Descriptive Summary
Title: Frank Saarni Collection
Dates: 1905-1997
Collection Number: MS 726
Creator/Collector: Saarni, Frank
Extent: 1 linear foot + 3 oversize boxes
Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Sacramento, California 95814
Abstract: Paperwork collected by builder's plate collector Frank Saarni during his work with the California State Railroad Museum and as a brakeman for the Great Northern Railway.
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.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
Frank Saarni Collection. California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Acquisition Information
Gift of Mrs. Frank A. (Betty) Saarni, 2013
Biography/Administrative History
Frank Arthur Saarni was born Aug. 3, 1926 in San Francisco and died Jan. 21, 2013 in Berkeley. Beginning as a teenager, Saarni assembled one of the major and most significant builder's plate collections in the United States and North America. Saarni also created accurate reproduction builder's plates for equipment being restored during the development of the California State Railroad Museum. As he collected, he kept meticulous notes and gathered research material on railroad history, which comprise this collection.
Scope and Content of Collection
Consists of construction lists for various locomotive builders, correspondence, notes on railroad photography trips, research materials, employment paperwork, ephemera, and albums of tickets and photographs. The correspondence relates to collecting and purchasing of builder's plates, as well as to Saarni's work with the California State Railroad Museum. Employment paperwork relates to Saarni's work as a brakeman with the Great Northern Railway. The locomotive builder lists are handwritten and organized by construction number. Notes on photography trips consists of a trip recapitulation listing road numbers of engines photographed by Saarni. Among his research materials is correspondence mostly to Virgil Bogue, from Arthur W. Keddie and others, regarding construction of the Western Pacific Railway. Photographic prints that were not affixed in albums have been removed and filed with the general photograph collection. Corresponding negatives were not included in the donation. Employee timetables have also been cataloged separately.

MS 726 Frank Saarni Collection [complete finding aid]