



**Building a  
Milwaukee Road  
Terminal Caboose**  
By Bob Boelter

## Building a Milwaukee Road Terminal Caboose *DRAFT*

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This project started accidentally. I received a Wisconsin Garden Railroad Society (WGRS) E-News from editor Russ Moritz indicating a fellow named Roger had a lot of large-scale equipment for sale and links were provided. Roger's preference was to sell the whole lot to one buyer.

I noticed, in his collection, Roger listed an Aristo Craft steam loco tender. That got me thinking. My indoor layout is based on the Milwaukee Road's Beer Line branch. One of the unique pieces of rolling stock populating the line was the Terminal (Milwaukee's nomenclature for "Transfer") Caboose. The railroad's shop built 46 of them on the frames of abandoned locomotive tenders in 1956-57. I also had renderings of the caboose enlarged from drawings I had seen.

I thought I'd give Roger a try. Not hearing back, I decided to attempt a scratch-built model. At that time, my plan renderings seem to be in large scale but not sure which. I did some online research and discovered they were published in the railroad's historical society's booklet called *Milwaukee Road's Steel Caboose* by Jeff Kehoe. I knew I had the book, and after searching the house for a week, I found it. There it was in amongst unopened boxes of videos, magazines and books stored in our garage since we moved to a new home eight years ago.

I had done a prescient job, a decade ago. I had enlarged the renderings of both sides, and the roof to 1/29 scale with measurements confirmed by the book that provided all the relevant dimensions. That opened the door to looking to USA Trains ([charlesro.com](http://charlesro.com)) and Bachmann ([bachmanntrains.com](http://bachmanntrains.com)) for suitable parts.

This is the background. I'll let pictures and captions tell the rest of the story.



The body's base is styrene with U channels on both sides. Most of the underframe is from USA Train's (USAT) Bay Window Caboose. The casting includes the steps and truck bolsters however, there is no brake rigging provided on that model. Because the AB brake system is highly visible in the center, the brake parts came from USAT's flat-car underframe. The Bettendorf trucks are USAT and the metal wheels are Bachmann's. The castings from USAT are not compatible with my plastic cements requiring the use of Walther's Goo, and like most of the rest of the model...screws are used to ensure a solid model.



Here is a close-up of the painted and weathered underframe. In the previous picture you'll notice I chose Kadee 831 truck-mounted couplers with a large offset. I did this not wanting to mount a coupler box directly to the see-through tread between the stairs. The tradeoff is that USAT trucks have a low mounting bar to suit their proprietary couplers.



The cabin assembly is made of Styrene. Because of the cutting required for doors and windows, the walls are laminates of thin Styrene sheets. The small black piece, upper right of the door is made of Plastruct square rod and drilled from above to create a snap-in holder for the ladder.



This is a railing test. The body was taped to the platform. Holes were drilled in the end stations (Plastruct square rod) and the brackets on the body. Some minor revisions were necessary.





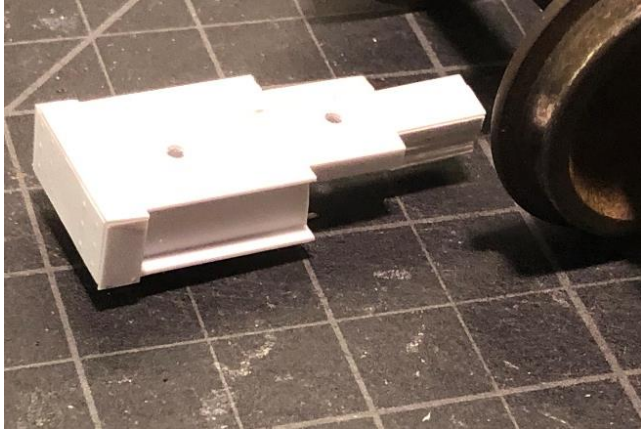
Here is the painted body. One departure from prototype is the small hinges in the upper corners. There was a time when I needed two small doll-house hinges for another project, but the minimum order was 100. So, from my plentiful inventory, I decided to create fold-out red markers signaling the rear direction.



The finished model with light weathering and decals applied. The roof has a smoke stack (USAT), a small vent, roof walks (USAT) and distinctive roof railings. There's one problem. The truck-mounted couplers are hidden because of the length of the porches.



So, a bridge between the couplers and the bar from the truck had to be created. Here (in white) it is being tested to a Kadее height gauge. Prototype photos show the bar from the underframe is heavy-duty steel and muscular. Here the solution looks anemic.



To create a more muscular looking coupler extension, more Styrene was used to clad the original.



The final result with extended couplers. The end castings, with brake wheels, are what USAT calls "Bay window caboose ladder assembly". I moved the ladders to the caboose body.



Here's the caboose crossing Humboldt Avenue on my layout.