Inventory of the Emerson Knight Collection, 1898-1965

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Inventory of the Emerson Knight Collection, 1898-1965

Collection number: 2004-2

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University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California

Processed by:
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Date Completed:
February 2008
Encoded by:
Devan McGirr
Funding:
Arrangement and description of this collection was funded by the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning.

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Emerson Knight collection
Dates: 1898-1965
Collection number: 2004-2
Creator: Knight, Emerson, 1882-1960
Collector: Environmental Design Archives
Collection Size: 1 carton, 3 boxes, 1 half box, 1 flat box, 1 tube, 4 shoeboxes
Repository: Environmental Design Archives
College of Environmental Design
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California
Physical location: Environmental Design Archives
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California 94720-1820
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in the collection should be discussed with the Curator.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of Item], Emerson Knight Collection, 2004-2, Environmental Design Archives. College of Environmental Design. University of California, Berkeley.
Acquisition Information
The collection was donated by the family in 2004.
Biographical Note
Emerson Knight (1882-1960)
Emerson Knight was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1882 and moved to Los Angeles when he was nine years old. His father, William Henry Knight, was an author, astronomer, and California pioneer. In 1913, Knight embarked on a walking tour of England and studied art in Paris. He returned to Los Angeles in 1916, but soon indulged his trekking desire by walking to Monterey, stopping at the California missions along the way.
He began supervising landscape developments for Cammillo Fancheschi in Santa Barbara, and in 1917 became an associate of Mark Daniels, a San Francisco landscape engineer. Knight took charge of 80 acres of the J. Cheever Cowdin estate in Hillsborough (south of San Francisco), and designed gardens and country estates in San Francisco and the peninsula. In 1918, Mark Daniels left his office, including most of his equipment and books, to Knight.

In the late 1920s, Knight traveled to Mexico where he did studies for the Mexican National Highway Commission regarding areas that might be developed into parklands and historic monuments. He was awarded a diploma as an honorary member of the Sociedad Forestal Mexicana. Upon returning to the United States, Knight worked for the Save-the-Redwoods League, the Monterey City Planning Commission, the California State Park Commission, and the National Park Service. He was elected as a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and established the San Francisco headquarters at his office so that the Society could qualify for representation in the San Francisco Federation of Arts. He was involved in the plan for the preservation of historic Monterey and worked on park surveys, including one with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Outdoor theaters played a major role in Knight’s career. In 1924 he oversaw the completion of a garden theater on the Max Cohn estate, Little Brook Farm, in Los Gatos. He designed the Woodland Theater in Hillsborough, and collaborated with Regua and Jackson on the Mount Helix theater outside San Diego. Knight is probably best known for his design of the Mountain Theater on Mount Tamalpais in Marin County. Planning for the project began in the late 1920s, but progress was slow until 1934 when Knight convinced the National Park Service to get involved. (Knight was working as an inspector for the Park Service at the time.) The Civilian Conservation Corp was then engaged to work on the theater, which was completed in 1938. Knight’s design for the theater was intended to blend into the natural environment, using natural elements as much as possible. Large boulders were used for seats, trees and bushes were transported to the site to create natural boundaries for the stage, and drinking fountains were built of indigenous rock.

In the 1940s, Emerson Knight suffered a period of ill health, but still wrote articles and poetry. He served as associate editor for The Architect and Engineer magazine for 11 years, and was a member of the San Francisco Arts Commission and the Commonwealth Club. He died in 1960.

Source:

Scope and Content of Collection
The Emerson Knight Collection spans the years 1898 to 1965 and documents Knight’s personal life, projects, and professional activities through reports and correspondence, drawings, and photographs. The collection is arranged in four series: Personal Papers, Professional Papers, Project Records, and National Park Service. The Personal Papers include personal correspondence and photographs, along with other personal memorabilia. The Professional Papers include correspondence, writings, and reports for organizations with which Knight was involved, such as Save the Redwoods League and Protect the Mother Lode Society, documentation of activity in other professional organizations, writings for publications, and reference files.

The Project Records document projects developed by Knight from 1927-1949 through drawings, photographs, and records consisting of reports and correspondence. Knight is well known for the design of the Mountain Theater at Mount Tamalpais that is documented in photographs and drawings. A previous donation of Knight’s papers contains further documentation of the Mountain Theater in the form of correspondence and reports. His work on parks and preservation for the Mexican government is also documented in reports and photographs. Additional documents include records and photographs of his project in Monterey, CA, limited photographic documentation of residential projects completed by Knight, and one drawing of a planting plan for his own residence.

The National Park Service series includes projects Knight worked on during his years at the National Park Service, from 1934-1937. Projects from that time include reports and correspondence for preserving historic Monterey, CA, work on Oregon coast parks, the California coast and beaches, and East Bay Regional Parks, in addition to other projects.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Subjects
Landscape architects--California.
Landscape architecture--California.

Genres and Forms of Material
Landscape architecture drawings

Related Collections
Emerson Knight Collection, (1954-1), Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley.
I. Personal Papers 1991-1965

A. Biographical Information

Series Scope and Content Summary
Series consists of manuscripts and photographs documenting correspondence with family and friends, in particular with his nephew Waldo Ruess, and additional correspondence between his sister Stella Knight Ruess, and friend, Fred Whittlesey, regarding Knight's estate after his death. The photographs consist of portraits of Knight, family, friends, and photographic studies of San Francisco and its vicinity. The travel subseries consists of photographs of Knight's European travels that were collected in a scrapbook, in addition to other photographs of travels. Additional materials include personal and family artifacts, such as pages from Knight's scrapbook, an account book, and other ephemera. Biographical information consists of a curriculum vitae and a student paper about Knight for which interviews and other primary source information were compiled. Knight's writings consist of notes and poetry written by Knight and collected by various other writers.

Box 1, Folder 1
A. Biographical Information

Curriculum Vitae n.d.
Biography of Knight - Student Paper 1962

B. Correspondence

Personal Correspondence of Travels 1909-1957
Marta Davidson Carr 1919-1920
General 1924-1959
Waldo Ruess and Emerson Knight 1942-1960
Maria Allen Bazzi ca. 1942
Stella Knight Ruess Re: EK's death 1960
Re: EK's Funeral, Will, and Estate 1960-1962
Stella Knight Ruess and Fred Whittlesey 1960-1964
Re: Hattie B. Knight Estate 1964-1965
Re: Stella Knight Ruess Estate 1965

C: Personal and Family Artifacts

Pages from Emerson Knight's Scrapbook 1894-1950
Accounts Book 1898
Book by Stella Knight Ruess 1910
Diary 1915-1919
Family Artifacts ca. 1917
Pressed Plant Specimens n.d.
Death certificate and Mortuary Photographs 1960
San Francisco Chronicle Obituary and Funeral Notices 1960
Adult Classes n.d.
I. Personal Papers 1991-1965

D: Photographs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 21</th>
<th>Family Portraits 1882, n.d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 22</td>
<td>Emerson Knight, Friends, and Family Portraits 1900-1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 23</td>
<td>Personal Photographs 1919-1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7, 10</td>
<td>San Francisco Bay Area 1925-1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10</td>
<td>Unidentified n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E: Travel Photographs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 2, Folder 24</th>
<th>California ca. 1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 9</td>
<td>California State Parks 1934-1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7</td>
<td>Europe n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 8</td>
<td>Europe - from scrapbook n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9</td>
<td>Missions San Juan Bautista and San Miguel 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10</td>
<td>Parks 1933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F: Writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 25-27</th>
<th>Emerson Knight's Poetry - Records of Walks in Europe ca. 1913-1950</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 28</td>
<td>Collected Poetry, not written by Knight n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 29</td>
<td>Emerson Knight’s Notes 1915, n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Professional Papers 1922-1949

Series Scope and Content Summary

Series consists of Knight's correspondence, photographs, reports, and writings for the Mother Lode Society and the Save the Redwoods League. Writings consist of articles written for publications such as Architect and Engineer, California Arts and Architecture, and Landscape Architecture. The reference file consists of park research, primarily the writings of John C. Merriam, and outdoor theater research. Additionally, Knight's certificate as a member of the San Francisco Art Commission, an honorary diploma from the Sociedad Mexicano Forestal, and limited manuscript from his membership in the Commonwealth Club are included.

A. Associations and Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 1</th>
<th>San Francisco Arts Commission 1933, 1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 2</td>
<td>Commonwealth Club 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10</td>
<td>Honorary Diploma - Sociedad Forestal Mexicana 1929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Writings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 3</th>
<th>The Architect and Engineer, writings on the west 1920s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 4</td>
<td>The Architect and Engineer, writings on Mexico 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 5</td>
<td>Writing - various ca. 1930, ca 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 6</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture, Mount Tam 1949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Reference File

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3, Folder 7</th>
<th>Parks Research - John C. Merriam 1933-1939</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 8</td>
<td>UC Berkeley Greek Theater (photographs) 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3, Folder 9</td>
<td>The Gonzales Historical Memorial (photographs) 1937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Protect the Mother Lode Society

Box 3, Folder 10  Mother Lode - Notes and Clippings 1938-1941
Box 3, Folder 11  Protect the Mother Lode Society 1940-1941
Box 3, Folder 12  Mother Lode - Sunset Magazine Articles, published and drafts 1940-1941
Box 3, Folder 13  Correspondence - Sunset Magazine Article 1940-1941
Box 3, Folder 14  Correspondence - Emerson Knight and Anson S. Blake 1940
Box 3, Folder 15  Correspondence - Historical Society of Southern California 1940
Box 3, Folder 16  Society of California Pioneers 1940
Box 3, Folder 17  Mother Lode Maps 1935, 1940, 1941
Box 3, 7, Folder 18-21  Photographs - Mother Lode 1938-1942

E. Save the Redwoods League

Box 4, Folder 22  Articles of Incorporation 1920
Box 4, Folder 22  Articles of Incorporation 1920
Box 4, Folder 23  Effects of Highway through Nelson and Sicklen Grove 1938
Box 4, Folder 24  Studies of Redwoods for Carnegie Institute of Washington 1938-1940
Box 4, Folder 25  Human Values of the Redwoods 1939
Box 4, Folder 26  Avenue of the Giants 1941
Box 4, Folder 27  Save the Redwoods League Publications 1954, 1958, n.d.
Box 7  Photographs - Del Norte Coast Park, Stout Grove, "Human Values" Study, Calavera Big Trees, Trips 1930-1945

III. Project Records 1927-1949

Series Scope and Content Summary
The Project Records include records consisting of correspondence and reports, photographs, and drawings of projects designed by Knight. Drawings and photographs of Mountain Theater are included; the photographs illustrate the construction process as well as the finished design. Records and photographs are included for his projects in Mexico and Monterey, CA. Limited photographs of his residential projects are included in the collection as well as one drawing of his private residence. The collection does not include project records for his private residential designs. Additionally, a presentation board featuring samples of his private projects and outdoor amphitheaters is included.

Box 5, 9, 10, Folder 28-32  Cohn, Max M., Los Gatos, CA - photographs 1924
Box 9  Cowdin Estate - Photographs 1917
Box 5, 9, Folder 2  Epstein, Gustav Estate - Photographs 1924
Box 10  Kaye, L.M. - Presentation Board - Photograph n.d.
Box 5, Folder 3-5  Mexico, Federal Government 1929-1930
Box 5, Folder 6-11  Mexico - Photographs 1924, 1927-1931, 1938-1939
Box 5, Folder 12-13  Monterey, CA 1937-1941
Box 9  Moon, Merle B. Estate - Photographs 1923
Box 5, Folder 14  Mount Helix Nature Theater - Photographs 1928
Box 5, Folder 15-16  Mount Tam, Mountain Theater, Marin Co., CA 1932-1954
Box 5, 9, Folder 17-18  Mount Tam, Mountain Theater - Photographs 1935-1939 1948-1949 1954
Box 9  Mount Tam, Mountain Theater - Photographs of construction 1934-1937
Box 9  Sherwood, Mrs. Eleanor H. - photographs 1931
Box 5, Folder 19  St. Augustine, FL - Zoning Ordinance for the City of St. Augustine 1938
Box 10  Woodland Theater - Presentation Board - Photograph 1927
IV. National Parks Service 1934-1937

Series Scope and Content Summary

The National Parks Service series consists of correspondence, reports, and photographs of projects Knight completed while employed by the National Park Service between 1934 and 1937. The projects include reports for the establishment of future parks, reports on park features such as trails, and a historic preservation report for Monterey, CA.

Box 5, Folder 1
Correspondence 1934, 1937

Box 5, 9, Folder 2
Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, CA - East Bay Regional Park, Preliminary Report 1934, 1936

Box 5, Folder 3
Boulder Dam, AZ and NV - National Recreational Reserve 1936

Box 9
Boulder Lake - photographs 1935-1936

Box 5, Folder 3
Boulder Dam, AZ and NV - National Recreational Reserve 1936

Box 5, Folder 4
Butano-Gazos, CA - Study of a National Seashore Recreation Area 1935

Box 5, Folder 5
California - Report on National Beach Parks Proposed 1934

Box 9
Fort Churchill - photographs 1934

Box 9
La Purisima Mission - photographs 1936

Box 5, 9, Folder 6
Mattole-Humboldt, CA - Study of a National Seashore Recreation Area 1935

Box 5, Folder 7-9
Monterey, CA 1937-1940

Box 9
Monterey, CA - photographs 1929 1935-1939

Box 5, Folder 10
Oregon-Coast Parks 1929 1934

Box 9
Ozette Lake, WA - Proposed National Seashore Recreation Area - photographs 1935 1934

Box 9
Pistol, River, OR - Proposed National Seashore Recreation Area - photographs 1935 1934

Box 9
Pistol, River, OR - Proposed National Seashore Recreation Area - photographs 1935 1934

Box 5, 9, Folder 11
Point Lobos Reserve, CA - Report on Motor Parking 1937

Box 9
Point Lobos, CA - photographic studies 1936-1937

Box 5, Folder 12
Point Reyes Peninsula, CA - Study of a National Seashore Recreation Area 1935

Box 9
Rogue River, OR - Proposed National Seashore Recreation Area - photographs 1935

Box 5, Folder 13
San Juan Islands, WA - Report 1937

Box 9
Tahoe Proposed Park - photographs 1935

Box 9
Thomas Creek, Mt. Rose, NV - photographs 1934

Box 9
Tillamook, OR - Proposed National Seashore Recreation Area - photographs 1935

Box 5, Folder 14
Trails Report - Principles of Location, Design, Construction 1937