

# The Geographical Center of North America

In the 1930s, Rugby constructed a monument to mark the geographical center of North America near the town. However, this location has been disputed multiple times, and many other North Dakota towns have claimed to be located at or closer to the geographical center. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the geographical center of North America.

## Archival Collections

### 10844 Pierce County Tribune Records

The historical photograph collection was maintained by Frank Hornstein, editor and publisher of the Pierce County Tribune (1940-1981) and includes photographs submitted to the Tribune and published in daily and retrospective editions.

### 11123 Ken C. Brovald Papers, Box 1, Folder 9, Item # 00235

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Rails," packet of 8 railroad articles written and published in various railroad magazines (1974-1990), "Born Broke" unpublished manuscript by Brovald (manuscript on CD and DVD, contents and online printout, photos, index printout), miscellaneous correspondence, certificates of achievements, miscellaneous unpublished writings, and an audio cassette "Telegraph Heritage" recorded by Ken C. Brovald for his family on January 1, 1981.

### 11137 Preservation North Dakota Records

#### Box 7, Folder 70

Records consist of by-laws, minutes, correspondence, grant applications and reports, financial records, and project records such as Picture North Dakota Churches and Hutmacher Farm of an organization dedicated to preserving and celebrating the architecture, historic places, and communities in the varied landscapes of the state.

### 11368 North Dakota Postcards - Town Scenes Collection

Computer generated prints of postcards and historical buildings and structures.

## Useful Search Guidance

### Subjects

- Geographical Center of North America
- U.S. Geological Survey No. 817

### People

- William A. Patterson
- Joseph M. Buechler
- Wendelin M. Bickler
- Bill Bender
- Peter Rogerson

### Locations

- Balta, North Dakota
- Rugby, North Dakota
- Orrin, North Dakota
- Robinson, North Dakota
- Center, North Dakota
- Pierce County
- Oliver County
- Kidder County

## Journal Articles

North Dakota Statistical Information

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**11538 Bruner-Hoeffel-Bohrer Architectural Records (and successor firms)**

Architectural drawings and records of the Bruner, Hoffel, Bohrer firm, and its successors Davison Larson, EAPC and JLG.

**20440 Joseph M. Buechler Papers**

Papers consist of letters, drawings, photographs and exhibits promoting the designation of Orrin, North Dakota, as the official geographical center of North America.

**32256 Highway Department. Tourism Promotion Bureau. Photographs and Negatives**

Consists of photographic negatives, prints, and transparencies used by the Tourism Promotion Bureau of the North Dakota Highway Department in maps, brochures, and other promotional and tourism related publications. Images include scenic views, buildings, aerial photographs, people, historic sites, recreation, plants and animals from around North Dakota.

**32398 Historical Society. Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Picture North Dakota Photographs**

The Picture North Dakota project was developed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the State Historical Society of North Dakota by organizing 100 centennial ambassadors from local and tribal historical societies and museums statewide to shoot 100 rolls of film of people, places, things, and events in the state. Each ambassador was sent one roll of color film with 36 exposures to be shot the weekend of June 23-25, 1995 by either themselves or someone else. Photographers were encouraged to document everyday life in their community, and were encouraged to be creative in their subjects.

**00552 North Dakota Historic Sites and Schools**

One black and white postcard of Hutmacher Historical site in Manning (ND), two black and white postcards of the Monument for Geographical Center of North Dakota in Rugby (ND), three colour postcards of North Dakota School for the Blind in Grand Forks (ND).

## Books

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*Geographic Center Historical Society, Prairie Village Museum (Newsletter)*

1991, 2003 - Rugby, N.D.: Geographic Center Historical Society

Call Number: 978.4591 G345

*A Century of Area History: Pierce County and Rugby, North Dakota, 1886-1986*

1986

Call Number: 978.4591 C333 Pierce 1986

*Geographic Center Historical Society, Prairie Village Museum [newsletter]*

1991-2003

Call Number: 978.4591 G34

*Diamond Jubilee, 75 years of Orrin, North Dakota, 1912-1987*

1987—compiled by Grace Gross, typed by Pamela Schmitt

Call Number: 978.4591 Or7d Pierce

*Pierce County in 2011: 125 Years of History*

2011—Rugby, N.D.: 125th Book Committee

Call Number: 978.4591 P615 Pierce 2011

*Community fact survey: Rugby, N. Dak., geographical center of North America*

1972

Call Number: 978.4591 R841c Pierce 1972

*Fifty Years in Pierce County*

1943—O.T. Tofsrud

Call Number: 978.4591 T571f Pierce

*Oliver County Plat Book & Directory*

2018—Great Plains Directory Service

Call Number: Oliver County 2018

*Balta: The Garden City of the Prairies, North Dakota*

1987

Call Number: 978.4591 B197 Pierce 1987

*1911-1986, Robinson, North Dakota: Diamond Jubilee*

1986—History Committee of the Robinson Diamond Jubilee

Call Number: 978.457 R569 Kidder 1986

## Online Resources

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[Pierce County is Official Center of North America](#)

Pierce County Tribune article from August 11, 1932

[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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[City of Rugby](#)

Rugby, North Dakota website

[The Debate Over the Geographical Center of North America](#)

CBS News story from May 30, 2021, produced by Dustin Stephens and edited by David Bhagat

## 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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