

**The Filson Historical Society**  
**Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company**  
**Records, 1836-1912 (bulk 1854-1882).**

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Size of Collection:  
.66 Cubic Foot

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**Scope and Content Note**

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company Records consist of documents pertaining to the financial and legal contracts made by the railroad with various entities. These mostly appear as formally-worded, handwritten contracts and memorandums of agreement between Louisville and Nashville Railroad, or other related, regional railroads, and another party. The records also contain bond certificates, handwritten receipts, coupons, and a few engineering drawings.

The railroad's contracts appear to have been arranged in a filing system with a number stamped on the document and an accompanying envelope. There are several sets of numbered contracts within the records, none of them appearing to be complete series. The contracts document agreements between railroads and companies in regard to purchase and delivery of railroad materials and equipment, mail and telegraph services, purchase and maintenance of locomotives and cars, purchase of land, leases of rooms, purchase of stocks, bonds, coupons and the buying of rights to patents. There are railroad consolidation actions, actions of the states of Florida and Tennessee, and obligatory construction of machine shops in Hopkinsville. They also contain breaches of contract resulting in missing shipments, disgruntled employees, and nonpayment of taxes to the City of Louisville.

One contract with Compagnie des Fondries & Forges de Terre-noire, la Voulte et Bessèges in Lyon, France and dated 1873, is written in French and is for the purchase of 2012 rails "28 feet longer than usual" and "guaranteed for a period of five years."

Some contracts drawn up by other railroads include Edgefield and Kentucky Railroad, Evansville, Henderson & Nashville Railroad, Evansville, Owensboro and Nashville Railroad, and documents generated by the Alabama and Florida Railroad and the North and South Alabama Railroad. Documents also detail an agreement between Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad and Louisville and Nashville to pay for repairs. There are also blank forms written up for meetings of directors and shareholders of a Tennessee and Kentucky Railroad Company.

Correspondence of a business nature, including letters and telegraphs, cover topics related to those in the contracts. There are also two folders of correspondence with Dr. Norvin Green in Louisville, the president of the Louisville, Cincinnati, and Lexington Railroad, sent by attorneys Albert S. Berry, M. J. Dudley, and James R. Hallam, all of whom are located in northern Kentucky and mostly dealing with purchase of property and rights of way for the railroad. There are also a few letters concerning a trial between Green and Berry due to a disagreement over services.

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**Historical Note**

The Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) was chartered on March 5, 1850, by the Commonwealth of Kentucky "...to build a railroad between Louisville, Kentucky, and the Tennessee state line in the direction of Nashville." On December 4, 1851, an act of the Tennessee General Assembly authorized the company to extend its road from the Tennessee state line to Nashville. Laying of track began at Ninth Street and Broadway in Louisville in May of 1853. By 1855, the founding fathers of the L&N, most of them Louisville citizens, had raised nearly \$3 million to finance the construction. The first train to operate over the railroad ran on August 25, 1855, when some 300 people traveled eight miles from Louisville at a speed of 15 mph.

A little more than four years later, on October 27, 1859, the first train operated all the way from Louisville to Nashville, joining the two namesake cities. For all practical purposes, the 187-mile railroad was complete. Scheduled trains began running a few days later, and with the exception of war, fire, and several floods, ran throughout the 132-year history of the L&N. The total cost of this original construction was \$7,221,204.91.

Throughout its early decades, the railroad would acquire land and lines in many surrounding states. Within a period of 30 years, through construction and acquisition of existing short line railroads, the L&N extended its tracks to St. Louis in Missouri, Cincinnati in Ohio, Birmingham and Mobile in Alabama, Pensacola in Florida, and New Orleans in Louisiana. 56 railroads were acquired, leased, or constructed during the 1880s and 1890s, as the L&N system began to take its final form.

For more information on the history of the L&N, see the Louisville Encyclopedia article by Charles B. Castner (Kleber, John, ed. *The Louisville Encyclopedia*. Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 2001): 528-530.

*Sources:*

Castner, Charles B., Ronald Flanary, and Patrick Dorin, *Louisville & Nashville Railroad; The Old Reliable* (Lynchburg, VA: TLC Publishing, 1996).

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**Folder List**

Box 1 of 1

- Folder 1: Contracts [Numbers 23, 25, 32-35, 41], 1857-1859
- Folder 2: Contracts [Numbers 43-45, 52-53], 1858-1870
- Folder 3: Contracts [Numbers 54-60], 1860-1873
- Folder 4: Contracts [Numbers 68-70, 77-78, 81, 84-85, 93-96, 99], 1855-1864
- Folder 5: Contracts [Numbers 102, 105-109, 112-113, 115-118], 1858-1871
- Folder 6: Contracts [Numbers 119-121, 126-133, 135, 137-138, 140-141, 207, 211], 1853-1871
- Folder 7: Contracts [Numbers 195, 234, 236, 241, 931], 1880-1881
- Folder 8: Contracts for Deeds and Rights of Way [Numbers 232-237, 240, 244, 246, 252], 1854-1881
- Folder 9: "Miscellaneous Papers" Contracts [Numbers 179, 186-188, 200], 1870-1886
- Folder 10: "Miscellaneous Papers" Contracts [Numbers 203-204, 206-208, 211, 259, 274], 1854-1860
- Folder 11: Miscellaneous Contracts, 1858-1869
- Folder 12: Miscellaneous Contracts, 1870-1881
- Folder 13: Stocks, Bonds, and Coupons, 1857-1885
- Folder 14: Financial Reports and Notices of Payment, 1858-1883
- Folder 15: Receipts, 1858-1883
- Folder 16: Legal Documents, 1854-1882
- Folder 17: Legal Documents, 1882-1889
- Folder 18: Land Deeds, Property Leases, and Rights of Way Agreements, 1854-1912
- Folder 19: Correspondence, 1836-1882
- Folder 20: Norvin Green, Correspondence, 1870
- Folder 21: Norvin Green, Correspondence, 1871-1873
- Folder 22: Memphis, Clarksville, and Louisville Railroad Company Repair Agreement, 1866
- Folder 23: Blank Forms for Meetings of Tennessee and Kentucky Railroad Company, 188?
- Folder 24: Miscellaneous Fragments, undated.

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**Subject Headings**

African American railroad employees  
Berry, Albert S., 1856-1908  
Bonds  
Contracts  
Deeds – Kentucky  
Dudley, M. J.  
Evansville, Henderson and Nashville Railroad Company  
Evansville, Owensboro and Nashville Railroad Company  
Green, Norvin, 1818-1893  
Guthrie, James, 1792-1869  
Hallam, James R.  
Louisville, Cincinnati and Lexington Railroad Company  
MacLeod, George  
Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad Company  
Ohio Falls Car & Locomotive Company  
Patents  
Railroad accidents  
Railroad cars  
Railroad tracks  
Railroads – Alabama  
Railroads – Florida  
Railroads – Kentucky  
Railroads – Right of way  
Railroads – Tennessee  
Railway mail service – United States  
Stocks  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Transportation  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Underground movements  
United States Post Office Dept.