

TROOP SLEEPER HISTORY

As World War II progressed, railroad passenger equipment was being taxed to its maximum availability. Troops were being transported by the millions, gasoline was rationed which forced people onto public transportation.

To help alleviate the sleeping car shortage, the troop sleeper was built. For a number of reasons it was decided to use a basic 50 foot steel box car, put in windows and side doors, toilet facilities, bunks and end doors with diaphragms to allow movement between the cars. A new designed high-speed truck was placed under the car. The cars were comfortable (?) being heated from train line steam heat, had electric lights and running water. Ventelation was from roof vents or windows could be opened as needed. Screens and black out curtains were provided.

During 1943-44 Pullman Standard Car Mfg. Co. built over 1200 of these cars for the Defense Plant Corporation. They were operated by the Pullman Comapny and each car had a porter.

The reason the box car style sleeper was chosen was two-fold: one, to build a streamlined, light weight sleeper would have used more materials and labor, both of which were in short supply and two, a larger number of service men could be transported with fewer, shorter cars so that more personnel could be carried in a given train length. Also when the sleepers were no longer needed after the war they could be easily converted to other uses, which indeed they were. A number of railroads bought the cars for MW service, Railway Express Agency converted hundreds to express refrigerator cars, the Alaska Railroad, operated by the federal government, converted the sleepers to box cars and troop kitchen cars to refrigerator cars. Some also were used in MW service.

These cars were the American version of the famous old 40 and 8 cars that the French used to transport troops in World War I. However the WW II version made the old French cars seem like cattle cars.

HELP WANTED We have a need for legal advice from time to time, any one volunteer?

right - Emery Godard disguised as Santa Claus aboard our fourth annual Santa Train.

Even though they were very utilitarian they had comfort and refinements lacking in their WW I counterparts. The interiors were insulated with attractive fiber-board, the floors were a composition material over a steel floor. There were individual lights for each set of berths and there was a toilet and two washbasins at each end of the cars. The bunks are three high and run crossways of the car. The bottom one stays in place, the middle one folds down to make the back of the seat during daylight hours, the top one always stays in place. The cars sleep thirty.

These cars were used in troop trains either singly or with other Pullman cars. Train makeup was usually a baggage car or express car on the head end for supplies followed by a number of troop sleepers, a troop kitchen car or railroad diner, and followed by more sleepers. A railroad coach or caboose on the rear provided a place for railroad crew to ride.

WP handled a large number of "Main Trains" as they were called. There is a good chance our car rolled on WP rails. If any of our members ever rode in one of these cars, we would be interested in hearing about your experiences.

Modelers wishing to build this car can convert one from a standard 50 foot box car using cast windows and passenger car parts. Commercial models in HO gauge were available a few years ago.

