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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

William Dye Smith papers

1898-1946 [bulk 1916-1922]

Sc MG 949

Processed by Serena Torres, 2019.

Summary

Creator: Smith, William Dye, 1881-1951

Title: William Dye Smith papers

Date: 1898-1946 [bulk 1916-1922]

Size: 1.46 linear feet (3 boxes plus 1 Oversize box)

Source: Donated by Anthony A. Lee, 2016

Abstract: Personal papers of William Dye Smith (1880-1951), an African American military sergeant who served in the United States Army Spanish American War.

Preferred citation: [Item], William Dye Smith papers, Sc MG 949, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Serena Torres, 2019.

Related Materials:

Mamie Casey and William Dye Smith letters, Sc MG 675, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Creator History

William Dye Smith (1880-1951) was an African American soldier who served in the Philippine-American War (1899-1901), Pulahan Revolt (1906), Mexican Expedition (1916), and throughout the United States until his honorable discharge in 1923. Smith was initially drafted into Company B, 25th Infantry of the United States Army Quartermaster on November 30, 1898, and served in various clerical posts, including Quartermaster Clerk and Quartermaster. He later became Sergeant with the Q. M. Corps at Fort San Padre, Philippine Islands in 1914. Smith served and was stationed in a number of places in the United States, such as Arizona, New Mexico, New York, Texas, and Wyoming.

Smith was born in St. Louis, Missouri August 6th, 1880. He married Laura E. Smith and together they had six daughters: Mable, Danetta, Mildred, Manila, Edith and Winifred. Smith lost his wife in 1938 and died in 1951 in Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Content Note

The William Dye Smith papers consist primarily of correspondence relating to the family and military life of Smith and his immediate family members. Through correspondence, details of trying times, difficult conditions, and bravery are revealed. Letters give insight into an African American military family during the late 19th century and early 20th century throughout the Spanish-American War and Philippine-American War.

Series I, Family Correspondence, 1901-1946 (bulk 1916-1922), includes correspondence between William Dye Smith (WDS) and his wife Lauren E. Smith (LES), as well as correspondence to and from Smith's daughters, friends and other family members such as his cousin Mamie Casey. Correspondence includes evidence of Smith's participation as a freemason and membership with United Grand Commandery Knights Templar in Missouri.

Series II, Military Records, 1898-1931(bulk 1916-1922) include records and correspondence of Smith's time in the United States Army. As in Series I, there is evidence of Smith's participation as a freemason and membership with United Grand Commandery Knights Templar in Missouri.

Series III, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1898-1931 (bulk 1916-1922), includes letters from family members and friends to William Dye Smith and Laura E. Smith. The letters were essentially a way of catching them up on their lives and asking about the state of the Smith's lives.

Arrangement: Papers are organized into three series: I. Family Correspondence; II. Military Records; III. Miscellaneous Correspondence Artificial arrangement by donor. Correspondence is arranged chronologically.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American families
African American freemasons
African American soldiers
Knights Templar (Masonic order). Grand Commandery (Mo.)
Spanish-American War, 1898--Participation, African American
United States. Army--History--Punitive Expedition into Mexico, 1916

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Letters (correspondence)

Geographic Names

United States -- Armed Forces -- African Americans -- History

Names

Smith, William Dye, 1881-1951

Container List

Family Correspondence 1901 - 1946 [bulk 1916 - 1922]

Series I Boxes 1-2: Family Correspondence, (1901-1946, bulk 1916-1922), includes letters to and from William Dye Smith to his wife Laura E. Smith; to and from his daughters Mable, Manila, Danetta, Mildred, Edith and Winifred; and other family members of William Dye Smith and Laura E. Smith. Correspondence describes some of the details of military life and hardships for Smith, expected growth and frustrations with the army, his accomplishments, and the unquestionable love he had for his wife and daughters. Smith greatly missed his family during his military service and noted throughout correspondence with his wife Laura how sad he was to miss out on some of the milestones of his daughters' lives. The box includes correspondence from other family members such as George Smith (father to William), Nannie Sanders (Laura Smith's mother) and Mamie Casey (cousin to William). There is significant correspondence between William Dye Smith and his daughter Mable Smith and also relating to her passing. Mable was the eldest of the daughters and seemed to have a close relationship with her father. She died in 1923 at the age of 19. The Smiths received condolence letters and cards from family and friends after the passing of Mable. Also found in this series are letters to William and Laura from their daughters. One highlight is a letter from daughter Danetta Smith to her mother writing about the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell speaking at a dinner. There is also correspondence with friends and others regarding personal business inquiries and transactions, as well as persons that are related to military business. In addition to letters are clippings, greeting cards, invitations, menus and telegrams. Also included are the Smith's marriage announcement and license. See full folder and item inventory list.

- b. 1 f. 1 **Stock Certificate 1901**
- b. 1 f. 2 **Laura E. Smith 1903**
- b. 1 f. 3 **William Dye Smith and Laura Engleman Marriage License 1903**
- b. 1 f. 4 **Marriage Announcement of William Dye Smith 1903**
- b. 1 f. 5-6 **Laura E. Smith 1905 - 1907**
Includes what is believed to be a birthday card from William to Laura, *Nineteenth Anniversary of Laura*.
- b. 1 f. 7 **Mable Smith, undated**
- b. 1 f. 8-9 **Laura E. Smith 1906 - 1910**
- b. 1 f. 10 **William Dye Smith - United States War Veterans Membership 1911**
- b. 1 f. 11-12 **Laura E. Smith 1911 - 1913**
Includes a letter of William Dye Smith's time in Camp Jossman Guinmaras right before the dismantlement, June 25, 1912.
- b. 1 f. 13 **Crawford to William Dye Smith 1913**
- b. 1 f. 14 **Laura E. Smith 1913**
- b. 1 f. 15 **William Dye Smith - Thanksgiving invitation 1913**
- b. 1 f. 16-17 **Laura E. Smith 1916**
Laura E. Smith is in Fort D.A. Russell Cheyenne Wyoming during this time. There are mentions of "Mexicans firing at white soldiers" and war in these letters from Nannie Sanders to Laura E. Smith. William Dye Smith is stationed in Mexico.
- b. 1 f. 17a **Smith daughters 1916**
Mildred Smith to her father William Dye Smith.
- b. 1 f. 18a-18c **Mable Smith 1916 - 1921**
Letters to William Dye Smith are from his daughter, Mable Smith.
- b. 1 f. 19 **Mamie Casey to William Dye Smith 1916**
The last name Hudlin was written on one of the original folders from donor with a question mark, but it's believed to be the same Mamie from the Mamie Casey and William Dye Smith letters.
- b. 1 f. 20 **Mable Smith 1916**
From William to Mable Smith.
- b. 1 f. 21 **Irene Hudlin Debut - Chicago Defender 1916**

Family Correspondence (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 22-23 **Laura E. Smith 1916**
Letters from Laura to William.
- b. 1 f. 24 **George Smith (father) to William Dye Smith 1916**
- b. 1 f. 25-27 **Laura E. Smith 1916 - 1917**
Includes a Quartermaster Christmas menu at Camp Llano Grande, Texas. Also, included is a misdated letter (incorrect year). Correct date is found on envelope.
- b. 1 f. 28 **Mable Smith 1917**
Mable to her father father, William.
- b. 1 f. 29-32 **Laura E. Smith 1917**
These letters are from William Smith to Laura Smith during his time in Arizona.
- b. 1 f. 32a **Smith Daughters 1917**
Letters from Danetta and Mildred Smith to their father, William Dye Smith.
- b. 1 f. 33 **Laura E. Smith - Publishing of The Cuprite vol. 4 by the students of Bisbee High school 1919**
- b. 1 f. 34 **Mable Smith 1919 - 1920**
Correspondence between Mable and her father, William Dye Smith. Also a letter from Mable to both her parents, William and Laura.
- b. 1 f. 35 **Smith Daughters 1920**
Postcard from William to daughter Manila H. Smith.
- b. 1 f. 36 **Edward W. Ferguson to Laura E. Smith with clipping of Ferguson's Death Notice, ca. 1920**
Testimony of Accused in U.S. versus Edward W. Ferguson, U.S. Army, retired on envelope
- b. 1 f. 37-41 **William Dye Smith 1921 - 1922**
Letters from Military friend Chicago, Illinois (illegible name), Jas. W. Beard from the Unites Grand Commandery, Knights Templar, Jos P. Moffitte with Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons, and Herman G. Baca with American Legion.
- b. 1 f. 42 **Warren N. Mims and Samuel Prince 1922**
- b. 1 f. 43-45 **Mable Smith 1922**
Included are letters, telegrams, and cards of condolences for the death of daughter Mable Smith. There's also a letter and application from Mrs. Emma Summers with the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) Albuquerque, New Mexico to Mable Smith not long before her death.
- b. 1 f. 46 **J. A. Cornish to William Dye Smith 1922**
- b. 1 f. 47-48 **Laura E. Smith 1922**
Letters to Laura Smith from P.E.B. Butler and her sister Minnie.
- b. 1 f. 49 **Samuel G. Chadman to William Dye Smith 1923**
- b. 1 f. 50-51 **Laura E. Smith 1923**
Includes a letter Letter from Eureka Court in Douglas Arizona to Laura Smith confirming qualification to take the Past Worthy councilors degree, June 14, 1923.
- b. 1 f. 52 **Captain L. C. Worthington to William Dye Smith 1924**
- b. 1 f. 53 **Vase Drawing and list - undated**
- b. 1 f. 54 **Mrs. O. J. W. Scott to Laura E. Smith 1924**
- b. 1 f. 55 **Smith Daughters - NAACP to Winifred Dye Smith 1926**
- b. 1 f. 56 **Christmas card from Major and Mrs. Scott 1927**
- b. 1 f. 57 **Laura E. Smith 1928**
How to master good English Pamphlet by Sherwin Cody.
- b. 1 f. 58-60 **William Dye Smith 1930 - 1934**
William Dye Smith was a postman in Los Angeles.
- b. 1 f. 61-62 **Laura E. Smith 1934**
Bible receipt and Conditional contract of sale to Laura Smith for a violin.

Family Correspondence (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 63 William Dye Smith Telegram 1934
 - b. 1 f. 64 Manila H. Smith (Huddie) to Mrs. Washington - Undated
Un-mailed postcard from Huddie. This was Manila Smith's childhood nickname.
 - b. 1 f. 65 Engagement announcement for Emily Brown Childress and James Rufus Portwig - Undated
 - b. 1 f. 66 Smith daughters 1926
Included is a card signed with the name Dan, the same nickname for Danetta Smith. In other correspondence donor has identified the sender as Danetta Johnson. Also included is Danetta P. Smith's high school commencement memorabilia.
 - b. 1 f. 67-68 Laura E. Smith 1936
Includes a get well card for Laura Smith from Lend a Hand Club in Los Angeles, California, April 14, 1936.
 - b. 1 f. 69-72 Smith Daughters 1932 - 1946
Included are letters and cards from Manila, Winifred, and Danetta Smith to their mother Laura. In one letter from Danetta Smith there is mention of Reverend Powell (Adam Clayton Powell) speaking at the Roger Williams Club dinner in Los Angeles in 1937. Also mentioned in this same letter is the listening of King's coronation.
 - b. 1 f. 73 Shorthand letter (signed Ma) - Undated
 - b. 2 f. 1 Laura E. Smith 1938
California Eagle (newspaper) Los Angeles, CA Thursday December 15, 1938 (vol. 59 No. 36), includes obituary of Laura E. Smith on the cover.
- Military Records 1898 - 1931 [bulk 1916 - 1922]**
Series II Box 3: Military Records (1898-1931, bulk 1916-1922) document William Dye Smith's military career. Included are correspondence to and from military peers and superiors, applications for business concerning family support, allowances, promotions, biographical records, exams on military regulation and topography, financial records, special orders throughout his military career, promotions received and denied, recommendations and letters of reference, documents related to reenlistment activity, and his retirement in 1923. There are also records of Smith's reporting stations in the United States such as Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming; Columbus, New Mexico; and Mercedes, Texas; and also outside of the United States in Colonia Dublan in Mexico and Manila, Philippines.
- b. 3 f. 1 Applications 1910 - 1922
 - b. 3 f. 2 Biographical 1911 - 1925
 - b. 3 f. 3 Certificates 1904 - 1905
 - b. 3 f. 4-6 Commission 1916 - 1922
 - b. 3 f. 7 Exams, undated
 - b. 3 f. 8-10 Exams 1911 - 1921
 - b. 3 f. 11-13 Financial 1914 - 1923
 - b. 3 f. 14 Furloughs 1916 - 1917
 - b. 3 f. 15 Miscellaneous - Menus 1910 - 1917
 - b. 3 f. 16 Miscellaneous - Affidavits 1916 - 1922
 - b. 3 f. 17-21 Miscellaneous 1898 - 1922
 - b. 3 f. 22-27 Orders 1911 - 1923
 - b. 3 f. 28-30 Promotions 1918 - 1922
 - b. 3 f. 31-34 Recommendations 1900 - 1923
 - b. 3 f. 35 Reenlistment 1922
 - b. 3 f. 36 Retirement 1922 - 1931

Miscellaneous Correspondence 1904 - 1940 [bulk 1905 - 1924]

Series III Box 4: Miscellaneous Correspondence (1904-1940, bulk dates 1905-1924) includes letters from family members and friends to William Dye Smith and Lauer E. Smith. In addition to letters there are invitations, postcards, greeting cards and get well cards to Laura Smith before her death in 1938.

- b. 4 f. 1 **1904 - 1907**
Includes letters regarding the deaths of William Dye Smith's grandmother, Nancy Routledge Hudlin in 1906 and his daughter, Daniel Smith in 1907.
- b. 4 f. 2 **1911 - 1913**
Of note is an autobiographical statement for William Dye Smith, 1911. Also included is a Redline Map for Pacific Electric Railways, 1912.
- b. 4 f. 3 **1914 - 1917**
- b. 4 f. 4 **1919 - 1920**
- b. 4 f. 5-6 **1922**
- b. 4 f. 7 **1923 - 1924**
- b. 4 f. 8 **1928 - 1929**
- b. 4 f. 9 **1933 - 1936**
- b. 4 f. 10 **1938**
- b. 4 f. 10 **1940**
Includes an invitation to attend a dinner in honor of Mr. S. C. Leung, General Secretary, National Committee of Y. M. C. A.'s of China.
- b. 4 f. 10 **Undated**