

## **French railway wagon at Camp Perry, Ohio.**

### **The coat of arms of Rambouillet featured on the “Gratitude Train”**

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On a trip to the States, last summer, as a guest of Prof. and Mrs. Merrick of Ohio, Rambouillet resident Charles-Henri de Noirmont, former army comptroller, made an interesting discovery pertaining to the memory of the war.

He said: When I visited Camp Perry, I found under a small hangar a French Railways wagon, like those in use during the period between the two wars. The Americans have named the wagon “Forty-Eight”, in reference to the inscription, in French, over the door: “Men – 40, Horses lengthwise – 8”.

Every combatant in the two wars who rode in these wagons is familiar with that inscription. There is a tricolored banner [red., white and blue] across the side of the wagon with the inscription, “Gratitude Train”. On both sides are mounted the coats of arms of a number of French provinces and towns, including those of Rambouillet.

### **The thanks expressed by the French**

Charles-Henri de Noirmont stressed that “This wagon is part of a group of 48 of them, each one bound for one of the 48 United States; they were filled up with gifts from the French people to thank the Americans for their help during WW2. This is the one that was donated to the State of Ohio; it contained gifts presented by the townspeople of Rambouillet.”

A former soldier himself, he added that the train was transported overseas aboard the vessel “Magellan” and reached New York in 1949, carrying a huge banner that read: “Thank you America!”

He added also that the wagon had been well restored at Camp Perry and is now protected from the weather under a hangar that is open to the public, through an association grouping many (American) reserve officers and men.

This particular wagon bears the coat of arms of Rambouillet; it is a fine symbol of Franco-American comradeship. In Rambouillet, the “American Monument”, in the shape of an eagle, is a reminder that 9 soldiers from across the ocean came to this region of ours and gave their life to liberate us, just as brave French people died too, for American independence, in times long ago. B.B.”

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Photo captions:

[1st caption, Col. 3]): Charles-Henri de Noirmont displays the coat of arms of Rambouillet that decorates the wagon on the “Gratitude Train”.

[Upper caption, Cols. 4-5] Mrs Anne-Claude de Noirmont and Prof. Merrick stand before the wagon from the “Gratitude Train”. The coat of arms of Rambouillet is located on the other side.

[Lower caption, Cols. 4-5] The locomotive that hauled the French wagons.

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[Inset]

The Society of the Cincinnati

*The Society of the Cincinnati* was founded in 1783 by Pres. Washington to preserve the fellowship forged on the battlefields between American and French officers [of the Revolutionary War]. Rambouillet resident, Charles-Henri de Noirmont is a member of the Society and it was in this capacity that he was invited to the USA and that he was able to visit Camp Perry, in Ohio. Gérard Larcher [President of the French Senate] is an honorary member of *The Society of the Cincinnati*, as is also French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

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