

Vermont Central Railroad Records, 1849-1880

MSA 182 & MS Size C

Introduction

This 125-document collection consists primarily of freight tonnage records and division allowance reports between 1849-1880. Railroads involved include the Vermont Valley, the Sullivan County (N.H.), Hartford and New Haven, Northern, Cheshire, and Vermont Central. The collection was purchased by the Vermont Historical Society from Charles Apfelbaum, Rare Books & Collections, 39 Flower Road, Valley Stream, NY 11581, in 1989 (ms. acc. no. 89.16).

Agency History

The Vermont Central Railroad, initially planned to connect Windsor with Burlington, was built between 1845-1849. Charles Paine, the first president of the Vermont Central, used his political clout to ensure a route through his hometown of Northfield, rather than along a shorter and flatter route through Williamstown. His successful insistence on this route produced great dissension among the board of directors, and consternation from those in Barre and (particularly) Montpelier, which were bypassed by the selected route. The branch line which was to be built into those communities was not viewed as a satisfactory solution, and many former backers of the venture withdrew their financial support.

Construction of the 116 mile line was at a considerable cost; the general contractor, Sewall F. Belknap, eventually defaulted and the construction was completed by other contractors. Charles Paine was personally brought to financial ruin as well. The total cost of constructing and equipping the railroad exceeded \$4.1 million.

During construction of the Vermont Central, plans were moving forward for construction of a Vermont link between Burlington and Montreal. John Smith of St. Albans was the president of that railroad, called the Vermont & Canada, and it was completed in 1864 to the Canadian border. Charles Paine was on the board of directors of the Vermont & Canada. By 1853, public disclosure of Paine's financial dealings resulted in his being voted out of office. Troubles occurred within the management of the Vermont & Canada about this time as well. However, John Smith ultimately gained control of both lines, and pursued an aggressive plan of expansion of his holdings. By the time of its name change to the Central Vermont Railroad in 1873, his company (by that time managed by his sons, John Gregory Smith and Worthington C. Smith) controlled 793 miles of track in four states, making it the largest railroad in New England, and seventh largest in the US.

Scope and Content

Most of the documents in this collection are freight tonnage records and division allowance reports between 1849-1880. The collection contains an agreement between the

Northern Railroad and the Sullivan Railroad stipulating management and competition practices for passengers and freight within Mass. and R.I. There is a legal document selling the capital stock of the Sullivan Co. Railroad to the Vt. Valley Railroad Co. of 1871. There are conductors' waybills, lumber earnings, risk account statements, bills and other financial records. As noted, much of the collection concerns freight tonnage payments.

Related Collections

See the VHS catalog for information about the Central Vermont Railroad and the Cheshire Railroad. There may also be photos and/or posters in their respective collections in the VHS library. The J. Gregory Smith Papers (MS 84) include some records of the Vermont Central Railroad.

Inventory

I. Legal Agreements

MSA 182:1 Legal agreements

II. Freight Records

MS Size C Freight with Vermont Valley Railroad, 1856
MSA 182:2 Northern N.H. Freight transported over Vermont Central
 lines, 1875
MS Size D Cheshire R.R. Co. freight reports to Sullivan R.R. Co.,
 1856
MS Size C Freight account, Ogdensburg to Vt. Central R.R., Oct.
 1863-Sept. 1864

III. Lumber Accounts

MSA 182:3 Vt. Valley Railroad, 1856

IV. Other Financial Documents

MSA 182:4 Sullivan R.R. conductors' waybills, 1850-1851
MS Size D Vt. Central R.R. accounts due on Sullivan R.R. cars, 1856
MS Size D Various bills and financial data
MSA 182:5 Risk on Vt. Central passengers, 1867-71, various months

V. Miscellaneous

MSA 182:6 Miscellaneous documents

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