



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report Issue #323 – November, 2023

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Hello again everyone! It's Thanksgiving time here in the United States (it was October 9 in Canada, eh?) and here at UMTRR HQ we are thankful to be able to bring you the latest from the folks behind the red and yellow sign. We've got curved corners, tunnel liners, robots, the soft release of a new N Scale body style (twice!), and more, so let's get started...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



049 00 961 and 049 00 962, \$28.95 each.

Reporting Marks: PFE 11007 and 11013.

40 Foot Wood Double Sheathed Refrigerator Cars, Vertical Brake Staff, Pacific Fruit Express.

Orange sides with brown and black "curved corners" (brown at top left and top right, black at bottom left and bottom right). Brown ends, roof, sill below door and stirrups. Black ladders, bottom sill, details, and Arch Bar Trucks. Black lettering including roadname and reporting marks on left. White on black Southern Pacific round herald on right of one side of car; red,

white and blue Union Pacific shield on right of other side of car (not shown in MTL images). Approximate Time Period: 1936 to late 1938, based on paint scheme.

We go directly to **Pacific Fruit Express**, the definitive work on the company and its extensive roster, for information on this virtual two-pack. On Page 137, the authors discuss PFE's Experimental Paint Schemes of the 1930s. "Although none were adapted for general use, nor even retained for long in service, they are most interesting footnotes to PFE history."

The first of these trials was the "curved corner" scheme of 1936 that is the subject of this month's release. One of these cars is pictured in the book, PFE 11007, a bingo to the first of the two cars released this month. The side shown in that photo has the Union Pacific "Overland" shield medallion, which was in use by PFE at the time. Courtesy of the UMTRR Spy Network, here's a grab shot of that side of the MTL model (at right). It was applied to at least 26 cars, all of



which were rebuilt R-30-5 and R-30-6 cars with Arch Bar Trucks. Also noted from the proto photo is the use of grab irons instead of a ladder on the right end of the side, which is a difference between the prototype and the MTL 049 body style.

Both of these cars belong to the R-30-6 class of wood refrigerators numbered 10122 to 13219, built by American Car and Foundry in 1912 and 1913. These had a capacity of 1928 cubic feet or 50,300 pounds, not counting ice. Between 1920 and 1925 virtually all of these cars were reconditioned. But between the Great Depression's impact on freight traffic of all kinds and the use of Arch Bar Trucks on these cars, they largely became surplus and were mostly scrapped, particularly between 1934 and 1937. Some of these were retrucked and sold off, including to California Dispatch Line for use as wine cars. (Two examples were modeled by MTL as part of their "Grape to Glass Series.") What cars that remained on the PFE roster were placed in different number series, and were gone no later than 1950. For example, there's a builder's photo of PFE 10599 on Page 83 of **Pacific Fruit Express**.

We've already seen from MTL the further variation on this experimental scheme, which was a single car on which the standard "Pacific Fruit Express" lettering was replaced with an attractive script version of the company name (Catalog 49500, Road Number 14750, March 1999, at right). All of the experimental curved corner cars were repainted by October 1938, leading to a very short ATP. Of course, Rule #1 ("It's your railroad") always applies, and I think it's going to be applied **a lot** in this case.



095 00 061, \$45.95.

Road Number: 257759 (will be "PRR 257759" in UMTRR website listings).

PS-2 Covered Hopper, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Gray with black lettering including large shadow keystone, roadname and road number in center. Body mounted couplers

and metal wheels. Approximate Time Period: 1957 (build date) to late 1980s.

Yes, MTL has released four PRR PS-2s in Z Scale prior to this run-- the virtual two pack from November 2013 being the third and fourth of these (the official MTL image at right). No, they are not from the same prototype series, which spanned road numbers 257001 to 257300. No "reprinting" here, mostly...



First, though, this tidbit from the UMTRR commentary on the first Z Scale virtual two-pack of these cars is too good to not reprint: Want to know how to paint a freight car? I mean, exactly how to paint a freight car-- specifically, this one? Well, on Rob's Pennsy Page (URL prp.railfan.net, no "www") you can learn precisely how covered hopper painting was done on the Pennsylvania Railroad, courtesy of the "Instructions for Painting Freight Equipment Cars"

dated December 1, 1955, one of several editions that's on the website. The roof received "Asphaltum-Asbestos Compound, Medium Consistency" -- yikes!-- and the sides were painted first with "Synthetic Freight Car Primer" and then "Ready-Mixed Alkali-Resisting Light Gray Freight Car Paint," two coats, please.

The H34 series were the first of Pennsy's covered hoppers to be painted in that "Ready-Mixed Alkali-Resisting Light Gray Freight Car Paint" straight away. Prior to that, the choice was "Freight Car Color" -- one of any number of shades of oxide red in layman's terms. The initial group of H34s was built by Pullman-Standard, but as MTL states, the next group of H34s was built by the PRR from kits supplied by P-S. H34b's, c's and d's would follow and there was also a single H34e.

The subject of this month's model (and probably next month's as well, presuming that the "051" catalog number means an "052" will follow) was built by Pullman-Standard, in 1957 at the company's Butler, Pennsylvania plant. It was part of the Pennsy's H34c class. Enough years later, we don't know how many but we do know long enough that the car had an ACI Label added, a photo of PRR 257797 was taken. That image is on Page 73 of the **PRR Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume Three** -- bingo!

Returning to Rob's Pennsy Page, we find that the H34c class came in two groups adding up to 400 cars numbered from 257701 to 258100. The first hundred, which includes the 257797, were built in July and August 1957, and the last three hundred in April 1958. The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for January 1959 has these dimensions: inside length 29 feet 3 inches, inside width 9 feet 5 inches, outside length 35 feet 3 inches, extreme height 13 feet 3 inches, and capacity 2003 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. The car count was down only one to 399 in the April 1968 ORER. And then it was on to successor Penn Central for most of these cars. The October 1969 Equipment Register has 391 cars, of which 107 had been listed with 154,000 pounds capacity. By then the ACI Label shown in the bingo photo would certainly have been applied. It went directly below the "I" in the "PENNSYLVANIA" roadname, just to the right of the sixth rib from the left.

In the first appearance of Conrail in ORERs, April 1976, there were still 294 cars with PRR markings in the series. Five years later in the April 1981 Register, that car count was down to 68. Only twelve of these were left in the October 1986 ORER, and three in the October 1991 Register, which is where I stopped looking. Some of these went on to Penn Central and/or Conrail paint before being taken out of service, but that's another story, of course.



103 00 190, \$33.95.

Reporting Marks: NS 655819.

60 Foot Excess Height Boxcar, Double Plug Doors, Waffle Sides, Norfolk Southern.

Brown with mostly white lettering including very small NS herald at top left

and reporting marks on left. Black on yellow warning sideboards at bottom left and bottom

right. White on black COTS panel at bottom right corner. Black lettering on white bands at top of ends. Approximate Time Period: 2000 (based on paint date) to as late as the present.



Hey, can you make that herald any smaller?

Here's a spartan paint scheme on a former Conrail boxcar that came over to the NS as part of the split of Conrail between Norfolk Southern and CSX. RailcarPhotos.com has the bingo photo and the caption that it's the former CR 223308, built by Berwick Forge and Fabricating in September 1978, part of the Conrail series 223301 to 223461. Out of that series, MTL has done three road numbers: 223435 in June 1998 and 223434 in January 2011, both "clean," and 223453 in July 2011, a weathered with graffiti run. The middle car of those three is shown at right.



On the NS this car was in Class BP-60. It was painted at the Hollidaysburg Shops in February 2000 while the photo is dated May 2009, so we've got an ATP that's at least that long. How much farther does the ATP go? Well, it could be as late as January 2020, the latest ORER I have, where the series NS 655819 to 655845 has a car count of ten. That is fewer road numbers than are possible, so it's a maybe this time... or maybe you'll use Rule #1. Bolstering this: also on RailcarPhotos, we have sister car NS 655847, the former Conrail 223362, found as of March 2021, and NS 655888 as of June 2023, albeit with a little, ahem, extra decoration.

We'll reach back to the previous Conrail releases for the dimensional data, since that wouldn't have changed, and, well, I'm being lazy. The inside length was 60 feet 9 inches, inside width 9 feet 1 inch, inside height 13 feet 2 inches, outside length 67 feet 9 inches, extreme height 17 feet, door opening 16 feet, and capacity 7321 cubic feet or 165,000 pounds. The cars are shown as exceeding Plate F dimensions. The ORER from April 1981 describes this group as "Box, Steel, Cushion Underframe, Plug Doors, Belt Rails to Accept PDQ Pallets, Rub Rails, Assigned Service B63B," which gives us the previous Conrail series as well.



105 00 641 and 105 00 642, \$28.95 each.

**Reporting Marks: BN 558051 and 558132.
50 Foot 15 Panel Steel Gondola, Fishbelly
Sides and Fixed Ends, Burlington
Northern.**

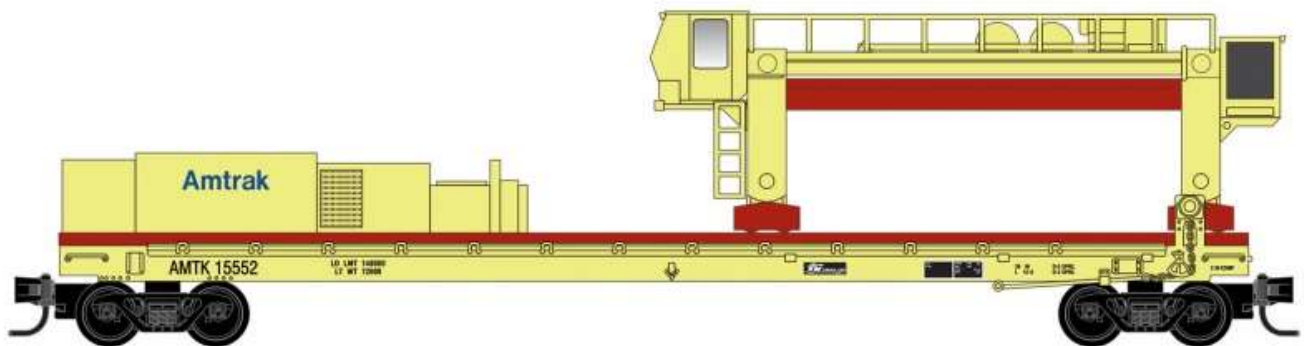
Green (the BN's "Cascade Green") with white lettering including roadname and reporting marks on far left and herald on right. White simulated reflective rectangles

along bottom of sides. Multicolor ACI Label on ninth panel from left. Approximate Time Period: no earlier than 1970, or 1971 based on service date on cars, into the 1990s.

This BN series started as the Burlington series of gondolas numbered 82000 to 82549, built in December 1955 by the CB&Q in its own Havelock Shops. On the BN these cars carried the road numbers 558000 to 558249. Sister car BN 558131 – oh so close to one of the road numbers selected by MTL – is pictured on Page 72 of the **Burlington Northern Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** as of May 1976. The lettering arrangement on that car is the same as on the Micro-Trains virtual two pack, including the reporting marks that are squeezed into the lower part of the side by the “this is as big as we can get it” roadname. The car is a 15 panel fixed end gondola with fishbelly sides, generally aligning with the MTL 1055 body style. (The folks in Talent had previously “run out” of 1055 numbers using their cataloging protocol; so the 1056 start of the catalog number is still attached to this particular type of gondola.) The ends are a bit different between prototype and model and the real cars used grab irons instead of a ladder at the right of the side. There is the usual quibble about the inside length of the MTL car being less than the prototype’s but the outside length being more.

Speaking of dimensions, these are the ones for this group as of the October 1972 ORER: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 3 feet 8 inches, outside length 57 feet 7 inches, extreme height 7 feet 4 inches, and capacity 1844 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds. All 250 cars had been moved to the BN from the CB&Q by then. The series stood at a still healthy 220 cars in the April 1982 Equipment Register, but by April 1997, the car count was down to only six. That’s where I stopped looking.

*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 **November 30**.*



Targeted Delivery January 2024:

064 00 500, \$39.95.

Reporting Marks: AMTK 15552.

60 Foot Flat Car, Amtrak.

Light green (based on prototype photos) with mostly black lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. There are no conspicuity stripes on this car. Includes concrete tie loader (presume this is a multimedia kit, assembly, painting and decaling by the modeler). Approximate Time Period: at least 2017 to as late as the present based on paint color. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Amtrak doesn't just *operate* intercity passenger service in the United States; it also *owns* a fair amount of infrastructure on which these trains operate, including a majority of the line known as the Northeast Corridor. (The states of New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts own some of the route between New Rochelle, New York and Boston.) That infrastructure requires a goodly amount of maintenance, and it's also been in what seems like a continuous process of upgrading. And that work includes concrete ties. According to a page on Amtrak's own website, the change to concrete ties began in 1978 "as part of the Northeast Corridor Improvement Project in an effort to offer faster and more reliable service. The Track Laying Machine pictures could replace up to a mile of rails and ties simultaneously per day. In one operation the Track Laying System, as it is also called, took out old rail and wood ties, plowed away the ballast, and then laid new concrete and wood ties and continuous welded rail." There's a short unofficial video of this monster in action in 2011 on YouTube: search for "Amtrak track-laying machine" to reach it.

According to the caption of a photo posted to RRPictureArchives which partially includes the subject of this pre-order item, Amtrak owns two Track Laying Machines. A photo from April 2018 shows one of them; partially seen in the image is AMTK 15552, which gives us, well, a partial bingo. The tie loader atop the 15552 appears to be the basis for the one that will be included with this car. From this image I get the impression that the color of the Track Laying Machine is a greenish-yellow not unlike the color of worker "visibility safety jackets" often seen at construction sites. You can't miss them, but I have a hard time figuring out exactly what color they are. (One seller of these jackets calls the shade "Yellow/Lime." I'm not sure that helps.) There are no conspicuity stripes on this car, but with a color like that I'd submit that the entire car is one Great Big Conspicuity Stripe! A long shot down the track outside of Central Philadelphia, also on RRPictureArchives, shows the Track Laying Machine in context with the 15552 and a string of flat cars with concrete ties.

Also in an image on RRPictureArchives, we get a top-down overview of the 15552 as of July 2017 as it sits in the Penn Coach Yard in Philadelphia. The rails along which the tie loader travels are clearly visible in this view, but we don't get a great look at the flat car which carries it.

Fortunately for us, Amtrak's company service equipment is largely listed in ORERs, under its official name of National Railroad Passenger Corporation. Given that Amtrak itself cited 1978 as when it started installing concrete ties, I went to the July 1980 Equipment Register, which has the series AMTK 15500 to 15594 with all 95 possible cars. It has AAR Designation MWF and the description "Flat, Steel, Specially Equipped Concrete Ties." The dimensions are not what I expected: inside length 46 feet 9 inches, inside width 9 feet 4 inches, inside height 3 feet 6 inches, outside length 56 feet 9 inches, extreme height 8 feet 2 inches, and capacity 189,000 pounds. Obviously those height numbers don't include the stacks of ties, or the gantry crane either for that matter! I do think that these dimensions come up a little short versus the nominal 60 foot length of the forthcoming MTL body style. Jumping to the October 2020 ORER makes me glad I started with the July 1980 issue: the series is described as just "Maintenance of Way." Well, that's no help. All 95 cars remained in service at that time. What is also not stated in the ORER, of course, is how they were painted. We'll pick that up in coverage below of the

accompanying three pack of flat cars with concrete tie loads, see the “N Scale Multi-Packs” section.

In addition to the above, Micro-Trains has announced the following forthcoming series, but not as a Pre-Order Announcement:



**Targeted Delivery Starting April 2024:
Ex-Per Diem Weathered Series, \$30.95 each.**

Scheduled to consist of twelve fifty foot exterior post boxcars of one or more body styles. Each car is to be decorated in a post-Incentive Per Diem scheme with weathering and graffiti. There is no pre-order announcement for these items.

Unofficially speaking, it appears that Micro-Trains has had a lot of success with this type of release. There have been MTL models of a number of former Incentive Per Diem boxcars, complete with restenciled reporting marks, obvious signs of hard use, and plenty of, ahem, “additional unauthorized decoration.” If the aftermarket prices for some of these cars is any indication, there’s room in N Scale for more of these. And there you go.

Other than noting that the two MTL example renditions (actual product may vary) are a former Corinth and Counce car minimally relettered for the Sabine River and Northern, and a Cedar Rapids and Iowa City car previously in the employ of the Seattle and North Coast (a Fallen Flag by then, I believe), I’ll refrain from detailed descriptions this time around. I’ve got to have something to write about when these cars arrive next year!

N SCALE REPRINTS: One this month...although not officially categorized as such...



071 00 531, \$27.95.

Reporting Marks: DRGW 105027.

89 Foot TOFC Flat Car, Rio Grande (Denver and Rio Grande Western).

Red body, white deck with red details. White lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel and yellow on black U-1 Wheel Inspection “dot” on right. Approximate Time Period: 1991 to late 1990s. Previous Releases: As Catalog 71530, Road Number 105019, December 2001; as Catalog 071 00 530, Road Number 105023, August 2009. This car was scheduled to be available mid-month, confirmed as I’ve seen it available online.

I don't think that I would have put this third-hand flat car on my top ten list of obvious possible reprints, or even my top hundred. But Micro-Trains has, and there you go. But wait, *MTL is not calling this a reprint...* although I am, because it fits into the catalog number sequence of the two previous releases. (Contrast this with the CSXT Centerbeam Flat Car reprint from last month, which to my eye didn't look any different from the previous four cars but received a new catalog number.) On the other hand, given the improvements to the rendition of the deck, it's definitely "not a reprint" as well. See the official MTL image of the previous run (at right) from August 2009 for comparison purposes... ignore the trailer that was part of that release.



The series was built by American Car and Foundry during the period September to November 1978 for ITEL, which leased them to the Providence and Worcester with road numbers 105001 to 105200. (I'll note that this group of cars doesn't include the road numbers in the virtual two-pack "Regional Releases" of this body style for the P&W from August, which are 105464 and 105519.) The first fifty of these didn't stay long there, as they were over to the Maine Central sometime before 1982. I see them in the Maine Central listing in the ORER for April 1981.

We pick up from there with information I found previously on the Rio Grande Historical and Technical Society's website. They've tagged these cars as having been acquired in 1982 from the Maine Central and retired before 1993, thus handily saving me some ORER lookups.

On Page 62 of the **Rio Grande Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** is a photo of the 105019 which was the first number MTL ran. It's also noted there that the cars started on the P&W, went briefly to the MEC, and then to the Rio Grande. I had wondered whether the Rio Grande had just dropped its reporting marks over the Maine Central's, and whether they had previously dropped their markings over the Providence and Worcester's—or the lessor did. I think at least the first part is true, as the "DRGW" doesn't align with the "105019"—in fact, it seems that Micro-Trains has straightened out the lettering too well versus the prototype. All of the other markings look good versus the **Color Guide** photo including the trademark of its builder American Car and Foundry.

There's a photo from March 1983 of DRGW 105023 on RailcarPhotos, a bingo for the previous release of this car. As with the **Color Guide** photo, the lettering arrangement aligns; in addition, in this photo it's possible to pick out the white deck. I'm not sure of the exact prototype for the MTL 071 body style but I don't think it's an AC&F car. I expect that there will be some differences between the real cars and the Micro-Trains model, but I'll leave that exercise to the reader.

The January 1985 Register shows just 20 cars in the Rio Grande roster in the group 105004 to 105049. They are the only cars of this type listed in the Rio Grande's assemblage. They are called out as AAR Class FC, and described as COFC, or Container on Flat Car, not TOFC, trailer on flat car. Inside length (such as it is with a flat car) was 89 feet 4 inches and outside length was 94 feet 8 inches.

N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS: No new releases or pre-orders this month.

N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:



105 44 450, \$27.95.

Reporting Marks: NS 617042.

50 Foot 15 Panel Steel Gondola, Fishbelly Sides and Fixed Ends, Norfolk Southern/ex-Conrail.

#7 in the Norfolk Southern Family Tree Series (pre-orders taken December 2022). Brown with mostly white lettering including restenciled reporting marks on

patch panel on left and small Conrail herald on right. White on black COTS panel on bottom right. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at six points along bottom of side. Moderate weathering and simulated damage to sides. White scrawl graffiti on both sides of car. Approximate Time Period: At least 2009 to 2019 based on photo evidence. Previous Releases: None.

The site RRPictureArchives.net gives us six bingos on this car which provide the “at least” ATP for this latest in the NS Family Tree Series. The first is from February 2009 and shows the car with the patch over the Conrail reporting marks but Conrail paint, including the car class GR52C, otherwise. Well, there are the conspicuity stripes. The latest is from September 2019 and shows the car a bit more worn and with a bit more graffiti, but in generally the same paint scheme.

From RailcarPhotos.com, which has two additional photos of the car from Collin Reinhart, we have the information that the car was built for the Reading Railroad by Bethlehem Steel and was part of the series 38800 to 39099. This set was part of the Reading’s Class GHy, of which there were three different groups. The **Reading Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has a shot of RDG 38909 from this series in the last scheme for the railroad with just the “RDG” in place of the full railroad name. When conveyed to Conrail this became the series 579394 to 579693. This particular car was CR 578456. On the Conrail Historical Society’s “Conrail Photo Archive” there’s an example of what these cars looked like in the form of a photo of CR 579532.

I can reach all the way back to the listing of Reading cars in the Conrail registration in the April 1976 ORER for dimensions. The cars were described as “Gondola, Steel, Fixed Ends, Composite Floor” and had these dimensions: inside length 52 feet 11 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 4 feet 8 inches, outside length 58 feet 9 inches, extreme height 8 feet 3 inches, and capacity 2263 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. All 300 cars were present. The inside and outside lengths are both a bit more, well, lengthy, than the MTL 105 body style.

In addition to the above, the following was announced on the Micro-Trains website and via the "E-Line" newsletter, on November 15 and 16 respectively



**110 44 611 and 110 45 612, \$38.95 each.
Reporting Marks: CRGX 16014 and 16261.
54 Foot General Service Tank Cars,
Cargill.**

Black with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and tank qualification stencil on far right. Yellow vertical conspicuity stripes at six points from left to right along middle of car. Weathering and Scrawl and multicolor graffiti on both sides of both cars. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given

conspicuity stripes to as late as to the present. Previous Releases: None.

Although no specific identification of the company appears on either of the tank cars in this virtual two pack, ORER information confirms that these cars are on the roster for Cargill. Founded in Iowa in 1865 by William Wallace Cargill, it's been a privately held company ever since. It is the largest private firm in the United States by revenue, which was estimated to be \$165 billion in 2022 (as a privately held company, its requirement to publish financials is much more limited than publicly traded firms). It's also a family-owned business, with the descendants of William Wallace Cargill still in control of over ninety percent of the firm. Cargill's main focus is agricultural products on an international scale, but it's pretty diverse within that category, including for example that any egg used at the McDonalds fast food chain in the United States comes through Cargill plants. It also has about a fifth of the overall United States meat market, and about a quarter of US grain exports-- that's a lot of covered hoppers! Unlike, say, ConAgra, though, it's not known for any household brand names. Cargill also has a sizable financial services operation.

We have what looks like a split in this virtual two pack with respect to provenance. According to RailcarPhotos.com, which has a shot of the 16261 as it appeared in February 2014, that car was part of the series CRGX 16180 to 16268, built by Trinity in January and February 1997. As on the MTL model, there is a fair amount of graffiti covering the dimensional and other data, which would be hard to read in any event, but we do learn that the car is within Plate C dimensions. Meanwhile, I can get close to the other car via a photo of CRGX 16016 on Fallen Flags, two road numbers away from the 16014. The 16016, photographed in May 2008, has the Cargill green and white logo and more importantly for us, a new date of October 1991. That doesn't really matter given that the ATP here starts no earlier than 2005 given the presence of conspicuity stripes, but does reinforce that these cars came from two different series. Other cars in the general vicinity of road number 16014 don't have the Cargill logo but do have the reporting marks rendered with stencils instead of the block lettering Micro-Trains used.

Which is good to know from photos, because the ORER for October 2020 has both cars, and more, together in one entry for CRGX 16000 to 16514, with a total car count of 329. That does help us with ending the ATP – sort of – with an “at least” but doesn’t help us understand much else. As usual, there’s no dimensional data other than the Gross Rail Weight of 263,000 pounds.



983 05 063, \$68.95, with Jewel Boxes.

993 05 063, \$59.95, with Foam Nest packaging.

Reporting Marks: SFRC 50773 (Catalog Number 081 44 020) and SFRC 50798 (Catalog Number 081 45 020).

Santa Fe Weathered Two Pack.

Consists of two 51 Foot Mechanical Refrigerator Cars, Rivet Sides, Without Running Boards. Orange with aluminum roof and dark blue door. Mostly black lettering including reporting marks at

bottom left, “Super Shock Control” at top left, large circle cross herald left of door, and “Ship and Travel Santa Fe ...All The Way” slogan on right. Black on white “MTC” logo on door. White on black double COTS panel at bottom right. Yellow on black U-1 Wheel Inspection “dot” below slogan on right. Moderate to heavy weathering. Approximate Time Period: 1966 (build date), or strictly speaking, 1978 and later given Wheel Inspection “Dot,” to 1981. Previous Releases: None.

I get to use a new addition to the Research Accumulation here: **Santa Fe Rolling Stock Reference Series Volume Six: Mechanical Refrigerator Cars and Insulated Refrigerator Cars of the Santa Fe Railway 1949-1988.** Wow, that’s a mouthful. In just the preface to this book, authored by John B. Moore Jr. and published by the Santa Fe Historical and Modeling Society, we get a general framework of the Santa Fe’s building and use of this type of car. The company didn’t build its first mechanical refrigerator car until 1949, and didn’t build any for revenue service until 1953. Following a substantial loss of business to trucks, the remaining Mechanical Temperature Controlled or “MTC” Cars (as the Santa Fe called this type of refrigerator) were stored in 1986 and the last two cars were retired in 1988.

The SFRC reporting marks which these cars carry was introduced in 1960 to denote mechanical refrigerator cars with load dividers. These specific cars, the series SFRC 50700 to 51399, was the company’s class RR-89, built in 1966 at the Santa Fe’s shops in Topeka, Kansas. They were the first class of MTC cars built without running boards. Page 101 of the above cited book has some of the technical specifications of these cars: inside length 48 feet, inside width 9 feet 3 inches, inside height 9 feet 2 inches, outside length over pulling faces of the couplers 60 feet 5 inches, a 20 inch travel “Shock Control” cushion underframe, and nine foot Camel plug doors. The capacity of these cars was 4007 cubic feet or 135,000 pounds. The “Ship and Travel” scheme used by MTL here is the as-delivered decoration. Some of these cars received the billboard “Santa Fe” replacing the “Ship and Travel” later in their service life. In 1968, 194 cars were modified with TECTROL atmosphere system equipment and renumbered into the 55003

to 55199 series; that equipment was removed in 1970. There's a photo of SFRC 55113 also on Page 101—I bring this up as from the outside it doesn't look any different than the unmodified RR-87 cars.

Speaking of appearance, the new 081 body style, released via a “soft launch,” is based on the MTL 070 body style, essentially this same car with a running board, which in turn, I understand, is based on the Pacific Fruit Express R-70-12 class of mechanical refrigerator cars built in 1960. Comparing model to prototype, there are some differences, most notably (to me, anyway) being the type of plug door and the arrangement of vents for the compartment that holds the refrigeration equipment at the end of the car opposite the brake wheel (which is high mounted despite the lack of running board). The number of vertical ribs aligns, as does the use of diagonal ribs either side of the door.

I didn't have any luck on bingo photos in the usual places for either the 50773 or 50798. The above book has a color shot of SFRC 50910, another RR-89 in the series. The author notes that the car has taken on a pinkish tint, the result of car washing cleansers. There's so much dirt on the cars in the MTL two pack that I doubt this pinkish shift could be discerned! The **Santa Fe Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Page 99, has a shot of a practically new SFRC 50730 from October 1996, the year it was built. Finally, on RRPictureArchives there is a “lined out” RR-89, already “condemned” in October 1983 and awaiting the scrapper as of October 1983. The car still looks pretty good, but business was business, then as now.

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS: First, the **Burlington Northern Weathered Caboose Three Pack (983 05 055, \$114.95, Jewel Boxes option only)** which was originally scheduled for release last month, was shifted to mid-this month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the April 2023 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 100 44 062, 11445; 100 45 062, 11451; 100 46 062, 11452. These are the fourth through sixth road numbers for this release.



Runner Pack #217, also known as the Chessie Four Pack (983 00 217, \$134.95, with Jewel Cases; 993 00 217, \$119.95, with Foam Nest Packaging), is now available, confirmed via online listings. UMTRR Pre-Order Coverage was in the June 2023 issue. The individual items are as follows: 108 51 600, C&O 158941; 108 52 600, C&O 160103; 108 53 610, B&O 187348; 108 54 610, WM 188820.

The D&RGW Weathered Two Pack with Power Load (983 02 232, \$73.95, with Jewel Cases; 993 02 232, \$64.95, with Foam Nest Packaging) is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR Pre-Order Coverage was in the June 2023 issue. The individual items are as follows: 045 44 061, D&RGW 23018; 045 45 062, D&RGW 23027. Following the catalog number sequence, these are the fourth and fifth releases of this item, though as noted in the pre-order coverage, they are “not a reprints” since the first three runs were brown with white lettering. (And just to confuse things more, there **were** black and white Rio Grande flat cars released in July 2011 and May 2023 – Catalog Number 045 00 38x, though they don’t have the same lettering. Images of each of these cars are in the appropriate “Month by Month” pages on the UMTRR Website.)



The Toys For Tots Three Pack (983 02 233, \$121.95, with Jewel Cases; 993 02 233, \$109.95, with Foam Nest Packaging) is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR Pre-Order Coverage was in the June 2023 issue. Note that the reporting marks have changed from DRRV in the original artwork to TOYX—“actual product may vary!” I’ve confirmed via the “Operation Toy Train” website that this aligns with the change to the prototype cars for 2022. The individual items are: 027 51 491, TOYX 1947, “Winter Camo” scheme; 027 52 491, TOYX 1775, “Woodland Camo” scheme; 081 53 010, TOYX 2009. The third of these cars is also a “soft release” of a new body style, the 51

Foot Mechanical Refrigerator, Rivet Side, without Running Board, though we also had this body style in the Santa Fe Weathered Two Pack this month (see above). Technically, this car’s catalog number is “first” with an 010 suffix.

*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 **November 30**.*



Targeted Delivery March 2024:

983 00 222, \$119.95, with Jewel Box Packaging (Only, No Foam Nest Version).

Reporting Marks: NATX 252278, 252281, 252377.

NATX Tank Car Three Pack (Runner Pack #222).

Scheduled to consist of four MTL 110 series 54 Foot General Service Tank Cars. Black with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and tank qualification stencil on right. Orange vertical conspicuity stripes at six points along middle of side (left to right).

Includes Approximate Time Period: 2011 to present. Previous Releases: None. Micro-Trains artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

With all of the Business Transactions that have taken place in the Private Owner Sector of North American Railroading in the past few decades, perhaps we'll start with "What company has the NATX reporting marks these days?" You might know that they started with North American Car Company. Well, I suppose October 2020 probably no longer counts as "these days" but that ORER has Union Tank Car Company for the NATX reporting marks. In that listing we find the series NATX 250610 to 260004, which not only includes this forthcoming trio but could contain a whole lot more. In fact, at the time it had 2056 cars, which is impressive but only (reaching for calculator) about 21.8 percent of the possible road numbers. As usual, the listing in the Equipment Register doesn't tell us anything useful beyond than that.

And the next question, to which I always forget the answer, is "Which came first: Tank Qualification Stencils or conspicuity stripes?" The answer: Tank Qualification Stencils, which were mandatory for all tank cars by July 2000. So the "no earlier than" ATP would be driven by the conspicuity stripes, which were applied beginning in 2005, and the next time I forget the answer to the above question I hope I remember to come back to this commentary, and not hunt my way through my own set of UMTRR Back Issues!

It turns out that the ATP start is not driven by *either* of those dates, but by the build date of 2011 for at least the first two cars. The 252278 and 252281 were among NATX 252200 to 252299 built by Greenbrier in January and February of that year, at its GIMSA plant in Mexico. There are bingo photos of these two on RailcarPhotos, fresh out of the factory in February 2011 in Hillside, New Jersey, and perhaps not having taken on their first load, since the placard holders are empty. (And there's an excuse for not putting N Scale sized placards in them!) I got all around but not a direct bingo for the 252377; interpolating from what I could find, it appears to be among the group 252300 to 252399 and was probably built a little after the 252200s and probably also by Greenbrier. The group after that was 252400 to 252499, built in early 2012 by the same company.



Targeted Delivery January 2024:

983 02 234, \$126.95, with Jewel Box Packaging.

993 02 234, \$114.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Reporting Marks: AMTK 15514, 15528, and 15559.

Amtrak Concrete Tie Flat Car Three Pack.

Scheduled to consist of three MTL 064

series 60 Foot Flat Cars. Orange with mostly black lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel on right. Small yellow “MW” left of center. Set comes with concrete tie loads, presumably to be assembled and painted by the modeler. Approximate Time Period: 1978 to as late as the present. Previous Releases: None. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Picking up where we left off above with the pre-order coverage of the single Amtrak Concrete Tie Loader flat car, we had just checked the ORERs to find that the series 15500 to 15594 was still intact as of October 2020, but of course with no indication of how these cars were painted. Orange had been the standard color for most Amtrak maintenance of way equipment, but the presence of the other flat car in a color that, well, wasn’t orange, might or might not throw a bit of a wrench into the ATP projection for this set. (Rule #1 always applies.)

Turning back to YouTube, there’s a short video from 2003 showing the gantry cranes – two of them – shuttling packs of concrete ties back and forth across a cut of these cars. Search on “Amtrak Tie Laying Machine at Croydon” to find it. I think what’s happening here is that one crane is moving used concrete ties to a flat car, dropping them, then picking up a set of new ties for use and heading back to the Track Laying Machine; then, a second gantry crane drops off a fresh set of new ties from where the first crane had just picked up a set, reverses, picks up the used ties and moves them backwards in the train, presumably to the Used Tie section of the train. There is no question that these cars were orange at that time. Well, except for the one that looks like it’s gray!

We get a nice bingo photo of the 15514 on RRPictureArchives.net, dated May 2014. I can read a date of March 1978 just right of center on the flat car, which aligns with when Amtrak stated that it began using concrete ties on the Northeast Corridor. There is an end-mounted vertical staff for the brake wheel on this car which will probably be a delta to the side mount brake wheel that is shown in the MTL artwork. The racking for the two sets of four stacks each of concrete ties is similar to but not exactly the same as what Micro-Trains envisions... but this photo is nineteen years old and hardware certainly could have changed. The stenciled reporting marks, though unusual for Amtrak equipment, are correct. Also on the same website is a shot of two Amtrak MOW-assigned diesels pulling the 15514; we just see a bit of the car but can also observe that it’s empty. The 15559 is represented on RRPictureArchives as well, in bright sunlight and looking very clean in October 2010. This shot shows just two rows of “reclaimed ties” on the right and what might be spacer beams on the left to placeholder for sets

of additional ties. Also in view are short yellow plates that span the distance between cars, allowing the gantry train to travel continuously between them. I wouldn't worry about these unless modeling a train in action. There wasn't a photo of the 15528 on RRPictureArchives but there is one on George Elwood's "Fallen Flags" site (www.rr-fallenflags.org). This one, from August 2018, shows the car from overhead and illustrates well how the ties are secured for transport. And the flat car is still orange.



Targeted Delivery April 2024:

983 02 243, \$96.95, with Jewel Box Packaging; 993 02 243, \$84.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Reporting Marks: B&O 354178 and 354820 and Southern 314008.

B&O and Southern Weathered Gondola Three Pack with Hay Load.

Scheduled to consist of three 105 series 14 Panel Steel Gondolas with Fishbelly Sides and Fixed Ends. The Baltimore and Ohio gondolas are black with white lettering including reporting marks on left, large "B&O" in center and class code O-65 at bottom right. The Southern Railway gondola is brown with white lettering

including roadname and road number in center. Cars have moderate to heavy weathering. Simulated hay loads included for all three cars. Approximate Time Period: late 1950s or 1960 into the 1960s for the B&O cars and 1958 into the 1960s for the Southern car. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

"Hay, what's in those gondolas?"

"Exactly!"

Sorry, couldn't resist.

Page 63 of the **Southern Railway Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has a photo of not one but two of the Southern's gondolas from the same prototype series, found in Columbus, Ohio in April 1962. We see most of the 314008 and all of the 314290 in this shot, which is described as "just full of interesting items, probably the most interesting are the two Southern gondolas filled with hay." It's noted that the series 314000 to 314299 was built by Pullman-Standard at its Bessemer, Alabama plant in 1958. The scheme they are wearing, which predates the "Green Light" decoration, is probably how they were delivered.

The ORER for January 1962 shows the series 293 cars of the possible 300, described as "Gondola, Steel, Fixed Ends" with these dimensions: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 5 inches, inside height 3 feet 6 inches, outside length 54 feet 6 inches, extreme height 6 feet 11 inches, and capacity 1745 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. While I would expect a paint scheme change by April 1976 for these cars (the roadname was changed to the more

modern style in 1960 and the “Green Light” was introduced in 1969), the car count was at 287 and the capacity had been increased to 154,000 pounds. This was probably through changing the trucks from 50 tons to 70 tons, so MTL’s notation that the car will be released with Bettendorf trucks is more important than usual here.

There have been MTL regular run releases for the B&O on the 105 body style before, but not in this paint scheme and not for this prototype series. This time, the gondolas are wearing the “Late Fifties Billboard” version, as named by Chris Barkan in his list of B&O paint schemes for hoppers and gondolas over the years. This scheme has the small ampersand (“&”) between the “B” and “O” and doesn’t have lines above and below the reporting marks. There’s no capitol dome herald on these cars either; that would return in the next version of the B&O paint scheme. An example of this paint scheme is on Page 36 of the **B&O Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**; it’s B&O 353299 as of July 1962. Online examples of the O-65 class are on Fallen Flags, but not in the same paint scheme; have a look at B&O 354155 and 354231.

The O-65 Class to which the photographed car and the 354178 and 354820 in this forthcoming set belong is a bit complicated according to the **Color Guide**. Cars 352000 to 354299 were built in 1957 and 1959. Then cars 354400 to 354899 were built in 1960. In between there was a set of 100 O-65a cars numbered 354300 to 354399 which had a “premium Core-Ten steel floor”, mentioned here only for completeness. All of these cars were assembled by the B&O from kits made by Bethlehem Steel. The O-65 cars had grab irons instead of a ladder on the right end of the side, a delta to the MTL 105 body style, but they are 14 panel fishbelly side gondolas with fixed ends as is the Micro-Trains model.

Returning to the January 1962 ORER, we have the series B&O 352000 to 354899 described as “Gondola, Steel, Fixed Ends, Composite Floor” with these dimensions: inside length 52 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 3 feet 6 inches, outside length 54 feet 5 inches, extreme height 7 feet 5 inches, and capacity 1745 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds. There were 2767 cars in the series at the time.

Searching on the phrase “hay in gondolas” was a fruitless exercise, with the single exception of a thread on Trainorders which described Michigan hay being shipped to Florida in gondolas-- which took place well after the ATP of the 1960s for this three pack. Feel free to try it yourself but don’t be surprised if you wind up in Venice, Italy, for information on an entirely different kind of gondola.

However, I checked in with the “BaltimoreAndOhioRailroadList” on groups.io about the two B&O cars in this set, principally because I didn’t locate bingo photos for them, and it turns out that the load might **not** exactly be hay. Writing in a thread I posted to the group, Joe Witofsky replied, “What you are referring to may be (horse) manure. Since horses tend to go on hay and straw bedding, it all gets mucked into a pile, and some used to get loaded into gondolas. I’m aware of one non B&O operation, where manure was loaded into MEC and BM gondolas for shipment to mushroom growers in Southern Pennsylvania. This lasted into the early 1970s.”

John Teichmoeller cited “hay” loaded from racetracks in PRR gondolas headed for a mushroom operation in Delaware. Mark Vinski cited a mushroom farm located in a former limestone mine, located in Western Pennsylvania off a branch of the B&O’s Buffalo Division, the former Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad.

Then Eric Peterson, who was Assistant Division Engineer at Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania in 1974-1975 on the Buffalo Division, had this detailed reply, start quote:

“The horse manure was mixed in with the straw from the horse barns. It is my recollection [that it] was first class manure loaded at Louisville, Kentucky.

“The shipments moved in open gondolas and often three or so per shipment. I believe there was a wye at Craigsville so sometimes the shipments would be delivered on trains out of Butler. Sometimes the shipments would move to Riker and then back to Craigsville. I just recall encountering the shipments multiple times. They were easy to detect. They smelled like horse manure. They often were giving off water vapor clouds as the manure would warm up due to the shipment biology. I do recall at least once a car load caught fire probably due to spontaneous combustion.

“Our engineering personnel did not have much involvement and I do not remember that we were requested to clean any cars. It would be nice to think these cars were in captive service and returned for reloading with the same freight. They were not piled high but the load was mounded in the center of the cars above the side rails. I doubt the loads could come close to the load limits for the cars.

“These shipments were not popular with the train crews. At this time cabooses were still being used and they were certainly not air conditioned. They were probably often close to the head end of trains out of Butler so if the train had to wait for a meet and while pushing the cars up the branch to the mushroom farm the head end crew was well aware of the car contents. The caboose crew members would as well be aware of the train contents on their way between Butler and Punxsutawney. Higher air temperatures would increase the aroma for all involved. The car inspectors would also be aware of the contents. I imagine if one of these cars loaded or empty was shop tagged it was repaired quickly.

“For the railroad I expect this was good traffic. Certainly not a high exposure to freight claims. Movements were probably expedited in every terminal.”

And that’s the “scoop” on these gondolas (sorry, couldn’t resist again)... many thanks to the B&O experts for their help.



Targeted Delivery April 2024:

983 02 244, \$96.95, with Jewel Box Packaging; 993 02 244, \$84.95, with Foam Nest Packaging.

Reporting Marks: D&RGW 72628, 72681, and 72692.

Rio Grande Drop Bottom Three Pack with Tunnel Form Loads.

Scheduled to consist of three 083 series 40 Foot Drop Bottom Gondolas. Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left and speed lettering roadname and “Tunnel Forms” legend on right. White on black COTS panel and white on black U-1 wheel inspection “dot” on far right.

Approximate Time Period: after 1978 (given

U-1 “dot”) into the 1980s at least. Previous Releases: Technically none, but MTL has done this general paint scheme as Catalog Number 083 00 060 with Road Number 46400 in November 2008, then Runner Pack #140 with Road Numbers 46404, 46409, 46446, and 46490, May 2018. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

As noted above, although these cars are expected to carry the same general paint scheme as the previously released MTL cars (the first of which is at right), they won’t be reprints – at least I think they won’t be. For one thing, they don’t come from the same prototype series: the previous cars carried road numbers from the group 46000 to 46499, built by Pressed Steel in 1947 and 1948, while the road numbers here align with the group 72000 to 73699, which were built by General American in 1953 and 1954. It’s noted in the **Rio Grande Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, Page 77, that these were the last drop bottom gondolas purchased by the D&RGW. “They were 46 foot 70 tonners with five-rib Improved Dreadnaught Ends and non-cushioned underframes. Although purchased mainly for coal service,” writes **Color Guide** author Jim Eager, “[they] were equally useful for hauling scrap, ore, clay, limestone and other aggregates.” Eager also writes that “many of the 72000s were put to work in company service, hauling scrap, ties, panel track, and other company materials.” An example in the book is the 73405, found in October 1990 assigned to scrap wheel service. There are some detail differences between the prototype cars and the MTL 083 body style, but the key spotting feature of eight panels per side is the same on both.



Another example of these cars in company service is D&RGW 72761, “For Tie Plate Loading” in September 1992, pictured on the Fallen Flags website. And on RailcarPhotos, the 72793 was carrying panel track in April 1987. These cars were well-built, obviously, but they were also well-beat up, as this photo and others attest. And are those **white** U-1 wheel inspection dots I see in these photos, meaning a “fail” for these cars’ wheels, and not the usual yellow dots that indicate that the wheels were okay? It appears so, which means that the MTL artwork should

reflect that reality. If only there were bingo photos available... Well, just because I couldn't find them doesn't mean Micro-Trains doesn't have any. Without any references, though, the Approximate Time Period is really Approximate this time. Based on the photo dates of other Rio Grande drop bottom gondolas I'll speculate that the cars were used into the 1980s at least; your mileage may vary. For the record, there were 23 cars in the series D&RGW 72004 to 73694 showed as conveyed to the Union Pacific in the ORER for July 1998 (and while I'm here: inside length 46 feet, inside width 9 feet 10 inches, inside height 5 feet 4 inches, outside length 49 feet 9 inches, extreme height 9 feet 8 inches, capacity 2410 cubic feet or 154,000 pounds) but just two of those are left in the January 2000 Equipment Register, which is where I stopped looking. I doubt this tells us anything about these "Tunnel Forms" cars.

The topic of "Tunnel Forms" is a subject onto itself for which there are numerous citations online. Certainly the Rio Grande had a lot of tunnels! One contemporary reference describes tunnel forms so haphazardly that I think AI wrote it (and now you know my opinion of AI), but in its car copy, MTL has the general idea: the devices allow for concrete to be cast on site. I'll leave further exploration to the reader.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: *Merry Christmas...*



102 00 280, \$28.95.

Road Number: 2023.

2023 Christmas Car.

Silver ends, roof and side sill. Entire side decorated with multi-color graphics featuring Micro-Mouse Junior sort of hiding behind a Christmas tree while Micro-Mouse, dressed (somewhat) as Santa Claus, struggles to pull a bag of presents out of the chimney. "Merry Christmas" in yellow with black and white outline in center, and "...Not a creature was stirring..." in white at bottom center.

In keeping with the mythology of the holidays, this car depicts the elder Micro-Mouse sliding at least the sack of Christmas presents, if not himself, down the chimney, in the grand tradition of...

...witches?

As noted on the “Best Life” website, “The concept that magical creatures enter homes through chimneys actually comes from the 1400s, when there was a widespread belief – and fear – that witches could pass through solid objects to enter any residence, according to Jeffrey Burton Russell, author of **Witchcraft in the Middle Ages**.” That belief was narrowed down (pun not intended) to chimneys – well, once they were developed, that is – but was also expanded to include the helpful brownies (Scottish), the evil bodach (Celtic), the candy-bearing La Befana (Italian), and others. Washington Irving borrowed this idea to send Saint Nicholas down the chimney in his 1809 book **Knickerbocker's History of New York**. But it was Clement Moore’s well-known poem “A Visit From Saint Nicholas” (which begins with, and is better known as, “’Twas the night before Christmas” and contains the line “Not a creature was stirring” that’s on the MTL car) which included Santa bounding down the chimney that really got the idea, well, stuck, in the American consciousness. How this works in apartment buildings and other residences that don’t have chimneys is something that I fortunately did not need to explain to my little ones, since our house had a chimney.



In addition to the above, **Car #9 in the “War of the Worlds” (139 00 033, \$28.95)** has been released. This car, USA 2469, features a load of destroyed Martian Machines. (It’s part of the story...) UMTRR pre-order coverage

was in the September 2022 issue. This is the final car in the War of the Worlds series of nine, but the companion locomotive and caboose are still to come.



The next items in the Medford, Talent and Lakecreek “70s/80s” items (pre-order coverage was in the April 2023 UMTRR) are due out mid-month: the **60 Foot Excess Height Double Plug Door Boxcar, Rivet Sides (102 00 250, \$31.95, Reporting Marks MTL 604833)** and the **57 Foot Car with Trailer (\$39.95, Flat Car, 064 00 190, Reporting Marks MTL 63213; 45 Foot Trailer, 451 00 340, Reporting Marks MTLZ 982743).**



Previously delayed from last month is the **Southern Oregon Orchard Co-Op 51 Foot Rib Side Mechanical Refrigerator Car (070 00 090, \$29.95, Reporting Marks SOOC 70452),** now slated for release mid-this month.



The **Robot Christmas Train Set (993 21 386, \$249.95)** has arrived at Micro-Trains Authorized Dealers, and the official Micro-Trains image has arrived on the MTL website as well. Pre-order coverage was in the July 2023 UMTRR.

Z SCALE: While I'm on the subject of the **Robot Christmas Train Set:** there's no official photo, but I am seeing the Z Scale set (**994 21 100, \$249.95**) available from at least one MTL retailer.



Meanwhile, the **2023 Christmas Car (507 00 740, \$28.95)** has been released. See the N Scale version above for my commentary.

Car #9 in the "War of the Worlds" (525 00 183, \$28.95) has been released. This car, USA 2469, features a load of destroyed Martian Machines. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the September 2022 issue. This is the final car in the War of the Worlds series of nine, but the companion locomotive and caboose are still to come.



Finally in Z Scale, the **Toys For Tots Three Pack (983 01 272, \$121.95, Jewel Box Packaging; 994 01 272, \$109.95, Foam Nest Packaging)** is expected to be available mid-month. Pre-order coverage was in the June 2023 UMTRR. Note that the reporting marks have changed from DRRV in the original artwork to TOYX; I've confirmed via the "Operation Toy Train"



website that this aligns with the change to the prototype cars for 2022. The individual items are: 511 51 310, TOYX 1947, “Winter Camo” scheme; 511 52 310, TOYX 1775, “Woodland Camo” scheme; 549 53 040, TOYX 2009.

MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Still in Z Scale for a moment, the Union Pacific ArroWedge in 1:220 has been cancelled. The N Scale version is still in process, currently targeted for December release. MTL’s November Micro-News has a schedule of the next few months; a soft copy is available for download on the Micro-Trains website.

Moving up about as far as we can go, to 1:1 Scale, Micro-Trains has announced two new T-Shirt designs for pre-order this month for delivery next month. First, there is a white on red “Cushion Underframe” design. Second is a multicolor rendition of the KarTrack ACI Label, with the caption “10 PM – Do you know where your freight cars are?” which is just the thing for a 70’s throwback, including a twist on the “It’s



10PM, do you know where your children are?” tagline used by some television stations at that time. (Channel 5 in New York, where I first heard it, still uses it.) Pricing is \$27.95 for either shirt in sizes from Small to 3X. They’re on Gildan shirts, which UMTRR HQ likes a lot (but that’s not a formal endorsement!)

DISCONTINUED ALERT: We start the bye-bye board as usual with N Scale items released this year, and that starts with the first number of last month’s virtual two pack of Canadian Pacific log cars (115 00 111). From September, both version of the Norfolk and Western Weathered Two Pack have left the building (983/993 05 058), as has the Rogue Valley Wine Company tank car (110 00 580), part of the M&TL “70s and 80s” group, and the 2023 Halloween Car (102 00 270). From previously during 2023, outs include the Norfolk Southern ‘Do Not Hump’ gondola (105 00 430, February), the first number of the reprinted TTX Depressed Center Flat Car (109 00 143, August, second number still available). I think I missed putting the Dreaded D on #1 in the War of the Worlds series (039 00 270, March). But the “Contact Dealer” banner is no longer on the MT&L open hopper (055 50 620, February) and I’m not sure what to do about that. I think that mid-October’s BN Covered Hopper Weathered Three Pack (983/993 05 064) is outta here, and I’m marking it as such in the UMTRR Release Tables, as it’s missing from the MTL website even though the November Micro-News has it as still available. On the other hand, the “clean” version of the SP Trailer Four Pack (983/993 02 228) is showing “Contact Dealer” but I think that’s a holdover from its delayed release and I’ll defer on the Dreaded D... for now. There is just one other N Scale item outta here: the Great Northern 50 foot boxcar with veneer load, also known as BNSF Family Tree #3 (037 44 160, November 2022).

Turning to this year’s Z Scale, it’s Trick and Not Treat if you missed the Z Scale Halloween Car this year (507 00 730, September), since it’s already sold out. So is the War of The Worlds flat

car, #7 in that series (525 00 182, September). The last two Farm to Table refrigerator cars have rolled away: #9 for Zion Fig Bars (518 00 800, November 2019), and #10 for Horvitz Brothers (518 00 810, December 2019), closing out all Z Scale releases from 2019.

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: In addition to MTL's regular runs of the 62000/062 body style, the 50 Foot Composite Side "War Emergency" Gondola painted in Santa Fe, UMTRR Special Correspondent George Hollwedel also ran a three pack of ATSF gondolas in the same paint scheme. His cars represent the Class GA-63 portion of the build of these cars for the Santa Fe, which, as noted last month, included 200 GA-61 gondolas from Pullman-Standard and 200 more classed GA-63 from General American. They were identical except for trucks: Barber Stabilized S-2 on the GA-61 and National B-1 on the GA-63. All of George's Special Runs under the Proto N Scale banner are sold out but I've seen them from time to time on the secondary market.

With respect to last month's N Scale Bridge Kit, Douglas Conrady has another larger example of the reuse of flat cars for that purpose, start quote: "A paved county road that I frequent was repaved in the late 90s or early 2000s. The county used two flat cars, side by side, to make the bridge. I remember seeing them on the construction site and thinking they would be able to hold anything that comes across and how cool it is ill be driving over rail cars. The span is about 80 feet. I know if one went under there, one would see the cars. I'm also thinking there are a few other flat car bridges in the county, but I'm not sure where they are. I've seen some flat cars, minus trucks, in the county yards."

A reader pointed out that while I was impressed with the decks on last month's COFC Flat Cars for the NdeM and FCP, I could have been equally impressed with the virtual two-pack of TOFC flat cars done for the Providence and Worcester in August 2022. They have the same level of detail, as evidenced in a top-down photo of the car in an eBay listing. Those two cars are still available per the MTL website.

End of the Line for Morning Sun Books: The well-known (at least in railfan circles) Color Guides and other publications like the extensive "Trackside" series will no longer be published after 2024. According to a letter cross-posted to a discussion venue from Steve Yanosey of Morning Sun Books (who I believe is the son of MSB founder and early Morning Sun author Robert Yanosey), "Digital titles may exist in the future, but there will be no more hardcovers published after 2024."

OOPS PATROL: One from August... the Santa Fe Weathered Hopper Three Pack has Catalog Numbers 983/993 00 062, not 064. And one from September: The N Scale 2023 Halloween Car has catalog 102 00 270, not 730. Another Copy And Paste fail from this inattentive byte-slinger.

FINALLY, GRATITUDE: As I top off these bytes, we're rapidly approaching Thanksgiving (yes, in the USA, anyway) and the time to remember and be grateful for what we have. For me, that includes my gratitude and thanks to you, the readership, for subscribing, reading, and commenting on this humble enterprise. I certainly never thought that I would still be telling these stories almost 27 years after beginning what's become the UMTRR in 1996 (and before

that on the Prodigy "bulletin board," exactly when I don't recall). From us here at UMTRR HQ, may you and yours enjoy the blessings of the season. And if you can, please reach out to those who can use a little help at this time of the year.

Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers,
George

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