Western Pacific Railroad 484

Steel Bay Window Caboose

WP 484 represents the Western Pacific's final order for cabooses. While boasting the latest accessories when it was built, overall the 484 is very similar to the first steel cabooses the WP acquired 25 years earlier. You can compare it to Western Pacific 428 in our collection, a member of this first order from 1955.

There are some differences, however. Unlike the railroad's other steel cabooses, which used a common design, WP 484 and her 5 sister cars were based on a Souther Pacific Railroad design and were built following a big order for the WP's main rival.

The "bay window" caboose was developed in the early 1920's, reported on the Akron, Canton and Youngstown Railroad in Ohio. Crews found that the bay windows allowed them to view farther up the sides of the train, making it easier to spot problems such as dragging parts or derailed wheels. It also proved to be a safer design. A caboose, being at the very end of a train, is subject to bone-jarring "slack action", caused when the slack in each coupling between cars is taken out as the train starts moving. By the time to slack runs out at the caboose, the cars is often jerked forward, throwing unwary crew members out of their seats. If thrown from a tall cupola, the result was often serious injury.

Western Pacific was an early convert to the bay window design, building their first version in 1942. The Southern Pacific debuted bay windows in 1949 and both railroads stayed with the design. In contrast, fellow California railroad Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe remained with the cupola design until the end of widespread caboose use.

The 484 was retired in June 1988, only 8 years old. WP 486, the final caboose in the order, was also the last WP caboose in service, retired by the Union Pacific in April, 1993.

builder
International Car Co.

built
May,1980

type
Steel Bay Window

length
37' 0" overall

original cost
$181,538.00

operating weight
49,500 lbs

acquisition
donated by Union Pacific