

## **MsSC 132**

### **George Smitley Papers**

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

George A. Smitley was born on July 8, 1872 in Fort Wayne, Indiana to John I. And Mary C. (Torbet) Smitley. Receiving about 4 years of formal education, Smitley became a traveling salesman for the Majestic Manufacturing Company at the age of 18 and worked on the road for them for 12 years. In 1905, Smitley came to Tacoma and worked for the C. E. Horton Furniture Company until 1914. In Tacoma, Smitley became involved in the local Elks Lodge, eventually assuming the position of secretary and manager. In addition to the Elks, Smitley was involved in the Masons, the Lions Club, the Tacoma Gun Club, and the Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine. Having held no previous political office, Smitley ran for mayor of Tacoma in 1934 and served one four-year term. Smitley died in 1956.

#### **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The George Smitley papers consist entirely of correspondence to Smitley, serving as Secretary of the Tacoma Elks at the time, dating from 1917 to 1919 and arranged alphabetically by last name of correspondent. These letters were sent by local Elk members involved in the war effort stationed at military training camps and schools in the U.S., training bases in England and France, and fighting in the trenches in France. The correspondence offers detailed glimpses of American attitudes and participation in the war including impressions of France and England, the involvement of the YMCA, Elks and Red Cross in troop relief and entertainment, diseases and quarantines at the front and in military training camps, anti-German rhetoric, use of planes for stunt-flying and combat, Air Corps training, and the daily reality of trench warfare.

**INCLUSIVE DATES:** 1917-1919

**RESTRICTIONS:** None

**VOLUME:** .5 linear ft.

**ACCESSION No.** 1993.24.2

#### **File Listing**

**BOX 1: Correspondence.**

1. Correspondence: A. (Influenza, Thanksgiving, French Women, mud in the trenches, Germans cursed, bachelorhood, Christmas, Elks Magazine to members in the war; troop reaction to the Armistice)
2. Correspondence: B. (Jews in San Francisco Lodge; train wreck on route to army base, Elks Club rivalry, entertainment for the troops; postal censorship, forecasting 3-5 more years of war, impact of submarines, whales for target practice; quarantine)
3. Correspondence: C. (Descriptions of conditions on the front, praise for the French; baseball at the front, more descriptions of the war; death of Oscar Tilleson; gambling in camp; mud in the trenches, "Sullen, arrogant looking crowd of Huns;" anti-IWW sentiment both at the trenches and on home front; describes trip to Europe, praise for France and French; stricken with diphtheria offers detailed description of hospital; influenza; problems with horses)
4. Correspondence: D, E, F, G. (Description of landscape and encampment system; tobacco for the troops, death from pneumonia; illiterate workers and troubles with the IWW at military camp in Washington; baseball teams and track meets on American ships; aeronautics; medical reports; good description of war; measles quarantine; Spanish Flu quarantine)
5. Correspondence: Fee, C.W. (Writing from China and Japan, describes impact of Bolshevik revolution in Russia and exodus of Russians-including army officers into China-very detailed)
6. Correspondence: H, I. (Desire for showers, humorous note on transport by train; description of army camp life-food, drills, etc.; thanksgiving, flu; tobacco, sea sickness; stunt flying)
7. Correspondence: Heide, Carl W. (Detailed descriptions of flying, plane wrecks, and homesickness, Jews from New York, French Flyer killed, scarlet fever, air warfare, poverty in NY, denial of enlistee of German descent, air stunts, details of air service, tri-wing bombers, quarantine, mosquitos, "Dough boys don't last long in France," "Will get a German for every Elk in lodge 174," cutting capers in Curtis training plane, young and brave French Flyer, aeronautics, submarine warfare, airplane motors, air raid drills in NY, changes in Air Corps, new uniforms, seasick, life in France, German prisoners, bi-plane flight described, stunt flying, Chinese cleaning motors)
8. Correspondence: J, K, L. (Sailing to France-attacked by submarines, sinking of Tuscania, contempt for the French, "in a German dugout", conditions at the front, with the army occupation, lice, dances, minutes of 63<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Elks Lodge, cigarette shipment appreciated)

9. Correspondence: M. (End of the war, shooting big guns at Fort Flagler, “where negroes dance with glee”, balloon company; fighting spirit; dues inquiries)
10. Correspondence: Manley, C.C. ( Christmas package from the Elks, quarantine for mumps, journey across U.S. to NY-suggestive tone, “The American soldier is a popular boy here”, hospitable French, KP duty, World Series, end of war- “The end of this war should see the end of Germany as far as any more wars are concerned. We cannot be bothered having to fight her again...”)
11. Correspondence: N, O, P, R. (Flashlights; quarantine at Camp Lewis; dues; railroads, France, photo postcard of 31<sup>st</sup> Engineer Corps; fine trip across “briny”, England is “the nuts”, only danger of dying is of “appendicitus from eating too many grapes”; troop reaction to end of war, poison gas attack and shot in the back at Meuse-Argonne; planning an Elks and “Y” entertainment; “We have drawn cards in a stiff little game of freeze out”, cutting spruce, asks for canceled dues-money pretty scarce for “sailors”)
12. Correspondence: S. (Local Elks club party for service men; safe arrival in Europe post card; ambition to get overseas; disappointed they hadn’t seen “Fritz”, Americans at home don’t realize “the dastardly, bestial atrocities, the devastation, the suffering even far from the actual battle line that Germany has caused”, supports compulsory military service in the future; discharge of soldiers; tent life at Fort Flagler; working in hospital on Italian front; praise for YMCA, despite being haughty-likes French, didn’t like England, cheap cigarettes, talked with a German POW-after which it was hard to “keep that desire to kill all Germans going full speed ahead”, “mail call is second only to mess call”)
13. Correspondence: T,U,V. (Long work hours; subsistence division, Washington D.C.- expensive-no housing; Tacoma’s virtues, new recruits’ swearing; German bombing, describes hospital, difficulty of sleep-shell shock; patrolling South American coast, convoys across North Atlantic; hopes to sink a submarine; public reception toward returning soldiers, evacuation hospital, saw President Wilson in D.C.; Camaguey-Cuba; French women, Salvation Army “Lassies”, Red Cross, yearns for apple pie when home)
14. Correspondence: W. (Want to get into “closer touch with Fritz-passage in letter appears to have been cut out-censored?”; first billeting in barns, YMCA provides entertainment, wants to whip “Kaiser Bill”; “I have the best gun in the Allied Army and expect to bag as many or more Germans as the next fellow”; importance of

lumberjacks' work, sawmills in France; At MIT-Military School for Aeronautics-talks about training, off booze and cigarettes; YMCA work-no salary, saw some action before war was over, destruction of Remiens, hoping to get to France, received tobacco, Elks business, contracted pneumonia on boat)