Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Special Service collection

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Special Service collection
Dates: undated, 1890-1998
Collection Number: MS 526
Creator/Collector: Tharp, M.E. "Gene"
Extent: 2 boxes
Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Sacramento, California 95814
Abstract: Material in this collection comes from the collection of M.E. "Gene" Tharp, who was a special agent, an Inspector, and later an Assistant Superintendent in the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Special Service.
Language of Material: English
Access
This collection is open for research at our off-site storage facility with one week's notice. Contact Library & Archives staff to arrange for access.
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Preferred Citation
Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Special Service collection. California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Acquisition Information
Biography/Administrative History
The 1880s saw the westward expansion of railroads. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, like many others, faced an increasing problem with armed train robbers. Local law enforcement west of the Mississippi was spotty, and could not handle these and other attacks on railroad property. Railroads responded by setting up special services to police the railroad and protect property and cargo. Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe set up a special service or railway police department for each of Santa Fe’s four operating divisions. These departments, which operated separately, were charged with the protection of Santa Fe patrons and their possessions, and the safe-guarding of Santa Fe facilities and premises. Each division special service department had special agents. Officers rode the trains, policed freight yards, depots, shops and other facilities, and conducted various investigations into train robberies and other crimes. These officers sometimes went undercover, infiltrating various labor organizations that were considered subversive. A favorite target was the Industrial Workers of the World, or "Wobblies." Hoboes and bums were also closely watched by railroad police. In addition to co-operating with local, state and federal law enforcement, the Santa Fe Special Service Department worked closely with the protective section of the Association of American Railroads and special services of other railroads. During World War I and immediately thereafter a reorganization of railroad police took place and now rail security forces function as municipal police do, with patrolmen reporting to captains, and the captains reporting to chiefs of police, who report to the Superintendent of Property Protection. Common crimes include trespassing, vandalism, public intoxication, breaking and entering, burglary, and arson. M.E. "Gene" Tharp was a member of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Special Services Department from the 1920s to the 1970s. In the 1960s, he was an Inspector of the Special Services Department. On July 1, 1970, Tharp was promoted to Assistant Superintendent, Better Freight Handling and Special Service.
Scope and Content of Collection
Material in this collection comes from the collection of M.E. "Gene" Tharp, who was a special agent, an Inspector, and later an Assistant Superintendent in the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Special Service. The collection includes correspondence, telegrams, reward posters, flimsies, newsletters, passes, tickets membership applications and cards issued by various labor organizations from the 1890s to the 1970s. This collection has been arranged in two series: 1. CASE FILES 2. SUBJECT FILES
MS 526 Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Special Service Collection [Complete finding aid]