



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report Issue #318 – June, 2023

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

Copyright ©2023, George J. Irwin. Reproduction prohibited. Please see legal notice at the end of this document.

Hello again everyone! While N Scalpers from around the country and around the world gathered in Reno, Nevada for the National N Scale Convention, Z Scalpers learned of the latest set of pre-orders to ponder, this time in the form of six virtual two-packs of 60 foot flat cars. We'll get to those in our normal course of business here... off we go...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



025 00 306, \$28.95.

Reporting Marks: SP 230821.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Youngstown Door, Southern Pacific (Union Pacific).

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. Small red, white and blue shield herald on right. White on black COTS panel on right. Small white horizontal rectangles at six points along bottom of side. Approximate Time Period: 2012 (based on photo evidence) to the mid decade of the 2010s. This item has a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.

This is about as simple as it gets in terms of boxcars, and that UP herald is about as small as it gets as well. The previous paint scheme wasn't so simple, though: that of the Golden West Service. These cars started out where they ended, sort of: the Southern Pacific.

According to RailcarPhotos.com, the Southern Pacific series 230700 to 230884 was originally SP series 242900 to 243370. This group was built for the SP by FMC in March and April 1973, as their Lot 17522, and were in the Class B-70-67. When constructed they had double sliding doors. When conveyed by the SP to the Golden West Service, the sale/leaseback operation, many of these cars were rebuilt with a single sliding door replacing the double door. At that time they received the attractive blue, yellow and red GWS paint scheme, and were stenciled for the Galveston Railway (GVSR), reportedly in the series 767000 to 767198. When the Golden West Service was wound down after the SP was merged into the Union Pacific, cars were generally restenciled to SP lettering, otherwise keeping their Golden West paint.

There were exceptions, of course, and this is one of them. SP 230821 in spartan Union Pacific paint was found in Lake City, Pennsylvania in both April and May 2012; both images are on RRPictureArchives.net. An Approximate Time Period starting around that date seems reasonable.

The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for January 2011 has the series SP 230700 to 230884 with a car count of 136 of a possible 185. The key dimensions were: inside length 50 feet 7 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 57 feet 11 inches, extreme height 15 feet 4 inches, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 5283 cubic feet with a Gross Rail Weight of 220,000 pounds. This is a little bigger than the 5077 cubic foot prototype for the MTL 025 body style. We don't make it to The Present since just one car remained as of the October 2020 ORER, after only four in the January 2018 Register. Going backwards from the 2012 bingo photo date, the car count was 171 in the October 2007 ORER, which fits with the fact that there were only three cars in the Galveston Railroad series from which these cars were restenciled. Restenciled doesn't mean repainted, though, as is obvious from other car photos available on RRPictureArchives and RailcarPhotos, at least, so I'm going to stick with my 2012 start of the ATP given the bingo photo date. Feel free to invoke Rule #1 ("It's your railroad") as needed.



095 00 071, \$45.95.

Reporting Marks: SP 401155.

PS-2 Covered Hopper, Southern Pacific.

Gray (including trucks) with red lettering including small circle herald and reporting marks on left and large gothic roadname on right. Approximate Time Period: 1957 (build date) into the 1980s as painted.

You might be aware that Micro-Trains has done several Southern Pacific paint schemes on its Z Scale version of the PS-2 covered hopper... but this isn't one of them. We get close, with a scheme that doesn't have the circular SP herald (at right), but it's not from the same prototype series.



And there's a later version of the SP scheme on a PS-2 that is from the same prototype series as this car (at left). Well, at least that might help us a bit with the Approximate Time Period.

That same prototype series would be SP 401100 to 401349, which was built by Pullman-Standard in March 1957 and belonged to the Espee's class H-70-16. (SP subsidiary Texas and New Orleans received another fifty cars, T&NO 3425 to 3674, which went into parent SP with road numbers 402048 to 402297. The MTL Z Scale release above right, SP 402150, is from that renumbered group.)

The SP listing in the January 1964 ORER combines the Class H-70-16 and H-70-18 covered hoppers into the group 401100 to 401549. (The H-70-18s were built by Pullman-Standard in 1958 but for our purposes are basically the same as the H-70-16s.) There were 448 of a possible 450 cars described as "Hopper, Covered, All Steel" with inside length of 29 feet 3 inches, outside length of 35 feet 3 inches, extreme height of 13 feet 3 inches and capacity of 2003 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. I went next to the April 1975 Equipment Register to find 429 cars still

in service at the time. The quantity dropped to 290 cars in the January 1985 ORER. After a car count of 32 in the April 1999 Equipment Register under the Union Pacific registration, just one car remains in the January 2000 issue. I would be surprised if that single car was still in the as delivered paint scheme, but I suppose that with the SP, you can't be sure. Certainly ACI Labels would have been added and possibly removed, COTS panels stenciled on, and the circa 1978 U-1 wheel inspection "dot" placed.

Page 63 of the **Southern Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume Two** has a July 1972 photo of SP 401296, found at Watsonville Junction, California. Underneath that dirt and rust most of the original red paint remains. The next page of the **Color Guide** has a June 1986 shot of SP 402183, one of the former T&NO cars; I mention it because it's in the same paint scheme without the SP circle herald.

There is a builders photo of SP 401211 on the Canadian Freight Railcar Gallery. It's in black and white so if you didn't know the lettering was red you might mistake it for black. Meanwhile, SP 401112 was found in its original paint, with the ACI Label, COTS Panel and U-1 dot, in October 1983 that photo is on RRPictureArchives. It's pretty beaten up and rusty, and would make a good candidate for a Weathered Release should MTL go that route. I didn't find a bingo photo on the 401155, but I'm not concerned about this for two reasons. First, Micro-Trains doesn't do prototype paint schemes without reference photos. Second, the "brother company" Kadee has also done this very same car in HO Scale (speaking of really good models!) and they also don't release prototype paint schemes without reference photos.



181 00 310, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: WM 36003.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Plug Door, No Running Board, Low Brake Wheel, Western Maryland / Chessie System.

Yellow sides, dark blue ends and bottom sill, aluminum roof. Mostly dark blue lettering including Chessie System roadname and reporting marks on left and "Ches-C" herald on right. Approximate Time Period: early 1970's (1974 paint date via photo evidence) through most of the 1980's. This car has a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.

I'd call this an upgrade to the December 2005 release of a car in the same prototype series (038 00 320, official MTL photo at right). I'd just added the **Western Maryland Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** to the Research Accumulation at the time. I was somewhat disappointed to find that the reference photo wasn't the 36008 which Micro-Trains released, but sister car 36003, on Page 33 of the **Color Guide**. And this month's release is... the 36003! Well, what do you know, a bingo more than seventeen (!) years after the fact. That image was from September 1975; it's noted that the car had been painted in Chessie garb the year before in the WM's Elkins, West Virginia shops.



©2005 Micro-Trains® Line Co.

The 36003 and 36008 belonged to a short series of twenty cars, WM 36001 to 36020, the railroad's class B-29. Built in late 1967 by Evans, these were the first group of modern insulated boxcars purchased by the WM. The as-delivered paint was the famous "speed lettering" scheme; a photo of WM 36005 in that initial decoration was taken in June 1984 so there's no question that the two schemes co-existed.

Two differences between the original model and the prototype are rectified with this release: short ladders and a lowered brake wheel. There are short ladders on both ends of the car while the MTL car has grab irons on the left. The somewhat nitpicky "door thing" last time (9 foot on the model, 10 feet 6 inches on the prototype) remains. But part of the upgrade is that Micro-Trains included the cushion underframe on this new release.

The 36003 does not have the DF designation on its side like the MTL model does, which may actually be an oversight by the WM's Elkins paint shop, not MTL's Talent paint shop since the previous Western Maryland paint includes that designation. One item that continues to have me curious is the red accents on the door hardware that MTL added; there's no markings like that on the prototype car.

The ORER for January 1976 shows the series 36001 to 36020 given AAR Classification RBL and the description "Box, Insulated, Evans Side Wall Fillers, 2 Evans Bulkheads, Full Track" with the following statistics: inside length 50 feet 1 inch, inside height 9 feet 1 inch (remember this is net of the insulation), outside length 55 feet 4 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 10 feet 6 inches as noted above, and capacity 4640 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. With sometimes typical reporting illogic, there are only two cars in the main series and eighteen more, specifically the first 18 cars in the group, in a subseries with the additional information "56 Pallets Supplied By H.J. Heinz Company." There was a Heinz facility on the line in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and, in fact, MTL has previously done a car that supported that plant, Catalog 21240, a 40 foot plug door boxcar in orange and black, back in August 1996.

By the January 1985 ORER, the WM is listed under the Baltimore and Ohio's registration and the group of 20 cars is all together again under the description "Refrigerator, Insulated, 2 Evans Bulkheads" with capacity dropped back to 132,000 pounds. In the July 1987 Register, the WM is under the Chesapeake and Ohio and just 4 cars remain in the group, and only one is listed under CSX Transportation in the July 1989 ORER. We don't know exactly which one it was, so you can stretch that ATP out through the whole decade with a little modeler's license.



181 00 330, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: IC 59546.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Plug Door, No Running Board, Low Brake Wheel, Illinois Central.

Orange with black lettering including roadname and slogan "Main Line of Mid-America" on left and reporting marks near bottom left. Large white on black "split rail" herald on right. White "Cushion Underframe / Insulated" lettering at top left. Approximate Time Period: 1967 (build date) to, strictly

speaking, the early 1970s, or add lettering details and continue through the decade of the 1980s. This car has a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.

General American built the series IC 49450 to 49549 for the Illinois Central in August 1967. The bingo photo which appears on Page 44 of the **IC/GM&O Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** was taken just a month later. The features listed in the caption accompanying the photo included: Evans side wall fillers, 10 foot 6 inch Youngstown plug doors, Equipco one piece load dividers, Durawood brand hardwood flooring, and a Keystone 20 inch travel cushion underframe. It's pretty reasonable to assume that the cars were built with short ladders and a lowered brake wheel, since that's how the 49446 appears the month after it was constructed! Well, duh, George... One of the more interesting details to me is way down at the bottom of the sill: the GATX logo which replaced the older General American trademark. MTL has reproduced this stencil. There are a couple of detail quibbles I noted between the real thing and the MTL 181 body style, including the exact shape of the bottom side sills.

The ORER for October 1969 shows this series alright, but under a small separate Refrigerator Car section. Technically these insulated boxcars were classed as refrigerator cars, but since the IC still had some actual ice-cooled refrigerator cars, the use of some of the dimensional data columns for these newer boxcars is, well, not exactly correct. (The IC also had a general note for its entire registration: "All freight cars of this company are of Fabricated Steel Construction and are equipped with two four-wheel trucks, unless otherwise noted." Thanks for that... I think.) Anyway, the inside length was 50 feet 1 inch "Between Linings, Clear (Bulkheads Collapsed)," inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 9 feet 10 inches, outside length 57 feet 9 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 10 feet 6 inches, and capacity 4582 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. There were 99 of the possible 100 cars in the group at that time.

The October 1972 ORER listing for the then-new Illinois Central Gulf Railroad still had a "Refrigerator Car" section including 94 cars in the series. There wasn't yet anything listed with the ICG reporting marks at the time. It doesn't look like the ICG was in any rush to change said reporting marks either: by the October 1976 Register there were only four cars switched to ICG from IC, and that's assuming my guess that the new series was ICG 150450 to 150549 is correct! By July 1980, 88 of the original 100 cars were still in the original IC series. If you're modeling this time period, consider adding the ACI Label, COTS panel and U-1 wheel inspection dot.

The ICG retook the Illinois Central name in February 1988. It's possible that half of the then twenty-one year old cars were still in their original paint scheme with IC reporting marks, while just three had ICG markings, again assuming my guess for the successor series is correct. And it's also possible that they were retired without ever losing their as-delivered paint as well, as just two remained as of the July 1992 Register, which is where I stopped looking.

There's no question that this new release can be run side by side with the black and orange "split rail" boxcar released by MTL in April 2019 (181 00 080, at right). That car's ATP also began in 1967 and ran through the 1970s.



182 00 190, \$29.90.

Road Number: 43022 (will be "SOU 43022" in website listings).

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Double Door, No Running Board, Low Brake Wheel, Southern Railway.

Boxcar red with mostly white lettering including "Super Cushion Service" (in all caps) on left, large roadname (with green dot inside letter "O"), slogan "Gives A Green Light To Innovations" and large road number on right. Multicolor ACI Label, white on black COTS panel, and yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" at bottom right. Approximate Time Period: 1969, given paint scheme, or after 1978, given U-1 "dot," into the 1990s. This car has a cushion underframe and body mounted couplers.

This is another upgrade from previous MTL cars with this paint scheme, specifically Catalog 37030, SOU 43037 in August 1997, and Catalog 037 00 030, SOU 43039 in March 2008 (MTL image of the latter at right, but note that there's no interior load this time). Both of these cars were on the MTL 037 body style, which had some differences with respect to the prototype as it existed at the time it had this paint scheme. And that paint scheme is available via multiple bingo photos of the 43022 on George Elwood's "Fallen Flags" site (rr-fallenflags.org), including a three-quarter view of the entire car from the brake wheel end and three detail photos.



A key difference is addressed on this new car: the lowered brake wheel. On the real 43022, the brackets from the previous mounting position of the brake wheel near the roofline are still present. That would be interesting to model. I noted in my review of the 037 00 030 in March 2008 that when the Southern stenciled "Super Cushion Service" on these cars they weren't kidding-- you can have a picnic on the extended draft gear! It reaches out, by my estimation, something like four feet from the end of the car, and that's not counting the coupler. Paper certainly would benefit from the protection of a cushion underframe such as this, but this is... Extreme Underframe. The MTL cushion underframe isn't quite that long; in fact, should they have attempted to depict the prototype's length, they also would have needed a different size plastic box in which to put the result!

Page 45 of the **Southern Railway Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has a photo of sister car SOU 43036. It's noted that these cars were built by Pullman-Standard in 1962. Equipment within individual cars in the series 43000 to 43049 varied. The Extreme Underframe is actually the P-S Hydroframe-60 product. The lettering is reversed from the

usual placement with the roadname and “Green Light” slogan to the right of the doors instead of to their left.

The cars’ dimensions actually reflect the Extreme Underframe going all the way back to the July 1963 ORER, so I’ll presume that they are original equipment. The “Gives a Green Light” slogan was introduced circa 1969 and was used until 1982 according to the RPI Website-- but the photo evidence shows that dropping that slogan didn’t mean immediately repainting the cars.

I’ll use the ORER entry for April 1984, which gives an inside length of 50 feet 6 inches and an outside length of 60 feet 10 inches-- hmm, that is a fair amount of extended draft gear per side. The rest of the data: inside height 10 feet 6 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, door opening 15 feet, capacity 4861 cubic feet and a varying poundage from 180,000 to 188,000. Illustrating the point in the **Color Guide** about varying equipment, there were 25 cars in the main series 43000 to 43049 and 22 in several subsets including twelve more precisely described as “Box, Cushion Underframe, Staggered Doors, DF Belt Rails, 50K” with AAR Designation XL. The other cars are either XL or XP. The July 1989 ORER showed 44 cars in lots of subgroups. The car count was 23 cars shown in the October 1996 Register under the Norfolk Southern listing. While one car was left in the October 2004 ORER, it’s probably more reasonable to call the ATP before that. The start of the ATP could be as early as the 1969 introduction of the “Green Light” slogan, but the U-1 dot puts the Strictly Speaking range beginning in 1978.

In addition to the above, the second number of the Canadian Pacific “TBOX” boxcar (**123 00 072, \$59.95, Reporting Marks CP 218312**) is was shown on the MTL website last month as available but is in the June Micro-News as coming mid this-month and on the MTL website with a June release date. UMTRR Coverage was in the October 2022 issue during the pre-order window.



*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 **June 30**.*



050 00 250, \$45.95.

Road Number: 316 (will be “SP 316” in website listings).

34 Foot Wood Caboose, Slant Cupola, Southern Pacific Safety Caboose.

Red (the SP’s “Daylight Red”) and aluminum (simulated stainless steel) on both ends and sides. Red roof (including running board), cupola, and smokejack. Aluminum painted trucks, end ladders and details. Gray (the

SP's "Lettering Gray") lettering on red, "Rio Grande Division Safety Caboose" and road number below cupola. Black lettering at bottom center, "This Caboose is a Reminder That Safety Is your Responsibility." Small black and white SP "sunset" herald at top right. Approximate Time Period: At least 1954 based on photo evidence. MTL artwork is preliminary, actual product may vary.

Boy, did I think I was going to have a tough time with this one. However, the first entry in a web search for the phrase "Rio Grande Division Safety Caboose" led directly to a discussion of this very car on the Espee group on groups.io. It seems that in December 2002, a manufacturer—the name of which was not disclosed to the group—had black and white photos of this car but not color ones, and was seeking clarification on what those paint colors might be. A query to the Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society was forwarded to the discussion group. The answer was provided in the thread by Jeff Cauthen, and it's transcribed above; basically, it's the Southern Pacific's "Golden State" scheme for its passenger trains. Interestingly, the first question I had upon seeing the MTL artwork was, hey, what color is that below the red?

Said unspecified manufacturer provided a black and white photo and caption from a book—I'm not sure which but I suspect it's one of the many SP-specific publications—that will suffice for our bingo. It's of the side of the car that isn't shown in the MTL artwork, and has the small SP "Sunset" herald at the top right, that is, the corner closer to the cupola. That would make each side a mirror image of sorts of each other. That's hard to describe in words but will be obvious with the finished product. It's noted in the caption, with a citation of the February 1955 issue of **Modern Railroads**, that "In 1954 crewmen with the worst safety record on the Southern Pacific's Rio Grande Division had to tow this caboose as a reminder of their failings." Yikes! I suppose I would be very careful! Hmm, George, I think that's the point?

Anyway, because the MTL 050 body style is based on the SP's own "Standard Design" CA/CA-1 caboose, I think we'll find that if the model isn't an exact match for the prototype, it's going to be very close. That would of course lead us to believe that the manufacturer in which posted this query online might just be one we all know located in Talent, Oregon... but that there are other models of this car in other scales and so MTL wouldn't have the only Inquiring Minds who Want To Know. Yeah, but I still think it was Micro-Trains...

The mention of 1954 in the caption gives us an "at least" Approximate Time Period. The Golden State paint scheme was first applied in 1953 to passenger cars assigned to that train by the SP and Rock Island, which jointly operated that service, so I doubt that this caboose would have received the paint it's to be modeled in before that. As for later than 1954? Well, also on the discussion thread, Brian Enhi, posted an undated photo of a later paint scheme on this same caboose. That scheme might make for a nice follow-up at some point from the Unnamed Manufacturer. If you know what I mean.

N SCALE REPRINTS:



053 00 063, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: WP 1404.

53 Foot Centerbeam Flat Car, Western Pacific.

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left of flat car and

“CENTERBEAM” across centerbeam. White on black COTS panel on placard on right of flat car. Approximate Time Period: 1977 (build date) to late 1980’s. Previous Releases: Road Numbers 1401 and 1403, September 2006. This item is expected to be available mid-month; I’ve seen it available in online listings as of “press time.”

When the virtual two pack of this car was released in 2006, we were approaching the thirtieth anniversary of the building of the specific centerbeam flat cars that were modeled by Micro-Trains. In that 1977 group of orders were cars for the Burlington Northern, Union Pacific, Milwaukee Road, and Western Pacific, all of which have been modeled by MTL. That “virtual two pack” for the WP represented fully twenty percent of the entire WP roster of ten cars, and with this reprint, we’re now up to thirty percent.

The ORER for April 1981 shows the short series 1401 to 1410 described as “Flat, Center Beam, Bulkheads” within Plate C dimensions with the AAR Classification of FBS. The inside length was 60 feet 8 inches, the inside height 11 feet 11 inches, outside length 68 feet, extreme height 15 feet 6 inches, and capacity a hefty 198,000 pounds (no cubic footage is given; well, it is still a flat car!). The extra weight allowance comes from the fact that for the capacity, centerbeams are pretty light in weight. I’m not terribly concerned about prototype fidelity here as we already know that the Thrall design was the prototype for the MTL body style; in other words, this should be as dead on as you can get for an N Scale model.

These ten cars made it into the merger of the WP into the Union Pacific, as they are in the July 1989 Register; however they are gone from the October 1991 ORER. That yields us a fairly precise Approximate Time Period.

Back in 2006, I didn’t yet have a copy of the **Western Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. That is in the Research Accumulation now, and on Page 68 there’s a shot of WP 1403, a bingo to one of the first two releases, as of October 1982. It’s confirmed that Thrall built these in November 1977. It’s also noted that the WP went back to “standard” bulkhead flatcars from Thrall after that. There is also a photo of WP 1406 on George Elwood’s Fallen Flags site (URL is www.rr-fallenflags.org); undated, but I think I can make out a reweigh date in the 1980’s, perhaps 1986. That large “Center Beam” in all caps really does shout out to the observer.

N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS: No single release items or pre-orders, but see N Scale Multi-Packs for the “Blue Comet” set.

N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:



032 44 590, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: NW 693378.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Plug Door, Norfolk and Western / former American Refrigerator Transit.

#2 in the Norfolk Southern Family Tree Series (pre-orders taken December 2022). Yellow sides, brown ends, aluminum roof. Black lettering including restenciled reporting marks on patch panel on left, “Car-Pac” on door, and “American Refrigerator Transit Co.” on right. Red,

white and blue shield device on left above reporting marks; blue, white and red Wabash “flag” herald and red and white Missouri Pacific “buzzsaw” herald on right above company name. Multicolor ACI label, yellow on black U-1 inspection “dot” and white on black double COTS panel at bottom right (COTS panel on yellow patch panel). Moderate to heavy weathering. Approximate Time Period: after 1973, or 1978 given U-1 “dot,” into the 1980s. Previous Releases: None. This item has a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers.

We can thank a rail baron, somewhat indirectly I suppose, for this particular entry in the Norfolk Southern family tree. American Refrigerator Transit was founded in 1881 by Jay Gould, who controlled the Missouri Pacific and Wabash, among other railroads, at the time. ART was established under the ownership of MP and Wabash and continued even after Gould lost control of those lines. In 1964, the Wabash was folded into the Norfolk and Western, and the N&W’s “hamburger” herald began to replace the Wabash “flag” herald. Obviously that hadn’t happened yet on this car. In 1973, the N&W sold its interest, leaving the MP as sole owner. Some of the ART cars, like this one, were leased back to the Norfolk and Western. What was left of ART was absorbed into the Union Pacific following its 1983 takeover of the MP, perhaps most visible through the UP’s use of the ARMN reporting marks.

From RailcarPhotos I get the impression that cars from the ART with WADX reporting marks flipped to N&W road numbers in the 693000s. There could have been other former ART cars moved over as well, but certainly the N&W was only interested in newer cars, not, say, ice cooled refrigerator cars—which were all out of the ART fleet by 1976 anyway. From several sources I see that this change to N&W reporting marks, with “Leased from ART” situated somewhere nearby on the car, appears to have coincided with the N&W’s pullout from ART. So the ATP for this car could start as early as 1973, however as usual the presence of the U-1 “dot” gives us a Strictly Speaking start of sometime after March 1978. The restenciling was limited to the reporting marks and lease information. Otherwise, the ART lettering remained largely intact, including the MP “buzzsaw” herald.

We go to RRPictureArchives for the bingo photo of this car, found in a train in Cajon, California in December 1979. If you count rivets, there are plenty to tabulate on this car. The car also has a straight bottom sill versus the tapered one on the MTL 032 body style.

The ORER for January 1978 shows the 693378 as part of 49 cars in the group N&W 693350 to 693399, with AAR Designation RBL and description "Refrigerator, Steel, Single Type Movable Bulkheads, Removable Side Fillers, Leased from American Refrigerator Transit Company" and these key dimensions: inside length 51 feet, inside width 9 feet 3 inches, inside height 9 feet 4 inches, outside length 57 feet, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 4452 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. The car count was 42 in the April 1984 Register, though 19 of the cars' descriptions were shortened to just "Refrigerator." And in the July 1987 ORER: yikes. The cars left aren't shown as leased from ART any more and are shown in individual listings. The 693378 was in its own line.

I'll note that RailcarPhotos has N&W 693478 repainted into the "runtogether" NW paint scheme of black and white as of September 1989. While it's not in the same prototype series it does suggest to me that the ART paint scheme was replaced sometime after the ART lease arrangement to the Norfolk and Western... whenever that was. So the ATP would be affected; I'll guess that was during the early to mid-1980s. Perhaps the book **American Refrigerator Transit** would be of help here, but that's not in the Research Accumulation at present.

In addition to the above, the following was announced on the Micro-Trains website and via the "E-Line" newsletter on June 15.



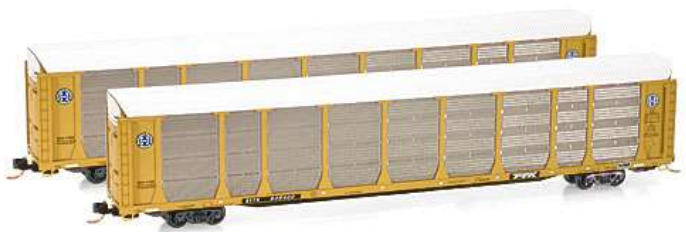
111 44 103, \$64.95.

Reporting Marks: ETTX 852068.

89 Foot Enclosed Auto Rack, TTX/Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

Flat car is yellow with white reporting marks on black panel on left, white "TTX" logo on black panel on right, white on black COTS panel on far right, and mostly black lettering otherwise. Racking is black with aluminum panels and aluminum roof, with blue, green and white BNSF circle cross herald on far left and far right. Orange conspicuity stripes at multiple points along flat car. Black excess height warning on white band at top of ends. Moderate to heavy weathering and rusting effects. Multicolor graffiti on one side of car and scrawl graffiti on other side of car. Approximate Time Period: 2011 to 2013 at least, based on photo evidence. Previous Releases (Unweathered): Road Numbers 908425 and 992046, February 2007 (though this is a "not a reprint" versus those, see below).

It's clearly—so to speak—an aluminum roof underneath that dirt and rust on this new Weathered Release, and that alone makes this a “not a reprint” versus the virtual two pack of ETTX/BNSF auto racks done in 2007 (official MTL image at right). There are lettering differences as well, including the trade of white reflectors for orange conspicuity stripes, which push the start of the Approximate Time Period for this release to after 2005.



And it may be later than that! I've occasionally noted here in these bytes that the racking on any given flat car can vary over time—and here's an example based on photos on RRPictureArchives. First, from August 2006, we have ETTX 852068 with a Norfolk Southern rack atop it. And so much for that “after 2005” ATP. It's not until September 2011 that there's photo evidence of the BNSF rack on this flat car—specifically, BNSF 32182, as racks do have their own road numbers. What happened between the first and second photos is not documented here, and of course makes things fair game for Rule #1 (“It's your railroad.”) There is a second photo of the car as of September 2013, with a bunch of, ahem, additional decoration, on the side we can see. What happened after that photo? Well, the BNSF circle cross had already been replaced by the “Wedge,” for one thing. Perhaps it's fair game for Rule #1 once again, if you're modeling The Present.

The ORER stash might help here. The October 2020 edition shows this car precisely, as part of a three car subset within the larger series ETTX 852037 to 852308 which has a total car count of 174. The car was listed with an inside length of 89 feet 4 inches, outside length of 93 feet 10 inches, and gross rail weight of 179,000 pounds. Its AAR Type Code V414 translates to a tri-level enclosed autorack.



181 44 320, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: RDG 17128.

50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Plug Door, No Running Board, Low Brake Wheel, Reading.

Green with mostly yellow lettering including large “RDG” and road number on left. Multicolor ACI label on left and white on black COTS panel at bottom right. Moderate weathering which is mostly rust effects. Approximate Time Period: 1973 to mid-1980s. Previous Releases: None.

The last of the paint schemes for the independent Reading Railroad prior to Conrail is represented here. As you can see there was a bit of an emphasis on the reporting marks. I see 1972 as the year in which this was adopted, and the date is April 20, 1973 for a bingo photo of the 17128 on Page 90 of the **Reading Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. (Interestingly, the actual title on the cover also substitutes “RDG” for “Reading.”) This class RBLB car was brand new looking when its picture was taken... so it's not going to be the reference image for the Micro-Trains model. I had no luck finding what photo I think MTL

used, so the one in the **Color Guide** will have to do. (I did visit the site www.readingmodeler.info which has some interesting stuff, including downloadable advertising images which many of you may find useful, whether you model the Reading or not.)

The ORER for July 1974 has a total of 49 out of a possible 50 cars in the series RDG 17100 to 17149. The main series is described as "Box, Steel, Cushion Underframe, Load Dividers, Side Fillers, 10 Foot Plug Doors" and has 24 of the 49 cars. Another 17 are described as simply "Box, Steel, Plug Doors" without the equipment listed in the main series. That aligns with the caption for the 17128 in the **Color Guide** which includes that 17 cars had this change made. Another seven cars still have the cushion underframes and the last of the group has all that's in the main series plus 40 pallets. Assuming that the 17128 isn't the missing car among the 50 possible, it's in the main series. The key dimensions are the same across all of the groups: inside length 50 feet 3 inches, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 9 feet 5 inches, outside length 56 feet 4 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 4359 cubic feet or 106,000 pounds.

Conrail assumed ownership of 48 of these cars according to the April 1976 ORER. All of the non-equipped cars were off the roster no later than the July 1980 Register, and those were gone between October 1986 and July 1987. Based on photos in the online archive of the Conrail Historical and Technical Society, it looks like at least a few of these cars did get restenciled into one or more Conrail groups, presumably from both the "RDG" scheme here and the previous Reading paint with large billboard roadname. For example, RDG 17137 became CR 364700 and was given Conrail class BR55B.



983 05 051, \$111.95, with Jewel Boxes.

993 05 051, \$99.95, with Foam Nest packaging.

Reporting Marks: BNSF 545129, 545293, 545404.

BNSF Weathered Three Pack.

Consists of three MTL 054 series 62 Foot Bulkhead Flat Cars. Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. The 545129 and 545404 have Cooper Black BNSF reporting marks and the 545293 has

gothic reporting marks; all three have gothic road number. White on black COTS panel right of center. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at seven points along side. Weathering includes decks and inside of bulkheads. Graffiti on sides and at least two of inside of bulkheads. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the present. Previous Releases: Technically none given MTL Catalog Number assignments, but Runner Pack #157 (993 00 157) with road numbers 545258, 545262, 545346, and 545349, September 2019 is very similar. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 054 44 400, 545129; 054 45 400, 545293; 054 46 400, 545404.

They're probably not reprints of Runner Pack #157 (official image at right); for one thing, these have all gothic reporting marks while two of the three pack this month have a mix of Cooper Black "BNSF" and gothic road number. But the story of that previous release can be leveraged for this commentary.



First, we'll once again note the nice job done on weathering the decks on this Weathered Set, and also point out that there's graffiti inside the bulkheads. That must have been an interesting process trick executed at the factory, considering that the bulkheads and flat car are a one piece body.

As with Runner Pack #157, these cars come from two former Burlington Northern orders from Thrall. The 545129 was within BNSF series 545113 to 545272, which was BN 621250 to 621449 built in 1975. The 545293 and 545404 were among BNSF 545273 to 545440, which were BN 621450 to 621649, built in 1976. Reaching back to the ORER for January 1978, we find that the BN placed both sets of these cars into a single series numbered 621250 to 621649, which had all 400 cars at the time. Here are the key dimensions: inside length 56 feet 8 inches, inside width 9 feet 4 inches, inside height 11 feet (measured at the bulkheads), outside length 66 feet, extreme height 14 feet 9 inches, and capacity 200,000 pounds.

RailcarPhotos.com has the 545129 as of June 2017, with a note that it was BN 621277 and that it was repainted at the former Santa Fe shops in Topeka, Kansas in November 1998. How's that for the start of an Exact Time Period... if you ignore the conspicuity stripes. The 545404 is on that site also, and also as of June 2017. It was BN 621608 and was repainted in June 2004. And we go over to RRPictureArchives for the 545293, found in May 2010 with the "matching" gothic reporting marks and road number... and graffiti on the inside of the bulkhead. One quibble here: the inside of the bulkheads is metal, not wood, while the Micro-Trains version is meant to represent wood. Will that be discernable at 1/160th actual size? I'll leave that to the modeler. The folks in Talent added the center white stripe to the inside though, nice touch there.

Back to the ORERs and jumping to the January 2006 edition, we have a bit of a mess. Let's just say that the BNSF didn't keep all of these cars in one neat series like predecessor Burlington Northern did. To get from BNSF 545113 to 545440 it takes 19 lines, of which 14 contain a single car, to get to a total car count of 54. In the January 2018 the car count has actually gone up to 113 cars, which is not what I would have expected. But it also takes 52 lines in the registration, including 42 which contain a single car. The 545293 and 545404 are specifically noted among these cars, and the 545129 could still be around in the "main" group 545113 to 545228, if you can call it that. Updating to the October 2020 ORER, the 545293 and 545404 are still shown and the 545129 could still be around as well. So "as late as the present" it is.

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS: All of the following are scheduled to be released mid-month:



983 02 215, \$195.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.
993 02 215, \$174.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.
Blue Comet Heavyweight Five-Pack.

UMTRR coverage was in the December 2022 issue.

The individual items are:

- 144 51 500, 3-2 Observation "Biela."
- 146 52 500, Diner "Giacobini."
- 147 53 500, Baggage Car "Barnard."
- 160 54 500, Single Window Coach "Tuttle."
- 160 55 500, Single Window Coach "Winnecke."

These are the first releases (or first and second for the Single Window Coaches) for each of the components of this set.

I can confirm that the next three multi-packs are available, based on online listings:

983 02 216, \$129.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.

993 02 216, \$114.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Southern Pacific "Hydra-Cushion" Four Pack.

UMTRR coverage was in the January 2023 issue.

The individual catalog and road numbers are: 033 51 200, 663018; 033 52 200, 663064; 033 53 200, 663093; 033 54 200, 663098. These are the first through fourth road numbers for this item, which hasn't been previously released.



983 02 218, \$121.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.
993 02 218, \$109.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.
Baltimore and Ohio Three Pack with Sherman Tank Load.

UMTRR coverage was in the January 2023 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 045 51 680, 8937; 045 52 680, 8943; 045 53 680, 8970. These are the first through third releases of this item, which hasn't been previously released. The Sherman Tanks are unassembled, undecorated multi-media kits.





983 02 219, \$121.95, with Jewel Case Packaging.
993 02 219, \$109.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.
New York Central Three Pack with Sherman Tank Load.

UMTRR coverage was in the January 2023 issue.

The individual catalog and road numbers are: 045 51 041, 499105, 045 52 041, 499109; 045 53 041, 499112. These are the sixth through eighth releases for this item though they are "Not A Reprints." The Sherman Tanks are unassembled, undecorated multi-media kits.

*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 **June 30**.*



Targeted Delivery November 2023:

983 00 217, \$134.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.

993 00 217, \$119.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Reporting Marks: C&O 158941 and 160103, B&O 187348, and WM 188820.

Chessie Hopper Four Car Runner Pack (Runner Pack #216).

Scheduled to consist of four MTL 108 series Three Bay Open Hoppers. Cars are black with mostly yellow lettering including Chessie System roadname at top left, reporting marks at left and large "Ches-C"

herald on right. White on black COTS panel at bottom right. Approximate Time Period: varies by car, but generally the late 1970s into the early 1990s. Previous Releases: See text. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

From CatWiki we have, "A group of cats is called a clowder if they seem to know one another." Well, these "cats" certainly do... although they're not all from the same litter. Let's take these cars in chronological order of their construction.

"Located just east of the massive coal marshaling yard at Russell, Kentucky, the Chesapeake & Ohio's Raceland Shops was... one of the largest railroad shops of its type in the world," says Randall K. Fields notes on Page 17 of the **Chessie System Color Guide to Freight Equipment**. The next few pages are a photo essay on the building of a Class H-48 open hopper in 1975. And the two C&O hoppers in this forthcoming four pack are H-48s. Page 20 of the **Color Guide**

has the bingo photo for C&O 158941, found in 1988. There's one difference between these cars and the MTL 108 body style, and also different from most prototype cars of this type: at the time there was a serious steel shortage, so the Chessie couldn't get full panels from which to construct the sides. They had to settle for two piece panels sold to them by Bethlehem Steel. A row of rivets horizontally across the center side reveals that distinction. How much of a quibble is that when reduced to N Scale? Well, we'll let the modeler decide. Meanwhile, there's a bingo photo of C&O 160103 photo, from July 1978, on RRPictureArchives.

The ORER for October 1976 shows two different groups in which these two cars are placed, though the dimensional data shown is identical: inside length 45 feet, outside length 48 feet 9 inches, extreme height 12 feet 3 inches, and capacity 3432 cubic feet or 190,000 pounds. There were 999 cars in the group 158000 to 158999 and 1000 cars in the group 160000 to 160999. And yes, the group in between were more hoppers, 159000 to 159999, and before that were even more hoppers, 157000 to 157999. Never mind a four or eight pack; MTL could do a hundred pack if they wanted. (I doubt that they'd want to.)

There were 990 and 993 cars in these groups in the January 1980 ORER. Skipping to the October 1996 Register, and the CSX Transportation listing, we find groups combined: 157000 to 158999 with a car count of 46 and 159000 to 160999 with a car count of 29. That's down to two and nine respectively in the January 2000 ORER. It's possible that some of these cars survived a bit longer with CSXT restenciling, as modeled by MTL in February (108 00 44x). Micro-Trains hasn't done this car with C&O lettering, though, so these two are unequivocally new releases.

After the H48s, the Raceland Shops built H-48As for the Western Maryland and Baltimore & Ohio. The H-48A cars differed from their predecessors in having single panel side sheets as was more typical for open hoppers. The B&O's share of the H-48A cars included the series 186000 to 187999, which includes the car that MTL will produce. The **Color Guide** has only WM cars for photo references, but they'll do to point out that the MTL 108 body style is in general alignment with the prototype. One small delta is the use of a ladder on the left end of the sides of the real H-48As versus very long grab irons on the Micro-Trains car. Photos of other B&O / Chessie System hoppers, and C&O ones for that matter, confirm that the ampersand in the reporting marks is split by the second rib from the left. It's correct, but it's a bit strange-looking. We have the bingo photo too: B&O 187348 was found in April 1987 in Warren, Ohio; that photo is on RRPictureArchives. It's got a new date of September 1978.

The January 1980 ORER shows a "change from previous issue" with respect to the group B&O 186000 to 187999—and there is no such series in the January 1978 Register, the previous issue in the Research Accumulation, further confirming the build date. These cars were also three bay 14 panel hoppers, 100 ton or 3432 cubic foot capacity, with a 45 foot inside length and 48 foot 9 inch outside length. This group was all the way down to just four cars as of July 1998.

Micro-Trains has done cars from this series before, as their Catalog 108 00 240. The 187114 (at right) was released in November 2013 with a coal load and the 186675 was done in May 2018 with a "hopper topper" which temporarily



converted the car to a covered hopper. This car looks like a reprint to me, but we'll see what catalog numbers MTL assigns when they are released.

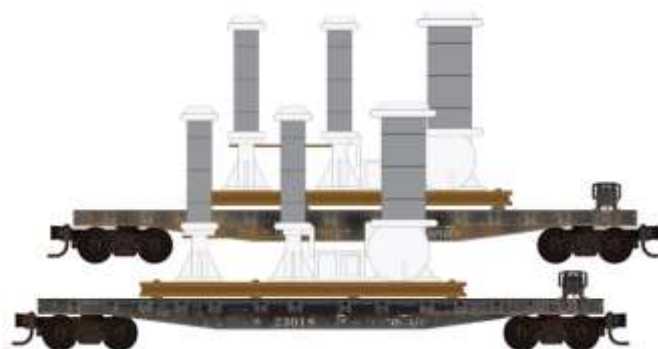
That brings to the Western Maryland entry. WM 188820 was part of the group numbered 188000 to 188999. According to the **WM Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Page 19, "During 1978 and 1979, as part of a freight car rebuilding program, Chessie re-built hoppers at its Raceland car shops. This series of cars was rated at one hundred tons with an inside length of forty-five feet." The example car pictured is WM 188123 as of October 1988, perhaps a future "April Fool" entry for Micro-Trains, as the reporting marks are "W&M" with an ampersand. Oops... Meanwhile, the bingo photo for the car MTL will produce, WM 188820, is available on Fallen Flags. It's dated December 18, 1983 and is in glorious black and white. The new date of either March or May 1978 hasn't yet been augmented with a reweigh date. There are images of other cars in the series on Fallen Flags and also on RRPictureArchives, including in the latter case one painted for CSX but retaining WM reporting marks... which I hope I remember should MTL do that car in the future.

In the July 1980 ORER, the groups 188000 to 188499 and 188500 to 188999 had a total car count of 987. The cars had identical dimensions. In the CSXT listing in the July 1989 ORER, there were 588 cars shown. That's down to 180 in April 1995 and just eight in January 2000.

MTL has done a Chessie/WM hopper before, but in a different number series, making this at best a "not a reprint": here's the official Micro-Trains image of Catalog Number 108150, Road Number 89862, released June 2004. This car was part of the series WM 89800 to 89993 as of the January 1985 ORER.



©2004 Micro-Trains Line Co



Targeted Delivery November 2023:

983 02 232, \$73.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.

993 02 232, \$64.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Reporting Marks: D&RGW 23018 and 23027.

D&RGW Weathered Two Pack with Power Load.

Scheduled to consist of four MTL 045 series

50 Foot Fishbelly Side Flat Cars. Cars are black with white lettering including reporting marks left of center and speed lettering roadname right of center. Moderate weathering, mostly dirt and mud. "Tall bushing insulator" loads included (multi-media kits, some assembly required). Approximate Time Period: 1956 (build date), strictly speaking to the late 1960s, or add ACI Label, COTS panel and U-1 wheel inspection "dot" as needed and go into the 1990s. Previous Releases: Technically none, see text. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Much earlier in my life, I had a bit of an obsession with power lines, including understanding how electricity got to our house from one of two generating stations within a few miles of my home in New Jersey, through high-voltage transmission lines to primary and secondary substations, then via power poles to in front of my house, where a 1950's era transformer stepped it down to the level useful for keeping the lights on, and operating model trains. If you think about it—and I did, quite a bit—the intricacies of the power grid in a densely populated area like mine was a major logistical and construction challenge. Making sure every electricity customer was properly served by a system that was efficient to build and maintain kept the power company busy. While I largely let go of that interest by the time I was in high school—there was this new venture called “Irwin’s Journal” by then—I still carefully consider how power lines would be strung on my N Scale layouts. Fortunately, however, I did not extend this out to “The Unofficial Large Electrical Insulator Release Report” which I don’t think would be of interest to many people!

Anyway, we have a pair of Rio Grande flat cars from the prototype series 23000 to 23099 which are scheduled to carry some of the Very Large Examples of electrical insulators. These are the ones you’re most likely to see at power plants, secured to high voltage lines, and installed at large primary substations. The higher the voltage, the larger these insulators need to be. According to the **Rio Grande Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Page 58, this series was built by American Car and Foundry in 1956. A photo of D&RGW 23034 as found in July 1991 is also on that page, illustrating the squeezing in of an ACI Label and double COTS panel just to the right of the Rio Grande speed lettering roadname.

It’s the January 1959 ORER where we pick up the series 23000 to 23099, described as “Flat, Steel Underframe” but with an FMS designation. This car falls into one of the more typical deltas between MTL flat cars and their prototypes, with the “inside length” a bit shorter than the real thing, which was 53 feet 6 inches, and the “outside length” a bit longer, at 54 feet 6 inches. Capacity was 100,000 pounds; cubic feet isn’t terribly relevant when dealing with flat cars. All 100 cars are present in the January 1959 Register, there are 99 in January 1964, and 98 in April 1970. In April 1981 the FMS is back to an FM designation, and the series is still at a healthy 87 cars. But in 1991, it’s down to 46, and just two remain in the October 1996 ORER.

I didn’t find bingo photos for the two cars that will be produced here, but I did find an confirmation of the paint scheme, which is a correction by Micro-Trains. A car from this prototype series, D&RGW 23015, was made by Kadec Micro-Trains in August 1975, so long ago that it originally carried Catalog Number 45108, prior to the change to five digit catalog numbers ending in zero (for Magne-Matic couplers), one (for Rapido couplers) or nine (for kits). A reprint, D&RGW 23019, was done in February 2001 with Catalog 43060; then another reprint, D&RGW 23022, was released in December 2012 with Catalog Number 043 00 060 (MTL image at right). Besides all of these having a side mounted brake wheel instead of an end mounted drop shaft brake wheel—which will still be true of the pending two pack, these cars were all painted brown with white lettering. This time, they’re going to be black, which is accurate according to a post on the groups.io venue



DRGW by Jim Eager – who is also the author of the **Rio Grande Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**. He noted back in 2001 that “we have the ACF paint specs on this group” – and the 23000s were painted “very dirty black, with silver lettering.” Silver lettering? That’s interesting, and probably hard to discern versus white under the weathering. At any rate, we will call these new releases although the catalog number from MTL upon release might flip these to “not a reprint” status.



Targeted Delivery November 2023:

983 02 233, \$121.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.

993 02 233, \$109.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Reporting Marks: DRRV 1947, 1775 and 2009 (Dover and Rockaway River Railroad). Toys For Tots Three Pack.

Scheduled to consist of two MTL 027 series 50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcars with Plug Door and Cushion Underframe and one MTL 070 series 51 Foot Mechanical Refrigerator with Plug Door and Cushion Underframe and without Running Board.

- DRRV 1947 is painted in military camouflage of white, shades of gray and black with yellow-orange lettering including reporting marks on left. Multicolor “Operation Toy Train” placard on left and multicolor “Toys for Tots” placard on right (to be installed by modeler). Yellow-orange horizontal conspicuity stripes along bottom of side.
- DRRV 1775 is painted in military camouflage of brown, shades of green and black with yellow-orange lettering including reporting marks on left. Multicolor “Toys For Tots” placard on left and multicolor United States Marine Corps / “Toys for Tots” placard on right (to be installed by modeler). Yellow-orange horizontal conspicuity stripes along bottom of side.
- DRRV 2009 has sides in black on top and blue on bottom separated by a red stripe, blue door, black ends, and aluminum roof. White lettering including reporting marks on left. Multicolor “Operation Toy Train” placard on left, multicolor teddy bear in United States Marines dress uniform placard on door, and red, blue and white “Toys For Tots” placard on right (to be installed by modeler). Yellow-orange horizontal conspicuity stripes along bottom of side.

Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Before we go any farther, **yes**, this is in the right category! These are based on prototype cars used in a special train that rides the rails in Northern New Jersey in December as part of “Operation Toy Train.” I recognized the reporting marks DRRV as belonging to the Dover and Rockaway River Railroad, an enterprise formed in 2017 that operates over three lines owned by Morris County (and thus saved from abandonment by Conrail). The DRRV is one

component of Chesapeake and Delaware, LLC, whose best-known road is the Black River and Western, the freight portion of a mostly tourist operation out of Ringoes, New Jersey, near Flemington. (A trust now operates the tourist passenger service.)

The prototypes for the three cars in this upcoming pack are documented on RRPictureArchives. DRRV 1775 was originally a Pennsylvania Railroad X58 boxcar, PRR 118434, built in 1965. It went into Conrail, was sold to the Morristown and Erie (the operator of the three lines before DRRV), and then went to the DRRV. Photographs from December 2018 show it in service for toy collection. The 1947 is the former Minnesota, Dakota and Western 8061, with a stint as NADX 8206 before going to the DRRV. A photo from October 2018 shows the car still in MD&W paint with spray-painted DRRV reporting marks, but by December 2019 it's in the camouflage scheme in service for Operation Toy Train. And the 2009, so numbered because that was the first year of "Operation Toy Train," was built for the Bangor and Aroostook as its 305, built in 1964 by Pacific Car and Foundry, then was RAHX 91101 and MCVX 91101, the latter part of the Firefighters Education and Training Foundation where it was used as a training car. Generally speaking, the MTL models are stand-ins for the real thing, though if the 2009 comes without a running board that will be a first for the 070 body style.

The website www.operationtoytrain.org has more on the equipment and on the drive itself. "Every year since 2009 (except for 2020), special trains have operated on the first two weekends of December in northern New Jersey and southern New York to collect donated toys for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation." The schedule for 2023 hasn't yet been posted, but if you're in the area, it's a good cause. MTL is getting into the spirit as well, donating 10 percent of the proceeds to the Toys for Tots Foundation.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: Happy Father's Day...



102 00 843, \$28.95.

60 Foot Excess Height Double Plug Door Boxcar, Rivet Sides, Father's Day 2023.

Blue sides, black ends and roof. Multicolor graphics different on each side. One side has Micro-Mouse in railroad engineer outfit on left and Micro-Mouse Junior in t-shirt and jeans on right, with thought balloon containing representation of Santa Fe FT-A diesel locomotive in center. Other side has black lettering outlined in white: "Happy

Father's Day!" on left and "2023" on right, with Micro-Mouse and Micro-Mouse Junior in center. This item is not on Micro-Trains Dealer Standing Orders.

"You know, I'm into heavy metal too!" says Micro-Mouse to his son. "Really?" asks Micro-Mouse Junior, who's holding a black and yellow electric guitar – which, despite the decoration, is not made of cheese. (Well, I hope not.) With respect to the term "Heavy Metal," however, I

do not think Micro-Mouse Junior means what Micro-Mouse Senior thinks it means. (Shout out to **The Princess Bride** right there.) Good thing Junior isn't into Hip-Hop; I'm not sure what Senior would put in the thought balloon for that...

Anyway, Father's Day got its start in 1910 with a relatively small celebration in Spokane, Washington. It was the idea of one Sonora Louise Smart, who helped to raise the other children in the family with her father after her mother died in childbirth when Sonora was sixteen. The Wikipedians tell us that "while hearing a church sermon about the newly recognized Mother's Day at Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Sonora felt strongly that fatherhood needed recognition as well. She approached the Spokane Ministerial Alliance and suggested her own father's birthday, of June 5, as the day of honor for fathers. The Alliance chose the third Sunday in June instead."

The idea didn't catch on for a while. It wasn't until 1966 when President Lyndon Johnson signed a proclamation saying that we look to fathers to "provide the strength and stability which characterize the successful family." In 1972, President Nixon made the day a national holiday. Hmm, I don't get that day off... oh, wait, it's the Third Sunday in June.

National Public Radio compiled a few facts—and bad jokes—about fathers in 2021. Among the ones I found most interesting is that Sonora Louise Smart was part of a small minority of families with single fathers, which still is a small proportion, 2 million estimated out of 24 million fathers with children under the age of 18, according to the Census Bureau.



In addition to the above, **Car #4 in the "War of the Worlds"** (039 00 272, \$26.95) has been released. This car, USA 1898, features the graphic "A Heat Ray Turns Men To Fire." UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue.

Z SCALE RELEASES: In the "I'm Not Sure I Understand This" category, MTL's June Short Line and the MTL website have the **Burlington Northern X-Post Plug Door Boxcars** (511 00 123, BN 321656, and 511 00 124, BN 321583, **\$29.95 each**) as "new" this month... though the same cars were shown as available mid-December. Pre-orders were taken for these cars in August 2022. I suppose I shouldn't complain, as there are official MTL images of the two cars this time.



MTL surprised us—well, at least me—with the releases of a pair of Union Pacific F7As last month. (Which are already sold out, as I expected.) This month, they move east with another pair of diesels...



980 01 021 and 980 01 022, \$119.95 each.

Road Numbers: 9832 and 9835.

F7 Powered Diesel Locomotives, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Tuscan with yellow striping (including on the nose on the A units). Yellow lettering including roadname along most of side. Road number below cab on A units and in small lettering at rear of all units. Small red and yellow keystone herald on sides and on nose of A-units. White on black numberboards on the A units. Approximate Time Period: 1952 to late 1960s in general. Previous Releases:

Road Number 9508, March 1986; Road Number 9504, July 1997; Road Numbers 9832 and 9835 (the same numbers as this release), September 2017. The first two releases had Catalog Number 14002 and were available with Magne-Matic or Marklin couplers.

The website broadway.pennsyrr.com, which I cited in September 2017, is no longer available. But I still have the data point that the two road numbers MTL released then were confirmed as being in Tuscan Red, as opposed to the “can’t tell it from Black” Brunswick Green, also known as Dark Green Locomotive Enamel. However, they were also FP7s, not F7s. All of these were built in 1952. The prototype FP7s were four feet longer than the F7s to allow for the placement of a steam generator. This made them available for passenger service, which means that they would be good in front of the Pennsylvania Railroad passenger equipment also released by Micro-Trains. Four feet reduced to Z Scale’s 1:220 proportion is a bit over 0.2 actual inch, if you’re keeping score. It appears that these units were included in the Penn Central merger, though passenger service itself would be ceded to Amtrak not much later. If you already have these units from the 2017 release, the website “The Diesel Shop” (at www.thedieselshop.us) has the Pennsy’s FP7s shown as numbered from 9832 to 9879A. If you’d like to change the road numbers to true F7s, the available choices are 9764 to 9819 and 9872 to 9879. I would advise checking to see if the units were in Tuscan Red before renumbering. I can confirm that the 9834 was in that paint based on a photo on Railpictures.net, and also offer a shot of 9832 in Tuscan Red on the Japanese version of Pinterest.

New this month is a Special Edition:

548 00 160, \$28.95.

51 Foot 51 Foot Mechanical Refrigerator Car, Rib Sides, Father’s Day 2023.

Blue sides, black ends and roof. Multicolor graphics different on each side. One side has Micro-Mouse in railroad engineer outfit on left and Micro-Mouse Junior in t-shirt and jeans on

right, with thought balloon containing representation of Santa Fe FT-A diesel locomotive in center. Other side has black lettering outlined in white: "Happy Father's Day!" on left and "2023" on right, with Micro-Mouse and Micro-Mouse Junior in center. This item is not on Micro-Trains Dealer Standing Orders.

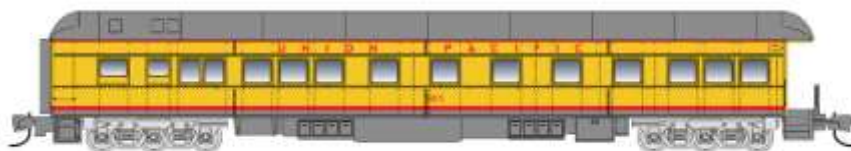
In the June Micro-News and on the MTL website, the N Scale version, which is on the 102 body style, was used for representation, which is why I don't have an image here. This car is available as of "press time" and at least one listing has photos of this Z Scale car (but I don't believe in, ahem, "appropriation" of someone else's images). Please see the commentary on the N Scale version above.

Also, three 83 Foot Modernized Business Cars announced for pre-orders in November 2022 are scheduled to be available mid-month:

556 00 021, \$29.95, is Pennsylvania Railroad Road Number 180, "Philadelphia."



556 00 061, \$30.95, is Union Pacific Road Number 103.



556 00 240, \$29.95, is Norfolk and Western Road Number 700, "Lafayette."



In addition, Car #4 in the "War of the Worlds" (518 00 842, \$26.95) has been released. This car, USA 1898, features the graphic "A Heat Ray Turns Men To Fire." UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue.

Z SCALE PRE-ORDERS: *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 **June 30**.*



Targeted Delivery 4th Quarter 2023:

524 00 043 and 524 00 044, \$23.95 each.

Reporting Marks: BN 630815 and 630850.

60 Foot Flat Cars, Burlington Northern.

Cascade green with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and roadname in center. White on black COTS panel at far right. White simulated reflective rectangles at eight points along car. Approximate Time Period: early 1970s to mid-1990s in revenue service, but to at least 2012 in company service. Previous Releases: Road Numbers 630843 and 630849, July 2008. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Only the 043 release is shown for illustration.

The series BN 630800 to 630849, which includes these two cars and the two previous road numbers, was from the CB&Q series 94000 to 94049 which was built in the Burlington's Havelock shops in 1956. Back in 2008 I traced the movement of these cars from the CB&Q series to the BN series, which was gradual. For example, the July 1974 ORER shows both the original Burlington series 94000 to 94049 with a total of 41 cars, and the BN series 630800 to 630849 with just seven cars. In the April 1981 Register, there were twenty cars in the BN series and twenty-five remaining in the CB&Q series. And in October 1986, there were just two CB&Q cars left, but the BN series was also down, to sixteen cars. Five of those BN cars were in service as of 1991, and three were listed under the Burlington Northern Santa Fe in the January 2000 Equipment Register. That's after the "forty year rule" typically in place for the service life of a revenue freight car at the time.

Here are the key dimensions: inside length 60 feet, inside width 9 feet 1 inch, outside length 66 feet 7 inches, extreme height 4 feet 9 inches, capacity 154,000 pounds. Many of these cars were equipped with tie downs. When marked for the CB&Q, cars with tie downs were given the additional notation "Caterpillar Service," which I assume to be the heavy equipment manufacturer, not the predecessors to butterflies.

When the first two numbers of this car were released, I got nowhere on the bingo photos. This time one came right up: BN 630815 as of August 2012. That's 56 years after the build date. It's possible that the forty year rule was sidestepped by a rebuild of some sort or the use of the cars on BN or BNSF rails only. The 630815 had tie plates and assorted junk scattered about so perhaps company service is the explanation here.



Targeted Delivery 4th Quarter 2023:

524 00 161 and 524 00 162, \$23.95 each.

Reporting Marks: ATSF 95329 and 95330.

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

Brown (see text) with white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. White simulated reflective rectangles at seven points along side. Approximate Time Period: early 1980s (based on paint scheme) to mid-decade of the 2000s as painted. Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Only the 161 release is shown for illustration.

According to RailcarPhotos.com, the Santa Fe built these flat cars, series ATSF 95314 to 95387, in 1967 at their Topeka Shops. They belonged to the Santa Fe class FT-58. The ORER for October 1969 has the series of the 74 cars described as "Flat, Shock Control, Roller Bearing, Farm Equipment" with AAR Designation FMS and these dimensions: inside length 60 feet, outside length 67 feet 2 inches, extreme height 5 feet 5 inches, and capacity 140,000 pounds. What we now call a hashtag appears, which "Denotes large cars within Plate C Dimensions." There were 74 cars at the time. As of the April 1997 Register, the total car count of 61 was in a number of subsets. The January 2006 ORER shows 22 cars in a slightly different series, ATSF 95312 to 95386, under the BNSF Railway registration. They're not listed in the January 2011 ORER.

The paint scheme shown on the MTL artwork is likely not "as delivered" since the Santa Fe was still using Railroad Roman for its reporting marks. One source has the switch to the Gothic typeface as of 1982; we'll take that for the start of the Approximate Time Period. An example of the previous paint scheme is on RRPictureArchives; ATSF 95368 was in Cajon, California in August 1981 carrying, guess what, farm equipment. We have two bingo photos of the 95329 in the paint scheme MTL is planning: and on RailcarPhotos in July 2006, and on RRPictureArchives in April 2009. The latter shot is from overhead and shows both the extended draft gear and the rather beaten up wood deck, which has a center portion running the length of the car. Also on RailcarPhotos is sister car ATSF 95384 as of September 2016, which has both conspicuity stripes and "MW" stenciled to the right of the road number. It's carrying what looks like two parts of a concrete bridge deck, which I suppose could be for use by the railroad. The year 2016 would be past the "forty year rule" for revenue equipment, as evidence by the series gone from the January 2011 ORER, but as with the Burlington Northern car just above, that doesn't apply to company service.

One thing about that paint scheme, though: the photos show cars that look a lot more brown than what I see as more like purple in the MTL artwork. "Actual product may vary..." The appearance of these cars from a straight-on side view does look different from the MTL 524 body style, however, when reduced to 1:220 proportion the ability to discern this is best left to the modeler.



Targeted Delivery 4th Quarter 2023:

524 00 171 and 524 00 172, \$23.95 each.

Reporting Marks: BNSF 584952 and 598959.

60 Foot Flat Cars, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF Railway).

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. White simulated reflective rectangles at seven points along side. Approximate Time Period: decade of the 2000s into the decade of the 2010s (add conspicuity stripes after 2005). Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Only the 171 release is shown for illustration.

And here's the reason why the Santa Fe cars described just above came off the roster: the series ATSF 95314 to 95387 became the BNSF series 584943 to 585001. Well, some of them, anyway. On RailcarPhotos.com, which has this succession information, there's a shot of sister car 584971 carrying, guess what, farm equipment. That image was taken in October 2006. Also from 2006 and on RRPictureArchives are bingo photos for the two road numbers MTL will release. The 584952 was loaded with farm equipment in February and unloaded in August; the 584959 was loaded with one farm tractor and some very large tires in May. No conspicuity stripes on these cars yet. The mixed reporting marks of Cooper Black BNSF initials and gothic road number are quite apparent. The Santa Fe class FT-58 was retained here.

Considering how much rolling stock had to be relettered, it's not surprising that just two cars had been shifted from the ATSF series to the start of the BNSF series, 584975 to 584982. Can we surmise that those were the numbers of the two flat cars restenciled? By the January 2000 Register, the full series 584943 to 585001 had a car count of 34. That was down to 11 total cars in January 2011, ten in April 2013, and eight in January 2018, before not being in the January 2020 Register. Sometime during that period, I'd expect that conspicuity stripes would have been added to the remaining roster. And as with the ATSF cars, some of these might yet remain in company service.



Targeted Delivery 4th Quarter 2023:

524 00 181 and 524 00 182, \$23.95 each.

Reporting Marks: NS 101138 and 101142.

60 Foot Flat Cars, Norfolk Southern.

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. Yellow conspicuity stripes at six points along side. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to early decade of the 2010s. Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Only the 181 release is shown for illustration.

The January 2006 ORER, the first in the Research Accumulation following the mandate for use of conspicuity stripes, shows the Norfolk Southern series 101100 to 101188 with just six cars. These were a mix of FM and FMS designations and had an inside length of 60 feet and a gross rail weight of 220,000 pounds. The car count is down to four in the January 2011 Register and just one in the October 2014 ORER. Not much to go on there. There's not much in ORERs from before the start of conspicuity stripes either: The April 1995 ORER has only two cars, 101100 and 101101, and it looks like the series 101100 to 101188 never gets above six total cars. No wonder I couldn't find any bingo photos. (This does **not** mean that MTL doesn't have them.)

In fact, I'm happy to have any photos of the series at all, which are available. NS 101101 was found in September 2004 without stripes; that image is on Fallen Flags. We get a good look at the side and it appears to be a pretty good match to the MTL 524 body style. The wood deck doesn't go all the way to the ends, and there are 14 stake pockets, both aligning with the forthcoming model. And on RRPictureArchives there are shots of the 101103, 101104, 101105, and 101106, taken as late as 2008 and all showing the cars with conspicuity stripes. All four were former Southern Railway cars, the series 152100 to 152199 built by United American Car in late 1981 according to RailcarPhotos.com. These four cars later received Norfolk Southern company service road numbers in the 905000s.



Targeted Delivery 4th Quarter 2023:

524 00 191 and 524 00 192, \$23.95 each.

Reporting Marks: OTTX 90057 and 90058.

60 Foot Flat Cars, TTX (Trailer Train).

Yellow with white reporting marks on black panel on left and white 1991 version TTX logo on black panel on right. Black lettering otherwise. White on black COTS panel on right. Orange conspicuity stripes at six points along side. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to early decade of the 2010s. Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Only the 181 release is shown for illustration.

Hey, more farm equipment! That's what was atop OTTX 90057 in April 2005 in Elkhart, Indiana, in a photo posted to RRPictureArchives. There's a shot there from January 2007, with the 90057 without a load. The 90058 is on that site also, as of April 2012, with, guess what, farm equipment. (Anyone thinking about offering some in Z Scale as loads for these 60 foot cars at this point?) In July 2013, the 90058 was found empty, and in a circle of sorts, that was back in Elkhart, Indiana. Photos of the unloaded cars show a deck with sectioning down the center, but I can't get more specific than that. Have a look online and see what you think. The cars also have lever brakes which differs from the vertical brake staff on the MTL 524 body style.

According to RailcarPhotos.com, the series OTTX 90000 to 90209 previously carried the QTTX reporting marks. The cars were built by Pullman-Standard in late 1964 and given the Trailer

Train class F60BH. Just when the reporting marks were changed would be the marker for the start of the Approximate Time Period, except that conspicuity stripes on the artwork indicate that this won't matter unless the reporting mark switch happened later than the 2005 start of the application of said stripes.

And... yes, the OTTX series is in place in the January 2006 ORER, and it's a lot larger: 90000 to 97099, which could hold 7100 cars, but has a more modest car count of 1316. Of these, it was noted that the 1147 in the main series could carry 90 percent of their load limit over a centered 14 feet. You know, for that really heavy farm equipment. The inside length of these cars was 60 feet, outside length 64 feet 10 inches, and gross rail weight 220,000 pounds. Jumping to the October 2020 ORER, there were just 42 cars left in the series. Probably not enough to get us to The Present, particularly considering the change in TTX logo from the white on black to the red on yellow in 2008. If you'd like to ignore the conspicuity stripes, the October 1991 ORER showed 1682 cars in the same OTTX main series, capacity 145,000 pounds, and another 232 in a subset with capacity of 155,000 pounds. That's the earliest that the TTX logo on the car as rendered by Micro-Trains would have appeared.



Targeted Delivery 4th Quarter 2023:

524 00 201 and 524 00 202, \$23.95 each.

Reporting Marks: UP 52033 and 52058.

60 Foot Flat Cars, Union Pacific.

Brown with white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. Yellow conspicuity stripes at seven points along side (double stripes on left in MTL rendering). Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes into the decade of the 2010s. Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. Only the 201 release is shown for illustration.

In both March 2009 and April 2015, UP 52033 was found in the UP's North Yard in Denver, Colorado. It had already been reclassified into work service with a designation of MWF. What looks like chains are visible on the car. Hopping back to the last day of 2006, the 52033 is called out as being support for the "spreader" — the "spreader" being the first piece of equipment in the consist, followed by two locomotives and some assorted other MOW equipment. The flat car is at the end, with what looks like a large earth-mover of some sort. There's no way to read the reporting marks of the flat car so we'll take the photographer's word on it. These photos are all on RRPictureArchives. Also on RRPictureArchives is a single photo of the 52058, the other of the virtual two pack here; that image is from September 2022 and shows restenciled reporting marks and a really worn deck. The vertical brake staff is also visible here.

RailcarPhotos has an image of sister car UP 52145 with what is without question a large earth-mover. The paint scheme is about the same as the MTL artwork. Not the same as the MTL artwork is UP 52039, found in yellow with red "Cushioned Load" lettering in March 1993. The

presence of conspicuity stripes once again helps us set the start of the Approximate Time Period even though the UP's "synthetic red" paint could have been applied to the 52099 prior to the mandate for reflectors.

The Union Pacific's own Albina Shops built these cars in 1975, the UP's class F-100-8 with road numbers 52000 to 52099, again according to RailcarPhotos. Although it's way before the ATP for these cars, the October 1976 ORER shows this group as a "Change From Previous Issue" and no car count yet. They were described as "Flat, Cushioned Underframe, Tie-Downs, (Agricultural Implements), Assigned Service" with AAR Designation FMS, an inside length of 62 feet, outside length 66 feet 4 inches, and capacity 186,000 pounds—not exactly the 100 tons implied by the assigned class. (The "100" in "F-100-8" should indicate 100 tons or 200,000 pounds.)

Jumping to the January 2006 Register, we find 25 cars still in assigned service for Agricultural Implements and another nine simply described as "Flat." The counts were down to 22 and 7 in the January 2011 ORER and 20 and 7 in the January 2018 ORER, then 13 and 4 in the October 2020 ORER. Although I don't think a "to present" is warranted here, Rule #1 ("It's your railroad") could certainly be invoked.

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: The Green Veneer Lumber Load that fits inside the MTL fifty foot double door boxcars—if you remove the double doors from one side first, that is—is available as a standalone item. One MTL image shows it installed in the BNSF Family Tree Series Car #3 Great Northern/BN boxcar—with the double doors removed from one side—but we'll go with the close-up image here. (Freight car not included!) Catalog Number 499 45 009 has an MSRP of \$9.95. Assembly required.



There was lots of fun in Reno at the National N Scale Convention, according to the UMTRR Spy Network, but not much new news from the Micro-Trains Booth. The target for the initial release of the General American 65 Foot Mill Gondola was still a few months out. Next year's gathering heads back East, to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Hmm, that's within comfortable driving distance of UMTRR HQ, and should bring in lots of people given its proximity to both New York and Philadelphia, oh, and that state I'm from between those two cities also. Meanwhile, the NSCS Banquet Car—given by Micro-Trains as a gift to all attendees of the banquet which closes the convention (well, except for the Manufacturer's Breakfast the next morning!) was a real throwback: an MTL 061 body style 50 Foot Composite Gondola with Straight Sides and Fixed Ends! It was decorated for the Virginia and Truckee. There hasn't been a regular run on that body style since March 2002! Does that mean we'll see another one at some point soon? And what's the over/under on the first time we see a Banquet Car on eBay?

DISCONTINUED ALERT: Leading off the bye-bye board this month is last month's N Scale Katy stock car (035 00 340)—not what I would have expected to be the first item outta here.

Well, that's just in terms of catalog number order. Also gone from May items is the Jewel Box version of the Wabash Cannonball Heavyweight Five Pack (983 02 211) and both packaging options for the Pennsylvania Railroad Flat Car Three Pack with Sherman Tanks (983/993 02 217). From previous months of 2023, the Rogue Valley Wine Company three dome tank car (066 50 180, February) is drained, and the Frisco/BN caboose, also known as BNSF Family Tree Series #5 (100 44 580, January) has left the station. Both versions of the DODX Abrams Three Pack (983/993 02 214, April) are no longer showing on the MTL website, which means to me that they get the Dreaded 'D' on the UMTRR Release Table.

Backing up to 2022, these N Scale releases have left the building: the CB&Q single sheathed boxcar (028 00 270, August), the second number of the BNSF Covered Hopper (099 00 352, November), the Canadian National Weathered Boxcar Two Pack in both versions (983 and 993 05 017, August) and, based on their having been removed from the MTL website, **all** of the Medal of Honor boxcars (101 00 760 through 101 00 773, June and November). That's as far back as we need to go for N Scale items.

In Z Scale, the Union Pacific Sleeper reprint (550 00 011, March 2023) has left the station, and the surprise reprint of two Union Pacific F7 diesels from just last month has also sold out, which is not a surprise to me (980 01 01x). The rest of the outs in 1:220 size include the first number of the Southern Pacific stock car (520 00 211, May 2022), both numbers of the New York Central/Peoria and Eastern boxcar (505 00 44x, September 2021), and the Mid-West Catsup refrigerator car (518 00 780, September 2019).

A general comment on the bye-bye board: while the yearly release tables which include what's available and what's discontinued are up to date including this month's Dreaded 'D' tags, I have not caught up with the other tables on the UMTRR Website, including the Month-By-Month, Runner Packs and Weathered Packs. I'll get there... I hope...

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: For you Southern Pacific fans... and just plain railroad history fans... it was announced by Scott Inman on the Espee at groups.io discussion venue that "A project to offer digital copies of the **Southern Pacific Bulletin**, which was years in the making, has come to fruition thanks to the efforts of the California State Railroad Museum (CSRM). Each issue of the company's internal periodical is available through California Revealed and the Internet Archive. CSRM has released a guide to the collection with links to each issue. Each issue is OCR readable, allowing users to search the text from the PDF files. The only downside is that later issues published in color were scanned in grayscale, but at least the information is available and searchable. The Bulletin offers the best insight into company information, initiatives, and employee advancements/retirements between the period of 1913 to 1996.

The list is here: www.californiarailroad.museum/assets/downloads/pdf/Southern-Pacific-Bulletin-Guide.pdf . This should be fun! I've already checked the Bulletin issue closest to the Approximate Time Period of my home layout, and what do you know, there's a photo of an SP Hydra-Cushion boxcar! Which is how this fits into the Incremental Information...

Speaking of cushioned underframes, there was a question about the competing “Hydroframe” product over on the MFCL (Modern Freight Cars List) at groups.io discussion venue. Here’s the answer, from Dick Dawson who was employed in the railroad industry for many years: “Hydroframe-40 refers to sliding sill travel of 20 inch travel in each direction from center for a total travel of 40 inches from extreme travel in one direction to extreme travel in the opposite direction. The ‘40’ does not refer to the location of any particular part of the car relative to another.” This question was asked in the context of “how far out should the draft gear be for a given model,” by the way.

I’m a bit behind on magazines — as usual — but note that the June 2023 issue of **Railroad Model Craftsman** contains a review of the MTL N Scale Southern Pacific Air Repeater Two Pack (993 / 983 02 207, \$64.95 / \$73.95). I won’t “repeat” everything said there (sorry) but all in all, reviewer Harry K. Wong liked it. Both versions of the pack were available at “press time.”

I noticed an eBay listing for the **Grain Storage Hopper Kit (499 45 004)** released last month... and at least that one example has graffiti on one side of the covered hopper.

OOPS PATROL: It didn’t take long to notice that I copied and pasted but didn’t change the road number of the third car (at right) in the Conrail Weathered Three Pack from last month (983/ 993 05 041). It’s **229938**, not **160005**.



Speaking of copy, paste, forget to edit, I did just that with the Z Scale Lightweight Baggage Cars released last month. The Union Pacific is 553 00 011 and the Norfolk and Western is 553 00 240.

I mistype, or fail to copy/paste/edit catalog numbers all the time, but it’s not every issue that I get a **price** wrong. I did for two months straight for the Foam Nest version of Runner Pack #200 of four Conrail/NYC (CSX) gondolas, though. For the record, 993 00 200 is **\$104.95** MSRP, not \$109.95.

FINALLY, A GUEST COMMENTARY ON SHERMAN TANK HISTORY: Long time UMTRR Gang Member and Tulsa Tourist Guide Richard Fisher (during my one and only trip there, he showed me around town including a view of one of the original sections of the famous Route 66) has a special treat to close out this month’s issue: information on the Sherman Tanks which have been included with the N Scale PRR, B&O and NYC flat car three packs last month and this month. Richard cites “The Sherman Bible,” a book titled **The Sherman Design and Development**, for the following information.

“Here is a list of the Factories producing M4, M4A1, M4A2, M4A3 and M4A4 Shermans: Alco (American Locomotive Company), Baldwin Locomotive Works, Chrysler Defense Arsenal, Ford Motor Company, Federal Machine and Welder Company, Fisher Tank Arsenal, Lima Locomotive Works, Pacific Car and Foundry, Pressed Steel Car Company, and Pullman-Standard.

"The models here are Ford Manufactured M4A3 Dry Stowage. They have the early small hatch hull from March 1943 with the early non split rear engine deck Turret (D50878 43-4) with cheek armor on the front right. This compensated for one inch of armor milled out from the inside to make room for the turret traversing gear. The casting molds were later modified to bring the turret back up to the required three inches."

"This would make them available for delivery starting in late May/June. Tanks were shipped from the factories by rail to Ordinance Depots. This is what the Micro Train sets represent.

"Tanks were stored until a delivery order was received. At that point the tanks were cleaned, checked and Government free items were added. The tanks then went to preservation and packing.

"Tanks shipped from factories rarely had national insignia. The only markings carried were the vehicles registration number. Insignias was added at the depots prior to preservation or not. Depending on the Theatre of operation, marking would vary greatly, in many instances the crews blacked out the stars or covered them with mud.

"Most people do not know what the M4 nomenclature means. So, here you go.

M-4: Welded hull, Continental Radial engine.

M-4 A1: Cast hull, Continental Radial engine.

M-4 A2: Welded hull GM 4046 Diesel

M-4 A3: Ford GAA V-8 Can also be M-4 A1 (the A3 references the prime mover)

M-4 A4: Chrysler Multi bank engine. These were used state side for training and were the primary Lend lease tank for Great Britain and China."

Thanks, Richard! And please remember, UMTRR HQ is always happy to receive for Incremental Information on any Kadec/Micro-Trains release, current or past. I'm happy to credit your contribution unless you ask me not to.

Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers, George

[Legalese: You've received this because you've requested a UMTRR e-mail subscription. If there's been some mistake, please let me know via e-mail at umtrr@irwinsjournal.com, including "UMTRR" in the subject line. You may also reply to this e-mail, but PLEASE delete attachments and other text first. All information contained herein is supplied "as is" and no warranties are express or implied. Trademarks are the property of their respective owners and are used for product identification only. Images of releases provided through courtesy of Micro-Trains Line, Inc. The Federal Trade Commission considers this effort to be an "endorsement." I assume readers can make up their own minds. **The UMTRR is copyrighted and all reprinting, reposting and other transmission is expressly prohibited, except for "Fair Use" quotes, unless prior permission has been obtained from me.]**