

Railroad buffs down by station

By CAROL HASKIN

Johnny Mercer immortalized the Atchafalaya, Topoka and the Santa Fe and Glenn Miller rendered the Chattanooga choo choo unforgettable. In its own small way, the South Oakland County Model Railroad Club is doing the same for the Grand Trunk Western Detroit to Durand run.

The small way consists of a scale model of that stretch of track, complete with miniature replicas of the Port Street station in Detroit as well as the stations in Birmingham, Pontiac, Holly, Fenton, Gaines and Durand.

As any model railroader will attest, a model railroad is never finished. Members of the South Oakland club have been working on their model for 20 years now and modifications continue.

Part of the fun of the modifications is the expansion of reality. A few

short scale, miles from the Fort Street station, the track curves around towering pine-covered peaks that put Colorado to shame. In the same vicinity, Royal Oak has been gobbled up by a black gulleted tunnel.

TUNNELS AND GREENERY provide a creative outlet for those members who specialize in scenery. Working with screen covered with base paint, these artists fashion all manner of flora and an interesting environment in which to plant them.

Every member has a similar specialty. Some do benchwork, building the foundation on which the model rests. Others like trackwork — hand-laying the 50,000 wooden ties, plotting out the 220 turnouts and 22 crossings and hand-molding all the switches.

The 35-member club meets on Friday nights to do the nuts and bolts work necessary to maintain the model. But on the third Friday of each month, the club opens its operations to the public.

On those evenings, from 8 until 11 p.m., the club headquarters in the attic of the Birmingham Grand Trunk Western station is jammed with railroad enthusiasts from all over Oakland and Macomb counties.

SOMETIMES MORE THAN 11 trains are run on the one hour and 15 minute circuit. The scale trains observe a normal schedule in which they carry out business at each of the seven stations just as a real train would on an all-day trip from Detroit to Durand and back again.

The trains have a scale speed in excess of 100 mph, and accidents can happen. However, despite the current trend in disaster entertainment, accidents are never staged. As one member put it, "We're toying around with 100 locomotives."

Despite their obvious dedication to trains, most members haven't been working on the railroad all the live-long day but come instead from a variety of fields.

"Our members range from veterinarians to library aides," one member said. "We've had almost every kind of professional at one time or another."

MODELERS ARE TIRED of their creations being regarded as grown-up kids playing with toys. Model railroading has become a prestigious hobby, not to mention a good investment. Model trains, especially antique ones, have appreciated in value

tremendously in recent years, according to collectors.

While membership in the South Oakland County Railroad Club has stabilized at 35, members say there is a very large model railroad population in metropolitan Detroit. Model Railroad Club members number about 35,000 nationwide, but "Model Railroader," the field's primary publication, has over 100,000 subscribers, which gives a more accurate idea of the popularity of the hobby.

The South Oakland club welcomes anyone with an interest in model trains and a desire to work with them. Age limitations are set — junior members must be 14 years old and senior members at least 18. Junior members have the same privileges as seniors, except all their work must be supervised by a senior member.

Today trains of all kinds are undergoing a sharp rise in popularity. More and more people are shuffling off to Buffalo and sundry spots in lieu of flying friendly skies. On the small scale, trains have always been popular. A non-stop Munchkin special from Detroit to Durand taking only 10 minutes could elicit a sigh from any haggard commuter. Model railroading appeals to the Casey Jones in everyone.

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Good year for post office

It was a very good year for the Southfield postal service. Mailmen delivered 115 million pieces of mail to 32,000 customers.

The city has a new 50,000-square-foot post office at Eleven Mile and Lahser roads, with improved parking, nearly 800 post office boxes and a 24-

hour self-service postal center in the lobby.

Also new are 11 operating mailrooms in high-rise buildings in the city.

Postmaster Roy J. Murray commented, "With our improved operating facility we are able to give the residents and businesses of Southfield much better service at a lower cost to the postal service. We are pleased to offer our customers the opportunity of ordering their stamps by mail to eliminate needless trips to the post office."

"Soon our business customers will be able to have their postage meters set in their office by our employee. We are sure that our on-site meter setting program will be welcomed by the business community."

The Southfield Postal Service looks forward to and accepts the challenge of continued growth in the community for 1975.

Murray added, "We will endeavor to expand our program whenever possible for improvement of delivery and customer services."

Resident wins film award

SOUTHFIELD—Joseph L. Sattler, 18, of Southfield, won an honorable mention in the senior category of the 1974 Kodak Teenage Movie Awards. Sattler's film concerns a man who is haunted by his brother who believes he is a victim of fratricide. Sattler is a freshman at the University of Michigan at Dearborn.

WSU registration begins Jan. 3

Final registration for the winter quarter at Wayne State University will be held Jan. 3, 6 and 7. In the Administrative Services Building. Winter classes begin Thursday, Jan. 9.

Students may register in alphabetical order from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on each of the registration days. For further information call 577-3811.

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