

Graff Collection – Collection Description

According to the late Ray Allen Billington, distinguished expert in the field, in combination with the Ayer Collection, the Graff Collection makes the Newberry one of the two or three outstanding libraries in the world for the study of the American West.

Newberry Trustee Everett D. Graff (1885-1964), attracted by the Ayer Collection, donated his library of Western Americana to the Newberry in 1964. The collection originally comprised some 10,000 books and manuscripts, many of them extremely rare, most dealing with the exploration and settlement of the trans-Mississippi West in the nineteenth century.

Major strengths of the Graff Collection:

- Lewis and Clark expedition
- Fur trade
- Mormon treks of 1846 and 1849
- California gold rush
- Narratives of overland travel throughout the nineteenth century
- Surveys for transcontinental railroads in the 1850s
- Cattle industry
- Early town, county, and state history
- Law enforcement, including the various vigilante organizations

The Graff collection is described in *A Catalog of the Everett D. Graff Collection of Western Americana* (Storm, 1968) and fully cataloged in the Newberry's online catalog and the OCLC database. Selected items from the Graff Collection are featured in the subscription database [The American West](#) (available within the Newberry).

The following Newberry Library Bulletin articles provide excellent overviews of the collection

- [A Historian Views the Everett D. Graff Collection by Ray Allen Billington, December 1960.](#)
- [The Everett D. Graff Collection in the Newberry Library by Colton Storm, December 1960.](#)

[American Literature – Publications about the Newberry Library Collections](#)