

CABOOSE The CLASSICS



Part One



Although approaching 50 years of service, caboose #18531 still manages to look dignified despite having had its cupola boarded up. As modern freight cars grew in height, the short cupolas no longer provided train crews with the vantage point that they once did in years past. Caboose and a local freight are shown at Sandusky, Ohio in 1964.

Photo by Bob Lorenz

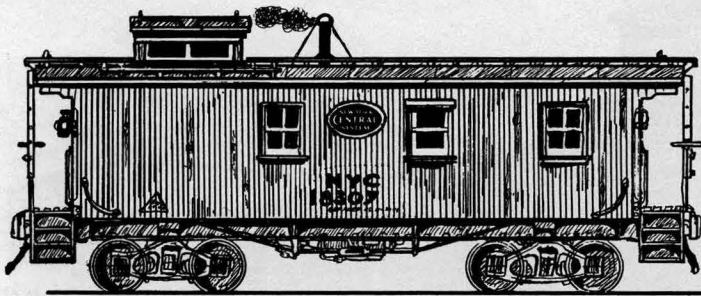
One of the definitions given in Webster's Dictionary for the word "classic" reads; "Most representative of the excellence of its kind". It may seem strange to apply this term to a wooden caboose, but considering the design and continued service, NYC cabooses saw relatively few changes in appearance from the date they were built. Many NYC cabooses saw 50 or more years service and a few still exist in railroad museums, rebuilt into restaurants, tool sheds, and countless chicken coops across the territory served by the New York Central System. In 1966, when an agreement was signed between the operating unions and the NYC, the operation of wood cabooses, already declining, rapidly ended.

The new agreement permitted use of "pooled" cabooses, rather than cabooses assigned to various crews on a semi-permanent basis. The NYC for its part in the agreement was committed to replacing its aging fleet of wood cabooses with steel type cabooses within a short period of time. Steel bay-window cabooses took over all mainline service with most yard and transfer duties being taken over by short-bodied shelters built in the center of converted flat cars. Most of the old wooden cabooses were quickly disposed of, the quickest way being to simply set fire to them, and sending workers in to cut up the frames and trucks after the funeral pyre had died out.

Since the New York Central System was made up of many different smaller railroads, it was only natural that much of this equipment was retained for continued use. Beside steam locomotives, few items of rolling stock reflect as much management individuality as cabooses. Form follows function in their design and local conditions often had their effect as well. The "standard" design caboose, such as 18531 on Page 5, had to have a shorter "gun turret" type of cupola due to industrial clearance problems in the east. Other cabooses that were built for affiliated railroads and subsidiaries, didn't have this restriction and resulted in high and wide cupolas such as those found on ex-Big 4 cabooses. In 1936, there

was a general renumbering of "System" equipment. Besides much rolling stock and steam locomotives, cabooses that once belonged to roads such as the Big 4 (C. C. C. & St. L), Michigan Central R. R., Ulster & Delaware as well as other small lines were renumbered into the NYC numbering series. Even though these cabooses differed greatly in size and appearance, they still managed to maintain a "family" look. Almost without exception they were painted a reserved box car or iron oxide red. The handrails and grab irons were painted yellow in later "safety conscious" years. Join us in a belated look at the "Caboose Classics" that once served the New York Central System.

NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM



"STANDARD"

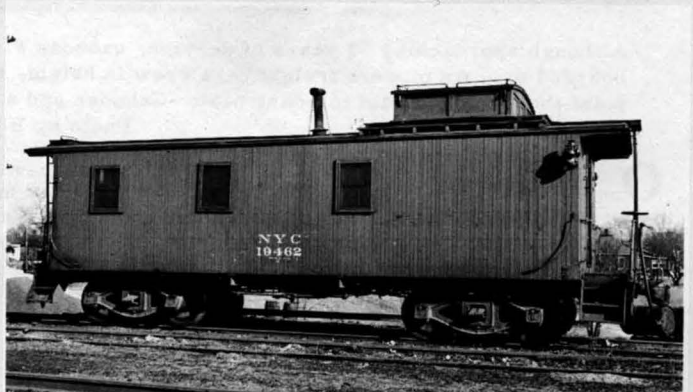
THE N. Y. C. "STANDARD" CABOOSE

The so-called "standard" caboose was built in larger numbers than any other type on the N. Y. C. System. It had all its own and its silhouette could easily be distinguished from other cabooses. It has been the subject of many reproductions from toy train set manufacturers and model builders alike. In its own way it found fame not usually accorded a wood bodied caboose. Because of its close cropped cupola design, it was able to move in areas having clearance problems that would not permit operation of larger cupola equipped cabooses. The short "gun turret" offset cupola gave them a sleek, almost streamlined appearance that befitted the "water level route". The N. Y. C. liked the design so well that only very minor changes were made in these cars in over 50 years of train service. When, in 1944, cabooses were rebuilt from box cars, their car bodies were built to resemble the "standard" caboose, although they were longer and had a different underframe. It is also believed that certain cabooses that once operated on the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern were also rebuilt to resemble the "standard" caboose, but had only two side windows on each side, rather than three, due to the L. S. & M. S. cars being about four feet shorter. These cars will be featured in a future issue. Best estimates give the number of these cabooses built as between 1900 and 2000. They were constructed at many different N. Y. C. shops including Lafayette, Litchfield, Collinwood, Oswego, West Albany and by the M. D. T. shops in East Buffalo, N. Y. They were built and rebuilt almost continually from 1906 onward. General arrangement drawings for this caboose are available from the N. Y. C. S. H. S.



Caboose #18591 at Conneaut, Ohio on November 21, 1946. No N. Y. C. herald appears above the "roman" style lettering but handrails have been painted yellow.

Paul W. Prescott Collection.



Caboose #19462 has its cupola window glass replaced with plywood and window screens are fixed in place.

Charles E. Winters Collection





The "standard" caboose was also used by the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie. Caboose #211 was built at P. & L. E.'s own shops at McKees Rocks, Pa. in 1925-26 as part of lot #470 which consisted of 34 cabooses, #200 thru 233. Also part of this same caboose order were 21 cabooses built for the Pittsburgh, McKeesport & Youghiogheny R. R. numbered 150 thru 170. The P. McK. & Y. was leased to the P. & L. E. for 999 years in 1881



Interior of P. & L. E. Caboose #211. View shows "long end" of caboose from underneath cupola. All N. Y. C. S. "Standard" caboose interiors were similar. Note folding table at right with coal stove and safety guard rail showing at left.



Interior view of P. & L. E. caboose #211 taken from long end of car. Note coal box and metal heat shield behind stove area. Fire was an ever present danger in wood cars with coal stoves. Air brake controls and gauge are mounted on bulkhead of storage locker and cupola seats.



When a locomotive gets into trouble, can a caboose be far behind? N. Y. C. #18400 is pulled off the track by GP-9 #7386 near Fremont, Ohio on February 3, 1968. This mishap probably ended 18400's long career which began when it was built at Oswego, N. Y. in 1916. The "geep" has been renumbered from 5986. Photo by Bob Lorenz



A whip antenna for the train crew's radio is mounted just outside the open center window of caboose #19411 at Fremont, Ohio, in May, 1964. Note the more modern "gothic" style lettering and black painted background of the N. Y. C. oval herald.

Photo by Howard W. Ameling

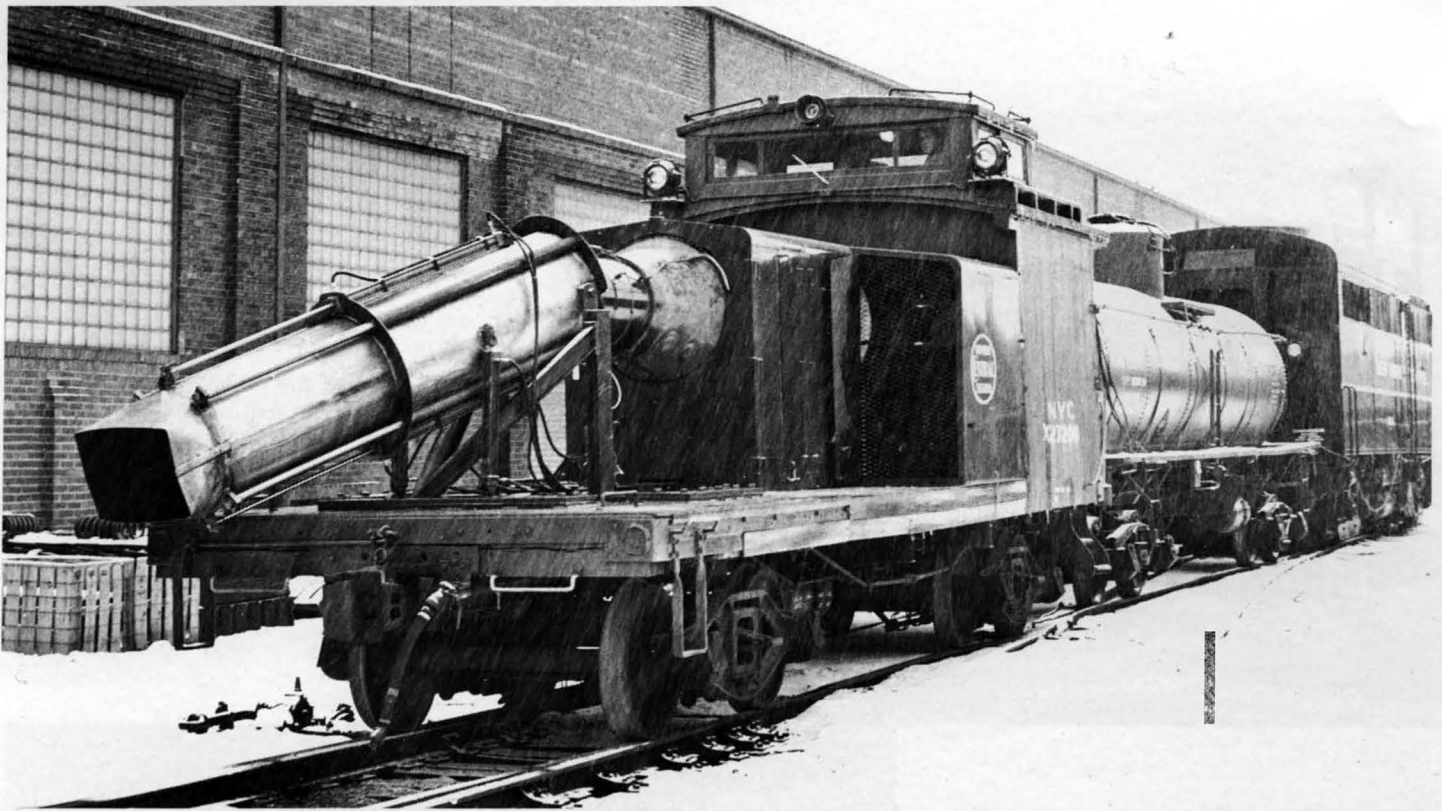


Although N. Y. C. caboose bodies were made of wood, they were either built or rebuilt with heavy steel underframe as evidenced by this view. Truss rods helped secure body mounting, but were not relied upon for principal support.



A switching move at Fremont, Ohio finds caboose #18431 and crew setting out cars on April 15, 1965. The end windows of the cupola have been boarded up but the car still looks good despite its 49 year seniority on the N. Y. C. which began at Oswego, N. Y. in 1916.

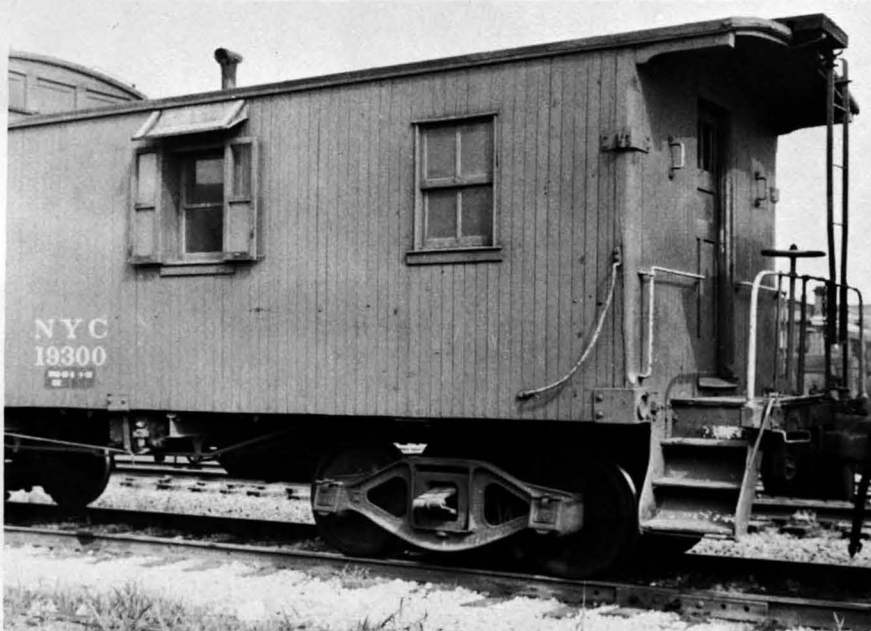
Howard W. Ameling Collection



Another use for an old caboos. Snow Blower #X27208 was rebuilt from caboos #18002 in August, 1963 at N. Y. C.'s Collinwood shops. Besides the caboos, the main ingredient of rebuilding was government surplus G. E. J-47 jet engine modified to burn diesel fuel supplied from tank car coupled behind.



E. M. D. F-7A #1702 and caboos #18455 team up to get some hopper cars moved at Millbury, Ohio in July, 1961. This caboos had a long useful life, being built at Collinwood, Ohio as part of an order built between 1901-1910. Notice that reflective metal discs have replaced the kerosene marker lamps, once standard equipment on all N. Y. C. caboos prior to the 1960's. Photo by Bob Lorenz



Caboose #19300 displays an unusual window modification, complete with tin awning and folding windwing type windows, which apparently were used as a kind of "poor man's" bay window, to allow train crew to lean out and still receive some protection from wind and weather. Caboose is equipped with the older "T" section trucks. Shown at Collinwood, Ohio in July, 1957.



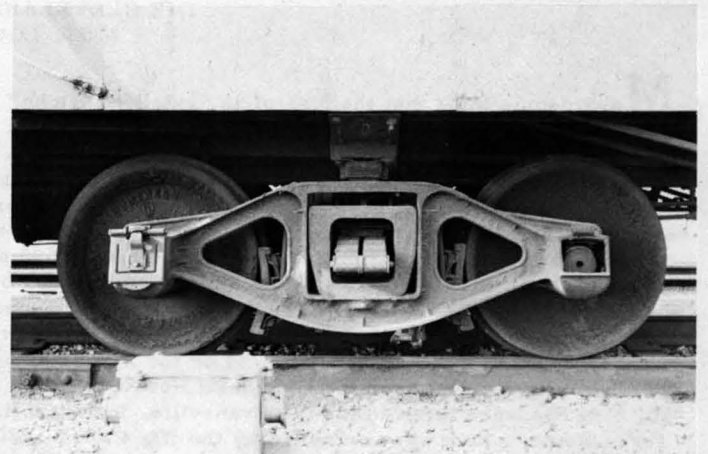
DATA SUMMARY

Road	Gen. Drwg.	Length over end sills	Body Length	Body Width	Truck Centers	Height over rail
N. Y. C.	Z-10985	35'-0"	30' - 1-5/8"	9' - 5-1/4"	20' - 0"	13' - 6-7/8"

Caboose #18583 shows location of stove smokepipe and vent for the "dry hopper" toilet, whose use could hardly be considered "featherbedding." The truck at the left, under the cupola end of the caboose was the older style "T" section swing motion truck used on N. Y. C. cabooses for many years. The other truck side frame is more modern, having a "U" section casting. Built at Collinwood, Ohio in 1910. Harold K. Vollrath Collection via Carl Prisco



In later years of wood caboose operation, when the tongue and groove siding rotted out, it was covered with plywood sheeting as shown here on #19877 at Niagara Falls, N. Y. at the late date of May 1973. Peter C. Zayau Collection



Detail shot of "T" section N. Y. C. caboose truck, complete with missing journal box cover. Peter C. Zayau Collection

Big Four

NEW YORK
CENTRAL
LINES

C. C. C. & ST. L.



On a cold winters day in January, 1951, a Big Four caboose passes the Sandusky St. shanty heading east on freight SLD-2 from Bellefontaine, Ohio. The "New York Central Lines" herald that is mounted on the end of the cupola was a non-standard marking probably applied by the train crew to help locate "their" caboose in a crowded yard. Si Herring Photo

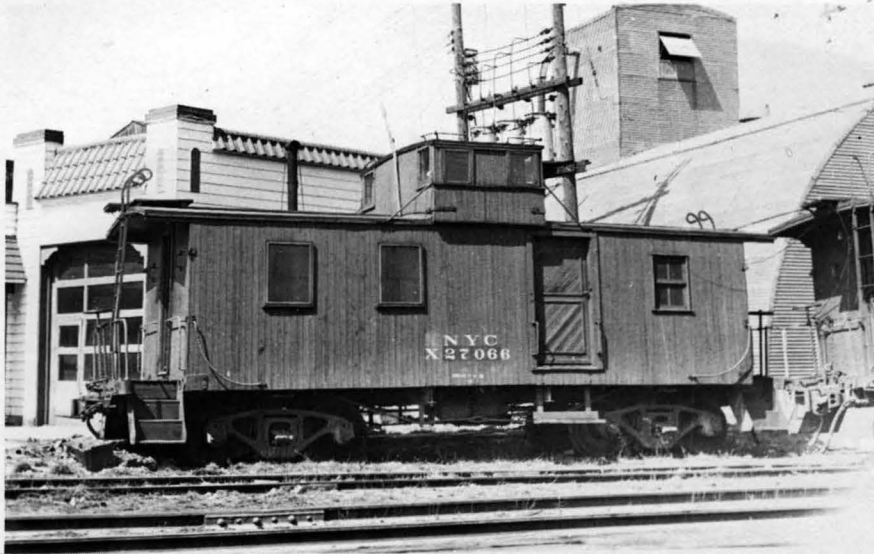
THE CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO & ST. LOUIS CABOOSE

Many people think that the idea of an "extended vision" cupola is a new idea that originated with the modern steel cabooses built by the International Car Co. in recent construction. The Big 4 designed and built cabooses with cupolas that extended 4-1/2" beyond the caboose side sills over 60 years ago. These interesting cabooses with the high, wide "control tower" cupolas at one timenumbered nearly 600 and were built at Big 4's Brightwood and Beech Grove shops between the years 1913 to 1927. The American Car & Foundry Co. built some during this period too. As built, they were numbered 1 thru 497, and 700 thru 799 on the Big 4. Cabooses 900 thru 923 were lettered for Cincinnati Northern R. R. and 501 thru 504 were lettered for the Evansville, Indianapolis & Terre Haute, which was controlled by the Big 4 after 1920. Some C. C. C. & St. L. cabooses underwent some rather extensive rebuilding. One such rebuilding effort was the addition of a side door and l. c. l. freight compartment. Interesting information on how this equipment was once used is related by photographer, author and former Big 4 employee,

Mr. Si Herring. "The only side door cabooses that I ever saw on the N. Y. C. were the ones used on the St. Marys' branch line. This line was, and is an "Ohio Central" job using O. C. crews out of Columbus, Ohio. However, in 1936 the operation was taken over by the Big 4 Ohio Division. The side door caboose was used for handling express shipments. Up to the late 1930's or early 1940's this train was listed as a mixed train, but actually carried very few passengers. Back around 1937 or 1938 a friend and I went to St. Marys, buying a ticket here in Bellefontaine, Ohio. The local agent almost had a stroke. He had to dig out old tickets and after blowing the dust from them, remarked to the conductor of #11, the Southwestern Limited, that had stopped at the station at that time. "Hey look, I just sold a couple of tickets to St. Marys." The agent then related the story of an old lady who once stepped off #11 and inquired about the train to St. Marys. She had purchased her ticket at Grand Central Station. The agent at Bellefontaine assumed that the clerk in New York did not tell her that this was a mixed train and he

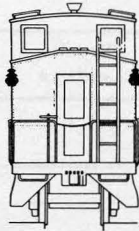
stated that whoever sold her the ticket ought to be hung. He told her that the train did not have a coach, no toilet facilities, and in fact, was just an ordinary caboos on a freight train. She said, "Sonny, they told me what kind of a train it was. I rode a Connostoga wagon to California way back when,

and if I could stand that ride, I can certainly stand a caboos ride to St. Marys". Mr. Herring thinks that the agent was a "bull-shooter", but then, you never know. General arrangement drawings for this caboos (without side doors) are available from the N. Y. C. S. H. S.



**THE CLEVELAND, CINCINNATI,
CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS
RAILWAY COMPANY**

One of the converted Big Four side door cabooses, renumbered X-27066 and used as a bunk car for work train crews, sits on a siding at Carey, Ohio in June, 1953. Si Herring Photo

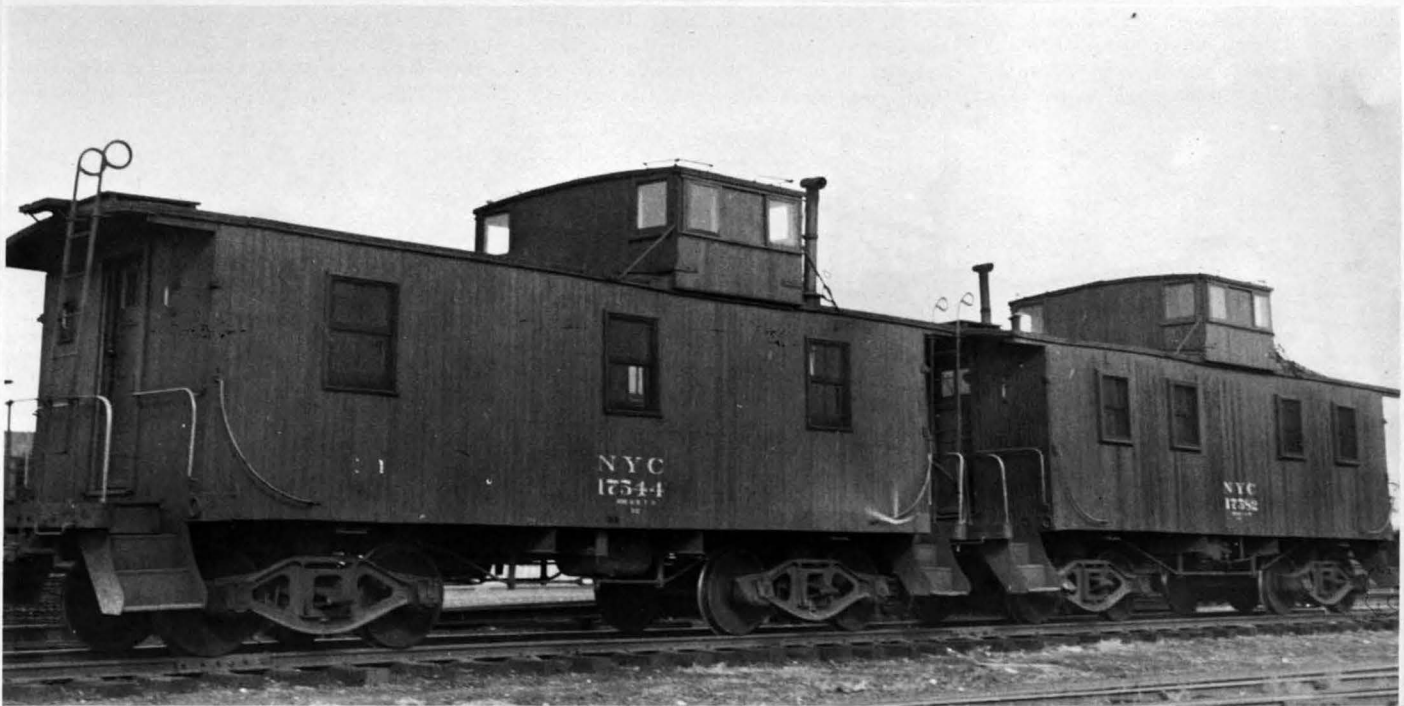


Baldwin VO-1000 #9307, Class DES-12b rolls past HI tower with the St. Marys local at Bellefontaine, Ohio in June, 1962. Si Herring Photo



The Big Four cabooses also got the plywood sheathing "treatment" as required in later years as evidenced by #17483, shown at Constantine, Michigan in July 1964. Notice the external cupola braces necessary for the large size cupola.

Howard W. Ameling Collection



Caboose #17544 shows evidence of heavy rebuilding. Besides the non-standard side window locations, the cupola has, for some reason been relocated from its usual location in the center of the roof. Before the 1936 renumbering, it carried road #415 and was built at Beech Grove, Indiana, in 1912. Caboose #17582, renumbered from 489 shows the standard configuration.

Harold K. Vollrath Collection via Carl Prisco

DATA SUMMARY

Road	Gen. Drwg.	Length over end sills	Body Length	Body Width	Truck Centers	Height over rail
C. C. C. & St. L.	Y-75872	32'- 0"	26'- 8"	9'- 0-1/2"	18'- 5"	14'- 7-3/4"

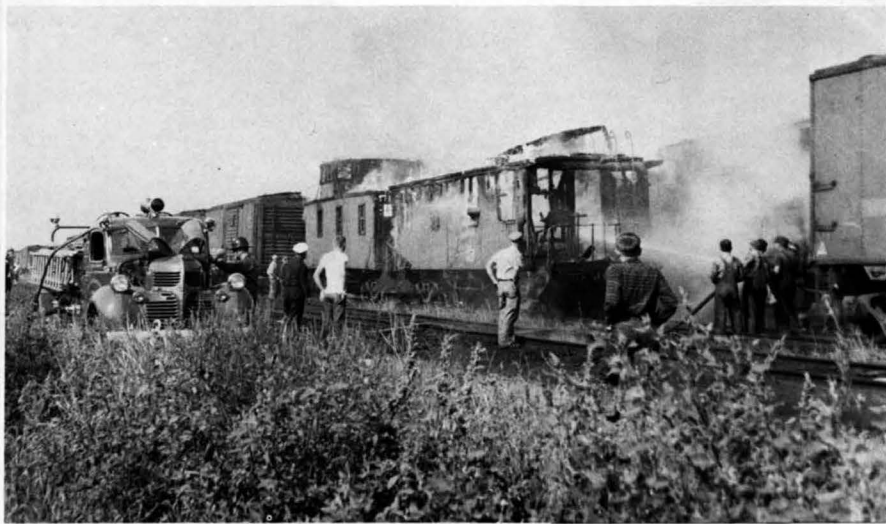


The old and the new. Caboose #17459, freshly painted box car red, has one of its side windows boarded over. Note small window appearing on the left side of the caboose end. No. 17459 has been kicked by a yard engine and is rolling towards the caboose track along with a jade green bay window caboose. Yard conductor J.D. Marker prepares to set the brakes on a warm March day in 1962 at Bellefontaine, Ohio.

Si Herring Photo



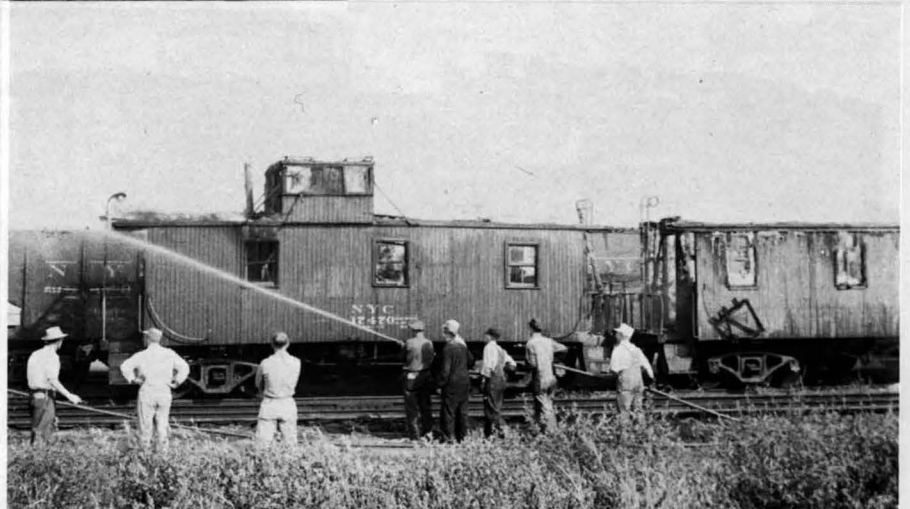
A rare Big Four caboose rebuilding featured a side door, shown here being loaded with l. c. l. freight at Bellefontaine, Ohio in 1948. Train was the T. & O. C. St. Marys Local 554. Si Herring Photo



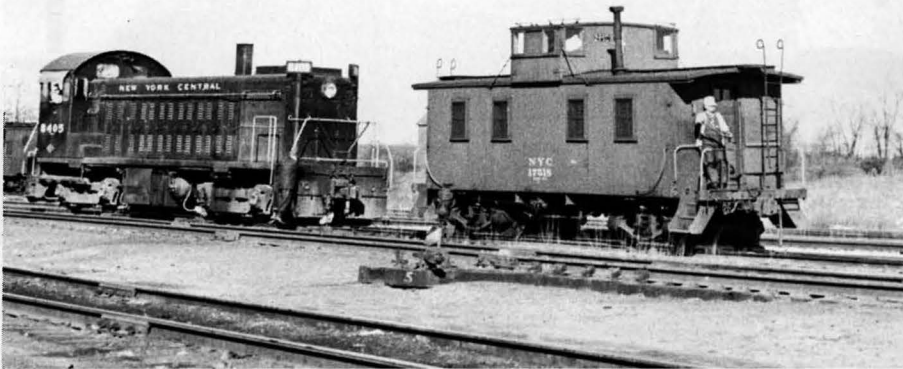
As the Bellefontaine Volunteer Fire Dept. vainly attempts to extinguish the blaze with the aid of old Dodge pumper, the once proud cupola on the nearest caboose collapses into the flame. Si Herring Photo



Fire was a constant threat to wooden cabooses. Two Big Four cabooses burn at BN yard in Bellefontaine, Ohio in August, 1952. The caboose on the left, #17470, was nearly 40 years old when it met its end. Si Herring Photo



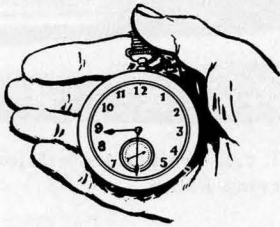
Big Four Route



Both engine and caboose are now gone. Yard Brakeman "Punkin" Lovelace rides the platform of 38 year old Big Four caboose 17518 as it is "kicked" into the caboose track at Bellefontaine, Ohio by a 3 year old 1000 h. p. Lima diesel switcher. No. 8405 was scrapped after 15 years service in 1964. The caboose was gone before 1962, but had much more service "seniority".

Si Herring Photo

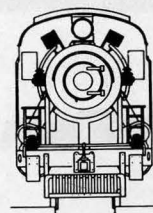
1951



Orders are hooped up to the crew of Big Four caboose #17369 as its freight train passes Sandusky St. in Bellefontaine, Ohio on June 26, 1948. Caboose is equipped with window screens and a tin sun shade above cupola side windows. Coaling tower can be seen in the distance.

Si Herring Photo

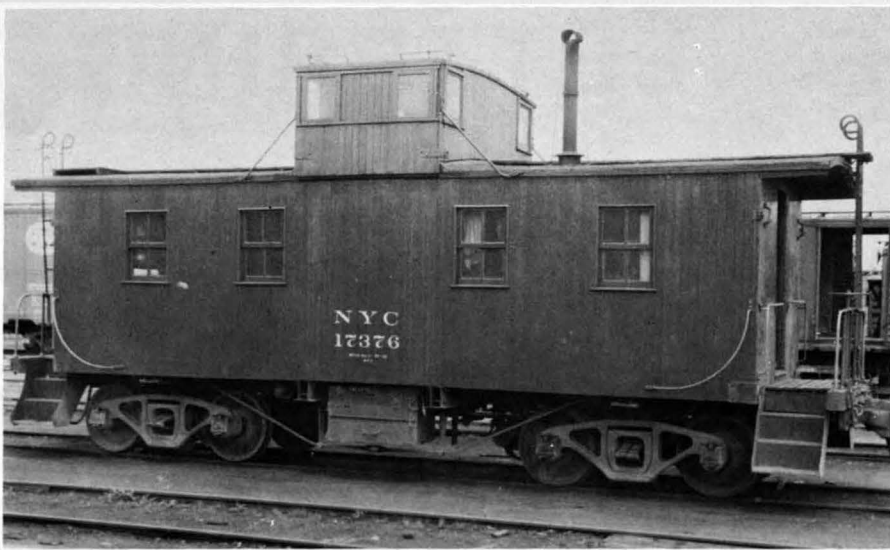
1948



1948

N. Y. C. #7883, Class U-3h 0-8-0 switcher works the freight yard at Bellefontaine, Ohio in July, 1948. The locomotive was built by Alco's Brooks Works in 1926, the Big Four caboose #17531 was constructed by Beech Grove shops (Indiana) in 1913.

Si Herring Photo



Big Four caboose #17376 is modified with a "possum belly" tool box mounted between the trucks. Built at Beech Grove shops in 1913 and originally #49 prior to 1936.
Al Shade Collection

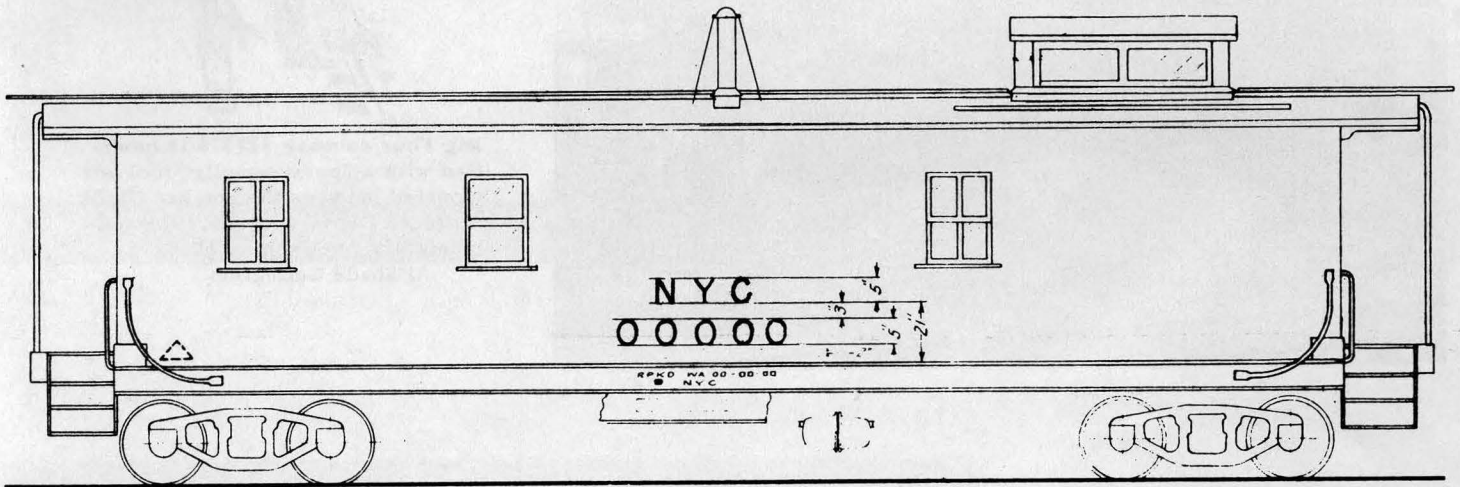


Sandwiched between two Big Four cabooses, an N. Y. C. steel bay-window caboose awaits an assignment at Bellefontaine, Ohio, in January, 1963. The steel caboose like its two 50 year old companions, is painted box car red.
Si Herring Photo

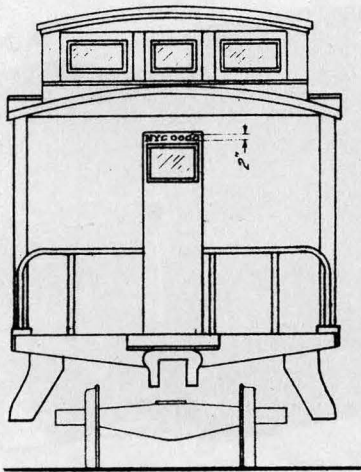


Caboose #17663 appears to be in good shape in this photo taken in January, 1963. Note the fancy "curl" on the ladder handrails which was always a distinct spotting feature of the Big Four cabooses. One of the side windows has been "planked over".
Si Herring Photo

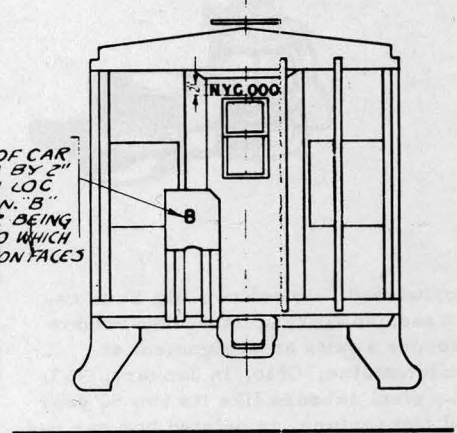
CABOOSE LETTERING



As indicated by caboose photos in this issue, not all N. Y. C. cabooses had the oval herald applied when repainted or rebuilt. The N. Y. C. oval emblem background was sometimes painted black and at other times no background was added, allowing the basic body color to show through. None of the N. Y. C. ovals that were applied to N. Y. C. steel bay-window cabooses had black backgrounds. For further details see July, 1974 "HEADLIGHT" article "The N. Y. C. Oval" for further painting and herald details.

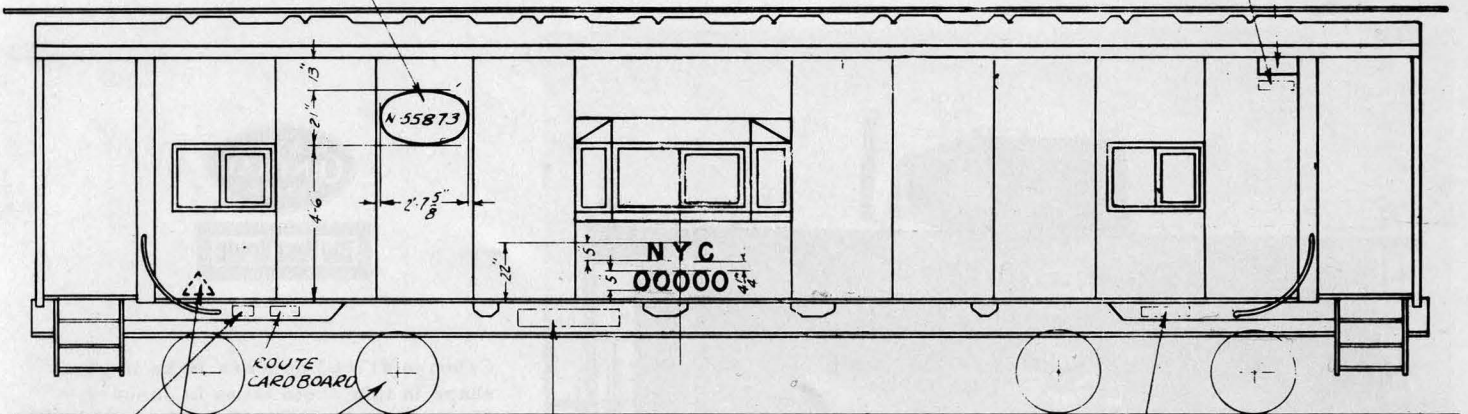


"A" & "B" ENDS OF CAR DESIGNATED BY "A" & "B" LETTERS IN LOCATION SHOWN. "B" END OF CAR BEING END TOWARD WHICH BRAKE PISTON FACES



SYSTEM OVAL

OWNERSHIP PLATE, OWNERS OR TRUST NO



ROUTE CARDBOARD

TRUCK STENCILING

PAINT STENCIL

LOT NUMBER
CAR NUMBER
LT. WGT
REBUILT STENCILING
CLASSIFIED REPAIRS

JOURNAL BOX PACKING

BUILDERS TRADE MARK
(NEW OR REBUILT CARS ONLY)
NOT TO EXCEED 72"