

Tour de Cooch, 2003 by Dan Pawling, Sr.

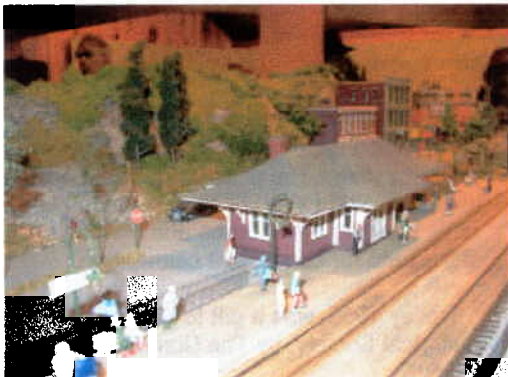


Ernie Poole layout was part of the Tour de Cooch. Here he is showing his layout to the visitors.



Bob Leavitt's HO layout in Reading, MA

Thanks to the 18 participants who made their home layouts available for viewing on 11/29 and 30. Special thanks to Bill Borrelli for assembling the maps for the tour and to Bruce Robinson for mailing them out. We hope that the ads in the model railroading literature brought a significant increase in visitors. Although we were able to see only four of the layouts on the Saturday, we were thoroughly impressed with the skill, craftsmanship, originality of the layouts and the welcoming geniality of the hosts and operating crews. Awesome!!! For example, two photos of Bob Leavitt's HO layout in Reading, MA, are attached. Incidentally, some of the Northeast Ntrakers we met were Chuck Tremblay, Roland Kelley, Peter Wisniewski and Ernie Poole. We are sorry that Bill Berrolli was unable to have visitors due to illness. We hope for his quick recovery to good health. Our greetings to those whom we missed.



Bob Leavitt's HO layout in Reading, MA

RED BIRDS SHIPPED OUT FOR BURIAL AT SEA
story by Dan Pawling, Sr.

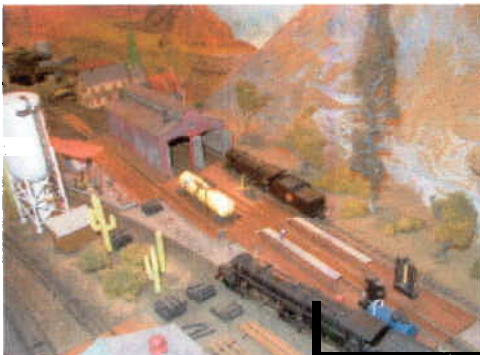
"Red Birds" were being shipped out on November 10, 2003 to be buried at sea. That's when I saw them stacked high on a barge being pushed along the Harlem River towards the Hudson River.

I was on an early train heading north on the Hudson Line to Poughkeepsie. I was checking the sights along the way and was surprised to see an ice-breaking type Coast Guard ship also heading north on a usually little used stretch of water. Then, coming into sight was the monster load on the barge and its tug moving slowly towards the narrow opening of the Spytten Duyvil swing bridge.

Then I remembered the deal made by the NJ DEP and the NYC Transit Authority for the 250 obsolete R-36 class subway cars. After the cars had been stripped of contaminants, 50 would be sunk in each of 5 already established artificial reef zones off the NJ coast. The artificial reefs have been found to increase marine life and result in improved commercial and recreational fishing.

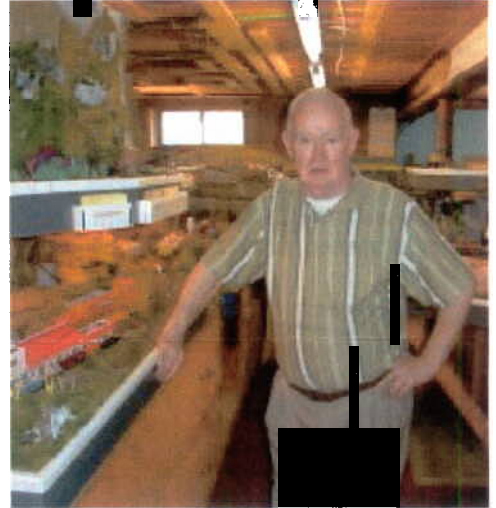
Apparently the 40-year old cars were prepared at the Transit Authority's large yard at the north tip of Manhattan. It being on the Harlem River, I think it is the only yard from which the cars could be directly loaded onto a sea-going barge.

"Red Birds? In the '60's the R-36 cars were painted light blue and teal and serviced the World's Fair station in '64 and '65. Their light colors made them a great target for graffiti artists. The official response was to paint the cars red --- hence the name "Red Birds." Rest in Peace - you served us commuters well.



Matt Sheedy's N-scale layout on the 2003 Tour de Cooch.

Matt Sheedy's N-Scale "Mountain Junction and Southern" Photos by Dan Pawling, Jr; Story by both Dan's



Matt's layout was one of several that we visited on the 2003 Tour de Cooch. We were pleased to see Chuck Tremblay there as an assistant to the host. Matt had a layout in 1974 and then started construction on this current one in 1984. Operations started in 1986.

Here are some fast facts, which we admit do not give the full flavor of the railroad. Presently there are 260 feet of mainline track with another 206 feet of branchline on the upper level. Each level operates independently, although there is a connection between the two. The track is Atlas code 80. There are 188 turnouts. Four towns with industry are on the mainline; there are eight towns on the branch. The number of car spots varies from town to town. We did not ask how many, but it seemed that a 7-person crew would be plenty busy during an operating session. Matt prefers to remain in DC and to use Rapido couplers. The trains were running flawlessly during our visit.

That is Matt in one picture. The Headquarters building stands in front of the dispatchers panel. Train schedules and car cards have been lettered by hand - the sure touch of an expert draftsman. This precision is also seen in the scratchbuilt structures and many detailed scenes on the layout. Thanks Matt for a most enjoyable and mind-expanding visit.