

COLORADO & SOUTHERN CABOOSE #1006

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If one walks down the quiet streets of the mountain town of Silver Plume, Colorado, you will find many interesting pieces of history. Old mine tailings, churches, and other buildings mix with remodeled Victorian homes and bubbling Clear Creek as it makes its way through town. At the intersection of Woodward Avenue and Main Street, next to the rock wall bank of Clear Creek, sits an important piece of Silver Plume's – and Colorado's – railroad history. Lettered as "Colorado & Southern #1006", this diminutive railroad car is one of three remaining examples of the type of caboose used along the Colorado & Southern Railway (C&S) from the turn of the 20th century until the abandonment of the C&S narrow gauge lines at the end of the 1930's.

Caboose #1006 was originally built circa 1881 as Denver, South Park & Pacific car #72. The DSP&P came under Union Pacific control in 1881. After this the cabooses were built by the Union Pacific in the Omaha, Nebraska shops. Originally designated as a "waycar" (an older railroad term for caboose), the car was painted white or light yellow with dark lettering. These early cars had no air brakes or cupolas, and had link and pin couplers. The cars also featured an equalizer bar suspension which was located between the two axles. Figure 2 below shows what the caboose looked like in its original configuration. The exact date of this photo is unknown; however it is between the car's construction in 1881 and the renumbering in 1885.

Car #72, along with the other DSP&P waycars, was renumbered to a four-digit number. According to an 1885 roster, the cabooses were numbered 1500-1520, and kept these numbers when the DSP&P became reorganized as the Denver Leadville & Gunnison (DL&G) in 1889. When the Colorado & Southern Railway was formed in 1899, the cabooses were renumbered once again to series 303-314. The cars kept this number series for the next decade, until the C&S

re-numbered their cabooses for the final time in 1912, giving them the number series 1000-1011. DSP&P waycar #72 had become C&S caboose #308, and then C&S caboose #1006.

During the frequent re-numberings, the cabooses kept their original configuration as well as their original suspension and dimensions, as shown in Figure 2. Between 1908 and 1912, all of the cabooses were rebuilt to accommodate air brakes, knuckle couplers, and cupolas. Due to the space required by the air brake system, the equalizer bar suspension was removed during this rebuild and the axles were sprung independently of each other. The #1006 would keep this configuration and number for the remainder of its service life, traveling all over the Colorado & Southern's narrow gauge system. The caboose was used on the South Park Line from Denver to Como and Fairplay, as well as the Clear Creek Branch over the Georgetown Loop to Silver Plume. When the C&S decided to abandon their narrow gauge lines at the end of the 1930's, caboose #1006 was chosen to be donated to the Town of Silver Plume. The car was left in Silver Plume sitting on wood blocks as shown in Figure 3.

Caboose #1006 has been on display in the Town of Silver Plume since it was left by the C&S in 1939, and has been repainted at least twice in that time. Today, the caboose features both lettering schemes that it wore while in service on the C&S. The side of the car that faces to the south features the block style lettering used on freight cars circa 1910. The side of the car that faces to the north features the newer "button" herald used during the later years of C&S operations. The caboose is located in a small park in the center of Silver Plume, next to the small town hall.

Sources

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