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Gunderson Max-Stack III's The Prototypes

By Mike Carski

Within the last two months, Charlie Ro, of USA Trains has released a 1:29 model of a double stack car with one or two trailer like containers. USA Trains did their homework on this project, that was two years in the making. The detail is incredible, and with two containers stacked, they look almost real.

With their release, many large scalers are surprised when they view this car for the first time. In fact, unless you are an avid railfan, you probably didn't know this type of railway transport vehicle even existed.

So, here is a brief overview of the prototype that the model came from. The USA Trains version is a standalone unit, a single car that carries two containers stacked on top of each other. On today's railroads, the single car unit is the minority, usually these are built as a five unit, articulated car.

These cars, whether standalone or five car set, are built by Gunderson, Inc., of Portland, Oregon. These are known as "Maxi-Stack III's" because they are the third generation of a commodities transport system that was first introduced in 1989. These third generation units can accommodate the full range of containers from the original 20' midgets to the new 57' giants, slowly appearing on the scene.

These prototype units are 65' long or 325' for a five unit set. They are manufactured from welded, 3/16" to 3/4" flat-plate steel. The container supports and other related items are bolted, rather than welded, to reduce fatigue problems.

The articulated, five car set is 325'-9" in length over the couplers, and 9'-10" wide between the sidesills. When loaded with two containers, the maximum height is 20'-2" above the rails, and can transport 318 tons in the 10 containers.

Hopefully, this has helped to enlighten our members as to, what it is, and where did it come from.