CHALLENGES AND DISCOVERIES OF PROCESSING MAPS IN RAILWAY COLLECTIONS

AT&SF Railway Company Land Records in UTA Libraries Special Collections
LESLIE WAGNER - INTRODUCTION

• M.A. in History, University of Texas at Arlington, 1998
  • Thesis Committee Chair: Richard Francaviglia, Director, Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and History of Cartography

• Certificate in Archival Administration, 1999

• Associate Archivist – The University of Texas at Arlington, 2009-Present

• Archivist
  • Methodist Hospitals of Dallas, 1999-2002
  • Dallas Jewish Historical Society, 2000-2006, 2009-2011
  • Dallas Holocaust Museum, 2002-2006

• Mapping the Southwest Project, 2010-2013
  • Project Archivist
  • Cartographic Cataloging
  • Training from one of the committee members
ATCHISON, TO PEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY LAND RECORDS

- Brief Summary of the Project
- The Details
- Approaching the task
- Technical aspects
- Add your third bullet point here
AT&SF RAILWAY COMPANY
LAND RECORDS – SUMMER 2013

• Time and manpower constraints
  • 4 months/17 weeks
  • Project archivist, full-time
  • Student assistant, up to 19 hours per week

• Physical constraints
  • Location: basement storage room
  • Limited work surface and limited shelf space

• Technical constraints
  • No computer drops, just Wi-fi, so used department’s laptop
  • Laptop configured with docking station, monitor, and keyboard
  • No phone or phone service
IN THE BEGINNING

• Dilapidated cardboard boxes
• Cobwebs, dust, and dead bugs
• Tight workspace
• Gloves, gloves, and more gloves
• Humidity and lack of airflow
• Time constraints
THE PLAN

• MPLP (More Product, Less Process)
  • Rapid assessment
  • Original order
    • Numbering systems represented different railroad affiliates
    • Redo of previously processed items (approx. 100 boxes)
      • From county to creator-assigned number (KEY)
  • “Touch it once” rule

• Creation of database to compile map details
  • Sort and filter
  • Pattern discernment

• Compilation of container list for final finding aid
MPLP (MORE PRODUCT, LESS PROCESS)

- Rapid Assessment
- Original Order
  - Numbering systems represented different railroad affiliates
  - Redo of previously processed items (approx. 100 boxes)
    - From filing by county to creator-assigned number (KEY)
- Processing the Maps
- Creating Access
  - Finding aid (Texas Archival Resources Online - TARO)
  - Bibliographic records (OCLC/WorldCat)
  - Voyager (local catalog)
**PROCESSING THE MAPS**

- Designed and adapted database to record all map data
- Applied the “Touch It Once” Rule
  - Teamed up to complete all aspects of processing for each map
  - Reviewed each map
  - Captured physical description
  - Entered data into key fields and noted all identifiers
  - Created an overall numbering system for the maps for later retrieval
  - Reviewed and noted preservation needs
CAPTURING MAP DETAILS

• What information to record?
  • Size
  • Title(s)
  • Identifying numbers
  • Company/railway name
  • Content description
  • Keywords
  • Preservation recommendations
  • Type of map
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

• Printing Methods
  • Sepia diazo prints
  • Blueprints
  • Some multicolor aniline prints.

• Size of rolled maps
  • Most common width of 1 yard/1 meter
  • Most common length about 140 cm
  • Nearly 2000 cm long

• Condition
  • Rolled/Flat/Folded
  • Damaged?
    • At risk maps were encapsulated immediately if appropriate

• Content
CAPTURING MAP CONTENT

• Recording Significant Details for the Potential Researcher
  • Who? What? Where?

• Understanding Map’s Function in Context
  • Tracking acquisition, maintenance, and return of right of way
  • Tracking sale, purchase, and abandonment of railroad lands and lines
  • Tracking mineral rights and land use
  • Pinpointing litigation over property tracts

• Recognizing Research Value
  • Economic growth – urban development
  • Economic setback – ghost towns
  • Changes in landscape, transportation, and culture
PHYSICAL EXTENT OF THE COLLECTION

- 1200 Maps
  - 800 rolled maps
  - 200 folded maps
  - 200 flat maps
- 290 Manuscript Boxes
- 24-26 Oversized Boxes
- 10 index card boxes
DESCRIPTION LEVELS FOR FINDING AIDS

• Series level
  • Absolutely necessary

• Box level
  • Doable, but still extensive

• Folder level
  • Impractical for this project

• Item level
  • Unthinkable!
COLLECTION SERIES

- Series I – AT&SF Records (Boxes 1-46 with 15 subseries)
- Series II – Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Records (Boxes 47-72 with 4 subseries)
- Series III – Auxiliary company records (Boxes 72-78)
- Series IV – Deeds and abstracts (Boxes 78-281 with 6 subseries)
- Series V – Maps
- Series VI – Non-AT&SF Publications
- Series VII – Ledgers
- Series VIII – Boxed maps
- Series IX – Unboxed maps, rolled
- Series X – Artifacts