

McLean County Museum of History

Freedom Train Collection

Processed by
Erin Bradley, 2008

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1948
PROVENANCE:	Gift
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	None

Brief History

The Freedom Train began as a concept formulated by government officials in early 1946. Strongly supported by the Archivist of the United States and later President Harry S. Truman, the train would display documents demonstrating celebrating American liberty. After the American Heritage Foundation was formed to oversee the financial and operational logistics of the project, the Freedom Train left from Philadelphia on September 17, 1947 to begin a year-long, 33,000 mile journey to every state in the Union. The train carried 127 historical documents, including the Magna Carta, the Gettysburg Address, Francis Scott Key's Manuscript of the "Star Spangled Banner," the Emancipation Proclamation, German surrender documents, and the Declaration of Independence. The goal of the tour was to inspire patriotism and instill citizenship after the difficulties of the Great Depression and World War II; the motto of the Freedom Train was "Freedom is everybody's job!"

The mayor of Bloomington proclaimed July 8-14 as a "Week of Rededication" to coincide with the arrival of the Freedom Train. Each day had a specific theme: Bench and Bar Day, Youth Dedication Day, Religious Freedom Day, Labor and Management Day,

and Farm Day, all leading up to the arrival of the Freedom Train on July 14. Thousands of McLean County citizens waited long hours to view the train.

The Freedom Train concept was resurrected in 1975 to commemorate the bicentennial of the United States in 1976.

Scope Note

The Freedom Train collection contains Freedom Train paraphernalia and newspaper coverage of the Freedom Train and corresponding Rededication Week in Bloomington.

Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Miscellaneous Documents about Freedom Train

- 1.1.1 Bloomington Association of Commerce: Special bulletin regarding Freedom Train
- 1.1.2 Train Master Control Sheet: July 13-19, 1948
- 1.1.3 Envelope containing 7 official Freedom Train postcards
- 1.1.4 2 oversize official Freedom Train postcards
- 1.1.5 Freedom Train poster
- 1.1.6 Freedom Train Picture Book poster

Folder 2: Freedom Train Postcard

- 1.2.1. 1948 "Freedom Train Postcard" plus dignitary badge from local chair Wayne C. Townley.

Folder 3: Freedom Train booklets, etc. #1

- 1.3.1. "Publicity Portfolio for Local Rededication Week and the Freedom Train" 24 pp. Undated. 2 copies.
- 1.3.2. "The Freedom Train" music score
- 1.3.3. Freedom Train picture book
- 1.3.4. Our American Heritage: Documents of Freedom
- 1.3.5. Your Bill of Rights

Folder 4: Freedom Train booklets, etc. #2

- 1.4.1. 1948 "The American Heritage Program for your Community" 32pp.
- 1.4.2. March 15, 1948 "Highlights of the National Rededication Program of the American Heritage Foundation" 8 pp. 2 copies.
- 1.4.3. 1948 "The American Heritage Employee Relation Competition" 8 pp.
- 1.4.4. March 1, 1948 American Federation of Labor letter "To the Officers of National and International Unions and Directly Affiliated Local Unions"

requesting their organizations financially assist with the expenses of the Freedom Train.

- 1.4.5. "Freedom Train," Summary of the background of the Freedom Train initiative and especially the radio program of same name. 2 pp. undated.

Folder 5: Freedom Train Newspaper Coverage (*Pantagraph*, unless noted)

- 1.5.1. (no date), "Freedom Train Brought Here by Citizens"
- 1.5.2. (no date) "Mayor Proclaims July 8-14 Week of Rededication"
- 1.5.3. June 30, 1948 "Freedom Train"
- 1.5.4. July 7, 1948 "Freedom Train Well Protected"
- 1.5.5. July 7, 1948 "McLean County Begins Its 'Rededication Week' in Preparation of the Freedom Train"
- 1.5.6. July 8, 1948 "'Rededication Week' Programs Arranged"
- 1.5.7. July 9, 1948: Full page advertisement for Freedom Train
- 1.5.8. July 10, 1948 "When You View Freedom Train"
- 1.5.9. July 10, 1948 "Freedom Train Fund: \$1,000"
- 1.5.10. July 11, 1948: Picture of Boy Scouts during "Youth Dedication Day"
- 1.5.11. July 12, 1948: Picture of arrival of Miss Illinois
- 1.5.12. July 12, 1948 "Priceless Historic Documents Can Be Seen on the Freedom Train" (3 copies)
- 1.5.13. July 13, 1948 "Train Program Starts at 9:30"
- 1.5.14. July 14, 1948 "2500 Persons Wait in Line at 10 a.m. to Board Freedom Train" (2 copies)
- 1.5.15. July 15, 1948 "Freedom Train Location Historic Spot" and "War II Documents Receive More Attention than Many Older Ones"
- 1.5.16. July 15, 1948 "Thousands Wait in Line Here as Freedom Train Opens" (2 copies)
- 1.5.17. July 28, 1948 "\$1,269 Given to Sponsors of Freedom Train"
- 1.5.18. *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, July 4, 1948 "On the Freedom Train"
- 1.5.19. *Chicago Tribune* (no date), "The Propaganda Train"