



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

## **The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report**

**Issue #241b - January, 2017 - Part Two (Pre-Orders)**

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Hello again everyone... we're back with Part Two of the coverage for this month. These are the sixteen items which Micro-Trains announced for pre-orders through February 28. The rest of the coverage is in the previously released Part One. All of the below items are N Scale... so Z Scalers, sorry, the only item I have for you here is an MTL announcement. I won't be offended if you close this now and/or recycle the bytes.

Instead of splitting these between New Releases and Reprints (of which there's only one anyway), as I would usually do, I'm going to use the chronological release order for these items, with the exception of saving the Weyerhaeuser Train Set and the "16 Unit Tank Car Set" for last.

MTL has stated that these may be the final SW1500s produced. The chassis needed for these locos, which is produced elsewhere, was obtained at a significantly higher price, which resulted in a corresponding price increase for these locomotives. Chances are that when these chassis run out, the next run of them would be at a cost that would make the price point infeasible. In addition, all of these units' production runs are subject to sufficient pre-order quantities. I don't think that will be an issue for most of these roadnames, but I can see a few of them at risk (NASA, G&W, Weyerhaeuser). As before, the locos are DCC ready and accept TCS MT 1500 and Digitrax DN-126M2 decoders.

Without further ado...

*The following N Scale items are in pre-order at present and are NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is as noted below. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close February 28. All items are shown with MTL preliminary artwork and actual releases may vary.*



**Scheduled Release September 2017:**

**986 00 513, 986 00 514 and 986 00 515,  
\$184.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 2621, 2632 and 2658  
SW1500 Diesel, Southern Pacific.**

Gray with red front hood, steps, platforms and bottom sill. White lettering including

roadname on hood and road number on cab. These units will include SP-specific lights and number boards and Flexi-Coil trucks. Approximate Time Period: 1967 (earliest delivery) to

mid-1990s. Previous Releases: Road Numbers 2471 and 2510, Catalog Numbers 986 00 511 and 512, May 2015 (pre-orders taken December 2014).

At least I get to ease into Part Two with a reprinted paint scheme. That also lets me borrow an image of that previous release; here's the 2510. As a data point of the impact of the increase in the chassis cost, the MSRP for this unit is fully fifty dollars above the previous releases. Yikes. I'm sure the folks behind the red and yellow sign don't like this either.



Richard Percy's "Espee Modelers Archive" ([espee.railfan.net](http://espee.railfan.net), no "www") includes a rundown of the 240 (!) SW1500s delivered to the Southern Pacific between 1967 and 1973, 46 of which went to SP subsidiary Cotton Belt. All of these were initially painted in the scarlet and gray that MTL depicts. There were changes to these units across deliveries and then later as well; witness for example the photos of the 2471 that were taken in 1980 and 1994 respectively. These units may also have started out pristine—a nearly new 2471 as of 1968 is shown on [RRPictureArchives.net](http://RRPictureArchives.net)—but as with most SP power, didn't stay that way for long. Washing of diesels simply wasn't an Espee priority. I should point out that parts of the handrails were painted white, a bit of detail that needed to be handled by the modeler on the previous run. (Some brands of paint used on RC cars will "stick" better to the handrail material that MTL utilizes.) However, the MTL artwork shows the handrails done in white this time.

The start of the ATP is staggered based on deliveries, which is duly noted above. The site [Utahrails.net](http://Utahrails.net) helps with the other end of the ATP: most of the former SP and SSW units were transferred to the series UP 1060 to 1233 in 1996 and 1997, with no doubt a lot of repainting as well. These became "UPY," or Union Pacific Yard, units in the early part of the decade of the 2000s. It's also noted on [Utahrails](http://Utahrails.net) that from 1967 to 1973, SP/SSW received 240 SW1500s in 11 different orders, of the total of 808 SW1500s built by EMD. That's fully 30 percent of the total fleet of this model.



***Scheduled Release September 2017:***

**986 00 080, \$194.95 each**

**Road Number: 3**

**SW1500 Diesel, NASA Railway.**

Blue with white band and red stripes. Black underframe and trucks. Red road number on hood. Blue, white and red NASA medallion

on cab. Approximate Time Period: around 2010 (based on paint scheme) to no later than 2015. Previous Releases: None.

Never mind the ATP for this one. The real customer base for this release is going to be principally the purchasers of the NASA Series of freight cars. We don't know how many that is, so I think this entry is one of the more at-risk for lack of pre-orders.

Anyway, three SW1500s were purchased by NASA second-hand from the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railway in 1983. Built in 1968 and 1970, they were former TP&W 303, 305 and 306 which became numbers 1, 2 and 3 respectively. They replaced NASA's S-2 diesel switchers. It appears that the initial repaint was red and silver, not the blue and white which MTL will use for this release. That led this author to scramble to discover the repaint date. The best I was able to do was a 2013 photo of the #3 in the blue and white on Railpictures.net which stated "repainted a few years ago." An image from 2010 posted on Pinterest appears to back this up. (And I think this is the first time I've cited Pinterest in these bytes...)

In March 2014, #2 was donated to the Gold Coast Railroad Museum. In 2015, #1 was sold to the Natchitoches, Louisiana Parish Port and the #3 went to the Madison Railroad in Indiana where it's still in use for freight and tourist train service. According to an article on the site Roundaboutmadison.com, the line had some help from their state and congressional representatives and picked up the unit as surplus for a fraction of its potential resale value. Such a deal!

The NASA Railway's operations were rarely accessible to the public, except during either its interchange work with the Florida East Coast or via special tours. But there are enough photos of the #3 out there for reference, for example, on RRPictureArchives.net a May 2010 shot. I'll also note that Wikipedia has an undated photo of the #3 with the road number at the front end of the long hood instead of the center as modeled.



***Scheduled Release October 2017:***

**986 00 571, 986 00 572 and 986 00 573,  
\$194.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 1135, 1174 and 1198.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Union Pacific.**

Yellow with gray roof and red bottom sill. Gray underframe, trucks and pilots. Gray and white handrails. Red lettering

outlined in black including roadname on hood and road number on cab. Small red, white and blue UP shield medallion below road number on cab. These units will include SP-specific lights and number boards and Flexi-Coil trucks. Approximate Time Period: generally, late 1990s to early decade of the 2000s (based on paint scheme). Previous Releases: None.

I can repeat myself from just a couple of pages above. The site Utahrails.net helps with the other end of the ATP: most of the former Southern Pacific and Cotton Belt units were transferred to the series UP 1060 to 1233 in 1996 and 1997. These became "UPY," or Union Pacific Yard, units in the early part of the decade of the 2000s, keeping the same numbers. There's your general ATP in a nutshell, though adding a "UPY" to the unit is relatively simple. It goes in small letters just above the road number.

I'll stick with Utahrails and its comprehensive roster information for some specifics on these three units. The 1135 was the former SP 2551, built in November 1969 and retired without being changed to UPY in February 2009. The 1174 was SP 2606, built in October 1971 and

flipped to UP in February 1997. It was sold to Central California Traction Company in April 2003, but wasn't repainted out of UP colors until September 2005. SP 2654, built in May 1972, became UP 1198 in April 1997. It also was not relettered UPY.

This leads me to conclude that MTL chose the road numbers carefully for the maximum Approximate Time Period. A total of 174 units were transferred to UP from the SP and SSW which provides plenty of other road numbers from which to choose... including the UPY units. You might recall that the UPY designation was needed because the locomotive roster had become so large, including via the addition of one thousand (!) SD70M diesels, that they would have run out of four digit numbers otherwise. I suspect this might have blown up their computer systems if they hadn't planned ahead... and who would have planned ahead for a collection of more than ten thousand locomotives?

Good grief, at this writing there are 13,527 UP locomotive photos on RRPictureArchives.net, just under the total of 13,964 images of UP rolling stock. There are two of the 1135, from 1997 and 2006 respectively, both showing the as-modeled paint scheme. I note that there's a series of shots from June 2006 tagged "UPY 1135" on the site as well, but that lettering is not on the 1135 as it was never officially redesignated before being retired. The single shot of the 1174 is from 2001 and shows what might be graffiti over much of the word "Pacific" on the hood. Before I forget, I'll note that while the pilots are gray, the edges of the steps are white. That detail might not be covered at the factory but can be handled quickly with a small brush and a steady hand. The 1198 was in service at several locations in Oregon in the years 2003 through 2006 and so there are images taken in Salem, Portland, Oregon City and Brooklyn (yes, Brooklyn, Oregon... I looked it up and it's a neighborhood in Portland). As of July 2001 it was in a line of stored UP diesels in Nampa, Idaho, also without the "UPY."

I had one question on my mind while doing this research: did the UP ever buy any SW1500s for itself, as opposed to acquiring them through mergers? Returning to Utahrails and its "Classic Era Roster," the answer appears to be "no."



***Scheduled Release October 2017:***

**986 00 091 and 986 00 092, \$194.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 3402 and 3426.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Burlington Northern Santa Fe.**

**Green with large orange band and yellow stripes; yellow side sill. Black underframe**

**and trucks. Green and white handrails. Green lettering including BNSF initials and on hood and road number on cab. Small red simulated reflective stripes along the side sill. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1996 to late decade of the 2000s. Previous Releases: None. The same two road numbers were originally announced for production in August 2015 but these were cancelled by MTL in November 2015 due to chassis availability.**

Since I'm still in RRPictureArchives.net I'll begin there for this coverage. The 3402 appears to have spent the much of years 2000 to 2008 in and around Lincoln, Nebraska and the BNSF's

former CB&Q Havelock Shops. There are nine shots of the unit performing local switcher duties there. In January 2009 it was photographed in Centralia, Illinois, as part of a quartet of units: one patched BN, one patched Santa Fe blue warbonnet, a Heritage 1 painted B40-8, and the 3402 itself.

Meanwhile, the 3426 appears to have been a bit more of a wanderer. It was caught variously in Kansas City and Topeka, Kansas and in Avondale, Missouri, just outside of Kansas City, between 2004 and 2009. The final image of the unit on RRPictureArchives is at Silvis, Illinois, as of March 2012 where it appears to be in a “dead line.” Silvis is a location of the National Railway Equipment Corporation, a builder, rebuilder and dealer of locomotives.

It’s noted in the captions for the 3402 and 3426 that these are both former Frisco SW1500s. The information is more exact for the 3426: it was SL-SF 341 and then BN 46. As of no later than 2014 it was GMTX 168 and part of the fleet of General American Marks Company, part of GATX.

MTL’s chosen paint scheme for this locomotive is the Heritage 1 version, first introduced not long after the 1996 merger. The major details match up with what I’ve read online. The scheme is generally considered to be a throwback to the Great Northern’s “Empire Builder” colors though I’ve seen contention on the ‘net as to exactly what shade of green was used. (It might be time to pull out that quote I like: “We don’t see colors as they are, we see colors as **we** are.”) A quick photographic comparison of the three major Heritage Schemes is at <http://trains21.org/2015/10/11/bnsf-heritage-paint-schemes> , but as in much of life, there were and are exceptions out there. I would be surprised to learn that switchers were prioritized for repainting but the “no earlier than 1996” start of the Approximate Time Period is at least technically correct.

From the “Diesel Shop” site ( [www.thedieselshop.us](http://www.thedieselshop.us) ) we learn that BNSF 3400 to 3429 were all ex-Frisco units built between 1968 and 1970. The BN was also the original owner of some SW1500s, as was the Great Northern. The other half of the BNSF, Santa Fe, was not a buyer of these switchers. An undated but presumably more current BNSF diesel roster on the **Trains Magazine** website shows no switchers remaining in service at all and the 3400 series of road numbers vacant. The “Don’s Depot” site shows the sale of these units to several major players in the aftermarket, including Progressive Rail and Larry’s Truck Exchange. The net of it is that we don’t get to a “to present” ATP.

And did I remember, before writing the above, to check my own coverage from the August 2015 UMTRR when these same two road numbers were first announced? Do I have to answer that question...





*Scheduled Release November 2017:*  
 986 00 101 and 986 00 102, \$174.95 each  
 Road Numbers: 1116 and 1104.  
**SW1500 Diesel, CSX Transportation.**

Dark blue with white cab roof, yellow front end, front of cab and side sill. Black underframe, trucks and pilot. Yellow lettering including CSX “boxcar” logo on hood and road number on cab. Blue and yellow handrails. Small brighter yellow simulated reflective stripes along the side sill. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 2011 to present (based on paint scheme). Previous Releases: None.

Attempts to untangle the various CSX Transportation diesel paint schemes usually result in my reaching for a generous portion of headache relief medication. Fortunately for this reviewer, the driving factor in the Approximate Time Period is that “boxcar” logo, which was introduced in 2011 (almost six years ago already!?).

For the start of this coverage, I’ll cite Diesel Era’s book **EMD’s SW1500: Second Generation Workhorse**. (Hey, I bought it not long after Micro-Trains’ initial announcement of these switchers, so I might as well use it!) Of the “original” railroads that eventually found their way into CSX, only two, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac, and the Louisville and Nashville bought SW1500s new from the factory. That L&N purchased thirty units, ten at a time in 1970, 1971 and 1972 and numbered 5000 to 5029. All thirty went from the L&N to the Seaboard System, when they were renumbered to 1100 to 1129. They kept those numbers when merged into CSX. The last ten units, which had been leased, were returned and went to Helm Leasing. Nineteen of the remaining twenty were still in service as of 2006. **Trains Magazine** shows 1100 to 1119 as an active series.

A three-quarter view of CSX 1116 on RRPictureArchives shows the end of the cab which faces outward painted in yellow with a small blue “boxcar” logo. I’m sure that yellow was used for visibility. The unit had been previously painted in other CSX schemes, which I’m not going to attempt to name (cue headache relief medication), but was in the “boxcar” logo no later than June 2013. Much of its tenure with CSX appears to have been in a familiar location: Nashville. Photos from 2016 show it a lot closer to UMTRR HQ, out in Dunkirk, New York, which among other things was the original western terminus of the Erie Railroad.

The 1104 (yes, MTL’s second catalog number is of a lower numbered engine) has no less than forty-one (!) photos on RRPictureArchives. As of 1993 it was in the notorious “stealth” scheme of all gray and blue—now that scheme, I can identify! It wore other schemes after that. Between July 2013 and October 2015, it picked up the “boxcar,” having already been painted dark blue and yellow. This unit has been getting around; it’s been photographed in Louisville, again in its original home territory, and also in Georgia, Florida, North and South Carolina, Ohio, New Jersey, and West Virginia. The last of these photos is dated 2016 so I’m going with a “to present” Approximate Time Period. Along the way, the units have had some modifications, including a new bell and the plating over of classification lights. I wouldn’t expect the MTL model to capture these changes.

I noted at the top of this commentary that the L&N was the source of these “original” CSX SW1500s. However, with the 1998 division of Conrail between CSX and Norfolk Southern, CSX did pick up some former Penn Central and Reading units as well. While CSX also acquired the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie in 1992. While the P&LE purchased forty of its own SW1500s, they were not included in the sale to CSX Transportation. Furthermore, thirty-five of those forty were already off the P&LE roster by the time of its sale to CSX. As for the RF&P, which was formally merged into CSX in 1991, only one of its order of nine SW1500s was included, becoming CSXT 1315. The other eight were dispositioned to Helm Financial and Bethlehem Steel, and we’ll see shortly where two of them ended up for a very limited time.



*Scheduled Release November 2017:*  
**986 00 111 and 986 00 112, \$174.95 each**  
**Road Numbers: 1502 and 1503.**  
**SW1500 Diesel, Western Pacific.**

Dark green with orange lettering including roadname on hood and road number on cab. Black underframe,

trucks, side sill and pilot. Approximate Time Period: 1973 to 1984. Previous Releases: None.

Pick up this pair of releases and you’ll have modeled two-thirds of the Western Pacific’s entire roster of SW1500s. Referencing the book **EMD’s SW1500: Second Generation Workhorse** once again, we find that the WP had originally ordered eight of these in 1970 from EMD, but changed its mind and purchased ten GP40s instead. In 1972, it did pick up a mere three units, 1501, 1502 and 1503, new from Electro-Motive. Here’s a data point: they cost \$207,134 each. (Useless data point: that’s close to \$1.2 million each in today’s dollars.)

While initially assigned to Stockton, California, the units moved to San Francisco and Oakland for the remainder of their service for the WP. The 1501 worked the car ferry operation on the San Francisco side until its demise. The three units were equipped with footboards outboard of the pilots, which were removed after some time. Other changes were made over time; I’d check photos taken in the specific year desired for those details.

The ATP of these units ended abruptly in March and April 1984 when they were repainted into the standard yellow and gray of the Union Pacific. However, what was not so standard about the change was the positioning of the UP roadname on two lines on at least the 1501 and 1502 (photos of both are in the **SW1500** book). The units stayed in Oakland for several years after their repainting. They were renumbered to 1315, 1316 and 1317 respectively in 1987, and then to UPY 1040 to 1042 in 2001 and 2004.

The Fallen Flags site ( [www.rr-fallenflags.org](http://www.rr-fallenflags.org) ) has shots of both numbers MTL chose. In what looks like scanned snapshots (remember those?) there are zebra stripes on the pilots. I’m not sure whether MTL intends to reproduce these, but given a release date ten months from now, there’s plenty of time for a decision there.



*Scheduled Release December 2017:*

**986 00 581 and 986 00 582, \$184.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 2517 and 2584.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Cotton Belt (St. Louis Southwestern).**

Gray with red front hood, steps, platforms and bottom sill. White lettering

including roadname on hood and road number on cab. These units will include SP-specific lights and number boards and Flexi-Coil trucks. Approximate Time Period: 1967 (earliest delivery) to mid-1990s. Previous Releases: None.

Let's return to Richard Percy's "Espee Modeler's Archive" ( [espee.railfan.net](http://espee.railfan.net) ) for this quote: "The SW1500s came in 12 orders, with deliveries starting in 1967 through to 1973. Of those 12 orders, three went to Cotton Belt. With this long a production time, there were detail differences in types of headlights fitted, and the early models came with sheet metal 'gussets,' a bit like the SW1200 'gussets' between the stepwell and the bottom of the walkway. In service modifications seem to be few initially, limited to the pilot being cut back to accommodate an AAR type pin lifter, and the removal of the full length grab iron and/or the pilot steps and/or the MU hose boxes, photos show a few variations."

Those three orders added up to 36 Cotton Belt units. Images on Percy's page show some of these units with the roadname in white and others, including the 2517, in red. I think this is explained thusly: "Some [units] went that long between repaints, that the Scotchlite wore off, revealing the red primer, hence the red lettered units." I take this to mean that the units were painted in scarlet first, then the gray painted over that, and finally the white lettering applied. When the white lettering came off, it took the gray paint with it, and so you have red lettering. That ought to be an interesting weathering project. On Locophotos.com I found SP-lettered units with the same "red" issue.

Utahrails.net has the specifics on one of the two units MTL has selected. SSW 2517, built in 1969, became UP 1106 in December 1996 and then UPY 1106 in October 2002. The Espee Modeler's Archive still has SSW 2584 on the Cotton Belt roster as of late 1995, but it's not shown in the Utahrails UP roster. This might mean that it was retired prior to the SP merger into the UP. A photo of the 2584 as of 1994 shows the roadname in red and includes the caption that it was last reported working for Lattimore Materials as their 1961. I found a recently sold slide on eBay that had LMC 1961; that image was dated 2004. Don's Depot gives a build date of December 1971 for the 2584 and shows intermediate stops at the Texas, Gonzalez and Northern and Rail Switching Service before going to Lattimore Materials in 2001. And I thought that tracing Per Diem Boxcars was as confusing as it got...





*Scheduled Release December 2017:*

**986 00 121 and 986 00 122, \$194.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 2313L and 2327L.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Southern Railway.**

Black with aluminum gray band. Metallic gold lettering including roadname on hood and road number on cab. Black underframe, trucks, side sill and pilot.

Flexicoil trucks. Approximate Time Period: 1973 (based on road numbers) into the decade of the 1980s. Previous Releases: None.

With a total of 48 units numbered 2300 to 2347, including 18 which were assigned to the Southern's numerous subsidiary railroads, the line was a good customer for this EMD model. The first thirty units arrived in 1968. But it wasn't until 1973 that a computer check letter was added to the road number—"L" in both cases here—so we have a "strictly speaking" ATP beginning here. Take the "L" away and backdate up to five years, if you'd like. Meanwhile, the Southern Railway went into Norfolk Southern in 1982, but I expect repainting of the 46 units that transferred to NS took some time. (Two units were wrecked and not replaced.)

The book **EMD's SW1500: Second Generation Workhorse**, Page 39, has a bingo on the 2313L, "wearing a heavy coat of grime... in Raleigh, North Carolina, in August 1972." It's noted that the Southern's SW1500s came with 1100 gallon fuel tanks and weighed 260,000 pounds each. I'm tempted to say something about the "N Scale weight" equivalent here but I'd better not! The 2327L was found in 1979 working Inman Yard in Atlanta with "slug" 914; that photo is on [RRPictureArchives.net](http://RRPictureArchives.net). By no later than 2001, the NS had sold this particular unit off to, of all places, Union Pacific, which repainted it as UP 1028 and then UPY 1028. By 2005 it was Helm Leasing property, working in Idaho according to more [RRPictureArchives](http://RRPictureArchives.net) photos.

If you'd like to have some variety in any additional units you might be considering (and MTL would of course be happy to sell you more than two!) the Micro-Scale Decal set 60-32 might be useful. It appears to contain the subsidiary lettering needed for the last 18 units that the Southern Railway purchased, namely, the Interstate Railroad, the New Orleans Terminal, the Chattanooga Traction Company, the Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific, the Central of Georgia and the Carolina and Northwestern, which is the name that the "old" Norfolk Southern was given as the "new" Norfolk Southern was being created.

Two painting items before I forget. The pilots have white zebra striping and the exhaust stacks were painted bright silver. The latter is easier to address than the former, assuming MTL itself doesn't do so before the units are released, although I wonder how long those silver stacks remained pristine looking.



***Scheduled Release January 2018:***

**986 00 131 and 986 00 132, \$174.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 1299 and 1298.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Canadian Pacific.**

Red (the CP's "Candy Apple Red") with black underframe, trucks, and pilots.

White lettering including roadname in

"Bank Gothic" typeface in two lines on hood and road number on cab. "Golden Beaver" herald below road number. White simulated reflective rectangles along the side sill. Approximate Time Period: 2001 and 2002, see text. Previous Releases: None.

I must confess that I am so enamored of the "Golden Beaver" scheme that I went way past my model railroad's Approximate Time Period and purchased a "big power" locomotive with that very paint scheme. These switchers are a fair bit smaller than the SD90/43MAC that I purchased and would certainly have an easier time with my layout's trackwork! Hmm...

There is an interesting surprise with this pair of units – an apparently very short Approximate Time Period, despite the Golden Beaver having been introduced in 1998. According to Bill Miller's "The View from Galt Station" site ( [www.trainweb.org/galt-sta](http://www.trainweb.org/galt-sta) ) which includes a CP Diesel Roster, these two SW1500s were originally built for the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac in 1967 as their numbers 2 and 3. At an unknown date they were sold to Quality Terminal Switching / Quality Terminal Services, a division of Omnitrax. (Omnitrax also currently operates the Port of Churchill on Hudson Bay... remember those "Manitoba" boxcars?) Omnitrax painted and leased the 1298 and 1299 to CP – the only SW1500s to be part of the CP's roster. Again according to Galt Station, that lease was very short-lived, only from July 2001 to September 2002! Photos of the two units are available, both on former Delaware and Hudson trackage in New York State. The 1298 was caught in East Binghamton and the 1299 at Rouses Point, at almost completely opposite ends of the D&H in New York – and at near the northern and southern borders of the state itself for that matter.

Will the short ATP impact pre-order volumes of this locomotive offering? Probably a little, although the Canadian Pacific is such a popular roadname that I expect plenty of invoking of Rule #1 here. Hey, I might do it myself, and bend that space-time continuum even further than I usually do.



***Scheduled Release January 2018:***

**986 00 590, \$194.95.**

**Road Number: 2539.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Southern Pacific.**

"Kodachrome" pre-SPSF merger scheme of red with yellow cab (including roof), side sill, nose and front of hood. Black

roof and band at top of hood. Black underframe and pilots. Silver trucks. Yellow slanted style "SP" near front of hood. Red road number on cab. These units will include SP-specific lights and number boards and Flexi-Coil trucks. Approximate Time Period: at least 1986 through 1989, see text. Previous Releases: None.

Our final stop in the sequence of SP-specific releases is the “Shouldn’t Paint So Fast” scheme. I haven’t used that one-liner in a while so perhaps I need to explain. In December 1983, Santa Fe Industries and Southern Pacific Company merged to form Santa Fe Southern Pacific Corporation. This was a holding company with rail and non-rail interests, particularly a lot of real estate. The intention was to merge the railroads into the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe or SPSF (note this is the reverse order of the holding company). However, the merger was denied not once but twice (original and appeal) in both 1986 and 1987. The SFSP Corporation operated the SP at “arm’s length” until it was sold to Rio Grande Industries in October 1988, a “reverse merger” of sorts which, among other things, put Rio Grande-like speed lettering heralds on Southern Pacific equipment. The big winner in this fight was the Santa Fe, as it kept all of the non-rail holdings of both companies, making it the State of California’s largest private land owner.

Overwhelmingly overconfident of an eventual positive outcome of the merger process, both the SP and SF began to paint locomotives and a few cabooses in a red and yellow scheme that combined features of both intended predecessors. (No other rolling stock was painted this way as far as we know; freight cars in SPSF are truly “fantasy” but still fun.) This included just two of the SP’s SW1500s, and even they weren’t consistent: the 2539 had a yellow cab sides and the 2757 red ones. The “SP” was positioned on the switcher so that it would be easy to add the “SF” as soon as the Interstate Commerce Commission approved the merger. They didn’t and thus railfans came up with the one-liner “Shouldn’t Paint So Fast.”

These were also called “Kodachrome” units based on the resemblance of the scheme to the red and yellow box of that brand of color slide film, which was manufactured from 1935 to 2009. (Previous versions of color film with that name date back to 1913!) The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific, separate this time, both repainted SPSF units to their home road’s colors. The 2539’s one-of-a-kind paint scheme was applied in 1986, lasted at least until June 1989 but was gone no later than December 1999 based on images on RRPictureArchives.net; it did get reverted to the original gray and scarlet scheme. Yes, I know that’s a long “in between” span, but that’s what the phrase “at least” is for! Speaking of “at least,” I do wonder whether MTL will receive “at least” enough pre-orders to produce this unit. I suspect they will despite its short Approximate Time Period, but it’s up to the market to decide.



*Scheduled Release February 2018:*

**986 00 141 and 986 00 142, \$194.95 each**

**Road Numbers: 325 and 351.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Frisco (St. Louis-San Francisco / SL-SF).**

Orange with wide white band. Black underframe and trucks. Orange pilots;

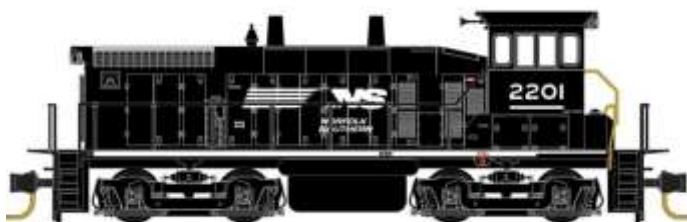
orange and white handrails. Red lettering including roadname on hood and road number on cab. Approximate Time Period: generally, 1973 to early 1981. Previous Releases: None.

My choice of “orange” as the description of the color that isn’t white comes directly from Page 55 of **EMD’s SW1500: Second Generation Workhorse**, which tags the color as “mandarin

orange.” I would have gone with red, but then I recalled the idea that colors are as we see them. (Yes, technically white is “the absence of color” but it’s still a shade of paint also!) The Frisco purchased 48 of these units starting in 1968 with the newest SW1500s coming in early 1973. These displaced older units from American Locomotive Company, Baldwin Locomotive Works and Fairbanks-Morse and operated all over the system. “Their careers were brief, because seven years after the road’s last SW1500 was delivered, the Frisco itself disappeared into the Burlington Northern system.” It’s noted in the **SW1500** book that renumbering from SL-SF 315 to 360 to BN 20 to 65 was completed on March 20, 1981 – and how’s that for a precise end to the ATP? – and repainting to the BN’s Cascade Green was all done in July 1983.

Locophotos.com has a photo on SLSF 325, dated May 1979, and a rundown of its history. It was built in October 1968, became BN 30 after the Frisco merger, then became BNSF 3410 in December 1997. It was retired from the BNSF roster in June 2009 and sold to MP Resources in October 2010. The prototype photo shows white zebra stripes on the red – oops, orange – pilot and MU cables installed there as well.

RRPictureArchives has a 1978 shot of SLSF 351 in Springfield, Missouri, the Frisco’s headquarters and also where two of the road’s major lines crossed. The 351 became BN 56 and then BNSF 3456. At the time it was photographed, it had cab sunshades and a cab roof-mounted rotating beacon... again showing that details can and will differ from unit to unit.



***Scheduled Release February 2018:***  
**986 00 151 and 986 00 152, \$174.95 each**  
**Road Numbers: 2201 and 2218.**  
**SW1500 Diesel, Norfolk Southern.**

Black, including underframe, trucks and pilots. White lettering including “horsehead” herald and roadname on hood

and road number on cab. White sill stripe. Black and yellow handrails. Approximate Time Period: generally, no earlier than 2005 to no later than 2010. Previous Releases: None.

No, it’s not a reprint, and yes, it’s close enough that I had to check. The key difference is the swap of the plain “speed lettering” herald / roadname for the later one with the horsehead, which was introduced in 2005. This narrows the ATP further from what was already determined with the coverage of the previous release in June 2014 (Catalog 986 00 021 and 022, Road Numbers 2202 and 2203, with the 2202 at right). Note the zebra stripes on the pilot of the earlier release, however, which is promising for the forthcoming SW1500s which also had them in real life.



Both of these units, part of the group numbered 2200 to 2242, came to the NS as part of the division of Conrail in 1996. The 2201 was Conrail 9506, previously Penn Central 9506, and the 2218 was CR 9552 and PC 9552. According to the site NSDash9.com, both units have been



retired. The NS had sold off SW1500s to Progress Rail and we already know that some of their switchers ended up on the Union Pacific. All of the ex-Conrail units were reported off the NS roster no later than 2010. Not to worry about that “horsehead” though, as again according to NSDash9.com, there were 3278 locomotives in one of the two variations of that scheme as of January 17, 2017.

I need to throw a “generally” in front of that ATP though. There are seventeen photos of the 2201 on RRPictureArchives.net, which show that the unit was not repainted out of Conrail Blue until sometime between February 2009 and July 2009. It looked really nice when right out of the paint shop though! The 2201 also had what looks to me like a roof-top air conditioner mounted on the cab; don’t quote me on the exact nature of the device since it’s definitely out of my area of expertise. We see just a little bit of the rear of 2218, the other road number MTL selected, in that photo as well. There are ninety-three (!) images of that unit available on RRPictureArchives. It was in the “Conrail Quality” scheme with a quick NS white on black number patch as early as June 1999. It was repainted with the horsehead herald between May and July 2008. The last of the 93 photos is tagged 2014, but I think that’s not correctly dated.



***Scheduled Release March 2018:***

**986 00 160, \$174.95**

**Road Numbers: various (see text).**

**SW1500 Diesel, Genesee and Wyoming Industries (various roadnames, see text).**

Orange with two black stripes. Yellow pilots and side sill. Black underframe and trucks.

Yellow handrails. Red simulated reflective stripes on side sill. White road number on cab and black, yellow and orange herald applied by the modeler. Approximate Time Period: varies by specific railroad, but generally the 1990s to present. Previous Releases: None.

Here’s something a bit different that I imagine MTL is hoping will spur more pre-orders for this particular scheme. Purchasers of this release will receive an SW1500 in the corporate black and orange colors of Genesee and Wyoming Industries, along with decals for nine of its subsidiary railroads and a complement of road numbers. So there’s a bit of “do it yourself” involved with this one. And there’s also the opportunity to go “off the board” for other of the G&W’s properties – though we’ll leave that exercise to the reader.

From a fourteen mile salt hauling shortline named for the two counties in Western New York in which it operated, the Genesee and Wyoming has grown into a major operator, collecting short lines and regional railroads totaling over 15,000 miles of track in five countries. The complete list of Genesee and Wyoming Industries’ holdings is on their website (URL [www.gwrr.com](http://www.gwrr.com)). Their most recent acquisition was the Providence and Worcester Railroad, in 2017. G&W also owns RailAmerica and the Ohio Central Railroad System. Technically, the original Genesee and Wyoming Railroad doesn’t “exist” except on paper; it was merged along with the adjoining Dansville and Mount Morris Railroad (G&W’s very first purchase, in 19xx) into the Rochester and Southern which is a portion of the former Buffalo, Rochester and

Pittsburgh division of the Baltimore and Ohio. The Buffalo and Pittsburgh operates another, larger part of the former BR&P.

The two choices for the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad are road numbers 42 and 47. The 42 was former Southern Pacific 2653—meaning SP-specific details. It was transferred to the G&W's Illinois Midland no later than 1997 but was relocated to the Buffalo area by the year 2000. The 42 led a salvage train pulling up rails of the original BR&P through Orchard Park, New York in May 2010. (The B&P now uses the former Pennsylvania Railroad line into Buffalo.) The 42 was relettered B&P 1509 before September 2014. Images of all of this are on [RRPictureArchives.net](http://RRPictureArchives.net).

Gee, I hope not all of these possible G&W SW1500s are going to be this complicated. I'll be here all week...

The 47 might be a better choice for a G&W switcher. It, the former Houston Belt and Terminal 50 built in 1969, looks like it's just been freshly painted in orange and black 1985. Stacks capped, I think it's in transit to the G&W as it was photographed at Riverdale, Illinois. That photo and others dated from 1986 to 1990 are on *Fallen Flags*. The 47 is at work in Retsof, New York, on the original Genesee and Wyoming Railroad. [RRPictureArchives](http://RRPictureArchives.net) adds some "unknown location" photos and a 1991 shot of the 47 in Chili, New York on the Rochester and Southern. By 2005, the unit was Portland and Western 1551, working in and around that Oregon city. There's a decal for that in your package. No later than 2007, the unit had become Commonwealth Railway 1551, a shortline in Southeastern Virginia in the G&W Family. Decals for that railroad are included as well. So, yes, you can model the same locomotive in service for three different G&W railroads. The Commonwealth Railway also had SW1500 1552, which also worked on the Illinois Midland (its 41) and the Portland and Western (also 1552). But the 1551 is a better road number choice since the 1552 is former Southern Pacific 2556.

Okay, that covers three of the railroads... only six more to go...

According to the G&W website, the Corpus Christi Terminal Railroad was founded in 1997. It's got 26 miles of track in and around this south Texas port on the Gulf of Mexico, and interchanges with KCS, UP and BNSF. The Wikipedians have a different take: it was a terminal railroad founded in 1924 by the Port of Corpus Christi Authority to enable competing railroads to serve the port. The "founding" part is that G&W's subsidiary RailLink leased the trackage from the Port Authority and began operating it in 1997. A motive power table includes three SW1500s and three CF7s.

The reporting marks for the terminal road are the somewhat less obvious CCPN. The three SW1500s listed on Wikipedia are the 339 and 9576, originally from the Penn Central, and 9591 which was built for the Reading. These were transferred to Conrail but perhaps not to the Norfolk Southern. *Fallen Flags* has a scanned print of the 9591 as of 2004. [RRPictureArchives](http://RRPictureArchives.net) has 17 other photos of the 9591, which was Reading 2752 built in 1966 and Conrail 9591, and also did a stint as Central California Traction 9591. [RRPictureArchives](http://RRPictureArchives.net) also has fifteen photos

of the 9576, dating as late as December 2016—dare we assume that it's still there? There is, or was, also a CCPN 1527, but it was painted very differently from the G&W standard, namely in red with black and white diagonal bands... you'll definitely prefer to start with an Undecorated SW1500 should you choose to tackle that one.

Chances are that you might have seen a freight car with the reporting marks TR and wondered whose car that was. It would be registered to the Tomahawk Railway, LP which as of the October 2014 ORER had 3,796 cars leased from CIT Capital Group. The Tomahawk, which was acquired by G&W in 2005, has just six miles of track in and around its namesake locality in Northern Wisconsin... but it also serves a point called "Jersey City"! (I was born in the more famous Jersey City... the one in New Jersey.) Interchange is with the Canadian National.

Minnesota Transfer was the first owner of its SW1500 305, which went to the Tomahawk's predecessor Marionette, Tomahawk and Western (founded in 1898!) as its 83, then to the Tomahawk as its 83. When transferred to the G&W family, a "15" was literally spray-painted next to the 83, kind of ruining its otherwise attractive green and white scheme. By 2010 it had been repainted in G&W colors. The Tomahawk also has, or had, SW1500 1587 which was in orange and black no later than 2013. Photos are on RRPictureArchives. Also noted in the category of "different details" are what I believe are spark arrestors on the stacks of both units... which are not the same style on the 1583 as the 1587. Consistently inconsistent, I tell you...

It would be pretty tough to come up with reporting marks more unusual than TZPR. But that is what denotes the Tazewell and Peoria Railroad, founded by G&W in 2004 through lease of the Peoria and Pekin Union Railway. That line was a terminal and switching concern which once served fourteen major railways that entered Peoria, Illinois. (I won't even try to name them!) Peoria was an alternate junction point to Chicago and St. Louis between eastern and western roads.

This is the easiest chronology so far. The Tazewell's two SW1500s began as original builds for the Apalachicola Northern Railroad in Florida--which the G&W also now owns—as its 714 and 715. When moved north to the TZPR, they kept the AN's blue and white paint for a while. No later than 2008, again based on photos, they became TZPR 1520 and 1521 and received the standard orange and black. The latest photo of the 1520 is dated June 2016, and the unit is posing in front of a building on which a sign is mounted, "Celebrating 8 years injury free." How about "Celebrating 8 years with a G&W loco assigned to the same place"?! The 1521's latest image on RRPictureArchives is from September 2016. I note that there is a logo or something on the first hood door in from the nose. I couldn't quite make it out but I also found it on a Buffalo and Pittsburgh bay window caboose: "Zero Injuries / Our Goal Every Day" with a yellow oval which is, of course a "zero." (Note to MTL: You could get away with doing this caboose, though it does have window issues.)

As for the Tazewell in "Tazewell and Peoria," it's the county in which the city of Pekin, Illinois is located. And Peoria is in Peoria County, which means the roadname is a throwback of sorts to the Genesee and Wyoming which is also named for its home counties. Tazewell

pronounced with a “short” a, that is, TAZZ-well instead of, well, TAZE-well. And that is perhaps the most trivial item in this commentary, if not the entire set of these bytes.

We go “north of the border” next for the Quebec – Gatineau Railway (there is no ampersand). This is one of the rare railroad names which factually describes its route: from Gatineau, Québec (formerly known as Hull), east to Montréal and then northeast to Québec City. The Q-G is a former Canadian Pacific line taken over by G&W in 1997 and stretches some 280 miles. Not exactly a “shortline”!

RRPictureArchives has photos of SW1500s numbered consecutively from 1500 to 1507 except for 1503. All of these are former Penn Central units. As I’ve come to expect by now with the G&W railroads, the switchers didn’t stay put: the QGRY 1501 was photographed in Sault St. Marie, Ontario on the company’s Huron Central from 2009 to 2013. And the 1502 and 1504 were in Maine during the years 2009 through 2016. And don’t miss a look at QGRY 1507 caught in Lachine, Québec in May 2003, with a couple of pieces missing!

The Buffalo & Pittsburgh RR is also one of the G&W’s larger properties, and it’s also one of their first, having been “founded” in 1988. The base of the B&P is the almost from Pittsburgh to Buffalo portion of the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh, which was purchased back in 1932 by the Baltimore and Ohio and was operated by the B&O until its sale to G&W. In 2004, the BPRR also absorbed G&W’s own Allegheny and Eastern, bringing it into Erie, Pennsylvania. It also leases the “P&W Subdivision” from CSX to reach New Castle, Pennsylvania and operates into Driftwood, Pennsylvania on former Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. There’s some of the former Pittsburg & Shawmut Railroad in the mix as well. B&P power is seen pretty frequently in the Rochester & Southern’s yard just northwest of the Greater Rochester International Airport.

The B&P has, or had, SW1500s numbered 1506 to 1515, again according to photo evidence on RRPictureArchives. Of those, the 1511, 1512 and 1515 are former Southern Pacific units so I wouldn’t use those numbers. The 1510 was originally on the Reading’s roster and the rest came from the Penn Central. The 1506 and 1507 were on the Québec-Gatineau before moving south to the B&P. Photos of most of these units abound on RRPictureArchives, for example 36 of them of the 1509, dated from 2002 to 2014... and guess what, the last few also have SW1500 number 42 from the Illinois Midland! Aargh...

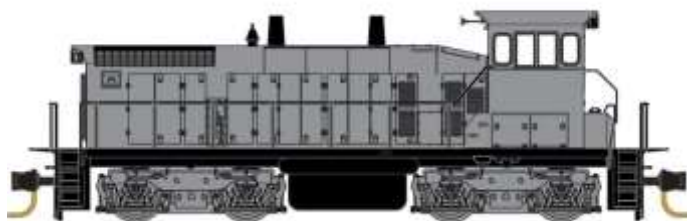
I’ll quote directly from the G&W website for the final of the nine roadnames for which MTL is providing decals: “G&W’s subsidiary Rail Link, Inc. has provided contract industrial switching and other rail transportation services for nearly 30 years... At Rail Link, customers are the focus of operations. We listen carefully to what customers say is important and work hard to develop creative, flexible logistics packages that address the individualized service needs of each facility.”

The reporting marks for Rail Link are RLIX, and RRPictureArchives has a shot of the 1507, formerly Québec-Gatineau 1507 and Buffalo and Pittsburgh 1507, as of September 2016. Other SW1500s that are or were on the Rail Link roster include 1500, 1503, 1517, 1518, 1522 and 1524



as well as 336, 339, 340, 349, and 392. But wait! The 339 and 392 have RLIX reporting marks under the road number, but a “Talleyrand Terminal” G&W-style herald. The 349 is painted red with large italic “THE PORT” lettering, for the Port of Baton Rouge. The 340, in G&W paint, was working a pulp mill in Georgia in 2012, but it was reported that R.J. Corman took over plant switching duties, and besides, that unit is now North Shore 1944, working in Pennsylvania and wearing Erie Lackawanna-inspired colors. I think you get the idea... Anyway, the 331, 336, 1500, 1503, 1507, 1517, 1518 and 1522 and 1524 look OK at first glance, though the 1517 and 1518 appear to have spark arrestors.

So, what are my takeaways from this excursion? First, the G&W units have variations, so photos are best for as close a match as possible. This includes the road numbers which – and I haven’t mentioned this before – are not all the same size, color or typeface. In fact, the white Railroad Roman 42 on the G&W unit in the MTL artwork appears to be the exception, not the rule. Second, these switchers clearly moved around so even if it’s painted for one of their railroads that doesn’t mean it’s actually operating on that railroad. Third, keeping track (no pun intended) of this is non-trivial work. Fourth, after this much research, I ought to create a Go Fund Me account to be able to purchase one of these... only kidding... mostly...



***Scheduled Release March 2018:***

**986 00 004 (AAR Trucks) and 986 00 005 (Flexicoil Trucks), \$149.95 each**

**Road Numbers: None.**

**SW1500 Diesel, Undecorated.**

Gray with black underframe, trucks and pilots. No lettering. Approximate Time

Period: 1966 (first build year) to present. Previous Releases: None.

So, why review an Undecorated unit? I’m not, really, except to note that even with the other thirteen pre-order announcements, coupled with (no pun intended) the previous nine prototype-based runs in 2014 and 2015 (NS, UP, BN, Conrail, KCS, Reading, CN and two SP), there are still plenty of railroads that were original owners of SW1500s. Among the Class 1 railroads as they were classified at the time, MTL left out the Rock Island, L&N, MP, Katy, PC, Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, and the RF&P. Of those, the Penn Central had by far the largest number on their roster—89—but it’s also the easiest to paint. (Dip in black, let dry, decal, right?) Then there are smaller roads including the Vermont Railway, Illinois Terminal, Indiana Harbor Belt, and the Toledo, Peoria and Western, and twenty-five other original owners. Add in private owners, one of which we’ll get to next, and non-original owners, and the possibilities just multiply.

And that, readers, is why an Undecorated unit is going to be important. It’s beyond the scope of this column (which already threatens to exceed Part 1 in length!) to locate decals for any of the above roads that Micro-Trains didn’t announce. With today’s printing technology what it is, it’s not nearly as difficult as it used to be to custom decorate. (Well, except for white, but there can be workarounds.) Might this therefore end up with the largest quantity pre-order

of all the SW1500s announced? Perhaps... it depends on the appetite the N Scale modeler has for a “must have” unit that probably could not be justified as a regular run from Micro-Trains.



***Scheduled Release November 2017:***

**993 01 550, \$269.95.**

**Weyerhaeuser Logging Train Set.**

Expected to consist of the following items:

- SW1500 Switcher, Road Number 305. Yellow with black roof, pilots and side sill. Gray underframe and trucks. Black company name on hood and road number on lower part of cab. Green Weyerhaeuser trademark and white “Safety First!” above road number on cab. Yellow simulated reflective stripes along the side sill. Preliminary catalog number 986 51 630.
- Three 114 Series 42 Foot Spine Log Cars with Uprights and loads. Green with white lettering including reporting marks left of center. Preliminary reporting marks WTCX 742, 759 and 783; catalog numbers TBD.
- 100 Series 36 Foot Steel Riveted Side Caboose. Yellow with silver roof, black underframe, trucks and end ladders. Green Weyerhaeuser trademark and black company name and road number below cupola. Catalog and road number TBD, but road number might be 4934, see text.

We make one last trip to the book **EMD’s SW1500: Second Generation Workhorse** for a view of the two Weyerhaeuser Company SW1500s which were purchased new from EMD in 1968 and 1972. Which were numbered... 306 and 307, not 305... but not to worry. It’s noted that the company also purchased five more SW1500s second hand. One of these was the 305, which was formerly Cotton Belt 2492 according to RRPictureArchives, which has images dating from 2005 to 2010. The Southern Pacific version of this unit is evident so I’d expect the shell to be the SP version which isn’t necessarily what we’re seeing in the preliminary artwork. WTCX 305 became Larry’s Truck Electric LTEX 305 no later than June 2012. (I still think “Larry’s Truck Electric” is the strangest name I’ve ever heard for a railroad equipment company.) On the other hand, a “standard” configuration, relatively speaking, for this switcher can be found on the 312, the former Conrail, ex-Penn Central unit 9501, which is painted exactly the same way as the 305. If the Approximate Time Period is driven by the loco alone, I would call it in the decade of the 2000s, but that’s usually not the point on sets such as these.

I cannot clearly make out the road number on the caboose – it’s just a bit too small, even at the full size view of the artwork – but 4934 would be a good guess, backed up by a 1976 photo of an ex-Southern Pacific steel car. The 100 body style is relatively close to the prototype, with four windows on the side for example, though the shape and window arrangement of the cupola differs.

The three skeleton log cars slated to be included with this set have the distinction of being the first of the body style to be painted and lettered. Of these, I was quite surprised to get a bingo on the 783, which is absolutely a skeleton log car with uprights... in service in 1980! The major difference between the prototype and model is the length, which includes a longish distance between the trucks and the couplers. It's a bit challenging to describe—sort of like “extended draft gear” on other freight cars-- so I'd recommend a look at the actual photo and of sister car 763 on RRPictureArchives.

Weyerhaeuser did have an entry in the July 1980 ORER but these cars were not listed. I suspect that they didn't leave company trackage, which in this case was in Olene and Dairy, Oregon respectively. These are both unincorporated communities outside Klamath Falls, which is in Southern Oregon, not all that far from Micro-Trains HQ for that matter by Western United States distance reckoning. They are both currently located along Oregon State Highway 140 and the “OC&E Woods Line State Trail,” the latter of which is the former Oregon, California and Eastern to which the “Weyerhaeuser Woods Railroad” connected. The OC&E was jointly owned by Southern Pacific and Great Northern before it was bought by Weyerhaeuser in 1975. The end came in 1991 and the last run brought 79 log cars with friction bearing trucks down to Klamath Falls. Most if not all of the over 300 log cars in service there were scrapped. For more on the OC&E's history and operations, check [www.trainweb.org/highdesertrails/oce.html](http://www.trainweb.org/highdesertrails/oce.html).

Weyerhaeuser also operated pretty extensively around Longview, Washington. Its sawmill there was the world's largest when built in 1929. It was principally a lumber, paper and packaging company through 2010 when it turned itself into a Real Estate Investment Trust. It's the largest private owner of timberland in the United States.

The SW1500 photos were taken in and around Longview, which is on the Washington side of the Columbia River north of Portland. Weyerhaeuser had another “Weyerhaeuser Woods Railroad” near there, connecting with the Columbia and Cowlitz, which it owned until 2010 when both were sold to Patriot Rails.



***Scheduled Release August 2017:***

**993 01 540, \$479.95.**

**16-Unit Tank Car Set.**

Expected to consist of the following items:

- Fourteen 110 series General Service Tank Cars, Reporting Marks CTCX, road numbers TBD (one tentatively 730843). Black with white reporting marks on left and tank qualification stencil on right. Yellow vertical conspicuity stripes at six places on car.

- Two 098 series Airslide Covered Hopper Cars, Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Reporting Marks BNSF, road numbers TBD (one tentatively 808876). Brown with mostly white lettering

including reporting marks on left (road number on patch panel) and BNSF circle cross herald on right. Yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes along bottom of side.

I'm quite pleased to turn over this commentary to our guest "The Masked Railroader" who has been doing some extensive research since this set was announced in the January Micro-News. Start quote, with a clarification to something on the Buffer Cars I'd previously said, namely, "In any case, they certainly can't be loaded!" Take it away, Masked...

"Quite to the contrary. The primary reason you want the buffer cars to be loaded is to minimize buff forces in emergency stop and severe slack action, to minimize lateral forces in compression that would result in a jack-knifed car. Or to minimize knuckles when starting.

"Here are the requirements for buffer cars in unit train service from our friends at the Union Pacific:

"Buffer cars are to be placed between the locomotive engine and shipments as required by Federal Regulations. Buffer cars must meet the following requirements.

- Must be a boxcar, covered hopper, gondola or tank car. The buffer cannot be a flat car.
- Must have a high-strength coupler (grade E coupler).
- The length of the car must be at least 45 feet and not greater than 75 feet.
- Must be loaded with a non-hazardous inert material that does not shift in train service.
- Gross weight of car must be a minimum of 45 tons.
- It is the responsibility of the shipper to provide buffer cars that are in good mechanical condition. If a car fails inspection, Union Pacific retains the right to refuse to provide train service. (Source: [www.up.com/customers/chemical/crude/equipment/index.htm](http://www.up.com/customers/chemical/crude/equipment/index.htm) )

"BNSF has similar requirements although I understand that their buffer cars are typically loaded considerably higher than 45 gross tons. A train I looked at showed BNSF 808168 at 96 gross tons with contents listed as GDSAND (fracture sand). [There is a photo of the 808168 on [RRPictureArchives.net](http://RRPictureArchives.net).]

"Currently, BNSF rosters 300 buffer cars in the series 808000-808299, which are 4180 cubic foot Airslides, before they switch to FMC 4700 cubic foot cars in the series starting BNSF 808300. BNSF 808000-808299 all appear to have been built August 1974 or later.

"As far as the Maintenance of Way (MW) markings, BNSF is certainly inconsistent. Most of the series BNSF 808000-808299 are **not** marked MW. And traditionally, BNSF has used cars numbers above 900000 for their MW fleet. Since these buffer cars are **not** revenue cars but **are** used in interchange service, I'm not precisely sure how the AAR years of service regulations apply, or if some interchange agreements come into play. BNSF 808000-808299 all appear to have been built August 1974 or later, thus are 50-year cars."

"Masked" then turned his attention to the tank cars...



“This is a perfect train length for a home layout, and except for the power, which can be BNSF, NS, CSX, CN, CP, that other railroad (Uncle Pete), or a wide variety of foreign equalization power, everything you need will be in one package. Or maybe two.

“CTCX tank cars were quite common on crude oil trains, especially later starting in 2011 from loading terminals first at Stanley, ND (Bakken Formation), then later in 2011 from Eland and Republic, ND (Williston Basin), then later from several other loading terminals. Early on, crude oil trains rarely were all one reporting mark, frequently a mix of two or three primary marks with several other odds and ends. This Micro-Trains set would go well with Union Tank Car Company Runner Pack #121 (993 00 121, October 2016).

“Micro-Trains has a reputation for using their 110 Series 56 Foot General Service Tank Car to stand in for sometimes quite different real-world tank cars. However, in this case, the Micro-Trains car is a good match to CTCX 730843 (the only road number I could find on MTL’s website). It represents a DOT-111 tank car, rather than the later CPC-1232 and DOT-117 standards. I am no tank car expert, but I believe the Micro-Trains car represent an older tank car judging by the top fittings housing, manway cover, and pressure relief device. Newer tank cars have a different arrangement. The series including CTCX 730843 doesn’t appear in my July 2008 ORER, but does appear in a photo dated September 1, 2008 on RRPictureArchives.

“There is also a series CTCX 731640-732464. This series appeared in my July 2008 ORER and at least a few of this series came from remarked DMIX 30,000-gallon ethanol tank cars (AAR Car Type T-108, same class as the CTCX 730xxx series cars). DMIX cars were in the roster of Minnesota Corn Processors, which was bought by Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM) in 2002. MCP was a cooperative and is, according to Grainnet, comprised of more than 5,400 members located throughout Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota. The former Minnesota Corn Processors reporting marks, DMIX and SYRX, are now listed under ADM Transportation. DMIX series 300000-300122 went to a wide variety of owners: GATX, CTCX, UTLX, TCIX for ones I’ve checked. So I have to assume that the rest of the series CTCX 731640-732464 was cobbled together from different original owners. As with CTCX 730843, these cars started in ethanol service before moving to crude oil service. So, you actually can model either type of train with the Micro-Trains 16-Unit Tank Car Set.

“Theoretically, railroads can continue to use unmodified DOT-111 tank cars in high-hazard flammable trains (ethanol and crude oil) until 2018, but Canada outlawed DOT-111 tank cars in that service starting November 2016. In 2015, both BNSF and UP levied a surcharge on DOT-111 tank cars in crude oil service. I remember seeing only DOT-117 crude oil tank cars after the end of 2016. I suggest all this gives an ATP 2008-2016 (ethanol/crude oil). Unless they are parked somewhere like fifty-thousand other DOT-111 tank cars, these cars could continue to be used in non-flammable service such fuel oil (combustible) and many other non-hazardous uses.”

Thanks, and who was that masked man? If you’re keeping score, by the way, this is actually not the single most expensive item ever released by Micro-Trains. That mark remains held by the March 1999 release of the Nn3 Scale 2-6-0 Mogul Steam Locomotive in Colorado &

Southern paint, which carried an MSRP of \$499.99. (It regularly fetches a non-trivial amount above that in the aftermarket.)

**But wait, we're not done yet...** there is more to report before closing out Part Two...

**MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS:** MTL CEO Eric Smith, writing in the January/February 2017 issue of **The N Scale Enthusiast**, announced 2017 plans. We already knew about the 70 foot Gunderson Husky Stack Well Car. Add to that the long rumored and hoped-for Single Window Coach. The UMTRR Spy Network reports that it will be based on a New York Central prototype. Also in N Scale there will be a new 50 foot boxcar – stay tuned for more on that. And Z Scalers will see a new Business Car “to complement our line of Lightweight Passenger Cars.”

**INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT:** While I was tracking down the Genesee and Wyoming diesel possibilities, I came across several photos of former Lake Erie, Franklin and Clarion boxcars restenciled GNWR, for Genesee and Wyoming, over on the Fallen Flags site. The original lettering is otherwise untouched. One of these photos is from June 2015. The LEFC boxcar was Per Diem Series #8 in both N and Z Scales, released September 2016. I'm not sure that the boxcars are an exact match to the MTL model, but there's always Rule #1.

**OOPS PATROL:** I officially left out the end of the ATP from the Z Scale Union Pacific diesels reprinted in December. In general, the A-units were in service into the early 1960s while the B-units were renumbered in the early 1950s. The specifics for the road numbers MTL produced are in the text of my coverage. Also, the Z Scale New York Central Weathered Train Set released this month has a catalog number of 994 05 140, not 995 04 140.

**RINGLING BROTHERS SOON TO BE A FALLEN FLAG:** You have probably already seen the news that the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus will be ceasing operations after the current tour season ends. (Check online for multiple news stories.) The fate of the circus train equipment, which was assembled from various sources including post-Amtrak surplus passenger car fleets, is unknown at this time. The final performance of the show is this May so there will be a last chance for some to catch the Circus Train in action before the virtual tents are folded for good. I suspect many railfans will be trackside when the final circus train goes by their town.

**SPECIAL RUN NEWS:** Our friend and long-time UMTRR gang member George Hollwedel has on hand the latest in his Micro-Trains items. “PNS0067, Western Pacific Ice Service Reefer three-pack now in stock. As usual I worked off a prototype photo and with the help of Micro-Trains we have a truly unique offering! The photo I used is on Page 95 of the book **Western Pacific Locomotives and Cars** by Patrick Dorin. Upon close inspection, the ends are still in PFE paint, complete with PFE report marks and road numbers. The sides are aluminum with black lettering and WP Maintenance of Way road numbers. Run these and baffle your friends!” For more, e-mail George at [proto.nscale@yahoo.com](mailto:proto.nscale@yahoo.com).

And our resident graffiti expert David Grothe has commissioned a pair of two-packs of BNSF "Super 111" General Service Tank Cars. The first pair carries road numbers 880605 and 880612, and the second pair is BNSF 880629 and 880622. These cars have the later "wedge" or "swoosh" herald. This paint scheme with tank qualification stencils and conspicuity stripes would have an Approximate Time Period of 2005 and later. They would complement MTL's own release with the BNSF Circle Cross herald (110 00). These also have a smaller size herald than the Brooklyn Locomotive Works "Millennium Series" run of BNSF "wedge" cars... which are long gone anyway. David's e-mail is davidgrothe@hotmail.com for further details.

**FINALLY... MOVIE BREAK!** So OK, that's been a lot of writing between Part One and Part Two. Even a byte-slinger needs a break, and I've been taking it by catching up on a massive backlog of messages from the various YahooGroups to which I still subscribe. Top of the list remains the scholarly "Steam Era Freight Cars Group" (STMFC) and every so often there is something posted there that I cannot resist passing along.

This time, it's two short films from the 1950s. These are not only time capsules of freight cars – and who here doesn't like freight cars? – but also provide a peek into the "popular culture" of the day. (This is why I also like to read "vintage" books; while "on vacation" I read a biography of Theodore Roosevelt which was completed not long after he died in 1919.) The first film strikes me as part of a school day curriculum; the second is clearly an educational refresher for railroad employees.

Both of these are on YouTube. The first is from 1954 and it's a ten minute short produced by the folks at Encyclopedia Britannica. It's called simply "Freight Train" and features, well, lots of freight cars! Find it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dtm7SQfNppM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dtm7SQfNppM).

The second is from the Association of American Railroads and was produced in 1952. It's called "The Freight Goes Through!" Except it shows how the freight doesn't go through if one is not careful... and includes some, let's say, impactful couplings of cars. It's not supposed to be funny, but I did laugh out loud at some of the staged collisions. This 18 minute film is at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT8WIXDxbyE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT8WIXDxbyE).

And with that, we're finally done with January. Any "slack time" before February? Not likely! Until then, and what we fully expect will be a "one part" column of more typical length, do the best you can!

Cheers, George

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