



SUNSHINE MODELS

Box 3054 Salinas CA 93912

52' 6" World War II Emergency Gondola

During World War II, military needs for steel took priority for the available supplies. The American railroads received steel only when military demand was met. By reviving earlier composite car building practices, the A.A.R. design teams found a way to stretch the available steel. The designers adapted otherwise modern car designs to this expedient. They replaced sheet steel with wood in the less critical load bearing parts of steel car designs of the late 1930's. Where wood was substituted, steel structural members were added for strength. The result was a series of composite wood and steel designs for hoppers, boxcars, flat cars and gondolas--A.A.R. Emergency designs.

Borrowing from the 52' 6" gondola design of the late 1930's, the designers went about replacing steel where wood would do. The side walls were an obvious place to substitute. 2 3/8" wood planking of 9 1/4" width formed the new walls. For structural integrity the designers created a truss of diagonal and vertical ribs in place of the all-steel side. A wood floor was both a savings in steel and a utility. The floor consisted of 5 3/4" x 2 3/8" planking over 4" x 4" wood stringers. The sides were attached to a steel underframe of a straight center sill and cross bearers. Steel dreadnaught drop ends were used. The power hand brake extended longitudinally from one side.

Many cars--notably PRR and some ATSF--rode on National Type B trucks, but others were on A.S.F. or other 70 ton "Bettendorf" trucks. The cars were of 140000 pound capacity and 1673 cubic feet. Interior width was 9' 1" with a height of 3' 6". The building program ran from late 1943 to mid-1944.

The Pennsy, Santa Fe, Norfolk and Western, New York Central, Rock Island and Grand Truck Western, among others, received the the gons. The Pennsylvania received some 1000 and designated them G-30 with numbering from 362384 to 363383. The 400 Santa Fe cars received the designation Ga-61 if built by Pullman and Ga-63 if built by GATC.

They were numbered 169500-169899. The 400 Rock Island cars took numbers from 900 to 1299.

The New York Central series 711000-711699 contained the substantial block of their War Emergency Gondolas. The Grand Trunk Western cars fell in the series 145400-145699. The small Norfolk and Western group of 100 cars were numbered from 70600.

The Maine Central, Boston and Maine and several other roads received second hand cars in the 1950's and 1960's. Generally these cars had received steel replacement sides and fixed ends.

The composite sides of the War Emergency Gondola were a temporary expedient, of course. In the 1950's the railroads began replacing the sides with steel sheeting. When steel sides were applied, the wood floor was generally retained but repaired. The interior width increased to 9' 6" and cubic capacity increased approximately 100 cubic feet.

In 1948, the ATSF, PRR, CRI&P, GTW, NYC, and N&W cars remained with composite sides. Santa Fe kept the wood side walls for a lengthy period. As late as 1954, the ATSF was converting some cars--still with wood sides--to carry automobile frames and renumbering them to 176600-176649.

The R.I. later stripped the side walls from some cars to handle piggyback loads. The ends were removed along with the wood side walls. This left the car essentially as only a frame with a floor--a "peek-a-boo" gondola. On other cars, the R.I. replaced wood sides with vertically corrugated panels, giving each panel the appearance of a small dreadnaught end turned on its side.

Several roads applied a variety of different fixed ends when rebuilding. The ends, being drop ends, were frequently abused during loading. Almost any type of end could be seen as the years passed.

