

Intermountain Caswell Gondolas

By Steve Sandifer

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Updated 10-9-11

Intermountain has released their models of the ATSF Caswell gondolas. The early version #47751 is GA-X with K brakes and vertical staff.



Intermountain photo

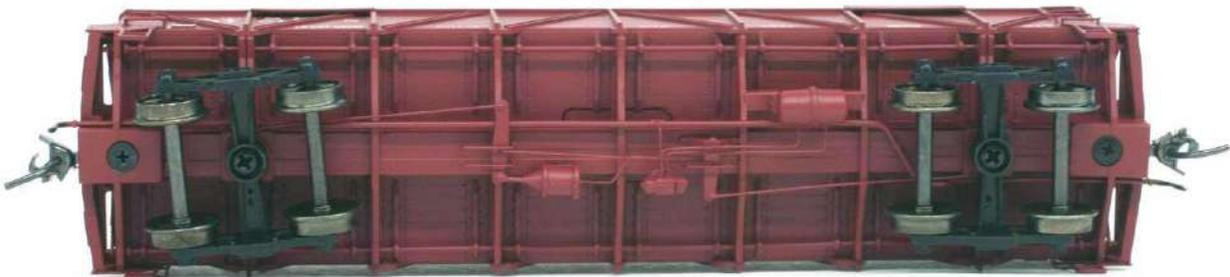
The later version #47765 is GA-7 with AB brakes and Ajax handle.



Photo J. Stephen Sandifer, load added by photographer.

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Bob Foltz, who purchased 28 cars, stated that about half of the trucks needed the center hole reamed out slightly to fit firmly on the bolster. The trucks on the repainted cars should be mineral brown, not black. Looking at the side view, on the left side, there is a drop grab located

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by the "100000" in the capacity rating. Charlie Slater pointed out that that grab should not be there. The interior detail is there, but very lightly done - not very noticeable. Both Hendrickson and Charlie Slater believe the color is too red and lacks the darker brown of the Santa Fe. Further variations in brakes and lettering have been announced. Richard Hendrickson had a full review in the 2007 vol. 3 issue of *The Warbonnet*. Andy Sperandio had a review in the October 2007 *Model Railroader*. Further tweaking information was in *Running Extra* #40, 4th Quarter 2007.

2013 update: A 4th run is planned if sufficient pre-orders are received. That run, originally advertised for November 2013, is now scheduled for April 2014, if orders are received.

Several articles have been written on the Caswell gondolas:

Santa Fe Open-Top Cars: Flat, Gondola and Hopper Cars 1902-1959 by Richard H. Hendrickson, 2009, Santa Fe Railway Historical & Modeling Society.

Santa Fe's Caswell Composite Drop-Bottom Gondolas by Richard Hendrickson, *Santa Fe Modeler*, 2nd Quarter 1991, page 12-20. (Includes plans)

Santa Fe's Caswell Composite Drop-Bottom Gondolas by Richard Hendrickson, *Santa Fe Modeler*, Jan-Feb. 1979, page 19-21. (Includes plans of -R)

More on Caswell Cars by E. E. Ard, *Santa Fe Modeler*, Nov-Dec 1980, p. 4-5. (includes photos of GA-5 ATSF 171317, 1952)

Caswell Variations, by Richard Hendrickson and Byron S. Rose, Westerfield Models.

There were a number of classes of Caswells. The GA-X were 900 cars built in 1913. The GA-7's were 500 built in 1923. Santa Fe had over 8,600 of these cars of various classes. Occhiello's Live List shows 186 of the GA-X in service in 1951 with only 4 remaining in 1956. Of the GA-7, 490 remained in 1951, 112 in 1956, and 19 in 1959. Other classes of Caswell's were also in service in the 50s. Many ended their lives in MOW duty.

Hendrickson reports that these cars saw very diverse use. "Large numbers were employed in Colorado and New Mexico coal service and they were also loaded with other bulk minerals - sand and gravel, ore, borates, limestone, and the like. They were used in coke loading. Large quantities of sugar beets were transported during the summer growing season and in timber country they carried wood chips and sawdust. In addition, they carried any load that did not need weather protection." Many were used in various kinds of company service hauling ballast rock, ties, and dirt. They brought sand to company sand houses and removed locomotive ash and cinders. Company cars in gray or silver add to the variety.

Charlie Slater reports, "By far the most common brake arrangement of the Caswell gons in the 1940's and 1950's was to have AB brakes and the original vertical hand brake. There aren't many photos of Caswell gons with an Ajax hand brake. This combination Intermountain is not offering yet. The only car I have seen a picture of with an Ajax hand brake is a Ga-7 number 172477, I am sure there were a few others, but they seemed to escape the photographers."

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Fred Dabney added, "I was seeing them in passing trains and in the local (Las Cruces, NM) yard far later - I'm tempted to say into the late 80's or beyond. The wood sides had been replaced with steel sheet with the bracing remaining in a few cases, and the floor hatches welded shut and the linkages to the drop doors removed."

The Santa Fe Society waycar book shows WA-R, a Caswell with vertical staff brake in MOW paint, 1978, Rincon, NM.

Westerfield produced these cars in resin for many years.

The Intermountain car is a welcome addition to many ATSF fleets. Intermountain will have an opportunity to make several variations and paint schemes available.

Concerning Car numbers: (these are original numbers. Numbers were changed during rebuilding.)

- GA-X, 1913, 82403-83302 (900)
- GA-2, 1917-18, 83303-84602 (1300)
- GA-4, 1920, 70000-70499 (500)
- GA-5, 1921, 171000-171999 (1000)
- GA-7, 1923, 172000-172499 (500)
- GA-9, 1924, 172500-172999 (500)
- GA-10, 1925, 173000-173499 (500)
- GA-11, 1926, 173500-174049 (550)
- GA-12, 1926, 174050-174349 (300)

When rebuilt, many received solid bottoms, the Caswell mechanisms being removed or covered over.