

## MS-241

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

### **Title**

Thelma B. Towle Collection

### **Dates**

1913 - 1990

### **Extent**

1 cm textual material, 67 photographic images (51 prints, 1 copy negative, 6 black-and-white negatives, 6 color negatives), 16 postcards

### **Creator**

Towle, Thelma B., 1907-1996  
Olds, Walter

### **Biographical History**

Thelma B. Towle (April 15, 1907 - November 4, 1996) resided in Winslow, Arizona during the 1940s and 1950s under the name Thelma Bonney Hall (Mrs. Ralph A. Hall). During this time she was a staff reporter in the Winslow area for the Arizona Republic newspaper. Her position with the newspaper led her to reporting on Indian matters and she became interested in the Hopi dances, including the Snake Dance.

In 1935 she wrote the article "Dancing the Snakes" for Arizona Highways. Photographs of this dance were rare, as the Hopi Tribe had banned photography some years before. Following her article Towle was sent several photographs of the Snake Dance that had been taken by Walter Olds of Winslow and an unknown photographer.

In 1957 Towle was contacted by National Geographic as to whether she could identify the year in which the Hopi Tribe first banned photography of the Snake Dance. She interviewed a number of people in the Winslow area about it, including Walter Olds and Emory Kolb. Although she was unable to establish the year to the satisfaction of National Geographic, she reached an estimated date of 1917.

In the 1960s Towle returned to Massachusetts and remarried, writing under the name Thelma Bonney Towle (Mrs. Herbert C. Towle). In the 1970s she rediscovered her materials and research on the Snake Dance and sent them to the Museum of Northern Arizona, hoping it would be useful for future research or reference.

### **Scope and Content**

The collection consists of materials related to Thelma B. Towle's research into the Hopi Snake Dance and the ban on photography of the dance. Textual material includes articles, clippings,

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pamphlets, correspondence and research notes. Photographic materials include images of the Hopi Snake Dance, images of carved Snake Dance figurines, and assorted postcards depicting scenes from Arizona and of Hopi and Navajo life.

### **System of Arrangement**

Collection is arranged in the following series:

- Series 1: Research and correspondence
- Series 2: Photographs
- Series 3: Postcards

### **Conditions Governing Access**

This collection contains culturally sensitive material. Advance permission is required to view restricted materials. Please contact the MNA Archivist for more information and to obtain permission for viewing these materials.

### **Physical Access**

Black and white negatives of File MS-231-2-3 are highly fragile due to acetate decay and cannot be used for printing. Color negatives of the same images are available.

### **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.

### **Finding Aids**

Detailed inventories of photographs are available upon request.

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

All materials were donated to the Museum of Northern Arizona by Thelma B. Towle. The bulk of the material was sent to the Museum of Northern Arizona in 1977. Mrs. Towle located additional information while cleaning out her files and sent it to the Museum in 1990.

### **Publication Note**

Towle, Thelma B. Dancing the Snakes. In *Arizona Highways*, vol. 29, no. 7. 1953.

### **Description Control**

Finding aid written by Christine Solymossy using *DACS*, 24 November, 2010

## MS-241

### Title

Series 1: Research and Correspondence

### Dates

1949-1990

### Extent

1 cm textual material

### Scope and Content

Series consists of articles, clippings, pamphlets, correspondence and notes documenting Thelma B. Towle's research on the Hopi Snake Dance and what year photography of the dance was banned.

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<b>Series 1: Research and Correspondence</b>				
<b>File #</b>	<b>File Description</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Box/Folder</b>
MS-241-1-1	Thelma B. Towle Research and Correspondence	1949-1990	1 cm textual	Asst. Box 1.1

### Title

Series 2: Photographs

### Dates

circa 1913

### Extent

51 photographic images (51 prints, 1 copy negative, 6 black-and-white negatives, 6 color negatives), 0.3 cm textual material

### Scope and Content

Series consists of photographs and related documents. Photographs are of the Hopi Snake dance taken by Walter Olds and an unknown photographer; photographs of a collection of Snake Dance figurines owned by Roman Hubbell.

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<b>Series 2: Photographs</b>				
<b>File #</b>	<b>File Description</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Box/Folder</b>
MS-241-2-1	Walter Olds Photographs	circa 1913	10 prints, 1 negative, 0.1 cm textual	Asst. Box 1.2
MS-241-2-2	Snake Dance Photographs, unknown photographer	circa 1913	36 prints, 0.1 cm textual	Asst. Box 1.3
MS-231-2-3	Photographs of Snake Dance Figurines	undated	5 prints, 12 negatives, 0.1 cm textual	Asst. Box 1.4

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## MS-241

### Title

Series 3: Postcards

### Dates

undated

### Extent

16 postcards, 0.1 cm textual material

### Scope and Content

Series consists of 16 color postcards and a related document. 14 postcards are copyright the Fred Harvey Company; 1 is copyright Harry Herz / C. W. Wharton James; 1 is copyright Esther Henderson. 8 of the Fred Harvey cards are "Phostint" cards from the Detroit Publishing Company. 4 of these cards show the Hopi Snake Dance, 1 shows the Hopi Basket Dance. The remaining postcards show Hopi and Navajo life, an Apache chief, and two scenes set in Arizona. One of the Arizona scenes is from a painting by F. Lungren.

<b>Series 3: Postcards</b>				
<b>File #</b>	<b>File Description</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Extent</b>	<b>Box/Folder</b>
MS-241-3-1	Color Postcards	undated	16 postcards, 0.1 cm textual	Asst. Box 1.5

### LCSH Access Points

Fred Harvey (Firm)

Hopi dance

Hopi Indian Reservation (Ariz.)

Hopi Indians

Hopi Indians -- Rites and ceremonies

Hopi Indians -- Social life and customs

Kachinas

Navajo Indians

Snake dance

Towle, Thelma B., 1907-1996

Trading posts -- Arizona