

J. N. Nicollet Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Donna Ellis



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2006

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Finding aid encoded by Library of
Congress Manuscript Division, 2010

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009278>

Collection Summary

Title: J. N. Nicollet Papers

Span Dates: 1797-1843

ID No.: MSS34744

Creator: Nicollet, J. N. (Joseph Nicolas), 1786-1843

Extent: 1,500 items; 8 containers; 3.2 linear feet; 1 microfilm reel

Language: Collection material in French and English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Mathematician, explorer, and cartographer. Correspondence, astronomical and geographical observations, expedition diaries, maps, reports, research material, and notes relating to Nicollet's explorations of the upper Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Bailey, Jacob Whitman, 1811-1857--Correspondence.

Blunt, Edmund M. (Edmund March), 1770-1862--Correspondence.

Bruté de Rémur, Simon William Gabriel, 1779-1839--Correspondence.

Chardon, Francis A., d. 1848. Journals from Fort Clark, undated (1834-1839)

Cheverus, Jean-Louis-Anne-Madeleine Lefebvre de, 1768-1836--Correspondence.

Clark, William, 1770-1838. Diary excerpt of William Clark (undated)

Connelly, Pierce, 1804-1883--Correspondence.

Deluol, Louis Régis, 1787-1858--Correspondence.

England, John, 1786-1842--Correspondence.

Gobel, David W.--Correspondence.

Graham, J. D. (James Duncan), 1799-1865--Correspondence.

Hassler, F. R. (Ferdinand Rudolph), 1770-1843--Correspondence.

Hitchcock, Ethan Allen, 1798-1870--Correspondence.

Jackson, Charles T. (Charles Thomas), 1805-1880--Correspondence.

Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809. Diary excerpt of Meriwether Lewis (undated)

Loisel, Régis. Account of the upper Missouri River country (1803)

Loomis, Elias, 1811-1889--Correspondence.

Mordecai, Alfred, 1804-1887--Correspondence.

Nicollet, J. N. (Joseph Nicolas), 1786-1843.

Nutt, Rush, 1781-1837--Correspondence.

Pike, Zebulon Montgomery, 1779-1813 Diary excerpt of Zebulon Montgomery Pike (undated)

Plympton, Joseph--Correspondence.

Portier, Michael, 1795-1859--Correspondence.

Rosati, Joseph, 1789-1843--Correspondence.

Sherwood, H. H. (Henry Hall)--Correspondence.

Troost, Gerard, 1776-1850--Correspondence.

Walker, Sears Cook, 1805-1853--Correspondence.

Subjects

Astronomy.

Geography.

Meteorology.

Places

Fort Clark (N.D.)

Minnesota--Discovery and exploration.
Mississippi River--Discovery and exploration.
Missouri River--Discovery and exploration.
Missouri--Discovery and exploration.
North Dakota--Discovery and exploration.
South Dakota--Discovery and exploration.
Wisconsin--Discovery and exploration.

Occupations
Cartographers.
Explorers.
Mathematicians.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of J. N. Nicollet, mathematician, explorer, and cartographer, were acquired by transfer, purchase, and gift from various sources between 1921 and 1956.

Processing History

The collection was housed and listed between 1921 and 2005. As part of a reorganization in 2006, a new finding aid was created.

Related Material

The [Henry Rowe Schoolcraft Papers](#) contains Nicollet's journal of 1836 concerning an expedition to the sources of the Mississippi River (with correspondence from 1837).

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of J. N. Nicollet is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of J. N. Nicollet are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm

A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on one reel. Consult reference staff in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition as available.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, J. N. Nicollet Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1786, July 24	Born, Cluses, Savoy, France
1817	Astronomer, Royal Observatory, Paris, France

1832	Emigrated to United States
1835	Expedition on Missouri River
1836	Expedition to Mississippi River headwaters
1837	Expedition to Lake Superior via St. Croix River and return via St. Louis River and Savannah portage
1838	Expedition to the headwaters of St. Pierre River (Minnesota River) and Des Moines River
1939	Expedition from Ft. Pierre, S. Dak., to Devil's Lake, N. Dak., via the Missouri River Published <i>Meteorological Observations</i> . U. S. War Department
1843, Sept. 11	Died, Washington, D.C. Posthumous publication of <i>Map of the Hydrographical Basin of the Upper Mississippi River</i> . Twenty-sixth Congress, Second Session, U. S. Senate Document 237

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Joseph Nicolas Nicollet (1786-1843) span the years 1797-1843. The collection contains correspondence, journals, maps and sketches, notes, printed matter, research material, and writings and reports. Much of the material is in French.

The correspondence consists primarily of letters to Nicollet, with the exception of some photostatic copies of letters Nicollet wrote to Rush Nutt, a physician and scientist in Mississippi, regarding Nicollet's study of the Chippewa and Sioux languages. Several letters are from bishops and prominent individuals in the early American Catholic Church, including Simon William Gabriel Bruté de Rémur, Bishop of Vincennes (Indiana); John England, Bishop of Charleston; Jean-Louis-Anne-Madeleine Lefebvre de Cheverus, Bishop of Boston; Michael Portier, Bishop of Mobile; Joseph Rosati, Bishop of St. Louis; Pierce Connelly; and Louis Régis Deluol. Scientists include Jacob Whitman Bailey, David W. Gobel, Ethan Allen Hitchcock, Elias Loomis, H. H. Sherwood, and Sears Cook Walker. Cartographers represented in the collection are Edmund M. Blunt, J. D. Graham, and F. R. Hassler. Nicollet also corresponded with state geologists Charles T. Jackson of Maine and Gerard Troost of Tennessee. Alfred Mordecai, drafter of the first United States ordnance manual, wrote requesting Nicollet to design a form for standardizing meteorological, geological, and mineralogical data reports. A letter from Joseph Plympton, the commander of Fort Snelling, Minnesota, suggests ways to develop the land between the St. Croix River and St. Anthony Falls, an area which is now Minneapolis.

The journals consist of astronomical observations, expedition diaries, and geographical and meteorological data. Some of the astronomical observations, dated 1832, were made from the White House in Washington, D.C. The expedition diaries document Nicollet's exploration of what is now Minnesota, Missouri, South Dakota, and Wisconsin and include detailed sketches of the routes. The geographical observations include calculations of latitudes, longitudes, and altitudes from various points. In 1839 Nicollet published *Meteorological Observations*. The collection contains the published copy along with a draft and notes.

The collection contains many of Nicollet's detailed sketch maps of the upper Mississippi and Missouri river basins and his notes on various scientific subjects. Writings and reports primarily

consist of a draft of Nicollet's report that accompanied his *Map of the Hydrographical Basin of the Upper Mississippi River*. Also included are Francis A. Chardon's journals from Fort Clark, North Dakota; Regis Loisel's account of the upper Missouri River; and excerpts from the writings of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and Zebulon Montgomery Pike.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1819, 1830-1843, undated (9 folders)
BOX 1	Journals
BOX 1	Astronomical observations, 1832-1838 (4 folders)
BOX 2	1836-1839 (4 folders)
BOX 3	1839-1842, undated (7 folders)
BOX 3	Expedition diaries 1835-1837 Nicollet's journal of 1836 concerning an expedition to the sources of the Mississippi River (with correspondence from 1837) is in the Henry Rowe Schoolcraft Papers , Container 87/reel 67 (microfilm shelf no. 13,819).
BOX 3	1838
BOX 3	June-Aug. (3 folders)
BOX 4	Sept.-Oct.
BOX 4	1839 (2 folders)
BOX 4	Geographical observations
BOX 4	General, 1834-1841 (4 folders)
BOX 4	Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, 1834-1836
BOX 4	Mississippi and Missouri rivers, 1839-1840, undated
BOX 4	New Orleans, La., 1841-1843, undated
BOX 4	Red Pipe Stone Quarry, Minn., 1838
BOX 4	Washington, D. C., 1943
BOX 4	<i>Meteorological Observations</i> , 1839
BOX 4	Draft and notes
BOX 4	Printed copy
BOX 5	Maps and sketches
BOX 5	Mississippi River and Ohio River, undated
BOX 5	Mississippi River headwaters, 1836, undated (2 folders)
BOX 5	Missouri River and tributaries, 1839 (3 folders)
BOX 5	Missouri River to Mississippi River, 1839 (3 folders)
BOX 5	St. Croix River, St. Louis River, and the Savannah Portage, 1837, undated
BOX 5	St. Pierre River (Minnesota River) and the Des Moines River headwaters, 1838

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 6	Sketches, undated (2 folders)
BOX 6	Unidentified, undated
BOX 6	Miscellany, leather mailing pouch, undated
BOX 6	Notes
BOX 6	Agriculture, undated
BOX 6	Canals, undated
BOX 6	Geography, undated
BOX 6	Geology, undated
BOX 6	Indians, 1840, undated
BOX 6	Meteorology, undated
BOX 6	Military forts, undated
BOX 6	Miscellaneous, 1838, undated (2 folders)
BOX 6	Mississippi and Missouri rivers, undated
BOX 6	Printed matter, 1813-1817, 1836-1843, undated
BOX 7	Research material
BOX 7	Chardon, Francis A., Fort Clark, N. Dak., journal, 1834-1839 (2 folders)
BOX 7	Ducatel, Julius T., geographical and astronomical report, 1843
BOX 7	Lewis, Meriwether; William Clark; and Zebulon Montgomery Pike, excerpts from diaries, undated
BOX 7	Loisel, Regis, account of the upper Missouri River country, 1803 (4 folders)
BOX 7	Mackay, James, table of distances on the Missouri River, 1797
BOX 7	Trudeau, Jean Baptiste, description of the upper Missouri River, undated
BOX 8	Writings and reports
BOX 8	"Brief Review of the Upper Missouri," undated
BOX 8	"Etat et Fleuve de Missouri," undated
BOX 8	<i>Descriptive and Physical Geography of the Region Embraced within the Map</i> , 1843
BOX 8	Part I
BOX 8	Draft (2 folders)
BOX 8	English translation (2 folders)
BOX 8	Part II
BOX 8	"Report on the Mineral Resources of the Pilot Knob and Iron Mountain of the State of Missouri," 1842