



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report Issue #314 – February, 2023

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Hello again everyone! First, thanks to everyone who responded to my request to confirm that the January issue of these bytes did arrive in your in-box. The issues with my web/e-mail host continue to pile up. Not only am I having issues sending mail (including to subscribers who use the very same ISP!) but more critically, we are not receiving important e-mail as it is being blocked inbound. We're working on it.

Enough whining... as this shortest month of the year brings plenty of more positive things to talk about... like model trains! And ribbon rail trains! And more freelance railroad refrigerator cars with produce labels! And a new N Scale Body Style announcement! Off we go...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



020 00 127, \$27.90.

Reporting Marks: MRS 5545.

40 Foot Steel Boxcars, Single Youngstown Door, Manufacturers Railway Company.

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left and roadname on right. Multicolor ACI Label left of door.

Approximate Time Period: 1966 (service date on car) to early 1970s. This car has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. This item is not on dealer standing orders.

One way to avoid telegraphing what's inside a freight car is to do the exact opposite of the Billboard Refrigerator Car: don't draw any attention to yourself at all. So it was with the completely ambiguous name of Manufacturers Railway Company. While the railroad, based in Saint Louis, Missouri, did have several other small customers, the primary traffic on the line was beer. So cars like this one, were suitably decorated – or should I say not really decorated – to incite a minimum amount of attention.

Manufacturers Railway connected with the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis directly, and with the Alton and Southern across the McArthur Bridge in East St. Louis, Illinois. I noted several accounts online of how the company's switch engines worked mightily to ascend the McArthur Bridge across the Mississippi River with traffic for the A&S. Last year, Colleen and I saw a few trains pass over that span, and it's still a challenge even with today's "big power."

In March 2011, it was announced that the MRS would shut down operations, citing movement from rail to trucking by its major customer. However, instead of a complete closure, the former operation was picked up by Foster Townsend Rail Logistics in October 2011. That firm is a

non-common carrier switching operation; it's part of Patriot Rail which owns thirty-two shortlines around the United States. The "beer cars" that, like this older boxcar, once carried only MRS reporting marks and roadname—and no specific clues as to its cargo—were dispositioned, including to Midwest Railcar Corporation.

The Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis Historical and Technical Society published a 150 page softcover by Scott Muskopf chronicling the MRS history, appropriately titled **Manufacturers Railway From Beginning to End**. One of their sparkling clean diesel switchers graces the cover.

The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for January 1967 shows the series MRS 5500 to 5552 with all 53 possible cars. These were your basic "Box, Steel" with AAR Designation XM. The inside length was 40 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 41 feet 7 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, capacity 3898 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds, and door opening 8 feet. So, yes, there's a "Door Thing" here since the MTL 020 body style has a six foot door. That can be remedied by the modeler if desired, since there is no lettering in the way of installing a Micro-Trains eight foot door in the opening. (See my page on the UMTRR Website describing this change, called, of course, "Door Thing.") This series of cars isn't in the Manufacturers Railway entry in the January 1964 ORER. The January 1966 service date on the MTL model is likely about when they were added to the company's roster.

These cars had a pretty short life in revenue service for the MRS. All 51 were in place as of the July 1974 Equipment Register, but the group was down to 20 cars in the April 1975 ORER and the whole series was gone no later than April 1976—at least in terms of the interchange service roster. I'll also point out that even without those cars, the railroad had a total car count of 1229 in the October 1976 ORER, which was all the way down to just 25 cars in the January 1978 Register.

Fallen Flags (www.rr-fallenflags.org) has a reference photo for this series... sort of. It's sister car 5548, found in a yard in Saint Louis. And this is an excellent example of how to misinterpret an image. In this shot, I saw what I thought was a pipe vent attached to the left of the side; the top of the appendage isn't visible in the image. From there I thought I saw what was piping from there across to the other end of the side leading to a hose that is then attached to a post sticking out of the ground.

Well, **no**. Another photo of the car dated 1980 and posted to RailcarPhotos.com shows that the appliance mounted to the car is actually a light fixture, which means that the "pipe" is more likely an electrical conduit. And so much for jumping to conclusions, George! We can also see more clearly from this image that the car has riveted, not welded, sides, and that the bottom sill differs from that on the Micro-Trains car. The running board had been removed but the car still had at least one full-height ladder. The only historical information provided is that the car was originally built in May 1952, which for me further confirms that the Manufacturers Railway bought this car second-hand. Both of these photos are dated to after the time that this series of cars was in revenue service.

There's an October 2004 image of MRS 5534 also on Fallen Flags, and it also looks like it's not going anywhere. What's left of the ACI Label is faded to black and aluminum and hanging by one fastener left of the door. I didn't locate a shot of the exact car MTL modeled but I'm sure that they have at least one.



054 00 280, \$30.90.

Reporting Marks: WP 1490.

61 Foot Bulkhead Flat Car, Western Pacific.

Black with white lettering including reporting marks at left. White on

black double COTS panel right of center. Yellow on black U-1 Wheel Inspection "dot" at far right. Simulated rough wood load included. Approximate Time Period: 1978 (build date) to late 1980s. Technically a New Release, but a similar car was a Weathered Release in January 2021 (Catalog 054 44 280, Road Number 1454), see text.

Back at the start of 2021, a funny thing happened on the way to the release schedule for this car. A column in the then-current issue of **The N Scale Enthusiast** magazine (not mine—I wrote the "Micro-Trains Year in Review" article) previewed the January 2021 offerings, including a Western Pacific bulkhead flat car... but an **unweathered** version. Perhaps it was meant to be offered that way originally, and then it was decided that a little "dirt" wouldn't hurt. And so we had the Weathered Release instead of the "clean release." More than two years later, we now have the unweathered version.



We've got a representative sample photo from the series on Page 68 of the **Western Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. WP 1483 was found with a load of lumber in Portola, California in 1981. It was part of the series 1451 to 1490, built by Thrall in 1978. This followed an order for ten Centerbeam flat cars in 1977 also from Thrall (and modeled by MTL, Catalog Number 053 00 06x, Road Numbers 1401 and 1403, September 2006). Another car from the series was WP 1454—oh, wait, that's a bingo to the Weathered Release—which is available on RRPictureArchives.net. That photo was taken in August 1978 in Sacramento, California, very possibly on WP home rails. How did I miss that when the Weathered Release was issued? Obviously, "very easily." Oops.

The ORER for July 1980 is the closest I have to the build date. The beginning of the description, "Flat, Steel, Permanent Bulkheads" aligns but someone wasn't paying attention to the "(Wallboard)" part of the description when they loaded the lumber onto the 1483! The inside length was 61 feet 1 inch, inside height 11 feet, outside length 70 feet 6 inches, extreme height 14 feet 9 inches, and capacity 186,000 pounds.

These cars didn't last as long as I thought they would. There was still a solid car count of 40 in the April 1985 Equipment Register, but that was down to 15 in the July 1987 book. The series was gone by the time the Western Pacific was absorbed into the Union Pacific.



054 00 290, \$28.90.

Reporting Marks: GM&O 74726.

61 Foot Bulkhead Flat Car, Gulf, Mobile and Ohio.

Orange with white lettering including reporting marks at left. Approximate

Time Period: 1965 (build date) to early 1990s.

The GM&O is certainly getting a bit more attention from the folks in Talent lately. In addition to the Heavyweight Five Pack and the recent double door boxcar, we've got this new release.

GM&O 74726 was among the series 74725 to 74759 built by Thrall Manufacturing in 1965. These followed a group of cars 74700 to 74724 built in 1964, also by Thrall. There's a bingo photo on Page 110 of the **IC/GM&O Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** which is credited to the railroad. The image shows a car with an added steel sheet across most of the side which ends just below the stake pockets, upon which the lettering is placed. However, on RailcarPhotos.com there is a shot of sister car 74742 which has the lettering applied directly to the car side, and looking much more like the MTL 054 body style with this arrangement. That photo was taken in 1987 so we know at least one car from the series lasted that long.

We see from both photos that the side frames for the bulkheads are also not tapered all the way down to the bottom of the frame; they become perpendicular to the frame about four-fifths of the way down from the top. This allows for return instructions to be placed on the bulkhead, which aren't present on the MTL model. The railroad certainly liked to use rather prominent return instructions! While not part of the prototype series, photos of GM&O 74805 posted to RRPictureArchives and GM&O 74582 on RailcarPhotos show again what I'm talking about.

The ORER for January 1967 has the series GM&O 74725 to 74759 with the description just "Flat, Steel" with AAR Designation FMS. An end note calls out that the series is "...equipped with chain bulkheads" – which is a description I haven't seen before. The inside length of these cars was 61 feet, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 10 feet 8 inches (counting the bulkheads), outside length 70 feet, and capacity 180,000 pounds.

Given the 1987 photo found online, I jumped out to the July 1987 ORER. There remained 24 cars of the original 35 with GM&O reporting marks under the Illinois Central Gulf registration. (The GM&O and Illinois Central merged to form the ICG in August 1972.) It wasn't obvious to me what ICG series could have been used for restenciling these cars, if there was one at all.

In 1988 the ICG reverted to its Illinois Central name. By the July 1992 Register there were just two cars left in the GM&O series, and that's where I stopped looking.



075 00 210, \$28.90.

Reporting Marks: MR 12070.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar with Double Plug Doors, No Running Board, McCloud River Railroad.

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black

COTS panel on right. Approximate Time Period: 1991 to mid-decade of the 2000s. This car has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. This item is not on dealer standing orders.

The McCloud River Railroad might be better known for its white and brown Incentive Per Diem Boxcars, one of which was modeled by MTL in its IPD Series in November 2016 (030 00 280, Road Number 2196, at right). It would be difficult to have **less** lettering than this new release has... but maybe this would make an easy canvas for your pike to have a few of these particular cars. Well, provided that you can procure them, that is... “not on dealer standing orders” has always unofficially suggested to me that MTL didn’t make that many copies of a car. You’ve been cautioned...



The site I referenced for this Northern California Fallen Flag, mcclouddriverrailroad.com, is still active. On this site there’s a thumbnail history; a more comprehensive one through 1992 cited is the book **Pine Across the Mountain** by Robert Hanft. The line was built to serve the timber industry in several phases beginning in 1897. At its peak, the line reached from Mount Shasta, where it connected with the Southern Pacific, to Hambone, thence over trackage rights on the Great Northern to Lookout Junction on the “Inside Gateway” line. In 1954 and 1955 – and yes, that’s relatively late for North American railroads! – new trackage was built down to Burney to serve a wooden fruit box manufacturer. For much of its history, the line was owned by United States Plywood. In 1977 it was sold to Itel Corporation, far better known as a lessor of Incentive Per Diem boxcars... and now it’s easy to see why the McCloud River had a bunch of that rolling stock. Between the switch to trucking and the general decline of the lumbering industry, the McCloud River gradually faded out. In 1992 it was sold to an Itel employee, renamed the McCloud Railway, and eked out a living until 2005 when all but the section from Mount Shasta to McCloud was abandoned. That last section was gone by 2009.

How did cars that were primarily used for carriage of food products wind up lettered for the McCloud River? The reason is documented on the same site I, well, cited: “The railroad leased [most] cars from Itel and/or GE Capital. In most cases, business decisions or other considerations caused these cars to be registered to the McCloud River/McCloud Railway, and they had little to no contact with their home rails.” And that appears to be the case with this series of RBL class 52 foot “refrigerator” cars (as typical, insulated plug door boxcars were often called “refrigerator” cars). We’ll let Jeff Moore, the author of the “McCloud Rails” site pick up the narrative. “Itel initially leased 494 of these cars to McCloud River [in] 1991. 394 of these cars had previously been leased to two other roads (Ferdinand and Huntingburg and

Louisville, New Albany and Corydon) and assigned to the Modesto and Empire Traction Company (M&ET) for packaged food service. M&ET requested that the cars be remarked to the McCloud River. Itel and McCloud agreed. Under the original agreements, McCloud River leased 100 cars from Itel, to be numbered MR 12000-12099, with those cars assigned to M&ET while the rest of the involved cars were reconditioned and restenciled. However, 13 cars were not remarked to MR, and the Federal Railroad Administration found MR 12062-12066 unacceptable for packaged food service. In a subsequent agreement Itel and McCloud River removed these eighteen cars from the lease and replaced them with eighteen other cars, numbered MR 12101 to 12118, and added five additional cars numbered MR 12119 to 12123. The 394 other cars were to be numbered MR 12124 to 12517, but subsequent Official Railway Equipment Registers suggest only 19 of those cars ever received MR reporting marks and numbers. Cars in this series numbered 130 in 1991, 129 cars in 1992-1993, 130 cars in 1994, 121 cars in 1996-1998, 117 cars in 1999, 115 cars in 2000, 114 cars in 2001, 92 cars in 2002, 84 cars in 2003, 77 cars in 2004, 76 cars in 2005, 53 cars in 2006, 11 cars in 2007, 3 cars in 2008, and 1 car 2009-2011. Most of these cars appear to have been restenciled to M&ET."

A sample ORER from the Approximate Time Period bounded here by Jeff Moore (thanks!) will do for a lookup. I still have the July 1992 edition on my desk from the GM&O bulkhead flat car, so why not? And... oh, great, there are lots of subsets, including the 12070 and 12071 in their own line. No matter, they all have the same key dimensions: inside length 52 feet 5 inches, inside width 9 feet 4 inches, inside height 10 feet 5 inches, outside length 60 feet 3 inches, extreme height 15 feet 5 inches, door opening 16 feet, and capacity 5100 cubic feet or either 133,000 or 135,000 pounds. The dimensional data here underscores a criticism of this item since MTL was part of Kadec: this car model isn't as long as its prototype. In January 1974 when the 36000 body style was released, the decision was made to leverage the already existing 50 foot boxcar underframe and tool up a new body shell. That decision continued into the 75000 body style introduced in August 1991, which is basically the 36000 car without a running board. Both cars are actually a nominal 53 feet long, not 50 feet. Whether to accept the 3 foot difference (0.225 actual inch when reduced to 1/160th actual size) is of course, up to the individual modeler.

RRPictureArchives has photos of seven cars in the MR 12000s group, including a bingo for the 12070 dated March 1991. It was found in Pittsburg, California, which is a lot closer to the Modesto and Empire Traction Company than to the McCloud River. Two other boxcars in the series, MR 12050 and 12087, in the same non-exciting paint scheme, were also found in the same general area. These cars have a straight side sill, which differs from the MTL 075 body style, but could be carefully addressed.



095 00 031, \$45.95.

Reporting Marks: UP 11443.

PS-2 Covered Hopper, Union Pacific.

Gray with black lettering including reporting marks on left and large roadname in center. Approximate Time Period: 1958 (build date)

to mid-1990s. This item is scheduled to be available mid-month (I've seen it available online). MTL artwork shown.

No, George, you do **not** get to copy and paste from the review of the Micro-Trains Z Scale release of a Union Pacific PS-2 virtual two pack in May 2008, since the prototype series is different even if the paint scheme is about the same (official image at right). On the other hand, were I reviewing the “brother company” Kadee’s PS-2 covered hoppers, I could borrow from that narrative, since one of their HO Scale PS-2s (Catalog Number 2048) carried the exact same road number, 11443, and the paint scheme looks to be almost exactly the same. “Alkali Resisting Light Gray” is what Kadee called the color on its version. Seems reasonable to me.



This car belonged to the UP’s Class CH-70-10. If the markings on the Kadee model are accurate—and why wouldn’t they be?—these cars were new from Pullman-Standard in February 1958. The ORER for January 1959 has the series UP 11400 to 11451, described as “Covered Hopper, Steel” with AAR Designation LO. The inside length was 29 feet 3 inches, outside length 35 feet 3 inches, extreme height 13 feet 3 inches, and capacity 2003 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. All 52 cars were present and accounted for. From 1958 through the early 1960s or so would be the most appropriate time period for these cars as delivered, since there would be reweighing and the accompanying stenciling changes, then ACI labels and maybe COTS panels as well—which could of course be added by the modeler, along with plenty of weathering. In the October 1986 ORER there were six cars left in the shortened series 11417 to 11447, and that’s the last I see of this group.

I didn’t come up with a bingo photo, or any reference photos for any of these series for that matter, but this time I’m not terribly concerned about this. MTL of course has photo evidence for UP 11443, and if they didn’t, they could have taken the short drive from Talent to White City to borrow it from the folks at Kadee.

While I’m here, I’ll mention that I believe that there was a change to the release schedule for the Western Pacific PS-2s, the second roadname for the body style. Namely, based on an update to the MTL website, both numbers **(095 00 021 and 022; WP 11031 and 11033, \$45.95 each)**, officially reached dealers in January. That represents a bit of a delay from mid-December for the first road number. Both cars are now available; I’ve confirmed this via online dealer listings. UMTRR coverage was in the July 2022 issue during the pre-order window.





108 00 441 and 108 00 442, \$28.90 each.

**Reporting Marks: CSXT 833912 and 833918.
100 Ton Three Bay Hoppers, CSX
Transportation / ex-Chessie System.**

Black with mostly yellow lettering including Chessie System roadname at top left, "Ches-C" herald on right, and restenciled reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel at bottom right. Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: as early as 1989 through around 2005.

We just had a few cars ago an example of a "clean" car being released after its Weathered Release version, and now we've got that again. This time, MTL appears to be continuing to leverage its research for the CSX Family Tree series, as this virtual two pack aligns with #9 in the Family Tree Series (108 44 440, June 2022, at right). No conspicuity stripes this time, however.



You might recall from my coverage of the similar Weathered Release that the car which became CSXT 833874 had an interesting backstory. It was originally built by the Norfolk and Western and was on the roster of the Pennsylvania shortline Upper Merion and Plymouth before coming over to the Chessie System with Chesapeake and Ohio reporting marks. Specifically, the car was C&O 191888 before it was CSXT 833874, and it had its own entry in the October 1996 ORER. Are we looking at the same story for these two cars?

Well, maybe. The series CSXT 833860 to 883969 is not a mistyping on my part-- that's **over fifty thousand** possible road numbers! We learned from the Weathered Release research that in October 2020 that series had a total of 2523 cars. What we need to know for this "clean" virtual two-pack is when the series appeared. So back to the pile of ORERs we go, to find that the first one I have in which the group appears is July 1989, with a car count of 44. That's also the first Equipment Register in which I see any CSXT-marked equipment at all. The group gets a bit over 100 cars in the mid-1990s but is back to 83 cars in the January 2000 ORER. Conspicuity stripes are introduced in 2005. The January 2006 Register shows 216 cars, so CSX was adding cars back into that huge group of road numbers.

However, it doesn't look like the prototype for this month's CSXT 833912 lasted long past January 2006. The bingo photo dated that very month, posted to RRPictureArchives, includes the caption, "Looks like she's gonna be scrapped." I'm not sure what the stenciled "HBO Class 2 12-99" means, but it's probably not good. The condition of the car isn't too good either. Meanwhile, CSXT 833918 was in Keyser, West Virginia in June 1992 already with the CSXT stencil and pretty clean paint.



180 00 380, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: ATSF 10001.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single 10 Foot Door, No Running Board, Short Ladders, Santa Fe (AT&SF).

Red with mostly white lettering including reporting marks and large circle cross on left and "Shock Control" on right, under which is "A Smoother Ride" in yellow. White on black COTS panel on right. Yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" on bottom sill right of door. Small white simulated reflective blocks at six points along side. Approximate Time Period: 1979 (shopped date, see text) to no later than 1989. This item has a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.

Has anyone wondered what happened to this car?

ATSF 10001 was the first ever Santa Fe boxcar equipped with Shock Control draft gear, which was made quite obvious on the car. Micro-Trains modeled this one in May 2002 (Catalog 31340, official image at right). I wrote back then that despite its one of a kind



status, the car not only lasted at least into the mid-1980's, but the paint scheme apparently lasted into 1979. We know this from "The Priest Book" more formally titled **Santa Fe Freight in Color... the Series, Volume One - Boxcars** by Stephen Priest and Thomas Chenoweth, which has a shot of the 10001 – or two, actually.

Road number 10001 was the only one in the Santa Fe classification Bx-77. It was rebuilt from a Bx-66 fifty foot boxcar and served as the prototype. In 1958 and 1959, Santa Fe built its series of Bx-76 cars from the ground up with Shock Control installed. Those Bx-76 cars received similar paint schemes (also modeled by MTL in Runner Pack #148, January 2019), but again, car number 10001 was different: it had the older style circle cross herald with a serif font.

The Priest Book picks up the story on Page 48, just below the photo of ATSF 10001 in its original scheme. In 1979 it was shopped and repainted. At that point it was done up in a plainer all-red scheme, but retained a large circle cross and a "Shock Control" slogan as was the norm then, and as modeled by MTL here. As you'd imagine the running board was removed and the ladders were cut down. The Priest book includes a photo of the car taken in December 1986. However, it was apparently off the roster by 1989, as confirmed via the July 1989 ORER. I do have one quibble here: a "Reverse Door Thing," as the prototype car had an eight foot door, and the MTL 180 body style has a ten foot door.

In addition to the above, there are several pre-order items to mention. The second Pullman-Standard Milestone Car (020 00 307, \$31.95, Reporting Marks **SSW 75000**), originally scheduled to be available mid-January, is now expected to be available in March.





Meanwhile, the third and final Pullman-Standard Milestone Car (025 00 246, \$35.95, **Reporting Marks PLCX 31**) is also targeted for mid-month delivery. I've confirmed via online listings that it's been released. This item has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. UMTRR coverage was

in the June 2022 issue during the pre-order window. The official MTL image shows the "waffle" sides that align with the prototype. I'm waiting to see an actual model to observe how they executed this! And might it lead to more cars of this type? I guess we'll see.



Also, the Canadian Pacific Enclosed Autorack (111 00 440, \$69.95, **Reporting Marks CPAA 543028**) is targeted for mid-month delivery. UMTRR coverage was in the June 2022 issue during the pre-order window.

Also, there is one single item that is open for pre-orders this month, which will be covered in the "N Scale Multi-Packs" section of these bytes since it is part of a larger series of multiple planned releases.

*But wait, there's more... the following item was announced for pre-orders on February 15 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 **February 28**.*



Targeted Delivery April 2023:
071 00 060, \$49.95.

Reporting Marks: DODX 48813.
89 Foot Flat Car With "Mystery Balloon," Department of Defense.

Blue with white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel at far right. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at nine points along side. "Mystery Balloon" with solar panel and instrument array load included (multi-media kit).

Ripped from the headlines! Well, the "mystery" load, anyway. I wonder if anyone will refer back to these bytes in a few years and wonder what I'm referring to. Look it up, kids!

DODX 48813, the flat car carrying this somewhat unidentified object, may be a bit of mystery as well. Although the car could have an ATP of 2005 and later given the conspicuity stripes, given the included load, I'll refer to the January 2020 ORER since it's the latest I have. The series DODX 48679 to 48999 has two groups, one described as "Flat, COFC (Condense/Collapse)" with 193 cars, and one described as "Flat (Condense/Collapse)" (that is, without the "COFC") with another 118 cars. Except for the outside length, the dimensions

given are the same. The “inside length” for both sets is 89 feet 4 inches and the Gross Rail Weight (car plus lading) is 220,000 pounds. I have these cars in the January 2006 Register also.

Checking my usual go-to sites, there are plenty of 89 foot flat cars to be found in the 48800s. However, none of the ones I found are in blue paint; they’re all yellow with white reporting marks on a black panel, similar to the Trailer Train/TTX paint scheme we’re familiar with. However, the 48813 is, in fact, in blue, as found by several readers via a photo on Flickr (www.flickr.com/photos/tjtrainz/15072098208/in/photolist-oXSrGd) . The exception that proves the rule, I guess.

N SCALE REPRINTS: One this month...



101 00 091, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: BN 281460.

40 Foot “Hy-Cube” Boxcar, Single Door, Smooth Sides, Burlington Northern.

Green (including roof) with white lettering including roadname and reporting marks on left and large herald on right. White on black COTS Panel, multicolor ACI Label, and white

on black U-1 Wheel Inspection “Dot,” all at bottom right. White simulated reflective blocks at six points along bottom of side. White end lettering. Note that there is no “Excess Height” band at the top of the ends, which is correct. Approximate Time Period: early 1970s, or 1978 and later given U-1 “dot,” to late 1980’s. Previous Release: Road Number 281441, August 2009.

Here’s that Previous Release from 2009 (at right). A quick check of details shows that we have somewhat of another “Not A Reprint” here, with the addition of the ACI Label and a change in position of the white blocks along the bottom of the side with this second run.



We get a bingo on the exact car on RailcarPhotos.com; BN 281460 was in Klamath Falls, Oregon in August 1980. (There’s also a shot of the first release, 281441, on that site, in Anaheim, California in October 1977.) While the “Exceeds Plate C” stencil is clearly visible on the car sides, there is no “Excess Height Car” band at the top of the ends, so MTL has this omission correct. The Burlington (CB&Q) and Northern Pacific Hy-Cubes didn’t have this warning either, as I confirmed from photos in the appropriate Morning Sun **Color Guides**. Last time, I attempted to determine whether it was the CB&Q or the NP series which became this BN group. This time, I don’t have to, as it’s noted on RailcarPhotos that the BN series 281440 to 281474 was from the CB&Q series 19840 to 19874, built by Pullman-Standard in October and November 1967 as their Lot 9256. They were the Burlington’s class XML-15A.

The ORER for April 1974 shows the series 281440 to 281474, described as just “Box, Movable Bulkheads” with AAR Designation XL, though the “C+” denotes that the cars are larger than the Plate C measurements. The inside length of these cars was 40 feet 6 inches, inside width 9

feet 6 inches, inside height 12 feet 9 inches, outside length 48 feet 4 inches, extreme height 16 feet 10 inches, and capacity 4730 cubic feet or 150,000 pounds. There were just 19 cars in this group out of a possible 35. By the April 1976 ORER there are 27 cars in the series-- obviously there's been some repainting into BN Cascade Green going on-- and they've gone from "Exceeds Plate C" to "Plate F". Oops, make that "F+" in the April 1981 Equipment Register, where there are 28 cars in the group. That count has slipped back to 20 cars in January 1985, and to 17 total cars in July 1989, but that's all she wrote as the series is not listed in the October 1991 ORER. That's actually a little longer of an Approximate Time Period than I expected, given that, as MTL once noted in its car copy, "The mini hy-cube phase was short lived."

Speaking of short-lived, though, the U-1 Wheel Inspection "dot" on this car is not yellow, which signifies that the wheels have passed inspection, but white, which warns that the wheels have not passed inspection and need to be replaced! That is not an MTL painting error; the bingo photo clearly shows a white dot. The data on the actual car includes a shop date of November 1979 which differs from the MTL model, but wouldn't the wheels have been addressed at that point? Perhaps there is something about this on the tack board; there are clearly several pieces of paper attached to it, but they are not readable.

N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS: No releases this month.

N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:



110 44 540, \$36.95.

Reporting Marks: BNSF 880404.

54 Foot General Service Tank Car, BNSF/ex-Burlington Northern.

#6 in the BNSF Family Tree Series (pre-orders taken March 2022). Black with white lettering including restenciled reporting marks on left and large Burlington Northern herald on right. Tank qualification stencil and white on black COTS panel on far right. White simulated reflective blocks at six points along bottom of side. Yellow vertical

conspicuity stripes at six points along middle of side. Approximate Time Period: 2017, plus or minus, given photo evidence. Previous Releases: None. This item is scheduled to be available mid-month. MTL artwork shown.

Micro-Trains has released an example of how tank cars like this appeared like when painted for the BN (Catalog 110040, Reporting Marks BN 875000, March 2002, at right)...





...and also how they looked like when repainted for the BNSF in the circle cross scheme (110 00 23x, February 2016, example at left)...

...and for completeness at least, we can't leave out the "Wedge" or "Swoosh" version of the paint scheme which was introduced in 2005 and offered by MTL as well (110 00 45x, October 2019, example at right).



So does that make this Weathered Release a sort of "in between"? I guess that's one way to describe it!

RailCarPhotos has BNSF 880404, from the BNSF series 880400 to 880429, which was the former BN series 875105 to 875134, built by Trinity in 1993. The photo is dated 2017, which should give us at least the "plus or minus" variance from that date. The ATP could be a lot longer than that since conspicuity stripes were introduced in 2005. But the exact date of when the BNSF reporting marks were pasted over the BN markings is probably not something in anyone's official records.

I'll also note that I found nearly all photos of these tank cars repainted into the full BNSF scheme, whether with the Circle Cross or the Wedge. The exception was the previous road number, BNSF 880403, also photographed in 2017, this time by our own Graffiti Special Correspondent David Grothe. That shot is on RRPictureArchives, and shows some scrawl graffiti smack in the middle of the "N" in the herald.

In addition to the above, the following was announced on the Micro-Trains website on February 15.



983 05 034, \$70.95, with Jewel Boxes.

993 05 034, \$61.95, with Foam Nest packaging.

Reporting Marks: AEX 4420 and 4421.

AEX ex-Squaw Creek Weathered Two Pack.

Consists of two MTL 108 series Three Bay Open Hoppers. Each car is black with white lettering including restenciled reporting marks on left and Squaw Creek roadname across top. The 4420 has multicolor graffiti on one side and white scrawl graffiti on both

sides. The 4421 has white vertical simulated reflective stripes at seven points along bottom of side. Both cars have simulated coal loads. Approximate Time Period: at least 2006 to 2013 based on photo evidence. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 108 44 510, 4420; 108 45 510, 4421.

The AEX reporting marks belong to The Andersons, a private company which has an impressive roster of freight cars. We've previously seen a few cars from MTL that have the restenciled AEX reporting marks, including the ex-Grand Trunk Western two pack of Center Flows in 2019. What's much more unusual, to me, anyway, is what's "underneath" that restenciling, a company I have not heard of before.

First, Collin Reinhart found AEX 4421 in a train in Alburtis, Pennsylvania in April 2008, with the reflective striping that's unusual for its white color versus the usual yellow or orange. Compared to other former Squaw Creek cars photographed at around the same time in the same general Northeastern Pennsylvania location, it's in relatively good shape. Some of them look quite worn out. The earliest photo I saw in the collection of hoppers numbered 4421 to 4444 was dated 2005 and the latest was from late 2013, though most shots were from 2008. All of these were on RRPictureArchives. The 4434 is captioned as former Squaw Creek 722244 and a BSC 3300. The translation of that to Bethlehem Steel-built 3300 cubic foot open hoppers is on RailcarPhotos.com: the AEX cars were in the former series was Squaw Creek 722199 to 722244, constructed by Bethlehem Steel in May 1977. They are listed as being for Squaw Creek in non-interchange captive service. As part of the fleet of The Andersons, these cars got around, though; I see shots of them from New Jersey to Seattle, Washington.

I was initially led astray by a Wikipedia entry for the Squaw Creek Southern Railroad, certainly one of the more obscure lines in the country. It's noted that starting in 2007, it operated over Norfolk Southern trackage from a mine in Lynnville, Indiana, south to docks and a power plant in Yankeetown, Indiana, which is on the Ohio River. The NS picked up this trackage in 2003 from the Peabody Coal Company. It's shown as a subsidiary of Respondek Railroad, which has only a single web page with photos representing the Squaw Creek Southern and two other railroads, and that two officers are Terry and Cory Respondek. Not much there. The locos are painted in bright green and yellow, a paint scheme similar to those of the former Illinois Terminal Railroad. But the 2007 startup date for this line is **after** the relettering of these cars began, so something doesn't compute.

But what if the relettering was not over the Squaw Creek Southern, but over the Squaw Creek Coal Company instead? I found a reference to this subsidiary of Peabody Coal Company on the MFCL at groups.io discussion list. Over on Ken Harstine's boxcars.us, there is a shot of an unpatched Squaw Creek 722230 dated November 1995 and found in Boonville, Indiana. That's along the rail route from Lynnville to Yankeetown operated by the Squaw Creek Southern. It's also noted that Boonville was the site of an open pit coal mine. Now that makes more sense.

A sample ORER will do here. AEX 4420 to 4444 had a car count of 25 in the January 2007 Register. The outside length was 50 feet 9 inches, extreme height 12 feet 3 inches, and gross rail weight 263,000 pounds to go with the 3300 foot capacity. These were 14 panel hoppers as is the MTL 108 body style, though they do appear to be a prototype that's a little smaller than the Norfolk and Western H11a design that's the basis for the Micro-Trains model.



983 05 038, \$74.95, with Jewel Boxes.

993 05 038, \$65.95, with Foam Nest packaging.

Reporting Marks: FXE 872486 and 873103.

Ferromex Weathered Two Pack.

Consists of two MTL 025 series 50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcars, Single Door.

Base color is brown with white lettering on the 872486 and blue with black lettering on the 873103. Lettering includes National Railways of Mexico "NdeM" herald on left

and slogan "Unir Servir" and eagle device on right. White restenciled reporting marks and vertical Ferromex roadname on brown patch panels on left. White on black COTS panel on right. Yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes along bottom of side (pattern differs by car). The 873103 has a Superior type door; the 872486 has a Youngstown type door and a multicolor ACI label left of door. Both cars have extensive weathering and fading effects. Approximate Time Period: After 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the present. These cars have a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 025 44 276, 872486; 025 45 276, 873103.

Let's start with the basics: Ferromex began operating in 1998 as the privately-owned successor to much of the National Railways of Mexico which was a government-owned entity. While the conspicuity stripes on these cars push the Approximate Time Period out to after 2005, in theory these cars could have been relettered prior to the application of those reflectors.

That's what we have with the bingo photo of FXE 873103 from November 2005. No stripes yet, but still a messy looking boxcar. I had initially wondered whether this boxcar's base color was a very faded and perhaps stained brown, however, looking at the prototype image over on RRPictureArchives it seems that the base color was blue under all that weathering. Traces of blue on the side posts (ribs) are a clue here. RailcarPhotos has the series FXE 873052 to 873856 as being the former NdeM 102000 to 103995, built by CNCF (Constructora Nacional de Carros de Ferrocarril) in Sahagun, Mexico in 1979 and 1980. A photo of NdeM 102046 from April 1980 shows the car not long after it was delivered, and yes, it was light blue, with a brown door and brown ladders and grab irons. How about that. The ends, roof and bottom sills differ between prototype and model here.

The ORER for April 1981 shows the NdeM series with 1994 cars, with these dimensions: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 55 feet 2 inches, extreme height 15 feet 3 inches, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 5037 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds.

From there we jump to the January 2006 Equipment Register and the Ferromex listing. The 873052 to 873856 group cited on RailcarPhotos is broken down into a bunch of individual lines

which consume most of an entire ORER page – and which ends with a subset 873792 to 873896, the latter of which doesn't align with the note on RailcarPhotos. Yikes. These cars are shown with a 4961 cubic foot capacity – did they shrink? – and vary between standard XM designation, the XP designation which indicates special equipment or alignment with a specific commodity, and the XF designation, which is for food service. Aha – maybe the lining that is often placed inside these boxcars to enable food service did impact the cubic capacity. I think I'll just note that the car MTL modeled, 873103, is part of a subset of six XF boxcars within the set numbered 873059 to 873110. That's right, subsets within subsets! Also, yes, it's unusual to have revenue cars with six digit numbers this high, but Ferromex had gondolas numbered in the 900000s at the same time, the highest of which carried road number 973428!

In the January 2013 ORER, the 873101 is listed as an XP boxcar, among 15 exceptions in the 873059 to 873110 group. It was still listed in the January 2020 Register, my current proxy for the present. I suppose I need to make some room on the shelf for a newer issue...

Let's move to the second of the two cars in this pack. Again from RailcarPhotos, FXE 872486 was part of the series 872411 to 873409, previously NdeM 101192 to 101999 built by Berwick Forge and Fabricating in late 1975. The April 1976 ORER shows all 2000 of these cars in the NdeM registration, with these dimensions: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 55 feet 3 inches, extreme height 14 feet 10 inches, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 5037 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds. Again jumping from there to the January 2006 Register, the 872486 is among a long list of subsets of the 872411 to 873409, this time mixed between XM and XF designations. It's called out as an XF car. And it's also among the roster in the January 2020 Equipment Register, switched to an XP designation.

We pick up two bingos on RRPictureArchives. The first is from January 2013 and the second from December 2013. Amazingly, the ACI Label is still in place on a placard attached to the first side post to the left of the door. (The KarTrak system which utilized these markers was abandoned by 1977.) On this car, the major quibble is with the ends which are the usual Berwick kind, not the type used on the FMC car which is the prototype for the MTL 025 body style.



983 05 044, \$66.95, with Jewel Boxes.

993 05 044, \$57.95, with Foam Nest packaging.

Reporting Marks: ICG 245056 and 245669. Illinois Central Gulf Weathered Two Pack.

Consists of two MTL 1055 series 50 Foot 15 Panel Gondolas with Fixed Ends:

- 105 44 566, Reporting Marks ICG 245056, is black with orange roadname and circle solid rail herald in center, white reporting marks on left, white simulated reflective stripes at eight points along bottom of side, and multicolor ACI Label and white on black COTS panel on right.

Moderate weathering. Approximate Time Period: 1973 (build date) to at least the 1980s. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Runner Pack #161 with Road Numbers 245157, 245161, 245178, and 245198, January 2020.

- 105 45 600, Reporting Marks ICG 245669, is black with white lettering including reporting marks on left, roadname in center, and solid rail herald on far right. White simulated reflective stripes at eight points along bottom of side, and white on black COTS panel between roadname and herald. Moderate weathering. Approximate Time Period: 1978 (build date) to at least the 1990s. Previous Releases: None.

We have a pairing of a reprint with a new release for this pack. While it is a reprint, I can't reprint myself from the previous coverage since this road number is not from the same prototype series. Darn! I was hoping for a bit of copy and paste. Well, we're close. Like the set featured in the ICG Gondola Runner Pack (one of which is pictured at right), these gondolas were also built by the railroad's own Centralia, Illinois shops in 1973. These cars were numbered from 245000 to 245099. The group that followed, 245100 to 245199, was the basis for the Runner Pack. The bingo for the 245056, taken in 1977, is posted to RailcarPhotos.com, shows that car with a fair amount of wear and rust. Hey, wait, that's the bingo for this Weathered Item!



The ORER for July 1974 shows this series described as "Gondola, Fixed Ends, Steel Floor" with a tag denoting a change from previous issue. The inside length was shown as 52 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet even, outside length 54 feet 4 inches, extreme height 7 feet 8 inches, and capacity 2000 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. There were 87 cars out of the possible 100 in service. I'm thinking that the other 13 might have been equipped for special service and given different road numbers. For example, there are 13 cars in the series 295000 to 295099 which were designated for coil steel but have the same dimensions. I'll also note that this set of cars is just a bit larger than the 245100s group.

The Illinois Central Gulf reverted to the Illinois Central in 1988 so in theory any time from there on could end the Approximate Time Period for these cars. The "death star" paint scheme came along after that. The ORER for January 2000 showed 11 cars from the original 100 still in the ICG reporting marks; by that time they were on their third owner as Canadian National had purchased the IC the year before. But I don't think they were still in the as delivered paint scheme at that time. Assuming that the Illinois Central just removed the "G" from the reporting marks and kept the same road number, ten cars from the group had been given that treatment.

The second car in this pack, ICG 245669, represents the simplification of the ICG paint scheme from two colors, orange and white, to just one, white, as well as the change from the circular "solid rail" herald to just the solid rail itself. (And that initial solid rail herald was a progression from the "split rail" herald of the Illinois Central pre-ICG, a logo that was introduced in 1966.) We'll start with the bingo this time, also on RailcarPhotos. The 245669 was found in March 1980, looking rather worn and also rather short compared to the Santa Fe gondola to which it's

coupled. It's noted that this car was part of the series ICG 245550 to 245749 built at Centralia in 1978.

The July 1980 Equipment Register has all 200 of these cars listed. The description was "Gondola, Fixed Ends, Steel Floor, Axle Spacing 5 Feet 10 Inches, Truck Centers 43 Feet 4 ½ Inches" – get out your N Scale Ruler, I suppose, to check the model against this detail. The inside length was 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet, outside length 56 feet 11 inches, extreme height 7 feet 8 inches, and capacity 2000 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. There were 179 of these cars remaining in ICG markings as of the January 2000 ORER, but again, I'm not sure that they were still in the original paint scheme. I'll take the ATP out a bit longer than for the first of the two pack, but don't forget Rule #1 ("It's your railroad").

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS: Listed by MTL as now available is the **Baltimore and Ohio Cement Two Pack (993 02 210, \$59.95, in Foam Nest Packaging; 983 02 210, \$69.95, with Jewel Boxes)**. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 028 51 280, 287024; 028 52 280, 287039. These cars have Andrews Trucks. It's noted that Vents, roof hatches, and gravity chutes are 3D printed and painted, but not installed. A photo of the set I saw had all of the user installed parts in a small bag, ready for the modeler.



Scheduled to be available mid-month is **Runner Pack #198** of four Burlington Northern Santa Fe gondolas (993 00 198, \$109.95, in Foam Nest Packaging; 983 00 198, \$124.95, with Jewel Boxes). UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 105 51 900, 512308; 105 52 900, 511311; 105 53 900, 512326; 105 54 900, 512356. In its release copy, MTL added the Incremental Information that the prototypes were originally built for the Frisco (St. Louis-San Francisco) in 1967. That **could** make these cars from the Frisco's group numbered 65100 to 65299 when built by the St. Louis Car Company in that year, but I didn't try to confirm this. And an Oops from me: These 15 Panel gondolas are in the 150500 body style which has as its prototype the Pullman-Standard "PS-5" gondola, which is 15 panel.



Also scheduled to be available mid-month are the two CSX Transportation Ortner Hopper Weathered Three Packs: **Gray, 983 02 208, \$109.95, and Black, 983 02 209, \$109.95, both in Jewel Boxes only.**

The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: Gray (at right), 125 51 103, 291374; 125 52 103, 291469; 125 53 103, 292055.



Black (at left): 125 51 071, 292204; 125 52 071, 292250; 125 53 071, 292387. Each car has a simulated rock load.



Meanwhile, I can confirm that the **Southern Pacific Air Repeater Two Pack (993 02 207, \$64.95, in Foam Nest Packaging; 983 02 207, \$73.95, with Jewel Boxes)** were released last month. The official photo is now available (at right). UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the August 2022 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows: 038 51 610, 260; 038 52 610, 266. The roof parts are to be installed by the modeler. These cars have a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.



*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 **February 28.***



Targeted Delivery July 2023:

993 00 213, \$144.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

983 00 213, \$159.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.

Reporting Marks: C&O 604752 and 604789 and B&O 605055 and 605095.

Chessie System Four Pack (Runner Pack #213).

Scheduled to consist of four MTL 092 Series Two Bay Center Flow Covered Hoppers. Each car is yellow with dark blue sill and underframe. Mostly blue lettering including reporting marks on left, "Ches-C" herald in center, and Chessie System roadname on right. Yellow lettering in blue sill. White on black COTS panel below and to right of herald. B&O cars have an ACI Label at the far bottom right. Approximate Time Period: B&O cars: 1976 (build date) to early decade of the 2000s; C&O cars: 1979 (build date) to mid-decade of the 2000s. Previous Releases: For the C&O cars, Catalog 92160, Road Number 605527, December 2002; then Catalog 092 00 160, Road Number 605556, November 2009, though these aren't in the same prototype series. For the

B&O cars, no previous releases.

Here's the first car of this body style to wear Chessie paint, from back in 2002 (at right). Remember when MTL used to highlight that the hatches could be opened on these cars? (They still can be opened; as before, with care. How do I know this...)



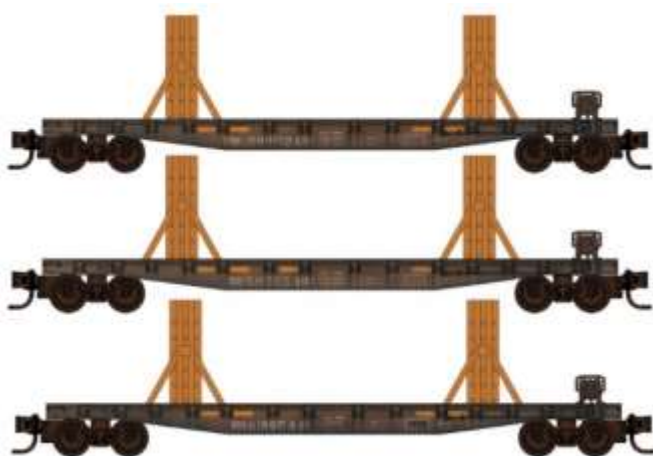
It's a bit of some and some here with both the Baltimore and Ohio and the Chesapeake and Ohio being represented in this four pack. (Where's the Western Maryland? They did have a few Center Flows in the Chessie scheme, but most of the WM cars remained in "as delivered" paint.)

Page 39 of the **Chessie System Color Guide to Freight Equipment** has the story of these four cars. They were all 2700 cubic foot cars built by American Car and Foundry in 1976 and 1979. As such the came fresh from the factory in the Ches-C garb. I'll get this out of the way: the hoppers were less long than the prototype used for the 092 body style. A key spotting feature is that the tops of the sides don't reach all the way to the ends, leaving a gap to the arch at each end which supports the end ladders and the ends of the running boards. The Chessie was the only Class I which purchased this particular type of Center Flow, but they bought a lot of them: this Chessie System HC-44 class numbered 1300 total cars. The only other buyer of these CF2700s was the Detroit and Toledo Shore Line. There are bingo photos of the B&O 605095 and the C&O 604789 on the same page of the **Color Guide**. The latter is among a string of newly delivered cars photographed in 1979. The former was among a set built in 1976 and was

caught in service in that year. The MTL rendering shows the B&O cars with ACI labels, which is correct.

We'll start the ORER check with the B&O cars. Series 605000 to 605499 accounted for the first five hundred cars. All five hundred are in the January 1978 Register, with these dimensions: inside length 32 feet 1 inch, outside length 41 feet 11 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, and capacity 2700 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. At this point the B&O and C&O were still being listed separately in the ORER. The first Equipment Register in the Research Accumulation in which the C&O series 604600 to 604999 appears is the July 1980 issue. For some reason, the capacity on these 400 cars is only 2696 cubic feet. Well, what's four cubic feet among friends. The series from which the first two MTL releases in C&O Ches-C paint were taken is also here, numbered 605500 to 605899.

All that's left here is a determination of the end of the Approximate Time Period, which is when the last of these cars were either restenciled with CSXT reporting marks or completely repainted into CSX colors. We'll make a few intermediate stops: the July 1989 ORER has 285 B&O cars and 329 C&O cars. In April 1995 the B&O car count was down to 49 cars and the C&O car count was 190. The January 2000 Register has just 24 B&O cars and the two C&O series combined for a total of 139 cars. By the January 2002 ORER just ten B&O cars and 90 C&O cars remain. The January 2006 Register has only two B&O cars and 52 C&O cars; the October 2007 has the same two B&O cars and 36 C&O cars. And my last look, in the January 2011 ORER, has one B&O car and seven C&O cars. Close enough.



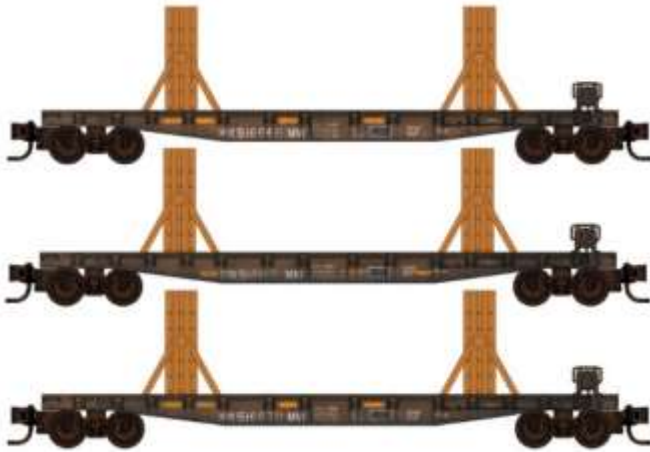
***Targeted Delivery July and August 2023:
Norfolk Southern Ribbon Rail Weathered
Pack.***

Consists of the following releases of 045 series 50 Foot Flat Cars with Fishbelly Sides:

July Release: 993 02 220, \$95.95, with Foam Nest Packaging; 983 02 220, \$107.95, with Jewel Box Packaging, Reporting Marks: NW 516592, 516954, and 516955, Ribbon Rail Three Pack #1.

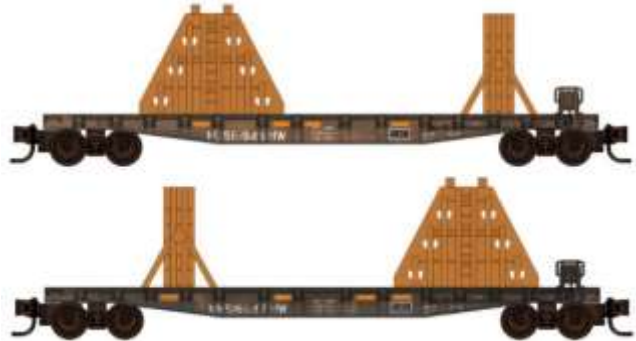
July Release: 045 44 670, \$41.95, with Jewel Box, No Road Number, Ribbon Rail Single Car Expansion.





August Release: 993 02 222, \$64.95, with Foam Nest Packaging; 983 02 222, \$73.95, with Jewel Box Packaging, Reporting Marks: NW 516947 and 516948, Ribbon Rail Center Car Two Pack.

August Release: 993 02 221, \$95.95, with Foam Nest Packaging; 983 02 221, \$107.95, with Jewel Box Packaging, Reporting Marks: NW 516966, 516971, and 516972, Ribbon Rail Three Pack #2.



Each car is black with white lettering including reporting marks on left, white on black COTS panel on right and yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes at varying points along side. Moderate to heavy weathering. Each car has ribbon rail racks (intermediate racks on all cars but the two pack, which has one end rack and one intermediate rack) which are multi-media kits to be assembled and painted by the modeler. Ribbon rail not included. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the present (at least 2021 given photo evidence). MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Here's another Really Ambitious Offering from the folks in Talent. The single car among all of two and three packs did lead this byte-slinger to ask how best to cover this, but enough about me: the idea behind an unnumbered extra car, I would think, is to allow the modeler to make their ribbon rail train as long as they want – or dare.

And ribbon rail trains can get pretty long. I counted twenty-three cars on a Union Pacific consist captured on video (<https://youtu.be/RPTIdiv0cdA>), for example. That's something over 1200 feet of continuous welded rail (another name for ribbon rail) – per section. Assuming purchase of all nine of these cars, the resulting train should handle pieces of rail that are about 477 feet long each, long enough to meet the operational definition of continuous welded rail. And as long as we're getting technical, there is a 2013 publication that has specifications: <http://corporate.sunrail.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CFRC-CWR-Plan-Rev-3-11-27-13.pdf> , as well as Federal Railway Administration standards for a Continuous Welded Rail Plan: https://safetydata.fra.dot.gov/OfficeofSafety/Documents/CWR_GenericPlan_2_7_18_Final.pdf .

Let's get a little more specific. Prototype photos of the Norfolk Southern rail flat cars are on [RRPictureArchives](#). The 516947, one of the two pack cars based on the "anchors" (my term) for the rail, was found in August 2013 and noted to be the former NW 300412, in the N&W

Class F37. Before that it was Wabash 412, built by the railroad using a General Steel Casting, well, casting. It was part of the series 400 to 449, later N&W 300400 to 300449. A photo from April 2021 shows that the car was still around and that it was not necessarily an “end” car based on its position between two other cars. (And duh, George, MTL calls it the “Center Car Two Pack.”) The base color of the flat car is rather difficult to discern, but the heavy weathering kind of makes that a moot point. I also note that there is a side-mounted lever brake on the car. An end-mounted brake wheel, like the one the car had when it was part of the Wabash roster, would certainly get in the way! For the superdetailing minded folks, there is a small diameter pipe running along the side, connected to the next car via a flexible coupling. The 516948, previously N&W 300416 and Wabash 416, was also found in April 2021, probably in the same consist as the 516497. There’s a worker atop the large platform, handy for size comparison purposes.

RRPictureArchives has bingo photos for all six of the other cars that have road numbers. NW 516952 was the former Southern Railway 150212. NW 516954 was Southern 51170; the image from August 2013 shows what it looks like without the rail load. NW 516955 was Southern 150152, belonging to Class FS-102. I see that there is a number “6” placard on the left rail holder (my term, clearly not what it’s actually called!) but I can’t determine the context of that placard—is it Car 6, Holder 6, or something else? The 516966 was Southern 51307, the 516971 was also from the Southern Railway, and the 516792 was SOU 51275. Hmm, there are “6” placards on the rail holders on these cars as well. I give up. Apparently someone was diligent enough to photograph all of these cars in April 2021 while they were in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, giving us an “at least” Approximate Time Period.

While the MTL rendition of the rail holders aligns with the photos I saw, there is going to be one thing missing from the set as delivered from the factory: the actual ribbon rail. MTL suggests a visit to the N Scale Kits website to obtain that detail. I checked and their version is made out of rust colored flexible plastic. This makes a lot of sense considering that N Scalers need to deal with far, far tighter radius curves than anything encountered on the prototype.



N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: Car #12 in the “Railroad Magazine Years Gone By Series” (101 00 891, \$27.95) has been released. It features the cover of the February 1941 issue, “Grounded.” UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the October 2021 issue. This is the final car in the series.

The next two cars in the MT&L Freelance Railroad series are scheduled to be available mid-month, and I've seen them available online. At right is the image of the **33 Foot Two Bay Offset Side Hopper with rock load (055 50 620, \$25.95, Reporting Marks MT&L 7343).**



And here's the **Rogue Valley Wine Company Three Dome (Three Compartment) Tank Car (066 50 180, \$32.95, Reporting Marks MTL 45637).** UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the July 2022 issue.



Meanwhile, I can confirm that the two MT&L Freelance Railroad plug door boxcars scheduled to be released mid-last month have indeed reached dealers (**021 50 621, \$27.95, MTL 39014; and 021 50 622, \$27.95, MTL 39032,**) based on listings found online.



*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 **February 28.***

Targeted Delivery July and August 2023:

Medford, Talent and Lakecreek Freelance Railroad Refrigerator Cars, \$28.95 each.

Each car is white with brown ends and roof and black fishbelly underframe, hardware and details. Black lettering including "Southern Oregon Refrigerator Co" and road number on left. Yellow on blue banner "Rogue River Valley Quality Fruit" left of door. Multicolor "fruit crate" label on right. Approximate Time Period: 1926 (build date on car) to the end of the Billboard Refrigerator Era as painted, then make something up afterwards (I said 2018 in my fictional "history" of these cars). MTL artwork (below) is preliminary; actual product may vary. Six more cars to add to the five already released, and trust me, the folks behind the red and yellow sign are not even remotely close to running out of fruit crate labels to use on these cars. I've neglected the Micro-Trains renderings until now, so let's match up the label to its prototype:



049 00 941, Road Number 5870 (Targeted Delivery July) features "Topsy Bee." According to thelabelman.com, this is a 1960s vintage label. It was used by Bear Creek Orchards of Medford, Oregon. "Fun image of cartoon bee sucking nectar out of pear with straw." I couldn't resist a copy and paste of that description. The original Topsy Bee Farms

was established in 1945 outside Phoenix, Oregon (not far from Talent, Oregon!) by Curtis and Janet Barnes along with Curtis' brother Charles. Curtis had been an animator for Disney including work on the film **Fantasia**. The current Topsy Bee, on part of the same property, is a "regenerative family farm" using sustainable practices since its founding in 2015.



049 00 942, Road Number 5859 (Targeted Delivery July) features "Golden Bosc Pears." This might be a more familiar label to some N Scalers as it's been featured on at least one other "Fruit Label" car. The Golden Bosc is a specific variety of pear that is named for

French horticulturist Louis Bosc. It's known for hard flesh, brown skin and a sweet taste, especially when fully ripe. These particular Golden Bosc pears were packed and shipped by Myron Root and Company of Medford, Oregon, founded in 1934. The label match find was in a bit of an unlikely place: the digital collection of the Boston Public Library. That's a long way from Oregon. Myron Root & Company, Inc. is still around as a management company and owns and operates Eden Valley Orchards and Edenvale Winery on the site of the first ever pear orchard in the Rogue River Valley.

I can't leave out the train on the label: it's a stylized version of the Union Pacific's early semi-articulated streamliners M-10005 and M-10006, which served as the "City of Denver" passenger train from 1936 to 1953.



049 00 943, Road Number 5863 (Targeted Delivery July) features "Pinnacle Pears." Okay, the Rogue River Valley is certainly scenic, but it's not exactly the Grand Canyon, which is more like what we see on this label. There is no shortage of images of this label

online. Estimated dates include the 1920s, 1940s and 1950s—and could be all of these, of course. We know from a news item archive that the Pinnacle Packing Company was in business in 1934 and had four plants in the Rogue River Valley. One of these plants in Medford still had a "ghost sign" for Pinnacle Packing in 2013.



049 00 944, Road Number 5866 (Targeted Delivery August) features "Sunday Best Pears." Unlike the previous labels, I only found one prototype example of this one, and it was for a former eBay listing. Oh, well. A search on the Associated Packing

Company of Medford, Oregon turned up even less. I guess "Fallen Flags" in the pear business aren't celebrated quite as much as they are in the railroad business. Anyway, packers and growers aren't necessarily the same company, though that does happen—the current Harry and David is an example, although they also purchase pears from other growers. In looking through online items for these bytes, I noted that Rogue River Valley pears were sold to both

canneries and produce markets, and packers and growers sometimes played these customers off each other.



049 00 945, Road Number 5869 (Targeted Delivery August) features "Vilas Round Robin Pears." I didn't get anywhere beyond a match to the label which was noted "Unavailable on Etsy." That's not much help! My online search engine

thought I misspelled "Villas" as "Vilas" when looking for "Vilas Orchards" and returned a bunch of references to retirement communities and tourist stops. No, that's not what I wanted!



049 00 946, Road Number 5857 (Targeted Delivery August) features "Dunbar of Medford Pears." Unlike the previous two cars, which appear to be for firms no longer in business, Dunbar Farms is very much active. In fact, in 2019 there was a long-

form discussion of this fourth generation family business on the local National Public Radio affiliate station, and in 2021 it was profiled on the television show "All Across Oregon." When founded in the first decade of the 1900s, planting pear trees was still accomplished with the help of a horse-drawn plow. Now Dunbar Farms focuses on organic produce, its own wine and a "tasting room" which offers lunch and dinner in season. But the farm still uses a version of the "pear on skis" artwork that's on the fruit crate label.



Z SCALE: Car #12 in the "Railroad Magazine Years Gone By Series" (502 00 651, \$27.95) has been released. It features the cover of the February 1941 issue, "Grounded." UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the October 2021 issue. This is the final car in the series.

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: It was included in last month's N Scale Delaware and Hudson gondola "not a reprint," and now it's available separately. The "Gondola Rack Brace Kit" comes in a two pack (499 94 002, \$11.95, at right). It's specified for the 046 series cars but I think it would work on other MTL body styles and perhaps even gondolas, from, ahem, elsewhere. Also available is "Bulkhead Flat Car Weathered Deck #2" (499 45 003, \$14.95). This gives the modeler a bit more variety. This comes just in time to be used on the two bulkhead flat cars released this month, and have one set left over.



During the Northeast N-Trak “Mini Meet” which preceded the Amherst Railway Society’s Annual Railroad Hobby Show in Springfield at the end of January, Micro-Trains announced of their next N Scale body style. It’s the 107 series 60 foot flat car with 70 ton trucks. More to come on this latest item, which is in the tooling phase at present.

DISCONTINUED ALERT: From just last month, showing as “Contact Dealer” are both packaging options for the N Scale Norfolk and Western Hopper Four Pack, aka Runner Pack 195 (983 and 993 00 195). Those would be the first 2023 releases to have left the building.

Backing up to 2022 N Scale items, both packaging options for the Montana Rail Link Weathered Boxcar Two Pack (983 and 993 05 032, December) are outta here. So is the Fruit Growers Express Weathered Refrigerator Eight Pack (993 05 824, March). The Foam Nest option for the Cotton Belt Weathered Center Flow Three Pack is no longer an option (993 05 029, October), but the set is still available in Jewel Boxes. The Jewel Box version of the CNW ex-Rock Island Gondola Weathered Two Pack is sold out (983 00 016, July), and with the Foam Nest version already gone, that’s it for that pair. Runner Pack #186 of four ADM Center Flows is gone. The Christmas Around the World add-on cars for Taipei/Tokyo and Dubai/ Barcelona are both gone (101 56 740 and 101 57 740, October); the San Francisco/ London car had already been sold out. On the other hand, the “Contact Dealer” advisory has been removed from the first set of Military Valor Award Cars released in May (101 00 760 through 766). The Reading Depressed Center Flat Car with load has been fired off (109 00 190, December). The tent has been folded on the first number of the Royal American Shows flat car (139 00 011, June). And the first number of the Union Pacific “Red Dot” Boxcar (181 00 361, February) has also shipped out. We need to go all the way back to 2019 for the next N Scale item on the bye-bye board: the Baltimore and Ohio Railway Post Office reprint (140 00 091, September). And that’s as far back as we need to go this month for N Scale items.

In Z Scale, the second number of the CP Rail bulkhead flat car has rolled away (527 00 202, November 2021), the Flo-Sweet tank car (Sweet Liquid Series #3, May 2021) has emptied out, and the first number of the Pennsylvania Railroad covered hopper (531 00 321, February 2021) and second number of the Penn Central covered hopper (531 00 352, also February 2021) are gone. Also out at the factory is the second number of the Great Northern open hopper (533 00 162, May 2021). Farm to Table Refrigerator Car #1, for Monarch Foods, has cleared the table (518 00 710, February 2019), as have #4 in that series for Stokely’s Finer Foods (518 00 740, May 2019) and #9 for Zion Fig Bars (518 00 790, October 2019). The second number of the Rock Island stock car has moooved on (sorry) (520 00 252, June 2019). The Northern Refrigerator Line Refrigerator with the green bananas artwork has sold out (518 00 610, August 2018).

Last month I had a question about the recently released Z Scale x-post boxcars in the 511 series. Although not all posted to the MTL website, I was told that there are some small quantities of the cars still available. So we’ll hold off on placing the Dreaded D on those items for now.

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: OK, so maybe this is Oops Patrol. Runner Pack #42 from October 2010 was a set of four orange and black Rio Grande gondolas which were initially described (by me) as reprints of the 46000/046 body style car, but when released

were actually 105 series gondolas. That would make the two orange cars in the Rio Grande Weathered Four Pack from last month nominal reprints of that Runner Pack quartet.

And maybe this is also an Oops. Charlie Kunz reports that the **Journal of the CSXT Historical Society** Volume 10 Number 4, from October 2021 has the CSXT Business Car “Alfred E. Perlman” with the road number 994307, which was used on last month’s MTL model. This conflicts with the online information I found, which was the Perlman with road number 994317. But a photo of the Perlman is on Page 20 of the publication and it’s clearly got 994307. The 994317 is shown as the car “Hays T. Watkins Jr.” All of the Journals are available on the society’s website: www.csxthsociety.org . The October 2021 issue is devoted to the CSXT Business Train.

Not specifically related to any of this month’s releases, but just a tidbit in the Santa Fe timeline. The question was asked about the Santa Fe’s small circle cross reflectors over on the MFCL discussion venue on groups.io. Jim Eager answered the question using the Santa Fe Painting and Lettering Guide by the late Richard Hendrickson: they were introduced in 1958 and replaced by reflective rectangles starting in 1971. Now, let’s see if I can remember that for the next relevant Approximate Time Period...

OOPS PATROL: And maybe this is Incremental Information too... When pre-reviewing the forthcoming Southern Pacific Railroad Police Two Pack, I completely failed to mention that MTL had already released the SP 4762 in N Scale, in May 2010 (official image at right). Looking back at that issue of the UMTRR, I see I also leveraged the “My Espee Modelers Archive” site looked after by Richard Perry for that coverage. He has photos of the prototype for this car there as well.



FINALLY, WE TOOK A RIDE ON THE READING (AND NORTHERN): I noted in my pre-review last month of the MTL Special Edition Reading, Blue Mountain and Northern 40th Anniversary Boxcar that the company had a passenger operation. What I didn’t mention is that we were intrigued by it, sufficiently so that Colleen and I did in fact “Take a Ride on the Reading” to invoke the “Chance” card from the board game **Monopoly**. (It’s that “Chance” card that makes the Reading more valuable than the other three railroads on the **Monopoly** board.)



Our selection was an all-day excursion from Reading Outer Station just a bit north of the city proper. We sat in Coach Number 210 (some of you know why that number is important to me) for the ride down and back from there to Jim Thorpe. No, the train wasn’t pulled by the famous Reading steam locomotive 2102, but by a pair of crisply painted green and yellow Reading and Northern GP38 diesels. The train stopped at the RBMN headquarters in Port Clinton, and also at Tamaqua, both times to pick up passengers. Tamaqua is also approximately where the train diverges from former Reading Company rails to those of the

Central Railroad of New Jersey. Based on my observations, much of this line was once double track, but now it's a well maintained single track with a fair amount of welded rail.

At Jim Thorpe, the town known as Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk until 1954, there is about a four hour layover, during which time we could, and did, take about a one hour out-and-back trip on the Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railroad. This train offers a full dome car (it was sold out) plus standard and "Crown Class" coach seating for a short ride up to the former Penn Haven Junction and back, along the Lehigh River. Since it was winter most of the trees were bare, allowing for some good views of the river rapids. This part of the route includes former Lehigh Valley trackage, with the former Jersey Central's right of way converted to a rail trail for walking and biking. It's all downhill back to Jim Thorpe, and as I mentioned last month, there is a one-way ticket option available in warmer months for those who would like take along their bikes (or perhaps rent one) and coast back down along the Lehigh on two wheels.

All in all, it was a nice way to spend a pretty mid-winter day. I enjoyed the Reading to Jim Thorpe round trip a fair bit more than the Lehigh Gorge side excursion. The former is a relative bargain given the length of the trip.

Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers,
George

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