

**William Tamaree Recording Collection
Introduction**

Call number: MC 13

Date Range: circa 1940 & 1976

Size: One box

Processed by: Zachary R. Jones

Processing date: July 19, 2010

Finding aid by: Zachary R. Jones

Intellectual Properties Note: Since SHI adheres to the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, and since we desire to honor Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian traditional cultural belief that clans retain the intellectual property rights to clan stories or songs, patrons who use or study clan songs or stories are asked to credit clan ownership to stories and songs.

Location: Onsite storage area

Cite this collection as:

MC 13, William Tamaree Recording Collection,
Sealaska Heritage Institute Archives
Juneau, AK

William Tamaree Recording Collection Biographical Note

William Baptiste Tamaree (1862-1956) was born April 14, 1862 in Wrangell, Alaska, and was a Tlingit Indian of the Wolf/Eagle moiety, Kayaashkeiditaan clan, X'aan hít. His Tlingit name was Sheeshgaaw. He was the child of a Kayaashkeiditaan clan Tlingit mother and French-Canadian father.

In Tamaree's youth it appears his biological father died, and his mother remarried a Tlingit man of the Teeyhittaaan clan. Tamaree also credited being raised by Teeyhittaaan clan individuals Mary Thomas and Nick Gush (Sik'nax.ádi yadí).

Early in Tamaree's adult life, he stated he married to a Tlingit woman who was much older than he, and she died of natural causes an unknown number of years after their marriage. In 1905 Tamaree married Teeyhittaaan clan woman Matilda 'Tillie' Kinnon (1863-1952) and they later raised two children together, Frances E. Tamaree (1905-1958) and Gladys June Tamaree (1908-1924). William Tamaree lived most all his life in Wrangell, though he spent less than five years in Petersburg working in the fishing industry.

Tamaree is often remembered as an advocate for Tlingit culture and civil rights, as well as being a respected cultural leader and knowledge barer in his community. During the 1930s Tamaree was part of the group Shtax'héen Kwáan Tlingit that organized the Wrangell Cooperative Association, an IRA tribal government, and he was an active member of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. The 1940 BIA census reported that Tamaree and his wife lived alone in Wrangell, and that he could speak English, but could not read or write. In 1944 he testified in the court case *William L. Paul vs Pacific American Fisheries* about the possessory rights and aboriginal title, including words about Tlingit use of the land and waters and the role of the Tlingit legal system in establishing and recognizing clan ownership of certain lands and waters.

In January 1956 Tamaree became very ill and was flown to Oregon for medical treatment, where he passed away.

Sources:

- *Alaska Fisherman* (September 1924)
- Obituary in the *Wrangell Sentinel* (3 Feb 1956)
- BIA Census records (1940)
- Deposition of William Tamaree from *William L. Paul vs Pacific American Fisheries* (1944)
- Tamaree's words from recordings in SHI's archival collections (MC 13)

**William Tamaree Recording Collection
Provenance Note**

A copy of this recording was donated to SHI by Ben Paul in 2001.

William Tamaree Recording Collection Scope & Content Note

This collection contains a 29 minute recording of William Tamaree (1862-1956) speaking in the Tlingit language about the 1869 Bombardment of Wrangell and a published newspaper version of Tamaree giving an oration about the 1869 Bombardment of Wrangell in the English language.

The Tlingit language recording, captured on cassette, consists of a Tlingit language oration of the Bombardment by Tamaree, dated to circa 1940s or early 1950s. This account by Tamaree should not be considered a memoir/remembrance of the Bombardment from Tamaree's youth (he was a child in Wrangell at the time of the Bombardment), but is a traditional oration of the Bombardment. The cassette recording is labeled "The first Xmas in Wrangell, the death of Shxict'oo [Skhat.oo]." In 2011 linguist and Tlingit James Crippen edited the recording for sound quality, and his edited version is presented in this collection on CD for patron use. This recording was translated/transcribed via a 2012-2014 NPS Battlefield Protection Program Grant, and this is included in the collection.

This collection also contains a *Wrangell Sentinel* newspaper clipping from 1976 of Tamaree orating in English about the Bombardment of Wrangell in 1869. This 1976 account was originally printed in June 1940 as the Chief Shakes House was being dedicated and during a time of cultural celebration in Wrangell. This 1940 version is different and distinct from the Tlingit language version, and the two should be considered different accounts.

William Tamaree Recording Collection Historical Note

The 1869 Bombardment of Wrangell was an altercation between U.S. Army troops of Battery I, 2nd Artillery stationed at newly occupied Fort Wrangell and the Shtax'héen Kwáan Tlingit Indians of Kaachxan.áak'w. The conflict sparked on Christmas night after U.S. Army soldiers shot and killed Tlingit man Shawaan and mortally wounded his brother. After soldiers failed to provide the Tlingit reparations for the murder of a Tlingit man according to Tlingit law, Tlingit law was applied by Xook'weidí clan man Shx'átoo who killed a local non-Native merchant. Later that day the U.S. Army opened fire on Kaachxan.áak'w with artillery, while small arms fire was exchanged between the Tlingit and the U.S. Army. The following morning the U.S. Army shelled the village again, but Shx'átoo surrendered himself to stop the conflict, a ceasefire ensured, and the situation calmed. On December 29, 1969 the U.S. Army publicly hung Shx'átoo. It is unknown how many Tlingit men, women, and children were killed or injured as result of the conflict.

The conflict was later criticized by U.S. Board of Indian Commissioners Secretary Vincent Colyer. Colyer submitted a critical report of Army actions to the U.S. President and Congress which was discussed during the 41st Congress, 2nd Session. It is also remembered as an attack on Tlingit sovereignty, example of unconstitutional actions undertaken by the U.S. Army against an indigenous community in Alaska, and a controversial episode in America's early occupation of Alaska.

In 2012 a two-year NPS Battlefield Preservation Program Grant was awarded to Sealaska Heritage Institute to study the conflict and its accompanying battlefield.

Sources:

William Tamaree, "Tragedy Marred First Christmas Eve for Wrangell Indians," *Wrangell Sentinel* (May 31, 1940): 1.

Vincent Colyer, *Bombardment of Wrangel, Alaska: Report of the Secretary of War, Secretary of the Interior, and Letter to the President*. 41st Congress, 2nd Session, Ex. Doc. No. 67 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870).

**William Tamaree Recording Collection
Inventory**

Box 1:

- Fd 1: CD recording of William Tamaree's account of the Bombardment of Wrangell. Includes edited version by James Crippen (29 minutes long) and original flat recording migrated from cassette to CD, which includes two tracks, 29:05 and 34:49 minutes long. Transcription/translation included.
- Fd 2: Cassette recording of William Tamaree's account of the Bombardment of Wrangell. Migrated from reel to cassette. Two sides: Side A 29:05 and Side B 34:49 minutes long. Same content on both sides.
- Fd 3: Newspaper clippings from the Wrangell Sentinel about the Bombardment of Wrangell and William Tamaree's 1940 account. William Tamaree, "Tragedy Marred First Christmas Eve for Wrangell Indians," *Wrangell Sentinel* (May 31, 1940): 1; "1869 Battle of Wrangell Ended in Hanging," *Wrangell Sentinel* (January 7, 1976): 1, 4; and William Tamaree, "Scutdoo Hero in Native Version of 1869 Battle," *Wrangell Sentinel* (January 14, 1976): 1, 4-5.