

**Ara Mesrobian Papers**  
**A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**2022**

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2020086360>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms021011>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2022

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Ara Mesrobian Papers

**Inclusive Dates:** 1876-2011

**Bulk Dates:** 1941-1994

**ID No.:** MSS86360

**Creator:** Mesrobian, Ara, 1924-2019

**Extent:** 2,800 items

**Extent:** 8 containers plus 1 oversize

**Extent:** 5 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2020086360>

**Summary:** Photographer and railroad enthusiast (railfan). Correspondence, railroad and trolley tickets and ticket books, railroad dining car menus, ephemera, and other material documenting mid-twentieth century rail travel, the operations of railway historical societies, and railfan subculture in the United States.

## Acquisition Information

The papers of Ara Mesrobian were given to the Library of Congress in 2020 by Mesrobian's niece, Caroline Hickman. They were transferred to the Manuscript Division by the Prints and Photographs Division in 2020.

## Processing History

The papers of Ara Mesrobian were arranged and described by Katherine Duvall in 2021.

## Related Material

The Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress holds the Ara Mesrobian Railroad Photography Collection (see <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020631257>).

## Transfers

Theater programs have been transferred to the Music Division where they are identified as part of the Ara Mesrobian Papers. Patrons are encouraged to contact the Music Division in advance of a research visit.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of the Ara Mesrobian Papers is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

The papers of Ara Mesrobian are open to research. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Ara Mesrobian Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

Ara Mesrobian was born August 7, 1924, in Washington, D.C. He attended Catholic University, graduating with a degree in electrical engineering in 1950 after serving in World War II in the Pacific Theater. He worked for the National Bureau of Standards for thirty years. In his free time, Mesrobian pursued his passion for photography and rail transportation, traveling widely to ride, photograph, and film trains. He was a member of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) for seventy years and was a founding member of the Potomac Chapter of the NRHS. He also participated in the Tractioneers, a Washington, D.C.-based organization devoted to trolleys and light-rail transportation. Mesrobian died June 18, 2019, in Chevy Chase, Md.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Ara Mesrobian (1924-2019) span the years 1876-2011, with the bulk of the material dating from 1941 to 1994. The collection documents Mesrobian's deep interest in rail travel and provides insight into mid-twentieth century rail travel, the operations of railway historical societies, and railfan subculture in the United States.

The collection is primarily comprised of Mesrobian's correspondence files from 1950 to 2011 and documents travel logistics, railway historical society events and activities, descriptions of trains, railways, and other transportation, and personal and business matters. The correspondence is filed in reverse chronological order within the folders. There is no correspondence from 1962. Mesrobian's collections of railroad dining car menus, railroad, trolley, and streetcar tickets and ticket books, and other related ephemera also make up a significant portion of the collection. These materials are primarily from the United States and Canada, with a limited amount from Mesrobian's European and Asian travels. There is also a significant amount of material related to railway historical society meetings and fan trips, including memorabilia associated with the last streetcar to travel over the original electric streetcar system in Washington, D.C. in 1962.

## Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged alphabetically by topic or material type.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Mesrobian, Ara, 1924-2019.

### Subjects

Electric railroads--Washington (D.C.)

Electric railroads.

Railfans--United States.

Railfans.

Railroad cars.

Railroad tickets.

Railroad trains.

Railroads--Asia.

Railroads--Canada.

Railroads--Dining-car service.

Railroads--Europe.

Railroads--Societies, etc.

Railroads--United States--History--20th century.

Railroads--United States--Societies, etc.

Railroads--United States.

Railroads.  
Street-railroads--Washington (D.C.)  
Street-railroads.  
Transportation--United States.

**Places**

Asia--Description and travel.  
Canada--Description and travel.  
Europe--Description and travel.  
United States--Description and travel.

**Occupations**

Photographers.  
Railfans.

# Container List

<b>Container</b>	<b>Contents</b>
BOX 1	Biographical material, circa 1952
BOX 1	Clippings about transportation, 1949-1956
BOX 1	Clippings about transportation, 1958-1960
BOX 1	Clippings, Sacramento Northern Line, 1940-1941
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	1950-1952
BOX 1	1953
BOX 1	1954
BOX 1	1955
BOX 1	1956
BOX 1	1957
	(3 folders)
BOX 1	1958
	(2 folders)
BOX 1	1959
	(2 folders)
BOX 2	1960
	(2 folders)
BOX 2	1961
	(2 folders)
BOX 2	1963
	(2 folders)
BOX 2	1963-1964
	(2 folders)
BOX 2	1965
	(2 folders)
BOX 3	1966
	(2 folders)
BOX 3	1967
BOX 3	1968
BOX 3	1968-1969
BOX 3	1970
	(2 folders)
BOX 3	1971
BOX 3	1972
BOX 3	1973
BOX 4	1974
	(2 folders)
BOX 4	1975
BOX 4	1976
BOX 4	1977
BOX 4	1978

## Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 4	1979
BOX 4	1980
BOX 4	1981
BOX 4	1982
BOX 4	1983
BOX 4	1984
BOX 4	1985
BOX 4	1986
BOX 4	1987
BOX 5	1988
BOX 5	1989
BOX 5	1990
BOX 5	1991
BOX 5	1992
BOX 5	1993
BOX 5	1994
BOX 5	1995
BOX 5	1996
BOX 5	1997
BOX 5	1998
BOX 5	1999
BOX 5	2000-2011
BOX 5	Correspondence, Christmas card data (rosters, etc.), 1951-1994 (2 folders)
BOX 5	Correspondence, William C. Moore, 1919-1921, 1935
BOX 5	Ephemera
BOX OV1	Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad Company notice, 1950
BOX 5	Central Electric Railfans Association, 20th Anniversary ribbon, 1958
BOX OV1	Interurban Trolley Service notice, 1953
BOX 5	Miscellaneous, 1951-1952, undated
BOX 5	Souvenir pins and tokens, 1948-1958, undated
BOX 5	Spanish railway stamps, 1958
BOX 5	Virginia and Truckee Railroad Company, 1876-1897
BOX 5	Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern Railroad, 1951
BOX 5	Equipment notes and specifications
BOX 5	Arden Short Line Electric Railway, undated
BOX 5	Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, undated
BOX 5	"Electric Railways of the United States," Ohio Railway Museum, 1954
BOX 5	"Guide to United States Railways" by Walter Martin, 1949
BOX 5	"Pacific Great Eastern Railroad" by Fred D. Fellow, undated
BOX 5	"Progress: A Record of the Red Arrow Lines and the Area they Serve," circa 1943
BOX 5	Washington and Old Dominion Railroad 100th anniversary, 1947
BOX 5	Washington, Baltimore, and Annapolis lines, 1952
BOX 5	Fan trips
BOX 5	Capital Transit Company, 1948
BOX 5	Capital Transit and Tracioneers "Gay Nineties" transit ride, 1951

## Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 5	Cariboo Country Special trip, 1957
BOX 5	D.C. Transit System streetcar, 1958-1962
BOX 5	General Motors Aerotrains, undated
BOX 6	Rocky Mountain Railroad Club narrow gauge excursions, 1954-1955
BOX 6	Tickets, 1941-1960
BOX OV1	Map, Central Electric Traffic Association Railway Service (1912-1923), 1941
BOX 6	Membership rosters, railway societies and clubs, 1955-2000 (3 folders)
BOX 6	Menus, banquets, 1955, 1960, 1978
BOX 6	Menus, hotels, airlines, and boats, 1955-1994
BOX 6	Menus, railroad dining cars
BOX 6	possibly 1939
BOX 6	1949
BOX 6	1950-1951
BOX 6	circa 1950-1969
BOX 6	1952-1953
BOX 6	1954-1955
BOX 6	1956-1957
BOX 7	1958
BOX 7	1959
BOX 7	1950s
BOX 7	1960-1964
BOX 7	1965-1969
BOX 7	1970
BOX 7	1971-1972
BOX 7	1974-1979
BOX 7	1981-1984
BOX 7	1992
BOX 7	Undated
BOX 7	Miscellany, 1949, undated
BOX 7	National Railway Historical Society
BOX 7	Annual color slide contest awards, 1955-1969
BOX 7	Annual convention, 1952
BOX 7	Annual convention, 1954
BOX 7	Annual convention programs, 1954-1955
BOX 7	Annual convention programs and ephemera, 1950-1951
BOX 7	Baltimore and Ohio Railroad special train, 1955
BOX 7	Banquet menus, 1955-1958
BOX 7	Constitution and bylaws, 1957
BOX 7	Special trip to West Jefferson, N.C., 1956
BOX 7	Sticker, undated
BOX 8	Tickets
BOX 8	Baltimore and Ohio Railroad trips, 1951
BOX 8	California, 1954-1958, undated
BOX 8	Canada, 1954-1958, undated
BOX 8	Connecticut, 1943, undated

## Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 8	Europe, 1959, undated
BOX 8	Illinois, 1951, undated
BOX 8	Iowa, 1951-1952, undated
BOX 8	Japan and Hong Kong, undated
BOX 8	Kansas, undated
BOX 8	Louisiana, undated
BOX 8	Maryland, 1943-1957, undated (2 folders)
BOX 8	Massachusetts, undated
BOX 8	Michigan, 1954-1955
BOX 8	Miscellaneous tickets, undated
BOX 8	Missouri, possibly 1904, 1951
BOX 8	New Jersey, undated
BOX 8	New York, 1939-1956
BOX 8	New York to Montreal trip, 1951 August
BOX 8	North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, undated
BOX 8	Ohio, 1941, 1951
BOX 8	Oregon, undated
BOX 8	Pennsylvania, 1946-1957, undated (2 folders)
BOX 8	Société des Tramways de Constantinople, undated
BOX 8	Texas, 1948, undated
BOX 8	Virginia, 1913-1951 (2 folders)
BOX 8	Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, 1915-1956 (2 folders)
BOX 8	Wisconsin, 1946-1953, undated
BOX 8	Washington Electric Railway Historical Society, bylaws and certificate of incorporation, 1949-1951