

Ocha Potter Autobiography

MS-700

Finding aid prepared by Elizabeth Russell, revised by Rachael Bussert.

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections

12/15/2009

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Summary Information

Repository	Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections
Creator	Potter, Ocha, 1878-1955
Title	Ocha Potter Autobiography
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1938-2003
Date [inclusive]	1938-1950; 2003
Extent	0.18 cubic feet 1/2 manuscript box (letter size)
Language	English
Language of Material	English
Mixed materials [Box]	1
Abstract	Autobiography, 1878-1950, by Ocha Potter, a native of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, head of the Keweenaw Road Commission and superintendent of the Ahmeek mine. Two versions found in collection. The expanded version includes photographs, newspaper clippings and additional material added by his descendants. Also includes an epilogue written twelve years after the initial memoir detailing the intervening years. The second version is a typescript copy shared by the National Park Service and is an abbreviated version of the autobiography without any of the photographs or other additional material. Collection also includes a CD-ROM with photographs.

Preferred Citation

MS-700, Ocha Potter Autobiography, Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Houghton, Michigan.

Biography

Ocha Potter was born in 1878 near the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago in Wisconsin. He attended the local rural school and left to attend high school in Fond du Lac. After a stint in the Army for the Spanish-American War, Potter worked several odd jobs, finally securing a job in the Gold Coast Colony in West Africa on diamond drill mine exploration. After contracting malaria, Potter returned to the United States where he enrolled in the Michigan College of Mines (now Michigan Technological University).

While a student at the Michigan College of Mines, Potter was hired to prospect for copper in the Copper River region of Alaska (1905–1908). After several summers in Alaska and the rest of the year in Houghton at school, Potter nearly had enough credit to graduate but as he had gotten married and had a young son, he needed to work. Several years later he was given a degree, the work he had done in mining considered as credit. In the meantime, Potter began working for the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company.

With his college education and former mining experience, Potter soon became mine superintendent at the Superior mine and others, ending up at the Ahmeek mine. With the Great Depression, Potter came to be in charge of state, local and federal relief funds for the Keweenaw Peninsula. As superintendent of Ahmeek Mine, he was familiar with the working men's plight during the Great Depression. He planned many county wide WPA projects, from roadside parks and bridges to the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge, cabins, and golf course. With the start of World War II, Calumet and Hecla began opening mines that had closed. Potter returned to Ahmeek, and was also put in charge of reopening the Seneca mine. He remained at Calumet and Hecla until his retirement in 1948. Ocha Potter passed away in 1955, and is buried in Calumet, Michigan.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

Two versions of the autobiography are found in collection. The expanded version includes photographs, newspaper clippings and additional material added by his descendants. Also includes an epilogue written twelve years after the initial memoir detailing the intervening years. The second version is a typescript copy shared by the National Park Service and is an abbreviated version of the autobiography without any of the photographs or other additional material. The second version is also included in electronic format on a cd-rom.

Arrangement

Chronological

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections 12/15/2009

Revision Description

This collection was processed during the NHPRC funded Detailed Processing project. 5/25/2012

Conditions Governing Access

Available for use in the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections.

Legal Status

The family of Ocha Potter retains the literary property rights to the autobiography.

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to publish must be obtained from the family of Ocha Potter.

Acquisition

Autobiography of Ocha Potter, with photographs, newspaper clippings and additional material added by his descendants was donated to the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections on April 6, 2004 by Susan Bennett. File contains typescript shared by National Park Service, CD-ROM shared by family, and printed copy from CD-ROM.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Calumet and Hecla Mining Company.
- Michigan College of Mines.

Geographic Name(s)

- Ahmeek (Mich.)
- Alaska
- Calumet (Mich.)
- Houghton (Mich.)

Personal Name(s)

- Potter, Ocha, 1878-1955

Subject(s)

- Autobiographies
- Copper mines and mining--Alaska
- Copper mines and mining--Michigan--Keweenaw Peninsula

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Sixty Years, Early Typescript May 1939-1950	1	1
Sixty Years, Full Edition May 1939-1950	1	2
Sixty Year, Full Edition CD-Rom Feb. 17, 2003	1	3