

Modeling the Western Pacific Railroad

- Kerry Cochran

For the WP modeler, I found this article written by Tony Thompson and asked if we could use it for one of our publications. Tony gave his permission to reprint with the following postscript.

I would emphasize that the kit is definitely not an accurate representation of the WP's 15001-16000 series cars. The model is too tall (not really possible to correct) and has an exterior steel roof which is not correct. Of course a modeler could file the roof flat and put roofing material onto it, which would be right for much of the lives of those cars.

But the model as I did it is at least a decent stand-in for those WP cars.

How about a simple kit?

I get emails from time to time, essentially asking the question that is today's title. I don't believe that many of my blog posts are about terribly complex projects, but I decided to choose something all could agree is simple, and show what I did. This won't be particularly revealing to experienced modelers, but hopefully will show that even with a very simple kit, there are enhancements you may like to make.

I chose a kit from my modest remaining stash (some years ago I sold, traded, or gave away a large part of my own personal "hobby shop," a possession familiar to many of us). It is an Accurail box car, one specially decorated for Western Pacific by 5th Avenue Car Shops for sale by the California State Railroad Museum. I happen to serve on the Museum's Collection Committee and like to support the museum's activities when I can, so I bought one of these. It is in fact simply different lettering on an existing 4100-series Accurail kit. Currently Accurail markets WP kit no. 4117, with the as-built lettering (shown below).



The car sides and bracing pattern are indeed similar to the WP prototypes, 1000 cars built by Pullman in 1916, numbered 15001-16000. But there are three issues with what you see above. First, you can see the kit's fishbelly underframe, which the WP cars did not have. Second, you can see an outside metal roof, whereas the prototype had an outside wood roof, covered with asphalt roofing sheets. And third, the prototype rode on Andrews trucks throughout its life, not the AAR trucks shown. Finally, in 1947 WP began renumbering some of these cars as 26001-26125 and adding the then-current lettering scheme. Here is a prototype photo of WP 26072:



This image is from Jim Eager's book, *Western Pacific Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment* (Morning Sun Books, 2001), and is a Robert Larson photo taken at Oakland, California in April 1970. You can discern all of the three differences from the Accurail kit that I mentioned above.

As it happens, the Accurail/CSRM kit has exactly the lettering of this prototype photo. Trucks and underframe can be changed to match the photo. The roof would be a bigger challenge to file smooth and add a representation of tar paper, but a few of these cars did get outside metal roofs in later years, so the kit roof could be retained. So I decided to go ahead with this project.

Viewing it just as a kit, this is of course an extremely simple project, the directions for which require only installation of center sills, insertion of brake components into shaped holes, and mounting of a vertical-staff brake wheel. But I did decide to do a few things differently, both in terms of how I like completed kits to perform, and in terms of this specific prototype.

First, I almost always change the Accurail car weight, because I don't like covering the screw holes in the underframe with the full-length weight. I simply use a hacksaw to cut the weight approximately in half,

Tony Thompson

A long-time SP modeler in HO and a California native, Tony Thompson is interested in SP history, and has published both magazine articles and books on this subject. He wrote the modeling column in the SP Historical and Technical Society's magazine, Trainline, for 25 years, and served five years as the Society's President. He is retired from a career in university teaching and research, as a materials scientist interested in mechanical properties of materials. For more, go to: <http://www.signaturepress.com/authors/awt.html> . He is a partner in Signature Press book publishing. To see their books in print, go to www.signaturepress.com . Visit Tony's blog at <http://modelingthesp.blogspot.com> to learn more about him.

then glue the halves to the floor with canopy glue Here is how it looks.



Second, for this car, the prototype did not have the Accurail fishbelly center sill (5th Ave. Car Shops inserted a notice to this effect in my particular kit). You can either cut it down to about 1/8-inch height, or just use 0.030 x 0.125-inch styrene strip. I chose the latter. With brake gear installed but no brake levers or rods yet, it looked like this.



The white additions will of course be painted dark gray.

To install Kadee #158 whisker couplers, I sliced off the post on the underside of the coupler box lid, drilled out the post location, then tapped 2-56 all the way through the box and floor, so I can install the box lid with a screw. For trucks, I used some cast white metal Quality Craft Andrews trucks I had on hand, installing suitable Reboxx semi-scale wheelsets. Last, the brake staff was cut to length, and placed with CA, as was the brake wheel. A coat of flat finish completed preliminaries.



For weathering, I used my acrylic wash methods (to see a thorough description of the method and its uses, consult the "Reference pages" list at the top right of this blog post). I also applied some slight color differences to individual boards, in both the side sheathing and the running board, using artist's "Prismacolor" pencils. Lastly, the usual route cards, reweigh and repack stencils, and occasional chalk marks were added to complete the car.

This is indeed a simple kit, and was enjoyable to complete. I likely don't have as many Western Pacific cars on my layout as I should, so this will be a useful addition to the fleet.

Thank you to Tony Thompson for allowing us to use his article to bring another modeling idea to us.



H&R BLOCK®
DAVID HANSEN - SUSANVILLE

H & R Block - David Hansen
2850 Main St Ste 7, Susanville, CA 96130
Tel: 530-257-9339



Ithicos Solutions
Self Service Active Directory Web Tools
Ithicos Solutions LLC
1315 Wentwood Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80919
808-735-4226 - ithicos.com