

Dakota Farmer Collection

Collection Summary

Identifier:	MA 38
Title:	Dakota Farmer Collection
Dates:	1906-1946
Extent:	4.79 linear feet (2 document cases, 2 oversize boxes)
Creator:	Dakota Farmer (Aberdeen, S. D.)
Language:	English

Repository: South Dakota State University Archives & Special Collections, University Station, Box 2115, 1300 North Campus Drive, Brookings, South Dakota, 57007

Access Note: Open. Materials must be used in-house and do not circulate.

Preferred Citation: Title or description of item, date, MA 38, box number, folder number, Dakota Farmer Collection, South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Brookings, South Dakota.

Abstract

The Dakota Farmer Collection documents the history, production, and promotion of The Dakota Farmer, an agricultural periodical established in 1881 in Alexandria, Dakota Territory, by James Baynes. The publication relocated to Huron within its first year under Augustine Davis and later came under the leadership of William Bushnell, who became sole proprietor in 1885. Under Bushnell's direction, the magazine expanded its influence and relocated to Aberdeen in 1893, where it advocated for agricultural development, improved livestock and crop production, and the growth of farm organizations throughout the northern Great Plains. Over time, The Dakota Farmer continued to serve as a source of agricultural information and commentary for farmers in the Dakotas, later becoming part of Webb Publishing in 1979 and eventually Farm Progress Companies.

The collection consists primarily of printing plates, specialty publications, survey reports, correspondence, and photographs documenting the magazine's production, marketing and editorial development. A large portion of the materials includes printing plates used in publication design, such as mastheads, ornamental frames, and original artwork reflecting the magazine's visual identity. Additional materials include advertising and promotional publications, surveys of farmers, merchants, and bankers assessing readership and market reach, and correspondence related to the redesign of the magazine's cover, including evaluations of competing agricultural publications and proposed design samples. Together, these records document the magazine's role in disseminating agricultural information while also promoting regional agricultural commerce and readership engagement.

Biography

The Dakota Farmer was established in 1881, eight years before North and South Dakota achieved statehood. It was first published in Alexandria, in what is now Hanson County, South Dakota, by founder James Baynes. Within its first year, Baynes sold the publication to Augustine Davis, who relocated operations to Huron, South Dakota. In 1883, Davis sold a half-interest to William Bushnell, who became sole proprietor by 1885.

Under Bushnell's leadership as editor and manager, The Dakota Farmer gained early prominence. The publication relocated to Aberdeen in 1893 and became a vocal supporter of agricultural development in the region. It advocated for improved livestock, crop quality, and the advancement of local farm organizations. Bushnell's influence extended beyond publishing—he was active in public affairs and later served as state statistician for South Dakota.

Over the following century, The Dakota Farmer continued to evolve with its readership, providing trusted agricultural news and guidance through changing economic and environmental conditions. In 1979, the magazine was acquired by Webb Publishing, which viewed it as a natural complement to its flagship title, The Farmer.

Today, The Dakota Farmer is part of Farm Progress Companies, a leading publisher of agricultural media. Farm Progress oversees 18 state-specific farm magazines and operates eight major farm shows across the country, including the nationally recognized Farm Progress Show.

Scope and Content

The Dakota Farmer Collection is composed primarily of printing plates, specialty publications, survey reports, correspondence, and photographs documenting the development, promotion, and influence of The Dakota Farmer, a prominent agricultural periodical in the northern Great Plains. The bulk of the collection consists of printing plates used in publication production, including column and cover mastheads, ornamental frames, and original artwork. These visual elements reflect the magazine's branding and editorial identity during the early to mid-20th century. A detailed inventory of the plates is provided in the container list.

The publications within the collection were primarily produced for advertising and marketing purposes, aimed at demonstrating the magazine's value to potential advertisers. The reports consist of surveys conducted among farmers, merchants, and bankers in North and South Dakota, assessing the magazine's market reach, readership habits, and its role in shaping regional agricultural discourse.

A notable file documents the process of contracting a redesigned cover for The Dakota Farmer. This material includes correspondence between magazine staff and the contractor, critical evaluations of contemporary agricultural publications, and three proposed sample covers. The file offers a unique view into the publication's design decisions, aesthetic considerations, and promotional strategies.

These materials illustrate The Dakota Farmer's function not only as a journal of agricultural information but also as a tool for regional promotion and commercial engagement in the Dakotas.

Access Points

Subjects

- Agriculture--Periodicals

Names

- Dakota Farmer (Aberdeen, S. D.)

Places

- South Dakota

Genre

- Photographs
-

Conditions Governing Access

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Container List

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
1	1	Back to the Dakota Farmer	1916
1	2	Correspondence	1926
1	3	Dakota Merchant and Banker Survey	1930
1	4	The Dakotas as a market for Maytag's (washers)	1926
1	5	Editorial comment, voluntary contributions	1934-1936
1	6	Farm Home Development in the Dakota Farmer Empire	undated
1	7	Feeding the Dakotas	undated
1	8	Interesting Facts about the Dakota Farmer	undated
1	9	James Baynes, founder information	1924
1	10	Preliminary report and recommendations on farm journals survey among farmers, merchants, and bankers in ND & SD	1930
1	11	Promotion of SD by Greater SD Association	1937
1	12	Publication information	1946
1	13	Publications that influence farmers of the Dakotas	1931, 1935
1	14	Publications that influence farmers of the Dakotas	1934-1935
2	1	Plates—Article mastheads	undated
2	2	Plates—Artwork	undated
2	3	Plates—Crest	undated
2	4	Plates—Frames	undated

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
2	5	Plates—Masthead	undated
2	6	Plates—ND and SD map	undated
2	7	Plates—Northwest farmstead (Santa)	undated
3	1	Clippings and tear-sheets, 1906-1918	1906-1918
3	2	Contracting for a new cover	1946
3	3	The Development of the Dakotas Parallels the efforts of the Dakota Farmer	1928
3	4	First Assistant to ... Cooks	1940-1941
3	5	Why local dealers benefit by handling advertised goods	undated
4	Items	Stray Shots by W.C. Allen, Traps and Trapping, Along Dakota Prairie Trails Wayside Observations by A. H. Pankow, undated	undated
4	Photos	MA 38-0001—Bound Dakota Farmers standing upright	undated
4	Photos	MA 38-0002—2 images mounted on tagboard—“And this was Once a Bare Prairie” specimens of Ponderosa Pine, Blue and White spruce, and Scene at the home place of A. Norby, Madison, S.D.	undated
4	Photos	MA 38-0003—Trees on a hill from vol. 34 no. 14, July 15, 1914 issue of the Dakota Farmer	1914
4	Photos	MA 38-0004—team of 2 white work horses pulling flatbed of corn with man standing on flatbed holding the reins—used as cover for Nov. 15, 1921 Dakota Farmer	1921
4	Photos	MA 38-0005—person on horse with dead coyote hanging from saddle horn	undated
4	Photos	MA 38-0006—aerial view of a farm	undated
4	Photos	MA 38-0007—bison herd	undated
4	Photos	MA 38-0008—Dakota Farmer building and lot next to it	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: “Now You Tell One”	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: “What’s in the Air” by Radio Ranger	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Advice from our Lawyer	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Along Dakota Prairie Trails	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Bees and Honey	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Breezes from the West	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Country Life in the Dakotas	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Dairy and Creamery	undated

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Dakota Farmer Young Folks Conducted by Aunt Clara	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Help One Another	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Horticulture, Trees-Fruit and the Garden	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Incomes from Your Money	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Livestock Edited by John T. E. Dinwoodie	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Poultry Department	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Sheet with 6 article mastheads: Special Service Department, Subscription Department; Country Life in the Dakotas by Helen B. Russell Golden Valley Co. undated,	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: Stray Shots by W.C. Allen	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: The Dakota Farmer Editorial	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: The Home, edited by Mabel Sensor	undated
4	Plates	Article mastheads: What's Doing in the Dakotas	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: 2 men on a sofa reading the Dakota Farmer	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: 3 separate border designs	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Border with 3 photographs (Power on the Farm)	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Car driving down road with dog in window going past a sign that reads, "Good Bye! Good Luck! Come Again!"	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Farm scene with farmer shaking hands with men in suits while wife and son with dog look on	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Farm scene with pigs and cows and car driving past	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Old Dakota Farmer Building (Elks Building) Aberdeen, S.D.	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Postman in U.S. Mail truck delivering mail to farm	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Sheet with 2 designs (bees and flowers, apple orchard)	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: Sheet with 4 designs (book shelves, bees and flowers, apple orchard, family reading paper)	undated

Box	Folder	Description	Date(s)
4	Plates	Artwork: Sheet with 7 designs (book shelves, family reading paper, corn shocks, threshing, horse/cow/pigs, apple orchard, bees and flowers)	undated
4	Plates	Artwork: The Dakota Farmer Building entrance	undated
4	Plates	Frames: 12 different sheets of frames	undated
4	Plates	Masthead: First bound volume of the Dakota Farmer— Current Bound volume of the Dakota Farmer	undated
4	Plates	Masthead: The Dakota Farmer	1911
4	Plates	Masthead: The Dakota Farmer	1929
4	Plates	Masthead: The Dakota Farmer	undated
4	Plates	Masthead: The Dakota Farmer Cover (blank)	undated
4	Plates	Masthead: The Dakota Farmer Cover (blank)	undated
4	Plates	North Dakota and South Dakota maps: Dakota Railroad/County/River Map	1912
4	Plates	North Dakota and South Dakota maps: North Dakota Railroad/County/River Map	1912