

# Fred's Rock Clinic 101

Model railroading has made me much more aware of rocks and trees in the landscape. Making molds, casting, installing and coloring rocks is the subject of this clinic. The result is a greater representation of reality to your railroad. Realistic trees (not puff balls) will be another clinic. You can select granite, shale, limestone or sandstone rocks to match rocks in the area you model. It's hard to make a bad rock as they come in all sizes and colors. Your many options are:

- I. **Rubber Rocks:** Easy to use especially on curved surfaces but they come in black and you must add color for realism. Disadvantage one use only and expensive. An option is to use them as a male mold on wet plaster similar to aluminum foil molds.
- II. **Carved Rocks:** Use molding plaster and just before it sets up hard carve, cut and chip to match or extend adjoining rock surfaces. Inexpensive but requires practice to get good results.
- III. **Rock Molds:** The easiest way is to use commercial rock molds. The disadvantage is duplication of rocks. The best way to avoid this is to make your own molds and cast your own rocks.

To make your own molds you will need a master to copy. A rock, coal, wood or a borrowed casting is OK. You will also need:

- a. **Liquid Latex.** Woodland Scenics
  - b. **Cheap 1" brush.** Harbor Freight
  - c. **Cheese cloth.** Craft store
  - d. **Mold release.** Pam, WD40
1. **Spray master with mold release and let dry a little.**
  2. **Brush on a coat of Liquid Latex and let dry.**
  3. **Repeat #2.**
  4. **Repeat #2 and add two layers of cheese cloth in third coat.**

**Add additional latex on top of cloth and let dry.**

- 5. Add one or two more coats of latex and let each coat dry.**
- 6. Carefully remove mold from master.**
- 7. Most molds will require support to prevent distortion from the weight of the plaster. Sand is the easiest to use.**
- 8. Mix molding plaster to the consistency of pancake batter and pour into mold. Smooth plaster on back and let dry before carefully removing from mold.**
- 9. Install rocks using hot glue and fill any gaps with molding plaster. It's possible to install rock molds on curved surfaces just before they harden. I have seen this done but have not tried it. The surface where the mold is to be placed must be wet before holding the rock in place with a pillow until it sets up. It will require practice and patience.**
- 10. Paint or stain raw rock mold going from dark to lighter on the edges using a variety of methods. India ink/alcohol black or brown depending on the color you want then use acrylic paints diluted to a wash. Dry brush with a fan brush using light gray or light brown color to highlight edges.**
- 11. Blend into the scenery by mixing a light wash made with the dirt used on the layout near the rocks. Pour it gently on the top of the rock and let it stream down just like it would in a natural rain storm.**
- 12. Talus or small rocks that have fallen from your imbedded rock can be added at the bottom to duplicate nature's realism.**

**IV. I usually carry a couple of empty coffee cans and a garden trowel in the trunk of my car when I travel to collect dirt of different colors for use on the layout. Red clay is easy to find at road projects as well as lighter dirt. Run it through a blender and sifter until it's like a fine face powder. It makes a lot more realistic ground surface and is a lot cheaper than Woodland Scenics.**

**V. If you would like help in making and installing rocks call me. I have many molds that you can use to cast rocks or use to make your own mold for use in the future.**

