

The 4th Division of the Pacific Northwest Region of the
National Model Railroad Association Presents

The Skagit Valley & Whidbey NMRA Clinic

Wednesday, November 9th

The third **SV&W Model Railroading Clinic** of the 2016-17 modeling season will meet at the Summer Hill location [165 SW 6th Ave] in Oak Harbor Wednesday, October 12th at 7:00pm for a clinic presentation by local model railroader entrepreneur Mark Malmkar.

The Branch Line from Nebraska

Mark will spend a few minutes and show a few photos from important layouts he was involved with in Nebraska. Four of the layouts included are his own, two from the railroad club and one the club assisted in building for the local children's museum. He'll sneak in a few photos of some of the models he built, both cars and structures.

The second section of the program will be discussion about his business, Plainsman Manufacturing, and outline how he started it and developed it. Samples of the products will be shown in photos, or passed around.



This is Palace Car Co kit #9501, shown with the Atearn car it fits. The seats inside this car are unique. Attend the clinic Nov 9 and he'll divulge the unique feature.

Once again, we will be meeting at **San Remo Mediterranean Grill** in Oak Harbor [421 NE Midway Blvd] for a pre-clinic dinner starting at 5:15 if you are interested. Come and meet your fellow model railroaders. San Remo has very good pizza, pasta and Spumoni!

On the calendar:

Nov 5-6, Vancouver, BC: Vancouver Train Expo 2016 is the reinvigorated 34th annual train show. Info:- www.vancouvertrainexpo.ca

Nov 12-13, Puyallup, WA: Great Train Expo at the Western Washington Fairgrounds, see <http://greattrainshow.com> for more information.

Saturday, Nov 12th: It's not that long (specially if you are reserving a table) until the annual **BEMRRRC Swap Meet**, held this year on Saturday, Nov 12th: <http://4dpnr.com/bemrrc-annual-swap-meet-on-saturday-nov-12th/>



Nov and Dec: The Northwest Railway Museum: Tickets for the **2016 Santa Train** are on sale. Trains will run

November 26 & 27, December 3 & 4, December 10 & 11 and December 16 & 17, 2016.

See www.trainmuseum.org for more information.



Jan 14-16, 2017, Seattle, WA: Pacific Science Center Show. This is the 4th Division's major fund raiser of the year! See <http://4dpnr.com/pacific-science-center-show/> for information about helping and/or attending.

Jan 21-22, 2017, Puyallup, WA: World's Greatest Hobby Tour. See <http://wghshow.com/sea2017/> for all the information!

Feb 25-26, 2017, Monroe, WA: United Northwest/4H Train Show. This is the biggest show of the year in the Northwest - make plans now to attend or even get a table for you and friends. See <http://www.unwclub.org/unwshow.html> for the scoop!

Our "sister" clinic, the Mount Vernon Model Railroad Clinic, meets every second Thursday at the Mount Vernon Senior Center at 1401 Cleveland Street. November 10th, Ted Becker will cover "Sticky Stuff", a clinic on glues and tape. We'll also kick off a recurring segment on "My Workspace" wherein a clinic attendees are invited to describe in words, pictures and possibly examples where they model. Contact Al Carter (360-399-1226 / tabooma@msn.com) for further information.

"We have a Yahoo Groups page for our use and sharing of information. It is the Skagit Valley and Whidbey Model Railroading group or "sv_and_w". The links below will take you directly to the group. In order to post you must have a Yahoo account which is simple to set up.

This is a private group that is not open to the public, it is designed for club use only.

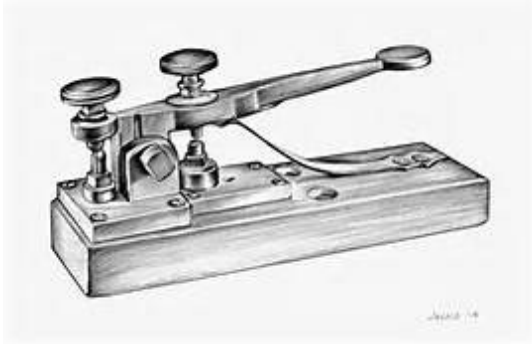
The Link: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sv_and_w (note those underscores)

If you have general railroading questions or would like to share railroading discussion with immediate locals or are even looking to sell some railroad stuff then this is the place to post information."

Swap Table

Bring what wish to sell, marked as to price and seller. Set up in the back room by 6:45.

The SV&W Telegraph
From your Clinic Chair,
Rich Blake



As we travel deeper into the "railroad season" I am reminded of many of the changes and challenges we have seen throughout the years in regards to the local hobby shop. Wait, what's that? Well they used to have these buildings you could walk into and view, talk about, learn and even buy stuff related to modeling projects. Many of my early experiences and influence came from the local hobby shop and I'm sure many remember the "good times" that were had in brick and mortar shops.

Unfortunately, many shops have closed and are closing at an alarming rate. It is simply not cost effective to maintain an overhead for a brick and mortar shop any longer. This past year we have seen our own "Performance R/C Hobbies" close in Burlington and possibly just as significant, the infamous and longstanding stalwart of a hobby shop, "Caboose Hobbies" in Colorado, has closed its doors after several decades of operation, (although I do hear that the remaining shop inventory has been sold and may be available again in the future).

So while it is easy to blame the internet and instant gratification for this trend - we also need to look at ourselves and our own purchasing habits. There are many one-stop mega shopping places on the web to choose from and it is fairly easy to find almost anything you want. But at the same time there are also many emerging virtual cottage industry shops and specialty shops on the web. These website based shops that provide not only unique items but also great customer service are in some ways mimicking what we have experienced in past hobby shops other than we can't physically touch objects before we buy. In my opinion this is the next viable way in which we can support our local "virtual" hobby shops and I encourage you to look into smaller specialty shops on the web. (As a narrow gauge modeler I have many I support, just ask).

In the same vein, this time of year brings us many train shows on the calendar. While a great place to take the kids (or the kid's kids) to watch trains run around in circles, these shows are also the last bastion of the brick and mortar shop with the several vendors and swap items available. This past show at Lynden was a good example where I saw a few of our members there keeping the swap tables going by purchasing items, myself included. This is encouraging and directly supports the local model railroading community. Without vendor support many of these shows would cease to exist simply because again - somebody has to pay for the time, electricity and space. Bottom line in all these examples is that we should never take our modeling supply sources for granted and continue to seek out and support them whenever possible otherwise they will vanish.

See you at the next clinic.

Dispatch Out.
Rich B.

The 2016-2017 Skagit Valley and Whidbey NMRA Clinic Modeling Contest

Our contest this year is all about going tiny! Your challenge, should you choose to accept it, is to build a tiny

diorama no bigger than 24 square inches. This can be achieved in any shape you choose or you can choose to use a pre-cut 4 inch by 6 inch gator board provided by the club. Note: as a circle that would be a 2.75" radius or 5.5" diameter. There is no height limit. Any scale.



Categories will be: **kits, kit-bashed, scratch built and humorous.**

The only rule is that your diorama must tell a story. Whether it is a farm woman feeding her chickens or bums under the train trestle, use your imagination to tell us what it happening.

All around us are individual stories happening every day. Think small but big! Judging in the spring, but get started soon!!

Phil Gonzales has volunteered to be our Diorama Shepard. His email address is: fishnutztoo@frontier.com

Some ideas might be gotten from: http://modvid.com.au/html/body_worldwide_miniatures.html

Some ideas from miscellaneous sources are scattered about this page.



By Rich Blake

Yard Scene at
Aberdeen, Washington



Local Layout Progress Report

From Dick Haines' *Big Stump-Little Lump Lumber & Ore Rwy.* just north of Oak Harbor, comes these views.

NOTE: The Editor of this prestigious Newsletter could use more input from its readers - local clinic attendees or otherwise. Send your pictures and articles - not brickbats, whatever they are - to me for inclusion. Thanks!



Aberdeen at night



Santa Cruz
Lime Works
area

Don't forget, we are supported by the NMRA and while we do not require membership, it is very strongly recommended. See the NMRA website for more information!



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Skagit Valley and Whidbey Clinic October Meeting
Trees, Trees, Rocks and Two-Foot Steam
Article by Rich Thom, Photos by Rich Thom & Presenters as Noted

The SV&W NMRA Clinic's October meeting featured mini-clinics, a format which has been popular before and proved itself so again. Tonight's clinicians kept the group in the meeting room for a whole hour beyond the usual lights out—so it must have been interesting!

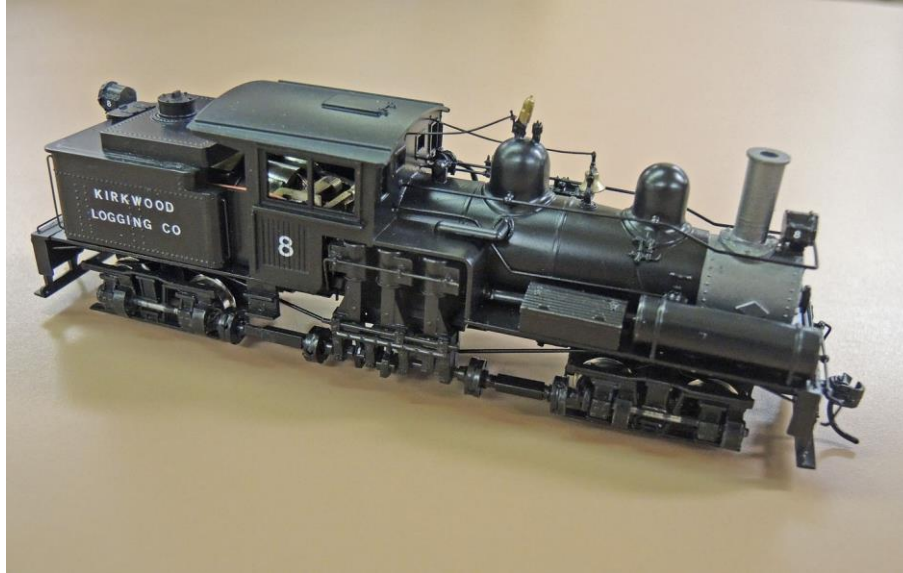


Fig 1 – Dave Clarke's Shay

Dave Clarke, a master at taking old locomotives, mostly brass, and turning them into beautiful, smooth-running new power. brought in his latest transformation, a Roundhouse Products 3-truck Shay (Fig 1). Dave installed a $\frac{3}{4}$ amp NCE decoder, replaced many plastic parts with castings, swapped out original bull and axle gears for Northwest Shortline ones, and painted the loco. Nice work Dave.

TREES, TREES, TREES

Tom Hawkins was first up on the tree tag team to demonstrate making a “bottlebrush” tree, using materials and a tool marketed by MicroMark. The kit includes wire, a supply of approximately 3” long fibers, and a tool—a “Safety-Wire Twister” (so said the box).



Fig 2 – Fibers and Pair of Wires Ready for Glue Application

The process begins by laying out the fibers and a pair of wires as shown in Fig 2. Glue is then applied; Tom uses Aleene's Fast Grab Tacky Glue. The twisting tool is used to twist the wire pair (Figs 3 and 4).



Fig 3 – Wire-Twisting Tool



Fig 4 – Twisting the Wires

The fibers are then trimmed to the desired tree shape, and foliage applied to the fibers (Figs 5 and 6). The tree is sprayed with hair spray (artist's fixative also works) and then foliage is sprinkled on; several applications of foliage may be needed to get the look you want.



Fig 5 – Trimming the Fibers



Fig 6 – Applying Foliage



Fig 7 – Tom Hawkins' Completed Bottlebrush Tree

Bottlebrush trees make convincing background trees, especially when used in clusters. Rope fibers and annealed wire (try 19 gauge) are available at any hardware store, and the wire-twisting tool can be found on Amazon for about \$12.



Fig 8 – Cliff Aaker Demonstrates Making Rope Fiber Hemlocks

Cliff Aaker—in collusion with **Susan Gonzales**--was next up to demonstrate making trees—his goal was to model hemlocks--again using rope fiber branches, but using trunks of wood rather than twisted wire, for a step up in realism compared to bottlebrush trees. In Fig 8, Cliff applies Aleene's Tacky Glue to a trunk before applying rope fibers, separated from common rope (photo) available anywhere. After letting the glue dry the entire tree is dipped in stain. Here are the detailed steps provided by Susan:

Materials

- Bamboo skewers, found at grocery stores or 1/8" dia. wood dowels at craft stores
- Manila rope, 3/8" or larger, at Home Depot or similar
- Aleene's tacky glue
- Furniture stain—we prefer dark walnut
- Coarse turf from Woodland Scenics or others—we prefer dark greens but you should use several different shades for trees clumped together

- Empty water bottle cut in half

Steps to Make Your Small Trees

1. Cut the skewers and dowels into a random mix of lengths and sharpen both ends
2. Cut the rope into 1.5 - 2" lengths
3. Shred the rope down to individual fibers
4. Apply 3 or 4 vertical stripes of Aleene's glue along the tree trunk. The combination of glue and wood will give the trunk needed texture
5. Apply the rope fibers to the glue, aligning the center of the fibers to the trunk. Try to use very few fibers at a time but put more on than you think you will want, working your way around the trunk in a circle. Make sure the top gets plenty
6. After the glue dries dunk the entire tree into the stain
7. After the stain dries (several hours) you can optionally spray with dullcoat
8. Trim the tree to the desired shape. Don't be afraid to trim too much off, especially near the top
9. Take the bottle halves and put some Aleene's in the bottom of one, and coarse turf into the other.
10. Roll the tree in the Aleene's. Be fairly aggressive with this step since the glue hasn't much to cling to
11. Roll the tree in the coarse turf



Fig 9 – Trees Created Using the Above Method

Susan also brought in some examples of another method she uses for coniferous trees, in this case replicating red pines and bristlecone pines. These are foreground models justifying the time to make them, about one hour per tree, says Susan. Trunks are hand-whittled, and the branches are individual twigs of caspia (Fig 10).



Fig 10 – Susan Gonzales' Pines

THROW OUT THE PLASTER—USE RUBBER ROCKS INSTEAD

Most modelers use the traditional method of creating rock outcroppings by using molds to cast them in hydrocal or other plaster formulations, and beautiful results can be obtained. Another method—rubber rocks—intrigued **Rich Thom** because they offered:

Rubber Rock Advantages

- Light weight—if you have large scenicked liftouts for example (which Rich did)
- Flexible, e.g. can curve to follow sharp curves in cuts
- Less mess—no plaster, molds
- Faster—attach to hardshell in minutes
- Trim with household scissors to fit scene
- Reworkable, especially in coloring steps

A rubber rock is essentially a reproduction of a rock outcropping ready to glue to layout hardshell—it's not a mold. They are made using a process similar to that used to make Halloween masks. Rich obtained his from Cripplebush Valley Models (www.cripplebush.net). Cripplebush sells rubber rocks in a wide variety of rock types including granite, basalt, limestone, sandstone and many others, so one can match rocks to the geology of the region modeled. Their disadvantages are that they are a little more difficult to color (in Rich's opinion) than plaster castings, and relatively expensive, roughly \$25 per square foot. That sounds pricey but compare to what you spend for a single locomotive, for example. For modest layouts (like Rich's at under 200 square feet), scenicked modules, or select mountain and canyon areas of very large layouts, rubber rocks are a good alternative that you might consider.

Attaching and Coloring Rubber Rocks (Rich's Method Anyway)

1. Mark out desired outcrop locations on hardshell with a Sharpie or equivalent
2. Pin on tracing paper and trace the outcrop outlines on the paper
3. Cut out the tracing paper patterns and transfer outlines to rubber rocks
4. Cut out outcrops with household scissors (save leftover pieces for isolated rocks!)
5. Glue rubber rock outcrops to hardshell with hot glue (alternatives include caulk)
6. Apply second ground layer of your choice to hardshell (Rich uses Sculptamold)
7. Brush-apply thinned (1:1) white acrylic gesso to everything—both rocks and ground layer
8. Brush-apply basic rock color to the rubber rocks—Rich uses an acrylic battleship gray
9. Brush-apply rock shadows—Rich uses either an India ink wash or near-black acrylic mix
10. Dry-brush rock highlights—just the basic rock color lightened up with some white



Fig 11 – Rubber Rocks Pinned to Hardshell Before Gluing



Fig 12 – Basic Rock Color on Rubber Rocks, Earth Tones Applied

It all sounds easy when you write it down like this, but there are sandtraps. In the attachment steps, as everyone knows hot glue “strings” and you will spend some time brushing and vacuuming away the strings from your rubber rock mountainsides. You can use caulk instead but then you need to hold the outcrop in place until the caulk sets. Some of the rubber rocks—particularly the granite reproductions—have high relief and are stiff as an egg carton, and don’t flex the way you would like them to—or at all. Rich found he had to mechanically cinch them in (using wire punched through the rubber rock and hardshell and then twisting it) in some places where the hot glue just didn’t have enough strength to hold them in place.

Coloring the rubber rocks is rather different from staining cast plaster rocks with washes. The rubber is not porous, and even after priming with the white acrylic gesso, which produces a matte surface with some “tooth,” the process is closer to painting than staining. I use acrylics thinned about 1:1 with water—runny but not a “wash.” It takes some practice to get it right: practice on test pieces off the layout. One advantage here is that if you are not happy with an outcropping, you can “start over” at the gesso step and try again. With a plaster casting, if you overstain and it’s too dark—you’re essentially stuck with it.



Fig 13 – View of Rubber Rock’s on Rich Thom’s Layout

MAINE TWO-FOOTERS

Moving a few thousand miles east, **Alan Murray** presented a still photo and video montage of the 36th National Narrow Gauge Convention in Augusta, Maine. Over the course of the convention, Alan visited many layouts in the area as well as museums and, well, just rural Maine in all its beauty and quaintness.



Fig 14 – Locomotive #9, the Only 2-Ft Gauge Survivor (Photo: A. Murray)

Locomotive #9 (Fig 14) is the only surviving locomotive from three different Maine two-foot gauge railroads, the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes, the Kennebec Central, and the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington. Additionally it is the oldest of the surviving Maine two-foot locos (built 1891) and only one of possibly two locos surviving from its builder, the Portland Co. of Portland, Maine.



Fig 15 – Passenger Car at Maine Railroad Museum (Photo: A. Murray)



Fig 16 – German Loco at Boothbay Railway Village (Photo: A. Murray)

At Boothbay Railway Village, a locomotive (Fig 16) manufactured in the 1930's by AG Vulcan Stettin, a German builder of warships and locomotives, runs for visitors. Water is carried below the boiler in tanks between the frames, i.e. this is a well tank.



Fig 17 – Model of Schooner *Wyoming* (Photo: A. Murray)

Finally, Alan included some photos that underscored that America excelled in the maritime, as well as the railroading, world. Turns out a Maine shipyard launched, in 1909, the largest wooden sailing vessel built in this country, the six-mast (an 0-12-0?) schooner *Wyoming* (model, Fig 17). It's length over spars was no less than 445 feet, height of masts from the keel 177 feet (17 stories), and gross weight 3,730 tons. Wow.

Thanks to all clinicians for their informative and interesting presentations.

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