Finding Aid to the Indian Board of Co-operation Collection MS.766

Finding aid prepared by Holly Rose Larson; Cheryl Miller
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Title: Indian Board of Co-operation Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MS.766
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Braun Research Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.2 linear feet (6 folders)
Date (inclusive): 1915-1925
Abstract: This collection contains correspondence to and from Indian Board of Co-Operation Second Vice President George Wharton James, manuscripts by James, pamphlets produced by the Indian Board of Co-Operation, newspaper clippings, posters, and ephemera dated 1915-1925.
creator: Indian Board of Co-operation (Calif.).
creator: James, George Wharton, 1858-1923
Scope and Contents
This collection contains correspondence to and from Indian Board of Co-Operation Second Vice President George Wharton James, manuscripts by James, pamphlets produced by the Indian Board of Co-Operation, newspaper clippings, posters, and ephemera. Materials are dated 1915-1925. This collection also includes bills and acts submitted to the United States Congress between 1921 and 1923.
Historical note
The Indian Board of Cooperation. The board was founded in 1910 by a Methodist minister, Fredrick Collett. "The policy of the Board is to encourage the Indians to do for themselves everything that they can, and to assist them in the doing of these things that they can not do without help." The Board's objectives included organizing Indians, obtaining passage of a bill so Indians could present their claims to the United States Court of Claims, obtaining legal services, ensuring funds appropriated for Indians be used for the Indians' best interest, and promoting all movements intended to enhance the welfare of Indians. (California Indian Herald, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1923:11) In 1919, the board established auxiliaries which were small Indian organizations that acted on the local level and raised funds for the board through memberships and special events. The Indian Board of Cooperation assisted Indians on many issues over the next decades. By May 1924, the board boasted 88 auxiliaries, with a membership of 10,400. (California Indian Herald, 1924:2) While Indians could belong to the auxiliaries, the board was made up of Whites. Most of the funds the board used for operation were obtained from Indians who paid between four and six dollars each to be members. Thus, much of the cost of financing the early land claims case came from Indians themselves.
California Indians obtained the opportunity to file in the United States Court of Claims when the Indian Board of Cooperation assisted in filing what came to be known as the "Test Case." "The suit is brought as a test case to establish the rights of all tribes and bands of California Indians whose lands were taken from them without fair compensation." (California Indian Herald, 1923:4) The case involved 1,008 square miles located in the Klamath National Forest, in Humboldt and Siskiyou counties. The case asked what legal rights the government had to the land. While the Indians never won back the land in question, the case did raise an important question: Did Indians have a right to redress for the lands lost? In 1927, the California Legislature enacted "An act to authorize the attorney general to bring suit against the United States in the court of claims in behalf of the Indians of the State of California in the event that the Congress of the United States authorizes the same." (Johnson, 1966:37).
Preferred citation
Indian Board of Co-operation Collection, 1915-1925, Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.766; [folder number] [folder title][date].
Processing history
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Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Collett, Frederick

Work, Hubert, 1860-1942

Booklets

Clippings

Correspondence

Government documents

Indians of North America -- California

Indians of North America -- Government relations

Indians of North America -- Land tenure

Indians of North America -- Legal status, laws, etc.

Land tenure -- North America

Manuscripts

Posters

United States. Congress