Norman R. Smith Collection

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2018
Descriptive Summary
Title: Norman R. Smith Collection
Dates: 1860-1950
Collection Number: 1999.17
Creator/Collector: Norman R. Smith (1857-1954)
Extent: 3 cubic feet (5 boxes)
Repository: Humboldt State University Library
Arcata, California 95521-8299

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.

Language of Material: English

Access
Open for research by appointment.

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Preferred Citation
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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.

Biography/Administrative History
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 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

**Indexing Terms**
Moonstone Beach (Calif.)
Smith, Norman R.
Smith, Victor
Trinidad (Calif.)
Westhaven (Calif.)

Norman R. Smith Collection Finding Aid