



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report

Issue #260 – August, 2018

(Not affiliated with Micro-Trains Line, Inc.)

Copyright ©2018, George J. Irwin. Reproduction prohibited.

Please see legal notice at the end of this document.

Hello again everyone! As the heat continues here at UMTRR HQ, slinging these bytes is a great excuse to stay in with the air conditioning at a comfortable level. This month, there's one thing we don't have: announcement of the Thomas Kinkaide "Painter of Light" series of cars which was scheduled to be this month. But we have bananas, tomato ketchup, a U-1 **white** dot, and a "Do-It-Yourself" Discontinued Alert. What's that about? You'll see...

But first, I'll pass along MTL's official response to the closing of the Affa Model Train Factory in China. This hit a number of N Scale providers rather hard, and as with the Sanda Kan incident some years back, there's some scrambling going on to find alternate suppliers. (And again, I think getting tooling back might be the key issue.) Micro-Trains posted a letter on their website noting that the only product of theirs impacted is the N Scale FT diesels, as the chassis were made by Affa. They have enough of these on hand for a while, fortunately. No other products are affected—and most are made here in the USA, specifically right in downtown Talent, Oregon. Why there are rumors out there speculating otherwise regarding the fate of Micro-Trains, I have no idea...

And now, on with the news and views...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



049 00 780 and 049 00 790, \$27.60 each

Road Numbers: 6399 and 4000 (will be "NRC 6399" and "NRC 4000" on website listings).

40 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Refrigerator Cars, Vertical Brake Staff, Fishbelly Underframe, Northern Refrigerator Car Company / Bananas Fruit Dispatch Company.

Both cars are white with brown roof and ends and black underframe, trucks and details. Black lettering including large "Northern Refrigerator Car Company" and road number on left and "Bananas Fruit Dispatch

Company / Import The Best" on right. White end markings. The 780 car has a bunch of green bananas and the 790 a bunch of yellow bananas to the right of the door. Approximate Time Period: 1926 to no later than 1938.

Yes, we have plenty of Bananas! But do I have photos?

Upon not finding either car in the usual go-to location, that is, the book **Billboard Refrigerator Cars**, I needed to dig more. Fortunately, images of both the 4000 and the 6399 are on the Protocraft website. (They make O Scale decals.) It's noted that "the 4000 series had yellow bananas and the 6000 series is shown with a green banana bunch. However there is little documentation on this so the modeler can probably choose either." As Micro-Trains did.

The Northern Refrigerator Car Company began as a subsidiary of Cudahy—they of "Old Dutch Cleanser" fame—but was sold off to Merchants Despatch Transit Company in 1928. That's just two years after these cars were constructed by Pullman-Standard. MDT kept the NRC structure around well past the Approximate Time Period for these two cars.

A number of the NRC's cars were in the service of the Fruit Dispatch Company, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company. Protocraft calls out the series 4000 to 7499 as being dedicated to this commodity. A check of the Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for April 1928 shows four number series that make up this group: 4000 to 4999 with 500 cars, 5000 to 5999 with 350 cars, 6000 to 6999 with 500 cars, and 7000 to 8499 with another 350 cars. All of these cars had a capacity of 2056 cubic feet or 60,000 pounds. Though the dimensions of the groups vary a bit, the inside length was around 33 feet and the outside length about 40 feet 8 inches. That would be a bit less long than the MTL 049 body style. There are a few other deltas, perhaps most notably the use of grab irons instead of a side ladder. Interestingly, the braces on both corners are reproduced using printing this time, at least on the sides if not the ends. Protocraft specifically calls out white sides for this car; it's also been done (elsewhere) with yellow sides.

As we know from previous discussions of billboard refrigerator cars, including in, well, **Billboard Refrigerator Cars**, this rolling stock was frequently repainted. Without complete photo evidence, we're stuck with the end of the ATP being no later than the end of the Billboard Refrigerator Car era, that is, about 1938. The shipment of bananas in refrigerator cars went well beyond that, of course, but in much less ornately painted cars, including for example those from NRC's owner Merchants Despatch Transit. If you're curious, there are several hundred messages on the overall topic of banana shipments over on the "Steam Era Freight Cars List," which has relocated to groups.io under the "RealSTMFC" banner. This fruit didn't need to be kept cold, but did need to be ventilated and held at a steady temperature. They also ripened and then spoiled quickly, so banana trains had a fairly high priority on railroads.



055 00 530, \$26.90

Reporting Marks: CR 404138.

33 Foot Two Bay Open Hopper, Offset Sides, Flat Ends, Conrail.

Brown with mostly white lettering including small roadname and "wheel on rail" herald at top left and reporting marks

on left. White on black double COTS panel and white on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" on right. Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1976 but probably 1977 to early 1980s, or strictly speaking, the end of 1978, given U-1 white "dot."

Rut-roh. This car has a white “dot.”

Which lets me to tell this story once again, with a nod to “HO Sam” and his “Modeling Details” page (www.hosam.com/mod/rsdet.html): The U-1 “dots” were applied “to designate freight cars which had 33 inch wheels manufactured by the Southern Wheel Company. These wheels were suspected of failing in service and causing several serious derailments. This FRA regulation began March 31, 1978 with the inspection of all 70 ton or less cars which had 33 inch wheels. Cars identified with the white dots could not be used in a train carrying hazardous materials. Beginning December 31, 1978 cars that had the white dots could not be used in any train. The wheels had to be removed and replaced with wheels of an approved type.” That means this Conrail hopper was either fixed up or it was out of service after the first day of 1979.

The presence of the dot also means that this particular hopper was repainted rather quickly after it went to Conrail from the Reading Railroad. The former reporting marks RDG 64028 are in the top right hand corner, and a service stencil “RDG 2-77” hints at when the decoration was changed. Conrail class HR5A is shown as well.

The author of the **Conrail Color Guide to Freight Equipment Volume One**, Larry DeYoung, noted that “a focus of Conrail’s early efforts at improving efficiency was getting payload per car up, which meant retiring many of the smaller, older cars such as 40 foot boxcars and 55 ton twin hoppers then in revenue service.” That happened rather quickly and therefore DeYoung could offer only one photo of a two-bay hopper – his, in fact. (And there are no 40 foot boxcars at all in the **Color Guide**.) That photo happens to be a going-away shot of CR 404138, taken in February 1982. That “dot” had to have been yellow by then, but it’s hard to tell from the photograph. DeYoung also makes it easy for me by noting that this was a former Reading HTc hopper and that there were 145 in the class in the ORER for January 1981.

So let’s go to the April 1981 ORER, just one issue later. The Conrail series 403332 to 405093 was already down another eight cars to 137. The inside length was 33 feet, outside length 36 feet 6 inches, extreme height 11 feet 1 inch and capacity 2260 cubic feet or 110,000 pounds. Since we know the former Reading road number, I can report that Conrail also had 198 cars in the original Reading series, 63000 to 64999 in the same ORER entry.

Micro-Trains reports in its car copy that these cars lasted on Conrail only until the early 1990s, and that’s absolutely right. The next ORER in the UMTRR Research Accumulation, April 1994, has no sign of the Conrail series, though, perhaps inexplicably, there’s one car left with the earlier Reading markings.

By the way, it’s no big deal to change that white “dot” to a yellow “dot” – Micro-Scale, the decal people, have just the thing to make this hopper “legal” again. That’s precisely what happened when the prototypes had their wheels changed out.



058 00 370, \$28.95

Reporting Marks: HJHCo. 456.

36 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Refrigerator, Truss Rod Underframe, Vertical Brake Staff, Heinz.

#12 and final release in the Heinz Series (pre-orders taken April 2017). Brown with black

underframe and arch bar trucks. Green and white Heinz pickle trademark on left. Red with white outline lettering including "57 Varieties" on left and "Tomato Ketchup" on right. White end markings. Approximate Time Period: 1890s into the 1920s.

If MTL hadn't already announced the next series of Heinz Refrigerator Cars, which will begin next month, I would have been able to say that "it all started and ended with Tomato Ketchup." You see, the first Heinz Refrigerator Car from Kadee Micro-Trains, released back in September 1976 and only the second refrigerator car ever from the company (by catalog number, as it was concurrent with the A&P reefer) was also a rolling advertisement for Heinz Tomato Ketchup. (My copy isn't handy, but you can see it over at Trovestar with a copyrighted photo. The direct URL is www.trovestar.com/generic/zoom.php?id=95931 .)

In a sense, though, the company honored with this series and the couple of previous releases starts and ends with Tomato Ketchup. Well, even that's not completely true, as the first product from one Henry J. Heinz was actually horseradish. That wasn't exactly a success. When Heinz tried again, it was with Tomato Ketchup. It's claimed that he actually invented the stuff, tweaking a Chinese recipe for something called "Cat Sup" (obviously translated!) made from tomatoes, starch and special seasonings. Whether he did or not – and at least one contemporary Heinz "ketchup engineer" says he did – there's no question that Henry J. Heinz was a brilliant marketer. German news agency Deutsche Welle profiled the man and product: www.dw.com/en/pittsburgh-pa-where-henry-john-heinz-invented-ketchup/a-276279 . The Wikipedians have allotted Heinz Ketchup its own entry. It has its own website. And it's even been counterfeited. The product comes in containers as small as the "dip and squeeze" (an innovation my mom really likes, if you're reading this over at Kraft Heinz) to a 260 gallon tote sold to manufacturers. The best-known way in which it's bought, though, remains the octagonal bottle, introduced in 1889 and patented the next year.

As with the previous eleven cars in this series, and, I suspect, the forthcoming yellow sided cars, ORER checks are fruitless. (Sort of a pun, as the tomato is officially a fruit, although it's used as a vegetable in cooking.) Other than a quick look at **Billboard Refrigerator Cars**, which has several images of MTL-modeled cars but not this one, I didn't check for photos. The Clover House catalog has a Heinz Tomato Ketchup car in yellow... but I'd better save that for the next series.



065 00 950, \$26.90

Reporting Marks: UP 69657.

39 Foot Single Dome Tank Car, Union Pacific.

Black including underframe, trucks and details. White lettering including large roadname across car and reporting marks on left. Approximate Time Period: 1955 (based

on renumber date given by MTL) or 1956 (service date) to no later than 1976.

About as far as one can get on a bingo without actually missing the mark is the image on Page 60 of the **Union Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume One**. UP 69657 is shown in a near distance end view, being steam cleaned in Council Bluffs, Iowa in an undated photo. One end is visible, the side not so much, but enough to tell that the car is painted with a large roadname. MTL borrows from the **Color Guide** for its car copy that these cars carried “everything from molasses to fuel oil.” The latter was the main commodity, though. The road did lease out tank cars not needed for that service to shippers, but steam cleaning was required first.

MTL reports that these cars were built by American Car and Foundry in 1924. It’s safe to say that they weren’t initially painted in the manner which Micro-Trains modeled. The set of cars was renumbered into the group 69500 to 69740 in 1955. That roughly coincides with the adoption of the larger size roadname. As of the January 1955 ORER, this renumbering hadn’t happened yet, as most of the tank cars on the UP roster were numbered from 4000 to 4970 in multiple series. There was space allotted, though, with the 69500 to 69989 in place but with a zero car count.

Moving up to the January 1958 ORER, that same group had 145 cars. There’s a little bit of data given: inside length 33 feet 7 inches, outside length 38 feet 6 inches, extreme height 14 feet 10 inches, and capacity 100,000 pounds. Well, I shan’t complain, that’s more information than we usually get! From the photo in the **Color Guide**, and the MTL model, we get a gallonage capacity of 12,636, which is noticeably larger than the basis of the MTL 065 body style, a General American 10,000 gallon car. The “look and feel” versus the prototype, or what we can see of it, seems OK, though.

From there I jumped to the July 1974 Equipment Register, heeding the note in the **Color Guide** that there were 1278 tank cars on the UP roster in 1970. The series 65900 to 69740 to which MTL refers had 158 cars in it at that time. By April 1975, just nine months later, the car count was down to 85, and a year later in the April 1976 ORER, the series was gone completely. Company service, with 900000 series numbers, might have been the next stop for these cars. There’s an example of a similar looking UP tank car in black with white lettering in the **Color Guide** as of 1992.



135 00 121 and 135 00 122, \$29.90 each.

**Reporting Marks: ARZC 100001 and 100008.
70 Foot Well Cars, Arizona and California Railroad.**

Red with aluminum details. Mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left. Green and white herald right of center. White

on black single COTS panel on far right. Approximate Time Period: 1993 to no later than 2001.

There aren't too many railroads which have a "Z" in their main set of reporting marks. (Trailers have had markings ending in "Z" since the 1960s.) The Arizona and California, reporting marks ARZC, is one of them. It was formed in 1991 to operate a former subdivision of the Santa Fe which ran from Cadiz, California to Matthie, Arizona. The ARZC has trackage rights on the BNSF to reach Phoenix and connection with the Union Pacific. The line also had a fifty-mile branch from Rice, California along the Colorado River to Ripley, but that was cut back to only four miles in 2011 and is used to store freight cars. The shortline was originally a venture of ParkSierra RailGroup, which was bought by RailAmerica in 2002; then RailAmerica was acquired by Genesee and Wyoming Industries in 2012, putting the ARZC in the G&W fold, complete with orange and yellow family colors and logo. Interestingly, the official G&W website no longer shows interchange with the UP at Phoenix. The ORER for January 2018 doesn't either. Nor does it show any freight cars owned.

Before all of the corporate doings, the company leased twenty-five single well cars from Gunderson in 1993. That enabled shipments of containers of high-protein hay from Blythe to Los Angeles, from where they went on to Japan. The cars, numbered 100001 to 100025, appeared in the April 1995 ORER. All of these were single 48 foot inside length. The ATP is pretty short: only 19 in the January 2000 ORER and all gone by the January 2002 ORER. But it's an accurate car for the MTL body style.

Photos of both the 100001 and 100008, along with sister cars 100000, 100002, 100003 and 100004 are available on RRPictureArchives.net. Photos of the '01 are from 1993 and 1994 and are both captioned, "Containers full of hay for export." A shot of the '08 dates to July 1997 and shows a bit of graffiti and the Arizona and California herald peeling off. Meanwhile, the Fallen Flags website has photos of the ARZC's motive power, not only pre-G&W but pre-RailAmerica, for example a 1994 shot of GP20 (!) number 2003 in an attractive green and white scheme.

In addition to the above items... the Union Pacific Impact Boxcar (020 00 157, \$49.95) is scheduled to be available mid-month and should be at MTL dealers as you read this. UMTRR coverage was in the February issue. I've been told by the UMTRR Spy Network that the "interior load" consists of fold-up color cardstock boxes. Hmm, perhaps the load actually **can** shift if you couple to the boxcar with too much force!



And let's try again on the SW1500s discussed last issue. Release date revision: The **Southern Railway SW1500 diesel locomotives (986 00 121, Road Number 1502 and 986 00 122, Road Number 1503, \$194.95 each)** are now available and the **Cotton Belt SW1500s (986 00 581, Road Number 2585 and 986 00 582, Road Number 2589, \$184.95 each)** are scheduled to be released mid-month and should be at MTL dealers as you read this. UMTRR coverage was in the January 2017 (Part 2) edition. Still need to work on the road number on that Cotton Belt unit...



N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS:



149 00 190, \$34.90

Road Number: 1760 (will be "UP 1760" in website listings).

Heavyweight Horse Car, Union Pacific.

Two-tone gray sides with white striping. White lettering, including roadname off center of letterboard (split by center door), road number at bottom center, "Railway Express Agency" on far left, and "Horse • Baggage • Automobile" on far right. Black roof, underframe and trucks. Approximate Time Period: 1946 to early 1950s.

Don Strack's Utah Rails site once again comes through with the starting information for this latest two-tone gray entry. It was built in 1924 by American Car and Foundry, part of a ten car order numbered UP 1759 to 1768. Yes, it was described as "Horse, Baggage, Automobile" and it carried UP Class 74-HBA, the 74 a reference to its 74 foot length. AC&F built 5 more of these type cars for the UP in 1926, and then Bethlehem Steel constructed five each in 1927 and 1929.

An undated photo of UP 1762 from the same series is available on the Railfan.net APBR archives. The car is in two-tone gray and it clearly has the Harriman-type clerestory roof, a delta to the MTL 149 body style. The real car also had windows, one to the left of the left door, three each between the left and center, and the center and right doors, and then one more to the right of the right door. The doors are also spaced differently with the right hand door closer to the end of the car. The lettering arrangement aligns with the real car.

The Official Register of Passenger Train Equipment (ORPTE) for January 1953 shows all ten of the "Horse-Baggage-Automobile" cars in the 1759 to 1768 series in service. The Per Diem is a rather steep \$16.15, with an 8.6 cent charge per mile. The cars are listed at an inside length of 73 feet 10 inches and length over the buffers of 77 feet 7 inches.

N SCALE REPRINTS: A passenger car this month...



145 00 050, \$29.95

Road Number: 990 (will be "PRR 990" in website listings).

Heavyweight Paired Window Coach, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Tuscan red sides and ends. Black roof, underbody and trucks. Buff lettering including roadname in center of letterboard and road number at either end of side. Buff stripes above and below windows on sides. Approximate Time Period: 1930s into the 1960s. Previous Releases: Road Number 1006, February 2012, then Road Numbers 1637 and 1672 as part of the PRR Five-Pack, November 2016.

"The passenger equivalent to Pennsy's ubiquitous X29 boxcar was its famous P70 coach. They were used everywhere on the system for commuters, locals, or blue ribbon trains." That's from David Sweetland and Robert Yanosey, on Page 11 of Morning Sun's **Pennsylvania Railroad Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** (Volume One), specifically the caption of a January 1961 photo of sister cars 1032 and 1048.

The 990 falls into this series, numbered 820 to 1099, which accounted for 187 of the 6000 (!) passenger cars on the PRR roster listed in the ORPTE for March 1943. All told, the Pennsy had more than a thousand P70s, including various subclasses. And they were paired-window coaches, though not quite the same as the MTL body style. A principal difference is that the P70s rode on four wheel, not six wheel, trucks. When the original run of these cars was released in 2012, Dave Vollmer wrote online that the MTL car is close to the P70's "somewhat modernized" look from the 1930s to early 1950s. We'll take that for our ATP. The 70 in "P70" refers to the passenger compartment being 70 feet long; the overall car is 80 feet long which is a bit more than the 78 feet of the MTL car.

The 990 is in a number by number roster of PRR passenger equipment from 1954 that's available on "Rob's Pennsy Page ([URL prp.railfan.net](http://prp.railfan.net) , no "www"). The paint scheme used by Micro-Trains lasted into the 1960s as both cars in the photo are still painted the same way in the photo in the **Color Guide**. The 1637 and 1672, which were in the 2016 "PRR Five-Pack" are also in that roster as Class P70fb, but the 1006, strangely, was not. Even so, we caught up with the 1006 courtesy of an image on the Fallen Flags site: it's in the collection of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg. Within the online roster of the museum it's noted that the 1006 was built by Standard Steel Car Company in 1928.

The 990 was photographed back in October 1963 when it was in service for a "Flaming Foliage Special" along the PRR main line in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Go to RRPictureArchives for that image, which shows the car in the paint scheme used by Micro-Trains.

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS: Did Micro-Trains do a mid-month switch? Initially, **Runner Pack #144** (993 00 144, \$109.95), **four Norfolk Southern Centerbeam Flat Cars**, was scheduled to be available mid-month. UMTRR coverage was in the March 2018 issue. The individual catalog numbers and road numbers for these items are as follows: 053 51 750, 120052; 053 52 750, 120089; 053 53 750, 120114; 053 54 750, 120128. These are the first through fourth road numbers for this car, which hasn't been previously released.



However, on the MTL website sometime before August 19, the above Runner Pack was **replaced with the next one in line**, Runner Pack #145 (993 00 145, \$99.95), four Union Pacific 50 Foot Steel Double Door Boxcars. Road numbers are 554372, 554378, 554385, and 554390, but I don't yet have the catalog numbers which should be in the 034 series. UMTRR coverage for this Runner Pack was in the April 2018 issue. I checked with MTL and yes, there was a switch. So look for the UP boxcars this month and the NS centerbeams next month. You read it here first... maybe...



Meanwhile, the **DODX Navy Five-Pack (993 01 640, \$199.95)** is scheduled to be available mid-month and should be at MTL dealers as you read this. UMTRR coverage was in the July 2017 issue (part of the overall coverage of this body style). These cars have six-wheel trucks. On its Facebook page, Micro-Trains noted that the loads are submarine missile bodies. Officially these are called "pre-production samples" but I think they look good. The actual product could still vary (unofficially, I doubt it). The individual catalog numbers and road numbers for these items are as follows: 137 51 050, 40001; 137 52 050, 40002; 137 53 050, 40003; 137 54 050, 40004; 137 55 050, 40005.



The following is in pre-order at present and is 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 August 31.



Scheduled Delivery January 2019:

993 00 149, \$114.95.

Reporting Marks: UP 217017, 217020, 217021, 217024.

Runner Pack #149, Quantity Four of 53 Foot Centerbeam Flat Cars ("Opera Window"), Union Pacific.

Yellow with black lettering including reporting marks on left. Red roadname across top of center beam and "Cushioned Load" across bottom of center beam. Approximate Time Period: 1977 (build date) through the present. Previous Releases: Catalog Number 53030, Road Number

217009, June 1995; Catalog Number 217001, December 2010. Catalog Numbers (probably 053 5x 030) will be confirmed upon release.

We'll start with the UMTRR Coverage of the reprint of December 2010 and build from there. In January 1996, a year after Micro-Trains' introduction of this body style, **Rail Model Journal** profiled this type of car and pronounced MTL's effort "a beautiful model of the Thrall 60-foot girder beam, complete with brake rigging." While the model is, technically speaking, a best match for the later Burlington Northern and Trailer Train orders of this car, that's only given the pulling eyes in the corner posts and the centered key slots. Plenty close enough for most modelers.

The ORER for January 1978 is the closest I have to the build date of March 1977 given by MTL. It shows the series of 75 cars numbered 217000 to 217074, described as "Flat, Center Beam Bulkheads" with AAR Designation FBS. The dimensions: inside length 60 feet 8 inches, inside width 9 feet 3 inches, inside height 11 feet 2 inches, outside length 69 feet 2 inches, extreme height 15 feet 5 inches, and capacity 198,000 pounds. The UP class is F-100-13 for these.

Between January 1985 and October 1986 according to the ORER Accumulation, the UP tacked on another set of Centerbeam cars to the original set, resulting in the series 217000 to 217142. Since the 2010 reprint, I've learned that that second group was ex-Illinois Central cars, built in 1970 and rebuilt in 1986, which were not of the same design. However, those cars are roughly the same dimension-wise except for the outside length which was listed at 70 feet 6 inches for the ex-IC additions, so the UP lumped them together. That's fine if you're a shipper, but doesn't make it easy for your average model train reviewer!

In the January 2007 ORER, there are 66 cars with an outside length of 66 feet 2 inches, and 50 more with an outside length of 70 feet 6 inches all in the combined series 217000 to 217141.

The January 2018 ORER shows a total of 41 cars in service with the 66 feet 2 inch length, which should bring us up to The Present in terms of cars on tracks.

We already know that neither the **Rail Model Journal** piece nor the two **Color Guides** to the UP have photos of any of these cars. In addition, I couldn't help wondering whether the as delivered paint scheme was still in place here in The Present.

So we'll go online. The Fallen Flags site (at www.rr-fallenflags.org) has a rather dark shot of UP 217020 from 2001, a much better image of UP 217049 from 2002, and a decent capture of UP 217053 from August 2006. The paint gets poorer as the cars get older. The image of the 217053 shows the fading of the original UP Armour Yellow paint to more of a rusty, dirty yellow-brown tone. There's a nontrivial amount of rusting of the center beam. The key data point is that the as delivered paint remains, at least on that car. For a bit of a "before and after" comparison of wear and tear, stay with Fallen Flags for photos of UP 217065 from 1989 and 1999, recognizing that the "before" was still some twelve years after delivery. The latter car would make for quite the Weathered Release. We'll see if the folks in Talent have the same idea, come early 2019.

RailcarPhotos gets us to March 2015 with a UP 217020 with restenciled reporting marks over what's left of the yellow on the car. And RRPictureArchives has a shot of UP 217010 as of December 2017, with an "MW" stencil and what looks like a load of raw crossties. And not much yellow paint remaining. At the other extreme is UP 217012 looking quite nice in May 1980. Even its trucks and draft gear are a clean yellow color! If only to be an exception, I suppose, RRPictureArchives does have an August 2017 shot of UP 217028 in the now-typical "dip brown" and also with conspicuity stripes. But that brown paint is already looking worn out. The UP 217040 got the "brown dip" earlier, I would think, as it's shown that way as of July 2006.



Scheduled Delivery January 2019:

993 01 740, \$89.95

Civil War Era "Red Line" Four-Pack.

Expected to consist of the following items:

- 151 51 180, 151 52 190 and 151 53 200, Civil War Era Boxcars. Each car is red with white lettering. Reporting marks NYC&HRRR 7919, NYC&HRRR 8052 and LS&MS D16689 respectively. First two have "Red

Line" in semicircle on left and reporting marks in circle with road number in center on right. Third boxcar has these positions reversed.

- 153 54 100, Civil War Era Flat Car. White with red lettering including reporting marks NYC&HRR 15109 and legend "Red Line Transit Co." right of center.

All cars will be equipped with link and pin couplers, not Magne-Matic couplers. Artwork is preliminary and actual product may vary. Catalog numbers are preliminary based on MTL image file names.

It's probably a bit of an oops to completely miss one of the publications in the UMTRR Research Library when describing a Micro-Trains release. And that's just what happened when I did the pre-review of the CWE White Line Four-Pack in April. The book **Merchants Despatch: Its History and Equipment** by Roger C. Hinman provides a thorough history of the company from its founding in 1855 to its dissolution in the year 2000. A central part of the company's early history is the establishment of what became known as the "Color Lines" for fast freight service between cities. And a copy of that book has been sitting on one of my shelves since it was published by Signature Press in 2011... well, that's embarrassing...

And it might provide an oops to be corrected for the White Line cars. In the discussion of the 29 foot cars in the MDT fleet, Hinman writes, "The Merchants Despatch cars were originally painted for a particular line service. Before the year 1871 was out, it became clear to management that this was an unnecessary restriction on a small car fleet and direction was given to remove the line markings as they came in for service. (Painting Authority to repaint cars 1-225, 1501-1525, 501-650, and 1001-1200 authorized December 18, 1871) By 1875, all cars had been repainted to remove this marking." Considering that MDT's first freight cars were built for them in 1871, that could mean an Approximate Time Period of less than one year for this paint scheme! However, there is on Page 90 of the book a photo taken at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial which shows an MDT car, a Blue Line car, a White Line car and a Red Line car. I also note that the MDT car carried red, white and blue stripes, which signified the three fast freight lines, the celebration of the country's 100th Anniversary... and the colors on the American Express Company's emblem. Yes, that American Express, which was the original founder of MDT. We'll leave the rest of that story to Hinman, and I'll recommend this book for your library as well.

Then again, these cars weren't lettered for the MDT, but for the railroads on which it operated. And neither were the White Line cars that MTL expects to deliver next month So does that change the ATP, or not?

Anyway, the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad was the result of Cornelius Vanderbilt's takeover of the "first" New York Central (from Albany to Buffalo) and consolidation with his Hudson River Railroad. The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern was another of Vanderbilt's properties which eventually spanned from Buffalo to Chicago. Vanderbilt had control of the MDT jointly—but much more beneficially—with American Express.

The June 1885 **Railway Equipment and Mileage Guide** (think pre-ORER) had a separate listing for "The Red Line Transit Company." "The cars of this company are painted red, and marked 'Red Line.' And doesn't that conflict with the information in **Merchants Despatch**? Yikes. The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern boxcar was part of the series 16324 to 16874, and the New York Central and Hudson River boxcars were both in the group 7500 to 8402.

Then there's a note that "The New York Central and Hudson River R.R. (Red Line), series 15000 to 15691, are platform cars." Which I'll take to mean "flat cars" and covers the 15109. While what would become the "New York Central Lines" dominated the list of carriers on which the Red Line operated, there was also the Boston and Maine, the Rock Island, the Reading and the Chicago & North Western listed as participants in that entry. Mileage of Red Line cars was supposed to be reported directly to Red Line Transit, not to the railroads whose reporting marks appeared on the cars. An accounting nightmare, circa 1885, I suppose! And yet another reason why "What Was The Approximate Time Period?" might yet be an unanswered question. Maybe I'll have this figured out by the time Micro-Trains announces a "Blue Line" set? Assuming that they do, that is.

Also, the pre-order window continues to month-end for the "clean" and Weathered TTX/Trailer Train Well Car 16-Packs (993 01 760 and 765, \$399.99 and \$449.95 respectively), which I covered in last month's UMTRR.

N SCALE WEATHERED/GRAFFITI RELEASES: *The following was announced via the Micro-Trains website, the MTL Facebook page, and via the e-mail "Micro-Trains E-Line," all on or after August 16.*

020 44 167, \$49.95, Reading Weathered Two-Pack. Consists of the following two 40 Foot Steel Boxcars with Single Superior Doors:



020 51 167, RDG 109019, brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left and small roadname on right. Multicolor ACI label at bottom right. Door is a replacement with the later green and yellow scheme and the letter "D" from the full "READING" roadname. Moderate weathering and door scraping effects.



020 52 177, RDG 109118, green with yellow lettering including reporting marks on left. Large yellow band with green roadname across top of side. Multicolor ACI Label to left of door. "D" in "READING" missing on door, which is a replacement door in the same green as car color. Light weathering.

Approximate Time Period for both cars as decorated is the early 1970s.

Bingos for both of these cars can be found on Page 77 of the Reading Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment. Author Craig T. Bossler wrote, "While it didn't happen too often, mismatch doors could occasionally be found... That these mismatches occurred could be a matter of supply, or perhaps a bit of devilish by the shop crews. It likely made management

cringe when they saw something like this on the road.” The photo of 109019 was taken in July 1973 and the 190118 was captured in December 1974. Both shots were within three years of the takeover of the Reading by Conrail, and followed the Reading’s 1971 entry into bankruptcy. The brown boxcar with plain lettering has the as-delivered scheme, while the bold “READING” – or should I say “REA ING”?!? – dates to the 1960s. It appears that both cars still had their running boards when they were photographed.

Both the 109019 and 190118 are from a 1956 order of boxcars from American Car and Foundry, the Reading’s class XM_c. The ORER for January 1958 showed the series 109000 to 109399 with 399 cars, with the following dimensions: inside length 40 feet 5 inches, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 10 feet 5 inches, outside length 41 feet 11 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 8 feet, and capacity 3891 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. Besides the “door thing” – the MTL 020 body style carries 6 foot doors, not 8 foot doors – there is the matter of the prototype being built by AC&F while the MTL car is based on the Pullman-Standard PS-1.

Skipping to the April 1976 ORER and the startup of Conrail, we find that of the original 400 cars, 364 were conveyed to the new operator. One of Conrail’s main priorities (besides tearing up track) was ridding itself of older equipment. By the April 1981 Equipment Register there was just one car left in the group in revenue service.

I’m calling the ATP at the early 1970s given the door mismatch, though it’s certainly possible that there’s a plus or minus around the time the cars were actually photographed. Assuming that they survived into the Conrail era, I would not doubt that they were still in the same condition with the superfluous “D” on one car and the missing “D” on the other.



025 44 565, \$28.95

Reporting Marks: RBOX 32556.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Youngstown Door, Railbox.

Car #8 in the “A Year of Railbox” series. Base car is yellow with black door and aluminum roof. Black lettering including reporting marks (with patched road number) and large “Railbox” name on left. Small red, blue and black “Next Load/Any Road” symbol and slogan on right. A side artwork of Hawaii with caricature of hula dancer playing a

ukulele in center (on the door). B side has fading, rust effects and graffiti both sides of door. Approximate Time Period: 2013, plus or minus (using the A or “featured” side of the car). Previous Releases: A three-pack (Catalog Number 25562) with Road Numbers 31558, 31562 and 31574, January 1997, and Weathered Releases “A Year in Railbox” #1 though #5, January through May 2018 (Catalog Numbers 025 44 560 through 025 44 564).

If “Hawaii” is the theme for this month’s Year in Railbox offering, then what is being commemorated? Answer: Hawaii Statehood Day, a legal holiday in that state only celebrated

on the third Friday in August. Hawaii became the fiftieth and final state in the Union on August 21, 1959, but Statehood Day, previously known as Admission Day, wasn't official until 1969. It is not without controversy, though; I'll leave digging further on that as an exercise for the reader.

MTL goes back to the newer, less elaborate version of the Railbox paint scheme for this release after two months with the original paint scheme as the base. And we go back to Graffiti Special Correspondent David Grothe for some particulars, start quote:

"The featured side of the car was done by graffiti artists Mers and Ryoe. Typing 'Mers Ryoe' in the search box on Flickr will return many different images of the car. The question now is, what is the ATP with respect to how Micro-Trains painted their release? The biggest artwork variation on the prototype versus the MTL model is at some point a large grey box containing the reporting marks and road number were applied to the car to make those more legible. The earliest photo I found of this island scene mural on the car was August 11, 2013, just about 5 years ago to the day of the MTL release. At that time, the grey box was not yet applied to the prototype and it looks just like the MTL release so we have our first bingo! I found another photo dated June 2014, still without the grey box. But then, a photo dated October 2014 has the grey box with white reporting marks and road number. This puts an end to the ATP as Micro-Trains released it but this subtle change wouldn't be too much of a challenge for a skilled modeler to do as TTX has done to their car. Moving forward, by January 2017 the door of the prototype has either been replaced or repainted to all black with the typical white lettering on it. The rest of the island mural on the car is intact as it was along with the grey box. Conspicuity stripes have also been added by this point.

"A bingo photo of the reverse side of the car can be found on rrpicturearchives.net. This photo is dated February 19, 2011 and it must have been a cold day in Unionville, NY as icicles can be seen hanging from the roof of the car."

David provided Flickr for each for the three prototype "versions" of this car:

www.flickr.com/photos/loseryouthcrew/9491364076/

www.flickr.com/photos/loadstone/14947450843/

www.flickr.com/photos/11700551@N02/32014701162/

RBOX 32556 is from the prototype series 30000 to 37749, the same prototype group in which the last three Year In Railbox cars also fall (34724, 34274 and 34856)... if you're looking in the ORER. We can narrow that down courtesy of RailcarPhotos.com which has the 32556 falling in the set numbered 32250 to 32849 built by American Car and Foundry from January to March 1979. The MTL 025 (and Z Scale 510) body styles are based on FMC prototypes.

With respect to patching the reporting marks to advance the ATP a bit, there are several how-to's on this technique available in print and online. There is decal film available in a few colors that makes the "patch" far easier than a paint job... at least, for me.



N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES:

Car #7 in the Union Pacific World War II Poster Series (118 00 170, \$25.95) has been released.

Reporting Marks for this Troop Sleeper are USAX 19417. UMTRR coverage was in the September 2017 issue. At left is the poster on which the car artwork is based.



In my late father's vast collection of books—a collection that I'm finding more of with each visit to my parents' house—is a gem of a hardcover called **Railroads At War**. It was authored by S. Kip Farrington, a noted writer, rail enthusiast... and sport fisherman. Farrington was clearly a railfan, as his glowing prose describing the involvement and innovation of United States railroads during the Second World War demonstrates. **Railroads At War** was published in 1944, making Farrington's a contemporary account. I find these histories simply fascinating. Chapter 2 of this book tells the story of... guess what road... the Union Pacific, and how the installation of Centralized Traffic Control along its Los Angeles to Salt Lake City line enabled a twenty-five percent increase in traffic. There's also a rather complete description of how CTC works. At "press time" there were several copies of **Railroads At War** available online for reasonable prices.

Z SCALE NEW RELEASES:



518 00 570, \$28.95

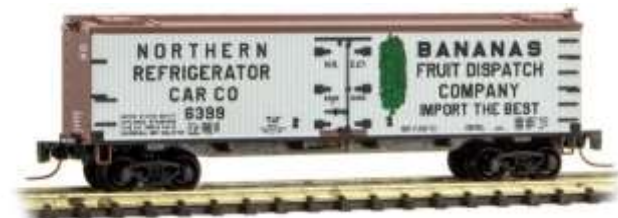
Reporting Marks: HPFL 2061.

40 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Refrigerator, Vertical Brake Staff, Heinz.

#12 and final release in the Heinz Series (pre-orders taken April 2017). Brown with black underframe and arch bar trucks. Green and

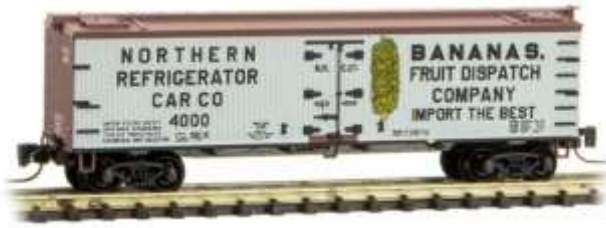
white Heinz pickle trademark on left. Red with white outline lettering including "57 Varieties" on left and "Tomato Ketchup" on right. White end markings. Approximate Time Period: 1890s into the 1920s.

Please see the coverage of the N Scale Release above (058 00 370), with the caveat that the Z Scale release is on a 40 foot car while the N Scale run is on a 36 foot car.



518 00 610 and 518 00 620, \$27.60 each

Road Numbers: 6399 and 4000 (will be "NRC 6399" and "NRC 4000" on website listings).



40 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Refrigerator Cars, Vertical Brake Staff, Northern Refrigerator Car Company / Bananas Fruit Dispatch Company.

Both cars are white with brown roof and ends and black underframe, trucks and details.

Black lettering including large “Northern

Refrigerator Car Company” and road number on left and “Bananas Fruit Dispatch Company / Import The Best” on right. White end markings. The 610 car has a bunch of green bananas and the 620 a bunch of yellow bananas to the right of the door. Approximate Time Period: 1926 to no later than 1938.

Please see the coverage of the N Scale Release above (049 00 780 and 049 00 790). Note that the Z Scale version has a more correct simulation of grab irons instead of a side ladder.



524 00 160, \$20.80.

Reporting Marks: ATSF 94283.

60 Foot Flat Car, Santa Fe (AT&SF).

Brown (including trucks and couplers) with

white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black double COTS panels on right. Approximate Time Period: 1960 (given by MTL), or strictly speaking, early 1970s given COTS panels, into the 1990s.

According to the **Santa Fe Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Page 62, “FT-19 class were ordinary FM type flat cars of 53 foot 6 inches built in company shops in 1960 with 50 tons capacity.” So first off, we have a “length thing” given the nominal 60 foot length of the MTL 524 body style. That’s enough to be noticed even reduced to 1:220 actual size (about 0.35 inch).

The description of the FT-19 class in the Color Guide includes a bingo on the 94283. It’s a straight side flat car with a sides so short from top to bottom that the COTS panels are attached to it—they won’t fit otherwise. The photo, taken in 1979, shows a U-1 “dot” at the far right end.

The ORER for July 1963 shows the series of 140 cars numbered 94225 to 94364, described as simply “Flat, Steel” with these key dimensions: inside length 53 feet 6 inches, inside width 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 54 feet 2 inches, extreme height 3 feet 9 inches, and capacity 140,000 pounds. Given the 1979 date of the bingo photo, I jumped to the July 1980 Equipment Register, where the car count is 106 and the outside length has increased to 56 feet 9 inches. In the July 1989 ORER there are 70 cars in service with the capacity down to 110,000 pounds. Just six remained as of the April 1997 Register, and those six squeak into the BNSF roster as of January 2000. Just one is left in the October 2004 ORER, which is where I stopped looking. The 1990s would be a more realistic end to the ATP, and of course there’s that U-1 dot which would be needed after 1979... strictly speaking.

And here's a bit of trivia: three of the FT-19s ended up on the Arizona and California Railroad, for which MTL has done well cars in N Scale. AZRC 4801 still sported the Santa Fe class at the far right as of 2006... along with conspicuity stripes and an "MW" designation. The 4802 and 4803 are also former AT&SF cars.

If you're wondering, Micro-Trains has also done nominal 50 foot straight side flat cars in N Scale (44060/044 00 060, starting August 1978), but they're from a different prototype number series.

Z SCALE REPRINTS: No releases this month.

Z SCALE MULTI-PACKS: No releases or announcements this month.

Z SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES: *The following was announced via the Micro-Trains website, the MTL Facebook page, and via the e-mail "Micro-Trains E-Line," all on or after July 16.*



510 44 226, \$28.95

Reporting Marks: RBOX 32656.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Youngstown Door, Railbox.

Car #8 in the "A Year of Railbox" series. Base car is yellow with black door and aluminum roof. Black lettering including reporting marks (with patched road number) and large "Railbox" name on left. Small red, blue and black "Next Load/Any Road" symbol and slogan on right. A side artwork of Hawaii with caricature of hula

dancer playing a ukulele in center (on the door). B side has fading, rust effects and graffiti both sides of door. Approximate Time Period: 2013, plus or minus (using the A or "featured" side of the car). Previous Releases: Previous Releases: Eight Pack #4 (994 00 804), May 2014; and Weathered Releases "A Year in Railbox" #2 through #5, February through May 2018 (Catalog Numbers 510 44 222 through 225).

Please see the coverage of the N Scale release above (025 44 565).

994 05 190, \$239.95, Northern Pacific Weathered Train Set. Consists of the following items:



- **981 51 351, Road Number 6513C, F7A Powered Diesel.** Two-tone green scheme with white lettering including slogan “Main Street of the Northwest” bottom center and road number at rear. Red, white and black monad herald on nose. Light weathering. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Road Numbers 6507A and 6513C, October 2014.

- **520 52 230, Road Number 81760, 40 Foot Despatch Stock Car.** Brown with white lettering including roadname on left and road number on right. Light weathering. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Road Numbers 81760 and 81778, May 2017.

- **533 53 061, Reporting Marks NP 70388, 33 Foot Steel Two-Bay Open Hopper, Offset Sides, Flat Ends.** Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left and roadname in center. Previous Releases: Runner Pack #51 with Road Numbers 70215, 70224, 70352 and 70368, March 2013.

- **503 54 171, Reporting Marks NP 103x (last digit obscured), 40 Foot Steel Single Door Boxcar, No Running Board.** Green with mostly white lettering including arched roadname and reporting marks on left, and slogan with monad herald on right. Moderate weathering and rust effects. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Road Numbers 1033 and 1034, November 2017.

- **501 52 280, Reporting Marks NP 38636, 40 Foot Steel Double Door Boxcar.** Brown with mostly white lettering including monad herald and reporting marks on left and arched roadname on right. Restenciled road number. Light to moderate weathering. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Road Numbers 32868 and 38296, February 2018.

- **535 56 006, No Reporting Marks, 30 Foot Center Cupola Caboose, Maintenance of Way.** Brown with white lettering including “M.W.” and “Radio Equipped” in center. Light weathering. Previous Releases: Multiples of this general paint scheme in different colors.

Note: The Diesel, stock car and single door boxcar may use any of the previously issued road numbers. The double door boxcar and hopper have previously unreleased road numbers. Approximate Time Period: 1960s into the 1970s.

Since these items have either been released recently or the individual coverage is available in back issues on the UMTRR website, for this coverage, we’ll stick to my usual “timeline” question: Could all of this equipment have operated in one prototype train at the same time?

We'll ignore the "M.W." caboose, noting that MTL must have run out of its actual Northern Pacific caboose release from back in October 2014. (It's not very close to any NP prototype anyway.) I called the ATP for the diesels in two-tone green in ending in the 1960s, based on a photo of the real 6513C taken in 1965. This was, of course, the passenger scheme for the NP diesels, with the black and yellow stripe being the freight scheme. So there's a bit of incongruity there, which I would have no problem explaining away – the passenger unit was pressed into service. (Also, see Rule #1: "It's your layout.") The ATP for each of the other cars was listed as follows: Stock Car, 1966 through the decade of the 1970s as these were rebuilds; Hopper Car, mid-1960s, again based on a rebuild, through the 1970s; Single Door Boxcar, late 1960s and 1970s; and Double Door Boxcar, 1961 or 1962 to early 1970s. So the short answer following a long sentence: yes, all of this equipment could have appeared together.

Z SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: No releases or pre-order announcements this month.

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: The N Scale Heavyweight Paired Window Coach is now available in painted unlettered versions in Pullman Green (145 00 001) and Tuscan Red (145 00 002) with an MSRP of \$21.25 each. There's also an N Scale "Crate Load" which is noted as fitting 50 foot boxcars. The two pack has Catalog Number 499 43 943 with a price tag of \$8.95. This crate load was included in the B&O/Chessie System boxcar from July (182 00 070).

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: I didn't mention what "holiday" was being commemorated with "A Year In Railbox #6" last month... namely because I did not know what was being honored. For the record, from the MTL website, I now know that it was "The National Day of the Cowboy," marked the fourth Saturday in July. Rats, I missed my chance to take a cowboy to lunch. Wait, I don't know any cowboys... This one is quite new, having been officially started only back in 2005. Which means the UMTRR preceded it. Hey, where's my "National Day of Unofficial Reports?"



DISCONTINUED ALERT: It's another month without an official Sold Out List from Micro-Trains. Have they discontinued the Discontinued Alert? What's a byte-slinger to do if there's no Bye-Bye Board to cite?

Do it myself, that's what, using as the Source Of Truth the Micro-Trains website. If, in their pages, a release that was not issued in the last month has a "Contact Dealer" ribbon, or if it's not in the listing of releases at all, we will presume that it's sold out. As usual, said release could still be "gettable" at your Friendly Authorized Micro-Trains Dealer. That is far less likely for pre-order items than regular runs, with the exception of some train sets which seem to hang around dusty hobby shop shelves for a while. If I've already mentioned in a previous column that a car is outta here, I won't bring it up again here.

So, I'm thinking that if I go a subset of releases at a time, I can cycle through all of the releases in N and Z Scale over the course of several months. I'm also thinking, "What am I thinking?!?" but here goes.

We'll begin this experiment with the 2017 and 2018 N Scale single release freight car items — no multi-packs. First up is Friendship Train Series #7, the Chicago and North Western Boxcar (020 00 037, November 2017). Next is the Western Pacific "Merchandise Service" Boxcar (020 00 097, May). Of the four Armed Forces boxcars released in January, only the United States Army version has been discharged (020 00 457). The CB&Q/Burlington single sheathed door-and-a-half boxcar has rolled away (040 00 030, April). The reprinted Canadian National wood caboose with maple leaf is gone (051 00 130, May), as are both the "clean" and Weathered Southern Pacific cabooses (051 00 310 and 051 44 310, May). The correctly lettered REA express refrigerator car from April is sold out (052 00 120) while the incorrectly lettered April Fool's Car remains in stock. Heinz Series Refrigerator Car #1, "Preserved Fruits," is no longer preserved (058 00 260, October 2017); at this writing #3 through this month's #12 are still on the MTL shelves. But both 36 foot reefers for the Santa Fe (058 00 380, April) and Northern Pacific (058 00 390, May) are gone. The United States Army tank car from just last month marched out in double time (065 00 960). Also outta here is the NASA Series tank car (065 00 940, June 2017). The Santa Fe "Food Loading" boxcar with large roadname and white door is gone (077 00 260, May 2017). The reprinted Soo Line drop bottom gondola with load is fully unloaded (083 00 020, March).

Hmm, about halfway through and I haven't lost my mind yet...

The CSX "Boxcar" Logo Two Bay Center Flow is sold out (092 00 390, June), another relatively quick exit. There are four of the same body style from 2017 gone as well: both the "clean" and "ETC" weathered/graffiti Norfolk Southern cars (092 00 240, March 2017 and 092 44 240, May 2017), and both numbers of the CSX paint scheme without a "boxcar" (092 00 35x, February). Moving to Three Bay Center Flows, the Pennsylvania Railroad reprint is empty (094 00 220, January 2017). The Weathered Great Northern Covered Hopper has blanked out (099 44 170, mid-June 2017). The Norfolk Southern 60 Foot Waffle Side Boxcar is gone (103 00 130, January). OK, I'll make an exception here: the Santa Fe "Safety Two-Pack" of waycars (cabooses) has departed (100 00 370, April 2017). I also fixed an oops, the catalog number of the second of those two is 100 52 380, not 370. Both TTX Depressed Center Flat Cars (109 00 14x, April), both Gulf General Service Tank Cars (110 00 33x, September 2017), and the really, really stained GLNX General Service Tank Car (110 44 370, mid-January) are gone. Enclosed auto racks which have rolled on included the Weathered BNSF in yellow (111 44 260, mid-September 2017) and the Conrail Weathered version (111 44 250, mid-November 2017), along with the clean Conrail version (111 00 250, November 2017), CSX "Boxcar" version (111 00 270, April) and Union Pacific "Building America" (111 00 280, May) — and that last one at \$49.95 MSRP, yet. Union Pacific Poster Series #1 troop sleeper kept on rollin', alright, right out the door of the MTL factory (118 00 110, February).

Did I say I was about halfway done? Not remotely...! (As Vizzini would say. Look it up.)

Both numbers of the Pennsylvania Railroad/Railway Express Agency boxcars (120 00 26x, October 2017) have been delivered. The Western Pacific Bay Window Caboose (130 00 190) and Weathered CSXT “Operation Lifesaver” Bay Window Caboose (130 44 210, mid-March) are gone. Lots of well cars are sold out: the weathered Northwestern Oklahoma (135 44 040, mid-September 2017), the Kansas City Southern (135 00 070, January), both CSX Intermodal (135 00 08x, February) and both Burlington Northern (135 00 09x, March). Finally, the Western Pacific plug door boxcar is gone (181 00 020, August 2017), as is the same car in a Union Pacific “Automated Railway” scheme (181 00 040, March).

Also of note, as of the August Micro-News, none of the July Weathered Releases in N or Z Scales had left the building. However, and I will bring this up even though I said I’d cover only singles this time, both the “clean” and weathered Pacific Fruit Express 16-Packs of 40 foot refrigerator cars (993 01 710 and 993 01 715, mid-May) are sold out. I get to type “D” (for Discontinued) **34** times into the 2017 Release Table... what fun! No, not really... Well, pick up that single weathered add-on if you can, I guess, as it’s still available.

OOPS PATROL: None detected or reported last month. Any catalog number misconstrues have been fixed in the UMTRR Website Listings; it now seems like one hundred years ago, not last month, when I did that so I can’t recall whether there actually were any of those mistakes.

FINALLY... INSECURITY: So I see from a recently received “helpful” e-mailing by a large website registration company that those of you who use Google’s “Chrome” Browser will be warned that the UMTRR website and its overall home, irwinsjournal.com, is “not secure.” Google will further explain, “Your connection to this site is not secure. You should not enter any sensitive information on this site (for example, passwords or credit cards), because it could be stolen by attackers.” Said “helpful” e-mailing also offered me a discount on an SSL (Secure Socket Layer) certificate. Even the “budget” version would about double the cost of keeping the website running. That’s a lot of dollars to flip that HTTP to HTTPS.

Well, last time I checked, I didn’t ask for credit cards and there weren’t any passwords. And my privacy policy is simple: I collect no data and I place nothing on your computer. (I have enough cookies in my cupboard as it is. I’m sure you feel the same way.) I also follow the recent GDPR adopted by the European Union—you know, the law that has resulted in your and my inboxes filling with “Updates to Privacy Policy” e-mails. I comply with these new regulations too, by default, simply because I don’t collect any information at all! Even my subscriber list lives off-line only on my PC, with suitable backups. What do you mean, put it in the cloud? What if it rains? (An actual question asked at an actual company town hall. You can’t make these things up.)

Still, an article on the Wired magazine website describes why SSL might be useful, although it also noted that this could be a step to “potentially cordon off older, passively managed corners of the internet.”

Frankly, despite the excessive UMTRR subscription rates (ha!), I can't budget for an SSL from the firm who sent that "helpful" e-mail. Apparently, though, there are much less costly alternatives... which I'll investigate. It seems my ISP has some sort of instructions on what to do with an SSL certificate.

In the meantime, though, please be aware that if you're using Chrome and it complains that irwinsjournal.com is "insecure," it really isn't in any significant sense. Well, except for its webmaster, perhaps.

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 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. **The UMTRR is copyrighted and all reprinting, reposting and other transmission is expressly prohibited, except for "Fair Use" quotes, unless prior permission has been obtained from me.**]