

Carolina Conductor



Volume 6 Number 2

Monthly Newsletter of the Carolina Railroad Heritage Association, Inc.

© February 2019

Preserving the Past Active in the Present Planning for the Future

Web Site: hubcityrrmuseum.org

Facebook: Carolina Railroad Heritage Association

Meeting Site:

Woodmen of the World Bldg.

721 East Poinsett Street

Greer, SC 29651-6404

Third Friday of the Month at 7:00 pm

Hub City Railroad Museum and SOU Rwy Caboose #X3115:

Spartanburg Amtrak Station

298 Magnolia Street

Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330

Wednesday 10-2 and Saturday 10-2

Officers:

President:

David Winans - 864-963-4739

Vice-President:

Steve Baker - 864-297-0918

Secretary/Treasurer:

Marv Havens - 864-292-3852

Directors:

Lee Dobbs - 864-268-3939

Bruce Gathman - 864-850-3642

Duane Heard - 810-623-7444

Jim Hopkins - 864-859-0189

Bob Klempner - 864-431-5409

Mac McMillin - 864-624-9658

Mailing Address:

2123 Old Spartanburg Road

Suite #129

Greer, South Carolina 29650-2704

Newsletter Editor:

Bruce Gathman

shaygearhead@bellsouth.net

Articles can be submitted anytime.

Merci Train of 1949

Sixty years ago -

The Merci Train, also known as the French Gratitude Train or the Forty and Eight, was the 1949 Europe-US response to the Friendship Train. Composed of 49 cars and filled with "gifts of gratitude", the Merci Train arrived in New York City on February 3, 1949, and was divided amongst the 48 states with the remaining car to be shared by the District of Columbia and Hawaii.

The idea to send a "thank you" gift to the United States for the \$40 million in food and other supplies sent to France and Italy in 1947 came from a French railroad worker, and World War II veteran, named Andre Picard. Donations from the Merci Train came from over six million citizens of France and Italy in the form of dolls, statues, clothes, ornamental objects, furniture, and even a Legion of Honor medal purported to have belonged to Napoleon.

Forty-and-eights were French 4-wheel covered goods wagons used as military transport cars. The term refers to the cars' carrying capacity, said to be 40 men or eight horses. Built starting in the 1870s as regular freight boxcars, they were originally

used in military service by the French army in both World Wars, and then later used by the German occupation in World War II and finally by the Allied liberators.

In 1949, France sent 49 of those boxcars to the United States (one for each state then in existence and one for Washington, D.C. and Hawaii to share) laden with various treasures, as a show of gratitude for the liberation of France. This train was called the Merci Train, and was sent in response to trains full (over 700 boxcars) of supplies known as the American Friendship Train sent by the American people to France in 1947. Each of the Merci Train boxcars carried five tons of gifts, all of which were donated by private citizens.

The Train and all 49 cars arrived aboard the *Magellan* on February 3, 1949, with over 25,000 onlookers in attendance. On the side of the gift-laden French freighter was painted, "MERCY AMERICA". Immediately the trains were distributed amongst



**Ship Magellan carrying Merci cars
to the United States from France.**

Continued on Page 4 - Merci Cars

President's Message

January Meeting

The January meeting was held at 7:00pm at the Woodmen of the World Lodge in Greer on January 18. Dave Winans presented the highlights of their trip and the week-long NMRA Convention held in Kansas City, MO. Although the NMRA is oriented toward modeling, there were numerous prototype events for the railfan. Also a number of Clinics were history oriented, which interested both modelers and non-modelers. Dave and Anne also stopped in Paducah, Kentucky on their way to the Convention and showed highlight the Paducah Chapter of the NRHS' Railroad Museum that they visited.

February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at 7:00pm at the Woodmen of the World Lodge in Greer on February 15, 2019. The program will be presented by Glenn Andrews. The program will be on the true story of The Wreck of Old 97. In addition, Marshall Goers will be performing the Wreck of Old 97 folk song.

2019 Officers

CRHA officers are:

President – Dave Winans
 Vice President – Steve Baker
 Secretary – Steve Baker
 Treasurer – Marv Havens

NRHS officers are:

President – Bob Klempner
 Vice President – Lee Dobbs
 Secretary – Marv Havens
 Treasurer – Marv Havens

Calendar of Events

Mark your calendars for the following events:

February 8 & 9, 2019 Central Model Train Expo at the Impact Center of the Rock Springs Baptist church in Easley. Come and volunteer to help at our information and sales tables. For info go to: www.crmha.org/trainshow.html



February 15, 2019 - CRHA meeting at the Woodmen of the World Lodge, 7:00PM

March 4, 2019 - Director's Meeting, 6:00 pm, Taylors Library

March 5, 2019 -Train Lovers' Lunch, 11:30 at the A&P Restaurant, Hwy 14, Greer. All Train Lovers invited.

March 15, 2019 - CRHA meeting at the Woodmen of the World Lodge, 7:00PM.

March 30, 2019 - TCA show, VFW Post 5408, Acworth, GA

March 30, 2019 - NMRA Palmetto

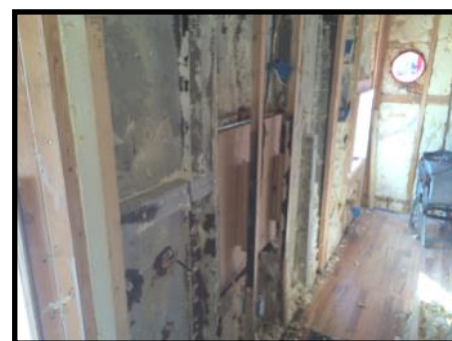
District Meeting, Southern Wesleyan University, Central, SC

May 11, 2019 – Train Day at the Spartanburg Depot

Caboose Renovation

The Caboose continues to be closed to the public during the on-going renovation. We hope to have it back into service as soon as possible, but it appears that this will not be a short-term situation. The spray foam insulation is almost completely removed. The interior of the metal shell will be treated with rust converter to prevent further metal oxidation. We are in the process of having new replacement window frames fabricated for all caboose windows.

Thanks to Duane, Marv and Jim for all the time they have spent working in the Caboose. In the interim, please visit the Museum. The HO model train inventory has been relocated to the Museum lobby. We have established a GoFundMe account to help with the renovation costs and appreciate all donations that are being made.



Continued on Page 3—President

Wanted—Articles for the Carolina Conductor

Submit an article of 200 words or more with some photos and captions and see them in print. Every one of us has some unique railroad experience that would make interesting reading for our membership. Your editor always needs more contributions of local railway history and news.

Continued from Page 2 —President

If you would like to help with the renovation, please contact Duane Heard at 810-623-7444 or Dave Winans at 864-963-4739.

School Groups at the Museum in the month of January



We had two school groups visit the Museum on January 15 and January 17. On the 15th a Spartanburg homeschool group visited and on the 17th a sixth grade class from The Classical Academy in Simpsonville visited. We showed a video on the Trans-Continental Railroad during their visit. We appreciate the donations and the sales that both groups left during their visits.

Mark Your Calendars

The 2019 Train Day will be held on May 11, 2019. More information will be published as the details are finalized.

Visit the Museum

If you have not been at the Museum lately you need to stop by and see the display on the WWI and WWII military camps that were in Spartanburg. Camp Wadsworth was a WWI training camp that was located in the area where the Westgate Mall currently is located. Camp Croft was a WWII training camp that was located where the State



Park now resides.

We have a letter on display from a trainee who was at Camp Wadsworth in December 1917 and claims it got down to 10 below zero while he was on guard duty. We verified with the National Weather Service records that it was at least 9 below zero in 1917. 2019 is not the only time it was cold in the Upstate. 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI.

January Minutes

Approved January Board of Director's Minutes are attached to the email.

Thanks,
Dave Winans
864-963-4739
dwinans4739@charter.net

GIBBLEGUTS.COM

By Dan Gibson



Hah! ... told you I could beat the train to the crossing. So much for your back-seat driving, eh mother ... ma ... you OK back there?

Continued from Page 1 - *Merci Cars*



Car of rice donated by the state of Arkansas.

the states.

Many of the trains were opened and turned into exhibits before distributing the objects as each state saw fit. Most states continued to exhibit the boxcars to the public after their gifts were distributed.

Various websites count 43 of the 49 boxcars still in existence. The state boxcars of Massachusetts, Illinois, Nebraska, Connecticut, and New Jersey are known to have been destroyed. The Colorado boxcar has been missing since 1954, and its fate remains unknown. Most of the surviving boxcars are displayed in various parks and museums in their respective states; such locations include:

- Alabama, Huntsville**
U.S. Veterans Memorial Museum
- Arizona, Scottsdale**



Merci car being unloaded in North Carolina

- McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park
- Arkansas, Helena**
American Legion Post 41 Intersection

- of Pecan & Porter Streets
- California, Fresno**
Fresno Federal Post 509 3509
North First Street
- Colorado**
Missing - Presumed Scrapped
- Connecticut**
Destroyed by Fire
- Delaware, Seaford**
Intersection of Front Street and Poplar Street
- Florida, Holly Hill**
City of Holly Hill Municipal Complex
- Georgia, Kennesaw**
Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History
- Hawaii and D.C., Ewa**
Hawaiian Railway Society
- Idaho, Boise**
Inside a building at the Old Idaho State Penitentiary
- Illinois**
Missing - Presumed Scrapped
- Indiana, Fort Wayne**
Veteran's National Memorial Shrine 2122 O'Day Road
- Iowa, Cedar Falls**
Antique Acres Campground
7610 Waverly Road
- Kansas, Fort Hays**
American Legion Post # 173
1305 Canterbury Drive
- Kentucky, New Haven**
Kentucky Railway Museum
- Louisiana, Baton Rouge**
Old Louisiana State Capitol
- Maine, Boothbay**
Boothbay Railway Village
- Maryland, Baltimore**
B&O Railroad Museum
- Massachusetts**
Missing - Presumed Scrapped

Michigan, Lansing

Continued on Page 5 - *Trans Con*

Continued from Page 4 - *Trans Con*

The Forty & Eight Society 2949 South Waverly Highway

Minnesota, Little Falls

Minnesota Military Museum

Mississippi, Jackson

Behind the restored GM&O train depot, 618 East Pearl Street

Missouri, Sedalia

Missouri State Fair Grounds

Montana, Helena

Montana Military Museum, Fort Harrison

Nebraska

Missing - Presumed Scrapped

Nevada, Carson City

Nevada State Railroad Museum

New Hampshire, Manchester

Reed Street near Bremer Street

New Jersey

Destroyed by Fire

New Mexico, Albuquerque

Expo New Mexico

New York, Whitesboro

Oneida County 40 & 8 5163 Judd Road

North Carolina, Spencer

North Carolina Transportation Museum

North Dakota, Bismarck

612 East Boulevard Avenue

Ohio, Camp Perry

Near the Camp Perry Lodging and Conference Center

Oklahoma, Norman

J. D. McCarty Center 2002 East Robinson Street

Oregon, North Bend

Sherman Park 1220 Sherman Avenue

Pennsylvania, Fort Indiantown Gap

Fort Indiantown Gap National Guard Training Facility Intersection of Fisher and Clement Avenues

Rhode Island, Woonsocket

Museum of Work and Culture 42 South Main Street

South Carolina, Bishopville

SC Cotton Museum and Lee County Veterans Museum

South Dakota, Huron

South Dakota State Fairgrounds

Tennessee, Bristol

American Legion Post #145

Texas, Austin

Texas Military Forces Museum at Camp Mabry

Utah, Ogden

Utah State Railroad Museum

Vermont, Colchester

Camp Johnson

Virginia, Newport News

Virginia War Museum

Washington, Yakima

Sarg Hubbard Park

West Virginia, Welch

Veteran's Park

Wisconsin, Ashwaubenon

National Railroad Museum

Wyoming, Cheyenne

American Legion Post #6 2001 East Lincoln Way

Strom Thurmond Welcomes Merci Car to South Carolina

“France stood by us a long time ago. And I say today “Viva La France, Long Live France.”

So Proclaimed Governor Strom Thurmond on a cold February day in 1949 while standing in Spartanburg’s railway station. South Carolina’s chief executive and other political dignitaries had come to welcome an unusual gift from the people of France. It was a small box-

car, a token of appreciation from an ally recovering from the ravages of four years of German occupation. The diminutive freight car of this type had been the backbone of the French rail system before World War I. This one was now filled with objects ranging from the simplest child’s drawings to impressive works of art, all contributed by citizens of France.

“It was just one of forty-nine sent across the Atlantic a month before as part of what became known as the Gratitude or Merci Train, a sign of appreciation for



Merci car in Greenville.

American aid donated to the French during 1948. In light of the current political disagreements between the United States and France, this early post-war cooperation is perhaps one of the highest points in Franco-American relations during the last half-century. Not surprisingly, such good relations are virtually forgotten today on both sides of the Atlantic. This study briefly examines how this gift of appreciation came about, what role the Palmetto State played in helping the American national aid effort, and what plans South Carolina’s government and citizen groups made to receive and display the French boxcar.

Continued on Page 5 - *Trans Con*

From Page 5 - *Merci Cars*

As in most endeavors involving many organizations and communities, we shall see that the gift to South Carolina led to disagreements and jealousies across the state that were aggravated, in part, by miscommunications between interested parties. Franco-American relations have had many rough periods. Through most of the twentieth century, the two governments in Paris and Washington have rarely agreed about international policy except during the two World Wars. Yet, as noted above, the people of both nations showed rare appreciation for the other in the late 1940s. This began when one American journalist saw a need for his fellow citizens to assist France and other destitute European allies through individual contributions rather than relying just on U.S. government aid. Since 1945 Congress had donated thousands of tons of food and supplies to Western Europe in the early post-war era, yet such assistance seemed to some observers an impersonal, if not calculated, policy.”

Current History of the Merci Car in South Carolina

Beth Spiegel recently shared some history and copies of historical photographs that she received from the late Andy Dolak when she visited him at his home near Columbia during the 1990s. The boxcar was in Greenville for more than 30



Merci Car currently in Bishopville, South Carolina

years, first in McPherson Park and later in Cleveland Park where Andy found it in the very early 1980s and went to work on restoring the badly deteriorated memorial to veterans of World Wars I and II. The results of his efforts can be viewed in the photo.

The boxcar remained in Cleve-

land Park for another ten years, but during that time it fell victim to vandals who badly ravaged it, shortly thereafter Andy rescued the important relic a second time and had it moved to its present location in Columbia (since moved to Bishopville), where he could keep a closer watch of it.



Merci car in Maine.

Coast Starlight San Diego to Sacramento

By Phil Abers

In early 2018, I took a train trip from San Diego to Sacramento, California. I have wanted to make this trip since I lived in California in the late 1980s. The section of the trip along the ocean was often mentioned as one of the highlights of American Train Travel.

I flew into San Diego and took a 10-minute bus ride to my hotel. I could see the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier from my hotel room. From the other side of the hotel, I



The San Diego depot interior and exterior views still showing signs of its previous ownership by the Santa Fe Railroad. The historic depot is located in Center City (Downtown San Diego) and is still an active transportation center providing services to Amtrak, the San Diego Coaster, the San Diego Trolley, and the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System buses.

could see the historic Santa Fe Train Depot two block away and the starting point for the Amtrak Coastal Starlight. The first leg of my journey was on the Pacific Surfliner, which follows the same route as the Coastal Starlight.

After a day of sightseeing in San Diego, I boarded the train shortly before 4 PM. The train headed north through metropolitan San Diego and then towards the coast. The train traveled on the coast alongside Camp Pendleton with a stop at San Clemente which is in walking distance of the San Clemente Pier. As we headed into Orange County and then Los Angeles, the train was full of commuters on this Thursday work day. By the time I reached Los Angeles station, it was dark and past the commute time. The train was mostly empty



California coastline as seen from the Coast Starlight.

Continued on Page 8 - *Starlight*

Continued from Page 7 - Starlight

and peaceful all the way to the Simi Valley Station. My sister picked me up at the station and we spent a couple of days in Thousand Oaks.

Two days later I returned to the Simi Valley station and resumed my trip to Sacramento. The trip went through the countryside of Ventura County, past some farms and to the coast. For almost two hours we follow the coastline going through the Vandenberg AFB. The train was at the edge of the bluff overlooking the ocean for much of the time. I purchased a business class seat and had a big picture window to look through to enjoy the ocean view. It was as impressive as I had heard. This trip was made during late February when the train is not very busy. With only about 25% of the seats taken, the ride was very enjoyable.

As we traversed the Salinas Valley sun set, we went through San Jose, Oakland and into Sacramento in the dark. To help pass the time, I made a reservation for dinner. I was seated with a family of 3 from Tiburon, Ca. The food, while not gourmet, was good. The trip came to an

end at the Sacramento Valley Station, which is about a 5-minute walk from Old Sacramento. We were 20 minutes early, but my old high school friend was there waiting on my arrival. It was a great trip that lived up to its billing and I highly recommend it. I hope to take another Amtrak Train in 2019!



Sacramento Valley depot interior and exterior.



The old Southern Pacific Railroad shops in Sacramento.



CHECK OUT THE CRHA:

WWW.HUBCITYRRMUSEUM.ORG/CAROLINA-RAILROAD-HERITAGE-ASSOCIATION
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/CRHA/NC/



CHECK OUT THE HCRM:

WWW.HUBCITYRRMUSEUM.ORG
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HUBCITYRRMUSEUM/