Will Ella Tatom Johnson Smith and James Mapheus Smith Papers

Scope and Content Note

The Will Ella Tatom Johnson Smith and James Mapheus Smith Papers consist of approximately seven cubic feet of material. The bulk of the papers consist of subject files, writings by Will Ella and James Mapheus, and writings by their associates.

The Will Ella Tatom Johnson Smith Papers are comprised of five series and represent almost half of the total collection. The series for Will Ella Tatom Johnson Smith are:

1. Correspondence
2. Writings
3. Personal
4. Subject Files
5. Writings By Others

The Correspondence series consists of Will Ella’s outgoing correspondence dating from 1959 to 1979 and her incoming correspondence arranged alphabetically. A bulk of the outgoing correspondence is to James Summerville, who in 1990 donated the letters to Vanderbilt Special Collections with the provision they be added to the Will Ella Tatom Johnson Smith Papers.

The Writings series represents only four files but does contain an interesting account of her early life and of her poetry.

The Personal series comprises accumulations of genealogy on the Tatom family, newspaper clippings, legal documents, and memorabilia. The memorabilia portion of this series contains some nice antique cards and poetry programs.

The Subject Files series is the largest portion of Will Ella’s papers, it is broken down further into four sub-series: General Files; Authors/Acquaintances; Vanderbilt University; and Associates. These are primarily clipping files on subjects that Will Ella had an interest, they span a number of years but are mainly from the 1940’s to the 1970’s.

Writings by Others series is comprised of the manuscript Hyperakmos Woman by Eric Tatom, Will Ella’s brother and by a manuscript of poetry by Saville Clark.

The James Mapheus Smith Papers are comprised of four series and are located in the second half of the Will Ella Tatom Johnson Smith and James Mapheus Smith Papers. The four series are:

1. Correspondence
2. Personal
3. Writings
4. Newspaper Clippings

The first series of the James Mapheus Smith Papers consists of three files of correspondence; the outgoing correspondence is arranged alphabetically as is the incoming correspondence.

The Personal series contains legal, financial, and biographical information on J. Mapheus Smith and his life. This series also contains a number of resumes and job descriptions from the many jobs he had over his life.

The Writings series has been broken down further into six sub-series: Book Reviews; Manuscripts; Articles; Writings by Others; Class Assignments; and Lecture Notes. The manuscripts in this collection are Smith’s Eminent Men, Social Psychology, and a two volume work entitled World War II Administrative History: Bureau of Aeronautics Summary (this is physically located at the end of the collection) also included in this sub-series are his M.A. and Ph.D. theses. A broad range of off-prints and full journals containing Smith’s articles comprise the largest portion of this series. Writings by Others sub-series consists of articles and bibliographies by Smith’s peers. The Class Assignments and Lecture Notes sub-series are from Smith’s sociology classes and cover his teaching career from 1927 to 1950.

The Newspaper Clipping series was probably maintained by Smith’s wife, Will Ella though it appears in Smith’s papers. These clipping files are on John F. Kennedy and his family and have primarily been pulled out of magazine and newspapers. Of interest in this series is a “J.F.K.” coloring book. Another collecting emphasis of Will Ella was the early history of George Washington, this can be seen in the scrapbook containing clippings on the history and restoration of Washington’s Mount Vernon.