

Tracing Your Ancestor Who Worked on the Railroad in Michigan

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French-Canadian Heritage Society of
Michigan

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Lecture on the Web

- The PowerPoint slides and the Microsoft Word bibliography for this lecture will be posted on my website for your convenience
- Please point your browser to:
<http://habitant.org>
- Click on the Tracing Your Ancestor Who Worked on the Railroad in Michigan, [PowerPoint presentation](#) and [Microsoft Word bibliography](#) links

American Railroads

- At its peak in the early 20th century, railroads employed 2.25 million people
- It was one of the largest employers in the country
- Most commercial and passenger traffic was carried by rail
- Railroads built America and bound the country together by ribbons of track
- Your family would indeed be rare if it had no relatives who worked for the railroads

Railroad Workers

- Just about every ethnic group would have worked for the railroads
- However, in my research, I have noticed a heavy concentration of Irish and many French Canadians in northern Michigan working for the railroads

Job Titles

- Conductor
- Brakeman
- Engineer
- Fireman
- Hostler
- Station Agent
- Yard Master
- Section Hand
- Others

Railroad Slang

- The railroad workers used a slang rich in number and colorful
- Example: Gandy dancer, that is, a track layer
- Source to help understand the slang:
 - “Railroad Language—Lingo—Dictionary,” available at <http://www.catskillarchive.com/rrextra/glossry1.Html>
 - Holmes, Glenn. “Railroad Terminology, Slang, and Definitions.” Available at <http://www.brs72.org/BRS-RRTALK.html>

Great Resource

- *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*
- Contains informative introductory essays, numerous articles, and a detailed glossary

Tracing Railroaders

- As usual in other types of research, it is easy to trace the wealthy and powerful involved in railroading
- For all others, tracing railroad workers depends on the records that have survived
- After 1936 it is easy to trace most railroad workers because of the Railroad Retirement Board
- Before 1936 it is more problematic, but not impossible

Filling in the Details

- Once you know the railroad your ancestor worked for you can learn more about the company
- Although personnel records might be limited or missing, you can still learn a lot about your ancestor's job and workplace through other records

Railroad Magnates

- If you have an ancestor who was a major player with the railroads, then consult the following:
 - *Biographic Directory of the Railway Officials of America*. New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Co., irregularly published 1885, 1887, [1893], 1896, [1901], 1906, 1913, 1922
 - The 1893 edition is available on <http://books.google.com>
 - Later editions carried the title *Who's Who in Railroading in America*, 1930, 1940, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1959, 1964, [1968] and *Who's Who in Railroading and Rail Transit*, 1971, 1977, 1983, 1985

After 1936

- The federal Railroad Retirement Acts passed during the New Deal (1934, 1935, and 1937) established the Railroad Retirement Board
- Separate block of Social Security numbers reserved for railroad workers, namely, 700-728
- The Railroad Retirement Board has records for railroad workers after 1935 only, *nothing for workers who died in 1935 or earlier*
- Does not include workers on street, interurban, or suburban electric railways

Railroad Retirement Board

Contact Information

- Contact:

U. S. Railroad Retirement Board
Congressional Inquiry Section
844 North Rush St.
Chicago, IL 60611-2092
(877) 772-5772

- <http://www.rrb.gov/mep/genealogy.asp>

Contacting the Railroad Retirement Board

- The records are filed by Social Security number
- Must have the following information to retrieve a file:
 - Person's Social Security number
 - If Social Security number not available, then you need to give them:
 - Person's full name including middle name or initial
 - Birth date
 - Death date
- If your ancestor has a common name, then it is best that you find a Social Security number before contacting the Railroad Retirement Board
- There is a non-refundable \$27 search fee

Railroad Retirement Board: Record Information

- Application for participation in Railroad Retirement
- Statement(s) of railroad service
- Application for employee annuity
- Description and certification of eligibility
- Record of Service for which no records are available
- Certificate of termination of service
- Death certificate of employee
- Notice of death and statement of compensation

Note: An individual file might be missing one or more of these forms

Example Railroad Retirement Board Document

- Do not have a Michigan example
- Will borrow my wife's grandfather, William Luther Curtis, for this example
- He worked for the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad, otherwise known as the Katy
- He retired in 1971 as a locomotive engineer

Form AA-15
Adopted August 1938

MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS
RAILROAD COMPANY

THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD, WASHINGTON, D.C.

READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE FILLING OUT THIS FORM

Do not write in this space

EMPLOYEE'S STATEMENT OF COMPENSATED SERVICE RENDERED PRIOR TO JANUARY 1, 1937, TO EMPLOYERS UNDER THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT ACT OF 1937.

This statement is not an application for an annuity but will be preserved for use in connection with annuity applications based in whole or in part on service prior to January 1, 1937. Under the Railroad Retirement Act of 1937 service prior to January 1, 1937, can be credited toward an annuity only for individuals who on August 29, 1935, were in the active compensated service of or in an employment relation to an employer under that Act. Only such individuals should fill out this form. Individuals who have already provided the Board with a record of service prior to January 1, 1937, need not fill out this form.

1. Social Security Account No. 702-18-7420

2. Name William Luther Curtis 3. Race White
(PRINT) (First) (Middle) (Last)
Address 2501 Kennedy Parsons Labette Kansas 4. Sex Male
(Street and number) (Town or city) (County) (State) (Male or female)
5. Date of birth Oct. 8th 1890 6. Place of birth Pickwick Hardin Tennessee
(Month) (Day) (Year) (PRINT) (Town or city) (County) (State)
7. Father's Walter Houston Curtis Mother's Manny Bella Pattles
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name) (First name) (Middle name) (Maiden last name)

8. Were you on August 29, 1935, in the active compensated service of an employer under the Act? YES If not, were you
(Yes or no) (Yes or no)
or August 29, 1935: on furlough and ready and willing to serve? ; on leave of absence? ; or absent
(Yes or no) (Yes or no) (Yes or no)
on account of sickness or disability? (Yes or no)

9. Statement of service prior to January 1, 1937, for all employers under the Act. (Use a separate block for each employer. Start with a new line of entries within the block only when your occupation changed, or your location changed, or when you resumed service after a break of three calendar months or more. If you need more blocks use the back of this form.)

(a) Chicago Rock Island & Pacific R.R. W.L. Curtis
(Name of employer under the Act) (Your pay-roll name)

OCCUPATION	DATE BEGAN		DATE ENDED		DEPARTMENT	LOCATION OR DIVISION
	Month	Year	Month	Year		
Enginehouse laborer	Oct.	1910	Dec.	1910	Mechanical	Warrika, Oklahoma

(b) Missouri Kansas Texas of Texas W.L. Curtis
(Name of employer under the Act) (Your pay-roll name)

OCCUPATION	DATE BEGAN		DATE ENDED		DEPARTMENT	LOCATION OR DIVISION
	Month	Year	Month	Year		
Enginehouse laborer	Sept.	1911	Nov.	1912	Mechanical	Hillshoro, Texas
Locomotive Fireman	Nov.	1912	July	1917	Operating	Hillshoro, Texas

(Additional blocks are provided on the back of this form)

Date October 20 1939
(Day) (Year)

(Signed) W.L. Curtis
(Sign in ink or indelible pencil—do not print)

DO NOT DELAY!!!

- There is a policy on the books to destroy these records 30 years after the last payment
- Some records were destroyed in the 1960s and 1970s
- This policy appears to be on hold for now, but could be restarted
- Ask for the records now!!!

Before 1936

- Company personnel records, usually not saved, but depends on the company, always worth investigating
- Often at historical societies
 - Local historical societies
 - Regional historical societies
 - Railroad technical and historical societies
- Must know the history of your ancestor's railroad

Railroad Genealogy

- There have been thousands of railroads operating in America
- Overtime the railroads have gone out of business or merged
- In Michigan we are fortunate to have Meints' *Michigan Railroads & Railroad Companies*
 - Extensive registry of all railroads that operated in Michigan
 - Has “genealogical” tables showing the merger of railroads

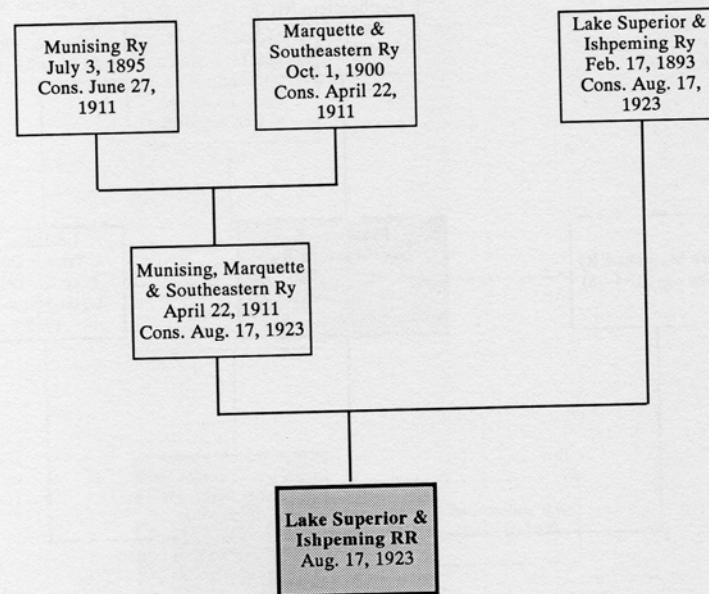
Railroads Today

- Railroads are divided into classes based on operating revenue
- In 1932 there were 132 Class I railroads
- Because of company failures and mergers, today there are only a handful of large Class I railroads in North America:
 - BNSF (Burlington Northern Santa Fe) Railway
 - CSX Transportation
 - Kansas City Southern Railway
 - Norfolk Southern Railway
 - Union Pacific
 - Canadian National Railway
 - Canadian Pacific Railway

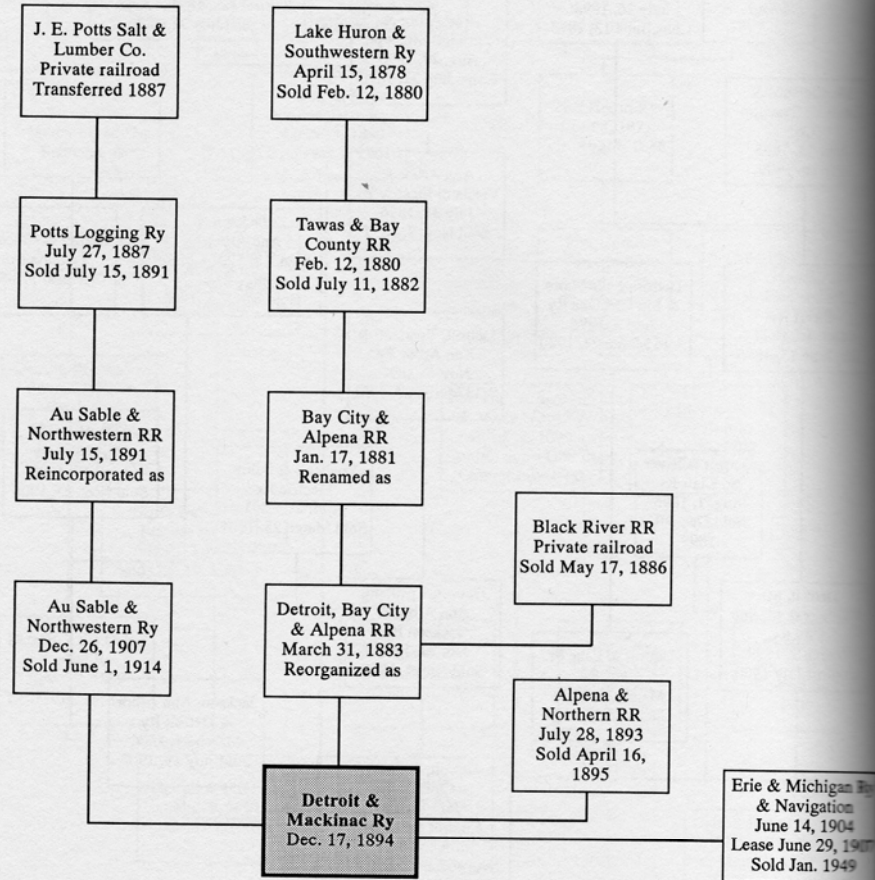
Example of Railroad Genealogy

- Lake Superior & Ishpheming Railroad
- Detroit and Mackinac Railway
- Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railroad
- There are many more complex railroad genealogies in Meints' *Michigan Railroads & Railroad Companies*, for example, the Grand Trunk Western table

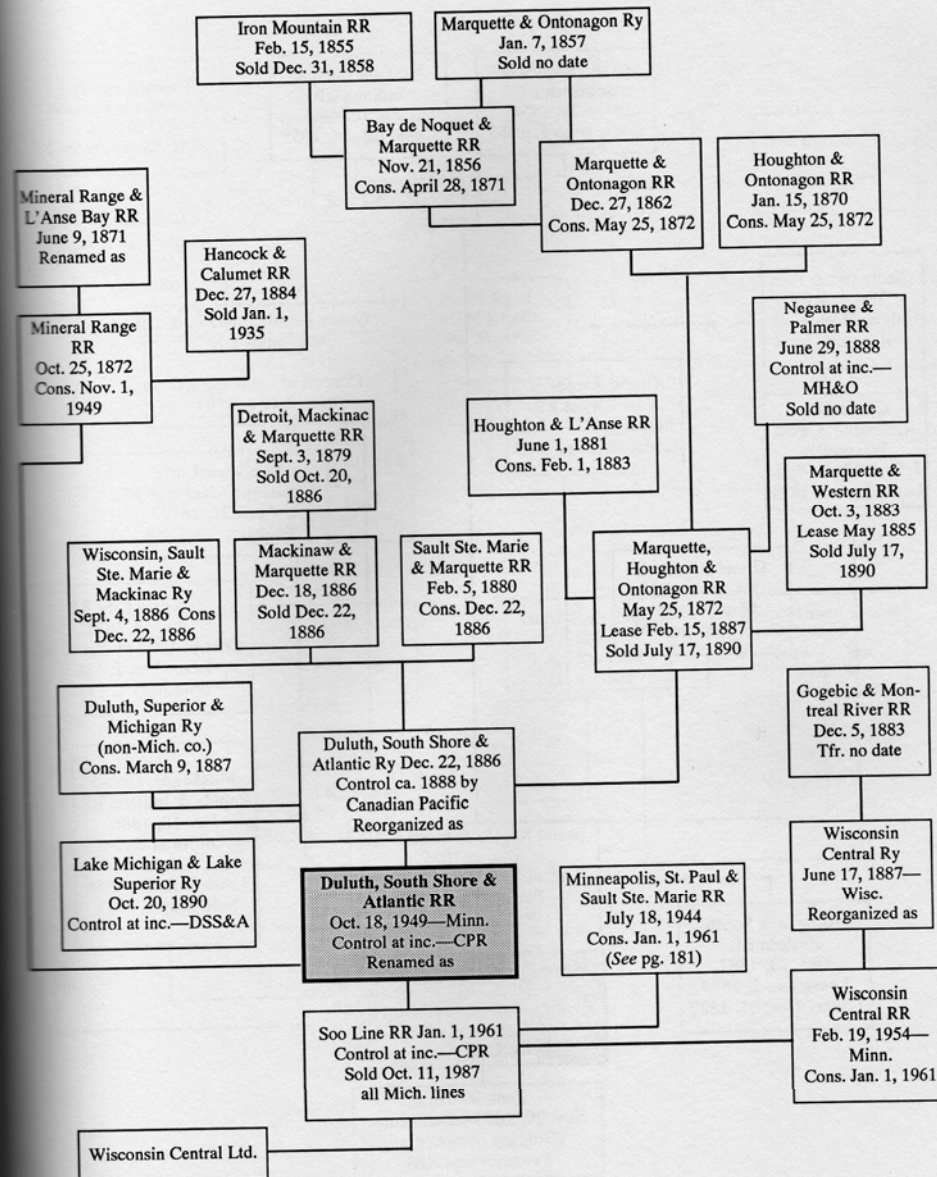
LAKE SUPERIOR & ISHPEMING



DETROIT & MACKINAC



DULUTH, SOUTH SHORE & ATLANTIC



Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway Example

- In 1949 the Mineral Range Railroad was merged with the Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway
- In 1961 the DSS&A and the Wisconsin Central Railroad merged with the Soo Line (Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad)
- In 1987 the Soo Line sold its Michigan lines to the Wisconsin Central Ltd.
- In 2001 the Wisconsin Central Ltd. merged with Canadian National Railway
- Most of DSS&A surviving records are with the Soo Line Historical and Technical Society and not with Canadian National Railway

Tools for Tracing Railroads and Workers

- Company records
- Published histories
- Articles in railroad and modeling magazines
- Regional, state, and local historical societies
- Railroad technical and historical societies
- Manuscript collections

Company Records

- If they survive and you can locate them and gain access, then you might find they include the following:
 - Employment applications
 - Surgeon's certificates
 - General employment files (which, by law, can be destroyed after fifty years)
 - History cards
 - Miscellaneous records
- These records are usually not indexed, better to visit the archives to search in person

Finding Technical and Historical Societies

- “Railroad Clubs/Historical Societies,” available at
<http://www.michiganrailroads.com/MichRRs/ClubsSocieties/ClubsMenu.htm>
- This is an extensive list of railroad related societies in Michigan.
- It is important that you know what railroad your ancestor’s railroad is now associated with to find the correct society

Published Histories

- Just about every railroad has one or more published histories
- Check WorldCat to locate these histories
- Available at <http://www.worldcat.org>
- The books by George H. Drury has short summaries of railroads, their history, and maps of their routes (currently out of print, but hopefully Kalmbach will bring out new editions)

Railroad and Modeling Magazines

- Kalmbach publishes
 - Trains
 - Classic Trains
 - Model Railroader
- There are many other specialty railroad publications
- Many historical and technical societies publish magazines dedicated to specific railroads

Finding Manuscript Collections

- Best place to find manuscripts relating to railroads is the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections
- It is available at <http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc>

Railroad Maps

- Yenne's *Atlas of North American Railroads*
- *Rand McNally Handy Railroad Atlas of the United States*, several editions published since the 1940s
- Walker's *SPV's Comprehensive Railroad Atlas of North America*, go to <http://www.steam-powered-video.co.uk/atlasses.shtml> for details of regions

Interstate Commerce Commission Railroad Valuation Records

- Huge inventory of railroad assets to determine freight and passenger rates
- Most records created between 1915 and 1920
- Records contains:
 - Map of route
 - Description of the company
 - Connections to other roads
 - Characteristics of the country
 - Detailed list of locomotives, freight cars, passenger cars, and other equipment
- Available at the National Archives in Records of the Interstate Commerce Commission, Record Group 134, specifically as 134.5 Records of the Bureau of Valuation, 1910-1974

Example of Map from an ICC Valuation Report





Accident Reports

- “Michigan Railroad Returns” in the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Railroads of the State of Michigan* has brief mentions by date of accidents
- Railroad Accident Reports, 1911-1984 at the National Archives, Records of the Federal Railroad Administration, Record Group 399
- It appears that most of the accident records at the National Archives are from 1947 and on

Example Accident Reports

TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES.

Sleeping, drawing-room and palace car companies.

What sleeping, drawing-room, chair or other palace passenger cars, not the exclusive property of your own or some other railroad company, have, during the year, been in use on your road in the State of Michigan, and on what terms? If rented by you, or allowed mileage between local points in this state, what was the amount paid for the use of such cars during the period under report?

Pullman Co., Chicago, Ill. \$1,938 83

Fast freight lines.

To what fast freight lines or other transportation companies, running cars upon your road, not the exclusive property of any railroad company paying taxes in this State, upon its gross receipts have you paid car mileage or car rentals for the use of each car, while in use for traffic between local points in this State and what was the amount of such car rental or mileage paid?

We are unable to furnish this information for Michigan separately; the figures given below represent amounts paid private car lines for use of their cars over the entire line.

American Steel & Wire Co., Chicago.....	\$0 17
Armour Car Lines, Chicago.....	494 35
Arms Palace Horse Car Co., Chicago.....	5 35
A. Booth & Co., Chicago.....	83 66
Chicago Refrigerator Car Co., Chicago.....	3 39
Cold Blast Transportation Co., Chicago.....	109 50
Dairy Shippers' Despatch, Chicago.....	60
Doud Stock Car Co., Chicago.....	21 34
German American Car Lines, Chicago.....	1 00
Johnson Automatic Refrig. Line, Chicago.....	94
Mather Horse & Stock Car Co., Chicago.....	39 29
Menasha Wooden Ware Co., Chicago.....	2 90
Missouri River Desp. Trans. Co., Chicago.....	43
Morris & Co., Refrigerator Line, Chicago.....	139 13
National Car Line, Chicago.....	286 80
Provision Dealers' Despatch, Chicago.....	8 95
Santa Fe Refrig. Desp. Co., Chicago.....	15 20
Stark's Heater Car Co., Chicago.....	2 12
Street's Western Stable Car Line, Chicago.....	87 80
Swift Refrigerator Line, Chicago.....	1,470 72
American Refrigerator Trans. Co., St. Louis, Mo.....	10 16
North & South Rolling Stock Co., St. Louis, Mo.....	10 14
Venice Transportation Co., St. Louis, Mo.....	4 20
American Tank Line, Cleveland.....	51 41
Peerless Tank Line, Cleveland.....	1 26
Merchants' Desp. Transp. Co., New York.....	241 67
W. J. Rainey Co., New York.....	11 60
Union Tank Line, New York.....	56 47
Cudahy Milwaukee Refrig. Line, Milwaukee.....	797 15
Milwaukee Refrig. Trans. Co., Milwaukee.....	257 32
Union Refrig. Trans. Co. of Wis., Milwaukee.....	179 64
Jamison Coal & Coke Co., Pittsburgh, Pa.....	89
Pittsburgh Coal Co., Pittsburgh, Pa.....	4 93
American Oil Works Co., Titusville, Pa.....	63
Titusville Oil Works, Titusville, Pa.....	63
Black River Trans. Co., Poplar Bluff, Mo.....	2 04
Buckeye Trans. Co., Cincinnati, O.....	21
Chicago, New York & Boston Refrig. Co., Boston, Mass.....	10 74
Continental Fruit Express, Los Angeles, Cal.....	8 89
Craig Oil Co., Toledo, O.....	63
Cudahy Packing Co., So. Omaha, Neb.....	68 39
Duluth Brewing & Malting Co., Duluth, Minn.....	2 64
Empire Line, Philadelphia, Pa.....	171 00
Fox River Desp. Co., St. Charles, Ill.....	2 87
Freedom Oil Works Co., Freedom, Pa.....	21
Imperial Oil Co., Buffalo, N. Y.....	82
Independent Refining Co., Oil City, Pa.....	21
Kingan Refrigerator Line, Indianapolis, Ind.....	2 86
Michigan Iron Co., Detroit, Mich.....	1 41
Solvay Process Co., Syracuse, N. Y.....	4 87
Southern Desp. Lbr. Line, Springfield, Ill.....	56
National Despatch Line, St. Albans, Vt.....	23 52

REPORTS OF ACCIDENTS FOR MICHIGAN DURING THE YEAR, 1905.

KILLED.

January 8, F. Hasenbeufel, trespasser, Negaunee. Run over and instantly killed. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 March 4, Aug. Murto, trespasser, Germ. Run over by night train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 April 5, Sam Alto, trespasser, Germ. Run over by night train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 April 17, Lock Hages, trespasser, Trout Creek. Stealing ride, fell between cars and run over; lack of caution.
 April 17, Wm. Monahan, trespasser, Bagdad. Trespassing on tracks and run over; lack of caution.
 June 12, M. Shea, switchman, Negaunee. Run over by partly derailed car; accidental.
 June 19, E. Lu Page, trespasser, Chassell. Run over by train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 June 19, J. F. O'Neill, trespasser, Negaunee. Rolled under train in jumping from passenger train; lack of caution.

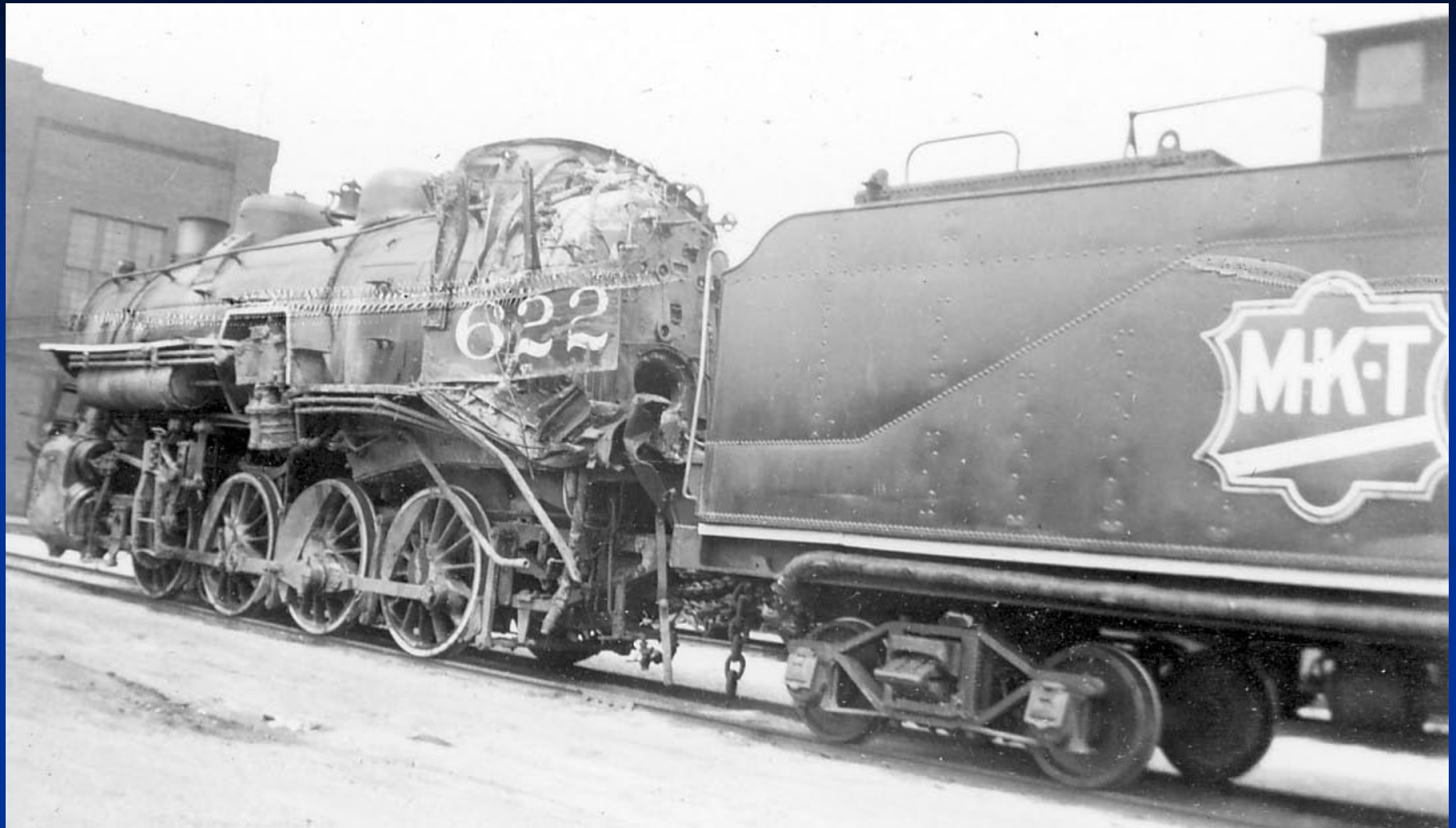
July 5, H. Brodeur, trespasser, Shingleton. Run over by train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 July 8, Mike Wooke, trespasser, Covington. Run over by train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 July 24, Peter Johnson, trespasser, Negaunee. Run over by train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 October 3, Albert Eddy, trespasser, Eagle Mills. Asleep on track and run over by night train; lack of caution.
 October 9, T. C. Koehm, trespasser, Lake Gogebic. Lying on track and run over by night train; lack of caution.
 October 10, Thos. Spencer, trespasser, Three Lakes. Stealing ride, fell under train and run over; lack of caution.
 October 28, Chas. Johnson, trespasser, Deerton. Asleep on track, intoxicated, and run over; lack of caution.
 November 25, E. Berg, trespasser, Bagdad. Supposed to have committed suicide by placing head on rail between moving cars.
 December 14, John Cavel, trespasser, Lake Gogebic. Lying on track and run over. Intoxicated; lack of caution.

INJURED.

January 11, P. McNamara, fireman, Houghton. Leg of warehouse truck fell on foot; lack of caution.
 February 9, C. V. Oberg, brakeman, Sidnaw. Fell from caboose; lack of caution.
 February 21, O. A. King, brakeman, L'Anse. Cut wrist with lantern globe; accidental.
 February 27, Jerry Grant, boilermaker, Marquette. Struck in eye with splinter from hammer; accidental.
 February 21, Matt. Devine, citizen, Negaunee. Rig collided with train at street crossing; lack of caution.
 March 7, Jas. McHugh, switchman, St. Ignace. Fell while boarding moving train; lack of caution.
 March 10, H. Vaudrin, laborer, Houghton. Piece of freight fell on toe; accidental.
 March 16, C. W. Leas, laborer, Clarksburg. Muscles of arm severely sprained while pulling bolt with claw bar; accidental.
 April 7, J. Kapporen, car repairer, Marquette. Finger lacerated unloading material; lack of caution.
 April 20, Chas. Wenzel, clerk, St. Ignace. Finger crushed while handling freight; accidental.
 April 21, Jacob Graft, machinist, Marquette. Finger crushed while turning piece of metal; accidental.
 April 29, John Stanton, switchman, Houghton. Coupling; accidental.
 May 4, Mike Fahey, laborer, Three Lakes. Rail fell on foot; lack of caution.
 May 19, John Bone, wrecking foreman, Nestoria. Trunk fell on foot; accidental.
 June 15, A. Seidberg, laborer, Nestoria. Fell from car; accidental.
 June 22, P. J. Dunn, brakeman, McMillan. Foot run over in attempting to board moving train; accidental.
 July 11, John Grene, car repairer, St. Ignace. Switch engine ran into car under which he was working. Scalp wound; lack of caution.
 August 3, D. Cumberland, woodsman, Dollarville. Struck by train while sitting asleep on station platform. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 August 4, Frank Cox, brakeman, Michigamme. Fell from caboose; accidental.
 August 11, J. W. McComble, machinist, Marquette. Finger cut off while using shears for cutting iron; accidental.
 August 17, F. Litchard, brakeman, Eckerman. Fell in attempting to board moving train; accidental.
 August 17, John Harris, laborer, Marquette. Foot bruised while loading ash pan; accidental.
 August 24, Geo. Molby, fireman, Au Train. Leg injured in collision; lack of caution.
 August 25, Jos. Sullivan, engineer, Marquette. Fell into ash pit; accidental.
 September 7, Oscar Huber, switchman, Houghton. Fell from car; accidental.
 September 8, Chas. Cleary, fireman, Marquette. Caught between engine and door frame of round house; lack of caution.
 September 14, Jas. Bye, machinist, Marquette. Hand crushed by being caught between set screw and frame of machine; lack of caution.
 September 16, C. Christianson, laborer, Trout Creek. Struck by piece of metal which broke off a spike maul being used by fellow laborer. He died four days after. Accidental.
 October 5, A. St. Louis, switchman, Marquette. Coupling; lack of caution.
 October 12, Jacob Smith, car repairer, Marquette. Let coupler fall on his leg; accidental.
 October 21, Sam Hill, trespasser, Marquette. Caught between cars and wall. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 November 15, Pat Donovan, brakeman, Carp Siding. Coupling; lack of caution.
 November 20, Pat McGraw, brakeman, Eagle Mills. Foot run over in attempting to board moving train; lack of caution.
 November 21, J. Gustavson, trespasser, Carp Siding. Struck by train. Intoxicated; lack of caution.
 November 30, Geo. Brisson, switchman, Marquette. Riding on front foot board of engine. Engine jumped the track, colliding with car on parallel track and caught him between engine and car. Accidental.

Online Accident Reports

- The accident reports at the National Archives are also available online
- U. S. Department of Transportation Library, “Investigations of Railroad Accidents 1911-1993, Table of Contents,” available at http://ntl1.specialcollection.net/scripts/ws.dll?websearch&site=dot_railroads
- Only covers major accidents, rarely mentions names, but very detailed reports



Steam boiler accident of locomotive no. 622, Katy RR, 6 April 1946, Parsons, Kansas, William L. Curtis was the engineer. This photograph in my wife's possession is an excellent clue that we will eventually follow to see if the accident was covered in the local newspapers.

Other Railroad Records

- Track and building plans
- Locomotive rosters
- Rolling stock rosters
 - Freight cars
 - Passenger cars
- Property records
- Employee rules and regulation booklets
- Timetables
- Lawsuits

Other Genealogical Sources

- Census records
- Vital records
- City Directories
- Newspapers
- Land records (people would purchase lands from the railroads that they may have worked for at one time)
- Letters, diaries, photographs, and remembrances

City Directory Example

- The 1889 City Directory of Escanaba lists:
“McNillis [sic], Dennis—208 N. Charlotte St.—
Escanaba—62—lab round house”
- This address is the same as the one given for
John O. [sic] James, his son-in-law who at that
time worked for the C&NW in Escanaba as the
round house foreman

Example Newspaper Report

JOHN F. STANTON MEETS DEATH IN TRAIN WRECK

John F. Stanton, aged 46, switch conductor for the Mineral Range railroad here and one of the best known railroad men in the Copper Country, was killed early yesterday morning when two heavily loaded cars of logs were derailed and wrecked in Ripley near the Portage Lake foundry.

The accident took place about 1:30 o'clock. A train crew, of which Stanton was switch conductor, was taking a train consisting of three cars of logs and two empty gondola cars down to the mill of the Houghton Lumber Co. in Ripley. The engine was backing down with the train, with the three cars of logs going first, followed by the gondolas and the engine.

Stanton was riding on top of the logs on the foremost car of the train, and as the wheels of the foremost car came in contact with the ice on the railroad crossing, the car left the track. The ice is believed to have been formed by snow placed on the crossing to improve the sleighing across the track.

The first and second cars were derailed and overturned in the smashup that followed. Stanton was thrown from the car and the logs, breaking loose, fell on him. Another switchman, riding on the same car, had a miraculous escape.

The train was immediately brought to a stop, and remaining members of the crew, hearing Stanton's cries, hurried to his assistance. They removed the logs that were holding him down and removed him to a home nearby. Two doctors were summoned at once but Stanton died before either arrived. He was conscious immediately after the accident but sank rapidly and passed away within 30 minutes. An examination showed that he had been badly crushed about the chest and had suffered serious internal injuries that had caused death.

The wreck of the two cars of logs was complete. One of the cars with its load of logs was driven through the side of the foundry building of the Portage Lake foundry, doing considerable damage. The cars are a complete wreck and will have to be rebuilt.

Was Spanish War Veteran.

Was Spanish War Veteran.
John F. Stanton was the oldest yard employe of the company at Houghton. He worked in the Houghton yards for 18 years and prior to that time had been a car repairer and had held another position with the company. His service with the railroad extended practically over a quarter of a century. The late Mr. Stanton was a veteran of the Spanish-American war. He was recently elected commander of George Millar camp of the United Spanish War Veterans.

Fellow employes of the railroad yesterday paid sincere tribute to Mr. Stanton as a man and as a fellow workman and all who knew him can testify to his splendid qualities.

Dan Murphy, yardmaster for the railroad, said yesterday that Mr. Stanton was one of the most careful employes the company had. He was constantly on the lookout for danger points and he never permitted a dangerous situation to continue without calling it to the attention of his superiors and his fellow employes. He possessed the respect and sincere friendship of everyone with whom he came in contact and his death was a real blow to his numerous friends.

Mr. Stanton was married and is survived by his widow and six children, also two sisters, Mrs. Fred Phillips, of Greenstick, Minn., and Mrs. Anderson of Duluth. Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Anderson will arrive here today. Funeral arrangements had not been completed yesterday.

In addition to being a Spanish War veteran, Mr. Stanton was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Macco-bees and the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen.

Grandson looks into grandpa's '23 rail death

HOUGHTON — Dennis Stanton of California is a Copper Country visitor these days coming in from Santa Cruz where he is a teacher of mathematics.

In the Portage Lake district he is visiting aunts his family was acquainted with. His grandfather at one time worked for the Mineral Range Railroad and was killed in a wreck near the Portage Lake Foundry and Machinery Co. in March, 1923.

He was on a freight train early in an afternoon which sustained a derailling to the extent that a number of cars of logs were thrown off the track with a resultant moving of certain cars into the foundry building of the machine firm. The structure was badly damaged but the greatest loss was in the grandsire's being killed by logs moving off the train and crushing him to an ultimate death.

The granddad was John Stanton who had resided in the Portage area for many years.

Young Dennis was interested in going over the route of the granddad and was considering walking from the bridge to Dollar Bay, where he had relatives, so that he could see the foundry and witness the former site of the Pryor Sawmill, the Houghton Lumber Co. mill which was very active at the time of the accident. In those days Pryor used to get considerable log shipments via rail. After being delivered, the logs were let loose to fall in the pond so they could ultimately be sawed into lumber.

With an M.A. degree in mathematics from Stanford University, Dennis now is traveling the perimeter of the United States and expects to leave the Copper Country Wednesday.

The Quasius unit, formerly of Ripley, is related to him with Albert Quasius of California being an uncle.

Aug. 15-1974

Example Land Record

NO.

13477 ✓

WARRANTY DEED.

Chicago & North-Western Railway Co.

TO

Alexander Stanton

Post City Mich

NW 15-38-25

OFFICE OF THE REGISTER OF DEEDS,

STATE OF MICHIGAN.

Monroe COUNTY.

Received for Record the 21st

day of December A. D. 1887, at 8

o'clock A.M., and recorded in Liber 27 of Deeds,

on Page 134.

William A. Andrew REGISTER

Chgs 25
Pa 100
Dew 25

Family Method

- Keep in mind that you should also trace siblings, uncles, and cousins who worked for the railroads
- Siblings, uncles, and cousins often worked together for the same railroad company
- In tracing them you might find that they once helped your ancestor get a job or their careers might point to other resources to search

John R. James Example

- My great-uncle John R. James, a foreman and engineer, probably got his father-in-law, my great-great grandfather, Dennis McNellis, a position in the C&NW Escanaba roundhouse
- He later helped his nephew-in-law, my grandfather, John F. Stanton get a job with the DSS&A
- I wonder if he helped my uncle Fred Phillips, C&NW Station Master at Quinnesec, get his job?



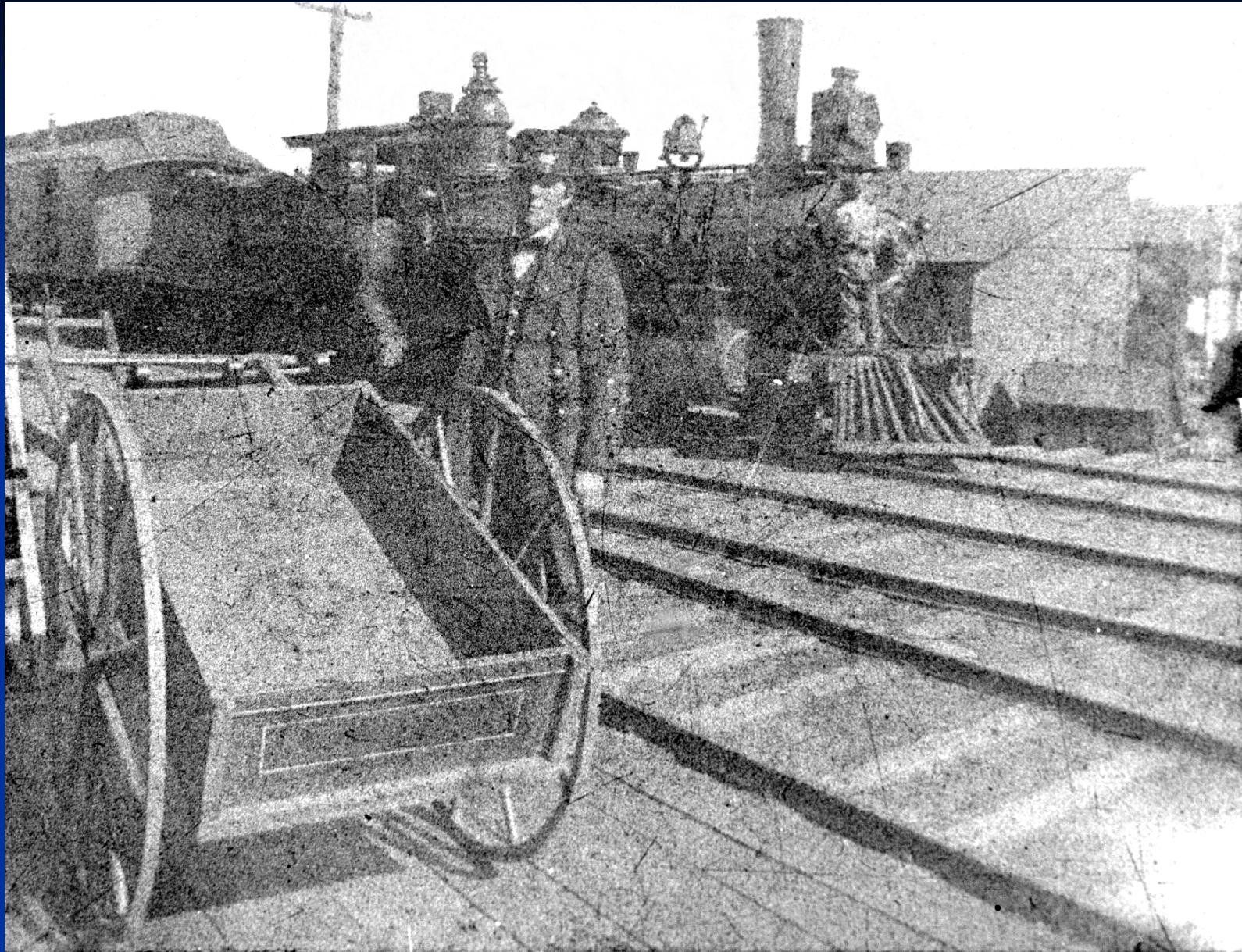
Photograph of Fred Phillips, probably at Quinnesec , Michigan.

Doing a Timeline

- Create a personnel file for your ancestor by creating a timeline
 - Date and mention
 - Sort chronologically
- Can get a view of his career

Example: John F. Stanton

- 26 April 1898 Car cleaner, residing in Houghton [Military papers].
- 13 April 1903 At Michigamme, left Houghton the night before, will be in Duluth this same week, working on a DSS&A train [Letter to Rose Prince, fiancée].
- June 1903 Employee of DSS&A, has lived at Marquette for the last three years, will move to Calumet [Marriage Announcement].
- 30 June 1903 Baggage master, residing in Calumet [Marriage Certificate].
- 29 April 1905 Switchman for the DSS&A in Houghton, injured in coupling accident [*Michigan Railroad Returns 1905*, p. 222, photocopy in Perron Collection].
- 1907-1908 DSS&A brakeman, residence 112 5th, East Houghton. [Houghton City Directory].
- 1910 Switchman [Houghton City Directory].
- 1912 Switchman [Houghton City Directory].
- 1916-1917 Switchman [Houghton City Directory].
- About 1921 or 1922 Injured in a railroad accident in Houghton [Obituary and Catherine (Stanton) DuLong's memory].
- 6 March 1923 Railroad brakeman DSS&A, Houghton, MI [Death Certificate]; employee of Mineral Range for 25 years, badly injured just a few years ago [Obituary].
- 7 March 1923 Switch Conductor, Mineral Range, worked in the Houghton Yard for 18 years, prior to that he was a Car Repairer, held another job prior to that, he was injured at some point before his death, over 25 years of service. Member of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen [Obituary].



Photograph of John F. Stanton, ca. 1900, Houghton, Michigan.

Genealogical Value

- After 1936, Railroad Retirement Board records have much genealogical value
- Before 1936, genealogical records more likely to point to railroad career than railroad records providing genealogical information
- In either case, you can learn an enormous amount about the railroad your ancestor worked for and place their career in context

Railroad Nicknames

Just for fun, the Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway was know by its workers as:

- Damn Slow Service and Abuse.
- Damn Small Salary and Abuse.
- Damn Slow and Sure Awful.
- Dead Slow Service and Agony.
- Delayed, Short-Steamed and Antiquated.
- Damned Slow, Shabby Affair.
- Dirt, Soot, Smoke, and Agony.
- Damned Seldom, Slow, and Abusive.
- Dust, Sand, Soot, and Ashes.
- Dependable, Satisfactory Service & Attention [The company's nickname].

Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railroad

- If you are interested in the DSS&A, then please visit my website at:

<http://dssa.habitant.org/index.htm>

- Also, see the new book by John Gaertner, *The Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic Railway: A History of the Lake Superior District's Pioneer Iron Ore Hauler* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009)

**THE
SOUTH
SHORE.**

**DULUTH
SOUTH
SHORE
AND
ATLANTIC**

**ROUTE
SUPERIOR GATEWAY
FOR
SUPERIOR SERVICE**



**THE
Marquette
ROUTE**

**DULUTH
"ZENITH CITY"
SHORT LINE**

DSS AND A