

**"The Code of Handsome Lake,
the Seneca Prophet," 1912
MC.975.07.085**

Finding aid prepared by Kara Flynn

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections
October 2015
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Summary Information

Repository	Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections
Creator	Parker, Arthur Caswell, 1881-1955
Title	"The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet"
Date	1912
Extent	0.06 Linear feet
Language	English

Preferred Citation

"The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet" (MC.975.07.085), Quaker & Special Collections, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

Biographical note

Handsome Lake (1735-1815) was born circa 1735, in a Seneca village in present day New York. He was a Seneca religious leader and reformer among the Iroquois and was prominent in the alliance of New York tribes. He was the half brother of Cornplanter, a Seneca chief. Handsome Lake played an important role in reviving the traditional religion among the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. His preaching combined traditional Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse) religious beliefs with a revised code meant to revive traditional cultural values. This code was later published as "The Code of Handsome Lake" by Arthur C. Parker. He died in 1815.

Arthur Caswell Parker (1881-1955) was born in 1881 on the Cattaraugus Reservation of the Seneca Nation of New York, the son of Frederick Ely Parker, a mixed race Seneca, and Geneva Hortense Griswold, a woman of Scots-English descent. He was an anthropologist who at the beginning of the 20th Century studied the Iroquois. Highly respected both by academics and the Iroquois, he wrote numerous works on their material culture, linguistics, folklore, archeology and ethnology. He was the director of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences from 1924-1945. In 1935 he was elected first president of the Society for American Archaeology. In 1944, Parker helped to found the National Congress of American Indians. Parker helped found the National Congress of American Indians in 1944. He died in 1955.

Historical note

The Indian Committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting began in 1795 and continues at the present time. Previous to this, Philadelphia area Friends formed the Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures. The "Friendly Association" grew out of the violence of the French-Indian War of the mid-1700s and was active as a formal organization from ca. 1755-1764 (Parrish "Friendly Association History").

Work of the Indian Committee included teaching Indians and their children, monitoring legislation affecting Native Americans and helping them combat frauds and abuses. The Committee worked primarily with the Seneca on the Allegany and Cattaraugus Reservations in New York.

In 1798, five Quaker missionaries traveled to the Seneca Nation to instruct the members in husbandry and to establish a school. These men were three young men; Henry Simmons, Halliday Jackson, and Joel Swayne, as well as two Quaker elders, John Pierce and Joshua Sharpless. At the mission established by the Quakers, the men built a model farm, and a school was established and run by Henry Simmons beginning in the fall of 1798. Cornplanter, the Seneca leader at the time, allowed the Quaker missionaries to build their school and model farm, and Handsome Lake, Cornplanter's half brother, was exposed to Quakerism through these missionaries.

Sources: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Indian Committee finding aid

Scope and Content note

This collection is comprised of the single volume manuscript "The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet," published by the Education Department Bulletin of the New York State Museum. Handsome Lake's 'Code' attempted to simplify the spiritual practices of the Iroquois, preaching temperance, a strict moral code, and self-determination. It also contains the prophecies of Handsome Lake, who believed the world would end (by fire) in the year 2100. The manuscript also contains descriptions of Iroquois religious rituals and myths at the turn of the twentieth Century.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections October 2015

Use Restrictions

Standard Federal Copyright Law Applies (U.S. Title 17).

Acquisition

Unknown.

Processing Information

Processed by Kara Flynn; completed October 2015.

Related Materials

Related Materials

- MC 975.01.072 Henry Simmons journals
- MC 975.01.078 Joel Swayne diary

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- Manuscripts

Personal Name(s)

- Handsome Lake, 1735-1815

Subject(s)

- Native Americans.
- Religion
- Seneca Indians

Collection Inventory

Manuscript 1912