

Renaming Freight Cars

By Peter Thornton

I re-lettered my first car over the past few days. It was an old-style hopper: I discovered (a) that St Aubin are selling new 'Pennsylvania' Bachmann Ore Cars with steel wheels for \$23.99 (these are big 8-wheel types, not the little mine cars, and not the gondolas either - I'd never seen them before) and then (b) that EBT owned some very similar cars numbered 600-640, some of which were rebuilt with steel interiors and lasted until 1945. There must have been quite an overlap with the all-steel hoppers built after 1915.

So (as I'm still waiting for my other order of hoppers) I got to work on this one. Stuff needed:

Brake Fluid (I hear undiluted Pinesol works - haven't tried it)
Flat finish spray paint, (I had some "Model Master Clear Lacquer" in my box)
Decals (from John Rosenbauer)
Tissues, paper towels, old paint brush
Flat black paint (optional)

Removing the "Pennsylvania" lettering was pretty easy. [I first removed the trucks, as it wouldn't stay on it's side, due to the heavy wheels!]

Paint the letters sparingly with brake fluid. Wait a few minutes for them to soften, then rub off the writing with a small stick or paper towel. Thoroughly wash the affected area with soap and water (in fact, wash the whole car body while you're at it!)

You'll be left with some discolored areas, as the brake fluid attacks the plastic and has removed the shiny surface. (Hence: don't wait too long to wipe the brake fluid off, and practice on one letter on an end before you do the sides!) Take the body outside and spray with the flat lacquer. When it dries, the discolored areas will have miraculously turned back into the same color as the rest of the body!

Now apply the decals. The decal paper has an extremely delicate layer so be patient and be ready to throw the herald/logo away if it splits beyond recovery. I used 4 heralds to get two in place. (Note - as John supplies 42 heralds/sheet; you can afford to waste a few.) Especially wait for all the decal to loosen and slide off, or it will split and be more difficult to position.

Cut each decal as close to the print as possible, to minimize the tendency to break. Slide it into position and dab it with a tissue to remove the excess water.

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Then let it dry. take the car outside again and spray it again with clear flat finish. Done.

Notes: John Rosenbauer has an ALPS color printer and can print on decal paper (8.5x11.) I bought some EBT decals at \$15/sheet. I don't know what else he has in his bag of tricks. Contact him: (jlrosen@wpa.net), RD#1, Box 369, Mt Pleasant, PA 15666.

I used Solvaset on the decals (to help them snuggle down into the wood grain.) Not sure it did much good. I also lightly ran a knife blade along the joints in the planks when the decal was dry, to break the decal and make it fit into the joint smoothly. I painted Solvaset again onto the joints. The spray would do the same thing, I suspect.

I wire-brushed lightly across the decals horizontally, to remove some of the ink before applying them. Made them look a bit more ancient - it maybe made them a bit more fragile? I also washed the car body with very dilute black paint, to dull the decals and bring out the grain, before the final spray.

Try to just paint brake fluid along a plank to remove the lettering. If you have a problem with the discoloration after cleaning and spraying, you can always paint that plank with a color similar to the car body - it will look like a repaired/repainted plank that is slightly different from the others.

The car looks good - maybe I need a few more of them. Now where did I put the phone number for St Aubin...

Additional comments from J.W. Rosenbauer:

"Faded" lettering can be done when printing. It's a simple adjustment. Solvaset will help but you might need a few applications.

I do larger heralds as follows: Place the cut decal in water for a few seconds. Remove from water and place complete decal with backing paper on the model near where you want it. Add a few drops of water as needed. Wait 45 sec to a minute to make sure all glue has dissolved. Using a pin or paintbrush slide decal off paper and into final position. Add water if needed. Carefully remove excess water with the corner of a paper towel. Let sit till almost dry then apply Solvaset.