

the last car is changing

Early version of the caboose.

"In the gaudy lexicon of railroad jargon, it has more names than any other property in the economy of the high iron, even more than there are for engines and engine drivers. It is a caboose, crummy, way car, van, cage, doghouse, drone house, bouncer, bedhouse, buggy, chariot, shelter house, glory wagon, go-car, hack, hut, monkey wagon, pavilion, palace, parlor, brainbox, zoo, diner, kitchen, perambulator, cabin car and shanty. There are probably others in a variety only bounded by the limitations of human imagining and the vocabulary of profane and uninhibited men."

—A Treasury of Railroad Folklore

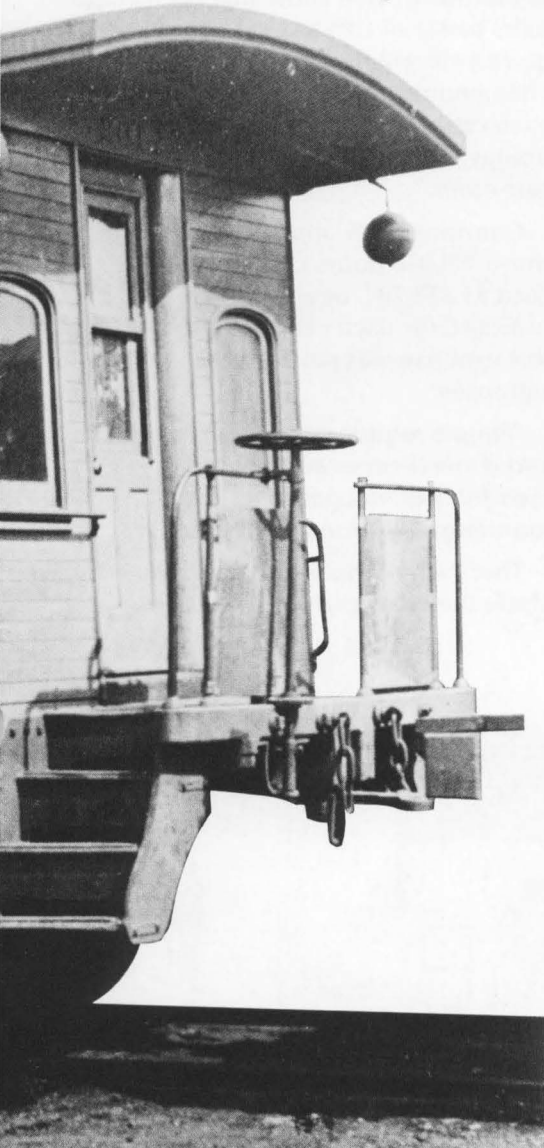


THEN...

No one knows for sure when the "caboose" came into existence.

The word dates to the time when it described either a ship's galley or the galley's iron cookstoves. One dictionary says it was derived from the Dutch work "kabuis" that developed from the Middle Low German "kabuse."

Whatever it is called, the caboose has been around so long that it seems



a natural part of every railroad.

Still, there was a time when the conductor parked himself wherever he could ride in the early days. Maybe it was in a boxcar, or lying prone on a flatcar or in the engine . . . or wherever he could hang on for awhile.

But the conductor, being a resourceful soul who played an essential role in getting the freight to its destination, wasn't satisfied.

According to one story, this home away from home arrived about 1855 and probably was no more than a shanty on a flatcar.

Railroad Folklore dates the cupola caboose to 1863 when a Chicago and North Western conductor had been assigned to ride in a boxcar because his shanty was shipped. Being a comic fellow, he propped himself on some boxes or a chair and stuck his head through a hole in the roof. As he rode into the terminal, the jokester was taking bows and smiling to the surprised yardmen as he rode by. He noticed the good view ahead from the top so he talked the mechanical forces into surrounding the hole with glass. A permanent perch was installed, too.

As time went on, one thing led to another. Bunks, stoves, chairs, pictures of the family, old household dishes and windows began to adorn this early version of the modern mobile home. In the early days, a caboose was assigned to one conductor. Wherever he went, so went the caboose.

The universal red color has disappeared, since cabooses are matched with the basic colors of railroads now.

But the little red caboose with its

lookout nest on top lives on in the memories of old-timers who can still hear it hustling along far behind the huffing and puffing steam locomotives of yesteryear.

NOW...

Today the caboose is still a familiar sight on most railroads, although some no longer use it on every freight train.

Trains run so fast these days that life in the caboose has changed. There is little time for fancy meals or dreaming about faraway places as trains rush to their destinations.

And the cupola-style caboose is beginning to disappear. As freight cars grow taller, some railroads have switched to the side-window or bay-window caboose. Union Pacific, which believes it affords a better view ahead while being less expensive, will get 100 bay-window cabooses in 1979.

Soon, the man perched on high in the cupola, waving to the world as he passes by, will begin taking up a new lookout point.

His perch will be lower as he looks out the side of the caboose through bay windows instead of over the top through cupola windows. With today's taller freight cars, side windows afford a better view.

That is one of the changes to be noticed by UP trainmen who will work on the new, bay-window cabooses.

The bay-window design is most noticeable to the on-looker, giving the caboose a sleeker, modern look.

Although about the same size as the old one, this caboose seems roomier since the cupola design

Continued

necessitated a narrow walkway at the center of the caboose. Also quite evident are longer end platforms.

While enjoying an improved ride, the brakeman and conductor will have greater freedom of movement since the cupola ladders will no longer be needed.

Roll-by inspections from a bay window caboose are simple. The employe gets up from his seat, walks to the rear of the car and looks out the back. No more climbing down from the "crow's nest" cupola.

The tool box and knuckle box, on the outside of the new caboose, provide easier access when train repairs are made enroute. The fuel tank, also placed on the outside, helps eliminate interior emissions.

In recent years, engineering developments have improved caboose comfort. Hydraulic end-of-car cushioning units have been installed on some newer cabooses, replacing the accordion-like rubber gear. The cushioning unit, similar to your automobile's shock absorbers, does a better job of softening the slack-action jolts cabooses sustain because of their tail-end position on trains,

said Dan Jensen, assistant general mechanical engineer-car.

Power supply reliability is improved with better alternators and stronger batteries. "It's the rough handling that is hard on batteries," said Dick Parish, master car inspector.

New caboose features include improved sound absorption materials, highly efficient insulating materials and a specially designed ice box, Jensen said.

Better heat distribution is seen as another advantage of the bay-window caboose, Parish said.

Another advantage is cost. Priced at about \$60,000, bay-window cabooses compare to an estimated \$72,000 for a cupola style. For 100 cabooses, that amounts to more than \$1.2 million saved without sacrificing function.

Although less expensive than the cupola-style, the bay-window caboose costs about twice as much as the average boxcar.

Since cabooses are expensive to maintain, UP strives to reduce maintenance costs while upgrading caboose care.

Even more than a personal automobile, they serve many functions besides carrying people from one place to another. "A caboose is a unique car; it's somewhere between a passenger car and a freight car," said Dick Sutton, mechanical superintendent-car department. It is a traveling office, living quarters, lookout point, toolhouse, dining room and shelter from the weather.

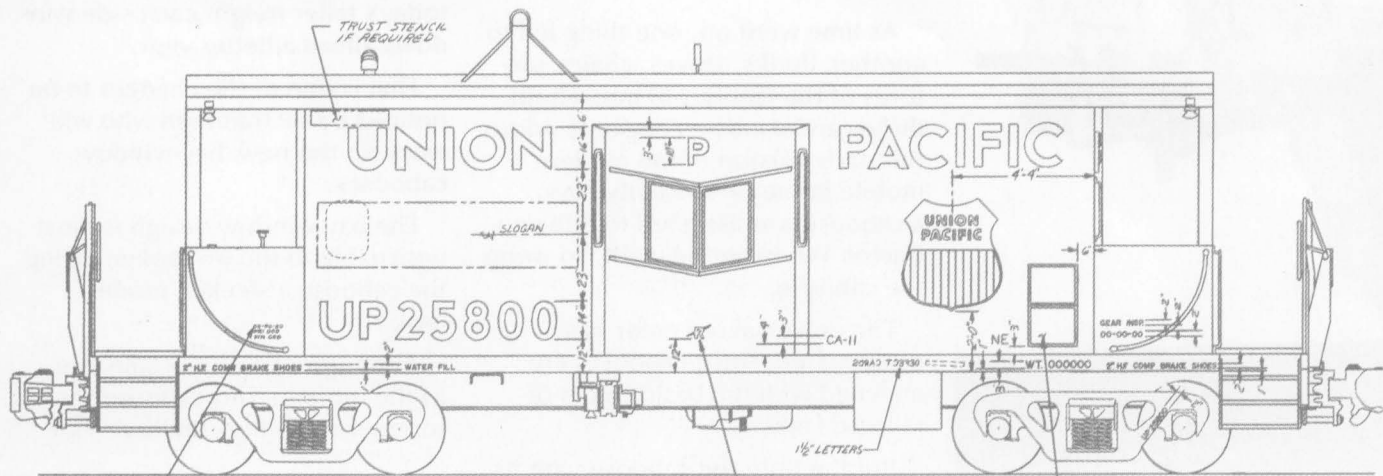
Maintenance figures for the first 10 months of 1978 show that repairs to 412 of UP's 642 cabooses required 119,940 man-hours of effort. That amounts to 290 man-hours for each caboose. In railroad terminology, that is defined as "heavy bad-order."

Counting both labor and materials, those 119,940 hours cost the railroad \$3,238,709, or an average of \$7,860 for each caboose. Part of this expense was painting 168 cabooses.

"People require special equipment and conveniences so they can do their job well in comfortable surroundings," Sutton explained.

That's why caboose comforts include the refrigerator, toilet, stove,

Engineer's concept of new bay-window caboose.



electric lights and cushioned seats.

To help make cabooses safe, each has high-back seats (*to protect against head injuries*), seat belts, grab irons, rounded corners, shatter-proof windows and non-slip floors. The conductor sits at a cushion-supported desk as he fills out papers.

Some special-purpose cabooses have showers, large refrigerators, cook stoves and additional bunks for track maintenance crews who live in them for long periods.

Heavy use also puts pressure on maintenance crews. UP cabooses traveled more than 30.7 million miles between January 1 and October 31, or an average of 48,420 miles per caboose. Most of the mileage was accumulated by the 420 cabooses in pool service, but another 199 were used in locals and in branch line service. Thirty-four cabooses are for special purposes, such as derrick crew duty.

With cabooses on the move most of the time, maintenance personnel have to move quickly. *"I've seen them move an inbound caboose onto an outbound "hot" train with*

virtually no delay," Parish said.

When cabooses do get a brief respite from duty, carmen check brakes, wheels and exterior surfaces. They work on locks or weather-strip doors and windows. Store Department employes fill water containers and fuel stoves, replenish water cups, re-supply stationery for the conductor and other items. Tools are checked. At the service track, cabooses are cleaned and refitted.

"Sometimes, a caboose must move on before every possible chore can be completed, but we try to avoid that if at all possible," Sutton said.

To boost reliability, UP is putting together a preventive maintenance program. *"Our goal,"* Parish said, *"is to set up a maintenance program that allows us to predict how long a part will last."* For example, an axle alternator has a certain lifespan. At the proper time, UP would send the alternator to the shop, where it would be checked and refurbished. Shopping a part before it breaks down reduces repairs.

Meanwhile, the caboose keeps functioning with a new or re-built alternator.

This maintenance system, similar to the type now used on locomotives, should allow UP to accurately determine when parts should be purchased. This saves inventory costs while assuring that enough parts are available.

But even with development of a computer-assisted maintenance system, close communication between the trainmen and maintenance personnel remains essential.

"Trainmen are our main link if there is trouble," Parish said.

CABOOSE SLOGAN CONTEST

Here's your chance to have your name and creative ideas displayed on Union Pacific cabooses while winning \$500 worth of U.P. Stock to boot. Union Pacific's Operating Department provides the opportunity with a system-wide contest for new slogans to be displayed on the railroad's cabooses.

The slogans can be of a safety, advertising or promotional nature.

To make sure that all employes have an equal chance at the prize money, eight winners will be selected: one from each division and one from the Omaha headquarters (*including off-line offices*). Each will be awarded \$500 worth of UP stock. Winners will also be presented a scale-model caboose with their own slogan displayed on the side. All entries become the property of UP. Contest deadline March 1. Entries should be short and to the point for easy reading on a fast-moving train. They can be written on the handy, postage-paid card included in this issue.

A special feature of the contest is to *"sign"* each winning entry as it appears on the caboose with the author's name. All Union Pacific Railroad employes (*including subsidiary companies*) and their families are eligible. Officers are excluded.

Use handy card in this issue for your entry.

