
Guide to the Asbury Rapid Transit System Records

Collection number: 03-DPGTL

Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archives
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:

Original processing completed by SCRTD library staff. Re-processed by Patrick A. Stawski in 2006

Date Completed:

2006

Encoded by:

Patrick A. Stawski

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Asbury Rapid Transit System records

Dates: 1935-1958

Collection number: 03-DPGTL

Creator: Asbury Rapid Transit System

Collection Size: 4 boxes(2 linear feet)

Repository: Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archives.
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2952

Abstract: The Asbury Rapid Transit System Records afford a glimpse into the every day operations of the small, privately owned rapid transit systems that existed in Los Angeles prior to the ascendancy of public transit agencies in the late 1950's. The files preserved in the collection document how these ventures provided transit services by establishing a network of leases and contracts with local companies and individuals. This guide provides multi-level descriptions of records content and context. The collection can also be accessed via the Archives Catalog, which contains individual descriptions of many of the items.

Physical location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access

Please contact the Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archives for information on collection access and restrictions.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Asbury Rapid Transit System records, 03-DPGTL. Dorothy Payton Grey Transportation Library.

Acquisition Information

ARTS material became the property of MCL upon acquisition. After MCL was purchased by LAMTA material passed into public agency ownership.

Custodial History

The Asbury Rapid Transit System (ARTS) records were originally produced by the ARTS offices themselves. ARTS was operated as a subsidiary of Metropolitan Coach Lines (MCL) beginning in 1954. When MCL was acquired by the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority in 1958, the records passed into the custody of this and successor public transit agencies. Records were transferred to the Dorothy Payton Grey Transportation Library and Historical Archives in the 1980's.

Processing Information

Dorothy Payton Grey originally processed the MCL collection. Photo descriptions provided by Jim Walker. Finding aid and collection level arrangement and description completed by Patrick Stawski, 2006.

Biography / Administrative History

Asbury Rapid Transit System (ARTS) was the inheritor of a tradition of small, privately held transit ventures that had been operating in Los Angeles since the turn of the Twentieth Century. These companies, such as Mount Wilson Stage Line, Original Stage Line, Pasadena-Ocean Park Stage Line, and Studio Stage Line, competed with and complimented rail passenger service by providing bus linkages between Pacific Electric's (PE) suburban and interurban routes and Los Angeles Railway's (LARy) local lines.

ARTS was the brainchild of two brothers, J.T. and F.H. Asbury, who had been providing trucking and carrier services in the Los Angeles area under the names of Asbury Trucking Company and Asbury Transportation Co., which still exists today. The two brothers formed Asbury Rapid Transit out of two pre-existing transit companies: Original Stage Line which had been operating in the San Fernando Valley since 1913, and Pasadena-Ocean Park Stage Line which had been in operation since 1919. The Asbury's began their passenger service acquisitions in 1930 by acquiring two-fifths shares of all the outstanding Original Stage Line stock. On June 8, 1933, the Asbury's "and their respective wives" acquired the entirety of outstanding Pasadena-Ocean Park Stage Line stock. Original Stage Line officially became Asbury Rapid Transit System on August 31, 1939. The two predecessor companies were contractually merged on September 30, 1939, leaving Asbury Rapid Transit as the surviving corporation.

Asbury spent the 1940's trying to expand its service in the suburban regions of Los Angeles by planning routes that connected with PE and LARy's rail lines. Asbury and other small companies targeted growing communities such as Torrance, Highland Park, and most notably the San Fernando Valley. The period spanning the 1920's through the 1940's was a great time of suburban growth in the San Fernando Valley. The completion of the Owens Valley aqueduct in 1913 flooded the Valley with water and new residents. The pre-water population was a mere 3,000 residents, but by the 1940's the San Fernando Valley was the fastest growing urban area in the nation and its population had grown to 400,000! Transit operations such as Pacific Electric and Asbury Transit greatly benefited from and further spurred the suburban explosion. Asbury took advantage of the wartime growth of the defense industry in the San Fernando Valley, transporting workers to the Lockheed and Vega airplane plants. Historians can literally trace the growth of the San Fernando Valley through the route applications submitted by local transit operators to the Public Utilities Commission as they attempted to follow the rapidly spreading suburbs.

By the 1950's, Asbury Transit, like many of the other independent transit providers of this era, began to feel the impact of the new automotive culture. The mostly white and upwardly mobile residents of the Valley took advantage of the new freeways meandering across the vast stretches of Los Angeles to zip quickly to and fro in the luxury of their own cars. Asbury was not able to off set the decreased ridership with increased fares or cost savings, and thus on August 3, 1954, Asbury Transit was sold to Jesse Haugh's Metropolitan Coach Lines. Asbury continued in operation as a subsidiary of MCL until 1957-1958 when the newly formed public agency, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (LAMTA), acquired both MCL and Asbury for 33 million dollars.

List of Abbreviations

- ARTS – Asbury Rapid Transit System
- BRT – Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen
- LACMTA – Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority
- LAMTA – Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority
- LARy – Los Angeles Railway
- MCL - Metropolitan Coach Lines
- PE - Pacific Electric Railway Company
- PUC – Public Utilities Commission

Scope and Content of Collection

Please see series description.

Arrangement

Please see series description.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Asbury, F. H.

Asbury, J. T.

Eyraud, A.J.

Haugh, Jesse L.

Haugh, Richard L.

Snowden, Ms.?

Uecker, E. H.

Asbury Rapid Transit System

Asbury Transportation Company

Asbury Trucking Company

Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen

Los Angeles Railway

Metropolitan Coach Lines Company

Original Stage Line

Pacific Electric Railway Company

Pasadena -- Ocean Park Stage Line

Local Transit -- California -- Los Angeles County

Local Transit -- California -- Los Angeles County -- San Fernando Valley

Transportation -- California -- Los Angeles County

Public Utilities -- California -- Los Angeles County -- Records and Correspondence

- *Arthur C. Jenkins Papers*, HE4491.K47 J4, Harmer E. Davis Transportation Library, Institute of Transportation Studies, University of California, Berkeley
- California State Archives, *Public Utilities Commission Records*
- Dorothy Payton Grey Transportation Library, *Metropolitan Coach Lines Records*
- Dorothy Payton Grey Transportation Library, *Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority Collection*

1 Reference 1935-2006

Collector: Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Physical Description: 1 folder

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series was created by the Archive for user reference. It contains copies of articles and items providing historical information about Asbury Rapid Transit System.

Arrangement

All material is one folder, arranged by author.

2 Publicity and Public Relations Photos 1953-1958

Creator: Asbury Rapid Transit System

Physical Description: 1 folder

Series Scope and Content Summary

Contains all the photos in the ARTS collection. Generally speaking the photos were generated for public relations and publicity functions. All the photos are of ARTS equipment and operations, but also included is a photo of a Pasadena Ocean Park Stage Line motor coach. In most cases it is difficult to determine who exactly took the photo, although one photo shot outside the Asbury Transportation Co. building c. 1935 is stamped with "Hawthorne Studios – commercial photographers" on the back, indicating that at least some of the photos were taken by an outside company. Photos are black and white glossy; dimensions include 8 X 10 and 3.5 X 4.75; some negatives also included. The subject content is various. Some of the photos are described in the Archives Catalog as well.

Arrangement

Photos are located in one file.

3 Secretary's Files - Auditor's Office 1942-1958

Creator: Asbury Rapid Transit System

Physical Description: 3 boxes

Series Scope and Content Summary

These files correspond to the company Secretary's Files. It appears that the Auditor's Office of Metropolitan Coach Lines (Richard L. Haugh, Secretary-Treasurer-Director, E. H. Uecker, Director, and secretary Ms. Snowden) implemented this filing system after Metropolitan Coach Lines took control of Asbury Transit in 1954. The Company Secretary functioned similar to what we currently call the "Board Secretary". The Secretary maintained the official company files "of record" which may have included the corporate minutes, the official seal of the corporation for certification purposes in real estate and bond instruments, as well as other official records of the corporate entity. This series consists mostly of contracts and leases with each contract assigned an "audit" number. The material inside the audit folders consists of originals and official copies of correspondence, contracts and agreements, notes and annotations, and blueprints and architectural drawings. The Reports on Examination contained in ARTS-59 contain an Accountant's Certificate, Balance Sheet, and Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Earned Surplus.

Arrangement

MCL's filing system is preserved with folders arranged by audit number, in ascending order. Within each folder, material is typically arranged chronologically. A complete container list is available at the archive.

4 General Organizational Records 1944-1951

Creator: Asbury Rapid Transit System

Physical Description: 1 box

Series Scope and Content Summary

These files contain additional company operations material. Some may have originally been included in the Secretary's Files.

Arrangement

Items are arranged chronologically. A complete container list is available at the archive.

5 Employee Relations and "Union Matters" Records 1945-1952

Creator: Asbury Rapid Transit System

Physical Description: 1 box

Series Scope and Content Summary

Contains material related to ARTS' dealings with the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), the union that represented the motor coach operators. As they deal with the union employees, these records document personnel and human resource transactions. The material includes the pocket-sized handbooks that contain the labor agreements negotiated between ARTS and the union. The agreement contains compensation information, examination rules, seniority policies, etc., and list the names of the company and union officers who negotiated the contract.

Arrangement

Items are arranged chronologically. A complete container list is available at the archive.

6 Accounting Books 1938-1958

Creator: Asbury Rapid Transit System

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series contains three volumes of the company's Accounting Books and includes books for Original Stage Line and Pasadena-Ocean Park Stage Line. All three companies used a double-entry bookkeeping system. The three preserved volumes contain general journal, general ledgers, accounts receivable, accounts payable, cashbook, cash register, and also include company statistics such as annual mileage logged, passengers carried, passenger revenue, and fuel consumption.

Arrangement

Ledgers are chronologically arranged. They are housed in original bindings and should be handled with care.