



The Merci Train:

Study of the J and K numbers of the Merci Train boxcars

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This document contains the collection of the J and K numbers for the Merci Train boxcars. These numbers are used to estimate when the boxcars were manufactured. This study aims at being accurate and references pictures of the J and K numbers from which the lists have been established.

The author started this study to validate the report on many media that the boxcars had been manufactured around 1870. This study paints a slightly different picture and seems to indicate a discrepancy between the date given by the J and K numbers.

The author encourages anyone reviewing this work to share hypothesis that would explain the discrepancy.

Meet us on facebook to discuss the Merci Train!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheMerciTrain/>

The author would like to thank the great inputs US side; thanks John Irving and thanks to all the very kind participations from those who took the time to check the metal plates on the chassis of their boxcars.

On the French side, the invaluable work on the P-L-M by the Rolands team of <http://wikiplm.railsdautrefois.fr/>

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Info - General Info

This workbook is formatted for easy printing.

This workbook contains worksheets to help work on the Merci Train (MT) boxcars numbering system.

Boxcars on the Merci Train were labelled using 2 number systems.

Both systems are used to describe the following type of boxcar:

J or K	Couvert avec volets ou rideaux
ww	Conduite de frein automatique et modérable
w	Véhicule dont l'équipement de frein est inopérant ou a été déposé
f	Frein à vis sur guérite

The above is the direct copy of the wiki.plm. For approximate translation see "K-info"

1. The J system

The J system was the initial P.L.M labelling code. It consists of the letter J followed by some digits. In our case, the number of digits is 5 and provides a code similar to "J 12345".

During the 1949 French restoration, the J number was painted on the 2 doors (2 sides) of the boxcar as seen on this North view zoomed on the J number cartouche (white box around number).



The J number was also painted on the East and West panel of the boxcar, this time without the P.L.M letters or the cartouche.

2. The K system

The K system was the P.L.M labelling code after 1921. This new system was created to help with the increased rolling stocks as well as the appearance of different type of boxcars.

The K label is more complex than the J label and can include letters that describe systems with which the boxcar is equipped. The number of digits is also extended to 6.


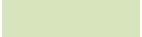

The K number only appears on a metal plate riveted to the under-carriage of the boxcar

The text part of the label is separated from the digits by a tilda symbol and the author decides to represent this symbol by the following "~".



K-info

This worksheet clarifies the symbols and their usage. See "K" worksheet for list of numbers.

 for low confidence  for high confidence  for special boxcar status

Column titles:

State: the state studied

ST: the usual 2 letters symbol for the state

K#: the series of symbols and 6 digits K number

Source: the origin of the data, usually picture. See below for picture code.

Picture title codes:

bc- boxcar

xx- 2 letters representing the state

other-etc code for position of pictures in relation to the boxcar

see US-MT-150209-Taking pictures of the Merci Train Boxcar.pdf

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheMerciTrain/385874794926353/>

Symbols used to describe the K number:

By definition, the "K" number is the text appearing on the metal plate affixed to the chassis

Up to now (February 2015), this text is of the form:

"Group of letter and symbols(FP-FrontPart)" + "~" + "group of 6 numbers"

The FP usually starts with the capital letter K and may contain:

ww which signifies a break pipe system [translation from French to be checked]

w which signifies an obsolete or inoperable breaking system

f which signifies a breaksman cabin breaking system

When the FP is surrounded by a vertical bar like so |FP| it means that the FP stands on a metal block welded onto the metal plate:

e.g. for the CA boxcar: bc-ca-ns-mp-zm-3



A "\$" signs means a character that is not easily identified:

e.g. for the DE boxcar: bc-de-ss-mp-zm-1



A quotation mark around a series of letter indicate that the symbol is faint and is mostly interpreted. The understanding of the actual K number is left to the researcher.

These various additional symbols suggests that these boxcars had a long life with systems being added and removed. The "K" system was introduced in 1921 to replace the "J" system.

K Done: 29 points out of 49 = 59%

State	ST	K#	# Only	Source	
Alabama	AL	K~128617	128617	bc-md-ns-mp-zm-1, J. Irving	1
Arizona	AZ	Kf 137988	137988	bc-az-ns-mp-zm	1
Arkansas	AR				
California	CA	K ~134730	134730	bc-ca-ns-mp-zm-1	1
Colorado	CO	BC-MISSING			
Connecticut	CT	BC-DESTROYED			
Delaware	DE	\$~130092	130092	bc-de-ss-mp-zm-1	1
Florida	FL	K~129961	129961	bc-fl-us1-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Georgia	GA	K"f"~138008	138008	bc-ga-ns-mp-zm, J. Irving	1
Hawaii/DC	HI	K~128220	128220	bc-dc-ns-mp-zm	1
Idaho	ID	K ~ 127970	127970	bc-id-ns-mp-zm	1
Illinois	IL	BC-DESTROYED?			
Indiana	IN	K~129899	129899	bc-in-ss-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Iowa	IA	Kwwf~138816	138816	bc-ia-us-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Kansas	KS	K f~134716	134716	bc-ks-us1-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Kentucky	KY	K-137850	137850	J. Irving	0.5
Louisiana	LA				
Maine	ME	K-137672	137672	J. Irving	0.5
Maryland	MD	Kwwf ~137121	137121	bc-md-ns-mp-zm-1, J. Irving	1
Massachusetts	MA	BC-SCRAPPED?			
Michigan	MI				
Minnesota	MN	K~129622	129622	bc-mn-us1-mp-zm-2, J. Irving	1
Mississippi	MS	K-128854	128854	K# painted on side	0.5
Missouri	MO	K"f"~137901	137901	bc-mo-us2-mp-2-2007, J. Irving	1
Montana	MT	K"f"~134930	134930	bc-mt-us-mp-zm-1, J. Irving	1
Nebraska	NE				
Nevada	NV	K~128673	128673	bc-nv-ns-mp-zm-1	1
New Hampshire	NH				
New Jersey	NJ	BC-DESTROYED			
New Mexico (o)	NM				
New Mexico (n)	NM	K-129452	129452	K# painted on side	0.5
New York	NY	K-138162	138162	J. Irving	0.5
North Carolina	NC	K"f" ~134906	134906	bc-nc-ns-mp-1-2008, J. Irving	1
North Dakota	ND	K-128986	128986	J. Irving	0.5
Ohio	OH	K"f"~137989	137989	bc-oh-ns-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Oklahoma	OK				
Oregon	OR	K~128542	128542	bc-or-us-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Pennsylvania	PA	Kwwf~137411	137411	bc-pa-ns-mp-1	1
Rhode Island	RI				
South Carolina	SC	K "f" ~ 134897	134897	bc-sc-ss-mp-zm-1, J. Irving	1
South Dakota	SD				
Tennessee	TN				
Texas	TX	K~128113	128113	bc-tx-ss-mp-1	1
Utah	UT	K~129658	129658	bc-ut-ss-mp-2007-04-25	1
Vermont	VT				
Virginia	VA				
Washington	WA	Kwwf~138679	138679	bc-wa-ns-mp-1	1
West Virginia	WV	K ~134986	134986		1
Wisconsin	WI	Kf ~135000	135000	bc-wi-ns-mp-1, J. Irving	1
Wyoming	WY				

K

State	ST	K#	From	To	Link
Alabama	AL	K ~ 128617	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
Arizona	AZ	Kf 137988	1893	1895	Kf 137 801 to 138 200
Arkansas	AR				
California	CA	K ~134730			
Colorado	CO	BC-MISSING			
Connecticut	CT	BC-DESTROYED			
Delaware	DE	K~130092	1890	1891	K 129 639 to 130 333
Florida	FL	K~129961	1890	1891	K 129 639 to 130 333
Georgia	GA	K"f"~138008	1893	1895	Kf 137 801 to 138 200
Hawaii/DC	HI	K~128220	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
Idaho	ID	K ~ 127970	1884	1888	K 127 781 to 128 038
Illinois	IL	BC-DESTROYED?			
Indiana	IN	K~129899	1890	1891	K 129 639 to 130 333
Iowa	IA	Kwwf~138816	1886	1889	Kwf 138 401 to 139 020
Kansas	KS	K f~134716	1890	1891	Kf 134 701 to 135 000
Kentucky	KY	K-137850	?	?	
Louisiana	LA				
Maine	ME	K-137672	?	?	
Maryland	MD	Kwwf ~137121	1893	1895	Kwwf 137 601 to 137 640
Massachusetts	MA	BC-SCRAPPED?			
Michigan	MI				
Minnesota	MN	K~129622	1893	1895	K 129 231 to 129 627
Mississippi	MS	K-128854	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
Missouri	MO	K"f"~137901	1893	1895	Kf 137 801 to 138 200
Montana	MT	K"f"~134930	1890	1891	Kf 134 701 to 135 000
Nebraska	NE				
Nevada	NV	K~128673	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
New Hampshire	NH				
New Jersey	NJ	BC-DESTROYED			
New Mexico (o)	NM				
New Mexico (n)	NM	K-129452	1893	1895	K 129 231 to 129 627
New York	NY	K-138162	?	?	
North Carolina	NC	K"f" ~134906	1890	1891	Kf 134 701 to 135 000
North Dakota	ND	K-128986	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
Ohio	OH	K"f"~137989	1893	1895	Kf 137 801 to 138 200
Oklahoma	OK				
Oregon	OR	K~128542	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
Pennsylvania	PA	Kwwf~137411			
Rhode Island	RI				
South Carolina	SC	K "f" ~ 134897	1890	1891	Kf 134 701 to 135 000
South Dakota	SD				
Tennessee	TN				
Texas	TX	K~128113	1893	1895	K 128 039 to 129 230
Utah	UT	K~129658	1890	1891	K 129 639 to 130 333
Vermont	VT				
Virginia	VA				
Washington	WA	Kwwf~138679	1886	1889	Kwwf 138 401 to 139 020
West Virginia	WV	K ~134986			
Wisconsin	WI	Kf ~135000	1890	1891	Kf 134 701 to 135 000
Wyoming	WY				

J-info

This worksheet clarifies the symbols and their usage. See "J" worksheet for list of numbers.

Column titles:

State: the state studied
ST: the usual 2 letters symbol for the state
J#: the series of symbols and 6 digits K number
Alt: another option, usually a K number but wilder interpretations occurred
Source: the origin of the data, usually picture. See below for picture code.
Conf: confidence
100% means that the info was extracted from an 1949 picture
0% means that the info presented is surely wrong
other % are a very subjective interpretation of whatever is in the between
color coded with the darkest the green background the highest the confidence

Notes: notes

Picture title codes:

bc- boxcar
xx- 2 letters representing the state
other-etc code for position of pictures in relation to the boxcar
see US-MT-150209-Taking pictures of the Merci Train Boxcar.pdf
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheMerciTrain/385874794926353/>

Other:

NOJ# means that no data is available at this time. More likely, the J number is not readable in an old picture or the J number was not reported on the current restoration of the boxcar

J

Done: 19.5 points out of 49 = 40%

State	J#	Alt.	Conf.	Source	Notes
Alabama	AL 57958		75%	bc-al-ns-1	
Arizona	AZ 57981		100%	bc-az-ss-J-zm, bc-az-ns-AR	
Arkansas	AR 57671		100%	bc-ar-ns-2-AR	
California	CA 58008	54750	75%	bc-J 58008-ns,	
Colorado	CO 57799		100%	bc-co-ns-TS-AR	
Connecticut	CT BC-D				
Delaware	DE NOJ#	I30092	0%	bc-de-ss-J-zm-1	match K#
Florida	FL NOJ#		0%	bc-fl-*	
Georgia	GA NOJ#	K-138008	0%	bc-ga-*	match K#
Hawaii/DC	HI 58220	53220	75%	need to ask G. Houlton about archive	
Idaho	ID 57970		75%	bc-id-ns-1	
Illinois	IL 59052		85%	bc-il-ss-1	
Indiana	IN NOJ#		0%	bc-in-*	
Iowa	IA NOJ#				
Kansas	KS 54716		75%	bc-ks-ns-pict-J-zm-1	
Kentucky	KY NOJ#		0%	bc-ky-ss	
Louisiana	LA 58092		75%	bc-la-ns	
Maine	ME NOJ#				
Maryland	MD 57121		100%	bc-md-ss-J-zm-1	Perfect preservation
Massachusetts	MA BC-S		0%	bc-ma-*	
Michigan	MI 54841		100%	bc-mi-ss-AR	
Minnesota	MN NOJ#				
Mississippi	MS NOJ#	K 128854	0%	bc-ms-ns45-1	
Missouri	MO NOJ#				
Montana	MT NOJ#				
Nebraska	NE NOJ#				
Nevada	NV 58673		100%	bc-nv-ss45-1949-AR	
New Hampshire	NH 54858		100%	bc-nh-ss-TS-AR	
New Jersey	NJ BC-D				
New Mexico (o)	NM NOJ#				
New Mexico (n)	NM NOJ#	K-129452	0%	bc-nm-ss-1	
New York	NY NOJ#				
North Carolina	NC 54906		75%	bc-nc-ss	
North Dakota	ND 58986		75%	history.nd.gov/fgt/objects/boxcar.html	
Ohio	OH NOJ#	K 137989	0%	bc-oh-ss-J-zm-1	match K#
Oklahoma	OK 50383		75%	bc-ok-ss-AR	or 58383 or...
Oregon	OR 50333		75%	bc-or-ss-1-TS, bc-or-ss-J-zm-1	
Pennsylvania	PA NOJ#	15"/"4U	0%	bc-pa-ns-TS	
Rhode Island	RI 50111		75%	bc-ri-ss-zm	
South Carolina	SC NOJ#				
South Dakota	SD 57994		75%	bc-sd-ns-J-zm-1	
Tennessee	TN NOJ#				
Texas	TX 58113		75%	MerciTrain.org	
Utah	UT NOJ#				
Vermont	VT NOJ#				
Virginia	VA 58012		100%	bc-va-ss-zm	Perfect preservation
Washington	WA NOJ#				
West Virginia	WV NOJ#	K-134986	0%	bc-wv-ns45-1-TS	match K#
Wisconsin	WI NOJ#				
Wyoming	WY 54904		90%	bc-wy-ns-1-TS-AR	

J

State	J#	From	To
Alabama	AL 57958	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Arizona	AZ 57981	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Arkansas	AR 57671	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
California	CA 58008	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Colorado	CO 57799	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Connecticut	CT BC-D		
Delaware	DE	?	?
Florida	FL NOJ#	?	?
Georgia	GA	?	?
Hawaii/DC	HI 58220	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Idaho	ID 57970	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Illinois	IL 59052	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Indiana	IN NOJ#	?	?
Iowa	IA NOJ#		
Kansas	KS 54716	?	?
Kentucky	KY NOJ#		
Louisiana	LA 58092	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Maine	ME NOJ#		
Maryland	MD 57121	1870	1870 J 56 872 to 57 571
Massachusetts	MA BC-S		
Michigan	MI 54841	?	?
Minnesota	MN NOJ#		
Mississippi	MS NOJ#	?	?
Missouri	MO NOJ#		
Montana	MT NOJ#		
Nebraska	NE NOJ#		
Nevada	NV 58673	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
New Hampshire	NH 54858	?	?
New Jersey	NJ BC-D		
New Mexico (o)	NM NOJ#		
New Mexico (n)	NM NOJ#	?	?
New York	NY NOJ#		
North Carolina	NC 54906	?	?
North Dakota	ND 58986		
Ohio	OH NOJ#	?	?
Oklahoma	OK 50383	?	?
Oregon	OR 50333		
Pennsylvania	PA NOJ#		
Rhode Island	RI 50111	?	?
South Carolina	SC NOJ#		
South Dakota	SD 57994	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Tennessee	TN NOJ#		
Texas	TX 58113	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Utah	UT NOJ#		
Vermont	VT NOJ#		
Virginia	VA 58012	1871	1871 J 57 572 to 58 971
Washington	WA NOJ#		
West Virginia	WV NOJ#	?	?
Wisconsin	WI NOJ#		
Wyoming	WY 54904	?	?

Additional Notes

"K" worksheet

1. Additional notes from J. Irving's "Merci Train PLM numbers PLM.docx"

Kansas Kf-134716*

*Numbers have been painted in white over the original steel plaque on the car frame.

Montana K 134930*

*There is space between the K & 3, but whatever was there is illegible.

Oregon K-128542

*The J number on the side of the car is J-50333

The red color of the notes was preserved above
but remove when transferred to the "K" and "J" worksheets

"J" worksheet

bc-J 58008-ns display the J number 58008 but is not positively identified.

It is believed giving a visual analysis of the state metal plate that J 58008 could have been the CA boxcar. Yet, the current painted sign differs.

J 58866 not in list but appears in pictures bc-uk-ss-58866

"K-age" worksheet

An "?" in the K-age of the boxcar means that the K number is probably reported or analyzed incorrectly or that the French P.L.M team has not yet recovered the data range within which the number should be.

█ means that the K number is surely reported or interpreted in a wrong way for example, an f is missing and the number should be checked against a Kf series and not a K series.

"J-age" worksheet

Let's all remember that the J numbers were painted on the boxcar in 1948. At this time, it is unclear what they represent (if anything). The amount of "?" signifies that the J number does not currently belong to a series discovered by the P.L.M team in France or has been interpreted in a wrong way or other hypothesis.

Done: 0 points out of 49 = 00%

Do not mind it. I am a nerd. I need formulas in my worksheets. Thanks for reading up to here! In other words, a way to calculate the progress of this work. It is very unlikely that a 100% will ever be reached due to the loss of some of the boxcars. Let's keep our hopes up!