

Athearn 50' ATSF Reefer

By Steve Sandifer

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In July 2006, Athearn released models of the ATSF 50' ice reefers RR-30. The best resource for this car is the Society Refrigerator Car book, p. 201 and following. A pre-release review was made in *The Warbonnet*, 2nd Quarter 2006.

Santa Fe ordered 100 (37290-37389) of these cars in 1939. Only the first 75 came as the model; the last 25 (37365-37389) had Preco fans installed.

Keith Jordan, co-author of the Society book, states: "Athearn's model, class Rr-30, was a group of 100 cars built new in 1940, but not necessarily for frozen food service. All were delivered with a *Super Chief* slogan and early (no *Ship*) straight line map opposite. Of course, when they were repainted at various times, typically ten years out, they would have gotten any of the *Ship and Travel* slogans (post 1947), and after 1959, the Big Circle Herald. Thus, Athearn's first run map car is only correct with the *Super Chief* slogan and map. Also, Athearn's model can't really be used for any of the other classes, since they differed in roofs, ends, underframes, etc., without some kitbashing."

Mike Brock added, concerning the other paint schemes, "The Athearn cars all have "NEW 1-40" applied AND S.F.R.D. applied. A car repainted after 1944 (with another slogan) would not include periods in S.F.R.D. nor would it sport a "NEW" date." So only the Super Chief version can be taken as correct for these first run cars.

"If not particularly frozen food service, then what? Well, there's frozen juice, flowers, wine, fish and other commodities which were high volume, low weight, making the 50-foot cars more suitable."

As an interesting foreign road sighting, Tim Gilbert adds, "SFRD Rr-30 Reefer #37328 was loaded with bananas northbound on the SOU between Monroe VA and Pot Yard on September 27th, 1946, but, alas, #37328 was not equipped with a Preco Floor circulating device. #37328 was part of a forty-three car Banana block consisting of 14 reefers owned by the FGEX/BREX/WFEX group; 11 by PFE; 7 by MDT; 4 by SFRD; 3 by ART; 2 by URTX; one by the NP; and one indecipherable. This is the only reporting of a RR-30 in all of my parsing of sundry wheel reports."

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The car comes ready to run. The first release features the straight-line map and a slogan and is dated 1940. The trucks are newly tooled National Type B-1s. The cars are highly detailed and very accurate. The roof hatch numbering is a very nice touch. The underbody has some brake detail but lacks some of the piping and could be improved with a little effort. The Athearn model lacks the Preco fans installed on 37365-37389, but modelers could add those (available as a detail part from Overland Models) for a different appearance.

In 1947 Santa Fe replaced the straight-line map with the *Ship and Travel* slogan. The slogans were applied randomly as they were painted and were from the same stencils used on the 40-foot cars, so they looked small on the 50 footers.

Athearn has made this model available in a number of passenger train slogans. As Jordan reports, only the *Super Chief* is correct as delivered on the map car.

Later in 2006 Athearn produced a 2nd run with "Ship and Travel..." 1947-1959 style slogans replacing the maps. These cars represented the repainted prototype and appeared with numerous passenger train slogans.

It is reported that the post-'59 giant herald will be produced as well.

Many cars lasted late in company ice service, with little or no changes in lettering, but renumbered.

This model is a welcome addition to the Santa Fe fleet. It is well built, detailed, and smooth rolling.

Byron Rose has made the following observations of the kit: "There are two additional error that were allowed by Athearn in the assembly of these models that I have not seen anybody mention yet. The first is that the end ladders are installed upside down. This makes them in non-compliance with the United States Safety Appliance Standards which go back to 1911 and state that the rungs of the paired ladders at opposite corners of the cars should line up with each other (i.e. side and end). Apparently, the people gluing the parts together weren't given explicit instructions, and Murphy's Law being what it is, they glued the end ladders in upside down.

"The second is the placement of the hold-up bar for the ice hatches. These are glued in as if they were hold-down bars. The Santa Fe went to great pains to design the platform at the hatches with a cozy little slot where the hold-up bar could rest when it was . . . at rest, so that workers icing the hatches did not trip on it. There is a photo of a similar installation but with a wood platform on page 183 of the ice bunker refrigerator car book. In a situation similar to the ladders and following Murphy's Law, the part was installed 180 degrees from where it should have been installed.

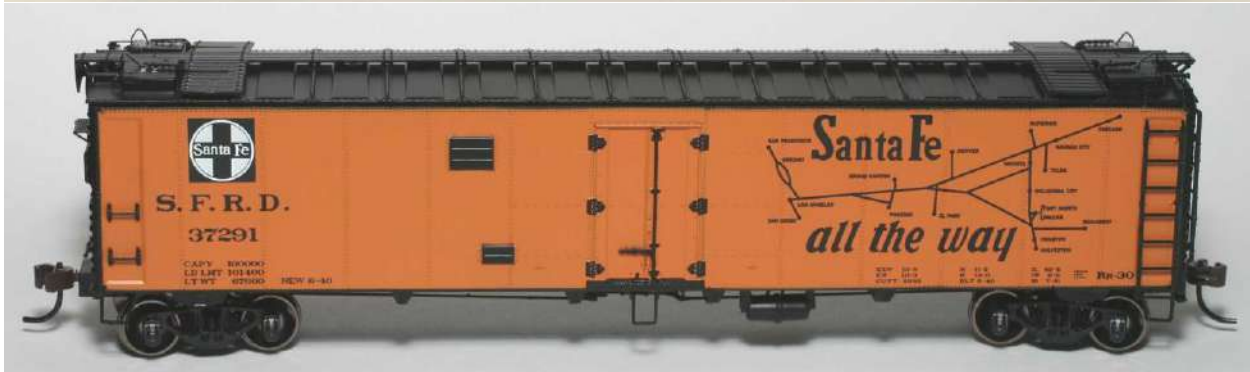
"Both can be corrected. The ladders can be carefully coaxed out but most likely will have to be cut out, at each of the four pins holding them in place, rotated 180 degrees like a propeller, and

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carefully glued back in position so the rungs align, using a good super glue. You will note when doing this that the pins fall into place where they ought to on the car end. The hatch hold-ups are a bit more difficult because they are really well glued in place (incorrectly). You'll probably have to pry them out and break them off carefully, and then glue them into the slot flush with the top surface of the platform.

"Ironically, if you have an undecorated kit (the only kind they made) and can follow the assembly drawing you'll see that it's very easy to get everything in the correct place."



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B-1 Trucks (New casting)