



Sharlot Hall Museum Library and Archives
415 West Gurley Street
Prescott, AZ 86301
www.sharlot.org

Title: Lillian Wilhelm Smith Papers

Creator: Lillian Wilhelm Smith

Dates: 1898-1964

Quantity: 1 linear foot (2 boxes)

System of Arrangement:

- Series 1: Biographical & Family Information
- Series 2: Personal Journals
- Series 3: The Artist & Artwork
- Series 4: Photographs

Abstract:

Artist Lillian Wilhelm Smith (1882-1971) spent most of her life in Arizona, painting the people and places of the region. She first visited Arizona in 1913 with author Zane Grey (1872-1939), a cousin by marriage, to illustrate his western themed books. After a period of return visits, during which she became inspired by the people and landscapes of Arizona, she decided to move permanently to the state in 1916. This collection contains biographical information, family documents, correspondence, newspaper clippings, personal journals, photographs, chinaware designs, drawings and artwork covering Smith's life in Arizona. The collection also includes information regarding Smith's She-Kay-Ah chinaware designs, *Hopi Whirlwind* and *Navajo Motif*, as well as materials of her collaborations with author Zane Grey and poet Lou Ella Archer-Elliott.

Identification: SHM MS-25

Language and Scripts of the Materials: English

Biographical History

Lillian Wilhelm Smith (b. 1882–d. 1971) was born Lillian Wilhelm in New York City, to Henry and Lenore Louise Bergman Wilhelm. Lillian had six siblings, Richard, Arnold, Theodore, Henry, George and Claire. At the age of six, she first demonstrated an interest and skill in art, thus her education was focused in honing her natural artistic skills. She



received her art training at the Art Students League in New York, the National Academy and the Leonia School of Art in New Jersey. She first visited Arizona in 1913 with author Zane Grey (1872-1939), a cousin by marriage, to illustrate his western-themed books. After a period of return visits, during which she became inspired by the people and landscapes of Arizona, she decided to move permanently to Arizona in 1916. During the next sixty years there were few places in Arizona where Lillian did not visit or live. One example was a twenty acre citrus orchard in Scottsdale she purchased in 1922. She was briefly married to Westbrooke Robertson from 1916-1924, living separately for the final two years of their marriage.

In 1923, Lillian met Jesse (Jess) Raymond Smith (1886-1960), a ‘good-natured cowboy’ and U.S. Army veteran of World War I. They married shortly after her divorce from Robertson was finalized in 1924. Although the couple never had children, they had a wide variety of friends, including famous playwright Porter Emerson Browne (1879-1934) and artists Max Ernst, Jessie Evans Benton, Mary Farrell Colton, Jimmie Swinnerton and Maynard Dixon.

During her career, Lillian was acknowledged as one of the first white women to venture into the more inaccessible regions of Northern Arizona, and much of her work was inspired by Arizona’s natural geological formations and expansive desert vistas, as well as the Hopi and Navajo people and their ceremonies. Smith created the She-Kay-Ah China Designs with indigenous motifs the two major designs being –Navajo symbolic (See Series 3 of collection), Hopi Symbolic, Smith’s china are collectibles today. The China was introduced at the 1928 Arizona State Fair. She later operated guest ranches in Tuba City and Sedona, and operated an art shop in the Biltmore Resort Hotel in Phoenix for three years. Her paintings were exhibited in the Arizona Museum in Phoenix, Taos, California and elsewhere across North America.

After Jess’s death, Lillian isolated herself in southern Arizona where she remained until her passing in February 1971. By her side for her final years was close friend Kay Manley. Her eulogy highlighted her significance to the artistic community to which she was so closely tied:

“Her brush captured vividly in oil and water color the characteristics of this great land-mountains, canyons and desert. In our opinion she was a fine artist but many of the years through which she lived were difficult economically for the American people and this fact, coupled with the fact that Arizona was still within the first early years of its founding, never brought to the fine artist the recognition locally to which she was truly entitled.”



Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of family and personal information, sketches, photographs, personal journals, correspondence and newspaper clippings covering Smith's life in Arizona from 1916-1972. Additional items cover Smith's collaborations with author Zane Grey (1872-1939) and author Lou Ella Archer. Some books that include information or history regarding Lillian Wilhelm-Smith are:

- Arizona's Pioneering Women*, by Betsy Fahlman, Betsy & Lonnie Pierson Dunbier, 2012
Shadows on the Mesa, Fillmore, Gary, 2012
Canyon Magic, Fillmore, Gary, 2010
Davenport's Art Reference, Davenport, Ray, 2005
The Artists Bluebook, AskART.comInc – Dunbier, Lonnie Pierson, 2005
Artists in California; 1786- 1940, Hughes, Edan Milton, 2002
Arizona Triptych, authored by Ashworth, Donna, published by Small Mountain Press, Flagstaff, AZ, 1999
Canyon Shadows, authored by Archer, Lou Ella, published by Times-mirror Printing and Binding House, 1931
Sonnets to the Southwest, authored by Archer, Lou Ella, Published by L.E. Archer, Phoenix, AZ, 1930
Who Was Who in American Art, 1564-1975, 1999 Falk, Peter Hastings , Ed. Kovinick, Phil; Marian Yoshiki-Kovinick, 1998
An Encyclopedia of Women Artists of the American West, Trenton, Patricia (ED.), 1995
Independent Spirits, Sandra E'Emilio, Erika Doss (et.all).
Five Ladies of Prescott and Their Art, Stragnell, Robert, 1995
Art Across America, Gerds, William H., 1990
Artists of the American West, Dawdy, Doris, 1985
Dictionary of Women Artists, Petteys, Chris, 1985
Brushstrokes on the Plateau, 1984 Chase, Katherin L.
The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West, Samuels, Peggy and Harold, 1976
Index of Artists: International-Biographical, Mallett, Daniel Trowbridge, 1935

Additionally, Smith illustrated a number of books for Zane Grey which include the following novels: *The Border Legion*, *The Last Trail*, *Under the Tonto Rim*, *The Call of the Canyon*, *Wild Horse Mesa*, *The Rainbow Trail*.



Restrictions

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Related Archival Materials & Subjects

[Art Students League \(New York, N.Y.\)](#)
Biltmore Resort Hotel, Phoenix (Ariz.)
[Browne, Porter Emerson, 1879-1934](#)
Goodwin Street Bridge
[Grey, Zane, 1872-1939](#)
Municipal playground
National Academy
Porter Emerson Browne
Robertson, Westbrooke
[Sedona \(Ariz.\)](#)
Sedona Region (Ariz.)
She-Kay-Ah China
She-Kay-Ah Ranch, Sedona
Smith, Jesse Raymond
[Smith, Lillian Wilhelm, 1882-1972](#)
Westbrooke, Robertson
Wilhelm, Henry
Wilhelm, Lenore



Administrative Information

Accession Numbers

76.007

82.144

85.078

87.102

Custodial History

The materials found within this collection were personally donated by Catherine Manley on June 8, 1976, accession number 76.007; Johni Lou Duncan on November 18, 1982, accession number 82.144; Nina Carney on July 30, 1985 accession number 85.078; and Jim Phillips on October 7, 1987 accession number 87.102. The materials were processed and placed into a standardized DACS compliant archival arrangement and organization scheme. The materials were originally cataloged using a non-standardized organization scheme in Document Box and/or Photo Box 2, Document Box 33, Document Box 169, Document Box 150, Surname File, Photo Box 124, and Photo Box 43. A new DACS compliant number was assigned to the collection – SHM MS 25.

Accruals

There are no expected accruals at this time, but any items that are donated to the archives in the future regarding Lillian Wilhelm Smith that are not a part of another collection will be added to this collection.

Description Control

This collection was processed by Cellene Smith using *Describing Archives: a Content Standard (DACs)* in 2013.



Container List

Title: Lillian Wilhelm Smith Papers, SHM MS-25

Dates: 1898-1965

Scope and Content: This series consists of biographies about Lillian, personal documents of Jess Smith, correspondence, news clippings of Lillian and her artwork and personal notes and ephemera.

Series 1: Biographical and Family Information		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Date
Box 1.1	Biographical & Family Information	1918-1919, 1960, 1971-1973, Undated
Box 1.2	Correspondence	1898, 1926-27, 1929, 1931-32, 1937, 1940-41, 1948, 1951-53, 1958, 1962-1965 & Undated
Box 1.3	Notes & Ephemera	c. 1911, 1937. 1953 & undated
Box 1.4	Newspaper Articles	1921 - 1965

Title: Lillian Wilhelm Smith Papers, SHM MS-25

Dates: 1898-1906

Scope and Content: This series consists of Lillian Wilhelm Smith's personal journals which includes sketches, news clippings, personal notes and dried flowers.

Series 2: Personal Journals		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
Box 1.5	Personal Journal #1	Jan.-Aug. 1898
Box 1.6	Personal Journal #2	Aug.-Dec 1898, 1899-1901, 1903-1904
Box 1.7	Personal Journal #3	1906
Box 1.8	Smith, Jess – Personal Diary	Jan. 19 - Feb. 21, 1922



Title: Lillian Wilhelm Smith Papers, SHM MS-25

Dates: 1907-1982

Scope and Content: This series consists of Lillian’s artwork and project collaborations with poet Lou Ella Archer-Elliott and author Zane Grey.

Series 3: The Artist		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
Box 1.9	Sketch Book/ Watercolors	1914, 1916 & undated
Box 2.1	Hand Drawings	undated
Box 2.2	Project Collaboration – Poet Lou Ella Archer	1930s
Box 2.3	Project Collaboration – Author Zane Grey	1915, 1925, 1957, 1965 & 1982
Box 2.4	She-Kay-Ah Chinaware Information	1931
Box 2.5	Art Exhibit Catalogs & Artwork List	1907, 1928 & Undated

Title: Lillian Wilhelm Smith Papers, SHM MS-25

Dates: Spans Lifetime

Scope and Content: This series consists of photographs, negatives and postcards regarding Lillian Wilhelm and Jesse Smith, Wilhelm & Smith relatives, Lillian & Jesse’s friends, Lillian’s artwork and landscapes photos for her artwork.

Series 4: Photographs		
Box/Folder	File/Item Description	Dates
Box 2.6	Lillian & Jesse Smith Photos	
Box 2.7	Group Shots with Friends & Family	
Box 2.8	Art School Photos	
Box 2.9	She-Kay-Ah Ranch in Sedona & Verde Valley	
Box 2.10	Landscapes	
Box 2.11	Artwork & Landscapes for Artwork	
Box 2.12	Hopi Photographs - RESTRICTED	
Box 2.13	Negatives	