

Record Series #: 1121-122

Name: Merchants and Miners Transportation Company records

Dates: 1934-1940, no date

Extent/Size: 12.0 legal folders (0.5 cubic feet)

Language: English

Name of Creator(s):

Merchants and Miners Transportation Company

Administrative History:

The Merchants and Miners Transportation Company was established in 1852 as a cargo and passenger steamship line between Baltimore, Maryland and Boston, Massachusetts. The company had four ships in service and extended their routes to Providence, Rhode Island in 1859. The transportation service temporarily halted operations during the Civil War but by 1869 they added another ship to their fleet and were fully operational again. In 1876, the company purchased the Baltimore and Savannah Steamship Company to expand their routes further and to start trading cotton.

By 1900 there were several routes added, including Newport News, New Jersey, Norfolk, Virginia, and a line from Savannah, Georgia, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The company was headquartered in Baltimore with offices at all the major ports along the company's routes. In 1909, a fleet of ships was purchased from the Winsor Line of Philadelphia.

During World War II, most of the ships were requisitioned by the United States government for use in the war. After the war, the company did not consider it viable to repurchase the ships from the government to continue their trade and passenger routes. The company was dissolved by 1952.

Longshoremen, also known as dock workers or stevedores, have been forming modern unions since 1864 in the port of New York. The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) traces their union back to groups established in the Great Lakes area of the Midwest in the 1870s. The ILA joined the American Federation of Labor in 1895 and became international after their work extended into Canada. Presently, the International Longshoremen's Association has 200 local affiliates along the Eastern, Gulf, and Great Lakes' coasts.

The local ILA unions established in Savannah, Georgia, are the ILA 1475 Clerks and Checkers Union (founded in 1956), the ILA 2046 Repair and Maintenance Union (founded in 1985), and the ILA 1414 Stevedores Union (founded in 1935). The Merchants and Miners Transportation Company negotiated with unions that were established in different port cities after the passing of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which granted private sector employees the right to organize, bargain for wages, and conduct strikes. The unions would approach companies negotiating benefits, salaries, working hours, and fair hiring practices, threatening strikes if negotiations went poorly. The shipping companies that used the Port of Savannah would often sabotage unions from forming, by using their connections in the local government to inform police of union meetings and subsequently union leaders were arrested.

Record Series 1121-122, Merchants and Miners Transportation Company records

Presently, the Georgia Ports Authority, Savannah Maritime Association, and local ILA unions keep the Port of Savannah up and running as one of the busiest ports on the East Coast of the United States.

Scope & Content:

The Merchants and Miners Transportation Company records contains correspondence copies from various employees between different port cities. The main topic of discussion is the formation of unions at the various ports the Merchants and Miners Transportation Company conducted business in. News clippings, reports, and notes are also a part of this collection and focused on the dock workers handling the commercial goods. Of significance in this collection are the letters detailing the uptick in union formations in other east coast ports and their correlation to the Port of Savannah.

System of Arrangement & Ordering:

The Merchants and Miners Transportation Company records are arranged alphabetically by subject.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection is stored offsite and researchers must request desired records at least one (1) full business day before research appointment for access.

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Related Collections:

Record Series 1121-102, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Savannah branch records. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Record Series 1121-112, W. W. Law Personal papers. City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Record Series 1121-122, Merchants and Miners Transportation Company records

Access Points:

Cargo ships

International Longshoremen's Association

International Longshoremen's Association. Local 1414 (Savannah, Ga.)

International Longshoremen's Association. Local 1475 (Savannah, Ga.)

International Longshoremen's Association. Local 2046 (Garden City, Ga.)

Labor negotiations

Labor unions

Labor unions--Organizing

Merchants and Miners Transportation Co.

Passenger ships

Port of Savannah (Ga.)

Stevedores

Wages--Stevedores

Sponsors/Funding:

Chatham County, Georgia, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) funding.

Preferred Citation:

Record Series 1121-122, Merchants and Miners Transportation Company records, City of Savannah Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

Processed by:

M. Kerkhoff, May 2021.

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Inventory:

Box

Folder

Folder title, Date(s) [archivist notes]

Box 1121-000-0005

Folder 1121-122-001	Claim Department folder, no date [a partial folder that the following material was found in]
Folder 1121-122-002	Correspondence, May 1934
Folder 1121-122-003	Correspondence, June 1934
Folder 1121-122-004	Correspondence, July-September 1934
Folder 1121-122-005	Correspondence, June, December 1936
Folder 1121-122-006	Correspondence, February 1937
Folder 1121-122-007	Correspondence, April-May 1937
Folder 1121-122-008	Correspondence, June-July 1937
Folder 1121-122-009	Correspondence, September 1937
Folder 1121-122-010	Correspondence, January-March 1940
Folder 1121-122-011	Meeting notes with local unions, 1937, no date
Folder 1121-122-012	News clippings, 1934, no date