

Greyhound's Response to the Dome Car



Model Railroad News

The All-Scale News Monthly

**Athearn's
Genesis
GP38-2
Southern
Style**



**MTH's
HO Scale
GP35
Phase II**

**Kato's N North American Suburban Station Kit
Easy Benchwork by Model Railroad Benchwork
Central Valley's HO Northern Pacific Flat Car Kit**

Volume 19, Issue 3 • March 2013
\$5.99 US/CANADA



Classic B&O Caboose arrives in new fully assembled HO

Spring Mills Depot HO B&O I-12 Wagontop Caboose

Review and Photos by Tony Lucio
Additional photos by MRN Staff

HO scale B&O Wagontop Caboose
Prepainted Ready-to-Run
MSRP: \$59.99
Undecorated Kit, MSRP: \$49.99

Available schemes:

Baltimore & Ohio (red, 1941-45)
6 road numbers

B&O "Linking 13 Great States" (red,
1955-62) - 6 numbers

B&O pool service (blue & yellow,
1965-69) - 6 numbers

Chessie System (1973-83+) - 6
numbers

Spring Mills Depot
PO Box 1616
Spring Mills, MD 21158
www.smd.cc



DURING the Great Depression, enterprises far and wide reckoned with declining fortunes, and Baltimore & Ohio was not immune. Lean revenues and stretched ledgers meant B&O could not afford the wholesale cost of desperately needed new equipment and other capital investments. With a specter of deferred maintenance and investment threatening to pressure revenues even more, leaving payrolls with less to do (or risking revolt by trimming already-skittish ranks outright) would only compound the downward spiral. Challenging situations require creative solutions, and in all of railroading there are few as inventive as what B&O's Chief Mechanical Engineer John Tatum drafted in 1934.

Extreme resourcefulness using worn old parts recycled and recast in



Sometimes simple is beautiful, although most people probably don't have a caboose in mind to make this point. But why not? Wagontop caboose not only wear functional form on steel sleeves with aplomb, but B&O's striking use of Royal Blue and Yellow for its pool service cabooses, accented by white lettering and contrasting safety gear, is a study in demure repose.

the road's Cumberland, Maryland, Shops birthed an experimental boxcar design, erected using custom-made metal "hoops" attached to underframes sourced from derelict wood-sheathed boxcars. Single panels of sheet metal were bent, draped, and riveted in place between the hoops

to form the carbody, followed by the addition of interior fittings, running gear, and safety appliances. The round, ribbed roofs on resulting cars had a distinctly unusual appearance resembling a covered wagon, thrusting the name "Wagontop" into celebrated chapters of railroad lore. The cars were strong, yet lightweight with superior water resistance and an excellent capacity-to-tare ratio. Most importantly, Wagontop boxcars were quickly, cheaply, and easily built using resources and available manpower B&O already had at its disposal. More than 2,000 Wagontop boxcars were soon built at four different shops, and similar numbers of Wagontop covered hoppers were quickly developed and built during the same period.

Almost immediately after the boxcar experiment proved successful, shop forces adapted the same con-

cepts to a new caboose design. It made natural sense to apply the economies of Wagontop construction to non-revenue cars, but Wagontop caboose did not lack for unique innovations of their own — the design introduced bay windows to the B&O. Shop personnel constructed the first handful in

1935 and 1936 with the classification I-5. Improvements and enhancements reclassified the design to I-12, and 100 of these built in Keyser, West Virginia, roamed the system by 1941, with 25 more joining the ranks in 1945. While the group might have lacked quantity, quality was not lacking. The I-12's short stature (just 30 feet long) and stout construction made it especially preferred for helper/pusher cut-off service, and many had specialized cut bars and other hardware installed for this purpose. B&O's I-12 models were rebuilt, upgraded, and survived well into the 1970s and Chessie System Era (where the classification went from I-12 to I-18). The fleet exited service in the mid-1980s proving to be a good investment for Baltimore & Ohio with four decades of service to the road. This legacy as an oddly innovative yet

You don't need to be a B&O fan to appreciate what's been accomplished here; all you need do is take a look and let your own jaw drop.



Consider the intricacies a more robust palette offers: beyond Chessie's familiar yellow and blue, we have the always-enigmatic Vermilion, plus silver (roof, lanterns, window frames), black (COTS and ACI stencils, window gaskets), red (ACI tags, reflectors, lantern lens), white (ACI and COTS data), and green (lantern lens). Totalling eight colors, plus painstaking masking and contrast around the platform and step edges, handles, grabs, and draft gear, the paint work on Spring Mills Depot's Chessie Wagontop caboose is easily one of the most obsessively intricate achievements ever offered on an HO-scale release. It's not a model, but 3D art — and a bargain at that!

resoundingly beneficial experiment has made the Wagontop one of B&O's most exclusive and endearingly iconic symbols. Therefore, it's no surprise Spring Mills Depot (SMD) chose the celebrated Wagontop caboose for its second HO-scale rolling stock offering.

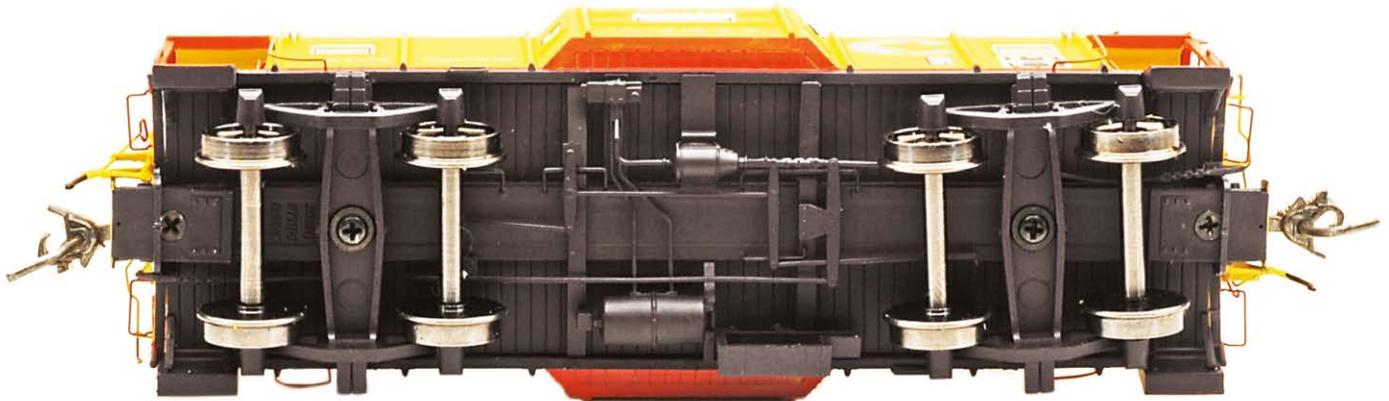
Astonishment Aboard!

This unbelievably detailed plastic model can easily stand up to and perhaps surpass even recent brass examples. Bodywork of spot-on scale dimensions is saturated with fine rivetwork along the seams while side panels display an accurate thickness thanks to prototypical depth at the sills. The fully plumbed underframe is embossed with wood-flooring construction, and windows

are a tight flush fit. SMD replicated even B&O's unique slotted steps. As if that weren't enough, era-specific details abound in accordance with the various schemes used on I-12s in service over the years. You'll find different side marker lanterns (impeccably rendered with tiny green and red lens detail included), smokejacks (with guy wires!), roof walks, corner grabs, line-facing bay windows, and upgraded hardware including side vents, reflector panels, toilet tanks, and battery boxes as added in Pool Service and Chessie System Eras. SMD provides these last two versions with separate vandal screens and safety lights as options for you to use if desired since many (but not all) I-12s eventually received these features. The

only notably missing item I can think of is the wipers on the narrow bay windows. They're funny things to see on a caboose, yet typical of an I-12. Then again, at least SMD left something for the enthusiast to do, right? Speaking of something to do, SMD also offers this caboose as an undecorated kit with all the above included, allowing the modeler to construct examples to suit their whims.

The platform end frame, railings, and hardware are superbly rendered in reasonably durable plastic while the ladder rungs, sill and end grabs, and roof access rails are metal wire. The use of wire results in some loss of fine fastener detail, but is a welcome trade-off considering how fragile these parts would



Underframe fanatics will be pleased to indulge their inner plumber with the details under the floor — everything is there, including battery boxes and toilet tanks where appropriate per prototype.

be rendered in styrene. As it stands, with the exception of the smokejack, the detailing on this caboose is surprisingly durable. Most importantly, the parts are all painted, cleanly installed, and straight! Another mix of plastic and wire supplies brake, warning, and unique helper/pusher service uncoupling hardware, which is especially interesting to view on the model.

The model is constructed with a plastic carbody screwed to the chassis. Operating hardware consists of metal Kadee No. 5 couplers and custom-tooled trucks equipped with metal wheelsets all in gauge. Spring Mills Depot's Wagontop caboose weighs three ounces and covers trackage reliably and smoothly.

Painting Particulars

The earlier B&O schemes are sharply demure, and our B&O pool service sample has a beautifully simplified scheme of dark blue with yellow ends and smartly contrasting grabs and steps. Earlier red schemes offered by SMD feature correctly contrasting window sashes in green and other color details (as well as herald variances) where appropriate to properly represent respective eras.

With its sometimes tricky stripe masking, color layering, herald alignment, and invocation of an enigmatic pinkish-orange Vermilion hue, tricolor Chessie paint schemes have long been the bane and downfall of many vendors. Fortunately, Spring Mills Depot pulls Chessie System livery off nicely. The blue sill and silver roof are separated from the yellow carbody by a crispy-thin Vermilion band, which remains laser-straight as it spans the bay window contours. The Ches-C herald is registered



Veteran I-12s were forced to don the necessary evil of vandal screens near the end of service careers. Not all were equipped simultaneously, so Spring Mills Depot provides laser-etched screens (and the end signals favored by Chessie) as options. The screens certainly add visual interest. Note that the parts are provided to model the bay window screens as either closed or open.

smooth and level... she's sleepy but not rocky or droopy. Paint application is smooth and even, devoid of runs and excessive thickness, where color layers might meet and overlap, which is always a welcome sign of a great model. Other notable paint touches include contrasting step edges, grabs, and railings, blue platforms and end doors, and sharp lettering and data. Even the COTS stencils are road-specific with authentic B&O shop data!

My only nit is a rather subjective pick concerning that infamous Vermilion. When fresh, the color had a vivid day-glo quality that is evident in photos, but difficult to describe or replicate. While SMD's color is thankfully not the blasé orange-red or daylight-orange that's "close enough" on many models, to my eyes it favors the dark end of the spectrum as it would appear after oxidizing in service for a time. However, I also detect a hint of pink, so perhaps the timeless debate merely continues on this color.

State of the Art

About the only thing missing from this caboose is an interior and/or lighting option, but I personally can live without those if it helped make the model more feasible to market. As a follow-up to its Canstock car, Spring Mills Depot's I-12 Wagontop caboose is an incredible sequel that continues a high standard. B&O enthusiasts are fortunate indeed to have museum-quality models of distinctive cars available at relatively affordable prices, and I expect it won't be long before fans of other eastern roads swamp SMD with pleas to switch allegiances. You don't need to be a B&O fan to appreciate what's been accomplished here, all you need do is take a look and let your own jaw drop.

Stepping into the HO Spotlight...

BLUFORD SHOPS
www.bluford-shops.com

Five new bay window and transfer cabooses coming ready-to-run with tons of detail painted for: MP, UP, L&N, CRR, INRD, SBD, MP-UP MOW green, CR, IHB, GTW, AMTK, KCS, GN, NYC, RI, PC, CGW, MKT, Southern, N&W, MON, ICG, EL, C&E1, GB&W, B&O and SP. Pre-order from your hobby shop. See our website for more!
PO Box 152 Bluford, IL 62814 ph. 618-822-6833 www.bluford-shops.com

Whistle Stop Trains
Your Complete Model Railroad Store

❖
All Scales — Z through G
New and Used
We Buy and Consign Collections

❖
Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-5, Closed Sunday
11724 SE Division Street • Portland, OR 97266
Phone: 503-761-1822 • Fax: 503-761-1861
Web Site: wsor.com