

Early Pioneer Life and Challenges on the Frontier

Homesteaders faced many challenges living on the frontier. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the daily life of North Dakota's homesteaders.

Archival Collections

10031 Sarah Boley Papers

Diaries document the weather, daily life, politics, and agricultural conditions in Morton County (N.D.).

10058 Lewis Ferandus Crawford Papers

Notebooks, essays, newspaper clippings, and correspondence concerning ranching, banking, Indians, and settlement in western North Dakota. Collection includes interviews with early settlers.

10183 Elizabeth Ellen Roberts Papers

Correspondence, literary productions, printed material, and miscellaneous. Correspondence dated from 1913 to 1961, to and from Elizabeth Roberts and her husband. These letters concern ranching issues, Christmas cards, personal matters, and research information procured from the Department of Agriculture and railroad companies. The collection's literary productions are made up of autobiographical writings and reminiscences, historical writings and informative papers, and research notes and drafts. These writings cover North Dakota and Dakota Territory historical topics and pioneer life. The printed material contains, dating from 1922 to 1960, brochures, Daughters of the American Revolution programs, pamphlets, and circulated poems and writings.

10418 Mary Pethic Gimblett Glaspell Papers [microfilm]

Diaries, 1889-1891 and 1898-1930, describing weather conditions and family activities.

Useful Search Guidance

Subjects

- Weather on the frontier
- Farming on a homestead
- Building a home on the frontier
- Women homesteaders

People

- Nelson E. Nelson, 1831-?
- Margaret Renville

Locations

- Dakota Territory

Journal Articles

Homesteading Episodes

Henry R. Martinson – *North Dakota History* Vol. 40 Issue 2

The Enchanted Years of the Prairies

Enid Bern – *North Dakota History* Vol. 40 Issue 4

They Had a Wonderful Time: The

Homesteading Letters of Anna and Ethel Erickson

Edited by Enid Bern – *North Dakota History* Vol. 45 Issue 4

11083 Alice Kennedy Dahners Papers

Alice Kennedy Dahners' (Mrs. Henry L. [H. L.] Dahners') contribution to the North Dakota Federation of Womens' Clubs Pioneer Mothers Biographies project, including handwritten, typed, and draft biographies, notes, news clippings and correspondence. Two hundred and sixty two pages in a scrapbook format and loose. Dahners lived in Mandan, ND, and many of the biographies are of pioneers in Morton County, ND.

11292 Emma Ghering Gibson

Diaries, daybooks, autograph books, friend books and a self-published book about pioneer women of Haddonfield, N.J. written by Emma Ghering Gibson of Larimore (N.D.).

11353 Lynn Bueling Papers

Consists of articles by Bueling that were published in the Mandan News and the Emmons County Record. The articles focus on North Dakota history and cover politics, frontier life, weather, literature, pioneers and settlers, newspapers, biographies, as well as local news, book reviews, and stories from Bueling's life.

20025 Gilbert Nordhagen Manuscript

Manuscript entitled "A History of the Early Settlers of North Dakota" which describes early churches, schools, farming, and settlement in Ransom County. Includes lists and biographical sketches of Ransom County settlers and two newspaper clippings containing articles penned by Nordhagen.

20035 Allen Totem Papers

Reminiscences concerning settlement in northeastern North Dakota, entitled "Pioneer Days in North Dakota."

20050 Emily Lindstrom Reminiscences

Reminiscences of settlement in Grand Forks County in the 1870s.

20097 Alton Giles Covell Diary

Transcript of Covell's diary describes migration and settlement in North Dakota.

20104 Fred Underwood Papers

Short stories concerning pioneer life, entitled "Dan," "Civilization," "Mother," "A Memory of '83" and an untitled sketch about women in pioneer days.

20239 Charles H. Hubbell Diary

Diary describes Hubbell's school, farming, and social activities, weather conditions, and trips to Tappen, Dawson, Steele, Jamestown, and Fargo.

20241 James Shoemaker Papers

Papers consist of copies and transcripts of letters from Shoemaker to his family in Pike County, Pennsylvania, describing local news, settlement, weather conditions, prairie fires, and Indian wars and bounties.

20306 Halvor Lars Sando Papers

Reminiscences entitled "Journeys on Foot from Grand Forks to St. Thomas, North Dakota." Manuscript describes establishment of a homestead near St. Thomas, North Dakota.

20317 Mary Dunlava Tellefson Papers

The manuscript "Pioneer Days in Cass County" Biography of "Clara" describing her work as a cook on bonanza farms, including the Amenia-Sharon Land Company, and her experiences homesteading in Cass County.

20354 Gustof Marcelius Papers

Copy of a letter from 12-year-old Marcelius to his mother describing his experiences in the Dakota Territory.

20357 Lars Johnson Papers

Correspondence of the Johnson family describing farming activities, local news, weather conditions, and family matters.

20449 Anna Rudser Serumgard Papers

Typescript entitled "Pioneer Homes in the Lake Region." Manuscript describes dug-outs, cabins, claim shacks, and various aspects of homesteading in the Devils Lake area.

20544 A. S. Pratt Papers

Photocopy of a letter by Pratt to Theodore Horton, Steuben County, New York, concerning severe winter weather and homesteading near Page, North Dakota.

20676 Willard E. Arnold Papers

Carbon copy typescript of reminiscences of homesteading, farming, personalities, dances, winter hazards, and encounters with Indians near Portland (N.D.), 1860s-1870s.

20693 Edna Dey Warner Papers

Typescript reminiscences of homesteading near Mandan, North Dakota, ca. 1904-1910.

20796 Jacob Huber Papers

The 105 page manuscript includes stories about residents living in central North Dakota.

21337 Gladys Pearce Papers

"Claimed by the Prairies" (manuscript) is a typed copy and covers the life of Winnie Nicholls from 1830 to 1914, dealing particularly with her life after 1873 as a Bismarck Pioneer. Among people mentioned are Alexander McKenzie, Dennis Hannifin, Calamity Jane, General Custer, Comanche, and the Marquis de Mores. Described are travel by covered wagon, Fort Seward (Jamestown), gambling halls, the removal of the capital to Bismarck, the 1898 fire, Negro settlements, statehood, Camp Hancock, early schools, social life of Bismarck, scenes in early Montana and many other subjects.

Books

Women of the Northern Plains: Gender and Settlement on the Homestead Frontier, 1870-1930

2005 - Barbara Handy-Marchello

Call Number: 305.436309784 H2369w 2005

Deep Grass Roots: The Adventures and Challenges of Two Women Homesteaders: A Novel

2018 - Marcia Neely

Tillie Melbakken and Bertha Harstad found the land desolate at first, but with excitement and optimism the friends became part of the close community, facing the joys and griefs, adventures and challenges that came with homesteading on the prairie.

Call Number: 813.6 N379d 2018

Homestead Memories: An Autobiographical Sketch

1950 - Stella G. Bierrum

Call Number: 920 B477

Dakota Dreams: Fanny Sabra Howe's Own Story, 1881-1884

2003 - written and illustrated by Janet Howe Townsley

Excerpts from a diary, with background information, tell a story of a young woman witness to her family's courageous homestead move from Wisconsin to the Dakota Territory.

Call Number: 920 H855t 2003

John Wesley and Alice Cowles Bliss Homestead in Dakota Territory, 1882-1930

2003 - compiled and annotated by Theodore Jay Bliss

From the diaries of Alice and other material written by her and her offspring

Call Number: 929.2 B649b 2003

900 Miles From Nowhere: Voices From the Homestead Frontier

2006 - Steven R. Kinsella

Call Number: 978 K561m 2006

A Small Bit of Bread and Butter: Letters From the Dakota Territory, 1832-1869

1996 - Mary Ann Clark Longley Riggs, edited by Maida Leonard Riggs

Call Number: 266.0092 R569s

Boy Life on the Prairie

1926 - Hamlin Garland; illustrations by Edward W. Deming

Call Number: 813.4 G233b 1926

Online Resources

[Archives—Biographies—Historical Data Project—Pioneer Biographies](#)

State Historical Society of North Dakota website

[SHSND Photobook](#)

State Historical Society of North Dakota's Online Search Portal for all digitized photographs

[Digital Horizons](#)

Online consortium of historic photographs from the collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota

[WorldCat](#)

State Historical Society of North Dakota's publication search portal

External Resources

[The Power of Observation: Homesteaders and Weather](#)

Article by the Homestead National Historical Park on the National Park Service website

[Women Homesteaders and Suffrage](#)

Homestead National Historic Park category of the National Parks Service website

State Archives

For more information related to the collections and resources available at the North Dakota State Archives, please email archives@nd.gov or call (701) 328-2668.



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