



Mini-Kit Rock Island Covered Silica Hopper



Rock Island Covered Hopper No. 89589 for Silica Sand Loading, Ottawa IL., Oct. 1952. Bob's Photo

In 1942 the Rock Island purchased 200 33' IL twin offset side hoppers and numbered them in the range 89400-89599. During the war years, the road converted numerous cars by adding roofs. The homemade roofs were constructed of Murphy roof panels and blank sections where hatches were to be added. Three or four hatches were cut in the non-paneled sections and available hatch covers were added. With roofs these hoppers had a cubic capacity of 2564 feet.

The cars were most notable for hauling silica sand from the Illinois River Basin (perhaps other locations, as well) to the various glass plants in the country. Along with limestone, silica was the major ingredient for the production of glass. Typical destinations were in the upper Midwest, such as Toledo OH. Other assignments may have been for grain and cement loading.

By 1946, all 197 remaining 89400 series twin hoppers had been roofed and fitted with tight fitting hatches and doors (class LO). The January ORER notes an increase in numbers, indicating recent completion of the project.

By 1948, 196 cars remained roofed, excepting 89495, and had been classified as HMR (hopper, roofed). (The reclassification as HMR, which indicates non-tight fitting hatches and doors, suggests assignment to sand service.) By 1953, 111 cars had been returned to open top hopper (HM) service. Fifty cars retained the roof, but bottom doors were sealed and nozzles for unloading installed, suggesting cement loading. These were reclassified LO. Thirty-five cars remained HMR. By 1956, the LO cars had declined to 22 and the HMR cars to 10. Many of the cars began to appear throughout the system for various uses such as sand service.

Added Modeling Notes

Use an Athearn No. 5400 undecorated 34' Offset Side Hopper for the construction of a 89400 series RI silica hopper:

1. Insert the roof casting. Add pads and hatches in 3 or 4 blank sections of the roof. (As time passed, homebuilt hatch covers replaced some of the original ones). Add roof and corner walks and corner grabs.
2. Improve the model with brass grabs and other details, as desired.

3. Glue the angle wedge in the notch of the B end to duplicate the right side. Add triangular gussets on the side of the roof section above the bulb angle, adjacent to each seam of the roof.
4. Paint the car boxcar red. Add a gloss coat and allow to dry.
5. Apply the proprietary decals, using the photo above for guidance.

Robert Massey created the masters for this mini-kit. Our thanks to him.