

Pullman Employee Records

The employee records of the Pullman Company at the Newberry are primarily for operating company workers—porters, maids, commissary attendants, conductors, shop workers, yard force workers, clerks, managers—not manufacturing or town employees. Although some 19th-century personnel records are available, the bulk of the records are post-1920.

Access

The Pullman Company Records are available for research according to provisions governing the use of the Newberry Library's manuscript collections. Because the collection contains sensitive records of recent origin (mainly personnel records), some additional restrictions have been imposed on the use of certain materials. Record series or portions of record series consisting of disciplinary or medical files are closed outright for 50 years from the date of creation. Other files containing medical or disciplinary records of individuals must be screened before a researcher may use them. While most personnel records remain open and available for research, researchers are required to provide written assurance that they will not divulge personally identifiable information less than fifty years old, that they will use such information only for statistical or summary purposes, and that supplied photocopies will be used only for the specified project and will be destroyed or returned when research is completed. Restrictions pertaining to particular record series are outlined in the collection inventory.

How to Search Pullman Employee Records

The Pullman Company Records are organized into fifteen record groups. These record groups are based on the company's corporate structure. Record Group 06, the Employee and Labor Relations Department, contains service records, Social Security applications, group insurance applications, pension applications, and medical files. The Newberry has just a small fraction of employee applications. Within Record Group 06, there are six subgroups:

- Subgroup 01: Labor Relations Department
- Subgroup 02: Personnel Administration Department
- Subgroup 03: Pensions and Group Insurance Department
- Subgroup 04: Safety and Compensation Department
- Subgroup 05: Medicine and Sanitation Department
- Subgroup 06: Chief Special Agent

You may find records for a particular employee in several different subgroups. Groups 02 and 03 are the best places to start your search.

Before looking for records of an employee, gather as much of the following information as you can:

- Employee's full name
- State in which he or she worked
- Job title

- Time frame (in which decades did this person work for the company?)

The following descriptions give a brief overview of where to look for particular records. See the [Pullman Company Records inventory](#) for detailed descriptions.

Employee Indexes and Registers

Pullman 06/02/01 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 02, Series 01)

Indexes and registers for Pullman Company management and workers, 1875-1946. Organized by type of register or index, and arranged chronologically. See pages 536-537 and 541 of the inventory for more information.

Volumes typically include employee name, birthdate, nationality, race, and service dates.

Employee Service Records

Pullman 06/02/03 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 02, Series 03)

The employee service records range from about 1890-1960, with the bulk of them from 1920-1950. There are 370 boxes arranged by location. Many of the early records were transferred to the Central Office. See pages 537-538 and 549-570 of the inventory for more information.

The service record cards typically list the employee's name, birthdate, race, address, next of kin, service commendations and warnings, and furlough, resignation, and retirement dates. Some cards in the Chicago District boxes include black and white photographs of employees.

Social Security Account Application and Railroad Retirement Board Registration Files

Pullman 06/03/04 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 03, Series 04)

These files contain employee applications for social security accounts and registrations with the Railroad Retirement Board, beginning in 1937 and going through 1960. There are 46 boxes arranged alphabetically by employee surname. See pages 587 and 593-594 of the inventory for more information.

Files typically include employee name, address, age, birthdate, birthplace, nationality, race, address, and parents' names.

Group Insurance Application Records

Pullman 06/03/01 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 03, Series 01)

In 1922, the Pullman Company inaugurated a death benefit plan that was superseded in 1929 by the voluntary, more comprehensive Plan of Group Insurance, which included death benefits, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and weekly sickness and accident insurance. Applications date from 1929-1970. See pages 585-586 and 591-592 of the inventory for more information.

Applications typically include employee name, address, race, occupation, work location, employment date, terminations and reinstatements, and beneficiary name, address, and relationship to the employee.

Application and Service Files

Pullman 06/02/02 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 02, Series 02)

Includes conductor and porter application and service files for the United States and Mexico, 1900-1964. This set of 16 boxes contains a small fraction of the amount of employee applications that may once have existed. Applications are arranged alphabetically by employee surname. See pages 537 and 542 of the inventory for more information.

Index volumes typically list employment date, district, and application number. Individual files typically contain applications, photographs, references, physician reports, disciplinary records, etc.

Discharge and Release Records

Pullman 06/02/06 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 02, Series 06)

Includes discharge and release registers and porter and conductor discharge files from 1880-1957, with the bulk of the records from 1880-1931. Organized by job title and then chronologically. See pages 539 and 573 of the inventory for more information.

Registers and files typically list employee name and number, occupation, division, district, date of release, and reason for discharge.

Retired with Pension Files, 1916-1980

Pullman 06/03/06 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 03, Series 06)

Organized by type of record: individual pensioner files arranged by file number; record cards grouped by death date and then arranged alphabetically; and registers arranged chronologically. See pages 588 and 595-597 of the inventory for more information.

Records typically list employee name, occupation, location, and death date.

Deceased Employee Prior Service Files, 1926-1976

Pullman 06/03/07 (Record Group 06, Subgroup 03, Series 07)

Organized by type of record: individual deceased employee prior service files arranged by file number (chronologically); unnumbered individual death files arranged alphabetically by surname; individual deceased employee register arranged chronologically. See pages 588 and 598-600 of the inventory for more information.

Records typically list employee name, occupation, location, and death date.

Microfilm

A preliminary inventory of Pullman employee records on microfilm is available in the library. Records date from the 1880s, so this is a good source for researching those employed before 1920.

Other sources for Pullman employee information

The [Railroad Retirement Board](#) has records for workers in the railroad industry post-1936.

The great majority of Pullman Car Works employee service records are held by the **South Suburban Genealogical and Historical Society** in Hazel Crest, IL.

The **A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum** in Chicago is a source for general information about Pullman porters and African-American labor history.

For a history of Pullman porters, consult Larry Tye's *Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class*. HD 8039 .R362 U68 2004

The Newberry's digital publication **Pullman: Labor, Race, and the Urban Landscape in a Company Town** features many digitized documents from the Pullman collection, with a focus on labor history.

Call our reference desk at (312) 255-3506 with questions on our holdings, or **contact a librarian** with research questions.