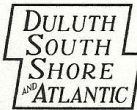


Secondhand Hacks for the South Shore

BY CARSON WILDER



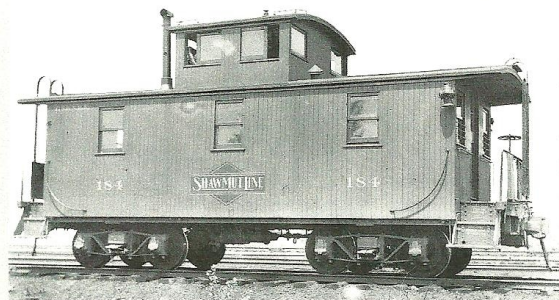
In 1947, the Duluth, Shore Shore and Atlantic Railway purchased seven secondhand wooden cabooses from the Hyman-Michaels Company of Chicago, IL. How these seven cabooses came to the South Shore is an interesting story in itself.

Following an increase in traffic levels after the end of WWII, the DSS&A was in the market for used cabooses. The moribund Pennsylvania coal hauling Pittsburg, Shawmut and Northern had nine cabooses for sale. All were of wood construction with steel underframes and were built by the Russell Car and Snow-Plow Company of Ridgeway, PA in 1913. After a 42-year period of receivership, the old and weary PS&N was finally shut down in early 1947 and its meager assets put up for liquidation. The Hyman-Michaels Company was charged with tearing up the bankrupt railroad and selling its assets.

What makes the selling of these cabooses to the DSS&A a unique situation was a railroad in process of liquidation (the PS&N) selling assets to a railroad in receivership (the DSS&A).

In answer to an inquiry about used cabooses made in March of 1947, a letter from Rodney Pennoyer of Hyman-Michaels was sent to the DSS&A advising them that nine PS&N caboose were newly available for the bargain basement price of \$2,2250 each, shipped from a point near Pittsburgh, PA.

The DSS&A, which had looked into the possibility of purchasing new steel cabooses, responded by sending Master Mechanic Dunneback to carefully inspect the PS&N hacks. Apparently Mr. Dunneback was satisfied with these cabooses, because the DSS&A offered to buy seven of the cars for \$15,750, which was about 35 to 40% of the cost



PS&N no. 184 (later DSS&A/Soo no. 591)—Photo courtesy of the Pittsburg, Shawmut & Northern Railroad Historical Society.

for a like number of new steel cabooses. Armed with the permission of the District Court of the United States for the District of Minnesota, and the DSS&A's receivers, Messrs. Soletner and Whitman, a sale was consummated in May 1947.

Upon arrival in Marquette, MI, the seven cabooses were numbered 590 through 596 and all but three (nos. 592, 593 and 594) were shopped in preparation for use in transfer service at Sault Ste. Marie and Houghton, MI. Following a flurry of complaints from South Shore crews about their hard riding qualities and general poor condition, cabooses 592-594 were eventually shopped as well.

With the 1961 creation of the "new" Soo, these cabooses retained their DSS&A numbers but eventually acquired new Soo Line logos, and in some instances, complete paint jobs. Interestingly, at least two of these cabooses survive today.

ture, and everyone was amazed when all the equipment began to move almost at the same time, yet there seemed to be no one in charge. The crane pulled into place, and the truck carrying the caboose wheelsets pulled up beside it. The crane lifted the trucks, one at a time, and gently set them on the section of track. Someone then came to us and asked "can you get a welder here to weld steel blocks on the rail before we set the caboose?"

As often happens in a small town, someone got on their cell phone, called the area welder, and he arrived in less than ten minutes and welded the necessary blocks on the rail. Then, like clockwork, the crane began to move again, and everyone worked together to hook up the spreader bars. Soon the caboose was swinging gently in the air. Men from all three companies worked together to get the caboose properly lined up with the donuts, and in just a few minutes the caboose was lowered in place. It was a very exciting time for our community and a cheer went up from the crowd. It wasn't much more than 20 minutes later that the depot/museum parking lot was totally empty of trucks and the job had been completed.

On June 4th, our restoration team began the work on the exterior of the

caboose. This caboose, originally built for the Pittsburgh, Shawmut and Northern Railroad, had been scraped and primed a light gray by a Boy Scout troop many years ago, so it was going to take some work to give it a real Soo Line makeover. We received great advice from Les Kruta of Lake Shore, MN, who restored a much older Soo Line caboose. When Les sent us photos of his beautiful caboose, we decided that his was the finished appearance we would aim for.

The first thing our team did was to examine the roof. In general, it seemed to be in good shape; it was metal rather than the asphalt or fabric we were told to expect. A fairly severe rain told us where the leaks were, and they were quickly repaired, sealed and coated when the entire roof was done. The windows were in good shape, so the next job they tackled was to scrape the exterior, caulking any holes or cracks that might prove troublesome in the future. When that was completed, a new primer coat was applied that had been tinted with red. This gave our caboose a light coral color, and many people stopped by to ask if that was to be the final color!

Almost all of the grab irons could be removed, and they were stripped with paint stripper, sanded with steel wool,

wiped with mineral spirits and then painted bright yellow. All of the other metal was cleaned and scraped and repainted a glossy black. The trucks were power washed with a cleaner, then scraped where necessary and spray painted with a glossy black rustproof paint.

One of our team is a carpenter, and he built a 4-foot wide ramp of treated wood running the full length of the backside of the caboose. This ramp allows visitors to walk in one end of the caboose and exit out the other, which should prevent traffic jams inside.

It took two tries to get the correct Soo Line color, with advice from Les Kruta. The first red we tried gave the caboose a reddish-blue cast, which didn't look quite right, and this new coat has a more red-orange cast, which our Soo Line visitors seem to approve of. As far as numbering, lettering and applying the Soo Line logo to each side of the caboose, Les Kruta introduced us to "pouncing," which means creating tiny holes in your pattern, then placing it on the side of the caboose and softly beating it with a pounce pad filled with a white chalky powder, thus leaving a white outline. When Ken Sorros of the SLHTS sent us all the proper sized lettering, numbers and Soo Line logo, along with the proper distances from the bot-