

Collection #
M 0034

**AMOS W. BUTLER
PAPERS, 1890-1937**

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

Processed by

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William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 full-sized boxes, 1 half-sized box, 5 folders of photographs

COLLECTION DATES: 1890-1937

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Amos W. [Mary Irwin] Butler

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: [Indian Peace Medal, 1757] R973

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1937.0003

NOTES: The primary donation was received October 28, 1937.
Additional material was received January 3, 1938.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amos William Butler was born in Brookville, Indiana on October 1, 1860 to William W. Butler and Hannah Wright Butler. His paternal grandfather, Amos Butler, is considered to be the first white settler in the Brookville area, arriving from Pennsylvania in 1803. He subsequently bought numerous parcels of land and helped plat the town of Brookville in 1808. Amos the younger would go on to bring pride to that town, as he would become a scholar and an expert in a range of fields.

Amos W. Butler attended Brookville College and in 1877, Hanover College. He would graduate from Indiana University in 1894. He was later awarded honorary doctorates from both Hanover and I.U. Shortly after his marriage to Mary Irwin Reynolds in 1880, Amos co-founded several groups dedicated to scientific pursuits; the Brookville Society of Natural History, the Anthropological Club of Brookville, and the Indiana Academy of Science all appeared around 1881. In 1897, he published the book "Birds of Indiana," for which he is considered the "father of Indiana ornithology." A chapter of the Indiana Audubon Society is thus named for Butler, and his 1932 biography by Barton W. Evermann was published by them.

Butler is perhaps best known for his role as the Secretary of the Indiana Board of State Charities, a post he received in 1897. He was appointed by the United States president as the U.S. delegate to the International Prison Congress three times, and by 1919 was considered one of the country's "leading penal experts." He was president of both the National Conference of Social Work and the American Prison Congress, and founder of the International Committee on Mental Hygiene. During this time Butler was responsible for several legislative measures reforming the treatment of criminals and the insane.

Mr. Butler retired in 1930, concentrating his energies on researching the native peoples of Indiana, with a particular interest in trade silver and Post (later Fort) Ouiatenon on the Wabash River. In 1935, he presented his talk "Post Ouiatenon and Indian Trade" at several meetings and conferences around the state. Amos W. Butler died on August 5, 1937, just short of his 77th birthday.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

Newspapers.com

Reifel, August J. *History of Franklin County, Indiana: Her People, Industries, and Institutions* (Portland, Indiana: 1915)

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The majority of the collection is made up of correspondence and research notes Butler compiled while researching Indian trade silver and Post Ouiatenon during the last years of his life. Much of the correspondence is with museum staffs and concerns artifact identification. There are descriptions and drawings of objects and maker's marks (often referred to as touch marks in the collection), and general lists of French and Indian trade objects. There are also letters leading up to and about Butler's article in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, "An Old Indian Peace Medal" published in December 1935. The actual medal was donated to the IHS by its owner, Charles C. Deam. A letter from Deam is found in Box 1, Folder 6. The letter mentions Indiana historian and reformer Jacob Piatt Dunn. Dunn's daughter Caroline Dunn worked at the IHS library for many years and contributed notes about the letter in 1970, also in Folder 6.

Photographs associated with the collection are black and white prints used for Butler's various published articles. They depict silver trade objects from various museum collections. The majority of these have no attribution, though some are stamped on the verso "Milwaukee Public Museum" and others are identified "Tippecanoe Historical Association."

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Manuscript of article “An Echo From Abroad”	Box 1, Folder 1
Correspondence about trade silver	Box 1, Folder 2
Correspondence about trade silver	Box 1, Folder 3
Correspondence about trade silver	Box 1, Folder 4
Notes on trade silver and beads	Box 1, Folder 5
Correspondence about article “An Old Indian Peace Medal”	Box 1, Folder 6
Correspondence about trade silver	Box 1, Folder 7
Correspondence and notes about trade silver	Box 1, Folder 8
Correspondence about article “An Old Indian Peace Medal”	Box 1, Folder 9
Printed items about trade silver	Box 2, Folder 1
Printed items with articles about trade silver	Box 2, Folder 2
Brookville scrapbook, 1890-1899; includes newspaper clippings, poems, songs, and literary reviews.	Box 2, Folder 3
Manuscript of article “Indian Trade in the Wabash Valley” and Fort Ouiatenon notes	Box 3, Folder 1
Clippings and notes on Fort Ouiatenon	Box 3, Folder 2
Correspondence about Fort Ouiatenon	Box 3, Folder 3
Notes on Fort Ouiatenon	Box 3, Folder 4
Notes on Fort Ouiatenon	Box 3, Folder 5
Photographs and drawings of silver objects	Manuscript collection photographs, Folder 1

Ft. Ouiatenon article images

Manuscript collection
photographs, Folder 2

Ft. Ouiatenon article images

Manuscript collection
photographs, Folder 3

Ft. Ouiatenon article images

Manuscript collection
photographs, Folder 4

Prints of George Winter paintings

Manuscript collection
photographs, Folder 5