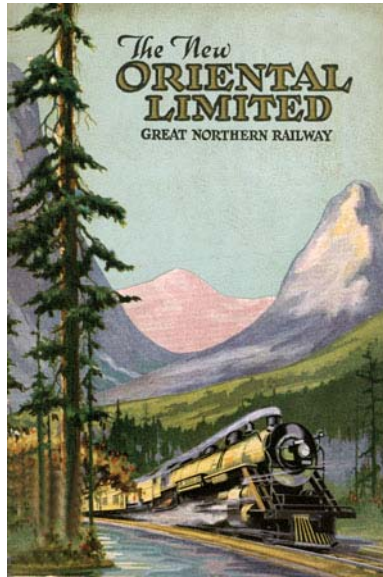


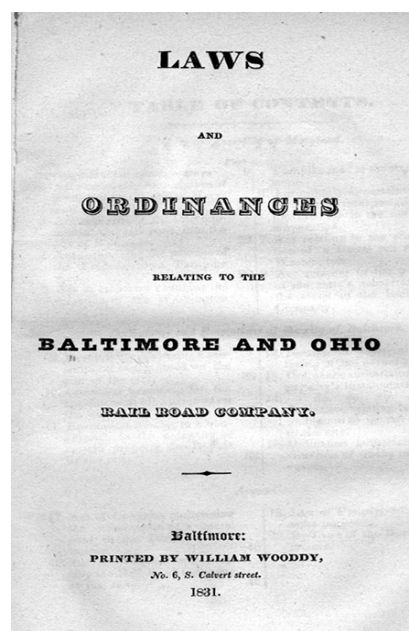
RE-INTRODUCING: *THE BUREAU OF RAILWAY ECONOMICS COLLECTION*



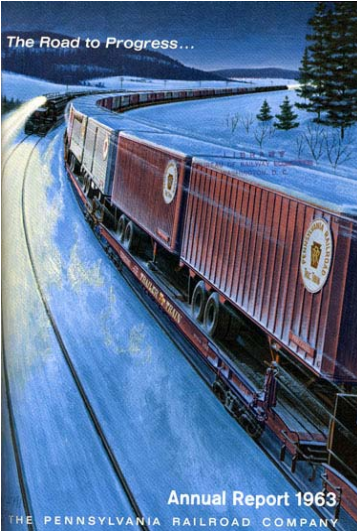
Thanks to a grant from the [State of Missouri's LSTA \(Library Services and Technology Act\) program](#), one of the most celebrated railroad collections of all time is now being cataloged to modern standards. The *Bureau of Railway Economics Collection* (BRE) is not only one of the great historical treasure troves of the John W. Barriger III National Railroad Library. It was once one of the most famous of American library collections and was widely recognized as the largest – and finest – railroad library in the world.

The story of the *BRE Collection* begins in 1910. It began as the BRE Library, the inspiration of a group of railroad executives who recognized a critical need to establish a reliable resource for railroad reference and research. It was created for what its founders described as “the scientific study of transportation problems.” The original focus of the *BRE Library* was railroad economic literature with an emphasis on statistical and regulatory material. Soon after the BRE Library's founding, an informal agreement was reached between the Library of

Congress and the Interstate Commerce Commission that *BRE Collection* development would not include “technical or legal literature.” Over time, however, what was defined as “economic” grew increasingly broad and would eventually embrace railroad technology, management, and the history of railroads in general. Turn of the century *BRE* librarians also avidly sought – through purchase and donation – documentation of railroading’s first century. The *BRE Collection* is rich in nineteenth century material – much of it unique or rare.



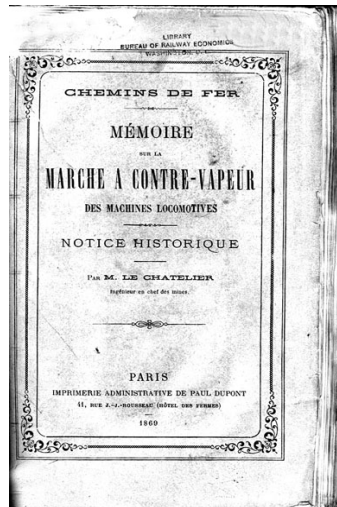
As an article in the November 1940 issue of *Railroad Magazine* made clear, the *BRE Library* “contain[ed] more ... railway documents than even the Library of Congress and is generally conceded to be the largest railroad library in the United States.” When the Association of American Railroads (AAR) acquired the library in the early 1950s, many thousands of additional materials – particularly of a technical nature – were added to the collection. The Barriger Railroad Library received the *BRE Collection* as a donation from the AAR in 1995. Over 60% of the collection dates to the 19th century and an estimated 35% of the collection is rare or unique.



Among the *BRE Collection's* most significant strengths are the nearly complete runs of railroad corporate annual reports dating back to the very beginning of railroads in the 1830s. These form one of the most frequently consulted parts of the collection.

The early 19th century engineering documents included in the collection are especially sought after by researchers. They describe the clearing of forests, the bridging of waters, and the treacherous scaling or tunneling of mountains. However, the economic challenges railroads faced proved even more imposing than natural impediments. To improve their economic situation, and to develop business, agriculture and a population base along their routes, many railroads attracted immigrants to their region through printed literature, often in foreign languages. The *BRE Collection* offers many fine examples of these.

The *BRE Collection* also contains an important collection of hundreds of commercially published 19th century maps, tour and travel guides. These colorful publications provide fascinating perspectives on 19th century travel as well as insights into how Americans viewed their increased mobility and the environment through which railroads took them.



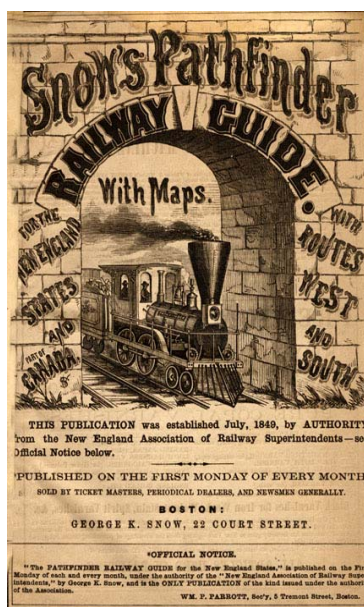
The *BRE Collection* also includes an impressive array of international 19th century railroad technical literature, particularly materials of British, German and French origin. These provide detailed insights into the construction of overseas railroads, the nature of their equipment and, often, their early operations. Of interest to scholars particularly for comparative purposes, many of these volumes are rare. Successive editions of many of these titles enable scholars to assess the growth and development of international railroad technology.

With the increased standardization of railroad operations – as seen in the establishment of time zones and the adoption of standard gauge track, among other uniform practices – railroad professionals established associations to discuss, weigh and debate technical trends, rules and procedures. They formed no fewer than 16 regional “railway clubs” to foster knowledge and provide forums for discussion. The *BRE Collection* has an unrivalled, nearly complete collection of these clubs’ proceedings; they offer hard-to-find, often candid, insights into the theory and practice of railroad management and operation.

Rounding out the *BRE Collection* are its extensive holdings of government hearings, reports and related documents. While most of the federal documents included in the collection are by no means rare, they give the collection balance and help tell the story of railroading’s

national significance. Many of the state and local government publications included in the collection are, however, quite rare – from the first state-sponsored railroad surveys to the often stormy debates about state railroad regulations.

No longer the preserve of railroad and business historians, or of railroad enthusiasts, railroad history has become in recent times a topic of compelling interest to social historians. Historians of art, music and literature have also sought and found in the growth and development of American railroads a rich store of cultural phenomena to explore. Much of today's railroad research is of an interdisciplinary nature as students and scholars reappraise railroad history through new and interesting critical perspectives. Railroad researchers' work will be greatly facilitated by the *BRE Collection's* ongoing, comprehensive cataloging. Begun in the Spring of 2006, *BRE Collection* cataloging is expected to be completed by July, 2007.



You can find *BRE Collection* materials through the Library's [Merlin](#) online public access catalog and on [WorldCat](#), the international bibliographic database.