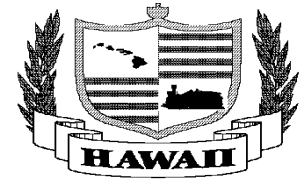


AKAHELE I KE KA`AAHI\*

\*Hawaiian, meaning:  
“Look out for the fire wagon.”



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## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES!

(A Merci Boxcar Update)

By Jeff Livingston

**Editor’s Note:** *When Jeff sent me the following story, he told me it was about 9 pages long. I thought I could cut it into two issues, but after I read it, I realized I couldn’t. This story is so good and so important, I want you to read it in total. To the volunteers who have helped with the restoration of the Merci Boxcar, a heartfelt mahalo (thank you) from the bottom of our hearts. To the guys who gave up part of their Hawaii vacations to “bust rust” and more, a huge thank you for your generous spirit. To the wonderful helpers who come to us again from the Lanakila work program, big hugs and mahalo for your return and your smiles and all your help. To the people who “bought” rafters for the roof and to the wonderful generous spirit of the member who donated the cost of the roof, our deepest gratitude for your generosity. You are giving HRS an incredible gift. Generations of people who hear the story of the Merci Boxcar won’t know to say thank you, but we do!!!)*

Following the tremendous amount of work accomplished by the AECOM team priming and painting the frame (Akahele, March-April 2023), progress picked up on the reconstruction of the “40 & 8.” The floor was installed in early April and **Aaron Erickson** joined me in the work. Aaron has become a stalwart volunteer and HRS member. He has joined me most every Saturday since April 2023 to work on the boxcar.



**Left: Aaron Erickson**

Once the floor was completed it was safe to work from the inside of the boxcar and installation of the new siding could begin.

(Continued on page 2)

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The new siding was cut and dry fitted prior to priming and installation. Not having been involved in the removal of the old siding this became an interesting effort getting everything to fit correctly. By the end of May, the siding replacement was well underway and the boxcar beginning to look like a boxcar again rather than a derelict frame.



(Continued on page 3)



**Lanakila Pacific work program participants** returned to the yard in June and again provided much needed assistance in cleaning and priming the frame above the floor.

**Left: Jayde and Coach Kazu**



**Right: Karizzma**

Assistance was also provided by **Mark Koppenhaver of York PA** and **Adam Brewster of Vonore TN** who each gave up a day of their Hawaii vacation to “bust rust” and prime. By the end of June significant progress had been made.



We had run out of siding at this point and while awaiting more siding to be milled, continued shimming and bolting up the siding we had already put in place. This took some creative thinking as the original specialty fasteners used in the boxcar’s construction are unavailable and various carriage, plow bolts and other fasteners have to be substituted for the originals. Our “re-engineering” prevailed and with the receipt of the additional siding, the “American” side of the boxcar and both ends were essentially complete at the end of July.

(Continued on page 4)

Sufficient new siding had been ordered to complete the shutters in addition to the “American” side and ends of the boxcar but it was discovered that the shutters required much thinner siding. This will not result in any loss of material as it can be used in reconstructing the “French” side door. Thinner, ¾-inch siding with the same beaded profile was ordered for the shutters.



With the annual meeting fast approaching and the goal of having the side and ends completed, August was spent on finalizing a number of details and correcting any “oops” items. I had made a decision to caulk all the seams between the outside metal framing and the siding to prevent water intrusion and this was duly accomplished. While not original, since the boxcar will remain outdoors for the foreseeable future, this step was considered necessary for the long term preservation of the car. Work was also started on the first shutter and the “French” side door during the month. We were finally ready for paint.



The first coat of exterior paint was applied by brush between 2 and 4 September, followed by the completion of the interior priming. A second coat was then rolled on the following Saturday.

**Left: Original on left, two new on right**

**Right: First Shutter**



In parallel with the exterior painting, having received the new wood for the shutters, the first shutter was made up and additional work done of the “French” side door which will require considerable new metal framing. Two of the shutter “hinges” are missing and in addition to the fabrication and welding he has already done on the boxcar, **Bob Yatchmanoff** is fabricating two new replacements.

(Continued on page 5)

With the exterior painting complete, two volunteers from the **Architects and Engineers of Hawaii**, a group Aaron belongs to, arrived at the yard on the 16<sup>th</sup> to help with the interior painting. **Sam Gillie** single-handedly took on the actual interior, while **Aaron Erickson** and **Phil Blackman** got on the door.



Left: Sam Gillie



Right: Phil Blackman and Aaron Erickson

The day of the Annual Meeting finally arrived and the boxcar was ready to show off her new look. No longer an unimportant and forgotten relic from a foreign land, her true colors and what she stands for are slowly becoming apparent.

This has only been possible through the support of HRS, the crew, and the numerous other volunteers who have provided invaluable assistance over the last eighteen months.



(Continued on page 6)

**Below: Left to right – Ken Rewick, Kevin Yamamoto, Jeff Livingston, Kathy Ebey, Kaizen Reyez, Salina Dela Cruz, Ben Dela Cruz, Paul Waitler, Bob Yatchmanoff**



**Below: Left to right – Wally Tillery, Aaron Erickson, Adam Gabriel  
Missing from the photos are Roger Elvenia and Marvin Jacks**



Work on replacing the roof is next on the schedule but funding was running low. An appeal was made at the annual meeting to “buy a rafter” for \$30.00 and twelve were needed. All twelve were subscribed and since I had lost count I sold thirteen.

The member who bought the thirteenth seemed a bit disappointed but accepted

my apology. He then asked me how much I estimated the cost of the roof to be, which was \$3,000.00, and promptly went into the gift shop and donated that amount. It’s now up to me to show him a return on his investment.

(Continued on page 7)



So ... Ken and I took off the first third of the roof the Monday following the meeting. It took more time to clean up the mess than it did to remove this roof section. With the few remaining bits and pieces of the roof structure that were left, we were able to figure out how it must have been constructed. It's more

complex than imagined with various mortices capturing square bolt heads, mortice and Tenon joints, and special fittings and fasteners. Removal of the roof also exposed the flashing pieces forming the top of the shutter guides, water run off tray and door cover. The flashing has since been removed from the "American" side section to be followed by the "French" side. (Continued on page 8)

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As we head into October much work remains to be done. With the continued support of HRS, the crew, and the established group of volunteers, plus any who come onboard, I am confident that the car will be ready (with the exception of the “French” side) for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary November 11, 2024.

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