

Dakota Resources:

The Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection at Northern State College

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The Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection in the Beulah Williams Library at Northern State College in Aberdeen is an archive that has been assembled over a period of forty-six years. Harriet Montgomery, a journalist, community leader, and long-time observer of water resource development in South Dakota and the surrounding region, began collecting the records in the 1940s. They were formally assembled for public use in 1985 with grant support from Harriet Montgomery, Northern State College, the South Dakota Committee on the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The collection details the story of water resource development in the upper Midwest from the 1940s to the present and provides researchers with an opportunity to study its political, economic, and social impact on the region. This archive, unique in South Dakota, might be used by anyone, from a professional writing a thesis on why the Oahe Irrigation Project was terminated to the interested amateur curious about how the James River could have been navigated by steamboats in earlier times. Here, the first step in any inquiry—getting the facts together—has been accomplished for the researcher.

The sixty cubic feet of records in the Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection include the kinds of material one

would find at a major research center or news agency: tapes, photographs, and films; memos, correspondence, reports and files; clippings and news releases; fact sheets, pamphlets, booklets, books, and maps. The originators of these materials include private organizations and government agencies, both domestic and foreign. No subject is too large (the WEB pipeline project is said to be the largest rural water system in the United States) or too small (the "Irrigators" topic consists of a single file folder). The Oahe Irrigation Project and proceedings of the Oahe Conservancy Subdistrict Board receive extensive coverage, as do the Garrison project, James River projects, and many other forms of water resource development. Parts of the collection concern water in relation to some other subject such as coal mining, oceans, aquifers, and flyways for waterfowl.

Some might object to the inclusion of published items in this collection, contending that they are not truly archival because they *are* published materials. Indeed, some portions of the Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection are made up entirely of news clippings. It is precisely because conflict makes news that much of recorded history is a succession of battle dates. The history of water resource development, an often controversial issue, is no exception. Most of the clippings in this collection come from the *Aberdeen American News*, *Bismarck Tribune*, *Fargo Forum*, *Huron Daily Plainsman*, and *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*. However, a wide variety of sources is represented, ranging from the *New York Times* to the *Sacramento Bee*, reducing the possibility of political bias. These and other published materials are purposely included in this collection because they may not have been widely distributed and thus are not available from other sources, just as is the case with the collection's "more archival" items like minutes and reports of various boards and agencies, hearing proceedings, contracts, and treaties.

All materials in the Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection are arranged by topic and listed in a 101-page user's guide. In an attempt to give the researcher as much information as possible while keeping the finding aid short, many abbreviations have been used and some punctuation marks omitted. Where possible, material is dated. File folder headings as designated by Harriet Montgomery or the depositor have been followed. Entries are not cross-indexed or subject- or name-indexed as in a library. Therefore, in no single location will a researcher find all the material on, for example, former governor Richard Kneip. There is a "Governors" file, in which Kneip has a folder contain-

ing clippings on water policies set during his term, but if one desired information on Kneip and the Oahe Moratorium in 1977 he would have to look under "Oahe Project Moratorium, '77." Materials are also divided into Series I (specific topic areas) and Series II (background materials divided into geographical categories). As in the instance of the Turkey-Clay Creek project, there is no specific Turkey-Clay Creek Watershed District file folder in Series I, but Series II contains a watershed plan and environmental impact statement for the project, and there is a Turkey-Clay Creek Flood Control Project listed under "Special Districts." There may also be small amounts of material in other file folders under "Watershed Districts" or elsewhere. The researcher should study both listings to be certain of covering his subject. Amounts, such as the number of file folders, leaves, or volumes, and measurements, such as the cubic and linear feet occupied by items or forms, are not recorded in the finding aid for this collection but are available upon request. The items vary from a small number of clippings in a single file folder to an environmental impact statement with backup materials (a two-inch-thick book).

Because the researcher is not allowed to rummage through the records in search of "something interesting," he will need to consult the user's guide to decide what material he wants to look at and to find all that might be pertinent to his subject. Researchers may write, call, or visit the Beulah Williams Library to view the collection finding aid. The finding aid will also be available in book form at South Dakota libraries and through the libraries' statewide on-line catalogue sometime in the near future. Materials in the Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection may be viewed at Northern State College, where the archivist in charge will gather together the requested material for use under supervision. While no materials may be checked out, copies may be obtained for a fee. For more information about the Harriet Montgomery Water Resources Collection, contact Archivist, Beulah Williams Library, Northern State College, Aberdeen, SD 57401.

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