The Wig-Wag

Eastern Iowa Division

Mid - Continent Region / NMRA

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Rock Island OSB Caboose - Pt. 2

By Tony Bowen, Eastern Iowa Division

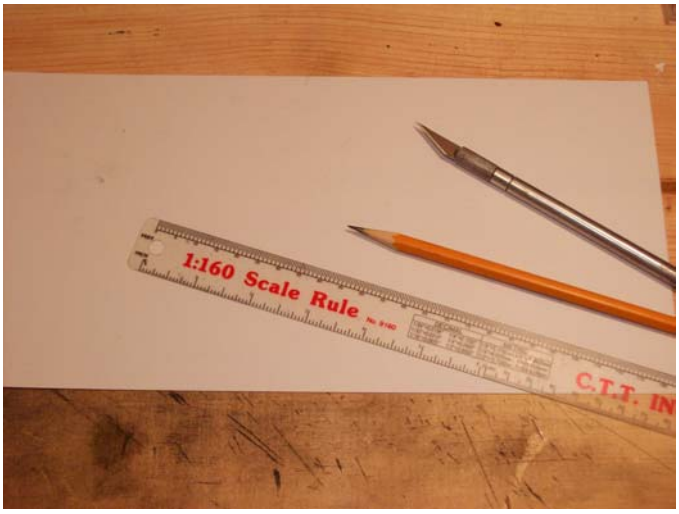
In the first part of this article you read the history of the Rock Island Outside Braced Caboose. Now it's time to take the research gained from the first part of the article and start building the model.

When it came to modeling the caboose I knew that the majority would have to be scratch built / kit bashed. I broke out the Walther's Catalog to see what was available to start my bill of materials for the project and then submitted my order to my local hobby shop. I went with Evergreen Styrene for most of the scratch building supplies. I did run into one problem as some of the outside bracing was "Z" shaped bracing and I was only able to find "L" shaped bracing. However, I easily overcame this by ordering extra "L" angle channel thinking I could glue two inverted piece together to get the "Z" shaped channel bracing. With in a week my parts came in and I was ready to start building.

Drawings, Styrene, Micro-Train trucks and a scale ruler would be the starting point for what would some day be an outside braced caboose.

Now came the crossroads of deciding what to build first the standard outside braced caboose or the passenger baggage caboose. I went with the

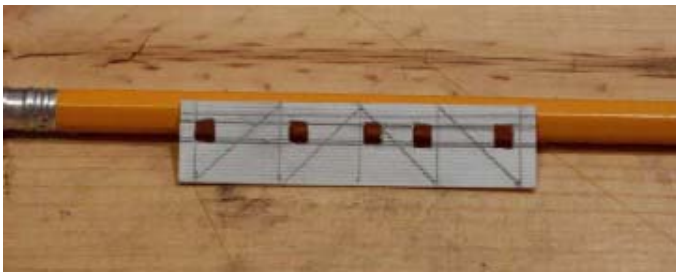
standard caboose first as I felt that it would be more of a challenge due to some of the odd measurements being on a shorten frame. I started by cutting the car sides first. I cut several car sides at one time in case I would mess up; I would have additional ones on hand. I also planned on building multiple cabooses so I used some of the additional parts as templates that I could refer back to when building other cabooses. The car side measures a scale 28'- 6" long and 8' feet high.



Starting with a Scale Ruler, Pencil, and Hobby Knife I measured the V-Grooved car siding a scale 28'- 6" X 8' and cut the out.

Once the sides were cut to the correct size I marked off where the vertical outside bracing would fall and then drew where the diagonal bracing would be placed. From there I measured for the placement of the windows. When the Class B-2 boxcars were converted into cabooses the window figuration was four windows one side and five on the other side. However many of these windows were blanked out over the years. However, for this project the window configuration would have the original appears the caboose would have looked like after the conversion.

After the windows were cut into the car side I moved onto the trim piece at the roofline of the caboose. On the outside braced cabooses the trim at the roofline was a piece of steel the stretched the length of the car and made up part of the overhang over the platforms. This piece of trim also had the vertical and diagonal bracing wielded to it. I measured two styrene stripes that would represent the steel trim at the caboose roofline and would later support the roof overhang on both ends. Once the two pieces were glued into place I started to cut the "L" angle and glue two pieces together to resemble the areas that had the "Z" channel bracing.

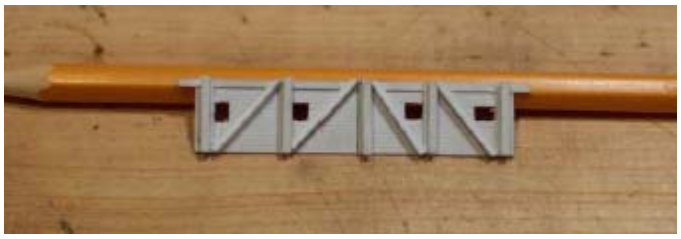


Having one of the sides cut out I marked where the bracing would fall on the caboose sides and where the windows would be placed. This side would be a template for other standard outside caboose to be modeled after.

Now came the big moment of placing the vertical bracing on the caboose sides. It did take long for me to realize that the bracing I was using was way too big. I thought sure I ordered the correct size of "L" angles bracing, and I had. However even the smallest "L" angle still measured a scale one foot wide. When it was by itself it did look bad, but once it was applied to the car side it looked very bulky and way out of scale. It was time to head back to the drawing board to find what other materials I could use for the outside bracing.

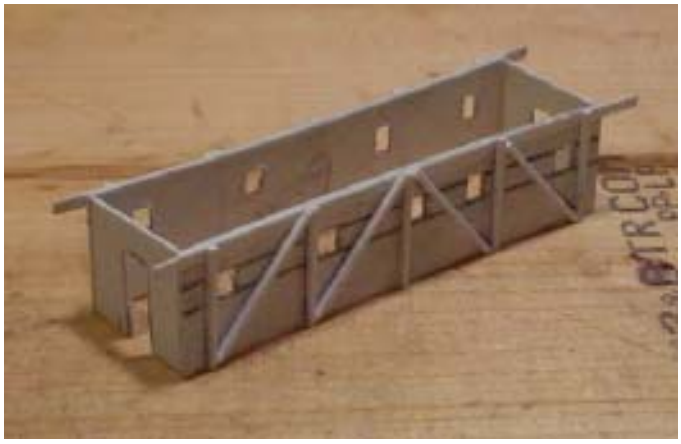
I found strip wood that would possibly work, but even it did not measure small enough to represent the outside bracing. Plus I also worried about what it would look like after it was painted. Would the styrene and the strip wood appear to be different colors once it was painted? So it was back to looking at the Styrene again. I finally settled on ordering some .020" X .020" square strips. The square stripes did not offer the exact outside bracing look like the prototype. However, it was the smallest material I could find in N scale to represent the bracing I was looking for and it did not give the bulky look to the caboose that the previous "L" angel did.

The "L" angle worked great to glue together to get the "Z" angel look, but even the smallest "L" angle glued in this method looked rather large and bulky on the N Scale car sides as seen in the following photo. So I changed my plans.



The "Z" angel bracing did not give the appearance I was going for so the idea was scrapped.

After gluing the smaller bracing I would be using into place on both car sides I moved to the caboose ends. The caboose ends were pretty plain, as they did not have any windows, just a door that was centered on the end wall. I cut a piece of styrene nine scale feet wide by eight scale feet tall. I measured in 3 1/2 scale feet from the outside edges and made two marks. Between these two marks was a two-foot area that I would cut out for the doorway. When I had both ends ready to go I glued them into place with the car sides that I had just completed.



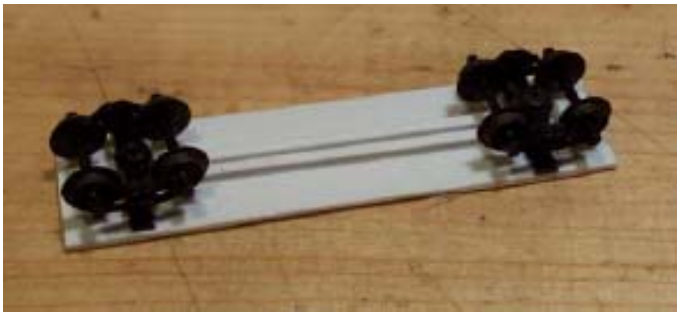
A test fit of the caboose sides and ends. The trim across the roofline would need a little reinforcement to hold them nice and straight across the top of the caboose. I would go back and add "L" angles to hold them in place and to finish off the top and bottom of the outside bracing.

Having the main part of the car body ready to go it was time to either move onto the roof and cupola, or start on the under frame. I decided to go with the under frame first as the roof would be completely open for me to see how the car floor and car body would fit together. The car floor on the standard outside braced caboose is basically a rectangle that extends the full width of the car. When designing the under frame I also wanted to keep in mind how the car body and floor with fit together.

I started the under frame I using .40 styrene cutting into a rectangle shape. The floor itself extends out over the trucks and the ladder style steps that would be added later would be mounted to the outside of the under frame floor. I cut an older 40' boxcar under frame apart for parts. I used styrene "I" beam pieces that would make the center sill for the caboose. The other detail parts such as and the air reservoir, triple value and brake rigging would be added later.

Here is a view of the underside of the under frame with the car stabilizers and center sill in place.

I was now ready to drill and tap holes for the bolster pins that would hold the trucks to the stabilizers. I used the regular tap and drill set that Micro-Trains offers to accomplish this task. Then I checked to make sure the trucks fit and rolled freely before moving on. I also wanted to keep in mind that I would be coming back and body mounting couplers to the under frame.



The holes were drilled and tapped. I checked to make sure the trucks moved freely and also tested it on the tracks.

After taking the under frame as far as I could go I started on the roof of the caboose. I reinforced the trim that goes across the top of the roofline with a piece of "L" angle on each side, and then I also did the same at the bottom of the caboose. This framed out the outside bracing nicely and added that crisp defined lines at the top and bottom of the caboose. When thinking about the roof I thought

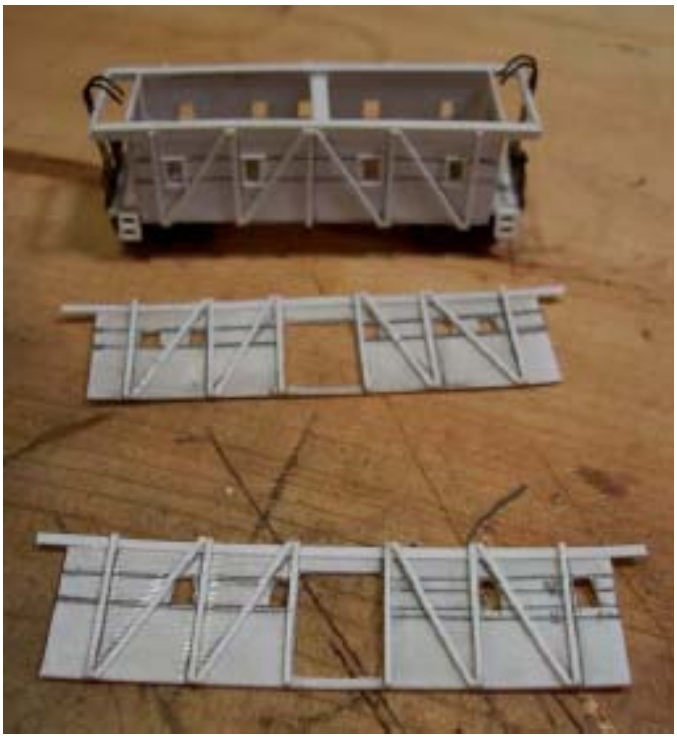
about the difficult task the cupola would be to cut out, and how fragile it would be. I started with the cupola ends cutting it to the correct size and cutting the windows into place. For the cupola sides I cut a small rectangle and then cut two small windows for each side. After all the windows were cut I glued the four pieces together to form the cupola that would sit on top of the roof. This piece was very delicate so I went ahead and added a roof right way to secure the sides from being damaged. However even as careful as I was the cupola just did not come out how I had hoped it would. I tried several other ways to tackle this problem and either the sides would not look the same, or I was not pleased with the outcome. I then went ahead an ordered two cupolas out of the Walther's catalog that would serve as I close likeness to the cupola that would appear on the outside braced cabooses.

The main superstructure of the caboose rests on the under frame, both parts fit well and the trucks swung freely during a test run over a piece of flex track.

In this view of the outside braced caboose with Micro-Trains ladders on the ends, minus the platform steps and couplers. I also framed out the windows, which added some nice detail.

The passenger / baggage outside braced caboose started out much like the standard caboose. The cabooses sides were cut using V-Groove styrene that measured a scale 35'X 9'. Keep in mind these were rebuilt from Class B-2 boxcars and were longer than the standard outside braced caboose. The baggage doors on the sides were located in the same place where the boxcar doors would have been located. However in the rebuilding process additional lumber was added to the header bringing the height of the door opening down, since the baggage doors were not tall as a boxcar door.

The window configuration on the passenger / baggage cabooses varied over the years, but going off the original window design there were four windows on one side and five on the other side of the caboose.

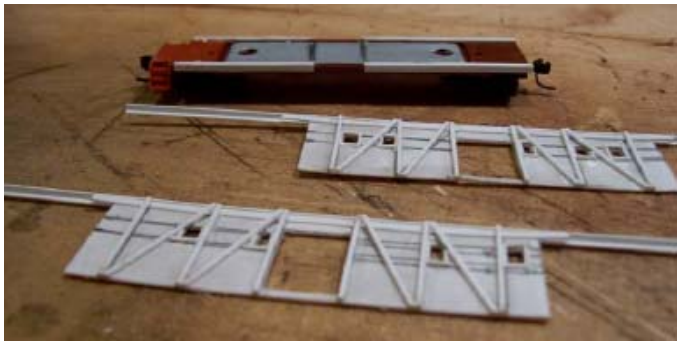


Both sides of the passenger/ baggage outside braced caboose that have been marked and the bracing has been glued in placed. The center opening is for the baggage door. In the background is the standard outside braced caboose, which had the platform steps added.

For the under frame of the passenger / baggage caboose I spliced two floors from an older caboose and boxcar together. Part of the reason for this was that I needed the passenger style steps that would have been found on the passenger end. There are detail parts that list these steps, however

after waiting some time at the hobby shop for them to find out the parts had been discontinued, I felt splicing to under frame together might be the next best solution. As for the crew end I would use the same ladders style steps that were used for the standard outside braced caboose.

Above is the spliced under frame of a 40' boxcar and the partial end of an old caboose under frame that was needed for the passenger end steps.



Additional styrene "L" angle was added to the under frame to support the caboose sides. The center sections on both sides were left out to have room for the baggage doors that would be added later.

The baggage doors were made with a piece of styrene cut just a little bigger than the opening and would fit on the inside of the door frame. I cut out one large opening where the windows would be located at the top of the baggage door. Then went back and added in smaller styrene strips to represent the five individual windowpanes across the top of the baggage door. Once that was completed the baggage doors were glued into place.

The passenger / baggage caboose main superstructure is pretty much complete other than the cupola and other details that were on order from the local hobby shop. [Bottom of left hand column.]

In Part III of this article I will get into some of the details and the painting and decaling of both the standard and passenger / baggage outside braced caboose.

Miscellaneous Views

These two photos are of Jeff Otto's Missabe Northern HO scale layout in the Twin Cities. The Photos were taken by Rich Mahaney, Eastern Iowa Division.

AP - Author

By Marty Vaughn,
MCoR Achievement Program Chair

To earn the Author AP certificate you have to earn 42 points credit for material you have had published. The material includes photos, drawings and text. Depending on where the material is published you can earn a higher number of points. A page published in Scale Rails is worth 3 points, a page in the Caboose Kibitzer is worth 2 points and a page in your Division publication is worth 1 points. But only half (21) of your points can come from a Division publication, the rest must come from other sources. A "page" is approximately 1200 words. Credit may be claimed for partial pages down to quarter pages. In addition, here in the MCoR we also have the option of publishing material on the MCoR website and that will earn 2 points per page too.

Just to be clear, the MCoR website isn't in competition with the Caboose Kibitzer. The Caboose Kibitzer will come first and be offered the article, but if they can't use it the web page can. The web page can also be used in conjunction with the Caboose Kibitzer, if you have more photos than the Region can afford to publish we can add supplemental photos on the web page and add the web address in the Caboose Kibitzer article. That way there are no restrictions on quantity and you can get credit for all your material.

How hard is it to get published? Speaking as a ex-Division editor, the answer is: not hard at all! Most Division and Region editors are always looking for new articles and photos. They are willing to work with you to fill their pages. And remember, it doesn't all have to be on models. Prototype articles and photos that provide information for modeling purposes also counts toward this requirement.

You can find the specifics and the form at the NMRA web site: http://www.nmra.org/achievement/apc10.html But don't read more into it than it says!

If you have any questions, my address is on the MCoR website and I will happy to try and answer your questions.

Think Commuting's Tough? Try Being the Train!

By Gerri Hirshey

Published February 11, 2007 in the New York Times

I AM 30-ish, but I carry the weight of generations, from young hedge-fund hotshots to silver-mained matineegoers. I work a 21½-hour day, traveling 505 miles on $3,959 worth of electricity. On average, I service 3,905 of you daily, amassing evocative keepsakes of our time together: 16 bags of trash and 4 full toilet tanks, plus errant cell phones, scarves, jackets, laptops and sippy cups.

I am your Metro-North train, called in the yards a "consist": 7 regular cars, 1 club car and 842 seats, making 8 trips daily between New Haven and Grand Central Terminal. And sister, if you think you've had it rough when you and your Diet Snapple sink into my spavined vinyl seats for the 7:11 back to Darien, consider this: Since, like a majority of the New Haven fleet, I'm made up of M2 cars delivered in the early 70s, I've got over a million miles on my weary chassis, no understudies and (until 240 new Kawasaki cars arrive, probably in three years) no hope of relief.

It is also my lot to carry the messiest commuters. You leave twice as much trash per trip as riders on Metro-North's Harlem and Hudson lines.

Check me out here in the Stamford yard before I meet my public, with cleaned, disinfected and fully supplied rest rooms, mopped and wiped floors, seats, windows and doors. It all happened outdoors, from about 2:55 a.m. to 5:50 a.m. Since the temperature was in the single digits last night, mops froze on the trip from bucket to floor.

Whatever it takes, I roll out as train No. 1307 at 5:57 a.m.

But you've probably never seen me at my freshest. By the time I huff into Grand Central at 6:59 — and I was on time 97.6 percent of the time in 2006, thank you — brown rivulets of spilled coffee are marbling my floors. The crew you see waiting on the platform has less than half an hour to collect your papers, half-eaten bagels and cups, scrape your gum and mop up your sticky lattes.

I need to be presentable for a 7:29 departure as Train No. 1510, and it's a full load. Reverse commutes are way up; so is off-peak and weekend ridership.

Despite the burden, I can't even get a decent shower. My spa — a supersize car wash — is closed in freezing weather. And for those of you who have groaned, understandably, at the announcement that "this train is being taken out of service," a peek into our E.R. will be instructive. Triage is performed in this yawning repair shop (and one in New Haven) by John Kulka, the facility superintendent. He has worked in these yards 28 years and knew us M2s when we were young and frisky. Here he is, chewing a cigar and, most often, his knuckles as he tries to get 300 cars in and out of repair and inspection facilities that hold only 18 cars at once. When you have 70 broken-down cars "shopped," well, you do the math. When blowing powder gives scores of us bad "snow ingestion" in our doors and undercarriages, burning out components, Mr. Kulka is faced with logistics comparable to a Rubik's cube devised by Satan himself.

Go figure — he says he loves his job. But he would also love a little respect for our battle-weary tenders. "We do everything we can," he said, "but we're at the mercy of weather and mechanical failure. We operate on a 100-year-old catenary system. Two years ago, I had guys out here working 24 straight, lying on their backs in two feet of snow in zero-degree weather trying to fix cars. The press was tearing us apart. But these people work their hearts out."

No one knows that better than Prena Beliveau, the car cleaners' general foreman. She has been on the job 24 years and has seen it all — particularly in our restrooms. We will sum up her vivid descriptions with a sanitized adjective: unspeakable. I am also regularly tagged with graffiti. My seats are knife-slashed. New Year's Day? Let's just say that as we limp back into the yards, it's no Parade of Roses. But as a rule, I am most sullied on the morning commuter runs.

Ms. Beliveau's crews handle it, biohazards and all, with hourly wages beginning at $14.10. They have been working without a contract or a raise for four years. Nonetheless, they come in voluntarily during storms and take care of their own, donating 400 sick days to help out a station clerk whose baby son was badly burned. My stalwart mechanics, or "car knockers," as they're called, didn't cause the state's vexing transit woes. But they're the ones with disinfectant and baling wire trying to hold it together.

Can I last until those spanking new Kawasakis arrive? I think I can, I think I can. But please, Joe and Jane Commuter, clean up your act.

Miscellaneous Views

Continued…

More views of Jeff Otto's Missabe Northern. Photos by Rich Mahaney.