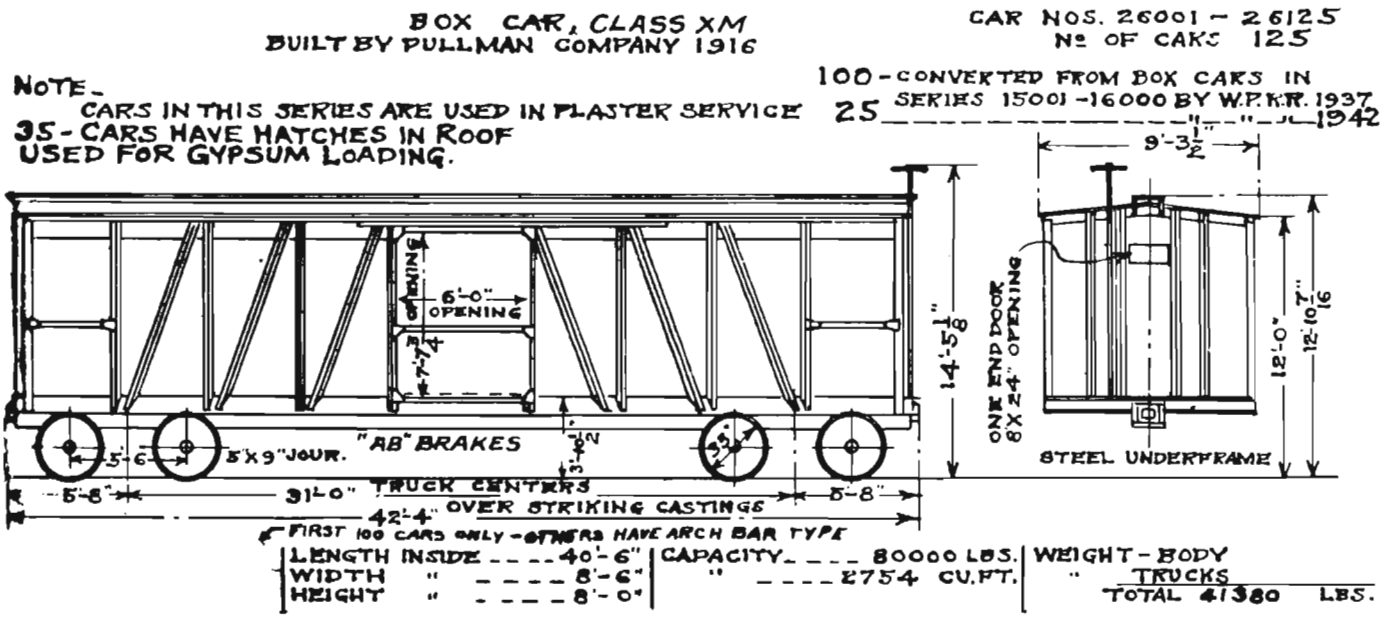
The FRRS Acquires a "Stock" Car

By Norm Holmes

The latest acquisition to our historic car collection has a very interesting background. Lacking a definitive freight car history, we'll have to presume Western Pacific used box cars from other railroads during its early years. After WP's 1915 reorganization, 1,000 40 ton single sheathed outside braced box cars were purchased from the Pullman Company in 1916, numbered 15001-16000. These cars served the company along with 2,500 double sheathed AAR box cars built by Mt. Vernon in 1917-18, 150 50' double door automobile cars and 100 50' double door automobile cars with end doors built in 1929. The wooden box cars served WP's shippers through WW I and the Great Depression until 1937 when 200 steel box cars arrived. WP's first stock cars were built by Mt. Vernon in 1917. WP built 100 cars to the same plans, followed by 195 cars from PC&F in 1924-25. In 1927-28 200 of the 15001 box cars were rebuilt into stock cars and in 1936-37 232 more were converted to stock cars. WP's earliest cabooses were 49 cars built in 1910. Between 1924 and 1931, 35 similar cars were built by WP. By 1937, additional cabooses were needed. With the delivery of WP's first steel box cars in 1937, more of the 15001 box cars were becoming surplus. Between 1937 and 1945, WP converted 85 box cars to cabooses, both cupola and bay window styles. Also in 1937, 125 of this series box cars were converted to be used in plaster service, probably for use at Gerlach, Nevada. In 1936, and possibly as early as 1927, WP began converting the 15001 box cars to outfit cars. (Outfits are gangs who work on the tracks and bridges, etc., and they need to move from time to time.) General plans were drawn for "A" kitchen cars, "B" office car with sleeping area, "C" and "CD" kitchen and diner, "D" commissary with cook's quarters, "E" kitchen, "EG" kitchen and dining car, "F" supply and cook's quarters, "G" diner, "H" 8 person bunk car, "J" foreman and engine crew, "K" and "L" shower bath car, "M" combination kitchen, diner and bunk car, "N" bunk car, "ST" tool car, "TW" tool and water car and "X-1" electrician's supply and quarters. There were variations within each series with cars built for specific needs. The suffix letter was added to the car number for identification, i.e. 0123-A. The last drawing in WP's Outfit car plan book is dated 6-10-54, which may be construed to be the last time one of these cars was built or modified. So where does this fit into our newest acquisition? Our car is a WP outfit car that was last used in the Oroville wrecker outfit. The car was numbered 37-7 when last used and carried the number 0643 before the renumbering of all cars in the wrecker train. The floor plan, as best can be determined, fits plan "C" kitchen and diner. I can remembering eating in this car several times while working to clean up derailments. The car was retired in the late 1970's when WP received two SP Pullman cars and a diner from SP's Carlin wrecker outfit. The car was sold to equipment dealer Phil Monte and stored in Stockton and later moved to Lodi. Monte saved the 0643 (we choose to renumber the car back to its original number because we have its replacement car in the museum also numbered 37-7) along with 2 sand cars, several box cars and other equipment for nearly 20 years for unknown reasons. Having to move the cars again, he offered them for sale. We needed a pair of Andrews leaf spring trucks, which were under the 0643, for our WP caboose No. 614. We also wanted a stock car for our collection. The only WP stock car in existence is No. 75893 at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. The wood was stripped from the car some years ago and it remains stored in a derelict condition. Our 0643 was converted from a 15001 series box car, same as the 432 75801 series stock cars. The body of the 0643 is in very poor condition, some of the siding is gone along with the windows and most of the interior cabinets, etc. Our intention is to strip all the exterior wood from the body and build the car into a stock car as WP did with other box cars of this series. Correct trucks for the stock car will come from one of our flat cars which will also supply couplers and air equipment for caboose 614. The flat car, to which we have several identical, will then be sold for a bridge. The 0643 was loaded on a low bed truck February 24, 1995 and held at the Amos Heavy Trucking yard until Monday, February 27, 1995 when the car and another trailer with the trucks were brought to Portola. Norm Holmes hauled ties and blocking to Lodi February 23 and removed items from the car roof to reduce height; John Walker helped load the car on February 24, and Norm, with help from Gordon Wollesen, Skip Englert and Ken Roller unloaded the car and set it on its trucks. The car is not very attractive in its present condition, so plans are being made to rebuild the car as soon as possible.