

# AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART ARCHIVES COLLECTION GUIDE

## Collection Summary

- Title:** Mary Alice White Pettis Collection of Erwin E. Smith Papers
- Date:** 1947–1983
- Creator(s):** Smith, Erwin Evans (1886–1947)
- Extent:** 2.5 linear feet
- Code:** PSP
- Repository:** Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives
- Abstract:** The Erwin E. Smith Papers contains correspondence, prints, sketches, and clippings relating to Smith's artistic and commercial career documenting ranch life and the cowboy.

## Information for Researchers

### Access Restrictions

The collection is open to qualified researchers.

### Use Restrictions

The Erwin E. Smith Papers are the physical property of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art. The Amon Carter Museum of American Art assumes no responsibility for infringement of literary property rights or copyrights or for liability to any person for defamation or invasion of privacy.

### Preferred Citation

Mary Alice White Pettis Collection of Erwin E. Smith Papers, [item identification], Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives.

### Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives

Erwin E. Smith Papers

Contact the museum archivist at [archivist@cartermuseum.org](mailto:archivist@cartermuseum.org) or 817.989.5077 for additional information.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Acquisition and Custody Information**

Bequest of Mary Alice White Pettis, 1986

### **Processed By**

Georgia A. Carey

## **Biographical Note**

Erwin Evans Smith (1886–1947) was a Bonham, Texas, native. His first range photographs were made on summer visits to his uncle's ranch in Foard County, Texas. During his recovery from a serious case of typhoid fever at the age of sixteen, Smith decided to become an artist. When he was eighteen, he went to Chicago to study with the noted sculptor Lorado Taft. Smith also had planned to study in Boston, but he postponed this in order to return to Texas and photograph full-time. Working on large ranches, Smith endeavored to dispel the popular misrepresentation of the working cowboy by providing factual images of the cowboy's rigorous life on the range. In 1908 Smith went to Boston to study with Bela Lyon Pratt. Smith used his collection of photographs as the basis of his drawings and sculptures. He remained in Boston for three years, but each summer he and his friend George Pattullo returned to Texas. Pattullo had written about Smith's western experiences, and as the two men traveled from ranch to ranch, Pattullo produced articles for the *Saturday Evening Post* and other publications. Smith's photographs illustrated these articles. After Smith returned to Bonham in 1911, he decided to begin his own ranching operation on the land in Fannin County that he had inherited from his father, but this venture was never successful. Smith submitted proposals for a book of his photographs to publishers, but negotiations never passed the planning stage. Projects such as a set of "Photographs of the Old West" produced in 1921 brought a good response but not enough cash. Smith and his mother moved into the home of his half-sister Mary Alice White Pettis in 1932. Both mother and son died in 1947.

During the 1930s Smith's photographs appeared on the cover of *The Cattleman*, published by the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, as well as illustrating articles in the magazine. In 1952 his photographs were reproduced in *Life on the Texas Range*. In 1976 Smith's grave in Honey Grove was marked by an Official Texas Historical Grave Marker.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Mary Alice White Pettis Collection of Erwin E. Smith Papers contains correspondence, brochures, magazines, clippings, and ephemera. All material is separated by form. The majority of the collection consists of correspondence requesting use of Smith's photographs and magazine articles containing reproductions of his work. The magazines are arranged alphabetically by title, then chronologically by date of issue. Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by the author's name, then chronologically. Undated correspondence follows dated correspondence.

*Correspondence:* This series contains correspondence requesting use of Smith's photographs for magazine and book projects.

*Published Materials:* This series contains examples of Smith's work as published in mass media publications.

*Ephemera:* This series contains material accumulated by Pettis documenting their family life and memorials to Smith.

A more detailed series description appears at the start of each series in this finding aid.

## **Series I. Correspondence**

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains correspondence to Mary Alice White Pettis requesting use of Smith's photographs. Pettis deposited Smith's negatives at the Library of Congress but retained intellectual control. The majority of correspondence is between the librarians and Pettis.

Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence, A

Box 1, Folder 2: Correspondence, B

Box 1, Folder 3: Correspondence, C

Box 1, Folder 4: Correspondence, D–F

Box 1, Folder 5: Correspondence, G

Box 1, Folder 6: Correspondence, H

Box 1, Folder 7: Correspondence, I–J

Box 1, Folder 8: Correspondence, K

Box 1, Folder 9: Correspondence, L

Box 1, Folder 10: Correspondence, M

Box 2, Folder 1: Correspondence, N

Box 2, Folder 2: Correspondence, O

Box 2, Folder 3: Correspondence, P

Box 2, Folder 4: Correspondence, Q–R

Box 2, Folder 5: Correspondence, Sa–Si

Box 2, Folder 6: Correspondence, Sm–St

Box 2, Folder 7: Correspondence, Ta–Te

Box 2, Folder 8: Correspondence, Th–Tr

Box 2, Folder 9: Correspondence, U–V

Box 2, Folder 10: Correspondence, Wa–Wile

Box 2, Folder 11: Correspondence, Wilk–Wo

Box 2, Folder 12: Correspondence, X–Z

## **Series II. Published Materials**

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains examples of Smith’s work as published in mass media publications.

Box 3, Folder 1: Clippings — Erwin E. Smith [1]

Box 3, Folder 2: Clippings — Erwin E. Smith [2]

Box 3, Item 1: *The American West*. November 1967 and January–February 1980

Box 3, Item 2: *The Cattleman*. June 1951

Box 3, Item 3: *The Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*. May 1952 [5 copies]

Box 3, Item 4: *Life*. March 1968

Box 3, Item 5: *National Republic*. June 1952

Box 3, Item 6: *Pioneer West*. April 1971

Box 4, Item 1: *Texas Historian*. September 1971

Box 4, Item 2: *Texas Humanist*. March 1979

Box 4, Item 3: *True West*. December 1955

Box 4, Item 4: *Vanity Fair*. November 1983

Box 4, Item 5: *Westerner*. July–August 1969

Box 4, Item 6: The National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Brochure, 1965

Box 4, Item 7: "Paintings from the C. R. Smith Collection", Old Library Building, the University of Texas at Austin, Catalogue, December 4, 1969–January 15, 1970

Box 4, Item 8: "Filmstrips," Catalogue, 1972–1973

Box 4, Item 9: "Imperial Film," Catalogue, 1973–1974

Box 4, Item 10: 1981, "A Calendar of Erath County History"

Box 4, Item 11: 1981, "A Calendar of Tarrant County History"

### **Series III. Ephemera**

**Scope and Content Note:** This series contains material accumulated by Pettis documenting their family history. Further items describe the collections of Smith materials at the Library of Congress and the Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library and J. Evetts Haley History Center, Midland, Texas.

Box 5, Folder 1: Erwin E. Smith and Mary Alice White Pettis Family Photographs

Box 5, Folder 2: Erwin E. Smith Photographs — Library of Congress Prints

Box 5, Folder 3: Erwin E. Smith Biography

Box 5, Folder 4: Erwin E. Smith — Texas Historical Grave Marker

Box 5, Folder 5: J. Evetts Haley — Introduction to Life on the Texas Range

Box 5, Folder 6: J. Evetts Haley — Brochures and Pamphlets

Box 5, Folder 7: *Agricultural Almanac* — 1955

Box 5, Folder 8: *Breaking the Wilderness* — Dust Jacket