



Blue Flag...

FRRS car restoration notes

By John S. Walker

Our first priority for 1993 was to repair and repaint the SN 1632 caboose. This caboose was one of our first acquisitions and is the oldest car in our collection. The old roof had developed some serious cracks and moisture and dry rot had begun eating up the edges of the roof boards. Clyde Lippincott, Nick Tynan and I stripped most of the old roof off into the dump truck on May 2, 1993 and Norm and Hap delivered it to the dump just before closing.

A really nasty rain storm assaulted the museum the next day, but the caboose was safely inside. Surprisingly, the old roof boards are still in pretty good condition, except on the edges. Moisture has destroyed the ends of some of the boards and has probably leaked into the tops of the walls. On May 9, 1993, Mardi Langdon and I finished taking out the rest of the roofing nails, vents, stove pipes and other projections to facilitate the reroofing process.

Interestingly, the cupola roof is constructed out of 1x6 wall siding lumber laid lengthwise (which Norm says was called "Wains Coat" and was a siding material commonly used in home construction) while the rest of the roof is constructed of 1x4 Tongue & Groove laid widthwise. These boards were covered by a layer of canvas. On top of this we found a layer of adhesive or tar, then roll roofing paper was laid lengthwise over the top. Along the centerline, a strip of asphalt roofing was used as a cap. On top of all this, was a good half inch of tar. This is not the way the original roof was constructed. More likely, the railroad never ripped the old roofs off when they needed repair and simply kept adding on more layers.

After considering all of the good advice and considering that our objective is to simply stabilize the roof and to do a quick exterior repainting, we have replaced all of the bad roof boards and some of the top sill that the boards are nailed into along the walls. Luckily, we have a boxcar full of 1x4 Tongue & Groove boards that are almost identical to the old roof boards. We have used a commercial water sealer to prepare the roof for a new covering. Both end ladders were reattached and made secure.

The roof of the cupola was a total write off. We found a four foot square sheet of metal plate imbedded in the tar roof that must have been placed there in an attempt to stop a leak. I think all of that old fossilized tar was the only thing holding the cupola together. Almost half of the cupola has been rebuilt. Wayne Monger, Clyde Lippincott and myself have spent many hours praising and swearing at the guys who originally built this car. There's some great craftsmanship built into this car. But on the other hand, it was never built to be taken apart and put back together again either! New roof supports were made and installed using the old pieces as templates. Clyde Lippincott made new redwood

side sills for the ends of the cupola and a new roof was laid down using 1x4 Tongue & Groove. We did not have the capability of reinstalling the 1x6 siding at this time and until we have a chance to examine other cabooses like this one, we don't know if the 1x6 was original or not anyway. Nevertheless, the 1x4 looks good and does the job.

The trim boards around the edges of the roof are rather significant. Norm Holmes pointed out that the boards have smoothed corners on opposite edges so that they don't puncture the roof canvas and so that the water drips off the ends instead of clinging to the bottom of the board. The 140+ feet of trim was made for us by a cabinet shop in Carson City.

Meanwhile, Ken Roller, and our summer high school help and others have stripped off the old exterior paint and filled in the bad spots with filler. The green paint has been flaking off the last two years and it really needs a new paint job. So far we have discovered boxcar red, silver, orange, blue and green. The caboose will be repainted to the SN Green scheme that it had before. Clyde Lippincott has volunteered to refinish the interior once the car is rolled out of the shop.

When we finish fixing the caboose, I would like to set up a display inside the car something like when the caboose was in actual use. We need pictures of these cabooses in all paint schemes and paraphernalia for display inside the car.

I am preparing a much more detailed report of our work on this caboose. I fear that it will be several pages when completed so I'm just trying to touch the high points here. If you're really interested in a nuts and bolts detailed description of this car, contact me this winter for a copy of the report.

After the caboose is completed, we want to finish the SN 5005 covered hopper. All this car needs is a little more cleaning and painting on the bottom and to finish putting the rest of the lettering back on.

The Tidewater Southern box car should be next in line. We need to completely scrub this car down with soap and water, repaint the existing lettering, mask the lettering off and repaint the car boxcar red. There is also some work to be done up on the roof of this car.

Again, if you would like to help, please let me know. It's not too hard and you will see the results of your work almost immediately.

WP LIVES!