

Kansas Merci Boxcar

1305 Canterbury Dr.
Hays, KS 67601



The Merci Train Background

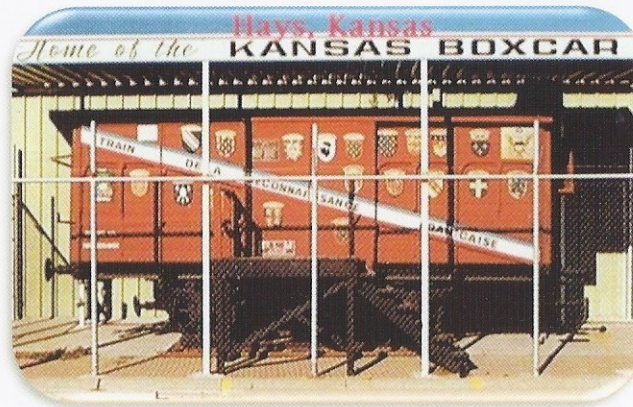
The story of the French Merci Train actually started 2 years earlier when American citizens gathered food, clothing and other relief supplies to be sent to France. In 1948, citizens of the United States sent 700 American boxcars filled with these goods to help the French recover from the war. Each car was loaded with 5 tons of supplies. This train was called the American Friendship Train.



It was in gratitude of this act of friendship that the French people formed the Merci Train to send back to the US.

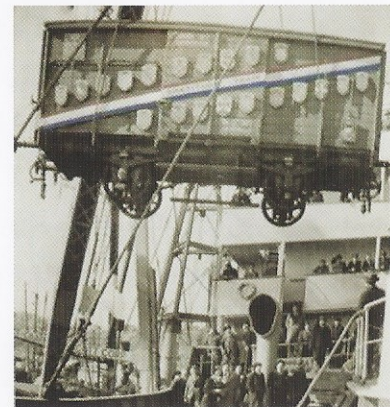
The Merci Train

The Merci Train was 49 French railroad boxcars filled with gifts of gratitude from the French citizens. The French people collected over 50,000 gifts ranging from the bugle that was sounded at the signing of the Armistice in 1918, the first motorcycle built, war medals were sent by widows, signs used to mark the homes of Nazi collaborators, Sevres pottery, Limoges porcelains, Baccarat crystal, engraved woodwork, church



bells, bonnets, peasant costumes and simple drawings from the children of France.

The Merci Train arrived in New York harbor on February 3rd, 1949 on the Magellan. On the side of the freighter was painted "MERCIA AMERICA".



Each of the 48 American states at that time received one of the gift laden boxcars. The 49th boxcar was shared by Washington D.C. and the Territory of Hawaii. Parades and ceremonies of welcome were conducted in the state capitols and major cities of almost all the states

The boxcars used for the Merci Train were built in France between 1852-1885 for use of shipping freight, horses, cattle, other domestic animals. The choice of these boxcars was no accident. About half the size of an American



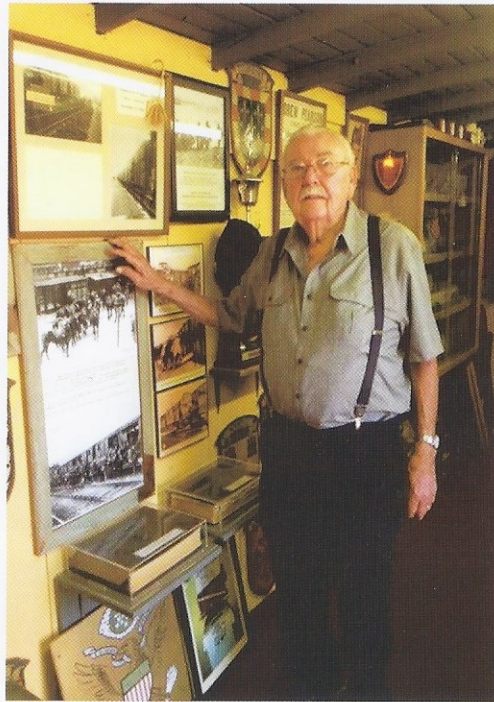
boxcar, they had been used in 2 world wars to transport US soldiers to the fighting front. It was known as a miserable mode of transportation. The boxcars were labeled with a triangular 40/8 symbol, signifying each boxcar could hold 40 men or 8 horses. These cars were commonly known as a 40&8 boxcar.

Kansas Merci Boxcar

The Kansas Merci Boxcar was accepted by "MERCIA GIFTS FOR KANSAS, INC." After being on display in Topeka, the car made a 140 day tour of Kansas visiting 120 towns. Ending on Armistice Day, November 11, 1949, the boxcar was placed next



to the library on the campus of the then Fort Hays State College. The boxcar has since been moved next to the Veterans Memorial Park which is located by the American Legion building in Hays, KS. Anyone wishing to tour the boxcar is most welcome. The boxcar is located outside and is in a fenced enclosure. The inside of the boxcar contains items from most of the wars our young soldiers have served along with more information on the boxcar itself.



Ed Holzmeister
Grand Directeur of the
Kansas Merci Boxcar
Kansas 40&8

(Pictured here inside the boxcar)

The outside of the boxcar can be viewed 24/7 without assistance. To see the inside or get next to the box car it is necessary to arrange a tour. The tour is free, however, it is by appointment only. Please contact Ed directly.

Ed Holzmeister
(785)625-9681



La Societe des Quarente
Hommes
et Huit Chevaux

(The Society of Forty Men
And Eight Horses)

A not-for-profit organization that was formed in 1920 by veterans who endured traveling in these tiny French boxcars. This is an independent, by invitation, honor organization of male and female U.S. veterans. This veteran's service organization is most commonly referred to as just '40&8'.

The 40&8 are honored to be the caretakers of many of the remaining Merci Box Cars including the Kansas Merci Boxcar.

40&8 Grande du Kansas

www.ksfortyandeight.org

