Melvin R. Gilmore, son of John R. and Mary Louisa (Concannon) Gilmore, was born on March 11, 1868 in Valley, Nebraska. He received an AB from Cotner College in 1904; an MA in Botany from the University of Nebraska in 1909; and his Ph.D. in 1914, also from Nebraska. Gilmore was Professor of Biological Science at Cotner College from 1905-1911, and museum curator at the Nebraska State Historical Society from 1911-1916. From 1916-1923 he served the North Dakota State Historical Society as curator. He next worked at the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, as a member of the scientific staff. He became Curator of Ethnology, Museum of Anthropology, at the University of Michigan in 1929. Dr. Gilmore, an adopted member of the Pawnee Indian tribe and authority on Plains Indians, wrote extensively in scientific periodicals on the material culture of Indians in the Missouri valley, intertribal commerce, ancient customs and ceremonies, and folklore. Gilmore died in Lincoln, Nebraska on July 25, 1940 after a long illness.

This collection relates to the life and career of Melvin R. Gilmore, and is arranged in three series: 1) Writings; 2) Correspondence; and 3) Miscellany. Series 1, consisting of Dr. Gilmore's manuscripts on Plains Indian culture, forms the bulk of the collection. Topics include Native American religion, food preparation and eating habits, legends, obstetrics, geography and ethnobotany, etc. The manuscripts are for the most part arranged alphabetically.

Series 2 contains a small amount of correspondence, mostly copies. The letters, both to and from Dr. Gilmore, relate to his research. Correspondents include: Jones, Volney H., Link, J.T., McDonald, J.B., Seton, Ernest T., and Sitting Bear, Arikara Chief. The miscellany of Series 3 includes biographical material on Gilmore, Omaha Tribal materials, etc. Of particular note is the correspondence that accompanies a student research paper, "Melvin Randolph Gilmore (1868-1940), Accomplished Ethnobotanist, Museologist, Plains Ethnologist." Its author, University of Nebraska Anthropology student, David L. Erickson, wrote to Gilmore student and associate, Volney H. Jones, for information. The letters contain extensive reminiscences and anecdotes about Dr. Gilmore by Jones.

A notebook of Melvin Gilmore's was added to the collection in 2010. This notebook is not currently on microfilm. The notebook contains ethnobotanical notes, lists of native plants, and interviews taken by Gilmore while discussing plant uses with various Native Americans. Also included are interview notes from several survivors of the Wounded Knee Massacre. Most of the interview notes appear to date from 1912-1913.

**Note:** The materials in this collection are restricted for preservation due to the extremely fragile condition of the originals. Researchers must use the microfilm copy. See the NSHS Library Catalog and the *Nebraska History* index for various published materials by and about Melvin Gilmore.

**DESCRIPTION**

Series 1 - Writings

Reel 1
Box 1
Folder

1. "The Aboriginal Geography of the Nebraska Country"
   - 17 pages, typed (with notations/corrections)
   - 1 page handwritten chart on Place names and translations [with photocopy]
   - 1 page handwritten Title page--Author's note
   - "Report on Aboriginal Geography of Nebraska" 10 pages, typed, preliminary report

   "The Aborigines of Nebraska," *State Journal*, May 11, 1913

   "Discussion by Melvin R. Gilmore" 11 pages, typed (on Indian history, venue unknown)

   "A Glimpse At Nebraska Indian Geography" 9 pages, typed (carbon copy)

   "Indian Agriculture in Nebraska"
   - 4 pages, typed (carbon copy, and photocopy)
   - 5 pages, typed (with After notations)

   "Indian Names of Melvin R. Gilmore" 1918
   - 2 pages, typed (with carbon copy)
   - 2 pages, handwritten

   "Itinerary of the Last Buffalo Hunt Made by the Omaha Tribe, December 1876"
   - 5 pages, typed (photocopy only)
   - 4 pages, typed (small margins)
   - map of the Last Buffalo Hunt route

2. "The Legend of Pahuk"
   - 2 pages, handwritten introduction
   - 2 pages, typed introduction
   - 4 pages, typed legend narrative
3.

-5 pages, typed
-7 pages, typed (several small corrections; larger margins)
-3 pages. A different legend narrative, (with corrections, and conservation photocopy)
"One Prodigy Done By This Young Man Among Many Others As Proofs Of His Wonderful Powers" 1 page, typed

"Maize" 13 pages, typed (carbon copy and photocopy)

"The Mescal Society, Or More Properly, Peyote Society, Among the Omaha Indians"
-6 pages, handwritten (and photocopy)
-6 pages, typed (carbon copy)

"The Name 'Nebraska' -- It's Meaning" 2 pages, typed

"Notes on Tribal Geography of the Dakotas from a Short Sojourn Among the Ogalala Dakotas on Pine Ridge Reservation August 1912"
-8 pages, typed
-8 pages, carbon copy
-10 pages, typed

3. "On the Uses of Plants by the Indians of the Nebraska Region: I. A Study in Economic Botany And II. On the Ethnogeography of Nebraska Region." Major and Minor Theses Presented To The Faculty Of The Graduate College Of The University of Nebraska In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy.
-Rough draft (various pages, handwritten and typed) and some research materials

4. "The Presbyterian Mission to the Omahas" 2 pages, (carbon copy, with handwritten annotations)

"Some Foods and Methods of their Preparation Among the Omaha Indians Previous to their Europeanization" 3 pages, typed

"Some Indian Place Names in Nebraska"
-10 pages, typed (numerous notations/corrections)
-1 page, typed Footnotes
-1 page, handwritten foot notes
-1 page, typed Photograph/Illustration notes "Loup Valley Indian Site Finds, July, 1924"
-Small note, handwritten: "For Mr. Watkins...."

"Some Notes on Native Animals Known to the Omaha Indians"
[all copies have some annotations]
-20 pages, typed (includes appendix)
-15 pages, typed (carbon copy)
-5 pages, typed (carbon copy) Appendix, "List of Mammals Mentioned in this Paper"

"Some Notes on the Indian Geography of Nebraska (with Special Reference to the Omahas)"
"Trip with White Eagle Determining Pawnee Sites, Aug. 27-29, 1914"
-7 pages, typed
-News clippings relating to the Trip with White Eagle (and photocopies)

"Wild Rice: A Most Excellent Native Grain"
-3 pages, typed
-3 pages, typed (carbon copy)

5. "Taxonomic List of Plants Used by Indians of Nebraska"
   -Handwritten, 102 numbered pages not including pages 33 1/2, 38 1/2 and the conclusion)
   -4 photo images of melon plant

6. Reprints of Gilmore articles:
   
   "The Aboriginal Geography of the Nebraska Country"
   -hard cover
   -soft cover

   "The Arikara Tribal Temple"
   "The Arikara Tribal Temple" (typed from reprint, pages 20 and above are incorrectly numbered)

   "Notes on Gynecology and Obstetrics of the Arikara Tribe of Indians" [2 copies]

   "Plant Vagrants in America"

   "The Return of the Native Flora" introduced by Charles E. Bessey, 2 pages published in Science N.S. Vol. XXXVI, No. 936, pp. 795-796
   "Observations of the Return of Native Flora on an Abandoned Tree Plantation on the High Plains of Nebraska" 2 pages, typed

   "The Sacred Bundles of the Arikara"

   "Vegetal Remains of the Ozark Bluff-Dweller Culture"


8. Miscellaneous notes

9. Bibliographical Notes

Series 2 - Correspondence
1. 1913-1924 including:

1913, May 23, from Gilmore to the "editor of the State Journal" 1 page typed, concerning translation of the word "Niobrara"
1914, March 11, excerpt, 2 pages, typed, from a letter from James R. Walker to Melvin Gilmore. Description of Waunyanpi, a kind of ceremonial wand of the Oglala Sioux
1915, March 28, from Arikara Chief Sitting Bear, 2 pages handwritten, concerning various plants (with 2 page "Notes to Accompany Letter of Sitting Bear" by Gilmore)
1915, Dec. 31, 3 page handwritten letter from Gilmore to NSHS Secretary concerning the history of a boulder placed on the University campus. Includes an original letter from J.B. McDonald to Gilmore concerning the boulder. Accompanied by a 4 page typescript of both letters.
1916, May 1, from Gilmore to Albert Watkins of the NSHS concerning various topics, 2 pages typed
1916, May 29, from Gilmore to Albert Watkins of the NSHS concerning the history of the Pawnee Tribe, 2 pages typed
1924, Nov. 12, from Gilmore to W.H. Fowler concerning a Pawnee Site (Pahok), 1 page typed

2. Correspondence copies, 1913-1924 (Clark, Florence L.; Link, J.T.; Seton, Ernest T.)

Series 3 - Miscellany

3. Notebook: Gilmore family genealogy
4. Omaha Tribe materials:
   Constitution of the Omaha Indian Historical Society, 4 pages, typed (2 copies)
   1 page list identifying Native Americans in a photograph taken in Europe of a traveling show. (Photo not present)
   "A Proposition to Make a Survey of the Plant Lore and Geographic Lore of the Indian Tribes of Nebraska" 2 pages, typed manuscript

Notebook (not on microfilm) added in 2010
Subject headings:

Anthropology
Arikara Indians
Blackbird, Omaha Chief
Ethnobotany
Gilmore, Melvin Randolph, 1868-1940
Gilmore family
Indians of North America -- Customs
Indians of North America -- Food
Indians of North America -- Languages
Indians of North America -- Legends
Indians of North America -- Missions
Indians of North America -- Names
Jones, Volney H.
Link, John Thomas, 1873-1936
McDonald, J.B.
Nebraska -- Geography
Omaha Indians
Pawnee Indians
Presbyterian Church in Nebraska
Seton, Ernest T.
Siouian Indians
Sitting Bear, Arikara Chief
White Eagle, Pawnee Chief