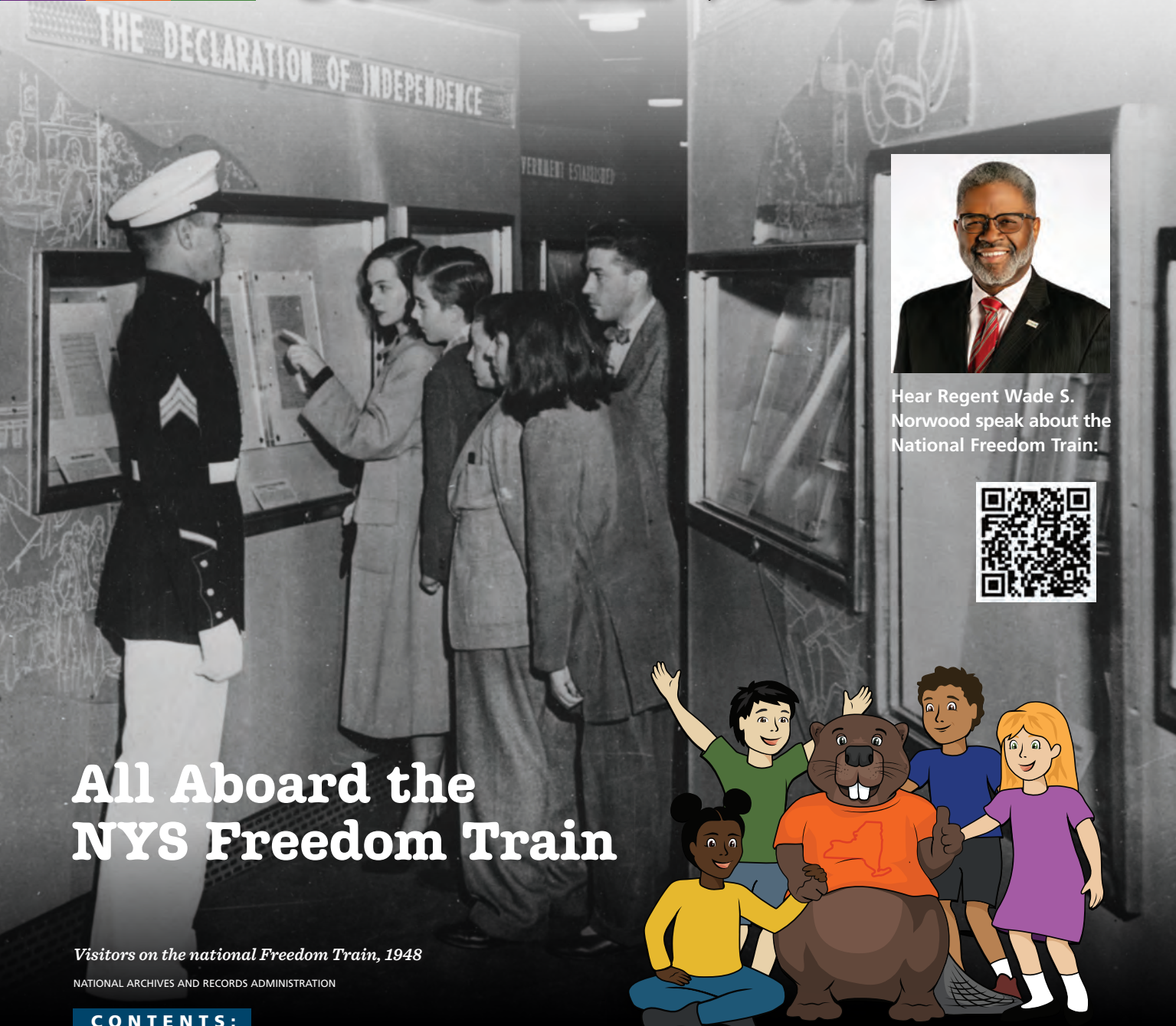


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Hear Regent Wade S. Norwood speak about the National Freedom Train:



All Aboard the NYS Freedom Train

Visitors on the national Freedom Train, 1948

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

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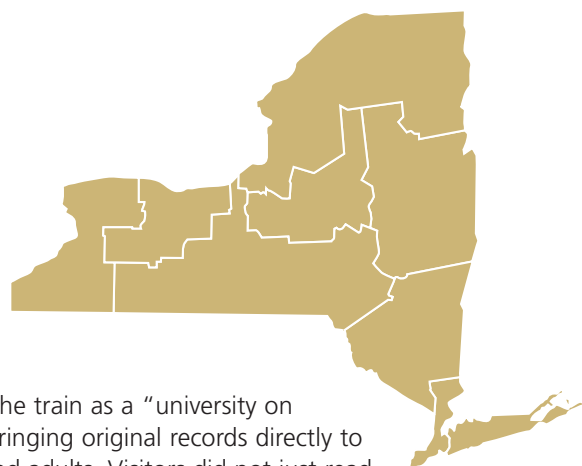
All Aboard the NYS Freedom Train

In the late 1940s, a National Freedom Train traveled across the United States. People could step inside the train cars to see important documents that helped establish the basic freedoms Americans have as rights. The train stopped in large cities, but it could only stay for a short time.

The national train was scheduled to spend just one day in Albany. However, librarian Edna L. Jacobsen believed New Yorkers needed more time to see and learn from these historic records. She helped create a longer lasting display of books and documents at the New York State Library. The exhibit included many of the same items as the national train and added materials that showed New York's role in the growth of freedom.

Albany newspapers wrote about the display. Gerald H. Salisbury, a newspaper editor, believed people across the state should be able to see it. He suggested putting the exhibit on a train so it could travel to towns and cities throughout New York. With support from librarians, newspaper groups, railroads, and state leaders, the idea became the New York State Freedom Train.

The New York State Freedom Train was created to help people learn about New York's history and the freedoms people had worked for over time. Salisbury



described the train as a “university on wheels,” bringing original records directly to students and adults. Visitors did not just read about history—they could see it for themselves. The train also encouraged people to visit libraries and continue learning long after it moved on.

The train included important documents from New York's past. The Flushing Remonstrance, a 1657 petition, supported freedom of religion. New York's first Constitution showed how people worked to govern themselves and protect their rights under the law. Materials related to the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments called for women's rights, including voting, property ownership, and equal educational opportunities. Items related to education and labor showed efforts to improve schools and protect workers. Together, these materials showed that American freedoms were shaped not only by national leaders, but also by the everyday actions of people in New York State.

Visit the New York State Freedom Train here:



Gnaw on This

- **The train was guarded like treasure.** Six soldiers from the New York National Guard traveled with the train, and local sheriff's deputies stood inside the cars when it was on display to help protect the historic items.
- **The exhibit cars did not have regular windows.** The windows of the display cars were covered with steel on the inside and outside to keep sunlight and damage away from the materials inside.
- **The train had its own slogan.** The New York State Freedom Train used the slogan “Freedom is Truly New York and You” to remind visitors that freedom belongs to everyone in the state.

Community Connections



- **Federal Hall National Memorial, New York City.** Visit the site where Peter Zenger was tried for libel. nps.gov/fehalearn/historyculture/the-trial-of-john-peter-zenger.htm?mobile-app=true&theme=wiki
- **Women's Rights National Historic Park, Seneca Falls.** This park tells the story of the first Women's Rights Convention. nps.gov/wori/index.htm
- **Statue of Liberty.** Learn more about the poem inscribed on her pedestal. nps.gov/stli/learn/statue-of-liberty-facts.htm



Take a Closer Look

Before we hop on the virtual Freedom Train, let's learn more about the different cars and what they displayed. The newspaper clipping to the right is from the July 13, 1949, issue of the *Potsdam Courier and Freeman*. Click the QR code above to see it online.



Use the article to the right to find out the name of each car. Write the name on the lines below.







Let's go back and reread the text, this time underlining important information using the colors in the key below.



The people or groups sponsoring (funding) the NYS Freedom Train.



The purpose of the Freedom Train.



Historic people you will learn about.



Documents named in the article.



Types of freedom of expression.

Using the information in the text and this newspaper article, write a letter inviting a friend to go visit the New York State Freedom Train with you. Be sure to include lots of details! Write your letter on a separate piece of paper.

Student Name _____

3

State's Struggle For Freedom Symbolized in Freedom Train Display of Historic Documents

A dramatic lesson in the struggle for freedom from the earliest days of colonization of America, the Freedom Train emphasizes the part New York State has taken in that struggle by a display of documents which led to the guarantees of freedom by the Federal Constitution and state legislation.

Proud Heritage of State

As Commissioner Francis T. Spaulding, of the state Department of Education, points out: "No state in the Union can claim a prouder heritage of freedom than New York. Today, perhaps more than ever before, it is important that that heritage be passed on to the next generation unimpaired."

The three exhibit cars of the State Freedom Train carry documents that have a monetary value of a million dollars and a humanitarian value that can be measured only in terms of liberty.

The Freedom Train is sponsored by The New York State Society of Newspaper Editors, The New York State Publishers' Association and the State Freedom Train Commission, which represents Governor Dewey, the Legislature, the state Education Department and the people. Chairman of the commission is Gerald H. Salisbury, managing editor of The Knickerbocker News, Albany. Joining in sponsoring the Potsdam display is the *Courier and Freeman*.

Freedom of Religion

The lead car of the train is named Freedom of Expression. The primary display cases in this car contain documents relating to freedom of religion. These range back to the days when New York State was a Dutch colony under Governor Peter Stuyvesant, who discriminated against the Quakers in 1663. The documents include the Charter of Liberties and Privileges drawn up by Governor Thomas Donegan's Assembly when New York had become a British colony.

Another display case in the lead car proclaims freedom of press and speech. These documents tell the story of the arrest of John Peter Zenger, an immigrant German printer of New York, for criticizing the unfair practices of Governor Crosby in 1734, his defense by Andrew Hamilton and his acquittal after a year in jail. That little-known case of an obscure printer established

freedom of the press which was later incorporated in the U. S. Constitution and New York State's Constitution.

Hamilton's successful defense of Zenger is the origin of the familiar phrase, a "Philadelphia lawyer," because Hamilton was a resident of Philadelphia. The original phrase was "bright as a Philadelphia lawyer."

Minutes of Legislature 1691

Representative government and labor freedom are also depicted in documents in the first car. A case in this car presents the minutes of the first legislative council and assembly elected by the people, a meeting of the New York Colonial Legislature, April 9, 1691.

The documents on labor range from the Duke's Laws of 1665, giving legal protection to servants and laborers, to the Anti-Discrimination Law of 1945.

Liberty under Law is the title of the second car of the train. The subject is subdivided into exhibits on personal liberty, suffrage and property rights, military security and the Federal Constitution.

Personal liberty was instituted in New York with the abolition of Indian slavery in 1679 by order of the New York Executive Council and extended universally in the state by a law passed in 1799, providing that every child born of a slave after July 4 of that year would be free.

This section also contains Lincoln's original manuscript of the preliminary proclamation providing for freedom of slaves if the seceding states did not return to the union within 100 days after September 22, 1862.

Documents on Education

Freedom of Self-Development is the title of the third exhibit car. Its theme is illustrated by documents on mobility permitted to persons and relating to transportation, education, science and state services.

"The Train's exhibits demonstrate that freedom in every field was obtained for communities and individuals only by courageous action. They stimulate interest in the meaning of freedom and the guarantees of freedom."

FORT JACKSON

Darrell Murphy spent the holiday week-end with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Don C. Murphy.



Learning Activity

The New York State Freedom Train wanted to use primary source documents to show how New York State has worked over time to secure the rights of citizens.

Peter Zenger was a printer who published a newspaper called the *New York Weekly Journal* in the early 1700s. He was arrested in 1734 for printing stories that criticized the governor of New York. At the time, the government thought it was a crime to speak badly about leaders, even if the stories were true. A jury found Zenger not guilty, which helped convince people that telling the truth should not be punished. This idea later became part of the First Amendment, which protects freedom of speech and the press in the United States.

A page from the New York Colony Council Minutes is pictured to the left. These minutes, which are notes taken at meetings, were chosen to travel on the New York Freedom Train. Scan the QR code to see the document:



Pursuant to an order of this board of the 2nd instant directing the sherriff to take & comitt to prison John Peter Zenger for printing & publishing severall Seditious libels disposed throughout his Journals or Newspapers the said Sherriff reported to this board that he by virtue thereof had taken the said John Peter Zenger who is now in his custody Att a Councill held at Fort George in New York the 20th Nov. 1734

Words to Know:

Seditious – speech or writing that encourages people to fight against or oppose the government.

Libels – published statements that say something untrue about a person.

Excerpt from the First Amendment (ratified in 1791):

"Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..."

In 1734, what did the colonial government believe about the people's right to publish criticism of the government?

By 1791, what did the US government believe about the people's right to publish criticism of the government?

This is one example of a freedom that was celebrated on the New York State Freedom Train. On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph about why you think freedom of the press is an important freedom to protect.