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## Wilder Smith, Dora Lee collection

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Tennessee Tech University Special Collections

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URL: <https://www.tntech.edu/library/research/archives>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Tennessee Tech University Special Collections
<b>Source:</b>	Lee, Jr. (John F.)
<b>Creator:</b>	Wilder Smith, Dora Lee, Dr., 1877-1963
<b>Title:</b>	Dora Lee Wilder Smith collection
<b>ID:</b>	RG.0000.0087
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1890-2008
<b>Date [bulk]:</b>	1890-1928
<b>Physical Description:</b>	1 Cubic Feet 1 Legal Document Box, 15.5" x 5" x 10.25"; 1 Small Box, 7.75" x 4.5" x 5.5" ), 2 Oversize Folder
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .

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## Biographical / Historical

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Dr. Dora Lee Wilder Smith (1877-1963) was the first woman to receive a medical degree from the University of Tennessee and the first woman to receive a license to practice medicine in the state of Tennessee. She was a strong advocate for prevention and treatment facilities for tuberculosis patients.

Born in North Carolina, she was the great-granddaughter of Revolutionary War veteran James Lee and the daughter of Civil War veteran, land over-seer and store manager, John Walker Lee and Mary Deck Lee.

She attended Ashville Female Seminary, a finishing school in Ashville, North Carolina and while there, she corresponded with her brother her brother Plato who was pursuing an education in medicine. These correspondences ignited her interest in medical practice. After graduating finishing school, she took nursing jobs to gain a sense of the medical profession, and then applied successfully to the University of Indianapolis' Medical School. She attended school during the day, and worked as a nurse at night. Halfway through her program, Union Civil War General J. T. Wilder became her patient, and a romance developed. They married in 1904 and moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. The couple built a home in Knoxville, which they named "Cherry Hill." She finished her senior year of medical school at the University of Tennessee and became the first woman to graduate from their Medical Department in 1906. In the same year, she became the first woman in the state of Tennessee to gain a license to practice medicine.

In 1909, she spoke before the Tennessee State Medical Association, reading her paper, "The State Sanitarium in the Prevention and Cure of Tuberculosis," which prompted their resolution to recommend the creation of such a sanitarium to the state legislature. In 1910, General and Dora Lee Wilder moved to Monterey, Tennessee, and built and managed the Imperial Hotel near the railroad. She became active in caring for the physical needs of women in particular, wrote health-related articles, and welcomed speaking engagements. By 1940, every local health department in Tennessee provided tuberculosis prevention and control, and in 1942, the first Tennessee state-owned tuberculosis hospital, Learline Reaves Memorial Sanatorium in Greeneville, began operations.

General Wilder passed away in 1917, and Dora Lee inherited the hotel, which thrived under her management. Dora Lee remarried in 1919 to a railroad developer, Percy B. Smith, who often stayed at the Imperial Hotel. She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, admitted in 1901, and remained active with the organization throughout her life.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection consists of materials associated with the life and career of Dr. Dora Lee Wilder Smith (1877-1963), the first woman to graduate from the University of Tennessee Medical Department, and first woman to receive a medical license from the State of Tennessee (1906). Materials in this collection consist of two boxes: one containing correspondence (including documentation of her application and acceptance to the Daughters of the American Revolution), associations, writings, legal papers, medical school records (some clearly adjusted for a woman), family histories, photographs, newspaper articles, and a second small box of various small personal effects. Two over-sized items located in a map-case drawer are blueprints of the Wilder's Knoxville, Tennessee home, "Cherry Hill", and an edition of the Chattanooga Daily Times (February 25, 1919). Some of the materials were Dora Lee Wilder's and/or her husbands' (General J. T. Wilder and Percy B. Smith's) original documents and belongings, and other related material was added by her descendants.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Women physicians
- Daughters of the American Revolution
- Tuberculosis
- Rural health
- Lee, Jr. (John F.)
- Wilder Smith, Dora Lee, Dr., 1877-1963

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## Collection Inventory

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Title/Description	Instances	
Associations - Ossoli Circle, Surgeon's Club, 1905-1906	box 1	folder 1
Autograph Book, 1892	box 1	folder 2
Blueprints to J. T. and Dora Wilder's Knoxville Home, undated	box 1	folder 3
Chattanooga Daily Times, 1919-05-25	box 1	folder 4
Contextual Information Provided by John and Sally Lee, undated	box 1	folder 5
Correspondence, 1898-1952	box 1	folder 6
Daughters of the American Revolution, 1901-1928	box 1	folder 7
Dora Lee Wilder Writings, undated	box 1	folder 8
Family Histories (4), undated	box 1	folder 9
Husband Smith, Percy B. Papers, 1874-1912	box 1	folder 10
Husband Wilder, J. T. Papers, undated	box 1	folder 11
Indiana Medical College Records, 1902-1906	box 1	folder 12
Legal Documents, 1912-1921	box 1	folder 13
Letters of Recommendation for Dora Lee (3), 1900-03-01-1902-09-19	box 1	folder 14
Medical-Related Papers, circa 1906	box 1	folder 15

Wilder Smith, Dora Lee collection

Monterey Depot Historical Society Dinner Theater, 2008-10-12-2008-10-15	box 1	folder 16
Newspaper Clippings (Some Copies), 1904-1984	box 1	folder 17
Other Family Members Papers, 1906-1982	box 1	folder 18
Phi Chi Fraternity Ninth National Convention Booklet, Indianapolis, 1905	box 1	folder 19
Photographs (5), undated	box 1	folder 20
Purchase Receipts and Certificates, 1916-12-19-1928-01-23	box 1	folder 21
Scrapbook and Ledger, 1890-1919	box 1	folder 22
Tennessee Medical College Records, 1905-1906	box 1	folder 23
World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago - Pamphlet, 1893	box 1	folder 24
Bank Book of Mrs. J. W. Lee, 1912	box 2	folder 1
Bone [and Silver?] Letter Opener, undated	box 2	folder 2
Christmas Gift Tag From DoraLee's Nephew, John F. Lee, To His Grandmother, 1919	box 2	folder 3
Confederate Flag, undated	box 2	folder 4
Felt Shoe Polishing Pad, undated	box 2	folder 5
Eyeglasses, undated	box 2	folder 6
Sunglasses, undated	box 2	folder 7
Two Eyeglass Cases with Eyeglasses in Each, undated	box 2	box 1