NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY PAPERS
Part I, 1864-1922

Series A:
Board of Directors' Minutes and Corporate Histories

Series B:
Labor

Series C:
Settlement and Development
NOTE ON SOURCES

Materials for this publication were filmed from the originals in the Northern Pacific Railway Company Records held by the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. The series summary sheets and other introductory materials that precede each file within the collection were formulated by the Minnesota Historical Society for use by researchers utilizing the collection in its original form.

This publication is an edited collection. The complete Northern Pacific Railway Company Records include over 12,000 linear feet of material and cover the entire period of the railroad's existence to its 1970 merger with the Great Northern, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, and the Spokane, Portland & Seattle railways to form Burlington Northern, Inc. This publication deals primarily with the Northern Pacific's broad corporate policies, labor relations, and settlement and development activities, from 1864 to the First World War and its immediate aftermath. Files that extend beyond 1923 but which are not too extensive are included. The Northern Pacific Chief of Labor Relations, U.S. Railroad Labor Board Files, 1920–1957, were far too extensive to include here, but a detailed index of that material was filmed as a reference tool for specialists concerned with the labor relations of that period.

NOTE ON MICROFILMING

The file folders for this collection were not filmed. The contents of each folder are in chronological order. However, one should not assume that all of the folders, as a whole, are in correct chronological order. Some folders have "topics" or "subjects," each of which is in its own order. The material was microfilmed as it is filed at the Minnesota Historical Society. We have included file numbers, where available, and the locator numbers.
This collection documents three important aspects of the Northern Pacific's varied activities in the Northwest. The Corporate History section includes the minutes of the Board of Directors, bylaws, financing, and other matters vital to the planning and execution of management's policies, 1864–1945, although most of this material is concerned with the period prior to 1923. Within this section, researchers can trace the succession of the Northern Pacific's managers from the mid-1860s through the railroad's construction phase, the economically troubled 1870s and 1890s, and the Northern Securities period, to the conclusion of the federal government's operation of the railroad during the First World War.

The Labor section documents the experiences of those who worked for the Northern Pacific, 1881–1943, although most of this material is concerned with the period prior to 1923. Both in its construction phase and later, the Northern Pacific opened vast new areas and served as employer of first resort for thousands of laborers. This section details workers' varied experiences from the early 1880s to the period of company unionism that followed in the wake of the 1922 Shopmen’s Strike. Topics included in the collection are wages and working conditions; labor organizations; strikes; the impact of race, ethnicity, and gender in the work force; federal intervention and legislation affecting the railroad; and other related matters.

The Settlement and Development section documents one of the Northern Pacific's principal concerns, 1870–1940, although again, most of this material focuses on the period before 1923. As a land grant railroad and as a major carrier, the Northern Pacific was always concerned with the economic vitality and growth of the territories it serviced. Consequently, the railroad paid close attention and actively promoted agriculture and other industries along its line. The Northern Pacific also launched strenuous campaigns to recruit farmers and others to settle the newly opened lands, while it played an important role in various irrigation and reclamation projects. A final topic documented in this section is the Northern Pacific's role in the development of Yellowstone National Park and the tourist industry.

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Series C: Settlement and Development

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