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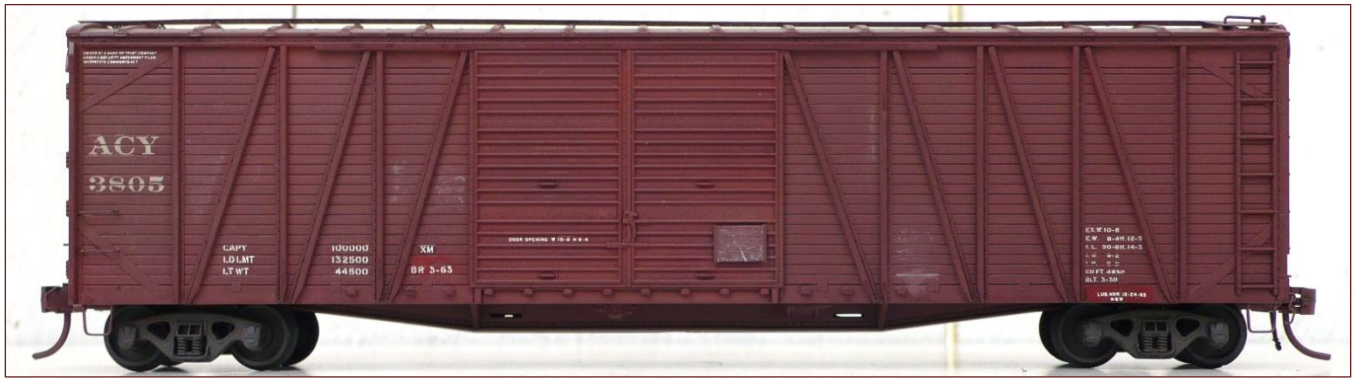

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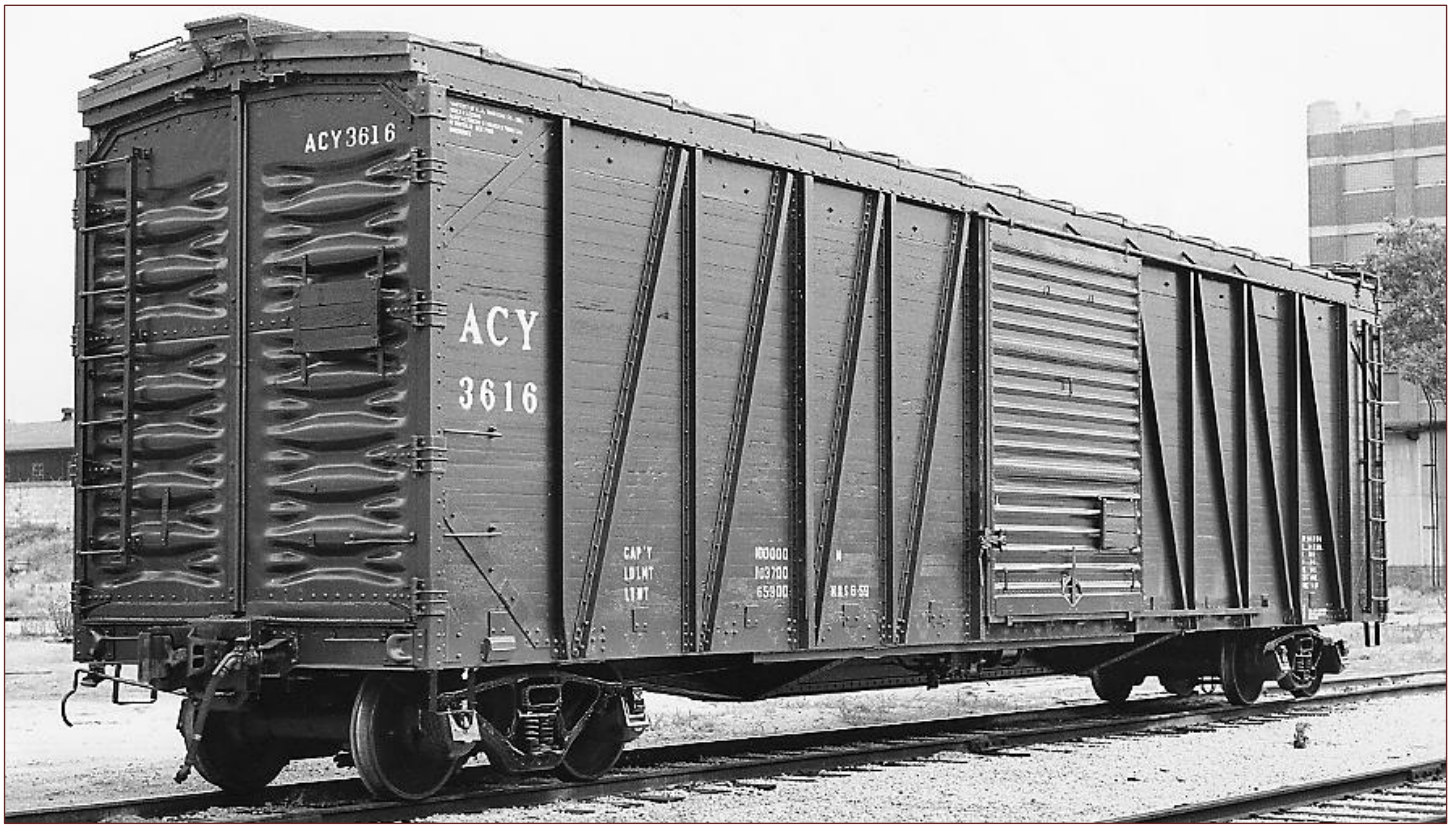
Modeling AC&Y's 50-foot Single-Sheathed Auto Cars

By Bob Lucas



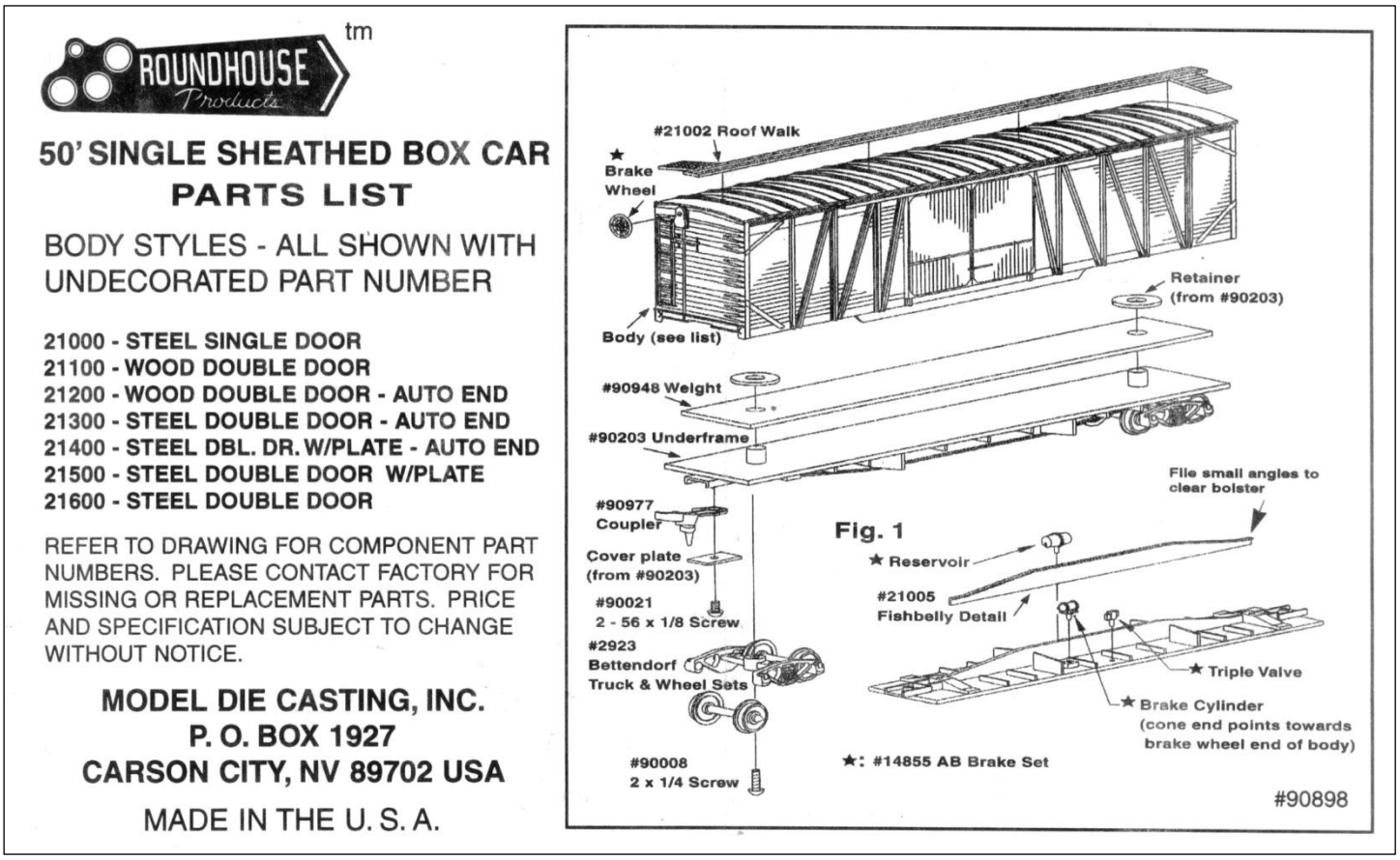
Above: AC&Y #3616, an ex-SLSF auto car, replaced a steel PS-1 50-foot box of the same number, destroyed in an accident. The "second" #3616 was pictured in 1959 after being reconfigured with a single door opening and general reconditioning. AC&Y took delivery of 201 ex-Frisco 50' auto cars in 1959. AC&Y 3616 was still on the active roster in January 1973. ***Society Archive Collection.***

A total of 201 ex-Frisco single-sheathed auto cars were added to the AC&Y roster in late 1959, primarily to handle increased tire and wheel rim traffic. The history and details of these unique freight cars were covered in our Spring-Summer 2016 News magazine, a free PDF download from the Society website – ACYHS.Org

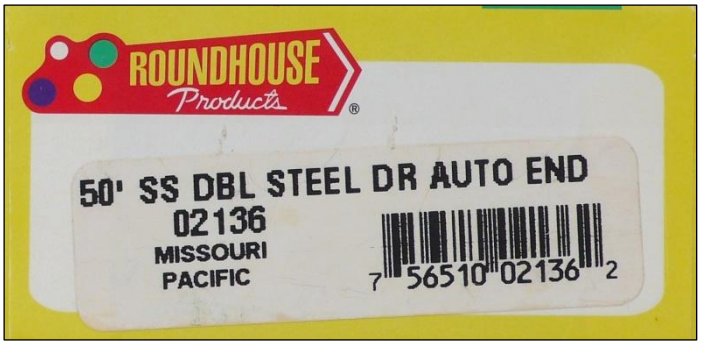
In June 1930, the SL-SF (Frisco) obtained three-hundred double door auto cars in series 152600-152899. All were built by General American Car of Chicago and were given AAR designation "XA". They were among the last 50-foot composite (steel framing and wood) auto cars constructed. They had an inside length of 50'-6", an inside height of 10'-2" and inside width of 8'-1". The hand brake was an Ajax design.

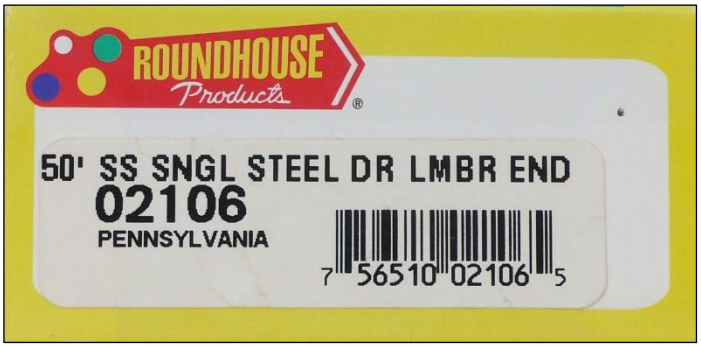
The cars also had Dreadnaught auto doors on the "A" end with an opening 9'-0" wide by 9'-11" high. The roof was a radial design and trucks were Bettendorf (Scullin) with Barber lateral motion devices. They utilized the Howe (inward-facing) truss design with rolled steel Z-brace framing. One hundred cars would later be retrofitted with Evans auto loaders (two types) while 200 cars remained unchanged during their SL-SF careers except for addition of schedule AB airbrakes and metal running boards.

Above: SL-SF #152812 is one of the three hundred 50-foot single sheathed auto boxcars built by General American for the Frisco in June 1930. Deemed surplus by the Frisco, 201 cars would find new homes on the AC&Y. The photo is dated 1954-55. The placard on the high tack board reads "UNLOAD THIS SIDE ONLY". ***Bob Lucas collection.***



Above: Fortunately for Frisco and AC&Y modelers, building these interesting cars in HO scale is very straightforward. The basis of the project are injection molded kits offered by Roundhouse. The Roundhouse line is now a division of Athearn (Horizon Hobby). Athearn resumed manufacture of many Roundhouse items, but not 50' single-sheathed boxcars. Nevertheless, these can be found on E-Bay or at train shows. ***Bob Lucas collection.***





Above: Roundhouse produced several versions of their single-sheathed boxcar kits. The 21300-series (body style) kits are virtually perfect matches to AC&Y's double door cars numbered #3750-3874. Modeling AC&Y's single door cars requires two kits, one being the 21000 single steel door body style plus either a 21200 or 21400 with the auto end door (which will be scavenged). Any pre-lettered cars are OK as they will be repainted.

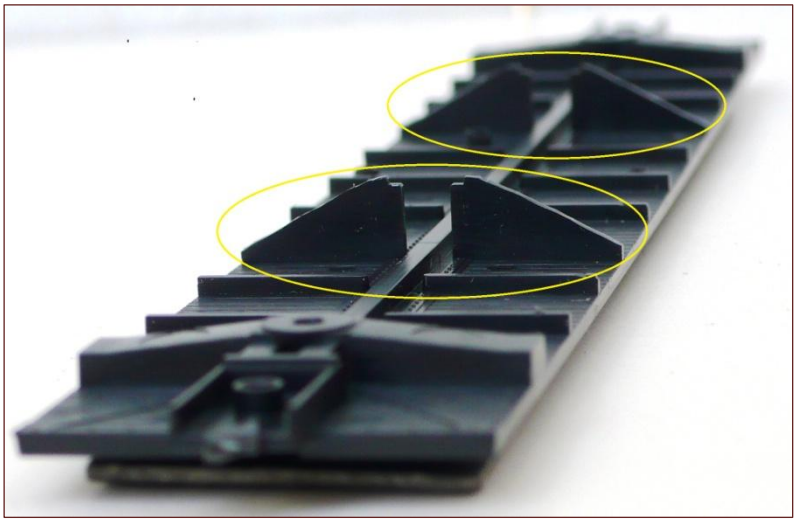
Summary of AC&Y's ex-Frisco Auto Cars

AC&Y Series	Total Cars	Frisco Series	Auto Loaders	Inside Length	Inside Height	Inside Width	Nominal CAPY	Circa AC&Y	Builder / Rebuilders	Side Doors (while AC&Y)	Notes
Second 3616	1	Various renumbered as SL-SF 152505-152574	Yes - Evans Type T-D	50' 6"	10'-8"	9'-1"	4902 CUF 50-ton	1959 to 1973	General American - Chicago, SL-SF and St. Louis Refrigerator?	Single steel door with 8'-8" opening	Built 1930, ex-SLSF, Replacement evaluation car, leased from A.A. Morrison
3750-3849	100	SL-SF 152626-152899	No	50' 6"	10'-2"	8'-11"	4642 CUF 50-ton	1959 to 1970	General American - Chicago, SL-SF and St. Louis Refrigerator?	Double steel door with 12'-1" opening	Built 1930, ex-SLSF, leased from Oklahoma Leasing.
3850-3874	25	SL-SF 152626-152899	No	50' 6"	10'-2"	8'-11"	4642 CUF 50-ton	1959 to 1970	General American - Chicago, SL-SF and St. Louis Refrigerator?	Double steel door with 12'-1" opening	Built 1930, ex-SLSF, leased from Purdy Co.
3875-3926	52	Various renumbered as SL-SF 152505-152574	Yes - Evans Type T-D	50' 6"	10'-8"	9'-1"	4902 CUF 50-ton	1959 to 1973	General American - Chicago, SL-SF and St. Louis Refrigerator?	Single steel door with 8'-8" opening	Built 1930, ex-SLSF, leased from A.A. Morrison
3927-3949	23	Various renumbered as SL-SF 152600-152624	Yes - Evans Type T-C	50' 6"	10'-2"	9'-1"	4663 CUF 50-ton	1959 to 1971	General American - Chicago, SL-SF and St. Louis Refrigerator?	Single steel door with 8'-8" opening	Built 1930, ex-SLSF, leased from A.A. Morrison
Total	**201**										

Modeling the Double Door Cars in HO Scale

Above: The first steps are removal of the lower side sill reinforcement and oversized drop steps on all corners (circled in yellow). The sill reinforcement can be carefully cut with a razor saw, then flush sanded on a flat service such as a sheet of plate glass to yield the prototype straight side sill.

Above: The next step is optional, but recommended. Carefully remove the cast-on left side grab irons, the lower end sill grabs and single end grab to the right. X-Acto #17 chisel blades are great for these tasks. Replace all 10 cast grabs with 18" straight metal grabs from Tichy or Westerfield. Use a #77 drill for mounting holes. The cast ladders can be replaced, but are not objectionable.



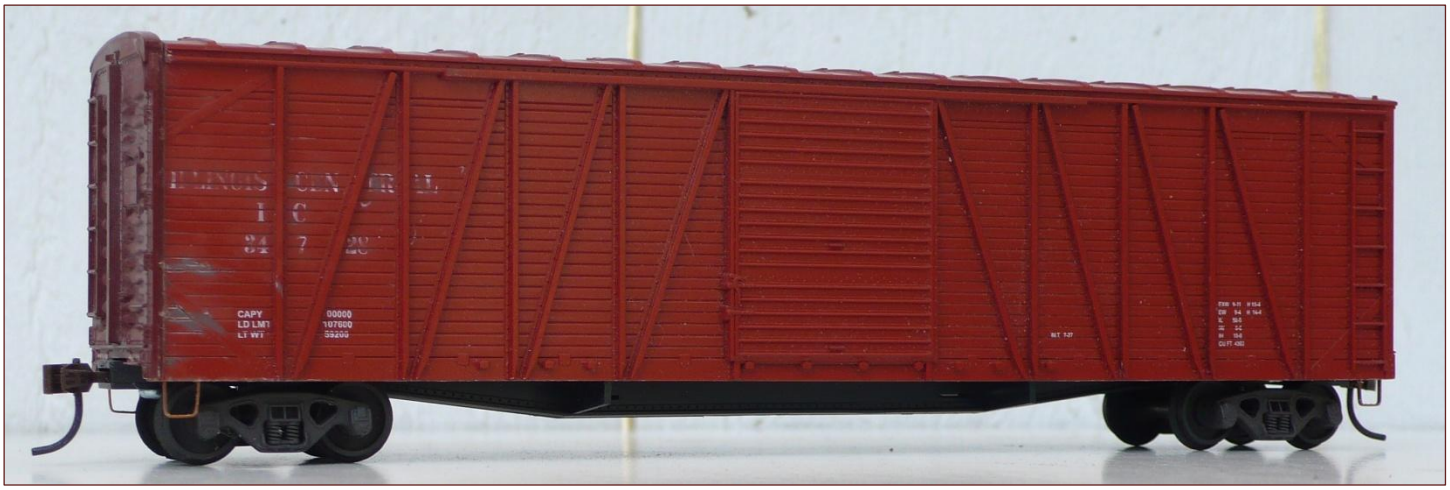
Left: Next, the deep center sill under frame requires minor modification. Since the sill reinforcement was removed, both large cross bearers should be trimmed to meet the depth of the lower side sill. The squared shape should be changed to match the angular profile shown in the photo. A sharp razor can be used to remove most material, and then file and sand to provide a nice clean appearance.

Above: While changes were made in brake apparatus locations, the under frame of my model of AC&Y #3805 was not super detailed. This is entirely a matter of preference. I used photos to approximate new locations for the emergency reservoir and AB triple valve from the locator holes. Underbody details, rods and piping were omitted. Modeling the bottom was not "in vogue" when I built this kit. More so, there simply were no drawings or underside photos to show the AB schedule brake component locations.

Above: This view shows other details. The cast-on steps were replaced with A-Line style "A" metal stirrup steps. Use a new X-Acto #11 blade to pin-point starter holes, then a #76 drill for the mounting holes. Trim the metal steps with a rail cutter for the best fit. Next, install your choice of coupler. The existing box, cover plate and screw will house most popular couplers. I prefer Kadee's #158 scale head whisker couplers. Next, replace the kit provided brake wheel with a Kadee #2020 Ajax wheel as per prototype. Two other detail installations coupler lift bars and angle cocks / air hoses. The latter is Kadee item #438. Use the AHB-1 mounting bracket. I plan to replace the delicate Kadee plastic air hoses in the photo with the Hi-Tech Details #HDT-6038 soft rubber versions. The lift "cut" bar is item DA #6215. Use DA#2206 eyelets and cement the other end to the coupler box cover.

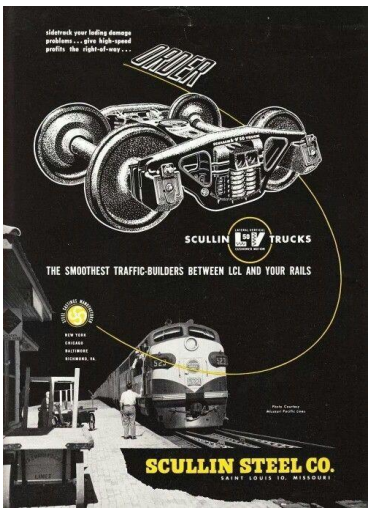
Above: Detailed modeling of the roof is again a matter of preference. I replaced the kit provided roof walk with a Plano metal version. The prototype manufacturer is unidentified in the SL-SF drawings. I went with Plano #194, the Apex pattern and added corner grab irons. For future cars, I plan to use Kadee #2011, the 50' Apex pattern in boxcar red.

Modeling the Single Door Cars in HO Scale



Above: To model the 50' single door cars, an auto end must be scavenged from another kit. Carefully remove the "A" end from the single door kit. The process is not difficult if proper tools are used and care is taken. After test fitting, simply apply solvent cement to add the new auto end. Then, follow the same steps as the 50' double door cars.

The SL-SF selected Bettendorf (Scullin) trucks. The Roundhouse trucks were close in appearance to the prototype with good fidelity. They should be painted grimy black. Metal wheels are an option. Detail Associates #6213 tack boards are located low on the right hand door (or right on the single door cars). There are also tack boards on both car ends. My model of AC&Y #3805 utilizes the flat metal weight from the Roundhouse kit. The completed car weighs 4.5 ounces, deemed OK per recommended NMRA criteria. Painting is a matter of choice. These cars appeared in many shades of boxcar red. Use the photos in the online history for guidance. The decals are from an old Champ set, though the simple ACY lettering and data can be gleaned elsewhere. Weathering is done pastel chalks.



Modeling the AC&Y / SL-SF Cars in N-Scale

Above: Steve Holzheimer, an accomplished modeler and long-time AC&Y fan, created casting patterns for both the single and double door cars in N-scale. AC&Y #3836 and #3927 were photographed on Steve's Spencer diorama. **Below:** Former Medina resident and AC&Y fan, Ralph Rizzo, built this nicely weathered HO scale model of 50' double door AC&Y #3790 using the Roundhouse kit as a starting point. ***Author's collection.***