

# “The Great American Desert” and Early Explorers

Before and during the time the Corps of Discovery was chartered to explore Louisiana Territory, many early pioneers and fur traders explored the area and documented their explorations. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting early explorers of North Dakota and the American West.

## Archival Collections

### 10085 Orin Grant Libby Papers

Documentation of Libby's professional and personal activities as Secretary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Grand Historian of the North Dakota Masonic Grand Lodge, and Professor of History at the University of North Dakota. Records relating to the SHSND consist of correspondence, research materials, and notebooks. Correspondence includes subject files concerning administration of the agency, historical research, curatorial applications, and agency projects. Research materials consist of original and copies, including biographies, census and enumeration records, Civil War and World War I letters, diaries and journals, newspaper clippings, reports, documents, historical sketches, and notebooks. The research materials provide information on cities and counties, churches, fur trade, Indians, military expeditions and forts, and transportation.

### 10547 Kathie (Ryckman) Anderson Papers

Papers consist of a draft manuscript copy entitled "Dakota: The Literary Heritage of the Northern Prairie State" from which excerpts were published in North Dakota History, as well as research, notes and publications about North Dakota authors and musicians, and cassette tapes of interviews with North Dakota authors.

### 10691 Roy Johnson and Louis Pfaller Collection

Newspaper clippings, articles, photographs, maps, pamphlets, and correspondence documenting the research of two historians, Johnson and Pfaller, on Major James McLaughlin, forts, battles, railroads, steamboats, exploration, pioneers, Native Americans, weather, murders, schools, missionaries, etc.

### 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.

## Useful Search Guidance

### Subjects

- Explorers of North Dakota prior to 1800
- Explorers of North Dakota prior to statehood
- Army Corps of Engineers western exploration

### People

- Stephen Long, 1784-1864
- David Thompson, 1770-1857
- John Bradbury, 1768-1823
- John James Audubon, 1785-1851
- Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, 1782-1867

### Locations

- Northern Dakota Territory
- Louisiana Territory

## Journal Articles

*Charley Reynolds—Hunter and Scout*  
E. A. Brininstool – *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* Vol. 7 Issues 2 & 3

*Audubon's Journey up the Missouri River, 1843*

A. O. Stevens – *North Dakota Historical Quarterly* Vol. 10 Issue 2

*Audubon at His Best*  
James B. Connolly – *North Dakota History* Vol. 31 Issue 4

**11493 Doreen Chaky Research Collection**

Research for the book *Terrible Justice*, numerous freelance articles, and work with the Williston Oil Reporter, as well as article drafts and notes.

**31376 Historical Society. Education and Interpretation. Editor's Files.**

Series consists of correspondence, notes, and memoranda with authors, researchers, and staff concerning publication of the North Dakota Historical Quarterly, The Museum Review, North Dakota History, PlainsTalk, and other Society publications such as the Traveler's Companion and exhibit catalogs.

**31481 Historical Society. Administration, Historic Site Deeds**

Historical Society. Administration, Historic Site Deeds, 1904-1977. Consists of photocopies of deeds, abstracts, letters, and other legal documents concerning state ownership of historic site properties.

## Books

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*The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long: the Journals of 1817 and 1823 and Related Documents*  
1978 - Stephen H. Long; edited by Lucile M. Kane, June D. Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman  
Call Number: 917.7 L853

*Historic Landmarks: Being a History of Early Explorers and Fur-Traders, With a Narrative of Their Adventures in the Wilds of the Great Northwest Territory*  
1950 – Hon. A.L. Van Osdel  
Call Number: 917.7 V344

*Stephen Harriman Long, 1784-1864: Army Engineer, Explorer, Inventor*  
1966 – Richard G. Wood  
Call Number: 920 L853

*David Thompson, the Explorer*  
1924 – Charles Norris Cochrane  
Call Number: 920 T372c

*Explorer on the Northern Plains: Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren's Preliminary Report of Explorations in Nebraska and Dakota, in the Years 1855-'56-'57*  
1981 – Office of the Chief of Engineers  
Call Number: 917.8 Un3p 1981

*John James Audubon's Journal of 1826: the Voyage to the Birds of America*  
2011 – John James Audubon; edited and with an introduction by Daniel Patterson; Patricio J. Serrano, assistant editor; foreword by John R. Knott  
Call Number: 508.092 A916j 2011

*The Missouri: Timeless Wilderness: a Feature Presentation of the Journey of Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied and Karl Bodmer on the Upper Missouri in 1835; Their Observations and Depictions, and Modern-Day Threat to One of America's Last Remaining Wilderness Waterways*  
1970—Mildred Goosman, John G. Lepley, Mark H. Brown  
Call Number: 917.8 G644

## Online Resources

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**People Encountered—Other Exploration Attempts**  
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

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**[Stephen H. Long—Nebraska Studies](#)**  
Article about Stephen Long linked from the National Archives website

**[Exploration of the American West](#)**  
Article on the Library of Congress website that discusses early mapping of the American West, Spanish expansion into the West, and the Lewis and Clark expedition

## State Archives

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



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