A 1920s FREIGHT CAR FLEET YOU CAN MODEL
THE CHICAGO & ALTON RAILROAD

By Ray Breyer

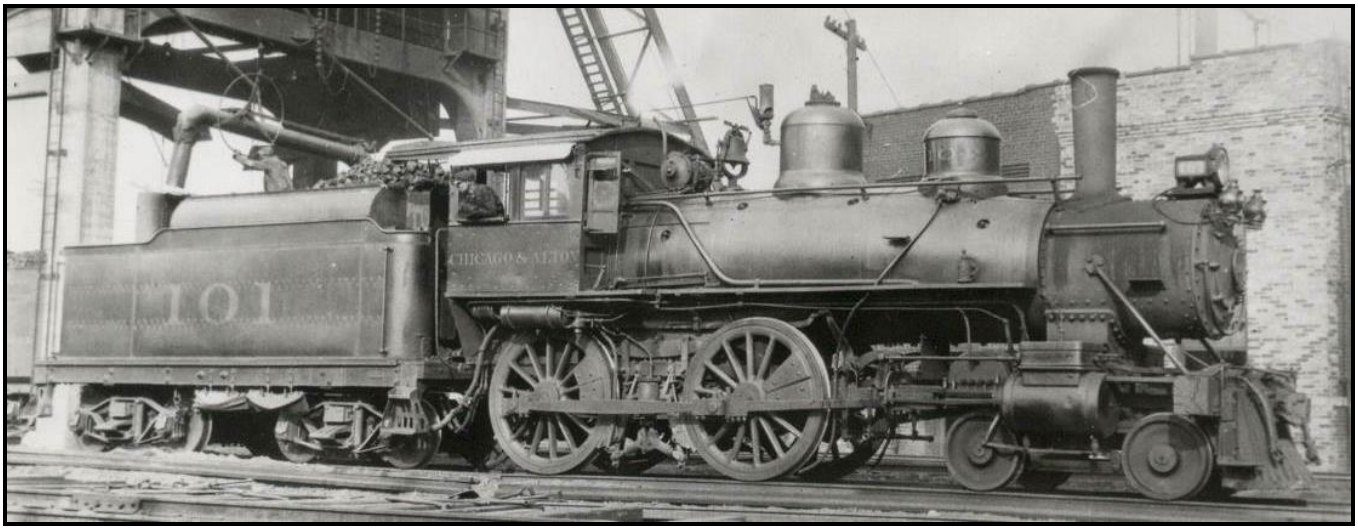
All images Author's collection unless noted.

C&A 17334, a Harriman-standard boxcar, is surrounded by a sea of Northern Pacific cars in Spokane in the late 1920s. Although small, their fleet of cars did touch every corner of the country.
Northern Pacific company photo.

The Chicago & Alton Railroad (C&A), more commonly known as just "The Alton", was at one time a well-known railroad with a reputation for fast, comfortable, and frequent passenger trains. At the dawn of the 20th Century is was perhaps THE premier passenger railroad of the Midwest, speeding more passengers between Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City than all of its competitors combined. While well known for its luxurious mainline passenger trains (the C&A built both the first Pullman sleeper and the first dining car) its Chicago area commuter service was the second largest in the Second City, and the railroad was making large profits from coal hauling from central Illinois mines, from agricultural traffic, through perishable freight to Chicago, and manufactured goods from Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City.

And then disaster struck the railroad. E.H. Harriman was convinced that the railroad was undervalued, and could be bought for a fraction of its actual worth. Harriman could snap up the railroad, and then improve the railroad's infrastructure, realize more profits from the railroad, and sell it off for a hefty profit. Harriman bought the railroad in 1906 and proceeded to bury it under a mountain of debt that it could never repay, through a massive program of infrastructure improvements and new equipment purchases that were well in excess of what the railroad could hope to earn over the next decade.

More disasters followed in quick succession. The Rock Island wrested control of the C&A from the Harriman Syndicate in 1914, and convinced the Toledo, St. Louis & Western to assume its debt and control. The Clover Leaf, duped into the purchase by traditionally shady "robber baron" creative bookkeeping, controlled the C&A until 1922, when it defaulted on unrealistically high bond payments. The C&A fell into receivership, where it remained until 1931, when the property was purchased by the Baltimore & Ohio (who wanted the road as a main line to Kansas City). The B&O reorganized the Chicago & Alton as simply the "Alton", but never realized a full merger with the railroad. The B&O finally sold the Alton off to the GM&O in 1947.



C&A 101, a home built 4-4-0 constructed by the road's Bloomington shops in 1881, is seen here in Peoria in July 1927. This 47 year old engine is about to depart with Train #55, a first class passenger run to St. Louis. That this ancient engine is still handling varnish at this late date shows how desperate the Alton was to keep what they had running. The engine would finally be retired and scrapped in 1930. Harold Vollrath collection.

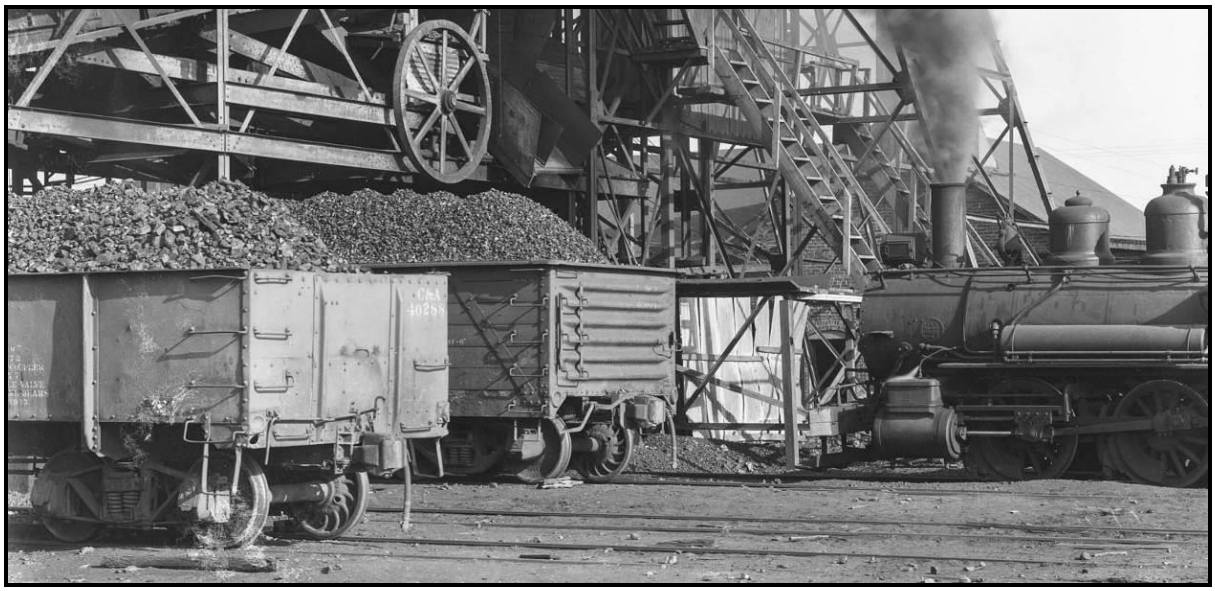
More bad luck came in the form of plummeting online traffic, virtually all of which came from three online sources: agricultural shipments, coal mining, and passengers. As soon as the automobile and the paved road made their appearance in Illinois after 1914, traffic began a quick downturn. Farmers have always hated the railroads (hence the "Grange" movement) and paved roads and pickup trucks meant that they could cut out one to three layers of middlemen by moving their products themselves. Coal mining in Illinois was a principle battleground for organized labor in the early years of the 20th Century, and major strikes in 1919 and 1922 caused a general depression of this principle traffic source for the Alton for most of the decade. Finally, passengers abandoned railroads in huge numbers even during WWI, preferring private cars for commuting and buses for intermediate distance travel. By the mid-1920s the Alton had lost over 30% of their peak passenger traffic, and was considering dropping most of their passenger service in favor of buses.

The C&A was proud of its passenger hauling tradition, and tried everything it could to keep it as a viable source of revenue. Here, C&A 630 departs St. Louis with train #4, on its way to Chicago. It'll reach the Windy City in seven hours. Otto Perry photo, Denver Public Library collection.

The railroad's hard luck story meant that the Alton saw a wave of new equipment purchases around 1900, another in 1906-1908 while under Harriman control, a small amount of USRA allocations in 1919, and almost no new equipment again until World War Two. The Alton had one of the oldest average freight car rosters in the United States. The railroad knew that they couldn't afford new freight cars, and the equipment they did have survived far longer than it should have, being rebuilt several times by the railroad's shop forces in Bloomington IL.

This late 1920s view of the C&A's car shops in Bloomington shows over 50 boxcars being stripped and completely rebuilt from the frame up. Most of the cars seen are 1913-built Harriman designed cars, which are getting new side sheathing and new corrugated steel ends. Railway Age Magazine.

The Alton's antique rolling stock roster is good news for 1920s and early 1930s modelers, since it allows them to accurately run cars built 25 to 35 years earlier, and which were long gone on most Class One railroads. The Alton was still running tiny, all wood 34-foot boxcars when other railroads were building 50-foot long, all steel cars! And while the railroad had a small overall car fleet (14,070 cars in 1926; the 45th largest fleet in North America), the Alton still served some of the largest industrial centers in the Midwest, so its cars roamed across the entire country, and even into Canada.



C&A 40288, a 1908-built steel gondola, and 43606, a 1924-built USRA gondola "clone", are seen here at an online mine in 1929. The USRA gondolas and their clones were the newest, most modern coal-carrying cars the Alton rostered until 1944. The engine is B-1 class #15, built in 1896!

THE ALTON'S FREIGHT CAR FLEET OF 1926

Let's take a look at what the C&A was running, by examining their fleet as it looked near the end of 1926. According to the road's ORER listing they owned 14,070 revenue freight cars: 4,134 plain boxcars, 722 auto and furniture boxcars, 2,112 gondolas, 1,262 stock cars, 490 flat cars, 355 hoppers, and 184 reefers, all broken down into 49 different number series. Overall, it was a tiny freight car fleet, but it had to be, simply because its traffic was drying up.

A long line of C&A boxcars, mostly Harriman-designed cars, sits idle in Bloomington in 1930. The Depression's severe traffic downturn and picky shippers wanting "new & clean" cars spelled the end for the bulk of the Alton's freight roster, most of which wouldn't survive to WWII. Pantagraph photo, McLean County Museum of History collection.

During the Harriman years traffic was booming: coal was up, grain was up, fresh produce was up, and live animal shipments were up. But starting around World War I all of that changed. Although the Alton made it to Kansas City, it was really an Illinois railroad at heart. And Illinois embraced the automobile and paved roads very early on; the "Good Roads Movement" started in 1913, and by 1914 Illinois was paving parts of the new Lincoln Highway. By the early 1920s, the Alton was losing short and intermediate haul traffic at an alarming rate, and nearly half of their livestock and LCL traffic had dried up by 1925. Worse yet, their two most profitable businesses, coal and passengers, were in a tailspin. People were moving by private car and bus, to the point that more than half of the St. Louis to Chicago traffic had disappeared by 1927 (for all railroads, not just the Alton). And Illinois coal was in a decline period, with unions fighting owners to keep rates and paychecks as high as they were during WWI. Traffic was declining at nearly 10% a year as online mines were closed or slowed.

The changing traffic of Illinois: downtown Mattoon in 1913 (left) sees nothing but horse drawn vehicles, while in mid-1918 (right) there's exactly ONE horse drawn vehicle, and 50 automobiles, on the same stretch of road. The car replaced animals quickly in Illinois, and that spelled trouble for railroads in the area. Illinois Central company photos.

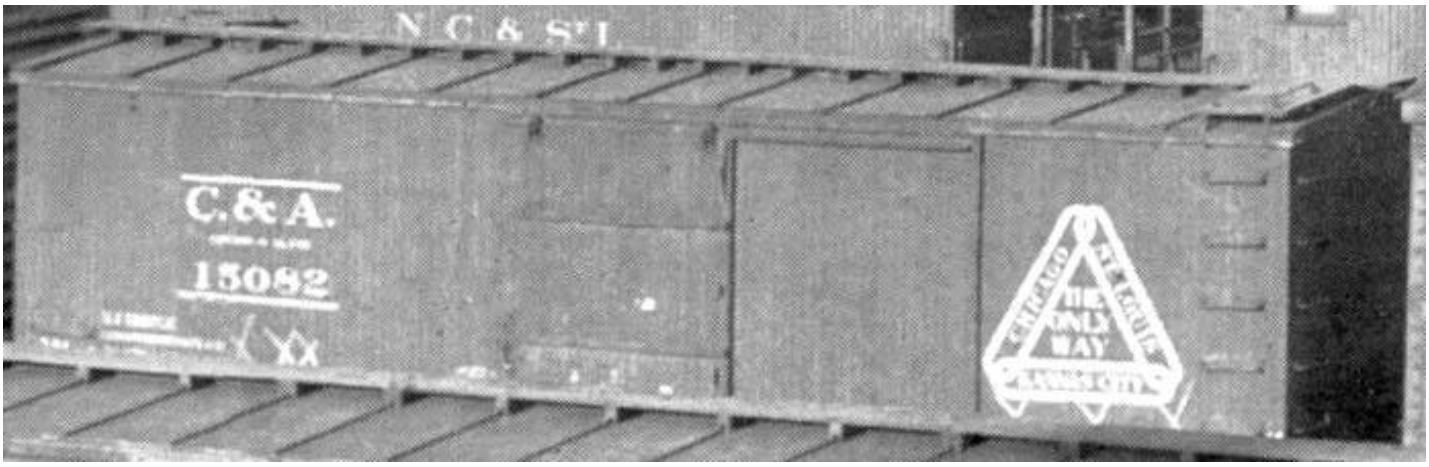
Because of declining traffic the railroad didn't need a lot of new freight cars, and couldn't afford them if they needed any. After the Harriman years the succession of railroads that were interested in buying the Alton were interested in their connection to Kansas City and western bridge traffic, not in potential online Illinois traffic. The railroad bought a lot of Harriman-Standard cars between 1906 and 1909, didn't see much in the way of new equipment until the USRA years (1,000 antique design wood gons in 1917, and 500 USRA gondolas in 1919), and not again until 1924, when the road bought another 1,250 USRA gondolas and 250 single sheathed automobile boxcars to cover about the only growth industry on the line. Everything else rolling was circa 1895-1903!

PLAIN BOXCARS

In 1926, the Alton rostered 4,134 XM-type boxcars in nine groups.

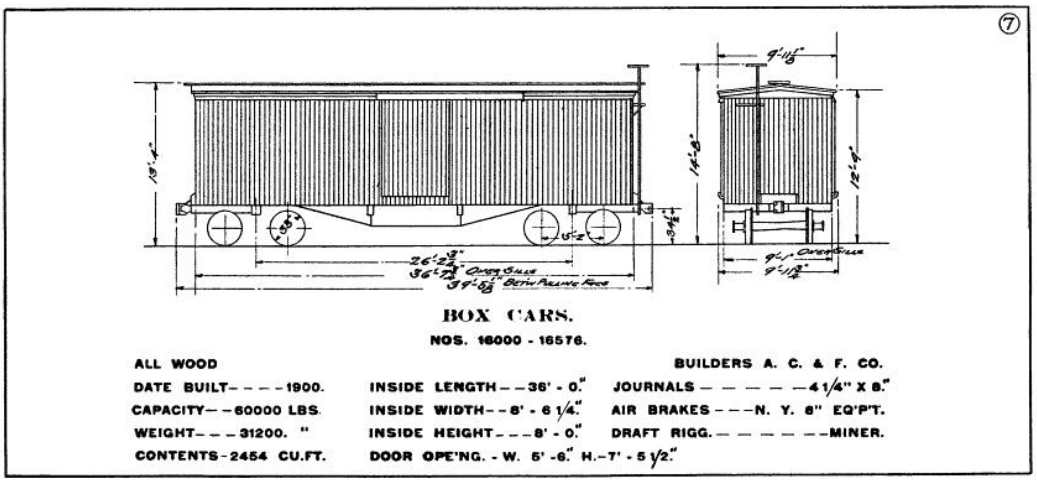
13000-13234, ACF 1897, 34'8" OL, all wood, 17 cars.
15000-15999, Mt. Vernon 1899, 34'10" OL, all wood, 517 cars.

C&A 13130 and 15281 are seen here in Bloomington in 1905. Once the mainstay of the Alton's boxcar fleet, these cars would be overshadowed in a year by a large group of Harriman Standard cars. Detroit Publishing Co. photo, Library of Congress collection.



By 1926 most of the 13000- and 15000-series cars had been fully rebuilt at least once, as seen here with #15082, which now has new doors and a steel roof.

16000-16576, ACF 1900, 36’7” OL, all wood, 440 cars.



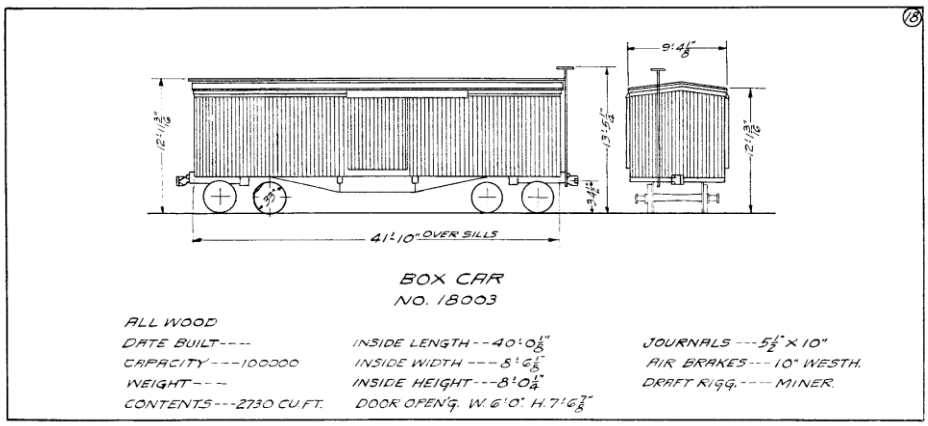
This 1927 C&A diagram of the 16000-series boxcars shows them to be virtually identical to the 15000-series cars. It’s likely that by 1926 most of these cars had also been rebuilt with steel roofs, and probably with steel center sills as well.

17000-17999, ACF 1906, 41’10”, double sheathed, steel underframe, 972 cars.

AC&F builder’s photo, Al Westerfield collection.

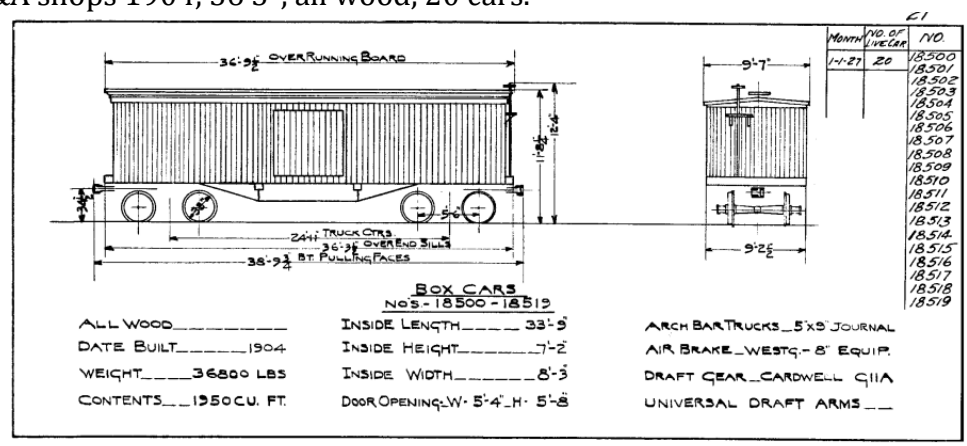
The 1,000 cars of the 17000-series were among the Alton’s most modern boxcars until 1924, and the largest single group of “modern” boxcars they owned. The cars were Harriman-Standard B-50-2 type cars, and were rebuilt or modified several times until the 1940s. In 1926 the cars were rebuilt with new steel roofs and corrugated steel ends. Over 950 of the cars received new cast sideframe trucks in the 1930s, preparing for the looming archbar truck ban of 1940.

18000-18001, C&A Shops 1895, 38’3” OL, all wood, 2 cars
18003-18004, C&A shops 1896, 41’10” OL, all wood, 2 cars.



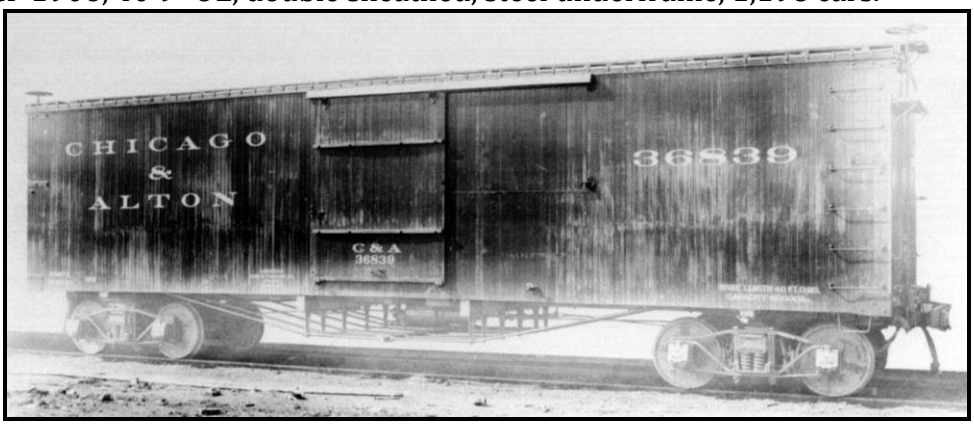
The 18000-18004 group of cars were all home builds from the C&A’s Bloomington shops, likely constructed out of spare material left over from various rebuilding programs.

18500-18519, C&A shops 1904, 36’3”, all wood, 20 cars.



More home built cars, the 18500-series were a throwback to late 19th Century car designs, and were tiny cars, even by 1904 standards.

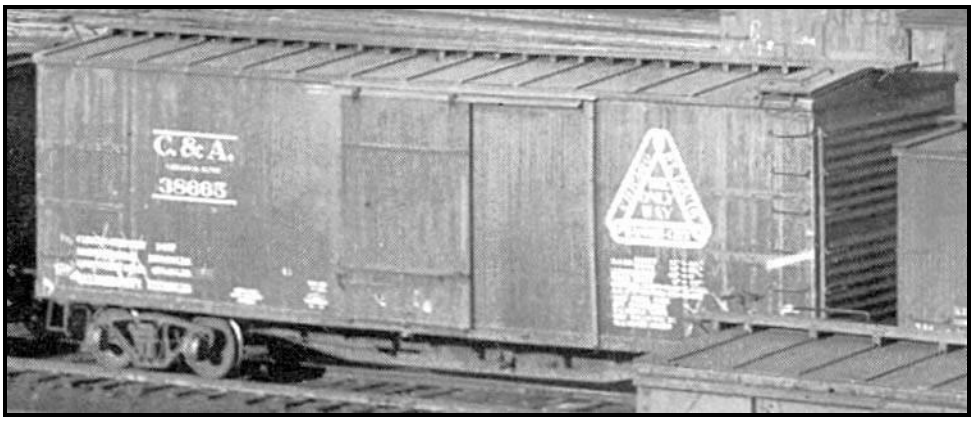
36000-37299, ACF 1906, 40’9” OL, double sheathed, steel underframe, 1,198 cars.



The last boxcars ordered before Harriman took over the railroad, the 36000-series cars were typical of Granger road cars at the dawn of the 20th Century: all-wood, but 40 feet long to maximize capacity for grain movement. Many of these cars had received metal roofs by 1917, but little else was ever done to them.

38000-38999, ACF 1913, 42’1” OL, double sheathed, steel underframe, 967 cars.

AC&F builder’s photo, Al Westerfield collection.



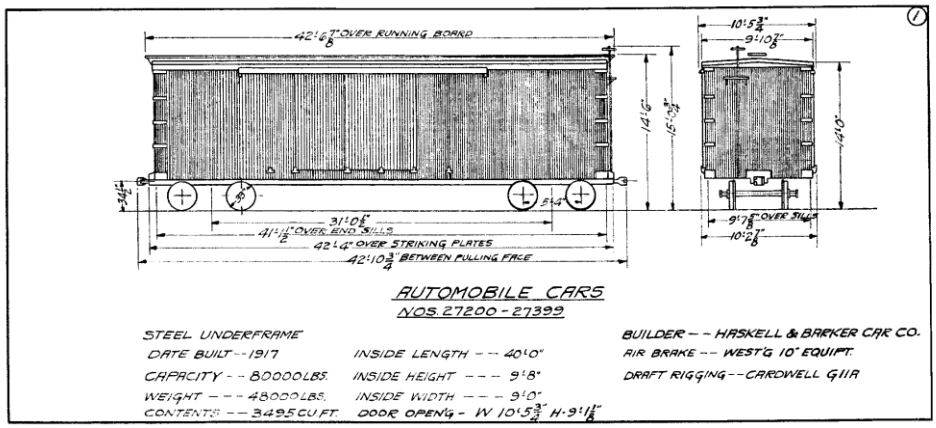
The 38000-series cars were more Harriman boxcars, this time 1,000 cars tacked onto a large order for B-50-6 class cars ordered between 1909 and 1913. More modern than the 17000-series Harriman cars, these cars also seemed to not be as long-lived, as general attrition reduced their numbers faster than the other Harriman boxcars on the roster. As with most of the boxcars in the Alton fleet, these cars were continually rebuilt and improved, receiving new steel roofs, rebuilt doors, and corrugated steel ends by 1926.

AUTOMOBILE AND FURNITURE BOXCARS

Large volume, low weight car ladings out of Chicago and St. Louis were typical of online Alton durable goods shipments, so the railroad maintained a larger than usual assortment of 40 and 50-foot boxcars. As far back as 1880 the road had a fleet of long furniture cars, which also covered shipments of carriages and wagons. By 1901 those cars were also carrying automobiles from Chicago (until 1909 the automobile manufacturing capital of the U.S). By 1917 automobile carrying traffic was more important than wagons or furniture, and most of their cars were busy hauling cars and light trucks around the nation.

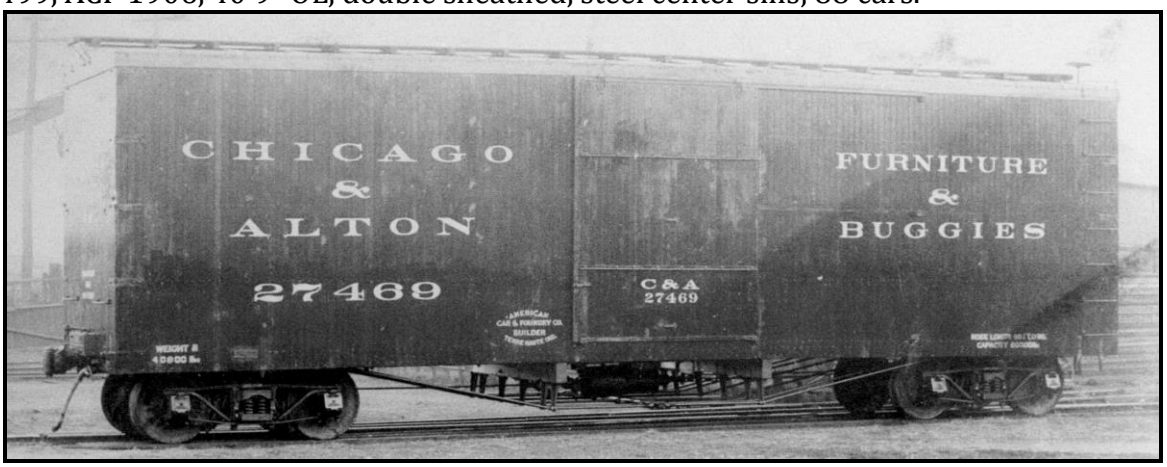
The Alton’s misfortunes meant that they were stuck transporting automobiles in very old, 1890s designed boxcars. Just before WWI the road did manage to buy 200 new auto boxcars, but these were little different from their 1893 home built cars, with the exception of double doors and a steel center sill. In 1924 the railroad’s receivers did allow them to buy 250 single sheathed auto boxcars, since manufacturers were increasingly refusing the Alton’s rickety old cars. This allowed the road to hang onto one of the few profitable traffic sources it still had access to.

27200-27399, Haskell & Barker 1917, 42’4” OL, double sheathed, steel underframe, 193 cars.



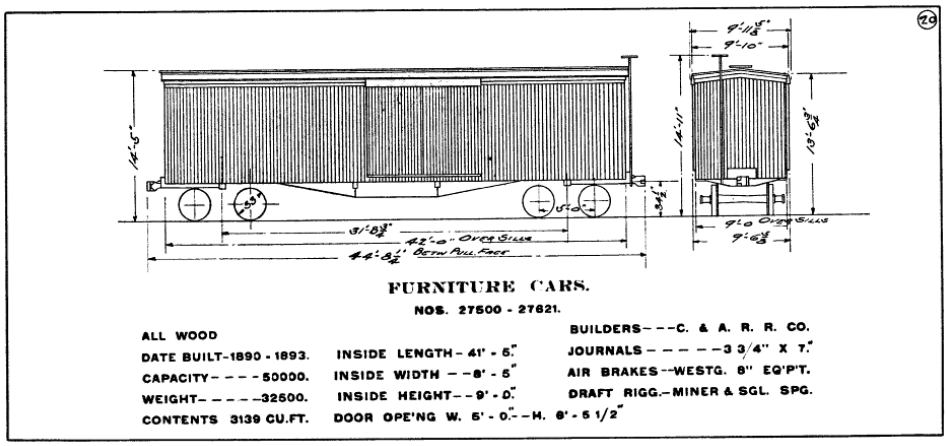
Until late 1924, these were the newest auto boxcars on the Alton.
Besides their straight center sill steel underframe, these cars were of all-wood construction.

27400-27499, ACF 1906, 40’9” OL, double sheathed, steel center sills, 88 cars.



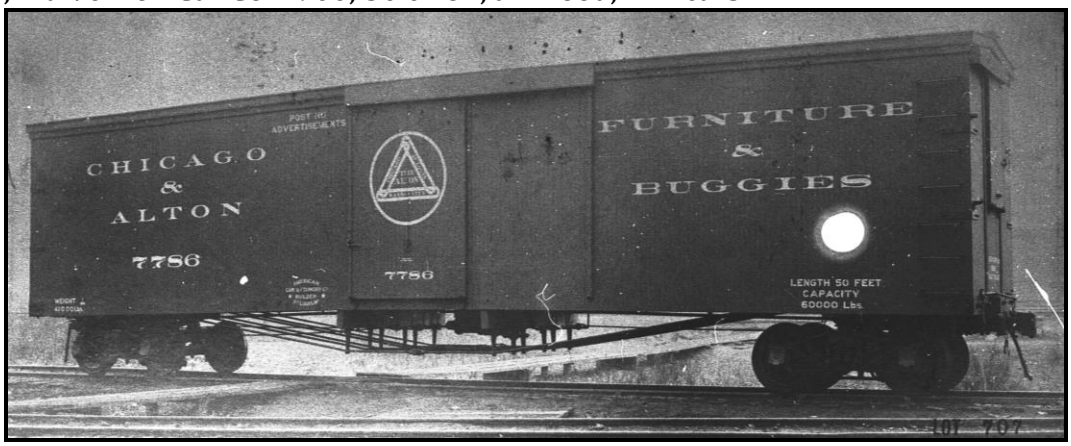
Built in 1906, the 100 cars of the 27400-series were fairly large cars for their time. As was typical for the Alton, the cars were rebuilt in 1914 to extend their service lives, by adding steel center sills and bolsters, a steel roof, and widening the door opening from six to ten feet. AC&F builder’s photo, Al Westerfield collection.

27500-27621, C&A Shops 1890-1893, 42’0” OL, all wood, 74 cars.



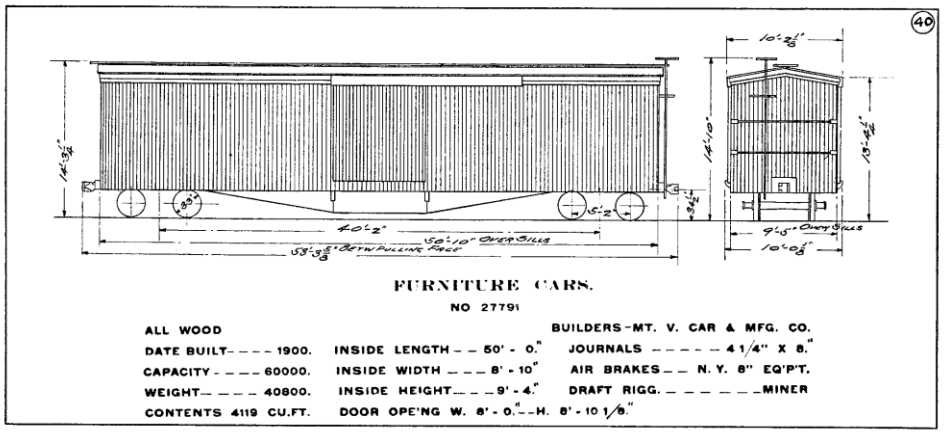
Home built by the C&A’s shops, the 122 cars of the 27500-series were all-wood, and never rebuilt with modern appliances like steel roofs or underframes. The cars would all be retired by 1930.

27700-27899, Mt. Vernon Car Co. 1900, 50’0” OL, all wood, 111 cars.



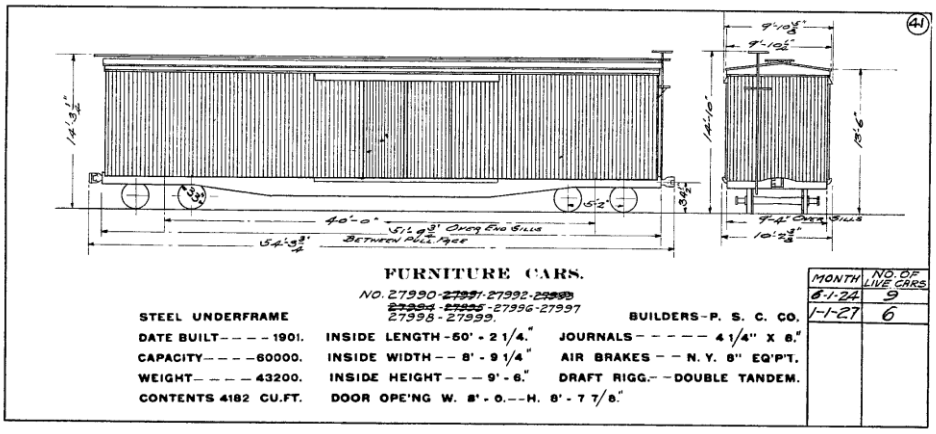
More antique furniture cars, the 27700-series cars (renumbered from 7700-7899 by 1910) had six foot wide doors which would have made loading automobiles into them challenging. Never extensively rebuilt or modernized, these cars would also disappear by the end of 1930. AC&F builder’s photo, Al Westerfield collection.

27791, Mt. Vernon Car Co. 1900, all wood, 50’10” OL, 1 car.



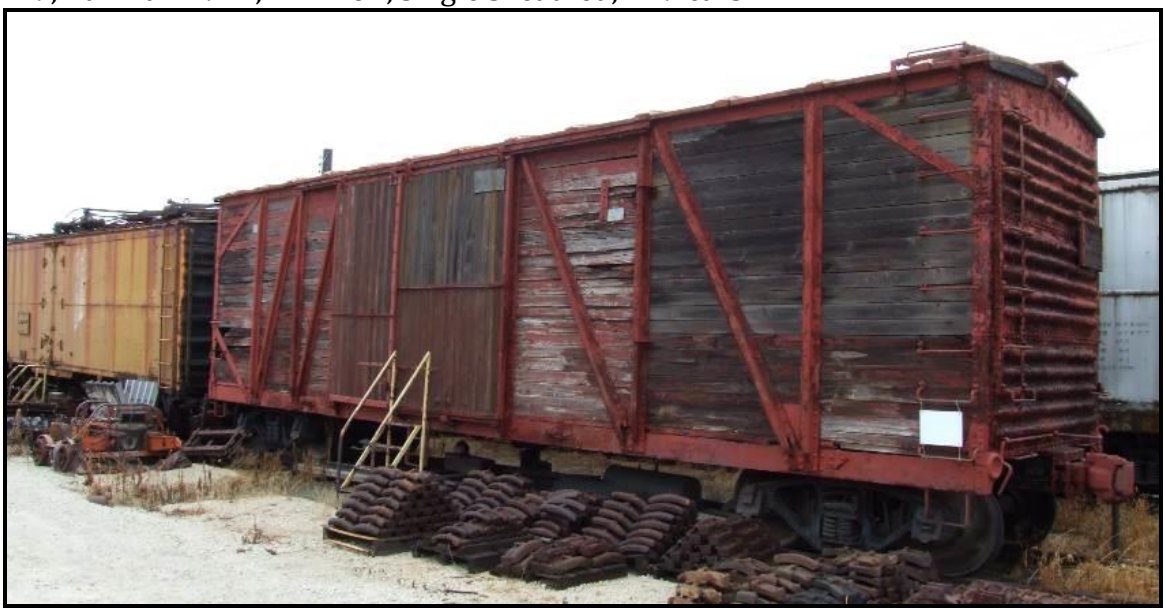
This single car was originally identical to the others in the 27700 series, but at some point before 1910 was modified to have an eight foot wide door opening.

27990-27999, Pressed Steel Car Co. 1901, 51’4”, double sheathed, steel underframe, 6 cars.



The 10 cars of this series were built before the Harriman takeover of the Alton, and were for a time the most modern equipment on the railroad. 52-foot long cars with Pressed Steel fishbelly side sills were a rarity, as were cars with double four foot wide doors. These cars survived until 1935.

39000-39249, Pullman 1924, 42'1" OL, single sheathed, 249 cars.



After World War One the auto industry boomed, and everyone in the Midwest wanted to own their own automobile. The auto industry was increasingly concerned about the freight equipment that was moving their products, and demanded new, clean cars for loading. That meant that virtually none of the Alton's antique auto or furniture cars were acceptable to shippers in the postwar years. To maintain at least some share of this lucrative traffic, the receivers of the railroad allowed the purchase of new auto boxcars (as well as more drop bottom gondolas to cover new coal mines being built along the line). The cars would eventually become part of the GM&O's roster, and one car, seen above at Union IL, would survive to preservation as a C&IM MOW tool car.

GONDOLAS

Coal was big business for the Alton, with over 55% of all freight revenue coming from moving coal from online mines to power plants and steel mills, mostly in the Chicago area. When the miners were on strike (which was often in the first three decades of the 20th Century), the Alton took major financial hits.

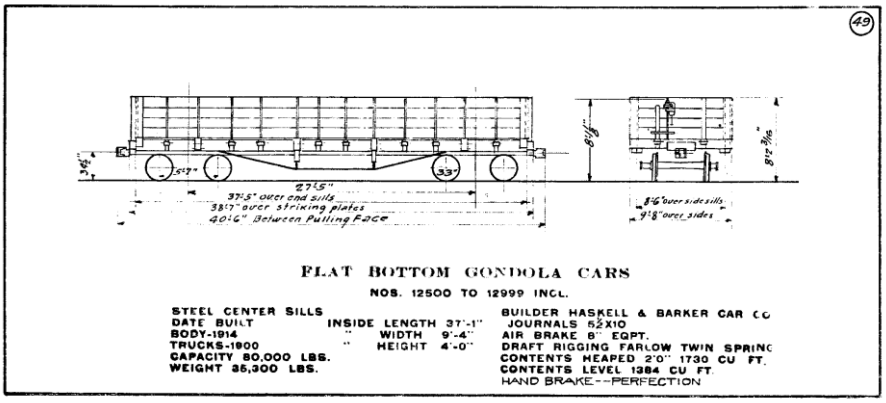
For whatever reason, coal mines in central Illinois preferred shipping in gondolas over hoppers; the IC, CB&Q, C&IM, Wabash, and Milwaukee all maintained large rosters of coal gondolas to cover the traffic. So while the Alton did own a couple hundred hoppers, they also owned several thousand gondolas to handle coal movements.

A long string of empty Alton coal cons wait to return to the coal fields south of Springfield, from the steel plants around Joliet in 1901. Detroit Publishing Co. photo, Library of Congress collection.

11000-12099, Georgia Car Co. 1899-1900, 36’0” OL, all wood, 549 cars.

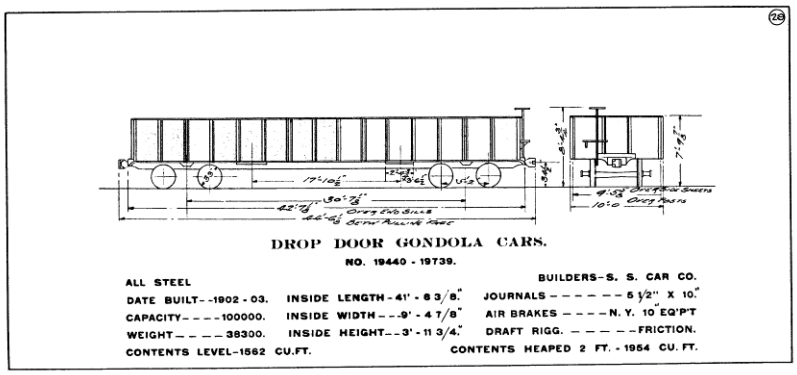
The 1,100 cars of the 11000-series were the general workhorse gondolas of the C&A until the 1920s. When built the Alton was also buying all-steel gondolas for the mill trade. These all-wood, flat-bottomed cars were built to a fairly common industry design, and would survive without extensive rebuilding until 1930.

12500-12999, Haskell & Barker 1914, 38’7” OL, Wood body with steel center sill, 470 cars.



The 12500-series cars were virtually identical to the older 11000-series, with the exception of a stronger steel underframe. Many of these cars would survive well into the WWII years before being scrapped.

19440-19739, Standard Steel 1902, 42’7” OL, all steel, 8 cars.

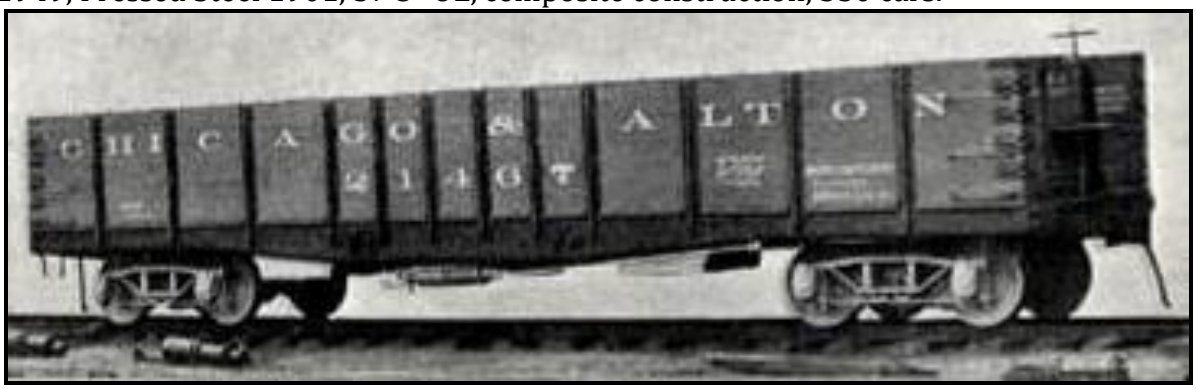


The Alton was an early adopter of the all-steel car type, especially for gondolas and hoppers. Their earliest steel cars didn’t seem to live long lives, and by 1927 the 300 cars of this series was down to just eight cars.

19740-19748, ACF 1902, 43’0” OL, all steel, 1 car.

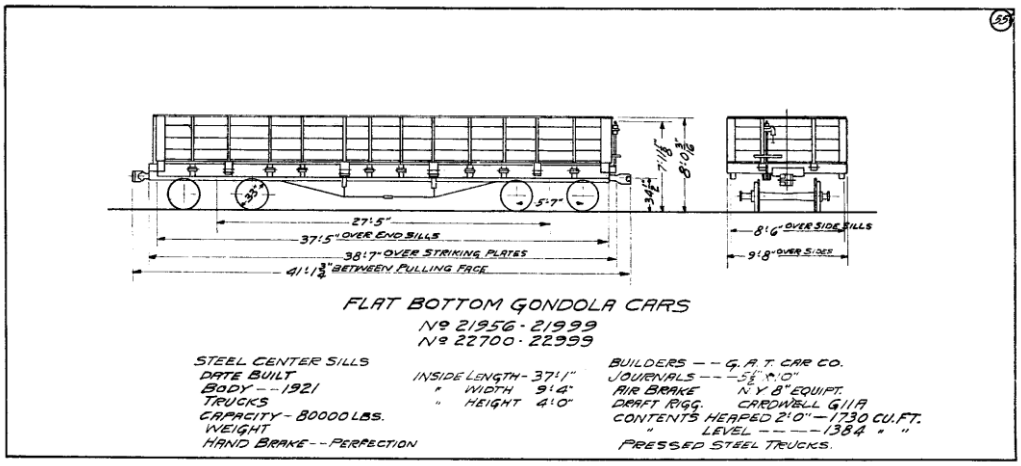
More early all-steel, drop bottom gondolas, there was only one of these cars left in 1927. AC&F builder’s photo, Al Westerfield collection.

21500-21949, Pressed Steel 1901, 37’5” OL, composite construction, 350 cars.



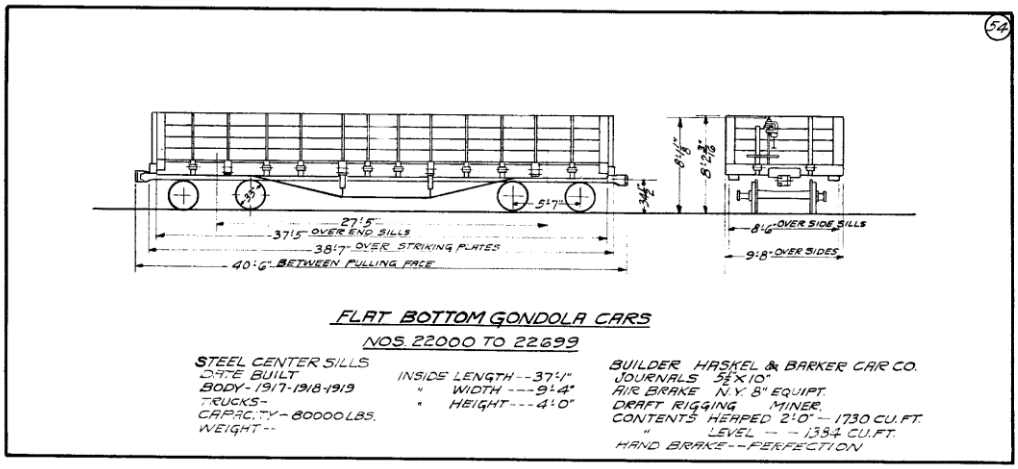
The Alton’s early composite gondolas with Pressed Steel underframes fared far better than their all-steel cars did, and 350 of 450 cars were still rolling 25 years after they were built. These gondolas had two pairs of drop doors to make unloading a bit easier. Scientific American Magazine.

21956-21999 and 22700-22999, General American 1921, 37’5” OL, wood with steel center sills, 344 cars.



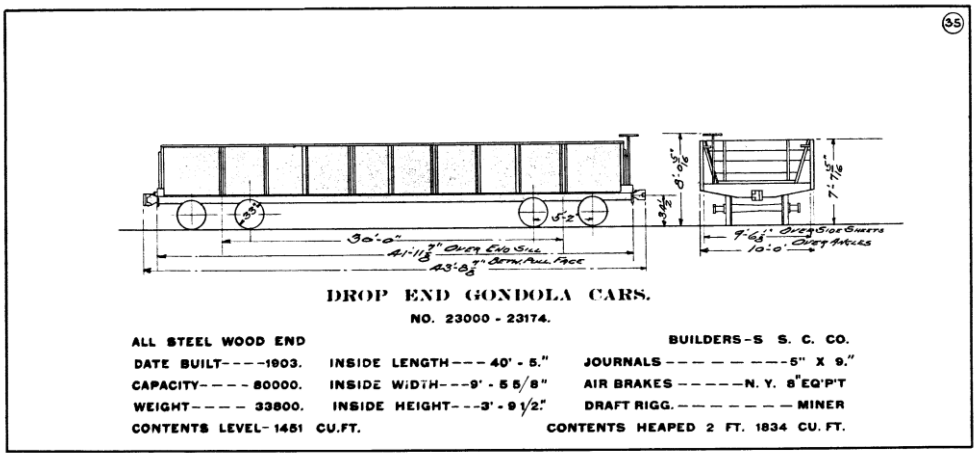
These two groups of short, wood-bodied gondolas were built after WWI to cover a small surge in coal shipments, and were constructed as cheaply as possible (the construction of brand new, all-wood gondolas were almost unheard of for new car construction in the 1920s). The cars were very similar to the 11000- and 12500-series cars, and scrapped in the early 1930s.

22000-22699, Haskell & Barker 1917, 37’5” OL, wood with steel center sills, 690 cars.



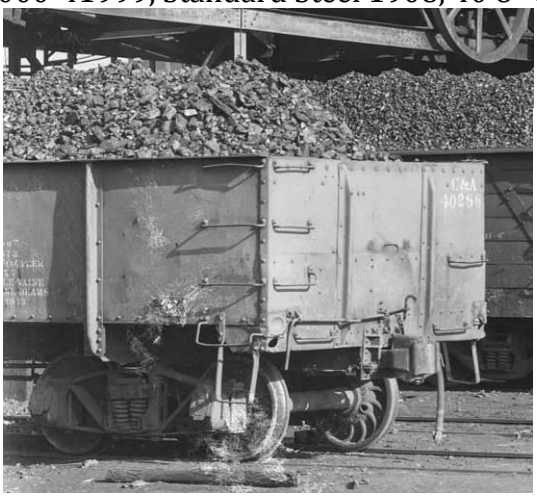
More wood-bodied gondolas, the 22000-series cars were built to cover booming coal traffic in the years just before America’s involvement in WWI. The cars would all be retired and scrapped before WWII.

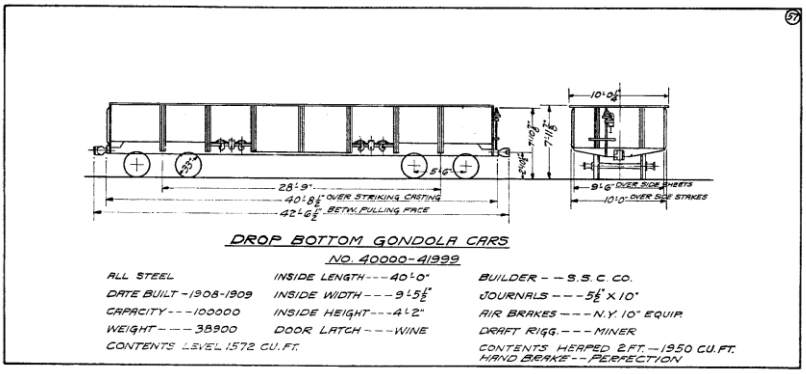
23000-23174, Standard Steel 1904, 42’0” OL, all steel, 4 cars.



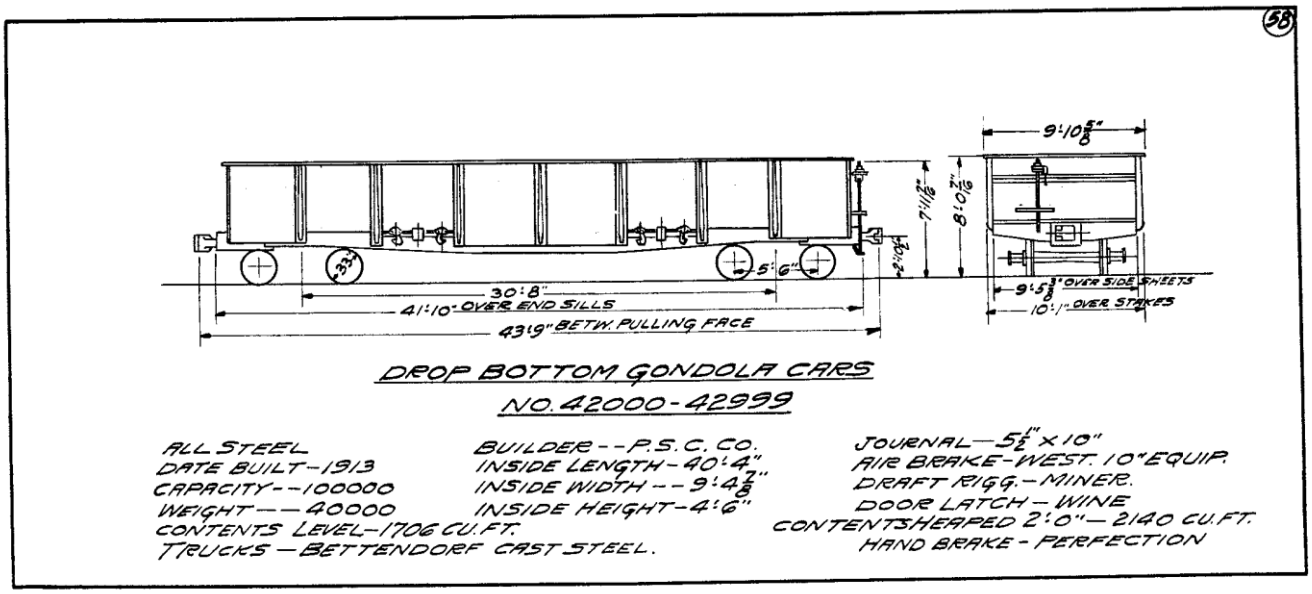
More early all-steel gondolas, these cars were equipped with drop ends for the mill trade. As with most of their other early steel cars, these didn’t survive very long.

40000-41999, Standard Steel 1908, 40’8” OL, all-steel, 1,902 cars.



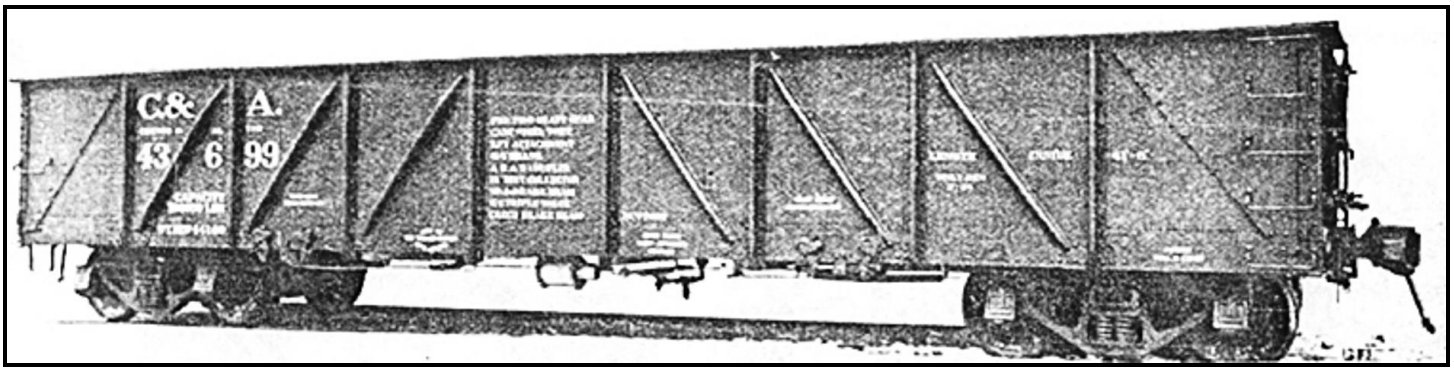


42000-42999, Pressed Steel 1913, 41’10” OL, all-steel, 997 cars.



The 3,000 cars of the 40000- and 42000-series formed the backbone of the Alton’s coal hauling car fleet. Oddly enough little is known about these cars, and few photos have surfaced. Typical early GS-type gondolas, they survived into the 1930s relatively intact as a group, but were all scrapped before WWII.

43000-43499, Standard Steel 1919, 42’1 OL, composite, 499 cars.
43500-43749, Pullman 1924, 42’1” OL, composite, 250 cars.
44000-44499, Pullman 1924, 42’1” OL, composite, 500 cars.
SOCX 501-1000, Pullman 1924, 42’1” OL, composite, 354 cars.

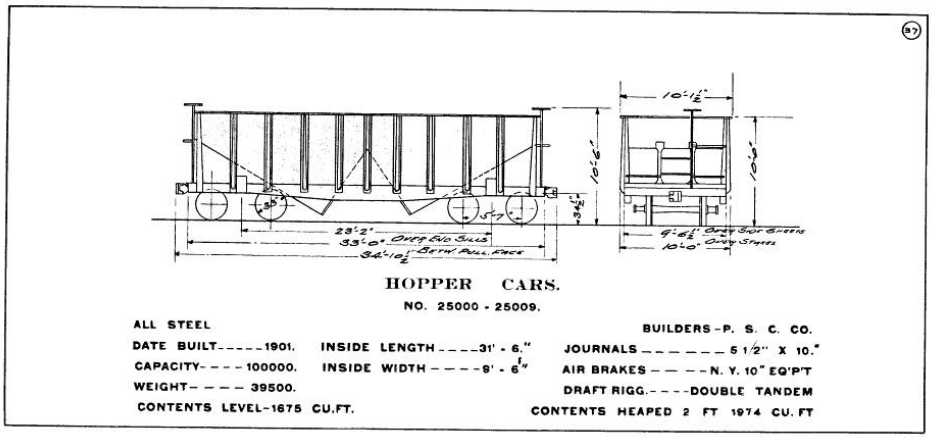


The second largest group of gondolas on the Alton, the 1,750 cars of the 43000-44499 series were made up of 500 USRA-assigned cars and 1,250 near-identical clones. The copies were all built in 1924 by Pullman, and included 500 cars built for Standard Oil but operated and maintained by the Alton, to protect that company’s construction of three huge mines around Carlinville, IL, with a daily output of 4,000 tons. These cars were the only gondolas to stay on the Alton’s roster from the mid-1930s to the GM&O takeover. NEB&W collection.

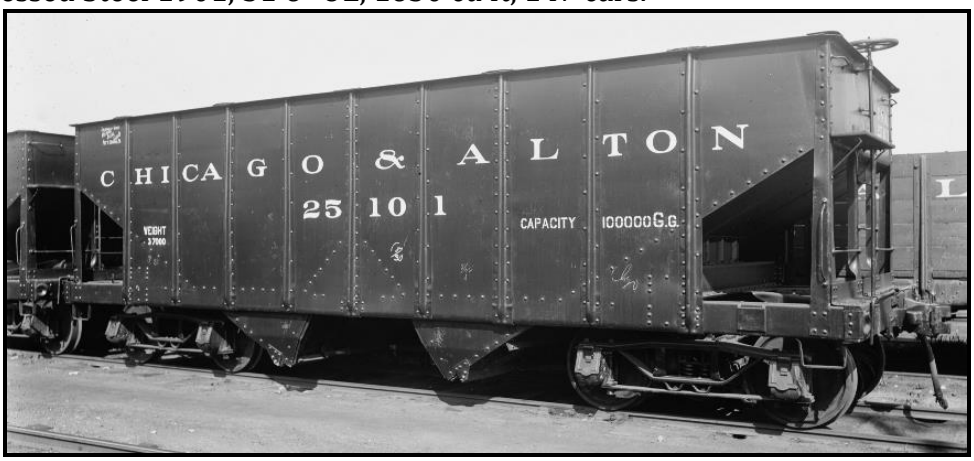
HOPPERS

Hoppers were never as important to the Alton as gondolas, so the road never owned many. In fact, except for three types of semi-experimental cars built between 1901 and 1905, the Alton didn't buy any hoppers until a group of war emergency cars were purchased in 1944.

25000-25009, Pressed Steel 1901, 33'0" OL, 1675 cu ft, 10 cars.

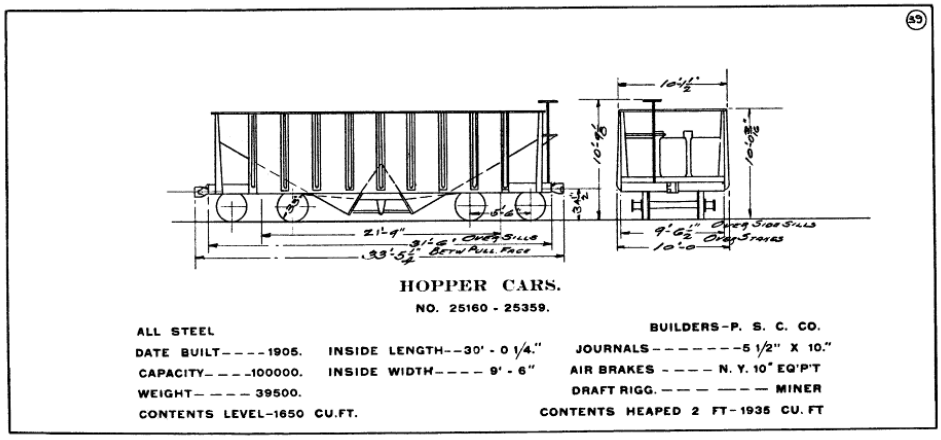


25010-25159, Pressed Steel 1901, 31'6" OL, 1650 cu ft, 147 cars.



Library of Congress collection.

25160-25359, Pressed Steel 1905, 31'6", 1650 cu ft, 198 cars.



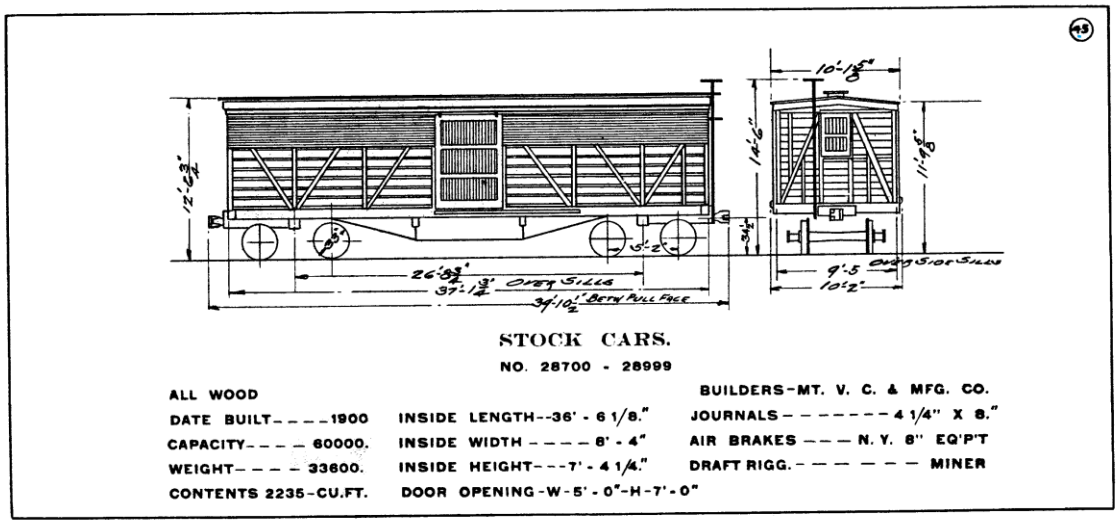
STOCK CARS

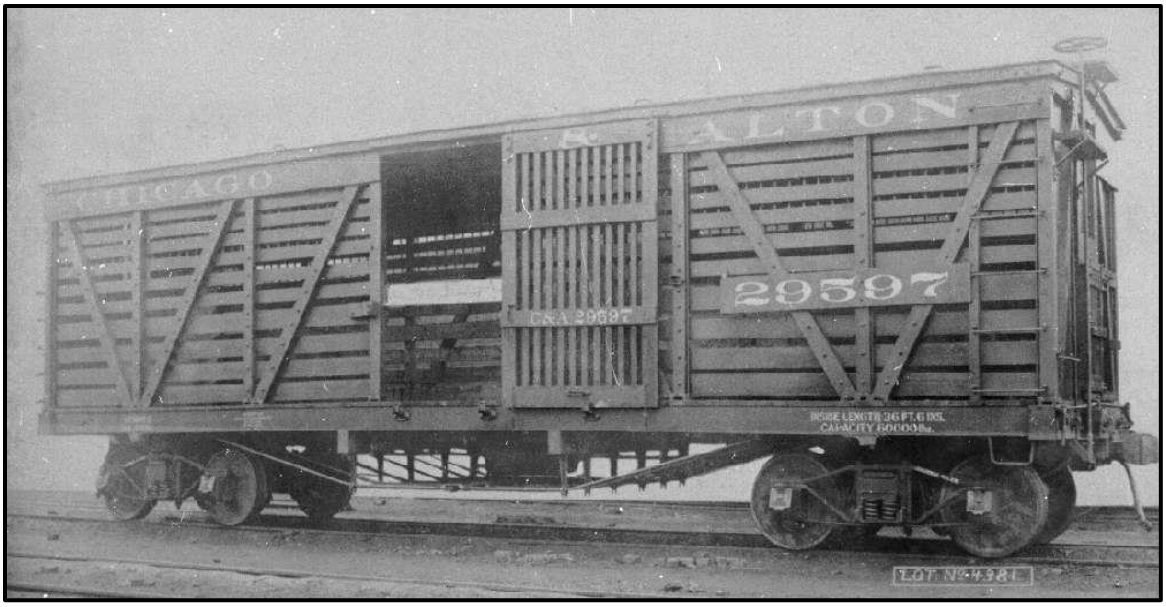
With direct connections to the large stock yards in Chicago, Peoria, East St. Louis, Springfield, and Kansas City, stock movement was more important to the Alton than on many other railroads. At Chicago the Alton handled about 3% of all shipments in and out of the Yards, which amounted to 11,092 car movements in 1921. Traditionally, the Alton leased some of their stock cars from Mather on long term contracts, but those were all terminated during the road's 1922 bankruptcy proceedings (the railroad would start leasing Mather cars again after the B&O took control in 1931).

28000-28499, ACF 1914, 40'1" OL, single deck, 500 cars.

The newest stock cars of the Alton's fleet, these 500 cars were similar in construction to IC cars built at the same time, and may have actually been a "tack on" order, with the Alton just copying the IC cars to save time and money. The only Alton stock cars to survive the Depression, these cars would be scrapped by new owner GM&O by 1951, in favor of leasing 300 Mather cars.

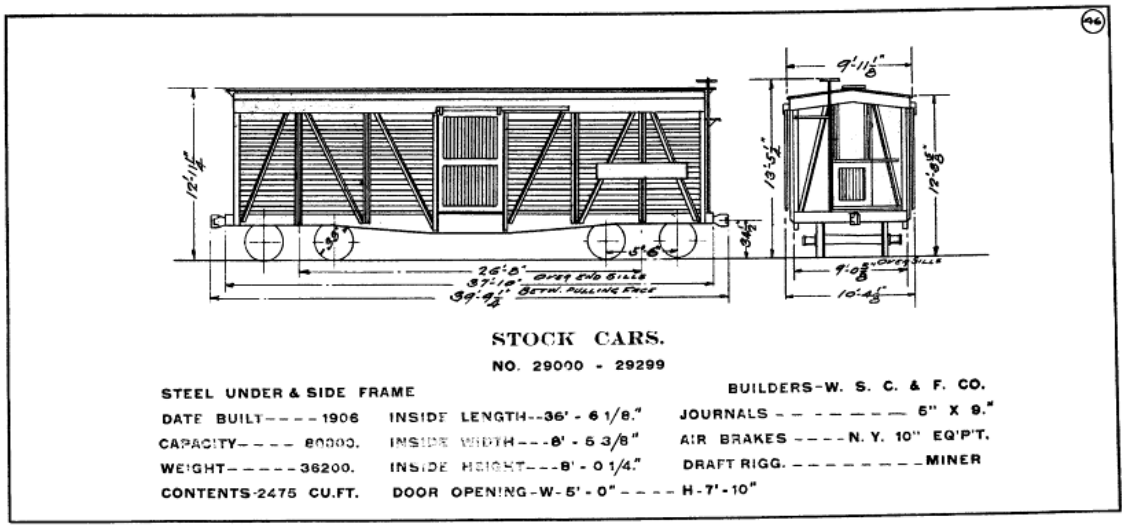
28700-28999, Mt. Vernon Car Co. 1900, 37'1" OL, all wood, single deck, 198 cars.
29300-29599, ACF 1906, 37'1" OL, all wood, single deck, 134 cars.
29850-29999, ACF 1906, 37'1" OL, all wood, double deck, 133 cars.





All built to the same general design over a span of five years, the 750 cars of the 28700-29999 series were traditional all-wood cars that were virtual clones to Mather cars built at the same time. By 1927 this group of cars was down to 465 cars, which would all be scrapped by 1930.
AC&F builder's photo, Al Westerfield collection.

29000-29299, Western Steel 1906, 37'10" OL, 297 cars.



These 300 cars were Harriman S-40-1 designs, built during the beginning of the Harriman era of the Alton. Stronger than the 28700-series cars, they would survive to the early years of WWII.

FLAT CARS

Nearly 4% of the Alton's freight cars were flat cars, making them a fairly important part of their overall roster. Usually used for hauling trucks and buses from Chicago and heavy machinery to online mines or from Caterpillar in Peoria, the cars were sometimes pressed into pulpwood service on the west end of the railroad.

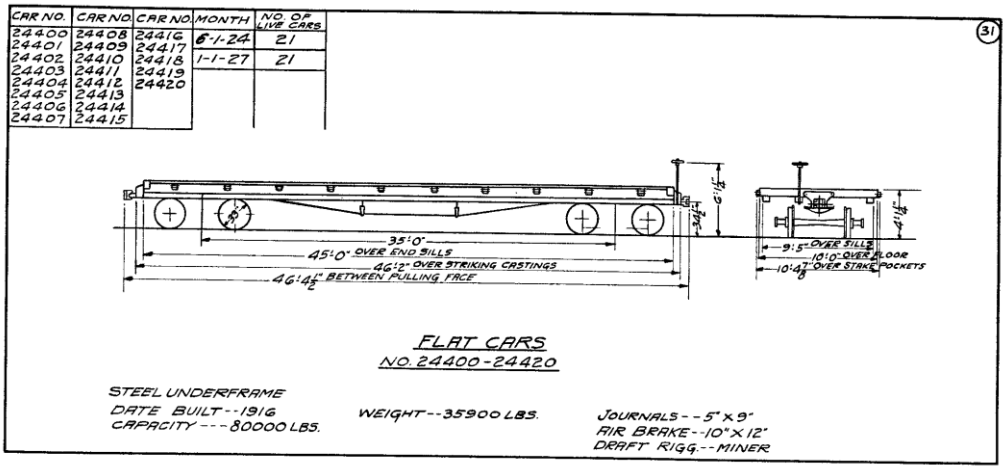
24000-24074, Standard Steel 1902, 42’0” OL, all steel, 75 cars.

These all-steel cars were built based on the over-engineered Pressed Steel underframe design, and so were virtually indestructible. Outliving most other flat cars on the Alton’s roster they were finally retired from revenue service by 1940, but many continued to be used in MOW service into the 1970s.
At least two are preserved in museums today.

24100-24399, ACF 1906, 41’10”, all wood, 229 cars.

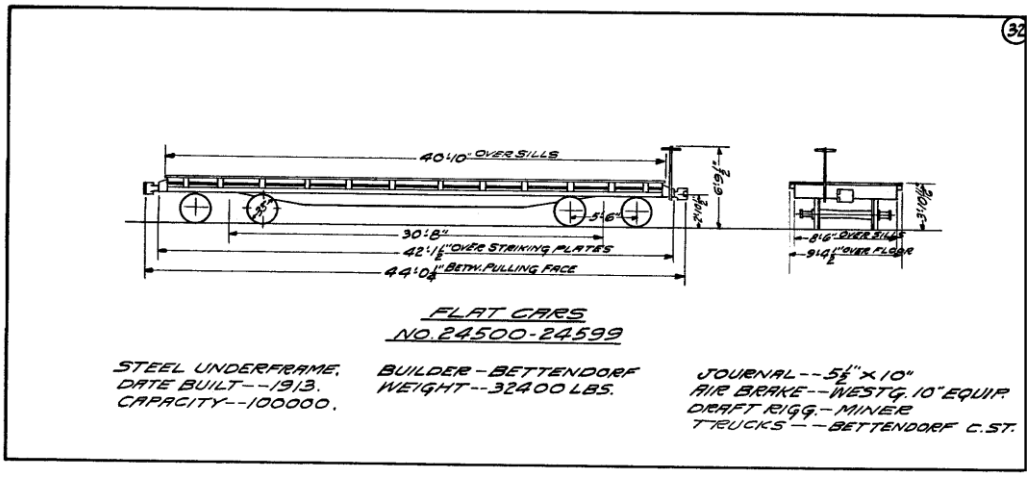
Ever frugal Alton returned to an all-wood flat car design in 1906. These 300 cars would work until 1930, when the survivors would be burned for scrap. AC&F builder’s photo, Al Westerfield collection.

24400-24420, C&A Shops 1916, 46’2” OL, steel underframe, 21 cars.



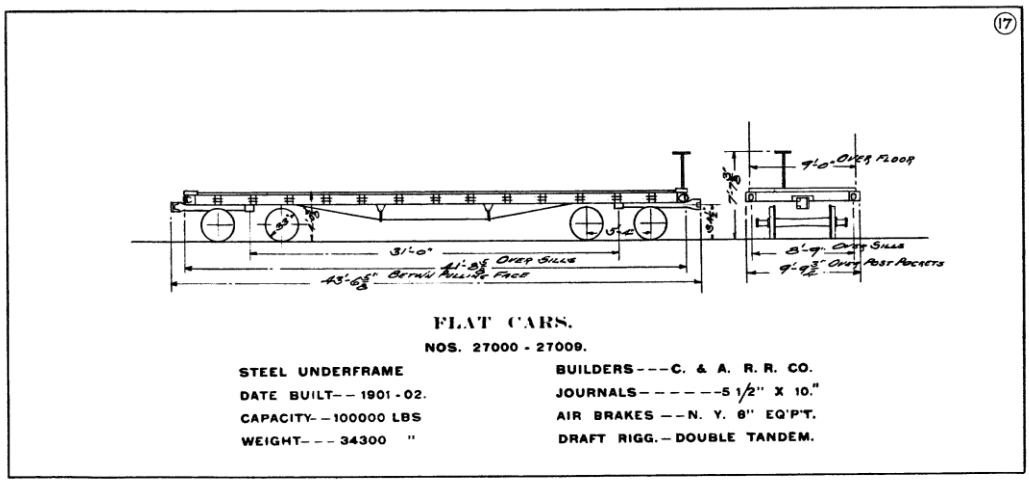
The Alton built a lot of flat cars in their Bloomington car shops, and these 21 cars were the longest, used to handle two Liberty trucks at a time to Eastern ports for export overseas during WWI. The cars would be scrapped during the early years of the Depression.

24500-24599, Bettendorf Car Co. 1913, 42’1” OL, steel underframe, 99 cars.

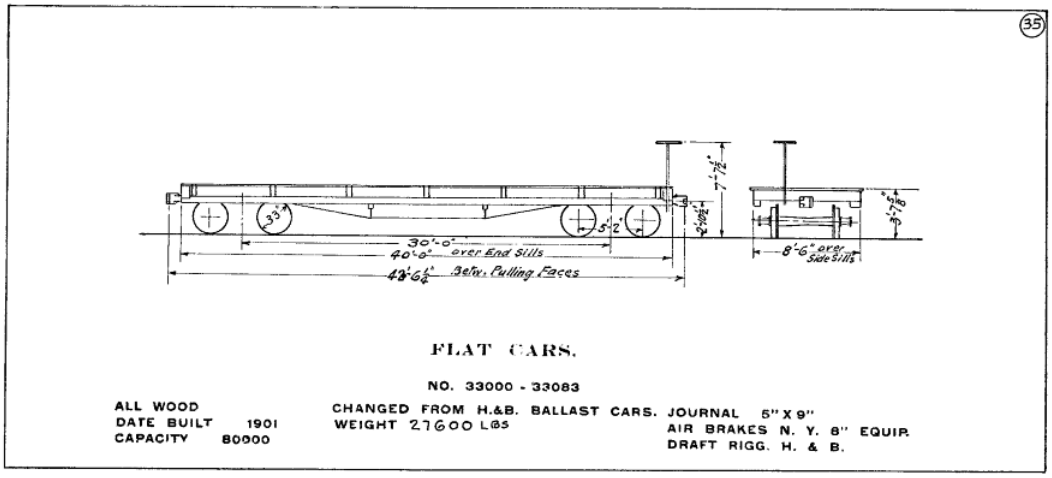


Some of the last Harriman-Standard cars to be ordered by the Alton, these F-50-5 type flat cars were also the last ones on the roster, finally being scrapped by the GM&O by 1950.

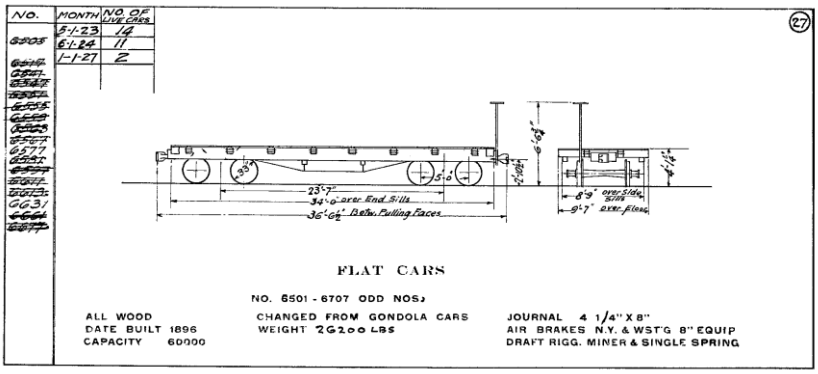
27000-27009, C&A Shops 1901, 41’8” OL, 9 cars.



33000-33083, C&A Shops 1901, 40’0” OL, all wood, 55 cars.



6501-6906 (odds), C&A Shops 1896, 34’0” OL, all wood, 2 cars.

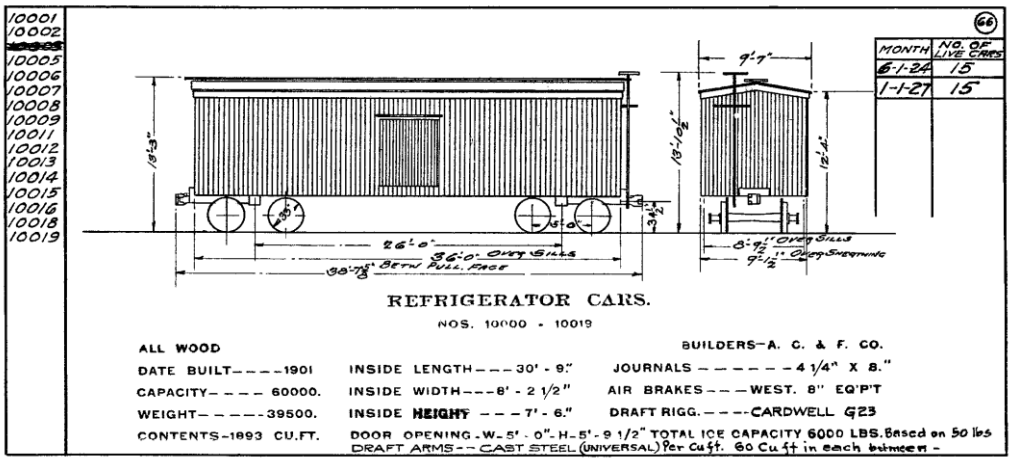


These three groups of old, all-wood flat cars were all home brews from the Bloomington Shops, mostly as rebuilds from older gondolas. All were to be scrapped and burned by 1930.

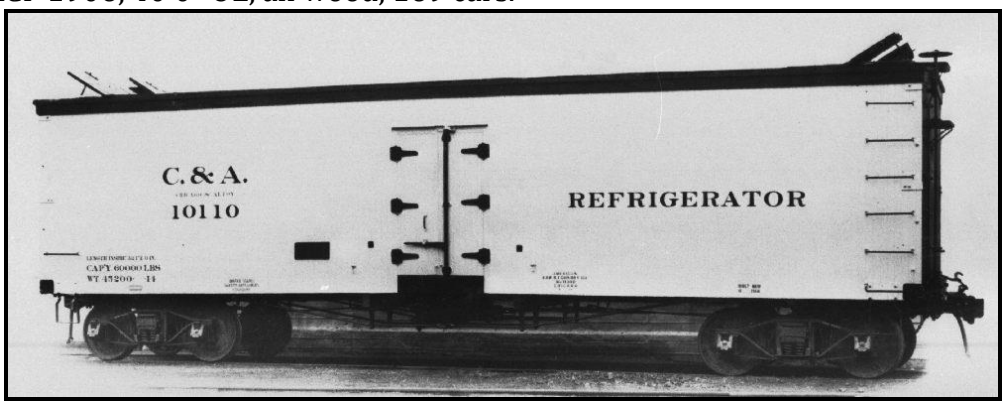
REEFERS

Perishable freight traffic was important to the Alton, mostly as Western through freight between Kansas City and “points east”. Traditionally building their own reefers, the Alton turned to ACF for modern cars in 1900 and 1906. The Alton tried to maintain a roster of around 200 cars to handle general online ladings, but by the Depression decided to scrap their remaining cars and turn to short term leases from various leasing companies.

10000-10019, ACF 1900, 36’0” OL, all wood, 15 cars.



10100-10399, ACF 1906, 40’0” OL, all wood, 169 cars.



MODELING THE ALTON'S FREIGHT CAR FLEET IN HO SCALE

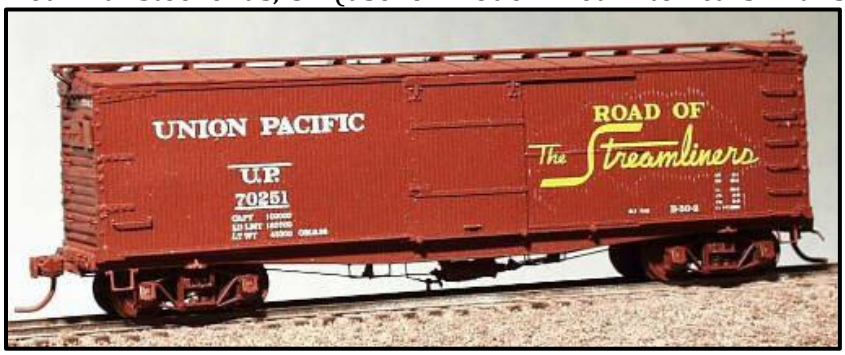
Adding Chicago & Alton freight cars to your roster isn't actually all that hard, once you know what their cars looked like. The really antique cars like their boxcars and flats may be a bit of a challenge, but most of their core cars are available in either plastic or resin.

Westerfield should be your first stop, since they have the most "Alton appropriate" cars. Their 1700 and 7300 series kits will cover both groups of Harriman-type boxcars (both as-built and modernized), the 10600 series wood gondolas will cover several groups of Alton cars, and the 12550 series kits will cover 300 of their stock cars. Westerfield is also your best bet when it comes to finding C&A decals.

1708: B-50-2 original, C&A.

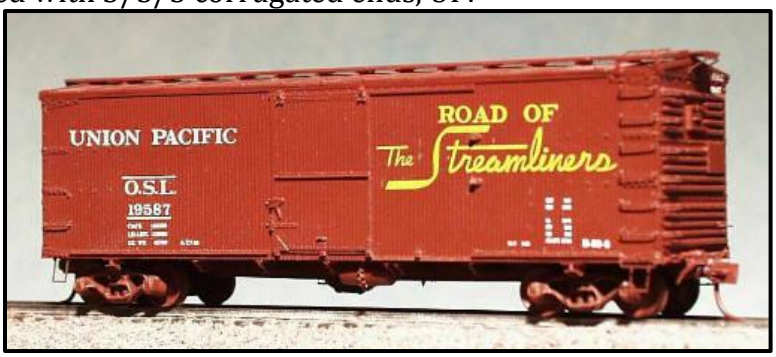
1718: B-50-4, post 1911, C&A.

1754: B-50-4, modernized with steel ends, UP (use for modernized Alton cars with steel ends).



7312: B-50-9, as built, C&A.

7355: B-50-6, modernized with 5/5/5 corrugated ends, UP.



Note that this is actually a stand-in for the Alton's modernized cars, since they used unique 8/7 corrugated ends. Nobody makes those ends, so work with what you can find.

10600: 36-foot wood gondola, undecorated.

12552: S-40-1 stock car, OSL.

Westerfield sells three decal sets, all from their C&A cars. These will come in handy for anyone modeling an Alton car roster, since there aren't any others available (Champ used to have a couple of sets, but they're long OOP). The Alton seems to have dropped their triangular herald in the mid-1920s, but some cars survived through WWII with it intact.

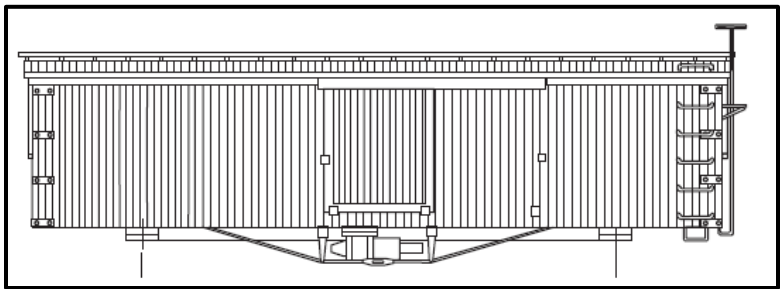
D1708, C&A early lettering
D1718, C&A post-1911 lettering
D7312, C&A WWI era lettering

Owl Mountain Models makes a very nice SP flat car kit that's also appropriate to use for the Alton's 24500-series cars.

#2002: F-50-5 flat car with T-section trucks

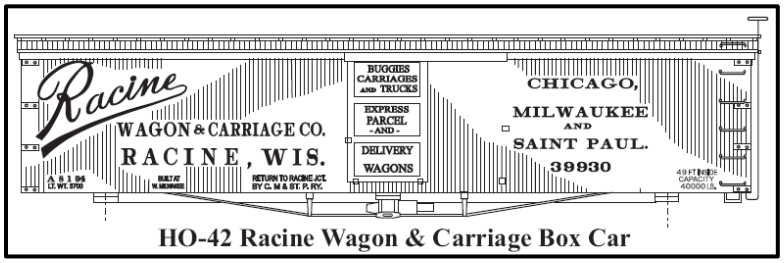
If you want to model a few of the Alton's really old cars, LaBelle kits are your best bet. They're wood kits, but do build up into very nice models. I've suggested three kits that should be appropriate for use as C&A cars.

HO-40-1: 36-foot boxcar



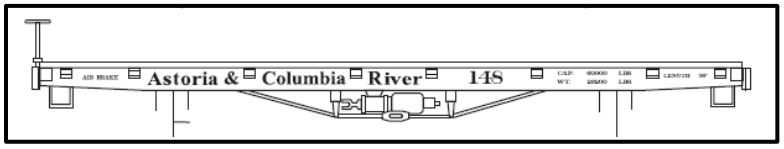
Use this kit for the 15000-series Alton boxcars.

HO-42: 50-foot boxcar



Use this kit for the Alton's 27700-series furniture boxcars.

HO-50: 36-foot flat cars



Use this kit for the Alton's 6501-series flat cars.

And finally, look to Intermountain or Walthers Proto for your USRA composite gondola needs. At one time Intermountain produced the cars in C&A lettering, but you may need to fall back on undecorated kits and home brew lettering.

46618: USRA composite gondola, C&A

Walthers 920-37050: USRA composite gondola, undecorated.

While now discontinued, this model is still out there, either under the "Walthers Proto" brand or its original "Life-Like Proto 1000" brand.