

THE HOTBOX

Youth Model Railroading at its Finest!

February 2001 2

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Issue #355



CABOOSE!

**Pics and See caboose
history**

**THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
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The HotBox

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Contributions!

We always need contributions in all forms. Please send the following in if you wish for the staff to consider for an upcoming issue of *The Hotbox*.

Feature Articles:

This is what we really need. They can be from a half page to two pages typed on anything related to railroading, railfanning, model railroading, you get the idea. Accompanying pictures are also welcome.

Columns:

Another thing we can always use! If you wish to start one, please drop us a line. And if you like a current column, please let the staff know, we like the feedback.

Photos and Drawings:

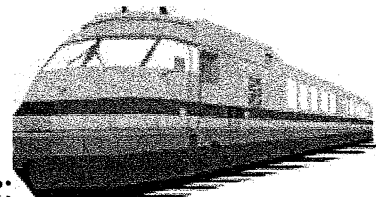
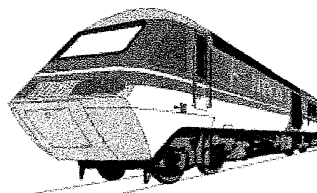
Do you have great pictures collecting dust? Railroading cartoons just sitting around? Drawings just waiting to be great works of art? Well send them in for consideration by us! Photos should be 3in x 4in minimum. Artwork should be on plain white paper with black ink.

Questions?

Ask the editor for more info.

On the Cover:

Conrail caboose 25030 at the Rochester, NY, yards – seen in 2001 waiting for its next assignment. Photo by Nick Wilson
SCL-L+N Family Lines caboose M-5 is now with the Hocking Valley Scenic Railroad but privately owned, here it is seen by Peter Maurath in Nelsonville, OH.



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Please Read and Recycle

Thanks to rrhistorical.com for some of the railway clipart.

The TAMR is a non-profit organization created to promote, foster, and encourage young persons in the hobby of model railroading, the activity of railfanning, and the preservation of the history, science and technology thereof.

Membership to the TAMR includes an eleven issue subscription to the *Hotbox*, the annual directory of members, quarterly regional newsletters and an invitation to participate in all TAMR events. The available membership categories are as follows:

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A Word from the Editor

Hi Everyone,

So, what month is this anyway? I believe that it is supposed to be February, but it's probably March or April now. Guess what? More delays! So now what? Well, this time it wasn't just my fault. There was a misunderstanding between Hans and I about postage, and envelopes that tied up about three weeks. So, we lost three weeks, how does that affect the here and now? Well, there was homework [don't ya love it?] and delays between the time we mail the Hotbox and the time you receive it and other little thing that hold up the mailing. So, we on the Hotbox staff apologize for all of the delays, and give you our word that we are trying hard to catch up. Until next month [or the month after that]...

-Charles W

A word from the Layout Design Artist

Hi everyone!

Welcome to our first caboose-only issue! Lots of these classics are featured in photos here, and look for a terrific article about Soo's cabooses by our own Soo expert, Lewis Ableidinger! It is about as comprehensive as one can get in just two pages. As always with the photo issues, the regular features will return next month. Sorry for the delays, we had some issues with the caboose photos moving across the country plus the stuff Charles mentioned above. So sit back and remember the times when all trains were ended each and every train by a caboose. And even if you can't remember it, see what it looked like. So till next time, see you trackside!

-Andy Inserra

Thanks to this month's contributing editors:

Peter Maurath

Tim Vermande

Lewis Ableidinger

Mike Acree

Nick Wilson

Editor of the Month – Lewis Ableidinger for the great article on Soo's wide-vision cabooses! It is incredible, and besides this he sent us some great photos from ND and Northern MN of, what else, cabooses!



Soo 81 on Transfer 1 in St Paul, one of the last regular trains with a caboose. Seen on Jan 9 02.
Andy Inserra photo

Soo Line's Wide-Vision Cabooses

By: Lewis Ableidinger

The Soo Line has always been known to maintain its equipment so that it can be used for an extended amount of time. GP9's that were built in 1954 continued to work for the railroad all the way up to 1999. The Soo's cabooses were no exception either. Until the mid 1960's all the cabs on the rear of any Soo train were wood-bodied, and some dated back to the 1880s, an astonishing 75 to 85 years. It was at this time the Soo Line decided to put these old, wood cabooses out to pasture (some literally) and bring in new, steel sided cabs.

In 1965 the Soo owned only one steel-bodied caboose, no. 275. It was actually a rebuild of an old wood caboose, which took place in 1956. To rebuild its entire fleet of antique crummies would be impractical, so the railroad began to look at purchasing new cabs. The railroad also knew it had to reduce its cab fleet by pooling cabooses throughout divisions as opposed to assigning a hack to each conductor. The railroad and labor unions passed this deal also in 1965. By pooling cabooses, the railroad also became more efficient. The agreement cut running time between Minneapolis and Chicago by two hours.

Shortly after that, president Leonard Murray stated that the railroad would be receiving five new, all-steel cabs with cushioned under frames that would be in use between the Twin Cities and Chicago. These five cabooses would replace eighteen wood cabooses and would be numbered one through five. Each car cost \$23,695, and that price included accessories the Soo Line requested. The operational improvements and maintenance reductions of these five new crummies were projected to save the railroad \$20,750 a year.

The cabs were built by the International Car Corporation of Buffalo, New York, which was the company that would go on to build all of the Soo's new cabooses. The assembly plant was located in Kenton, OH. The Soo chose the extended-vision cupola design over the bay-window design for better visibility. The shipment was made in February 1966 with the Soo taking delivery in Burlington, WI. From there the cars went to Shoreham Yard in Minneapolis for additional accessories.

The new hacks were a vast improvement over the old, wood cars. Electrical lighting replaced oil lamps, propane heaters displaced coal stoves and vinyl covered seats replaced the old, hard, wood benches. The cushioned under frame gave the car a smoother ride and eliminated some of the jolting from slack action. The steel design also made the cabooses much safer.

Over the next several years, the Soo progressively bought small orders of wide-vision cabooses to expand the pooling system over the railroad's entire line. In 1966, ten cabs, numbered 6-15, were ordered and were virtually identical to the first five. In 1967, and additional twenty cabs were orders, numbered 16-35. These had a few minor changes to the first few orders. Oil heaters replaced propane. The oil was also used for the new incineration toilets. Another change was the addition of the Spicer generator drive on the axle.

Cars 36-45 were ordered in 1969 and had a few minor exterior details changed. One was the cupola was positioned closer to the center of the car. With these cabooses, the Soo

was able to put one on the end of each train on its mainlines, and therefore did not order new crummies for several more years. The remaining 135 wood cabooses were assigned, by train number, to locals, branchline runs, and transfer jobs.

The next new order of cabooses came in 1972 with numbers 46-55. These new cabooses sported a variety of changes and cost reduction methods. A major change was the end cupola window went to a more square design from the previous rectangular design. The Soo ordered more cabs in 1973 with the delivery of numbers 56-65. Later that year, with a booming economy, the Soo decided to purchase eighty additional cabooses at a cost of a little over \$30,000 each. They were very much the same to numbers 56-65 and were numbered 66-145. These new cabs would completely replace the wood hacks and the Soo would not purchase any new cabooses again (with the exception of those inherited from the Minneapolis, Northfield and Southern in 1982 and the Milwaukee Road in 1985). The Soo now had 145 wide-vision cabooses and nearly all of the wood crummies were replaced, except for a few, which were used for terminal switching service until the early 1980s. These steel cabooses would continue in service throughout the remainder of the century.

Although all the cabooses were delivered painted white with a red cupola and variations of either red or bare steel on the roof, some cabs were repainted to an all brown color between 1987 and 1991. They became known as the "brownie" cabooses.

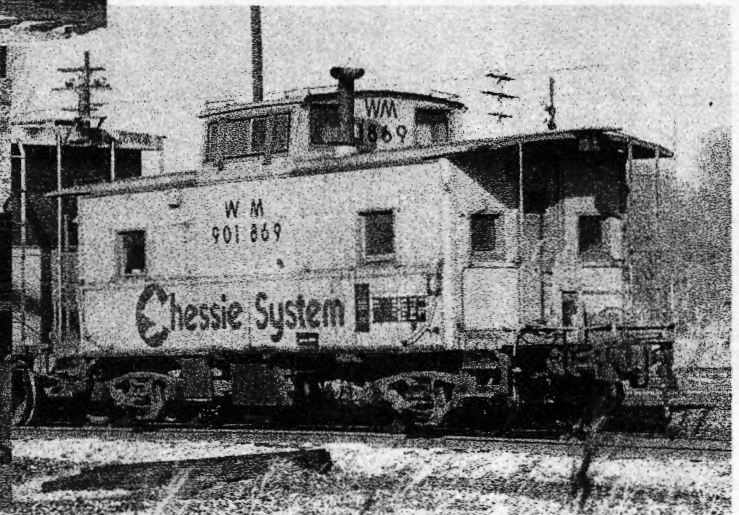
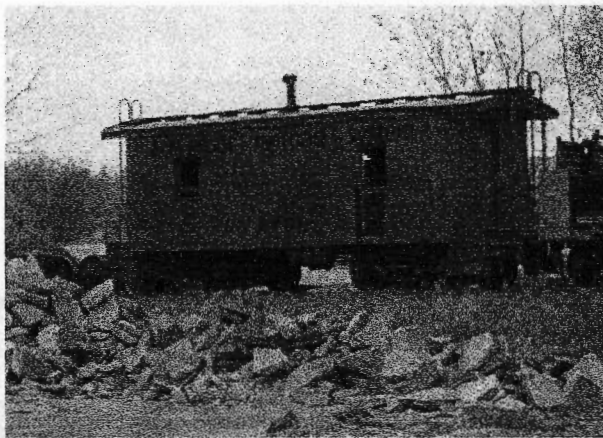
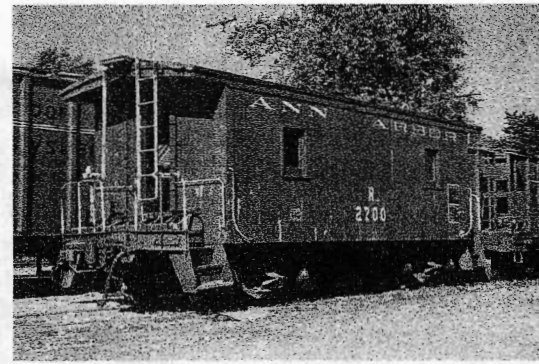
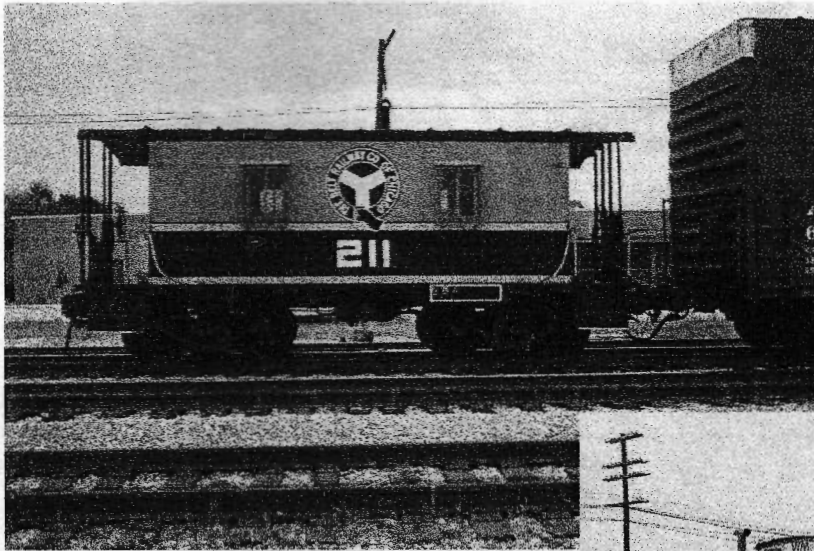
In 1982 the groundwork for the elimination of the caboose began. End of train devices would, in only a decade, replace all cabooses on mainline trains. By late 1992 it was difficult to find a cab on the end of a train. Even so, at the beginning of the year 2000 about half of the original 145 cabooses were still on CP/Soo property for use on work trains, long backup moves, or other such operations warranted a caboose.

As of this writing, there are a few Soo cabooses for sale, for those of you who have a little extra cash laying around. A description can be found on Canadian Pacific's website (along with other interesting items for sale).

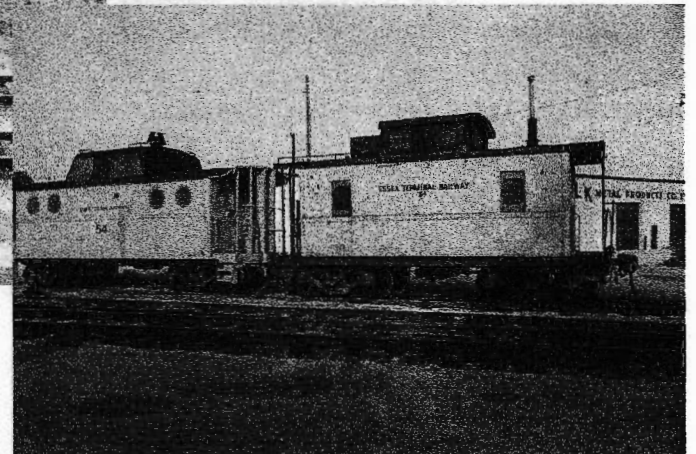
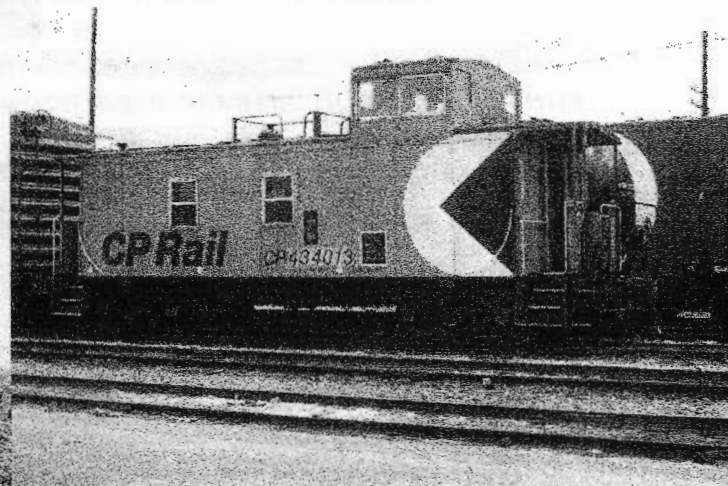
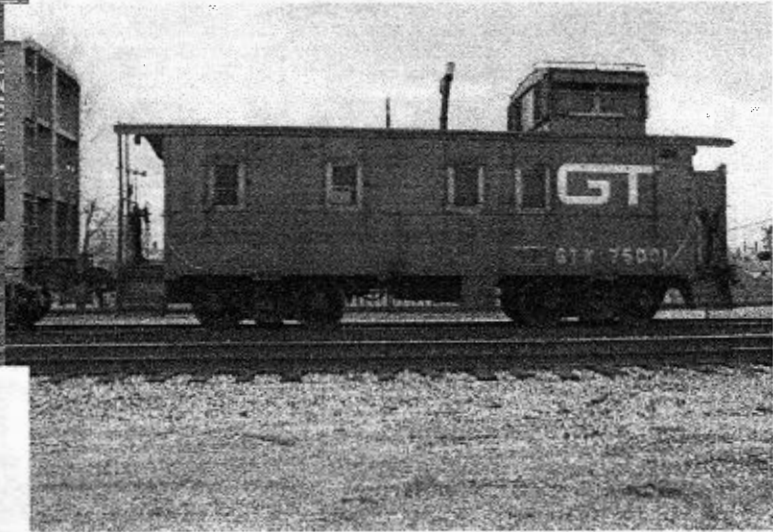
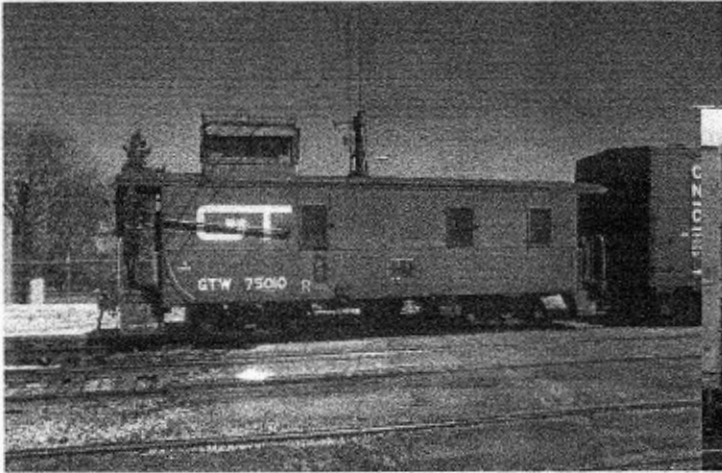
For those of you who would like to model a Soo wide-vision caboose, Atlas's version is the most correct you can buy, with only a few details that may need to be changed. The other option is to go with Athearn, whose caboose is not only cheaper, but comes in two different road numbers (18 and 63). Unfortunately, the Athearn design is nowhere near what the Soo received, it would make a good model for just an occasional appearance on a run-through train.

As long as the CP Rail may need a caboose for some purpose on any of it's former Soo Line, it's likely that the Soo's extended-vision cabooses will be around for just that purpose.

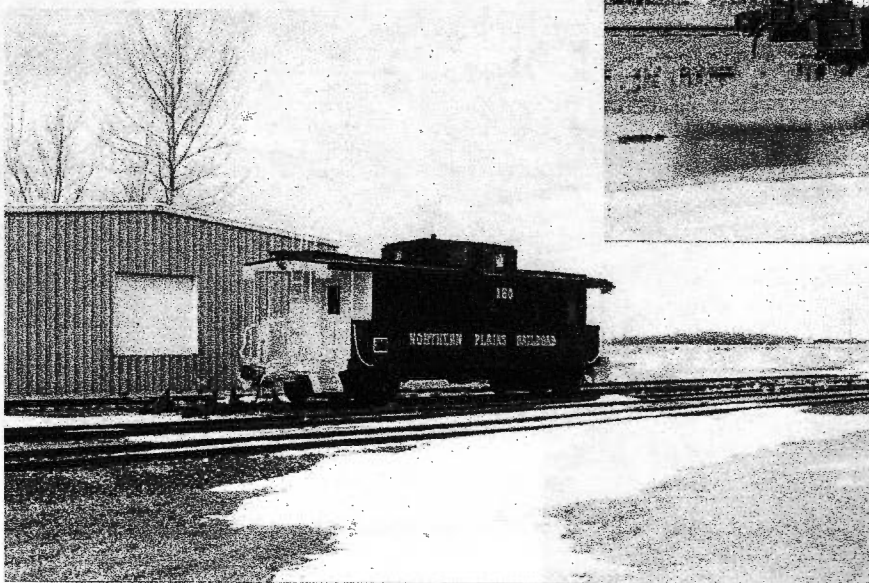
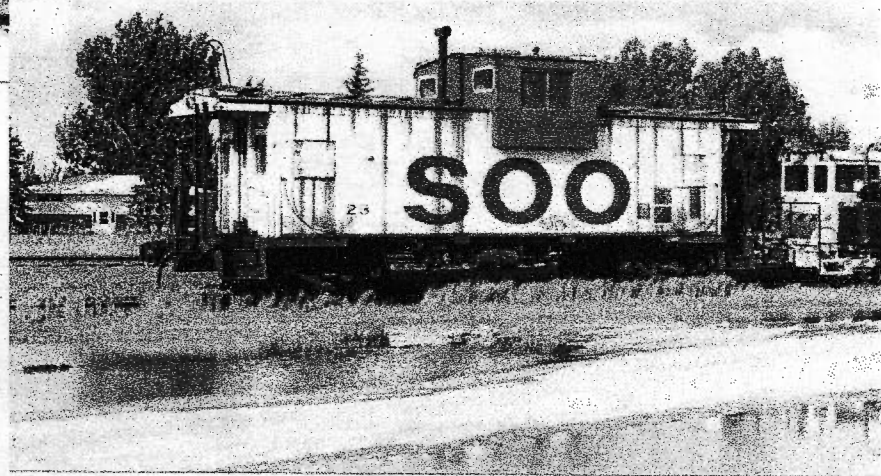
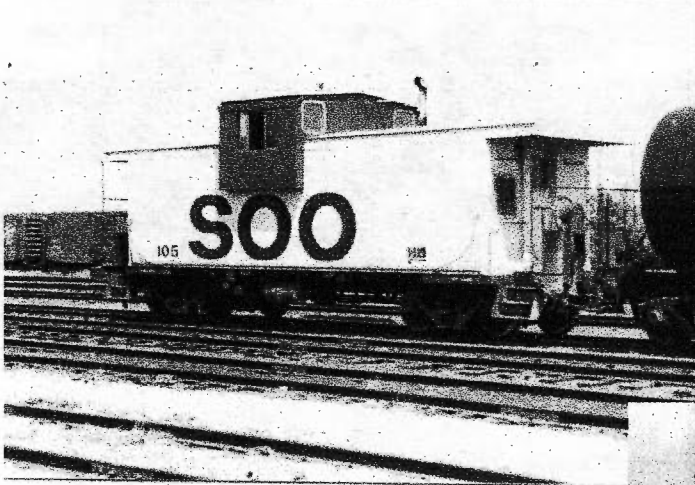
Cabooses of yesterday – Tim Vermande



**North of the border (well, at least owned by companies north of the border!)
– Tim Vermande**



Cabooses of Today – Lewis Ableidinger



Cabooses Lounging Around – top three by Lewis Ableidinger, fourth down (ice cream stand!) by Mike Acree, 5th and 6th by Peter Maurath, last by Nick Wilson

