

RAILROAD MERIT BADGE

Thank you for your interest in putting together a BSA All Day Railroad Merit Badge for your group! I put this together to help future districts/councils/groups organize this awesome merit badge. The reason for I organized this merit badge in this format was to get out of the worksheets and YouTube videos and actually getting to walk around the train sites and get to see history right on the tracks! A huge thank you to the Niles Canyon for partnering with Mission Peak District in putting this together for our scouts. If you have any questions in the future, feel free to reach out to me at EvelynMarieLittle@gmail.com.

Hope you enjoy this amazing opportunity with the trains and part of American History,
Eve Marie Little

PRE-PLANNING

- **REACHING OUT TO SITE** - Reach out to the Railroad site and send them an email explaining that you are interested in hosting an all-day merit badge at their facility.
- **CHOOSE AN EVENT DATE** - Choose a date at least 6 months away to plan the railroad event.
- **MERIT BADGE COUNSELORS** – Reach out to several railroad merit badge counselors in the area and ask them if they would be interested in being a part of this event.
- **HOW MANY SCOUTS** - Decide how many scouts will be allowed to attend this merit badge. We decided that 8 scouts to each merit badge counselor was a good ratio. After doing this event, I would say I do not recommend more than 18 scouts due to the size of the room.
- **COST PER SCOUT** - Choose an amount of money to charge the scouts. The purpose of the money is not making money but rather to help pay for some of the petty costs but also eliminate those who would have been a no-show for this event.
- **HOW TO PAY FOR BADGE** – Make a couple of choices on how scouts can pay for the merit badge. We used Venmo and Zelle for the payments. Ask the parents to make sure to write their scout's name in the notes/memo. Makes it easier to link up the payment with the scout.

- **MAIN POINT OF CONTACT** – You need to choose one person to be the main point of contact for all communications between the scouts, merit badge counselors, and the railroad group.

MARKETING

Once you have finalized the date, site partnership, merit badge counselors, number of scouts, and cost per scout, reach out to the district and inform them about the merit badge. Here is what is going to be needed for this step.

- **DISTRICT CONFIRMATION** – Make sure to send all of the proposed details to the district and doublecheck if they have to confirm/approve this event.
- **PUT TOGETHER FLYER** – Put together a flyer with all of the factors such date, merit badge name, partnership name, time (we went with 8:30am-2:30pm), and the city where it is going to be at. **DO NOT** put the full address in the invitation (that will be in the confirmation email later to avoid random unapproved scouts showing up).
- **CONVERT FLYER TO BOTH PDF AND JPG** - Make sure to have this flyer in both PDF and JPG format so that the leaders can either forward it as a PDF but also post it on social media with a JPG. You can use the website www.zamzar.com for a free conversion.
- **SEND OUT THE FLYER TO LEADERS** - Send both flyers to all of the scout leaders and scoutmaster with a request to send these flyers to all of their scouts who might show interest.
- **SEND OUT FLYER TO DISTRICT** – Send them both flyers so that they can advertise it on their website and/or send it in other ways.

RECRUITING/ORGANIZING SCOUTS

One of the big things that we recommended through our experience is to have some prerequisites so that it will “weed out” the scouts that just want to sign up for another merit badge and focus on giving the opportunity to the scouts that really are interested in this badge. We looked over all the requirements and we felt that the scouts could do:

Requirements 2, 4, and 7.

You need to have ONE person in charge of all the communication to make the communication direct and clear. This person needs to also be in charge of keeping the spreadsheet, emails, and payment and additional notes.

- **ORGANIZE A CONTACT LIST** – Attached to this manual is a spreadsheet to keep touch of scouts that have emailed you with interest in the badge. Make sure to save the following information:
 - Scout Name, Scout Email, Parent Name, Parent Email, Troop Number, District Name, Rank (make sure no unranked scouts allowed), Info email, etc.
- **FILING INFORMATION AS IT COMES IN** – Scouts will begin to email the main contact with questions, turning in prerequisites, etc. Make sure to keep log of the communications and log in as the paperwork, payments, etc starts to come in.
- **TWO DEEP LEADERSHIP APPLIES HERE TOO-** Make sure the scout is emailing you, not their parents. The purpose of this communication with the scouts is to increase empowerment and motivation. **BUT** make sure that their parent is always cced in all communication per BSA two deep leadership.
- **BE AWARE OF SCOUT RANKS** – Just be aware that the scouts must be at least a SCOUT ranking to sign up for these merit badge. We didn't realize that we needed this until we had an unranked show up and had to hold his merit badge blue card until he finished his scouting rank.
- **CONFIRM PREREQUISITES** – Make sure that all the scouts that are interested in attending the badge, turn in their prerequisites, preferably using the PDF format of the worksheet. If they just type the answers in the email, reply back stating that they need to fill this out in the worksheet and bring it with them on the day of the event.
- **CONFIRM ENROLLMENT** – Once the scouts have turned in all of their prerequisites and payment, send them a confirmation email that they are good to go!
- **REACH OUT TO MERIT BADGE COUNSELORS/TRAIN ORGANIZERS** – Just send them emails to keep them in the loop of what is going on, headcount of scouts and hold a meeting with them at least a month before the event to go over the entire process and agenda.

Here are a couple of sample emails that were used in the communication between our scouts (and their cced parents) for this merit badge.

FIRST REPLY EMAIL:

Sure thing! So excited to hear from you!

First of all, here is the information I need from you; your full name, parent's name, and the troop you are from and current rank. Send me that information at your earliest convenience.

Now, what you have to do to finalize your enrollment for this merit badge is to work on the prerequisites 2, 4, and 7 and get them done with proof of your work such as your worksheets and pictures of you at the railroad museum. [Microsoft Word - Railroading.docx \(usscouts.org\)](#)

Once you have submitted your prerequisites and proofs, I will confirm your spot BUT it won't be finalized until I receive the \$25 dollar payment. Once that is done, you are officially enrolled in this merit badge. As to answer a common question, WE will have a merit badge counselor ready for you the day of the event so you need to independently work on the prerequisites and once you send them back to me AND I confirm you in the class, you will have a merit badge counselor help you with the rest!

Hope you are excited about this; this merit badge is going to be tons of fun and you will be working inches away from 100 year old trains!

EMAIL TO SEND WHEN PREREQUISITES ARE TURNED IN AND APPROVED

This is great! Could you make sure to print out all the requirements worksheet so you can have it ready to go for the merit badge day? A couple of questions, what is your troop number? What is your city? and what is your rank?

You are officially approved to take this merit badge! Now the only thing that we have pending is the \$25 dollar payment. Please pay it via with the name @EveLittle or via Zelle at evelynmarielittle@gmail.com. Make sure to write down in the notes your name so I can match up that payment with you!

REPLY WHEN PREREQUISITES AND PAYMENT HAVE BEEN TURNED IN

Congratulations! I have received both your prerequisites and your payment for the Railroad Merit Badge and you have been officially approved! Make sure you have printed your worksheets and keep your eyes for upcoming emails from me with more information about the address and more details about the All-Day Railroad Merit Badge.

But most of all, congratulations and looking forward to having you “on track” for this amazing experience!

REPLY WHEN SCOUT TURNS IN PREREQUISITE IN PLAIN TEXT (Didn't use PDF worksheet)

This is great! Could you print out the requirements and actually write them inside of the document so you can have it ready to go for the merit badge day?

Here is the link. The printable worksheets are towards the bottom; I recommend printing them in PDF and filling them out that way. [Microsoft Word - Railroading.docx \(usscouts.org\)](#)

RIGHT BEFORE THE EVENT

About a week before the event, make sure to start finalizing all of your paperwork and information for this event. Here are the suggestions of what you need to get ready for this event.

- **SEND OUT A CONFIRMATION EMAIL TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT** – Put together an email that you BCC all the scouts, their parents, the merit badge counselors and the railroad leader. Make sure to include what they need to bring to the event, what time to show up, address of the site, your personal cellphone in case of any emergency, etc. The suggested email is below.
- **FINALIZE ROSTER** – Get all of the information finalized on this and get it ready to make the check-in sheet. Also send a quick email to the merit badge counselors and train leaders on the finalized headcount.
- **MAKE CHECK IN SHEET** – Put together a check-in sheet where parents will be responsible for signing in their scout, check-in/check-out along with putting in a emergency contact information on there as well. We have attached a sample that we used but feel free to make your own.

- **SEND OUT A SEPARATE HOW TO PREFILL OUT THE BLUE CARD** – This one way of doing this will be much easier than half of the group requesting electronic versions and half of the group requesting physical cards. Just do it one way. Make sure to have some extra physical cards in case the scout forget/fill it in wrong/etc.
- **SEND OUT A FINAL REMINDER EMAIL TWO DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT** – It is always wise to send a reminder email a day or two before the event because people don't want to dig through the email looking for the address, check off list, etc.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE EVENT EMAIL

Good Evening Scout Train Enthusiasts!

We are very pleased to share with you that we are less than two weeks away from our Mission Peak all day Merit Badge! Here are a little more details that you will need to know for this event.

HOURS OF MERIT BADGE

The hours will be **8:30am-2:30pm**. Please make sure to come exactly on time since we are going to be having some registration paperwork that will need to be turned in. I will be sending the paperwork in another email in the next 48 hours.

ADDRESS OF LOCATION

**5550 Niles Canyon Road
Sunol, California**

Please be aware that there is a little bit of a drive to get into the location because it is in a train storage site so plan for about 3-5 minutes to drive and park. This site is literally between Vallejo Mills Historical Park and the tiny town of Sunol. Make sure to have all your paperwork and additional items below so we can have registration and drop-off go quickly.

WHAT TO BRING

Make sure to pack the following five items:

- **Pre-filled out BSA Blue Card** (no digital) - don't worry, I will be sending you another email on how to fill this out perfectly.
- **Liability Release Form** - don't worry, I will send this to you in another email along with how to fill out your blue card.
- **Class B Uniform** - something that is "Scout-ish" but don't mind getting dirty because we are definitely going to get dirty!
- **NO OPEN TOED SHOES !!!** If you wear them, you get sent home.
- **Packed Lunch with filled up water bottle**
- **Railroad Worksheet and Pencil to write with**

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to me! Thanks for Choo-Choo-Choosing this awesome Merit Badge!

BLUE CARD EMAIL SEND DURING THE WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT

Good Evening:

I can't believe that we are less than a week away from the Mission Peak District Railroad Merit Badge and we are so excited to have you joining us for this first time partnering with Niles Canyon Railway! Just a couple of updates and additional information.

BLUE CARD INSTRUCTIONS

We want to make sure to have the scouts fill out their blue cards as efficiently and "fully" as possible so we can get them processed quickly. I have attached a scanned copy of the BlueCard sample. Make sure to fill it out to the best of your ability before your scout arrives. Not having it filled out correctly could delay receiving their blue card.

FINAL REMINDER EMAIL SENT TWO DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT

Good Morning Railroad Merit Badge scouts:

This is your final email you are going to be receiving before we see you on Saturday at 8:30am. Make sure you have these following items with you when you arrive at the site at **5550 Niles Canyon Road, Sunol, California** at 8:30am. Please be prepared to pick up your scout at 2pm from the same site. Please be aware that there is a little bit of a drive to get into the location because it is in a train storage site so plan for about 3-5 minutes to drive and park. Also parents will need to come in and sign their scout in along with sign some liability waiver paperwork.

Upon arrival, make sure your scout has the following items. Failure to have everything with you could result in a partial merit badge or a denial from the site.

- 1) **MERIT BADGE WORKSHEET PAPERWORK & PENCIL** - Make sure you have PRINTED out the Railroad Merit Badge worksheets from the following link and the sections 2, 4, and 7 have been filled in. We will not accept any attachments or loose typed up papers on the side. FILL IT IN on the worksheet! [Microsoft Word - Railroadinq.docx \(usscouts.org\)](#) If you don't have this done correctly, this could result in a partial merit badge credit or none at all.
- 2) **DRESS ATTIRE** - Make sure to wear a Class B shirt, one that you do not mind getting dirty because we will be around a lot of old and dirty equipment. Also make sure to wear a **close toe shoe** for safety reasons at the site.
- 3) **LUNCH AND SNACKS** - Make sure to pack a good lunch and some snacks for this day's merit badge along with a large bottle of water to help stay hydrated.
- 4) **PARTIALLY FILLED OUT BLUE CARDS** - You have been sent a previous email with step-by-step instructions on how to partially pre-fill out this paperwork with your name, address, troop information, etc. I have attached it to this email just in case you have misplaced it.

DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

This is the day that you make sure you have all of the following items with you pack the night before the event or by the front door so you are ready to go.

- Extra Blue Cards
- Printed Check-in roster for the parents to sign AND put their emergency contact information
- Extra Liability Forms
- Extra Pencils
- Water Bottles
- Packed Luncheon for yourself
- Extra Clipboards to make check-in quicker
- Camera for taking pictures
- An extra railroad worksheet (one scout will forget theirs)

DAY OF THE EVENT

Make sure to come at least 30 minutes earlier than the check-in time to get yourself set-up and ready to go. You will be driving in through the front gate. The railroad site had a volunteer set-up to check guests in and get them through the front gate. Make sure to ask the volunteer if they are going to have the scouts park at the entrance and walk or drive all the way to the White House and check them in and then drive out. I feel the later one worked just fine.

- **ARRIVE EARLY** – Make sure to get there about there early and set-up
- **SET-UP REGISTRATION AREA** – Make sure you have all the required paperwork and clipboards ready for them to sign in along with extra material if they are missing blue cards, liability waivers, etc.
- **SIGNING MERIT BADGE BLUE CARDS** - During the day, make sure to be filling out the blue cards to pass back to the scouts at the end of the day. I choose to split up the blue cards and have each merit badge counselor sign a certain amount of them. Take off the counselor piece and give it to them for their records. Also, keep your eyes on the counselors and when they are allowing another to speak, ask them to sign the cards.
- **PASS OUT BLUE CARDS** – Have them all filled in and signed by the end of the day and pass them out to the scouts and they are about to head out with their parents.

PROPOSED AGENDA FOR THE DAY

One of the mistakes that we made was that we had ALL of the written part of the badge in the morning, did our walk-through, and then rode the train at the end. The 3 hours of sitting and filling out the workbooks was tiring for the scouts. Below is my suggested timeline for next time to help break up the day to intros, work, walk around, lunch, guest speaker, work, walk around again, and train ride.

8:00am – Arrive on site and drive to the White House. Using the back table, set-up a quick registration table with the parents signing them in on the roster(using the clipboards) while another volunteer/merit badge counselor checks all their paperwork (liability, railroad worksheet, and blue cards)

8:30am – Scouts and parents start coming in and registering

9:00am – Introduction of Railroad site representatives, yourself, merit badge counselors and scouts.

9:10am – Have a brief discussion on Safety and the importance of safety on the site. Take this opportunity to discuss what was learned in Requirement #4

9:20am – Work on Requirement #1

10:00am- Work on Requirement #3a & 3c

10:30am – Do a Brief Walk around the site – Make sure to keep your eyes keep on different types of trains and engines that were discussed in Requirement #1.

11:15am – Come back and eat lunch

11:45am – Work on Requirement 3d - Have a special guest come talk about their career in railroading and have the scouts ask them questions about working with railroad.

12:15pm – Work on Requirements 5 and 6 – Signs and Emergency signals

1:15pm – Go for a more in-depth walk around the site and point out the signs and emergency signals as well as what is done on this site.

1:30pm – If the scouts were well behaved, the Railroad site might take them on a nice little train ride through to the Sunol area and back. They will be pointing out several historical train factors and signs.

2:30pm – Come back and finalize the railroad merit badge.

AFTER THE EVENT

- **CLEAN UP THE AREA** - Just make sure to do a walk-around of the White House at the railroad site and make sure that nothing has been left behind, all the magazines are put together and the area is cleaned up.
- **WRITE A FOLLOW UP EMAIL TO THE SCOUTS** – Make sure to write a follow up email telling them congratulations on finishing this hands-on merit badge and then make them aware of how they can get more involved.
- **PAY EXPENSES** – Gather all the money that has been accumulated and pay for all the expenses that you had such as paper, blue card purchase, new pencils, etc from this event.
- **MAKE DONATION** – We decided that after all the expenses had been paid, we would write a donation check with the scout's registration money to Niles Canyon Railway at:

**Pacific Locomotive Association
P.O. Box 515
Sunol, CA 94586-0515**