

MY 14 DAY BUILDING CHALLENGE

Ed Bommer

This Walthers kit for a cast aluminum depressed center flat car slept a long while in a storage box. Inside it was a pair of built-up Precision Scale buckeye trucks I had forgotten about. Couplers and a bit of detail work would finish it off in short order. It took about 10 days to do, a few hours at a time, so I hope it qualifies!

Cast aluminum O scale kits go back to the 1930's. They were popular but not so easy to put together. Box cars, stock cars and hoppers had to be assembled by drilling holes and driving brass rod pins in place. Or parts were drilled and tapped for screws to hold the castings together. Modern epoxies make their assembly easier and faster. Flat cars were the simplest to build. Often the holes for attaching trucks and couplers had been pre-drilled and tapped. Walthers number 5403 was like that, but I made a few changes to use the Precision Scale trucks and Kadee couplers as seen below.

Wood center-plate shims with kingpins for attaching the trucks were put in, along with wood shim inserts to put Kadee couplers at the correct height. Using wood let me avoid drilling and tapping holes in the cast aluminum body and helped to insulate it from the rails.



Brass strip and rod made the car steps, uncoupling rods, grab irons and other car end details. BTS air brake hoses were attached and brake wheels were added to both ends. The corner steps have angle braces on them. Little styrene triangles were cut and glued in place to detail the striker plate faces.



The car's deck is plain. Anchor holes were drilled in the tie-down flanges to add a bit of detail.



The underbody is not detailed. It rides low and any brake piping and rigging on it would be unseen. The Precision Scale trucks fit even with the car end sill in order to clear the casting's center sill on curves. Prototype photos show the trucks being close to the car ends.



So here we are, ready for paint and lettering after some track testing, to make certain it gets around curves without short circuits. It also needs a load . . . someday!



The first order in finishing the model was painting the trucks, which had been soldered together by whoever built them. And they roll effortlessly. That made removing the wheels to paint them a problem. So they are masked off with bits of index card with slots cut in them for the axle ends. Later, the wheels had excess paint removed and their treads polished with a Dremel tool.



Here is Erie 7212, ready for service. These special cars were developed in the 1920's and 30's as rural electrification programs were being done across the USA. With that was also building new hydro-electric power plants, such as at Hoover Dam and with the Tennessee Valley Authority. Large, heavy turbines, generators and transformers built at eastern factories were shipped to locations needing them on cars like these. Erie had many, perhaps due to generous clearances along its main line when built as a broad-gauge railroad in the 19th century.

