

# Steamboats

In the 1830s, steamboats replaced keelboats on the Missouri River, transporting cargo and people. In 1858, steamboats were first used on the Red River to aid in the fur trade. This pathfinder will lead researchers to several resources available at the North Dakota State Archives highlighting the use of steamboats in North Dakota and their lasting effect on the state.

## Archival Collections

### 10105 Frank Bennett Fiske Papers, Folders #5.001,5.002

Fiske family correspondence, minutes of the Catholic Order of Foresters (Fort Yates, ND), Fiske's research files, manuscripts, articles, diaries and journals, studio registers, cash books, guest register, programs, notes, notebooks, broadsides, audio recordings and a play script by Angela Fiske.

### 10221 Harold E. Babcock Papers

Notes on Babcock's M.A. thesis about the historical geography of the Devils Lake (Ramsey County, N.D.) region, and an article on steamboating on the Missouri River.

### 10542 Edward E. Heerman Papers, Folders #5.002-5.014

Papers consist of minutes, correspondence, subject files, diaries, legal documents, steamboat ledgers, financial documents, scrapbooks of reminiscences and histories, printed material and photographs. The collection includes the papers of Edward E. Heerman, his daughter, Minnie (Heerman) Naugle, and Minnie's daughter Halicia (Naugle) Whitehouse. Material belonging to Minnie's brother Elbert E. Heerman, son Heerman Naugle, and husband E. E. Naugle are also in the collection, but only to the extent that they were collected and saved by E. E., Minnie, and/or Halicia.

### 00270 Frances Densmore

Consists of photographs taken by Densmore on Fort Berthold Reservation during her study of Mandan and Hidatsa music and language.

### 10691 Roy Johnson and Louis Pfaller Collection, Folder #14.020

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.

## Useful Search Guidance

### Subjects

- Steamboat navigation on the Red River
- Steamboat navigation on the Missouri River

### People

- Grant Prince Marsh, 1834-1916
- William Lewis Heckmann, 1845-1907
- Anson Northup, -1861
- John M. Belk, 1847-1929

### Locations

- Missouri River
- Red River

## Journal Articles

### *Missouri River Steamboating*

William E. Lass – *North Dakota History* Vol. 56 Issue 3

*Steamboating on the Red River of the North*  
Captain Fred A. Bill—*North Dakota Historical Quarterly* Vol. 2 Issue 2

### *Captain John M. Belk*

*North Dakota History* Vol. 14 Issue 1

**10958 William E. "Bill" Shemorry Papers, Folders #3.029, 197.004**

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.

**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.

**20159 Silver Lake No. 4 (Steamboat) Records**

Records trips on the Missouri River from Sioux City, Iowa, to Fort Buford, and intermediate points.

**21064 John M. Belk Papers**

Typed interview, list of steamboats piloted, and various notes about the life of Captain John M. Belk. The interview and material was compiled by his son, John B. Belk in 1926.

**30195 Governor. Public Service Inquiry Commission. Records**

Consists of correspondence and reports concerning the investigation of certain railroad, telegraph and telephone, car equipment, and steamboat companies.

## Books

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*C.J. Atkins' Logs of the Missouri River Steamboat Trips, 1863-1868*

1910 - North Dakota State Historical Society

Call Number: 386.3 C1

*Steamboat Navigation on the Upper Missouri River and Its Influence on Bismarck*

1959 – Thomas Junior Myhra

Call Number: 386.3 M994

*History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River: Life and Adventures of Joseph La Barge*

1903 – Hiram Martin Chittenden

Call Number: 917.78 C449

*Steamboat Treasures: the Inadvertent Autobiography of a Steamboatman*

1997 – edited by Dorothy Heckmann Shrader; introduction by John Hartford

Traces the writings and career of Steamboat Bill Heckmann

Call Number: 920 H449s 1997

*Steamboat Kid: Memories of a Missouri River childhood*

2000 – Dorothy Heckmann Shrader; introduction by John Hartford

Call Number: 920 S562s 2000

*Steamboats West: the 1859 American Fur Company Missouri River Expedition*

2010 – Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell

Call Number: 978.02 L3342s 2010

## Online Resources

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### [The Wreck of the Abner O'Neal](#)

Timothy Reed – 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

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### [Scurvy in the Frontier Army—Grant Marsh](#)

Page on the Historical Society of North Dakota website that discusses Grant Marsh's time as a steamboat captain on the Missouri River

### [High Water Mark of Steamboating Was During 1861, Says Captain Grant Marsh](#)

Article from the Bismarck Daily Tribune from March 11, 1914

## 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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