

Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company Collection

Collection Summary

Identifier:	MA 33
Title:	Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company Collection
Dates:	1913-1918
Extent:	1.47 linear feet (4 document cases)
Creator:	Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company
Language:	English

Repository: South Dakota State University Archives & Special Collections, University Station, Box 2115, 1300 North Campus Drive, Brookings, South Dakota, 57007

Access Note: Open. Materials must be used in-house and do not circulate.

Preferred Citation: Title or description of item, date, collection ID, box number, folder number, collection title, South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Brookings, South Dakota.

Abstract

The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, widely known as the Milwaukee Road, was a major Midwestern rail carrier whose operations spanned from 1847 until its merger with the Soo Line Railroad in 1985–1986. Established originally as the Milwaukee and Waukesha Railroad, the company evolved through successive name changes and expansions to become a vital transportation network linking the Midwest to the Pacific Northwest. By the late nineteenth century, its lines stretched across Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and beyond, shaping patterns of commerce and settlement. Although the corporation no longer exists as an independent

entity, its legacy endures in preserved landmarks such as the Milwaukee Road Depot and historic equipment including the Milwaukee Road 261.

The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company Records document railroad operations at the local level, with materials originating from the Madison, South Dakota depot. The collection consists primarily of operational and administrative forms, including car reports, conductor delay records, and telegrams that illustrate the daily coordination required to manage freight and passenger traffic. These records provide insight into internal communication systems, logistical planning, and the procedural routines that sustained a Class I railroad during a critical period of regional growth.

Beyond operational detail, the collection reflects the broader economic and social importance of rail infrastructure in South Dakota and the Upper Midwest. The Madison depot records demonstrate how railroads functioned as commercial arteries for rural communities, facilitating trade, transportation, and regional connectivity throughout the twentieth century. The materials also hold preservation significance: after donation to Prairie Village in Madison, the records survived a destructive barn fire and were subsequently salvaged, photocopied, and encapsulated. Though not comprehensive, this representative body of documents offers valuable evidence of industrial-era railroad administration and underscores the enduring importance of archival stewardship.

Biography

The Milwaukee Road, officially known as the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (CMSP&P RR), was a Class I railroad that operated across the Midwest and northwestern United States from its founding in 1847 until its merger with the Soo Line Railroad in 1985–1986. Over its history, the company underwent several name changes and periods of bankruptcy. Although it no longer exists as a separate entity, its legacy is preserved through landmarks such as the historic Milwaukee Road Depot in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and through preserved equipment like the Milwaukee Road 261 steam locomotive.

Originally incorporated as the Milwaukee and Waukesha Railroad in 1847, the company soon changed its name to the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad. Its first rail line, connecting Milwaukee and Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, opened in 1850, with passenger service beginning on February 25, 1851. The name was changed in 1874 to the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, and by 1887, it had expanded lines through Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Scope and Content

The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company Records are significant for their detailed documentation of railroad operations and internal communications during a formative period in American transportation history. Originating from the Madison, South Dakota depot, these materials provide insight into how a major regional railway coordinated its daily activities, managed logistics, and handled communication across departments. Forms such as car reports, conductor delay records, and telegrams offer a practical view of the operational structure and administrative routines of a Class I railroad.

The collection is especially valuable for understanding the role of railroads in the economic development of South Dakota and the broader Midwest. It reflects how railway infrastructure supported small-town commerce and regional connectivity, offering a window into how railroads functioned as essential lifelines for rural communities throughout the 20th century.

In addition to its content, the collection carries significance for its preservation history. After being donated to Prairie Village in Madison, the records survived a barn fire that destroyed much of their storage environment. The effort to salvage, photocopy, and encapsulate representative samples demonstrates a successful recovery initiative and highlights the importance of archival intervention in the face of loss or deterioration.

Although the records do not constitute a comprehensive archive of the company's transactions, they offer a rare and instructive sampling of original railroad forms and internal procedures. As such, they serve not only as a resource for transportation historians but also as a useful reference for scholars interested in archival preservation, regional history, and industrial-era communication practices.

Access Points

Subjects

- Railroad companies

Names

- Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company

Conditions Governing Access

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Container List

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	1	7 Reports	undated
1	2	37 Daily Telegraph Car Report	1914
1	3	49 Report	1914
1	4	Accident and Injury Report	1915
1	5	Bill of Loading Memorandum	1915
1	6	Cannon Ball Coal Company Flyer	undated
1	7	Cars Departing Station	1914-1918
1	8	C.D. Report	undated
1	9	Claim Ticket	undated
1	10	Clearance Card	1918
1	11	Conductor Connections Report	1913-1918
1	12	Conductor Delay Report	1913-1917
1	13	Correspondence	undated
1	14	Daily Connections Report (32 Report)	1913-1918
1	15	Daily Crop and Car Report	1917
1	16	Daily Report of Cars on Hand	1918
1	17	Diversion Form	1917
1	18	Empty Car Slip	1913
1	19	F.C.O. Car Request Form	undated
1	20	Foreign Car Disposition	1913
1	21	Freight Agent Form	1917

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	22	Inner-Company Correspondence	undated
1	23	Load and Empty Report	1918
1	24	L.P.T. Car Request	1917
1	25	Operator's Order Blank	undated
1	26	Report of Car and Engine Failure	1914-1918
1	27	5pm Company Coal Report	1918
1	28	Telegrams	1913-1918
1	29	Telegrams	1913-1918
1	30	Telegrams	1913-1918
1	31	Telegrams	1913-1918
2	1	Telegrams	1913-1918
2	2	Telegrams	1913-1918
2	3	Train List	undated
2	4	Train Order Forms	undated
2	5	Train Register Check	undated
2	6	Unloading Tally	undated
2	7	Way-Bill Correction Form	1917
2	8	Work Sheet Madison, SD	1913
2	9	Standard Way Bill	undated
2	10	CM&SP Railroad Samples Encapsulated	undated
2	11	CM&SP Railroad Samples Encapsulated	undated
3	1	32 Report - Sample	undated
3	2	49 Report - Sample	undated
3	3	Cars Departing Station - Sample	1913-1918
3	4	Conductor Connection Report - Sample	undated
3	5	Conductor Connection Report - Sample	undated
3	6	Conductor Delay Report - Sample	undated
3	7	Correspondence	undated
3	8	Daily Crop and Car Report - Sample	1917
3	9	Diversion Form - Sample	1917
3	10	Foreign Car Disposition - Sample	1913
3	11	Inner-Company Correspondence - Sample	1917
3	12	Load and Empty Report - Sample	undated
3	13	L.P.T. Car Request - Sample	1917
3	14	Operator's Order Blank - Sample	1914
3	15	Report of Cars Arriving - Sample	1917
3	16	Report of Car and Engine Failures - Sample	undated

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
3	17	Telegrams - Sample	1913-1918
3	18	Telegrams - Sample	1913-1918
3	19	Telegrams - Sample	1913-1918
4	1	Telegrams - Sample	1913-1918
4	2	Telegrams - Sample	1913-1918
4	3	Telegraphic Report of Accident - Sample	undated
4	4	Train List - Sample	undated
4	5	Train Order Reports - Sample	undated
4	6	Unloading Tally - Sample	undated
4	7	Work Sheet Madison, SD - Sample	1913