

Norman R. Smith Collection Finding Aid

Collection Number

1999.17

Contact Information

The Library, Special Collections
Humboldt State University
One Harpst Street
Arcata, California 95521

Processed By

Joan Berman, MLS, MA

Date Collection Processed

2011, 2016

Language

English

Collection Creator

Norman R. Smith (1857-1954)

Dates Covered by Collection

1860-1950; bulk: 1918-1938

Size of Collection

5 boxes, 3 cubic feet

Abstract

Norman R Smith's son Chester V Smith died on November 9, 1918, of pneumonia at Camp Colt, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; this appears to be the inspiration that drove his devoted father to begin a series of diaries, titled "The Bridge," written from 1918 through 1938. Smith recorded daily activities, including the weather, from his Moonstone Beach retirement home as he boldly visioned the future development of the town of Trinidad. The diaries also were a vehicle for Smith to express his continuing grief at the loss of his son, as virtually every entry contains a variant of this (from Jan 1, 1933): "...My Dear Dad: Trust God and hold fast onto me. I am with you and the Lord is with You. Be not discouraged nor cast down, all is Well.....Chester". Norman R Smith was a well-traveled

surveyor and engineer "with pipe dreams." His father, Victor Smith, of the town of Port Angeles WA, was lost on the Brother Jonathan shipwreck off Crescent City. Norman Smith also wrote a family history: "Victory: Biography of Victor Smith" was published serially in the Port Angeles Evening News in 1950.

Access

Open for research by appointment.

Copyright

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Acquisition Information

Donated in 1978 by Glenn Berry, HSU Art faculty member, who found the diaries in the Smith house above Moonstone Beach when he purchased it in 1970.

Biographical Information

After a very full and eventful life primarily in California, Washington (D.C. and State), Alaska and British Columbia, Norman R. Smith, born in Ohio in 1857, "retired" to the "summer resort community" that he had developed at Moonstone Beach, Humboldt County from his base in Red Bluff, California about 1914. This was near where his father, Victor Smith, well known in Port Angeles and Port Townsend WA, was lost in the wreck of the Brother Jonathan off Crescent City in 1865.

Norman studied civil engineering in San Francisco and worked as a surveyor in Port Angeles and Port Townsend before returning to California. He married May Smith in 1890; both had been previously married. Confusingly, May's first husband was also named Smith (George Venable Smith), and they had a daughter, Lois, born in 1883. Lois lived with Norman and May and their son Chester V. Smith, born in 1891 in Port Angeles. Chester worked closely with his father in the development of the Moonstone Beach property; unfortunately, he died on November 9, 1918 of pneumonia at Camp Colt, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, having just been accepted in the Service. Victor's death appears to be the inspiration that drove his father to begin the series of daily diaries that he titled "The Bridge."

Norman, May and Lois continued to live in both Red Bluff and Moonstone Beach, where they each occupied different houses. Norman had great visions for the major development of an "Industrial Colony on Trinidad Harbor," as he described in a 20 page "booster" publication in 1924, complete with photos by Lois Smith.

In 1934, in response to a request from his sister Nellie in Berkeley, Norman wrote her a series of letters detailing the family history, and in particular the exploits of their father Victor Smith and his relationship to the town of Port Angeles, WA. These letters resurfaced in 1950 when Jack Henson from the Port Angeles Evening News interviewed Norman and published them in the newspaper from June 9 through October 1950 as "Victor: Biography of Victor Smith." Norman died in 1954 at 96; he was preceded in death by May in 1946 and Lois died in 1968.

Scope and Content of the Collection

Norman Smith's diaries, written from his home at Moonstone Beach, Humboldt County, are of varying sizes, most are quite small. He began recording in 1918, upon hearing of the death of his son. Each entry includes brief place/weather information, some daily activities and invariably a communication with and/or from his deceased son Chester.

The diaries are arranged chronologically. The exception to this is the diaries for 1942 and 1943, written most probably by Lois C. Smith, which are included in the first box, primarily for space considerations. This box also includes a typescript copy covering Nov 9, 1918-Nov 9, 1919, dates for which original diaries are missing. This typescript copy was donated to HSU by the Humboldt County Historical Society in 2009; they retained another copy. HCHS also donated the loose pages of the 1938 diary to HSU. These materials were part of the Lois Smith Collection that they received, also from Glenn Berry, in 2002, primarily of her photographs.

The diary for 1933 contains several loose items:

- Several receipts
- Card: charter member The Townsend National Legion Certificate of Membership, Norman R. Smith
- 2 letters to May and Lois May 9, 1940 from Berkeley in Townsend Club envelope/The Townsend Plan, from Norman's sister Nellie. One of the letters, addressed "Dear Brother Norman" refers to "...the story you wrote for me is not put away - in one sense - but is kept with my most valuable possessions. Thank you very much. I did not know, but that you might have had something to add. You have done enough already please pardon such disregard for your precious time...."

The Miscellaneous series includes some correspondence from the original donation.

Maps from the original donation were transferred to the HCC Map Collection.

Newspaper clippings of "Victory" and the manuscript by Savina Antonioli about Norman

Smith were found in the Genzoli Collection Information Files and transferred to this collection

Container List

Series: Diaries: "The Bridge"

Box [1] 1918-1921; 1942-1943 (8 vols and 1 typescript in folder)

- 1918 (1)
- 1918-1919 (typescript copy Nov 9, 1918 - Nov 9, 1919 - in folder) - [transferred from Humboldt County Historical Society in 2009]
- 1920 (4)
- 1921 (1)
- 1942 (1)
- 1943 (1)

Box [2] 1921-1923 (18 vols)

- 1921-Jan 1922 (6)
- 1922 (9)
- 1922-23 (1)
- 1923 (2)

Box [3] 1924-1929 (10 vols)

- 1924 (4)
- 1925 (1)
- 1926 (2)
- 1927 (1)
- 1928 (1)
- 1929 (1)

Box [4] 1930-1938 (7 vols plus 1 loose in folder)

- 1930 (1)
- 1931 (1)
- 1932 (1)
- 1933 (1)
- 1935 (1)
- 1936 (1)
- 1937 (1)
- 1938 (loose Jan 18, 1938-May 11, 1938 - in folder) - [transferred from Humboldt County Historical Society in 2009]

Series: Miscellaneous

Box [5] Miscellaneous

- (1915-1916] Letters mostly from Chester to Dad, on letterhead: Norman R. Smith & Son Engineers, Red Bluff
- [1927] 3 letters on letterhead: Transcontinental Pacific Terminal Association, Norman R. Smith, General Manager (photo of Trinidad Harbor from South Trinidad)
- Victory, by Norman R. Smith. Newspaper clippings from Port Angeles Evening News, June 9-Aug. 22, 1950. From letters written by Norman R Smith to his sister [circa 1934] telling the history of his family, embracing the early history of Port Angeles. The story starts in 1860 and ends in 1891 - [transferred from Genzoli Collection: Information Files]
- Savina Antonioli - story of Norman R Smith, to Genzoli as a story for him to publish (16 page mss), ca 1950 - [transferred from Genzoli Collection: Information Files]

Series: Maps (these were transferred to the HCC Map Collection)

- 1999.15.0017 (2 copies) Oil and harbor Development (3-1)
- 1999.15.0018 [Proposed Railroads from Eureka to Red Bluff and Lakeview] (3-1)
- 1999.15.0128 Proposed Plan of Summer Homes at Shelter Cove [Moonstone] (3-5)
- 1999.15.0129 Proposed Plan of Summer Homes at Shelter Cove [Moonstone] (3-5)
- 1999.15.0155 Map Showing Survey of the Boundary of The Town of Trinidad, Calif (3-5)
- 1999.15.0156 Map of Industrial Colony Site, Showing South Trinidad and Moonstone Beach (3-5)
- 1999.15.0157 (2 copies) Official Map of Trinidad Cemetery (3-5)
- 1999.15.0158 (2 copies) Map of West Haven, Humboldt County... (3-5)
- 1999.15.0159 Map Showing the Boundaries of Certain Tracts or Parcels of Land Surveyed for the Persons Whose Names are Shown on Each Tract [Westhaven] (3-5)
- 1999.15.0395 Demartin's Shipping Point, Del Norte County (1-2)
- 1999.15.0427 Trinidad Inn (3-5)
- 1999.15.0428 Trinidad Inn (3-5)
- 1999.15.0429 Front View of proposed Trinidad Inn (3-5)
- 1999.15.0431 Humboldt and Eastern Railroad Table showing mileage, cost, earnings, gross and et operating expenses... (1-2)

- 1999.15.0433 [Arcata and Mad River Railroad line, proposed route to Mckinleyville-Railroad Avenue] (3-2)

Bibliography

Kendall, John. Articles by John Kendall on Victor Smith, Clallam County Historical Society website

(http://www.clallamhistoricalsociety.com/collections/articles_by_john_kendall/56-victor-smith.html)

[Meader, Deb.] New to the Collection: the Lois Smith Collection. Humboldt Historian, Fall 2003, pp. 32-33

"Norman R. Smith" in Hines, Harvey K. An Illustrated History of the State of Washington. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1894, pp. 676-678.

Newsletter of the Trinidad Museum Society, July 2002. Several articles discuss the Smiths, with photos and map, other articles shed light on the development of Moonstone and Westhaven.

Smith, Norman R. Trinidad, Humboldt County in Northern California: the best part of the State ... a word about its past, present and its future. Trinidad; Long Beach, Calif: Eshelman Printing Co., 1924.

Smith, Norman R. Victory, the story of Port Angeles, clippings from the Port Angeles Evening News, June 9-Aug. 22, 1950, by the son of Victor Smith, founder of this city. Washington State Library Catalog (<http://stlow.iii.com/record=b1455871~S2>)

Related Collections

HSU Library, Boyle Collection, Lois Smith series

Humboldt County Historical Society, Lois Smith Collection

Subject Headings

Moonstone Beach (Calif.)

Smith, Norman R.

Smith, Victor

Trinidad (Calif.)

Westhaven (Calif.)