

# Private RR Car, 1900-1935

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Before private aircraft, the private railroad car was the ultimate emblem of status, prestige, and power in America. Private cars enabled business magnates, movie stars, and the wealthy and well-connected to avoid rubbing elbows with the *hoi polloi* while traveling.

**The Pullman Company:** The Pullman Company (known as the Pullman Palace Car Company until 1900) was the largest manufacturer of private railroad cars, and dominated the passenger car business as a whole. Pullman retained ownership of the cars they manufactured, and supplied staff and services under a lease arrangement to railroads or private businesses.

Lessees of a private car would contract with a railroad (or railroads . . . sometimes several were needed for a complete trip) and the car would be switched from train to train as necessary.

Similar designs of private car, with air conditioning and improvements to lighting, and plumbing, could also be found in service until the late 1950s and after. The Pullman company had several standard blueprints for private cars, but they were willing to customize on the same basic plan for the requirements of specific customers. Pullman would supply stewards, cooks, and other servants for the car, all trained to the highest standards of service and appearance. The vast majority were African-American (Filipino on the west coast).

## Rolling Palace

The first example is typical of one floorplan of such cars manufactured during the first quarter of the 20th Century by the Pullman Company, and is based on a car built for a

railroad president 1916. It remained in service (with occasional repairs and improvements) with the original owner until 1935.

This floorplan is suitable for pulp adventures, *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios, and any other RPG or miniatures game set in the first third of the 20th Century. It might be used by a wealthy patron, a millionaire businessman, a politician, a celebrity, or a well-connected mad scientist.

Pullman cars had names as well as serial numbers, for use in tracking the car's movements. The name could be chosen by the lessee or by the Pullman company, and was painted on both sides in large letters, often with gilded or carved embellishments.

## Details

**Length:** 71' 8"

**Width:** 9' 4"

**Gross Weight:** 177,900 lbs.

**Price:** \$6,000 (in 1916), which is the price of the extra luxuries and accoutrements. Leasing the car might cost between \$1,500-\$2,000 per year.

**Light:** By 1900, lighting in almost all Pullman cars was provided by electricity

**Heat:** Heat in earlier cars was provided by coal-fired stoves, but by the 1920s, steam heat (piped from the engine) was available.

**Ventilation & Air Conditioning:** Overhead electric ventilator fans were standard equipment, and all windows could be opened as necessary. Air conditioning was available at extra cost by 1920, and had become common by the late 1930s.

**Passengers (8-10):** This car holds up to two passengers in each bedroom, four passengers in the sleeper section, and two servants in the servants' quarters.



## Interior

The passenger areas of a private car were fitted with expensive and luxurious appointments. Walls were paneled in expensive woods, the floors were carpeted, plumbing and electrical fixtures were of the finest quality. The servant's areas were well-made, but less expensive.

The plans supplied with this booklet are numbered, rather than labeled, so the game master can adapt the plans to an individual campaign. The plans are scaled to 1/5" = 1 foot, or 1/60th. They are designed to be printed out and taped/pasted together for use during a game.

**1. Steps:** The steps used to board the car were folded up during transit.

**2. Vestibule:** This was the section between cars, fitted with an accordion-like seal to make the transit from car to car weather-tight and safe.

**2a. Door to Next Car:** This could be locked to prevent unwanted company from entering the car.

**3. Icebox:** In the early years, this was an insulated box with a large chunk of ice to preserve perishable food. More advanced cars had mechanical refrigeration.

**4. Heater:** This was a coal- or kerosene-fired stove installed in the original car. When steam heat became available, some owners chose to keep the older heaters as a backup system, others removed them and used the area for additional storage.

**5. Kitchen:** This provided first class meals for the passengers, at all hours.

**5a. Stove:** This was originally coal fired, but might be replaced with an oil-fueled stove by 1925 or so. Coal storage was in a bin underneath the cooking surface. Utensils were stored in overhead cabinets.

**5b. Drainboard:** This area holds a rack where dishes can be set to dry, and can be used to chop/dice/slice foodstuffs. Cabinets underneath provide storage space.

**5c. Sink:** This is where the dishes are washed and meals prepared. Cabinets underneath provide storage space.

**5d. Sliding Glass Partition:** This feature connects the pantry and the kitchen, enabling food to be passed quickly from storage to the cook. The work surface is at waist height, with cabinets underneath and overhead.

**6. Locker:** Table linen and some of the larger serving dishes for the dining room are stored here.

**7. Pantry:** This provides storage for all food items not requiring refrigeration, including wines, dry goods, and so on. Simple, late night snacks such as cold sandwiches and the like can be prepared in the pantry. The working surface is at waist height, and storage is provided by cabinets above and below.

**7a. Sink:** This is a secondary sink, for preparing food.

**8. Passage:** This connects the front and back sections of the car.

**8a, 8b. Locker:** These lockers provide storage for the bed linen used in the sleeper section and the servants' quarters.

**8c. Locker:** This locker provides storage for towels and washcloths.

**9. Servants' Section:** This has sleeping space for two servants, almost certainly a cook and a porter/steward provided by the Pullman Company. The servant's quarters contain storage for the servant's personal possessions and uniforms, as well as a private commode and sink, obviating the need for the servants to use the passengers' facilities.

The seats unfold at night to form a lower berth, while the upper folds down from the ceiling.

**9a. Locker:** Storage for the servant's personal luggage – limited, but adequate.

**9b. Wardrobe:** Pullman porters normally wore company uniforms.