The Mt Vernon NMRA Clinic

Clinic Report

February 17, 2020

Sponsorship: The Mount Vernon NMRA clinic is one of several clinics sponsored by the Fourth Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroad Association. We meet on the 3rd Monday at 7:00 pm at the Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Street. Membership in the NMRA is **NOT** required to attend our clinic, but it is encouraged. For more info on joining the NMRA, see: www.nmra.org/membership. Or see **Al Carter** for a membership application. Remember, if you are unsure, there is a one-time 9 month Rail Pass trial membership for only $19.95.

Building Access: Please remember to use the front door. For security reasons, the door cannot be propped open and must remain closed and locked. If no one is there to open it, push the button on the sign on the tripod adjacent to the door, and someone will be right there to let you in. The doorbell had a good workout and seems to be a good solution.

Contact Info: Clinic Chairperson is **Ted Becker** (rail.bird@att.net). Name badge maker/keeper and roster manager is **Tom Buckingham** (tom@401kplanninggroup.com). Refreshment provider is **Dave Falconer** (dsfalconer@aol.com). Newsletter writer/editor/publisher/photographer and general all around behind-the-scenes guy is **Al Carter** (tabooma@msn.com).

New Attendee: Welcome to **Doug Seward**! Doug is an O scale and O tinplate model railroader who lives in west Mount Vernon and decided to check us out at our February clinic. Glad you stopped by, Doug, and please come back!

Next Up: At the March 16 clinic, we will begin a two-part session on scenery – ground cover, to be precise. Part one in March will deal with static grass: how to make your own static grass applicator, as well as some commercially available applicators. Then we will put these tools to use and apply some static grass on the display layout. Also, we will look at grass tufts (commercially available) and how to make your own.

Coming Down the Track:

March 16	**Mount Vernon**	**Clinic: Static Grass Applicators (Ted Becker/Al Carter)**
April 20	**Mount Vernon**	**Clinic: Ground Cover (Al Carter)**
April 21-24	**Eugene, OR**	**PNR Convention**
May 16	**Everett, WA**	**4D Spring Meet**
May 18	**Mount Vernon**	**Clinic: REA Operations in Seattle (Thomas Keyes) a**
May 18	**Mount Vernon**	**Clinic: Diorama Build Finale**
May 22-24	**Burnaby, B.C.**	**7th Div Railway Modelers of British Columbia 5th Annual Meet**
July 12-18	**St. Louis, MO**	**NMRA National Convention**

7th Division Meet: Our NMRA neighbors to the north, the 7th Division of the PNR, are holding their 5th annual "Railway Modelers of British Columbia" meet in Burnaby, B.C. Included in the 3-day event will be modeling clinics, model displays, operating sessions, and self-guided layout tours. NMRA membership is **not required** to attend, but NMRA members get a discount. Here is a link to the website, including registration and accommodation information. This is a great meet and not that far for most of us!

http://railwaymodellersmeetofbc.ca/

Further Down the Track:

For the next "season", starting in September 2020, we are planning on promoting a "flat car build" – not necessarily a contest. Details still to be worked out. Initial thoughts on this project:

- Making a plastic flat car deck look realistic
- Exploring different types of flat cars and flat car loads
- Examining methods for securing loads

Are you willing to present a clinic (need not be a full hour clinic) related to flat cars? Know someone who might be willing? Let us know your thoughts and desires, please!

This just in…. Bob Nelson has been doing some research on flat car loading and is well on his way to presenting a clinic on this subject. Thanks, Bob!

Tool Time: This is the part of the clinic where we encourage you to bring along a tool (or more than one) to share with the group. It can be a trusty old standby that you use all the time, or something new that you have discovered. There are a lot of sources for tools, some non-traditional and some obscure. Show us what you've got!

Well, unfortunately, no one brought anything to share for Tool Time this month. **Ron Nelson** did bring along a couple of homemade static grass applicators, but since that is the clinic topic next month, Ron opted to hold off and share his static grass applicators with us next month. Looking forward to it, Ron!

Cliff Aaker did bring a Rotary Paper Cutter that he uses to cut shingles – see his report below….

Diorama Build Project: Paralleling the 4D's diorama contest, the Mount Vernon Clinic is having a diorama build project. It was felt that maybe more would participate if it wasn't an actual contest. Same rules: no larger than 1'x2' and must have some reference to railroading. Several people are participating**: Ray Vaughn, Ted Becker, Don Jones, Ken Wagner, Tom Buckingham**, and **Al Carter**.

Ray Vaughn showed his O scale diorama. He has the foundation/main floor built upon which he will place a scratch-built farm supply store. The base includes some real dirt from eastern Wa.

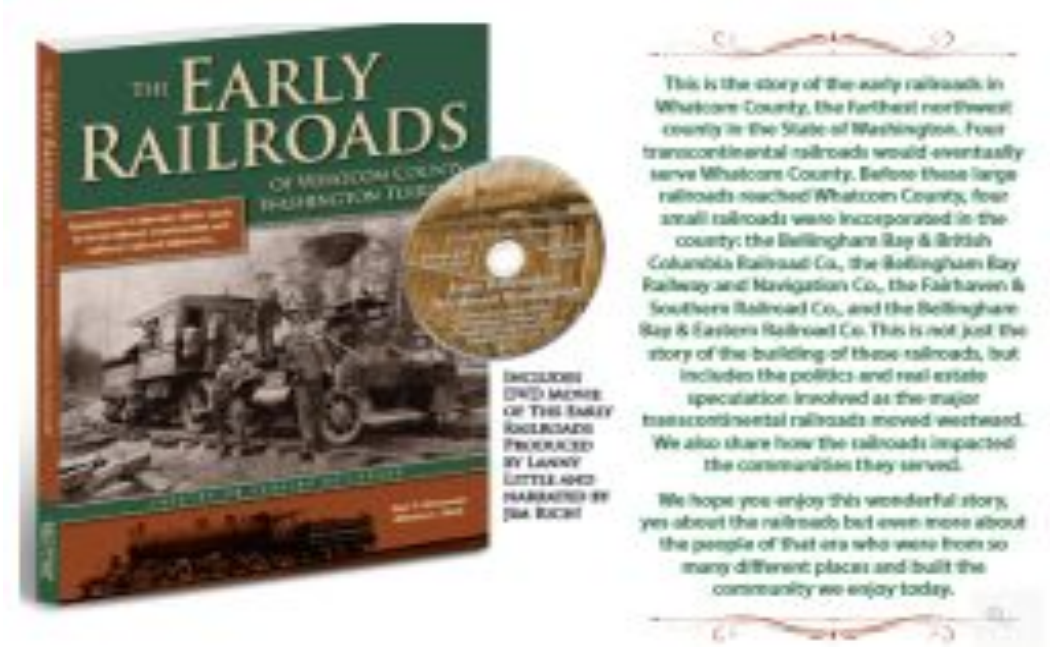
Al Carter showed more progress on his diorama of an abandoned railroad right of way, with more vegetation growing up where the rails used to be, a few more scraggly trees, and some blackberry bushes behind the abandoned building.

Modeling Tip: If, like most of us, you grab the rattle can of spray paint rather than dig out the air brush, especially for something like a quick primer coat or applying a flat finish, first warm your rattle can up in a container of warm water for 15 minutes or so. Longer if your paint cans have been stored out in the garage, especially in winter. You may have to "refresh" the warm water. Then, make sure you adequately shake/swirl the can. To me, this is at least a full 60 seconds; more if you can do it. You'll be surprised at how nice a finish you can obtain from rattle can spray paint if you follow these steps.

Modeler's Showcase: Several entries this month:

James Harvey brought along a train order hoop from a family member who worked on the ATSF, and a battery-operated lantern from the ATSF, still in remarkable working condition.

Karl Kleeman introduced the book he co-authored: **The Early Railroads of Whatcom County.** Co-authored with William Rink, this book is an absolute treasure! Very well written and excellent photographs. Highly recommended for anyone interested in the history of Whatcom County railroading.

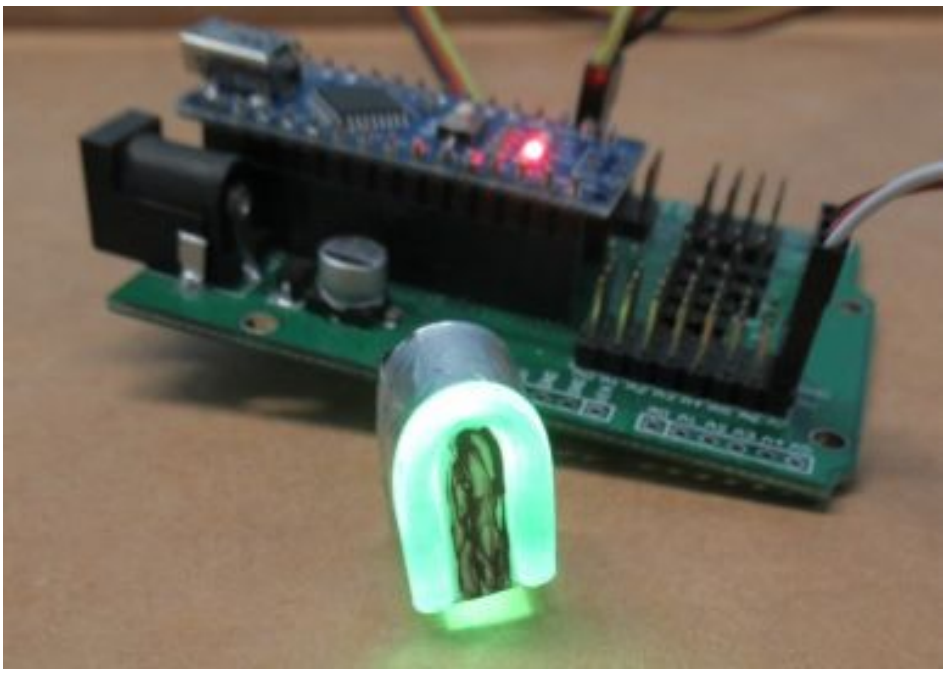


Karl reports the book is available for sale at Village Books in Bellingham (Fairhaven). Karl will also be bringing more books with him to our March clinic. Don't miss our chance to pick up a copy – I'm really enjoying mine!

Al Carter showed off some “el-cheapo” trees from China that were improved greatly by a couple of coats of olive drab green spray paint.

He also showed an in-progress styrene city building, with the main focus this evening being the roof – he puddled on gray paint, then dusted on Pan Pastels, resulting in a “blotchy” (read that: realistically weathered) roof finish.

Ted Becker didn't bring his diorama base but showed structure for the diorama: a diner "in progress" and the really cool thing is he has made a scale (HO) jukebox. It was made of a strip of plexiglass rounded on one edge then heat formed into an arch. Inside is a NeoPixel multi-color LED driven by an Arduino NANO. Ted reports it does not have sound because he cannot find HO scale phonograph needles. When it does get sound, it will be pre 50's boogie woogie, he reports.



Dale Bearden showed off a mini scene (On30) of “Grampa’s Speeder” which is modeled from a photograph taken in early 1952 in Prescott, WA. Except for the wheel castings, the model is entirely scratch built out of styrene and brass, and his 1956 M-19 Fairmont was the pattern. He hand-cut the ties and batten boards and scratch built the shed.

Layout Photos:

The Anacortes Model Railroad Club's layout is being disassembled – the owner of the building the club resides in has asked the club to move out. **Steve Jaffray** reports that the club members are still searching for a new location, and in the meantime structures and other layout parts are being packed away.

Years ago, Steve scratch built a fabulous model of the BN (former GN) swing bridge over the Swinomish Channel. Steve's model is made of wood, and actually operates. Here is a photo of his superb model.

Steve reports: *The approach with operator shanty is about 1' in length. The other trestle approach is about 5' long. Both are scratch built from wood with hand-laid ties and rail. The swing bridge pier is scratch built from wood. The rotation pedestal is made from a piece of teflon block. The swing bridge itself is 3' long (selectively compreesed from the actual 5' scale length it should be) and scratch built using styrene from different manufacturers, with hand-laid ties and rail. All were built from actual plan sheets that were acquired from the BNSF Bridge Maintenance Department in about 1995. The entire project took between 9 months to a year to complete.*

Such a superb model deserves to be on display, not packed away in a crate. Hopefully, the Anacortes Model RR Club will find a new home and you can once again view this magnificent bridge.

Send a photo or two of your layout (send to Al Carter at tabooma@msn.com). Note: this doesn't have to be a completed scene – people are very interested in progress photos: benchwork, partial scenery, track being installed, etc.

Main Event:

After a cookie break, the evening's featured clinician, **Cliff Aaker** of Oak Harbor presented his "Scratch Building" clinic. Now, your editor (me) wasn't smart enough to remember to take a photo of Cliff presiding over his rapt audience, so **Rich Thom** kindly sent me a photo of Cliff when he gave this same clinic over in Oak Harbor. Thanks, Rich, for rescuing me!

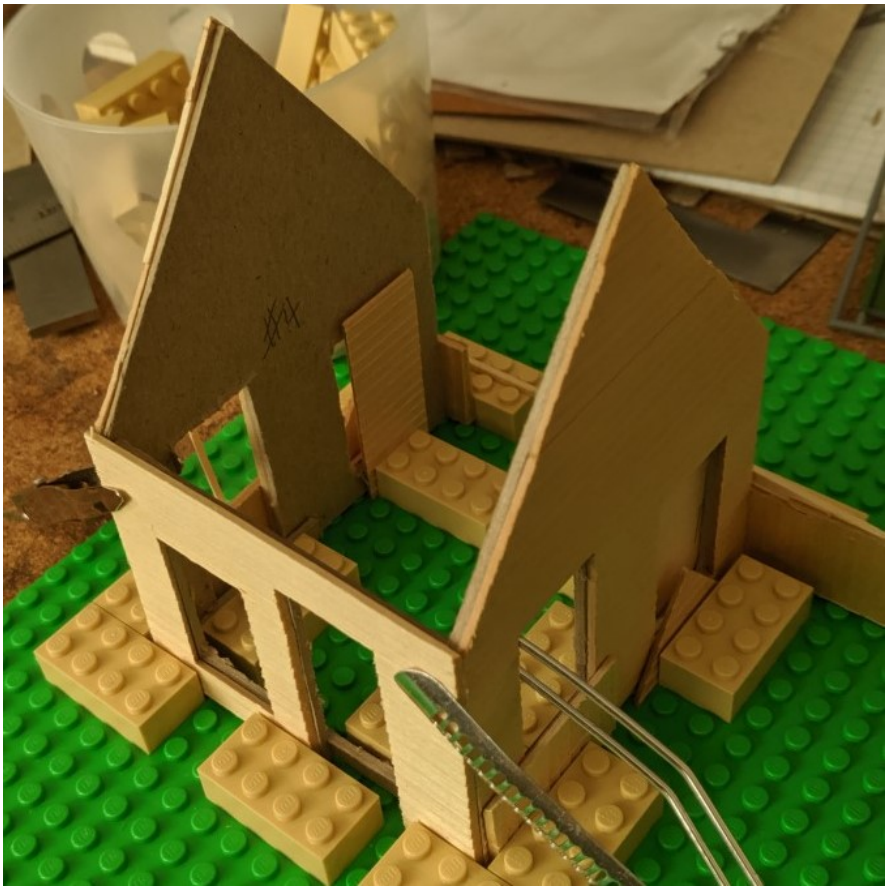
Cliff has really embraced scratch building. He builds both structures and rolling stock and is doing this partly to fulfill requirements to earn NMRA merit awards. He also states that one of the primary reasons for learning to scratch build is to force himself to learn new techniques. He learns by doing, experimenting to see what works and what doesn't. He is not afraid to try a new technique, and if it doesn't work, he'll go back and try something else.

Cliff says he always starts with some type of plan, be it a hand drawn sketch on a napkin or a set of commercial drawings. These are particularly necessary when determining roof pitch and door height, for example.

Cliff is now primarily an On30 modeler and brought several examples of both boxcars and flat cars that he has scratch built.

Cliff showed a couple of boxcars that have solid wood cores – he started with a 2x4 and trimmed it down to size, then added siding, ends, and roofs. He uses some commercial trucks (Bachmann), and sometimes uses 3D printed trucks from Precision Vintage Classics. Other details include truss rods and turnbuckles. Some of the door hardware is made from wire and paper!

For flat cars, Cliff sometimes uses sheet lead, 1/32" thick, laminated between the car deck and the under deck, to add weight to the cars. Sheet lead is available from Amazon in a variety of thicknesses and sizes. Cliff also adds nail holes in flat car decks with a narrow reamer.



Cliff uses Legos to assemble building and keep sides square and plumb and uses chipboard (Amazon) as a sub-structure, then overlays the siding and roofing material. He reports no warpage problems with this method of construction

Corrugated siding/roofing: Cliff makes his own corrugated siding and roofing from heavy duty aluminum foil grade that is used as B-B-Q liner. It is available on Amazon: Search for Reynolds Wrap Pitmaster's Choice Heavy Duty Aluminum Foil. Note that it is heavier duty than even the "heavy duty" foil found in supermarkets.

Brunel Models makes a corrugated siding tool to make corrugated siding and roofing. Link: https://www.brunelmodels.net/product-page/corrugated-iron-maker-ho-large. Note that this tool is available in a variety of scales.

A Rotary Cutter. Cliff showed a neat tool he uses to cut siding, shingles, and roofing paper – a Rotary Cutter. This is a really neat tool that is similar to a paper cutter but uses a rotary knife-wheel running against a straight edge, which makes precision cuts. It is available on Amazon; search for Carl-Professional-Rotary-Paper-Trimmer

Cliff also showed off a scratch built (of course!) station that features an operating semaphore. He used an R/C servo controlled with an Arduino microcontroller. He linked it to a hand-held remote controller, and he can randomly, with the push of a button, raise or lower the semaphore. Way cool!

Many thanks to Cliff for making time to come over to Mount Vernon and share with us his scratch building techniques!

Also, special thanks to Cliff who created the headline banner on page one. Definitely makes the newsletter more professional looking!

Questions/Comments/Contributions to this newsletter should be sent to **Al Carter** at tabooma@msn.com. If you want to be removed from the mailing list, contact **Tom Buckingham** at tom@401kplanninggroup.com. To volunteer for a clinic, or to suggest a clinic topic, contact **Ted Becker** at rail.bird@at.net

That is all for this month…