

A Brief Guide to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company's Prior Service Records at the Kansas State Historical Society

by Suzanne Guinn; edited by Robert L. Knecht

© Kansas State Historical Society, 2002

The 259 boxes of "prior service" records consist of correspondence and related documentation between the ATSF and the Railroad Retirement Board, the federal agency that began administration of most railroad workers' pensions on **29 August 1935**. Employees who were employed on that date were eligible for service credit for *prior service* with participating railroads. These files document that prior service.

CONTENTS OF THE PRIOR SERVICE RECORDS

These records deal mainly with employees' service files prior to the establishment of the Railroad Retirement Board in 1937 by the U.S. government. Many employees had service both before and after the Railroad Retirement Act; as they began to retire, after 1937, their service before 1937 could also be included. For those who retired before 1937, this did not apply. The ATSF Prior Service Records show employees working for the railroad prior to *29 August 1935*.

Documents include form letters regarding the *employee relation* to the railway on 29 August 1935, or whether the claimant was a railroad employee at that time. **For the genealogist**, many of these records contain birth statements for employees. The majority of these are unverified. Another record sometimes found in the files is *Form AA-15*. This document provides the employee's full name, race, address, sex, date of birth, place of birth, father's name, mother's maiden name, employment relation, name of employer, and the name as found on the company's payroll. Then follows an employment record which includes the position held, dates, the department, and locations. The signature of the employee is at the bottom of the sheet. Sometimes statements from co-workers verifying service are included. *Form 2190 Special* contains the name, birth date and place as well as parents' names, among other employment information. For further explanation of these forms see "Forms with Genealogical Information Found in ATSF Records," *Appendix C*.

Birth information can usually be found first on the Record Cards, as well as on the birth statements in the employees' files. In some cases, date of death or date of retirement were also written on records.

None of these records are primary sources, and in most cases there is no independent verification of the data provided.

USING THE PRIOR SERVICE RECORDS

The fundamental question that must be asked is whether the person was employed by the AT&SF or another railroad on 29 August 1935. *If so*, these records may contain information about his or her employment with Santa Fe prior to that date. *If not*, and the person retired or left Santa Fe's employment *before 29 August 1935*, these records will *not* contain any information on that person unless they were again employed by the Santa Fe or another railroad after 29 August 1935. No individual personnel records are known to exist. If an employee was hired *after 29 August 1935*, these records will *not* contain any information on that person unless he or she had also worked for Santa Fe prior to that date. The Railroad Retirement Board has records of employees after that date, and they will do searches for a fee. Additional information is available from the Board: Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, 844 N. Rush St., Chicago, Illinois 60611-2092, or on their web site, <http://www.rrb.gov/geneal.html>.

The Prior Service records are accessed through the alphabetical employee Record Cards (index cards) for the appropriate Santa Fe line or subsidiary. When cards do not exist for a specific line or subsidiary, the files are in alphabetical order. Researchers should also check the **Lost, No Prior Service Cards**, *series (3)*, to see if previous searches by the Santa Fe showed that no records existed for a specific individual.

Generally, there are two sets of employee files for each subsidiary or line: PM and PS. The majority of the files were given PS numbers. An employee's Record Card may contain a PM file number, a PS file number, or both. Existence of a PM or PS number does not always guarantee the existence of a file.

To Look for an Employee

If you believe that the employee was a railroad employee on 29 August 1935, these records may be of assistance. If the employee retired before or was hired after this date, these records will not include him or her. If the line or subsidiary is known, go to that section below. If the line or subsidiary is not known, search all sections below until the person is located.

Disclaimer: Occasionally some of the files were not found even when a card was found for the individual. Be careful, also, when you match names, as on occasion more than one individual had the same full name. Be sure to check and compare Social Security numbers, birth dates, and other data to make sure you have the records for the actual person you are researching.

ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

General Records

Series (1) PS record cards : 5 x 7 in. cards. 15 boxes (15 ft.)
019-10-01-01 thru 019-10-02-07

These cards index the ATSF Main Line Pension File : PM Records, series (6); Completed Prior Service Records, subseries (7/1); "Open" portion (PS I-PS 21649) of the Open/Closed Files, subseries (7/2); and Worksheets, series (8). These cards also index the Santa Fe Coast Lines, as well as the Main Line, so the numbers on these cards can refer to Coast Lines PS Files, series (12). On these cards, the PS number is stamped in the upper right corner. The PM number is written or stamped on the bottom right portion of the card. In Box : 15, at the end of the main alphabetical sequence, are two separately-filed sets of index cards: one for employees of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, the other for employees of the Santa Fe Coast Lines Hospital Association.

Main Line

Series (2) PS record cards : 3 x 5 in. cards. 42 boxes (42 ft.)
019-10-03-01 thru 019-10-05-06

Series (3) Lost, no prior service cards. 2 boxes (2 ft.)
019-10-05-19 thru 019-10-05-20

Series (4) PM number book. 1 box (1 ft.)
I17-08-01-01

Series (5) Numerical PS list. 3 in.
I17-08-01-02

Series (6) Pension files : PM records. 41 boxes (41 ft.)
I17-08-01-16 thru I17-08-03-16

Series (7) Prior service (PS) records. 116 boxes (116 ft.)
I17-08-04-05 thru I17-09-04-20

Subseries (7/1) Completed prior service records. 4 boxes (4 ft.)
I17-08-04-05 thru I17-08-04-08

Subseries (7/2) Service records : open/closed files. 35 boxes (35 ft.)
I17-08-04-09 thru I17-09-01-03

Subseries (7/3) Prior service records. 77 boxes (77 ft.)
I17-09-01-04 thru I17-09-04-20

Series (8) Worksheets. 8 boxes (8 ft.)
I17-08-03-17 thru I17-08-04-04

Series (9) AA-2P and AA-2P BRS forms forwarded to the Railroad Retirement Board from January 1, 1974 to Dec 31, 1979.
5 in.
I17-09-04-20

The PS Record Cards, series (1) and (2), act as indexes to these records. The PS Record Cards : 3 x 5 In. Cards, series (2), index the "closed" portion (PS 21650-PS 30712) of the Open/Closed Files, subseries (7/2), and the main body of 77 boxes of Prior Service Records, subseries (7/3). The Lost, No Prior Service Cards, series (3), include names and Social Security numbers of those people who requested searches but for whom no files were found. Finding a name in these cards means that no file exists and additional searching is of no use. Some Worksheets are interfiled with the employee records, others are combined and filed by PS number, series (8).

Once you have checked the desired employee's name in the two sets of PS Record Cards, series (1) and (2), there are 5 places to check depending on the PS or PM numbers found on the Record Cards: Pension Files : PM Records, series (6); Completed Prior Service Records, subseries (7/1); Service Records : Open/Closed Files, subseries (7/2); Prior Service Records, subseries (7/3); and Worksheets, series (8). If you do not find the name you are looking for, check the Lost, No Prior Service Cards, series (3).

(3), for those names. Here you will find names and Social Security numbers only, but the presence of a card here indicates there are no other files for that person.

The **Pension Files : PM Records**, *series (6)*, may contain forms 2190 and AA-15. Files in this series may be from either the main line of the Santa Fe or its Coast Lines. The **Completed Prior Service Records**, *subseries (7/1)*, are in numerical order. Individual files may contain form 2614. The **Service Records : Open/Closed Files**, *subseries (7/2)*, may contain forms 2614 and 2190. "Open" files are numbered PS 1–PS 21649; "closed" files bear the numbers PS 21650–PS 30712; the exact significance of "open" and "closed" has not been determined. There are gaps in the records where files have been withdrawn; sometimes there are also gaps between the last file number in one box and the beginning file number in the following box. The **Prior Service Records**, *subseries (7/3)*, may contain form 2614. Files PS 23300–PS 23599 and PS 29257–PS 29499 are missing. The **Worksheets**, *series (8)*, are for PS numbers 35000–47500 and should be the last series checked. Worksheets trace the employee's work history and give the amount paid each month, full name and payroll name of the employee, the PS (Prior Service) number, Social Security number, position held, and job location.

PM files are separate from PS files. Searchers may find information on a desired employee in both the PM files and in the PS files, one of them, or neither. Researchers should find only one PS file between the **Completed Prior Service Records**, *subseries (7/1)*; **Service Records : Open/Closed Files**, *subseries (7/2)*; **Prior Service Records**, *subseries (7/3)*; and the **Worksheets**, *series (8)*. All of these files need to be consulted until the desired file is found. Gaps in one file sequence usually means the file is in another group. The significance of "Open" and "Closed" and the meaning of *PM* has not been determined. *Please note: The AT&SF main line, Coast Lines, and Panhandle & Santa Fe all began file numbers with 1.* Therefore there is what appears as duplication of numbers or a number with two different names. It is important that researchers check all lines and find the right person with the right number. The **AA-2P and AA-2P BRS forms forwarded to the Railroad Retirement Board from January 1, 1974, to Dec 31, 1979**, *series (9)*, are not the forms themselves but sheets listing those employees on whose behalf the forms were sent. Their value for genealogical research is very limited.

Eastern Lines

<i>Series (10)</i>	Service records : Eastern Lines. 1 box (1 ft.) 117-10-03-18
<i>Subseries (10/1)</i>	Birth statements 117-10-03-18
<i>File unit : 1</i>	Deceased 117-10-03-18
<i>File unit : 2</i>	Retired 117-10-03-18
<i>File unit : 3</i>	No relation 117-10-03-18
<i>File unit : 4</i>	Other roads 117-10-03-18
<i>Subseries (10/2)</i>	Prior service files 117-10-03-18

These **Service Records : Eastern Lines**, *series (10)*, contain mostly **Birth Statements** (Form 2614 Standard), *subseries (10/1)*, and are followed by the **Prior Service Files**, *subseries (10/2)*, to which they are related. The **Birth Statements**, *subseries (10/1)*, are divided into four categories: **Deceased**, *file unit : 1*; **Retired**, *file unit : 2*; **No Relation**, *file unit : 3*, meaning the person was not an ATSF employee on 29 August 1935; and **Other Roads**, *file unit : 4*, meaning the person worked for another railroad on 29 August 1935. The **Deceased**, *file unit : 1*, and **Retired**, *file unit : 2*, files are in numerical order by PS number. The **No Relation**, *file unit : 3*, and **Other Roads**, *file unit : 4*, files are in alphabetical order. These four bundles of **Birth Statements**, *subseries (10/1)*, are easy to search without a general index. The **Prior Service Files**, *subseries (10/2)*, after them are arranged alphabetically by employees' names. None of the other index cards—series (1), (2), (3), (11), or (15), described elsewhere—appear to pertain to these records.

Coast Lines

<i>Series (11)</i>	Record cards. 11 boxes (11 ft.) 019-10-05-10 thru 019-10-06-02
<i>Series (12)</i>	PS files. 27 boxes (27 ft.) 117-10-01-11 thru 117-10-02-17
<i>Subseries (12/1)</i>	Closed files. 3 boxes (3 ft.)

I17-10-02-14 thru I17-10-02-16

Subseries (12/2) **Other files.** 24 boxes (24 ft.)
 I17-10-01-11 thru I17-10-02-13 and I17-10-02-17

The two boxes of **Record Cards**, *series (11)*, are in alphabetical order by surname, and give both PS and PM file numbers. The **PS Files**, *series (12)*, are in two subseries: **Closed Files**, *subseries (12/1)*, and **Other Files**, *subseries (12/2)*; each subseries contains files in numerical order. The **Closed Files**, *subseries (12/1)*, contains files not found in the **Other Files**, *subseries 12/2*. The **Other Files**, *subseries (12/2)*, are filed by PS number but also provide PM numbers if applicable.

Once you have found your ancestor on a **Record Card**, *series (11)*, then you need to check the **PS Record Cards : 5 x 7 In. Cards**, *series (1)*. Next check for an **Other File**, *subseries (12/2)*. In some instances you may find a 5 x 7 card filed with the PS file. If you do not find a file here, check the **Closed Files**, *subseries (12/1)*. You may also need to check the **Pension Files : PM Records**, *series (6)*, to see if a second file exists.

The files found in box 24 of the **Other Files**, *subseries (12/2)*, contain no genealogical information.

GULF, COLORADO AND SANTA FE RAILROAD
14 boxes (14 ft.)

Series (13) **Service records : numerical.** 1 box (1 ft.)
 I17-10-02-20

Series (14) **Prior service files : alphabetical.** 13 boxes (13 ft.)
 I17-10-03-01 thru I17-10-03-13

There are no separate record cards for this railroad. Cards are filed with the employee's file. There are **Service Records : Numerical**, *series (13)*, for PS numbers 50000–50309 and **Prior Service Files : Alphabetical**, *series (14)*, filed by employees' names. The **Service Records : Numerical**, *series (13)*, contains 60 employee files numbered PS 50000–PS 50309. There does not appear to be any duplication between files in this series and the **Prior Service Files : Alphabetical**, *series (14)*. The **Prior Service Files : Alphabetical**, *series (14)*, also has an Index List to PS Numbers in the front of the files. The range is #6764 to 7494. These numbers do not seem to correlate with the files. What files the list does index is presently unknown. No Form AA-15 could be found in any of the GC&SF files, but they did contain the other forms mentioned above. There are two forms found in these two series that have not been found elsewhere: a medical examiner's certificate, as well as an accompanying request for the physical examination, and an employee's withholding exemption certificate.

PANHANDLE AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY
31 ft.

Series (15) **Record cards.** 7 boxes (7 ft.)
 019-10-06-04 thru 019-10-06-10

Series (16) **Prior service records.** 24 boxes (24 ft.)
 I17-09-05-02 thru I17-10-01-06

Series (17) **Index to PS numbers.** 1 folder (2 in.)
 I17-10-02-19

Series (18) **Personnel and service records, 1953–1959.** 10 in.
 I17-10-02-19

These records include **Record Cards**, *series (15)*, in alphabetical order by employees' names and **Prior Service Records**, *series (16)*, that are in numerical order according to the PS number of the employee. The file numbers are PS 1–PS 7492 and PS 55000–PS 55850. In addition, there is a file of **Personnel and Service Records, 1953–1959**, *series (18)*—also annotated as “closed”—with files covering the dates September 9, 1953, through March 11, 1959.

APPENDIXES WITH ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRIOR SERVICE RECORDS

- Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions
- Appendix B: ATSF Railway Links/Web Sites

Appendix C: Forms with Genealogical Information Found in ATSF Records