



# *National Archives and Records Administration*

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## ICC Railroad Valuation Records

**Report:** This report describes the valuation records created by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), Bureau of Valuation. These records provide detailed documentation pertaining to the railroads of the United States from their beginning until the 1960's. Most of the valuation records were created during the period 1915 to 1920 by ICC and railroad employees who undertook a massive project to inventory almost every aspect of the existing railroad system in the United States.

The valuation records in the custody of the National Archives are part of Record Group 134, Records of the Interstate Commerce Commission. These records total approximately 11,000 cubic feet and are divided into two general subdivisions: the basic valuation records and the period updates. The basic valuation records will allow a researcher to obtain for the period 1915-20 information about the railroad facilities existing at a particular location, the land owned by a railroad and how it was acquired, the land adjacent to railroad property, and the financial history of the railroad from its earliest operations to the date of basic valuation. Periodic updating records allow a researcher to follow changes in facilities from the date of basic valuation and changes in the financial condition of the railroad corporation to the 1960's. In addition, the records will allow a researcher to determine the specific rolling stock held by a railroad for the period from basic valuation to the 1960's.

Such information, however, is not contained in any single type of record. The general subject categories of the records are land, engineering, and accounting reports and supporting documentation. The following is a brief description of the types of valuation records in the custody of the National Archives:

- 1. Engineering Field Notes:** Notes concerning grading, ballast, ties, track, and all railroad structures. The three main types of notes are the chaining notes, the bridge and building notes, and inventories of furnishings. The chaining notes detail every mile of railroad. These notes provide detailed descriptions of the railroad right-of-way, giving to the nearest foot the location of crossings, culverts, bridges, and the intersection of railroad track. The bridge and building notes, if they are of high quality, contain detailed descriptions of structures and are frequently supplemented by photographs and/or blueprints.
- 2. Equipment and Machinery Schedules:** Schedules were submitted by railroads as inventories of their holdings of various types of equipment, including steam locomotives and rolling stock. Schedules exist for some smaller railroads mostly in the southeastern USA. A list of schedules is available.
- 3. Final Engineering Report:** Reports summarize the information in the engineering field notes concerning the fixed property of railroads and rolling stock. The final engineering reports are maintained with the Valuation Dockets and also separately.
- 4. Detailed Land Maps:** Almost all of the maps are 25" by 54" and cover either one half mile, a mile, two miles, three miles, or four miles of track. They contain many engineering details such as the layout of track and the locations of buildings and bridges.

5. **Land Acquisition Forms:** Forms detailing the acquisition of each parcel of land the railroad is using for common-carrier purposes that is part of the right-of-way covered by the map as well as some parcels not being used for that purpose. Equipment and Machinery Schedules are sometimes included with these forms.
6. **Grant Forms:** Forms recording grants to railroads by the federal, state, or local governments, corporations, and individuals. Some grants were for common-carrier purposes and others were for financial considerations.
7. **Leasing Forms:** Forms recording leases of railroad-owned land to individuals, corporations, and municipalities.
8. **Land Appraisal Field Notes:** Notes compiled by the ICC to determine the current value of land adjacent to railroad right-of-ways. Each note pertains to a land appraisal zone, which was established at each point where property adjacent to a railroad right-of-way changed in value. Each note describes the land in the zone and provides an estimate of its, then, current value per acre or per square foot.
9. **Final Land Reports:** Reports summarizing some information in the land acquisition forms and land field notes concerning the land owned or rented by railroads. They provide compilations of the value of land used by railroads for common-carrier purposes. Perhaps, most importantly, they serve as a finding aid to the valuation records. The final land report enables one to identify the relevant engineering field notes, the maps, the land acquisition schedules, the grant schedules, and the land appraisal report regarding a specific location. The final land reports are maintained with the Valuation Dockets and also separately.
10. **Statements about Railroads:** Usually consists of charts showing the corporate organization of railroads. In some cases, the statements include a narrative history of the railroad. The narrative histories are only available for some railroads.
11. **Accounting Schedules and Related Records:** The schedules provide extensive financial data covering subjects such as profit and loss, cost of construction, bonds issued and retired, and securities purchased and sold. Related records exist mostly for the smaller railroads and include material relating to their financial histories.
12. **Formal Valuation Dockets:** Dockets recording the formal administrative proceedings during which the ICC reached a valuation decision concerning a railroad. The dockets contain the engineering, land, and accounting final reports that contain summary information based on the findings of the valuation supporting documentation.
13. **Periodic Forms Updating Final Engineering Reports:** The first update forms cover over a decade, but the railroads were subsequently required to submit annual updates.
14. **Periodic Forms Updating Final Land Reports:** The first update forms cover over a decade, but the railroads were subsequently required to submit annual updates. These forms covered the major acquisitions or sale of land used for common-carrier purposes.

**15. Annual Financial Report Forms:** Annual reports submitted after the basic valuation of the railroads. They update the financial information gathered on the railroads during the basic valuation.

**16. Inspection Reports Compiled:** Reports compiled by the ICC during the late 1930's and early 1940's. Many of these reports contain numerous photographs about the facet of the railroad's operation being inspected. They do not, however, cover many railroads.

Most of these types of records are inter-related. For example, the final land reports serve as a finding aid to information found in the engineering records. Also, researchers interested in maps of a specific locality should consult the chaining notes in the engineering field notes as well as the detailed land maps.

There are several types of information needed to gain access to the railroad valuation records. The name of the railroad during the period 1915-20 and the location of the town or geographical area in question are necessary to gain access to the records. The number of the valuation section, the milepost (and station) numbers, and the map numbers are helpful but not required to begin research. In most cases, the available finding aids give this information.

For further information concerning research in the railroad valuation records, please contact the Archives II Textual Reference Staff, Textual Archives Services Division, National Archives in College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740, telephone (301) 837-3510, email: [archives2reference@nara.gov](mailto:archives2reference@nara.gov). The railroad valuation maps are available from the Cartographic Reference Staff, Special Media Archives Services Division, National Archives at College Park, telephone (301) 837-3200, email: [carto@nara.gov](mailto:carto@nara.gov).

Descriptions, container and file title lists for these records are available on the National Archives Catalog on the National Archives website at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov). In addition, these descriptions are included in the "Records Relating to North American Railroads, Reference Information Paper #91," compiled by David A. Pfeiffer, which is available online at [www.rlhs.org](http://www.rlhs.org) and in hard copy from the National Archives.