

Building a Beaver Models Helium Car

By Norman Bos - Photos by author



I have wanted a helium car for my S scale layout for a long time. I model the Santa Fe and MOPAC and both of these railroads carried these cars from the helium fields in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. The span of use of helium cars was from before World War II into the 1970's. Helium is still used, but is now transported by truck. Northeastern Scale Models made a wooden car in S years ago, but I have never seen one.

Last year at the Hostlers Model Train Show in Ogden, Utah, I learned that my fellow Hostler, Greg Brubaker, was doing research and planning to 3D print an HO model helium car. I asked him if he could 3D print an S scale car and

he assured me he could. Now less than one year later, the S car is printed and mine is built.

And what an engineering feat the model is! All of the pieces fit with a level of precision that would make LEGO proud. The 3D printed pieces are smooth, precise and crisp. He cautions in the instructions that the pieces are brittle, but I did not find this to be so.

The kit is complete and only requires paint and glue. My kit contained Kadee 802 couplers and scale wheels.

The car undersurface clearances are enough for truck-mounted couplers. The

instruction sheet contains an abbreviated history of shipping helium by rail. Painting and decaling guides for the 40 years of use by three operators are described. The helium tubes are bundled as one unit and yet the tubes are prototypically separated. One can see





The only shortcoming I could find with this kit is that the decals do not fully match the drawings in the instructions. Some creative license was necessary.

This is the most precise model kit I have ever constructed! The price for an S kit \$149.95.

between the tubes! The underframe is fully printed, with all the dual brake lines and tanks in place. The end bulkheads are fully formed and ready to receive the ends of the tube assembly prototypically. The sideframes and roof walk are also ready without modification.

The assembly sequence is logical and the illustrations very professional. I changed the sequence a little by installing the grab irons before painting the car in order to avoid filling the tiny holes for the grab irons with paint. I painted the grab irons later with a paint pen. This worked very well. I also installed the ladders and brake wheel before assembling the bulkheads to the frame.

Once I selected the era in which the car will operate, the painting was straight forward.

The paint patterns for the different users are well described in the instructions.

I chose to make a car for the US Navy during WWII. The instructions called for aluminum colored tubes and battleship gray colored bulkheads and underframe. (I misread the instructions and should have painted the car all battleship gray for the US Navy. Maybe I will re-decal the car into a MHAX or ATMX and correct the error). Battleship gray is not a specific color and there are a lot of variations. I found Tru-color battleship gray paint to be a good representative shade and matched it as best as possible with a rattle can paint color (I don't use an air brush). I used Rust-Oleum gloss Winter Gray. I really like the results.

