



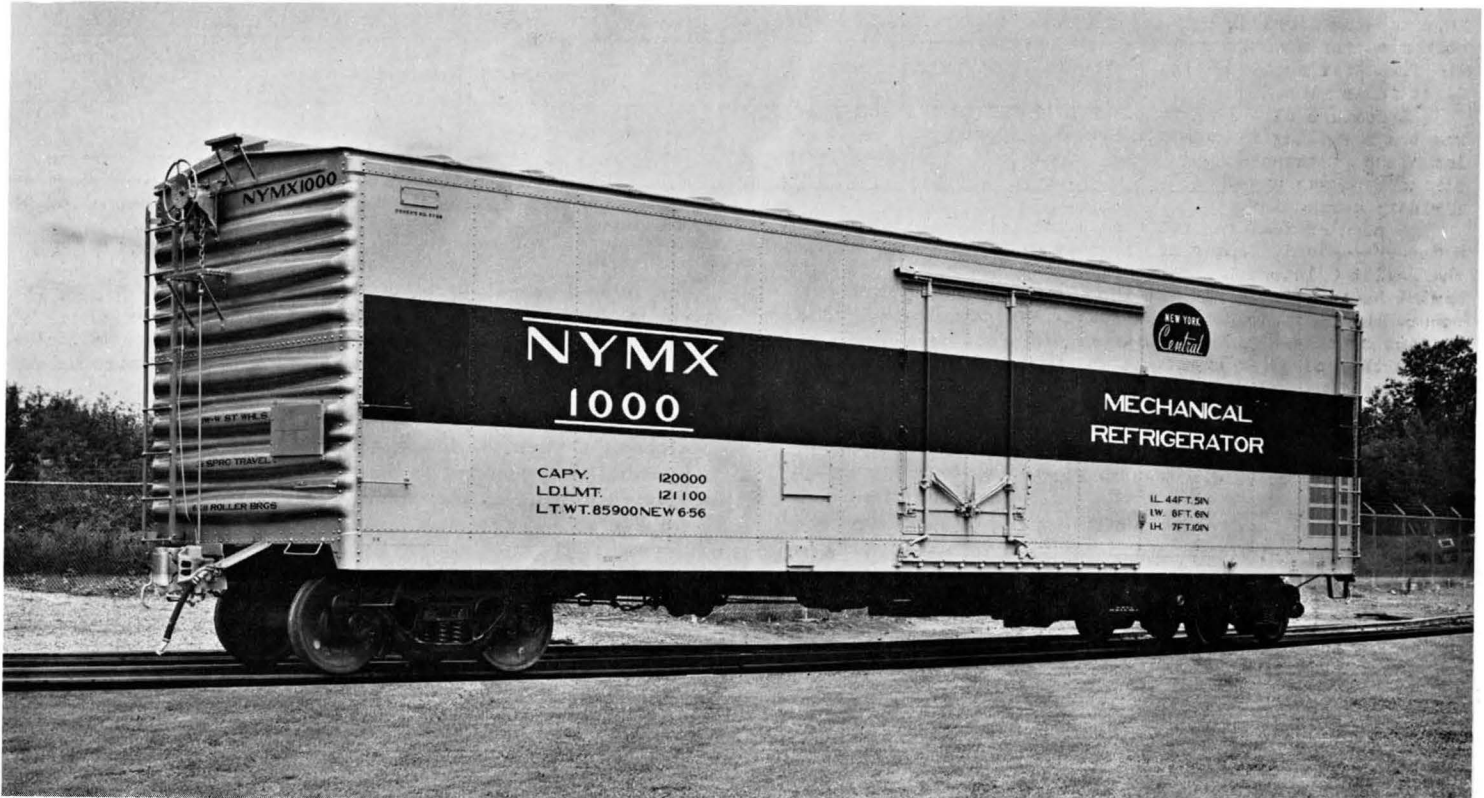
THE N.Y.C. OVAL



IT'S EVOLUTION AND APPLICATIONS

PART TWO

BY H. L. VAIL JR.



Merchants Despatch Transportation Co. — NYMX 1000, Mechanical Refrigerator, 45" x 30" oval. Yellow sides with dark blue band. Dark blue upper portion of herald. Light blue lower portion.

In any historical endeavor such as this, information is presented as the best that is available at a given time. Further investigation and additional information from sources long thought to have been destroyed come to light after publication of the original data. Such will always occur, and in this regard certain corrections need to be made in the data furnished in the first article published in June 1974.

Upon close examination and comparison of the photos published, it is apparent that the "System" ovals identified as 18" x 12" are not of that proportion and are actually 18" x 9". Prints of the Roman lettered "System" ovals have come to light, which indicate that of the two original 18" x 9" and 18" x 12" "Lines" ovals it was the 18" x 12" which was eliminated when the "System" ovals were designed. Therefore, all photos of Roman "System" oval cars indicated as being 18" x 12" should be described as 18" x 9", specifically: Page 8, NYC 499100 at the top and

NYC 499042 at the bottom should be 18" x 9" ovals and Page 10, NYC 500300 should be an 18" x 9" oval. Additionally, the charts should be corrected as follows:

a) Chart on Page 3: Column headed "Superseded", the word "eliminate" to be reversed with V-50300. Additionally, show V-50299 as X-50299 and V-50298 as Y-50298, changing the prefix letter which denotes the size of the drawing only. Also on Page 3, third line from the bottom, 18" x 9" should read 18" x 12".

b) Chart on Page 4: Column headed "Size", first line, change 18" x 9" to read 18" x 12". Correct prefix letters as in a) above.

c) Chart on Page 13: Correct in same manner as the others.

The corrected complete chart is therefore: (see next page)

CHART 1

NYC Lines Herald Roman Lettering All had Black Background			N Y C SYSTEM HERALD				NYC System, New Black Lettering All Black background except Lt. Gray Covered Hoppers, and Flexi-Van cars with body color background, Black Lettering, and some P&LE Red Cars		
NYC Lines Dwg. No.	Size	Super-seded	Roman Lettering		ADD Special Herald with Block Lettering and body color background	Super-seded	NYC System Dwg. No.	Size	Superseded by re-designed multi-colored Herald
			NYC System Dwg. No. with Black Background	Black Background Eliminated					
V-13352 3/4/07	18" x 9"	11/1935	V-50300 8/16/35	circa 3/44		10/55	V-55732 10/14/55	18 1/2" x 10 1/2"	1960 except some P&LE Flat Cars until 2/67
LS&MS #10394 6/29/06 V-13367 5/11/05	18" x 12"	11/25/35	Size Eliminated	- - -	(2) N-55873, 9/16/49 31 5/8" x 21" for Steel Bay Window Caboose only	10/55	(2) X-55873	29" x 19 3/8"	About 1962 except some Ballast Cars in 1965, and Flexi-van cars
V-13147 1/31/05 or X-13147	28 1/4" x 19 1/8"	11/35	X-50299 8/16/35	(1) circa 3/44		10/11/55 except Gond Cars 12/6/56 for Gondolas	9/7/55		
V-13333 11/12/04	36" x 24"	11/35	Y-50298 8/16/35	circa 3/44		10/11/55	(3) G-57900 11/15/56	36" x 24"	About 1961 except some rebuilt 65 ton hopper cars
X-13341 12/04	48 3/8" x 32 1/2"	11/30/35	Z-50297	3/2/44	Z-55741, 5/27/49 same size For Pacemaker Cars only	10/11/55	V-57621 5/17/55	54 3/8" x 37 1/4"	1959

(1) Cement Hoppers (covered) when painted Lt. Gray, Body Color background, Black Lettering

(2) Note same number different prefix letter, Re-designed 9/7/55 with slightly different dimension

(3) Designed for 70T welded outside stake SC Hopper cars.

With thanks to member Lawrence R. Bolton and others who furnished other revisions of the creation of "The Oval", the two most accepted versions of its beginning are, first, quoting from Freeman H. Hubbard's "Railroad Avenue" (McGraw-Hill, 1945).

"A rather amazing fact about the New York Central insignia is that it was put across because an obscure printer disobeyed the orders of the late George Henry Daniels, who handled the Central's advertising and was rated as the keenest railroad publicist of his day. Our story dates back to 1904, the year of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis. At that time, the American Bank Note Company held the contract for producing the Central's timetables; and Clyde S. Thompson, a young \$35-a-week illustrator, devised the oval as a novelty for a special World's Fair timetable. After the special timetables had been printed, the decorative slug was shoved aside. This bit of metal would have been tossed into the "hell box" reserved for discarded type, but it was rescued by an old-time compositor in search of something to kill the white space on a new Central timetable cover. The printer took a chance and used the slug, ignoring instructions (from Daniels) to follow the copy.

Daniels was short and rotund, with a white goatee and a mind of his own. When he saw the proof he deleted the oval, but later changed his opinion and restored it. From that time on, thanks to three men, only two of whose names we know, this decoration has been the trademark of the road whose slogan is "The Water Level Route-You Can Sleep".

Secondly, from an old New York Central "Headlight" magazine:

"The familiar oval has been New York Central's emblem since 1893. To many persons, even the outline of the oval without any lettering has come to mean New York Central.

NYC's oval has been in use since its chance creation in a print shop. In 1893, special folders were being prepared for use in promoting the Central's service to Chicago in connection with the World's Fair held there that year. As

one folder was about to go to press, an illustrator-proof reader in the printing shop spotted a large blank space on one page. He quickly sketched an oval and lettered in the railroad's name within its border to use as a space filler.

Ordinarily, the engraving of the oval would have been discarded when the job was completed, but in this case it wasn't. A typesetter in the same plant found it when he started setting up the cover of a Central timetable some-time later and used it.

When Central officials saw the oval in the proofs of the timetable cover, their first reaction was to order it taken out. On reconsideration, however, they decided to leave it in."

A study by a member of "The Four Track News", a fine monthly publication of George H. Daniels, passenger department, indicates the following: June 1904, twelve NYC Lines advertisements, no ovals; June 1905, eleven NYC Lines advertisements of which five showed ovals. Thus, between these two dates, the oval started to become a famous trademark, in fact, the first freight car oval drawing we know, Drawing V-13333, dated 11/12/1904, was completed, followed in December 1904 by Z-13341, the most familiar 4' -03/8" x 2' -8 1/2" size used on box cars.

The first part of our "Oval" story ended with the modernized, "block" lettered "System" ovals of 1955.

Early in 1956 a new look oval was designed with script lettering, without the word "System", and applied to a few pieces of equipment.

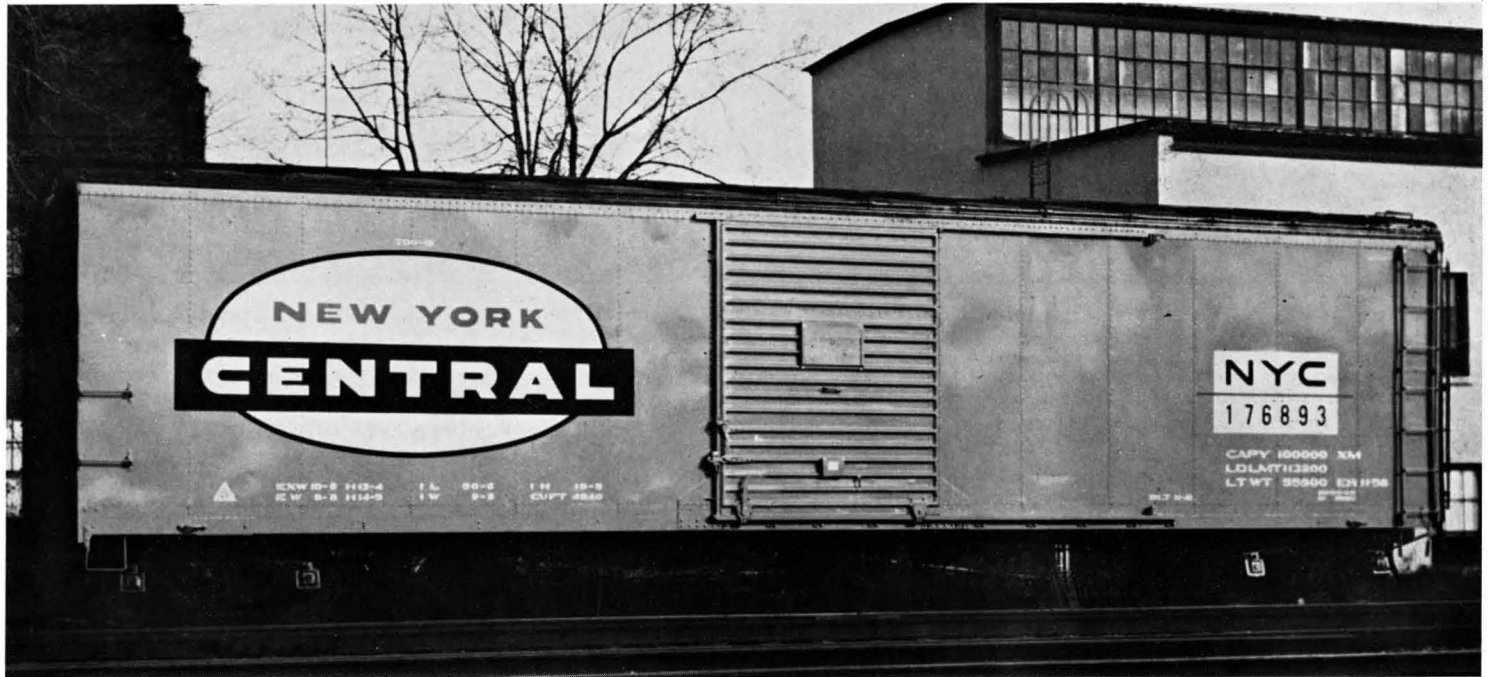
This "Script" Herald was used on only one series of cars, NYMX mechanical refrigerator cars Nos. 1000-1039, which were built by the Pacific Car and Foundry Co. in June 1956. The "Oval" was Dark Blue with White lettering on the upper portion, Light Blue with White stripes below, all on the Yellow background. No NYC drawing number has been found. This Herald, from a print in our hands was 3' -9" x 2' -6".

On locomotives, the Herald was used on the pilot of The Explorer, all Blue on a Yellow background with Yellow lettering and as a cast plate, 26" x 19 1/4" on the cab sides. On the Aero-train, this design was used on the pilot, in this case, Red on Silver background with Silver lettering. During this time, as EMD E-7 and E-8 passenger units, were given Intermediate Overhauls at Collinwood, (and two re-built by EMD, the small Herald on the nose was changed to the "Script" design.

In June and July 1957 Alco delivered nine road switchers, Model RS-11 (Spec DL-701) NYC Nos. 8000-08, Class

DRS-10A which had the "Script" Herald on the cab sides. Other units, including switchers given Intermediate Overhauls also had the same Herald on the cab section. A detailed discussion of locomotive application of these and other Heralds will be covered in Part 3 of this subject to be published later.

Additional use of this design was made by the Public Relations Dept. on "No Smoking" signs for passenger coaches, timetables and the like beginning before April 1956.



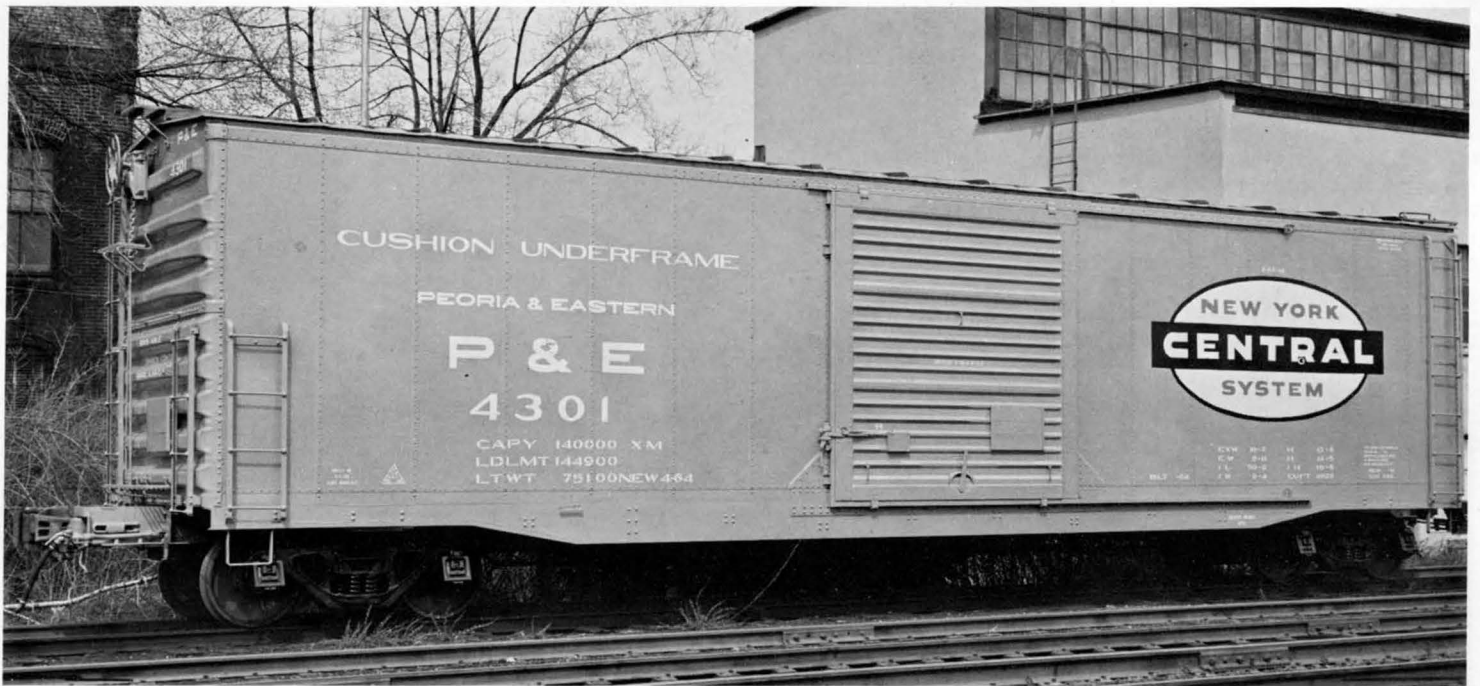
NYC 176893, a 50-6" box car, Lot no. 700B, rebuilt at Despatch Shops in November 1958. Oval size was 14'-10" x 6'-71/2". Car had green sides, black roof, ends and underframe. Odd shaped herald did not carry the word "System". Only ten cars were painted with this style herald and reporting marks. Line "N Y C" is same red color as words "New York".

In 1958 the last major design change occurred. To project a new image for "The Road to the Future" the Black, Red and White "Cigar Band" Herald in block style lettering was adopted. The new design for "The Road to the Future" comprised a new paint scheme as well, initially for all Box and Auto Cars and Cabooses, and later used on most equipment.

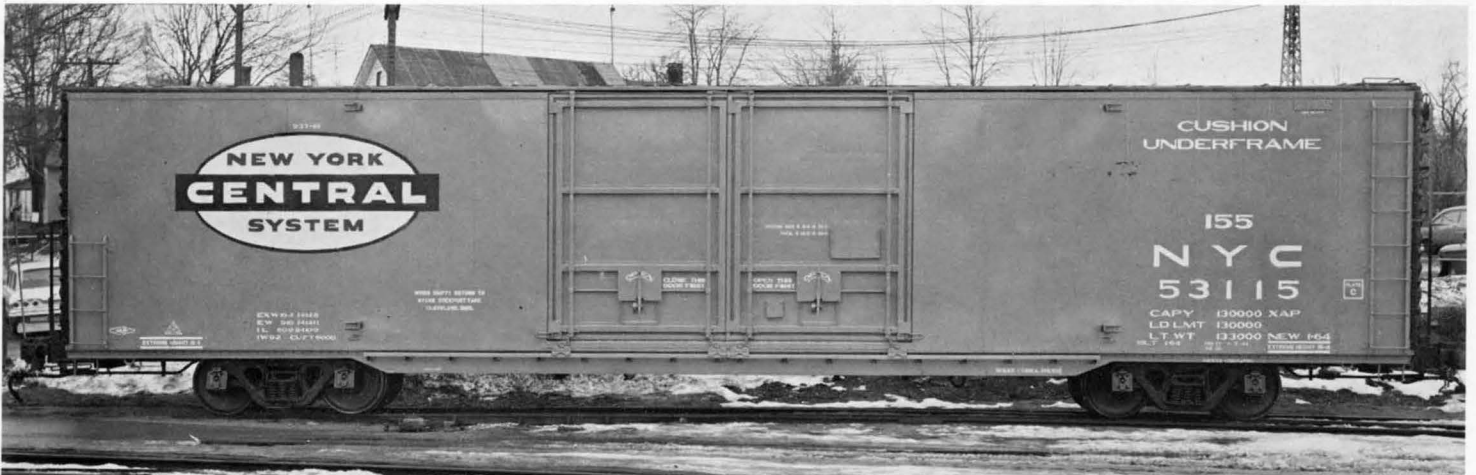
The first cars painted in the new scheme, with new style reporting marks, were twelve 50 Ft. Box Cars, Lot 700B, re-built at East Rochester in November 1958. The Herald, to the left of the door was 14' -10" x 6' -71/2", per NYC Drawing X-58372 dated 5/5/59 (you will note that the drawing was made after the cars referred to above were painted) and did not include the word "System". These were the only cars so lettered. Painting was NYC Green sides, Black roof, ends and underframe.

The Herald was re-designed slightly smaller, and the reporting marks re-arranged to what became standard (for a while) to mid 1964. The Herald, NYC Drawings X-58391 and X-58392, dated 6/19/59 was 12' -0" x 5' -4". The Herald can be described as being a White oval background, with Black edging, a Black band horizontally through the middle with block lettering "Central" showing White through the band, the words "New York" above, and "System" below in Red on the White background.

In 1961 "Scotchcal", pressure sensitive "decal" type Heralds were designed with a 1/2" White border all around for application on a Black background. NYC Drawing X-87067, dated May 16, 1961 indicates two sizes: 1) 33 1/8" x 15 5/8" and 2) 53" x 25". These were originally designed: Size 1) Road Switcher locomotives and Size 2) Road Freight and Passenger locomotives. In 1962, use of Size 1 was extended to switchers, and in 1965, Size 1 was used on multi-level cars, and Size 2 on Box Cars and Cabooses. These same sizes were applied with stencils on Freight equipment. Size 1), NYC Drawing X-58726, 3/9/1961, 2' -8 1/4" x 14 5/8" (without 1/2" White border) was stenciled on multi-level cars, Transfer Cabooses and Coil Cars. Size 2), NYC Drawing W-58950, 5/11/64, 4' -4" x 23 1/2" (without 1/2" White border), indicates usage extended to Box, Auto Box, Covered Hopper, and Gondola Cars as of 5/1964. At this time, all new cars except Covered Hoppers (Gray) Flexi-Van Cars (Gray) and Open Top Hoppers (Black) were painted NYC Green. It should be noted that after the initial paint scheme of 1959 with Green on the sides only, by late 1963 Box and Auto Box Cars began to get Green roofs and sides with Black ends and underframe. By the time the smaller Herald was used (4' -4" x 23 1/2") in 1964, sides, roof and ends were Green and the underframe Black, a scheme which was the final one used.



P. & E. 4301, a 50'-6" box car from Lot no. 943B was built by Despatch Shops Inc. in April 1964. It had the entire body painted green with a black underframe. The Oval herald size was 12'-0"x 5'-4".



NYC 53115, 60'-6" box car, Lot no. 937B, built in January 1964 by Greenville Steel Car Co. Car has green sides and roof with black ends and underframe. Oval herald size was 12'-0"x 5'-4".



P. & L. E. 7106, a 50'-6" box car, Lot no. 897B, built in January 1961 by Despatch Shops Inc. Green sides, black roof, ends, and underframe. 12'-0"x 5'-4" size Oval herald applied.

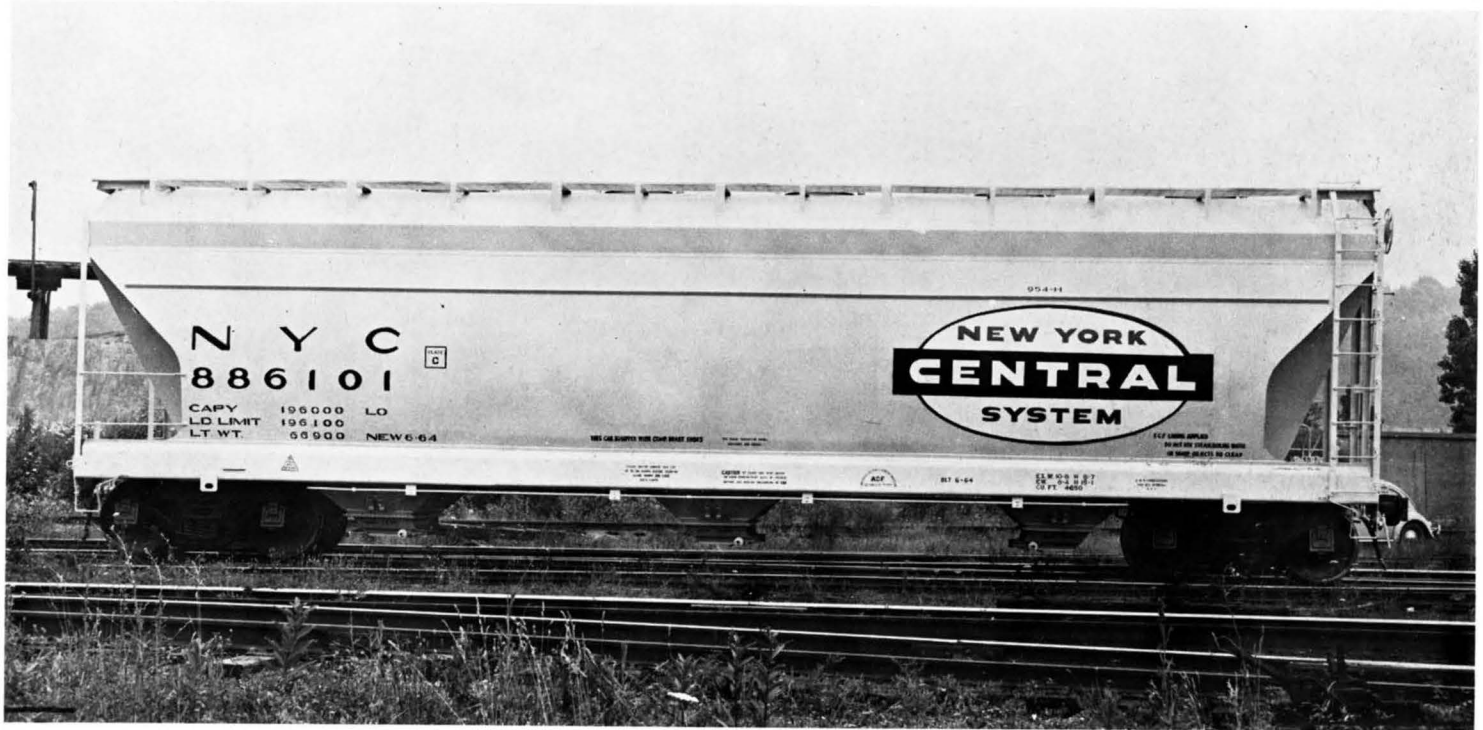
In 1962, an intermediate size Herald was designed for use on 125 Ton "PD", pressure differential "Flexi Flow", Covered Hoppers, painted Gray, Cabooses painted Green, and until 1964 was also used on some Box Cars. This was NYC Drawing V-58823, 12/26/62, size 6' -6" x 3' -1".

Certain variations in the general use of these Heralds occurred. On outside staked Covered Hoppers and Box Cars with stenciled Heralds, size 4' -4" x 23 1/2", some of the lettering on the Herald landed on the stake. Some cars are stenciled with the SYS to the left and TEM to the right of the stake, and others with SYS to the left, T on the face of the stake, and EM on the right.

Generally, Covered Hoppers, all painted Gray, received three sizes of Herald. Outside stake cars: 4' -4" x 23 1/2"; PD Cars and 500 Cu. Ft. capacity, 100 Ton ACF "Tank Type": 6' -6" x 3' -1", and ACF "Tank Type" (4650 Cu.

Ft. capacity and smaller), the large size: 12' -0" x 5' -4". Some early 125 Ton PD Cars may have had the large size applied.

Beginning in 6/1964, the entire fleet of 55 Ton bulge side self clearing (SC) Hopper Cars were rebuilt to 64 Ton outside stake design with higher sides. The sample car, built at East Rochester, NYC 829000 Lot 942H used old standard 36" x 24" Herald. The cars re-built at Beach Grove, same Lot No., NYC, TOC, and Lot 107H P & E, used the same Herald, but reversed lettering layout (Herald at left). The NYC cars re-built at McKees Rocks, Pa., also Lot 942H, used a 2' -8 1/4" x 14 5/8" White outline Herald, similar to X-58726, with horizontal bars above and below the word Central lining out what would usually be the Black bar across the full color version. All cars painted Black.



NYC 886101 was a 100 ton, 4650 cu. ft. "A. C. F. Centerflow" covered hopper built in June 1964 as part of Lot no. 954H. Car had light gray body, black trucks, and a 12'-0" x 5'-4" Oval herald. Note the older style reporting marks.



NYC 78950 is a 50'-1" box car from Lot no. 922B, which was built in December 1962. Car has green sides and roof. Body ends and underframe were painted black. Odd shaped "flat top and bottom" Oval herald measured 12'-0" wide.



NYC 885800 is a 125 ton "Pressure Discharge" covered hopper, part of Lot no. 941H, built by A. C. F. in July 1964. Car has light gray body with black trucks and a 6'-6"x 3'-1" Oval herald.



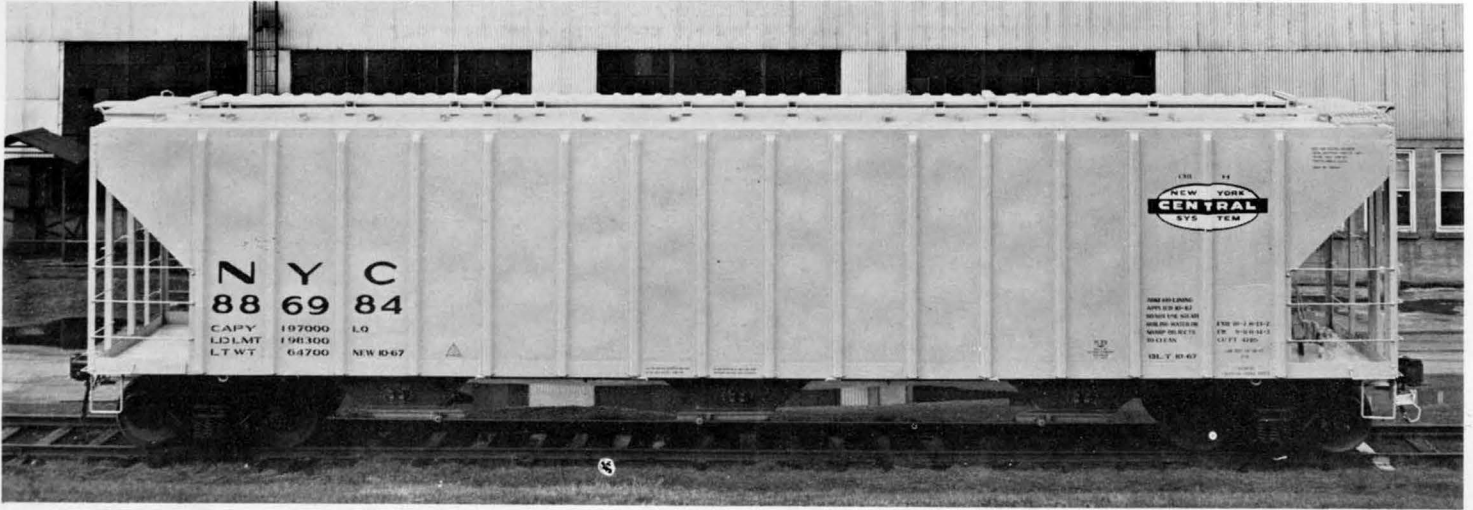
P. & L. E. 7200 is a 50'-6" box car, Lot no. 921B, built by Despatch Shops Inc. in October 1962. Entire body painted green with black underframe. Oval herald size was 6'-6"x 3'-1". This car lot pre dates herald drawing U-58823 and general use of this paint scheme.



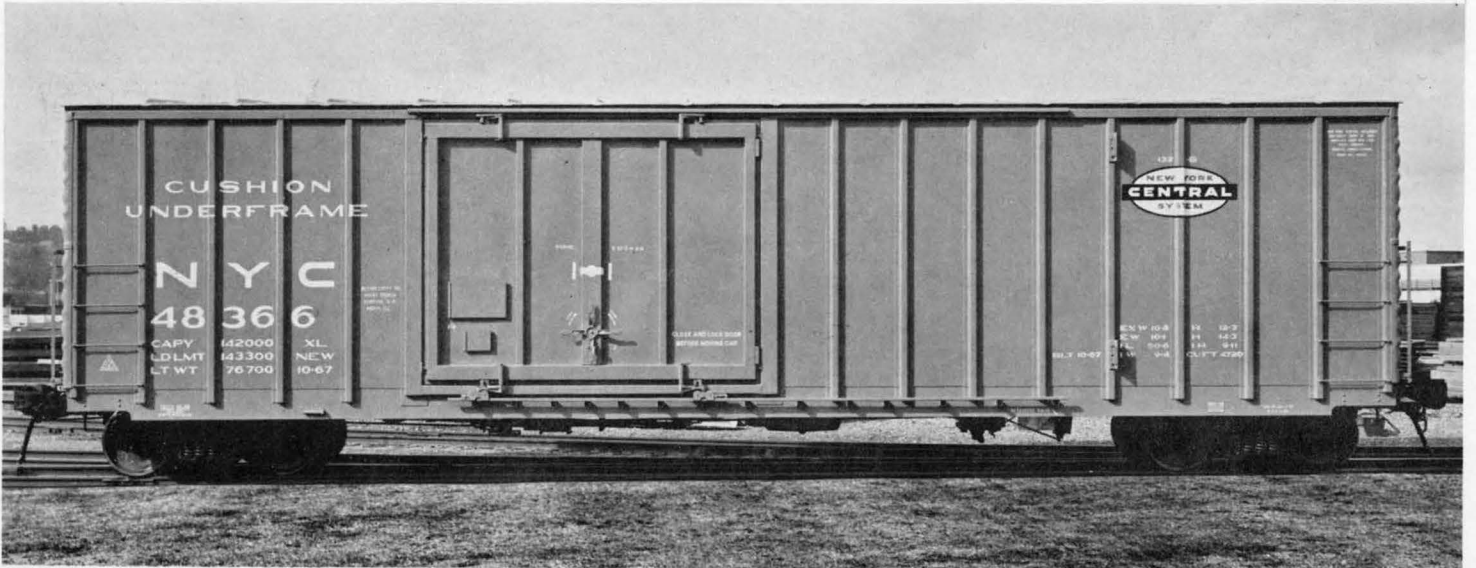
NYC caboose No. 21001, was built by Despatch Shops Inc. in February 1963 as Lot no. 919 which consisted of 100 cabooses (21000 - 21099). Car has green sides and ends, with black roof and underframe. Oval herald size is 6'-6"x 3'-1".



NYC 53817 is a 60' box car, Lot no. 979B, built by Despatch Shops Inc. in November 1965. Entire body is painted green with black underframe and 4'-4"x 23 1/2" herald.



NYC 886984 is a 100 ton covered hopper from Lot no. 138H, built in October 1967 by Pullman-Standard. Entire car body painted light gray with black trucks. Oval herald size is 4'-4"x 23 1/2". Note that the word "System" is cut in half on this herald with half applied to each side of the rib.



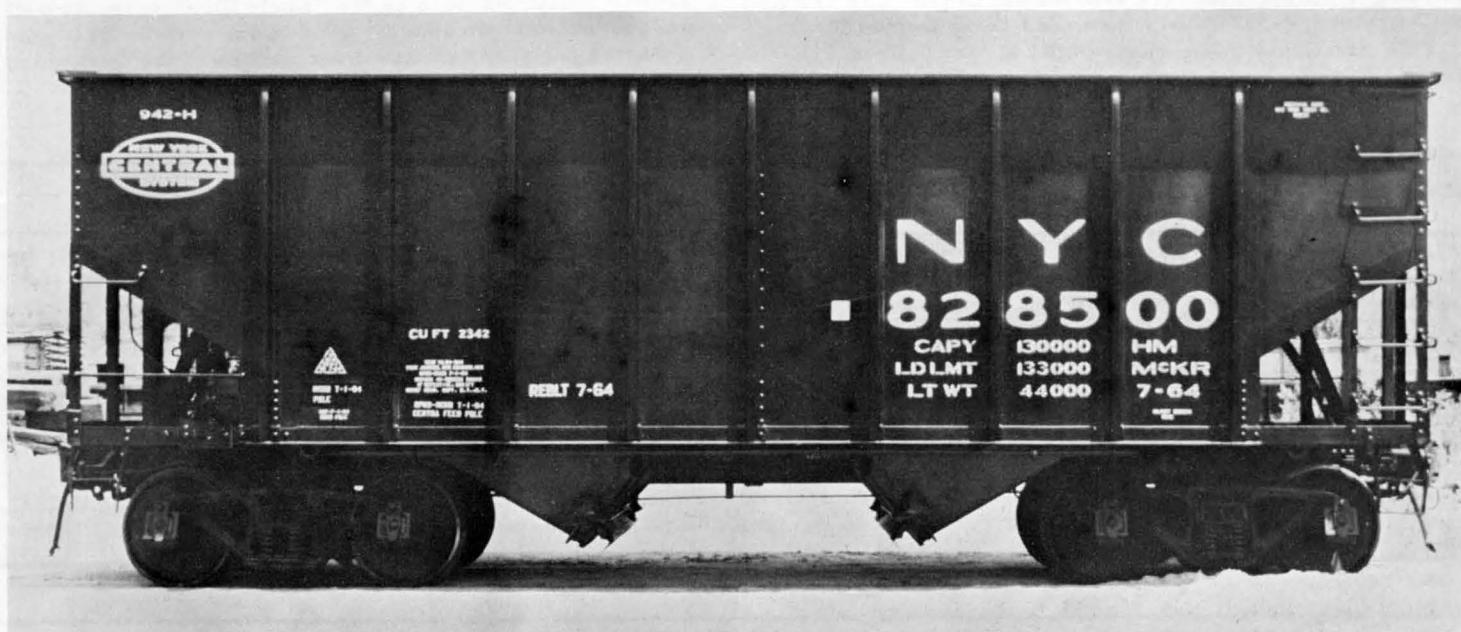
NYC 48366, a 50'-6" box car from Lot no. 132B, built by Pacific Car & Foundry Co. in October 1967. Car has all green body, black underframe. The 52"x 24" "Scotchcal" Oval herald has no white border. Note that the middle letters ST of the word "system" are applied on the rib, all other letters of this word are on the car sides.



NYC transfer caboose 18166 was part of Lot no. 121, built by Despatch Shops Inc. in July 1967. Caboose was painted green with black underframe and trucks. The Oval herald size was a 33 1/8"x 15 5/8" "Scotchcal" application. These cabooses carried road numbers from retired wood cabooses.



P. & L. E. 42157 is a 125 ton "coil car" from Lot no. 110F built in May 1967. Entire body is green with black trucks. The Oval herald size is 2'-8 1/4"x 14 5/8" (X-58726).



NYC 828500 is a 65 ton hopper car, Lot no. 942H which was rebuilt by the P. & L. E. at McKees Rocks, Pa. in July 1964. Entire car was painted black with a 2'-8 1/4"x 14 5/8" white stencil "outline" herald with bands across the oval.



NYC 720000 is a 52' gondola, Lot no. 120G, built by Despatch Shops Inc. in March 1967. Entire car painted black with white "outline only" stencil without bands across oval, it measured 2'-8 1/4"x 14 5/8". (X-59354)

In 1967 new Gondola Cars were painted Flat Black. The special Hot Coil Cars and Hot Slab Cars were painted with a special high temperature paint, "Corrosite", with a Flat Black appearance, developed for the New York Central by The Reliance Paint Co. originally for Hopper Cars used in Benson Mines ore service where the ore concentrate was loaded into the cars while hot. A new Herald design was used in the Gondola and Hot Coil Cars, NYC Drawing X-59354 dated 1/67, also 2' -8 1/4" x 14 5/8", but without the horizontal bars across the oval, there being an outline only. The "Hot Slab" Cars, 70 Ton Lot 130G and 100 Ton Lot 148G had no Herald at all. Lot 148G was the last Lot of NYC cars built.

A few "odd" Heralds occurred, once only excepting, of course, the first one used in 1959. First, Lot 922B, 50' insulated Box Cars, a "flat topped" Herald of basic similarity to X-58391, 12' -0" wide was used. Second, Lot 959H, 100 Ton outside staked Covered Hopper Cars built at East Rochester in April 1965 received a small, (less than 2' -6" wide) standard color Herald stenciled on the side sheet between the stakes to eliminate the problem of stenciling over the stake as referred to above. This was obviously too small.

Certain other cars never received the last style Herald, Flexi-Van Cars which used the older 29"x 19 3/8" NYC Drawing X-55873. Flat cars used the old 18 1/2" x 10 1/2", NYC Drawing V-55732, with new cars being painted Black in 1964 and Green in the case of P&LE cars built in February 1967.

The following chart shows the development and use of this last "Oval" design.



It is noticeable that the various sizes of "Ovals" were used wherever they could be best fitted on the car sides considering the construction of the specific car, with the initial objective of best promoting the "New" in New York Central. It is also probable that as time went on, the cost of stenciling Heralds probably became a factor, thus the continuing reduction in the sizes used on Box and Auto Box Cars, and the simple White outline Herald used on the last Black Gondola and Hot Coil Cars. It is difficult to state that all of a certain type of car was always stenciled with re-built and re-painted equipment may have been done differently than the current standard.

This discussion of the "Oval" on equipment is based on the NYC "J" book "Lettering Instructions, Freight Cars", contain specific new car lettering drawings, and photographs of cars as built new or sample cars in major re-build programs. There may be some exceptions and variations that the author has not been able to verify at this writing.

Part III of the story of the NYC Oval will cover special service equipment such as the "Early Bird" cars, as well as locomotive applications. In addition, certain NYC subsidiaries designed and used adaptations of the Oval which will also be covered.

CHART 2

NYC DWG. NO.	DATE	SIZE	APPLIED BY	USED ON	NOTES
?	5/65	about 2' -6" x 13 5/8"	Stencil	Lot 959 H Covered Hopper only	Black, White and Red
X-59354	6/67	2' -8 1/4" x 14 5/8"	Stencil	100 Ton Gons.: NYC Lot 120G, P&LE Lot 123G NYC Hot Coil Cars Lot 122F	Plain White, no Horizontal Bars on Black Car body (2)
X-58726	3/9/61	2' -8 1/4" x 14 5/8"	Stencil	Multi level Cars, Transfer Cabooses, Coil Cars	Black, White and Red
?	circa 1964	2' -8 1/4" x 14 5/8"	Stencil	65 Ton Twin SC Hopper Cars rebuilt at McK. Rocks, 70 Ton re-built SC Hopper	Plain White, with Horizontal Bars, Black car body
X-87067 (line 1)	5/6/61	33 1/8" x 15 5/8"	"Scotchcal"	Multi level Cars, Road Switchers and Switchers	Black, White and Red with 1/2" White Border
W-58950	5/11/64	4' -4" x 23 1/2"	Stencil	Box and Auto Box Cars, outside stake Covered Hopper Cars Gondola Cars (and Stock Car #24001) (1)	Black, White and Red
X-87067	5/6/61	52" x 24"	"Scotchcal"	Box and Caboose Cars, Road Freight and Road Passenger Locos	Black, White and Red, originally with 1/2" White Border, later without
U-58823	12/26/62	6' -6" x 3' -1"	Stencil	125 Ton "Pressure Differential" Covered Hoppers, Caboose Cars(?) Box Lot 119B, 129B etc.	Black, White and Red
X-58391 X-58392	6/19/59 "	12' -0" x 5' -4"	Stencil	Box and Auto Box Cars, Tank Type (ACF) Covered Hoppers	Black, White and Red
X-58372	5/5/59	14' -10" x 6' -7 1/2"	Stencil	Box and Auto Box Cars	Black, White and Red First experimental Herald, No word "System" 12 cars only

(1) Gons. Green before 1967, Black after - See X-59354

(2) A few Lot 120G Gondola Cars were painted Gray for use in company traction motor service. These had this Herald stenciled in Black.



NYC 744000 is a 50' long, 100 ton hot steel coil and slab gondola from Lot no. 148G built in November 1967 by Despatch Shops Inc. Entire body painted with "high temperature" black paint. No Oval herald was applied to these cars since there was no room left on side sills of it's application.



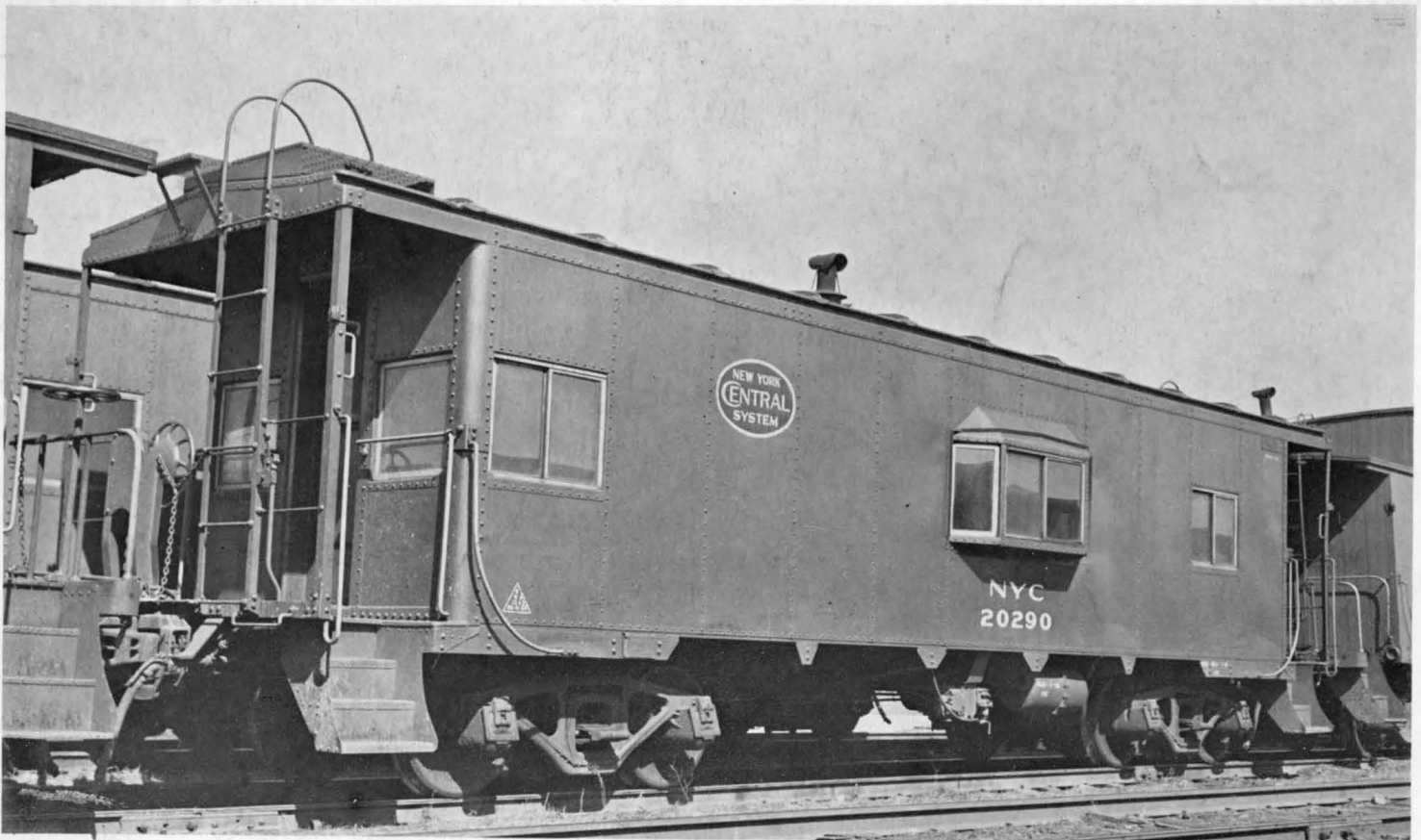
NYC 886326 is a 100 ton, 4700 cu. ft. covered hopper, part of Lot no. 959H built by Despatch Shops Inc. in April 1965. Entire body painted light gray with black trucks. Special small herald measured less than 2'-6" wide. Note that this is the only lot of cars with this herald.



NYC 502001 was a container car from Lot no. C102 and was built in September 1931, it is shown here while on display at the New York World's Fair on June 3, 1940. Oval size was 18"x 9" (V-13532), See page 3, "CENTRAL HEADLIGHT", July 1974. Note the two different sizes of L. C. L. containers and locations of Oval heralds. George E. Votava Collection



NYC "Aerotrain" 1001 displays the 26"x 19 1/4" script style Oval herald, which had a red background with silver lettering. Here we see General Motor's attempt to save the passenger train at Buffalo, N. Y. in June 1955.
Harold K. Vollrath Collection



NYC caboose 20290 is equipped with a 29"x 19 3/8" Oval herald. (N-55873) According to the drawing, the body color which in this case is box car red, is supposed to be the background color inside the Oval. In this case however, the background color appears to be black and thus is a "non-standard" application. Photo was taken in July 1955.
Harold K. Vollrath Collection