

Jim Thorpe Papers
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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
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Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

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Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

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Collection Summary

Title: Jim Thorpe Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1950

ID No.: MSS86581

Creator: Thorpe, Jim, 1887-1953

Extent: 30 items

Extent: 1 container

Extent: 0.2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2023086581>

Summary: Native American (Sac and Fox) athlete and Olympic gold medalist. Correspondence and an unpublished manuscript by Associated Press sportswriter Orlo Robertson, with Patricia Thorpe, related to Thorpe's life.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Jim Thorpe were purchased by the Library of Congress in 2023.

Processing History

The papers of Jim Thorpe were arranged and described by Katherine Madison in 2023.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the Jim Thorpe Papers is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Jim Thorpe are open to research. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Jim Thorpe Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

James Francis "Jim" Thorpe, or Wa-tho-huk (Sac and Fox, Thunder Clan), was born May 22, 1887, near Prague, Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Beginning in 1904, he attended Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he competed in track and field as well as football under the tutelage of Glenn S. "Pop" Warner. In 1911 and 1912, while competing for Carlisle School, he was selected to the Collegiate Football All-America first team. In 1912, Thorpe won gold medals for the United States in the decathlon and classic pentathlon at the Stockholm Olympics. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) stripped him of his medals a year later, in 1913, due to violations of their amateur competition rules; Thorpe had played minor league baseball as a means to support himself during summers when he was a Carlisle student. The IOC reinstated his wins posthumously in 1982. Following the Olympics, in 1912, Thorpe won the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) All-Around Championship.

Thorpe primarily played baseball and football during his professional athletic career. Beginning in 1913, he played both major league and minor league baseball as an outfielder for teams including the New York Giants, Milwaukee Brewers,

Cincinnati Reds, and Boston Braves. From 1915 to 1920, Thorpe played football for the Canton Bulldogs (Ohio) and from 1921 to 1923 for the Oorang Indians (Ohio). He served as the first president of the American Professional Football Association (later the National Football League) from 1920 to 1921, and was elected as a charter member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1963.

Following his retirement from professional sports around 1928, Thorpe worked multiple jobs and made frequent appearances as a motivational speaker or guest celebrity. Several starts at owning or managing small businesses were short-lived. He served briefly in the Merchant Marine at the end of World War II. He was a strong advocate for the rights of Native American actors in the Hollywood film industry, and appeared in over fifty films (many uncredited) in the 1930s and 1940s, including *Always Kickin'* (1932), *Trailin' West* (1936), *Meet John Doe* (1941), and *Wagon Master* (1950). In 1950, Thorpe served as a technical advisor on *Jim Thorpe – All American*, a biopic based on his life, released by Warner Bros. Pictures in 1951.

Thorpe was married three times: from 1913 to 1925 to Iva Margaret Miller (1893-1980); from 1926 to 1942 to Freeda Verona "Libby" Kirkpatrick (1905-2007); and from 1945 to his death to Patricia Gladys Askew (1898-1975), who served as his business manager and agent. He died in Lomita, California on March 28, 1953.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Jim Thorpe consist of material from 1950. The collection documents the efforts of Associated Press sportswriter Orlo Robertson to write an authorized biography of Thorpe. It consists of correspondence between Robertson, Thorpe, and Patricia Thorpe, Thorpe's wife and manager, as well as from Warner Bros. Pictures executive Everett Freeman and Associated Press Stockholm Bureau chief Folke Palm. The collection also includes draft manuscript pages of Patricia Thorpe and Orlo Robertson's biography, titled "The Jim Thorpe Story," a handwritten foreword contributed by Thorpe's former Carlisle School coach, Glenn S. "Pop" Warner, and legal documents.

A photocopy of the draft manuscript pages of "The Jim Thorpe Story" is available and should be used to preserve the original.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged alphabetically by topic or material type.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Freeman, Everett--Correspondence.
Palm, Folke, 1905-1985--Correspondence.
Robertson, Orlo L., 1903-1985--Correspondence.
Thorpe, Jim, 1887-1953.
Thorpe, Patricia, 1898-1975.
Wa-tho-huk.
Warner, Glenn S. (Glenn Scobey), 1871-1954.

Organizations

Olympic Games (5th : 1912 : Stockholm, Sweden)
United States Indian School (Carlisle, Pa.)
United States Indian School (Carlisle, Pa.)--Students.

Subjects

Baseball.

Celebrities.
Football.
Indians of North America--Cultural assimilation.
Indians of North America--Education.
Indians of North America--Indian Territory.
Indians of North America--Oklahoma.
Indians of North America--Social conditions.
Indians of North America--Sports.
Motion picture industry--United States.
Off-reservation boarding schools--United States.
Race discrimination--United States.
Racism--United States.
Small business.
Track and field.

Places

Indian Territory.
Oklahoma--History.
Sac & Fox Nation, Oklahoma.
United States--Race relations.

Occupations

Athletes, Native American.
Athletes.

Container List

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BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Freeman, Everett to Jim Thorpe, 1950, Mar.
BOX 1	Palm, Folke to Orlo Robertson, 1950, Apr.
BOX 1	Robertson, Orlo to Patricia Thorpe, 1950, July-Aug.
BOX 1	Thorpe, Jim to Orlo Robertson, 1950, Aug.
BOX 1	Thorpe, Patricia to Orlo Robertson, 1950, Mar.-Dec.
BOX 1	"Foreword" by Glenn S. "Pop" Warner, 1950
BOX 1	"The Jim Thorpe Story" draft manuscript pages, 1950 (3 folders)
BOX 1	Notarized statement of ownership by Orlo Robertson of writing sample, 1950, July