

Homesteading and Settlement in North Dakota

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act on May 20, 1862. Under this act, many people moved to North Dakota to homestead the land. Joseph Rolette, Jr. was the first to file a claim in northern Dakota Territory. Nelson E. Nelson was the first person to acquire a homestead patent in northern Dakota Territory. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the Homestead Act of 1862 and the challenges of settlement.

Archival Collections

10710 Dease Family Papers

The papers consist of legal, financial, and business documents of several family businesses.

10746 Lyman N. and Anne A. (Clark) Cary Papers

Land and business records in Morton County, papers associated with membership in social, fraternal, religious organizations and associations, correspondence, newspaper clippings, photographs, scrapbooks, and memorabilia.

11300 Lillian Jolliffe Papers

Consists of genealogical information about the following surnames: Dalahniuk, Demaniow (Demianiw), Dutchak (Dutchuk), Gawrylow, Haverluk, Hoverlock, Klym, Kordonowy, Logosz, Pawluk, Repetoski, Staskuk (Stashuk), Trout, Twardoski, Woznicki, and Zevik. Research dates from circa 1870-circa 2000. Genealogy was compiled circa 2000-2015.

11354 Ephemera Collection

Box 3, Folder 22

The ephemera collection contains a variety of materials which are arranged first by size, then by topic (in alphabetical order). The collection consists of primarily printed material such as posters, tickets, programs, brochures, and pamphlets.

20020 Mrs. W. M. Lindsay Papers

Reminiscences of migration to North Dakota and life on a homestead near Minto, North Dakota, in the 1880s, entitled "My Pioneer Years in North Dakota."

20021 Charles L. Lockett Papers

Reminiscences of life on a homestead in Rolette County, North Dakota, circa 1888.

Useful Search Guidance

Subjects

- Homestead Act of 1862
- Pioneers
- Settlers
- "Proving up"
- Sod housing
- Threshing
- Plowing
- US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

People

- Joseph Rolette, Jr., 1820-1871
- Nelson E. Nelson, 1831-?
- Margaret Renville

Locations

- Dakota Territory
- North Dakota

Journal Articles

Pioneering in North Dakota

Charles H. Hobart – *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* Vol. 8 Issue 2

Alice Nelson Page: Pioneer Career Woman

Walter E. Kaloupek – *North Dakota History* Vol. 13 Issue 1 & 2

Frontier Housing In North Dakota

John Hudson – *North Dakota History* Vol. 42 Issue 4

20049 Opal Wanek Wothe Reminiscences

Reminiscences of homesteading in southwestern North Dakota, entitled "Prairie Smoke Tayles."

20051 Frank A. Wardwell Reminiscences

Reminiscences entitled "The First Common School in What is Now The State of North Dakota," describe Wardwell's experiences homesteading and teaching in the "first" school in Glyndon (Minn.), and Pembina (D.T.).

20053 H. J. Marshall Papers Reminiscences

Reminiscences of homesteading and hunting in Barnes County in the 1880s and 1890s, entitled "Pioneer Days in North Dakota."

20064 Bess Cobb Papers

Letter from Cobb to Helen Munson, Viroqua (Wisc.), concerning homesteading in Leipzig (N.D.).

20068 Mae Roberts Jensen Collection

Diary contains entries concerning life on a homestead near Devils Lake, North Dakota. Includes photographs, newspaper clippings and letters.

20091 George Sanger Diary

Transcript of Sanger's diary describes settlement and homesteading in North Dakota, weather conditions, farming, and other activities.

20106 Christen Christensen Papers

Letter, photographs, and a family history describing homesteading near Bowbells (N.D.).

20261 James H. Wyckoff Reminiscences

Reminiscences of homesteading in Cass County, entitled "Territorial Days - In Minnesota and Dakota."

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.

20398 Adeline E. (Herrick) Hicks Papers

Papers consist of correspondence relating to homesteading, photographs, and biographical information. Correspondents include Ezra Taylor Herrick, Williamsport, Dakota Territory; Everett G. Herrick, Watertown, New York; Roy Yeater, Hazelton, North Dakota; Adeline Hicks, Amherst, Massachusetts; and William Lewis Yeater, Portland, Oregon.

20436 Lillie B. Smith Papers

Reminiscences of homesteading in Rainbow Valley, North Dakota entitled "A Glimpse of Pioneer Life."

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.

20655 Damia Peck Berry Papers

Letter contains reminiscences of homesteading near Yorktown, Dakota Territory in the 1880s.

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.

30066 Dakota Territory Centennial Commission. Homesteader Application Forms and Related Correspondence.

Series consists of homesteader application forms and related correspondence from the Dakota Territory Centennial Commission.

30529 Historical Society. Historical Data Project, Pioneer Biography Files

Series consists of more than 5,000 brief biographies of North Dakotans, and consist of forms and personal reminiscences of pioneers in North Dakota. In addition, they provide information on many ethnic cultures in North Dakota, customs, and the challenges that pioneers encountered.

30792 Dakota Territory Centennial Commission. Homesteader Index File.

Dakota Territory Centennial Commission. Homesteader Index File, ca. 1961-1962.

32011 Federal Records. US Department. the Interior. Bureau of Land Management. Homestead

Contains Homestead Entries from the US Department. the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Entries include: Felix O'Clair and Raymond McLaughlin.

32474 Historical Society. Museums, Share Your Family's Homesteading Stories Files.

Series consists of forms filled in by patrons regarding relative's homesteading stories in North Dakota or the Northern Great Plains. Forms were part of the 150 anniversary exhibit on the Homesteading Act.

40634 Kidder County. Land Office, Applications, Homestead Entry and Land Tract

From the US Dept of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.

Books

Homesteading on the Plains: Daily Life in the Land of Laura Ingalls Wilder

1997 - Mary Dodson Wade

Quotes from the writings of Laura Ingalls Wilder and paintings by one of her relatives accompany accounts of pioneer life in the Midwest during the second half of the 1800s

Call Number: 813/.52 B

A New Home! A New Land!: Settling in North Dakota

1979 – Evelyn Nack Olgeirson

Call Number: 813 O&2n 1979

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

2018 – Marcia Neely

It was 1900 when two young Norwegian women left their homes near Watson, Minnesota, made the five hundred-mile journey to a small settlement in western North Dakota, and settled into homestead life, turning their dreams into realities.

Call Number: 813.6 N379d 2018

Staking Her Claim: Women Homesteading the West

2008 – Marcia Meredith Hensley

Call Number: 920.720978 H5265s 2008

Homesteads

1962 – United States, Bureau of Land Management

Issued during the Sesquicentennial of the establishment of the Bureau of Land Management.

Call Number: 333.16 Un3

Free Government Land Adjacent to the Northern Pacific Railway: Homestead Laws, Location of U.S. Land Offices, Homestead Lands Still Open, 1916-17

1917—A.M. Cleland, L.J. Bricker

Call Number: 333.16 F853 1917

Homestead and Exemption Laws of the State of North Dakota

1923—North Dakota Department of State; edited by Maurice W. Duffy

Call Number: 333.16 N814& 1923

Online Resources

[Lincoln's Legacy: Homestead Act](#)

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

[About the Homestead Act](#)

National Park Service website

[The Homestead Act of 1862](#)

Page on the National Archives website that includes photos of the Homestead Act of 1862, a homestead application, proof of improvements, and a homestead certificate

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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