



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of the American Indian*

Elmer E. Higley collection

Nathan Sowry

2020

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Museum of the American Indian
<b>Title:</b>	Elmer E. Higley collection
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAI.AC.228
<b>Date:</b>	(bulk circa 1900-1968)
<b>Creator:</b>	Higley, Elmer Ellsworth
<b>Extent:</b>	534 Lantern slides 0.2 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	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.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Gift of Mrs. R. S. Jensen and Family in 2018 and 2019.

### Processing Information

Processed by Nathan Sowry, Reference Archivist, in 2020.

### 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](mailto:nmaiarchives@si.edu)).

### Conditions Governing Use

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### Conditions Governing Use

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

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## Scope and Contents

Please note that the language and terminology used in this collection reflects the context and culture of the time of its creation, and may include culturally sensitive information. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

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## Arrangement

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

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## 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 (Piegan) [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 (Piegan) [Blackfeet Nation, Browning, Montana]  
Pueblo  
Tlingit  
Tulalip  
Wasco  
Yakama (Yakima)

Preferred Titles:

*Higley, Elmer Ellsworth*  
*Methodist Episcopal Church*

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Lantern Slides, 1900-1924

*534 Lantern slides*

Arrangement: 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\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents:	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:	Nooksack Tulalip Haida Tlingit

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#### 1.2: Great Basin / Plateau , 1900-1924

*7 Lantern slides*

*Box 3*

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents:	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)

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#### 1.3: Northeast / Great Lakes, 1900-1924

*3 Lantern slides*

*Box 3*

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents:	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

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## 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)

Scope and Contents: 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.

Conditions Governing Use: Some photographs in this series are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

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

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## 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)

Scope and Contents: 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.

Conditions Governing Use: Some photographs in this series are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

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

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## 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\(s\)](#)

**Scope and Contents:** 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

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## 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\(s\)](#)

**Scope and Contents:** 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.

**Conditions Governing Use:** Some photographs in this series are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

**Culture:** American Indians

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## Series 2: Printed Materials, 1914-1968

### 0.2 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: 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: Methodist Episcopal Church  
Higley, Elmer Ellsworth

### 2.1: Mesa Verde Notebook / Scrapbook, 1914-1919

#### 1 Folder

##### Folder 1

Scope and Contents: 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

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

#### 1 Folder

##### Folder 2

Scope and Contents: 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

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

#### 1 Folder

##### Folder 3

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

Topic: American Indians

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