

FERRIES AND RAILROADS PAPERS

A Special Collection in

The Archives and Library of

THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, New York 10301

Arranged and Described by

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NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION

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\*\*\*\*S.I. Ferry Terminal Architects:

1903 – Carrere & Hastings

1949 – Madigan & Hylander – Architectural Firm

\*\*\*\*Ferry Museum opened – April 2, 1993 and closed Sept. 2001

(in ferry terminal)

## PROVENANCE:

These papers were deposited at various times by founders and members of the Board of Trustees of the Institute, especially by William T. Davis. The accession numbers range from 1924 to the 1960s.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

William T. Davis, 1862-1945, born and died on Staten Island, was an internationally known entomologist, and a local historian. He collaborated with Charles W. Leng to write "Staten Island and its People: a History," which was published in 1930.

## SCOPE & CONTENT:

The so-called Ferry and Railroad Collection spans the period 1722-1980, with the bulk of its papers falling between the years 1851 and 1900, a significant period in the development and growth of American transportation. It consists strictly of business material, including correspondence, memoranda, ledgers, legal agreements, contracts, court cases, reports, programs, invitations, maps, drafts, clippings, printed material, and ephemerae pertaining to a variety of ferry and railroad companies located on and around Staten Island. Most of the collection is stored in two cubic foot boxes. Five additional folders are kept with oversized material.

The contents of the collection, which have been deposited at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Science by various donors at different times, is diverse and incomplete, containing scattered items from several participating sources. To facilitate reference, the collection has been artificially arranged into subgroups, filed alphabetically, which identify the contents with the individual or corporate structure to which they belong. Its fragmented nature and large gaps in time do not lend this collection suitable to an obvious series arrangement. Each subgroup has, therefore, been placed into chronological order. In addition, because of the complex interrelationship in ownership and growth of ferries and railroads on Staten Island throughout its history, no attempt has been made to separate the two entities.

The largest subgroup, the North Shore Staten Island Ferry Company (N.S.S.I.F. Co.), contains over one-fourth of the collection and documents the development and early activities of the Company from 1857-1875 (18 folders). The bulk of the material—mostly correspondence, memoranda, a corporate charter, contracts, statistical estimates, and printed material—deals with the problem of harbor encroachment; legal indentures (or leases) for land use; contracts for services of labor; and specifications and cost estimates for ferry boat parts. Most related correspondence is directed to the N.S.S.I.F. Co.'s founder, William H. Pendleton. One notable letter, written to him by Jacob Vanderbilt in 1861, outlines, in full, the details of the rental of a Staten Island pier for the use of the ferry. A printed copy of a Superior court case in 1875, directed against the N.S.S.I.F. Co. and the New-York and Staten Island Ferry Company by the City of New York, is particularly revealing of the problems of landing rights facing ferries at this time.

Another subgroup consists of papers documenting the history of the Staten Island Rapid Transit (S.I.R.T) from 1871 to 1952 (14 folders). Like those of the N.S.S.I.F. Co., these files are fragmented,

providing only a small sampling of the issues confronting this company. The bulk of the material-including correspondence, printed brochures and booklets, clippings, typescripts, and schedules-contains incomplete papers related to its establishment and organization, early routes, affiliation with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, statistical cost estimates, and acquisition of ferry franchises by S.I.R.T. from the City of New York. The highlight of this subgroup is an annotated typescript of the "Early History of the Staten Island Rapid Transit," prepared, in 1885, by William H. Pendleton, first Director of the Company. This document reveals, in concise form, the plans of S.I.R.T.'s early founders-Pendleton and Erastus Wiman-in altering the system of transportation and communication between Staten Island and New York, and Staten Island and New Jersey. The issues involved here are indicative of the importance relegated to rail transportation at this particular point of time, not only in Staten Island but in the United States as well. Likewise, a later "Report," prepared in 1952 by the Mayor's Committee on S.I.R.T., is equally useful to document the reverse trend, i.e., the decline in the use of rail systems on Staten Island by the mid-twentieth century.

Other subgroups in this collection are incomplete, containing at most, two or three items belonging to each representative company or individual. These reveal a scattered range of activities conducted during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, including the licensing of ferries run by Anthony Wright (1722), William Burnett (1740), Thomas Stillwell (1740), and the Staten Island Ferry Company (1856); two Supreme Court cases over the use of disputed land rights (1851 and 1857); and a report on rapid transit prepared in 1930. The latter, entitled a "Report of Transit Committee on Rapid Transit for Richmond Borough," is an example of Staten Island's early awareness and sensitivity to the critical need of efficient commuter transportation.

A small part of the material found in the Ferry and Railroad Collection is ephemeral in nature, including opening invitations and early tickets for the Brooklyn and Staten Island Ferry Company (1897), the City of New York, Department of Plant and Structures' trackless trolley system (1922), and the Staten Island Shore Railroad (n.d.); a souvenir program for a Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Banquet (1885); stock shares from the Peteler Portable Railroad Company (1870); and otherwise miscellaneous tickets, schedules, and memorabilia of various Staten Island based companies (1862-1980).

#### RELATED MATERIAL:

Additional material on Ferry and Railroads of Staten Island may be found in the Staten Island Institute's Archives under the William T. Davis, Edward C. Delavan, Jr., and George William Curtis collections, as well as the special collection of photographs on ferries of New York.

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Box Inventories:

Box 1/2

Folders		
1-3	Baltimore & Ohio RR	1885-1948
4	Brooklyn & Staten Island Ferry	1897
5-7	City of New York: Ferries	1922-1979
8	Holland Hook Ferry	1914
9-11	New-York and Staten Island Ferry	1851-1861
12-28	North Shore Staten Island Ferry	1857-1875

Box 2/2

Folders		
1	Peteler Portable RR Company	1870
2	Port Richmond & Bergen Point Ferry	1887-1892
3	Richmond Railways, Inc.	1920
4-8	Staten Island Ferry Co.	1782-1872
9-22	Staten Island Rapid Transit Railway	1873-1928
23-24	Staten Island Shore Railroad	1870-n.d.
25-26	Report of Transit Committee on Rapid Transit	1930, 1931
27	Anthony Wright Ferry License	1722

PB & MC IV

William Burnett Patent re: ferry rights	1740
North Shore S.I. Ferry Company Lease	1862
Staten Island Ferry Company	1856
S.I. Midland RR Company	1895
George II to Thomas Stillwell patent re: ferry rights	1740