

IrwinsJournal.com Presents:
The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report
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Hello again everyone! Well, we begin the month with a Great Big Oops for last month – or what is known in today's parlance as an Epic Fail. You weren't seeing double; I accidentally sent out the January column as February's. At least I know you're paying attention – I got about 30 replies in the first two hours after the mis-send, which was corrected the same day. Perhaps that will prove to be the all time worst Oops in the history of this enterprise, in which case, it's all downhill – or would that be uphill? – from here.

Some long awaited cars in both N and Z Scale come from behind the red and yellow sign this month, although in the case of N Scale, not quite the ones we might have expected. Read on...

N SCALE NEW RELEASES:



032 00 470, \$29.10

Reporting Marks: UP 498051.

50 Foot Steel Post Boxcar, Plug Door, Union Pacific.

Yellow sides; aluminum roof, ends, bottom side sill, trucks and couplers. Black lettering including reporting marks on left. Red, white and blue Union Pacific shield herald on left. Multicolor "Automated RAILway" logo with map on right. Approximate Time Period: 1963 (build date) to no later than 1986.

We don't have to go very far for information on this car: just back to January when the Z Scale version was released. Channeling my inner laziness, I'll reprint myself.

MTL depicts the second car in sequence of the UP series 498050 to 498249. The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for January 1964 describes these cars as "UP Refrigerator, Steel, Plug Doors, Cushion Underframe, Compartmentizer" with AAR Designation RBL. The inside length was 50 feet 1 inch, inside width 9 feet 5 inches, inside height 9 feet 11 inches, outside length 53 feet 6 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 10 feet and capacity 4638 cubic feet or 135,000 pounds. There were 171 cars in the series at the time and a special character on the line appeared, which "denotes reduction." The Union Pacific class for this car was BI-70-4, even though the classification was officially a refrigerator car. As we know that's often the case for plug door boxcars, especially if they're insulated which this one was. I guess the UP figured that the "I" in "BI" was enough to communicate that the car was insulated since there's no other indication shown.

Morning Sun's **Union Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** (Volume One), Page 26, shows sister car UP 498167 which was built a couple of months after the 498051 but still in 1963. The car was "of smooth side riveted construction" which presents an immediately noticeable delta between prototype and model. The side sills are also a bit different on the MTL 032 body style, and extended draft gear would be a better fit on the car as well.

In the April 1970 ORER the "reduction" must have been reversed, as the car count for the series is up to 191. An end note describes pallets "considered part of car"; the 498051 had 52 of them. Load dividers and side fillers had been added to the description and compartmentizers were deleted. By the April 1976 Register the end notes had been brought into the description, creating a bunch of subsets of these cars organized by the number of pallets included (!) and totaling 183 cars. Though you'd have to be thinking about both roofwalk removal and fading paint by April 1981, the ORER showed 173 cars remaining. The group was all the way down to 22 cars by January 1985, and the series is gone by the October 1986 Register, so we can narrow down the end of the ATP pretty tightly this time.



038 00 420, \$20.50

Road Number: 579 (will be "SOU 579" in website listings).

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Plug Door, No Roofwalk, Southern Railway.

Brown with mostly white lettering including large roadname (with letter O filled in green) and slogan "Gives A Green Light To Innovations" and road number on left and legend "Insulated Super Cushion Service" on right. Yellow "DFB" left of door. Black trucks with brown extended draft gear and couplers. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1969, but strictly speaking, about 1974, to early 1980s.

The series Southern 570 to 649 was built by Pullman-Standard in 1963 according to James Kincaid, writing in Morning Sun's **Southern Railway Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. A photo on Page 41 shows sister car 620 in what we will assume to be its as-delivered configuration, with roofwalk and the slogan "Southern Serves the South." Comparing car to model, we get a pretty good match, with the only quibble I can find being a short ladder instead of grab irons on the left end of the side. Until we get to the door, that is.

Besides the roofwalk removal, there are two other clues to the start of the Approximate Time Period. First, the "Green Light" slogan was adopted in 1969. Second, the double panel consolidated stencils MTL has on the car were in use starting about 1974. I'll give both choices since removal of the double block isn't difficult.

So let's check the July 1974 ORER for more. We have a combined group numbered 500 to 649 consisting of 146 cars, described as "Box, Insulated, Cushion Underframe, Considered Part of Car: Flat Lift Truck Pallets or Platforms or Skids" with AAR Designation RBL (again, we have a boxcar officially classified as a "refrigerator"). The inside length was 50 feet 6 inches,

inside width 9 feet 3 inches, inside height 9 feet 10 inches, outside length 60 feet 10 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, capacity 4604 cubic feet or 120,000 pounds. Although in my mind this isn't nearly as easy to see as with sliding doors, we do have a "door thing" on the width of the plug door; on the real cars it was twelve feet versus nine feet on the 038 body style. Continuing through the ORERs, we find the series at 140 cars in a bunch of subsets in January 1985, and then at 118 in July 1992 under the Norfolk Southern registration. However, sometime between then and the next Equipment Register in the Research Accumulation, namely October 1996, the series is gone completely. So it's "early 1980s" for the end of the ATP with the possibility that the cars went into a Norfolk Southern group, or not.

It would be nice to locate a photo of a car in the group in the configuration and paint used by Micro-Trains, and we get oh-so-close to a bingo with a September 1988 shot of Southern 578 on Fallen Flags (www.rr-fallenflags.org). The wider door looks more obvious to me in this shot, and we pick up another possible delta of cut down ladders on the right hand side. While the roof may have been painted brown at one point, that paint is largely gone, exposing the galvanized steel underneath. That might be a fun weathering project.



048 00 610, \$24.90

Reporting Marks: MRX 5330.

40 Foot Double Sheathed Refrigerator Car, Vertical Brake Staff, Fishbelly Underframe, Morrell's Pride.

Yellow sides, brown roof, ends and stirrups. Black lettering including reporting marks on left, "Morrell's Pride" in script diagonally across side and legend "Ham - Bacon - Canned Meats" across car. White end markings. Approximate Time Period: 1934 to late 1930s.

The exact car MRX 5330 appears on Page 43 of the book *Billboard Refrigerator Cars* by Hendrickson and Kaminski, a volume I suspect we'll be returning to frequently in coming months. While the photo is a bingo, the model isn't, starting with the use of a fishbelly underframe when the prototype doesn't have that feature. (I believe an underframe swap with another 049 series car would fix this issue.) It's noted in the book, as MTL notes in its car copy, that the car was delivered in April 1934 with National B-1 trucks; but the book authors go on to say that this was "only a few months before the Interstate Commerce Commission outlawed car-side advertising." The end of the ATP reflects the fact that billboard refrigerator cars didn't disappear all at once, though the exact date of repainting of this car is most likely forever unknown.

The 5330 was certainly extant as of the July 1935 ORER however, as part of the series 5300 to 5499. All 150 possible cars were there, with these dimensions: inside length 38 feet, outside length 40 feet 11 inches, extreme height 14 feet, door opening 3 feet 10 inches wide by 6 feet 6

inches high, and capacity 1840 cubic feet or 70,000 pounds. The car also carried up to 9000 pounds of crushed ice but wasn't suitable for chunk ice. The 5330 was among more than seven hundred cars registered to the Morrell Refrigerator Car Company. Surprisingly, the header indicates that the company is "Dissolved" and lists a trustee, but shows it as operating the Morrell Refrigerator Line and Morrell Tank Line. Hendrickson and Kaminski state that this was true going back to ORERs of the mid-1920s.

The railroad car company's lifespan might be in question, but the actual meat packer's isn't. On its website, the firm John Morrell and Company describes itself as "considered to be the oldest continuously operating meat manufacturer in the U.S. In 2002 the company celebrated its 175th anniversary." It was founded in England in 1827. It is a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods which operates other meat packer brands with which you might be familiar, and that had refrigerator cars of their own: Armour, Rath, and Patrick Cudahy. It also owns the Krakus brand of Polish ham, my favorite (and my parents), but I don't recall any billboard refrigerator cars carrying that particular trademark!



053 00 080, \$28.10

Reporting Marks: CSXT 600609.

**60 Foot Thrall Centerbeam Flat Car,
CSX Transportation.**

Red with black ends. Mostly white lettering including reporting marks (only) on left. Approximate Time Period: 1988 to present, but see text.

Well, if we can have a Canadian Pacific centerbeam car in blue (March 2011), why not a CSX centerbeam in red? And indeed, this car does exist, as proven by two bingos on the site RRPictureArchives.net. The first was taken in September 2006 and shows a fully loaded 600609, and the second is from July 2007 and is a three quarter going-away view of an unloaded car. Notably missing is the famous "man running from unbalanced load" graphic—pity.

Right away we can count up a delta between prototype and model—do we call this a "hole thing"? Let's not! Though it's true that there are thirteen oval-shaped openings on the real car whereas there are just twelve on the 053 body style. In addition, there are four panels on either side of these openings versus three on the model. This would usually send us right to the ORERs to check the car's length, but RRPictureArchives has it for us: inside, it's 73 feet and outside, it's 79 feet 9 inches. In other words, we've got a stand in here, by almost twenty feet. That's enough to see in N Scale, and rates a "see text."

That red paint did make me wonder whether CSX was the original owner of this car, given the build date of 1988 and the pictures being from eight and nine years later respectively, so I did check through the ORERs. The sure bet based on the image dates was the July 2007 Register, and there were 195 cars in the group 600560 to 600759 in that edition. Despite their nearly eighty foot length, these flats somehow make it into the Plate C clearance profile.

(Why do I think Plate C has changed over time?) The car count was down just three to 192 in the January 2011 ORER, so I think “to present” works just fine for the ATP. Now, to figure out when it started, and so backwards we go in the ORERs. Where I got a surprise: the series is in fact present in the July 1989 ORER, the closest Register I have to the build date of 1988 given by MTL. But in red? The Fallen Flags site comes through with a photo of sister car 600612 as of May 1988, so the answer is, Yes, in red.



140 00 090, \$29.90

Road Number: 84 (will be “B&O 84” in website listings).

Railway Post Office Car, Baltimore and Ohio.

Blue and gray sides; black ends, roof, underframe and details. Delux gold lettering including roadname in center of letterboard, road numbers left and right, and “United States Mail / Railway Post Office” bottom center. Approximate Time Period: early 1950s to early 1960s at least.

There are really two questions to answer with respect to this release, since I must admit I know very little about B&O passenger equipment. First, how prototypical is it, and second, when would it have been painted blue and gray?

As you might already know, the MTL 140 body style is a model of the “as built” RPOs, the window arrangement of which did not meet favor from the United States Post Office. Within a few years, the Post Office mandated changes to the window placement and the railroads complied, including, we assume, the B&O. According to Morning Sun’s B&O Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment, the group 77 to 84 was built by Pullman in 1913, certainly long ago enough to have started out with the window arrangement used by Micro-Trains. At that point, however, the car would have been painted olive green.

The transition from there to blue and gray was gradual. Equipment for the B&O’s train “The Royal Blue” was first in 1935, and that was just, well, blue. Blue and gray was used on equipment for the Capital Limited, National Limited and other “name trains” starting in 1937. The full roster of B&O equipment didn’t get painted this way until 1953. It’s unlikely (but not impossible) that this particular RPO and its sister cars would have been on the “name trains” so I think the ATP given the paint scheme would be the early 1950s. That means that the window arrangement would not be contemporaneous with the blue and gray. Several B&O modelers have already said online that the car will certainly do, at least for now.

Some of this group of RPOs were converted from their original clerestory roof to what the Color Guide calls a “turtleback” roof with a deep arch—perhaps an attempt at “streamlining”? An example is B&O 080 found in March 1969 and pictured in the Color Guide. That car is also in C&O blue, gray and yellow, a post-blue and gray scheme which I think limits the end of the ATP. The leading zero in the road number indicated that the mail racks had been removed, which occurred in the case of the 069, 072, 075, 080 and 087... but

not the 84. Meanwhile, over in the photo archive of Railfan.net there is a September 1964 photo of B&O 87, and an undated photo of B&O 78, both in the blue and gray scheme and with the side in view having five windows on the left. Both do still have the clerestory roof, which isn't an exact match to the MTL car. B&O 81 is in the collection of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and there are photos of it on RRPictureArchives.net, but trust me, you might not want to look at its present condition. I guess it beats being scrapped.



144 00 090, \$31.40

Road Number: none (will be "B&O None" in website listings).

Heavyweight 3-2 Observation Car, Baltimore and Ohio.

Blue and gray sides; black ends, roof, underframe and details. Delux gold lettering including roadname only in center of letterboard. Approximate Time Period: see text.

The blue and gray ATP for this car is probably less narrow than for the RPO, wouldn't I think? Observation cars were certainly an attraction for paying customers on name trains, and as noted above, the name trains started to get blue and gray in the later 1930s. Ah, but did the B&O's name trains have these kinds of observation cars? For that matter, did the B&O have these types of observation cars at all? The lack of a road number might be a clue here.

I mentioned above that the name trains like the Capital Limited were decorated in blue and gray before the remainder of the passenger equipment roster. What I didn't mention is that those trains also had "streamlined heavyweight" cars including closed flat end or round end observation cars. Those cars had raised lettering denoting the railroad name and the train to which they were assigned and looked quite sharp. There are several example photos in the B&O Color Guide. But they're not a match for the MTL car.

The Pullman Project database, when queried on any Plan 3959 (not just the 3959D that is the exact prototype for the MTL body style) does not show anything painted in B&O colors. It's probably fair to conclude that the car is a "fill in" to enable an entire MTL train for the Baltimore and Ohio.

This isn't the first time in model railroading that an open end observation was painted in blue and gray. Bachmann issued its Spectrum series observation as B&O 901, although its model is based on a Pennsylvania Railroad business car. That 901 might refer more to the address of the B&O Museum—901 West Pratt Street—than anything else. But it certainly led to incremental minutes of research, and so much for that. So "see text" it is.

N SCALE REPRINTS:



038 00 330, \$21.50

Reporting Marks: CN 289002.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Plug Door, No Roofwalk, Full Ladders, Canadian National "SuperTherm."

Gray with mostly black lettering including reporting marks and small herald on left and "SuperTherm" with blue bands above and below on right. Approximate Time Period: 1981 to 1994 (given by MTL, we'll take it). Previous Release (as Catalog Number 38330): Road Number 289004, June 2003.

In June 2003 when the first run of this car was released, there wasn't much more to add to my commentary than what MTL had already provided. I did validate the basic data with Ian Cranstone's "Canadian Freight Cars" site including that five cars came from the CN series 280300 to 280499, and were numbered 289001 to 289005. At that time, a 'net search on "Supertherm + Canadian National" resulted in only three entries, two of which were in French! (The third one was Ian's site.)

This time, we do better. There's a photo of the 289004—which was the road number of Micro-Trains' first release—on Page 25 of Morning Sun's **Canadian National Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment, Volume Two**. The SuperTherm cars were given six inches of insulation for energy efficiency. The model to prototype comparison shows riveted sides on the real cars and welded sides on the 038 body style, plus some roofline and side sill differences. It's noted in the Color Guide that "these cars provided savings through two-way hauls, reduced downtime to service for fuel, heater and refrigerator units and higher load capacity." If that's true, why were there only five cars converted? I suppose the learnings from the SuperTherm cars (and sixty SuperTherm trailers, which were also modeled by MTL) were applied to new construction rolling stock later.

The ORER for January 1985 shows the five cars numbered 289000 to 289005, as "Box, Steel, Movable Bulkheads, Supertherm Cars, 25K" with AAR Classification XPI. They had an inside length of 50 feet 2 inches, outside length of 55 feet 4 inches, inside height of 9 feet 2 inches, outside height of 14 feet 6 inches, extreme height of 15 feet 1 inch, and a door opening of 8 feet. The capacity was 3957 cubic feet or 153,000 pounds. You can see what the extra insulation does to the car's capacity just by noting the difference between the inside and outside heights, over five feet. MTL had previously noted that the cars were off the roster by October 1994; Ian Cranstone concurs, and we'll take that for the end of the ATP.



065 00 331 and 065 00 332, \$20.80 each
Reporting Marks: SP 62670 and 62937.
39 Foot Single Dome Tank Cars, Southern Pacific.

dome. Approximate Time Period: late 1950s to early 1980s at least. Previous Releases (as Catalog 65330): A three-pack with road numbers 62701, 62842 and 62902, Catalog Number 65332, June 1992.

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left and roadname on right. Letter "S" in white diamond on

I suppose it's just too difficult to avoid calling these tank cars "sweet"! The s-in-a-diamond on the dome indicates that the cars were originally meant for liquid sugar service. As we'll see, that is not necessarily how they ended up!

Lee Gautreaux's "Railgoat" website (www.railgoat.railfan.net) provides information and photos of sister cars to the ones MTL reprints this month. The road numbers selected here and in the previous three pack span two classes of SP tank cars. The class O-50-12, originally numbered 58400 to 58574 were renumbered to the series 62625 to 62797. They were built by General American in 1934, were 41 feet long and had 12,000 gallons capacity. The class O-50-13 was also built by General American, but in 1942. They were 42 feet long, also had 12,000 gallons capacity and were first numbered 58575 to 58774, then 62798 to 62995. This was, we'll assume, part of the "great renumbering" of the Southern Pacific rolling stock fleet, which would help determine the start of our Approximate Time Period. But that renumbering began in 1956 and continued into the 1960s, so we'll still have to do some ORER work.

Sure enough, in the January 1955 Equipment Register all of the O-50-12s and O-50-13s cars remain in the 50000s, and the two groups noted above are the highest numbered tank cars on the roster. By the January 1959 ORER over five hundred of the cars have been moved to the 62000s and less than 200 are in the 50000s. And by July 1963, just 32 cars were left to be renumbered while 578 had been renumbered. This apparently includes other tank cars from other groups, since there aren't 578 possible numbers from 62625 to 62995! The first group is actually shown in the Equipment Register as 62246 to 62797, which does allow enough space. And allows me to go off point again... Anyway, it's nice that these cars are listed in the Equipment Register at all, but I suspect it's because of that sugar service as opposed to strictly company service. Oh, before I forget, the large roadname was adopted circa 1955, so there's no conflict with the start of the ATP on that detail.

Photos of cars in the O-50-13 class are on Lee's site. To me they appear to be slightly longer and of a smaller diameter than the MTL 065 body style. They also appear to have lasted a while! However, liquid sugar service was replaced with, er, less sweet tasks like service oil loading. The latest of the photos that Lee has is all the way from March 1992. Most of the images are from the 1980s, so I've called the ATP there though with an "at least." By January

1985 the two groups were merged into one, 62246 to 62995, with only 29 cars, so that's where I stopped looking.

N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES: *The following item was announced as an "off-cycle" release for February 2012 via the Micro-Trains website, the MTL Facebook page, and via the e-mail "Micro-Trains E-Line, all on or about February 15.*

993 05 100, \$119.95

Reporting Marks: See below.

A four pack of 50 Foot Steel Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Superior Door, BNSF (Burlington Northern Santa Fe).

Brown (boxcar red) with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and small circle cross ("heritage") herald on right. Yellow conspicuity stripes along bottom sill. Approximate Time Period: 2005 to present. Previous Release (in unweathered form): Road Number 727874, September 2001. Specific catalog numbers, reporting marks and additional description:



025 51 740, BNSF 727902.

Moderate light gray weathering, simulated painted over graffiti in darker brown, additional yellow and gray graffiti on right; all on one side of car.



025 52 740, BNSF 727xxx.

Moderate dark gray/black weathering. Multicolor graffiti depicting caricature of a person's head on left on one side, obscuring road number.



025 53 740, BNSF 727893.

Moderate light gray weathering. Large multicolor graffiti "GRUPYO" across nearly entire one side of car. Simulated painted over graffiti in darker brown.



025 54 740, BNSF 727919.

Weathering only in black, no graffiti.

I'm able to quote myself from both the September and October 2011 UMTRRs since an unweathered version of this car was offered in N and Z Scales respectively in those months, and in between I received a large helping of Incremental Information from one of our UMTRR Gang Members. Also, we now have the January 2011 ORER in the Research Accumulation. Let's start there: The series BNSF 727863 to 727921 at that time had 51 total cars, described as "Box (Copper Rod) 20 Inch Travel, Cross-Bar Loading Devices, 50K" with AAR Designation XP. That's down only one from the January 2006 Equipment Register.

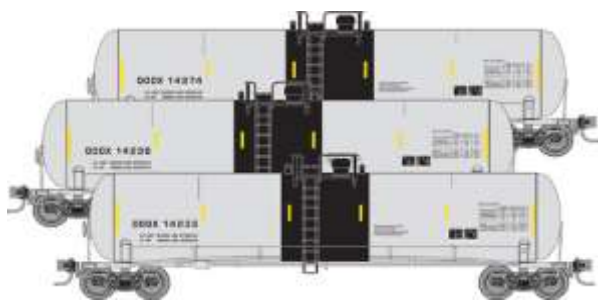
Our helper previously checked the UMLER (Universal Machine Language Equipment Register) and discovered that among other cars in the group, BNSF 727873 was previously BN 376701, and BNSF 727875 was previously BN 376703. In addition, BNSF's Car Drawing Index shows that BNSF 727862-727889 (27 cars) was previously BN 376690-376717 (27 cars) which was renumbered from BN 376200-376399 which had 12-1974 and 01-1975 build dates. Precisely one car, BN 376723, remained from that original group in the January 2011 ORER.

The driver of the start of the ATP isn't any of this, but is the use of conspicuity stripes, which started in 2005 with the legal mandate to do so: too many vehicles were hitting trains at grade crossings. Photos of cars in this series are on RailcarPhotos.com, including BNSF 727888 in nice shape terms of paint, though rather well adorned with small dents from the inside of the car. BNSF 727870 was found in Denver in April 2011 complete with graffiti. While the ORER dimensions are close to the MTL 025 body style, based on the photos we don't have a precise match to the prototype.

N SCALE RUNNER PACKS: In addition to the below announcement, Runner Pack #61, four North Western Refrigerator Line double sheathed wood refrigerator cars with vertical brake staff, is now available. UMTRR coverage was in the September 2011 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 049 51 520, Road Number 4261; 049 52 520, Road Number 4885; 049 53 520, Road Number 5013; 049 54 520, Road Number 5270.



The following item is in pre-order at present and is NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is September 2012. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release of these items in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close March 30.



Scheduled September 2012 Release:

993 00 067, \$99.95

Quantity three of 54 Foot General Service Tank Cars, Department of Defense.

Reporting Marks: DODX 14233, 14238, 14274. Silver-gray with black vertical bands in center. Mostly black lettering including reporting marks on left and tank qualification stencil on right.

Yellow conspicuity stripes along car. Approximate Time Period: 2005 to present. Previous Releases: None. Catalog numbers will be provided upon release of car, but cars will use MTL's 110 body style. Artwork is for illustration purposes and actual release may vary.

The "tank qualification stencil," required by July 2000 for tank cars, is clearly visible on the right side of these Department of Defense cars. As noted when MTL first used it (the green Procor release, Catalog 110070, April 2004) it represents a big change in the way tank cars are

tested. "Qualification" is analogous to "air worthiness" testing performed on planes, meant to address potential problems like leakage before they occur. This feature would have driven the start of the Approximate Time Period, but then there those yellow conspicuity stripes, which were in place starting in 2005.

A quick check of the January 2011 ORER shows 160 cars in the DODX series 14200 to 14361, described as "Tank, DOT 111A100W1" with a Gross Rail Weight of 263,000 pounds, but that's all. Translating the description, these are general purpose cars according to the UTLX website... except when they're not. Other choices are molten sulfur, corn syrup and caustic soda (sodium hydroxide). Gallonage varies quite a bit as well. A bit of a dead end here.

RailcarPhotos.com has seven photos of cars in this group, all taken in North and South Carolina between 2005 and 2008, but only one of them is in the paint scheme that MTL depicts in its preliminary artwork. (It's where I get the "silver-gray" color I use above.) It's the 14313, photographed in April 2008 in Selma, North Carolina. We get more here than in the ORER: capacity 20,422 gallons, exterior length 52 feet, light weight 58,600 pounds, and dimensions within Plate B. I think it was built in either 1970 or 1978; it's not completely possible to read this from the image. We have some deltas between the prototype and the MTL 110 body style. The real car has a centered ladder and platform, and a somewhat different arrangement of the hardware at the top of the car. The degree to which this is irritating is up to the individual N Scaler as usual, but I think most will be OK here. Military cars of all types have proven to be popular, and the fact that other paint schemes exist on this series of cars might just lead to other single releases or Runner Packs in the future — although that's purely my unofficial opinion.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: In addition to the below items, the **Chessie Vintage Advertising Set** (993 21 150, \$119.95) is now available. UMTRR coverage was provided in the October 2011 issue, but the images of this set weren't yet available. So here they are. Individual catalog numbers and road numbers are as follows: 038 50 229, C&O 1944; 038 50 239, C&O 1948; 038 50 249, C&O 1949; 038 50 249, C&O 1957; 038 50 259, C&O 1959.





074 00 142, \$23.95

40 Foot Boxcar, Plug Door, Without Roofwalk, Full Ladders, Presidential Series #42: Gerald Ford.

Cream sides and ends with green roof and black lettering. Multicolor rendition of the Seal of the President of the United States and dates in office on left. Name of Vice President, home state of president and party affiliation at bottom left. Multicolor portrait of president in front of red, white and blue rendition of American flag in service during presidency on right.

It was one of those “I know where I was” moments. On August 8, 1974, Richard Nixon resigned the office of the Presidency. Our family was in Boston on vacation and watched Nixon’s resignation in our hotel room that night. We were scheduled to return home via the Amtrak “TurboTrain” to New York late the next morning. Somewhere near Providence, Rhode Island, Gerald Ford became the thirty-eighth President of the United States, the only man in American history to have not been elected either President or Vice President.

Another possible item in the monthly MTL trivia contest could have been “This President was originally named Leslie Lynch King, Junior.” His biological father—who abused Ford’s mother-- wasn’t revealed to him until he was a teenager, and he was so close to his stepfather that he took his name—Gerald Rudolph Ford, Junior—after finishing college. Ford was born July 14, 1913 in Omaha but grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was an excellent student and a superior football player, doing both in high school and then the University of Michigan. Note how this contrasts with Chevy Chase’s portrayal of him on **Saturday Night Live**; Ford was actually one of the better athletes among Chief Executives. He was good enough to be courted by the Detroit Lions and Green Bay Packers, but he wanted to go to law school. A job coaching football at Yale helped secure that admission. Ford met a number of future political luminaries at Yale Law School, but returned to Grand Rapids to practice law. Following Pearl Harbor, Ford enlisted in the Navy and served dependably for four years. He then returned to legal work in Michigan, and rejoined an interest in Republican politics. He ran against and defeated the incumbent Congressman in the state’s Fifth Congressional District, no easy feat since the incumbent had served five terms and was supported by the local political “machine.” The Fifth was heavily Republican and winning the primary nearly assured the seat. Ford’s election marked the beginning of twenty-four years in Congress. During the campaign he married Elizabeth Ann Bloomer, who became much better known by her nickname Betty.

Ford’s perspective was conservative and strongly in favor of containing Chinese and Soviet power. He locked horns with President Lyndon Johnson over persecuting the Vietnam War. He was also quite adept at understanding budgets and appropriations, and brought his legal background to Congress as well. Above all, though, he was known as an amiable, honest and forthright member of the House of Representatives, and by 1965 this resulted in him becoming the Republican Minority Leader of the House, the highest position among his party members. Ford considered Richard Nixon to be a friend and supported him for election to

the Presidency, but apparently the feeling wasn't mutual and better relations between the White House and the Republican caucus of Congress didn't result. In fact, it's said that Nixon regarded Ford as an intellectual lightweight.

Then came the resignation in disgrace of Spiro T. Agnew, the first Vice President under Richard Nixon. Agnew quit under a plea bargain with the Justice Department, which stemmed from their investigation of his having accepted bribes while in office as VP and as Governor of Maryland. Nixon appointed Ford to replace Agnew, for no better reason than the belief that he would easily be confirmed by Congress. That's exactly what happened and Ford took the oath of office on December 6, 1973. The Watergate Scandal was about to break wide open.

At first Ford supported the sitting President, but as more and more details about Watergate emerged, he began to distance himself from Nixon. When it became known that Nixon had secretly taped thousands of hours of White House conversations, Ford urged Nixon to provide them. They were, as we now know, damning—Nixon had knowledge of the Watergate breakin and had directed the subsequent coverup—impeachable offenses. Nixon resigned and Gerald Ford found himself as the leader of the Western World only eight months after being just a leading Congressman from Michigan, without a single public vote being cast for him.

Ford inherited a country that was suffering economically, still grappling with the Vietnam War and its aftermath, and struggling with civil rights issues including busing to relieve racial imbalance in school systems across the country. Further, the détente policy begun by Nixon with the Soviet Union was still rather tenuous. But above all, the country had been torn apart by Watergate and shocked by the first ever resignation in disgrace of a sitting President. Ford needed to address this immediately. He did in his remarks following his taking the oath of office, stating assuredly, "Our long national nightmare is over." Certainly Ford's manner and style—honest, forthright, and approachable—which had given him the position of Vice President—was what a hurting country needed. But just a month later, Ford made a decision which most likely cost him any chance of being an elected President in 1976: he granted Richard Nixon "a free, full and absolute pardon." Ford told the United States that he wanted to move forward and not reopen the wounds of Watergate. Many did not agree and Ford's popular approval rating was halved almost instantly. It was even called a "corrupt bargain."

Despite not having achieved the closure he sought by pardoning Nixon, Ford had to press on with the business of being the President. Even without the circumstances that led to his ascension to the White House, Ford would have been thoroughly challenged. He was able to make some progress, particularly in foreign affairs, but economic "stagflation" haunted his short tenure. Further, Congress wanted to reclaim power they felt they had ceded to the Presidency in administrations past, and frequently clashed with their former colleague. Things got worse in 1976 when, sensing an opening with the conservative wing of the party that had felt betrayed, Ronald Reagan mounted a serious challenge for the Republican nomination for the next election. Ford was able to retain his party's place on the ticket, but

found himself well behind Jimmy Carter in opinion polls. Ford was able to make up much but not all of this deficit. Carter secured the White House by 57 electoral votes and 1.7 million popular votes. Ford officially retired from public service but did not leave the public eye completely; he lectured and wrote several books. I was surprised to learn that he approached Ronald Reagan about running for Vice President for the 1980 election! As we know, that didn't quite work out. Meanwhile, Ford's wife Betty battled serious addiction problems, went public with her struggle, and co-founded the Betty Ford Clinic in 1982. Gerald Ford continued on as an elder statesman of and advisor to the Republican party. Ford died on December 26, 2006 at the age of ninety-three.

Gerald Ford was awarded the Presidential Freedom in 1999, honoring his service following the nightmare of Watergate. The Miller Center recognizes this as well: "Americans, by and large, believed that Gerald Ford was an innately decent and good man and that he would (and did) bring honor to the White House."

There are just two more Presidential Trivia contests remaining, so without delay let's see what we can do. Born in a log cabin? Well, Lincoln's already been done. Library of 4000 books? Not specific enough—I imagine that would apply to numerous Chief Executives. (It probably applies to this reviewer!) Founded the University of Buffalo? Ah, now that we can work with. And the final clue—the last Whig President? It's the lucky thirteenth man to lead the country—Millard Fillmore. Get those entries in, and good luck!



470 00 039, \$29.95, Ringling Brothers Two-Pack of Circus Wagons.

First wagon is fully enclosed, red with gold ornamentation and wheels. Second wagon is a "cage" type with orange frame, and gold wheels, bars and ornamentation.

This latest companion release to the Ringling Brothers vintage flat cars is included here mostly for completeness; it's not on standing orders so if you're interested you'll need to work with your Authorized Micro-Trains Retailer.

The following item is in pre-order at present and are NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is September 2012. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release of these items in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close March 30.

993 21 160, \$219.95, "Cemetery Central" Halloween Set. Expected to consist of the following items, depicted here in artist's renditions (please note that MTL has disclosed that set is subject to change). Base paint is black with bright green lettering, except for the bay window caboose. Catalog and road numbers will be confirmed at the time of release.



2-8-2 Steam Locomotive; Model Power release with MTL paint and Magne-Matic coupler installed. Road Number 1031.



Fishbelly side flat car (045 series) with "casket and hearse" load. Road number 1221.

Fishbelly side gondola (exact series TBD) with "Graveyard Scene" load. Road number 1692.



Two bay offset hopper (055 series) with "skeleton bones" load. Road number 1313.

Bay window caboose (130 series) decorated in "mausoleum" style in gray with black. Road number: None (but we'll check back on this upon release).



Well, I think I'm finished with last year's Halloween candy by now; having been stuck with much more candy than trick-or-treaters in past years, I currently follow the rule of buying only candy that I like! So that must mean it's time for the pre-order announcement of the latest MTL Halloween set. Well, no, there is probably no causality between the two events; certainly it would be "spooky" if there were a connection.

I was a little curious about the selection of the road numbers. 1031 on the loco is obvious; the date of Halloween. The 1313 on the hopper makes sense if you are triskaidekaphobic—which, I hasten to add, is not the case with our daughter, who was born on a thirteenth! (And when she picks numbers for my lottery tickets, 13 is always included, and usually comes up!) The 1221 on the flat car corresponds to December 21, 2012 which is the date of the Winter Solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, or the longest night of the year—not applicable for my friends in Australia! And 1692 doesn't stand for a day, of course, but a year, the year of the Salem Witch Trials. And of course there are websites about this event: for example, a "Famous American Trials" page (<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/salem.htm>). Now, about that "mausoleum" caboose... what might work there? It appears that these structures were built in the "B.C. years"—for example, that of the First Qin Emperor of China was completed in 210 BC, "just in time for his use." Let's not use 210, though—that's my birthday! Now that would be both creepy, and ooky. (Bonus points for naming the TV series which includes "creepy" and "ooky" in its theme... and there is a train connection.)

By the way, there was talk online about the loco in this set being from Bachmann, along with some, er, commentary on that. Turns out that's not the case, at least the way MTL has the lineup right now. Even so, that wouldn't be the first time that a Bachmann steamer was included as the motive power: that would be the "Disconnect Log Car Set" from back in 2006, which had an undecorated Prairie (2-6-2) from that firm.

Nn3 SCALE (NARROW GAUGE): No releases this month.

Z SCALE NEW RELEASES:



533 00 011 and 533 00 012, \$18.60 each
Reporting Marks: ATSF 180808 and 180874.
33 Foot Two Bay Hopper, Offset Sides, Flat Ends, Santa Fe (AT&SF).

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. Black and white "circle cross" herald above and left of reporting marks.

Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: 1941 to late 1940s (based on reporting marks with periods) but possibly as late as the early 1970's, see text.

It was the first Micro-Trains offset side hopper released in N Scale-- by Kadее in June 1977, and at least numerically, it's also the first released in Z Scale. (Technically, it's a tie with the B&O release below, I suppose.) The road numbers released here don't duplicate any of the three N Scale releases, which is definitely alright in the case of the first two N Scale road number, which don't match the prototype as well as the third one (180806, if you're keeping score) does.

Back when that third N Scale number was released, in April 2003, two of the long time UMTRR Gang Members did most of the heavy lifting for me. First, George Hollwedel checked with his data library and found that freight car historian Richard Hendrickson said the GA-54 can be modeled with an Athearn hopper in HO. That helped via comparison to the MTL 055, and now 533, body styles. "I looked at the Athearn hopper," George reported, "and it has extended ends, but otherwise looks like the 55000 MT body. I'm counting it among the 'very close' at least." Coming from George, that was a pretty good endorsement.

Then Brad Scherer offered information from the publication **Santa Fe Railway Listing of Freight Cars by Class and Car Number 1906-1991**, compiled by Larry Occhiello and published by the Santa Fe Railway Historical Society. "In it is listed cars by number series and class over the included years," Brad told us. "Looking up the road number, we find that this is a class GA-54, built in 1941." That's in agreement with MTL's car copy then and now. "As you may remember," Brad continued, "Santa Fe classified its gondolas and hoppers in a single type of class, differentiated by letters and numbers. Thus, all hoppers and gondolas are GA-class (for <G>ondol<A>), and these were part of the 80th series (26 letters of the alphabet + 54) of hoppers and gondolas received. Looking up the Ga-54 class, the number series of 200 cars goes from 180800 to 180999. The brief description is 'Hopper 33 feet, 2 bay.' The manufacturer is listed as the General American Transportation Corporation." Brad relayed the "live listing" of car counts for the GA-54 as well: 1942 and 1945, 200; 1947 through 1961, 199; 1963, 161; 1965, 120; 1968, 90; 1970, 73; 1971, 61; 1973, 19; 1974, 7; 1977, 4; 1978, zero.

Brad noted that the "live listing" made no mention of paint scheme—just like the ORERs don't! But we have that information from the RPI site through a look at how the reporting marks changed over time. The move away from the ampersand, that is, from "A.T.&S.F" to "A.T.S.F." took place in 1938, prior to the delivery of these cars. In 1944, the periods went

away, turning "A.T.S.F." into just "ATSF." This would impact the "strictly speaking" ATP, depending on how fast you think the cars were restenciled. The RPI listing for the Santa Fe also notes that in 1941 the line put heralds on its hoppers for the first time. I wonder if that first occurred on this series of cars?

We'll grab the July 1943 ORER for the vital statistics: series 180800 to 180999 had inside length of 33 feet, inside height of 7 feet 5 inches, outside length of 34 feet and extreme height of 10 feet 7½ inches. Cubic footage was 2191 and capacity was 100,000 pounds.

An interesting bit of trivia: in the July 1950 Register, the group was subdivided into the main collection of 154 cars and a subseries of 45 cars with AAR Designation HMR and a notation that read, "outside height from rail to top of running board, 12 feet 1 inch, extreme height 12 feet 1 inch." Wait a minute-- running board? Yep, as a note in the AAR listings says, "If any of these hopper cars are equipped with a roof or are covered for protection of contents the letter 'R' should be affixed to the regular symbol to designate its special class of service." Does that mean a "Covered Hopper"? Well, kind of, although that really would have been an LO class car. The use of a roof on some of these cars lasted at least through 1959 but was not mentioned in the January 1964 ORER. We also don't know if the cars were still painted as delivered, but then again, "Rule #1" (it's your railroad) always applies.



533 00 021 and 533 00 022, \$17.80 each
Reporting Marks: B&O 727044 and 727046.
33 Foot Two Bay Hopper, Offset Sides, Flat
Ends, Baltimore & Ohio.

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left and large "B&O" in center.

Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: 1956 (build date) to late 1970s.

I'll reach back to July 2011 and the release of the 727044 in N Scale in order to reprint detailed information from B&O expert and long time UMTRR Gang Member Brian DeVries. Prior to the regular run car in N Scale, and of course these Z Scale releases, Brian shepherded two previous Special Runs from Micro-Trains of a similarly painted car. Writing on the "B&OinN" YahooGroup, Brian said "the car is an N-44 class car modeled after those coming out of the B&O's DuBois Pennsylvania car shops beginning in October 1956 into 1957 and, continuing on in 1959-60. In all, some 3,300 cars were produced." Brian notes that "the paint scheme portrayed is the 'Late Billboard B&O' with the small ampersand which was used from 1955 onward. The only offset-side two-bay cars to carry this paint scheme prior to the N-44 project were some repainted N-35's and (a few) N-41's. This became the B&O's second most common look (behind the '13 Great States' Capitol dome logo)."

Brian added that "These cars were stenciled 're-built' but from the center-sills up, they were assembled from new Bethlehem Steel components. A few brake rigging and truck components were salvaged from older cars being scrapped at DuBois - hence the 're-built.'"

The ORER for January 1959 shows the series 727000 to 728999 with 1997 cars, described simply as “Hopper, Steel” with AAR Designation HM. The inside length was 33 feet, inside width 10 feet 4 inches, outside length 34 feet, extreme height 10 feet 8 inches, and capacity 2145 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. This is before the second set of rebuilds that Brian mentioned, so it’s not surprising that the January 1964 Equipment Register shows the group as even larger: 3264 cars numbered from 727000 to 730299. Micro-Trains notes in its car copy that the group was at just 25 cars by 1980. I see 182 in the April 1976 ORER.

An example photo is on George Elwood’s Fallen Flags site; it’s from the Jim Sands collection and is of B&O 728306. Brian also provided to me a reference photo from October 1956 showing some of these hoppers coming out of the DuBois Shops. Brian added for us an insight regarding the use of four consecutive car numbers within the two Special Runs and including the production car in N Scale, which extends to these two Z Scale cars being just two numbers apart. “This is appropriate because sizeable blocks of these cars, in exact numerical order, were moved from the DuBois Shops to staging areas like Punxsutawney Pennsylvania’s Riker Yard and, from there, to the mines for their inaugural loading. They would be scattered to the wind thereafter.”

Z SCALE REPRINTS: No releases this month.

Z SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES: *The following item was announced as an “off-cycle” release for February 2012 via the Micro-Trains website, the MTL Facebook page, and via the e-mail “Micro-Trains E-Line, all on or about February 15.*



531 44 170, \$24.15

Reporting Marks: SOO LINE 69078.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, Soo Line.

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left and large roadname across car. Light weathering in shades of brown. Extensive multicolor graffiti on one side. Approximate Time Period: 1957 (build date) to mid-1980s. Previous Release (in unweathered form): Road Number 69078, June 2011.

How about that: the first time that I can add the “Previous Release” verbiage to a single Z Scale weathered release! The first weathered item in 1:220 was issued in June 2009, and it and all other cars up to this point were weathered versions of the same previously “clean” item. Up to this point, that is. The UMTRR Spy Network informs me that MTL decided when the first release of this car was being made for June 2011, that it was an ideal candidate for a separate weathered run. Would the potential to make the double O in SOO LINE into the caricature of a grinning face have anything to do with that decision? I guess we’ll never know for sure. (Insert “smilie” here.)

Reprinting myself from that June 2011 coverage, there were twenty-five covered hoppers in the Soo Line series 69074 to 69098 as of the January 1959 ORER, plus another twenty-five numbered from 69099 to 69123 with identical dimensions. Though, at the time, the Soo was

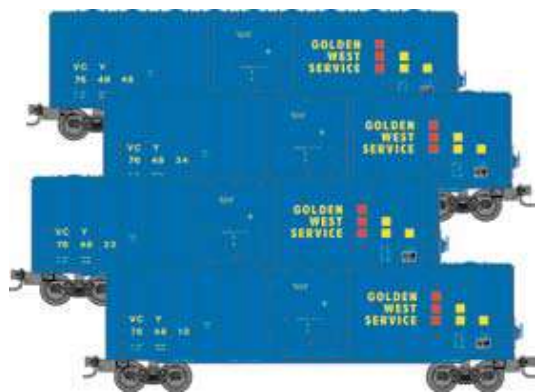
still in possession of many groups of cars that were even numbers only (such as boxcars) or odd numbers only (flat cars, open hoppers), these covered hoppers were numbered consecutively. According to the information on the Soo Line Historical Society website (URL www.sooline.org) these cars were built by Pullman-Standard in 1957 and were sublettered for the Wisconsin Central—the first one, not the second one with which you might be more familiar. Also on the SLHS website: “Unique to these cars are the prototypes’ unusual shapes of the ‘S’ in the billboard ‘SOO LINE.’ Some of these cars lasted in their original paint schemes until the 1990s.”

Heading back briefly to the 1959 ORER, we’ll provide the usual vital statistics for these cars: inside length 29 feet 3 inches, outside length 35 feet 3 inches, extreme height 13 feet 3 inches, capacity 2003 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. Breezing through the rest of the ORER Accumulation, we find all 25 cars still in service in April 1976, 18 in October 1986, and just one, the 69098, in July 1992. That yields for us a decent Approximate Time Period which I’ll call at the mid eighties. We had a bingo on the “clean” release 69078 on the site RRPictureArchives.net, although as you might recall, its condition was anything but clean.

Z SCALE RUNNER PACKS: In addition to the below announcement, Runner Pack #39, four CB&Q (Burlington) boxcars, is now available. UMTRR coverage was in the September 2011 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 500 51 070, Road Number 62602; 500 52 070, Road Number 62898; 500 53 070, Road Number 62961; 500 54 070, Road Number 62980.



The following item is in pre-order at present and is NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is September 2012. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release of Runner Packs in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close March 30.



994 00 045, \$79.95

Quantity four of 50 Foot Steel Exterior Post Boxcar, Plug Door, Golden West Service.

Reporting Marks: VCY 764810, 764822, 764834, 764846.

Dark blue with yellow lettering including reporting marks on left and roadname on right. Red and yellow squares right of the roadname. Approximate Time Period: mid-1990s through mid-decade of the 2000s. Previous Releases: None. Catalog Numbers (in the 511 series) will be confirmed upon release.

The projected road numbers for this quartet are not the same as on the N Scale Weathered Pack of March 2011, but they are in the same prototype series, so we can use the commentary anyway—after cleaning off the dirt and graffiti, I suppose! These cars don’t appear in the

July 1992 ORER for the Ventura County Railway (that's the "VCY"), but are in the ORER for October 1996. The series 764500 to 764899 had 332 cars described as "Box, Steel" with AAR Designation XP. The vital statistics: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 11 inches, outside length 57 feet 10 inches, extreme height 15 feet 4 inches, door opening 12 feet, and capacity 5258 cubic feet or 149,000 pounds. There were still 327 cars in the series as of the January 2002 ORER. The entire Ventura County Railway listing is gone from the October 2004 Equipment Register, however the VCY cars were transferred to the Galveston Railroad registration. But just 109 cars were left at that point, and only 31 remained as of January 2006.

As I've recounted before, the Golden West Service was a joint venture of the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Greenbrier Companies, and Gunderson. It came about as the result of the cash-strapped SP's need for rolling stock. Gunderson rebuilt that rolling stock taken from the Espee and leased it back to them through Greenbrier. The reporting marks corresponded to three railroads that probably couldn't fit all of the cars on their rosters on their actual physical trackage! In this case, "VCY" denotes the Ventura County Railway; the others were Coe Rail Inc. and Galveston Railroad, L.P. John Mosbarger preserved a four page brochure advertising "Southern Pacific Lines' New Golden West Service Railcar Fleet" in living color on his "Shasta Route" website (URL <http://shastaroute.railfan.net> , then hit the "SP Miscellaneous" button). The refurbishment of nine thousand cars was to be completed by 1993. The entire operation is more or less in the past tense, however, as Union Pacific has reclaimed the Golden West fleet and put its own predecessor railroads' reporting marks on it, including at least SP, SSW and DRGW. So while the Approximate Time Period ends approximately in the middle of the last decade, it's possible to simply restencil the cars for one of the UP railroads and you're good to go to The Present.

Z SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES:



502 00 544, \$22.95

Reporting Marks: MA 1788.

40 Foot Box Car, Plug Door, Massachusetts State Car.

Aluminum sides, black roof, ends, sills and door hardware; blue and black primary lettering including reporting marks, state name and outline map on left. Four color process graphics including state flag, state flower (mayflower) and state bird (black-capped chickadee) on right. Forty-fourth release in the Z Scale States of the Union series.

[Note: This commentary is largely reprinted from the July 2003 UMTRR.]

There was once a commercial which contained the tag line, "The Spirit of Massachusetts is the Spirit of America" and that certainly holds true even if you're not a tourist. The American Revolution began on April 19, 1775 in Lexington, Massachusetts with the "shot heard 'round the world." But the future Commonwealth had already noted a number of

firsts prior to Lexington and Concord, for example, the first public park, Boston Common, in 1634; the first American college, Harvard, founded 1636, as well as the first public secondary (1635) and primary (1639) schools; the first public library, 1653; the first regularly published newspaper, 1704; and let's not forget the first Thanksgiving, 1621. And there's that Boston Tea Party as well. A number of the Founding Fathers, including John and Samuel Adams, were from Massachusetts. The television program "Founding Fathers," in fact, gives a fair amount of credit to Samuel Adams for stirring things up, though it's his cousin John that became more famous over time and eventually became President. (Unless you're counting beer brands; Sam is up one on John there.) John Adams was one of five US presidents that hailed from the Bay State.

Native Americans who inhabited the area included the Nauset, the Massachuset and the Wampanoag when the first Europeans came to the area. Unfortunately, they brought disease which eventually wiped out three-quarters of the native population in New England according to one account. Crispus Attucks, who was killed in the Boston Massacre, was the son of a Massachuset woman, but that particular tribe was entirely gone by 1800.

In 1826, the first American commercial railroad was built in Quincy, its purpose to haul granite. By that time the Commonwealth was well on its way to becoming a major industrial center, producing iron, textiles and devices such as the sewing machine (developed in 1845 by Elias Howe) and materials such as vulcanized rubber (produced by Charles Goodyear in 1839). Leisure and sports can be traced to here as well; the first basketball and volleyball games were played within Massachusetts borders and at Revere was the first public beach. The first successful American subway opened in Boston in 1897; note that "successful" disclaimer!

While most people think of Boston first, and perhaps Boston Baked Beans second, when considering Massachusetts, much of the western portion of the state remains decidedly rural and scenic; the age-old Berkshires provide the mountainous backdrop. I'm reminded of how open the space is when I have to drive the forty mile stretch between Exits 2 and 3 on the Massachusetts Turnpike! Are we there yet?

My first entry into the Bay State was, appropriately, by train; by Amtrak "TurboTrain", to be exact, into Back Bay Station in Boston. It's appropriate that Gerald Ford is the Presidential car this month since, as I've reported above, President Nixon while we were there and Ford became President on the way home. I've been back numerous times since then. The most memorable of the recent trips was the "New England Swing" of May 2008, the key destination being Boston and a concert by contemporary jazz artist Keiko Matsui.

Among the famous from the Commonwealth are actors Leonard Nimoy, Bette Davis, Jack Albertson, and Matt Damon; inventors Eli Whitney and Samuel F.B. Morse; writers Henry David Thoreau, John Greenleaf Whittier and Edgar Allan Poe; Theodore Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss; educators Buckminster Fuller and Horace Mann, and perhaps to no one's surprise, the musical group Boston.

HOn3 SCALE (NARROW GAUGE): Runner Pack #1, (994 00 951), three Colorado & Southern refrigerator cars, is now available. UMTRR coverage was in the September 2011 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 850 51 010, Road Number 1102; 850 52 010, Road Number 1108; 850 53 010, Road Number 1114.



MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Unfortunately, the biggest announcement is for something MTL doesn't have this month: "Our next shipment of Z SD40-2 chassis did not arrive as scheduled. We will release our next Z scale locomotive as soon as we are able. We apologize for this delay."

Moving swiftly to what MTL does have, there are two new structure kits. In N Scale is a "Ship Supply House" (499 90 939, \$34.95) and in Z Scale is a "Tipple Extension and Mine Head" (799 90 958, \$32.95) which combines with the Coal Mine Tipple Kit. Two new loads are available: an N Scale Scrap Load (2-pack, 499 43 980, \$9.95) and a Z Scale Railroad Tie Load (799 43 942, \$9.95).

DISCONTINUED ALERT: February was another blowout month for MTL N Scale cars, with five hitting the bye-bye board. In catalog order, they are the British Columbia Railway tank car reprint (065 00 630), the "The Rock" boxcar reprint (073 00 020), the Union Pacific "Building America" Center Flow with MP reporting marks (092 00 270), the Western Pacific covered gondola reprint (106 00 220), and the one of a kind Santa Fe bay window caboose (130 00 100). I'll bet MTL wish they made more of those waycars!

Other items have left the building as well, and we'll also take those in catalog number order. First is the weathered Boston & Maine/Guilford boxcar (025 44 400, mid-month November 2011), followed by the New Haven wood boxcar (042 00 130, June 2011), the Baltimore and Ohio hopper (055 00 480, July 2011) and the Canadian Pacific open hopper reprint (055 00 410, October 2011), the American Beef Packers steel refrigerator reprint (059 00 540, December 2009), and the D&TS/Canadian National center flow reprint (092 00 220, August 2011). Though it doesn't roll on tracks—but does have wheels—the Ringling Brothers Modern Wagon Pack is gone (462 00 050).

In Z Scale, the first sellout of a 2012 release is "dirty": the Union Pacific weathered two-pack (500 44 600, mid-January 2012). It's also first in the catalog number sequence. Just three other cars are gone: the New Haven boxcar (500 00 720, June 2011), the "clean" Soo Line covered hopper (531 00 170, June 2011) just as the weathered version was released; and the second number of the Florida East Coast well car with container (540 00 102, October 2010, first number already gone).

Besides these, I've also updated the UMTRR website with the Runner Packs and their individual items which have been discontinued. I'm using as my source the MTL on-line

ordering pages. Suffice to say that the list of what packs are still available is much shorter, in both N and Z Scales, than the list of what is outta here. I hope I haven't worn out the letter "D" on my keyboard. I also note that a number of N and Z Scale structure kits are out of stock also. I don't track these anywhere on the UMTRR site –rolling stock is enough! –but it is worth noting here nonetheless.

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: A somewhat humorous "exception proves the rule" item from one of our readers who spends a lot of time trackside at the day job (and thus, we can't reveal the name of said Gang Member). We've noted several times that one would not typically see cars with obscured reporting marks, such as those MTL issues. Those releases are usually "recycles" of remaining stock of previously issued unweathered cars. I've noted, as have others, that this is not really a prototype practice. Well, as you can guess, our field reporter tells us: "I did finally see **one** car with obscured numbers!"

OOPS PATROL: Isn't sending the wrong column out enough of an oops? Maybe, but there were a few numbering problems that were corrected when I updated the website tables.

FINALLY, ANY INTEREST IN BACK ISSUES? As most of you know, since the debut of these bytes in PDF format in January 2010, I have not posted the long, shorter "archive" or any other version of the UMTRR to the website. I had several reasons for this change, among them less work to maintain the site, concern about the transfer bandwidth (different from disk space in my domain irwinsjournal.com, of which I have plenty) and also a desire to move all my readers to that outrageously priced subscriber edition. Kind of a paywall, except without the paywall, you might say. (Or might not.) I did not exactly get a surge of subscribers when I did this, perhaps proving that all I had was semi-interested lurkers going to the site to read the column.

However, there has been the occasional, and I do mean occasional, request for back issues, usually the result of a computer issue "eating" an issue or a few. I've always responded to these requests, although not always promptly (!). But an e-mail received during the month has made me wonder whether it does make sense to post UMTRR "back issues" on the 'net once again. So I ask, what do you think? Drop me an e-mail with your reaction, or lack of same-- I'd be interested in that as well. Please be sure to include "UMTRR" as part of the subject line somewhere so that your note doesn't wind up with those e-mails from entities of questionable origin. Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers, George

[Legalese: You've received this because you've requested a UMTRR e-mail subscription. If there's been some mistake, please let me know via e-mail at umtrr@irwinsjournal.com, including "UMTRR" in the subject line (all other e-mail including to any other addresses in the irwinsjournal.com domain is automatically deleted unread). You may also reply to this e-mail, but PLEASE delete attachments and other text first. All information contained herein is supplied "as is" and no warranties are express or implied. Trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Images of releases provided through courtesy of Micro-Trains Line, Inc. The Federal Trade Commission considers this effort to be an "endorsement." I assume readers can make up their own minds.]