

## Finding Aid to the John F. Fay Papers

### Fay, Francis John, 1889-1967

Francis John Fay Papers, 1903- 1986

.4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 217

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[Biography](#)

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### OVERVIEW

**Access:** The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

**Provenance:** Donated by Patricia Monger on behalf of the children of Gunda and John Fay: Helen Drege, Elizabeth Jones, Frances Shuler, Frank J. Fay, Patricia Monger, Sadie Jelleberg, and Marjorie Krohn, 1999 (Acc. 2547 & 2549).

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**Citation:** [Identification of item]. John F. Fay Papers, MS 217. Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

### BIOGRAPHY

Francis John Fay, who went by “John,” was born on November 2, 1889 at Churchs Ferry, North Dakota on the same day that North Dakota joined the Union, thus his long-standing claim of being the first white child born in North Dakota, one that has not been disputed.

Fay moved with his family to Hurricane Lake (near York, N.D.) in 1893. Since there were no schools in the area, young Fay was tutored at home by his mother. When he was ten years old, a schoolhouse was built and he started there as a fifth grader.

In 1921 Fay married Gunda Ledfors in Rugby, N.D. They farmed on the family homestead (Hurricane Lake) until 1944 when they moved to Rugby. During his farming years, Fay was involved in a partnership with his neighbor, Elmer Emerson. The men owned threshing equipment and worked for area farmers. After moving to Rugby, Fay started a livestock shipping business.

John Fay lived in Rugby until the time of his death in 1967. He and his wife had seven children.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Fay documents consist primarily of financial ledgers which provide detailed accounts of the family and business income and expenses from approximately 1923 to 1960. Some of the ledgers are very detailed, especially the farm accounts from the 1930s and 1940s. Few ledgers exist from this time period, and it is very rare to find the kind of detailed accounting that Fay provides in his financial records. In addition to the farm records, Fay also kept records on two of his businesses: Emerson/Fay (a threshing partnership with a neighbor), and The Rugby Coop Shipping Association (owned by Fay). There are also a few tax documents from 1917-1919 and documents on Fay's participation in the Federal shelterbelt program. The collection has been organized into two series: **Financial** and **Subject**.

The [Financial Series](#) is organized chronologically and contains the following: income tax returns for 1917-1919 (John Fay and Frank Fay); financial ledger on the Emerson/Fay partnership, 1923-1943 (see biographical folder for information on Elmer Emerson), farm record books (1935-1938), farm accounts (1934-1944), business accounts for the Rugby Coop. Shipping Association (1944-1960), and shelterbelt documents (1935-1936).

The accounting in the Emerson/Fay ledger includes detailed lists of expenses: repairs and oil, cooking costs, and labor. The entries also indicate that Fay was often paid for his threshing services in cash, but sometimes his neighbors would pay with eggs or labor. There are also entries on livestock, notes payable, insurance coverage, and breeding records.

The farm record books include crop maps, inventory records (horses and machinery), and balance sheets.

In the farm account books, Fay provided detailed accounting of both personal and farm income and expenses. He itemizes such things as gas and oil, groceries, telephone bills, harness snaps, coal, oyster shells, spark plugs, seed grain, repairs, sheep shearing, feed, plow sharpening, taxes, breeding fees, insurance, clothing, allowances for his children, "play day" expenses, church donations, stamps, and Christmas cash. He also includes income such as eggs, cream, livestock, wool, and grain sold.

The business account for the Rugby Coop Shipping Association itemize expenses such as feed and seed, supplies, repairs and maintenance, veterinary and medicine, taxes, gas and oil, automobile upkeep, and

labor. The income is itemized as well and includes prices for livestock, grain, cream, and eggs. The ledgers also include inventory records and some family expenses

The [Subject Series](#) contains one file on Fay's participation in the Federal shelterbelt program (1935-1936). There is correspondence with F.E. Cobb, director of the Plains Shelterbelt Project in North Dakota; lease and option contract; easement contract; and an agreement for the rent of Fay's equipment to prepare land for shelterbelt tree planting. There is also a "Report of Conditions of Hong Farmers Elevator Company" as of May 31, 1919. The notebook appears to have been kept by Mr. Fay's mother documenting butter, cream and eggs sold in the period 1903 to 1907, although it is not complete for the entire time period.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Finding aid, and Biographical materials
<b>Financial Series</b>	
1/2	Income Tax Returns and Worksheet, 1917-1919
1/3	Emerson/Fay Financial and Laborer Records, 1923-1943
1/4	Farm Record Books, 1935-1938
1/5	Farm Accounts, 1934-1940
1/6	Farm Accounts, 1941-1944
1/7	Business Records, 1944-1954
1/8	Business Records, 1954-1960
<b>Subject Series</b>	
1/9	Hong Farmers Elevator Co, 1919
1/10	Notebook, 1903-1907
1/11	Shelterbelt Documents, 1935-1936