

Merci Train Collection

RG 96

Louisiana State Museum Historical Center

July, 2012

Descriptive Summary

Title:	Merci Train Collection
Dates:	December 1948 – October 1949, September 1969, March 1986
Abstract:	This collection contains correspondence, documents, and newspaper clippings pertaining to the Merci Train and its arrival in Louisiana.
Extent:	7 folders
Accession:	T0025.2003.033.01-.35

Biographical / Historical Note

The Merci Train, also called the French Gratitude Train, was given to the United States by the country of France as a gesture of thanks for the Friendship Train, a WWII relief effort organized by columnist Drew Pearson. The Merci Train was comprised of 49 cars, one for each of the 48 states and one to be split by the District of Columbia and the Territory of Hawaii, and was filled with gifts of artistic, historical, and sentimental value.

The car designated for Louisiana arrived in New Orleans on Sunday, February 13th, 1949. It was met with a parade down Canal Street. Mr. James J. A. Fortier, a curator at the Louisiana State Museum, was appointed as Chairman of Earl K. Long's committee to welcome the Merci Train.

Source: Merci Train Collection, Louisiana State Museum Historical Center.

Scope and Content

This collection includes correspondence between James Fortier, Earl K. Long, and Drew Pearson, as well as several other people involved in the Merci Train's arrival in New Orleans. The collection also includes newspaper clippings following the Merci Train's arrival, as well as the death of Drew Pearson and the restoration of a Merci Train boxcar in Arizona. There are also notes and guest lists pertaining to the breakfast celebrating the train's arrival.

Subjects

Merci Train
James Fortier
Drew Pearson
Earl K. Long
Louisiana State Museum
World War I Veterans
World War II relief efforts

Access of Use Restrictions

Access

Collection is **open** for research

Related of Separated Materials

Fortier, James J.A. RG 295, p. 171. Caricature. In: Club Men of Louisiana, 1917.

Fortier, James J. A.
Successor as Museum Curator, Appointed by Governor Sam Jones. Times Picayune, Nov. 23, 1940, also in Scrapbook 95b, p 84. Article includes appointment of 8 new members of the Board of Curators of the Louisiana State Museum.

905 Fortier, James J.A. Address. Dedication of the Lafayette Public High School in New Orleans. (Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 2., p 204-209, 1926.)

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Merci Train Collection, Louisiana State Museum Historical Center

Acquisition Information

Notes

Contents List

Box 1

- Folder 1:** Letter to Drew Pearson inviting him to attend, as principal speaker, the Dedication of the Merci Train to the Old State Capitol World War II Memorial. May 6, 1949
Information Regarding Merci Train and Veterans Memorial Commission, detailing the construction of a canopy to display the Merci Train boxcar. No date, c.a. 1949.
Carbon copy of a letter to Baton Rouge Lumber Company from Fred C. Dent requesting a donation of lumber for the building of the Merci Train boxcar canopy. March 16, 1949.
Letter to James J.A. Fortier from Governor Earl K. Long thanking Mr. Fortier for his involvement in the Merci Train celebration. March 7, 1949.
Letter to James J.A. Fortier from Drew Pearson requesting a report on the reception of the Merci Train boxcar in Louisiana. October 13, 1949.
Postcard to “Dear Sir” from Ernestine Perry requesting that a report and several photographs of the Merci Train reception in Louisiana be forwarded to her. October 11, 1949.
- Folder 2:** Draft of invitation to a breakfast (déjeuner) at Arnauds and tour of “the Museum”. No date. c.a. 1949.
Reservation for Breakfast French “Merci Train” listing names and numbers of tickets for the breakfast. No date. c.a. 1949.
- Folder 3:** Photocopy of newspaper clipping “Railcar from France Here is Reminder of Drew Pearson”. Sunday Advocate. September 7, 1969
Newspaper clipping “Bid to Save ‘Gratitude’ Boxcar Starts Here”. The Arizona Republic. March 19, 1986.
Newspaper clipping “Veterans of World War I Relive Days of ‘40 and 8” and accompanying picture, “France’s ‘Merci’ to Louisiana”. The Times Picayune. February 14, 1949.
Newspaper clipping. No titles related to Merci Train. The Times Picayune. March 14, 1949.
Newspaper clipping “‘Thank You’ Car Awaited Sunday”. The Times Picayune. February 13, 1949.
Newspaper clipping “‘Thank You’ Car Groups Chosen”. The Times Picayune. February 8, 1949.
Newspaper clipping “Torch for Tomb on ‘Merci Train’”. No date. c.a. 1949.
Newspaper clipping “Breakfast Planned for Group on Train”. No date. c.a. 1949.
Newspaper clipping, photograph “Highlights in the early life of Andrew Jackson . . .” March 16, 1949.
Newspaper clipping, photograph “A gendarme guards the French “Gratitude Train” in a Paris station”. New Orleans Item. January 11, 1949.

Newspaper clipping, “From France to New Orleans”. Two photographs, “The Gratitude Train” and “Back in the Old Days”. New Orleans Item. February 14, 1949.

Newspaper clipping “‘Merci’ Boxcar of Presents from France Parades Here”, and photograph “Accompanied by Army Troops”. New Orleans States. February 14, 1949.

- Folder 4:** Letter to James Fortier from Mrs. John May (Amelie B. May) regarding the “ladies from her committee” attending the breakfast. February 1, 1949.
- Letter to James J.A. Fortier from Robert L. Browne accepting the invitation to the Merci Train breakfast. February 4, 1949.
- Letter to James J.A. Fortier from T.J. Arceneaux declining the invitation to the Merci Train breakfast. February 4, 1949.
- Letter to James J.A. Fortier from P.L. Dupas responding to Fortier’s request for WWII casualties for Fortier’s “World War II Salon”. September 17, 1948.
- Letter to James J.A. Fortier from Geo. E. Schneider regarding the New Orleans Association of Commerce’s involvement in the Merci Train visit to New Orleans. February 25, 1949.
- Letter to James J.A. Fortier from A.A. Fredericks enclosing two letters. February 11, 1949.
- Letter to Earl K. Long from Francis D. Barbier, requesting bell from Merci Train to be sent to Lafourche parish. February 10, 1949
- Letter to Earl K. Long from Bernard J. Bagert regarding American Legion involvement with the “Gratitude Train” and the distribution of gifts from the boxcar. February 10, 1949.
- Letter to James J.A. Fortier from Earl K. Long enclosing a copy of another letter and requesting that Fortier serve as a member of the Merci Train welcome committee. January 11, 1949
- Copy of a letter to Earl. K. Long from Edwin Peters Lastrapes requesting a Souvenir for his children. January 17, 1949.
- Letter to “French Thank You Train Committees” from Drew Pearson regarding details of the arrival of the Merci Train, the schedule for its progress around the United States, and the contents of the boxcars. January 12, 1949
- Note to Mr. Fortier from Rinderle regarding the submission of a story to the “Newspapers”. January 26, 1949.
- Folder 5:** Letter to James J.A. Fortier from Earl K. Long enclosing a copy of another letter and expressing pleasure that Fortier had accepted a position on the Merci Train welcome committee. January 24, 1949
- Copy of a letter to Drew Pearson from Earl K. Long confirming the appointment of a welcome committee for the Merci Train. January 11, 1949.
- Copy of a letter to Earl K. Long from Drew Pearson asking if the Governor had appointed a committee to welcome the Merci Train. December 29, 1948.
- Copy of letter to Earl K. Long from H.C. Noreworthy requesting a bell from the Merci Train for his church, and inviting Long to a Business Men’s Luncheon at the YMCA. December 29, 1948
- Folder 6:** Document listing the southern schedule of the Merci Train. No Date.
- Folder 7:** Document listing names with reservation for the breakfast celebrating the Merci Train. No date.