



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report

Issue #283 – July, 2020

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Hello again everyone! This month from Micro-Trains, seven very small pieces of N Scale equipment are scheduled for release. We also learn when some much larger and quite highly anticipated N Scale rolling stock is due out. Meanwhile, we have a pre-order for a Christmas train set that documents quite a misadventure. Read on...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



032 00 520, \$26.90.

Reporting Marks: NYC 78777.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Plug Door, New York Central.

Century green with white lettering including "Cushion Underframe" and reporting marks on left and "Insulated" on

door. Black, white and red "cigar band" herald on right. Approximate Time Period: 1966 (build date on car) into the 1970s. This car has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers.

Page 52 of the **NYC Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume Two** provides the bingo, or exact photo match, to this car. NYC 78777 was one of fifty cars built by North American Car for the New York Central in the summer of 1964. This lot, the Central's 953-B, was different from the norm at the time in two respects: first, it wasn't built in-house at the company's Despatch Shops; second, it still had a painted-on "cigar band" herald when the railroad had mostly switched to Scotchcal "decals" applied to the carbody. The small lettering to the right of the capacity lettering reads, "When empty return to the Belt Railway of Chicago, Clearing, Ill." That suggests to me some sort of dedicated service. Comparing photo to model, the plug door is a little different, and at the left of the side the real car had a short ladder instead of "the previously customary" grab irons.

The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for January 1967 shows the group NYC 78750 to 78799 with AAR Designation RBL and described as "Refrigerator, Cushion Underframe, Plug Type Doors." The inside length was 50 feet 1 inch, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 10 feet, outside length 57 feet 8 inches, extreme height 14 feet 5 inches, door opening 10 feet 6 inches, and capacity 4620 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. An end note calls out that all fifty cars have "fork lift truck pallets, platforms or skids, which will be considered part of car." In theory, that was supposed to keep shippers and receivers from helping themselves from these. I don't know how effective that was.

With running board removal commencing in the mid-1960s (in fact, the Central built a set of RBLs in November 1966 that didn't have them), the Strictly Speaking Approximate Time Period might not be that long at all. We'll presume, though, that this took a while as the Penn Central, successor to the NYC, had other things on its mind... like survival. The ORER for April 1970 has the New York Central series again standing at all 50 cars. Of those, 28 made it to April 1976 and the beginning of Conrail in the as-delivered NYC reporting marks. Five of those were still in NYC markings as of July 1980, which is where I stopped looking since by then the running boards should have been pulled. I didn't try to locate the renumbering of these cars into either Penn Central or Conrail series, but I would expect that did happen.



065 00 066, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: SHPX 4024.

39 Foot Single Dome Tank Car, F. Pirrone and Sons.

#6 in the "Grape to Glass" Series (Pre-orders taken September 2019). Aluminum with black underframe, bottom of tank and handrail. Black lettering including

reporting marks on left, company name in center and locations (Salida, Calif. And Garfield N.J.) right of center. Black end markings. Approximate Time Period: 1937 (build date) into the 1940s.

This coverage begins with an obituary, from the August 31, 2008 issue of **The Modesto Bee** newspaper: "Alfred F. Pirrone, who ran a family winery in Salida and later became a vice president at E.&J. Gallo Winery, died Saturday. He was 85.

"Mr. Pirrone grew up in New Jersey and moved to California in 1941. His time in college was interrupted by World War II, when he served with the Army in the Philippines. He returned to the University of California at Berkeley and graduated in 1947, then joined the family winery-- F. Pirrone and Sons-- in Salida. In 1964, he became the sole owner of Pirrone Wine Cellars.

"In 1969, Mr. Pirrone went to work for Gallo and ran the grower relations department. He retired in 1980. He and his wife continued to grow wine grapes throughout Stanislaus County."

And that's about all I have on the F. Pirrone and Sons winery of Salida, California and Garfield, New Jersey. Micro-Trains has in its car copy that the "F" in F. Pirrone was Frank Pirrone Jr., who began the venture in 1916 as just a grape supplier, than started making wine in 1936. Okay, one more data point: Al Pirrone apparently liked to cook. He contributed a recipe for Pacific Crab Salad to the 1963 cookbook **Favorite Recipes of California Winemakers**.

The prototype was an AC&F 8000 gallon insulated tank car, whereas the MTL 065 body style is modeled after the General American 10,000 gallon tank car—in other words, the Micro-Trains car is a bit too big. The bingo photo, from the collection of Ed Hawkins, is viewable online via the Resin Car Works site (resincarworks.com/extras/extras_kit9_ACF_ti.htm), then

scroll down to the photo link). It's an American Car and Foundry builder's photo of the SHPX 4024, fresh out of the plant in May 1937. As Pirrone was the lessee, and we know both how frequently those changed and how infrequently these changes are documented, the Approximate Time Period is again a guess—a pattern with the Grape to Glass series. We do have a solid start to the ATP this time, though. Data compiled by Ed Hawkins and also available at the above noted URL reveals that this was a series of exactly one car. On the other hand, the same photo is on Page 48 of the book **Tank Cars - American Car and Foundry Company, 1865 to 1955**, and there it's stated that the 4024 was part of a five car series, 4024 to 4028. "The car in the photo was leased to F. Pirrone and Sons," though, which could mean there was only one car... or not. Can you say "ambiguous"?



094 00 630, \$29.80.

Reporting Marks: CR 888635.

Three Bay Center Flow Covered Hopper with Trough Hatches, Conrail.

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left, roadname in center and medium sized "wheel on rail" herald

on right. Multicolor ACI Label and white on black double COTS panel on right. Approximate Time Period: late 1976 (based on service date on car) to early 1990s.

If only my eyesight were a little better, I could read the previous reporting marks right off the top right hand corner of this model. Good luck with that, George! We do know that the car is part of Conrail class H45 from the lettering, and from the Micro-Trains car copy we also know that it was originally built by American Car and Foundry for the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1966.

Aha! We can head over to the Conrail Historical Society's photo collection and learn that CR 888635 was formerly PRR 259843. A bingo photo of the car was taken in the mid-1980s. Some of the two original sets of cars, PRR 259751 to 260000 and 260776 to 260870, received Penn Central paint and numbers prior to Conrail, but 163 of them never saw PC reporting marks before going straight to Conrail paint. It looks from my inspection of the bingo photo in its original size that this car was lettered for the Penn Central in between PRR and Conrail.

The service date on the car also reveals that this was among the first cars redone for the Consolidated Rail Corporation. The paint on the bingo photo matches that on the MTL model, including the November 1976 date and the tiny "Grain Loading Only." At one time Conrail did try to distinguish what cargo the Center Flow was to carry by paint scheme, but I don't know if that carried through the carrier's entire history. Somehow this car also managed to escape application of the U-1 wheel inspection "dot." You can easily add one, of course.

The ORER for January 1978 shows that Conrail wasn't too particular about where it placed this car. The 888635 is part of a subset of eleven H45 cars inside the main series 888596 to 888695, which consisted of Conrail class H47 aluminum covered hoppers! What? (Micro-Trains has modeled the PRR version of the H47A, Catalog Number 099 00 10x, in July 2010 and August

2019.) The H45 cars were 4600 cubic foot capacity, just a shade off the CF4650 model that is the basis for the MTL 094 body style.

In the October 1986 Equipment Register, the dominant car types were still the H47 and H47A covered hoppers, with 101 cars in an expanded group CR 888596 to 888748. The H45s, still including the 888635, accounted for between 12 and 30 cars—I'm hedging a bit because the "H45" is not included in the description of 18 of the cars even though the dimensions are identical across all of the subsets. The October 1993 ORER shows an even bigger mess, so let's just say that the 888635 is still on the roster. However, that's the last time I see any H45s and even the H47s were way down to just 27 cars. Thus endeth the ATP.



108 00 400, \$26.90.

Reporting Marks: ROCX 15100.

100 Ton Three Bay Open Hopper, Rock Island Improvement Company.

Black with mostly white lettering including large "ROCX" and reporting marks on left.

Blue and white "R" from "The ROCK" paint

scheme on right. Yellow on black U-1 Wheel Inspection "dot" and white on black double COTS panel on far right. Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: 1978 (based on service date on car) to at least 1981 in regular service (see below).

Hidden in plain sight among "standard" RI and ROCK rolling stock on Page 73 of the **Rock Island Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** is a distinctive hopper with an interesting story. "The Rock" was teetering on the edge of shutdown in 1978, which would occur on March 31, 1980. Some of its shippers contributed to a refurbishment and leasing of hoppers under the Rock Island Improvement Company. The series ROCX 15000 to 15249 was the result. The bingo photo shows the car, rebuilt in 1978 at the Rock Island's El Reno shops (no, George, "ER" does not mean East Rochester this time!). This program continued in 1979 and 1980 according to the **Color Guide**. The image of the 15100 was captured in July 1981 so we know the car was extant in the "ROCX" paint scheme at least until then. The car was "an old Rock Island hopper" previously rebuilt in 1974 and belonged to either the 9000 to 9599 or the 100000 to 100399 series. There's a shot of Rock Island 100309 back on Page 71 of the Color Guide. It was built by Pullman-Standard in 1957 and reconditioned by United States Railway Equipment in 1974. While it's definitely a three-bay hopper, its capacity was 154,000 pounds, not 200,000 pounds or 100 tons. It had 16 ribs while the MTL 108 body style has 13. So we've a bit of a stand in here, as usual I'll leave the extent of that to the reader.

Complementing the bingo photo in the Color Guide are four other images on the website RRPictureArchives.net. Two of these cars looked like they were in storage or company service on the Iowa Northern as late as 2014. (That company owns and operates former Rock Island trackage in, well, Northern Iowa.)

But that's about it for this car. The April 1980 ORER shows that the ROCX reporting marks are registered to the Rock Island Improvement Company, but next to those marks is the indicator

that there was no listing in the Equipment Register. An entity by that name was involved in legal disputes from at least 1945, and perhaps the same company was founded in 1924, according to entries in an otherwise fruitless web search. The ROCX reporting marks are now in use by Rocky Mountain Transportation Services.



180 00 180, \$26.90.

Reporting Marks: NP 1213.

50 Foot Steel Boxcars, Single 10 Foot Door, No Running Board, Short Ladders, Northern Pacific.

Green with white lettering including arched roadname and reporting marks on left. White, black and red NP monad herald on right. White stripe across car including door. Small white and red "DF" circle on door. Approximate Time Period: 1967 (based on service date on car) to early 1980s. These cars have a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers.

"NP 1213 at Cicero, Illinois looks new, but check again," writes Todd Sullivan on Page 54 of the **Northern Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. "The roofwalk is gone and the slogan is, too. So this is a repaint of one of these DF cars. The photo date of February, 1968 helps establish the approximate date of its repainting." The slogan referenced here is "Route of the Vista-Dome North Coast Limited" or even "Main Street of the Northwest" which was part of the original scheme of these boxcars. If you don't own the book, check George Elwood's "Fallen Flags" website (www.rr-fallenflags.org) for a shot of the very same car. An image of NP 1165 from 1973 also on that site shows that the previous and newer paint schemes co-existed.

The 1213 belonged to the series NP 1100 to 1289, which were rebuilds of unequipped 31000 series 50 foot boxcars during the period 1954 to 1956. On Page 53 of the **Color Guide** there's a shot of NP 1168 from that series. And at right there's the official MTL image of NP 1265 also modeled from that series and released in April 2008. This car was a reprint; the initial run was in March 1994 (Catalog Number 31250/031 00 250).



It's interesting to me how, when comparing the with and without running board photos of these cars, how the car looks more "squared off" when the running board is removed even though the boxcar shape hasn't been changed otherwise. There is one delta, though: the MTL 180 body style has a ten foot door while the real cars had eight foot doors, making the "DF" medallion (which was literally that, not painted on) look a bit small. The shortened ladder on the right is correct; on the left the real car had grab irons. I could not verify the brake wheel position (high or low) with any photos available to me.

I thought I could cheat on the Approximate Time Period by copying and pasting information from my April 2008 coverage of the previous two NP cars in this series, but no! I closed the

ATP back then with, guess what, running board removal and repaint into this scheme. OK, then, we'll pick up the ORER lookups with the successor Burlington Northern's entry from April 1970. There were 191 cars described as "Box, Steel" with AAR Designation XL in the slightly larger series 1100 to 1295. The key dimensions were: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 54 feet 5 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, door opening 8 feet as noted above, and capacity 4807 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. An end note calls out the DF loaders. Just over ten years later in the July 1980 Register, the car count was down to 20. The series was down to two and scaled back to NP 1104 to 1284 in the April 1984 ORER, so "early 1980s" it is for the ATP. And could that mean that the only two left were 1104 and 1284?

In addition to the above, the seven Scale Test Cars announced for pre-orders in January are expected to be available mid-month and should be at MTL dealers as you read this UMTRR coverage was in the January 2020 issue. Only the MTL artwork was available at "press time"; I'll replace it on my website with actual product photos, should those become available. Fun fact: a version of the prototype car was only thirteen feet long! These are the items:



121 00 110, \$16.95

Reporting Marks: CSXT 914240.

Scale Test Car, CSX Transportation.

Blue with yellow handrail and brake wheel. Yellow lettering including reporting marks on left and "Scale Test Car" on right. Orange vertical conspicuity stripes at three points on car. Approximate Time Period: 1990s through at least the decade of the 2000s.



121 00 120, \$16.95

Reporting Marks: C&O ST-1.

Scale Test Car, Chesapeake & Ohio / Chessie System.

Black with yellow handrail and brake wheel. Yellow lettering including reporting marks on left and "Scale Test Car" on right. Yellow grab irons. Approximate Time Period: mid-1970s to at least the 1980s.



121 00 130, \$17.95

Reporting Marks: MILW 980238.

Scale Test Car, Milwaukee Road.

Orange with black handrail and brake wheel. Black lettering including weight and "Scale Test Car" on sides. Red and white Milwaukee Road herald on left. Yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" on right. White grab irons. Approximate Time Period: 1970s, or strictly speaking, 1978 given U-1 "dot" to at least 1992.



121 00 140, \$15.95

Reporting Marks: CP 420939.

Scale Test Car, CP Rail.

Black with white grab irons. White lettering including roadname on left. Approximate Time Period: as early as 1968 to at least 2005, or to at least 2012 if adding conspicuity stripes.



121 00 150, \$14.95

Road Number: 490387 (will be "PRR 490387" in website listings).

Scale Test Car, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Black with white lettering including "Test Weight Car" on left and roadname and road number on right. Approximate Time Period: 1917 (build date) into the 1960s.



121 00 160, \$14.95

Reporting Marks: UP 903145.

Scale Test Car, Union Pacific.

Aluminum with black lettering including reporting marks on right. Approximate Time Period: 1990s to present (a bit of a guess).



121 00 170, \$14.95

Reporting Marks: D&RGW X-450.

Scale Test Car, Rio Grande (Denver and Rio Grande Western).

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left and "Scale Test" on right. Approximate Time Period: 1953 (as numbered) into the 1970s.

N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS:



160 00 140, \$29.95

Road Number: 2280 (will be "ERIE 2280" in website listings).

Heavyweight Single Window Coach, Erie Railroad.

Pullman Green with black roof, underframe and six-wheel trucks. Yellow lettering including roadname in center of letterboard and road number at bottom center. Approximate Time Period: mid-1920s to early 1940s (corrected from earlier versions of this commentary).

While the Erie Railroad baggage car (Catalog 147 00 140, released April 2015) which was the prototype for the MTL body style remains available (what?), here's the second heavyweight passenger car for this roadname. Strings of coaches, especially the company's fleet of

“Stilwells,” would have been in commuter service out of the Erie’s Jersey City passenger terminal a few blocks from where I first lived. Yes, the Erie did have these type of coaches in addition to Stilwells, so no worries there. I’m old enough to remember seeing that terminal, mostly vacated in favor of merger partner Lackawanna Terminal just north in Hoboken even before the 1960 merger, in ruins. This was years prior to the land being reclaimed for what would become the Newport Centre district of high-rises and office buildings. The PATH station below the terminal site was once called “Erie” – take a look for the large “E”s at the top of the posts holding up the underground platforms next time you’re there.

An undated photo of the 2280 can be found on northeast.railfan.net. There are 22 windows on the side we can see, aligning with the MTL 160 body style. Roof and underframe details differ between model and prototype.

In the previous version of this commentary, I put the 2280 in the series 2070 to 2099, not where it belonged, and so everything in that paragraph was wrong. There **is** a prototype photo so the car **did** exist. So let’s try this again, using the links above, my copy of the March 1943 Official Register of Passenger Train Equipment and earlier ORERs which did have the Erie’s passenger equipment listed.

The 2280 is not in the August 1924 ORER. It is in the April 1928 Equipment Register, where it’s part of a group of fifteen, numbered 2274 to 2288, capacity listed at 88 passengers. In the January 1940 ORER, it’s in a larger group 2250 to 2284, with 35 cars of capacity between 76 and 84, and it’s noted that the 2280 was equipped with Safety Carrier Steam Jet Air Conditioning Service. At some point that would have put the car in Erie Two-Tone Green, which the company used for air-conditioned cars, and possibly into a new road number, but the trail goes cold (pun not intended) right there. The 2280 is not listed in the ORER of January 1943. So my revised ATP for this car is likely from the mid-1920s to early 1940s.

According to the **Erie/DL&W Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, even after the merger of the Erie and Lackawanna, many Erie coaches kept their lettering until being retired in favor of “Comet” cars supplied for commuter service by the New Jersey Department of Transportation.



160 00 180, \$32.90

Road Number: 1671 (will be “NW 1671” in website listings).

Heavyweight Single Window Coach, Norfolk and Western.

Maroon with black roof, underframe and six-wheel trucks. Buff lettering including roadname across of letterboard and road number at bottom center. Approximate Time Period: early 1950s (based on paint scheme) to 1964 for at least this particular car.

When the first Norfolk and Western heavyweight passenger car released by Micro-Trains, a 12-1 sleeper (Catalog 142 00 180, August 2018), it was easy to hit the “Pullman Project” database

and see that the car was repainted to N&W's "Tuscan Red" in 1953. But was that the actual start date for that paint scheme? For example, the road's "name train" Powhatan Arrow was equipped with streamlined passenger cars in 1949, and those were Tuscan Red. On the other hand, it's also noted that Tuscan Red cars didn't have a black roof until the early 1950s.

A visit to the online archives of the Norfolk and Western Historical Society (www.nwhs.org) helps a bit here. A bingo photo of the 1671 is available; it's dated July 1960. The paint matches that on the Micro-Trains model. The side we can see has 22 windows, also aligning with the MTL 160 body style, though to me those windows look a little taller than on the model. Also on the site is a shot of N&W 1647, a "modernized" coach with a replacement roof, but more importantly the same general Tuscan Red and black paint, as of September 1954. These and other cars of the type were in the N&W's class "Pg."

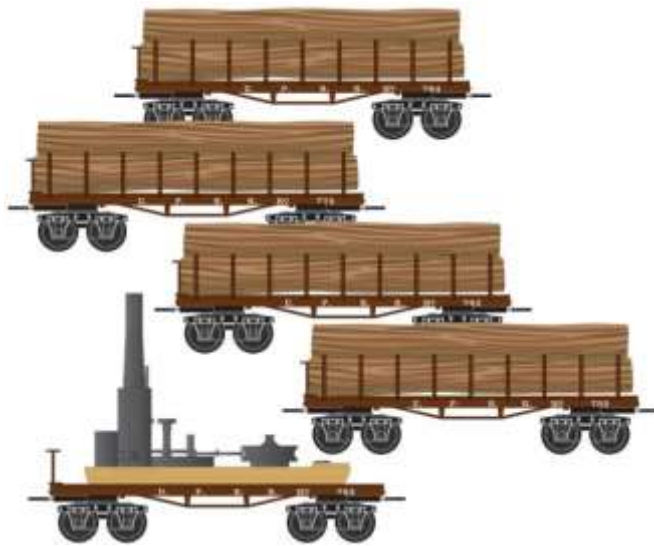
The ORPTE for March 1943 places the 1671 in a group of fifteen cars numbered 1659 to 1673. Each car was 80 feet long and seated 68 passengers. The inside length of 70 feet was shown in the January 1953 ORPTE. In its car copy, Micro-Trains notes that the 1671 was sold to the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1964. I'll take that as the end of the Approximate Time Period at least for this particular car.

N SCALE REPRINTS: No releases this month.

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS: *All of the following are scheduled for mid-month release and should be at MTL dealers as you read this.*

Runner Pack #168 (993 00 168, \$94.95), consists of four Pennsylvania Railroad 50 foot gondolas with fishbelly sides and drop ends. Simulated cable spool loads are included. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the February 2020 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 046 51 440, 374256; 046 52 440, 374779; 046 53 440, 374801; and 046 54 440, 374876. These are the first through fourth releases for this item.





were in March 2015 with road numbers 751 and 783).

The **Civil War Era Union Pacific Log Car Five-Pack (993 02 070, \$119.95)** consists of five flat cars, four of which have simulated log loads and include flat car stakes and the last of which includes a steam donkey. These cars have link and pin couplers. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the February 2020 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 153 51 510, 784; 153 52 510, 775; 153 53 510, 762; 153 54 510, 755; and 153 55 083, 793. These are the first through fourth releases for the flat car with stakes, and officially the third for the flat car without stakes and with the steam donkey (first two

And the **CP Weathered Tie Loader Three-Pack (993 02 090, \$99.95)** consists of three fifty foot gondolas with tie loads and a tie loader kit (resin and cast metal parts). UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the March 2020 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 046 51 450, 428017; 046 52 460, 428064; and 046 53 290, 428021, going from bottom to top of the illustration. These are the first releases for the 450 and 460 items and the second for the 290 item (the first release was in April 2006, road number 341998).



*In addition to the above, 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 **July 31**.*



Scheduled Delivery December 2020:

993 00 173, \$109.95.

Reporting Marks: CSXT 475235, 475239, 475274, 475275.

Runner Pack #173, quantity four of MTL 105 Series 50 Foot Steel Gondolas with Fixed Ends, CSX Transportation.

Black with mostly yellow lettering including reporting marks on left and CSX logo on right. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at points along lower side. White on black COTS panel below "X" in CSX on right. Each

gondola also has a resin coil cover painted back with yellow lettering including CSX logos and installed atop the gondola. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 (given conspicuity stripes) to as late as the present. Previous Releases: None. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

While specialized cars for coil steel have been around for decades — my late dad's accumulation of HO Scale rolling stock includes AHM offerings bought at Woolworth's in the 1970s! — there are still your basic gondolas with coil covers roaming the rails as well. In February 2011, CSXT 475235, being offered as the first of this four-pack, was found in West Trenton, New Jersey on former Reading Railroad trackage. It's a 16 panel gondola with different ends than the Micro-Trains car. There are not one but two separate cover pieces, although reduced to N Scale that will not be at all obvious. This car was initially Louisville and Nashville 26451 and then Seaboard System 475235, keeping that number when the reporting marks changed from SBD to CSXT.

Meanwhile, the 475239, former L&N 26455, was in a string of these gondolas in June 2007 in Walkerton, Indiana. It was also caught with a whole lot of, ahem, additional decoration on one side, in December 2015 in McAllen, Texas. CSXT 475274, previously known as L&N 26490, was in Bremen, Indiana in August 2008, similarly scrawled upon. And finally to complete the foursome of Bingo Photos, all on RRPictureArchives.net, is an image of what looks like a freshly painted CSXT 475275, in Harlington, Texas in October 2003. At the time the car did not have conspicuity stripes, lending some credibility to my call of the ATP beginning sometime after they were mandated in 2005. In July 2015, it definitely had that feature, plus some, ahem, white scribbles on one side. This car was the former L&N 26491. Most easily noted in this shot versus all the others are the instructions on the coil covers: "Remove this cover first" on the left and "Replace this cover first" on the right. These instructions should be reversed on the other side of the car – "Remove" on the right and "Replace" on the left. A bit of subtlety, this, which I suppose is a bit above "nitpicking" in the hierarchy of Attention To Detail.

The ORER for January 2006 shows the series CSXT 475210 to 475282 with AAR Designation GBSR and the description "Gondola, Equipped with Cradles and Removable Roof Cover." The inside length was 52 feet 4 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet 8 inches, outside length 61 feet 1 inch, extreme height 12 feet 6 inches (presumably this is with the cover installed) and capacity 2244 cubic feet with a gross rail weight (car plus lading) of 263,000 pounds. There were 61 cars present at that time. As of January 2018 the car count was 40, so "to present" at least seems possible. Another data point here is that the original L&N series, 26425 to 26499, first appears in the ORER sometime between the October 1976 and January 1978 editions. If the "forty year rule" applies to these cars, they would have been out of service by the end of 2017 at the latest. It's my understanding, though, that the "forty year rule" has plenty of loopholes these days.

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 July 16.*



025 45 561, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: RBOX 30377.

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

#7 in the "Year in Railbox 2020" series, "National Tattoo Day." Base car is yellow with black door and aluminum roof. Mostly black lettering including later version Railbox name and reporting marks on left. Black, red and blue later small version "Next Load/ Any Road" logo on right. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Featured side of the

car has multi-color graffiti across most of the side (including on door). Opposite side of the car has multicolored graffiti on left bottom of side and white scrawl graffiti at several other points

on car. This item does not have conspicuity stripes. Approximate Time Period: before 2005, plus or minus. This car has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers.

It's nice to see that a character in the 1970s/1980s television show Fantasy Island is honored with a "Year In Railbox" car... no, wait. Wrong "Tattoo."

Unfortunately, neither I nor our Graffiti Special Correspondent David Grothe could locate the bingo for this car. As David points out, it's conspicuously absent from RRPictureArchives and elsewhere. Your intrepid byte-slinger also ran through more than 2400 images on Railpictures.net with no results. David pored through another 2000 images elsewhere online. I confirmed that Micro-Trains has the needed photos of the graffiti in question in order to do this car. Hey, not everything MTL does comes from online sources!

I can tell you that from RailcarPhotos.com we know that the 30377 falls into the RBOX series 30000 to 30499, built by American Car & Foundry in February and March 1978. This was part of the Railbox class XAF20. Images of other cars in the series on RRPictureArchives show that there's a difference between the prototype and model roof.

The TTX Corporation listing in the ORER for January 2002 shows the much larger group, RBOX 30000 to 37749 with 5294 cars. The capacity is given as 5275 feet, a little off the MTL 025 and Z Scale 510 body styles which are models of FMC 5077 cubic foot cars. As a group, these cars probably make it to "The Present," with a total of 3540 cars in the January 2018 ORER. However, this release does not have conspicuity stripes, which would stop the ATP closer to the 2005 range. I don't think the 30377 would have made it more than a few years past then without those "reflectors," if it survived at all. For example, a July 2010 shot of sister car RBOX 30321 is captioned, "en-route to be scrapped."



094 44 650, \$34.90

Reporting Marks: NAHX 61040.

Three Bay Center Flow Covered Hopper, Round Hatches, Wells Fargo Rail Corporation (formerly General Electric Railcar Services, previously North American Car).

Base car is gray with mostly black lettering including restenciled reporting marks on left. Light to moderate weathering and paint wear effects. Featured side of the car has multicolor "Let's Go Camping" graffiti

across the bottom of the side. Other side of the car (unofficial photo above) does not have graffiti. Approximate Time Period: 2018, plus or minus, but no later than early 2020.

David Grothe quickly located the bingo for this car, as he took the photo. And good thing, since when shot by David in February 2020, the car carried reporting marks NOKL 440477, NOKL being for the Northwestern Oklahoma Railroad. The patch panel with the new

reporting marks partially covers the “L” in “Let’s.” A 2011 photo of a clean side of NAHX 61040 is posted to RRPictureArchives. It’s noted in the caption that the car was formerly Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern with reporting marks DME 70058, was NAHX 61040 before that, and became NOKL 440477. David’s photo of the car with those reporting marks is also on RRPictureArchives.

We know that the Approximate Time Period for this car does not extend to 2020 based on David’s photo. Having struck out on other images, it’s over to the ORERs to try to place either the end of the NAHX reporting marks or the start of the NOKL reporting marks to arrive at a “plus or minus” ATP. And we don’t have to go far: the January 2018 Equipment Register doesn’t have NOKL 440477, and does have 266 cars in the series NAHX 61000 to 61299 under the registration for Wells Fargo Rail Corporation. Wells Fargo Rail is the combination of First Union Rail Corporation with the 2015 purchase of General Electric Rail Car Services. The NAHX series is under the GE Rail Services registration in the April 2013 ORER, and going back at least as far as the January 2000 Equipment Register. I know graffiti can last a while on a freight car, but I think twenty years is a stretch! I’m going to tag (pun intended) 2018 around which to Approximate the Time Period.

The ORER listing has only external dimensions of this car: length 58 feet 1 inch, extreme width 8 feet 6 inches, extreme height 15 feet 6 inches, capacity 222,000 pounds (later, gross rail weight listed at 286,000 pounds). These are 5150 cubic foot cars, a fair bit larger than the MTL 094 body style. In addition, the size and shape of the ends differ from the Micro-Trains car.

From RailcarPhotos.com we learn that they were built by Thrall between November 1994 and January 1995 as their Job Number 828. As for service for the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern, only 100 of these cars spent only part of 1998 in DME reporting marks.



993 05 700, \$89.95

Reporting Marks: BNSF 616646, 617404, and 617709.

BNSF Graffiti Three-Pack.

Consists of three 108 series three bay covered hoppers. Base cars are Brown (mineral red) with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and “wedge” or “swoosh” herald on right. White on black COTS stencil at bottom right. Yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes along bottom of side. Each car has light to moderate weathering. The 616646 has patch panels and repainted areas (lighter red-brown). The 617404 has a patched road number and white scrawl graffiti across side in the MTL image. The 617709 has a multicolor graffiti tag across most of the

bottom of the side shown in the MTL image. Simulated coal loads included for all cars. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 2005 (given herald and stripes) to as late as the present, but more likely the decade of the 2010s. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Catalog Numbers 108 00 37x, Road Numbers 615546 and 615587, December 2017. Individual catalog numbers for these cars are 108 51 370, 108 52 370 and 108 53 370.

When the “clean” versions of these cars were released at the end of 2017, I complained that I didn’t have a more recent ORER than 2014 to check on the Approximate Time Period. I do know, the January 2018 to be exact, but it’s really getting to be time to seek out a newer copy instead. (Directly from the ORER folks, it’s \$175 a copy. Plus shipping. Maybe next year.)

Anyway, according to that January 2018 ORER, the cars selected for this Weathered Three Pack are all from different series. The 616646 is within the group BNSF 616159 to 616679, which had 118 cars at the time. The 617404 was from the set BNSF 616848 to 617589, containing 118 cars. And the 617709 was one of just 35 BNSF cars numbered from 617636 to 617717. I’m feeling a little skittish about calling a “to present” Approximate Time Period here. Oh, before I forget, the December 2017 release road numbers, 615546 and 615587, were—possibly—in a set numbered 615521 to 615998. These cars had an outside length of 48 feet 9 inches or 49 feet 9 inches, extreme height of 12 feet 2 inches or 12 feet 4 inches, and capacity of 3420 or 3433 cubic feet and a gross rail weight (car plus lading) of 263,000 pounds. The start of the ATP probably isn’t as far back as 2005, either, although that’s the earliest it could be, given the introduction of the “wedge” or “swoosh” herald and the introduction of conspicuity stripes both occurred in that year. It would have taken some time to change the paint and add the stripes.

David Grothe took the October 2017 photo of the 617709 with the graffiti included on the MTL model, so we know we’re good until at least then. That shot is on RRPictureArchives, as is an October 2015 image of the same car without graffiti and what looks like a relatively new paint job. That’s it for RRPictureArchives, though, in terms of bingo photos. It’s over to the site RailcarPhotos.com for the match to BNSF 616646, and I do mean “match” as Micro-Trains has reproduced the pattern of “touch-up” paint from that photo, which was taken in July 2015. The car was previously BN 542035 and before that, SL-SF 89135. There’s also a May 2019 picture of BNSF 617404, formerly ATSF 178645, on RailcarPhotos.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: Car #3 in the **Solar System Series**, for the planet Venus, has been released in both pre-ordered varieties. UMTRR coverage was in the December 2018 issue.



interior light and magnetic wand activator.

Catalog 102 02 832, \$27.95 (at right) does not have the interior light.

Catalog 102 00 832, \$36.95 (at left) has the



Meanwhile, the **Thomas Kinkadee Painter of Light FT-A Diesel** (987 01 808, \$124.95) is expected to be available mid-month and should be at MTL dealers as you read this.



And now we continue the Christmas Season for Special Edition Pre-Orders...

*In addition to the above, 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 **July 31**.*



Expected Delivery October 2020:

993 21 340, \$229.95

Santa's Off The Rails Train Set.

Scheduled to consist of one 987 series FT-A Diesel Locomotive, three modified 101 series forty foot boxcars, and one modified 100 series steel caboose. Each item will have multicolor illustrations of Santa Claus in various scenes, one side typical and the other side humorous. The FT-A (Road Number 2020) has "Merry Christmas" in red outlined in white. Each boxcar has black postmarks at far left and right of both sides. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Here's something a little out of the ordinary for around the Christmas Tree! Not since Ralphie's "Old Man" had difficulty plugging in the Christmas Tree at the Parker household on Cleveland Street – better known as the "Christmas Story House" -- has there been a situation comedy like this. You knew I'd sneak in my favorite author, Jean Shepherd, and his best known work, the film **A Christmas Story**, right? On one side of this set, the usual well-run tasks of Santa's visits around the world are depicted. On the other side... well, let's just say things aren't going quite as well as planned. I invite you to have a good look at the preliminary artwork from the MTL website, viewed at full size (that's almost an 8 ½ by 11 inch sheet when enlarged) – there's a lot going on. Just the middle boxcar has Kris Kringle tangled up in the Christmas Tree, with the milk and cookies going everywhere, along with a cat, possibly responsible for this mishap. (Shadow and Branson, the resident felines at the UMTRR HQ, officially protest this interpretation.)

I'm sure that sets like these have more than a minimal presence at train show operating displays. If so, be sure to turn the train around frequently. And see if anybody notices that it's "HO! HO! HO!" in the clockwise direction and "OH! OH! OH!" in the counterclockwise direction.

Z SCALE NEW RELEASES:



Chesapeake and Ohio Cameo Car #4 (505 00 425, \$34.95, Reporting Marks C&O 21457) has been released. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the October 2019 issue.

Also, the next four new release cars following the MTL pre-order only protocol have been released this month. They are two more virtual two-packs...

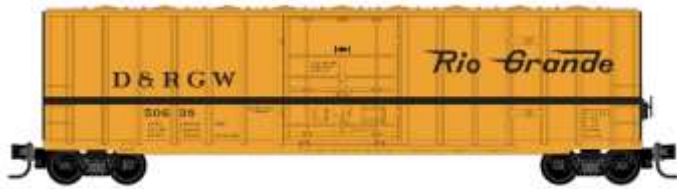


511 00 281 and 510 00 282, \$25.80 each.

Reporting Marks: NYC 48260 and 48264.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Plug Door, New York Central.

Green with white lettering including "Cushion Underframe" and reporting marks on left. Small black, white and red "cigar band" herald at top right. Approximate Time Period: 1966 (build date) into the 1980s. Pre-order coverage was in the January 2020 UMTRR.



511 00 291 and 510 00 292, \$29.90 each
Reporting Marks: D&RGW 50638 and 50641.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Plug Door, Rio Grande (Denver & Rio Grande Western).

Orange with black ends and black stripe across sides. Black lettering including large reporting marks on left and "speed lettering" roadname on right. Approximate Time Period: 1966 (build date) to 1972. Pre-order coverage was in the January 2020 UMTRR. Only the artwork for the 291 release is shown here.

Z SCALE REPRINTS, MULTI-PACKS and SPECIAL EDITIONS: No releases or pre-order announcements this month.

Z SCALE SINGLE RELEASE PREORDERS: *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 **July 31**.*



Targeted Delivery December 2020/January 2021:

522 00 361 and 522 00 362, \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: WP 6051 and 6055.

50 Foot Steel Gondolas, Fishbelly Sides, Drop Ends, Western Pacific.

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left. Yellow roadname in center split by red feather. Black on yellow "when empty" instructions sideboard on far left. Simulated wood tie load included. Approximate Time Period: early 1960s (1962 rebuild date given by MTL) to late 1970s. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

These two road numbers were released in N Scale on covered gondolas, Catalog 106 00 220. The 6055 was run in February 2012 and the 6051 in April 2016. Since covers were removable I don't think that's an issue for the Z Scale releases. And besides, here's a market opportunity for an enterprising 1:220 modeler with a 3-D printer, right?

These two were part of a short series 6051 to 6060. They were pulled from the original series WP 6501 to 6600, built in 1945 by Mount Vernon Car. While from a similar series built by Greenville in 1948 and 1949, we've seen Z Scale models of this general group from MTL, as a single car in April 2002 and via Runner Pack #29 in May 2011 (at right).



When moved out of the 6600 group to this set of ten, the cars were equipped with a three section roof and removable bulkheads. The “as delivered” end doors were also welded shut. Before going on, I’ll note that the above heritage is correct whereas my previous commentary on the N Scale runs had them coming from the later Greenville-built cars, i.e. an “oops.”

The January 1964 ORER lists these ten as AAR Classification GBS, description “Gondola, Steel, Wood Floor, Covered.” The inside length was 52 feet 6 inches and the outside length 55 feet 1 inch, the extreme height was 8 feet 7 inches, which should count the cover. Capacity was 1,745 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. All ten were still around in 1972, and two of the ten lasted into 1981.

And as shown in the MTL artwork, these cars were given a much more elaborate paint scheme. No plain roadname here! The large orange feather was sure to garner looks at railroad crossings. This is quite the unusual circumstance for a gondola. Page 77 of the **Western Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, has an August 1978 photo of WP 6064, not in the same series but with same snazzy paint scheme, though faded considerably. There’s a car from this prototype group, 6053, on Page 76 of the **Color Guide** also as of August 1978, but its yellow lettering and orange feather have nearly disappeared.

All ten were still around in 1972, and two of the ten lasted into 1981. However, a 1981 photo of WP 6059 shows it repainted with reporting marks only. That image is on [RRPictureArchives](#), and shows a load that would be a challenge to reproduce: broken freight car trucks! Get out that 3-D printer...



Targeted Delivery December 2020/January 2021:

522 00 371 and 522 00 372, \$24.95 each.

Road Numbers: 60065 and 60143 (will be preceded by “SOU” in website listings).

50 Foot Steel Gondolas, Fishbelly Sides, Drop Ends, Southern Railway.

Brown with white lettering including large roadname and road number in center, accented by green dot inside the “O” in “SOUTHERN.” Simulated wood tie load included. Approximate Time Period: late 1960s (based on paint scheme) into the decade of the 2000s. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

In December 2008, MTL released N Scale Runner Pack #22 with road numbers 60065, 60100, 60143 and 60182 (at right). The UMTRR coverage was in May 2008. There’s not much I can steal from there... I mean, “honorably adapt.” For one thing, the MTL artwork doesn’t match the N Scale cars. You’ve probably already noticed the larger, bolder lettering.



Let's begin, then, on Page 67 of the **Southern Railway Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** and a photo of the 60750. No worries about how far off the road number is from the two announced. This was a series of 1500 cars, built by Pullman-Standard in 1953. When built they carried a white on black paint scheme. The "Green Light" paint scheme was in use from about 1969 to 1982 according to the RPI website, but as we know, repainting was not uppermost on the minds of Southern Railway officials. The fourteen panels on the prototype match the MTL 522 body style. The offset of the five digit road number under the eight letter roadname is spot on as well.

The ORER for April 1970 shows the series Southern 60000 to 61499 with description "Gondola, Steel, Fixed Ends" -- and therein lies a delta to the Micro-Trains car, which has drop ends. The inside length was 52 feet 6 inches, inside height 3 feet 6 inches, outside length 57 feet, extreme height 6 feet 11 inches, capacity 1745 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds. There were 1244 cars in the main series. There were also four different subsets, the most interesting of which was a set of 34 cars equipped with demountable containers and given AAR Classification LG. Another 26 cars were equipped with bulkheads and covers for use in hauling aluminum and sheet steel.

There continued to be spinoffs of the main series throughout my ORER lookups; for example in April 1981 there were 1150 cars in the main series, 54 more cars with capacity increased to 197,000 pounds, 12 cars with tie down chains for logs, and 18 with demountable containers. Moving to July 1989 we find 343 cars remaining in the main series, three left with demountable containers, and "Capacity Roulette" for 33 additional cars in seventeen different subgroups. No, even I'm not crazy enough to list all of them. Eighty-five total cars held on all the way to the Norfolk Southern listing of January 2000, and twenty-nine were left in January 2002, but that's all in terms of revenue service. So a 2007 shot of the 60064, over on RRPictureArchives, is of an "off-roster" gondola, green light or not.



Targeted Delivery December 2020/January 2021:

522 00 381 and 522 00 382, \$24.95 each.

Reporting Marks: UP 229786 and 229791.

50 Foot Steel Gondolas, Fishbelly Sides, Drop Ends, Union Pacific.

Brown (including trucks and couplers but not wheels) with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and large roadname in center. White on black double COTS panel and yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" on right. Simulated wood tie load included. Approximate Time Period: mid-1960s or, strictly speaking, 1979, to early 1980s. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Two hundred Class G-70-4 gondolas were delivered by Bethlehem Steel to the Union Pacific in early 1958. The 30294 was selected by the company photographer to have its picture taken, which appears on Page 80 of the **Union Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** (Volume 1). Besides being in a different number series, it also sported yellow lettering.

However, there were 700 cars in all in the G-70-4 class, and according to the **Union Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume 2**, 179 of these were fitted with two belt rails, four movable bulkheads and a three section removable roof. Their load capacity was also lowered to 68 tons from 77 tons, given that extra equipment.

This was in 1965 although the MTL artwork shows a service date in 1979. Sister car UP 229793, which appears on Page 44 of the above book (Volume 2, that is), also has a 1979 service date. The lettering on that car is somewhat different than on the 229786, on which we have a bingo over on RRPictureArchives.net.

Interestingly, the photo of the 229786 was taken in 1978 and the car has consolidated stencils but not the U-1 wheel dot. The 1979 servicing shown on the Micro-Trains model artwork probably included the addition of that inspection “dot,” since the Federal Railroad Administration requirement for their use began in 1978. According to the RPI site the UP switched from yellow to white lettering in 1966, or the year after the cars were modified. By losing the consolidated stencils and U-1 dot (and ignoring the reweigh date!) you could backdate the start of the ATP to then.

The ORER for January 1978 shows the series 229700 to 229799 with 75 cars, of AAR Designation GBR with the description “Gondola, Steel, Fixed Ends, Wood Floor, Adjustable Bulkheads, Removable Roofs (Coil Tin Plate).” The inside length was 52 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet 1 inch, outside length 57 feet 3 inches, extreme height 9 feet 1 inch and capacity 1900 cubic feet or 136,000 pounds. That car count represents only part of the 179 conversions, but we’ll stick with just this set of cars. The UP didn’t stick with them much longer, though, at least in this number series. In the January 1985 Register, the “group” is reduced to 229706 to 229779, but there’s just one car in that entry. And that, understandably, is where I stopped looking.

Like the Western Pacific gondolas discussed above, these UP cars had covers, probably but certainly for much of their service life. Since you can’t prove the absence of something, an application of Rule #1 (“It’s your railroad”) will enable these models to be run with the included tie load—let’s assume, for example, that they were pressed into service for that reason. Or perhaps MTL is thinking that there’s a market opportunity for 1:220 covers that goes beyond someone with a 3-D printer, although that is purely my speculation.



Targeted Delivery December 2020/January 2021:

522 00 391 and 522 00 392, \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: PRR 374256 and 374779. 50 Foot Steel Gondolas, Fishbelly Sides, Drop Ends, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Brown (the PRR’s “Freight Car Color”) with white lettering including reporting marks on left and plain keystone on right. Simulated wood tie load included. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1961 (based on paint scheme) or 1962 (based on paint date on cars) through the decade of the 1970s. Previous Releases: None. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

This last virtual two-pack is a true “gimme” for this byte-slinger as the two road numbers here are the same as the first two road numbers in N Scale Runner Pack #168 which dropped this month. So it’s a copy/paste of the pre-order coverage for that set...

The PRR class G31a gondola were in two series according to “Rob’s Pennsy Page” (at the URL pr.railfan.net) but we’ll focus on the 373950 to 375749 group which has the road numbers MTL announced for this Runner Pack (the other set was numbered 612000 to 614999). These 1800 cars were all built by Pullman-Standard in 1951 and 1952. They had fourteen panels, drop ends and wooden floors, the latter denoted by the “W” in a circle to the left of the plain keystone lettering. The bingo photo for the 374256 is on Page 81 of the **PRR Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume 3**. This image was captured sometime after July 1962, the repaint date on the car. This isn’t long after the “Plain Keystone” scheme on the car was introduced, defining the start of the ATP for this set. It appears that these cars had a side mounted brake, but via a lever not a typical brake wheel as on the MTL 046 body style.

Rob’s Pennsy Page calls out car counts for this series based on ORERs: April 1952, 1049; October 1953, 1799; October 1958, 1796; October 1963, 1793; and April 1968, 1389; that last lower figure being the result of rebuilds of some G31a cars into other G31 classes. From there it was on to the Penn Central, with a total of 1108 cars in the April 1970 Register. The key dimensions were: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 3 feet 3 inches, outside length 57 feet 3 inches, extreme height 7 feet, and capacity a mix of the original 140,000 pounds and 154,000 pounds and 1646 cubic feet.

As of the first appearance of Conrail in the April 1976 ORER, the rebuilt G31k class had become the main series with 259 cars, with 131 G31a cars making it to their third owner still in PRR markings. Eight of the G31a cars survived to be listed in the July 1980 Equipment Register, but I think I’ll end the ATP with the decade of the 1970s.

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 45 221, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: RBOX 30377.

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

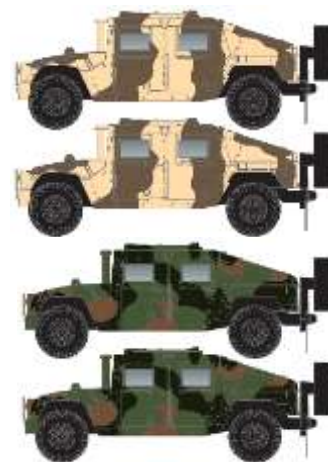
#7 in the “Year in Railbox 2020” series, “National Tattoo Day.” Base car is yellow with black door and aluminum roof. Mostly black lettering including later version Railbox name and reporting marks on left. Black, red and blue later small version “Next Load/ Any Road” logo on right. White on black double

COTS panel on far right. Featured side of the car has multi-color graffiti across most of the side (including on door). Opposite side of the car has multicolored graffiti on left bottom of

side and white scrawl graffiti at several other points on car. This item does not have conspicuity stripes. Approximate Time Period: before 2005, plus or minus.

Please see the coverage of the N Scale release (025 45 561) above.

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Open for pre-orders are two more pair of Humvees, this time in “camo” (camouflage) paint (see MTL artwork at right). Quoting Micro-Trains directly: “These decorated vehicles will come decorated in the Desert Camo and Woodland Camo schemes and will included printed headlights and taillights. The interior window, shell and underframe will be assembled together, however the extra wheel, snorkel and etched-metal pieces will not come installed. The etched-metal pieces will come painted. Specific assembly instructions and recommendations are available on the ‘How To’ page at Micro-Trains.com.” Each pair of Humvees has an MSRP of \$34.95. The “Desert Camo” pack has Catalog Number 499 45 953 and the “Woodland Camo” pack is 499 45 954.



Micro-Trains’ own CEO Eric Smith presented at a “Virtual National Train Show” webcast during the evening of July 16 (Eastern Time) and discussed the Solar System Series, the TTX 60 foot boxcars, the Santa Fe Fast Mail Train Set (but see below), tooling for the PS-2 covered hopper, and the Talent PPE initiative. There were no new announcements made. (Overall, the idea of the “Virtual NTS” was good, but I think the execution left something to be desired, not your fault, Eric and gang.)

DISCONTINUED ALERT: We’ll begin a relatively short Do It Yourself Bye-Bye Board with this year’s outs, leading off in N Scale with the CP Rail boxcar from May (023 00 420) and the CP Rail white bulkhead flat from last month (054 00 270). The Western Pacific center flow from last month is also already gone (093 00 170). It’s probably not a surprise that both TTX Auto Racks from last month are already outta here (111 00 38x), but so are the Weathered/Graffiti “Picnic Pack” (993 05 690) and BN/BNFE Weathered Two-Pack (993 05 700). Speaking of packs, cross off the CN Expo 86 pair of boxcars (993 01 960, February), the CSX-Family Lines Weathered Three-Pack of Center Flows (993 05 610, February). I suspect the Santa Fe Fast Mail Train Set from mid-last month (993 02 050) was made pretty strictly to pre-orders only, and it’s left the station. Turning to Z Scale, the first number of the Union Pacific boxcar has left the building (501 00 301, February), and apparently so has Chesapeake and Ohio Cameo Car #4 by virtue of it being missing from the website listing (505 00 424).

Looking at the N Scale Freight Cars singles for 2019, we go all the way down to Kinkade Painter of Light Series #5, “Blessings of Summer” (102 00 805, August) for the first sellout. To be fair, though, that’s because most 2019 singles are already gone. The first numbers of the Hammermill Paper (115 00 061, June) and Norfolk Southern (115 00 071, September) log cars have been logged out. (OK, that was lame, even for me.) TTX Fuselage Sets #1 and #3 (993 00 781 and 783, March) are gone. The first number of the Z Scale Union Pacific tank car (530 00

391, August) has been drained. The only item issued before 2019 that has left the building since last check is the N Scale Santa Fe Heavyweight Baggage Car (149 00 040, May 2016).

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: Bryan Busséy has more for us on the New Haven single release passenger car, road number 6818 (160 00 380) and the five-pack pre-order announcement (993 02 110), both from last month: "New Haven used its single window coaches in commuter service until the end. #6818 would have been reassigned after service on the Old Colony lines. The single window coaches were the backbone of New Haven passenger service on the non- Northeast Corridor lines, and the ATP is not short by any means. Both this model and those in the upcoming Runner Pack are appropriate for 1955 through 1968. They also were used to shunt employees between New Haven and Cedar Hill. Much like the Rapido PBLWs and 8600s, this is a must-have piece of equipment for any New-Image-era New Haven modeler.

"The 6818 is a smoker and has a tan interior representing leather seating. The four coaches in the Runner Pack will have navy interiors representing non-smokers cars with mohair seats. The car numbers for all six cars are correct and appropriate for their respective classes." Thanks, Bryan!

Meanwhile, if either the New Haven passenger cars had been released and/or announced this month, or I had been faster in my perusal of the **Model Railroader 1934-1999 DVD**, I would have been able to tell you concurrently that the Dean of Track Planners, the late great John Armstrong, had a feature article on the Old Colony in the February 1960 MR. Besides a mostly shelf-based "octopus" which manages to include a number of the Old Colony lines, Armstrong provided background information on the prototype. "Old Colony's numerous commuter and short distance passenger hauls and light freight traffic have been the despair of the railroad's treasury for many decades," he wrote. Most of the passenger service had been discontinued in 1959 just before this article was published. Armstrong included a chart of how a representation of the actual Old Colony service could plausibly operate on the track plan he designed.

Our Graffiti Special Correspondent adds an asterisk to the "Year in Railbox 2020" February release: it's almost identical to a car done as an N Scale Enthusiast Special Run. The key difference is that the road number isn't present on the NSE Special Run. I guess the prototype restenciling crew hadn't reached it yet to put back the road number.

And I'll add a footnote to last month's "Year In Railbox 2020" #6 - MTL's notes have this as the "Pick Your Poison Day" car. What, "Union of the Snake" doesn't work? This Duran Duran fan must be showing his age again.

Further to this month's scale test cars release, I've just read a letter to **Model Railroader** in the June 1959 issue, commenting on MR's April 1959 review of an HO Scale kit version of this same style of scale test car. "These test cars are never handled behind the caboose, except in an emergency, but are handled directly in front of the caboose. The reason is simple: No air

brakes. Should a car, behind a caboose, become uncoupled while the train was moving and not be noticed by the crew, it could become a lost car, creating a hazard." The writer noted that some scale test cars had been equipped with air brakes by that time. If you're keeping score, I've made some progress on my perusing of the Model Railroader DVD and will finally be getting to the introduction of N Scale in just a few more "years" – of issues, that is, hopefully not my pace of reading.

And further to the now sold-out (rats!) BN/BNFE two-pack from last month (993 05 700), there's a closeup of a different Western Fruit Express car showing the Burlington Northern and Northern Pacific heralds together, and faded: It's at www.railpictures.net/photo/592397/ , but you need to allow ads. (And I know that because...)

OOPS PATROL: Transposition Department: The Z Scale "Year In Railbox #6" boxcar has catalog number **510** 45 012, not **501** 45 012. Omissions Department: The Reporting Marks of Z Scale Chesapeake and Ohio Cameo Car #4 (505 00 424) are C&O 21294.

FINALLY, ZOOM TRR? As we go "to press" it's looking more like we're shifting from forward to perhaps neutral, or even reverse, with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic here in the United States. One event after another is being cancelled or postponed, and model train conventions have been among the many impacted. I wonder if we'll see any train events for the rest of the year... they don't just have to be held, but people have to attend.

Some enterprising folks are taking to holding meetings via the wonders of the Internet, specifically, that relatively new toy called "Zoom." (If you're old enough to have spontaneously started singing, "Boston, Mass. 02134!" then you have company here at UMTRR HQ.) Given that my wife has a Zoom account that can accommodate a number of participants that I doubt we could reach, I wonder if it would be fun to have an Unofficial Get-Together of the Unofficial Micro-Trains Release Report Gang? Let me know your thoughts via the usual e-mail umtrr@irwinsjournal.com , and please put "ZOOM" in the subject line. If there's enough interest, Colleen and I will set something up.

Until next month, do the best you can!

Cheers,
George

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