

Walthers Santa Fe Chair Smoker

By Brian Banks

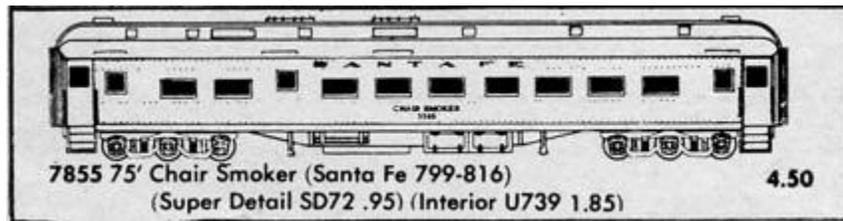
Walthers Vintage Passenger Car Kit

7855 / 6655

Santa Fe Chair Smoker

updated 8-29-06

The current best source for prototype information is the new *Santa Fe Coach, Smoker, and Chair Car Genealogy* by Dr. John B. McCall.



Walthers vintage passenger car kit #7855/6655 is a model two of the three lots of the last heavyweight 75' Santa Fe Partition Coaches ordered, cars 809-828. These cars have been referred to as Jim Crow cars, as they had three partitioned seating areas to comply with laws at the time in several states regarding segregation. Cars 819-828 (lot 4813) were built in 1924, and 809-818 (lot 6152) were built in 1928. Several cars from both lots were converted to Chair Smokers in 1937 and 1938 with apparently no change to their external appearance, some went to MOW, several went to the conversion program, but unfortunately none have survived. The third and final lot 6252 of Partition Coaches number 799-808 were delivered in 1929 with no gusset windows and toilet windows at the lower large window height, so do not resemble the Walthers kit.

Both lots when delivered had large 4'3" windows, 24" toilet windows on each end, and one 24" toilet window down the car on one side where the mid-car partition was. The tops of the toilet windows were level with the top of the gusset windows. Many if not all these cars were modified so that the gusset windows were plated over, which left the toilet window height higher than the large windows. In addition, cars 809-818 Lot 6152 were airconditioned, whereas 819-828 were not.

The kit is a decent representation of the 819-828 series cars without air conditioning, and the non-air-conditioned converted Chair Smokers 1032-1035. It is, however, approximately 67', or 3 feet too short. The difference appears to be in the length of the large windows (4'0) and the distance between them, so the overall effect is negligible. Addition of air conditioning ducts, hatches, and underbody details enables the kit to be used to model the 809-818 cars, or the converted Chair Smokers 1036-1038.

The kit is a combination of stamped metal sides, wood floor, and other structural pieces, clear plastic windows, cast metal parts, decals, and various other details including scale-sized

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directions and a side drawing. Kits came with either a wood or plastic roof. It did not include trucks or couplers.

The model can be enhanced by the addition of New England Rail Service air conditioning ducts, Pullman water tank, vestibule bulkheads, and battery boxes, Cal Scale UC brake system, steam and air lines, American Limited working diaphragms, and Kadee #8 couplers. Steam ejector equipment will have to be scratch built unless Coach Yard or Pecos River parts can be obtained, although a couple of manufacturers reportedly have parts in the mill. Walthers Goo works well to attach unlike materials like metal to wood, and Super Glue can be used for much of the rest. The Lot 4813 cars 819-828 were delivered with Pullman six wheel drop equalized trucks, whereas the Lot 6152 cars 809-818 had Pullman six wheel straight equalized trucks. Both are available from several sources. The converted Chair Smokers would most likely have the trucks that were delivered with the particular lot they came from.

All in all, it is a decent kit given its vintage construction methods and stampings. It is not in the league of today's state of the art passenger car offerings, but with some work and attention to detail, offers the ability to add one of these unique cars to the roster.