



Fe-13 No. 6312, Plymouth engine loading, circa 1947

ends were replaced in rebuilding, thus the mix of steel ends on a given car was unpredictable. The cars could have indented Dreadnaught, indented Murphy, indented Dreadnaught with a spacer plate at the top or an indented Murphy end with spacer plate. Any rebuilt car could receive any combination of these ends.

All the 50' rebuilds were given AB brakes and Ajax power hand brakes. Running boards were wood. The Fe-6, Fe-7, Fe-8, Fe-9, Fe-10 and Fe-11 series cars retained L section Andrews trucks. The remainder of the classes received ARA cast side frame trucks.

The retention of the massive underframe made these rebuilds heavy. The cars had a light weight of nearly 60,000 lbs. This

mattered little, since the auto trade required large cubic capacity, not weight capacity.

The rebuilds were divided into classes according to the equipment originally installed. The rebuilding to steel permitted the installation of Evans Auto Loaders, an innovation allowing greater density of automobile loads. The Evans loader equipped cars were Fe-6, 10, 14, 16 and 20 classes. The general service cars were the Fe-7 and 11 and Chrysler auto body loading cars were Fe-8 and 9. Further, the 50' rebuilds were given number series for the services for which they were equipped. For example, most of the Evans Loader



Fe-7 No. 6511, Nash Rambler panel loading, Sept. 1950



Fe-7 No. 6402, Nash Rambler panel loading, Jan. 1952

equipped cars went into various series beginning with 67--- and Chrysler body loading cars were in the 8001-8160 series. General service cars were put into 7850-7999 and 8161-8259 series numbers.

Over time, the Santa Fe renumbered cars assigned to specific loadings and changed the series numbers with each reassignment. The accompanying table outlines the original cars, their classes and number series and the subsequent re-equipping, rebuilding and renumbering.

The 1936-40 rebuilding of the 50' cars was not the end of the process. The 50' cars were assigned a variety of uses, some of which required changing the cars internal equipment. The railroad stood ready to change the internal configuration as needed by the shipper. These changes coincided with the changes in automobile body styles and shapes of parts. Most notably, however, many of the cars had their roofs raised to accommodate exotic needs. The first demand for raised roofs came before Pearl Harbor. Later when many airplane assembly plants on the West Coast did not have sufficient capacity to build all the airplanes required for the military effort, various sub-assemblies were farmed-out to plants around the country. These sub-assemblies were commonly wing and fuselage sections, engines and engine nacelles. They were transported west by rail.

When the Fe-6 thru 20s were rebuilt, the inside car height was 10'4". Selected Fe-8, 9, 11 and especially the 13s received roof modifications. The raised roof cars varied from 10'10", 11'1", 11'8", even to 12'4". These transformations and subsequent reductions are outlined in the table.

After World War II, the raised roof cars proved useful in the auto trade. Automobile bodies, less the engine compartment, could be shipped with the body stored upright, two abreast. Centerline racks secured the auto bodies in the car. Airplane components also remained a frequent use for these cars. The Korean War and growth in the size of airplanes maintained a demand for raised roof cars, as well. These raised roof cars required special handling by the railroad and were stenciled in yellow with the outside height and a reminder of their handling requirements.

During the period 1931-51, the ATSF standard for rebuilt cars was Mineral Brown sides, ends, underframe and trucks. The roof received a flat black anti-skid coating, though the running board and laterals were brown. After 1951, the anti-skid coating was more likely brown.

The Fe-6 thru early Fe-20 cars were rebuilt before the famous map scheme was introduced. These cars bore a simple scheme of

ATSF herald, reporting marks with periods and ampersand and numbers without lines. The right side had a 5" "AUTOMOBILE" and the door had the appropriate standard marks for auto or parts racks.

Beginning with the last part of the Fe-20 order, the famous Santa Fe straight line map and passenger train slogans began to appear. Both the map and the slogans were enormous, being designed to fit the large expanse on the right side of the 50' cars and appreciably larger than the same motif on 40' cars.

The slogans applied were dictated by the stencils that the shop had on hand, some shops not having all the metal stencils. Only photographs provide acceptable evidence of the slogan applied.

Repainting of the cars in the period 1940-1947 gave the Fe-6 thru early Fe-20 cars the enlarged 50' map and slogan scheme, also. Since the cars had seen several years of service during World War II, and in some instances conversions to specific auto and military service, repainting was common. Thus the application of maps to the 50' rebuilds, while not universal, was widespread. From 1940 until 1943-44, the reporting marks used periods. Subsequently, the periods were dropped.

In repaintings after 1947, the Ship and Travel slogan and accompanying train slogan scheme replaced the map and slogan on the 50' rebuilds. This time, stencils for the 40' cars were used and the lettering was smaller in size than that used in the map scheme. Modest style changes were also made, for example the removal of "All Pullman" from the "Chief" slogan in 1957.

While the Fe-6 thru 20s served admirably, a weakness began to appear in the late 1940s. The draft gear and bolster area showed deterioration. Many of the cars were sent back to the shops in 1951 for rebuilding this portion of the underframe. The visual result was the addition of a trapezoidal plate to the end of the bolster. The "I" beam bolsters were no longer exposed at the sides of the car, but the life of the cars was prolonged.

Some of the Fe-6 thru 20 cars made it onto small Midwestern roads. A few cars were sold to roads serving the auto industry, perhaps with the agreement that the Santa Fe would get the western end of the car movement.

The Fe-6-20s lasted until as late as 1977 in general service although retirements began as early as the late 1960s and were in full force in the early 1970s.

*All photos courtesy of Richard Hendrickson.*







