

# News Release



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## Historic 1880s Railroad Boxcars Under Restoration Before Return to Allensworth State Historic Park

**SACRAMENTO** -- Two rare, 19<sup>th</sup> Century railroad boxcars that are believed to have been the residence of the Station Agent at the Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park are undergoing restoration at the California State Railroad Museum's facilities here and will return to Allensworth where they will be displayed, California State Park officials announced today.

"This project is a unique opportunity for the Railroad Museum and its talented shop crews to showcase a wealth of restoration expertise," said Museum Director Cathy Taylor. "We're very excited to have this chance to perform work for another State Historic Park with a railroad heritage."

Allensworth is the only California town that was founded, financed, and governed by African-Americans. Founded by Colonel Allen Allensworth in 1908, the town was dedicated to the principle of improving the economic and social status of African-Americans.

California State Parks contracted with the nonprofit California State Railroad Museum Foundation in mid-2002 to conserve and restore the two railroad boxcar bodies associated with Allensworth.

Both cars are 30-foot wood boxcars, believed to have been built in the 1880s for the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe (GC&SF), a subsidiary of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway operating in Texas. Wheels and axles were removed after the turn of the 20th century, and the boxcars are today considered rare specimens of early railroad freight cars.

Continued research and ongoing findings suggest that both cars were most likely the residence for the Station Agent at Allensworth. The Allensworth depot is believed to have been a different 30-foot GC&SF boxcar body (a boxcar was Allensworth's only railroad depot; a permanent structure was never built).

Several boxcar bodies were once utilized by the Santa Fe Railway at Allensworth to house track workers and other employees in addition to serving as the town's railroad depot. Since all of the 30-foot boxcar bodies which once served a variety of purposes at Allensworth are basically identical, the project's interpretive goals will still be met.

Additional research has also found that the GC&SF acquired a large number of 30-foot boxcars between 1878 and 1888, built by several different manufacturers including Missouri Car & Foundry and the Litchfield Car Manufacturing Co. The two subject Allensworth boxcar bodies, while built to the same general standard, exhibit slight differences in construction details, suggesting they were built by different companies.

Purchased around 1950 by a private individual in Corcoran and subsequently moved to Stoil (the next Santa Fe Railway station north of Allensworth), the cars changed hands once more before being purchased for preservation at Allensworth.

For the current project, one car will be fully documented and receive a museum-level conservation for protected display at the Park. The other has been dismantled to provide information, and many parts, for a replica which is intended for outdoor interpretive display and use as the Allensworth depot.

As of this month, work on the replica is nearly complete, and conservation of the remaining boxcar has begun. The carbody currently being replicated will become the Allensworth depot. The carbody slated to undergo conservation will be faithfully preserved for display “as is,” and its associated interpretation can be modified in the future to reflect subsequent findings.

The restoration project is not accessible for viewing by the public. However, once work on the railroad cars is completed later this year, they will return to Allensworth for eventual display and incorporation into the Park’s interpretive programs.

Allensworth is a featured California State Park during February, which is Black History Month. Allensworth State Historic Park is located 40 miles north of Bakersfield on State Highway 43 in Tulare County.

For details regarding Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park and events scheduled during February’s Black History Month, visit [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov). For more information about the California State Railroad Museum and the nonprofit CSRM Foundation, visit [www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org](http://www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org).

Operated by California State Parks with financial assistance from the non-profit California State Railroad Museum Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Widely regarded as North America’s finest and most-visited interpretive railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-square foot Railroad History Museum plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill commercial buildings in Old Sacramento. Also operated by the Museum is Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in Jamestown. For updated 24-hour information, call (916) 445-6645 or visit [www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org](http://www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org).

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