

RESTORATION GUIDE ADDENDUM

Extensive research was been done by Gratitude Train enthusiasts who have visited many or all of the existing boxcars in the US and collaborated over the past decade to provide information for proper restoration work. High resolution files were created to provide high quality and historically correct replica shields and plaques for the boxcars. Heritage Printing in Charlotte, North Carolina is the only vendor authorized to use the files created. They provide exceptional customer service and have provided high quality replacement plaques for several existing box cars.

Mission

It is the mission of mercitrain.org to provide a central source of information about the Gratitude Train and a link to all the boxcars of each state. MerciTrain.org also strives to provide guidance and recommendations to facilitate proper restoration of the boxcars from the Gratitude Train.

Boxcar Restorations

Most of our boxcars have been updated or had minor restoration work done. A full restoration is very expensive and difficult. For most work on updating or minor restoration work on our boxcars the Restoration Guide is suitable. However, several common mistakes are overlooked and there has not been any information published for the mounting of the Coat of Arms shields, corner plaques and banner. This addendum is intended to help resolve this issue.

Common Errors

Banners: One of the most common errors is the coloring of the banner. Red, white, and blue seems to make sense, but the banners on the Merci Boxcars are based off the French flag so the colors should be blue, white and then red.

Eagle plaque: Heraldist Robert Louis is pictured on page 11 of the Restoration Guide with the eagle plaque – a traditional heraldic eagle was chosen. Boxcars displaying a Bald Eagle are historically incorrect.

Merci Train / Locomotive plaque: The round Merci Train logo plaque is incorrect. See the Restoration Guide for the correct style plaque – page 19.

Coat of Arms Shields: Research indicates that each boxcar had the same Coat of Arms shields in a specific location as shown in the Restoration Guide. Replica shields and plaques can be obtained through the recommended vendor shown below. The shields chosen by Robert Louis represent 40 common historical provinces or regions of France.

PLM Number: The frame of most boxcars have a stamp with a K# following. These numbers were used for inventory and maintenance records. As one company merged with another the J number was added. The J number is typically J 5 (last 4 of the K number). If the K number is on the door it is incorrect. The PLM J numbers were painted on both doors of each boxcar.

Color of Boxcar: This is addressed in detail on page 23 of the Restoration Guide and should be reviewed before painting your boxcar.

PLEASE NOTE: NOT TO SCALE AND OTHER BOXCARS MAY HAVE MINOR DIFFERENCES

Coat of Arms, Plaque and Banner Mounting for Merci Boxcars



T mount and shield shape mount

The boxcars came with two types of mounts for the shields to attach to the sides for display. The t-mount and shield shape mount as shown in the photos below.

The shield shape mounts were on both doors except for the mount near the door latch which was a t-mount. The remaining mounts were t-mounts for the shields. A similar H mount was used for the corner plaques.



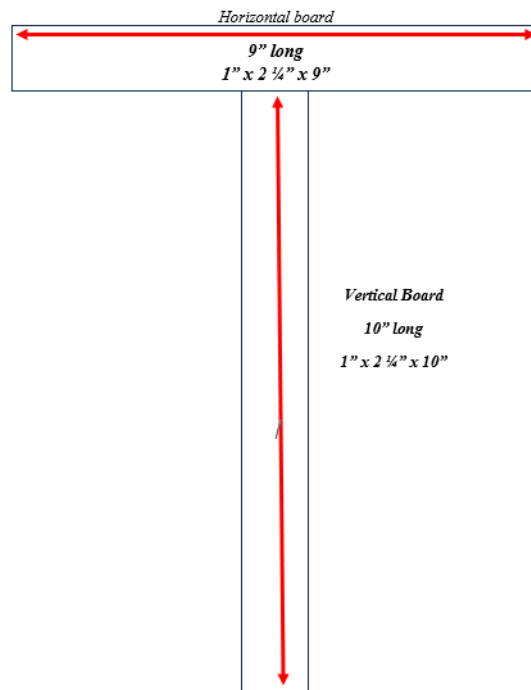
All mount styles shown.

The t-mounts on boxcar sides were all 2 ¼" wide with the horizontal part of the mount being 9" long and the vertical part of the mount being 10" long. T-mounts adjacent the door (latch) are 1" thick. The shield shape boards are ¾" thick.

Note: The left and right end of the horizontal t-boards were cut inward at an angle. (see photo below)



Horizontal t-mount with angle cut shown.



Larger Illustrations and photos are attached.

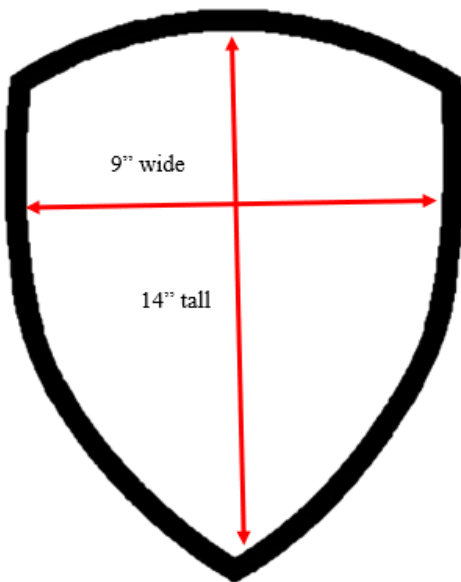
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Door Shields vs. Left & Right Shields

The mounting supports for the door shields is not as thick as the supports on the left and right sides of the doors. The shield shape backings were $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and the t-post backing adjacent the latch is 1" thick (presumed a little more to clear the latch).

The doors should be able to open and not touch the shields on the part where the door opens. They are also designed to be flush with the banner boards on the left and right sides.

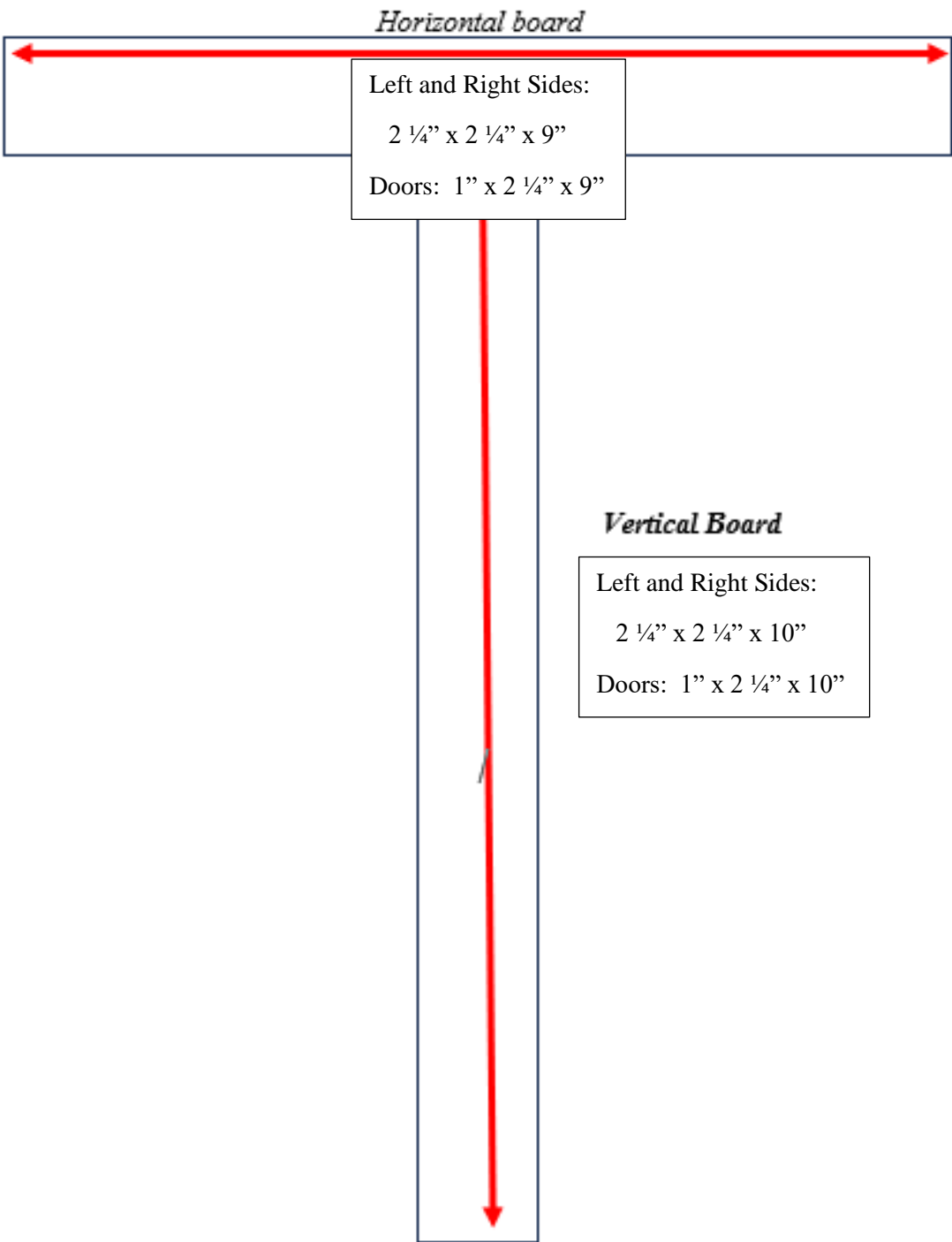
The shield shape backing boards are 14" from top center to bottom center.



Left and Right T-mounts

T-Post mounts on the left side and right side are $2\frac{1}{4}$ " thick to bring them flush with the banners.

T – mount measurements



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H MOUNTS: The H – mount is used for the Merci Train logo / Locomotive plaque on the lower quarter of the boxcars. This is 15” tall and 12” wide using 2 ¼” x 2 ¼” boards. It is also used on the Eagle plaque mounted on the upper quarter of the boxcars. It is a wider sign so the Eagle H-mount is 13” wide vs. 12” for the locomotive plaque.



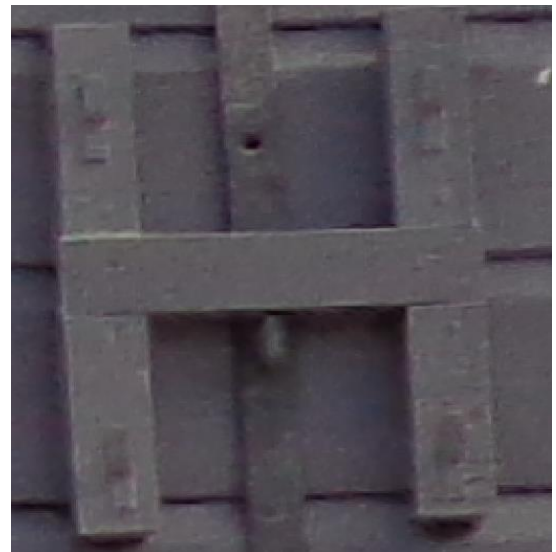
French side lower – an adjustment had to be made to accommodate for the metal framework.



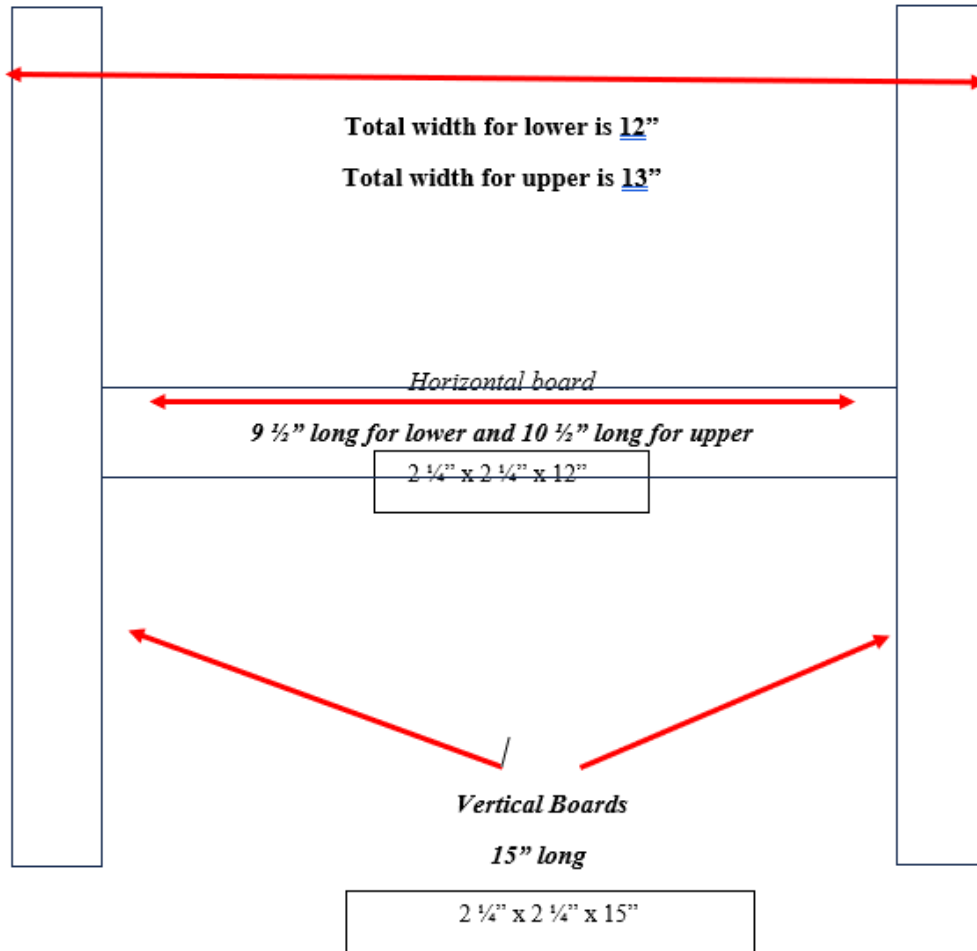
French side upper



English side upper



English side lower – adjustment made for metal framework and vertical boards were each 6 ¼” and the horizontal board 12”.



ADJUSTMENTS: Adjustments may need to be made in various areas to accommodate for framework or other reasons. See example below.



Adjustments for framework: Two of the T-mount shown left on the French side were adjusted for the metal framework of the boxcar.

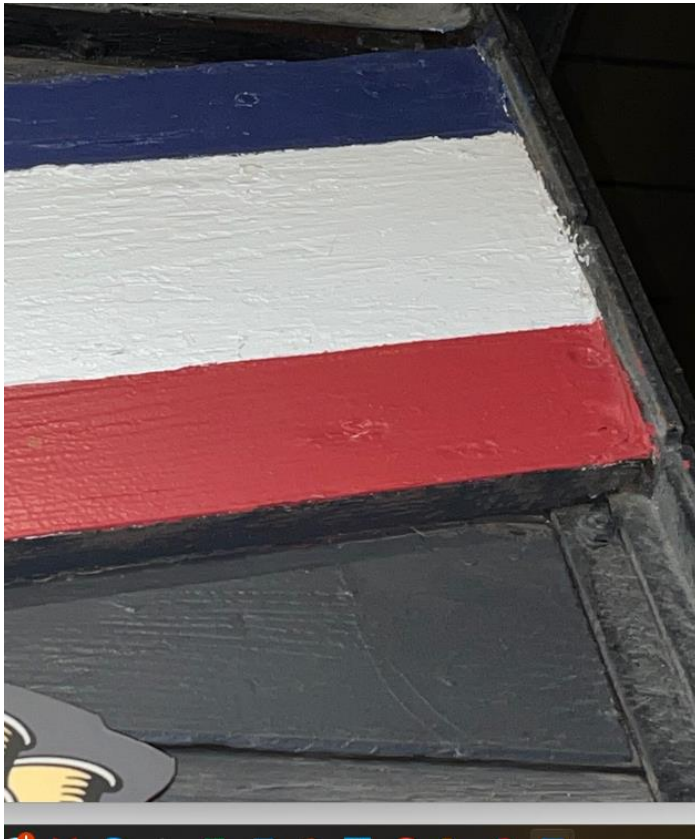
BANNERS

There are mounting boards on the top and bottom of the left and right sections of the banners. This makes it all flush with the t-mounts for the Coat of Arms shields. The door mounting board are simply 1" x 12" lumber and painted Blue / White / Red. Remember the lumber used is not smooth sanded and the character of the wood is visible through the paint.

Banner mounts are on the top and bottom of the banner on the left and right sides of the boxcar. There are no banner mounts on the doors. The boards are mounted directly onto the door with adjustments made for the metal frame as needed.

The banner board is also adjusted as needed to go up to or around metal framework.

Banners can be obtained through the approved vendor but due to the large amount of material used they add significant cost to the project. Prices for the Coat of Arms shields and corner plaques are separate from the full package including the banner. The choices are also separated from indoor use done on pvc vs. outdoor use which is done on aluminum composite. If you are able to get a good painter to do the colors and lettering then that may be an option. Otherwise, the banner plaques can be purchased and installed.



This is the banner board on the door and how it comes up flush to the frame.

STRIPE WIDTH

THE STRIPES ARE NOT EQUAL SIZE. THE UPPER AND LOWER (BLUE AND RED) STRIPES MEASURED AT 3" EACH AND THE CENTER WHITE STRIPE AT JUST UNDER 6"



The upper banner mount and banner board are shown with adjustments made for the frame.



The banner mounts are cut to fit inside the frame at the door and at the top where it meets frame again. The banner mounts are also the same 2 1/4" thick wood as the t-mounts.

The banner board is also adjusted as needed to go up to or around metal framework.

THE ROOF

The roof, even if under cover, will collect a lot of dirt and grime over the years. Fortunately the Texas Merci Boxcar has been under shelter since about 1951 and the roof remained in excellent condition. Power washing shows the tar paper style roof.



The inside wooden supports remain in excellent condition.



HERITAGE PRINTING

Heritage Printing is the recommended vendor for replica plaques. They were selected in July 2021 and have provided for several states. If you need reproductions that are historically correct please use this veteran owned vendor. Shield package without banners is shown on the next page. Please go to www.mercitrain.org and follow the link for the price list. Prices are subject to change. Contact Project Manager Jason Allard at 704-426-3396 or email at Jason.Allard@HeritageCustomSigns.com

www.HeritageCustomSigns.com

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