

Archive
Lakeshore Museum Center
Grand Trunk Car Ferry Collection Finding Aid

Collection: Grand Trunk Car Ferry Collection

Object ID Number: 2012.054.001

Location: LMC Archive, Room 204 Shelf K 2 Box E

Dates: 1961-1984

Quantity: 6 Legal Sized Folders

Restrictions: Restricted Materials in Car Ferry Abandonment Series, 3 Pages Total

Abstract: This small collection provides researchers with information about the Grand Trunk Car Ferry service in the last years of its operation. The collection also provides researchers with a better understanding of the policies of Grand Trunk and the union Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, and the events that led to Grand Trunk ending car ferry service across Lake Michigan. In addition, this collection provides a glimpse into Mildred Mape's career and the how the Car Ferry Abandonment affected her position.

Historical Information: The Grand Trunk Western Railroad began a car ferry service where railroad cars were loaded onto steamships and shipped across Lake Michigan. This service allowed Grand Trunk to avoid railroads in the Chicago area, which was often congested, and began in 1902 with the Crosby Transportation Company. In 1905, the Grand Trunk Milwaukee Car Ferry Company was created after Grand Trunk acquired Crosby's interest. Several decades later, in 1927, Grand Trunk Railroad recognized Muskegon's potential as a car ferry terminal. Grand Trunk took over a large percentage of the Muskegon Railway and Navigation Company on Belt Line. The Belt Line had a terminal on the foot of McCracken Street, which used to be the site of the Stimson, Fay, and Company sawmill. Belt Line had planned on organizing a car ferry service to Milwaukee again in 1919.

One of the appealing aspects of reopening a car ferry terminal in Muskegon was the size of Muskegon Lake; in previous years the Grand Trunk ships had a difficult time maneuvering in Grand Haven's harbor. The Muskegon Lake had both the size and the depth to accommodate large ships. The Grand Trunk Car Ferry service between Muskegon and Milwaukee began July 17, 1933, which was the first car ferry service to operate from Muskegon since the ending of the Pere Marquette service at Port Sherman in 1906. In July of 1933, Grand Trunk moved three car ferries from Grand Haven to Muskegon: *City of Milwaukee*, *Grand Rapids*, and *Madison*. All three car ferries completed three round trips across Lake Michigan every day of the week, all year long, and they could accommodate up to 26 freight cars in their holds.

All three of the above car ferries were relatively new when service from Muskegon to Milwaukee began. The *City of Milwaukee* was built in 1931 by the Manitowoc Shipbuilding

Company, the *Grand Rapids* was built in 1926, and the *Madison* was built in 1927. The car ferries were built to break their way through frozen lakes in order to maintain operation year-round, and they had reinforced bows capable of crushing ice. The one problem the car ferries encountered was being stuck in the ice if they were forced to slow down.

Grand Trunk worked to improve the car ferry service and decrease costs, and in the 1940s they replaced coal with fuel oil. Years later, Grand Trunk eliminated passenger service in 1971, in an effort to further cut costs, although the company continued to experience financial difficulties. The Grand Trunk Car Ferry continued service from Muskegon to Milwaukee until 1978, when the company decided to abandon car ferry service across Lake Michigan. In addition to financial concerns, Grand Trunk decided to end the car ferry service due to improvements in Chicago's railway system and more powerful diesel locomotive engines.

The Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express, and Station Employees, known in this collection as Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks (BRSC), was founded in 1899. This organization was the largest railroad organization in the nation that focused on employees in mostly clerical positions, or employees who spent the majority of their time with clerical functions. The Grand Lodge was in charge of officially running BRSC, with both judicial and legislative roles. The Grand Lodge met once annually and BRSC members were assigned membership cards and were responsible for paying dues. The Durand Lodge, under the Grand Lodge, was located in the city of Durand and ran the local union branch. Mildred Mapes was a member of the Durand Lodge of the BRSC and the Grand Lodge name is on her membership cards.

Mildred A. Wood was born on May 28, 1922 in Detroit, Michigan to Rolla and Alma Wood. She moved to Muskegon as a young girl after her mother died. She graduated from Muskegon High School in 1941. Mildred married Ralph W. Mapes on June 18, 1949 in South Bend, Indiana. The couple returned to Muskegon and Mildred worked as a clerk and executive secretary for the Grand Trunk Car Ferry for fourteen years. She was a member of the union Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, Durand Lodge. Mildred and Ralph had three sons, David, Michael, and Brian. She died on October 6, 2004 and she is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

Scope and Contents: This collection is organized into the following six series: Membership, Publications, Personnel, Car Ferry Abandonment, Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks, and General Information.

The Membership series includes three membership cards that belonged to Mildred Mapes, member of the Durand Lodge No. 994 from 1972 to 1976; six membership cards to the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, and Steamship Clerks, Grand Trunk Lodge No. 354 from 1961 to 1970, including the stamps received for paid dues; two receipts for dues paid in April 1968, and April 1962; and a withdrawal card regarding membership for the Durand Lodge No. 994, 1978.

The Publications series contains three newsletters and magazines “Railway Clerk Interchange,” February 1974 and May and August 1975; a newsletter “GT Reporter” for November 1978; and clippings from newsletters regarding Grand Trunk issues and concerns, 1973 and 1978.

The Personnel series includes agreements between the Grand Trunk Western Railroad Company and the Brotherhood of Railway, Airline, Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, and Express and Station Employees, 1973, which includes rules, expectations, policies, and other information for employees; articles of agreement which explains which of a carrier’s employees are “protected employees” and an explanation of status, 1964, 43 pages; a Railroad Retirement and Survivors Benefits booklet, February 1984, which describes benefits, information about disability, and other information about retirement for employees and their dependents; a memorandum of agreement for protecting vacancies, with information about policies and changes, 1970; and a small booklet explaining employee benefits, titled “If You Work for a Railroad.”

The Car Ferry Abandonment series includes information about the Grand Trunk’s abandonment of car ferry service across Lake Michigan, and contains: papers detailing the abolishment of positions, with one brief page each on unlicensed positions such as deck officer and marine engineer, and is specific for the termination of the car ferry *City of Milwaukee*, November 1, 1978; papers titled “Answers of Applicant Grand Trunk to Interrogatories of Protestant United Transportation Union” which details the employees to be laid off, salary rate, contract details with information about agreements prior to the abandonment, September 1977; papers detailing the decision to end Lake Michigan car ferry operations with background information, a “case for abandonment” with fiscal information detailing the revenue and loss from the service, west and eastbound operations, discussions about the abandonment decision, appendices with statistical information, notices and correspondence, and correspondence with recommendations regarding the car ferry abandonment; RESTRICTED materials include a list of employees affected by the car ferry abandonment, includes information about salaries, severance information, and name of employee, materials restricted due to Social Security numbers. The restricted materials are placed at the front of the folder and include 3 items total.

The Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks (BRSC) series includes correspondence sent to Mildred Mapes regarding her dues in 1961; notice of assessment about the 1978 strike and dues; agreements between BRSC and Grand Trunk; correspondence about dues in 1971; two copies of the Constitution of the Grand Lodge, statutes and protective laws of BRSC, one copy was printed in 1963 and the other copy is not dated.

The General Information series contains papers detailing Operation Float Bridge, from Muskegon to Milwaukee, February 3, 1965; a 1978 directory for Grand Trunk; a 1969 calendar card; and papers about the Grand Trunk Railport, which were new intermodal services in Chicago, April 1975.

Arrangement: This collection belonged to Mildred A. Mapes and was donated by one of her heirs. There was no clear original order and this collection was arranged into logical series and in a manner that best anticipated researchers’ needs.

Contents:

Series 1: Membership

Dates: 1961-1978

Series 2: Publications

Dates: 1973-1978

Series 3: Personnel

Dates: 1964-1984

Series 4: Car Ferry Abandonment

Dates: 1977-1978

Series 5: Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks

Dates: 1961-1971, undated

Series 6: General Information

Dates: 1965-1978