

K. C. Emerson Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2022

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2021086425>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms022012>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2022

Collection Summary

Title: K. C. Emerson Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1938-1994

ID No.: MSS86425

Creator: Emerson, K. C. (Kary Cadmus), 1918-1993

Extent: 800 items

Extent: 8 containers plus 2 oversize

Extent: 3.4 linear feet

Extent: 4 digital files (55.08MB)

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2021086425>

Summary: Army officer, entomologist, prisoner of war. Correspondence, notebooks, military papers, writings, photographs, memorabilia, and other papers as well as digital files of sound recordings pertaining to Emerson's life and career in the United States Army, both as an officer and as a civilian, with a particular emphasis on his experience as a prisoner of war in World War II. The papers also document his work as an entomologist focusing on lice.

Acquisition Information

The papers of K. C. Emerson were given to the Library of Congress by his son, William K. Emerson, in 2021 and 2022.

Processing History

The papers of K. C. Emerson were arranged and described by Laura J. Kells in 2022. Digital files were received as part of the K. C. Emerson Papers on an optical disk and were assigned a unique digital ID number. Use the digital ID number to request access copies of the files associated with the optical disk. A description of the standard processes taken on all born digital records can be found in the Processing History Note: Born Digital Collection Material at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.digital>.

Other Repositories

Emerson's collection of ectoparasites and his scientific library are located in the K. C. Emerson Entomology Museum at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of K. C. Emerson in these papers and in other collections in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of K. C. Emerson are open to research. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

Technical Requirements

Digital files consist of audio files in Wavform Audio (PCMWAVEFORMAT) format.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or digital ID number, K. C. Emerson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1918, Mar. 13	Born, Sasakwa, Okla.
1939	B.S., medical entomology, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University), Stillwater, Okla. Married Mary Rebecca Williams Commissioned, second lieutenant of infantry, United States Army
1940	M.S., entomology, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University), Stillwater, Okla. Platoon leader and company commander, Ninth Infantry Regiment, Second Infantry Division, Fort Sam Houston, Tex.
1941-1942	Commander, companies E and F, Twelfth Quartermaster Regiment (Philippine Scouts), Fort William McKinley, Manila, Philippines
1942-1945	Prisoner of war, survived Bataan Death March to Camp O'Donnell in Tarlac Province, the Philippines, in camp near Cabanatuan, the Philippines, and Tanagawa, Zentsuji, and Roku Roshi prisoner of war camps in Japan.
1946-1949	Instructor, Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University), Stillwater, Okla.
1949	Ph.D., entomology, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University), Stillwater, Okla.
1950-1951	Executive officer and commander, Forty-second Armored Infantry Battalion, Fort Hood, Tex.
1952-1954	Held several positions, Second Armored Division, Germany
1955-1958	Staff and faculty, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kans.
1958-1959	Held several positions, United Nations Command, Military Armistice Commission, Korea
1959	Assigned to Office of the Chief of Research and Development, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Began affiliation with the Department of Agriculture and Smithsonian Institution, serving as curator of the Anoplura and Mallophaga collections of the United States National Collection
1961-1975	Assistant for research, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (R & D)
1966	Retired as colonel, United States Army
1971	Appointed adjunct professor, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Okla.
1975-1978	Deputy for science and technology to assistant secretary of the army (R & D)
1993, June 23	Died, Sanibel, Fla.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Kary Cadmus Emerson (1918-1993) span the years 1938-1994. The collection touches on all periods of Emerson's career in the United States Army, both as an officer (1939-1966) and as a civilian (1966-1978), but the most extensive and substantive material focuses on his time as a prisoner of war (POW) during World War II from April 1942 to September 1945. A grouping of correspondence contains letters saved by Emerson, his wife, Mary Rebecca ("Rebecca"), and his parents, Diva E. and Earl E. They include the letters K. C. Emerson sent to his wife from Zentsuji prisoner of war camp in Shikoku, Japan, between 1943 and 1945, telegrams and letters she received from the War Department with information about his status and location and instructions on how to communicate with prisoners of war in Japan. Also included are letters she received from people who heard over shortwave radio a recorded message from K. C. Emerson that

he made in late 1943 but was broadcast on Japanese radio in January 1944. A digital recording of that radio message is also part of the collection, as is a recorded message that Emerson sent to Rebecca after his release in 1945. Emerson received letters from his wife, parents, and other family members in 1944 that were written in 1943. The date of receipt is noted in pencil on each one. Small photographs of Rebecca and their young son, William, who he had never met, once enclosed in letters, are filed in a grouping of photographs.

Other items from this period include seven notebooks in which Emerson recorded details, timelines, lists, and information about the Philippines, the Twelfth Quartermaster Regiment (Philippine Scouts), and his subsequent POW experience. In two of the numbered notebooks, books 3 and 6, Emerson recorded recipes for favorite foods discussed by the hungry, malnourished prisoners in Zentsuji POW camp. A 1965 compilation of some of these recipes, "The Quan Cookbook," is included in a group of writings. Emerson used the backs of letters he received as notepaper and inserted them in Book 6 of the notebooks. Photocopies of these letters are filed with the other correspondence. Emerson's unpublished memoir of his POW experience is chronicled in two versions. "My First Tour of Japan," written in 1970, begins in fall of 1942 when Emerson left POW Camp Number 3 near Cabanatuan, the Philippines, and was taken by ship to Japan, where he spent the rest of the war in POW camps. Photographs and maps accompany his text. "Guest of the Emperor," (1977), tells the full story of his POW experience, from his account of the Bataan Death March in April 1942 up to his release in September 1945.

Emerson's impressions of the Philippines and details of life there in 1941 are expressed in letters to his parents and an album of photographs. A military papers section and photographs document other periods in his military career. Some of the most substantive material pertains to meetings of the joint observer teams in which he participated when assigned to the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission in Korea, (1958-1959). Bound volumes of memorabilia largely feature items saved from his years as assistant for research in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (R & D), a position he held before he retired from the army and as a civilian.

Trained in medical entomology, Emerson remained active in the field of entomology as an avocation throughout his life, becoming a renowned expert on lice. A bibliography of his writings and copies of his published articles on Anoplura (sucking lice) and Mallophaga (chewing lice), dating from 1940 to 1990, document this aspect of his life.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Emerson, Diva E. (Diva Elizabeth), 1899-1967--Correspondence.

Emerson, Earle E. (Earle Evans), 1896-1984--Correspondence.

Emerson, K. C. (Kary Cadmus), 1918-1993.

Emerson, Rebecca, 1918-2008--Correspondence.

Organizations

Cabanatuan (Philippines : Concentration camp)

United Nations Command. Military Armistice Commission.

United States. Army.

United States. Army. Philippine Scouts.

United States. Army. Quartermaster Regiment, 12th.

United States. Assistant Secretary of the Army (R & D)

United States. War Department--Correspondence.

Zentsūji Camp (Japan : Concentration camp)

Subjects

Bataan Death March, Philippines, 1942.
Death marches--Philippines.
Entomology.
Lice--Research.
Prisoner-of-war camps--Japan--Shikoku Region.
Prisoner-of-war camps--Philippines--Cabanatuan.
Prisoners of war--United States.
World War, 1939-1945--Atrocities--Philippines.
World War, 1939-1945--Japan.
World War, 1939-1945--Philippines.
World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons, American.
World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons, Japanese.
World War, 1939-1945--United States.

Places

Korea (South)--History--1948-1960.
Korea--History--1945-
Philippines--Description and travel.
Philippines--History--1898-1946.

Form/Genre

Recipes.

Occupations

Army officers.
Entomologists.
Prisoners of war.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Emerson, Diva E., and Earl E. Emerson (parents), letters received
BOX 1	Emerson, K. C., 1940-1941, 1945
BOX 1	Emerson, Mary Rebecca, 1941-1942
BOX 1	Others, 1944-1945
BOX 1	Emerson, K. C., primarily letters received
BOX 1	Family
BOX 1	Emerson, Diva E., 1943-1945
BOX 1	Emerson, Earl E., 1942-1945, 1956
BOX 1	Emerson, Mary Rebecca, 1943-1944
BOX 1	Others, 1941-1943, 1958, 1972-1974
BOX 1	General, 1943-1961, 1967-1981, 1986-1990 (2 folders)
BOX 1	Emerson, Mary Rebecca (wife), letters received
BOX 1	Emerson, K. C., 1941-1945 (2 folders)
BOX 1	Others, 1942-1944 (4 folders)
BOX 2	War Department, 1942-1945
BOX 2	Memorabilia
BOX 2	Bound
BOX 2	Vol. 1, 1968-1970
BOX 2	Vol. 2, 1938-1968
BOX 2	Vol. 3, 1940, 1958-1973
BOX 3	Vol. 4, 1946-1975
BOX 3	Vol. 5, 1975
BOX 3	Vol. 6, 1961-1976
BOX 4	Vol. 7, 1958-1959, 1974-1978
BOX 4	Unbound, 1975-1982
BOX 4	Military papers
BOX 4	Army Science Board, 1979-1982 (5 folders)
BOX 4	Awards and commendations, 1958-1978
BOX 4	Miscellany, 1946, 1955, 1988
BOX 4	Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (R & D)
BOX 4	Directories, 1967-1978
BOX 5	Personnel file, 1965-1978 (3 folders)
BOX 5	Philippine Division, Fort William McKinley, the Philippines, 1940-1941, 1969
BOX 5	United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission, Korea, 1958-1959 (6 folders)

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 5	Miscellany, 1939-1994 (2 folders)
BOX OV 1	Miscellany, oversize certificate, 1970
BOX 6	Notebooks, 1940s (7 folders)
BOX 6	Photographs
BOX 6	Family, 1940s
BOX 6	Germany, Second Armored Division, United States Army, 1951-1953
BOX 6	Japan, prisoners of war, circa 1943-1945
BOX OV 1	Japan, prisoners of war from Oklahoma, 1945
BOX 6	Korea, United Nations Command, Military Armistice Commission, 1959
BOX 6	Miscellaneous, 1938-1969 (2 folders)
BOX 7	Miscellaneous, 1971-1975, undated (2 folders)
BOX 7	Philippines, 1940-1941
BOX OV 2	Philippines, photograph album, 1940-1941
DF	Recorded messages, 1944-1945 Digital ID: mss86425_227_001
BOX 7	Writings
BOX 7	Bibliography, circa 1988-1993
BOX 7	Cookbook, "The Quan Cookbook," 1965
BOX 7	Entomology articles, 1940-1975 (4 folders)
BOX 8	Entomology articles, 1976-1990 (3 folders)
BOX 8	Memoirs
BOX 8	"Guest of the Emperor," 1977
BOX 8	Miscellaneous, 1971, undated
BOX 8	"My First Tour of Japan," 1970