

CGW Caboose: long & short version by Mike Porter's Crummies \$35 + \$3.50 s/h available from:
C&NWHS

~~Norm Cattel~~
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Historical Society

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CGW Wood Caboose Decals #87-
508 (will do two cabooses) \$3.00 +s/h
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Railroad modelers would lose out if not for the unsung heroes who quietly go about researching and producing models for their favorite railroads. Mike Porter, a third generation CGW employee, worked with American Model Builders, to produce two HO versions of the Chicago Great Western's extended vision, wood caboose, specifically #110 & #10. Mike started the project and, with other CGW fans, forwarded research, sketches and photo's to AMB. AMB created computer drawings to guide their laser to cut the caboose body and floor piece for these kits. Both the original 33 foot version and the rebuilt shortened 28 foot version are now available through the C&NW Historical Society from AMB.

The prototype for the models was the CGW's 10-160 series with some exceptions. The first cars were built in 1885 by Haskell and Barker. Later orders came from American Car and Foundry and South Baltimore Car Works. Records indicate that some of the cars were acquired from predecessor roads. A few were not originally built with the unique extended vision feature, but it was added later to all the cars but one during a rebuilding program. Beginning in 1935 most of the cabooses went through a rebuilding program which consisted of complete stripping, new posts applied, new side braces to strengthen the frame, a complete Z sections center sill with bolster and cross ties, metal steps and six inch I beam platform end sills. In addition Type D couplers and friction draft gears plus a set of Andrews trucks were added. A few of the cars (10, 25, 49 and 94 and perhaps others) were shortened from the original 33' to 27' interior length. These rebuilding programs account for the long life the cabooses enjoyed on the old Great Weedy. A few of these cabooses lasted until December of 1969.

The models follow AMB's standard caboose format: an interior box, with laser scribed adhesive backed wood overlays forming the caboose body. A skeleton of gently curved roof ribs covered by a paper thin plywood overlay forms the roof; which in turn is covered with a laser cut adhesive paper to represent the canvas roof covering. The floor/frame is an Athearn caboose frame which the modeler must kitbash to generate the correct length floor. AMB includes the necessary parts to do the kitbash, plus cast metal queen posts assemblies for the truss rods. The cupola assembly is laser scribed and cut plywood with separate windows. All windows are multi-part, adhesive backed pieces. Adhesive paper overlays are included to represent sheet-metal the CGW applied to some cabooses. Different overlays allow modeling a specific caboose. As always, it is wise to check photos. Strips of brass wire and template drawings are include for duplicating grab irons, hand railings, ladders, etc. The modeler provides trucks, couplers, ladders, weight, lettering, and details.

The instruction sheets provide a brief history of these cars; painting information; references; a list of materials and manufactures for finish details; and numerous black and white photos of various CGW cabooses. Clear isometric drawings with numbered steps, each including a check off box so you keep track of where you are, make this kit an ease to build.

First step, get the detail parts: Trout Creek caboose ladders, Detail Associates' AMB caboose detail kit,

and decals. The CGW used Arch-bar and later Andrews trucks under their wood cabooses. I do not know of anyone who makes an HO caboose truck in either the Arch-bar or Andrews style, so I kitbashed caboose trucks out of MDC arch-bar freight trucks. (See the how too article on page (insert page # here).

Photos show the CGW cabooses had several paint/lettering schemes using different paint colors; including the Corn Belt emblem, no emblem, initials only, and the modern Lucky Strike emblem. I choose the CGW paint scheme with the Corn Belt emblem, used until 1954. Study the carrier sheets to determine what needs to be painted which color. Don't forget the paper (sheet-metal) overlays, I did. I airbrushed ModelFlex's light Tuscan oxide red for the body color. Some CGW fans feel this color is too red, but with a flat finish and light weathering, I find it matches some color photo's I have seen. Regarding AMB's color mix for CGW Maroon, I have heard some comment this is a little too dark. Experiment using less black until you get the color you like. The roof, steps, ladders and underframe were airbrushed ModelFlex Weathered Black. Photo's show some cabooses had red steps, I left mine black.

A miter box ensured square cuts when cutting the Athearn caboose floor and underframe. Follow the instructions precisely and you will get the exact length needed. There is no room for error! I installed kadee compatible couplers at this time and glued the frame to the floor to make a stronger sub-assembly. The floor alone is very weak and the wood sub-floor leaves no space for an overlapping reinforcement piece of styrene. After this dried I had to narrow the width of what remained of the Athearn floor to fit inside walls of the caboose body. While some criticize AMB for using the Athearn caboose frame because it is not prototypically accurate, I find it provides a nice end porch with caboose steps, plus a frame and coupler pockets I know will be compatible with my other rolling stock. Besides who looks at the underframe when operating. While this is the weak part of the kit, I found it to be an effective and reliable way to build a beautiful and accurate caboose, at a reasonable price. Those desiring a more accurate frame will have to scratch build one, and remember caboose steps are not easy to do.

Assembly was very easy. Where parts did not have adhesive backing, I used medium viscosity CA except on the roof, where I used carpenter's glue, which allowed for precise positioning. Everything was cut perfectly and fit cleanly. Windows dropped right in place. Only the ends required a sanding of the edges after assembly. I did have to make one small adjustment. The sub-roof is not cut to allow for the paper overlays on the corners of the cupola. I gently cut notches in the sub-roof, after it was in place, with a fresh razor blade, notching until the cupola just slid into place for a nice snug fit.

Final assembly included weighing the cabooses to NMRA recommendations. I use discarded wheel weights from my local tire dealer, which I glued to the wood sub-floor with Goo.

Most of my time was spent installing details; the grabs, end railings and ladders. Detail Associate's AMB Caboose parts kit supplies curved side grabs, 90' end grabs, drop and straight grabs, cupola roof grabs, coupler lift bars, and eyebolts. Ladders are also included, but I used the Trout Creek caboose ladders instead. The Trout Creek ladders are etched brass with wire for rungs which must be soldered together. Don't panic, they include a jig which made it almost painless. These are flimsy and fragile, but build up into a beautiful caboose ladder. Soldering paste and a hot iron made this task easy. Do note the template for the truss rods on the instruction sheet for the 28' caboose has not been adjusted for the shorter length. Additional details to add could include tool boxes and different window placement. Within the series these cabooses varied, check photo's. I chose to build the kits were designed, #10 & #110.

The end railings were built using brass wire and templates. The railings were soldered together. Holes were drilled in the end beams and the railings CA'ed in place. The brake wheels and staff were done in the same manner. I used Kadee brake wheels, which I had on hand. Squadron Green putty filled the existing, unused holes in the Athearn end beams. You could use a thin styrene overlay if you prefer.

I used Oddballs Decals set #87-508. This is a new set for the early CGW caboose using white lettering, the Corn Belt emblem, and 12" numerals. Note the end numbering above the doors. Delivery from

Oddballs was quick and the decals went on easily. They have a very thin film which disappeared after application of decal setting solution.

I painted the lower grabs and end railings on my long caboose yellow, the ladders, roof grabs, and cupola stays are black. Sources vary, but either in 1943 or 1954 the CGW began painting grab irons yellow for safety reasons. Photos show the Corn Belt emblem with yellow grabs in the early 50's. But not all grabs were painted yellow. Photos in Gene Green's book CGW Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment by Morning Sun, shows yellow grabs with either yellow or black roof grabs. Ladders and cupola stays are seen yellow, black or body color red with yellow grabs. Again check photo's.

Final touch ups with paint and weathering completed these models. Note the paper roof overlays betray white edges after installation. These need to be touched up with black paint using a steady hand and small brush. To weather, I used a fiberglass "eraser", rubbing the siding with the scribing and wood grain. This removed a thin layer of paint and scratched the decals just enough without leaving a aged look. An overcoat of ModelFlex clear flat left a caulky, faded paint, look while sealing the decals.

The dimensions match exactly the drawings in the CGW caboose article published by the Historical Society in spring of 1998. CGW fans should thank Mike Porter for his efforts in making available a model of a very distinctive caboose. These rival anything done in brass, plus I find wood paints and weathers so nicely. Credit also goes to AMB, who works closely with individuals and Historical Societies to produce prototypically accurate models of railroad structures and rolling stock. Anyone who models the CGW, or interchanges with the CGW, up through the 60's should have one or more of these distinctive looking cabooses.

Kitbashed Arch-bar Caboose Trucks

I needed caboose trucks for the CGW cabooses I was reviewing. Accurately modeling wood cabooses is difficult because there are not any good vintage HO caboose trucks available. The only option is brass caboose trucks, if you can find them. Caboose trucks differ from freight trucks in that they have leaf springs instead of coil springs. As Cabooses were not normally interchanged, many older ones were never upgraded to cast frame or Bettendorf style trucks, of which there are several good examples available in HO. Many old wood cabooses road on arch-bar trucks to the end of their life. The hobby needs some good rolling, plastic HO Arch-bar and Andrews caboose trucks.

MDC's arch-bar freight trucks are made of slippery plastic and roll nice. I decided to remove the coil spring detail and replace it with a caboose leaf spring carved out of styrene. But how does one attach styrene to Delrin or other slippery plastics? Even CA is not a guaranteed hold on Delrin. I did not want a spring detail "popping" loose while a caboose was bobbin down the track. But if you drill through the sideframe and styrene block you can secure the block in place with a piece of brass wire. CA would then reinforce this mechanical fastener.

I completely remove the coil spring area of the MDC trucks by drilling a series of small holes around the springs, without damaging the actual truck sideframe. Using a #11 blade and small square file I cleaned out the opening. If you do not want the trouble of cleaning out the opening, start with a pair of sprung plastic arch-bar trucks, (or Andrews if you prefer) remove the metal coil springs and glue the frame and bolster pieces together forming a rigid plastic truck. Now you have the necessary opening without the drilling, cutting and filing. This would not work with metal trucks as you need the flexibility of plastic to be able to insert the wheelsets.

Make the new leaf spring detail out of 1/8" square styrene strip. Use a strip long enough to provide a "handle". File one side of the strip till it slides into the new opening in the sideframe. Then file the end of the strip at an angle on the top & bottom of the strip, copying the leaf spring profile as it sticks out of the sideframe. Using a small square file I lightly cut across the angled face in three or four places, creating the ends of the individual leafs in the spring. Once finished with the files, I cut the newly created leaf spring detail off the end of the styrene strip, leaving enough of the "square" end to fill the opening in the sideframe. I inserted my new "leaf spring" into the sideframe with the leaf spring sticking out. Using a #78 drill bit I drilled through the sideframe, through the styrene leaf spring detail and out the other side of the sideframe. A piece of brass wire was inserted into the resulting hole, securing the new leaf spring in the sideframe. When satisfied with the fit and appearance, I removed the wire and leaf spring, coated both with CA and reinstalled. The final step was to trim the wire flush with top and bottom of the sideframes and touch up any file marks.

Once all sideframes were modified and dry, I airbrushed them with Modelflex weathered black. The paint helps mask imperfections in the spring details and if even if they are not all exact duplicates, remember when looking real close you don't see all four sideframes anyway. With Intermountain wheelsets installed, you have a pair of very nice rolling, arch-bar caboose trucks. They are easy to produce and the price allows one to equip a whole fleet of cabooses.