

M&StL Bay Window Wood Caboose:
by Mike Porter's Crummies.
\$36.95 plus \$2.55 shipping.
~~CNWHHS~~
~~2053 Partridge Lane~~
~~Kalamazoo, MI 49009-3009~~

No longer available from the CNWHS.
Now offered direct from American Model
Builders. Check with your local Hobby Shop or
Walthers for current pricing and availability.

Wabash Decals has updated their M&StL Caboose decals for this kit: Set EE-1 is pre 1956 and Set EE-2 is post-1956. Each set will do one caboose and comes with a lettering guide. \$2 per set, order from Mark E. Vaughan 2426 Lawndale Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60201

Mike Porter's Crummies, working with American Model Builders, has produced another LASERKIT Caboose. (See the review of their CGW Caboose in the Sept 2000 RMC.) This HO scale model is of the Minneapolis & St Louis Bay Window wood caboose, commonly called crummies on the M&StL.

The M&StL began a caboose replacement program in late 1938, no doubt a part of receiver Lucian Sprague's rebuilding program, which led to 77 new crummies on the railroad. They started with nine used cupola cabooses from the Lehigh Valley. The remainder were new crummies built at the former Iowa Central shops in Marshalltown, Iowa. They reused many metal parts from older wood crummies. The first 12 came with cupolas, the next 56 were built with bay windows.

The Bay Window crummies were built in several series beginning in 1942. #1121-1132 were completed in 1942-1943; #1133-1144 in 1945; #1200-1211 in 1947; and #'s 1212-1219 & 1225-1230 in 1948/9. The final eight, #1231-1238 were finished in the end of 1949. #'s 1145 -1199 were assigned to wood crummies from the Iowa Central that were still on the roster from the 1912 merger. In 1955/6 the M&StL renumbered 12 Bay Window crummies in the 1300 series when they received radios.

According to drawings dated 1940-1941, the steel underframes used on the first series, #1121-1132 came from the "MINNEAPOLIS STEEL & MACHINERY DIV. of MINNEAPOLIS-MOLINE POWER IMPLEMENT CO., Minneapolis, Minn." an online shipper located in the Minneapolis suburb of Hopkins, MN. This first series also came with wood roofwalks. Later crummies had metal roofwalks and received underframes from several manufacturers. All came with Apex tread steel steps. Trucks were of the "Bettendorf" swing motion design.

The M&StL wrecked three Bay Window crummies, the rest transferred to the C&NW in the 1960 merger. The C&NW scraped or sold them in the sixties with a few lasting into the early 70's. A complete roster, with the renumbering notes, can be found in the files at <http://www.yahogroups.com/community/mstl>.

The Chicago & North Western Historical Society published drawings of the M&StL bay window caboose in the Summer & Fall 1988 issues of North Western Lines. I understand an extensive article on their construction is in the works. Thanks to the researchers for use of the above historical information.

The M&StL painted their Crummies bright red, with black roofs, underframes, steps, ladders and grab irons. The wood roofwalks were left unpainted. The metal roofwalks may have been painted or galvanized, I don't know. In 1956 a new Logo with the white circle and red lettering promoting the Peoria Gateway was applied. About this time they started painting grab irons yellow. After the C&NW merger white was used on grabs, ladders and the steps. A 1963 photo shows ends with reflective diagonal stripes. The C&NW painted roofs red and added the C&NW Bar & Ball logo. One color photo from 1959 shows red trucks, all other photos I examined showed black trucks. Use the Wabash decals for M&StL lettering. Check photos for post-C&NW lettering.

The kit follows AMB's standard caboose kit format: an interior box, with laser scribed adhesive backed wood overlays forming the body. A skeleton of curved roof ribs covered by a thin plywood overlay forms

the roof; which is covered with a laser cut adhesive paper to represent the canvas roof covering. The floor/frame is an Athearn caboose frame which is kitbashed to create the correct length floor. AMB includes laser cut parts for the kitbash. All doors and windows are multi-part, adhesive backed pieces. Adhesive paper overlays are used for the trim around the bay window. Brass wire is include for forming grab irons and railings. The modeler provides trucks, couplers, weight, lettering, and details. AMB is introducing two new features to their caboose kits starting with this kit. One is an acrylic jig for accurately forming the grab irons. The second is a kit with-in the kit to build J-shaped caboose ladders. Both are welcome additions, adding to the value of these kits.

The instruction sheets provide a excellent history written by M&StL expert Gene Green; painting information; references; a list of materials and manufactures for finish details; and numerous black and white photos of M&StL Bay Window crummies. Clear isometric drawings with numbered steps, each including a check off box so you can keep track of where you are, make this kit an ease to build. Follow the instructions and you should have no trouble assembling this kit. Put a new blade in your hobby knife and begin.

Examine all parts and sort based on paint color. I left the parts attached to the carrier sheets for painting. Remove the roof walk parts from the carrier sheet so they will not be painted. I stained them with an alcohol and leather weathering mixture. I also removed all the cutout scraps from the windows so the inside edges would be painted. I airbrushed all exterior body parts with a light coat of Model-Flex Caboose Red. A light coat does not fill the laser scribes allowing them to remain visible, and you are less likely to warp the pieces with water based paint.

Prepare the underframe by cleaning off flash and filling the holes in the end beams. I used calipers to ensure accurate measurements and a miter box to ensure square cuts for the kitbash. Square the ends of the floor insert with a file for a good glue surface. I laid the parts on a piece of glass and applied Testor's liquid cement. Note the Athearn floor is wider than the styrene insert, trim the Athearn parts to match the width of the floor insert. Paint the underframe assembly Weathered Black

I assembled the inner body structure and roof framing using thick CA. The M&StL used a curved or radial roof. The thin ply-wood in the kit is stiff and does not bend easily. Soak it in water first so it will curve easier, then glue using clothespins to hold the roof sheet to the frame until the glue dries. I found this is the trickiest part of the assembly.

Finishing the body assembly shows the real beauty of AMB's design. With the adhesive back siding and trim the caboose literally takes shape before your eyes. The laser assures everything fits perfectly. Just take your time to make the door and window trim lines up with the vertical siding, before pressing the trim pieces in place. Nothing looks worse then a window frame that is out of alignment. When attaching the roof remember the stove pipe goes on the same side as the 2nd small window. I added 2 ozs of weight using stick-on tire weights I get from my local tire dealer.

Attach the roofing material making sure to line up the openings for the roof walk supports. The adhesive is very sticky, you only get one chance. I peeled part of the backing away, lined up the first few holes, then continued to peel and stick down only the center. Once I was sure everything lined up, I then used my fingers to gently press the paper down, moving from the center to the edges to avoid any wrinkles or bubbles. Fold over the edges and burnish for a tight fit. Glue the roofwalk supports in place, I had to trim the roof paper around some of the support holes, as the paper curled and shrank slightly when painted with water based paint. Insert the stove pipe, you will need to enlarge the hole, and then touch up the paint, particularly the roof walk supports and the white edges of the roof paper. Everything is painted Weathered Black.

A clear acrylic jig is provided for forming the grab irons and end railings. Assemble by tilting the part in position along the laser cut ridge to make sure the part lines up correctly, place a drop of CA and lower the part in place. Thick brass wire is used for the pins used for bending the corners. Using the .015" brass

wire, forming the grab irons is easy, while providing consistency in size and shape. This jig is a great addition and goes into my tool box.

J-shape ladders are found on many crummies. AMB's ladder stiles and jigs are laser cut from .020 thick ply-wood with brass wire inserted for the rungs. This is similar to the Taurus/Trout Creek etched brass caboose ladders which has been recommended in previous AMB caboose kits. Extra stiles are included in case you break one, they are extremely fragile, until assembled. I found assembly went much quicker once I taped the jig parts to my workbench along a straight edge (see photo). This held the stiles steady so I could thread the brass wire through the holes and apply CA using the end of a straight pin. The ladders are terrific.

The included drawing of the end railing shows all the vertical rods, including the brake wheel shaft. Using the drawing, I made a simple drilling jig out of a piece of styrene as I plan to build a fleet of these crummies. Using the existing holes in the ends of the Athearn end beam I used pieces of wire to hold the jig in place and drilled the remaining holes. Drill the holes with a #78 drill. I glued the formed end railing in place, then inserted wire into each hole and cut it flush with the railing and bottom of the end beam. Remember the brake shaft is taller than the railing. I used Kadee Brake wheels as I had them on hand, though Cal-Scale's are recommended. All joints were made using CA, though they could be soldered. Paint Weathered Black.

Ream out the grab iron holes with the #78 drill and then touch each grab to a puddle of CA and insert. Paint all grabs Weathered Black. I found a piece of paper slipped under each grab reduced the possibility of getting black paint on the body.

Before attaching the body to the frame I very carefully went around with a paint brush and touched up both red and black colors. Pay special attention to all the edges of the trim which show the charring from the laser if you did not paint these edges before assembly. Also cover any white adhesive that may be visible under the roofwalks, etc. And examine the grab irons for any signs of brass showing through. A steady hand and small paint brush will result in a sharp paint job.

Now is also the time to apply the decals. The smaller M&StL herald was used on the Bay Window Crummies. It is a two part decal with a white lettering overlaying the black circle and triangle. It requires careful alignment for the perfect job. Note the name letters are the same height as the letterboard, you will need to trim the decal film very close to the letters. Rail Graphics printed the Wabash decals and they went on very easily, and snuggled right in with a setting solution.

Final assembly consists of inserting the frame assembly into the body. I tapped the frame for 2-56 screws to attach Tichy caboose trucks equipped with Inter-Mountain wheel sets. I had to trim the Athearn floor pieces to allow the trucks to swivel. Couplers are Kadee #5's, and are at perfect height. The last item is adding the ladders using CA at all places the ladder touched the body or railing, noting the J ends sit above the roofwalk surface. Give everything a final coat of flat finish and add your favorite weathering. Photo's show the M&StL kept their crummies clean, though some exhibit siding deterioration along the bottom of the sides in later life.

The finished model matches the drawings perfectly. M&StL fans should thank Mike Porter for his efforts in making available a model of another distinctive caboose. 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 M&StL or interchanges with the M&StL up through the 60's should have one or more of these distinctive looking crummies. Mike Porter has produce another winner in a caboose kit of a unique prototype. M&StL fans will be ecstatic.