

EXPLORING THE NER:

A Road Trip to Ottawa & Montreal Area Layouts

by Bill Brown



One of the highlights was a visit to Mike Hamer's Boston and Maine RR, which was featured in the 2004 issue of *Great Model Railroads*.

All of us have seen the movies over the years — the guys heading out of town together for a ROAD TRIP! Many not-so-memorable flicks have chronicled the exploits of college buddies on spring break, or just recently those old guys heading to Vegas for a bachelor party. Regardless, road trips with “the boys” always end up with memories that last a long, long time. I have been lucky to have experienced this many times in my life. From two trips exploring rail sites in Colorado, or a day at Horseshoe Curve with evenings on the front porch at the Station Inn, all

have generated numerous funny stories that have been repeated over and over. As my good friend and travel buddy Bob Hamm always says, “those stories are mostly true... *mostly!*”

My latest “extravaganza” took place last fall as Martin Collard, Mike Shanahan, Mike Kendrick and I accepted an invitation from good friend Pierre (Peter) Desfosses to visit model railroad comrades in Quebec and Ontario. Our three day jaunt involved visits to 12 great layouts, some prototype rail-fanning, and a railroad museum; as well as an evening out in grand Old Montreal.



Our "Road Trip" group: Patrice Larose, Mike Shanahan, layout host Bill Scobie, Bill Brown, Mike Kendrick, Joe Lamarre, Yvéric Patry, Martin Collard, and our host Peter Desfosses (inset).

Although this trip was entirely for pleasure, my position as NER AP chair and a member of the Board causes me to reflect on the fact that this area north of the border is very under represented in the NMRA. The geographic areas we traveled are parts of both the Northeastern and Niagara Frontier regions. It occurs to me that the NMRA could benefit greatly by enhanced involvement with these super folks. We discovered that some really great modeling takes place during those

long and cold Quebec and Ontario winters.

Starting out for Ottawa from Syracuse, NY, we quickly discovered that our GPS unit did not list any Canadian addresses. A stop at a Walmart garnered a brand new unit. We met up with our host Peter, along with three of his "henchmen" who would travel with us for our three days of exploits. What an interesting group it turned out to be!

We quickly found that our escorts would have no trouble navigating our trip as Joe Lamarre led the way in his "Homeland Security Cruiser." Joe is a "Jack Bauer wannabe" who



Cars are spotted on Ophir Loop on Bill Scobie's Sn3 scale DRG&W layout, above, featuring rugged mountain scenery. At left, Christopher Lyons greets visitors to his HO scale Lyon Valley Northern Railroad. (Photos by Bill Brown)

equips police cruisers with all of that technology gear. His personal vehicle, consequently, was stocked with a police laptop, elaborate



radar detectors, police monitoring communication systems, sirens, and flashing beacons. We just followed Joe and reaped those travel benefits. Also tagging along was Yvéric Patry and his fantastic three wheeled motorcycle. Although we all were intrigued by his fun looking ride we had to wonder about spending that kind of money for a “play toy that can only get about four months of use per year! Rounding out our travel group was Patrice Larose; lets just say a very knowledgeable and true gentleman.

Our three day exploits through the Ottawa and Montreal areas were based in railroad explorations, but resulted in the nurturing of friendships that will span our border for a lifetime. We actually learned some French along the way as well. Our host Peter and our own Mike Shanahan seemed to be the target of everyone’s

constant ribbing. Yvéric described each as our “bouc émissaire,” which he says loosely translates to “whipping boy!” We also learned that a sign at the end of a street that says “Arret” in French means “Stop,” but if Peter is driving the translation really means “Slow Down Slightly”!!!

I recommend that if you get the chance (and if you have a wonderful and understanding spouse like I do), take the time to enjoy a trip like this with friends. You will talk about these great experiences for many a day to come, and those stories will at least initially be based in fact before getting “enhanced” over time!

I’ve included a list of the layouts we visited and links to photos so you can see some of the fine model railroading being done in Quebec and Ontario.

Photo links to layouts on our Quebec and Ontario visit

- Saturday – 1st stop: Pierre Lamontagne, Cornwall, ON; Pierre’s beautiful layout depicting his fictional version of the real Roberval and Saguenay Railroad.
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/q8k2v6ny40arlab/AAAWqTUi8m1Uxo5TM7yGEjspa?dl=0>>
- Saturday – 2nd stop: Mike Hamer, Ottawa, ON; Nicely detailed rendition of the B&M Railroad in a very tight bedroom. Unusual staging around the perimeter. Appeared in Great Model Railroads 2004.
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/el6m1ti9g29spyy/AADQlaZxB1XkJ7Blm7qCfQ0aa?dl=0>>
- Saturday – 3rd stop: Christopher Lyons, Ottawa, ON; The Lyon Valley Northern is an impressive modern day layout with big industries.
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xft552z1vs2dtqc/AABi2O_4Dm09BAku4WdauGYza?dl=0>
- Sunday – 1st stop: Bill Scobie, Ottawa, ON; Huge DRG&W elaborately scenicked Sn3 scale layout with so many rocks and trees and lots of trestles!
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1ctccqd9ja2hqov/AAD6zytqUhDeoZrYOIskNrifa?dl=0>>
- Sunday – 2nd stop: Michel Boucher, Gatineau, QC; Michel models the D&H Adirondack Branch and Sanford Lake Extension in the ‘70s. (Don’t derail a car in hidden sections!!)
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4s6vkho390rqs83/AADZKQciriGxIcebEH56WN-8a?dl=0>>

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Photo links to layouts on our Quebec and Ontario visit (continued)

- Monday – 1st stop: Michel Lapointe, Repentigny, QC; This layout is extremely well detailed right down to ensuring the Quebec signage is in French or bilingual!
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/knqfpzjo44t86yy/AABbd9Ka1ePHlvsOh2MxZ7Xba?dl=0>>
- Monday – 2nd stop: Vermont & Essex club, Montreal, QC; Huge club layout with a lot of Exceptional modeling. We appreciated our hosts' hospitality!
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/z86hzjnz7hlwq6/AAA3wIGd9R7iK3M7X-pQgHaHa?dl=0>>
- Monday – 3rd stop: Canada Central club, Montreal, QC; Huge layout under construction in a 40' x 60' room. (You'll need to log in to see Facebook page, then click on "photos.")
<<http://www.facebook.com/groups/243799762327208/>>
- Monday – 4th stop: Robert Robillard, Brossard, QC; Nice double deck layout set on the north shore of the St. Lawrence Seaway, featuring a big helix and storage room. (The link here features old photos taken in 2012. Lots of improvement since.)
<<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/27tu3ds0bu85xob/AAA8sGKGIEWFCrQmv-WPNGG8a?dl=0>>
- Monday – 5th stop: Exporail - Canadian Railway Museum, St-Constant, QC; One of the biggest (if not the biggest) railroad museums in Canada. There's a HO layout in there too!
<<http://www.exporail.org/en/welcome-to-exporail/>>
- Monday – 6th stop: Rémy Gagnon, Laprairie, QC; A modern layout laid in a way that uses all available space without compromising look and operations.
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/7s09xm4tp9zshpx/AABWWfOfuOaxsfXCgW-_Dln3a?dl=0>
- Monday – 7th stop: Michel Bonin, St-Constant, QC; Large Union Pacific layout where 40 to 50 car trains are the norm. Layout features about 800 cars and 150 locos in and under the layout (staging).
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mj6rlrbr39k7v6a/AACVtoaXbJU3qtSK3_WDXEtGa?dl=0>