

Leaders in Oil Production: North Dakota's Bakken Oil Boom

In 1951, the first major discovery of petroleum occurred in North Dakota in a wheat field near Tioga, Williams County. The state has since experienced several ebbs and flows of oil booms, in the 1970s and 1980s, and another one began again in the Bakken in 2002. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the history of oil drilling and production in North Dakota.

Archival Collections

10113 Charles and Viola Liessman Family Papers

Box 7, Folder 1

Correspondence, organizational records, subject files, notes, reports, photographs, ephemera, millinery store and other business records, moving image and audio recordings, and printed materials.

10204 Alexander C. Burr Papers

Box 2, Folder 7; Box 7, Folder 3; Box 9, Folder 25

Correspondence, printed material, and subject files relating to professional activities. Dean of faculty and vice-president of Jamestown (N.D.) College, organizer and first president of the North Dakota Society of Professional Engineers, research director of the North Dakota Research Foundation, and an elder in the Presbyterian Church, Jamestown (N.D.).

10274 North Dakota Farmers Union Records

News releases, speeches, committee reports, printed material, biographies of union officers, records relating to the educational and cooperative Union of America - North Dakota division subject files, scrapbooks, local minutes and financial records, newspaper clippings, educational material, film, videocassettes, photographs, publications, and audio recordings.

10440 Williston (N.D.) Chamber of Commerce Records

Minutes, correspondence, subject files, committee files, budgets, financial statements, annual reports, audit reports, by-laws, photographs, memoranda, programs, printed material, and memorabilia. Records relate primarily to administration of the Chamber, promotional activities, community celebrations, tourism, area businesses, public relations, reclamation, oil and gas industry, economic and industrial development, and Garrison Dam.

Useful Search Guidance

Subjects

- The Bakken
- The Williston Basin
- The Three Forks
- Hydraulic fracturing (fracking)
- Amerada Petroleum Corporation
- Clarence Iverson No. 1
- Oil boom
- Petroleum

People

- Albert Jacobson
- Arthur C. Townley, 1880-1959

Locations

- The Bakken Formation
- Tioga, Williams County, North Dakota

Journal Articles

North Dakota's Oil Dedication

Russell Reid – *North Dakota History* Vol. 20 Issue 4

S. W. Melzer—Woodworth

Larry J. Sprunk – *North Dakota History* Vol. 43 Issue 2

Gilbert and Pearl Wick—Robinson

Larry J. Sprunk – *North Dakota History* Vol. 44 Issue 4

10475 Minot (N.D.) Chamber of Commerce Records

Box 3, Folders 9, 25

Consists of minutes, correspondence, subject files, photographs, publications, and ephemera.

10534 Thomas W. and Frances V. Leach Papers

Personal and business records, including correspondence, contracts, surveys, maps, minutes, and related materials involving North Dakota counties as well as several other states and Canadian provinces where Leach had business interests. Other records include the personal and business records of Thomas and Frances, including partnership records, information on leasing and oil exploration, North American Royalties, Inc., the Leach ranch, North Dakota Wood Preserving Company, and other business ventures documenting the oil industry, business history and the Leach family. The collection documents the beginning of the Leach business ventures, especially in the oil business as well as personal and community involvements of Thomas W. and Frances V. Leach. The collection also contains many early maps of geological and oil drilling locations and interests in North Dakota and other states

10809 Wayne Gudmundson Collection

Consists of work for exhibits or publications: "Iron Spirits," "The Faces of the Oil Patch," and "Heimahagar- Homeplaces" (a collaborative exhibit with Gudmundur Ingolfsson), as well as research on and records of Sigurbjorn Gudmundsson, Kristjan Niels Julius Jonsson (K.N. or Kristjan Niels Julius), the legal case of Gudmundson et. al. vs. Thingvalla Church and information about Mountain (N.D.).

10858 Nels E. Becklund Papers

Consisting of the correspondence, financial records, personal, and business papers of the land and rented property managed by Becklund. Almont Oil Company; Banner Oil Company; Farmer's State Bank; Hartford Insurance Company; Saint Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company; Mobile Oil Corporation; Provident Life Insurance Company Stockholders Realization Corporation; Western Dakota Land & Loan Company; Almont, North Dakota; Morton County, North Dakota.

10939 Anton P. Ness Papers

Consists of business records, correspondence, testimonials, photographs, ephemera, publications, financial material, and legal documents relating to lands that Ness owned, his practice of spiritual healing, and personal life.

10958 William E. "Bill" Shemorry Papers

The collection consists of office files (research, newspaper and magazine clippings, article drafts, and published articles), slides, photographs, negatives, and glass plate negatives related to Shemorry's career as a newspaper publisher, photographer, reporter, historian, researcher and author in Williston, N.D.

11020 North Dakota Petroleum Council Records

Records consists of correspondence, historical materials, newsletters, news clippings, scrapbooks, and publications.

11035 Clarence Norman Brunsdale Papers

Papers that document the history of Clarence Norman Brunsdale and his family, including childhood, education, personal, professional and political papers. Papers include correspondence, report cards, family histories, speeches, scrapbooks, a resolution, certificate, award, flyer, news clippings, broadside, programs, printed material, photographs, negatives, and slides.

11049 Hess Corporation Newspaper Clippings

Consists of 80 volumes and two folders of newspaper clippings from regional papers documenting the discovery and production of oil in North Dakota. The bulk of the volumes date from 1951-1959. The final two volumes were removed from the booklet and placed in folders. In 1969, the Hess Corporation merged with the Amerada Petroleum Corporation.

11450 Tom Bell Collection

Volumes of newspaper clippings, news headlines, and articles documenting the COVID-19 Coronavirus virus of 2020 and the Bakken oil boom in western North Dakota in 2015.

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.

11519 Danchertsen Family Papers

Consists of recollections of Charles Danchertsen about his work experiences for the Amerada gas and oil company in Tioga, North Dakota, starting in 1958. The collection also includes a notebook created by Charles' father, who was in charge of Amerada's oil production. The notebook contains notes on every conversation he had between November 3, 1952 and August 26, 1953.

31041 Bank of North Dakota. Administration. Oil Boom Scrapbooks.

Scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings concerning oil development in North Dakota.

80002 Amerada Petroleum Corporation Check

Check documenting the purchase of the first commercially produced oil and gas in North Dakota. Check was issued to the Bank of North Dakota.

Books

The Williston Report: The Impact of Oil on the Williston Area of North Dakota
1958 - Robert B. Campbell (and others)
Call Number: 330.9784 C154

The Bakken: An Archaeology of An Industrial Landscape
2017 – William R. Caraher and Bret A. Weber
Call Number: 331.76223382 C258b 2017

Oil and Gas Conservation and Property Laws: Submitted to the Legislative Research Committee
1960 – Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Call Number: 333.339 N814o 1960

The Williston Basin: A New Look
1967 – sponsored by North Dakota Economic Development Commission; North Dakota Oil and Gas Association; North Dakota Petroleum Council
Call Number: 333.823 W679

The Bakken Goes Boom: Oil and the Changing Geographies of Western North Dakota
2016 – edited by William Caraher and Kyle Conway
In 2008, the Bakken went boom. Thanks to advances in hydraulic fracturing, oil production in western North Dakota exploded. As the price of oil went up, so did the oil rigs. People came from all over the country (and the world) in search of work, and cities and towns struggled to keep up.
Call Number: 333.8232 C258b 2016

North Dakota Oil: A Growing Industry in a Growing State
1960 – N.D. Petroleum Council and N.D. Oil and Gas Association
Call Number: 333.8232 N814n 1960

The Competitive Position of North Dakota Crude Oil in the Minnesota Market
1969— Robert Wales
Call Number: 333.8232 W148

Online Resources

Bakken Oral History Project (MSS 11249)
Shane Molander – State Historical Society of North Dakota Blog

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

[Advertisement for the DesLacs Western Oil Co.](#)
The Ward County Independent from July 19, 1917

[Mineral Resources: Oil and Gas Division](#)
Page on the North Dakota website documenting the drilling and production of oil and gas

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).