

Railroads and Railways

In 1862, Congress authorized construction of the transcontinental Northern Pacific Railroad. In the 1880s, the Great Northern Railway also built tracks in North Dakota. The Soo Line built tracks in 1891 and 1893. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the age of railway transportation in North Dakota.

Archival Collections

10046 Dana Monroe Wright Papers

Correspondence, subject files, biographies, research notes, and maps. Papers relate primarily to local and family history, archeological surveys, and the State Historical Society of North Dakota, diaries, correspondence, newspaper clippings, family histories, and memorabilia, and notes and an 1863 map of the military trail of General H.H. Sibley in Burleigh, Kidder and Stutsman County (N.D.).

10048 Erastus Appleman Williams Papers

Correspondence concerning political appointments and affairs, correspondence, blueprints, and documents pertaining to the acquisition of land at Bismarck (N.D.) for the Soo Railroad, rough drafts of Williams' political platform, correspondence of the North Dakota Irrigation Association, specifications for the Bismarck Auditorium, copies of bills introduced into the legislature, resolutions of various organizations, campaign literature, pamphlets, photographs, newspaper clippings, and records, of the Surveyor General's office. Correspondents include Asle Jorgenson Gronna, Louis Benjamin Hanna, Henry Clay Hansbrough, Porter J. McCumber, Alexander McKenzie, Thomas F. Marshall, and Burleigh Folsom Spalding. Arranged in seven records series: political papers (1892-1923), ND Irrigation Association papers (1892-1923), Surveyor-General papers (1890-1908), railroad papers (1902-1905), architectural material (1902-1906), personal papers (1903-1922), and scrapbooks (1892-1980)

10132 Bryant Family Papers, Folders

Box 1, Folders 4, 5, 6

Papers of George A. Bryant (1850-1923), businessman and treasurer of Foster School District No. 2, Logan County; his son O. Frank Bryant (1873-1940), attorney, businessman, secretary to Governor Shafer, and publisher of the Napoleon Homestead; and grandson Jay Bryant (1904-1985), Deputy Secretary of State. The collection primarily consists of O. F. Bryant's papers, and includes correspondence, printed material, invitations, ephemera, land records and legal papers relating to real estate business, the Homestead newspaper, F. O. Bryant's Ford Dealership and radio business, positions as Register of Deeds of Logan County and secretary to Governor Shafer.

Useful Search Guidance

Subjects

- Transcontinental railroad
- Northern Pacific Railroad
- Great Northern Railway
- Soo Line
- Jay Cooke and Company Bank

People

- Edwin Johnson, 1803-1872
- James Hill, 1838-1916

Locations

- Edwinton/Bismarck, North Dakota
- Northern Pacific Railway Bridge in Bismarck
- Fairview Lift Bridge and Cartwright Tunnel

Journal Articles

North Dakota's Railroad Depots:

Standardization on the Soo Line

Frank E. Vyzralek, H. Roger Grant, and Charles Bohi – *North Dakota History* Vol. 42 Issue 1

North Dakota's Railway War of 1905

John C. Hudson – *North Dakota History* Vol. 48 Issue 1

The Northern Pacific Railway Bridge at Bismarck

Edward C. Murphy – *North Dakota History* Vol. 62 Issue 2

10201 Midland Continental Railroad Company Records

Correspondence, valuation reports, financial records, maps, annual reports, photographs, and agent and general office files.

10219 Northern Dakota Railway Company Records

Minutes of the board of directors, annual reports, correspondence, financial records, employee records, contracts, stock subscriptions, freight receipts and railroad equipment catalogs.

10507 Chester C. Morrison Papers

Consists of notes, photographs, maps, publications, promotional materials, and the manuscript of Morrison's history of the Great Northern Railway Immigration and Agricultural Department. Great Northern Railway employee, Immigration and Agricultural Development Department, 1898-1976. The photographs are mainly in Montana, promoting homesteading and land development.

10553 Frank E. Vyzralek Collection

The collection includes the research files, personal papers, photographs and audiovisual materials of lifelong researcher and former North Dakota State Archivist Frank Edward Vyzralek. The research files include original work and information compiled about agriculture, arts and entertainment, business and industry, city and town life, education, ethnicity, Indians of North America, history, military, people, places, politics and government, religion and transportation.

10952 Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company Drawings

Station maps for the following North Dakota line segments: Abercrombie, Christine, Fargo, Edgeley, Ellendale, Fairmount, Griffin, Hickson, Linton; New Leipzig, Brampton, Saunders, Strasburg, Tyler, and Zeeland. Includes depot drawings for: Abercrombie, Ellendale, and Hague. Includes prints for doors, windows, platform track scale, chimney, diesel oil pump house, and tool and hand car house.

11053 Dakota Northwestern Railway Company Records

Certificate of incorporation of the Dakota Northwestern Railway Company, a leaflet about the project, two lists of subscribers and amounts pledged, correspondence about the project, legal documents and agreements, and two reports about the projects by Charles A. Palmer, Consulting Engineer, and W. C. Laughery.

11102 Railroad Depot Architectural Drawings

Includes plans for depots, platforms, telegraph offices, lunch buildings, and freight houses located in North Dakota, for the Northern Pacific, St. Paul Minneapolis & Manitoba, Great Northern, Burlington Northern, and St. Paul & Pacific railroads.

11116 North Dakota Humanities Council, Larry Remele Memorial Fellow Reports

Collection consists of audiocassettes, papers, programs, and reports to the people of North Dakota tabloids by Larry Remele Memorial Fellows of the North Dakota Humanities Council.

11123 Ken C. Brovald Papers

Papers consist of biographical information about Ken Brovald and his father Arthur Melvin Brovald, notes, photographs and captions for Brovald's book "Silent Towns on the Prairie," captions and photos for a book that never materialized on the 1930s depression in ND, railroad slides and photographs with descriptions, short stories by Brovald, news clippings and articles, copies of railway maps, photographs of towns in North Dakota, book by Brovald "Alaska's Wilderness Rails," packet of 8 railroad articles written and published in various railroad magazines (1974-1990), "Born Broke" unpublished manuscript by Brovald (manuscript on CD and DVD, contents and online printout, photos, index printout), miscellaneous correspondence, certificates of achievements, miscellaneous unpublished writings, and an audio cassette "Telegraph Heritage" recorded by Ken C. Brovald for his family on January 1, 1981.

11234 Northern Pacific Railroad Records

Fargo Division, which extended from Dilworth (Minn.) to Mandan (N.D.) and included the branch lines. These copies of maps show the mile posts from Dilworth to Mandan. The Fargo Division records also include circulars from the Division Office of the Superintendent (1942). The Bismarck Division records include freight receipts and a chromolithograph advertising the railroad routes available from Bismarck (D.T.).

11271 Jerry Masters and William (Bill) Bursack Papers

Drafts and research on railroads for the manuscript "The Northern Pacific before the Last Spike: Locating the Route." The work was conducted with William (Bill) Bursack and given to Frank Vyzralek for publication.

21003 Great Northern Railway Records

The letter relates to routine matters of ticketing, daily routine, and the weather conditions in Mohall ND. Letter written to A. N. Tolan, living in Lake Preston MN, from William Clifford, who is the manager of the Mohall depot.

21037 Journal of a Railroad Section Hand (New Leipzig, North Dakota) Records

Journal details the activities of the hand during the work day.

32230 Public Service Commission. Administration. Railroad Reports & Summaries of Accidents, Illness

Public Service Commission. Administration, Railroad Reports & Summaries of Accidents, Illness, Incidents and Injuries. Initial accession consists of .75 ft of reports & summaries from 1994-2002, files are arranged chronologically by year. Reports and summaries detail the various accidents, illness, incidents and injuries that occur in a given year, both the reports and summaries are filed together.

80122 Great Northern Railway Railroad Passes

Railroad passes.

Books

Location of Historical Materials Concerning the Railroads in the State of North Dakota : Facilities Using Railroad Equipment: For State Historical Society of North Dakota: Abstracted From "Guide to Railroad Historical Resources, United States and Canada"
1993 - Thomas T. Taber III
Call Number: 016.38509784 T113L 1993

The Northern Pacific Railroad: Its Route, Resources, Progress, and Business. The New Northwest and Its Great Thoroughfare
1871 – Northern Pacific Railroad Company
Call Number: 332.6712 N815 1871

Railroads and Clearcuts: Legacy of Congress's 1864 Northern Pacific Railroad Land Grant
1995 – Derrick Jensen and George Draffan, with John Osborn
Call Number: 333.11 J545r 1995

The History of the Northern Pacific Land Grant, 1900-1952
1967 – Ross Ralph Cotroneo
Call Number: 333.16 C826

Railroad Laws
1885 – Territory of Dakota
Call Number: 380.26 D135r 1885

The Soo Line
1979 – Patrick Dorin
Discusses the history, services, and equipment of the Soo Line Railroad, which is known throughout the Midwest for its dependability
Call Number: 385 D734s

Online Resources

[Mapping the Land & its People - Railroad Commissioner's Map](#)
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

[Great Northern Railway](#)
Article on the website for the James J. Hill House located in Minnesota

[Griggs County Courier](#)
Newspaper advertisement from April 17, 1885 promoting Northern Pacific Railroad land for sale

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.



North Dakota State Archives Subject Guides made possible through a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).