
Inventory of the City of San Francisco Derailment Collection, 1939-1949

Processed by Dr. Blaine P. Lamb; machine-readable finding aid created by Xiuzhi Zhou

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Collection number: MS 39

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Descriptive Summary

Title: City of San Francisco Derailment Collection,

Date (inclusive): 1939-1949

Collection number: MS 39

Extent: 2 document boxes + 1 flat document box

Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library

Sacramento, California 95814

Shelf location: Big Four Building or off-site storage. Please contact the Library in advance of your visit.

Language: English.

Provenance

Gift of Brian Thompson, 1988

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Collection Description

Includes newspaper clippings, Southern Pacific records, instructions, arrival and departure times, notes, maps, scrapbook, photographs and a poster. Organized by type of material.

Historical Background

The train, City of San Francisco, operated by the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and Chicago and North Western Railroads, was called "the largest, fastest, most beautiful, powerful and luxurious streamliner ever designed," when inaugurated on January 2, 1939. The train, which carried passengers between Oakland, California and Chicago, derailed on August 12, 1939, at a site between Harney and Palisade, in eastern Nevada. The cars suffered tremendous damage, and there were many deaths and injuries among the crew and passengers. Evidence found at the point of derailment indicated that it had been the result of sabotage. Years of detective work by Southern Pacific and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, turned up

much evidence and several suspects, but no convictions were ever made. The identities and motives of the saboteurs remain a mystery.

Title: Photograph album No. 32

COMPANY RECORDS

Box 1, Folder 1 **Records concerning train speed on curves, instructions for engineers and personnel, operation of the train, arrival and departure times, and visibility at the place of the derailment.**

Folder 2 **Diagram charts and graphs**

Folder 3 **Southern Pacific logo, map of Nevada and miscellaneous notes**

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Box 1, Folder 4 **Southern Pacific, Bureau of News, Book 1, containing newspaper clippings dealing with the derailment**

Folder 5 **Southern Pacific, Bureau of News, Book 2, containing newspaper clippings dealing with the derailment**

Folder 6 **Southern Pacific, Bureau of News, scrapbook containing clippings dealing with the derailment**

PHOTOGRAPHS

Box 1, Folder 7 **Promotional photographs of the "City of San Francisco" showing interior and exterior**

Box 2, Folder 1 **Photographs of the general location and topography of the derailment site**

Folder 2-4 **Photographs of damaged equipment**

Folder 5 **Photographs of altered track which caused the derailment**

Folder 6 **Photographs of devices used to cause the derailment and of evidence which indicated that the derailment was intentional**

Folder 7 **Photographs of police, special agents, and individuals who attempted to apprehend the saboteurs**

Folder 8 **Photographs of suspects**

Box 3, Folder 1 **Reward poster issued by the Southern Pacific for capture of the saboteurs**

Folder 2 **Oversized photographs of the derailment, with accompanying descriptions**