

Joe Smith Papers, 1890-1962

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Smith, Joe, 1872-1962
Title	Joe Smith Papers
Dates	1890-1962 (inclusive) 1890 1962
Quantity	10.90 cubic feet (25 boxes)
Collection Number	0252 (Accession No. 0252-001)
Summary	Farmer, Populist politician, and journalist in Eastern Washington and Seattle
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	Open to all users.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Joe Smith was a wheat farmer, a political activist for Populist and Progressive causes, and a prominent newspaper reporter. Although successful as a journalist, Smith never won any of his several bids for public office.

Smith was born in Missouri in 1872. His family moved to Endicott, Washington, in 1883 to homestead. His father, Lillis F. Smith, slowly expanded his landholdings and became one of the larger wheat farmers in the Palouse. In 1889, at the age of 16, Joe Smith began keeping a meticulously detailed diary while working on his father's farm. Smith was sent back to the family home in 1889. While there, he attended Missouri State University (now the University of Missouri) from 1890 to 1892. Although Smith's activities during this period were principally confined to the University and his studies there, he did make one train trip through the West; at which time he recorded his impressions of such western towns as Kansas City, Ogden, and Salt Lake City. Following a major fire on the Missouri State campus in 1892, Smith returned to Endicott. It would be several years before he completed his formal education, and then it would be taken at the Washington Agricultural College of Washington State University in Pullman. During these years, he still worked on the farm occasionally, even through a severe agricultural depression.

Smith began writing for the *Spokane Spokesman-Herald* and smaller Eastern Washington papers in the mid 1890s. The agricultural depression of the 1890s drove Smith to join the Populist Party. He served as a Populist precinct committeeman and campaign worker, as well as writing newspaper stories

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friendly to the Populists. His diaries thus describe in detail politics in the Palouse country during the 1890s.

When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, Smith volunteered for the Army. He also agreed to cover the war for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. He saw action in 17 battles in the Philippines during the war and the subsequent Philippine Insurrection of 1899. Smith entered the Army as a sergeant major, and left in 1899 as a first lieutenant.

The articles published in the *P-I* established Smith's reputation as an excellent journalist. Smith settled in Seattle when he returned from the Philippines and married Emma Fonner in 1899. He worked for a myriad of papers; the *P-I*, *Seattle Times*, *Seattle Star*, and *Seattle Union Record* all hired Smith at one point or another. He covered Seattle politics and also reported on every session of the state legislature in Olympia from 1901 to 1919. He also covered most gubernatorial campaigns for this period. In addition, Smith edited and published a horticultural catalog, *Joe's Seed Bulletin*, for more than 40 years beginning in the 1910s. Smith, however, failed in his 1917 attempt to start his own weekly paper, called *Joemma Jottings*, in tiny Longbranch, Washington.

Joe Smith was also a political activist. He worked in the movement for passing the initiative and referendum laws. He served as chairman of the Direct Legislation Committee in 1907 and then as Secretary-Treasurer of the Seattle Direct Legislation League for several years starting in 1908. Also in 1908, he was secretary of the LaFollette Presidential Committee. He supported a number of other Progressive causes, including strengthening the power of Seattle City Light. Smith was one of the founders of the Seattle Municipal League, a powerful civic reform group created in 1910. When Mayor Hiram Gill expanded Seattle's "vice district" Smith played a very active role in the Municipal League's successful effort to recall Gill in 1911. Gill's replacement, Mayor George Dilling, picked Smith as his personal secretary. Smith and Dilling, however, soon had a falling out. Smith quit and then ran, unsuccessfully, for City Council in 1911. Smith joined the Progressive Party when it split off from the Republicans in 1912. He helped run Theodore Roosevelt's campaign in Seattle.

There is a gap in the Smith Papers from 1920 until the mid 1930s. During this time, Smith continued to work as a reporter and as editor of *Joe's Seed Bulletin*. In addition, Smith had switched political parties, becoming a Democrat, at some point during this period. In 1936 Smith ran unsuccessfully for the state legislature. In 1940 he sought, but did not obtain, the Democratic nomination for governor. Smith went into semi-retirement in 1941. He wrote a few articles in the 1940s and 1950s, mostly opinion pieces and reminiscences. He also began an autobiography but never finished it. Joe Smith died in 1962.

Content Description

Smith's diaries are the single largest portion of the accession. There are 280 volumes in all; they cover 1889-97, 1911, and 1946. The diaries describe in detail agricultural practices and Populist politics in the Palouse. The diary for 1911 contains material on Mayor Gill's recall and Mayor Dilling's administration. The years 1897-1910, 1919-20, and 1941 are documented by notebooks rather than diaries. Some notebook entries are similar to Smith's diary entries--very descriptive and well thought out. However, most entries in the notebooks are brief and sometimes cryptic notes that Smith took on the progress of various bills in the state legislature and during interviews with state legislators. The notebooks also contain notes on Seattle politics and on interviews Smith conducted on non-political subjects.

The correspondence series contains additional material on Seattle and Washington politics. The letters cover the period from 1892 to 1957. Incoming and outgoing letters have been interfiled and arranged chronologically. This accession also contains a number of Smith's writings and publications. The writings are mostly newspaper articles, drafts of his autobiography, and reminiscences. His newspaper

articles are on both political and agricultural topics. The accession also has small subject series that document the activities of Seattle City Light, the public power campaign in Washington during the 1930s and 1940s, and Smith's campaigns for public office. It also contains Smith's financial records and several photographs.

All material relating to the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection is kept in a separate subgroup. These include some correspondence, Smith's diary from 1898, his reports, his published articles, muster rolls for Smith's company, and a transcript of a court martial.

Other Descriptive Information

The repository has copies of *Joe's Seed Bulletin* from the 1950s, as well as a few issues of *Joemma Jottings* from 1917. It also holds a copy of Smith's posthumously published memoir of his childhood in Endicott, Washington: *Joe Smith, Bunch Grass Pioneer* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1986).

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

The creator's literary rights have not been transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Smith Papers were purchased from Shorey's Book Store in 1962.

Processing Note

The collection was reprocessed in 1996.

Fifteen photographs have been transferred to the Joe Smith Photograph Collection in the division.

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Detailed Description of the Collection

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2/1-23	Correspondence	1909-1918
3/1-19	Correspondence	1918-1942

Container(s)	Description	Dates
4/1-3	Correspondence	1943-1957
4/4	Undated and Incomplete Letters	undated
Box/Folder		
4/5	Financial Records	undated
4/6	Legal Documents	undated
4/7	Court Papers	undated
Box:Oversize		
23/1	Certificates	1891-1898
Box/Folder		
4/8	Certificates	1898-1899
4/9	Resolutions	undated
4/10	Notes	undated
Diaries		
Box/Folder		
5/1-26	Diaries 46 items	1890-1891
6/1-24	Diaries 46 items	1891-1892
7/1-27	Diaries 61 items	1892-1896
8/1-31	Diaries 90 items	1896
9/1-17	Diaries 47 items	1896-1897

Container(s)	Description	Dates
9/18	Diaries	1911, 1946
Notebooks		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9/19-28	Notebooks 17 items	1892-1904
10/1-2	Notebooks 14 items	1906, 1910
10/3	Notebooks	1919
10/4	Notebooks	1919, 1920
10/5	Notebooks	1941
10/6	Notebooks 4 items	undated
10/7-8	Loose-leaf	1898-1906
10/9	Loose-leaf	1901
10/10-11	Loose-leaf	1901-1909
10/12-13	Loose-leaf	1906
10/14-15	Loose-leaf	1907-1909
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
10/16	Publications	undated
Speeches and Writings		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
11/1	[Untitled Speech]	June 4, 1896
11/2	"Military Essay"	1896

Container(s)	Description	Dates
11/3	Fragments	undated
11/4	"The Army Correspondent"	February 4, 1904
11/5	"The Glory of the Daffodil"	1928
11/6	"Reminiscences of a Newspaper Reporter"	June 15, 1936
11/7-23	"Joe's Dope" (Autobiography) Chapter 1-13	undated
11/24-27	"Bunch Grass Pioneer," Version A, Chapters 1-4	undated
12/1-2	"Bunch Grass Pioneer," Version B	undated
12/3	"The Life and Misbehavior of Claude Smith"	1960
12/4	Biographical Odds and Ends	undated
12/5-6	"Pullman, Fifty Years Ago"	undated
12/7	"Seattle, Fifty Years Ago," Version A	November 14, 1949
12/8-9	"Seattle, Fifty Years Ago," Version B	1949
12/10-13	"Joe's Radio Memos"	October 19, 1956-February 1957
12/14	"The Trail of the Serpent: A Little History of the Supreme Court"	undated
12/15	"The Ballad of Yukon Jake"	undated
12/16-17	"Statesmen I Have Met"	undated
12/18	Elberton	undated
12/19	Palouse Country	undated
12/20	Campaigning	undated
12/21-22	Economics	undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
12/23	Toast	1899
12/23	"The War" (Poem)	undated
12/24	Political	1895-1906
13/1-2	Political	1903-1910
13/3	Work for Young Republicans	undated
13/4-7	Political	1911-1912
13/8	37th District Representative/State Legislature	1936
13/9	Political	1937-1939
13/10	Speeches for Gubernatorial Campaign	1940
13/11	Political	1940
13/12	"The Measure of Wendel Wilke"	1940
13/13	City Light Issue	1940-1941
13/14	Mayoralty Campaign Finance Question	1941
13/15-19	Miscellany	undated
22	Duplicates	undated
Box/Folder		
13/20	Speeches and Writings of Others	undated
21	Notecards	undated
Subject Series		
Box/Folder		
14/1-7	Seattle City Light	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
14/8-9	Electric Power	1936-1942
14/10	Joe Smith Campaign	1910
14/11	Joe Smith Campaign for Representative 37th District State	undated
14/11	Legislature	undated
Box:Oversize		
23/2	Pigott Printing Co.	1917
Box/Folder		
14/12-13	Pigott Printing Co.	1917-1921
Ephemera		
Box/Folder		
16/1-2	Miscellaneous	undated
16/3	Campaign Miscellany	undated
16/4	Puget Sound Power and Light - Annual Reports	1934-1941
Box:Oversize		
23/3	<i>The Seattle Mail and Herald</i>	January 17, 1903
Box/Folder		
16/5-10	Political	1904-1908
17/1-16	Political	1910-1942, undated
Box:Oversize		
23/4-5	Political	1904-1917, 1940-1950

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
17/17	Reports - Washington.Emergency Relief Administration	1933
Publications		
Box/Folder		
17/18	<i>The Dilettante</i>	1900
17/19	<i>Direct Trader</i>	1917
17/20	<i>Joemma Jottings</i>	1917
17/21-22	<i>Joemma Bulletin</i>	1923-1926
17/23-24	<i>Joe's Bulb Bulletin</i>	1927-1929
17/23-24	<i>Joe's Seed Bulletin</i>	1940-1941
17/25	<i>Joe's Bulletin</i>	1954
18/1	<i>Seattle Composing Stick</i>	undated
18/2-5	Washington State Publications & Legislation	1933-1943
Box/Folder		
19-20	Clippings	1899-1962
21	Campaign Cards	undated

Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
24/1-3	General Correspondence	October 25-December 3, 1898

Container(s)	Description	Dates
24/4-7	Diary	undated
24/4-8	Notes-Philippine Insurrection	undated
24/9-10	Notebooks	undated
24/11-13, 25/1-2	Reports	1898-1899
Box:Oversize		
23/6	Transcripts-Charges Against Col. Fife, First Washington Volunteers	1898
Box/Folder		
25/4-6	Rosters	undated
25/7-9	Muster Rolls	undated
Box:Oversize		
23/6	Rosters	undated
23/6	Muster Rolls	undated
Box/Folder		
25/10	Lists	undated
Speeches and Writings		
Box/Folder		
25/11	"Old Buck" and "Buck Harlan" (Philippine Insurrection)	undated
25/12	"The Corporal of the Third Squad"	undated
25/13-18, 26/1-9	"The Story of the First Washington Volunteers"	undated
26/10	"Christmas at Manila a Year Ago"	1899

Container(s)	Description	Dates
26/11	"The Corporal of the Third Squad"	undated
26/11	"The Battle of February Fifth, A Personal Narrative"	undated
26/12	"Dauntless Washington Troops Fight To the Death (<i>Post Intelligencer</i>)"	1899
Box/Folder		
26/13	Speeches and Writings of Others	undated
26/14-15	Ephemera	undated
Memorabilia		
Box/Folder		
26/16	Purple Heart	undated
26/16	Banner	undated
26/17	Miscellaneous	undated

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Agriculture--Palouse River Valley (Idaho and Wash.)
 Journalists--Washington (State)
 Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)
 Political activists--Washington (State)
 Populism--Palouse River Valley (Idaho and Wash.)
 Progressivism (United States politics)
 Spanish-American War, 1898--Journalists
 War correspondents--Washington (State)--Seattle
 Wheat farmers--Palouse River Valley (Idaho and Wash.)

Personal Names :

Dilling, George W
 Gill, Hiram
 Smith, Joe, 1872-1962--Archives

Corporate Names :

Populist Party (Wash.)

Geographical Names :

Palouse (Wash.)--Politics and government
 Philippines--History--Revolution, 1896-1898--Journalists

Seattle (Wash.)--Politics and government
Washington (State)--Politics and government

Form or Genre Terms :

Diaries

Notebooks

Photographs

Titles within the Collection :

Joe's seed bulletin

1996 (Last modified: 4/13/2016)



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