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LAWERENCE RAKESTRAW COLLECTION, 19³7-1987

Scope and Content Note

The Lawrence Rakestraw collection consists of one box of materials documenting the involvement of the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) in Southeast Alaska in a totem pole restoration and preservation project in the early 1940's. The C.C.C. usually was geared to young people, but in Southeast Alaska elderly men, the knowledgeable carvers, were hired to teach the traditional skills to the young men. Lawrence Rakestraw has written a number of articles on the C.C.C.; some of these are included in the collection.

Linn Forrest had been in charge of totem pole restoration from 1937 to 1941. (This story is told in detail on a 1970 tape in the Oral History Department, APR). He worked closely with Viola Garfield, an anthropologist from the University of Washington, in collecting Indian legends. These were published as The Wolf and the Raven. Forrest became interested in parallels between Biblical tales of creation and Native tales at this time.

When the C.C.C. project was finished, he and Alva Blackerby, a career Forest Service man, working on their own time, put together a group of these Indian tales. These tales are in the Rakestraw collection, as the manuscript entitled "Alaska Raven Tales of Creation".

Forrest died in 1989; Blackerby died in 1959.

Also in the collection is a series of color slides taken in Southeast Alaska ca. 1947. These have good identifications.

Three cassette tapes of Lawrence Rakestraw interviewing Ray Taylor, who started the Forest Service in Alaska, have been separated from the collection and sent to Oral History. A microfilm copy of the Alaska File of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903, and of letters received relating to salmon fisheries, 1898-1901, is available in the microfilm collection of the APR reading room as M/F #195. A film of the celebration of the totem pole raising that occurred in Ketchikan in ca. 1940, and a videotape of the pages of the manuscript "Alaska Raven Tales of Creation", has been sent to the media department of the Rasmusen Library.