

MS-74

The Museum of Northern Arizona
Harold S. Colton Memorial Library
3101 N. Fort Valley Road
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
(928)774-5213 ext. 256

Title

Walter Runke collection

Dates

1901-1978, predominant 1901-1903

Extent

196 photographic images (191 prints, 127 glass plate negatives, 69 nitrate negatives, 32 safety negatives), 0.25 cm textual material

Biographical History

Walter Runke (1879-1964) was superintendent of the Western Navajo Indian Agency from 1901-1920 and later had a career as a postmaster in Flagstaff from 1928-1936. He also served two terms as state senator from Coconino County.

Runke's fondest memories were of his years in Blue Canyon. Blue Canyon is one of the main branches of the Moenkopi Wash, east of Tuba City. Blue Canyon Trading Post was established by Jonathan Paul Williams at one of the only possible crossings of the wash for wagons (and cars) in 1882. He abandoned it in 1889, after giving up hope of finding gold in the Navajo Mountain area. From 1889 to 1899 the abandoned post buildings at Blue Canyon remained vacant.

In 1900, the Western Navajo Agency and Blue Canyon School were established in the old buildings. Fourteen students were enrolled at the school. Milton Needham and his wife were Superintendent and Matron of the school respectively. Mrs. Needham was Laura Runke's (nee Williams) aunt and invited Laura - not yet 16 - to come to help her at the school to teach sewing, etc; Laura arrived in July 1901. Shortly afterwards, Walter Runke arrived from Algoma, Wisconsin, to be the school's Industrial teacher. This was to be the beginning of a twenty-one Indian Service career for Runke. Williams and Runke quickly became close, but parted ways in 1902 and eventually married separately in 1904; both couples remained friends for years until Williams' husband and Runke's wife passed away in 1923 and 1942 respectively. After two years of courting, Williams and Runke married - each for the second time - in 1944.

In 1902 the government bought Tuba City from the Mormons, and during the fall and winter 1902-1903 Walter Runke worked to move the agency and school to Tuba City, effectively abandoning the buildings in Blue Canyon once again. Another short-lived trading post was established using the buildings from 1914-1920. In 1921, the buildings were again abandoned and demolished shortly thereafter.

MS-74

Scope and Content

Collection contains 196 photographic images taken by Walter Runke at the short-lived Blue Canyon School, 1900-1902. Runke's photos are dated from 1901-1903. Images are of the physical buildings, students, teachers, and school activities, Blue Canyon, Navajo and Hopi people, Hopi villages and dances, and Navajo textiles. Also included is a brief series of articles about Blue Canyon.

Conditions Governing Access

Viewing restrictions were placed on particular photographs in this collection due to the culturally sensitive nature of the subjects (Hopi dances). These restrictions were placed by the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office. Contact the Museum of Northern Arizona Archivist for information on obtaining permission to view these images.

Physical Access

Five broken glass negatives have been re-housed in archival sink mats.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Unpublished and published manuscripts are protected by copyright. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Collection was donated by Mrs. (Laura) Runke in 1967.

Publication Note

Rigby, Elizabeth. "Blue Canyon." *Arizona Highways* vol. 35, no. 8 (August 1959): 30-39.

Description Control

Finding aid written by Lauren Johnson using *DACS*, 30 October 2009

Walter Runke collection				
File #	File Description	Date(s)	Extent	Box/Folder
MS-74-1	Nitrate Negatives / Prints / Copy Negatives	1901-1903	69 nitrate negatives, 68 prints, 32 copy negatives	Box 1.1 to 1.3, nitrate freezer
MS-74-2	Glass Plate Negatives / Prints	1901-1903	127 glass plate negatives, 123 prints	Box 1.4 to 1.6, GP-A Boxes 61-64
MS-74-3	Blue Canyon Information	1932-1978	0.25 cm textual	Box 1.7

LCSH Access Points

Algert (Ariz.)
Blue Canyon (Ariz.)
Hopi dance
Hopi children -- Education
Hopi Indians
Navajo children -- Education
Navajo Indians
Navajo rugs

Runke, Walter, 1879-1964
Snake dance
Trading posts – Arizona
Tuba City (Ariz.)
Western Navajo Training School