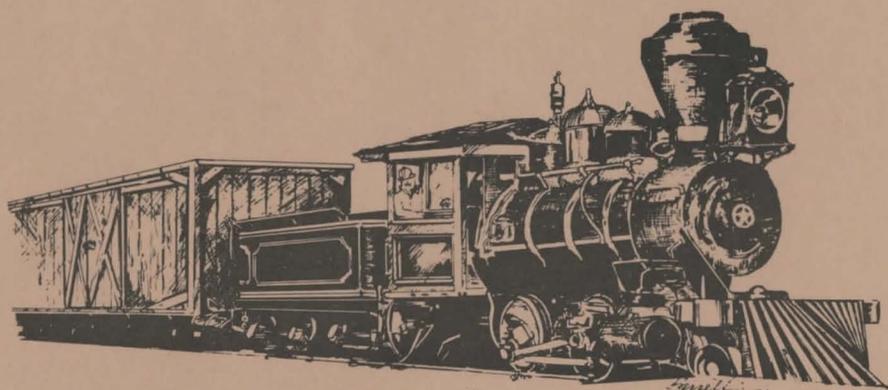


NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY PAPERS Part I, 1864-1922

**Series A:
Board of Directors' Minutes and
Corporate Histories**

**Series B:
Labor**

**Series C:
Settlement and Development**



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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.

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY PAPERS 1864-1922

The Northern Pacific Railway Company was the first transcontinental railroad to traverse the northern tier of states, a territory that included Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Chartered in 1864 by the United States Congress to construct a line from Lake Superior to Puget Sound, the Northern Pacific in return received title to an estimated forty-seven to sixty million acres in alternating sections along its line—the largest land grant ever awarded by the federal government. After a series of unsuccessful attempts, the railroad finally was completed to Tacoma, Washington Territory, in 1883. Forced into receivership on several occasions, it was reorganized in the wake of the Panic of 1893 under the aegis of investment banker J.P. Morgan and James J. Hill of the Great Northern Railway Company, with whom it concluded a final truce and alliance in 1896. In 1901, the Northern Pacific came under the formal control, with the Great Northern and Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroads, of the Northern Securities Company, also controlled by Morgan and Hill as well as by Edward H. Harriman and his allies. When the United States Supreme Court ordered the dissolution of the Northern Securities Company, the Northern Pacific reverted to its former status until the formation of Burlington Northern, Inc., in 1970.

Because of the vast lands the Northern Pacific controlled or claimed under its land grant and because of its fundamentally important role as a carrier and as a pioneer in finance, management, labor relations, and other matters, the Northern Pacific exercised a pivotal influence in the settlement and development of the Northwest. Viewed another way, the Northern Pacific, as an important organization within the railroad industry, was among the very first big businesses in the United States. Consequently, the Northern Pacific, like its counterparts elsewhere, served as a model for corporate enterprise in the industrializing nation.

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.

W. Thomas White

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