



General American Type 17 Circumferentially Riveted Tank Car



In 1917 General American Tank Car Co. began production of a large fleet of circumferentially riveted tank cars. While not officially designated Type 17, it was an unofficial classification for a large group of cars built to a nearly identical design, all within a few years, to meet wartime and immediate postwar demand.

By about 1921, the Type 17s use of circumferential rivets was abandoned. The successful development of larger sheets of rolled steel during the war allowed sections to span the entire length of the tank. Rivets were now horizontal, parallel with the length of the tank.

Steam era tank cars were appreciably more durable than other types of freight cars. As a consequence, Type 17 cars were widely in use into the 1960s. The antiquated design, and its longevity, made the Type 17 an anachronism in the diesel era.

The Type 17s arrived during an era of billboard lettering for tank cars. The owning companies, largely oil producers and distributors, used the cars to advertise during the rapid expansion of the automobile in the U.S. Since repainting of tank cars was rare, these elaborate lettering styles were plentiful for many years and made a colorful exception to most late steam era tank cars.

Sinclair Refining Co. was one of the largest refining, shipping and marketing companies in the U.S. In 1938 it had a roster of 6459 cars using the SDRX (and UNPX, PARX and FMTX) reporting marks. By 1946 the fleet was 6322 cars. The majority of cars had an 8,000 gal. capacity. They were lettered with a large aluminum SINCLAIR and would remain so for many years. The block 11800-899, displayed here, contained 92 radial riveted cars in 1943 and 89 in 1953, but there are numerous other series in the number jumble.



