

**Lake Shore and
Michigan Southern
Railway System
Records
1849-1909**



*Guide to the Scholarly Resources
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Introduction

The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway System was formed in 1869 through the merger of four railroads: the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana; the Cleveland and Toledo; the Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula; and the Buffalo and Erie. These companies provided an unbroken rail route between Chicago, Illinois, and Buffalo, New York.

The Lake Shore's predecessor roads had, in turn, been formed through mergers of a variety of smaller lines, some of which were among the first railroads to be established in Ohio and Indiana. The Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana resulted from the merger of the Michigan Southern Railroad and the Northern Indiana Railroad in 1855. The Michigan Southern's antecedents included the Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad which was chartered in 1837. The Cleveland and Toledo represented the merger of the Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland and the Junction Railroads in 1853. In 1854, the Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula Railroad, which had been completed in 1852, acquired the rights to a railroad between the Ohio State line and Erie, Pennsylvania. This road had been constructed by the Franklin Canal Company. The easternmost portion of the Lake Shore System was comprised of the Buffalo and Erie Railroad which had been formed through the merger of the Buffalo and State Line and the Erie and North East Railroads in 1867. Almost all of the railroads which came to constitute the Lake Shore System were the result of the great interest in railroad construction which characterized the Midwest in the 1830s and 1840s.

Financiers from Cleveland, Ohio, were largely responsible for the creation of the Lake Shore System. However, within several months of merger, the Vanderbilt family of New York City acquired control of the railroad. Though the Lake Shore maintained its headquarters in Cleveland, and though prominent Clevelanders such as Stillman Witt, Amasa Stone, Jr., Henry B. Payne, and Jephtha H. Wade sat on the road's board of directors during the late nineteenth century, the system was dominated by the New York interests. Cornelius and William K. Vanderbilt used the Lake Shore as a connection with their own New York Central and Hudson River Railroad to create a totally controlled railroad linking New York City with Chicago.

By the early 1900s local Cleveland representation had disappeared from the System's board of directors. In late 1914 the Lake Shore was combined with the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad to form the New York Central System. Presently, the Lake Shore route is operated as part of the Conrail system, created in 1976 to manage, among other railroad properties, the lines of the bankrupt Penn-Central Railroad which had been created in 1969 through a merger of the New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads.

Scope and Content

The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway System Records, 1849-1909 consist entirely of financial records of railroads which merged to form the Lake Shore System or were subsidiary to the System. The records include cash books, day books, ledgers; journals, stock ledgers and listing of stock transfers.

The collection is divided into ten series:

Series 1, Buffalo and State Line Railroad Company

Series 2, Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula
Railroad Company

Series 3, Cleveland and Toledo Railroad Company

Series 4, Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley and Pittsburgh
Railroad Company

Series 5, Jamestown and Franklin Railroad
Company

Series 6, Junction Railroad Company

Series 7, Michigan Southern Railroad Company

Series 8, Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana
Railroad Company

Series 9, Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad
Company

Series 10, Unidentified Railroad

Records within any series are arranged alphabetically by their given title (e.g. "Ledger," "Stock Transfer," "Treasurer's Ledger") and then chronologically.

This collection is an important source for the study of the financial management of American railroads during the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of the runs of ledgers, journals and daybooks are fairly complete thereby providing the basis for a detailed analysis of the management of a particular railroad. Journal entries provide information concerning the types of supplies used by the railroads as well as the salaries paid to various personnel. By themselves, the records are an excellent example of accounting technique as practiced during the nineteenth century.

The materials relating to stock ownership are of particular value in that they provide the names of individuals and companies which invested in the railroad industry. Many of the names listed in such records are of individuals prominent in cities such as Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York. Because governmental regulations concerning the ownership and management of railroads were minimal during the mid-nineteenth century, these records and the collection in general, provide information not available in other archival or printed sources.

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