

Shaker Historical Society and Museum
Elizabeth Nord Library & Archives
2nd Floor, 16740 South Park Blvd., Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Finding Aid for the John J. Bernet Papers
2025.17

Date Range: 1912-2001

Bulk Dates: 1930-1935

Finding Aid created by Makialani Kanewa-Mariano, 2025
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Descriptive Summary

Title: John J. Bernet Papers

Repository: Elizabeth Nord Library & Archives, Shaker Historical Society, 16740 South Park Blvd, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Identifier: 2025.17

Date Range: 1912-2001, undated (bulk 1930-1935)

Extent: 0.76 cubic feet (2 boxes)

Creator: Cutting, Michele Bernet

Language: English

Administrative Information

Provenance: Gift of Michele Bernet Cutting, 2025

Restrictions: Open for use by researchers

Copyright: The Shaker Historical Society (SHS) does not claim to control the rights for reproduction for all materials in this collection. Some materials may be protected by copyright, trademark, privacy, publicity rights, or other legal interests not owned by SHS.

Credit Line: Shaker Historical Society, Gift of Michele Bernet Cutting

Related Materials: Materials related to the Van Sweringen Company and its railroad interests are scattered throughout SHS's holdings. Researchers are encouraged to consult with staff for assistance identifying relevant materials

Processing Notes: The donation was received with the contents separated into twelve folders. Original order was maintained. A finding aid was prepared by Education and Outreach Manager, Makialani Kanewa-Mariano in 2025.

Biographical/Historical

John J. Bernet (1868-1935) was a transformative American railroad executive best known as the "Doctor of Sick Railroads." Born in Brant, New York, Bernet began his career as a telegrapher on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway and rose through the ranks to lead several major railroads, including the Nickel Plate Road, Erie Railroad, Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, and Pere Marquette Railroad. Renowned for revitalizing struggling lines, Bernet modernized equipment, improved efficiency, and restored profitability, even during the Great Depression. His leadership helped turn the C&O into one of the few railroads to pay dividends in the 1930s. Bernet died in 1935 in Cleveland, Ohio, leaving a lasting legacy of innovation and fiscal discipline. John Carroll University's Bernet Hall was named in his honor that same year.

Scope and Content

The John J. Bernet Papers measure 0.76 cubic feet and date from 1912 to 2001 with the bulk of the collection dating from 1930-1935. The archives contain newspaper clippings, brochures, promotional materials, photographs, scrapbooks, and magazines.

Arrangement

The John J. Bernet Papers are arranged as three series:

Series 1: Business materials, 1912-1943, undated

Series 2: Personal records and materials, 1935-2001, undated

Series 3: Press materials and newspaper clippings, 1928-1935, undated

Access Terms

Railroad Trains

Swearingen family

Transportation

Transportation - History

Transportation - Records and Correspondence

Bernet, John J.

Shaker Heights (Ohio)

Cleveland (Ohio)

Newspapers

Newspapers - Transportation

Obituaries

Container List

Series 1: Business, 1912-1943, undated

This series contains materials related to John J. Bernet and his business ventures and events.

Box 1, Folder 1	Books related to John J. Bernet's work and business ventures
Box 1, Folder 2	Dinner Invitations, various memorial tributes, and photographs
Box 1, Folder 3	Trafficgram and article from <i>Nation's Business</i>
Box 2 (Oversized)	Transcript from Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway meeting of the Board of Directors

Series 2: Personal, 1935-2001, undated

This series contains personal materials related to John J. Bernet and his family.

Box 1, Folder 4	Memorial tributes and family photographs of John. J. Bernet
Box 1, Folder 5	Personal letters and wedding invitation
Box 2 (Oversized)	Photographs of John J. Bernet and Helen Lucy Woods Bernet, illustration mock-up of John J. Bernet, and wedding announcement clipping for Helen Bernet Callaghan

Series 3: Press, 1928-1935, undated

This series contains articles and newspaper clippings about John J. Bernet and his family.

Box 1, Folder 5	Various article clippings and the <i>Cleveland District Golfer Magazine</i>
Box 2 (Oversized)	Scrapbook of clippings and unknown issue of <i>Architectural Digest</i>