials are located onsite in the Museum.

Language of the Material

English

Abstract

A collection of documents, photographs and samples of artwork relating to the life and work of Tom Dorsey, or Tom Two Arrows an Onondagan-adopted Lenni Lenape (Delaware) Indian and artist based in the Albany area.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Tom Dorsey (Tom Two Arrows) Collection, 1935-2007, MG 252. Albany Institute of

Conditions Governing Access and Use

Restrictions on Access

None

Copyright

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Some of items in this collection are directly from the 3 AIHA exhibitions that featured Dorsey's work (1942, 2002, 2007). The earliest items were from the AIHA commission of Tom Dorsey to create works in 1942. Other ephemera donated later from Dorsey himself include correspondence and originally designed stationary. Some items were loaned out from the Albany Institute to the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences and the American Indian Archeological Institute, among other institutions in 1989.

Processing Information

Processed by L. Whitehead; completed October 2012. Finding aid updated by H. Cox, September 2020. Updated by R. Chartier-Hobson, October 2024.

Biographical/Historical

Albany artist, Thomas J. Dorsey, (1920-1993), was also known as Tom Two Arrows. At age 21 he was commissioned by the Albany Institute of History & Art to create a series of paintings depicting Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) games and dances as a result of the interest and enthusiasm of John D. Hatch Jr., who served as director from 1940-1948. Dorsey, a member of the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) tribe and adopted by the Onondagas, was a graduate of Albany High School where he studied with Herbert Steinke (1894-1978/1979). While working on this project, Dorsey spent six weeks on the Onondaga

reservation in Nedrow, near Syracuse, New York. Dorsey served in the armed services during World War II during which time he became a sergeant.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains thorough correspondence including handwritten letters and telegrams between Tom Dorsey and the Albany Institute spanning thirty years. Also included are exhibit labels from the 1942 show written by Dorsey himself. These are accompanied by newer labels and exhibit summaries, which were created and used by the museum in the later exhibitions. Photographs of original Dorsey works and of everyday life on the Onondaga reservation, along with some of the artist's original stationary designs can be found as well. Dorsey was mentioned in and contributed to many journals and published works including a play entitled "A Song, a Dance, a Story..." put on by the Capital Repertory Theater in Albany, the script of which is included in the manuscript collection. Dorsey also illustrated children's books, copies of which are contained the AIHA special collections. Some miscellaneous items within the collection are Dorsey's resume and a train ticket that belonged to him. The collection deals almost exclusively with Dorsey's professional life and his interactions with the Albany Institute, and there is very little about his personal life other than a death announcement from a local paper and his resume.

Contents List

The following section contains a listing of the materials in the collection.

Description	Box	Folder
Stationary, 1944-1945, undated	1	1
Published items (articles, books, etc.), 1938-2006	1	2
Newspaper Clippings, 1935-2007	1	3
Slides (depicting the 2002 exhibit set up at AIHA of "Iroquois Games and Dances")	1	4
Exhibit Labels (by Dorsey for the 1942 exhibit of "Iroquois Games and Dances")	1	5
1942 Exhibit Materials	1	6
2002/2007 Exhibit Materials	1	7
Photographs, 1939-1943, undated	1	8
Correspondence, undated	1	9
Correspondence, 1942	1	10
Correspondence, 1943	1	11
Correspondence, 1944	1	12
Correspondence, 1945-1946	1	13
Correspondence, 1948-1960	1	14

Miscellaneous	1	15
1) Draft Card for Employer, 1942		
2) Pamphlet, "Life and Legends of the Iroquois Indians," 1939		
3) Resume, Dorsey, undated		
Post Cards and Greeting Cards (depicting Tom Two Arrows dancing and artwork)	1	16
Advertisements	1	17
Slides, "Tom Two Arrows," of Iroquois Games and Dances prints, undated	2	