



IrwinsJournal.com Presents:

The Unofficial Micro-Trains® Release Report Issue #334 – October, 2024

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Hello again everyone! Before we get to this month's bytes, we have this programming note: Next month's issue could be a fair bit late getting to your inbox... but we do have a really good reason! UMTRR HQ will be closed for much of late October and early November, for both some rare business travel and to celebrate the wedding (!) of our daughter Thalia to her fiancé (and all around great guy) Frank. Those of you who are veteran subscribers may recall when Thalia arrived, and like me, may find it hard to believe that she's walking down the aisle...or in this case, along the beach. UMTRR HQ will be open again, probably just in time to see the November Weathered Releases, which will put me way the usual byte-slinging schedule...

Now, let's take this month's look behind the red and yellow sign...

N SCALE NEW RELEASE FREIGHT EQUIPMENT:



045 00 790, \$29.95.

Reporting Marks: CR 758007.

**50 Foot Fishbelly Side Flat Car,
Conrail Maintenance of Way.**

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left. Yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" on right. Includes short bulkheads and

racking (multi-media kit). Approximate Time Period (ATP): 1978 (service date on car) to around 1986.

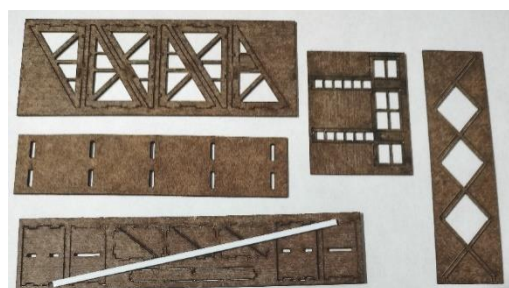
From the Micro-Trains car copy we have: "This Conrail Maintenance of Way flat car with Bettendorf trucks was modified to include a rack to hold pre-fabricated track switch panels and other large flat assemblies." Ah, maintenance of way equipment, such fun... so hard to uncover information. MOW equipment is rarely listed anywhere, so it's just by happenstance that I tend to find any data on any specific car. And the ATPs are usually no more than somewhat informed guesses, sometimes assisted with a bingo photo or two.

But wait! Given the May 1978 service date of the car, I tried the July 1980 Official Railway Equipment Register (ORER) anyway. And what do you know, there **is** a series listed, CR 758001 to 758010, with all ten cars. These are described as "Flat, Steel, Diagonal Plate Loading, F30d" with AAR Classification FMS. (More on FMS in the commentary on the BNSF Flat Cars, below.) The inside length was listed at 49 feet 3 inches, outside length 52 feet 6 inches, extreme height 14 feet 9 inches, which clearly includes the racking, and capacity 125,000 pounds.

The Class Code F30d is a clue to this car's origin, and to follow that clue we go to "Rob's Pennsy Page" (pr.railfan.net). The Pennsylvania Railroad constructed 250 of them in 1951, using a welded frame; unlike the F30a cars which were cast frame models built by the Pennsy back in 1924. In the PRR roster, the F30d cars carried road numbers 475300 to 475549. Of the original 250, 164 were in the original series in the ORER for April 1968. In the same July 1980 ORER that showed the Conrail series, there were also 31 cars still in PRR paint! Sticking with the Conrail series, though, we find that just two remained as of the October 1986 Register, and they're gone no later than the July 1997 ORER.

There is a bingo photo on RRPictureArchives.net. Taken in April 1981, the 758007 is far from home in San Bernadino, California, probably in the Santa Fe yard. This suggests to me that the car isn't an MOW piece of rolling stock, at least not yet. Either that, or Conrail went far afield to pick up track panels... or sent an emergency shipment to the Santa Fe. That does seem like a good story, actually...

Meanwhile, from the UMTRR Spy Network, we have a photo of the parts that come together to make this racking (at right). The small white plastic strip laid diagonally across the sheet at bottom left is among those parts. It looks like it's the strip that goes across the front of the triangles on the finished product (see car image above).



As pictured in the bingo photo, the car is empty, making it easier to see how the racking goes together. It's also rusty, another guide to completing and finishing the multi-media kit. Taking a closer look at the load that MTL supplies with this car, it's all one assembly, with a base which joins the two end bulkheads and to which the racking is attached. The real car doesn't appear to have this extra floor. It's modeler's choice whether to include it and make construction easier-- and removable-- or to secure the component parts directly to the flat car floor instead.



092 00 610, \$32.95.

Reporting Marks: BNSF 406414.

Two Bay Center Flow Covered Hopper, Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

Green with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left and small circle cross herald on right. White on black COTS panel on right.

Yellow horizontal conspicuity stripes at five points along bottom of side. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to as late as the mid decade of the 2010s.

Here's a question: Could a car with an early version of the BNSF paint scheme still be around in that paint scheme to receive conspicuity stripes? And here's the answer: Yes! Bingo photos on RRPictureArchives taken in October 2009, January 2010 and March 2010 all show exactly

that... well, along with some Unauthorized Incremental Decoration, which MTL has chosen not to include here. To that we add a bingo on RailcarPhotos.com from August 2010, which also has this car's provenance: It's from the BNSF series 406300 to 406559; formerly the BN series 437000 to 437399; and originally the CB&Q (Burlington Route) series 184000 to 184399 built by American Car & Foundry in 1966. These were 3200 cubic foot cars with a 38 foot inside length and 42 foot 1 inch outside length, bigger than the AC&F 2970 cubic foot cars that are the basis for the MTL 092 body style. However, a bigger delta is that the real cars had trough hatches when built, not the individual round hatches on the Micro-Trains car, as noted on Page 88 of the **CB&Q Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** and Page 44 of the **Burlington Northern Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment**.

A quick check of the ORERs shows a car count of 231 for BNSF 406300 to 406559 as of October 2006, then 193 in the January 2011 Register and 133 in October 2014, but they're all gone by no later than January 2018, not surprising since the cars would have reached 50 years old by the end of 2016.

Here's another question, though, asked by the poster of the October 2009 image: "Could this be a one-of-a-kind?" More to the point, could it have survived from its painting all the way back in the early days of BNSF? The paint looks awfully good, although the car itself has a few significant dents. Perhaps it was a "heritage" repaint? The ATP for this it begins with the application of its conspicuity stripes, though, so I need not delve completely into that question!



104 00 190, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: ATSF 37960.

60 Foot Excess Height Single Door Boxcar, Riveted Sides, Santa Fe (AT&SF).

Red with mostly white lettering including reporting marks and large

circle cross herald on left. White "Shock Control" with yellow "A Smoother Ride" on right. White class code Bx-157 at bottom right. Multicolor ACI Label, yellow on black U-1 wheel inspection "dot" and white on black double COTS panel at bottom right. Approximate Time Period: 1972 (rebuild year) or 1976 (service date on model) or, strictly speaking, 1978 given U-1 wheel inspection "dot" through the decade of the 1990s, see text.

The bingo photo this time comes from Page 122 of "The Priest Book," more properly **Santa Fe Freight in Color The Series Volume One - Boxcars** by Stephen Priest and Thomas Chenoweth. (Calling it "The Priest Book" here at UMTRR HQ works, but Priest has authored and co-authored other books, so that term might be quite confusing elsewhere.) There were only four cars in the Class Bx-157, numbered 37960 to 37963. They were rebuilt in 1972 from Santa Fe Class Bx-116 cars, which were constructed in 1966 by Pullman. Key for our commentary here is that the extreme height of these cars was increased from 15 feet 4 inches to 17 feet 1 inch, by "raising the roof" and adding a flat panel to the door. There's a noticeable seam where this was done that's not present on the MTL 104 body style. The flat style roof on these cars aligns with the MTL car, but the ends differ between prototype and model.

The bingo photo of the 37960 was taken in November 1987; at the time the car had red ends and that's how Micro-Trains has painted their depiction. This contrasts with black ends on sister car 37962 as of August 1976, which also appears on Page 122 of the Priest book. In either case the white "Excess Height" band is present. You can see how I get a multi-part choice for the start of the ATP for this car, strictly speaking anyway.

The ORER for July 1987, the closest I have to the bingo photo, has only two of the original four cars shown in the 37960 to 39763 series. The pair are described as "Box, Shock Control, Load Dividers, Air Pack, Roller Bearings, 50K" and were noted as exceeding the Plate F clearance diagram. The inside length was 60 feet 8 inches, inside width 9 feet 4 inches, inside height 12 feet 10 inches, outside length 68 feet 1 inch, extreme height 17 feet 1 inch as noted above, door opening 10 feet wide by 12 feet 6 inches high, and capacity 7252 feet or 132,000 pounds. Both cars remained in the July 1989 ORER but are gone from the October 1991 Register.



**108 00 660 and 108 00 661, \$28.90 each.
Reporting Marks: PC 481915 and 483187.**

Three Bay Open Hoppers, Penn Central.

Black with white lettering including reporting marks on left, small herald on right, and COTS panel and class code H43D at bottom right. Simulated coal load included. Approximate Time Period: 1972 (build date) into the 1990s.

Page 73 of the **Penn Central Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** (Volume One) has PC 481533, one of the 2520 H43D class open hopper cars built for the PC by Bethlehem Steel Car from September 1971 to June 1972. Given that the Penn Central was already a financial train wreck, the cars were purchased by Greyhound Leasing and leased to the company. (Yes! Effectively the railroad leased freight cars from a bus company! Greyhound purchased Booth Leasing in 1962, as noted on encyclopedia.com, "and soon became the largest industrial leasing company in the world.") The H43D class carried a bit more capacity than the previous H43s, due to thinner side sheeting. The H43s, built starting in the mid-1960s by PC predecessor Pennsylvania, were based on Norfolk and Western drawings, and are the basis for the MTL 108 body style, so there shouldn't be any quibbles here. The paint scheme with the smaller PC herald and the lack of roadname was adopted in February 1970. Hey, the less paint we can use, the less red ink we'll have, said more than one PC officer might have said I would think. My recent re-read of the book **The Wreck of the Penn Central** indicates as much.

The ORER for July 1974 had 2503 cars of the original 2520 in the series PC 479451 to 481970, plus another 1494 H43d hoppers in the group PC 482000 to 483499. The key dimensions were: inside length 45 feet, outside length 48 feet 9 inches, extreme height 12 feet 4 inches, and capacity 3433 cubic feet or 200,000 pounds. Almost all of these cars were conveyed to Conrail;

as shown in the April 1976 ORER, the car counts of the two groups were 2481 and 1481 respectively. As late as the April 1999 Register, with the split of cars between CSX and Norfolk Southern already underway, there remained 25 cars still with Penn Central markings, making this quite the long-lived class of cars. Details over that timeframe will differ, of course, including but not limited to that infamous U-1 wheel inspection “dot.” The cars as depicted by Micro-Trains represent the “as delivered” version. Speaking of timeframes, though, the build dates on the cars in this virtual two-pack differ: the 481915 has January 1972, which the 483187 has May 1972. Nice touch!



123 00 130, \$54.98.

Reporting Marks: TBOX 889482.

60 Foot High-Cube Exterior Post Double Plug Door Boxcar, TTX (TBOX).

Brown with black reporting marks on white patch panels

on left. Mostly white lettering otherwise; white on black COTS panel at bottom right. Black on yellow “This Car Excess Height” warning panels at bottom left and bottom right. Orange horizontal conspicuity stripes at eight points along bottom of side. Metal wheels and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: as early as 2012 to present. According to the October 2024 Micro-News, this item is expected mid-month and is not on Micro-Trains dealer standing orders. It was added to the MTL Website on October 14.

RRPictureArchives has a three-quarter view of this exact car from trackside taken in September 2012; not surprisingly, it fills just about the entire photo. This car was already on its third set of reporting marks: it was UP 354896, then AOK 354896. Comparing this and other prototype images to the MTL 123 body style, we have at least a pretty good match. The ends are the same style but have a slightly different configuration.

On RailcarPhotos there’s the lineage of this car and the rest of the series. It was built by Gunderson between October 2002 and April 2023 and was originally in the Union Pacific roster, series UP 354450 to 354999. They were painted in the basic brown scheme with small red, white and blue shield herald that fit between the third and fourth exterior posts (“ribs”) from the right.

From there, the entire group went to the registration of the Arkansas and Oklahoma Railroad with the same numbers and reporting marks AOK. That line owns a segment of the former Rock Island “Choctaw Line” in Arkansas and operates a second section in Oklahoma, which makes the shortline’s name appropriate. I don’t have when the cars went from UP to AOK, but I do have to save something just in case MTL decides to release a UP or an AOK version of this car, right? I do know that the UP herald was removed or painted over, and that the typeface for the replacement AOK reporting marks varied; sometimes it was the same lettering style as the UP uses.

Some of these cars then went to TTX with TBOX reporting marks and road numbers 889374 to 889555. On RailcarPhotos, the earliest image of with the TBOX reporting marks is August 2012, just a month before the date of the bingo photo on the 889482. So I'll go with 2012 for the start of the ATP.

Doing the math, not all the AOK/ex-UP boxcars would have been conveyed to TTX; there are 550 possible cars in the series 354450 to 354999, all built; but only 182 cars between 889374 to 889555. And to, well, illustrate, this, RailcarPhotos has an image of AOK 354737 as of April 2024. However, there is a lower numbered series, TBOX 889269 to 889373, that captures another 105 road numbers from the original UP/AOK group. The January 2018 ORER has a total of 286 cars across both number series. Some dimensions for both: inside length 60 feet 9 inches, inside width 9 feet 6 inches, inside height 13 feet 1 inch, outside length 67 feet 11 inches, extreme height 17 feet, door opening 12 feet, and gross rail weight 286,000 pounds. For some reason, the cubic foot capacity differs; it's either 7571 or 7550 cubic feet. There's no indication of loading devices or anything else that explains this.



134 00 021 and 134 00 022, \$34.95 each.

Reporting Marks: BNSF 585033 and 585069.

60 Foot Flat Car, Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

Brown (mineral red) sides with simulated weathered wood deck. Mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left. White on black COTS panel at far right. White simulated reflective blocks along sides. Metal wheels and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: No earlier than 1996 into the decade of the 2010s (add conspicuity stripes after 2005).

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe kept the Santa Fe's car class FT-44 when they renumbered the series ATSF 95388 to 95487 to BNSF 585002 to 585076. These cars were built by Thrall for the Santa Fe in late 1966 and early 1967. The use of the Cooper Black typestyle for the reporting marks—the "font," if you will-- used for many years by the Santa Fe including on their circle cross herald, but gothic for the road number usually indicates one of the earlier repaints by the BNSF. Indeed, there were already four cars in the series moved from ATSF to BNSF in the July 1998 ORER. However, since the series is shown as 585016 to 585063, then to 585073 and 585076, those four are probably not the two that MTL models here. It's enough to grab the key

dimensional data, though: inside length 60 feet even, outside length 67 feet and capacity 146,000 pounds. The cars were described as “Flat, Axle Spacing 5 Feet 9 Inches, Truck Centers 49 Feet 6 Inches, 20 Inch Travel [Cushion Underframe], Tie Downs.” The AAR Designation was FMS, which designates what would otherwise be your basic flat car with flooring laid over sills but with equipped with permanent racks for stowing parts, or are specially modified or equipped to provide for loading of a particular commodity – which gives us the “S” in “FMS.” By the January 2000 ORER, the car count for this group was up to 35, while the former Santa Fe group also stood at 35 – how about that? Just two years later in the January 2002 Register, both car counts were down: ATSF, 32 to BNSF, 31. Continuing through the ORER stash, the count was 24 and 29 in October 2004, then 23 and 27 in January 2006, 17 and 21 in July 2007, 15 and 17 in January 2011, 14 and 15 in April 2013, then 14 and 9 in October 2014. Interestingly, five cars remained in the original Santa Fe markings even as the BNSF series was gone by January 2018! No “to present” for the Santa Fe flat cars though, as that series is gone by the October 2020 ORER. But yes, the original and successor paint schemes were contemporary from the start of the BNSF until the end of the Approximate Time Period.

There is a possible asterisk to this Approximate Time Period, however, in the form of the photo of sister car of BNSF 585024 on RailcarPhotos.com. First, the car has conspicuity stripes along the top of the sides, just under the deck. Second, it’s noted that the car is in Maintenance of Way service as of the photo date of April 2012. Also on RailcarPhotos is an image of BNSF 585044 as of November 2008, not yet sporting conspicuity stripes, but carrying what looks to me like a track maintenance machine of some sort. The deck on both isn’t looking all that great. Micro-Trains has simulated this general effect with different color wood boards.

On the other hand, the bingo photo of BNSF 585033 from August 2013 shows that car without conspicuity stripes; maybe the white reflectors count and the yellow ones were therefore not required. It’s also carrying what is called out in the photo caption as two pieces of BNSF maintenance equipment (X60000253 and X6000171, to be precise, and yes, those are seven digit numbers). But bouncing back to April 2005 for the bingo on BNSF 585069, it’s carrying two John Deere products that I cannot identify, along with their tires. Every bit of the length of the car is needed for these items.

Also see “N Scale Weathered Releases” for a pre-order announcement for a new series of weathered cars.

N SCALE REPRINTS: The Atlantic Coast Line 50 Foot Fishbelly Side Flat Car with Anchor Load (045 00 351, \$45.95, Reporting Marks ACL 77272) is now available, confirmed via online sale listings. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the May 2024 issue. This is the second release for this item, but it’s technically a “not a reprint.” There are no other releases or pre-order announcements this month.



N SCALE NEW RELEASE PASSENGER CARS: No releases or pre-order announcements this month, but see N Scale Multi-Packs for the release of the MT&L Christmas Set.

N SCALE WEATHERED RELEASES:



025 44 376, \$30.95.

Reporting Marks: GMRC 23028.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Door, Green Mountain Railroad/ ex-Marinette, Tomahawk and Western.

Release #7 in the ex-Per Diem series (pre-orders were not taken for this

series). Green with mostly white lettering including MT&W roadname and restenciled reporting marks on light green patch panel on left. Black and white MT&W herald left of roadname. Orange conspicuity stripes along bottom of side, some obscured by graffiti. Moderate to heavy weathering and rust effects. Extensive multicolor graffiti across bottom of both sides. Lowered underframe and body mounted couplers. Approximate Time Period: 2000 to at least 2014. Previous Releases: Technically none, but see text.

The Green Mountain Railway (GMRC) was one of the successors of the Rutland, which perished in 1963. It was formed in early 1964 when F. Nelson Blount, the founder of Steamtown, leased 52 miles of track from the State of Vermont between Bellows Falls and Rutland. The GMRC did local freight service and some bridge line business using at the outset former Rutland diesels. For Blount, however, the key reason for forming the railroad was to have a place to run steam-powered tourist service as part of his Steamtown USA venture. After Blount's untimely passing in 1967, his collection was eventually relocated to the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The Green Mountain Railroad remained in operation, though, including running its own diesel-powered tourist trains. In 1997 what was left of the Rutland in Vermont was put back together again when the Vermont Railway purchased the Green Mountain. The GMRC is now part of the "Vermont Railway System."

Meanwhile, the Marinette, Tomahawk and Western Railroad can be traced back to 1891 and the Wisconsin and Chippewa Railroad, founded by one William H. Bradley. In 1898, the W&C was merged into the MT&W, also founded by Bradley in 1894. Its main purpose was to service paper mills in Northern Wisconsin. The name of the railroad was roughly right; Marinette is on the coast of Lake Michigan, on the south shore of the River on the border with the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, while Tomahawk, Wisconsin is about 105 miles to the west-northwest in the interior of the state. On Trainweb.org it's noted that the line was never more than 50 miles long, suggesting to me that it never reached Marinette. In the March 1923 Official Guide of the Railways it's shown as having a line from Spirit Falls to Tomahawk and Harrison, and another line from Tomahawk to Bradley, a total of 33 miles roughly forming an upside down "T" with Tomahawk at the intersection. By the 1930s it was down to 13 miles. During the Incentive Per Diem era, the MT&W rostered several series of boxcars, one of which became the subject of this month's release. I think that given that there were paper mills online, these leased cars were used for actual outbound traffic.

In 2005, what was left of the MT&W was sold to Genesee and Wyoming Industries in 2005 and renamed Tomahawk Railway (TR), which makes sense given that its eight miles of track is in the immediate area of Tomahawk (including a locality within Tomahawk called Jersey City – interesting to this native of Jersey City... New Jersey). The road's main purpose remains service to a paper mill. Its one connection is with the Fox Valley and Lake Superior, a WATCO operation over former Wisconsin Central lines, at Tomahawk.

Our Special Correspondent David Grothe is really good at finding photos in less known corners of cyberspace... and he provides the bingo photo for this month's Per Diem Series car. It's on Trainiax.net, direct link trainiax.net/photos/2010/2010-10-20-slr/photo-gmrc23029-2010-10-20-slr.JPG . The car was found in October 2010 in Compton, Quebec on the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic (Quebec). It's a 5355 cubic foot boxcar built by FMC; that's a bit larger than the 5077 cubic foot model that's the prototype for the MTL 025 body style. Other cars in the 23000 block pictured on the Trainiax site, and on RailcarPhotos and RRPictureArchives, indicate a mix of boxcars from different sources and cubic foot capacities. Other photos of the 23029 on RRPictureArchives date from April 2009 to August 2014, so the ATP is at least that long. It's noted that the car was first MT&W 4476, then went to the Sabine River and Northern, reporting marks SRN 7378, then was stenciled for Yorkrail as YKR 5186, and after that went to the GMRC. It's now BKTY 154842, possibly still in the mostly original paint.

Checking the ORER stash, I first see GMRC 23029 in the January 2000 issue—it's not in the April 1999 issue-- and the last time I see it is in the October 2014 issue—it's not in the January 2018 edition. It's in its own subseries under the larger group 23000 to 23098 given the difference in cubic foot capacity from most other cars in that series.

While this is being considered a completely new release given the catalog number, we can reach back to August 1981 (!) for an unweathered version of the MT&W boxcar (at right, from the UMTRR Archives). It was Catalog Number 25050 with reporting marks MTW 4152.



The following was announced on the Micro-Trains website on October 14.



123 44 018, \$52.95.

Reporting Marks: TBOX 665519.

60 Foot High-Cube Exterior Post Double Plug Door Boxcars With Modified Door Hardware, TTX.

Yellow with aluminum roof and black doors. Mostly black lettering including reporting marks on left. Red, blue and black "Next Load/Any Road" logo on left. White on black TTX logo on right. White on black double COTS panel on far right.

Orange vertical conspicuity stripes at various points across car. Tops of ends are white (denoting excess height car) with black reporting marks. Light weathering; scrawl and multicolor graffiti, mostly along bottom of both sides of car. Body mounted couplers and metal wheels (wheels weathered). Approximate Time Period: at least 2013, plus or minus, strictly speaking. Previous Releases: Unweathered, TTX Three Pack with Road Numbers 665118, 665138, and 665141, November 2020; then single releases as follows: Road Number 665113, July 2022; Road Number 665130, August 2022; Road Number 665148, September 2022, then Weathered Releases: Road Number 665822, January 2024, Road Number 665898, March 2024, Road Number 665919, April 2024, Road Number 665661, August 2024.

So that's **five** "unclean" TBOXes this year, and perhaps counting, since there's still two months to go in 2024. Like the previous four, TBOX 665519 is part of the prototype series 665500 to 665999, built between July and October 2003 by National Steel Car Company of Hamilton, Ontario, as their Job 5165. They carry TTX class XHN60, as did the 665000 to 665499 from which all the previous road numbers were taken by MTL. There are two prototype photos of this car on RRPictureArchives, both taken in 2013. The "plus or minus" ATP I give here based on those images should definitely be supplemented with Rule #1 ("It's your railroad") because we don't have any real idea when the, ahem, additional unauthorized decoration, was first applied, or when and if it was ever removed.



993 05 081, \$75.95.

Reporting Marks: BN 413233 and 413366 (Catalog Numbers 098 44 081 and 098 45 081).

Burlington Northern Weathered Two Pack.

Jewel box packaging. Consists of two MTL 098 series 50 Foot Airslide Covered Hoppers. Green with mostly white lettering. The 413233 is in the

"Spartan" scheme with reporting marks only on left. The 413366 is in the as delivered scheme with large roadname on left, reporting marks on left, large herald on right and multicolor ACI Label at far right. Both cars have white on black COTS panel at bottom right. Light to moderate weathering and rust effects. Scrawl and multicolor graffiti. Approximate Time Period: mid-1980s to mid-decade of the 2000s for the set. Previous Release: Reporting Marks only scheme, none; Large roadname scheme, Road Number 413315, October 2017.

Page 41 of the **Burlington Northern Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment** notes the "second series of General American 4180 cubic foot Airslides to be delivered to the newly formed Burlington Northern. They were built in 1971." So, bingo, right? Well, not exactly. The series is listed as BN 413225 to 413289, which only takes in the 413233. And the representative photo is of BN 413247, not 413225. Taken in September 1971, a month after it was built, it confirms that the scheme with the large roadname and herald is "as delivered."

My October 2017 coverage of the previous release of the car in the full paint scheme (official MTL image at right) isn't that helpful either, as that car, BN 413315, belonged to the series BN 413300 to 413334... no match there!



Let's detour to RRPictureArchives for the actual bingo photos. BN 413225 was found in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in December 2007. By this time it's in the "spartan" scheme as shown in the MTL artwork. Meanwhile, BN 413366 is shown as it looked in July 2006, March 2007, August 2008, and August 2009, all in the as delivered scheme as it's modeled by Micro-Trains. This indicates that yes, these cars could be operated together despite the 413225 having been repainted into the reporting marks only scheme.

But nailing down an Approximate Time Period more broad than that suggested by the photos is a little more challenging, for both the pair and the individual cars. Looking through the **Color Guide**, the earliest photo of any car in the "logoless" scheme is from 1986, so that's the earliest possible ATP start for the 413225. BN 413366 was part of the series 413335 to 413404. It's not in the July 1974 ORER but is in the April 1975 Register. While I'm here, the key dimensions for both cars were: inside length 48 feet 11 inches, outside length 54 feet 1 inch, extreme height 14 feet 6 inches, and capacity 4180 cubic feet or 193,000 pounds. Both series were at their full car count of 65 and 70 cars respectively at the time. Jumping to the July 2007 ORER based on the photos, the 413366 appears to be still on the roster, as it's one of four cars in a shortened series 413366 to 413379, but the 413225 doesn't seem to be in revenue service by that time. So the ATP in which both these cars could be run together is the late 1980s to the mid-decade of the 2000s. All of the Airslides in the 413000s are gone in the ORER listing for January 2011, which is, of course, for the BNSF Railway, not the BN. Some of these cars were used in buffer car service, repainted to BNSF. Micro-Trains has offered models of those cars.



*In addition to the above, the **Northern Pacific 40 Foot Single Sheathed Boxcar with Lumber and Car Unloader (028 44 251, \$28.95, Reporting Marks NP 601)** is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the May 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 **October 31**.*



***Targeted Delivery Starting April 2025:
Re-Patched Railbox Series, \$30.95 each.***

Scheduled to consist of twelve MTL 025 series 50 foot exterior post single door boxcars. Each car is expected to have as its base the original Railbox paint

scheme: yellow with black door and mostly black lettering including large “Railbox” and “R” logo on left and “The nationwide boxcar pool” on right. Red, blue and black “Next Load/Any Load” device on right. Restenciled reporting marks on patch panel below Railbox logo. Moderate to extensive weathering; scrawl and multicolor graffiti varying by car. Door color may differ from original black to model a later replacement. Approximate Time Period: 1983 through the decade of the 1980s at least, depending on the specific car. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Although I placed the previous advance announcement of a Weathered Series in the N Scale New Releases section of these bytes, I proceeded to place the actual cars in said series here in the N Scale Weathered Releases section—I checked (November 2023)-- and how’s that for not being consistent. So this pre-order announcement is going in this section instead.

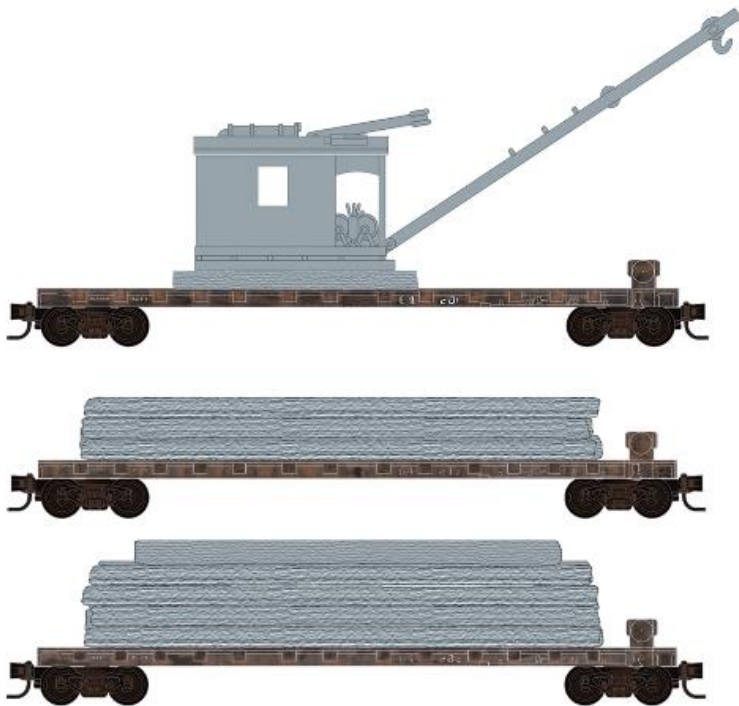
The place to start for this series is **Rail Model Journal**’s November 1999 issue, which was the first installment of the extensive coverage of the “Box Car Boom of the 1970s” by freight car historian and author Jim Eager. “At the same time that Incentive Per Diem boxcars began to take off,” Eager wrote, “Trailer Train, which was owned by a consortium of Class I railroads, launched Railbox, its own solution to the shortage of general-purpose boxcars.” The Railbox fleet grew to almost 25,000 cars from five different builders.

But the boxcar boom of the 1970s became a boxcar bust in 1980s with the economic downturn in the United States. While thousands of IPD boxcars were being transferred from one railroad to another—the results of which we’re seeing in the Micro-Trains’ current “Ex-Per Diem” series, Railbox wasn’t immune to the bust either. Eager continues, “In 1983 the car glut also forced nine of Trailer Train’s member Class I roads to assume direct responsibility for over 11,000 of the Railbox cars that had been built.” And that provides plenty of raw material for this forthcoming series. For example, from Eager’s installment in the August 2000 issue of Rail Model Journal, we learn that the entire Railbox class XFF10, built from September 1975 through February 1976, was turned over to the Burlington Northern, Santa Fe, Southern, Southern Pacific, Chesapeake and Ohio, and the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac. That’s 1800 cars right there.

Is the BN 249444, the example shown in the initial MTL artwork, from this group of cars? Well, we have to leave something for the actual coverage... and besides, I haven’t looked that up yet!

N SCALE MULTI-PACKS:

Runner Pack #228, also known as the **Florida East Coast Four Pack (983 00 228, \$149.95, Jewel Case Packaging)** is now available (confirmed via online sale listings). UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the May 2024 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are: 125 51 160, 15314; 125 52 160, 15331; 125 53 160, 15332; 125 54 160, 15369. These are the first through fourth releases for this item.



The **Log Car and Log Loader Three Pack (983 02 254, \$99.95, Jewel Box Packaging)** is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the May 2024 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers for these three 50 Foot Flat Cars with Straight Sides are: 044 51 160, 84201; 045 52 160, 84217; and 045 53 160, 84283. These are the first through third releases for this item... which isn't really as distinctive as usual since there are no reporting marks on these cars, only road numbers. The log loader is a multimedia kit.

*The following is in pre-order at present and is NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is as noted below. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close **October 31**.*



Targeted Delivery March 2025:

983 00 233, \$119.95.

Reporting Marks: WP 220106, 220108, 220146, and 220194.

Western Pacific Boxcar Four Pack (Runner Pack #233).

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of four MTL 020 series 40 Foot Single Door Boxcars. Green with yellow stripe at bottom of sides and part of the ends. Yellow lettering including “Merchandise Despatch” and reporting marks on left, “Package Delivery” on door and “Overnight Freight” on right. Black, yellow and red “Feather” herald on right. Approximate Time Period: early 1941, or 1945 based on service date on cars, to no later than 1949. Previous Release: Catalog Number 020 00 097, Road Number 220084, May 2018. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary.

Let’s start here with information from Protocraft, who offer decals for these cars in O Scale. They note that in 1937 the WP ordered 200 Modified Class XM 1937 AAR box cars from Mount Vernon Car and Manufacturing Company. (This predates the PS-1 boxcar which is the basis for the MTL 020 body style.) These cars, series 20001 to 20500, were painted red-brown and lettered with white lettering with the black, white and red medallion. In 1941, fifteen of these cars were reassigned to express passenger service. They were equipped with steam lines and painted as shown in the MTL artwork: dark Pullman Green with Armour Yellow lettering and medallion with red feather and a six inch yellow band around the bottom of the car. The fifteen cars were numbered 220071, 220084, 220085, 220086, 220089, 220092, 220105, 220106, 220108, 220136, 220146, 220149, 220159, 220176 and 220194. In other words, they were randomly selected from the 20000s group and had a “2” placed in front of their original road numbers. Heading up the page on the Protocraft site is a bingo photo of WP 220106 which is one of the numbers coming from MTL this time.

While I’m here, I should include the official Micro-Trains image of the May 2018 single car release (at right). If you look closely at the bottom of the end, you’ll note that the yellow stripe wraps around it, well, at least as far as it can go before reaching where the coupler needs to be.



The ORER for January 1943 shows all fifteen cars in the group, listed as the series 220001 to 220200. It's placed out of road number sequence right after the 20000 to 20200 group. The dimensions were: inside length 40 feet 6 inches, inside width 9 feet 2 inches, inside height 9 feet 6 inches, outside length 41 feet 9 inches, extreme height 14 feet 11 inches, door opening 6 feet, and 3526 cubic feet or 100,000 pounds. An end note calls out that these cars "are equipped with air signal and steam train line[s] for use in passenger train service, handling merchandise."

The continuation of this story comes from WP historian Garth Groff, whom we've quoted here before. For his comments, I checked the archives of the Steam Era Freight Cars Group (STFMC) on the discussion venue groups.io. Here's an excerpt of what he wrote, start quote:

So called "merchandise service" was a rear-guard solution to dwindling LCL [Less than Car Load] revenues used by some railroads. What this meant on each railroad probably differed, but on the Western Pacific and subsidiary Sacramento Northern this term applied specifically to expedited shipments from manufacturers or wholesale houses in San Francisco and Oakland to retail merchants in Sacramento and smaller near-by cities, Woodland, Yuba City/Marysville, Chico and Oroville. This traffic was already being eroded by truckers using newly-paved state highways by the mid-1930s (and some of the cut-rate truckers were unregulated pirates). Thus the WP's green "Merchandise Dispatch" boxcars.

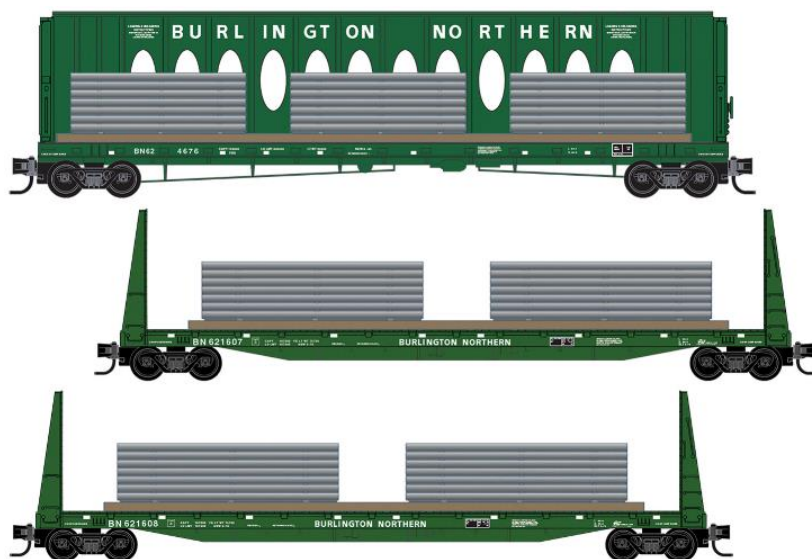
Here's how the merchandise service scheme worked (or didn't) on the Western Pacific, based on official correspondence I obtained from the late Jeff Moreau:

Five days a week four of these cars were given priority loading with merchandise at the San Francisco freight house. The cars were put on the first available night car float and hustled across the Bay for more priority loading in Oakland. Loading completed the next morning, they were added to Train 12, the Feather River Express, which had a mid-day departure.

One car was dropped at the WP passenger station in Sacramento and moved to the downtown freight station on the Sacramento Northern. Two cars were dropped in Marysville at the WP passenger station, one for unloading at the SN freight station in adjacent Yuba City. The second went north on the first available SN night freight to Chico. The final car was dropped at the Oroville passenger station, and moved by the SN to their downtown depot. The cars were returned to San Francisco on Train 51, a freight. There should have been one block of cars loading, one being unloaded, and one on the return trip five days a week. The remaining three cars were spares, and probably also saw a lot of use at Christmas time.

End quote. The coming of World War II brought less truck competition for the duration given fuel restrictions, but also less merchandise to carry. The WP's service ended by 1948 with all but one cars repainted by the July 1949 ORER, which still showed the 220201. Apparently these cars rarely left the service to which they were assigned, meaning that in addition to an Approximate Time Period there is also an Approximate Service Area—that WP and SN routing. I suspect there will be plenty of use of Rule #1 ("It's your railroad") to get around this. There probably was for the original run of this car from the folks in Talent as well.

Groff shared a photo of one of the cars on the SN on the website he started which is now looked after by the Western Pacific Railroad Museum: www.wplives.org/sn/1010.html , then scroll down to the last photo which shows the car behind the SN freight motor 1010. "I have never seen a photo of the cars in Train 12," Groff reported, "perhaps not surprising because of the War years."



Targeted Delivery March 2025:

983 02 261, \$109.95.

Reporting Marks: BN 624676, 621607, and 621608.

Burlington Northern Three Pack with Metal Load.

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of one MTL 053 Series 60 Foot Centerbeam Flat Car and two MTL 054 series 62 Foot Bulkhead Flat Cars. All cars are green with mostly white lettering including reporting marks on left. The centerbeam flat car (BN 624676) has large roadname across the top

of the centerbeam. The bulkhead flat cars (BN 621607 and 621608) have small roadname in center of side. All cars have a white on black COTS panel on right and white simulated reflective panels at multiple points along side. Simulated metal ingot loads included. Approximate Time Period: 1983 to as late as the decade of the 2000s for the Centerbeam and 1976 into the decade of the 2000s for the Bulkhead Flat Cars. Previous Releases: Centerbeam, Catalog 53010, Road Number 624463, January 1995 and Road Number 624469, May 1998, then Runner Pack #79 with Road Numbers 624425, 624437, 624449, and 624481, August 2013 (UMTRR pre-order coverage, February 2013 issue); Bulkhead Flat Car, six pack, Catalog Number 54012 with Road Numbers 621353, 621387, 621466, 621468, 621534, and 621649, October 1986, then Catalog Numbers 054 00 01x, Road Numbers 621455 and 621523, December 2011. These will be the seventh releases of the Centerbeam and the ninth and tenth releases of the Bulkhead Flat Car.

We've got to cover two different cars for this three pack – thank you, Captain Obvious – and we'll start with the Centerbeam. At least as far as the UMTRR Research Accumulation is concerned, the definitive print reference on the prototype for this body style is Scott Chatfield's article in the January 1996 issue of **Rail Model Journal**. Chatfield calls the MTL car a match to the Burlington Northern's order of 300 of these cars from Thrall, and that's good enough for me. This order followed 190 cars built by Thrall for the BN in 1977. There is conflicting information on the build date of this set: the RMJ article gives 1980 but RailcarPhotos.com has 1983. Considering that I didn't find the series in the ORER until the April 1984 ORER, the RailcarPhotos date might be correct.

That series is BN 624400 to 624699, listed with the description “Flat, Center Beam, Tie-Downs, Truck Centers 52 Feet, 10 Inch Travel (Lumber).” The inside length was 60 feet 8 inches, inside height 11 feet 2 inches, outside length 68 feet, extreme height 15 feet 6 inches, and capacity 199,000 pounds. These cars were within Plate C dimensions. Just one was missing from the original 300 cars in the April 1984 ORER. In the October 1996 Register, there were two groups split by capacity adding up to 289 cars. By January 2006 within the BNSF Railway registration, there remained 253 in the BN series. The January 2011 ORER showed just 24 cars left, which was down to just one in the October 2014 Register. The successor series for these BN cars was BNSF 559175 to 559453. MTL has done BNSF Centerbeams, but not from that number series so far.

Lending more credence to the 1983 build date statement, the bingo photo for the 624676 is on RRPictureArchives. It looks bright shiny new in September 1983, complete with tie-downs. It was photographed at Saint Helens, Oregon. There are plenty of other examples of other cars in the series on that site as well as RailcarPhotos (17, all taken in the decade of the 2000s) and Fallen Flags (including BN 624552 from 1985 and BN 624688 from 1986.

Next we’ll check out the bulkhead flat cars, starting with bingo photos. BN 621607 was loaded up with lumber and rolling through Bozeman, Montana in July 1986; that image is on RailcarPhotos. On that site and also on RRPictureArchives is the other bingo. BN 621608 was in West Colton, California in March 1982. It was unloaded at the time and the overhead shot gives us a good look at the weathered and beaten up wood deck. The ends of the boards overlapping the steel frame are uneven from wear and probably just breakage. The build date in 1976 is visible. There are plenty of other cars from the prototype series on those two sites and Fallen Flags.

The build date of 1976 firmly puts these cars as original equipment for the Burlington Northern as opposed to any of its predecessors. These forthcoming cars and the previous eight road numbers all belong to the prototype series BN 621250 to 621649 constructed by Thrall. The January 1978 ORER shows the series with all 400 possible cars. The key dimensions were: inside length 56 feet 8 inches, inside height 11 feet, outside length 66 feet, extreme height 14 feet 9 inches, and capacity 188,000 pounds. While the details differ, the number of pockets for example, the inside length of this car is quite close to the MTL 054 body style.

The April 1981 ORER provides some evidence for the metal load coming with this runner pack: 378 cars in the main series out of the original 400 with capacity 186,000 pounds and another 20 in ingot service with capacity 178,000 pounds. Aha! Jumping all the way to the January 2007 ORER, the car count was a total of 173 across two main series and several subsets in the BNSF listing. That was down to 40 in the October 2014 Register and just nine in the October 2020 ORER. We know what happened to one of these cars: as of October 2014 the 621663 from the series, shorn of its bulkheads, was being used as a bridge in Lolo, Montana! That snapshot is on Fallen Flags.

For the bulkhead cars, a data point for the Approximate Time Period is the fact that the BN dropped the roadname after a while. A shot of BN 621491 on RailcarPhotos appears to be an

exception: as of March 2013 it still had the roadname. I don't know exactly when this change occurred, but I do see a lack of roadname as early as 2007, on BN 621621 which also looks as though it's had a fresh painting. Removing the roadname would be a relatively easy task, perhaps while adding conspicuity stripes for 2005 and later, and roughing up the wood deck.



Targeted Delivery March 2025:

983 02 262, \$114.95.

Reporting Marks: DTTX 56787, 56795, and 56821.

TTX Weathered Well Car Three Pack.

Jewel box packaging. Scheduled to consist of three MTL 135 Series 68 Foot Well Cars. Yellow with silver details. White lettering reporting marks on left and TTX symbol on right, both on black panels. Heavy weathering and scrawl and multicolor graffiti. The 56795 has restenciled reporting marks on at least the side depicted in the preliminary artwork. Approximate Time Period: early 1990s (1992 build date previously given by MTL) through decade of the 2000s. Previous Releases: Runner Pack #133, Road Numbers 56811, 56812, and 56816, October 2017; then a Sixteen Pack of Clean (Unweathered) Cars, Road Numbers 56779, 56782, 56791, 56803, 56813, 56819, 56823, 56826, 56831, 56840, 56847, 56853, 56858, 56865, 56870, 56873, January 2019 (Individual Catalog Numbers 135 xx 061); then a Sixteen Pack of Weathered Cars, Road Numbers 56780, 56785, 56790, 56797, 56805, 56814, 56824, 56829, 56833, 56844, 56851, 56856, 56860, 56864, 56869, 56871, February 2019 (Individual Catalog Numbers 135 xx 065), then clean releases with Road Numbers 56786 and 56799, January 2024. MTL artwork is preliminary; actual product may vary. These will be the 38th through 40th releases of this car.

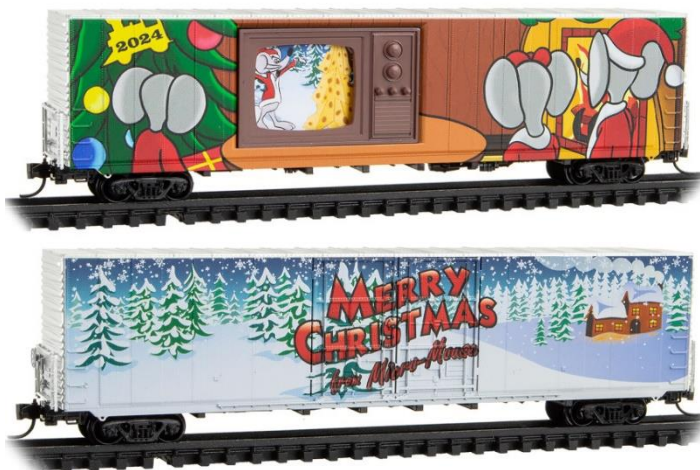
The January 2024 virtual two pack of clean cars in this general paint scheme were Number 36 and 37, so with this Weathered Three Pack, we'll be up to forty road numbers for this item. If you own all of them, you've got yourself an impressive train, though still not nearly as long as the monster "interesting double-stack trains" we see around here. Trailer Train officially became TTX in 1991 so these cars, built in 1992 according to previous MTL car copy, would never have been marked with the original name of the company, which many of us continue to use (or at least parenthesize).

We're also closing in on having fully half of the prototype series represented. The ORER for October 1993 shows the Trailer Train series DTTX 56775 to 56873 with AAR Classification FC and description "Flat." The AAR Car Type Code S312 translates to Stack Car, 48 foot well,

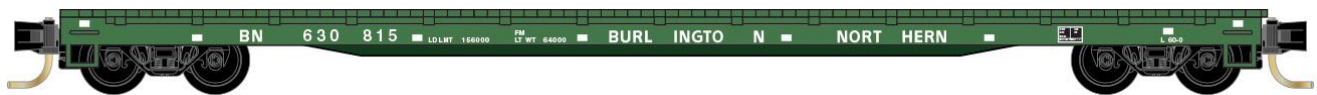
single well (or FC again), and the load type, which can consist of two 20 foot or one 40, 45 or 48 foot container in the well and one 40, 45 or 48 foot container stacked above. The inside length is, as you'd probably guess, 48 feet, the outside length 71 feet 8 inches (notice the round-up from the Gunderson spec) and the capacity is 164,000 pounds. There were 98 cars in the group in October 1996 and 95 in the January 2006 ORER. However, given the movement toward a 53 foot standard for domestic service, the 48 foot containers were on their way out by the start of the present decade, and so were these cars. In the October 2014 Equipment Register just 13 were left; that's down to three in the January 2018 ORER and two in October 2020, the latest ORER I have. No "to Present" this time. Add the change in the TTX logo to the "heritage red" and I think the decade of the 2000s is a reasonable end to the ATP.

N SCALE SPECIAL EDITION RELEASES: There are no pre-order announcements this month.

The **2024 Micro-Mouse Christmas Car (102 00 701, \$31.95)** is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in last month's issue (September 2024). This model has the "3D Multi-Media TV Door" on one side.



Also, the **Medford, Talent and Lakecreek 2024 Christmas Train Set (983 21 388, \$249.95)** is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in the July 2024 issue. The individual catalog and road numbers are as follows (no reporting marks on these items): FT-A Powered Diesel, 987 51 814, Road Number 1975; Business Car "Reindeer Trail," 144 52 791; and Single Window Coaches "Christmas Valley," "Mistletoe Lake," and "Nutcracker Hill," 160 53 561, 160 54 561, and 160 55 561.



Z SCALE: The next virtual two pack of 60 foot flat cars pre-ordered in June 2023 is expected to be available mid-month. It's the pair for the **Burlington Northern (524 00 043 and 524 00 044, BN 630815 and 630822, \$23.95 each)**. Only the MTL artwork for the 043 release is shown here (above) for illustration. These are the third and fourth road numbers for this release.



Also, the **2024 Micro-Mouse Christmas Car (507 00 750, \$29.95)** is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR pre-order coverage was in last month's issue (September 2024). This item has standard printing without the "3D Multimedia TV Doors"... which makes sense since this is a plug door boxcar!



HO SCALE: The **Union Pacific/Southern Pacific/ex-Golden West Service Three Bay Hopper Kit (2000-002, \$49.95, Reporting Marks SP 496071, Grit 'N Grime Series Car #9)...**

and the **Union Pacific Three Bay Hopper Kit (2000-002, \$49.95, Reporting Marks UP 76029, Grit 'N Grime Series Car #10)** are now listed as available. UMTRR pre-order coverage for both was in the July 2024 issue. Grit 'N Grime Series Car numbers are per my reckoning; there is no "official" count of these releases.



Also, the **2024 Micro-Mouse Christmas Car Kit (5900-001, \$49.95)** is expected to be available mid-month. UMTRR Pre-Order coverage was in last month's issue (September 2024). Unlike the N and Z Scale versions, both sides of this car are the same (MTL rendering above left). This car includes the "3D Multimedia TV Doors," which I presume are for both sides of the car.

*The following is in pre-order at present and is NOT currently available. Scheduled delivery is as noted below. UMTRR coverage is being provided ahead of the actual release in order to facilitate pre-order decisions; pre-orders close **October 31**.*



Targeted Delivery Early 2025:

5600-002, \$59.95.

Reporting Marks: RBOX 33916.

50 Foot Exterior Post Boxcar, Single Door, Railbox.

Yellow with aluminum roof and black door. Mostly black lettering including later Railbox logo on left. White reporting marks on black patch panel on left. Small black “Next

Load/Any Road” slogan with crossed blue and red arrows on right. White on black COTS panels on right. Orange conspicuity stripes at seven points along side. White lettering on door. Light to moderate weathering; heavy rust effects on roof. Scrawl and multicolor graffiti especially on bottom of both sides of car. Approximate Time Period: after 2005 given conspicuity stripes to into the decade of the 2020s.

The Wikipedians call this variation on the original Railbox decoration – that one being the one with the somewhat larger “Railbox” and the much bigger “Next Load / Any Road” – as the “1996 Paint Scheme.” I twisted myself into a pretzel trying to get more specific than that when I did the pre-order coverage of N Scale Runner Pack #223 (which is of combination door “ABOX” boxcars, but still applies) in December 2023, but didn’t have much luck there. I didn’t get any useful Incremental Information this time either, despite exploring several interesting rabbit holes.

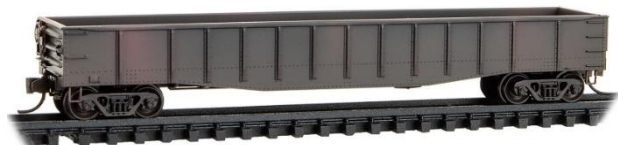
Turning to the actual car, then, it belongs to the RBOX series 33600 to 34099 built by American Car and Foundry as its Job 11-06857 between August and September 1979. This is the class XAF20B. Information on the Accurail 5600 body style found on the MFCL (Modern Freight Cars List) discussion venue on groups.io indicates the ends of the model are Dreadnaught type versus the “Non-Terminating” ends used on the prototype. One participant was rather blunt: “The diagonal panel roof is actually correct for an ACF-built car for Railbox, but that’s about it.” Ouch! I hasten to add that a key spotting feature, the number of posts (ribs) per side, is aligned between model and prototype at six either side of the door, and that the bottom sill appears to correspond between the two as well.

Given the conspicuity stripes on the pre-production model, I started with the ORER for January 2006, which shows... well, a bit of a problem: multiple groups of cars consolidated into the series RBOX 30000 to 37749, with a total car count of 6616 in multiple subsets. Three of these subsets are of 5290 cubic foot cars, matching the XAF20B class. The 33916 appears to be counted in one of these subsets which includes cars 33899 through 33922... assuming that this is really consecutive. And I guess it is, since the 33916 is explicitly called out in the January

2011 Equipment Register, while the car count for the overall set has dropped to 3644. It's also in the October 2020 ORER, but that's as far as the Equipment Register stash goes at present. Something new for the Grit 'N Grime series, and, in fact, for Micro-Trains in general, is the inclusion of a weathered insert for this car kit (MTL pre-production sample shown at right). This allows modelers to run the car with the doors open and not ruin the heavily used effect, which applies to the interior as well as the exterior. What do you mean, you're supposed to Close And Lock Doors Before Moving Car? I've seen plenty of examples where that rule hasn't been followed. Note that the weathered insert also includes pieces for the inside of the doors... nice touch.



MTL ANNOUNCEMENTS: Looking for something a little spooky for your N Scale Halloween Train? How about a **Coffin Load (499 45 030, \$14.95, at right)**? It looks like at one of the, um, inhabitants of a coffin is trying to make a getaway... or maybe just saying, "Trick or Treat!" This load will fit any of the Micro-Trains N Scale 50 foot gondolas. If you happen to need one of those that fits the occasion, there's a weathered and unlettered version also coming mid-month, specifically, the



14 panel fishbelly side version with fixed ends (**105 44 002, \$24.90, at left**). Perhaps some ghastly lettering could be added by the modeler to enhance the spookiness...

Also new this month is a multi-piece Construction Load (**499 45 029, \$14.95, at right**) which isn't specified for any particular MTL (or other) freight car, but might look at home on a flat car, including the new sixty foot model, or in a gondola. See the Incremental Information section below for a help on how to secure them to the rolling stock of your choice...



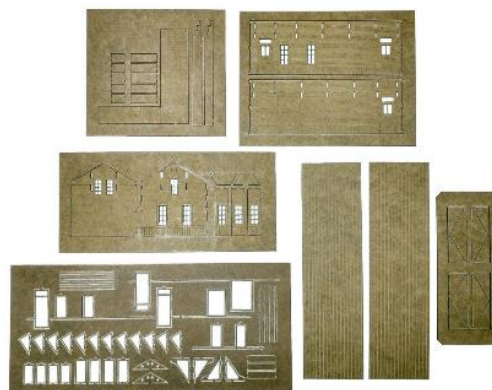
What's perhaps most interesting to us here at UMTRR HQ is the return of N Scale structure kits, this time, as a pre-order item. (MTL was offering these pretty consistently for a while during the period 2007 to 2015, which reminds me that I really should get back to that listing I was compiling for the UMTRR website.) So in pre-order until October 31 for targeted delivery in December is the **MT&L Talent Train Station Kit (499 45 034, \$29.95, pre-production sample pictured at right)**. While it's officially



(I guess) part of the Medford, Talent and Lake Creek Freelance Railroad, it's actually based on a real structure: the Southern Pacific depot that was built for use in Medford, Oregon but was

moved down the line to Talent in 1900. I've learned through the "Espee" discussion venue at groups.io that the original station was dismantled for its lumber in 1935. However, a replica of the structure is alive and well and is now the home of the Sweet Beet Café, which opened in 2017 and is "a charming French-inspired cafe with some home-cookin' flavors to offer something new to the Southern Oregon palette" according to their website (URL sweetbeetstation.com, as you'd expect). Lunch items from the menu I viewed online include the "Caboose Club" and the "Runaway Train." And apparently, there are mimosas. Hmm, now I'm hungry...

Anyway, the MTL kit version of this structure appears to be similar in design to their earlier structures—see the components (at right); which probably means it's of "laserboard" which is worked with similarly to but not exactly the same as laser-cut wood. I have several earlier MTL structures which, on the difficulty scale for me, fall between plastic and craftsman kits. I really like Sharpies or similar to color the laserboard prior to assembly, which should also work here, **except** if you want a light colored (white or yellow) building. A check of 108 Home Street, Talent, Oregon, using your favorite online street viewing sites will show the station as it's currently painted. This is a nice representation of a small town structure, not necessarily just the SP in Southwest Oregon.



DISCONTINUED ALERT: Let's start in a different place this time: HO Scale, just to note that none of the "Grit 'N Grime Series" freight car kits have hit the bye-bye board as of yet. OK, that was fast... and over to this year's N Scale items to see what's outta here. And, believe it or not, the answer is Nothing! No new outs since last month's check. It's the same for 2024 Z Scale items; none have left the building since last report. Perhaps the folks in Talent haven't caught up with what's sold out recently. More work for next issue, perhaps...

That having been said, there is some inconsistency I'm seeing on the MTL website: for example, the recent Z Scale Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific 60 Foot Flat cars are not on the "Z Scale Freight Cars" page, but they are shown when searching on "524" which is the first part of their catalog numbers. So, a grain of salt or two might be applied here. We also have a possible "undo": this month both version of the Northwest Oklahoma Weathered Three Pack of Bulkhead Flat Cars (9x3 02 247, June) are showing on the MTL website but I'd already marked them and their components with the Dreaded "D."

Alrighty, then, let's back up to 2023. In Z Scale, same result: nothing discontinued. In N Scale, the Southern Pacific Rio Grande Division Safety Caboose has rolled away (050 00 250, October) and the Kansas City Southern Three Bay Hopper has emptied out (108 00 550, July). The Jewel Case version of the Rio Grande Gondola Weathered Four Pack (983 05 036, January) is sold out; with the Foam Nest version already gone, I'll also add the Dreaded "D" to the individual items.

INCREMENTAL INFORMATION DEPARTMENT: A thread on the Steam Era Freight Cars Discussion list on groups.io cited an interesting “publication” from the Association of American Railroads called “Open Top Loading Rules.” Surfing to my.aar.org/OTLR results in a library with multiple sections of information on how to load and secure many different types of items, from metal pipes to military items. This is a suitable resource for those modelers who want to prototypically attach Micro-Trains loads to their respective freight cars. Don’t blame me if you get lost in this site for a while...

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

AND THAT WRAPS UP OCTOBER’S BYTES. Until sometime next month, do the best you can!

Cheers,
George

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