



UP 249046. More or less the typical special-design purpose-built. Thrall built this one in December 1995. These have a pair of insulated hoods. Note the gray paint scheme, unusual for a UP car. March 1996; Omaha, NE.

Coil Steel (and related) Cars

by David G. Casdorph

Photos courtesy Freight Cars Journal



CNW 39638. Built by Thrall in September 1969. The car was painted by CNW's Clinton shops in February 1993. Interior length, 48' 11".

Freight cars used for coil-steel service today fall into three broad categories — special-design purpose-built or converted gondolas and converted flats. Two things are common to all of these — they are at least 100-ton cars and they have some form of cushioning (usually underframe, but sometimes end-of-car).

Special-Design Purpose-Built — Most of us usually think of this category when we think of coil-steel cars. For HO modelers, this means the Walthers #3850-series models. Many of the purpose-built cars began showing up in the mid-'60s. At that time the AAR classified them as FMS, or flat car,

special service. Later, most cars were classified as GBSR, or gondola, special service, with roof. The basic design of this type of car uses a trough running the length of the car (which is why it's hard to say whether they are "flats" or "gons"). The trough acts as a cradle for the coil-steel rolls. Usually, the cars are loaded with several sizes (diameters) of coiled steel with the smaller ones loaded toward the middle of the car. These are still being produced today.

Purpose-Built or Converted Gondolas — This is probably the second most common type of car used for coil-steel loading. This type usually uses a basic mill gondola that

has had cradles or bulkheads installed inside the car. They exist in both new-delivered (for steel products service) and converted variants. Sometimes, but not always, the gons also get hoods (or covers). The variety of hood shapes and sizes is a subject that would fill a volume by itself.

Converted Flatcars — These are not as common as the two previously mentioned groups. I've seen converted cars from both bulkhead and standard flatcar designs.

The following photo montage illustrates the variety of cars used in coil-steel service. It is by no means intended to illustrate all of the current designs (but, pretty close!).

MP 950163. Built in 1981 by Thrall. Note the hoods with the built-in stacking posts (four on each hood along the sides). The "cage" on top is for lifting the hoods. November 1996; Fontana, CA.



CSXT 497241. Built in November 1965 by Evans Products. Two different styles of hoods are very common in the daily life of this type car — these are at lease both CSX hoods! October 1995; Vernon, CA.



EELX 60005 is a special-design purpose-built coil car that was built in March 1967 by Evans. Note the integral clamshell roof and massive frame.

Mike Foley photo



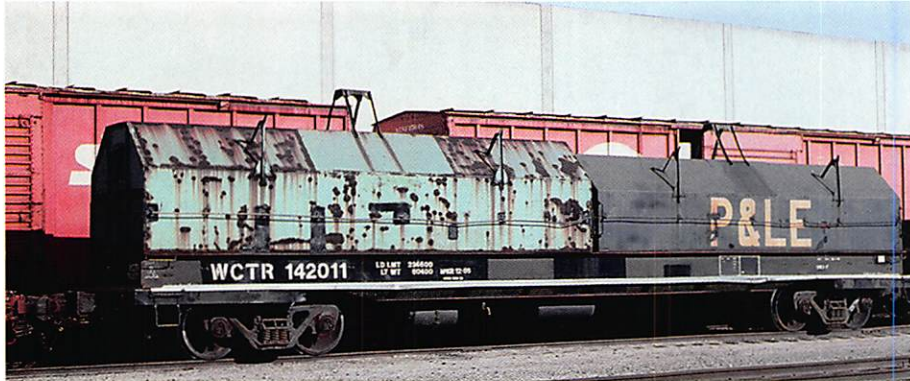
KCS 716063 is part of a series of 70 cars that were delivered by Thrall in 1994. The cars do not have hoods.



BN 686001. Burlington Northern bought ten of these in 1993 from Thrall. Notice how most cars of this style have a walkway that extends the perimeter of the central frame/cradle.

CSXT 498100 was built in May 1974 by the C&O's Raceland Shop. Cars of this type usually have cushioned underframes.





WCTR 142011 was originally built in 1966 by Evans for the P&LE 42000-series. This car is equipped with 125-ton trucks. The WCTU Railway Company operates 13 of these, numbers 142000-142012.



NS 167122. At first glance it looks like the typical Thrall coil car. However, this one has a special type of hood. First of all there is only one long hood; it's insulated and made of aluminum. Light weight is 61100...compare to the light weight of the UP's insulated hood car of 68400 (UP 249046).



CR 631651 is a very different type utilizing a lower center-of-gravity and end platforms for the brake gear. This one was built by Conrail in January 1996. April 1996; Toledo, OH.



BN 686056. Another interesting design to emerge in contemporary coil-car designs is this "shorty" (34' 0" IL) style built by National Steel Car. They have been seen in operation both with and without hoods. Burlington Northern has received over 800 of this type to date.

EJE 3850 is one of my favorites...a good 'ole fashion drop-side gondola with a large three-section bulbous hood.

CN 190421 is more typical of the hoods found on converted gondola cars in coil-steel service. This one has two parts. This series of 98 cars (190400-190497) has removable coil kits (removable cradles) offering a dual-service advantage to the mill-gon type of coil cars.



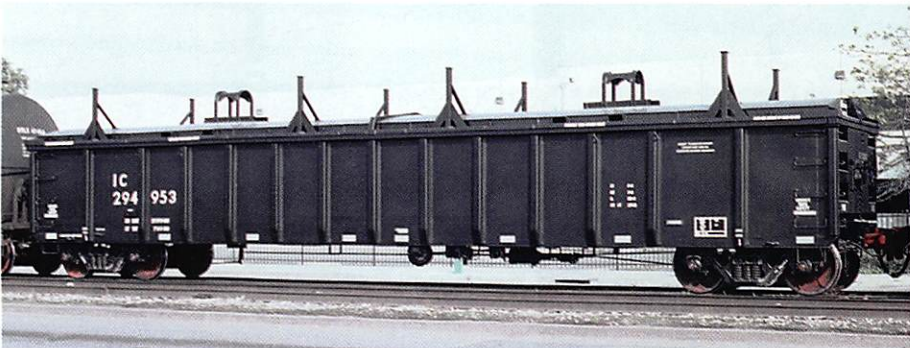
LRWN 6329. These cars are owned by GERSCO and leased to the SP. They were converted from standard mill gons in the ICG 246100-246199 series from November 1993 to January 1994. This is one of the few cars without cushioning. These are usually used for coiled-wire service.



MP 697159 were originally built by Ortner Freight Car in 1969 as part of the 697050-697149 series. Renumbered into the 697150-697164 (15 cars) series in 1995. The cars have bulkheads and can be used for transporting other steel products.



IC 294953 is a purpose-built covered gondola car. Built in December 1995 by Johnstown America as part of the IC 294900-294969 series. These may also be used for transporting other steel products.



SP 599236 was originally built as a standard non-bulkhead flatcar with end-of-car cushioning. The conversion added a bulkhead at each end and a longitudinal cradle. Converted by the Southern Pacific's Pine Bluff Shops in 1994.



TTJX 81282. Certainly an interesting conversion is this former bulkhead car owned by TTX. Each car carries two of these removable cradle-platforms. The cars were converted in 1995 for Conrail operations.

A close-up of the Conrail cradle-platform on TTJX 81282. A similar operation was started by the ICG in the early '80s using bulkhead flatcars and called T-R-T service.

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