

LSRHA Application Narrative

B. Project Summary

LSRHA is requesting \$1,200 to fund the purchase of archival supplies to properly handle and store approximately 600 glass plate negatives and other negatives of the Illinois Central Rail Road Collection Project, which has a total budget of \$15,963. The Illinois Central Rail Road (IC) Collection arrived in the middle of 2011 in 140 banker boxes and other containers. This is an outstanding collection of a vast variety of Illinois Central Rail Road documents.

The Illinois Central Rail Road Collection is one of six major collections obtained by LSRHA over the past four years. The other collections include: the Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW); Copper Range Rail Road (CR); Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (CRI&P), Fairbanks Morse Company (FM); and Sheffield Car Company (Sheffield) focused collections. The C&NW, CRI&P, FM, and Sheffield collections are mostly technical drawings dating from the 1870s to the 1960s, whereas the IC and CR focused collections are broader topic collections. The total number of technical drawings may exceed 50,000 in number, of which about half have been cataloged (see the “Collections” page of lsrha.org). The photographs and photograph negatives of the ICRR Collection will help expand the total number of photographic items provided by the Ritzman and Kuba photographic collections, which may exceed 70,000 items. The posting of catalogs and thumbnail images of photographs and drawings on the lsrha.org website and website promotion will broaden public interest and understanding of the industrial heritage preservation ongoing at Lake States Railway Historical Association.

Glass plate negatives in the ICRR Collection are stacked without separators but with side cushioning in five banker boxes. Other than a preliminary investigation of subject matter, these negatives have not been disturbed. This initial investigation revealed that these negatives are in very good condition and are of locomotives, buildings, and trackside venues. Beginning in April, 2013, volunteers will start sorting and cataloging at the box level the contents of this collection in preparation for more detailed cataloging and proper storage during the summer and autumn of 2013. This processing will be conducted by experienced volunteers under supervision by Donald Ginter, chairman of the Collections Management Committee. A summer intern will be involved in processing if a selected candidate accepts the position and a professionally trained archivist will be join in processing this collection if an National Endowment for the Humanities grant application is funded.

Processing of the glass plate negatives will involve carefully removing packing around the stacks and separating each plate while wearing cotton or vinyl gloves. Vinyl gloves will be used if there is evident flaking of the emulsion surfaces. Each plate will be digitally scanned using a UMAX Astra MX3 scanner and digital images added to the digital image database prior to wrapping in glassine envelopes and storage in divided and cushioned negative cartons. Prints of each file will be viewed by railroad history experts in the membership of LSRHA to identify and describe each image for cataloging purposes. Each negative will be given an item ID number following board-approved Archive Collection Processing Procedures Policy. Descriptions and images of each negative will be available and searchable on the lsrha.org website for public access.

C. Responses to Questions

1. Documentation of need for the Project: What is the proposed project's significance to industrial heritage?

The Illinois Central Rail Road Collection arrived in the archive in 140 banker boxes and other containers with a vast variety of Illinois Central Rail Road documents. Included in this collection are: about 600 8x10 inch glass plate negatives; many more nitrate and acetate film negatives; locomotive maintenance and operating manuals; public and employee timetables; routing guides; locomotive and car lists; train orders; predecessor histories; IC Laws and Documents (bound volumes, 1-33); train service records; passenger car blueprints; steam and diesel statistics and data; ICC Accident Reports; industry lists; locomotive boiler cards; and many more, including predecessor (Gulf, Mobile & Ohio; Mobile & Ohio; Alabama & Vicksburg; Indiana & Illinois Southern; St. Louis, Alton, & Terre Haute; Tennessee Southern; etc.) and other railroads outside the Illinois Central Gulf system. Another recently-donated collection of station records from the closed Illinois Central Rail Road stations at Apple River and Warren, Illinois will be processed along with this major collection.

The glass plates alone are priceless from a historical standpoint and appear to be in good condition. The same cannot be said about some of the nitrate and acetate film negatives, many of which show signs of degradation. This vast collection has been relatively undisturbed and will remain so until the cataloging process begins in June, 2013 with the help of a summer intern, a hired archivist if other funding is approved, and expert volunteers.

The ongoing vision of Lake States Railway Historical Association is to collect and preserve corporate archives and private collections of railroad documents and artifacts, with emphasis on endangered collections, and make these collections available to the public for viewing and research. The LSRHA mission statement in the bylaws states that the "principal focus of the collections shall be the Western Great Lakes Region of the USA during the 1880-1916 era."

The Association is dedicated to the highest standards of collection, restoration, preservation and scholarship and is committed to facilitating research, interpretation, and publication from its collections. The collections are being catalogued and preserved under climate-controlled conditions at the archive, which is maintained as a research facility. The purpose of our organization is to make the archive and its collections available for researchers and the public and ensure that retrieval of specific collection items can be achieved readily using the full capacities of Excel and PastPerfect utilities. Photographs, corporate paper documents, and blueprints and drawings of buildings, locomotives, railroad cars, hoist houses, loading docks, etc. will be valuable to community and railroad historians and industrial archeologists.

Other large collections include the Chicago & North Western Railway Drawing (C&NW) Collection, Fairbanks Morse (FM) Collection, Sheffield Car Company (Sheffield) Collection, and the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (CRI&P) Collection. The C&NW Collection of 20,416 drawings is completely cataloged. The FM Collection was deeded and transferred to LSRHA in February, 2012 in 108 roll boxes containing Fairbanks Morse technical drawings and 157 banker boxes of related documentation. Fairbanks Morse and Company was a petroleum-

fueled motor manufacturing company in the late 19th century and continues today. The Sheffield Car Company, which was purchased by Fairbanks Morse, manufactured three-wheeled, lightweight handcars, the well-known two-man, four-wheeled handcar, self-propelled motorcars, and streetcars. LSRHA experts estimate that the FM and Sheffield Collection drawings may contain about 10,000 technical drawings and supporting documents that are irreplaceable. The Sheffield drawings are viewed as the treasure of this collection and do not exist elsewhere to our knowledge. The CRI&P Collection, which was deeded to LSRHA in June, 2012, was delivered to the archive by the end of June. This collection consists mostly of about 15,000 technical drawings. The bulk of these drawings arrived as rolled stacks in 70 six-inch diameter metal canisters constructed in the CRI&P shops and in five 6-inch diameter PVC pipe containers.

2. What research methods will you employ?

Each photograph will be identified and properly stored for public access by qualified volunteers and cataloged with assistance of a contracted, part-time Data Entry Specialist and an intern. LSRHA is fortunate to have some of the most knowledgeable railroad historians in the Mid-West among its members to help identify railroad location, subject matter, locomotive or car number and type, and time period of each negative and photograph if not otherwise identified. Cataloging involves data entry into our archival database using Excel and PastPerfect software. All of these collections will be available for research and teaching purposes once lists are added to our website. Our intent is to have photographs, and technical drawings of buildings, bridges, locomotives, railroad cars, hoist houses, loading docks, etc. digitized or microfilmed and available through computer access or microfilm readers for researchers.

3. Who is responsible for your project?

Don Ginter, Chairman of the Collections Management Committee, is responsible for the ICRR Collection Project. The Collections Management Committee establishes procedures and priorities for LSRHA and implements these upon approval of the Board. A board-approved Collections Management Policy and Archive Collection Processing Procedures Policy are on file at the archive office in Baraboo and available for volunteers, summer intern, and archivist to follow. Chairman Ginter's resume is included in this package. LSRHA received the 2012 Governor's Award for Archival Achievement recognizing LSRHA and the Collections Management Committee for its accomplishments. This award is described in greater detail below.

Ken Breher is Treasurer for LSRHA and he is responsible for following the account established for this project. Michael Harrington is Secretary for LSRHA and he resides in the same town as the bank where accounts of LSRHA have been established. Mr. Harrington has authority to sign and mail checks only as directed by Richard Goddard, President of LSRHA, who instructs Mr. Harrington by e-mail to write checks, copying Mr. Breher.

4. What tangible products do you expect to produce with this project?

The first tangible product of this project will be the ability of LSRHA to not only post descriptions of the photographs and other documentation on the LSRHA website but to also post a thumbnail image of each scanned negative. Public disclosure will allow the viewing public to

purchase reproductions or copies of photographs and other documents on our website. These other items include photographs of equipment, structures, and trackside views; regulatory documents; library catalogs; correspondences; and the like. The ultimate and long-range goals of LSRHA will be to achieve MARC cataloging of LSRHA collections and the ability of LSRHA to hire a professionally trained archivist who may be paid, in part, by revenue generated by the sale of reproductions of LSRHA drawings, photographs, and other documents on its website.

To date, over 100 private collections have been added to the LSRHA Archive. These donations include a major collection of original equipment drawings of the Chicago & North Western Railway and its acquired lines from the 1870's to the 1950's with 11,528 C&NW drawings, 8,895 CStPM&O drawings, 1,080 CR drawings, and 29 Chicago & Great Western drawings. The cataloging and preservation of the C&NW and acquired railroad mechanical drawings was an eighteen month initiative of LSRHA that was completed in early 2012. Approximately 500 C&NW drawings have come from other collections. These additions have been cataloged and are listed on the lsrha.org website on the "Collections" page. Cataloging of the Ritzman photographic collection is ongoing. This extensive collection comprises mostly of black-and-white photographs of steam locomotives (50%), structures (40%), and rolling stock (10%). Structures include depots and stations, freight houses, roundhouses and other support buildings, bridges, and other service buildings. Although focus was on Chicago & North Western and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific, other Midwest railroads are also represented. The Kuba Collection has been bequeathed to LSRHA but has not arrived to date. The subject matter of this collection includes many railroads of North America and is also black-and-white.

As evidence of effectiveness, the C&NW and Copper Range drawings and documents have been described, cataloged and listed publicly on the lsrha.org website. The combined budget for this project was \$23,729 and total expenses were \$23,026. This project received funding from the National Railway Historical Society, Union Pacific Foundation, British Petroleum Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, U.W. Extension Arts & Culture, Alliant Energy Foundation, and associate donations. LSRHA also completed the NEH Preservation Assistance Project, which had a budget of \$4,436. This project was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities to have the practices and policies of LSRHA evaluated by a professional archivist. The 20-page report presented to LSRHA by Dr. Michael Doyle, Archive Department Head, UWM Libraries/Archive Department, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, commented very favorably about our archive, our procedures, the professionalism and dedication of our volunteers, and the historic value of our collections.

LSRHA is proud to announce that it was selected by the Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board of the Wisconsin Historical Society to receive the 2012 Governor's Award for Archival Achievement. The nomination for this award specifically cited the recently completed Chicago and North Western Drawing Collection. Matt Blessing, State Archivist and Administrator for the Library-Archives Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, stated that, "Gubernatorial appointees serving on the WHRAB's selection committee were very impressed by [the LSRHA] application, noting that the LSRHA project offered a model for how a volunteer organization can effectively manage large scale archival projects." Mr. Blessing went on to say that "the Association's work in securing external support from corporations, professional associations and educational institutions was equally impressive."