



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report Issue #286 – October, 2020

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Hello again everyone! This is probably the most grateful I've ever been to be able to bring these bytes to you. The distance between safety and catastrophe at the Micro-Trains factory was, as has been noted, "across the street." Our best wishes continue to go to those six MTL staff members who lost their homes and just about everything else, and to the entire crew behind the red and yellow sign which, thankfully, is still standing. Team Micro-Trains has been impacted by the Alameda Fire to be sure. There are some changes to expected delivery dates, mostly on Multi-Packs which I'll cover in that section of these bytes. But there's a fair amount that's now available as well... and have I mentioned it's near Christmas Time again?

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



065 00 086, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: CMWX 102.

39 Foot Single Dome Tank Car, Chateau Martin Vineyards.

#9 in the "Grape to Glass" Series (Pre-orders taken September 2019). Aluminum tank, black underframe and trucks. Red "Chateau

Martin Brand Wines" across side, multicolor crown trademark on right. Black lettering otherwise including reporting marks on left. Black end markings. Approximate Time Period: 1940 (build date) to no later than 1952.

The bingo photo for this car comes from an overview of Chateau Martin Wines and its roster ([URL coastdaylight.com/chatmart/cmwx_roster_1.html](http://URL.coastdaylight.com/chatmart/cmwx_roster_1.html)). There was a listing for various equipment in the Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) from 1940 to 1975. The 1940 roster included this tank car, one of the set CMWX 101 to 105. Most of the other cars were "house cars" which had internal tanks installed, and most of those were painted in the well-known purple and white scheme with large Chateau Martin lettering and a variety of slogans. Micro-Trains has done a couple of these as Special Runs, but the prototypes don't really have any close matches in N Scale. The principal use of these cars was to bring bulk wine from the company's production facility in Waterford, California (near Modesto and southeast of San Francisco) to the bottling plant at the Bronx Terminal Market in New York City.

The same photo on the webpage cited above appears in the book **American Car and Foundry Company 1899-1999**, Page 91. The 102 was a series of five cars, 101 to 105, sold to Commodities Car Company and then leased by that firm to Eastern Wine Company, which was the producer of Chateau Martin. The cars were 6000 gallon capacity and as such were a fair bit smaller than the MTL 065 body style. The Commodities Car Company listing in the January 1943

Equipment Register shows only those five cars. By 1950, fifteen of the wood-sheathed “BMT” tanks within house cars have been added. However, between then and the April 1952 ORER, only the 101 and 105 are shown among the tank cars. That yields an Approximate Time Period of not more than twelve years for this specific car. The home points are listed as Waterford and the Bronx, which tends to confirm that the shipment from the former to the latter was the purpose of these cars. In addition, it suggests to me that Commodities Car Company existed solely to own and lease these cars for this use and was probably a subsidiary of Eastern Wine.



065 00 096, \$27.70.

Reporting Marks: UP 4053.

39 Foot Single Dome Tank Car, Union Pacific.

Black with white lettering including roadname and reporting marks on left and “Fish Oil” on right. White end markings.

Approximate Time Period: 1954 (based on lettering) to no later than 1959.

This is one of those unusual cases in which a railroad owns tank cars for other than company service. While the story of this car goes back to its construction by General American, for the purposes of the Approximate Time Period we need only go back to the reweigh date, November 1954. The lettering protocol aligns with that date; the UP began using gothic lettering back in 1939 and dropped the periods from the reporting marks in 1957. It was noted back in 2011 on the Steam Era Freight Cars Group (then in YahooGroups, now in Groups.io) that that railroad repainted some tank cars from 1952 to 1956.

The January 1955 has the series UP 4000 to 4099 in the main listing of its revenue equipment. There were 56 cars in the group at that time. Dimensions listed included an inside length of 33 feet, outside length 36 feet, and extreme height of 12 feet 10 inches, along with a weight capacity of 80,000 pounds. That strikes me as being a bit smaller than the MTL 065 body style. At the time, the Union Pacific had 850 tank cars overall in several groups in the 4000s number block. However, between January 1958 and January 1959, the group in which we’re interested was gone from the ORERs, and no later than January 1962’s Equipment Register, all of the UP tank cars were out of the 4000s numbers. That same January 1962 ORER has UP tank cars in the 68000s and 69000s. That includes the group 68000 to 68054 which may or may not be the 4000 to 4099s based on the dimensional data, which is a little different. Anyway, with renumbering or removal, the ATP for this release ends.

Now, about that Fish Oil stencil. Besides being about as far away from the products shipped in the “Grape to Glass” series while still being ingestible – yecch! – fish oil is a product derived from, well, oily fish. (Thanks, Wikipedians... I think.) Fish don’t make their own oil, they consume it instead from plankton and algae. As some bigger fish eat smaller fish, they accumulate fish oil, but also toxic chemicals which is why some experts advise limiting consumption of larger fish. There are also, let us say, a variety of opinions as to how beneficial fish oil is to human health, and what specific conditions it might positively impact. Around the time that these UP tank cars would have rode the rails, it’s likely that fish oil was

synonymous with Cod Liver Oil. Among its uses was that of a supplement for children which contained Vitamin D, and was universally unpopular among children as well! However, fish oil also had industrial applications and my sense is that this is why the UP designated tank cars for that commodity.



073 00 260, \$27.90.

Reporting Marks: MP HERB-1.

40 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Youngstown Door, No Running Board, High Side Ladders, Missouri Pacific "Herbie" Car Version Two.

Brown (including truck frames) with white "Herb-1" designator at bottom left, multicolor "Herbie" rendition on left, red and white "Eagle/Buzzsaw" MP herald at top right, and white "Help Every Railroader Become Injury Exempt" lettering on right. Approximate Time Period: 1983 into the 1990s. This item has a lowered floor and body mounted couplers.

Within a day of the announcement of this release, I received an e-mail asking if this was a "not a reprint" of the previous Herbie car (Catalog 24220, July 1993). How do I avoid a double negative here? It is not a "not a reprint"? No. It is a new release? That's better. This is actually a model of the **second** of three prototype Herbie cars while the previous run was a model of the first of the three prototypes? Yeah, that'll work.

With the May 2020 pre-order announcement of the Z Scale version of the first version of the Herbie car, I located the "Screaming Eagle" website hosted by Trainweb which has a special page devoted to this specific car (URL www.trainweb.us/screamingeagle/herbie.html). The "Herbie" design was based on the winning entry in a 1979 safety poster contest. Missouri Pacific's management liked the concept so much that they commissioned a boxcar, MP 129685, on which to deploy it. Contest winner David Newborne personally painted the car with his design. It then travelled around the MP system. For example, it was found in July, 1980 in Riverdale, Illinois; the resulting image is on RRPictureArchives. There are several differences between the prototype and the MTL 503 body style, most noticeable being a wider door and full side ladders and end ladders on the actual car.

That was only the first of two different MP boxcars which wore the "HERBIE" scheme. A second car was painted no later than 1983 based on photo evidence, and received the red and white eagle/buzzsaw herald with the "screaming eagle" facing left instead of right. That's the one modeled this time by Micro-Trains. You'll see from the photo evidence that it's not quite the same car as the 073 body style. There's no ORER data from which to compare model to prototype, but there's a "door thing" for sure with at least an eight foot door on the real car.

Union Pacific merged the Missouri Pacific on January 1, 1997, but that wasn't the end of HERBIE. No later than 1998, the UP painted a third boxcar in a similar scheme, trading the MP's eagle/buzzsaw herald for the familiar Union Pacific shield. That car looks like a converted American Refrigerator Transit steel refrigerator car! The horizontal rivet seam

across the center of the side is the spotting feature leading me to that conclusion. A shot of that car is on RRPictureArchives. It's also noted that the second HERB-1 saw service on the UP with the MP herald replaced with the Union Pacific shield.



083 00 140, \$26.90.

Reporting Marks: ICG 220220.

40 Foot Drop Bottom Gondola, Illinois Central Gulf.

Black with orange roadname across car and orange and black "solid rail" herald on right.

White lettering including reporting marks at bottom left and visibility stripes at points along bottom. Multicolor ACI Label and white on black COTS panel at far right. Simulated container load included. Approximate Time Period: 1974 (conversion date) to no later than 1984.

"Now here's a car you don't see every day!" wrote James Kincaid on Page 123 of the **GM&O/IC Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. ICG 220220 was converted from a drop bottom gondola to container service in August 1974. It's not known what the donor series was for the just these four gondolas, 220220 to 220223. Kincaid thinks they were randomly selected from the Illinois Central series 99000 to 99743. "While hard to see due to the slight blurring," Kincaid writes of the bingo photo, "note that the load limit is marked 'with containers.'"

The ORER for April 1975 shows only three of the four possible cars in the small group. They were described as "Gondola, Special Container, Lading Strap Anchors" with AAR Designation LG. (Also something you don't see every day.) The inside length was 41 feet even, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 5 feet, outside length 45 feet 4 inches, extreme height 9 feet 5 inches, and capacity 1956 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds. These cars didn't last long: only one remained in the January 1978 Equipment Register and it was gone between the April 1981 and April 1984 ORERs. I suspect that these cars were converted for a specific purpose and once that mission was completed the cars were deleted.

IC drop bottom gondolas have been previously represented by MTL with a virtual two-pack in "Main Line of Mid-America" lettering (083 00 07x, June 2009) and a single car in black and orange with the split rail herald (083 00 090, May 2015), but those weren't in the prototype 99000 series.



105 00 320, \$26.90.

Reporting Marks: B&O 360814.

50 Foot Steel 14 Panel Fishbelly Side Gondola, Fixed Ends, Baltimore and Ohio/Chessie System.

Dark blue with yellow lettering including reporting marks on left, small "Ches-C" herald in center and small Chessie System roadname on right. White on black COTS panel on far right. Simulated scrap load included. Approximate Time Period: mid-1970s (or perhaps, 1982 for this particular car) to the late 1980s.

I'm tempted to review this and the Chesapeake and Ohio / Chessie System gondola together, but no, let's not. (Well, except in the forthcoming next issue of **The N Scale Enthusiast**.) We can find the bingo photo for this car on Page 73 of the **Chessie System Color Guide to Freight Equipment**. The 360814 was among the series of Class G-21 B&O gondolas assembled from Bethlehem Steel kits in 1964 at the railroad's DuBois, Pennsylvania shops. The 14 panels, fixed ends, and fishbelly sides align with the MTL 105 body style. "Most cars in this class," **Color Guide** author Randall K. Fields wrote, "were typical of unadorned, general service 70 ton gondolas."

Although it won't tell us whether the car was repainted into Chessie colors, the ORER for July 1974 shows us 584 cars in the main series B&O 360775 to 361374, plus a few that were equipped with either metal bins or coke containers. All are described as "Gondola, Steel, Fixed Ends, Flat Bottom, Composite Wood and Steel Floor" with these dimensions: inside length 52 feet 5 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet, outside length 56 feet 11 inches, extreme height 7 feet 10 inches, and capacity 1995 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. Almost ten years later in January 1985, a total of 498 cars were in service out of the original 600 built. But there's a quick exit from there: down to 269 total cars in a headache-inducing number of subsets in the July 1989 Register, all of which are gone by the July 1991 ORER. Some of these cars could have gone to CSX Transportation paint or at least restenciling, but not with the same road numbers as far as I can tell. And so much for the Approximate Time Period. As for the specific repaint date of this car, the bingo photo shows a service date of January 1982 at the Chesapeake & Ohio's Raceland, Kentucky shops.

I found a photo on George Elwood's "Fallen Flags" website of sister car B&O 361263 as of May 1990, with reporting marks and a small capitol dome herald. Checking with our B&O Special Correspondent Brian DeVries, I confirmed that this car was still mostly wearing the "as delivered" paint, with the U-1 wheel inspection "dot" and COTS panel added later, of course. Brian added that the original B&O class was O-70, just barely visible at the bottom of the second panel from the right.

Meanwhile, I won't miss pointing out that while a scrap load is perfectly appropriate for this car, on the same Page 73 of the **Color Guide** there is a shot of B&O 360356 from the previous prototype series... which appears to be carrying super-size versions of the Starfleet Insignia. A mix of railroading and **Star Trek**... what could be better than that?



105 00 330, \$26.90.

Reporting Marks: C&O 39275.

50 Foot Steel 14 Panel Fishbelly Side Gondola, Fixed Ends, Chesapeake and Ohio/ Chessie System.

Dark blue with yellow lettering including reporting marks on left, small "Ches-C" herald in center and small Chessie System roadname on right. Multicolor ACI Label on right and white on black COTS panel on far right. Simulated scrap load included. Approximate Time Period: mid-1970s (or likely 1976 for this particular car) to early 1980s.

The Chesapeake and Ohio controlled the Baltimore and Ohio from 1963 on although it wasn't officially merged into CSX Transportation until 1987, just after its 180th anniversary. From 1963 on, though, equipment was swapped around between the two railroads. Turning again to the **Chessie System Color Guide to Freight Equipment**, Page 72 this time, we find that C&O 39275 was an example of this relocation from one roster to another. Specifically, this car was among one of three groups built in either 1937, 1940 or 1941 by Bethlehem Steel and American Car and Foundry, in the B&O's Class G-3. The C&O series 39000 to 39499, including the 39275, was a set of cars rebuilt at the C&O's Raceland, Kentucky shops in 1968. The bingo photo of the car in the Color Guide shows a reweigh date in 1976 at Raceland, in fresh paint and showing off the bumps and bruises of a car in heavy duty service... which is what can be said about most gondolas. The cars retained friction bearing trucks after their rebuild.

The April 1976 ORER makes a distinction between the first eighty percent of this series, described as "Gondola, Steel," with 391 cars, and the last twenty percent, which is called out for "Sand and Gravel" and accounts for another 96 cars. The dimensions for both sets are the same: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet 6 inches, outside length 57 feet, extreme height 8 feet 5 inches, capacity 2260 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. If you're keeping score, that makes this car larger than the B&O car above, but not by much: the inside height difference is six actual inches, which scales down to 0.0375 inch in N.

Despite their 1968 rebuilding, the fact that these cars were originally built from 1937 to 1940 must have figured in their retirement schedule: just fifteen total are shown in the April 1981 ORER and there's just a single car left as of the April 1985 Equipment Register. Could be that it was decided not worth the effort or expense to put the by-then required roller bearing trucks under these cars. The timeline seems enough, perhaps barely, for an overlap of service in Chessie System paint to run this car with the B&O one above; if I'm wrong, just call for an application of Rule #1 (It's Your Railroad).

By the way, if you're interested in a possible source of the scrap load idea, there's a photo of Chessie/B&O gondola 354387, also on Page 72 of the **Color Guide**, piled above the top of the sides with... you guessed it.

N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS: One this month:



144 00 360, \$32.90

Road Number: 7507 (will be "PRR 7507" in website listings). Heavyweight 3-2 Observation Car with Balloon Roof, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Tuscan with black roof, four-wheel trucks and underframe. Buff stripes and lettering including road number left and right and car name "Quaker City" in center. Approximate Time Period: mid-1960s to no later than 1969.

In the “Business Car” section of the **PRR Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume Two** is a going-away shot of PRR 7507 as of April 1966. It’s not the best bingo photo ever, but it’ll have to do. It was in the Pennsy’s Class Z74D. This was one of at least two PRR cars named “Quaker City.” Turning to the late Jerry Laboda’s Passenger Car Photo Index, we find citations to both the 7404 and 7407 bearing that name. Laboda’s site has a link to a photo on Flickr which is another going-away shot that appears to be a scanned-in slide, which I can guarantee was not taken in February 2009! There’s also what’s definitely the most useful image, an almost straight-on shot from Northeast Rails. The use of four-wheel trucks by MTL is accurate, however the window arrangement between the prototype and the MTL 144 body style isn’t.

Turning back to the **Color Guide**, it’s noted that the car had a kitchen, pantry and a room with upper and lower berths at the vestibule end (the end opposite the observation platform), followed by a dining room with three folding beds, a toilet annex and three more rooms, with a double bed, a single bed and upper and lower berths respectively. Definitely a business car and not your basic 3-2 observation! The use of the non-clerestory roof is also a match between model and prototype. The PRR keystones are wedged in between windows as on the MTL car, representing the final version of the Pennsy’s passenger paint scheme. Previously, PRR business cars had the full roadname across the letterboard, just as their general service passenger equipment did. That change dates to the mid-1960s.

Jerry Britton has pieced together information on the PRR’s business car collection, with his advisory that the Z74’s history “is also the most convoluted. Over their lives, individual cars were reclassified, renumbered, and renamed many times.” He has, among many other details, that the 7507 was originally built by Pullman in 1928 and was named “Philadelphia,” “Pennsylvania” and “Baltimore” before becoming the “Quaker City” in July 1954. The car was conveyed to successor Penn Central as of February 1, 1968 but was retired on August 4, 1969 and subsequently sold.

N SCALE REPRINTS: No releases this month.

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS: Micro-Trains is working to catch up from the Alameda Fire-caused factory shutdown, causing some delays on multi-packs. There are no new multi-pack releases this month. Under a “Shipping Updates” section and elsewhere in the Micro-News and the MTL website, there are these estimated updates:

- Runner Pack #171 (993 00 171) of four Western Pacific wood refrigerator cars, November
- TTX Version 1 of “TBOX” cars three pack (993 01 840), mid-this month -- and it’s noted in the Micro-News and online as already sold out at the factory
- CSX “TBOX” cars three pack (993 01 850), mid-November
- CN “TBOX” cars three pack (993 01 860), December or January
- TTX Version 2 “TBOX” three pack (993 01 870), January
- Both eight packs of DPRX tank cars (993 00 821 and 822), mid-this month
- CSX Tie-Loader three pack (993 02 100), mid-November

Of these, the UMTRR Spy Network tells me, the TTX “TBOX” cars are the top priority. They’ve certainly been long-awaited. Just a little more patience, folks... and you too, George, I must tell myself...

There is one Runner Pack announcement: *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 October 31.*



Expected Delivery March 2021:

993 00 176, \$99.95.

Road Numbers: 60514, 60750, 61118, 61349 (will be preceded with “SOU” in website listings).

Runner Pack #176, quantity four of MTL 105 Series 50 Foot Steel 14 Panel Fixed End Gondolas, 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. Previous Releases: None. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Catalog and road numbers will be confirmed upon release.

If you read through the entire UMTRR when it’s released... you do, right?... then you probably recall the Z Scale pre-order announcement of two Southern Railway gondolas in July. I noted then that I could not pull much information from my much earlier coverage of the N Scale Runner Pack #22 from the May 2008 issue (at right), since the paint scheme was not the same.

Well, you might consider this forthcoming foursome as a “not a reprint” of that earlier Runner Pack, since it turns out it’s from the same prototype series, and it’s also from the same group as the Z Scale pair announced in July, with that pair’s paint scheme, even though there are no common road numbers.



That’s because the prototype 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 105 body style. The offset of the five digit road number under the eight letter roadname is spot on as well. And unlike the forthcoming Z Scale version, these models will have fixed ends, as they should.

The ORER for April 1970 shows the series Southern 60000 to 61499 with description "Gondola, Steel, Fixed 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.

Page 67 of the **Southern Railway Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has a bingo photo of the 60750, the second, numerically, of the four cars in this set.

N SCALE WEATHERED/GRAFFITI RELEASES: *The following was announced on the Micro-Trains website on October 15.*



025 45 014, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: RBOX 32013.

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

#10 in the "Year in Railbox 2020" series, "National Mischief Day." Base car is yellow with black door. "Ghost" lettering including original Railbox name on left and "Next Load/Any Road" logo on right. Restenciled reporting marks on left. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Featured side of the car has multi-color graffiti across most of the most of the left including depiction of a tagger with spray paint. Opposite side of the car has multicolored graffiti across the bottom of the side (including the door). Moderate to heavy weathering including on roof. Orange conspicuity stripes at several points on each side. Approximate Time Period: 2017, plus or minus, based on featured side of the car. This car has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers.

Isn't every day "National Mischief Day" in terms of tagging freight cars? Well, according to the site "What National Day Is It," June 18 is "National Mischief Day" – but that doesn't fit with the "Year in Railbox" theme and it's the only reference I found to that particular day of the year. What I think the folks in Talent are referencing here is "Mischief **Night**," the night before Halloween, or October 30. This year it's also the fifth Friday of October, meaning that many employees paid bi-weekly get three checks in the month, perhaps leaving a bit of money for mischief—or buying trains. (Not the same thing!) Back in the Previous Century in my suburban neighborhood in New Jersey, Mischief Night usually didn't go much farther than toilet paper and eggs, although unfortunately that is not the case everywhere. Here around UMTRR HQ in more recent years, everything is quiet, which is good.

Our Graffiti Special Correspondent David Grothe provides bingos for both sides of this car which are posted at RRPictureArchives.net. They were both taken on December 29, 2017 in Denver, with snow on the ground. RBOX 32013 is part of the series 31000 to 32249 series built by Pullman-Standard between December 1978 and March 1979. The prototype ends and roof differ from the MTL 025 body style (and the Z Scale 510 body style) which is of an FMC x-post boxcar. I'm not even going to try to decipher the scribble on the non-featured side of the car. David tells us that he "recognized the featured side of the car immediately - King 157. Micro-Trains could do a never ending graffiti series from just the cars King 157 has 'redecorated.'"

The ORER for January 2018 shows the 32013 among the larger series we've noted before, RBOX 30000 to 37749, with a total of 3560 boxcars. Most of these are 5275 cubic foot cars with some 5290s thrown in; the 32013 is a 5275 car. Backing up to the April 1981 Equipment Register, well before the lettering was this faded or the car was tagged, there was the group RBOX 30500 to 32249, with 1744 cars.



111 44 400, \$59.95.

Reporting Marks: TTGX 995868.

89 Foot Enclosed Autorack, TTX/Norfolk Southern.

Base flat car is yellow with black lettering, white on black reporting

marks on left, and lighter yellow conspicuity stripes at points along car. Graffiti side has restenciled reporting marks and red post- TTX logo on right; non-graffiti side has the earlier TTX logo on right. Base racking is yellow with aluminum panels and roof, black NS "speed" herald and roadname on left and reporting marks (NS 24978) on far left. Black end markings on white panel at top of sides. Featured side of the car has multicolor graffiti including, from left, a vulture (or buzzard, see text), "AWARE" lettering, the Grim Reaper, "DARK" lettering, and another buzzard (or vulture). Other side of the car does not have graffiti. No weathering. Approximate Time Period: 2019, plus or minus, based on featured side of the car.

Here's the Halloween-themed car for the year, although doesn't seem like all of 2020 has been rather a large nightmare. The Grim Reaper is, of course, one of your main fantasy characters that appears around October 31 in yard displays. It can be traced back to... wait for it... a

pandemic. Specifically, it was the Black Death of the 14th Century, also known as the bubonic plague which wiped out up to one-third of the population of Europe.

Now, about those birds on the left and right ends of the car side. Apparently there is some lack of distinction between buzzards and vultures. According to the website "The Spruce," "Ultimately, whether a bird is a buzzard or a vulture depends on who you ask, and where you ask them. In North America, a vulture is a vulture, a buzzard is a vulture, and a hawk is a hawk. In the rest of the world, a vulture is a vulture, a buzzard is a hawk, and a hawk is sometimes a buzzard, though there are still other birds with the name hawk that would not be called buzzards." More technically, vultures are the bald-headed, long scavenging birds, says "The Spruce" while buzzards are a type of hawk. Vulture physiology makes them particularly able to eat, ahem, roadkill that's been sitting for a while, but meanwhile it's not true that they circle dying animals (or people) waiting for the end to come. OK, I have a headache now. Where's that stash of Halloween Candy?

David Grothe found the prototype photo, graffiti side, over on Flickr. The clean side was shot in July 2006 with that image available on RRPictureArchives. The presence of the two different TTX logos on opposite sides of the car is unusual but not impossible, I would think. Could be that "Aware" and "Dark" covered the reporting marks and logo with their, ahem, additional decoration, and when that was addressed the new red logo was added. It's noted in the caption accompanying the 2006 photo that this car had a bi-level rack. There's no way to tell this from the photo and I can barely discern whether it's a bi- or tri-level rack when looking at a real car... in bright sunlight. MTL has long since stopped the practice of describing the enclosed autorack either way.



993 05 670, \$59.95.

Great Northern Weathered Two-Pack.
Consists of:

- **024 51 440, Reporting Marks GN 2549, 40 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Superior Door, No Running Board, Short Side Ladders.** "Loader" Scheme of Pullman Green roof and ends, and bottom half of sides and doors; Omaha Orange on top half of sides and doors. White lettering including reporting marks on left. Pullman green roadname at top left. Small black and white round side

facing goat herald with "Great Northern Railway" on right. Heavy weathering and rust effects. Approximate Time Period: most of the 1970s. Previous Releases: None, however, this paint scheme has been done on the 40 Foot Steel Boxcar with Running Board (Roofwalk) as Catalog Number 20226/020 00 226 three times: Road Number 2530, March 1995 (as part of the 20226-2 four pack, see below); Road Number 2533, July 1996; and Road Number 2547, October 2006.

- **032 52 340, Reporting Marks GN 36809, 50 Foot Steel Plug Door Boxcar.** Green with white lettering including reporting marks on left. Black, red and white side facing goat herald on left. “Rocky” waving goat character and “Cushioned Ride” on right. Multicolor ACI Label at bottom right. Moderate to heavy weathering including on roof. Approximate Time Period: late 1960s given ACI Label, or strictly speaking, 1976 given reweigh date on car, to no later than 1986. Previous Releases (unweathered): Road Number 36871, March 1996; Road Number 36866, April 2013.

You’ve seen the “loader” paint scheme in the style of the Empire Builder “name train” before, but not without a running board. Here’s the most recent example (at right) from 2006. The first run of that car was in the somewhat infamous “BN Fallen Flags Four Pack” of 1995; the car was rerun relatively quickly the next year. If you’re still in need of that quartet I think you’ll find that the aftermarket is, how shall we say, rather soft at the moment.



You might also recall that these cars, the series GN 2525 to 2549, were initially built for passenger train express service. The as delivered paint scheme was Pullman Green with yellow lettering and large goat herald, as depicted by MTL itself on GN 2538 and 2528 as their catalog 20406 in March 1997 and March 1999, respectively. Around 1955 the cars were repainted into the scheme you see... barely... here. As of the April 1970 ORER, 22 of the original 25 cars were in the Burlington Northern roster with GN reporting marks, in the “Passenger Baggage Express Cars” section of the registration. In April 1976, 17 cars remained, reclassified as plain boxcars with the AAR Designation XM instead of BX. Only the 2546 was left as of the April 1981 Equipment Register, although the cars could have been shifted to company service. Besides the rust, the Approximate Time Period is largely driven by running board removal. That could have been anytime in the 1970s, if not sooner.

There are three representative photos of this group of boxcars on Page 13 of **Great Northern Equipment Color Pictorial Volume One**, a book I didn’t have in the UMTRR Research Accumulation back in 2006. The images are of GN 2540 as of 1962, GN 2533 in July 1969, and GN 2547 from April 1967. They don’t look nearly as bad as MTL depicted this car, and they still have running boards. But the 2549 looks as bad as MTL depicted it in the bingo photo on RRPictureArchives. It was found in Saint Paul, Minnesota in March 1978, between two nominal fifty foot express boxcars, one still in the Empire Builder scheme and one in the Big Sky Blue that was the final Great Northern paint scheme.

The bingo photo for the other half of this two-pack is also on RRPictureArchives. GN 36809 was out in West Colton, California, still earning its keep on Halloween Day in 1976 and, interestingly, still sporting its running board. Before I forget, that does mean that the two boxcars in this pair could be run together in the same train, at least theoretically. The rust on the roof is quite apparent from this overhead shot.

Besides being a Weathered Release, this is also a “not a reprint” as the original runs had a red plug door matching the as-delivered prototype. The most recent run of the “clean” version, from April 2013, is at right. The bingo photo of the weathered car does show a green, not red, door. The lettering at the top left is gone, there’s restenciled data, and also present is the ACI Label which didn’t yet exist when these cars were built in 1964.



The **Great Northern Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Page 57, includes a 1967 photo of GN 36871 which was the road number on MTL’s initial 1996 release. While the MTL model is based on a Pullman-Standard product, these cars were built by American Car & Foundry, so I’d expect some differences. And there are: from the photo we note different ends than the 032 body style, the use of a short ladder instead of grab irons on the left, and possibly a different roof. There is a “door thing” per the caption in the **Color Guide** – the MTL car has an eight foot plug door while the real car had a nine foot version – though that’s harder to discern with respect to plug doors in my opinion.

The January 1967 ORER shows the series 36800 to 36999, described as “Box, All Steel, Hydra-Cushion” with an end note calling out the nine foot plug doors – they were still that unusual at the time to be worth being specified. The inside length was 50 feet 8 inches, inside width 9 feet 4 inches, inside height 10 feet 5 inches, outside length 55 feet 2 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 9 feet, and capacity 4940 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. There were 199 cars of the original 200 in service at the time.

I’d advised in my look at the 2013 reprint that readers should “mind the roofwalk” once 197 of the original 200 cars were conveyed from the GN to the successor Burlington Northern. The July 1974 ORER noted 180 cars in the group. Of those, 91 remained in the January 1985 Register but the entire series was gone by the October 1986 ORER, marking a rather sharp end to the Approximate Time Period. I still don’t think the cars lasted all the way to the end with running boards, but an application of Rule #1 (“It’s Your Railroad”) may suffice here.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: Merry Christmas!



102 00 150, \$27.95

Reporting Marks: None.

60 Foot Excess Height Double Plug Door Boxcar, Rivet Sides, Micro-Trains Holiday Car 2020, “Grandma’s House.”

Dark blue base with across-the-car mural artwork. One side depicts the Micro-Mouse family tying a Christmas Tree made of cheese to the family car, and the other side shows them driving toward “Grandma’s House.” This car does not have end markings.

Over the river and through the woods, to Grandfather's house we go... the horse knows the way to carry the sleigh through white and drifted snow...

Well, perhaps not exactly. I remember the traditional song with "Grandmother's" not "Grandfather's" house being the destination, although, traditionally, they should be sharing the same residence, no? And here's a surprise: the original poem was written in 1844, had twelve (!) stanzas, and was originally about traveling for (American) Thanksgiving, not Christmas! It was originally titled "The New-England Boy's Song About Thanksgiving Day" and was written by Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880). The original language included "Grandfather" and "wood," not "woods."

Child may be best known today for "Over the river..." however she was a prolific writer, abolitionist, and activist for civil rights. She founded **Juvenile Miscellany**, the first monthly periodical for children. (Thank you for that information, Wikipedians.)

You might consider this car to be the continuation of the story started on the 2017 Christmas Car (102 00 130), in which the Micro-Mouse family selected the Christmas Tree Made of Cheese for their decoration. I hope that the 2020 tree is either a different one, or that the cheese in question ages well! With two copies of each of the 2017 and 2020 cars, you could align the two different sides in such a way to show the entire "story." What do you mean, the 2017 car is sold out?



I'm going to go out of catalog number sequence a bit here to note that also scheduled for release mid-month are other holiday-themed items.

The three **Thomas Kinkadee Studios Christmas Singles Boxcars** should be at MTL dealers as you read this:

101 00 831, The Nativity.

101 00 832, Santa's Workshop.

101 00 833, Dash Away All.

Each car has an MSRP of \$27.95.

Also out by now should be the **“Santa’s Off The Rails” Train Set** (993 21 340, \$229.95). The individual catalog numbers for the train set are as follows: The FT-A diesel has catalog number 987 51 809, the three modified boxcars are 101 52 859, 101 53 869, and 101 54 879, and the modified cabooses is 100 55 809. Only the diesel carries a road number, 2020.

At “press time” there was only artwork for these items which I’ll replace with product images on the UMTRR website should they become available.



Also, Car #6 in the **Solar System Series**, for the planet Jupiter, has been released in both pre-ordered varieties. UMTRR coverage was in the December 2018 issue.



Catalog 102 00 835, \$36.95 (at left) has the interior light.

Catalog 102 02 835, \$27.95 (at right) does not have the interior light.



*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 **October 31**. Note: These are not on standing order with the previously announced Solar System Series cars (through Neptune) and require separate pre-orders.*



Expected Delivery April 2021:
102 00 839, with interior light (shown), \$36.95.
102 02 839, without interior light (not shown), \$27.95.

60 Foot Excess Height Modified Boxcar, Solar System Series “The Dwarf Planets.”



Expected Delivery May 2021:

102 00 840, with interior light (shown), \$36.95.

102 02 840, without interior light (not shown), \$27.95.

60 Foot Excess Height Modified Boxcar, Solar System Series "The Moon."



Expected Delivery June 2021:

102 00 842, with interior light (shown), \$36.95.

102 02 842, without interior light (not shown), \$27.95.

60 Foot Excess Height Modified Boxcar, Solar System Series "Halley's Comet."

Each car will have multicolored sides with black roof and ends. White lettering on left and description and information on right. Color illustration or photographic image of the subject matter replacing doors, printed on translucent material. Lighted version includes LED interior light. MTL artwork shown; actual product may vary.

Pluto finally gets its due! Although it has to share space with the other Dwarf Planets (ahem), the "you'll always be a planet to me" object will appear in the Solar System Series after all. I claim no influence on the folks in Talent on this. It's not a bad idea to include The Moon in the train, either. The first thing I think of with respect to the third of the three new boxcars in this group is the song "Halley Came To Jackson," a song written and performed by Mary-Chapin Carpenter on the album **Shooting Straight In The Dark** released in 1990. While it wasn't one of the four singles released from the LP, it did become the subject of an illustrated book and record—oops, compact disc—that I bought for my kids when they were "this tall." If you haven't heard this sweet little song about a woman who sees the comet—twice-- have a listen.



Expected Delivery March 2021:

100 00 810, \$29.95.

Modified 34 Foot Steel Cupola Caboose, Solar System Series "Milky Way Galaxy."

Black with multicolor graphics across car depicting the galaxy (artwork shows windows are either "blanked out" or covered).

White lettering including "The Milky Way Galaxy" at top left and information on left (may be on right on reverse side of the car to align across from cupola). MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Yes, this is out of catalog number order, but it's in cosmological order, isn't it? And it's at the end of the Solar System Series train. Speaking of cosmology, a run through just the Wikipedia pages on the subject of this caboose proved once again that I don't know much about a lot of things! I probably shouldn't have diverted to the "Big Bang" page either. Anyway, the statistics quoted in the MTL artwork are just one way to measure the size of the Milky Way

Galaxy, but don't fault the folks behind the red and yellow sign for that since there is still arguing going on about that. Those astronomers just love to have a good time discussing all the exponents needed in the math for such things!

Z SCALE: I'm going to summarize 1:220 items this month rather than overuse the "no releases this month" phrase, and hopefully not be too confusing...



The only release this month other than What's Weathered is the **2020 Christmas Car (507 00 680, \$27.95)**. It has the same design as the N Scale car (which see above for more commentary), however as in previous years it's on the 50 foot boxcar as MTL doesn't make a Z Scale version of the 60 foot double plug door boxcar.



The Weathered Release for the month is Year in Railbox #10, "National Mischief Day" (510 45 014, \$29.95). Please see above for the commentary on the N Scale version of this release (025 45 014) with the exception that the Z Scale version has truck-mounted couplers.



Meanwhile, two of the cabooses that were initially listed as being released in August are shown as "now available" in the October Micro-News. They are the CSX "20th Anniversary Safety Caboose" (535 00 420, \$32.95) for which we're showing both sides (above) as they are different colors, as promised...



...and the Union Pacific (535 00 480, \$29.95) with "Everyone Gains" safety slogan. If the use of artwork only versus the actual product photo online is a proper indication, then the Santa Fe (535 00 430) and Great Northern (535 00 450) are yet to leave the factory (and that is my take only), while we already know that the Norfolk Southern (535 00 440), Chesapeake and Ohio (535 00 460),

and Northern Pacific (535 00 470) cabooses dropped around late August/early September. Pre-orders for all these cabooses were taken in March and April; UMTRR coverage was in the March 2020 edition.

And on the subject of pre-orders, they're still open for the slate of PS-2 covered hoppers which were announced last month and pre-reviewed in last month's bytes. Here's the recap, and remember, all artwork is preliminary and actual product may vary:



Targeted Delivery February/March 2021:

531 00 073 (at left) and 531 00 074 (not shown), \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: ATSF 82657 and 82864.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, Santa Fe (AT&SF).

Gray with black lettering including reporting marks on left. Black and white square circle cross herald at top left. Approximate Time Period: 1957 (build date) into the 1990s. Previous Releases: Road Numbers 82515 and 82526, November 2007 (as Catalog Number 531 00 07x).



Targeted Delivery February/March 2021:

531 00 321 (at left) and 531 00 322 (not shown), \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: PRR 257912 and 257971.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Gray with black lettering including shadow keystone herald and roadname at top left across to center and reporting marks on left. Approximate Time Period: 1954 to early 1980s. Previous Releases: None.



Targeted Delivery February/March 2021:

531 00 331 and 531 00 332, \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: CSXT 226539 and 226482.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, CSX Transportation/Chessie System Restencil.

Yellow with blue lettering including "Ches-C" herald in center and "Chessie System" roadname at top right. Black restenciled reporting marks in lighter yellow patch panel on left. White on black double COTS panel on right. Approximate Time Period: late 1990s into the decade of the 2010s. Previous Releases: None.



Targeted Delivery February/March 2021:

531 00 341 and 531 00 342, \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: SL-SF 85238 and 85266.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, Frisco (St. Louis-San Francisco).

Gray with black lettering including reporting marks on left and large "FRISCO" in center. White on black COTS panel on right." Approximate Time Period: 1966 (build date) or, strictly speaking, mid 1970s given COTS panel, to early 1990s. Previous Releases: None.



Targeted Delivery February/March 2021:

531 00 351 and 531 00 352, \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: PC 877145 and 877242.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, Penn Central.

Gray with black lettering including reporting marks on left and herald with roadname in center. White on black double COTS panel at bottom center. Approximate Time Period: late 1968 to at least 1980. Previous Releases: None.



Targeted Delivery February/March 2021:

531 00 361 and 531 00 362, \$25.95 each.

Reporting Marks: MILW 99619 and 99633.

PS-2 Two Bay Covered Hopper, Milwaukee Road.

Gray with black lettering including reporting marks on left and large roadname across top. Approximate Time Period: as early as 1958 (based on paint scheme) but more likely mid-1960s, to late 1980s. Previous Releases: None. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: None this month.

DISCONTINUED ALERT: Cars in last month's lineup that have already hit the Do It Yourself Bye-Bye Board—other than those from the Solar System-- include the Petri Wine Company tank car (066 00 130), the Santa Fe caboose (100 00 470), both numbers of the Norfolk Southern depressed center flat cars (109 00 17x), the Chessie System Weathered Two-Pack (993 05 740) and the Cotton Belt autorack (111 00 390). From the rest of the year in N Scale items, the Norfolk Southern gray company service boxcar has left the building (180 00 150, May), the Baltimore and Ohio hopper eight pack has been emptied out (993 00 821, March), and a bunch of Solar System Cars have left orbit: the lit version of The Sun (102 00 830, May), the lit version of Mercury (102 00 831, June), both versions of Earth (102 00 832 and 102 02 832, August), and both versions of Mars (102 00 833 and 102 02 833, September) and Neowise (102 00 841 and 102 02 841, September). In Z Scale, C&O Cameo Car #3 is outta here (505 00 423, May), as is the first number of the CSXT gondola (522 00 241, March).

Backing up to 2019 N Scale items, the Chesapeake and Ohio double door boxcar is gone (034 00 450, November). #1 in the Kinkade Painter of Light Series has sold out (102 00 801, April). Both numbers of the CSXT Ortner Hopper have been unloaded (125 00 10x, July). Both

numbers of the Hub Group green container have shipped out (469 00 53x, January). The Gingerbread Train Set (993 21 330, October) has rolled away. The only Z Scale sellout from 2019 is the first number of the Southern Pacific SD40-2 (970 01 251, March).

Just a few N Scale items from before then: The N Scale Union Pacific Observation has left the station (144 00 191, July 2018), the N Scale New Haven Baggage Car is gone (147 00 100, March 2017), the Baltimore and Ohio Horse Car has galloped away (149 00 090, February 2016), and we've scared off the Doctor Mort's Creepy Carnival Halloween Train Set (993 21 470, September 2016). And just one more Z Scale item: the Northern Pacific mechanical refrigerator with Christmas graffiti (549 44 030, November 2017).

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: I'm into 1967 in my chronological review of the Model Railroader 1934-1999 DVD. This is the year that N Scale equipment availability really begins to take off, but that's not what I'm citing here. Instead, there's a photo on Page 35 of the April 1967 MR of a 36 foot refrigerator car lettered for the Canadian Northern, predecessor of the Canadian National. In fact, it's a bingo photo for the Micro-Trains release (058 00 080, May 2009), which is Incremental Information all by itself. What caught my eye was an explanation of the door at the bottom left of the side which MTL simulated. "When natural ice was still in use, refrigerator cars had small doors at the bottom of the ice bunker for removing mud, sticks, and other debris that accumulated as the ice melted." Aha! The reference to "natural ice" is to that harvested from rivers, ponds and such, as opposed to that specifically manufactured for use in refrigerator cars – would that be "unnatural ice?" Perhaps not... Anyway, the photo and caption appear as part of an overview of refrigerator cars from the beginning to what was then the state of the art.



In that same issue of **Model Railroader** are drawings and photos of the Pacific Fruit Express Mechanical Refrigerator car, Class R-70-12, that aligns with the MTL N Scale 070 body style and Z Scale 548 body style. I might have noted this in previous reviews but haven't added that information to the Body Style Table on the UMTRR website, so there you go.

Steven Purvis checked in with two additional items for us. First, with respect to the last month's "virtual two-pack" of Norfolk Southern Depressed Center Flat Cars (109 00 17x), he writes, "I looked at the pictures you referenced and I noticed two things. First. in the picture of 185403; one of the sisters is coupled on the left. So, we can clearly justify running the pair together empty in the same train. Also, on the pictures of 185404, there are two different transformer loads. The first has heavy metal tie down rods connecting the four top corners to the car. The second looks just like earlier MT loads... **no tie downs** of any kind. I guess they have some kind of heavy bolts holding it secure.

Turning to the forthcoming Red DODX Flat Car pack, I referenced a bingo photo of DODX 41023 as of April 2009 with a tank that I said I would not attempt to further identify. Steven did, enhancing my very meager knowledge of military equipment. "The tank that you noted

on DODX 41023 is none other than the M1A2 SEP version 1 variant of the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank. We know this by the CITV (Commander's Independent Thermal Viewer) mounted on the top of the turret. It is the stacked birthday cake looking device on the roof. (For more detailed information, see www.deagel.com/Sensor%20Systems/CITV/a001643 .) The version 1 variant (vs SEpv2 or greater which also have CITV) is confirmed by the lack of the CROWS (Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station), or COWS II, top mounted machine gun that would be in place of the standard roof mounted machine gun mount.

"Which," Steve continued, "begs a pet peeve; military models on rail cars with machine guns mounted or main guns that are not properly stowed for transit. We meticulously count rivets on coal cars and then load 'combat ready' military vehicles on our flat cars." Steve provided a few examples of what the equipment should look like when in transit. One "for instance" is the main gun dismounted and secured to the side of the tank.

OOPS PATROL: Maybe I should just cease and desist on copy and paste. My Weathered Cars supplement had the wrong catalog numbers for the Year in Railbox N Scale car from last month. It is 025 45 **562** not 025 45 **013**. The individual catalog numbers of the N Scale Norfolk Southern Hopper Runner Pack #169 released last month (993 00 169) end in **280**, not **030**. This is the corrected lineup: 108 51 280, 145444; 108 52 280, 145495; 108 53 280, 145550; and 108 54 280, 145551. Also, lighted cars in the Solar System Series that are not "The Sun" (102 00 830) do not include the magnetic "telescope" wand that's used to activate said light. That is a separate part for those who didn't get "The Sun," Catalog Number 499 45 910, MSRP \$7.95.

AND THAT WRAPS UP OCTOBER. Until next month, stay safe, and do the best you can!

Cheers,
George

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