



*IrwinsJournal.com Presents:*

## **The Unofficial Micro-Trains<sup>®</sup> Release Report Issue #333 – September, 2024**

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Hello again everyone! This month we learn that Christmas comes in **three** sizes from the folks at Micro-Trains for 2024... if you pre-order, that is. We've also got a modernization of sorts of a freight car that was released by Micro-Trains in 1989, a virtual two pack with a Rather Large CNW, and a pre-order for a prototype that was inspired by an MTL model – how about that? Let's have a look...

### **N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:**



**071 00 600, \$37.95.**

**Reporting Marks: WP 8925.**

**89 Foot TOFC Flat Car, Western Pacific.**

Yellow with gray and black decks and red/orange hitches. White reporting marks on black panel on left, white roadname on black panel on right, and mostly black lettering otherwise. Small white and black stylized feather herald in center. White on black double COTS panel on far right. Approximate Time Period (ATP): 1980 (build date) to 1985. This item is not on MTL Dealer Standing Orders.

After the giant feathers which were symbolic of the Western Pacific's "Rides Like A Feather" slogan, the small stylized version which was the last for the WP before it went into the Union Pacific seems like a bit of a letdown. Well, there's only so much room on which to fit any lettering at all on a flat car, even an 89 foot one. The bingo photo showing this herald as it appeared on the 8925 as of June 1983 is on [RRPictureArchives.net](http://RRPictureArchives.net). There are several other cars of this type pictured here as well: WP 8826 in Dolton, Illinois in May 1985, the 8862 in Dike, California in September 1984, the 8903 in San Bernadino, California in September 1985, WP 8917 in Cajon, California in August 1984, the 8968 also in Cajon in March 1982, and 8988 hiding in the background of a yard shot from April 1981.

The Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) for April 1981 shows the series WP 8801 to 9000 with a rather long description: "Flat, Flush Deck, Equipped With Movable Foldaway Container Pedestals, Hitches and Bridge Plates, For Transporting Trailers or Containers, or Combinations of Both." The AAR Designation was FC, which leans more toward carrying containers than trailers. The inside length (basically, meaning the length of the deck) was 89

feet 4 inches, inside width 9 feet, outside length 94 feet 8 inches, extreme height 8 feet 8 inches (which I think considers the hitches), and capacity 140,000 pounds.

According to RailcarPhotos.com, these flat cars were built by Pullman-Standard in August, 1980, the series WP 8801 to 9000. The P-S trademark is visible on the left end of the side. The exact prototype for the MTL 071 series isn't known to me – yet, anyway – and I am hardly an expert on this particular type of car. But it looks like there's at least decent alignment between the prototype and the model here. There are enough photos online that I can leave further comparisons to the reader.

It's noted on Page 72 of the **Western Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** that "One theory is that the cars actually came from Pullman's inventory and were built on speculation for Trailer Train." It's also noted in the **Color Guide** that Trailer Train "objected to the use of their paint scheme." I guess there's more than a passing resemblance! So some but not all of these cars were repainted in basic black with white lettering. There's an example of that scheme on WP 8964 as of October 1982, also on Page 72 of the **Color Guide**. And there's also one on RailcarPhotos, WP 8862 as of September 1984. This could be a follow on release from MTL; we'll see.

The end of the ATP comes for this whole set when it was sold to the Rio Grande in 1985. Micro-Trains has released Rio Grande TOFC flat cars, but not from this particular series.



081 00 061 and 081 00 062, \$29.95 each.

Reporting Marks: WFCX 8909 and 8911.

51 Foot Mechanical Refrigerator, Exterior Post (Rib) Sides, No Running Board, Western Fruit Express.

Yellow sides, black ends, aluminum roof. Black lettering including Great Northern roadname, "Western Fruit Express / Refrigerator" and reporting marks on left. Large GN outline goat head herald on right. Multicolor ACI Label left of and below

herald. Approximate Time Period: 1967 (build date) to early 1970s.

At the top of these bytes I mentioned a car that hasn't been seen in the Micro-Trains release list since 1989... well, this is it, sort of (at right). This paint scheme was done on the same body style with a running board, in a six pack, Catalog 70032 in December 1989. The example is from my personal accumulation. The running board is out and an ACI Label has been added. The reporting marks on this six pack were WFCX, different from the usual WFE for most of the company's roster.



The first stop is Page 92 of the **Great Northern Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**, which has a bingo photo of WFCX 8909... incorrectly dated! The caption says the car was found in April 1964, but that's not possible as the "outline goat" herald wasn't introduced by the Great Northern until 1967. Perhaps the photo date is April 1974? Meanwhile, from the MFCL discussion list on groups.io, I have that the WFCX series 8800 to 8979 was built by Pacific Car and Foundry in 1967. This would make what MTL did the "as delivered" paint scheme. It's also noted that the "X" in the reporting marks is painted right over one of the ribs, and MTL has that detail right, as depicted on the bingo photo. Further, though, there is comparison made to the Pacific Fruit Express classes R-70-17, -18 and -19, which is sometimes how PC&F cars built for other railroads are described. Without getting too far off the point, these were 57 foot cars, longer than the MTL 081 body style (and the predecessor 070 body style also). The Micro-Trains model also has full ladders and a high mounted brake wheel while the prototype had short ladders and a low mounted brake wheel. The number of ribs (posts) per side is the same between prototype and model.

The Western Fruit Express listing in the ORER for October 1969 denotes the series WFCX 8800 to 8979 as "Large Cars Within Plate C Dimensions." They were described as "Refrigerator, All Steel" with an end note calling out movable bulkheads. The inside length was 50 feet, but remember that's not counting the installed refrigeration equipment. The inside width was 9 feet, inside height 8 feet 11 inches, outside length 63 feet 9 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, door opening 9 feet wide by 8 feet 8 inches high, and capacity 4022 cubic feet or 132,000 pounds. All 180 cars in the series were present and accounted for at that time.

Going back to the MFCL group, I see that Jim Eager pointed out that WFCX 8800 to 8979 became BNFE 8800 to 8979 when the Burlington Northern fully absorbed the cars of Western Fruit Express and Burlington Refrigerator Express, as well as cars from the Northern Pacific. Based on ORER lookups, it appears that this change was complete by sometime between October 1972, when the WFCX reporting marks were still in place, and July 1974, when those markings are gone from the Equipment Register and there are 177 cars with the BNFE reporting marks. So that's the end of the ATP.

In addition to the photo in the **Color Guide**, I also see images of WFCX 8882 and 8979 on the Fallen Flags site ( [www.rr-fallenflags.org](http://www.rr-fallenflags.org) , under the "Freight Cars-Misc & Private Owner" heading, then scroll down to the set of "Western Pacific Fruit Express" images (yes, the title should be just "Western Fruit Express"). Both of these shots are in glorious black and white.



**092 00 601 and 092 00 602, \$32.95 each.**

**Reporting Marks: CNW 437016 and 437206.**

**Two Bay Center Flow Covered Hopper, Chicago and North Western.**

Gray with mostly black lettering including reporting marks on left and large “CNW” on right. Red, white and black ball and bar “Chicago and North Western system” on left above reporting marks. White on black COTS panel on far right. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at four points along bottom of side. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the present.

The CNW series 437000 to 437299 was built by Thrall as their Job 774 in March and April 1994, according to RailcarPhotos.com. The MTL 092 body style is a model of an American Car and Foundry design so there are some detail differences versus the prototype. I’ll hit the ORER for October 1996, the first one in the Research Accumulation after the build date. The CNW is already within the Union Pacific listing by that time (it was acquired by UP in 1995). There are no inside dimensions shown for these cars; the outside length given was 41 feet 11 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, and capacity 3000 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. As of the October 2020 ORER, 252 of the original 300 cars were still on the roster. It seems to me to a reasonable bet that the ATP runs to “the present.”

A May 1994 photo of CNW 437075 indicates to me that how MTL painted these cars represents the “as delivered” scheme, with the exception of the conspicuity stripes which were added later. An overhead shot of CNW 437206 also on that site – bingo! – indicates an unusual delta between the prototype and the MTL 092 body style: there are only three hatches on the roof instead of four. This car, unlike others for which there are images on RailcarPhotos, is relatively clean as of February 2022. There was some, ahem, unauthorized additional decoration on the car at the time, but Union Pacific doesn’t allow graffiti on its models so you’ll need to add that yourself... if desired. Other cars in these series didn’t fare quite so well. For example the other car in this virtual two pack, CNW 437016, was about half covered in, ahem, incremental paint, as of April 2016, and it was missing the herald above the reporting marks. That photo along with five others of just this one car is on the site RRPictureArchives.net. Interestingly, only the shot dated April 2013 has the car with the herald, while photos from 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2011 show the car without it. I’m thinking that the herald is a “decal” of some sort, was replaced in time for the April 2013 photo, and then went missing again. Also noted is that some cars were repainted into the Union Pacific “Building America” scheme but retained their CNW reporting marks.





181 00 350, \$28.95.

**Reporting Marks: WM 36015.**

**50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Plug Door, No Running Board (Roofwalk), Low Brake Wheel, Western Maryland.**

Brown with white lettering including speed lettering roadname across side, reporting marks on left, "DFB" special equipment indicator left of door and "Cushion Car" right of door. Cushion underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 1967 (build date) into the 1980s.

This release marks a significant upgrade from a previous issuance from the same prototype series, which would be a model of WM 36003, in the colors of the successor Chessie System. It was run by Micro-Trains in December 2005, Catalog Number 038 00 020. At the time, I noted that the real cars had short ladders and a lowered brake wheel and that I wasn't sure if they were built that way. Here's the official MTL image of that 2005 release (at right).



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Page 33 of the **Western Maryland Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has a bingo photo of that car, but more importantly for us this time, also has an image of WM 36005, which is in the as delivered paint scheme that Micro-Trains has modeled this month. Besides the short ladders and low brake wheel, we also get a cushion underframe, as noted right on the car. There does remain the quibble that short ladders were used instead of grab irons. There is also somewhat of a "door thing" with the prototype being a generous 10 feet 6 inches and the model's being 9 feet, but, in my opinion, on a plug door that difference is much less noticeable.

The 36015 was part of the short series WM 36001 to 36020, the Western Maryland's B-29 class. The cars were originally built in late 1967 by Evans and were the first group of modern insulated boxcars bought by the WM. The as delivered paint was the famous "speed lettering" we see here. The 36015 was photographed in June 1984 still in this paint, while the Chessie System version was captured in September 1975. So yes, the original and Chessie versions of these cars co-existed.

The ORER for October 1969, the closest I have after the build date, 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. An end note calls out that the first eighteen of these cars are "equipped with 56 wooden 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 cars that supported that plant, the 21240 40 foot plug door boxcar in orange and black back in August 1996. As noted in my coverage of the Chessie version, the January 1976 ORER has

sometimes typical reporting illogic, with only two cars in the main series and the other eighteen as the subset with the pallets from Heinz!

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. The ATP could stretch into the 1980s given that information and the 1984 photo of sister car 36003, but you'd probably want to add an ACI Label, COTS panels, and a U-1 wheel inspection dot, in that chronological order.



**181 00 360, \$28.95.**

**Reporting Marks: CR 360168.**

**50 Foot Steel Boxcar, Single Plug Door, No Running Board (Roofwalk), Low Brake Wheel, Conrail.**

Brown with mostly white lettering including roadname and reporting marks on left and large "wheel on rail" herald on right. Yellow U-1 inspection "dot" (no black background), multicolor ACI Label and black on white double COTS panel on far right. Lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 1977 (based on paint scheme) to 1985.

Page 72 of the **Conrail Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** has the bingo photo of this car and its provenance: it was originally part of the New York Central series 78800 to 78949, Lot 935B, built at the Central's Despatch Shops in East Rochester, New York (not far from UMTRR HQ) in 1964. Micro-Trains has modeled cars from that NYC series, including this one done in May 1999 (at right).



The photo in the **Color Guide** of the 360168 is from March 1983, but I'm thinking that the car was painted years before. My evidence for this includes the ACI Label and U-1 "dot" but more importantly the Quite Large Herald and Pretty Large Roadname. Those were applied earlier than later in the history of the Consolidated Rail Corporation (there were exceptions, of course). Oh, yeah, there's also the service date of January 1977! Another example of this decoration is sister car 360164, available on the Conrail Photo Archive. It has the Conrail Class BE55B, which is a bit of a misnomer since the "E" often references former Erie Lackawanna cars, not former New York Central cars. Well, that's Conrail for you. For what it's worth, the 360164 has a high, not a low, brake wheel, but the bingo photo of the 360168 in the **Color Guide** is inconclusive on that point.

The ORER for January 1978 has a surprise for us: CR 360168 is in its own listing, described as "Refrigerator, Cushion Underframe, Plug Doors, Two Evans Adjustable Load Dividers Arranged For Locking Positions Along Full Length of Car with Incremental Adjustments of One Inch." Yikes, that's a mouthful. It also sent me back to the bingo photo and yes, the image

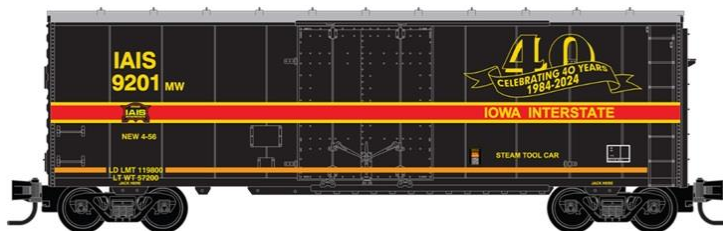
shows extended draft gear on this particular car. So maybe MTL could have gotten away with the cushion underframe on this release instead of the standard underframe used with the 181 body style. I'll note that the "main series" of which the 360168 was an exception, namely, CR 360127 to 360181, was also described as having cushion underframes. Anyway, the AAR Designation was RBL, and the dimensions were: inside length 50 feet 2 inches, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 10 feet even, outside length 57 feet 8 inches, extreme height 15 feet 1 inch, door opening 10 feet 6 inches (a "door thing" here but again, not as noticeable with a plug door boxcar), and capacity 4678 cubic feet or 140,000 pounds.

In the April 1985 ORER, the description has been cut back to simply "Refrigerator" but the 360168 is still in its own listing. However, that's the last Equipment Register in which I see it.



In addition to the above, the **Western Pacific Wood Caboose with Offset Straight Cupola (051 00 221, \$45.95, Reporting Marks WP 601)** is now available, confirmed via online sale listings. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the July 2024 issue.

*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 **September 30**.*



**Targeted Delivery January 2025:**

**074 00 500, \$28.95.**

**Reporting Marks: IAIS 9201 MW.**

**40 Foot Steel Plug Door Boxcar, No Running Board, Full Side and End Ladders, Iowa Interstate 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.**

Black with red and yellow stripe across middle of car. Aluminum roof and band at top of sides. Mostly yellow lettering including reporting marks on left, roadname on right inside stripe, and 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary banner at top right. Small red and yellow "Iowa Interstate" herald on left inside stripe. White on black COTS panel at bottom far right. Lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: August 2024 to present. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. This pre-order was first announced via e-mail from MTL on August 23, 2024.

Here's the latest example of "the model becomes the prototype" — the real Iowa Interstate Railroad liked the MTL Special Edition 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary boxcar honoring their railroad (102 00 300, June 2024) that they used the artwork for that car to create a car of their own! OK, it's not the same body style and it's a little less ornate, but it's the thought that counts!

We'd discussed the Iowa Interstate during the pre-order coverage of the Special Edition IAS 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Car (January 2024 UMTRR) so this time, let's have a look at the Central States Steam Preservation Association (CSSPA), which also worked with Micro-Trains to make this prototype 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary car a reality. According to a recent press release on the association's website ( [www.csspa.org](http://www.csspa.org) ), "The Railroad Development Corporation (RDC) brought [steam locomotives] #6988 and #7081 over from China in 2006, performed a full restoration, and put these two locomotives in service for the Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS). In 2013, when IAIS decided not to continue the steam program, CSSPA was born, and was fully incorporated on August 6, 2014. For the past decade, CSSPA has maintained and operated both #6988 and #7081 and now takes on the added responsibility of fundraising to keep these locomotives in service." One focus of that fundraising will be the completion of the required 15 year inspection of the 6988, which will take place at the Silvis, Illinois shops of the Railroad Heritage of Midwest America—a former Rock Island facility. This inspection is really a rebuilding of the locomotive, so it's going to take a while —and a nontrivial amount of money. CSSPA is soliciting donations for this; see their website for more information.



How about a bingo photo (at left) — and this time, I can bring it directly into these bytes courtesy of the folks behind the red and yellow sign, who in turn credit the Iowa Interstate itself. This image was captured at the Iowa State Fair in August 2024, the debut of the car at an exhibit there. The 9201 is fresh out of the paint shop! There are other photos on [RRPictureArchives.net](http://RRPictureArchives.net) which show the 9201 before its repainting. That "New 4-56" lettering is what's on the car, and what was on the car prior to its repainting into the scheme you see here; before the

40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary scheme it had been in black with yellow lettering back at least as far as August 2018. It had been in use as a tool car before that, and had a six foot sliding door. As you can see, it's been replaced with what looks more like a upright cabinet door to me. The MTL 074 body style is as close as the folks in Talent can get to that without some expensive retooling. The 074 body style also has a high brake wheel instead of the low one on the prototype... but as already noted, it's the thought that counts. Speaking of which, I see on the MTL preliminary artwork that to the right of the door, there's a small MTL trademark along with lettering I can't quite read. There's a closeup photo of it in the September Micro-News, available on the MTL website (see "Dealer Info" in the "Information" dropdown).

**N SCALE REPRINTS:** No releases or pre-order announcements this month.

**N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS:** No releases or pre-order announcements this month.



## N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:



025 44 366, \$30.95.

**Reporting Marks: SRN 1898.**

**50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Door, Sabine River and Northern/ex-Port Huron and Detroit.**

Release #6 in the ex-Per Diem series (pre-orders were not taken for this

series). Blue with narrow white and red band above centerline of side. White lettering including large "PH D" on left and roadname and reporting marks on right. White on black double panel consolidated stencils on far right; multicolor ACI Label left of door. White restenciled reporting marks on black patch panel. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at six points along bottom of side. Moderate to heavy weathering and rust effects. Lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 2014, plus or minus. Previous Releases: Technically none, but see text.

We've got two previous examples of cars in this general decoration to share to start things off here. First is Catalog Number 025 00 970 (at right), Road Number 1042, January 2017 (Per Diem Series #12).



And then there's PHD 1068 (at left), which was part of the Ex-IPD Weathered Four Pack that was released in May 2019 (993 05 530). Its catalog number is 025 52 970, keeping with the catalog number for the "clean" release.

Typically in the Per Diem series, the boxcars in question were repainted or restenciled for other railroads well before the actual railroad went out of business, assuming that it did of course. This time, the opposite is true: the boxcars of the Port Huron and Detroit rolled on even after the sale of the line to the Chesapeake and Ohio in 1984. PHD cars remained in service after the C&O takeover, with one lone holdout in the boxcar series PHD 1000 to 1099 remaining in the October 1996 Equipment Register.

Going back to January 1978, we see these dimensions: inside length 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 7 inches, outside length 57 feet 3 inches, extreme height 14 feet 10 inches, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 154,000 pounds or 5077 cubic feet. That last number is a good one, as the MTL 025 body style is based on the FMC production of a car of that size. And sure enough, the bingo on RRPictureArchives.net of the 5042, the car done as the "clean" release in 2017, shows the FMC logo that MTL reproduces. We've got a good match. But we're not looking at a clean car this time, are we George? No, and not the previous time either. The 2019 component of the Weathered Four Pack was still part of the same prototype series, however. I tagged it (pun intended) as being at the tail end of the overall ATP for these cars as PHD equipment, or the mid-1990s.

That brings us to this release. If you look closely – and I’ll help with a piece of the official MTL image at right – there is not only the restenciled SRN reporting marks, but “HS” reporting marks to the left of those. That matches the bingo photo, which was found by Special Correspondent David Grothe, on the “Thunder Train” site (direct URL [thundertrain.org/trains-050414.html](http://thundertrain.org/trains-050414.html) , no “www,” then scroll down). SRN 1898 was found in a train in Little Rock, Arkansas, in May 2014. I wonder if the black blocks cover yet another set of reporting marks?



Yes, they do! We don’t know the PHD road number, but before becoming SRN 1898 the boxcar was HS 16000 and prior to that it was USLX 8902. This according to the caption accompanying a photo of the car on RailcarPhotos.com. That image is dated May 2006 but the car doesn’t yet have conspicuity stripes. Over on RRPictureArchives, there are two angles of the car taken on the same day in June 2008. I suppose it’s possible to widen my “plus or minus” ATP here given that the SRN restencil had already occurred. And no wonder it looks like that lettering has deteriorated quite a bit between 2006 and 2014... as has the rest of the car, for that matter.

*The following was announced on the Micro-Trains website on September 16.*



**104 44 041, \$29.95.**

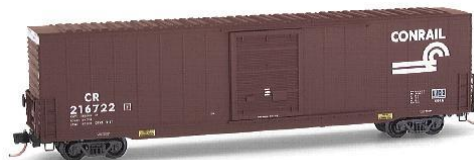
**Reporting Marks: CR 216718.**

**60 Foot Excess Height Single Door Boxcar, Rivet Sides, Conrail.**

Brown with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left, roadname and medium herald on right,

and class code X64 at bottom right. White on black COTS panel at bottom right. Black on yellow warning boxes at far bottom left and right. Black lettering on white panel at top of ends. Moderate weathering; multicolor graffiti on lower portion of both sides of car. Approximate Time Period: 1980s (1980 build date) to as late as 2011 (add conspicuity stripes after 2005); or strictly speaking, 1987, plus or minus. Previous Release: Road Number 216722, October 1999.

Here’s the only previous release of this car, CR 216722, a “clean” run from back in the Previous Century (at right). We can see that besides being weathered, this release is also Not A Reprint as the herald is in a lower position than on this 1999 run, and the warning boxes are in different positions. This time, the X64 class code is included as well.



It’s noted in the MTL car copy that these cars were built by Penn Central in the former Pennsylvania Railroad Samuel Rea Shops in 1969. This series has been done by Micro-Trains in PC as well (Catalog 104020, Road Number 278655, March 1999, at right). Back then, I reported that many of these cars went from PC to CR while keeping their original numbers, and speculated



that it was probably via a simple, and sloppy, restencil job. (And I did a speculative example of this myself, posting the results on the UMTRR Website (see the “Conrailized” page). Eventually, though, at least some made it into “real” Conrail paint. Examples of this are in the Conrail Photo Archive. As usual, the paint schemes vary and include multiple sizes of the “wheel on rail” herald.

It looks as though some cars were moved into different series when repainted as well. The original Penn Central/Conrail number series 278650 to 278728 declined from its original 79 cars in 1969 to just 4 total cars in April 1995. This Weathered Release was in a group of two, 216717 and 216718, first seen by me in the July 1987 Register. The key dimensions: inside length 60 feet 8 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 12 feet 10 inches, outside length 68 feet, extreme height 16 feet 11 inches, door opening 10 feet, and capacity 7300 cubic feet or 137,000 pounds. Other cars with the same dimensions are in listings of one or two cars with numbers in the 216700s as well, though with some other boxcars mixed in here and there. And so much for consistency. Both cars are present in the ORER through April 1999, the last Register I have prior to the split of Conrail between CSX and Norfolk Southern. Both cars went to Norfolk Southern, as seen in the NS registration in the January 2000 ORER. One of these was left in the January 2002 Register.

That one left would have been the 216718, the subject of the MTL model. The prototype was photographed in Elkhart, Indiana in April 2005. The image is on RRPictureArchives. It looks like the service date was in 1987, which aligns with the first view of the car in the ORER stash. The paint is holding up pretty well considering its 18 year age. I note two orange rectangles at the far ends of the car that aren’t present on the model but wouldn’t be hard to add. Also comparing the MTL 104 body style to the real thing, the ends differ a bit and the prototype has straight bottom sills.

Bonus coverage: The road number of the 1999 “clean” release is in the series CR 216722 to 216731 as of the July 1989 Register, where there are all nine cars present. The car count remained at nine as of April 1995 and was down to three in April 1999. Only one was shown in the Norfolk Southern roster as of January 2000 following the split of Conrail, and CSX didn’t have any.



**993 05 078, \$65.95.**

**Reporting Marks: UP 300331 and 300432 (Catalog Numbers 030 44 181 and 030 45 181).**

**Union Pacific Weathered Two Pack.**

Jewel box packaging. Consists of two MTL 030 series 50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcars with Double Doors. Yellow with aluminum roof, ends, and side sills. Black lettering including

reporting marks on left. Red roadname on right. Medium red, white and blue shield herald at top left. White on black double COTS panel below the second “I” in



“Pacific.” Multicolor ACI Label below the first “I” in “Pacific.” The 300331 has yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection “dot,” crossed out in black, between the second and third grab irons on right and white restenciled dimensional data and service date (January 1980) on black patch panels below reporting marks on left. The 300432 has light to moderate weathering; the 300331 has moderate to heavy weathering. These cars have a lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: Strictly speaking, 1974 for the 300432 and 1980 for the 300331 to at least the early 1990s as painted. Previous Releases: Single Release, Road Number 300305, August 1997; then Runner Pack #73 with Road Numbers 300303, 300318, 300239, and 300335, February 2013 (pre-order coverage, August 2012 UMTRR).

These cars are “not a reprints” from previous runs, given the lowered underframe and body mounted couplers, and the change from aluminum to black trucks. The first release in 1997 pre-dates online official MTL images, so at right is the Runner Pack photo from 2013. That single version from August 1997 was the first Micro-Trains car to have aluminum trucks and underframe. I also remarked at the time that it was “a throwback to the days when UP bought up colorful freight car paint instead of other railroads.”



The prototype series of those runs and these two Weathered Releases are the same. They were built by FMC in 1974, series 300300 to 300449, and received the Union Pacific class A-100-16. (UP kept the A for “Automobile” on its double door cars long after cars of this type were no longer used to ship automobiles.) A bingo on that first release is on Page 15 of the **Union Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment Volume 2** by Lou Schmitz. The only minor quibbles I see between model and prototype are a relatively minor difference in the side sills, and the use of short ladders instead of grab irons on the sides. The photo on Page 15 dates to September 1976, but on Page 16 there’s a January 1989 shot of UP 300362 in plain brown with a small herald. We’ll need to keep this in mind for the ATP.

The April 1975 ORER is as close as I can get to the build date. The cars are described as “Box, Steel, Cushion Underframe, Staggered Doors, Side Wall Lading Anchors, 50K”. The inside length is 50 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 10 feet 6 inches, outside length 55 feet 8 inches, extreme height 15 feet, door opening 16 feet, and capacity 5080 cubic feet or 192,000 pounds. All 150 cars were in service at that time.

Jumping to the July 1992 ORER, there are 93 cars in the main series and 19 more listed simply as “Box, Steel” with the XP designation which is for cars “specially equipped, designed or structurally suitable for a specific commodity loading.” Some of the group does hang on to the January 2000 Equipment Register: 15 cars in the main series and seven more in several “Box, Steel” subsets. The cars are all gone no later than October 2004, which ends the overall ATP before the coming of conspicuity stripes.



The two cars in this Weathered Pack, strictly speaking, don't have the same ATP out of the box. As noted in my description above, the 300331 has a service date in 1980, while the 300432 retains the original "New" date of November 1974. There's also a heavier coat of weathering on the 300331 which makes sense in this context. UP doesn't allow graffiti on its models so we don't see any on these cars.



The bingo photo for the 300331 is on RailcarPhotos.com, and it is a bingo, right down to the patch panels and the "cross-out" of the U-1 wheel inspection dot! The photo date is July 1980. The 300432 is seen in an overhead shot as of February 1977 on RRPictureArchives. In general, I see photos of cars in the series in the as delivered paint scheme as late as 1992 on the Fallen Flags website, so we know the ATP goes that far. I only found two shots later than that, of UP 300367 from the same series, and the car was in the later brown scheme.



993 05 079, \$74.95.

**Reporting Marks: FEC 15227 and 15670 (Catalog Numbers 125 44 021 and 125 45 021).**

**Florida East Coast Weathered Two Pack.**

Jewel box packaging. Consists of two MTL 125 series Ortner Three Bay Rapid Discharge Hoppers. Red with mostly white lettering including very large reporting marks in center and

"Don't Make Crossings Deadly!" warning left of reporting marks. White on black COTS panel at bottom right. White simulated reflective stripes along bottom of sides. Approximate Time Period: late 1980s to early decade of the 2010s (based on paint scheme). Previous Releases: Unweathered, Road Number 15178, January 2005 and Road Number 15088, June 2005; then Runner Pack #119 with Road Numbers 15065, 15093, 15107 and 15124, August 2016 (announced March 2016); Weathered/Graffiti, Road Number 15726, July 2019.

With the forthcoming spartan scheme FEC Ortner Cars coming soon (Runner Pack #228, targeted delivery next month), the folks in Talent employ some further Economies of Scale to bring us this "Operation Lifesaver" version of cars from the same general series. Based on the information I have, this scheme, and the one with billboard lettering but without the "skull and crossbones" warning, and the spartan reporting marks only scheme all co-existed. Calling an end to the ATP for any of these cars is challenging because the Florida East Coast stopped listing its equipment in the ORER no later than the January 2018 issue, and possibly before that.

To add to the complexity, the two cars in this Weathered Pack come from different prototype series. The 15227 was part of the series FEC 15000 to 15299, built in December 1979 or early 1980. The October 1986 ORER shows 299 cars in the series 15000 to 15299, with the following

dimensions: inside length 31 feet 3 inches, inside height 9 feet 10 inches, outside length 43 feet 10 inches, extreme height 13 feet 2 inches, and capacity of 2300 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. The January 2002 ORER shows 298 of the cars still in service. Exactly when the skull and crossbones were added to the base red and white paint scheme would be a guess on my part, and I'm guessing late 1980s here, but Rule #1 ("It's Your Railroad") always applies.

The 15670 has a bingo on Fallen Flags as of January 2011. This one's in the series FEC 15500 to 15699, another set of 2300 cubic foot cars. I first see these, all 200, in the July 1989 ORER. There were still 200 in the October 2004 ORER. The last car count available to me was 65 in the October 2014 Register.

According to John Sykes, whom I've quoted just about every time an FEC Ortner Hopper is released, the repainting into the plain brown and white sometime after the final set of these cars arrived in 1989. The fact that we have the prototype 15670 in the scheme modeled by MTL in 2011 indicates that this repainting certainly took some time!

**N SCALE MULTI-PACKS:** The three pre-order packs for September are expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR Pre-Order Coverage was in the April 2024 issue for all three packs. All of these packs are in jewel case packaging.



**Runner Pack #227, also known as the Norfolk Southern Four Pack (983 00 227, \$149.95, Jewel Case Packaging).** The individual Catalog and Road Numbers are: 027 51 530, 440219; 027 52 530, 440229; 027 53 530, 440307; 027 54 530, 440341. These are the first through fourth releases for this item. These cars have cushion underframes and body mounted couplers.



**The BNSF with Tarp Covers Weathered Three Pack (983 02 252, \$104.95, Jewel Case Packaging).** The individual Catalog and Road Numbers are: 108 51 372, 617442; 108 52 372, 617462; 108 53 372, 617477. These are the third through fifth releases for this item, counting the virtual two pack of clean releases from December 2017 (108 00 37x, Road Numbers 615546 and 615587). The tarp loads are multi-media kits.



**The C&O Weathered Gondolas with Coil Loads Three Pack (983 02 253, \$95.95, Jewel Case Packaging).** The individual Catalog and Road Numbers are: 105 51 066, 305005; 105 52 066, 305012; 105 53 066, 305054. These are the first through third releases for this item. Some incremental information on this pack from our

Special Correspondent David Grothe: a prototype photo of C&O 335005, one of the three cars in this set, appears on the blog of Tom Patterson, an HO Scale modeler who details constructing one of these cars using a Con-Cor gondola as a start. The overhead shot of the 335005 shows a yellow interior, which probably helps with visibility as coils are loaded into the gondola. While the inside of the MTL cars aren't yellow, that's simple enough to fix. The direct URL for this page is [cwerailroad.blogspot.com/2020/12/why-am-i-doing-this.html](http://cwerailroad.blogspot.com/2020/12/why-am-i-doing-this.html) and shows a great example of a proto-freelance pike called the Chesapeake, Wheeling and Erie Railroad.

*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 **September 30**.*



**Targeted Delivery February 2025:**  
**983 00 232, \$99.95.**

**Reporting Marks: None.**

**Logging Car Four Pack (Runner Pack #231).**

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of four MTL 114 series 40 Foot Modern Log Cars (Spine Log Car with Uprights) with simulated log loads. Black with no lettering and simulated log loads. Approximate Time Period: much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Previous Releases: It's complicated, see below. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.



The last time we saw this body style, the cars were painted and lettered: that was the Weyerhaeuser Four Pack, also known as Runner Pack 143, released in June 2018. To get an unpainted version, drop back to the virtual three pack run in April 2016



(image of one of these at right). This is as good a time as any to clarify the “It’s Complicated” note as to Previous Releases: If you’re just counting unpainted cars of this body style, there have been nineteen up to this point. But they all have different loads and they mostly have different base catalog numbers. Cars 1, 2, and 3 were part of 2005’s Chehalis Western Train Set (993 01 010), and cars Number 11 through 14 were in Runner Pack #57, issued in November 2011.

Last time I was, as usual, pretty sparse on prototype data, and that hasn’t changed. Since it’s been a while, it might be useful to recheck the websites that had information on logging operations which I cited back in 2016.

The page hosted by Michigan State University has a slightly different URL than last reported ( [project.geo.msu.edu/geogmich/RR-logging.html](http://project.geo.msu.edu/geogmich/RR-logging.html) ) about the history of Michigan’s logging railroads, though the photos could be representative of just about anywhere. By 1887 there were 89 logging railroads in the state, making the harvesting of lumber much more efficient than via river or overland with sleighs – and leading to a huge deforestation of the state.

DigitalNC has a set of photos of lumber and logging operations in Transylvania County, North Carolina, including some “human interest” images. The URL for this is a bit long... [www.digitalnc.org/blog/railroad-and-logging-photographs-from-transylvania-county-on-digitalnc/](http://www.digitalnc.org/blog/railroad-and-logging-photographs-from-transylvania-county-on-digitalnc/) . This is the same as last time; it’s from August 2014.

The “Florida Memory” site has images including loading of cars that look similar to MTL products. Go to [www.floridamemory.com](http://www.floridamemory.com) and search on the term “Logging Railroads,” which should return 70 images.

In addition to those three sources, I’ve recently added the book **Logging Railroads of the Adirondacks** to the Research Library. This book includes extensive coverage of every logging operation that took place in the region, from the largest to the smallest, and includes plenty of photos and maps. These railroads existed from 1890 to 1950, although more in the first half of that time period than the second. As happened in other states, there was plenty of deforestation, but the “Blue Line” of the Adirondack Park was a mitigating factor, as was the fact that several industrialists established their summer camps in the mountains and didn’t always allow their properties to be forested.





**Targeted Delivery February 2025:**

**983 02 259, \$114.95.**

**Reporting Marks: ATSF 999046, 999141, and 999643.**

**Santa Fe Weathered Caboose Three Pack.**

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of three MTL 100 Series 36 Foot Steel Cabooses. Three of four side windows have been blocked. The 999046 and 999141 are red with yellow stripe, large yellow circle cross herald below cupola, white reporting marks at bottom center, and small black and white simulated reflective circle crosses at four points along side. The 999046 has a white cupola. The 999643 is brown with white reporting marks. All three

cars have a multicolor ACI label, white on black COTS panel, white side grab irons, and light to moderate weathering. Cars have body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: in general for the prototype series, as early as the mid-1960s, but more likely the late 1970s, to as late as the 1990s. Previous Release: Technically none given blocked windows and weathering. Unweathered releases are as follows: Red with white cupola: None; Red with red cupola: Road Number 999229, September 2020, and Road Number 999212, June 2024; Brown: Road Number 2216, January 2003. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.



Back just a few months ago, Micro-Trains released a clean version of the red with red cupola waycar (the Santa Fe's term for cabooses) that is similar to but not exactly the same as the forthcoming three pack. My commentary on that car can be leveraged for the two red cars. We'll have to dig a little deeper for the brown car, but first things first.

The Santa Fe's CE-1 class of waycars (that's the railroad's term for cabooses), which includes both the 999046 and 999141, had a long history, but here, as we did in June, we'll start at the rebuilding of these cars which took place between 1966 and 1968, resulting in the series 999000 to 999314. Back in 2006, S. Roger Kirkpatrick compiled a list of "Captive Cabooses" from multiple Santa Fe classes, including this one, and the data includes when they were rebuilt. When this work was done, the number and type of windows were changed. Cushion underframes were also added, and to designate this the paint color was changed from the traditional mineral red (i.e. brown) to a much brighter red. These cars were also in pool service, as opposed to each crew having an assigned caboose. By interpolating the chart in the "Captive Cabooses" page, we get a 1966 rebuild date for the 999046, and a 1967 rebuild date for the 999141, assuming that they were done in numerical order, good enough to start the ATP.

Neither actually appears on the “Captive Caboose” list. The MTL 100 body style is based on a Missouri Pacific/Texas and Pacific prototype so there are some differences, the window count and arrangement being the most notable.

I also mentioned in June that on the same “Captive Caboose” page Kirpatrick writes, “Santa Fe’s fleet of waycars shrank from hundreds of cars in a dozen classes in the mid-1980s to less than one hundred in only two classes (CE-8 and CE-11) at the time of the BNSF merger a decade later.”

RRPictureArchives has a bingo for ATSF 999141, taken in August 1975 in Oceanside, California. The image could be the direct inspiration for this model based on the MTL preliminary artwork (at right).



We’ve got three bingo photos on RRPictureArchives for ATSF 999643 in the “local service” brown paint with white lettering. Lettering on the waycar indicates that it was in Santa Fe’s CE-7 class. We’ve got a shot from January 1975 in Fullerton, California. This view has the cupola on the left and two small windows on this side. It’s also apparent that the road number is on a patch panel, suggesting a renumbering not long before the photo was taken. This car has an arched roof cupola, different from the CE-1s and the MTL 100 body style. Then there’s a photo from February 1976 in Fullerton, California, showing the side with the cupola on the right and just one window. Finally there’s a shot of this car with 999644, also in brown, bookending 999949 in red and yellow, making for a nice clean trio in San Bernadino, California, in February 1977. Note the use of light weathering on the MTL preliminary artwork (at right) which suggests a late 1970s ATP start.



The “Captive Caboose” page has the CE-7 class numbered from 999640 to 999651. These were rebuilds from two groups: some built by American Car and Foundry in the late 1920s and some constructed by the Santa Fe itself in 1942. Both sets were steel cars; I checked that.



Wrapping up this commentary, here’s a look at the previous brown and white Santa Fe waycar from back in 2002. Calling this a “previous release” might be a bit of a stretch, but it is the general idea.



*Targeted Delivery February 2025:*

**983 02 260, \$119.95, TTX Flat Car Three Pack With Bridge Load.**

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of:



- Two MTL 071 Series 89 Foot TOFC Flat Cars, Reporting Marks JTTX 942513 and 942621. Yellow with white reporting marks on black panel left of center. White circa-1991 “TTX” logo on black panel right of center. Mostly black lettering otherwise.



- One MTL 134 series 60 Foot Flat Car, Reporting Marks OTTX 97355. Yellow and light brown sides. White reporting marks on black panel left of center. White circa-1991 “TTX” logo on black panel right of center. Mostly black lettering otherwise including Trailer Train/TTX Class TSH 60A left of TTX logo. White on black COTS panel at far right. Orange conspicuity stripes at six points along side. Simulated wood floor. Metal wheels and body mounted couplers.

White reporting marks on black panel left of center. White circa-1991 “TTX” logo on black panel right of center. Mostly black lettering otherwise including Trailer Train/TTX Class TSH 60A left of TTX logo. White on black COTS panel at far right. Orange conspicuity stripes at six points along side. Simulated wood floor. Metal wheels and body mounted couplers.

Approximate Time Period: early to mid-decade of the 2000s, or add conspicuity stripes and go into the decade of the 2010s. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Let’s start this three pack with a look at the 60 Foot Flat Car, since I can be relatively lazy and borrow from last month’s coverage of the debut of this body style. (See last month’s UMTRR for more on this prototype series of cars.) This time, there aren’t conspicuity stripes on the car, which in theory limits the ATP to around 2005 or so. This forthcoming road number, 97335, is in between last month’s road numbers, 97331 and 97409, which puts it in the same series of TSH60A class cars, OTTX 97194 to 97148. These were built by Thrall in April and May 1974. As built, they were brown with white “Trailer Train” lettering and end mounted brake wheels. This was changed at some point to side mounted ratchet brakes. I didn’t need to know exactly when this happened for last month’s review, since the conspicuity stripes came later. This time, it’s more important. The information I found on this point is not exactly conclusive but seems to point to the early 2000s as the more likely timeframe for this change. In other words, the ATP start is probably **after** the change to yellow paint with the TTX logo adopted in 1991. Rule #1 (“It’s your railroad”) still applies. The bingo photo for the 97335 is on RRPictureArchives.net. It was found in August 2015 in Elmhurst, Illinois carrying three farm tractors. It’s really hard to tell from the oblique angle whether it has conspicuity stripes.

Moving to the 89 foot cars, bingos for both JTTX 942513 and 942621 are also on RRPictureArchives. They were found in Clinton, Iowa, on the same day in July 2006, with weathering patterns that look a lot like the Micro-Trains artwork. In both cases, the reporting marks look like a stencil.

Both cars belonged to a relatively large series, 940515 to 942848, that held only a total of 81 cars in the January 2006 ORER. I'll give the usual flat car dimensions here: "inside length" 89 feet 3 inches, inside width 9 feet even, outside length 93 feet 8 inches, extreme height 4 feet even, and gross rail weight 220,000 pounds. The car count was down to just 38 cars as of the July and October 2007 ORERs, then 29 in the January 2011 Register, back up one to 30 in the April 2013 ORER, down to 17 in October 2014, 16 in January 2018, and 11 in October 2020 which is as far as I can go in the ORER stash. I really need to fix that... anyway, I don't think we quite get "To Present" and besides, it seems that within a year or two of the 2006 bingo photos there would have been conspicuity stripes applied to these cars. From there, I went backwards from the bingo photo date: 96 cars in October 2004, 93 in January 2002, 70 in January 2000, 51 in April 1999, 66 in July 1998... well, you get the idea. But going back to the October 1991 ORER, the first one I have after the change to the TTX logo, the car count is a much more impressive 601. That points to the limiting factor on this three pack to be the ATP of the 60 foot car versus the 89 foot cars. On the other hand, the variation in the car count also suggests to me that cars may have been numbered in and out of JTTX reporting marks, which further suggests that these exact cars may or may not have been on the roster for the entire span of the series. We do have those bingo photos, though, and they do align with the ATP for the 60 foot car. It'll have to do.

In the explanation of reporting marks which appears at the end of the TTX Company listing, JTTX is described as, "Flat cars, specially modified or equipped by the company or participant railroads with miscellaneous devices for special services, equipped with end of car cushioning." I suppose those special services could include large parts of a bridge!

Of course I needed to look a little deeper into the load that is coming with this three pack. These appear to be two identical sections of a bascule bridge, specifically, the rolling lift design which is also known as the "Scherzer" after its inventor William Donald Scherzer, an American engineer. The span is raised by rolling on a track somewhat resembling a rocking-chair base. We can see the gear teeth on the bridge sections in the artwork. This was the last engineering work Scherzer did before his untimely passing from typhoid fever in 1893 at the age of thirty-five. Railroads particularly adopted this design since it was handy to cross navigable waters. There are several extant examples on the "Chemical Coast Line" of Conrail Shared Assets, the former Elizabeth and Perth Amboy line of the Jersey Central, though I believe they no longer open to marine traffic. The second version of the CNJ's Newark Bay Bridge included Scherzer type spans as well. And you can see plenty of this design in Chicagoland too. The MTL drawings suggest a bridge that's in the range of 100 feet long, not unusual for this design.





**N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES:** #2 in the “Honoring Class I Railroads” series which, well, honors the **Norfolk Southern (102 00 845, \$29.95)** is now available, confirmed via online listings. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the February 2024 issue.



Also, the **Micro-Mouse Halloween Boxcar (102 00 850, \$39.95)** is now available, confirmed via online listings. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in last month’s issue (August 2024).

*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 **September 30**.*



**Targeted Delivery October 2024:**  
102 00 701, \$31.95.

**Road Number: 2024** (will be “MTL 2024” in UMTRR Website Listings).  
**Modified 60 Foot Excess Height Boxcar, 2024 Micro-Mouse Christmas Car.**

Multicolor sides. One side depicts the Micro-Mouse family at home watching television, on which appears a scene featuring Micro-Mouse and a Christmas tree made of cheese (a theme of the MTL 2017 Christmas Cars) and equipped with “3D Multimedia TV doors.” Other side has snow scene with red and black “Merry Christmas from Micro-Mouse” in center.

“Hey, Mrs. Micro-Mouse? What’s on TV?”

“**You** are, honey!”

And so we have the theme of this year’s Christmas Car. I’ll bet you didn’t know that Micro-Mouse was such a star. I hope his show **A Cheese Tree For Christmas** got a good time slot, perhaps “hammocked” between **A Charlie Brown Christmas** (my favorite special for the holidays) and **Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer** (Colleen’s, and mostly because of Hermey, the elf who wanted to become a dentist). Or perhaps the Micro-Mouse family has the DVD, or maybe they’re taking advantage of one of the many streaming services available these days to watch this heartwarming family saga of three mice in search of that perfect decoration. (Hmm,

if it's heartwarming and involves a couple, that might be the Hallmark streaming service... never mind.)

Actually, what's more likely is that they're watching the 2020s equivalent of a home movie: a video clip captured on a smartphone and uploaded to YouTube. And YouTube was certainly around in 2017 when that scene would have been "filmed": here is that very image on the N Scale Christmas Car from that year (102 00 130, October, at right).



Keeping with the television theme, the opposite side of this year's car is a bit of a "reboot" as it's based on the reverse side of this same 2017 Christmas Car (at left).

What **is** different this time around, though, is that unlike the direct releases for the annual Christmas Cars, for the first time, this is a pre-order item. I'm a little surprised at this, but I suppose the production of these cars with the "3D Multimedia TV Doors" takes a bit more time than needed for a more typical holiday offering. We'll see what this means for the market... and the aftermarket.

**Z SCALE:** No releases this month. There is a pre-order announcement, see below. Meanwhile, there were official images posted of the virtual two-packs of Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific 60 foot flat cars released last month (524 00 18x and 524 00 20x), which will be posted to the 2024 Month By Month Page on the UMTRR Website... ah, as soon as I get to it...

*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 **September 30**.*



**Targeted Delivery October 2024:**

507 00 750, \$29.95.

Road Number: 2024 (will be "MTL 2024" in UMTRR Website Listings).  
50 Foot Plug Door Boxcar, 2024  
Micro-Mouse Christmas Car.

Multicolor sides. One side depicts the Micro-Mouse family at home watching television, on which appears a scene featuring Micro-Mouse and a Christmas tree made of cheese (a theme of the MTL 2017 Christmas Cars).

Other side has snow scene with red and black "Merry Christmas from Micro-Mouse" in center.



Please see the above coverage of the N Scale version of this car, noting that as usual this is on a different body style than the N Scale version. Also, the Z Scale version isn't described as having the "3D Television" insert.



**HO SCALE:** The Norfolk and Western/ex-Virginian Two Bay Open Hopper Kit (2500-001, N&W 125134, \$49.95) is now listed as available. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the April 2024 issue.

And here's the first Grit 'N Grime series car that wasn't announced for pre-order, for which there's a tie to the above car...



2500-002, \$49.95.

**Reporting Marks: VGN 27020.**

**33 Foot Two Bay Open Hopper, Flat Ends, Rib Sides, Virginian Railway.**

Grit 'N Grime Series Car #11 (by my unofficial count). Black with white lettering including circle herald at top left, roadname across top and restenciled reporting marks on left. Multicolor ACI

Label below "A" in roadname and white on black double COTS panel on right below second "N" in roadname. Moderate weathering including fading and rust effects. Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: early 1970s (1972 service date on car) to early 1980s. There were no pre-orders for this item.

This is almost but not quite an "upscaling" of the N Scale version of this car which was released in October 2021 as one component of the Virginian Railroad Weathered Hopper Two Pack (993 05 940). That N Scale version (at right) had a service date of what has to be 1978 or later given that it had a U-1 wheel inspection "dot," just visible under the second "N" in the roadname. This HO Scale version has a service date of April 1972 – almost six years before the coming of the "dot" – and a double COTS panel below that second "N" instead. So call it a "backdate" as well as an "enlargement."



You would think that if the Virginian became a Fallen Flag in 1959, that none of its rolling stock would have survived long enough to get a ACI Label or a COTS panel. But the bingo on VGN 27010, on RRPictureArchives.net, is dated March 1984! In fact, there were two Virginian hoppers in a coal train on a connecting track between the Belt Railway of Chicago and the Baltimore and Ohio Chicago Terminal.

According to a worksheet posted on the STFMC group on groups.io, the 27010 fits into the Virginian's H-15A class, numbered 27000 to 27299, built in 1953. That's pretty late for a two-bay hopper. I suspect that these cars and the other ones in the 20000s differed a bit in details by class, but they were all 33 feet inside length, eight-panel hoppers, with the top chord 10 feet 9 inches above the rails. That is at least a nominal match to the Accurail 2500 body style.

As of the April 1982 Register, there were still 153 cars shown in a rolled up series 23000 to 29999, all 33 foot hoppers from various groups. In the April 1984 ORER there are no cars left in the series, though a total of 274 hoppers in VGN markings still remain in the N&W registration, along with 26 pulpwood cars. So the photographer of the VGN 27010 in March 1984 might have caught it on its final revenue trip, or the car had already been assigned to company service which would have taken it out of the Equipment Register.

*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 **September 30**.*



**Targeted Delivery January 2025:  
2000-004, \$59.95.**

**Reporting Marks: BN 481170.**

**Three Bay Center Flow Covered  
Hopper Kit, Burlington Northern.**

**"Grit N' Grime" Release #12 (by my  
unofficial count). Green with white  
lettering including medium herald**

**and reporting marks on left. White on black COTS Panel on far right. Light to moderate  
weathering and fade and rust effects. Scrawl and multicolor graffiti on both sides.  
Approximate Time Period: early 1990s into the decade of the 2000s. Previous Releases: None.**

This car covers one of the three phases of Burlington Northern paint. Generally speaking, they did co-exist since the large BN herald was still around as the "spartan" scheme was introduced and then modified to include a smaller version of the BN herald, which is the one modeled here. In an unusual reversion of sorts, that "logo over three lines" BN scheme returning the herald was introduced around 1991, yes, later than the "spartan" scheme of reporting marks only.

The 481170 was part of the series 481100 to 481199, built by AC&F in 1978. It was of 4650 cubic foot capacity. A photo is on RailcarPhotos.com is from July 2007; there are not yet conspicuity stripes on this car. This is towards the end of its service life, as there were only four cars left in the entire series in the January 2007 Equipment Register, and they're gone by the January 2011 ORER.





**Targeted Delivery October 2024:**  
5900-001, \$49.95.

**Road Number: 2024** (will be "MTL 2024" in UMTRR Website Listings).

**Modified 50 Foot Double Door**

**Boxcar, No Running Board, Low Ladders and Brake Wheel, Roller Bearing Trucks, 2024 Micro-Mouse Christmas Car.**

Multicolor sides depicting the Micro-Mouse family at home watching television, on which appears a scene featuring Micro-Mouse and a Christmas tree made of cheese (a theme of the MTL 2017 Christmas Cars). Includes "3D TV Door."

I will go a little beyond the "please see the coverage of the N Scale version of this car" here (although you are welcome to refer to it!) to note this is Micro-Trains' first venture into Christmas Cars in 1:87 scale – and it's a complete surprise to me. The description of this car above comes mostly directly from the description of the 5900 series body style on the Accurail website; I added the "no running board" part although I suppose that should be obvious. Although the HO Scale market in total is substantially larger than the N Scale market, I wonder if the same is true for Special Edition releases of this type – which obviously, this is. Certainly there have been Christmas cars and plenty of other holiday releases done for years in 1:87 (looking at you, Con-Cor and Bev-Bel). It's also at a higher price point than the N and Z Scale counterparts; I won't speculate on why that is the case. Will it be a success for the folks in Talent? I suppose we'll find out, particularly if there is another HO Christmas Car in 2025.

**MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS:** The N Scale sugar beet recently used in the Northern Pacific Weathered Three Pack of drop bottom gondolas with extensions is now available as a separate three pack (499 45 028, \$14.95, at right).



Also new this month is a second Scrap Load two pack (499 45 032, \$14.95, at left) which fits Micro-Trains' fifty foot gondolas.

It's not really an announcement, but the folks behind the red and yellow sign take you behind that red and yellow sign in a new Factory Tour Video on YouTube: [youtu.be/4USt6J3lRlo](https://youtu.be/4USt6J3lRlo) . The video runs about 31 minutes and is right up to date as among the cars featured is the just-released N Scale 60 Foot Flat Car. Fun fact: MTL printed up 3D renderings of the body of this car to ensure that all the parts would fit together. Things have certainly advanced technologically, no?

**DISCONTINUED ALERT:** With the 2024 Release Table **finally** caught up to the previous month (but please don't ask about the other tables on the UMTRR Website...) let's update that update with the items which are outta here from the year so far. First up to get a Dreaded "D" is the CNW/Union Pacific x-post boxcar (025 00 406, June). The Northern Lights/Aurora Borealis boxcar (038 00 650, July) is gone. The Cotton Belt flat car with load is shown as Out of Stock in one place and still available in another part of the MTL website, but more importantly, the catalog number was misstated in the MTL Micro-News; it's 045 00 **760**, not 045 00 **331**, which makes this technically a new release and not a reprint (even though it was "not a reprint" anyway). Considering that it was a pre-order I'm going with the sold out report here. Meanwhile, no question that both numbers of the Southern Pacific Mill Gondola (107 00 080, April and 107 00 081, May) and the first number of the Pennsylvania Mill Gondola (107 00 090, June) have rolled away (105 00 527, June). The second and third weathered versions of the TBOX boxcar are sold out (123 44 015, March and 123 44 016, April). The Jewel Box version of Runner Pack #224 of four C&O Hoppers is out (983 00 224, May) but the Foam Nest version remains in stock. Both versions of the Northern Oklahoma Weathered Bulkhead Flat Car Three Pack have been unloaded (9x3 02 247, June). The CEFX Boxcar Weathered Two Pack (993 05 073, June) has left the building, as has the Grand Trunk Center Flow Weathered Two Pack (993 05 074, July). In Z Scale, the Union Pacific x-post boxcars (511 00 163 and 164, February) were previously reported as out but now they're showing in stock so I've updated the Release Table.

Backing up to 2023 and N Scale items, there a number of items sold out: the first number of the Union Pacific Flat Car (045 00 721, December, second number still available); the Louisville and Nashville Tank Car (065 00 296, January); the second number of the NdeM 89 Foot Flat Car (072 00 032, October, first number already gone); the Erie Lackawanna Boxcar (073 00 610, December), the Santa Fe Hy-Cube Boxcar reprint (101 00 051, January); the Norfolk Southern 60 Foot Boxcar with tiny herald (103 00 190, November); the GATX/Soy Power Tank Car (110 00 590, July); the second number of the Canadian Pacific Skeleton Log Car (115 00 112, October); the Bureau of Mines Sleeper Single (142 00 510, May) and both versions of the Two Pack (9x3 02 213, also May); the Jewel Box version of Runner Pack #217 of four Chessie System Hoppers (983 00 217, November); the Jewel Box version of the Southern Pacific Repeater Boxcar Two Pack (983 02 207, January, foam nest version already gone); both versions of the Southern Pacific Hydra-Cushion Boxcar Four Pack (9x3 02 216, June) and the PRR Flat Car Three Pack with Load (9x3 02 217, May) and the Southern Pacific Weathered Trailer Four Pack (9x3 02 224, October); the Jewel Box version of the NYC Flat Car Three Pack with Load (983 02 219, June); the Foam Nest version of the NS Ribbon Rail Flat Car Three Pack #1 (993 02 220, August); the Foam Nest versions of the Conrail Center Flow Weathered Two Pack (993 05 061, October) and Santa Fe Hopper Weathered Three Pack (993 05 062, August); and the Jewel Box version of the Santa Fe Refrigerator Weathered Two Pack (983 05 063, November). In Z Scale, there's just one item: the Norfolk and Western Passenger Car (552 00 240, April) has left the station.

**INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT:** The Reading Hopper released in July (055 00 630) isn't the first one to have a white panel. I was reminded of this, not from my own accumulation, but from a sale listing for the 55490 RDG 86585 released in July 2004, official

MTL image at right. Which just goes to show that one cannot remember **everything**... well, at least I can't.

A 1937 photo of the sprawling H.J. Heinz Complex in Pittsburgh shared to the RealSTFMC list on groups.io yielded a comment from freight car historian Eric Hansmann which helps confirm an absolute end to the Approximate Time Period for the many Heinz freight cars done by MTL: "In the original 1937 image, the low, fenced area adjacent to the first building at left was where the HJ Heinz car repair facilities were located. By this time, all the Heinz reefers and insulated box cars had been retired." The pickle cars operated by Heinz remained on the roster, in fact one of them is visible, the sixth car from the right in the cut of cars in front of the plant. Here's the direct URL:  
[arc-anglerfish-arc2-prod-advancelocal.s3.amazonaws.com/public/KXS22EWJG5GRJGD6BPB2NB52OE.jpg](https://arc-anglerfish-arc2-prod-advancelocal.s3.amazonaws.com/public/KXS22EWJG5GRJGD6BPB2NB52OE.jpg) .



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*Psst... wanna see inside the 2024 N Scale Halloween Car? Here it is... don't tell anyone. Also, don't tell anyone that I needed to open it to figure out why the magnetic wand wasn't working for me. (Because you use the*



*wand at the **end** of the car, not the top or bottom, that's why, George. Sheesh.) That's a pretty large battery! I like the way the light is transmitted to the entire space where the doors would normally be on the 102 body style. Based on the name etched on the PC board, it appears that this assembly was originally developed for the "Thomas Kinkaid Painter of Light" Series of cars which began in 2019. I would imagine that since then it's been used in the Planets and Constellations Series as well. All in all, I'm impressed!*

**OOPS PATROL:** Nothing detected or reported from last month's bytes.

**FINALLY, A PICTURE IS WORTH... WELL, YOU KNOW:** Last month's special guest appearance by Colleen led to an important question: do you have any pictures of the Halloween layout?



Well, yes we do, and here's one...

As you can see, it's pretty simple. We didn't try to overdo it; no static grass was harmed, for example, even though that's among the "state of the art" in model railroading. Given that most of our young Trick or Treaters (and the grownups who accompany them!) only spend a few minutes with us, it's OK... and besides, there is Rule #1... I will note that those Woodland



Scenics "Oranges" in HO Scale sure look good as Pumpkins in N Scale! Regrettably, the Great Pumpkin has not appeared in this Pumpkin Patch either; sorry, Linus. (Look it up, kids.)

In this view, you can see most of the train that travels around the track during Trick or Treat afternoon and evening. From left to right, we've got the latest version of the Kato "Pocket Line" switcher, a "Trick" car, the NSE Heinz gondola with "pickle," a "Treat" car, the NSE Tootsie Roll gondola with example, and an Atlas Halloween car. That Kato unit can run on a single 1 ½ volt battery; we use an old Minitrix battery pack with speed control that holds six batteries – that have lasted through two Halloween nights!



And one more view, complete with Branson, who is busy supervising. I suppose our orange cat Oliver Henry should have been present also, but he was unavailable for comment. Black and orange colors are pretty appropriate for Halloween, come to think of it...

Until next time, do the best you can!

Cheers,  
George

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