
Ralph L. Barger Pullman Company collection

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California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives

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2020

Descriptive Summary

Title: Ralph L. Barger Pullman Company collection

Dates: 1874-1970

Collection Number: MS 613

Creator/Collector: Barger, Ralph L., 1929-

Extent: 21 boxes + 2 half boxes

Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives
Sacramento, California 95814

Abstract: This collection is comprised of Pullman Company corporate records collected by historian Ralph Barger. Includes correspondence, blank forms, requisition forms, property ownership documents, car and equipment forms and other documents.

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

Ralph L. Barger Pullman Company collection. California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives

Acquisition Information

Gift of Ralph L. Barger, 2003

Biography/Administrative History

Ralph L. Barger was born in Putnam County, New York in 1929. As a child, he and his brother J.P. Barger, collected model trains. Their interest prompted Ralph Barger to write various railroads asking for information about famed passenger trains. During service in the Army beginning in 1948, he served as an instructor at West Point, then as a 2nd Lieutenant stationed in Germany, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam. In 1961, he began to collect passenger car prototype information and started to compile passenger equipment roster information on U.S. railroads. His interest in Pullman cars was piqued by Lucius Beebe's book MR. PULLMAN'S ELEGANT PASSENGER CARS. The works of John H. White, Jr., Arthur Dubin, William Kratville and Robert Wayner inspired him to assemble a compendium of all known Pullman cars. Mr. Barger and his wife, Lois, who were married in the mid 1950s, have two daughters, Keven and Carol, and a son, Ralph III. His brother, J.P., continues to be interested in railroad history, with a focus on railroad photography. Mr. Barger belongs to numerous historical societies, including the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society. He has written two books, A CENTURY OF PULLMAN CARS (2 volumes) (1988; 1990) and UNION PACIFIC BUSINESS CARS, 1870-1991: INCLUDING INSPECTION AND INSTRUCTION CARS (1992). He is presently working on a third volume of A CENTURY OF PULLMAN CARS as well as a roster of all operating Pullman cars. The Pullman Company (incorporated in Illinois in 1867 by George M. Pullman as the Pullman Palace Car Company) led the United States and Canada in sleeping car construction and the provision of luxurious and comfortable cars for passenger railroad travel. By 1880, the company operated cars on 60,000 miles of track across the United States and Canada and its stock was worth over 6 million dollars. The Pullman Company built manufacturing shops at Detroit and the world's largest car plant in 1879 at Lake Calumet, Illinois, 14 miles south of Chicago. Adjacent land was purchased and developed as a company town. In 1881, 12,000 people lived in the town of Pullman. An economic downturn prompted layoffs and pay cuts which led to the unionization of Pullman workers and a strike at the shops in 1894 to try to force a rollback of wage cuts. The Pullman Company, as it was renamed in December 1899, was very profitable, particularly in the 1920s. In the 1940s, an anti-trust lawsuit was brought against Pullman by the U.S. Department of Justice. As the result of an unfavorable ruling in 1943, Pullman was ordered to sell either its operating division, the Pullman Company or its manufacturing division, the Pullman-Standard Car Company. The Pullman Company along with its 256 parlor cars, over 600 sleeping cars and sleeping car leasing operations, were sold to a consortium of U.S. railroads on July 1, 1947. However, railroads continued to lease sleeping cars back to the Pullman Company. A major downsizing of shops, laundries, and other real estate helped Pullman remain competitive, but business began to decline. The Pennsylvania Railroad, Penn Central and other railroads began to withdraw from Pullman service. In 1969, all railroads with Pullman service cancelled their contracts

with Pullman. The company began to sell off its assets, including the inventory of equipment maintained on each car. Pullman retained a small staff to complete sales and settle lawsuits. The Pullman Company ceased to exist in 1981. Selected bibliography: Barger, Ralph L. A CENTURY OF PULLMAN CARS. 2 vols. Sykesville, Maryland: Greenberg Publishing Company, 1988; 1990. Pullman Company. ANNUAL REPORTS. 1948-1956, 1969 (calendar year). White, John H., Jr. THE AMERICAN RAILROAD PASSENGER CAR. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. "George Mortimer Pullman." In RAILROADS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, edited by Robert L. Frey, pp. 335-339. New York: Facts on File, 1988.

Scope and Content of Collection

This collection is comprised of Pullman Company corporate records collected by historian Ralph Barger. Includes correspondence, blank forms, requisition forms, property ownership documents, car and equipment forms and other documents. These records were generated by several Pullman Company departments, including: the Office of the President, the Operating Department, the Office of Finance and Accounts, the Transportation Department and the Employee and Labor Relations Department. They focus primarily on the sale of Pullman property and cars in the late 1960s. Arranged by Pullman Company department. Record Group 1. Operating Department Sub-Group 1.1. Purchases and Stores Department Sub-Group 1.2. Superintendent of Transportation Record Group 2. Employee and Labor Relations Department Record Group 3. Office of Finance and Accounts Sub-group 3.1. Vice-President and Comptroller Sub-sub-group 3.1.1 Manager of Office Services Sub-group 3.2. Auditor of Receipts Record Group 4. Office of the President
