

CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

MS 16 GERALD M. BEST COLLECTION

1932-1981. 8 boxes

Consists of correspondence, research notes and copied materials, manuscripts of his publications, rosters, and ephemera. The correspondence relates largely to railroad topics, although some personal correspondence is present. Topics include Best's association with the Golden Spike Centennial Celebration in 1969, the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, the formation of the California State Railroad Museum, and Best's publications. There are also letters to and from other railroad historians, writers, and photographers. The research notes pertain to Best's publications, as well as to other railroad subjects which did not find their way into print. Rosters include those prepared by Best and by others. The manuscripts are typewritten carbon copies. Ephemera includes clippings, brochures, handouts, etc. Patrons are also directed to the following Gerald M. Best collections and materials which have been removed and catalogued separately: published materials, photographs and artifacts.

PROVENANCE Gift of Mrs. Gerald M. (Harriet B.) Best (387-900), 1986

HISTORICAL INFORMATION Railroad historian, writer, and photographer Gerald M. Best was born in 1895 and raised in Port Jervis, New York. While pursuing a career in radio communications and in motion picture sound engineering, Best became active in model railroading and in railroad photography. Beginning in 1948, he restored his own narrow gauge Baldwin plantation locomotive "Olomana" which he operated on Ward Kimball's Grizzly Flats Railroad in Southern California. This engine is now on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Prior to his retirement in 1962, Best wrote two books and a number of articles on railroad history. After retiring, he authored ten other books as well as several pamphlets and articles. His last article appeared posthumously in the Autumn 1985 issue of RAILROAD HISTORY.

Best was active in the Pacific Coast and Southern California Chapters of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society and served as a vice-president of the national organization. He died in 1985.

Bibliography: Arnold S. Menke, "Gerald M. Best's 'Autobiography of a Railfan,'" RAILROAD HISTORY (No. 158, Spring 1988), pp. 14-71.

SERIES SUMMARY

- 1 CORRESPONDENCE
- 2 WRITINGS
- 3 RAILROAD RESEARCH
- 4 ROSTERS
- 5 EPHEMERA

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MS 16 GERALD M. BEST COLLECTION

1932-1981.

1. CORRESPONDENCE

Arranged chronologically for general correspondence. There are also folders containing letters from individuals and on specific subjects. See also Series 2, Writings, for correspondence relating to specific publications, and Series 4, Rosters, for correspondence concerning the development of rosters for specific railroads.

BOX LIST

- Box 1 Folder 1 Gerald M. Best biographical
- Box 1 Folder 2 General correspondence, 1932-1963
- Box 1 Folder 3 General correspondence, 1964-1966
- Box 1 Folder 4 General correspondence, 1967-1968
- Box 1 Folder 5 General correspondence, 1969-1981
- Box 1 Folder 6 General correspondence, Undated and Fragments
- Box 1 Folder 7 Lucius Beebe letters, 1958-1965
- Box 1 Folder 8 C.W. Witbeck correspondence, 1937-1968
- Box 1 Folder 9 Correspondence concerning drawings for replicas of Central Pacific Locomotive No. 60, "Jupiter" and Union Pacific Locomotive No. 119, 1966-1967
- Box 1 Folder 10 Correspondence concerning production of replicas of Central Pacific Locomotive No. 60, "Jupiter" and Union Pacific Locomotive No. 119, October 1976 - January 1978
- Box 1 Folder 11 Correspondence concerning the Golden Spike Centennial Celebration, May 1967 - September 1968
- Box 1 Folder 12 Correspondence concerning the Golden Spike Centennial Celebration, October 1968 - October 1969
- Box 1 Folder 13 Correspondence concerning the Golden Spike Centennial Celebration, February 1970-March 1972; plus Golden Spike Celebration ephemera
- Box 1 Folder 14 Correspondence concerning the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, 1953-1973
- Box 2 Folder 1 Correspondence concerning the California State Railroad Museum, 1967-1976

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CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

MS 16 GERALD M. BEST COLLECTION

1933-1975.

2. WRITINGS

Arranged by title. Includes correspondence relating to Best's publications (arranged chronologically), research notes, research materials (pamphlets, photocopies, etc.), and typed carbon copies of his manuscripts.

BOX LIST

Box 2 Folder 2 General correspondence concerning Gerald M. Best's Publications
Box 2 Folder 3 MINISINK VALLEY EXPRESS, Correspondence, 1933-1955
Box 2 Folder 4 MINISINK VALLEY EXPRESS, Correspondence, undated and fragments
Box 2 Folders 5-11 MINISINK VALLEY EXPRESS, Research notes
Box 2 Folder 12 MINISINK VALLEY EXPRESS, Manuscript
Box 3 Folder 1 SHIPS AND NARROW GAUGE RAILS, Correspondence, 1942-1964
Box 3 Folders 2-3 SHIPS AND NARROW GAUGE RAILS, Research notes
Box 3 Folder 4 SHIPS AND NARROW GAUGE RAILS, Excerpts from Pacific Coast Company
Box 3 Folder 5 SHIPS AND NARROW GAUGE RAILS, Manuscript
Box 3 Folder 6 NEVADA COUNTY NARROW GAUGE, Correspondence, 1963-1965
Box 3 Folder 7 NEVADA COUNTY NARROW GAUGE, Research notes
Box 3 Folder 8 NEVADA COUNTY NARROW GAUGE, Marvin Locke Thesis, "A History of the Nevada County Narrow Gauge R.R."
Box 3 Folder 9 NEVADA COUNTY NARROW GAUGE, Manuscript
Box 4 Folder 1 SNOWFLOW, Correspondence and research notes
Box 4 Folder 2 SNOWFLOW, David L. Joslyn Manuscript "Fighting Snow on the Sierra"
Box 4 Folder 3 SNOWFLOW, Manuscript
Box 4 Folder 4 MEXICAN NARROW GAUGE, Manuscript
Box 4 Folder 5 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Correspondence, April 1966-December 1967
Box 4 Folder 6 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Correspondence, January 1968-December 1970
Box 4 Folder 7 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Correspondence, January 1971-January 1975
Box 4 Folders 8-9 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Research notes
Box 5 Folders 1-3 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Research material
Box 5 Folder 4 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Ephemera
Box 5 Folders 5-6 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Original chapter heading illustrations by Manville B. Wakefield
Box 5 Folder 7 ULSTER AND DELAWARE, Manuscript
Box 5 Folder 8 RAILROADS OF HAWAII, Manuscript
Box 5 Folder 9 SUGAR TRAINS, Book notices
Box 5 Folder 10 "History and Motive Power of the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad" Partial manuscript
Box 5 Folder 11 "Notes on the Writing of Railroad History for the General Reader", Manuscript "Rendez vous at Promontory", Manuscript "The Gravity Railroad of the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company", Manuscript review of DIAGRAMS OF LOCOMOTIVES AND TENDERS OF THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC by Richard K. Wright, Untitled manuscript on the Construction of the Central Pacific Railroad, Manuscript, talk, annual dinner of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Southern California Chapter, March 21, 1967

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CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

MS 16 GERALD M. BEST COLLECTION

3. RAILROAD RESEARCH

Arranged by railroad corporate name or subject, includes notes and other materials on a variety of railroad topics.

BOX LIST

Box 6 Folder 1 Chicago and Alton Railroad, Locomotive diagrams
Box 6 Folder 2 Delaware and Hudson Railroad, Research notes
Box 6 Folder 3 Delaware and Hudson Railroad, Research notes, including: Chateaugay Ore and Iron Company, Plymouth and Wilkes-Barre Railroad and Bridge Company, Cooperstown and Susquehanna Valley Railroad, Schoharie Valley Railroad, Adirondack Railway
Box 6 Folder 4 Ithaca, Auburn and Western Railroad, Research notes
Box 6 Folder 5 New York, Ontario and Western Railway, Research notes
Box 6 Folder 6 Rack and Pinon Railroad / Palmdale-Colton Cutoff, Report
Box 6 Folder 7 Santa Maria Valley Railroad, Research notes
Box 6 Folder 8 Twentieth Century-Fox / Sierra Railroad Motion Pictures, Reports
Box 6 Folder 9 Southern Iron and Equipment Company, Locomotive and car specifications
Box 6 Folder 10 Thomas Goodwin and Company (Virginia Iron Works), Report
Box 6 Folder 11 "Pershing" Class Locomotives, Research notes
Box 6 Folder 12 Logging Railroads of the Southern United States. List of companies
Box 6 Folder 13 Locomotive builders construction records in the collection of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society
Box 6 Folder 14 Boiler tests on the locomotives "Olomana" and "Chloe"
Box 6 Folder 15 Information on Gerald M. Best photographs and photographic techniques
Box 6 Folders 16-17 Miscellaneous notes
Box 6 Folder 18 Java State Railways and Royal State Railways of Siam, Locomotive data
Box 6 Folder 19 Locomotives of the Southern Pacific Company. 1940. 102 pages. Typescript (carbon)
Box 6 Folder 20 Valuation maps of the Southern Pacific Company, Main line, Nevada and Utah
Box 6 Folder 21 Scrapbook of black-and-white and color reproductions of nineteenth-century steam locomotives

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4. ROSTERS

Arranged by railroad corporate name.

BOX LIST

Box 7 Folders 1-2 Cuban plantation railroads rosters
Box 7 Folder 2a Dominican Republic railroad rosters
Box 7 Folder 3 Delaware and Hudson Railroad roster
Box 7 Folder 4 Delaware and Hudson Railroad rosters, including: Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, Chateaugay Railroad, Dannemora Railroad
Box 7 Folder 5 Erie Railroad rosters
Box 7 Folder 6 Texas and Pacific Railway rosters
Box 7 Folders 7-8 Union Pacific Railroad rosters
Box 8 Folder 1 Union Pacific Railroad rosters, including: St. Joseph and Grand Island Railroad, Kansas Pacific Railway, Denver Pacific Railway, Utah Central Railroad, Utah Southern Railroad, San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad / Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad, Colorado and Southern Railway, Denver, South Park and Pacific Railroad, Fort Worth and Denver Railroad, Colorado Central Railroad, Oregon Railway and Navigation Co., Oregon Short Line Railway, St. Joseph and Denver City Railroad, Ilwaco Railway and Navigation Co., Walla Walla and Columbia River Railroad
Box 8 Folder 2 Correspondence regarding rosters of the Union Pacific Railroad and Subsidiary and Affiliated Lines
Box 8 Folder 3 Victoria (Australia) Railway rosters
Box 8 Folder 4 Redwood loggers and steam dummy lines Rosters
Box 8 Folder 5 Don H. Roberts correspondence and rosters, including: Northern Pacific Railway, Northern Pacific Terminal Company, Washington and Columbia River Railway, Willamette Valley and Coast Railroad, Midland Continental Railroad, Duluth Union Depot and Terminal Company, North Yakima and Valley Railway, Clark County Timber Company, St. Paul and Duluth Railroad, Minnesota and International Railway, Detroit, Toledo & Ironton Railroad
Box 8 Folder 6 Miscellaneous rosters

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5. EPHEMERA

BOX LIST

Box 8 Folder 7 Information on Gerald M. Best model railroad equipment
Box 8 Folder 8 Clippings
Box 8 Folders 9-10 Ephemera

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