



4-1995

## Lux et Lex: Volume 3, Number 1

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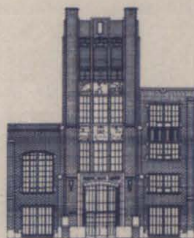
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# Lux et Lex

*"By the light of Knowledge we read the laws of life"*

Volume 3 Number 1

Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota

April 1995

## OUR WRITTEN HERITAGE

The Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, in its mission to identify, preserve, and interpret the written heritage of North Dakota for future generations, has recently made available several manuscript collections for scholarly research. The collections span more than the last hundred years and uniquely document the political, economic and social history of the state, the Red River Valley and the city of Grand Forks.

The political papers of the late **Senator Quentin Burdick** document his two years in the U.S. House of Representatives as North Dakota's first Democrat elected to Congress in 1958 and his thirty-two years from 1960 to 1992 in the U.S. Senate. Burdick staunchly defended North Dakota's agricultural community and family farmer, and was a lifelong champion of the state's Native American communities. He wielded considerable political clout in his latter years as Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies. Burdick's papers total 966 linear feet and contain correspondence, subject files, legislative materials, and photographs.

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsored the first **Flickertail Girls State** in 1947 at Jamestown College. Held on the University of North Dakota campus since 1950, the program allows participants to experience real-life politics in North Dakota at the city, county, and state level. Records trace the evolution of the program from 1956 to 1989.

Business records of several companies reveal the economic climate of the Red River Valley from 1881 to 1990. The **A.L. Hanson Papers** outline Hanson's banking career which began in Iowa in 1878 and continued in Hillsboro, Dakota Territory. From 1881 to 1893, Hanson organized and became an officer of the Hillsboro Bank, Buxton Bank and the Bank of Wapeton. The majority of his papers reflect loan and mortgage activities of these three banks, as well as his real estate and tax title business.

The nation's tenth largest wholesaler, the **Nash Finch Company**, began as a small family-owned confectionery and tobacco store in Devils Lake in 1885. Business thrived with the addition of two stores and expanded into retail fruit. After fire destroyed the original store in 1887, the Nash brothers relocated to Grand Forks where they developed a wholesale line. By 1891, Nash Brothers Company was entirely wholesale and included fruits and other grocery lines. Nash Finch Company remained in Grand Forks until 1919 when it moved to Minneapolis, a rapidly growing regional wholesale distribution center.

Nash Finch Company records contain 48 linear feet of financial records dating from 1911 to 1979, although the majority date from 1919 to 1960. The records detail the financial activities of the Nash Brothers Company, Nash Coffee Company, Nash Finch Company, the Nash Shareholders Company, and the Nash Foundation. Three indexes offer detailed access



Nash Brothers Wholesaler, 112-114 North Third Street, Grand Forks 1890's.

and organize the records by date, creating agency, and document type.

The **Implement Dealers Mutual Fire Insurance Company** was organized in 1903 by the Retail Implement Dealers Association of North Dakota and Northwestern Minnesota. The company experienced several affiliations and name changes, and is presently American West Insurance Company. Although it has operated in thirty-four states at one time or another, the highest number of policies have been written in North Dakota. Certificates of Authority, annual reports, and yearbooks outline the history of the company from 1903 to 1990, while correspondence, minutes of meetings of both policy holders and Board of Directors, and financial reports document the company's early years through 1948.

The depression years began in North Dakota in the 1920's and continued into the Great Depression. The **McCanna Farming Company** was established in 1881 near present-day McCanna, ND, and operated continuously through the 1960's. Nine linear feet of farm records contain a wealth of correspondence and financial records, which tell the story of the farm's survival during the Depression and recovery during and after WWII. The collection's bank records for 1922 to 1930, however, reveal the opposite outcome for small bank operations in northeastern North Dakota. The majority of these banks closed their doors.

A similar scenario was played out for two Grand Forks businesses. The **Northern Packing Company** opened for operation in Grand Forks on December 9, 1919, and processed a variety of meats and meat products. Annual reports, correspondence, and financial records document the company's high business expectations, but disclose that area farmers found it more convenient to take their business to local butchers. In 1935, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation foreclosed on its unpaid mortgage and the plant closed. A small Grand Forks business, the **Dacotah Custom Shirt Shop**, experienced a similar fate. In operation from 1919 to 1934 at

the hands of several proprietors, shop records disclose a tenacious effort to succeed, but not enough business to meet expenses.

Records from the **Grand Forks County Register of Deed's Office** offer ninety-nine journals that record and document several different types of property transactions between county residents and businesses. The Registry Indexes of Chattel Mortgages date from 1875 to 1966, Reception Books from 1895 to 1967, Register of Deeds Cash Book, 1885 to 1895, and the Index of Continuing Crop Liens, 1929 to 1949. In addition to these, Bond Record journals record the bonds and affidavits for county officials from 1884 to 1923.

Several interesting collections offer glimpses into the social and cultural life of the state. Marius Gjelsnes immigrated from Norway to Reynolds, Dakota Territory in 1881, as did Caroline Olsen in 1886. **Marius and Caroline Gjelsnes** exchanged letters during their courtship from 1886 to 1888, prior to their marriage in Hillsboro, August 21, 1888, and again the summer of 1892 when Caroline returned to Norway with their youngest child to attend her parent's 25th wedding anniversary celebration. Seventy-six original and translated letters describe life in North Dakota during the transition period from frontier to statehood and reveal the Americanization process as experienced by Norwegian immigrants.

**Henrietta "Pat" Christopher** was dedicated to the preservation of Pembina County and Red River Valley history and conveyed her interest through many articles and several pageants, including "Red River Ripples: A Pageant of Pembina, 1818-1889." She established the Pioneer Daughters Club of Pembina County in 1940, became the charter Director of the Red River Valley Historical Society, and was active in numerous capacities with the North Dakota State Historical Society and the Pembina State Museum. Pat Christopher's writings comprise the majority of her papers and complement the **Pioneer Daughters Club of Pembina County** records which are rich in the history of Dakota Territory and northeastern North Dakota.

Thirty-six diaries penned by **Helen Normand Murphy** from 1937 to 1973 detail daily life on a Niagara area farm until 1958. She writes about household chores, the weather, special events, and World War II, as her son was in the service. The diaries continue to relate her life as a widow and express her feelings and involvement with the church. In a similar vein, a memoir and thirty-three years of letters from 1925 to 1958 written by **Burt Finney**, a pharmacist in Bismarck, to his only daughter describe Casselton in the late 1890's and relate Finney's observations about life in Bismarck from 1901 until just before his death in 1959.

As North Dakota's First Lady from 1984 to 1992, **Jane Sinner** initiated several social and cultural projects. Sinner's papers describe her concerns regarding mental health, television violence, and teenage pregnancy. In addition, they document Sinner's promotion of North Dakota arts and the beautification of state lands through her wildflower program, "North Dakota Goes Wild!"

Organized in 1966, the **North Dakota China Painters Guild** promotes the fine art of china painting in all its aspects. Minutes, news clippings, and annual china show programs describe Guild activities which encourage the talents of individual members.

**Paolo Conte** was born in Palermo, Italy. He taught piano and composition at Wesley College from 1914 to 1923 when he became Dean of Fine Arts at Oklahoma Baptist University until 1936. He continued his career at the University of Wichita and as the minister of music for the First Baptist Church in Wichita, semi-retiring in 1952. The Conte Papers contain biographical material and a nearly complete collection of his compositions, orchestral music, symphonic poems, piano and orchestra concertos, light opera and numerous selections for voice, organ, piano and violin.



Paolo Conte in his studio in Wesley College, UND, circa 1920.

Several valuable additions have been made to the papers of **Thomas McGrath**, nationally renowned North Dakota poet. They include "Thomas McGrath," a memoir by fellow poet, Jack Beeching, and letters exchanged with McGrath; correspondence with former wife, Alice McGrath, and with Ann Lewin Diamant, godmother to McGrath's son, Tomasio; drafts of the manuscript for Frederick Stem's book, The Revolutionary Poet in the United States: The Poetry of Thomas McGrath; in addition to, several audio and video tapes of poetry readings and interviews with McGrath.

UND Law School graduate, **Judge Edward J. Devitt**, led a long and exceptionally distinguished career as Chief U.S. District Judge for Minnesota. His papers include 58 linear feet of legal documents from civil and criminal cases which record social, economic, and environmental issues of the 1970's and 1980's, as well as biographical materials and publications. A number of criminal cases are cross-referenced to Appeals Court records in the papers of **Judge Myron H. Bright**, Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, allowing a researcher to follow the entire case from jury trial through subsequent appeal.

The Department of Special Collections recently has acquired several microfilmed collections of interest to researchers.

**Bureau of Customs.** Record Group 36 reproduces copies of original passenger lists or abstracts of passenger lists of vessels arriving at 63 ports on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts and at two ports on the Great Lakes, 1820-1873.

**Farmer's Wife Magazine.** Published in St. Paul, Minnesota, this women's farm journal documents agriculture, farm life and the activities of rural women from 1906 to 1939.

**North Dakota Post Office.** Records of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971, and Reports of Site Locations, 1837-1950, detail the establishment of North Dakota post offices.

**Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade.** Seventy-four indexed ledgers and account books, 1802-1871, reveal the business life of the Western Department of the American Fur Trade Company. The papers are particularly rich in economic information from the Jacksonian era through the pre-Civil War years.

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