

Collection #
SC2857

CHICAGO PULLMAN STRIKE REPORTS JULY 1894

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May 2009

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 folder
COLLECTION DATES:	July 5-6, 1894
PROVENANCE:	Gary Romele, Port Orford, OR, February 2009
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2009.0043

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

George Pullman developed a railroad car that was comfortable for passengers; that he wanted to be like bedrooms on wheels. These cars were called Pullman cars. The first was built in the mid-1860s. Pullman became the owner of the Pullman Palace Car Company and branched out from just making sleeping cars to dining and private cars as well. Pullman was very successful and eventually he had a city, just outside of Chicago, named after him. The city comprised of the Pullman Palace Car Company as well as worker's housing that was also owned by George Pullman. It was mandatory that the workers live in these houses if they were to work for Pullman.

During the depression of the 1890s the workers grew agitated by the high rent and wage decreases that left their families hungry. They began requesting meetings with Pullman who continually refused. Also, in 1893, Eugene Debs of Indiana began the American Railroad Union (A.R.U.) that represented ALL railroad workers. The A.R.U. drew large amounts of support as it grew to 150,000 members in the first 11 months.

The agitation grew to a head on May 11, 1894 when 90% of Pullman employees walked off their jobs. At the June convention of the A.R.U. the members agreed to support the Pullman workers. This meant that nation-wide they would then stop working on trains that were pulling Pullman cars. This strike frightened railroad owners who began viewing the A.R.U. as an entity that needed to be destroyed. The majority of newspapers in the country and Richard Olney who was the United States Attorney General (also a man who earned his wealth from the railroad industry) were on the side of the railroad owners. Olney issued an injunction claiming that the railroad workers needed to return to work or they would be breaking the law because he said that they were disrupting mail services and that in turn that was disrupting free trade. So, suddenly their strike became illegal. From there the situation escalated and on July 4th, 1894 federal troops were sent to Chicago (against the desire of the Illinois governor). Instead of creating peace the troops in the city sparked more violence. Riots began and although often it was not the railroad workers committing the violent acts they were quickly blamed for them.

A few days later the workers could see that the strike had ended and they had lost. About three-fourths of the workers returned to their low paying jobs with high rent housing at Pullman but this time they had to sign a pledge stating that they would never join a union.

Although the strike was a failure for the workers it made the nation more aware. After it was over people began realizing how poorly the workers were treated and how certain people acted against them. It had long lasting effects on workers rights and organizations for the future.

Sources:

Carwardine, Rev. William H., *The Pullman Strike*. (Charles H. Kerr & Co., Publishers: Chicago, 1894).

Stein, R. Conrad, *The Story of the Pullman Strike* (Childrens Press: Chicago, 1981).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains reports from three special meetings of the Central Association of Railroad Officers that were held on July 5 and 6, 1894 in Indianapolis. They list the reports from the officers of the railroads in central Indiana and the effects of the strike on their operations.

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Chicago Pullman Strike Reports, July 1894

CONTAINER

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

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1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2857).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.