

MS 526 ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY SPECIAL SERVICE COLLECTION

Not dated, 1890-1998. 2 boxes.

Material in this collection comes from the collection of M.E. "Gene" Tharp, who was a special agent, an Inspector, and later an Assistant Superintendent in the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Special Service. The collection includes correspondence, telegrams, reward posters, flimsies, newsletters, passes, tickets membership applications and cards issued by various labor organizations from the 1890s to the 1970s.

This collection has been arranged in two series:

1. CASE FILES
2. SUBJECT FILES

PROVENANCE Gift of Steve Tharp, in memory of M.E. "Gene" Tharp (387-1598), 2002.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION The 1880s saw the westward expansion of railroads. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad, like many others, faced an increasing problem with armed train robbers. Local law enforcement west of the Mississippi was spotty, and could not handle these and other attacks on railroad property. Railroads responded by setting up special services to police the railroad and protect property and cargo. Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe set up a special service or railway police department for each of Santa Fe's four operating divisions. These departments, which operated separately, were charged with the protection of Santa Fe patrons and their possessions, and the safe-guarding of Santa Fe facilities and premises. Each division special service department had special agents. Officers rode the trains, policed freight yards, depots, shops and other facilities, and conducted various investigations into train robberies and other crimes. These officers sometimes went undercover, infiltrating various labor organizations that were considered subversive. A favorite target was the Industrial Workers of the World, or "Wobblies." Hoboes and bums were also closely watched by railroad police.

In addition to co-operating with local, state and federal law enforcement, the Santa Fe Special Service Department worked closely with the protective section of the Association of American Railroads and special services of other railroads.

During World War I and immediately thereafter a reorganization of railroad police took place and now rail security forces function as municipal police do, with patrolmen reporting to captains, and the captains reporting to chiefs of police, who report to the Superintendent of Property Protection. Common crimes include trespassing, vandalism, public intoxication, breaking and entering, burglary, and arson.

M.E. "Gene" Tharp was a member of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Special Services Department from the 1920s to the 1970s. In the 1960s, he was an Inspector of the Special Services Department. On July 1, 1970, Tharp was promoted to Assistant Superintendent, Better Freight Handling and Special Service.

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1. CASE FILES

Train robbery was a significant problem in the American West in the 1890s. This series illustrates how the law responded to the problem in the outlying territories and states and how Santa Fe Special Service Agents fit into the law enforcement community. The Case Files include correspondence, telegrams, and transcripts of witness statements about train robberies, attempted train robberies and proposed robberies. There were a considerable number of enquiries into reward money, usually from U.S. Marshals. Debate among Santa Fe company officials and special agents over whether to offer and honor rewards took place. Tips from snitches were passed back-and-forth among peace officers. The posse was a frequently used method of capturing or killing these outlaws.

Information about and correspondence with some of the more well-known peacekeepers and gunfighters appear in these files. Correspondents include well-known lawmen Heck Thomas and Chris Madsen, Deputy U.S. Marshals who were in charge of the posse against the Dalton Gang and who helped apprehend the Doolin Gang.

The investigation and capture of several notorious gunfighters are documented in these files. They include: Bill Doolin (and the Bill Doolin Gang), Bill Dalton, Henry Starr, Oliver Yantis, and Jesse Jackson. The case file of the robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893, contains a piece of shirt which officials believed belonged to Bill Dalton, a member of the Bill Doolin gang who was thought to have ripped his shirt in pieces to staunch a wound inflicted by a posse. Subsequent information revealed that it was not Bill Dalton, but Bill Doolin, who was wounded (in the heel) and it is more likely that the fabric belonged to his shirt.

The Provenance file explains who has had custody of the Santa Fe Special Service case files from the 1890s and how they came to be in Gene Tharp's possession.

Organized chronologically by case file.

BOX LIST

- Box 1 Folder 1 Provenance, 1961-1962
- Box 1 Folder 2 Attempted robbery of AT&SF Train No. 2, Trinidad, Colorado, July 30, 1890
- Box 1 Folder 3 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 403, Wharton (now Perry), Oklahoma Territory, November 8, 1892
- Box 1 Folder 4 Index to robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893

- Box 1 Folder 5 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893 (1 of 5)
- Box 1 Folder 6 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893 (2 of 5)
- Box 1 Folder 7 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893 (3 of 5)
- Box 1 Folder 8 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893 (4 of 5)
- Box 1 Folder 9 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Cimarron, Kansas, June 30, 1893 (5 of 5)
- Box 1 Folder 10 Attempted robbery of AT&SF Train No. 408, Black Bear Creek, Oklahoma Territory, June 29, 1893 (1 of 2)
- Box 1 Folder 11 Attempted robbery of AT&SF Train No. 408, Black Bear Creek, Oklahoma Territory, June 29, 1893 (2 of 2)
- Box 1 Folder 12 Attempted robbery of AT&SF Train, Scotland County, Missouri, September 18, 1894
- Box 1 Folder 13 Proposed robbery of AT&SF Train No. 3, Dodge City, Kansas, October 4, 1894
- Box 1 Folder 14 Proposed robbery of AT&SF Train, Lamar, Colorado, December, 1894
- Box 1 Folder 15 Proposed robbery of AT&SF Train, Near Perry, Oklahoma Territory, January 6, 1895
- Box 1 Folder 16 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 203, Near Curtis, Oklahoma Territory, September 12, 1895
- Box 1 Folder 17 Murder of Santa Fe Special Agent, Pueblo, Colorado, December 10, 1915
- Box 1 Folder 18 Robbery of AT&SF Train No. 405, Near Bliss, 1917
- Box 1 Folder 19 Murder of Thurlow W. McCullough, Iola, Kansas, March 22, 1926

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2. SUBJECT FILES

Material collected by Gene Tharp over the course of his career with the Santa Fe Special Police. In 1968, Gene Tharp, an Inspector in the Special Service Department, was asked by his supervisor, John L. Hastings to help him compile a short history of the police department of the Santa Fe to commemorate its centennial year. This series includes material such as: articles, rulebooks, copies of laws and official proclamations. Includes membership books taken from International Workers of the World members during arrest, correspondence and background checks completed on potential special service personnel, wanted posters, tickets, passes and bulletins for lawmen containing articles on prominent western U.S. marshals such as Bill Tilghman and Chris Madsen.

Arranged in alphabetical order.

BOX LIST

- Box 2 Folder 1 Bad Order Ticket, 1923
- Box 2 Folder 2 Bulletin, vol. 1, Nos. 8-9, June-July 1970
- Box 2 Folder 3 History of the Special Service, 1968
- Box 2 Folder 4 Hoboes, 1927
- Box 2 Folder 5 International Workers of the World (Wobblies)
- Box 2 Folder 6 Investigations, 1925-1926
- Box 2 Folder 7 Outside activities of Gene Tharp, 1967-1975
- Box 2 Folder 8 Personnel files, 1919-1926
- Box 2 Folder 9 Photographs of Santa Fe Special Service Supervisors H.B. Baker, J.J. Brennan, H.H. Germain, E.E. Gregg Emmett (circa late 1800s-1930)
- Box 2 Folder 10 Report on the American Association of Railroads, Protective Section, Second National Police Academy, April 21 - May 2, 1952
- Box 2 Folder 11 Research material (1 of 3)
- Box 2 Folder 12 Research material (2 of 3)
- Box 2 Folder 13 Research material (3 of 3)
- Box 2 Folder 14 Speech presented at the F.B.I. Conference on Thefts..., Akron, Ohio, May 20-21, 1953
- Box 2 Folder 15 State of Kansas Highway Patrol Bulletin No. 53, December 31, 1952
- Box 2 Folder 16 The Story of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1946
- Box 2 Folder 17 Ticket stubs, Passes, Receipts
- Box 2 Folder 18 Union stamps
- Box 2 Folder 19 Photocopies of wanted posters (The backs of wanted posters were used to type correspondence. These wanted posters can be found in the Investigations (Folder 6) and Personnel (folder 8) files.)
- Box 2 Folder 20 Writings of Gene Tharp, 1975-1998

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