Inventory of the Emma Lena Smith Diaries SPC.2017.005

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Contributing Institution: California State University Dominguez Hills Archives and Special Collections
Title: Emma Lena Smith Diaries
creator: Smith, Emma Lena
Identifier/Call Number: SPC.2017.005
Physical Description: 2 boxes
Physical Description: .60 Linear Feet
Date (inclusive): April 1935-September 1953
Date (inclusive): October 1955-August 1967
Abstract: This collection comprises 23 diaries of Emma Lena Smith. These diaries reflect upon the daily life of a housewife from California's Central Valley, her small-town husband, other family members and neighbors as they go about their day-to-day life of work, church and community events. Emma posts daily information about the weather, her role of taking care of the house, which includes canning fruits and vegetables and Andrew's various jobs, such as farming his own land, working at the city plant and working odd jobs for pay or in exchange for goods or services.
Biographical / Historical
Emma Lena (nee Quain) Smith was born on September 22, 1870 in Michigan and died on December 31, 1968 in Stanislaus County in California. She resided in California's Central Valley near Modesto, mainly in the towns of Merced and Ceres, with her second husband, Andrew (1874-1959). Emma and Andrew were married on August 22, 1917 in San Leandro, California and separated in 1952 when Emma was 82 years old. She lived the remainder of her life with her daughter, Mildred (nee Macey) Goodwill (1899-?), son-in-law Mitchell (1895-1961) and grandson, Richard "Dick" Lee Goodwill (1938-2015).
Conditions Governing Access
There are no access restrictions on this collection.
Conditions Governing Use
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Preferred Citation
[Title of item], Emma Lena Smith Diaries, Courtesy of the Department of Archives and Special Collections. University Library. California State University, Dominguez Hills.
Scope and Contents
The Emma Lena Smith Diaries contain 23 composition books and spiral notebooks that cover the years 1936 to 1967. There is a gap in the diaries from September 1953 to October 1955. Emma Lena Smith was a housewife in the Central Valley of California. Her diaries cover her day-to-day life including canning fruits and vegetables, her interactions with her husband, family and neighbors, and attending weekly and annual events, such as church services, the Ladies Aid meetings, the Women's Christian Temperance Union conventions (WCTU) and school graduations. Many of her entries are written about her second husband Andrew, her sister Bertha, her daughter Mildred, son-in-law Mitchell, grandson Dickie and a various neighbors. Andrew's daily work was on the farm, at the local plant, helping neighbors with their farm work and his participation in local associations, including the Veterans Camp.
There is mention of a local Japanese American family that Andrew, Emma's husband, would occasionally help with their farming needs and also picking up some of their belongings when they returned from a WWII Incarceration Camp. This would most likely be in reference to Toraichi Fukui and his wife, Fusayo Fukui.
Processing Information
This collection was processed by Louanne Heintz in 2017.
Arrangement
Arranged in two boxes.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Homemakers
Housewives
Separation (Law)
Farmers
Japanese American Farmers
box 1, folder 1  
**Daily Diary April 1935-December 1935**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Emma Lena Smith’s home, which she shared with her husband, Andrew, burned down. They stayed with her daughter and son-in-law until they were able to rent a house on Garrison Ave. They moved multiple times in 1935. Their neighbors and friends provided many items to help replace what was destroyed in the fire. Andrew at this point in time was employed at the plant in town. He also did odd jobs for others in the community.

box 1, folder 2  
**Daily Diary January 1936-September 1936**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Emma and Andrew moved to a place near Ceres, California. Andrew made improvements around the home including fixing the fence and putting up shelves in the kitchen. Emma and Andrew are involved in many different organizations within the community, such as the Veterans Camp, their church and the WCTU. They begin to produce fruits and vegetables on their parcel of land (i.e., oranges, rhubarb, melons, squash, cucumbers, beets, and alfalfa). They were also able to purchase a washing machine and an electric refrigerator.

box 1, folder 3  
**Daily Diary September 1936-October 1937**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Emma and Andrew attend church services on various days of the week and sometimes even twice a day in the morning and in the evening. Emma’s sister, Bertha, visits from a neighboring town. Along with planting various crops, including peas and potatoes, they have cows and chickens to tend to. Although their days often follow a somewhat regular routine, every once in a while there will be a salesman that stops by to sell their goods or they are able to go see a moving picture in town.

box 1, folder 4  
**Daily Diary November 1937-August 1938**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Emma keeps busy by attending meetings and events, such as the Home Dept. Christmas party, the Ladies Aid covered dish dinner and quilting parties. Emma makes candy and nut breads and shares the olives and almonds that they’ve grown with their neighbors. Emma spends a day with her parents who came for a visit and they take a day trip to Sacramento, Sutter’s Fort and the College of the Pacific. Mildred and Mitchell adopted a baby boy. Andrew was laid off from his job.

box 1, folder 5  
**Daily Diary August 1938-March 1939**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Andrew continues to look for work. He spends his time helping out at other farms, grinding feed, picking peaches, and carpentry work. He also does some occasional construction work on the church. Emma spends much of her time canning the fruit that they have grown or received from neighbors. Their car and tractor both had mechanical issues.

box 1, folder 6  
**Daily Diary March 1939-April 1941**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Andrew works long hours irrigating and cultivating the pasture and garden, sometimes watering during the middle of the night. Emma’s days are filled with household chores, making jams, visiting neighbors and attending church events. The war in Europe begins to affect the prices of some goods. Andrew has rented some land from a Japanese American family and also helps them once in a while with their crops.
Daily Diary April 1941-March 1943
Scope and Contents
There are many weddings and funerals that Emma and Andrew attend. They have purchased a different place to live and spend time fixing it up. Emma writes about the Japan raiding Pearl Harbor and President Roosevelt declaring war against the Axis forces. Andrew belongs to the Veterans Camp and he was made a corporal to help organize items. There is no mention of the Japanese American family between October 1941 and September 1945.

Daily Diary April 1943-February 1944
Scope and Contents
Andrew received medical shots to help with his arthritis. Emma and Mildred sewed dresses and helped at the church Bazaar. Emma and Andrew sell their place and move in with Mildred and her family. Mildred's husband decides to build a new house with Andrew's help. They continue to farm and can fruits and vegetables.

Daily Diary February 1944-January 1946
Scope and Contents
Emma travels to Chowchilla to visit the doctor and is told she has high blood pressure. She spends some time helping at the Red Cross. Emma and Andrew have been having some disagreements. On February 15, they decide to separate. Andrew persuades Emma to reconsider. The Japanese American family returns from WWII Incarceration Camp and Andrew helps them get settled.

Daily Diary January 1946-December 1946
Scope and Contents
Andrew works construction on the Parsonage. Their grandson, Dickie, has the measles, which are passed on to Mildred. Emma and Andrew move at least twice in this year. They take a vacation and ride the train to San Diego and have an excursion to Tijuana, Mexico.

Daily Diary December 1946-October 1948
Scope and Contents
Multiple family members are sick off and on with the flu. Plumbing problems are dealt with for the house. Emma has several long talks with Andrew, which he does not agree with. Their daily activities include farming, gardening and taking care of the home. They attend the Sacrament Fair.

Daily Diary November 1948-March 1950
Scope and Contents
Emma and Andrew's relationship continues to be strained. They buy a radio and are able to listen to President Harry Truman's inauguration. A welfare worker comes out to see Emma multiple times. Andrew needed to have an operation and takes over a month to recuperate. Emma and Bertha take care of a lot of the farm work.

Daily Diary March 1950-June 1951
Scope and Contents
Andrew spent multiple visits in the hospital in San Francisco. Emma went on a two day trip with Mildred's family and Bertha to San Jose and Monterey, California. Emma turned 80 years old. Emma and Andrew needed to get a loan for $3,000 and an extra $200 to buy a 1951 Plymouth.
Andrew continues to have health issues. Emma asks a woman named Nellie to stay with her and help her around the house. Nellie lives in a trailer on their land. Emma mentions that Andrew has his own room. She posts in multiple entries how grouchy Andrew is behaving. They have more disagreements and Andrew told her to get out of the house. Emma then tells him to sell the place. She moves into an apartment and then goes to live with Mildred and her family. Andrew confronts Emma and her family members on multiple occasions with the sheriff having to be called at least once.

Many people in the family are ill with different sicknesses. Andrew makes several attempts to talk to Emma. Andrew moves into a rest home on McHenry Ave. Emma resigns from her post on the WCTU. Mildred buys Emma's half of the property. Emma makes note of important current events throughout her diaries, including June 1953 when Queen Elizabeth is crowned and a large A-bomb was set off. Mildred was able to buy the rest of the property from Andrew in August 1953. Andrew moves to the Veterans' Home in Yountville, but still continues to be a nuisance to Emma and her family.

Emma helps plan Henry and Kitty's golden wedding anniversary. Andrew is in Stockton and is not doing well. His health is deteriorating and he has been deemed as “dangerous”, especially towards Mildred. Emma's grandson, who is now referred to as Dick, is in his second year of high school and works part-time at the library. Mildred is teaching again with only a few students in her class. The sheriff's deputies came to tell Emma that Andrew has escaped from the Stockton State Hospital. He is found and is brought to the Veterans' Home.

Mitchell, Emma's son-in-law, had a mild heart attack. Andrew passes away. Emma tapes Andrew's obituary onto one of her diary pages. It stated that he was 75 years old. He was born in Denmark and was a veteran of the Spanish-American war. Emma and her family attended the funeral on January 21, 1959. Emma notes twice in her writings that she is having some confusion.

Emma spends some time visiting her sister Bertha and also her friend Nellie. Bertha is hospitalized and then recuperates in a convalescent home.
Daily Diary November 1962-June 1964
Scope and Contents
Emma continues to keep up on current events. She mentions that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt died in November 1962 and the Asian flu epidemic was going on in the Eastern and Midwestern states during February 1963.

Daily Diary July 1964-February 1965
Scope and Contents
If Mildred or Dick were not going to be home for long hours or at night, then Emma goes over to her sister’s place. Her daily entries are usually focused on her daughter and grandson.

Daily Diary March 1965-August 1967
Scope and Contents
In the month of August 1967, Emma mentions that she is not feeling well and receives shots from her doctor on at least two different visits. Emma's last entry that is found in this collection is on August 31, 1967. The year of Emma’s death was determined to be in 1968.