

## **ATTACHMENTS**

## **EXHIBIT A:**

AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITY OF FRESNO AND THE GRAND DU  
CALIFORNIA OF LA SOCIETE DES 40 HOMMES ET 8 CHEVAUX

(Removal, Relocation and Public Display of War Memorial "Merci Boxcar")

THIS AGREEMENT ("Agreement") effective as of September 21, 2004 is entered between the CITY OF FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, a municipal corporation, ("City") and THE GRAND DU CALIFORNIA OF LA SOCIETE DES 40 HOMMES ET 8 CHEVAUX, a California nonprofit corporation, ("The Grand").

W I T N E S S E T H:

- A. WHEREAS, in or about 1952 the City accepted from The Grand custodianship of, and maintenance obligations as to a WW II war memorial "Merci Boxcar" donated by the French Republic to the State of California and accepted on behalf of the State by The Grand; and
- B. WHEREAS, the Merci Boxcar ("Boxcar") has been on continuous public display in City's Roeding Park; and
- C. WHEREAS, The Grand advises that the Boxcar has fallen into neglect and disrepair such that the display no longer generates significant public interest as a war memorial; and
- D. WHEREAS, The Grand, at its sole cost and risk, desires to remove the Boxcar from Roeding Park, relocate it to American Legion Post 509 in Fresno, restore the Boxcar and thereupon place it on continuous public display at Post 509; and
- E. WHEREAS, the City is willing to allow removal, relocation and public display of the Boxcar in furtherance of the common benefit and in the public interest, upon terms and conditions herein.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing and of the covenants, conditions, and premises hereinafter contained, to be kept and performed by the respective parties, it is mutually agreed as follows:

1. Transfer of Interest. In consideration of the payment of \$10 by The Grand to the City hereby acknowledged and the obligations, responsibilities and liabilities incurred by The Grand hereunder, the City hereby quitclaims and transfers to The Grand, without representation or warranty of any kind, and The Grand hereby accepts, on an "as is" and "where is" basis, all its right, title and interest in and to the Boxcar as may be held by the City, such that the City has

no obligation responsibility or liability as to the Boxcar, subject only to the recapture and reversion option in the City provided in this Agreement.

2. Removal, Relocation and Site Restoration. The Grand shall, at its sole cost and risk, acquire all required permits, permissions and approvals and thereupon relocate the Boxcar to the Fresno Post 509 located at 3509 N. First St., Fresno CA, by not later than 180 days following the effective date of this Agreement, or such other time as the City's Chief Administrative Officer may in his/her sole discretion agree in writing. The Grand shall coordinate the move and any necessary site restoration with the City in order to minimize the impact upon the public. The Grand shall comply with all governmental requirements and applicable federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations, now in force and as they may be enacted, issued, or amended during the term of this Agreement. The Grand shall ensure that individuals/entities involved in the relocation are duly qualified and licensed.

3. Boxcar Restoration, Maintenance and Public Display. The Grand, at its sole cost, shall refurbish and restore the Boxcar and thereupon place the Boxcar on public display at Post 509 by not later than July 4, 2005, or such other time as the City's Chief Administrative Officer may in his/her sole discretion agree in writing. The Boxcar shall remain on public display at all times thereafter. The Grand, at its sole cost, shall at all times reasonably maintain the Boxcar.

4. Default, Termination, Recapture and Reversion. Any failure to perform by The Grand not cured following 30 days written notice thereof shall be an event of default. Upon a default by The Grand, the City may at its option (i) terminate this Agreement with full reservation of rights and remedies available under law, contract and equity, and/or (ii) give written notice to The Grand of recapture/reversion of custodianship of the Boxcar, whereupon custodianship of the Boxcar shall immediately revert to and re-vest in the City with full rights to reenter and recapture in any manner allowed by law.

5. Indemnification. To the furthest extent allowed by law The Grand shall indemnify, hold harmless and defend the City and each of its officers, officials, employees, agents from any and all loss, liability, fines, penalties, forfeitures, costs and damages (whether in contract, tort or strict liability, including but not limited to personal injury, death at any time and property damage) incurred by the City, The Grand, or any other person, and from any and all claims, demands and actions in law or equity (including attorney's fees and litigation expenses), arising or alleged to have arisen directly or indirectly out of performance of this Agreement. The Grand's obligations under the preceding sentence shall apply regardless of whether the City or any of its officers, officials, employees or agents are passively negligent, but shall not apply to any loss, liability, fines, forfeitures, costs or damages caused by the active negligence or



by the willful misconduct of the City. This section shall survive termination or expiration of this Agreement.

6. Insurance. Prior to and at all times during removal and relocation of the Boxcar and any necessary restoration of the Roeding Park site pursuant to Section 2 above, The Grand, at its sole cost and expense, shall provide written evidence of suitable and sufficient insurance coverage(s) to the City's Risk Manager and approval thereof by the Risk Manager shall be an express condition precedent to removal, relocation and site restoration activities. The foregoing requirement also shall apply to all subcontractors of The Grand.

6.1 The City shall be an expressly named additional insured on all liability coverages. Defense costs shall be provided as an additional benefit and not included within the above limits of liability. The Grand shall be responsible for payment of any deductibles contained in any insurance policies required hereunder. All workers' compensation insurance policy shall contain a waiver of subrogation as to City, its officers, officials, agents, employees and volunteers.

7. Waiver/Release. The Grand hereby waives and releases the City from any and all claims, causes of action, demands, and/or damages arising out of this Agreement. In this regard, The Grand hereby waives the benefits of the provisions of Section 1542 of the Civil Code of the State of California which reads as follows:

"A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS WHICH THE CREDITOR DOES NOT KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE WHICH IF KNOWN BY HIM MUST HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR."

8. Attorney's Fees. In any action or proceeding brought by a party hereto, seeking to enforce rights or obligations incurred hereunder the prevailing party in such action or proceeding shall be entitled to reasonable attorney fees and costs incurred therein in addition to other relief to which such party may be entitled. Any such action or proceeding shall be instituted and maintained in the County of Fresno, State of California.

9. Nondiscrimination. The Grand shall not employ discriminatory practices in the provision of services, employment of personnel, or in any other respect on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual preference, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, age, marital status, status as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era, medical condition, or physical or mental disability.

10. Independent Contractor. The Grand, in its pursuit hereof, shall act in an independent capacity and not as an employee, partner or agent of the City. The Grand's removal, relocation and site restoration activities hereunder shall be coordinated by its authorized agent, Mr. E.C. Brady, 5826 East Farrin Avenue, Fresno CA 93726, (559) 229.3916.

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11. Notices. Any notice required or intended to be given to either party under the terms of this Agreement shall be in writing and shall be deemed to be duly given if delivered personally or deposited into the United States mail, by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested with postage prepaid, addressed to the party to which notice is to be given at the party's address set forth on the signature page of this Agreement or at such other address as the parties may from time to time designate by written notice. Except to the extent otherwise required by law or provided for in this Agreement, all notices expressly required of City shall be effective only if authorized by City and signed by an authorized representative of City.

11.1 Personal service, as aforesaid, shall be deemed served and effective upon delivery thereof. Service by mail, as aforesaid, shall be deemed to be sufficiently served and effective as of 12:00:01 A.M., on the fourth (4th) calendar day following the date of deposit in the United States mail of such registered or certified mail, properly addressed and postage prepaid.

12. Non-Assignment. This Agreement is personal to The Grand and there shall be no assignment by The Grand of its rights or obligations under this Agreement without the prior written approval of City.

13. Binding. This Agreement shall be binding upon and inure to the benefit of the parties and their respective heirs, successors, assigns, transferees, agents, servants, employees and representatives.

14. Governing Law and Venue. This Agreement shall be governed by, and construed and enforced in accordance with, the laws of the State of California. Venue for purposes of the filing of any case, controversy or proceeding regarding the enforcement or interpretation of this Agreement and any rights and duties hereunder shall be Fresno County, California.




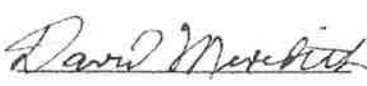
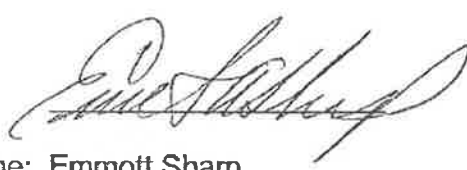
15. Cumulative Remedies. No remedy or election hereunder shall be deemed exclusive but shall, wherever possible, be cumulative with all other remedies at law or in equity.

16. Precedence of Documents. In the event of any conflict between the body of this agreement and any exhibit hereto, the terms and conditions of the body of this agreement shall control and take precedence over terms conditions expressed within the exhibit. Furthermore, any terms or conditions contained

within any exhibit hereto which purport to modify the allocation of risk between the parties, provided for within the body of this agreement, shall be null and void.

17. Final Agreement. This Agreement and any documents, instruments and materials referenced and incorporated herein represent the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof. This Agreement may be modified only by written instrument duly authorized and executed by both City and The Grand.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

<p>CITY OF FRESNO a California municipal corporation</p> <p>By:  Authorized Agent Richard Putnam, Interim Director Parks, Recreation &amp; Community Services</p> <p>ATTEST: Rebecca E. Klisch, City Clerk</p> <p>By:  Deputy (9/22/04)</p> <p>APPROVED AS TO FORM: Hilda Cantú Montoy</p> <p>By:  Deputy</p>	<p>THE GRAND DU CALIFORNIA OF LA SOCIETE DES 40 HOMMES ET 8 CHEVAUX, a California nonprofit corporation</p> <p>By:  Name: David Meredith Title: Grand Chef de Gare</p> <p>By:  Name: Emmott Sharp Title: Grand Correspondant</p>
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## La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux

July 20, 2004

The City of Fresno  
City Hall, Fresno, CA 93721  
Attn: Deputy City Attorney R. R. Coyle

Re: Transfer of 40/8 Boxcar from Roeding Park

Dear Mr. Coyle:

The Grand du California of La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux (40/8) is in receipt of your letter of July 14, 2004, regarding the movement of the 40/8 War Memorial "Merci" Boxcar from its present location in Roeding Park to a site on the grounds of Fresno Federal Post 509 of the American Legion.

In 1952, the City of Fresno accepted custodianship of the "Merci" Boxcar, a gift to California from the republic of France, and placed it on display in Roeding Park. Over time, the general condition of the boxcar deteriorated, with evidence of leaking, dry rot and missing parts. In its present location it is believed subject to vandalism.

Fresno Federal Post 509 of the American Legion, the location where awards, records and artifacts of the 40/8 have been traditionally stored, has a paved and fenced site available for public display of this national heritage.

The Grand requests the transfer of custodianship of the 40/8 "Merci" Boxcar from the City of Fresno to the Grand du California of the 40/8, which will terminate any and all obligations by the city for its maintenance and upkeep

As your letter states, the Fresno City Council has the authority to approve such transfer for the common benefit and in the public interest. The terms and conditions of the agreement between the City and the Grand du California should include the following:

1. The City of Fresno will convey custodianship and whatever interest the City holds in the "Merci" Boxcar to the Grand du California of the 40/8.

*"Our Greatest Fun is SERVICE"*

2. The Grand du California of the 40/8 will accept such conveyance on an "as is" and "where is" basis, and will agree to maintain the public display of the boxcar.
3. The City of Fresno will bear no cost, obligation or liability involved in the movement of the boxcar from its location in Roeding Park to the site at Fresno Federal Post 509. The Grand du California will bear all costs and provide adequate insurance for the move.
4. The transfer will be coordinated with the city departments involved, and all required governmental permits and approvals necessary for the relocation, refurbishment and display of the boxcar will be secured. Mr. E.C. Brady of Voiture 31 of the Grand du California will be the local coordinating agent.
- 5 Any failure of the foregoing conditions, will be cause for a reversion of the transfer of the boxcar.

It is requested that any documentation or actions not in accordance or consistent with the above, be brought to the attention of the undersigned before being placed on the City Council agenda for action.

Please contact me at 916.624.2152 if you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of this matter, and I would appreciate immediate notification when the transaction documents are ready.

Sincerely,



Earl Chinnoch  
Grand Avocat  
3400 Argonaut Ave  
Rocklin, CA 95677  
916.624.2152

- c: James Palsrok, Cheminot Nationale, 40 et 8  
David Meredith, Chef de Gare, Grand du California  
Emmott Sharp, Grand Correspondant, Grand du California  
R. "Dale" Shelton, Commander Fresno Federal Post 509  
E. C. Brady, Voiture Locale 31 Contact

## **EXHIBIT B:**



GORDON G. DUNN, MAYOR

# City of Fresno

MAYOR'S OFFICE  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELFARE  
CITY HALL  
FRESNO 1, CALIFORNIA

May 12, 1952

To the Grand Voiture  
The 40 et 8 American Legion  
c/o Mr. Monte H. Lukov  
1337 Fulton Street  
Fresno, California

Gentlemen:

This is in further regard to the acceptance by the City of Fresno of the custodianship of the 40 et 8 Boxcar.

The City of Fresno will arrange for the transportation of the Boxcar from Long Beach to Fresno without expense to the Grand Voiture, will mount the boxcar on a cement slab, build a fence surrounding it, provide a cover, and erect a marker describing its history. The Boxcar will be located in Roeding Park.

Let me take this opportunity to express again the pleasure with which the City of Fresno accepts the boxcar. It will add much to the enjoyment of the citizens of the City of Fresno and the State of California.

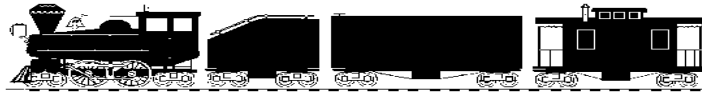
Very cordially yours

Gordon G. Dunn  
Mayor

fc:ab

## **EXHIBIT C:**





**La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux**  
**GRANDE VOITURE du CALIFORNIA Inc.**

City of Fresno CA  
Deputy City Attorney John Hastrup  
2600 Fresno St  
Fresno CA 93721

April 10, 2019

**Response via US Mail and e-mail to [john.hastrup@fresno.gov](mailto:john.hastrup@fresno.gov)**  
Re: CA Merci Box Car / Your ltr dtd March 29, 2019

Dear Mr Hastrup:

The Grande Voiture du California, upon assuming custody of our Merci Box Car from the city of Fresno, did in fact move the Box Car to Fresno Federal Post 509 of the American Legion located at 3509 N First St, Fresno CA. Members of our Grande Voiture, along with several members of Post 509 completely refurbished the Box Car at considerable expense and with the expenditure of hundreds of hours in volunteer labor, due to the deteriorated condition of the Memorial caused by the lack of protection and maintenance by the city of Fresno over some 52 years. The Box Car has been on continuous display at Post 509 since 2004. We have therefore completed our obligation to the City, ie refurbish and public display of our Box Car.

Since the Palm Springs Air Museum has offered to display our Merci Box Car in one of their air plane hangers, (inside, and out of the elements) the Public Display criteria of the 2004 Agreement is still valid.

Per Section 4 of the 2004 Agreement between the city of Fresno and the Grande Voiture:

The Default, Termination etc clause stipulates that if the Grande Voiture did not complete the move and refurbish the Box Car within 30 days, then the city could re-capture the Merci Box Car. Clearly this does not apply any more; we accepted custody from the city in 2004, and as above, our Box Car has been on display at American Legion Post 509 in Fresno since.

The Grande Voiture would prefer to keep the Merci Box Car in Fresno. However, the myriad of restrictions put forth by the city of Fresno in our endeavor to provide a suitable cover for our Box Car, and thus protect it from the elements, makes retaining its presence in *Merci Box Car Move 2*

Fresno not possible. Just this past year, the Grande Voiture has spent over \$3,000.00, replacing side boards, resealing the roof, repainting the exterior and the locality plaques, AGAIN due to weather contamination caused by lack of a protective cover. With our declining membership, we just do not have the funds to continue the extraordinary expense of maintaining this memorial for the People of the state of California.

You will notice John, that even back in 1952 the Grande Voiture released custody of the Box Car to the city of Fresno. In 2004, the city of Fresno returned custody of the Box Car to the Grande Voiture. OWNERSHIP of the Merci Box car is the People of the state of California, as a Memorial for the service of US veterans during WWI and WWII. As was typical of the action by most governors throughout the United States, original custody of the California Merci Box Car was given to the Grande Voiture, as THE Veterans organization dedicated to the memory of those veterans that rode in them, by then Governor Earl Warren. The intent was for us to protect the Merci Box Car for the people of California.

Your letter also indicates another “Scheduled” meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission is scheduled for April 22. As a follow-up to our meeting on February 15, Laura has requested information as to a written offer from the Palm Springs Air Museum to move and display our Merci Box Car. Those and several other documents pertaining to the issue have been provided to her prior to her scheduled meeting on March 25. Then she abruptly cancelled that meeting. It seems the issue is not important to her any more, unlike what was displayed to us at her scheduled meeting on February 15. We wonder why after 52 years in Roeding Park with ZERO interest by and from the city of Fresno, and now since 2004 with the city interference with our efforts to provide a suitable cover to protect our Box Car for the People, why now, all of a sudden the interest and who is driving the effort to now keep the Box Car in Fresno?

We believe the best location that has the facilities and volunteer man-power with the expertise to preserve our Merci Box Car is the Palm Springs Air Museum. In concert with our original task of preserving this Merci Box Car as a War Memorial for the People of the state of California, we urge the city of Fresno to approve our intended move of our Merci Box Car to the Palm Springs Air Museum.

Joseph R Donovan  
Grand Correspondant  
Grande Voiture du California  
4660 N River Rd Spc 12  
Oceanside CA 92057-5879

760-721-9405 FAX 870-721-0339  
[jdonovan4660@hotmail.com](mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com)

Copy: Grand Chef, Grand Chef de Train, Grand Conducteur, Grand Avocat, Wayne Schwartz

*Merci Box Car Move 2*



Douglas T. Sloan  
City Attorney

March 29, 2019

**VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL AND EMAIL - jdonovan4660@hotmail.com**

Joseph R. Donovan  
Grand Correspondent (State Secretary)  
Grand Voiture du California, Inc.  
4660 N River Rd., Space 12  
Oceanside, CA 92057-5879

Re: Merci Box Car

Dear Mr. Donovan:

The City appreciates the ongoing efforts of your organization to preserve and maintain the California Merci Train Boxcar (Boxcar). Unfortunately, it is clear from your March 19, 2019, email (enclosed) to Historic Preservation Specialist, Laura Van Onna, that you misunderstand the legal status of the Boxcar. As the City has repeatedly explained in prior correspondence, the Agreement Between City of Fresno and the Grand Du California of La Societe Des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux dated September 21, 2004, (2004 Agreement, a copy of which is enclosed), gives the City the right to exercise a reversionary interest to take custodianship of the Boxcar should you attempt to move it in violation of the 2004 Agreement.

Section 3 of the 2004 Agreement, "Boxcar Restoration, Maintenance and Public Display," provides:

The Grand, at its sole cost, shall refurbish and restore the Boxcar and thereupon place the Boxcar on public display at Post 509... Boxcar shall remain on public display thereafter.

Section 4, "Default, Termination, Recapture and Reversion," provides:

Upon default by The Grand, the City may...give written notice to the Grand of recapture/reversion of the custodianship of the Boxcar, whereupon custodianship of the Boxcar shall immediately revert to and re-vest in the City with full rights to reenter and recapture in any manner allowed by law.

The City is also writing to inform of its intention to work with your organization to facilitate the move of the Boxcar to a permanent, protected location in Fresno so it can be better enjoyed by the public in the city it has called home since 1952. City staff will be guiding that process forward and is prepared to consider the Boxcar relocation matter at the next regularly scheduled Historic Preservation Commission meeting on Monday, April 22, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., Conference Room 2165, 2nd floor, City Hall, 2600 Fresno Street.

L- Joseph R. Donovan – Grand Correspondent (State Secretary) re: Merci Box Car  
March 29, 2019  
Page 2

If you would like to submit any additional materials on the relocation matter, please do so no later than Friday, April 12, 2019, at NOON. Thank you for working with us. Let me know if you have questions.

Sincerely,



John Hastrup  
Deputy City Attorney

cc: Dan Gilbertson, Chairman & CEO Palm Springs Air Museum  
Wilma Quan, City Manager  
Laura Van Onna, Historic Preservation Specialist  
Daniel Zack, Assistant Director Development and Resource Management  
Department  
Douglas T. Sloan, City Attorney  
Katie Doerr, Chief Assistant City Attorney

Attachment: 2004 Agreement  
Email - Joseph R. Donovan dated March 19, 2019

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14. Governing Law and Venue. This Agreement shall be governed by, and construed and enforced in accordance with, the laws of the State of California. Venue for purposes of the filing of any case, controversy or proceeding regarding the enforcement or interpretation of this Agreement and any rights and duties hereunder shall be Fresno County, California.

15. Cumulative Remedies. No remedy or election hereunder shall be deemed exclusive but shall, wherever possible, be cumulative with all other remedies at law or in equity.

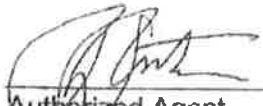
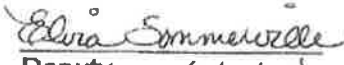

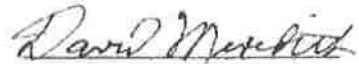

16. Precedence of Documents. In the event of any conflict between the body of this agreement and any exhibit hereto, the terms and conditions of the body of this agreement shall control and take precedence over terms conditions expressed within the exhibit. Furthermore, any terms or conditions contained



within any exhibit hereto which purport to modify the allocation of risk between the parties, provided for within the body of this agreement, shall be null and void.

17. Final Agreement. This Agreement and any documents, instruments and materials referenced and incorporated herein represent the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof. This Agreement may be modified only by written instrument duly authorized and executed by both City and The Grand.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

<p>CITY OF FRESNO a California municipal corporation</p> <p>By:  Authorized Agent Richard Putnam, Interim Director Parks, Recreation &amp; Community Services</p> <p>ATTEST: Rebecca E. Klisch, City Clerk</p> <p>By:  Deputy (9/22/04)</p> <p>APPROVED AS TO FORM: Hilda Cantú Montoy</p> <p>By:  Deputy</p>	<p>THE GRAND DU CALIFORNIA OF LA SOCIETE DES 40 HOMMES ET 8 CHEVAUX, a California nonprofit corporation</p> <p>By:  Name: David Meredith Title: Grand Chef de Gare</p> <p>By:  Name: Emmott Sharp Title: Grand Correspondant</p>
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## Claudia Gabaldon

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**From:** Joe Donovan <jdonovan4660@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 19, 2019 12:22 PM  
**To:** Laura Van Onna  
**Cc:** PGC Will Williams; PGC Robert S Mattson; oldsarge21@comcast.net; bartosjb@att.net; Gr Cond du CA Mildred S Wright-Pearson; Joe Donovan  
**Subject:** Re: Merci Box Car Move

Laura:

I received another inquiry from the Palm Springs Air Museum just yesterday wanting an answer on the progress being made with the city of Fresno. The Desert Sun Newspaper also contacted me yesterday seeking information on the impending move of our Merci Box Car to the Palm Springs Air Museum.

While our Box Car sat in Roeding Park for over 52 years, the City of Fresno failed to provide a cover over our Box Car to protect it. That was the issue that prompted us to move the Box Car in 2004. Since we have been dealing with the issue of getting a cover over our Merci Box Car since 2004 to protect our Veterans Monument, and now your organization doesn't appear to want to deal with your attempted objection to our efforts to protect our Box Car, I can assume that the City of Fresno has no objection to our intended move of our Box Car to the Palm Springs Air Museum.

I will go ahead and notify the Palm Springs Air Museum that they can proceed with the move unless I get a specific written objection from the City of Fresno within 30 (Thirty) days from today.

Joseph R Donovan, Grand Correspondant  
Grande Voiture du California  
4660 N River Rd Spc 12  
Oceanside CA 92057-5879

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**From:** Laura Van Onna <[Laura.VanOnna@fresno.gov](mailto:Laura.VanOnna@fresno.gov)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 19, 2019 11:56 AM  
**To:** Joe Donovan  
**Cc:** PGC Will Williams; Gr Chef de Train du CA John B Bartos; Gr Cond du CA Mildred S Wright-Pearson; PGC Robert S Mattson; [oldsarge21@comcast.net](mailto:oldsarge21@comcast.net)  
**Subject:** RE: Merci Box Car Move

Hello Joe,

I am not sure if you or any other representatives from the Grand Voiture were planning on attending the HPC meeting on March 25, but I wanted to send notification in any case as soon as I received it – that the City would like a little more time to consider current options for the Boxcar, and we will therefore be deferring this item. As this was the only item tentatively scheduled for the HPC meeting on March 25, we will be cancelling this meeting. We may be scheduling a special HPC meeting at some point before the next regularly scheduled meeting on April 22 in order to consider the relocation proposal for the Boxcar. I will send updates as I learn of them.

Thank you again to all of the representatives of the Grand Voiture du California Inc. who made the trip to Fresno last month to meet with City staff. Your vested interest thus far in the sustainability of this historic resource as well as your prompt submittal of documentation is greatly appreciated. Apologies for any inconvenience. I see any discussion concerning the Boxcar as a positive; we will continue to push it forward. It is apparent that everyone cares about and wants a bright future for the Boxcar. Thank you for working with us.

Kind regards,  
Laura

Laura Groves van Onna  
(559) 621-8439

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**From:** Laura Van Onna  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 06, 2019 3:16 PM  
**To:** 'Joe Donovan'  
**Cc:** PGC Will Williams; Gr Chef de Train du CA John B Bartos; Gr Cond du CA Mildred S Wright-Pearson; PGC Robert S Mattson; [oldsarge21@comcast.net](mailto:oldsarge21@comcast.net)  
**Subject:** RE: Merci Box Car Move

Hello Joe,

Thank you so much for submitting this additional documentation. I will take a look over it and let you know if I have questions.

Should we expect any representatives from the Grand Voiture to be present at the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) meeting on March 25, 2019?

Kind regards,  
Laura

Laura Groves van Onna  
(559) 621-8439

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**From:** Joe Donovan [<mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 06, 2019 9:43 AM  
**To:** Laura Van Onna  
**Cc:** PGC Will Williams; Gr Chef de Train du CA John B Bartos; Gr Cond du CA Mildred S Wright-Pearson; PGC Robert S Mattson; [oldsarge21@comcast.net](mailto:oldsarge21@comcast.net)  
**Subject:** Merci Box Car Move

Laura:

As requested in your letter of February 19, 2019, please see my response per above attachments. File is being sent via snail mail today to your office.

Joe Donovan, Grand Correspondant, Grande Voiture du California



**La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux**  
**GRANDE VOITURE du CALIFORNIA Inc.**

Laura Groves van Onna  
Historic Preservation Specialist  
City of Fresno  
2600 Fresno St Rm 3043  
Fresno CA 93721-3604

March 5, 2019

Dear Ms van Onna

Ref: Your letter of February 19, 2019

In response to your reference letter, please see the attached PDF file containing

1. Original request from Palm Springs Air Museum dated 21 August 2017 sent to Wayne Schwartz outlining the history of the museum, its mission, and their request to explore the possibility of moving the Merci Box Car to the Air Museum.
2. E-mail correspondence dated July 18, 2018 between myself and Fred Bell, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of the Palm Springs Air Museum. (The delayed time frame for my response to the Air Museum was caused by Wayne Schwartz having an incorrect e-mail address for me.) I provided a brief history of the Merci Box Car in its current location and Mr. Bell set out on a fund raising effort to actually move the Merci Box Car.
3. September 26, 2018 letter from Frank Castner Palm Springs Air Museum Volunteer Display Coordinator agreeing to locate the Merci Box Car INSIDE, out of the elements in their European Hanger. Frank outlined his intention of traveling to Fresno October 2 & 3, 2018 to look over the project, meet with a crane and rigging company and a paving company to restore the parking lot at Post 509 to its original condition.
4. A series of e-mails referencing the project in chronological order for clarification
  - a. July 19, 2018 my letter to Frank Castner listing the estimated height and weight of the Merci Box Car and July 20, 2018 Frank's response. (Pg 4 of 4)
  - b. September 19, 2018 A note from Frank Castner that they have completed fund raising efforts and my return note to Frank that Mildred Wright-Pearson would be the contact point in Fresno during their visit scheduled for October 2 & 3. (Pg 3 of 4)
  - c. October 4, 2018 Follow up letter from Frank Castner after his visit to Fresno. My outline of the history of the Merci Box Car in Fresno with supporting documentation (previously provided to you) (Pg 2 of 4)
  - d. Request from the Air Museum that the City of Fresno would not interfere with the intended move of the Merci Box Car, and my response to Frank Castner (Pg 1 of 4)

Frustrated with the interference of the City of Fresno in our endeavor to protect our Merci Box Car by providing at a minimum a cover to shelter it from the elements, at its current location at Post 509, various  
*Merci Box Car Move 030519*

Past Grand Chef's de Gare and a retired Rail Road employee have contacted rail road museums in California. Specifically contacted were Sacramento, Fairfield, and San Louis Obispo. None of those museums had space or were willing to accept custody of our Merci Box Car.

Since the Grande Voiture is primarily interested in the permanent preservation and prominent display of the Merci Box Car as a Veterans War Memorial for the people of California, as envisioned by Governor Warren and the former leaders of the Grande Voiture, we are convinced that the Palm Spring Air Museum provides a fitting location for our Merci Box Car. Unless the City of Fresno can put forth a viable argument as to why our Merci Box Car should not be moved to the Palm Springs Air Museum, we intend to move forward with said relocation.

I believe the documentation provided previously and herein satisfies your requests from City Staff of Fresno outlined in your referenced letter. Your prompt reply to Item 4.d above will be appreciated.

Thank you for your efforts and cooperation.

Joseph R Donovan  
Grand Correspondant  
4660 N River Rd Spc 12  
Oceanside CA 92057-5879



**PALM SPRINGS  
AIR MUSEUM**  
1996-2016

PalmSpringsAirMuseum.org

745 North Gene Autry Trail  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

p 760.778.6262 f 760.482.1880

21 August 2017

c/o Wayne Schwartz  
2851 E. San Gabriel  
Fresno, CA 93726

TO: The Forty & Eight Committee; Fresno Federal Post 509:

The Palm Springs Air Museum is a World War 2 museum dedicated to the history and individual sacrifices of all those who serve our country. Our mission is to Honor, Preserve and Educate. In pursuit of this mission, we currently house 59 aircraft from the early days of WW II to Vietnam and after. We also maintain a world-class research library with over 10,000 volumes, 6,000 videos and thousands of personal artifacts and artwork that help us tell the stories of the service of military and civilians over the last 75 years. As a partner in the Library of Congress Veterans History Project we also have over 1,000 video interviews of Veterans from all branches of the military and periods of service.

Established in 1996 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit we rely heavily on Volunteers for our daily operations. We currently have 10 paid staff and 347 Volunteer docents who maintain our eight venues that are open seven days a week from 10 am to 5 pm. We are only closed three days a year – Thanksgiving, Christmas and the second Friday in February for our annual gala fund-raiser. We have 16 Volunteers with over 12,000 hours each and since 1996 our total volunteer hours exceeds 1.1 million hours. Our venues include four hangars dedicated to WW 2 Europe, WW 2 the Pacific, a separate hangar to house our B-17 and air motive maintenance operation, a newly opened hangar dedicated to Korea and Vietnam, a gift shop, visitor services, a library and archives center, and a restoration shop.

Much of the success of our operation comes from the fact that within our Volunteer group are very skilled craftsmen in all areas – wood working, metal work, aircraft mechanics, art and design, publishing, etc. We do most of our display work in-house and publish three books about the Museum and a newsletter 10 times a year. From November to May each year we have Saturday programs featuring a speaker and a flight exhibition of one or more vintage aircraft. It is the effort of these Volunteers and the coordination of our staff that have resulted in the Palm Springs Air Museum being ranked by CNN as one of the 14 best air museums in the world.

All of our 15 World War II aircraft are kept in running condition and 7 are currently airworthy and fly at air shows around the western U.S. and during Museum programs. All of these aircraft are maintained in-house by our own mechanics and restoration crew who perform the routine maintenance and annuals to keep them flying. It is our long-range plan to restore as many of these vintage aircraft to airworthy status as possible.



Most of the other aircraft in our collection are display aircraft that have been restored to represent aircraft of particular units or individuals. Virtually all of these came to us as derelicts in deplorable condition due to years of neglect and damage from the elements. A look at our web site gallery of aircraft (psam.org) will show that they have been restored to pristine appearance and are of the highest museum display quality. Again, virtually of all of that work has been done by our Volunteer restoration crew under the direction of our mechanics.

Consistent with our mission, our staff and Volunteers are constantly in search of items that enhance our ability to keep the story of our service men and women alive. The California Merci Train Car is a perfect example of this desire. It represents a largely unknown aspect of the aftermath of WW II and is exactly the kind of artifact that must be preserved for future generations. Personally, I have spoken with a number of our docents who are very knowledgeable about the war, but had never heard of the Merci Train. We would very much like to change that.

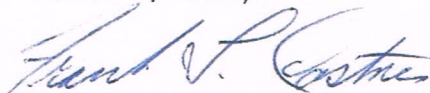
With nearly 100,000 visitors a year and a location across from the terminal of our international airport where millions of visitors land each year, we have the potential to make the California Merci Train Car a star of the show. As director of the Museum I enthusiastically endorse our effort to relocate the car to our Museum. I am confident that we have the requisite craftsman to repair any of the wooden portions of the car and the steel under carriage can be dealt with by our welders and metal craftsmen. As for restoration of the painted crests, the world-renowned aviation artist Stan Stokes has his studio in our Museum and we have access to local company that provides superior vinyl wrap art for vehicles displays. In fact, a large part of the wall displays in our new hangar are vinyl applications.

An initial survey of our facility suggests that an appropriate location would be at the south end of our newest hangar where it would be visible from the air field and accessible to our visitors as well as providing a close-by source of power. Once installed on tracks, it would be our intention to provide a shade cover for the car. I have already discussed with our display people the idea of opening the car and installing a display outlining the history of the Merci Train idea complete with photos of all 43 cars still available for viewing in other states. The car would be air-conditioned, lighted, and steps installed for visitor access.

It is the hope of our Board and management that this proposal has merit to initiate a discussion to enable us to explore the possible move of this piece of history to our Museum. I am confident that sufficient fund-raising is within our means to move the item to our location and begin the process of repair and restoration. Since we are not close to rail lines, it would be our intention to move the car by truck so that it could be moved directly to a permanent location within our facility.

We have the overall dimensions of the car and would be grateful if you could provide us with information as to the weight and the availability of the track it currently rests upon.

Respectfully Yours,



Frank L. Castner,  
Volunteer Display Coordinator  
Palm Springs Air Museum

**RE: WW1 Merci Box Car**

Frank <frank@palmspringsairmuseum.org>

Wed 7/18/2018 2:44 PM

To: jdonovan4660@hotmail.com <jdonovan4660@hotmail.com>

Joseph –

My apology for the difficulty in reaching me – our phone service to this extension is not reliable, so this email is best.

The Air Museum is definitely interested. We would appreciate any history of the car that you have and whatever recommendations you might have regarding the best way to transport it.

We did have someone look at it last fall and I assume the track and plaque are part of the package.

Our Director has asked me to work up a budget for this project and stay in touch with you to ensure you of our continuing interest. We will begin immediately to explore funding sources and map out a precise location on our site.

Thank you for the offer –

Frank Castner

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**From:** Fred

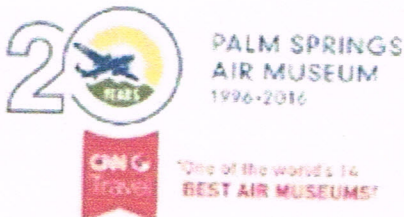
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 18, 2018 1:38 PM

**To:** Frank; Education

**Subject:** FW: WW1 Merci Box Car

?

Fred Bell  
Vice Chairman &  
Managing Director  
Palm Springs Air Museum  
Cell: 760 578 1600



This email and any files or attachments transmitted with it may contain privileged or otherwise confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, or believe that you may have received this communication in error, please advise the sender via reply email and immediately delete the email you received.

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**From:** Joe Donovan [mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 18, 2018 10:32 AM

**To:** Fred

**Subject:** WW1 Merci Box Car

Dear Sir

Several months ago, I received a letter and phone call follow up from a Mr Frank L Castner of your



organization expressing interest in a WW1 Merci Box Car that is currently in Fresno CA. I am the state secretary of the Grande Voiture of California. That Box Car was donated by the people of France following the end of WW2, one was given to each of the 48 states and the District of Columbia. Our Veterans organization, having it's roots following the use of the box cars to transport either 40 men or 8 horses to and from the front lines in both WW1 and WW2 was given custody of the California Merci Box Car by then Gov Warren. The Geographic center of California is Fresno, the 40 & 8 Grande Voiture Headquarters was in Fresno, and the leaders of the 40 & 8 convinced the Govoner Warren that the Box Car should be located in Fresno. The city of Fresno accepted custody and had it moved from the Port of Long Beach to Fresno in 1952. It sat in Roeding Park for years, became vandalized, and deteriorated. Consequently, in 2004 the Grande Voiture again regained custody from the City of Fresno and had it moved to American Legion Post 509 in Fresno. We have been struggling since to get a shelter built to no avail. Mr Castner's letter expressed interest in moving the Box Car to your Air Museum. After almost a year of continued efforts to get a shelter built over the Box Car, we are at our witts end. If you are still interested in that Box Car, please have Mr Castner or someone from your organization contact me. Phone calls to Mr Castner go to voice mail or disconnect.

Joseph R Donovan Grand Correspondant  
Grande Voiture du California  
4660 N River RD Spc 12, Oceanside CA 92057-5879  
760-721-9405 Cell 760-505-6158

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

26 September 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Transfer of the California Merci Car to the Palm Springs Air Museum

As mentioned in a letter to Wayne Schwartz dated 21 August 2017, the Palm Springs Air Museum is prepared to relocate the Merci Car from its present location in Fresno to the grounds of the Palm Springs Air Museum, 745 N. Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs, CA 92262.

We initially indicated it would be placed adjacent to one of our hangars and provided with a suitable cover from the elements. It is now our intention to permanently display the car inside our European Hangar. This would provide much better visitor access as well as protect the car from the elements. If it is necessary to place the car outside temporarily until the facility can be reworked to accommodate the car, we would provide suitable cover and protection.

As mentioned earlier, Greg Kenny, our Assistant Director and myself will be going to Fresno Tuesday and Wednesday next week, 2 & 3 October to look at the car and meet with a crane company and blacktop service. We have made contact with Mildred Wright Pearson and have arranged to meet her on site next week.

Frank Castner,  
Volunteer Display Coordinator  
Palm Springs Air Museum



## RE: CA Merci Box Car History

Frank <frank@palmspringsairmuseum.org>

Thu 10/4/2018 12:09 PM

To: Joe Donovan <jdonovan4660@hotmail.com>

Joe –

Thank You

Frank

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**From:** Joe Donovan [mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, October 4, 2018 12:08 PM

**To:** Frank

**Subject:** Re: CA Merci Box Car History

Frank:

I can only look at the release signed by the Fresno City Attorney in 2004. Sorry, I can't be of any further assistance.

The people of California OWN the Box Car. Custody was given to the Forty and Eight per Gov Warren. Since the City of Fresno failed since 1952 to live up to their obligations, I don't see how they have any claim to OUR property. I have prepared a Resolution for our Grande Voiture to transfer custody of the Box Car to your Museum. It's similar to the one sent transferring custody from the City to Post 509 and Voiture 31. It will be approved at our next meeting October 20 & 21 in Santa Maria. I will send you a copy after it is signed.

Joe

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**From:** Frank <frank@palmspringsairmuseum.org>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 4, 2018 11:57 AM

**To:** Joe Donovan

**Subject:** RE: CA Merci Box Car History

Joe –

Thank you for the information.

Is there a way for you to provide us with a written affirmation that the city of Fresno will not make any attempt to prevent the move of the car from the present location to our Museum?

Thank You

Frank

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**From:** Joe Donovan [mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, October 4, 2018 10:52 AM

**To:** Frank

**Subject:** Re: CA Merci Box Car History

Frank:

I believe the attached documents outlining the history of the Merci Box Car should suffice. Any further documentation needed may be in the notebook located in our Trophy Case at American Legion Post 509 in Fresno. If this is not enough, let me know, and I will obtain custody of the Notebook and review any documentation in it.

1. City of Fresno accepting custody of the Merci Box Car from the Grande Voiture 40 & 8. dated May 12, 1952 (We were originally a committee of the American Legion, but separated completely in 1960 or there-a bouts.)
2. City of Fresno Attorney ltr dated July 14 outlining city requirements to return custody of the Box Car to the Grande Voiture (Via American Legion Post(2 pgs) 509 and Voiture 31 of the Grande Voiture dated July 14, 2004 (2 pgs)
3. Grande Voiture Ltr responding to the City ltr of July 14 dtd July 20, 2004
4. (1) Resolution 001-05 (new fiscal year) and (2) cy of Grande Voiture check 070797 \$10.00 payable to the City of Fresno releasing them from their obligations of the May 1952 ltr and in response to the City ltr of July 14

For some reason, my file does not include a cover letter from the Grande Voiture to the City of Fresno in October 2005 wherein a copy of our Resolution and Check was sent. It may be in the Notebook identified above, but the actual documentation is the Resolution and the check.

As in the past, if any further information is required, please contact me.

Joe Donovan  
Grand Correspondant  
Grande Voiture of California

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**From:** Frank <frank@palmspringsairmuseum.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 4, 2018 8:37 AM  
**To:** Joe Donovan  
**Subject:** RE: Merci Box Car

Joe –

Greg Kinney and I were in Fresno Tuesday and yesterday to look at the car. It is in amazing condition and congratulations to all who have worked on the restoration and preservation. This points even more strongly to the need to protect such a treasure from the elements. Mildred and the members of the Legion were very cordial and we certainly understand their strong emotional attachment to the car. We also met with a crane operator and the blacktop company and feel confident that all of that is in order. Mildred showed us some documents related to the move of the car to its present location in 2004 and there was reference to ownership issues between the Grande Voiture and the city of Fresno. Would you please send me copies of the documents related to any agreements between these parties in 2004 so our director can review them.

Thank You  
Frank Castner

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**From:** Joe Donovan [mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com]



**Sent:** Saturday, September 22, 2018 12:31 PM  
**To:** Frank  
**Cc:** Gr Cond du CA Mildred S Wright-Pearson  
**Subject:** Re: Merci Box Car

Frank:

Mildred Wright Pearson will be your contact point in Fresno. She lives locally. 559-250-8247.

Since the Merci Box Car was given to the Grande Voiture of California by then Governor Earl Warren, the Grande Voiture has retained actual "Ownership" of the Merci Box Car for historical reasons. "Custody" of the Merci Box Car was transferred to the City of Fresno in 1950, and back to "joint Custody" of American Legion Post 509 and Fresno Voiture Locale 31 of the Grande Voiture in 2004. "Custody" of the Box Car is anticipated to be transferred to the Palm Springs Air Museum upon their written commitment to maintain the box car in it's current (newly sealed and painted) condition and the installation of a permanent structural cover for the Box Car (if not located inside) to protect the historical nature of the Box Car. Actual "Ownership" of the Box Car will remain with the Grande Voiture of California.

As always, should you have any questions, please contact me.

Joseph R Donovan  
Grand Correspondant

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**From:** Frank <frank@palmspringsairmuseum.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 19, 2018 11:26 AM  
**To:** Joe Donovan  
**Subject:** RE: Merci Box Car

Joe –

Update on the Merci Car – We have completed our funding needs to move the car to the Museum. Our staff has made contact with a crane company and a blacktop firm to repair the area where the car and plaque are located. Greg Kenny and I are planning to go to Fresno on Tuesday October 2 and Wednesday October 3 to meet with the crane and blacktop people. Is there someone in your organization that we should arrange to meet as well?

Thanks

Frank Castner

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**From:** Joe Donovan [mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, July 20, 2018 10:00 AM  
**To:** Frank  
**Subject:** Re: Merci Box Car

Frank:

I'm sorry, but I do not have the exact height. Various specifications we have looked at over the years calls for a "Cover" shelter, or what have you, all with a height of 14 feet. That does allow for

clearance over the roof of the box car, so my best guess would be not over 13 feet tall, probably less. Web information that I have found only specifies weight, width, and braking system. I will try to get an exact figure for you, but that may be difficult as those in Fresno may be reluctant to assist.

Joe

---

**From:** Frank <frank@palmspringsairmuseum.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 20, 2018 9:27 AM  
**To:** Joe Donovan  
**Subject:** RE: Merci Box Car

Joe –

Thanks for the great information – there is a possibility with the dimensions of the car that we might be able to house it inside one of our hangars. Do you know the height of the car on the track from the ground up?

Thanks  
Frank

---

**From:** Joe Donovan [mailto:jdonovan4660@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 19, 2018 2:26 PM  
**To:** Frank  
**Subject:** Merci Box Car

Frank:

I found these documents in my file. As you can see, the Web Site referenced has much information on the history etc of the Merci Box Cars.

From what I have learned from the Web Site, the weight originally was 8.7 Short tons (US Ton) or 17,400 lbs. That figure should be close enough for estimating purposes.

As you progress, contact myself and I will get further information you may need. (My plan is to be in Northern CA, leaving Sat 7/21 for a couple of weeks, so either e-mail or my cell phone will be the best way to contact me. I will have my complete file on the Box Car with me.

Joe

## **EXHIBIT D:**



Laura Van Onna

The City of Fresno

Historic Preservation Specialist

Historic Preservation Commission,

April 8, 2019

City of Fresno

Dear Historic Preservation Commission,

We have a notably historic treasure here in Fresno. And, with your help, we have the opportunity to keep this important legacy in the Fresno community and feature it in a place of honor in the center of the state of California.

A beautiful WWII *French Merci Boxcar* has been located in Fresno for almost 70 years. In 1949 to show their gratitude for the US military support during WWI and WWII and for the huge shipment of food and clothing from the American people sent in 1948, each US state received a French boxcar to say "Merci", we thank you. Filled with precious handcrafted goods, antiques, and heirlooms, they were symbolic of the immense appreciation for the 300 boxcars shipped to France from the American people, 40 million dollars' worth of help. The French were especially grateful for the tons of raisins and dried figs from the central valley, the perfect contribution to thwart starvation in their devastated country after a long and brutal war.

In 1952 the California gratitude boxcar, painted a dull olive green, was situated in Roeding Park. Since 2004, it has been placed at the American Legion Post 509, at 3309 N. First Street. Local volunteers have painted and preserved the colorful original French provincial plaques on the now gleaming, sealed white boards of the car. Unfortunately, a planned cover was never put in place.

We were about to lose the boxcar war memorial, but thankfully our hero veterans are coming to the rescue again. The Clovis Veterans Memorial District has offered to appropriately display and protect this poignant symbol of US patriotism and generosity at their complex. This center is visited by thousands of local Fresno and Clovis residents each year for both public and private events. Scheduled tours offered to the local school districts would add to the history curriculum for students from throughout the valley. The greater urban area of Fresno/Clovis comprises about one million potential visitors as well with reasonable access for both northern and southern Californians.

The Clovis Veterans Memorial District already displays military memorials and has a sterling reputation for support of veterans in our valley. Hundreds of veterans meet there each week for Veteran's forums to unify the veterans' organizations and promote events. A new heritage center is planned as well as a public library





nearby. This would be a wonderful partnership of mutual benefit and recognition of the sacrifices made by these patriotic heroes. It would also show future generations how much we value of the acts of courage and charity of our predecessors, a model for behavior in younger people.

Heritage Fresno will spearhead fundraising with others coming on board to raise the money needed for removal and display. Interested groups include the Alliance Française, the Westerners, and other local history groups. Local veterans groups are strongly supportive of this resolution to maintain a military and symbolic legacy of global friendship and the defeat of evil.

Are you all aboard to help us keep this treasure for our community? We say, "Merci" for your attention to this serious issue.

Janice Stevens

and Linda Scambray

*Janice Stevens*  
*Linda Scambray*

Co-chairs of Heritage Fresno

559 431 3110 [scam4@comcast.net](mailto:scam4@comcast.net).

## MY STORY OF THE 40 & 8 BOXCAR

After an eight day voyage from New York to Scotland, then to Southampton, England, across the channel to Le Havre, France, finally on French soil we are now in a huge building enjoying a long awaited meal. Up on a large stage is Glen Miller's Band giving us a warm reception of his favorite WWII music. The date: February 2, 1945 & it's cold, rainy, & patchy snow outside. We are ordered to climb aboard some similarity of a passenger train, however, this looked more like an old boxcar of sorts. The floor was covered with straw & in one corner was a bucket, obviously our toilet for this ride. Herded aboard some 35 to 40 GIs with all their gear was a chore just to boost ourselves up into this contraption which we soon learned was a WWI vehicle to haul 40 men or 8 horses into the war zone of France in the Great War. Some guy on the ground slammed the huge wooden door shut & we're now cheek to cheek in a dark unlighted boxcar, no windows, no type of heat or ventilation except for the visible cracks in the wooden sides. No one talks for quite a while, then the typical bitching of what are we doing here?, why aren't we moving, who's running this man's war? We remained motionless for a long period before hearing a shrill whistle, then a slight movement as the car began to move forward. At last we're on our way, but where to? That was not our concern or problem, really, where are we headed to & what's on the other end of this unknown journey? We were all fresh, green troops from the states trained as infantry soldiers & would fill the vacancies from the casualties from the Battle of The Bulge up in Belgium & Luxembourg. Most of us were part of the 15,000 troops aboard the Queen Mary, one of the fastest & largest troop ships of WWII & bringing much needed replacements to the Infantry Divisions that had suffered over 80,000 casualties in that 5 week battle. We are chugging along in this boxcar after boxcar train, stopping frequently on a siding to let a train with wounded headed to a hospital take the lead. Imagine how dark it is inside this miserable conveyance, you now need to find that bucket, in which corner could it be? Wow!, we're stopping again, some guy outside slides the big door open, "everybody out" chow time. We grapple to find our mess gear & jump down, form a long line along the railroad siding to see a GI field kitchen waiting to serve us our one of two meals a day. More bitching & griping about the food. However, to supplement that need with luxury were French children hocking French bread & wine for a fee. They gladly took our "greenbacks", our US dollars, as it was all we had so far. This affair went on for this 3 day journey from Le Have to Metz, France, a driving distance of about 6 hours in today's travel. Back into this 40 & 8 boxcar to huddle together to attain a bit of body warmth, hoping the snow flowing through the cracks wouldn't hit your face. Miserable doesn't really give you a true picture of this trip, many were now coughing & feeling sick from the cold weather & primitive conditions we faced in these boxcars. What we didn't know was this was just a foretaste of the weather we would live through for several months. The winter of 1944-45 was the coldest in 50 years in Europe & a good portion of us would face this situation sleeping in the woods on the ground without a blanket many a night. After our 3 day journey on these 40 & 8 boxcars we were happy to be on solid non moving ground for a change. Three days to go approximately 400 miles, you be the judge as to how fast we traveled on much repaired bombed railroad tracks. Once a target of German aircraft, then bombed by our Air Force, this mode of transportation for military men & supplies suffered constantly until our landing at Normandy & our swift move eastward into France. Yes, we survived the miserable ride in those detestable French 40 & 8 boxcars. As an Infantryman who did his share of walking across Germany in WWII, I'd prefer the ride anytime.

Vern Schmidt  
E. Co. 358 Reg't  
90<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
WWII



Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
GEORGE GRUNER	5515 N. Fresno St #102 FRESNO CA	George F. Gruner
JOHN DURANT	1573 W FIFTH AVE	John Durant
Rollie Hagen	5118 E Ashlan Fresno	Rollie Hagen
Lloyd Buckner	P.O. Box 218122, Fresno, CA	Lloyd Buckner
Steven Buckner	17509 Parkcliffe Lane Friant, CA 93626	Steven Buckner
VERNON SCHMIDT	315 E NEES #104 FRESNO, CA 93720	Vernon Schmidt
Violet Schmidt	315 E NEES #104 FRESNO, CA 93720	Violet Schmidt
ALBERT BLUMER	526 S N. Cedarwell Fresno, CA 93710	Albert Blumer
Bruce Abbott	3105 W BROWNING FRESNO CA, 93711	Bruce Abbott
SAMUEL E. BANUELOS	PO BOX 4032 FRESNO, CA 93744	Samuel E. Banuelos
Robin Rhodes	4507 E ALAMOS AVE FRESNO 93726	Robin Rhodes
MARY ANN GANEGAN-RICHARDSON	PO Box 437 - Clovis CA 93613-6257	Mary Ann Ganegan-Richardson
BEN LLANOS	1105 W. INDIANAPOLIS FRESNO CA 93705	Ben Llanos
MAHLON M. S. HILK	6309 N 9TH STREET FRESNO, CA 93710-5710	Mahlon M. S. Hilk
Kerry Fildes	1036 E SAMPLE FRESNO, CA 93710	Kerry Fildes
Garry ROGERS	6552 N. Gentry Fresno, CA 93711	Garry Rogers
Jim Wilson	1883 EAST MONCIE FRESNO CA 93720	Jim Wilson
Elaine A Grover	783 N Orangelwood Fresno, CA 93727	Elaine Grover
Daniel M. Hernandez	783 N Orangelwood Fresno, CA 93727	Dan Hernandez



Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
Peggy Bailey	2152 Stanford Ave. Apt. 113, Clovis, CA	Peggy Bailey
Gertrude M. Haines	457 W. KEATS, CLOVIS	Gertrude M. Haines
Kathleen Penner ESTHER MILNES Esther Milnes	1540 N. Jarvis 1153 W. Keate	Kathleen Penner Esther Milnes
Irene Aparicio	25 Rall, Clovis	Irene Aparicio
HELEN CONDI	2071 E. AXELSON DRIVE	FRESNO Helen Condit
KEN. COWAN	830 E BEDFORD	FRESNO CA Kenneth Cowan
Janet H. Hill	3012 <del>Cherry Ave</del> Evergale Clovis 93711	Janet H. Hill
Ted Johnstone	2985 W. Canterbury Ct. Fresno	Ted Johnstone
Rod Chaney	18381 Rd 26 Madera, Ca 93638	Rod Chaney
Patrice Isom	9816 N. Sedona Circle Fresno, CA 93720	Patrice Isom
Sally Stallings	838 E. University Fresno, Ca, 93704	Sally Stallings
Rosalinda G. Gales MARY ANN CARL M	9395 N. Rowell Fresno Ca 93720 660 E. Vartanian Ave 93716	Rosalinda G. Gales Mary Ann Carl
Ellen Rhodes	1114 Paul Ave Clovis 93612	Ellen Rhodes
David Brown	9074 N. Brownview Fresno 93720	David Brown
Gayle Thornton	1357 E. Fairmont Fresno 93704	Gayle Thornton
LINDA G SCAMBRAY	6146 N CALLISCH FRESNO 93710	Linda Scambray
Bonni Pellicciotti	3695 Prescott, Clovis 93612	Bonni Pellicciotti

Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
ANTHONY N. GUERRERO	1908 COUGAR LN. <sup>93611</sup> Clovis, CA	Anthony N. Guerrero
Aram Moradian	5453 E. Butler <sup>Fresno</sup>	Aram Moradian
WARREN P SMITH	732 W Coptland	Warren P Smith
BRUCE G. STAEBLER	1624 BURGAW AVE. Clovis, CA 93611	Bruce G Staebler
GEORGE A. LaBORDE	4771 E. NORWICH AVE	George LaBorde
ROD DEZA CONCEPCION, JR	2195 METERWOOD AVE SANGER, CA 93657	Rod de la Concepcion
Ale, Fasros	Fresno CA 93722	Ale Fasros
PELLAGIO VALDEZ	3769 Portals Ave Clovis, CA 93619	Pellagio Valdez
GARY RODRIGUEZ	2811 W. COLLEGE DR., FRES CLOVIS, CA 93611	Gary Rodriguez
Don Vanderheyden	1662 HOLLAND AVE. 93611	Don Vanderheyden
DOROTHY HARTWORT	2839 Pontiac Ave <sup>93611</sup> Clovis	Dorothy Hartwort
John J. STURDIVANT	FRESNO, CA 93710 2867 E FREMONT AVE	John J. Sturdivant
George Grimsley	9402 E. ELIOT AVE CLOVIS, CA 93619	George Grimsley
Andy Wulf	1944 COUGAR LN CLOVIS CA	Andy Wulf
ALBERTA KEMMERER	3040 MAGNOLIA CLOVIS, 93611	Alberta Kemmerer
KEN KEMMERER	3040 MAGNOLIA CLOVIS, CA 93611	Ken Kemmerer
ROBERT TALMAGE	5756 E. PARK CIRCLE DR FRESNO, CALIF 93727	Robert D. Talmage
NANCY HUEY	14572 E TULARE AVE SANGER, CA 93657	Nancy Huey
Terry Scambray	6146 N. Callisch	Terry Scambray



Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
Linda Arredondo	4462 N. Wishon-Frs	Linda Arredondo
Shirley Atteberry	687 Carson, Clovis	Shirley Atteberry
Linda Hammer-Brown	6619 N. Durant Ave Frs	Linda Hammer-Brown
Rich Bailey	1722 No Hollywood Dr <sup>Roadley</sup>	Rich Bailey
Pearl Lai	4615 Marty Ave Fresno CA	Pearl Lai
August Knittel	34447 <sup>Squaw</sup> Leap Auberry 93602	AUGUST G. KNITTEL
Kathi Morris	4083 Ziaito, Clovis 93619	Kathleen Morris
SANDEE GIOILLI	1048 W BROWNING St	Sandee Giolli
Clarice Krikorian	2857 W. Cromwell Ave, 93711	Clarice Krikorian
DAVID ELWIN	8514 N. MAPLE AVE, 93720	David Elwin
TOM MORTON	1789 ASHEROFT AVE 93611	Tom Morton
<del>Rich Bailey</del>	<del>1722</del>	
Herb Aclon	2156 W. Via Delphin <sup>Fresno</sup> 93711	Herb Aclon
Linda Hamilton	2834 N. Farris, Fresno CA 93704	Linda Hamilton
Roger B. Taylor	4557 E Ato, Fresno 93726	Roger B. Taylor
PAT HUNTER	1490 W. GHAW FR 93711	Pat Hunter
Jessie Robb	540 Pierce Dr. <sup>93612</sup> Clovis	Jessie Robb
Pat Russell	4878 N. Sunset <sup>93709</sup>	Patricia Russell
Paterson	9816 N. Helena Clovis	Paterson

(CHARLES) BARRETT

www.BusinessFormTemplate.com  
560 E. PORTLAND AVE.  
93720

Charles Barrett

Esther Aclon  
2156 W. Via Delphin  
Fresno, Calif 93711



Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
MIKE MAZZEI	4849 N. HULBERT	
Susan McAndrew	<sup>FRESNO, CA</sup> 413 E. Seagull Ct 93730	Susan McAndrew
Susan Korsinen	370 W. Teague Fresno, CA 93711	Susan Korsinen
Susan McBride	91 W. Jordan Ave Clovis, CA 93611	Susan McBride
Loredana LoBianco	331 W. Palo Alto Ave <sup>CLOVIS</sup>	L. LoBianco
Kathleen White	4706 N. Orchid Sanger, TX	K. White
Dee Schleich	3317 E Bellvue Way <sup>CLOVIS</sup>	Dee Schleich
Carol Burke	1091 N. Home St <sup>CLOVIS</sup>	
David Gearhart	5064 E. Clay <sup>Fresno</sup> 93727	David Gearhart
Lisa Marie Slater	1471 Rail Clovis CA <sup>Fresno</sup> 93611	Lisa Marie Slater
Elena Vincent	5559 W. Stuart Ave <sup>Fresno</sup> 93722	Elena Vincent
Margaret Frech	61 Acacia Dr. Sanger <sup>93657</sup>	Margaret Frech
Jerry Vandell	1714 N. Blythe <sup>Fresno</sup> 93722	Jerry Vandell
Ronald L. Hae	6357 N. Telemo <sup>Fresno</sup> 93711	Ronald L. Hae
Dennis Huffman	261 W. Sample Ave Fresno, CA 93704	Dennis Huffman
Judith Finer	1701 E Trenton	Judith Finer
Clive Paulson	1701 E Trenton	Clive Paulson
Janet K Baker	1755 E Roberts #134	Janet K Baker
Gayle Elliott	41824 Long Hollow	Gayle Elliott

Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
Susana Sosa	Fresno, CA 93711 1320 W. Yosemite Ave.	Susana Sosa
Dan Nadaner	"	Dan Nadaner
Della Henry	2439 N. Leonard Ave Fresno, CA 93737	Della Henry
Jerry Henry	"	Jerry Henry
Catherine Guild	1881 E. Frederick Ave Fresno CA 93720	Catherine Guild
Jim Guild	"	Jim Guild
NANCY Liddell	1067 E. Venturian Fresno 93710	Nancy Liddell
Lynne McVeigh Lynne McVeigh	1003 Clovis Kaweah Ave 93615	Lynne McVeigh
John Hendon	Fresno, CA 93720 633 E. Warwick Ave.	John Hendon
Craig Watters	1605 S. Helm Ave Fresno, CA 93727	Craig Watters
Jan Lee	7105 E. Tulare Ave 93737	Jan Lee
JAMES L. LEHMAN	795 E. OAKHURST AVE FRESNO 93720	James L. Lehman
Bill Lee	Fresno, CA 93737 7105 E. Tulare Ave	Bill Lee
O. JEAN PIERRE BEDROS	3040 SERENA AVE CLOVIS CA 93619	O. Jean Pierre Bedros
Randy Viger	1123 N. Karen Ave	Randy Viger
Tim Danks-Ferguson	4539 E. Weldon	Tim Danks-Ferguson
Chris Bach		Christopher M. Bach
A. MELIN	4530 N College	A. Melin
Carmen Hoyo	4530 N College ave	Carmen Hoyo



Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
Gloria Medina-Sanchez	10676 N. Coronado Cir Fresno, CA 93730	
Giorgio Mobili	"	
Carmen Orozco	4721 E Kavaland Fresno CA 93725	
Vanessa Vera Rojas	4630 E Shields Ave Fresno CA 93726	Vanessa Vera
Julian Davila	2460 C St Selma CA 93662	Julian Davila
Dolores Evaristo	5070 W Tenaya Fresno, CA 93722	Dolores Evaristo
HERMAN EVARISTO	5070 W. TENAYA FRESNO CA	
Pierre St-Henri	P.O. Box 9271 Fresno 93791	
James G. Sherman	4460 W. Shields Ave, PMB 188 Fresno 93722	James G. Sherman
Ana Cortez	P.O. Box 75282 Fresno CA 93729	Ana Cortez
VIVIAN KHANOUNSAY	5901 W. WILLIS AVE FRESNO, CA 93722	
Champhong Thannoung	5901 W. WILLIS AVE FRESNO CA 93722	
Ann	3308 Duncan Ave Clovis 93619	Nidia E. Lopez-Gonzalez
Liz Kobashigawa	6676 N. Walters Fresno CA 93710	Liz Kobashigawa
Rose Mary Curtis	6488 N. Kennedy Ave Fresno, CA 93710	Rose Mary Curtis
Yolanda Doub	1086 E. Quincy Ave. Fresno, CA 93720	Yolanda Doub
Calliope Correia	1364 N Roosevelt Fresno CA 93728	Calliope Correia
Dale Huffman	261 W. Sample Ave	
Dale Huffman	261 W. SAMPLE FRESNO, CA 93704	Dale Huffman

Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.

Printed Name	Address	Signature
Michael Donaghe	1141 N Ventura Ave	<i>Michael Donaghe</i>
JAMES DONAGHE	1141 N VENTURA AVE	<i>James Donaghe</i>
Vidra Donaghe	1141 N. Ventura	<i>Vidra Donaghe</i>
Sally Casillas	1004 S. Kent, Visalia	<i>Sally Casillas</i>
Jonathan Bazar	1004 S. Kent, Visalia	<i>Jonathan Bazar</i>
WILLIAM CASILLAS	1004 S KENT ST VISALIA	<i>William Casillas</i>
Jessica Herrington	581 W Lincoln Ave #204	<i>Jessica Herrington</i>
SCOTT JOHNSON	944 EAST YALE AVE	<i>Scott Johnson</i>
Florence Mar	1460 University Ave.	<i>Florence Mar</i>
Kathryn Peper	1371 W. Sample Ave	<i>Kathryn Peper</i>
Augustine Peper	1371 W. Sample Ave	<i>Augustine Peper</i>
John Crimi	1073 E. Monticello Circle	<i>John Crimi</i>
Jeane CRIMI	P.O. Box 618, Lone Pine	<i>Jeane Crimi</i>
Janet K Adams	295 Robinwood Reelley 93654	<i>Janet K Adams</i>

**Please sign if you would like to see the  
Merci Train Boxcar remain in Fresno County.**

[illegible]





Alliance Française

Fresno, CA - USA

April 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The *Alliance Française of Fresno* would like to impress upon you the significance of the Fresno Friendship "Merci" Train #70 and the French Voie de la Liberte/Liberty Road marker given to Fresno by the French town of Etampes (located downtown near the Court House). These are enduring symbols of friendship and cooperation between Fresno, California and France. The Friendship "Merci" Train played an important role, although currently little known, in the history of the friendship that exists between the United States and France. A train of 49 boxcars contained thank yous extended to the citizens of the United States from the citizens of France. Each car was filled with hundreds of gifts, artifacts and treasures, large and small, from the French people, as a heartfelt expression of gratitude for the American's outpouring of love in the form of the famous "Friendship Train" of 1947. Fresno received one of those "Merci" boxcars.

(<http://mercitrain.org/California/>; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendship\\_Train](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendship_Train)).

The *Alliance Française of Fresno's* primary goal is to promote cultural connections across our two countries and losing this symbol of our friendship, a friendship that expands from the American Revolutionary War to the Statue of Liberty to the Merci Train, would be a great loss to the region. However, the boxcar needs to be appropriately displayed and cared for. The Clovis Veterans Memorial District has agreed to undertake the responsibility of caring for this artefact that honors all veterans and patriots. We fully support the relocation in order to ensure that the sacrifices of our veterans do not go unheralded.

In conclusion, we ask you to support and facilitate the efforts of Heritage Fresno, Janice Stevens, and Linda Scambray to preserve and maintain the "Merci" train in the greater Fresno area.

Sincerely,

Natalie Muñoz

Vice President, *Alliance Française of Fresno*



## Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission

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April 8, 2019

Ms. Laura Van Onna  
The City of Fresno  
Historic Preservation Specialist  
Development and Resource Management Department  
City Hall  
Fresno, California

Dear Ms. Van Onna:

I am writing to you and the City of Fresno's Historic Preservation Commission on behalf of my colleagues on the Fresno County Historical Landmarks and Records Advisory Commission in connection with the French Friendship Boxcar issue.

At our March 14, 2019, regular meeting, it was the sense of the Landmarks Commission that everything possible must be done to preserve the French Friendship Boxcar at a suitable location within the County of Fresno and, more specifically, the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area. Our Commission was intensely concerned about the proposal by a group in Palm Springs to move the boxcar to that Riverside County area for historical display purposes.

This historic railcar was one of many given to communities around the nation by the grateful people of France in thanks for providing large shipments of food and clothing to those left destitute by World War II. The gift of one of these small European freight cars was received in Fresno in 1952 with gratitude from France for the many tons of raisins, figs and other dried fruits provided by Californians here and throughout the San Joaquin Valley. These French *Merci* boxcars came to Fresno and other American cities and towns containing gifts of handcrafted French items. This old car — originally located in Roeding Park and, since 2004, at American Legion Post 509 in Fresno — is truly a memorial to Fresno's support of our nation's efforts and charitable caring in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's two World Wars. It is a precious part of Fresno's past and one worthy of care and perpetuation.

Historical preservation is always challenging, and constantly fragile. Nearly seven decades have passed since the car arrived in Fresno. Many memories about the World Wars have since dimmed. So has understanding among many in these later generations about what this old boxcar and its symbolism are all about. The car's maintenance has frequently been in short supply. It is understandable for conclusions to possibly have been drawn that Fresno County no longer cares, or has reason to care, about such an artifact.

Ms. Laura Van Onna

April 8, 2019

2.

We should view the proposal to move the railcar to an air museum in Palm Springs as a great big wake-up call. As we have all witnessed in Fresno County over far too many decades, the easiest path has frequently been taken by recognizing the past through eliminating the old in favor of something new, or with nothing of substance at all. I would hope we might not only forgive and excuse the Palm Springs proposal, but be thankful for it being a constructive reminder that we must forever care and protect the heritage we have, such as this old-fashioned railroad car.

Fortunately, our wonderful veterans who have worked so hard to eliminate effects of many years of the car's deterioration, along with those of us who respect and adhere to the values of historic preservation, are being joined by many others among our fellow Fresno County residents in demanding that this European wartime railway treasure be preserved, as intended in 1952, right here in Fresno County. It must continue to be a fitting perpetual memorial. It is our request that your Commission decide the same.

Sincerely,



**J. Randall McFarland**

Fresno County Historical Records and Landmarks Advisory Commission

Member and Past Chair

2877 23<sup>rd</sup> Court

Kingsburg, California 93631-9553

## **EXHIBIT E:**

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**P1. Resource Name:** California Merci Train Boxcar

**\*P2. Location:** \*a. County: Fresno

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: Fresno North, Photorevised 1981

c. Address: 3509 N. First Street, Fresno

d. Assessor's Parcel Number: APN: 437-213-21

**\*P3a. Description:** The California Merci Train Boxcar is located at 3509 N. First Street on the southeast corner of the parcel and is owned and maintained by the Fresno Federal Post 509 Inc. (American Legion). The boxcar is a standard design constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the French military. It consists of an iron chassis on four iron spoke wheels with a car of angle-iron frame with inserted wood panels of horizontal boards. The overall length is 20 feet. Doors on sliders are located midsection on both sides of the car. Twenty wood painted shields representing the provinces of France are affixed to each long side of the boxcar. A black and white sign on both sides reads "*Hommes 40, Chevaux 8*", thus the car could accommodate either 40 men or 8 horses. A banner painted on a diagonal across both sides in red/white and blue states, "Gratitude Train." A dedication plaque dated November 19, 1949 is located on the ground at the west corner of the structure.

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP18 (rolling stock, train)

**\*P4. Resources Present:** •Structure



**P5b Photo date:** 29 December 2015

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:**

Pre-World War I (1885-1901),  
France "Merci Train"  
[www.mercitrain.org](http://www.mercitrain.org).

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**

Fresno Federal Post 509 Inc.  
(American Legion)  
3509 N. First Street  
Fresno, CA 93726-6808

**\*P8. Recorded by:**

Karana Hattersley-Drayton M.A.  
Historic Preservation Project  
Manager, City of Fresno

**\*P9. Date Recorded:** 29  
December 2015

**\*P10. Survey Type:** Intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:** "Evaluation of the California Merci Boxcar for Fresno's Local Register of Historic Resources."

**\*Attachments:** • Building, Structure and Object Report; • Continuation Sheet



**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\*NRHP Status Code: 5S2, 3CS

\*Resource Name: California Merci Train Boxcar

**B3. Original Use:** French boxcar from WW I      **B4. Present Use:** Heritage display

\***B5. Architectural Style:** Covered goods wagon used as military transport

\***B6. Construction History:** The boxcars were constructed by the French in the 1870s through 1901.

\***B7. Moved?** ■ Yes, one of 49 boxcars originally constructed in France and sent to the United States in 1949 and transported to California.

\***B8. Related Features:** The California Merci Train Boxcar is located on the parcel of the American Legion, Post 509.

**B9a. Architect:** N/A

**B9b. Builder:** French military

\***B10. Significance: Theme:** World War I Memorial      **Area:** French-United States Relations

**Period of Significance:** 1949

**Property Type:** French WW1 boxcar

**Applicable Criteria:** i, iii.

The “Merci Train” boxcar located on the southeast corner of the American Legion, Post 509, was relocated to this site from Roeding Park circa 2004. It is one of 49 boxcars that was filled with gifts donated by the people of France as gratitude for the \$40 million in food and supplies sent to France and Italy in 1948 by the American people; thus the term “Merci” (thank you) train. The boxcars were constructed in France beginning in the 1870s as regular freight cars and were put into military service by the French army in both World Wars, by the Germans during their occupation in World War II and finally by Allied Liberators. The boxcars were called “Forty-and-eight” or *Quarante et huit* as they could hold either 40 *hommes* (men) or 8 *chevaux* (horses). The boxcars were used to transport American soldiers during WWI, without comfort one should add, as they had no seats, windows, toilets or sleeping or dining accommodations. Each of the 49 boxcars in the “Merci Train” was filled with five tons of gifts donated by the French people. The train arrived in the United States aboard the *Magellan* on February 3, 1949 in New York City and was greeted by a crowd of 25,000. Each of the 48 states that existed in 1949 received a boxcar with one shared by the District of Columbia and the Territory of Hawaii; of this number 43 still exist. The California car apparently went first to Long Beach but was transferred to Fresno in 1952 and put on display at Roeding Park. The boxcar appears eligible for listing on Fresno’s Local Register of Historic Resources and potentially is eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources or as a California Landmark.

\***B12. References:** “Merci Train” <https://en.wikipedia.org> (accessed 13 January 2016); “Merci Train” [www.mercitrain.org](http://www.mercitrain.org) (accessed 13 January 2016); Plaque at site; personal communication with Wayne Schwartz 14 January 2016; misc. correspondence on file with the American Legion.

\***B14. Evaluator:** Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A.  
Historic Preservation Project Manager  
Fresno, CA

\***Date of Evaluation:** 14 January 2016

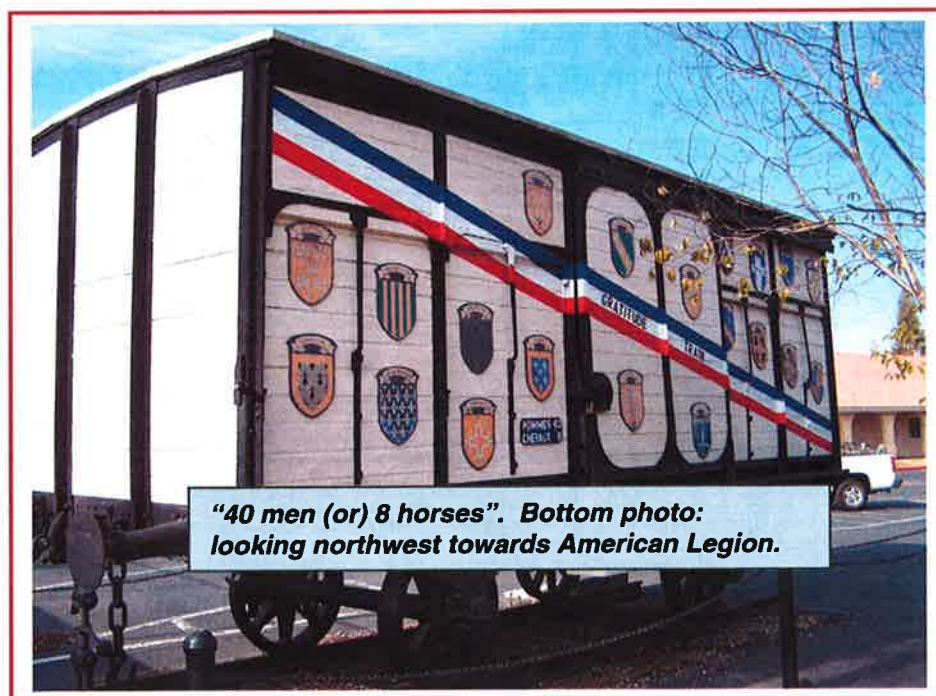
(This space reserved for official comments.)



\*Recorded by: Karana Hattersley-Drayton, M.A.

\*Date: 29 December 2015

■ Continuation



**"40 men (or) 8 horses". Bottom photo:  
looking northwest towards American Legion.**



