



Detailing and Weathering the MER's CNJ PS-1 Boxcar

by Mike McNamara

Did you pick up one of the MER's limited run of CNJ 40-foot PS-1 boxcars? If so, you know this is a good-looking model with a nicely done paint job. But, what if you model the 1970s to early 1980s, like me, and would like to place this mid-1950s car in service on your layout?

Recently, I came across a photo of a Jersey Central PS-1 boxcar in the November/December 1986 issue Model Railroading magazine. Now, I wasn't specifically looking for this picture. I just happened to see it while looking through some older magazines. The picture, in color no less, shows car number 23502 in October of 1982. With this photo, I now had the means of modifying my model and placing it in service on my layout, knowing that it had at least one prototype in service as late as 1982. I'll describe my modifications, and you can choose to do some or all of them as you wish.

The caption with the prototype photo gave some history on these cars. Numbered 23502-23549, these cars were built in October of 1957. I don't know if this was a typo with the number series starting at 23502 instead of a more usual 23500. Maybe there were 2 other cars from a different, earlier order. In any event, this doesn't matter with the MER cars, as they are numbered 23506 and 23515. (*Editor's Note: The CNJ PS-1s were numbered 23500-23549.*)

The first most noticeable change is that the ends of the car should be black. I don't know if this was true for all cars in this number series, but I decided to paint mine. I masked off the sides and roof with masking tape and sprayed the ends black. When dry, I applied decals for the reporting marks to the ends to replace those painted over. I used some leftovers from other sets to get all of the lettering and numbering for "CNJ 23515". I also installed a Kadee No. 2042 black brake wheel, which has finer detail than the part in the kit.

With this complete, I turned to the roof. Because I model an era when most roofwalks are gone, I like to upgrade the



roofwalks on the few cars that still have them. Carefully pry up the Accurail roofwalk. Slice off the two center mounting pins and reinstall them in their holes, flush

with the roof, applying a small amount of glue from the inside of the car. Leave the two end holes open for now. Also trim off the molded on roofwalk supports at the end of each car. Install a Kadee No. 2001 40-foot roofwalk. These are great items, and you get two in a package for half the cost of an etched metal running board. Plus it is already

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painted boxcar red! You'll need to trim off all of the mounting pins except the one at each end. They will fit into the existing holes. You'll also need to trim a little bit off of the angled supports at each end of the roofwalk to get a good fit. Install the roofwalk, using very small amounts of CA to attach it. I then had some fun weathering the roof by dry brushing various Polly Scale paints, including silver, boxcar red, grimy black, and railroad tie brown.

For the car sides, I installed the 5 panel doors. Neither door included in the kit seems to match the prototype picture exactly, but the panel door looks closest to the door in the photo. Door variations may have existed, of course. I then weathered the car using light sprays of rust, dust, earth, and grimy black. I sprayed all areas, including the roof, to help blend in the dry brushing. I also used a mixture of Polly Scale boxcar red and rust to highlight some weathering shown in the prototype photo. This included the panels on the door and small areas on the sides. I used very small amounts of paint on the brush to slowly build up the color effect.

With that complete, I turned my attention to the painted squares on the sides. These squares generally represent a later paint-over of changed data from servicing or rebuilding. I brush painted these areas with a mixture of Polly Scale boxcar red and rust, using the photo as a guide for the color and placement. There is also a black area next to the wheel dot on the right side of the car that I painted grimy black.

When the paint dried, I added some decals for the painted over data and some other missing elements. I added the white car data and the wheel inspection dots from Microscale set 87-193. The consolidated lube stencils are from set MC-4126, while the ACI plates are from set MC-4280. Finally, I added some chalk marks to the door from leftovers in set 87-81. These decals really bring the car into my time period. After the decals dried, I washed the car gently and sprayed on a flat finish of Dullcote.

For the underframe work, I installed Kadee No. 5 couplers and KD 33-inch wheel sets. I painted these items with a mix of rail tie brown and black. I added two-tenths of an ounce (.2) of extra weight to the car by using two 3/4" washers, one over each truck, glued atop the kit's weight. I have found that Liquid Nails in the small tube with a twist-off cap is real handy for this type of bonding. This brings the car up to 3.8 ounces, very close to the NMRA recommended 3.75 oz.

Putting the shell back on the underframe, I had one last detail item to add. On all of my cars, I like to install Detail

Associate No. 6215 coupler lift bars. To mount these, I had to glue a small block of styrene to each end under the ladder in order to mount the shortened eye bolt in a hole drilled with a No.78 bit. I then threaded the bar through the eye bolt and glued the end under the coupler pocket. I painted the bar and the styrene block a mixture of boxcar red and rail tie brown. I was now ready to place the car in service on my layout, an old warrior still hanging on in the age of 50-foot Plate C boxcars.

Even if you don't want a heavily weathered vintage 1982 car like mine, I hope you will still consider some of the upgrades, such as the roofwalk, brake wheel, and perhaps some weathering. These techniques also apply to other cars as well. A few simple upgrades like this will really set a car apart from the normal plastic model kit.

I have uploaded some photos of this car as well as one of the prototype boxcar to my website. You can find them at <http://home.earthlink.net/~mikemcnh/flatcar/artmer0303.html>. If you have any questions or comments, feel free to e-mail me at mikemcnh@earthlink.net.