

A.C.&Y. H.S.

News

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A&BB's 8-Wheel Caboose

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Front cover: A&BB caboose 2 in September 1969 at Barberton appears just prior to retirement. A center cupola has been added. Idle for at least a year, the car is in obvious need of end platform repairs and fresh paint. A&BB 1 and 2, both former PRR cabins, had a facinating history, a story nicely told by our Tom Davidson. (*John Beach*)

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Publications Associate Editor

Bob Lucas

Webmaster and Digital Publications Editor

Robert Peacock

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Editorial

From the Editor . . .

This issue's lead story entitled "Eight Wheel ex-PRR Cabooses of the Akron and Barberton Belt" is a welcome consequence of our Society Morning Sun book project. In an effort to faithfully document non-revenue equipment belonging to the A&BB, substantial new information surfaced on the several unusual cabooses employed by the Belt Line. Throughout 2013, Tom Davidson, Rich Burg, Ed Kirstatter, Bill Hanslik, Jr., Ralph Carris, Roger Durfee, Doug Edwards, Bob Johnson, and historians from the PRRHTS were able to better characterize the history of these cabooses; in particular, the colorful history of A&BB wood cabooses number 1 and 2.

While our News magazine has migrated to an online venue, we welcome new material and articles related to the AC&Y, A&BB and affiliated railroads of Ohio.

Society Archive

From the Archive Committee . . .

The AC&Y HS Archive collection of photos, financial records, documents, maps, drawings and track diagrams is both impressive and invaluable. We underscore the importance of archival preservation and assure all that decisions regarding our historical materials will continue to be for the benefit of present and future generations. All AC&Y items are significant: newspaper accounts, documents, photographs, negatives, forms, records and personal remembrances. Help us continue to uncover and preserve the history of a fascinating little railroad!

As most are aware, the Society had a secure facility in Akron to house these remarkable records plus our other assets. However, given the migration of the Society to an open membership (no dues) structure and fixed costs for our leased space, we have exercised placement of the bulk of the Society collection at the University of Akron Archive, a professional archive repository. Most of the records, namely sixty boxes or AFE's, were relocated in January. We will continue to provide additional historic materials to the University of Akron throughout 2014 and will also discuss funding for specific joint projects to enhance the collection.

Society Book

From the Publications Editor . . .

As many know, AC&Y HS is working with Morning Sun Books to produce a 128-page all-color publication covering the AC&Y and A&BB. The initial submission was highly praised. The final submission has just been made. We will update the book status on the Society website.

Eight-Wheel ex-PRR Cabooses on the Akron and Barberton Belt

By Tom Davidson



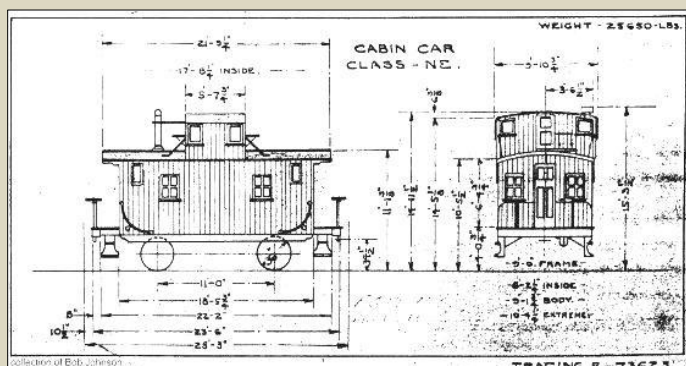
ABOVE: Presenting a handsome appearance at the Terminal in September 1962 is A&BB caboose 2 coupled to Baldwin S-12 number 27 and Ub appropriate Dow Chemical (GATX marked) tank car from a local industry. Caboose 2 is sans the center cupola of the same car seen in the later dated cover photo. While under PRR oversight for most of its history, the A&BB did not adopt the Pennsylvania Railroad's "cabin car" terminology. (John Beach)

Barberton Industrialist O. C. Barber was sure he would make a killing if he sold his railroads to the larger railroads serving the Akron - Barberton area. He bundled his three railroads into one, and on May 6, 1902, the brand new Akron & Barberton Belt Railroad Company emerged from the ashes of the Barberton Belt Line Railroad Company, the Cleveland, Barberton and Western Railroad Company, and the Barberton Akron and Eastern Belt Line Railway Company,

With the three railroads consolidated into one, Barber was ready to dangle them as bait in front of the noses of the Pennsylvania, Baltimore and Ohio, Erie, and Northern Ohio Railroads to see what they would offer. He rejected their initial offer of

\$500,000, suggested that \$2 million was a more realistic figure, and sent them packing, fully aware that they would be back. Back they came, and after a good deal of haggling they all arrived at a final price of \$1 million. Each of the four trunk line railroads then serving Akron and Barberton would own 25% of the A&BB. Barber didn't get the full million dollars because certain construction expenses were deleted from the final payment. He went to his grave believing the big roads had cheated him. He eventually learned that the new owners had bonded the property for \$3 million soon after the sale. Three years later, the new A&BB acquired the Barberton and Southern Railroad from the Columbia Chemical Company on April 26, 1905, bringing the A&BBRR to its eventual size.

There is very little information available to tell us about the A&BB's early days, much less those of its predecessors. Thomas T. Taber reports that the Barberton Belt Line's 0-6-0 no. 101 became A&BB no. 1, perhaps lasting as late as 1916; and he says A&BB had a locomotive no. 2, about which nothing is known. As for other early equipment, there is really not much other than speculation. It is known that at least one 4-wheel caboose was owned by the A&BB, and there is persuasive evidence that it may not have been the only one.



ABOVE: PRR 4-wheel "bobber" (Courtesy Bob Johnson)

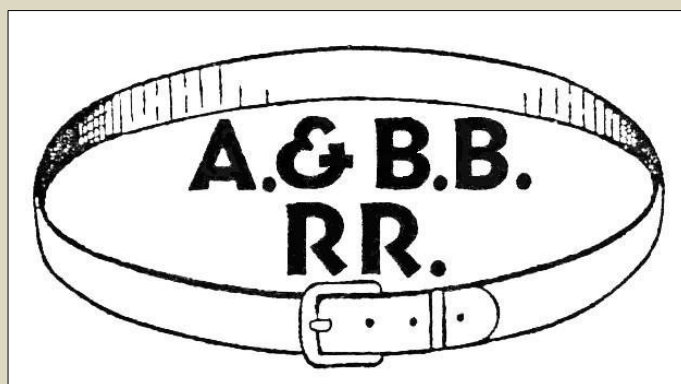
The first A&BB cabooses for which we have reliable documentation were 8-wheel cars purchased from the Pennsylvania Railroad. On the PRR, the term "caboose" was not used; that road called the cars "cabins", and it is appropriate to explain a bit about cabin car development on the PRR. At the beginning of the 20th Century, the standard cabins (or cabooses) on many railroads, including the PRR, were four-wheel "bobbies", so named because of their notorious instability, especially on rough track and/or at high speeds.



ABOVE: At Barberton in the mid-1930's is an ex-PRR N6A wide cupola cabin, working on the A&BB as caboose 102. The wreck car 1 is likely a vestige of a either a PRR or B&O bobber caboose which was the A&BB's number 99. Both cars were retired and off the roster by 1940. (Bob Lucas collection)

Larger, 8-wheeled cars were introduced on PRR's Lines West (of Pittsburgh) around the early 1900's in the form of class N6A, and proved their worth. The N6A's initially operated over the lines across Northern Ohio and Northern Indiana, where clearances were generous, so their noticeably wide cupolas presented no problems. When these cars began to migrate south to lines like the Panhandle route to St. Louis, with its many low and narrow tunnels, those wide cupolas began to get in the way, and it is said that a number of N6A's were seriously damaged before the railroad addressed the problem.

The solution was to build N6's with narrow cupolas like the ones on the Panhandle's 4-wheel NC and NE classes. Thus was born the N6B, which eventually became the road's standard wooden 8-wheel cabin car. PRR stretched the bodies and added steel under frames to many NC's and NE's to create 8-wheel N6A's and N6B's, and built hundreds more new N6A's and N6B's. Cupolas were invariably offset on the N6A's; but N6B's could be found with either offset or centered cupolas. The wide cupolas of the N6A's were generally recognized as a clearance liability, so many of them were eventually converted to N6B's. For the most part, N6A's were a rare breed by the end of the 1930's, and were believed to be extinct by the end of WWII



The first A&BB N6-series cabin for which we have records was the Pennsylvania Railroad's narrow-cupola N6B 980501, which became A&BB number 13 sometime between September 15, 1923 and December 31, 1927. This car had been out shopped (probably as a 4-wheeler) as cabin car number 995998 for the Cleveland Akron & Columbus (CA&C) which was a PRR Lines West subsidiary, at that Road's Mt. Vernon, Ohio Shops on May 22, 1905. It was rebuilt to an N6B cabin on August 14, 1915 at the same shop.



ABOVE: *Belt Line 100 shows its characteristic signature of an ex-Pennsy cabin car. It appears at Barberton in 1934 with truss rod flat 1, a curious non-revenue car on the A&BB's roster for which there is no data. Retired in 1940, records suggest A&BB 100 was caboose 13 between 1927 and 1929. Note the small window openings at either end used to access exterior marker lamps. (Robert W. Richardson – AC&YHS Archive Collection)*

Then on September 15, 1923 it was re-lettered for the parent Pennsylvania Railroad and renumbered 980501. The A&BB number suggests that there were probably other cabooses on the railroad at that time. One photo of this car indicates that she had PRR's characteristic narrow cupola and small "window" openings to allow trainmen access to the marker lamps from inside the car. Around 1929, this car was renumbered, becoming A&BB caboose 100. The marker light access windows were intact when the car was photographed by Bob Richardson in 1934. In August of 1929, the A&BB purchased two N6A's from the PRR, just in time to greet the Great Depression. The first had been built in April, 1905 as Class NE 4-wheel cabin 996222 for the PRR's Lines West subsidiary Pittsburgh Fort Wayne & Chicago (PFW&C) at that Road's Fort Wayne Shops. She was rebuilt and out shopped as class N6A on May 12, 1915, re-lettered to PRR on July 24, 1920, and renumbered PRR 980782 on July 27, 1921. The second car was built by the Fort Wayne Shops as PFW&C (Pennsylvania Lines) N6A 996277, and renumbered PRR 980821 on March 13, 1921. PRR 980782 became A&BB 101, and PRR 980821 became A&BB 102.

These two cars are both believed to have had the wide cupola that characterized N6A's. We have no photos of 101, but our one photo of 102 shows that the marker light access windows, as well as the principal side windows, were crudely patched over by about 1934. This does not look like a PRR modification. More likely, it was done by the A&BB. Belt Line caboose 102 was retired in November, 1939, followed by 100 and 101 in December of 1940.

For the next several years, until a few years after WWII, the A&BB evidently owned no cabooses at all. There has been a great deal of speculation surrounding A&BB's operations during that time. It has been suggested that the road may have borrowed cabooses (or, in the case of the PRR, cabins) from the four owning railroads. It has also been suggested that the road got by simply by relegating the train crew to the "doghouse" on the tender, or to the cramped PRR-designed cab of an A&BB 0-6-0. These doghouses had been installed around 1938. My source for this date is the Treptow photo, which shows a doghouse on freshly-shopped #15 on September 3, 1938.



ABOVE: During the Belt Line's "caboose-less era", A&BB train crews were afforded only the protection of a small tender doghouse. A&BB O-6-O number 15 with crew members on the tender deck is seen here at South Barberton in October, 1941. (Robert W. Richardson – Courtesy of the Denver Public Library)

The conductor, brakeman, and flagman would have endured a miserable, crowded existence in that case, and one wonders why they wouldn't just quit and hire on to the B&O, Erie, PRR, or AC&Y where conditions were more humane. After all, those roads needed all the help they could get during the war. It would also be interesting to know what the Unions had to say about that arrangement. Just how the conductor could do his paperwork in such conditions is baffling.



ABOVE: In January, 1947, the Belt Line reinstated cabooses on East Akron runs. A&BB O-6-O number 16, trailing a Pennsy N6B cabin and consist, is crossing over the B&O at River Street near Goodyear Plant 2. (Bob Richardson – Courtesy of Denver Public Library)

By January 10, 1947, the A&BB was using at least one PRR N6B cabin car, number 982228, on its freight trains. A Bob Richardson photo (above) taken at the Goodyear flyover on that date shows the cabin, still in Pennsy lettering, running westbound toward Barberton behind O-6-O number 16.

In May of 1948, the same number 982228 shows up as number 2 on the A&BB caboose roster; and a similar N6B, number 983044, appears as number 1. PRR 983044 had been out-shopped at the Fort Wayne Shops as four-wheel Grand Rapids & Indiana (GR&I, another PRR subsidiary) class NE cabin number 1861 on March 11, 1909. She was rebuilt into an eight-wheel class N6A on May 1, 1915, then re-lettered and renumbered PRR 983044 on July 15, 1921 at Grand Rapids, Michigan. At some unknown point in time, she lost her wide N6A cupola and became an N6B with a narrow cupola. The previously mentioned PRR 982228 had been outshopped as N6B number 998080 on an unknown date, at an unknown location, for the PRR's Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis (PCC&StL or "Panhandle" route). She was renumbered PRR 982228 at an unknown date and location. These two N6B's had offset, narrow cupolas and were virtually identical when they arrived on the A&BB, purchased for \$1500 each.

41751

COPY

Pittsburgh, March 9, 1948. 12-s

H. T. Cover:

The Akron & Barberton Belt Railroad Company was ordered by the Public Utility Commission of the State of Ohio to furnish a caboose in each freight train operated between Barberton and East Akron, to be endorsed on September 8, 1947:

The proprietary companies do not have any serviceable cabin or caboose cars that are available for rent or sale for this service.

In order that we can go into the market to purchase suitable equipment for this Company, will you please furnish me with the required number of sets of specifications for cabin car meeting the requirements of the State of Ohio, in order that we may request the Purchasing Agent to procure bids for the building of one and the building of two cabooses from outside manufacturers.

H.H.Haupt.

Copy to:
C. K. S.:

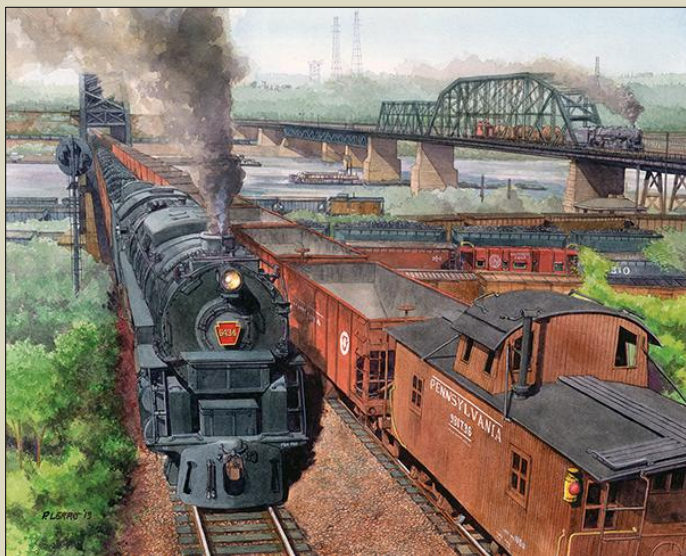
For appropriate attention.

March 11, 1948.(2d)

H.T. Cover.
H.T. Cover.

ABOVE: PRR was responsible for management of the A&BB during the late 1940's. Here, the State of Ohio has mandated use of a caboose on the Belt Line's trains to and from East Akron. (Courtesy of Rich Burg)

For the next several years, A&BB cabooses 1 and 2 went about their business without ceremony as A&BB's entire caboose roster. But disaster struck around in the early or mid 1950's when a fire broke out in number 2 in the vicinity of Firestone.



Trainman Ralph Carris was there, and reports that the fire was caused when wind blew through an open door and scattered hot coals from the car's coal-burning stove. Number 2 was uncoupled and the rest of the train was pulled away, preventing damage to a high-value load from Babcock & Wilcox in the next car; but number 2 burned right down to the frame. One might expect A&BB to look for a second-hand replacement for number 2, since old cabooses were readily available at the time; but the A&BB chose to rebuild number 2 with an entirely new body and a centered cupola that didn't remotely resemble her original offset cupola.

LEFT: *Monongahela Crossing in 1948 by Peter Lerro features a Pennsy N6b cabin.* (Courtesy Historic Rails)



ABOVE: *This 1950 photo of A&BB caboose 2 shows the car little changed from its original appearance as PRR N6b cabin 982228. You can see the Pennsylvania roadname lettering painted out.* (Courtesy Rich Burg)

Photos show that the original frame and trucks were used in the rebuild (of caboose 2), and the end platforms were essentially unchanged. Traditionally, it was believed that the sides and ends were sheathed in plywood; but more recent information indicates that sheet metal was used. The size, shape, and locations of the side and end windows were also substantially altered. The rebuild was reportedly performed by A&BB shop forces in Barberton.

Caboose 1 remained painted red. Caboose number 2 was painted red after rebuild based on a circa 1956 photo of her in rebuilt condition. A second black and yellow scheme came in 1958. No number was applied on her sides at any time after the rebuild.

At some point, probably around 1959, the cupola of the unnumbered "number 2" was removed. In later years the caboose 2 trucks were painted silver. She remained on the roster until being retired in 1972, mostly appearing in a colorful solid yellow scheme.

Number 1 also endured modifications during the 1950's. Her cupola was removed at some point and the roof patched over; but the original cupola location could be discerned if one looked hard enough. The car seemed to suffer from some structural integrity problems, as truss rods were applied on each side, evidently to square up the body. The truss rods ran diagonally from corner to corner, forming a large, elongated "X" on each side.

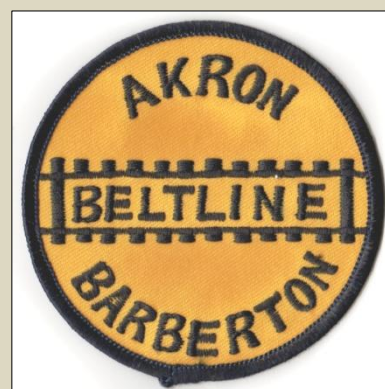


ABOVE: Here is caboose 1 in 1948, a year after being added to the roster. (Bob Richardson –AC&YHS Archive)



ABOVE: Seen sometime after the air resevoir stencil date of July, 1955, caboose 1 has lost her cupola and is now reinforced with tie rods in order to remain road worthy. (Michael Bradly collection)

By the mid-1960's, she was little more than a derelict behind the Barberton roundhouse, still in red, with her old Pennsylvania Railroad name and number peeking through the badly faded paint. It has been said that she may have lasted past 1970 before being scrapped. She was officially retired in 1962, but apparently remained on the property. A second number 1 would join the A&BB roster in 1977, a steel car of Canadian National origin, was purchased from the Lehigh Valley.

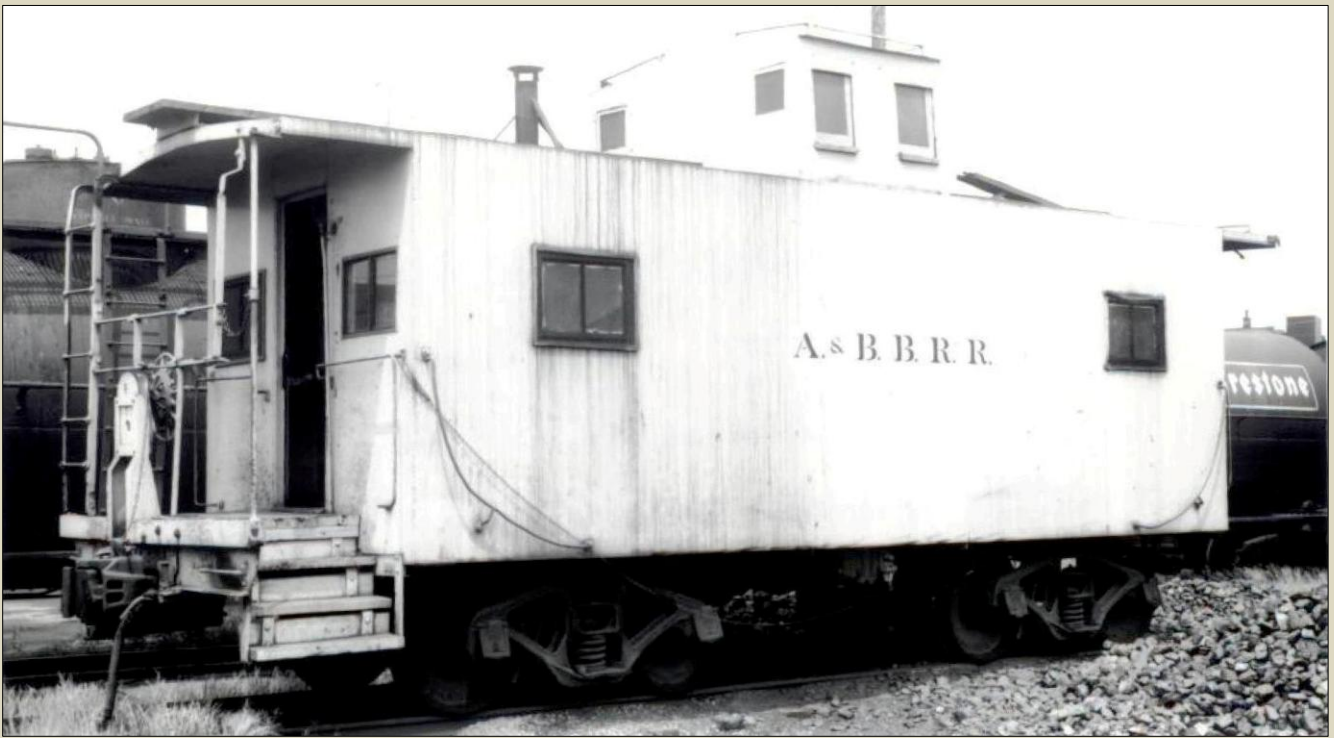




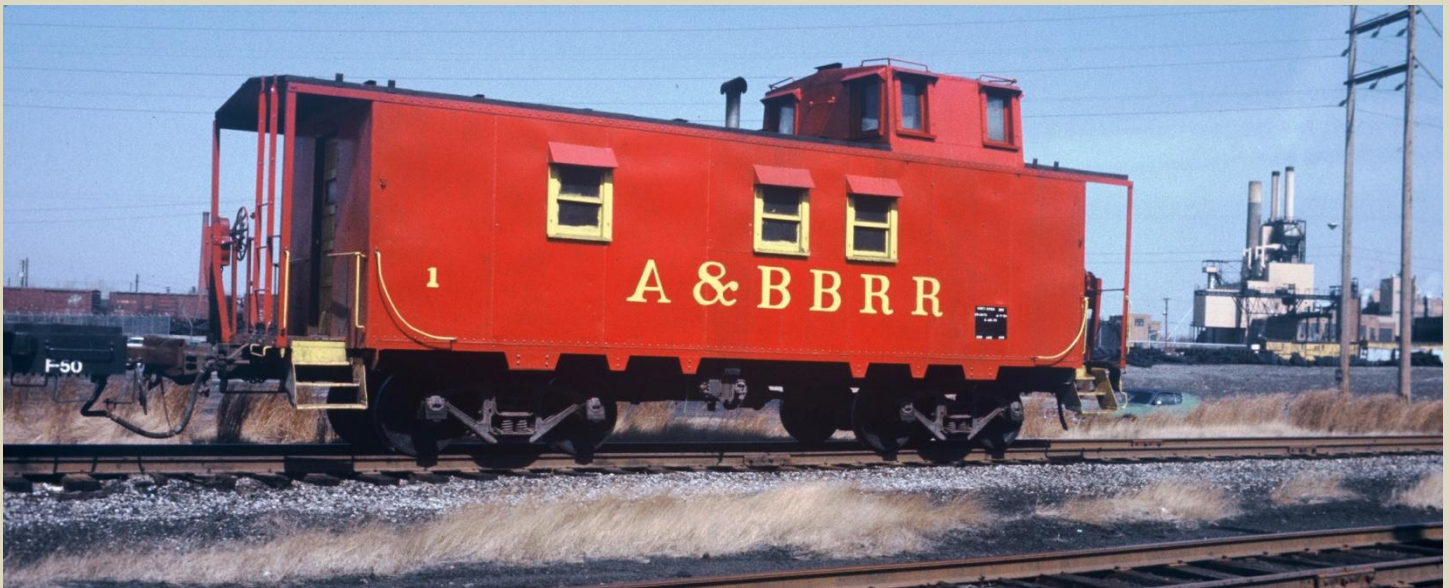
ABOVE: At Barberton about 1963 is the derelict A&BB caboose 1. The car also was an ex-Pennsy class N6B cabin number 983044 that came to the Belt Line in January, 1947. It apparently had structural issues at some point, serious enough that the A&BB backshop installed tie rods to keep the car squared up. Notice the Pennsylvania road name and number are still discernable behind the faded red paint. (John Beach)



ABOVE: Clearly well maintained and recently repainted, A&BB caboose 2 appears about 1962 at Barberton, most likely returning from an East Akron transfer run. Long thought to be plywood construction, personal accounts of A&BB trainman confirm caboose 2 was steel sheathed. (John Beach)



ABOVE: A&BB caboose 2 appears in the late 1960's with a center cupola. (*Michael Bradley collection*)



ABOVE: Second A&BB No. 1, a caboose of CN birthright, appears with fresh paint in 1977, evidence of the little road's proud and colorful legacy. (*Ed Kirstatter*)

FOOTNOTES / CREDITS:

1930 Poor's Manual of Railroads

Richard Burg and Bob Johnson, PRR Historians, generously provided information gleaned from their research.

Ralph Carris, former A&BB employee, personal recollections.

Roger Durfee and Doug Edwards, article in Railroad & Railfan magazine, 1984

ICC Records including 1923 Valuation Report, I.C.C. Docket 434 Pennsylvania Railroad Records, Pennsylvania State Archives, Equipment Retirement and Valuation Reports and the Renumbered Record Cards.

Bill Hanslik, Jr. and Ed Kirstatter, A&BB Historians, collaborated information from their records.

Thomas T. Taber contributed important contextual information on A&BB's early motive power.