Descriptive Summary

Title: GILBERT HAROLD KNEISS COLLECTION

Dates: 1863-1967

Collection Number: MS 17

Creator/Collector: Kneiss, Gilbert Harold (1861-1964)

Extent: 40 boxes + 6 oversize boxes

Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives

Sacramento, California 95814

Abstract: This collection contains early Western Pacific records obtained by Gilbert Harold Kneiss, the Vice-President and head of the WP public relations department from 1949 to 1963, his family papers, and his writings as a railroad historian.

Language of Material: English

Access

Collection is open for research by appointment only. Please give us 7 days advance notice.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

GILBERT HAROLD KNEISS COLLECTION. California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives

Acquisition Information


Biography/Administrative History

Gilbert Harold Kneiss was born in San Francisco August 28, 1899 and graduated with a degree in civil engineering from the University of Nevada in 1923. During the 1920s he worked for Standard Oil of California, and in the following decade formed the Audisk Corporation. Kneiss served as technical director for railroad pageants at the Golden Gate International Exposition and the New York World’s Fair in 1939-1940. After serving as the San Francisco district manager for the War Production Board from 1941 to 1947, he became assistant to the president and head of a new public relations department for the Western Pacific Railroad. Among his accomplishments were the inauguration of a military blood procurement car during the Korean War and special trains to the circus for children in outlying areas in Nevada. Kneiss authored two books on railroading, BONANZA RAILROADS (1941) and REDWOOD RAILWAYS (1956). He was a founding member of the Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society and served as a vice-president of the national organization. Gilbert Kneiss died February 2, 1964.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Gilbert Kneiss Collection consists largely of records he obtained while working for the Western Pacific Railroad. These documents date from the time of the construction of the Western Pacific Railway to the road’s first receivership and reorganization in 1915-1916. They are derived principally from the papers of Virgil G. Bogue, Western Pacific’s vice-president and chief engineer, circa 1905-1915. The papers include significant amounts of correspondence from the company’s president Edward Turner Jeffery (1843-1927), and cover a number of subjects, including location of the line, acquisition of the right of way, construction of the railroad, facilities, and terminals, branch lines, relations with other railroads (especially the Southern Pacific), operations and equipment. In addition, a lesser amount of Western Pacific Railroad material dating from 1916 to 1963 is included. A second major portion of the collection consists of records from the Nevada Central, Virginia and Truckee, and Carson and Colorado Railroads. The Nevada Central material is principally letterpress copy books of C. W. Hinchcliffe as superintendent, secretary, treasurer, cashier, general passenger and freight agent, and receiver. The Virginia and Truckee/Carson and Colorado items consist of shipping bills, train registers, a time book, and records of bank deposits. The collection also contains Kneiss personal and family materials, research notes and notebooks by Kneiss on a number of California and Nevada railroads. The notebooks contain locomotive roster information for many California and Nevada short and branch lines. This collection is arranged into five series: 1 WESTERN PACIFIC RAILWAY RECORDS 2 NEVADA RAILROADS RECORDS 3 SUBJECT FILES 4 GILBERT KNEISS NOTEBOOKS 5 MISCELLANEOUS RAILROAD RECORDS