BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REPORT OF THE ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

To the Board of Directors and Members of the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society:

The Archives Committee is pleased to submit the following report for the year ended December 31, 2022.

**General Information** The Committee acquires, organizes, and preserves photographs, documents, drawings, and other paper materials related to the history of the Boston and Maine and Maine Central Railroads, their predecessors and successors, and other New England railroads. We furnish archival information to many different patrons including researchers, writers, preservationists, surveyors, engineers, lawyers, modelers, and genealogists.

The Archives are located in the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center at 40 French Street in Lowell, Massachusetts. This building is owned by the National Park Service and is part of the Lowell National Historical Park. Our Archives are housed within the Center for Lowell History, the UMass Lowell special collections library. The B&MRRHS collection is owned by the Society and managed by the Archives Committee. It occupies an area of about 1,000 square feet where we have shelving, cabinet storage, and workspace for researchers. Our cooperative agreement with the University gives our collection a secure, climate-controlled environment and an accessibility that is unmatched by most other railroad historical societies.

At Lowell the visitor will find photographs, slides, negatives, right of way and track maps, valuation surveys, timetables, books, periodicals, mechanical drawings of structures and equipment, and a wealth of data organized alphabetically by subject—Abandonments, Accidents, Baggage, etc.

The Center for Lowell History, including the B&MRRHS Archives, is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and the third Saturday of the month from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Intending visitors should email the Archives Chairman to make an appointment: fnowell3@gmail.com. This is an appropriate place to offer our thanks to Tony Sampas, the archivist-in-chief and general manager of the Center for Lowell History, without whose help we could not offer such a welcoming and well-maintained facility to our members and guests.

The Society rents additional space for the Archives (and for our Hardware collection and Sales Department) in a warehouse building in North Chelmsford, Mass. The Archives Committee uses this space to receive and catalog donations, to scan large format documents, and to store primary source material, principally railroad records and drawings.

**Our Volunteers**

The Society’s archival effort is performed by three groups.

**Rick Nowell’s group** is composed of Ken Akerboom, David Ashenden, Len Bachelder, Brad Blodget, Paul Burke, Steve Butterworth, Carl Byron, Rick Conard, Eric DiVirgilio, Mike Dolan, Jack Dziadul, Bob Farrenkopf, Mark Fecteau, Bob Fuller, Marguerite Gropp, Tom Humphrey, Rick Hurst, Larry Kemp, Brad Kippen, Rick Kfoury, Alan LePain, Jack Madden, Dick Miller, Emily Nicewonger, Dan O’Brien, Rick Nowell, Keith Scarlett, Jimi Smith, Mal Sockol, Kris Spinney, Leo Sullivan, Henry Taves, Earl Tuson, Peter Violette, and Dave West.

This group held 10 work sessions in 2022, as compared to 9 in 2021 and 14 in 2020. The average attendance in 2022 was 7, as compared to 5 in 2021 and 4 in 2020. During 2022, this group was engaged in large format scanning, cataloging, and photo identification and labeling.

Many of our committee members and friends made important contributions by performing work in “off hours.” Ken Akerboom improved and updated his popular freight car database. David Ashenden, Len Bachelder, Steve Butterworth, Carl Byron, Rick Conard, Jack Dziadul, Tom Humphrey, Alan LePain, Jack Madden, Richard Symmes, and Tom E. Thompson answered a variety of historical inquiries. Jack Dziadul updated his *B&M Bulletin* and *Modelers Notes* indexes. Steve Butterworth and Paul Burke cataloged collections. Rick Hurst found good homes for duplicate and off-topic materials. Paul Burke filed new acquisitions at Lowell and assisted, along with Bob Fuller, with donation pick-up. Rick Kfoury helped with upload to the new Omeka on-line archives platform. Emily Nicewonger processed photos and filed new acquisitions at Lowell. Earl Tuson made some major improvements to our shelving at Lowell. Kris Spinney abstracted employee records. Peter Violette scanned B&M steam locomotive drawings for use by New England Steam Foundation’s 470 restoration.

**Rick Hurst’s group,** which includes Brad Blodget, Larry Kemp, and Dick Miller, continued meet regularly to process the Donald B. Valentine Fitchburg Division collection. Material relevant to specific locations are now in good alphabetical order. The remaining collections are being organized by subject. Rick Hurst’s volunteer group also devoted several work sessions to establishing a comprehensive file of Bulletin Orders, Notices, and Circulars at North Chelmsford. These documents are organized by year and division, the earliest being from 1933.

**Brad Kippen’s group** includes Kris Spinney, Rick Kfoury, and Rick Nowell. During Calendar Year 2022, they added 1,108 Chaffin Collection negatives to the BMRRHS archive. Brad reports that 4,700 negatives are 100% complete, that is to say, scanned, post-processed, negative ID's added, and registered in the negative database.

• 3,081/4,700 (66%) of completed negatives are Boston and Maine.

• 1,619/4,700 (33%) of completed negatives are other railroads USA and Canada

An additional 883 negatives are presently in progress. All of these are scanned and in various stages of the post-processing and registering the data to the database.

• 557 / 883 (63%) of in-progress negatives are Boston and Maine. These are the last of Chaffin's Boston and Maine negatives to complete. Topics remaining include the steam switchers (0-4-0, 0-6-0, and 0-8-0), pre-1911 steam copy negatives, B&M predecessor copy negatives, and some of the location pictures.

• 326 / 883 (37%) of the in-progress negatives are non-Boston and Maine.

Brad has been in correspondence with a number of railroad historical societies to obtain locomotive information for negatives in the Chaffin Collection and to make scans of locomotives on these foreign railroads available to their members. In so doing, we have established friendships with other organizations like ours.

During the year we also received assistance from an intern, Brandon Bourgeois, a remote learning student affiliated with a library/archival program at Clarion University,

We were saddened by the death of our volunteer Al Taylor, who had contributed many hours to the Archives, especially in processing the locomotive photo collection of Edward Ozog. We miss his friendly presence at our work sessions.

**Digital SERVICES** In 2022 we continued the educational commitment (begun in 2013) to make archives materials available online and in digital format.

* As part of the Society’s remodeling of our website ([www.bmrrhs.org](http://www.bmrrhs.org)) we adopted the Omeka web publishing platform for our On-Line Archives. Omeka is a computer program that generates an attractive, professional looking on-line display of archival items. We went live with Omeka in December. We continue to make adjustments and complete the uploading of materials to the new site.
* Over 2,600 historical photographs can be viewed on our Flickr site (www.flickr.com/photos/bmrrhs). Archives photos also appear on the Society’s Facebook page.
* In 2020, we released an updated DVD containing a complete run of the B&M Bulletin from Vol I, No. 1 (1971) to Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (2019). The master disk was prepared from scans furnished by David Ashenden and Bulletin Andrew M. Wilson. The disk is available through our on-line Sales Department.
* Over 2000 large format documents have been scanned since 2018. These include valuation plans, dispatcher sheets, bridge plans, station plans, and locomotive and car plans. We hope to post them eventually to the Society’s website. In the meantime, they are available for viewing on demand.
* Brad Kippen’s group has scanned, catalogued, and preserved over 4,700 negatives from the Robert E. Chaffin Collection. (See above).
* Our consolidated employee database currently has over 23,000 entries. While we do not hold comprehensive employee records, we can gather names, locations, and occupations of employees from items in our collection. This is painstaking work but we are rewarded by being able to provide information to descendants of B&M employees and other researchers.

As we make an ever-increasing commitment to digitization and providing on-line resources, our exposure to loss or expense from destruction of electronic records grows too. We have adopted a cloud-based backup system to supplement our existing procedures.

**Requests for Information** Every few days we receive a request for information. Some of these inquiries can be answered by the Chairman from his files. Others require time at the Archives in Lowell or Chelmsford to locate and copy photos, employee records, or data. Still others defy solution and we refer them to our “panel of experts.” This crowd-sourcing approach has proved highly effective, and we thank all of you who have contributed to these lively and enlightening exchanges of knowledge.

**Our Donors** We logged in a total of 55 donations in 2022, as compared to 71 in 2021 and 59 in 2020. Donors included Paul Calantropo, Southern Railway Historical Association, Lew Walter (courtesy of J. Leonard Bachelder), Monticello Railway Museum, Steam Railroading Institute, Ron Palmquist, Center for Lowell History, Paul Baillio, William H. McCaffrey, Geoff Beard, John A. Goulet, Roger Liller, Edwin R. Hiller, Candice Strawley, J.W. Wright, The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Historical Society, Richard Miller and Larry Kemp, Richard K. Hurst, Andover (N.H.) Historical Society, Michael C. Lennon, Rich and Dennis Snook, Guilford Transportation Industries, Philip R. Jordan, Family of Rodney H. Peterson, Ken Akerboom, B&MRRHS Sales Dept., Ron Rand, Fred Guth, Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society, Bradford G. Blodget, Sanford-Springvale Mousam Land Trust, Soo Line Historical and Technical Society Inc., Robert P. Fuller, CSX Corporation, Peter Violette, David E. Boyd, John F. Meixel and the Colorado Railroad Museum, Scott Batson, Peter J. Edmunds, Eric Fleming, Alden Dreyer, Thornton H. Waite, Mary Ann Nelligan courtesy of Bob Goodwin, Robert Liljestrand, New Haven Railroad Historical and Technical Association, Cliff Temple, and Nashua Historical Society.

We extend warmest thanks to all our donors for their generosity and their interest in our work of preserving the history of the Boston and Maine and Maine Central Railroads. We encourage our members and friends to donate additional material to our growing collection. We will also appreciate receiving information about potential donors.

Our committee welcomes new volunteers. We need researchers, catalogers, scanners, and organizers. All you need is an interest in railroad history. Contact the Chairman for more information. I am, as always, impressed and inspired by how much can be accomplished by volunteers.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Nowell

Frederick N. Nowell, III

Chairman, Archives Committee