Elmer E. Higley collection

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Collection Overview

Repository: National Museum of the American Indian
Title: Elmer E. Higley collection
Identifier: NMAI.AC.228
Date: (bulk circa 1900-1968)
Extent: 534 Lantern slides
        0.2 Linear feet
Creator: Higley, Elmer Ellsworth
Language: English
Summary: This collection consists of 534 glass lantern slides depicting Indigenous groups throughout North America. It also includes a small number of publications written by Elmer E. Higley and others about Native Americans and missionary work during the early twentieth century.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Processing Information

Preferred Citation
Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Elmer E. Higley collection, NMAI.AC.228;
National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions
Access to NMAI Archives Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu).

Conditions Governing Use
Permission to publish materials from the collection must be requested from National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center. Please submit a written request to nmaiphotos@si.edu. For personal or classroom use, users are invited to download, print, photocopy, and distribute the images that are available online without prior written permission, provided that the files are not modified in any way, the Smithsonian Institution copyright notice (where applicable) is included, and the source of the image is identified as the National
Biographical / Historical

Elmer Ellsworth Higley was born in Ohio in 1867. He attended high school and college in northwestern Pennsylvania before marrying Alice C. Dowler in 1892. Higley later also attended the Drew Theological Seminary and afterwards worked as a pastor in a number of Methodist churches around the country. In approximately 1919 Higley was appointed Superintendent of the Joint Committee on Indian Work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with his office based in Chicago, Illinois. Employed in this work until 1923, Higley traveled the United States, visiting Native reservations and promoting Christian reform efforts for American Indian education. While traveling, Higley frequently presented illustrated lectures on his missionary work to audiences, using the glass lantern slides now residing in the collections of the National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center. In the years after 1923, Higley continued as a pastor in both Ames, Iowa, and Evanston, Illinois, the latter where he eventually died in 1931.

Scope and Contents

The Elmer E. Higley collection consists of both Lantern Slides and Printed Materials. Series 1: Lantern Slides, 1900-1924, includes 534 glass lantern slides, many hand-colored. The lantern slides were used by Higley in lectures to promote his missionary and reform work with the Joint Committee on Indian Work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, of which he was the Superintendent from 1919 to 1923. While Higley was the photographer of some of the lantern slide images, specifically those taken in Mesa Verde, the majority of the photographs were not taken by Higley, but rather collected by him for use in his lectures as he traveled around the country. Series 2: Printed Materials, 1914-1968, includes a small number of early twentieth-century publications written by Higley and others about Native Americans and missionary work in the United States during this time.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into two series. Series 1: Lantern Slides, 1900-1924 and Series 2: Printed Materials, 1914-1968.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
American Indians
Diné (Navajo)
Haida
Kalispel (Pend d’Oreilles)
Methodist church buildings
Missionaries
Missions -- Mission School
Mohawk
Niitsitapii (Blackfoot/Blackfeet)
Nooksack
Pikuni (Piegans) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]
Pueblo
Tlingit
Tulalip
Wasco
Yakama (Yakima)
cliff dwellings -- Colorado -- Mesa Verde National Park

Cultures:
American Indians
Diné (Navajo)
Haida
Kalispel (Pend d’Oreilles)
Mohawk
Niitsitapii (Blackfoot/Blackfeet)
Nooksack
Pikuni (Piegans) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]
Pueblo
Tlingit
Tulalip
Wasco
Yakama (Yakima)

Preferred Titles:
Higley, Elmer Ellsworth
Methodist Episcopal Church
Container Listing

Series 1: Lantern Slides, 1900-1924

534 Lantern slides

The Lantern Slides series is arranged by location or culture group into the following seven subseries. Subseries 1: Northwest Coast, 1900-1924, Subseries 2: Great Basin / Plateau, 1900-1924, Subseries 3: Northeast / Great Lakes, 1900-1924, Subseries 4: Plains, 1900-1924, Subseries 5: Southwest, 1900-1924, Subseries 6: Missionary Work, 1919-1924, Subseries 7: General / Unidentified North America, 1900-1924

1.1: Northwest Coast, 1900-1924
50 Lantern slides
Box 1 (photographs)
Box 2 (photographs)

Image(s)

This subseries contains 50 glass lantern slides of the Northwest Coast of the continental U.S. and coastal Alaska. Communities depicted include the Nooksack and Tulalip peoples of Washington state, as well as many Alaska Native communities including the Haida and Tlingit.

Culture: Haida
         Nooksack
         Tlingit
         Tulalip

1.2: Great Basin / Plateau, 1900-1924
7 Lantern slides
Box 3

Image(s)

This subseries contains 7 glass lantern slides from the Great Basin / Plateau region. Communities depicted include the Kalispel (Pend d'Oreilles), Wasco, and Yakama (Yakima) peoples.

Culture: Kalispel (Pend d'Oreilles)
         Wasco
         Yakama (Yakima)

1.3: Northeast / Great Lakes, 1900-1924
3 Lantern slides
Box 3

Image(s)

This subseries contains 3 glass lantern slides from the Northeast / Great Lakes region. Communities depicted include the Mohawk peoples, a member of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy.

Culture: Mohawk

1.4: Plains, 1900-1924
96 Lantern slides
Box 3 (photographs)
Box 4 (photographs)
Box 5 (photographs)
Box 6 (photographs)
Box 7 (photographs)

Image(s)
This subseries contains 96 glass lantern slides from the Plains region. Communities depicted include primarily the Pikuni (Piegan) and Niitsitapii (Blackfoot/Blackfeet) peoples of Montana.

Some photographs in this series are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

Culture: Niitsitapii (Blackfoot/Blackfeet)
Pikuni (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]

1.5: Southwest, 1900-1924

212 Lantern slides
Box 7 (photographs)
Box 8 (photographs)
Box 9 (photographs)
Box 10 (photographs)
Box 11 (photographs)
Box 12 (photographs)
Box 13 (photographs)
Box 14 (photographs)
Box 15 (photographs)

Image(s)
This subseries contains 212 glass lantern slides from the Southwest region. Approximately 100 of these images are of the "Cliff Dwelling" structures at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, photographed by Elmer E. Higley between 1914 and 1919. Other images depict Diné (Navajo) peoples, buildings, and a number of Pueblo communities.

Some photographs in this series are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

Topic: cliff dwellings -- Colorado -- Mesa Verde National Park
Culture: Diné (Navajo)
Pueblo

1.6: Missionary Work, 1919-1924

71 Lantern slides
Box 15 (photographs)
Box 16 (photographs)
Box 17 (photographs)
Box 17 (photographs)
Box 18 (photographs)

Image(s)
This subseries contains 71 glass lantern slides depicting Elmer E. Higley's missionary work. Images include Methodist Episcopal Church buildings and Indian Mission School buildings on numerous Native American reservations, missionary work with Mexican immigrant families in the Los Angeles area, and lantern slides with textual information relating to Higley's lectures.
Topic: Methodist church buildings
Missions -- Mission School

1.7: General / Unidentified North America, 1900-1924

95 Lantern slides
Box 18 (photographs)
Box 19 (photographs)
Box 20 (photographs)
Box 21 (photographs)
Box 22 (photographs)

Image(s)

This subseries contains 95 glass lantern slides depicting various Native American communities. Images do not include descriptions, and the Native American individuals and communities portrayed are unidentified.

Some photographs in this series are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

Culture: American Indians

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0.2 Linear feet

The printed materials consist of a small number of early twentieth-century publications and articles written by Higley and members of the Joint Committee on Indian Work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a U.S.-based missionary society working to reform life on Native American reservations. Materials also include Higley's notebook/scrapbook from Mesa Verde, and a few miscellaneous brochures and publications about Native Americans not directly related to Higley or his missionary work.

Occupation: Missionaries

Topic: Higley, Elmer Ellsworth
Methodist Episcopal Church

2.1: Mesa Verde Notebook / Scrapbook, 1914-1919

1 Folder
Folder 1

This folder contains Elmer E. Higley's notebook / scrapbook from his work with Mesa Verde National Park between the years 1914 and 1919. Specifically, it includes Higley's typed notes and newspaper clippings, referencing Higley's work with Smithsonian Institution anthropologist Jesse Walter Fewkes during these years.

Topic: cliff dwellings -- Colorado -- Mesa Verde National Park

2.2: Publications by Elmer E. Higley and the Joint Committee on Indian Work, 1919-1924

1 Folder
Folder 2

This folder contains Elmer E. Higley's articles and published works associated with the mission of the Joint Committee on Indian Work of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Topic: Methodist Episcopal Church

2.3: Miscellaneous brochures and publications about Native Americans, 1916-1968

1 Folder
Folder 3

This folder contains a small number of publications about Native Americans, possibly collected by Elmer E. Higley.

Topic: American Indians

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