

St. Andrew's Elementary School Fifth Grade Class, Abilene, Kansas

Testimony of the Importance of the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad

March 5, 2024

Hello! I'm ____ from St. Andrew's School in Abilene, Kansas. I am honored to be invited to Topeka today to speak on behalf of my classmates and school to tell you what the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad means to us. This impressive historic train is just two blocks from our school and runs through the front yard of our favorite President's house, the one and only Dwight D. Eisenhower. We feel that it is of great historic value because there are no passenger or tourist trains anywhere in the vicinity. This unique train allows us to learn valuable history about our community and how it has impacted the Abilene area and the state of Kansas over the years. The steam engine that has been recently restored has been a fun hobby for train enthusiasts and retirees and many other dedicated people in our community.

This past December, we had the amazing opportunity to take our entire school on the Santa Train Excursion. It was so fun to walk there with our entire school and take a ride complete with treat bags while visiting personally with Santa in his historical Santa attire. Many of us also enjoyed a train ride as part of our preschool experiences. Several schools travel to Abilene to see the many sights there, and the Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad is an important piece of that history. It sits along the historic Chisholm Trail where many longhorn cattle drives took place. Each year as we celebrate Chisholm Trail Days in Abilene, the train depot is a central part of that event. Old Abilene Town, the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad, the Eisenhower Center, the Greyhound Hall of Fame, and of course our amazing school, St. Andrew's, all sit next to one another. We are all part of a legend that lives on in history, and we are very proud of that fact.

Thank you for listening to us tell you a little bit about why the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad is important to us.