

# **Freight Cars Journal N° 83**



## **1999 Freight Car Year Review**

**July 2000**

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#### *Front cover*

TCQX 99002. Thrall's new integral  
20'2" design auto transporter car.

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# 1999 Freight Car Year Review

by David G. Casdorff

1999 was an incredible year for freight car historians. Freight car builders provided railroads and private owners with both quantity and variety.

## Covered Hopper Cars

*Cement Cars.* All of the known 1999 production of cement cars (two-bay gravity-outlet covered hopper cars) were of the newer high-cube 286K GRL designs. These include Thrall's curve-sided 3250-cubic-foot design and Trinity's straight-side ribbed 3260-cubic-foot design (evolved from the smaller 2980). Trinity also introduced series production of their new curve-sided 3221 cubic-foot design. It appears Thrall built the majority of cement cars. Total production of both Trinity and Thrall cement cars probably did not exceed 1,500.

*Grain Cars.* Due to several large orders from BNSF and SOO there were quite a few grain cars (three-bay gravity-outlet covered hopper cars) built during 1999 (these two railroads totaled over 3,000 alone). Prominent designs were Trinity's 5161, NSC's 5300, and Thrall's 5150 (all curve-sided designs - as are all grain cars being built recently). In addition to the standard grain cars there were several "pseudo" grain car design built ("pseudo," meaning large cube with gravity outlets). Deliveries included the following Thrall designs; the 5250 for CEFX, the 5400 for the DME, and the 6300 for SCGX.

*Sugar Cars (and related designs).* Sugar cars and cars similar to these are the same cubic-foot size as

grain cars but have gravity-pneumatic outlets (grain cars have gravity-outlets only). BNSF received some 350 Trinity 5161's in 1999 for this service.

*Pressurized Covered Hoppers.* This is a niche that traditionally has been occupied by the GATX Airslide® and PD (pressure differential) designs. The Airslide® is long gone and was replaced by Trinity's Power Flo®, a 5125 cubic-foot capacity PD. However, it appears that even the Power Flo® is nearing the end of its production as the newer larger 5650 Power Flo II® takes over. Only 195 Power Flo® cars were known to have been built in 1999. By contrast over 1,000 Power Flo II® cars were built in 1999. ACF built a small number of 5300 cubic-foot PD's.....a jump in size from their long time running 5000 cubic-footers. These larger capacity PD's often carry flour, starch and other related items.

On the smaller end of the PD cubic-foot capacity spectrum are the "fly-ash" cars. Thrall dominates this niche with its 3230 cubic-foot design.

*Plastics Cars.* Covered hoppers for the various plastics industries (four-bay pneumatic outlets) continued in 1999 with vigor. Dominating for the first time were the extra-high cube designs (those over 6,000 cubic-foot). Three major designs in this arena: Trinity's 6221, ACF's 6224 and Thrall's 6270. However, there were also about 500 of the previous standard 5800 cubic-foot capacity cars built during 1999 as well.

Related is Trinity's new 6601 cubic-foot capacity design, a monster car that went into series production for Trinity Leasing for the first time during 1999.

*Other Designs.* Trinity built 800 two-bay gravity-outlet aluminum-bodied 3601 cubic-foot capacity covered hopper cars for salt service. And, National Steel



***EQUX 630308. Thrall's 6270 design plastics car.***

Car received (an) order(s) for nearly 2,000 gravity outleted 4275-cubic-foot capacity cars lettered for PTEX.

### Box Cars

*60-Foot.* For box cars fans everywhere, 1999 could be called the year of the 60-footer! About 80% of 1999's box car production went to the 60-foot types. Included in this were all three current sizes, Plate E, Plate F and Plate G designs. Three manufacturers participated; Trinity Industries, Greenbrier Companies (Gunderson, Trenton and Concarill), and returnee box car producer, National Steel Car. Most of the cars were lettered for railroads (though many owned by leasing companies). However, in a rare occasion (historically, box cars are rarely delivered new in non-railroad reporting marks), a private owner (NRLX) acquired 100 new 60-footers in 1999.

*50-Foot.* Only about 20% of the box cars built for the year were 50-footers. All were Plate F designs. Most

of them were built at the beginning of the year by Greenbrier Companies and Trinity Industries.

### Coal Cars

*Hopper Cars.* Virtually all known 1999 production of coal hoppers were aluminum-bodied. Most were built by Trinity Industries for the power companies. Two main groups prevailed; the under 4000 cube and the over 4000 cube. Designs for all coal hoppers included Johnstown's 3770, Trinity's 4200, 4416 and 4418, Johnstown's smoothside 4300.

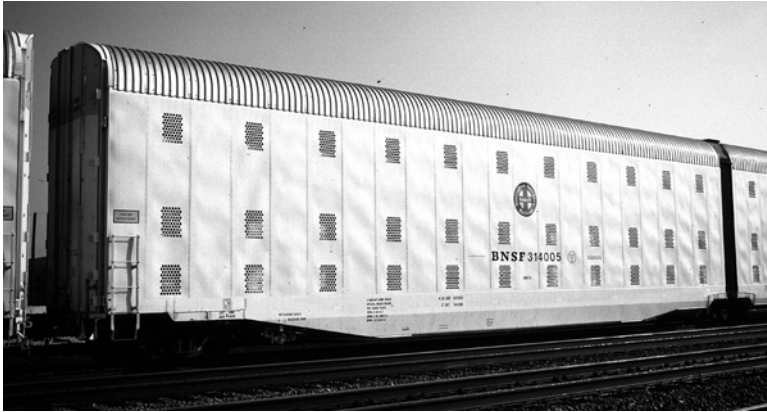
*The "J-Cars" or Coal Gondola Cars.* Coal gondola cars again prevailed in 1999's production (vs coal hopper cars). Johnstown led the way with their "Bethgon" and "Aeroflo" style cars for most built during 1999. The only other known competitor was Trinity Industries. Known designs this year include the following: Johnstown America's 4300 and 4480, and Trinity Industries' 4525. While most of these went to power companies, BNSF acquired 600 cars.

### Coil Cars

Cars for steel and aluminum coils continued to be produced during 1999. However, all the known 1999 production of coil steel cars were for the recent 42-foot single-hood or open cars (unlike the more traditional two-hood cars from the past). CP, CSX, NOKL, NS and TR were among those receiving cars. Builders included Thrall, National Steel Car and recent builder entrant, Alstom. There were just over 1,000 coil cars built in 1999.

### Auto Transporter Cars

*89'4" Cars.* The traditional 89-foot 4-inch "flat-and-rack" auto transporter continued this year with even more



***BNSF 314005. Greenbrier Companies/Gunderson  
Articulated Auto Transporter.***

new flats for the new racks. Johnstown America and Greenbrier Companies competed head-to-head all year when suddenly Thrall jumped in the game - giving us three builders of rack flats. Johnstown built both low-level rack flats and standard-height rack flats. Thrall and Greenbrier Companies built only standard-height rack flats.

Thrall also threw in a new prototype, an integral 20'2" high auto transporter car (two were built in July).

*Articulated Auto Transporter Cars.* A relatively recent phenomenon are the articulated auto racks. Thrall and Greenbrier/Gunderson have both achieved series production. However, only Gunderson is known to have built cars of this design during 1999. Most of the production went to the BNSF and KCS with some 330 units.

#### Center-Divided Bulkhead Flat Cars

The only center-divided bulkhead flat cars (FBC's) built during 1999 were of the 73-foot variety. There were both v-deck riser and flat-deck riserless designs. A little over 2,300 FBC's were built during 1999.

Most were lettered for railroads. NSC (dominant) and Thrall were the only known builders of FBC this year.

### Flat Cars

Flat car new-builds, other than those technically considered as part of the auto transporter and FBC groups were relatively quiet in 1999. A couple of interesting notes, though. TTX received their first new-built non-rack-flat 89'4" cars in decades this year with six-hundred 286K GRL general-service flats (mostly used for pipes and beams) from National Steel Car. TTX Company also added a number of new-built heavy-duty straight-deck flats this year (at least 74 of them).

### Gondola Cars

*52-Foot.* I would of thought the "Gondola Rush" was over - but, 1999 proved me wrong, several thousand 52-foot gons were built this year. All of them with the now standard 5'6" inside height. The three big builders of gons in 1999 were Trinity, Gunderson, and Thrall.

*66-Foot.* Even 66-footers had a little bit of a showing. Nearly 400 of this length gondola are known to have been built in 1999. BNSF and CHTT took the lead. Trinity Industries and Thrall were the only builders of 66-foot gons (I've not seen or heard of any 65/66-foot gons from any of the Greenbrier Companies).

### Refrigerator Cars

When are we going to run out of those old reefers? They just keep on going....and going.... But, 1999 brought in a series production of composite-bodied (read plastic) mechanical high-cube refrigerator cars from a daring Union Pacific railroad! Trinity Industries built the massive 7932 cubic-foot cars. Beam me up Scotty!



## Intermodal Cars

*Well Cars.* Well, guess what....53-footers totally took over well car production in 1999. Nearly two-thousand 53-foot well cars were built in multiples of three as either articulated or drawbar connected (so that's nearly 6,000 wells!). BNSF and TTX ruled on deliveries received in this category.

*Spine Cars.* There were relatively few spine cars built in 1999. TTX Company continued with their deliveries of 57-foot dual-purpose (COFC/TOFC) cars in three-unit sets from Trinity Industries and National Steel Car. Johnstown America built more of its special ABC cars (that's Articulated Bulk Container cars - industry term I don't make this stuff up). These are two-unit cars designed to carry those little refuse containers double-stacked on the ends and single-high in the mid positions.

## Tank Cars

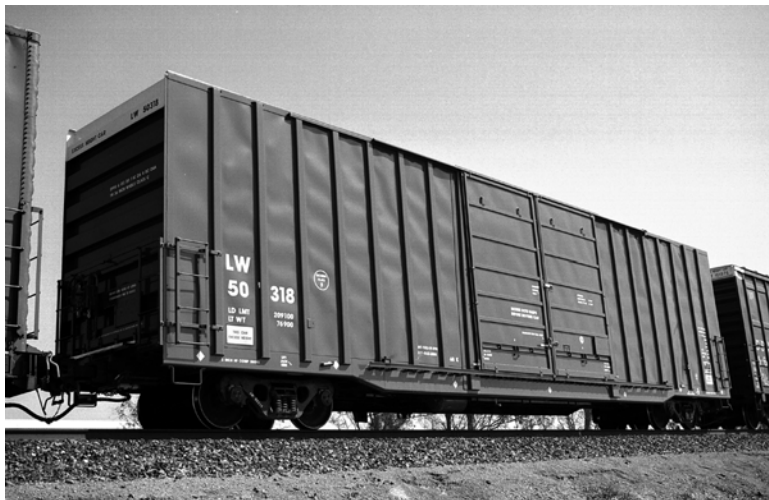
Tank cars have always kind of trotted along at

***GATX 75470. Trinity Industries Chlorine tanker.***



an even pace. 1999 continued the usual variety of designs - but, with a twist. Now, more 286K GRL tank designs are being introduced. This group now includes: corn syrup, vegetable oil, phosphoric acid, asphalt, general-service four-compartment, general-service 23,600 gallon, and a huge general-service 34,000 gallon tank car (for AMCX). Trinity Industries has been and continues to dominate the tank car market. However, Union Tank Car, ACF, and Texana Tank Car also built a number of tanks during 1999.

***LW 50318. National Steel Car's 60-foot double sliding door box car.***



## FreightCar Plants - 1999

Alstom (Montreal, PQ)

ACF

Huntington, WV  
Milton, PA

ARI

Goodrich, TX  
Paragould, AR

Dome Railway Services

Greenbrier Companies

Gunderson, Portland, OR  
Gunderson Concarill (Mexico)  
Trenton Works, Trenton, NS

Hamburg Industries, Inc, North Augusta, SC

JLR<sup>1</sup>

Johnstown America

Johnstown, PA  
Danville , IL<sup>2</sup>

Kasgro Rail Corporation, New Castle, PA

National Steel Car

Hamilton, ON

Texana Tank Car, Nash TX

Thrall Car

Cartersville, GA  
Chicago Heights, IL  
Clinton, IL<sup>3</sup>  
Winder, GA

Trinity Industries

Beaumont, TX  
Dallas, TX  
Denton, TX  
Greenville, PA  
Findlay, OH  
Fort Worth, TX  
Longview, TX  
Monclova (Mexico)  
Montgomery, AL  
Mount Orab, OH  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Saginaw, TX  
Tulsa, OK<sup>3</sup>  
Wilmington, DE

Union Tank Car

East Chicago, IN  
Houston, TX<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Unknown builder of specialty tank cars.

<sup>2</sup> Known as Freight Car Services for the first part of the year.

<sup>3</sup> Unconfirmed if actual production occurred here during 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Former Richmond Tank Car plant located in Sheldon, TX.

## **Checklist of Freight Car Designs - 1999**

### ACF & ARI

3200 Gravity-Pneumatic Outlet Covered Hopper  
5300 PD Covered Hopper  
5800 Pneumatic Outlet Covered Hopper  
6224 Pneumatic Outlet Covered Hopper

### Alstom

42' Coil Steel Car

### Dome Railway

70' 230-ton 8-axle Heavy-Duty Flat Car

### Greenbrier Companies

50'6" Plate F 6269 Box Car  
60'9" Plate E 6648 Box Car  
60'9" Plate F 7277 Box Car  
60'9" Plate G 7286 Box Car  
60'9" Plate G 7352 Box Car  
60'9" Plate G 7541 Box Car  
60'9" Plate G 7550 Box Car  
89'4" Standard-Level Auto Rack Flat Car  
Articulated Auto Transporter Car  
52'6" 2780 Gondola  
Articulated Three-Unit 53' Well Car

### Hamburg

45' 370-ton 12-axle Heavy-Duty Flat Car

### Johnstown America

4300 Coal Hopper  
4300 Coal Gondola  
4480 Coal Gondola  
89'4" Low-Level Auto Rack Flat Car

89'4" Standard-Level Auto Rack Flat Car  
Articulated Bulk Container Car

Kasgro

55' 220-ton 8-axle Heavy-Duty Flat Car

National Steel Car

60'9" Plate F 7599 Box Car  
42' Coil Steel Car  
73' Center-Divided Bulkhead Flat Car  
4275 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
5300 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
89'4" 286K GRL General-Service Flat Car  
Articulated Triple-Platform 57' TOFC/COFC Spine  
Drawbarred Triple-Unit 53' Well Car

Thrall

42' Coil Steel Car  
3230 PD covered Hopper  
3250 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
5150 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
5250 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
5400 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
6270 Pneumatic Outlet Covered Hopper  
6300 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
89'4" Integral 20'2" High Auto Transporter Car  
89'4" Standard-Level Auto Rack Flat Car  
73' Center-Divided Bulkhead Flat Car  
52'6" 2743 Gondola  
66' 3564 Gondola

Trinity Industries

50'6" Plate F 6235 Box Car  
60'9" Plate F 7118 Box Car  
60'9" Plate F 7500 Box Car

60'9" Plate G 7332 Box Car  
3770 Coal Hopper  
4200 Coal Hopper  
4416 Coal Hopper  
4418 Coal Hopper  
4525 Coal Gondola  
3221 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
3260 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
3601 Gravity Outlet Aluminum-Body Covered Hopper  
5125 PD Covered Hopper  
5161 Gravity Outlet Covered Hopper  
5650 PD Covered Hopper  
6221 Pneumatic Outlet Covered Hopper  
6601 Pneumatic Outlet Covered Hopper  
52'6" 2743 Gondola  
66' 3267 Gondola  
7932 Composite-Body Mechanical Refrigerator Car  
Articulated Triple-Platform 57' TOFC/COFC Spine  
Articulated Three-Unit 53' Well Car

Notes:

- A. Just because a design is not listed does not mean it was not offered.
- B. This is a list of known designs reported to *Freight Cars Journal* - others may exist.
- C. This list excludes tank cars.



*NS 165996 (above) National Steel Car's 42' coil-steel car. Alstom logo (below). ARI logo (Bottom).*

