

Black Exodus from North Dakota during the early twentieth century

Black population figures in major counties, 1910-1940

County	1910	1920	1930	1940
Burleigh	54	51	60	28
Cass	120	55	42	35
Grand Forks	60	30	19	9
Ramsey	44	44	26	15
Ward	67	68	76	34

from Federal Census Records in Stephanie Abbot Roper, "African Americans in North Dakota 1800-1940", pages 78-81.

This advertisement for a "Ku Klux Klan Konclave" can be found on page 5, columns 6-8, in the June 21, 1926 issue of the *Bismarck Tribune*. The Klan already had strongholds in the Red River Valley, to the point of controlling the city government of Grand Forks, and was looking to expand.

The Ku Klux Klan's later advertisement in page 12 of the *Bismarck Tribune* from June 25, 1924, would state, "Special officers have been sworn in to preserve order and no disturbances will be tolerated." The Klan apparently had its detractors.

Black flight from North Dakota from 1930 to 1940 can be attributed to the effects of the Great Depression, but black flight from 1910 to 1930 cannot. A decline in the black population of Cass and Grand Forks counties corresponds to strong Klan activity during that period. 1930 Census figures suggest that this effort failed in Bismarck.

Bismarck Tribune
Ku Klux Klan Advertisement
June 21, 1926 Page 5, Columns 6-8
from Library of Congress Chronicling America

Ku Klux Klan Klonclave

Bismarck, No. Dak.

Saturday June 26th

Special Klan Fireworks, manufactured by the Klan Fireworks Co. of Tippecanoe, Ohio

A public naturalization ceremony. Klan obligation open to the public

Addresses:

How We Do It in Grand Forks

Hon. John L. Hulting, Mayor of Grand Forks

A tribute to Dr. A. A. Holmes, a departed Bismarck Klansman
Hon. Wallace Campbell

Who the Klan will vote for in the coming election and why—by "Dec"

The Need of the Hour

Judge John A. Jeffery, I. R. Realm of No. Dak.

A Klan parade will be staged on the grounds. Get a complete program at the gate

Open to the Public—Everybody Welcome
Small admission charge at gate, children free

Slavery in the Upper Missouri River Valley

Lest anybody imagine that slavery didn't exist in modern day along the Upper Missouri, including modern day North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana, it did. Pierre Chouteau Jr., boss of the American Fur Company, made sure of that! Slavery was illegal here from 1820 to 1854, but the federal government was lax in enforcing its laws.

Here are some excerpts from primary and secondary documents in reference to slavery.

From Papers of the St. Louis Fur Trade, Part 1: The Chouteau Collection, 1752-1925

Reel 17, page 976. (Stamped "Chouteau Maffitt Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis")

Jean Joseph Rolette to Pierre Chouteau Jr., April 4, 1831

Prairie du Chiens 4th April

Pierre Chouteau Esq^r
Agent AmFCo}

Dear Sir:

Your esteemed favors of 16th Ult^o and 26th of same month were received yesterday, with the sundry articles received per Bill Lading – all was current and I have settled the Freight –

As respecting that Servant (Mieux?), the law prohibits slavery, therefore I must decline purchasing as It gives you too much trouble at a time when you must be very busy – please decline the same unless some will offer themselves –

Respectfully –

Your most obdt. Svt.

Jos. Rolette

From The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied, Volume 3.

Edited by Stephen S. Witte & Marsha Gallagher; translated by Dieter Karsch (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press *in cooperation with the* Durham Center for Western Studies, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, 2012)

p. 94 (December 4, 1833)

“In the afternoon several Indians came, among them Síh-Chidä and another one, ~~Broken-Pot~~ The Pot In Which One Sees Oneself, who is the strongest man among all the Mandans. He has wrestled with Negroes and whites, and thus far all contests have turned out to his advantage.”

From On the Upper Missouri: The Journal of Rudolph Friedrich Kurz, 1851-1852.

Edited and Abridged by Carla Kelly, Introduction by Scott Eckberg (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005)

pp. 38-39 (August 18, 1851)

“Toward evening Jim Hawkins, a Negro from Fort Union, arrived here. Mr. Culbertson intended to take him as cook to Fort Laramie but left him behind temporarily at Fort Union, where he was also obliged to serve as cook. He says Dennik [Denig], the bourgeois there, is a hard man, liked by nobody, not even here. He keeps two Indian wives, Jim says, and squanders all he has on them; he begrudges anything paid to the employees, oppresses the engagés with too much work, is never satisfied, etc.

Jim ran away, taking a boat that belonged to the great company. He must have related his story to Mr. Kipp with highly pleasing embellishments, for the latter put him in the kitchen forthwith and sent Bill, who has been our cook hitherto, to the hayfield.

At one time, Jim was in the employ of Mr. P. A. Sarpy in Belle Vue, where I know him quite well. He squandered all that he earned there on old immoral Indian women; consequently he could not be kept longer. He is really someone’s slave in St. Louis and is required to pay a certain sum to his master every year; the balance of his wages he may spend as he likes. It is true he is free here, but the company must be responsible, more or less, for his life.”

From This Far-Off Wild Land: The Upper Missouri Letters of Andrew Dawson.

By Lesley Wischmann and Andrew Erskine Dawson (Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2013)

p. 224 (Fort Berthold, June 28, 1849)

“I found it quite time enough for me to be active too, so I got the little Canon we have, out of the Fort to an embankment close by and gave them 15 shots of it, but unskilled as I am in gunnery and having no one to assist me save my old negro cook, all of the others refusing to go out of the Fort, I cannot say what execution was done, but the noise along served a good end as it terrified the most away from my neighborhood. The Gros Ventres say I did them a great service – and I do believe myself had it not been for the whites and this Fort all the village would have been swept away. The Sioux displayed much courage and a good deal of skill in their attack,, but the Gros Ventres being so few in proportion had recourse to that better part of valour called discretion, and the result shows they were not wrong in doing so.”

From Fort Clark and Its Indian Neighbors: A Trading Post on the Upper Missouri.

By W. Raymond Wood, William J. Hunt, Jr., and Randy H. Williams (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011)

pp. 134-135

“African American slaves were present in some of the posts, and at least two of the principal owners of the Upper Missouri Outfit owned slaves. Kenneth McKenzie purchased a slave named Fleming about fourteen years of age for \$350 from William Gordon in St. Louis in December 1828. Whether this is the same “negro waiter” that Larpenteur refers to at Fort Union is unknown. Daniel Lamont, in his will of November 11, 1834, leaves “Two Female Slaves” to his wife in St. Louis. Maximilian stated that Alfred, the cook at Fort Clark in 1833, was “a Negro from St. Louis” though he did not say whether or not he was a slave. Chardon owned a slave called Black Hawk who was with him at Fort Clark as early as January 1838 and probably earlier, and until Chardon's death in 1848, when in his will he gave the man his freedom. He must have owned at least two slaves during the winter of 1842-43, as one of them named Reese was killed by the Blood band of the Blackfeet, prompting Chardon to retaliate by killing some members of the tribe.”