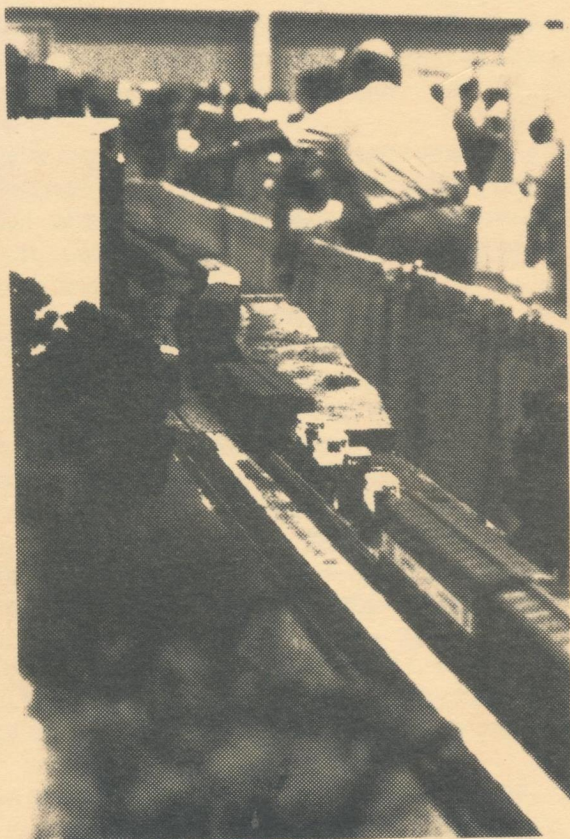


ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the
S Scale Special Interest Group

1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun

October 1985



A passenger train and a time freight pass in the S curve on the S scale modular layout during the "Going Home" NMRA national convention in Milwaukee.

Ken Zieska photo.

Foolscap

Ken Mackenzie
Editor

You will see a lot of material about track and wheel specs in this edition. It's probably not your favorite subject, but it is an important prerequisite to having fun in the hobby.

Reliable operation of your railroad is fun. Watching your favorite piece of rolling stock perform smoothly on a club or show railroad is fun. But this kind of fun doesn't happen by accident. It depends on careful adherence to a good set of specs.

If you model in Sn3 only, you are in good shape. There is a universally accepted set of specs which suppliers must follow if they expect to get your business.

If you model in dual gauge, your Sn3 specs prevent you from using the NMRA Standard specs for switches. You can use the NMRA Finescale specs (or the NASG specs, which are almost identical).

If you model in standard gauge only, you have a choice between the NMRA Standard specs and the NASG/NMRA Finescale specs, which are **not** compatible with each other (through switches and crossings). You have to pick a set of specs you can live with based on:

1. who you want to interchange with,
2. the track and wheels you already own,
3. the specs used by suppliers of equipment you (or those you interchange with) may want to buy.

Your Editor models in dual gauge using the Sn3 and NASG specs, which are compatible with each other. Besides, they are the only ones you can get check gauges for.

Wouldn't it be more fun if we all used the same set of track and wheel specs?

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Cinders

Ken Zieska called in with news from Minnesota and the WATS grapevine:

Dave Jasper brought his Omnicon 2-8-0 over to Ken's railroad for a workout. It pulled 18 cars through Ken's grades and curves. The locomotive had trouble with one of the curves where Ken admits he fudged on the minimum radius. What is that radius, Ken?

American Models is going to make a plug door boxcar available in Northern Pacific colors. The fine streamlined American Models passenger cars will be available with the Northern Pacific North Coast Limited paint scheme.

The scalers in the Badgerland S Gaugers group are proposing that the whole club finance construction of four corner modules like the ones which the Southeastern Michigan gang brought to the NMRA convention. This would double the number of such corners in existence.

The S Team had its first annual family picnic in early September. Discussion centered on the challenge of making the sectional display railroad truly operable. The loops operate, but only with the switch points spiked shut. Some of the problems stem from our primitive trackwork skills, but some seem to stem from components. Two members of the club are experimenting with extending the frogs of Scenery Unlimited switches by adding plastic to their points the way Shinohara did in HO. Other talk included these items:

American Models is out of #8 switch kits, and does not plan to supply more. How come, Ron?

Someone (I didn't catch the name) is approaching the NMRA Engineering Committee with the suggestion that the old NMRA track and wheel standards be dropped in favor of the current NASG/NMRA Fine specs. I trust the committee will consult the SSSIG about this. How do you all feel about this suggestion? Would anyone be adversely affected?

Letters are the lifeblood of any newsletter, and our first few drops have arrived.

IT'S OFFICIAL:

Dear Ken,

The initial announcement of your SIG is scheduled for the December 85 issue of the BULLETIN.

I interpret your letter to mean that a person who wants the newsletter should send you \$7; \$1 for dues and \$6 for the newsletter.

NMRA members only.

Dues: \$7 for membership and newsletter.

\$1 for membership without newsletter.

Note: Very few SIGs can sustain a monthly newsletter. (Only the TAMR does; teens have a lot of energy.) You might want to consider bi-monthly or quarterly publication.

Ken Hampton
NMRA Groups Chairman

(Your statement of the dues is correct, and clearer than mine. Why the separation? Postage is the big expense, and some small groups may want to share a newsletter, but all join. One addition: non-members (suppliers for example) can subscribe to just the newsletter for \$10.

After only two issues, monthly publication already seems unsustainable. But we made a promise, and we'll keep it - for one year anyway. The volume of news and letters may be too small to fill 12 issues every year. Ed.)

MISSIONARY WORK:

Would it be better to push our group for photos to be published in the BULLETIN? I've decided that's a better spot for me than the S Gaugian or

the (NASG) Dispatch, because we don't need to "preach to the converted"; we need converts.

Ken Zieska

(I agree that photos and photo stories are one of the best ways to fire the imagination of non-S modelers and interest them in our scale. The all-scale magazines like Model Railroader, Model Railroading, Railroad Model Craftsman, and the Narrow Gauge Gazette are also wonderful targets for exposure. A good example is the RMC series by Frary & Hayden on the Thatchers Inlet RR, which popularized the HO_n2-1/2 scale almost overnight.

After the first flicker of interest, though, modelers who want to know more about S are likely to pick up an issue of one of the S magazines to find out more. Everyone in HO_n3 should take a gander at a copy of Sn3 Modeler. The mouth-watering photos in there, including some by Malcomb Furlow, would inspire a water buffalo. Ed.)

A complementary copy of the first issue of Essence was mailed to each of the members of the S Finescale SIG which was coordinated by Barney Daehler. The following letters came almost by return mail.

DAKOTA SOUTHERN:

Dear Ken,

Thanks for the copy of Essence. I was a member of Barney's SIG and would like to join up with yours. I am also enclosing a check for my brother.

I'm a life member of the NMRA, #1166. It's kind of nice to get a newsletter dedicated to S scale. As you can see from my address, I'm a bit off the beaten track when it comes to fellow model railroaders.

Alex Huff

(Is Wagner, South Dakota anywhere near the Black Hills? I am modeling the dual-gauge Burlington/Deadwood Central in the Black Hills circa 1910. Standard gauge articulateds, narrow gauge tank engines and narrow gauge interurbans all shared the same trackage for a few years during the end of the gold rush.

I am as deeply interested in the Black Hills as most other narrow gauge modelers are in western Colorado. I only know about the area from pictures, but hope to travel there next summer to get the lay of the land. Then again, I've been hoping that for the past five years. Ed.)

SAN JUAN EXTENSION:

Ken -

Thank you for the sample copy of Essence. I am one of the former S Finescale SIG members.

Barney did a fine job. It is a difficult one at best, and I don't believe he got much help in the way of contributions for articles.

Enclosed is \$1 for SIG membership and \$6 for a subscription to Essence.

Gary Waite

(You may be interested in the following excerpts from the letter which went to Barney with his complementary copy of Essence:

"Dear Barney,

"There needs to be some organization which is exclusively S and exclusively scale. Until recently, your SIG was it. Since your group has dissolved, we have formed a follow-on group called the S Scale Special Interest Group (SSSIG)."

Please consider lending your support. S scale needs the continued benefit of your knowledge and ideas."

"I can now appreciate what a burden it is to coordinate a SIG and publish a newsletter single-handed. Ken Zieska lent me several back issues of your newsletter, which I read with interest and enjoyment. I liked the relaxed, newsy style."

"I don't pretend to understand the standards snarl. Perhaps you would be willing to explain it to me (and the rest of the Essence readers)? What do you think we should try to get the NMRA to do? Should we be measuring the compliance to standards of major trackwork and rolling stock suppliers? Is there an adequate body of standards to measure against?"

"Input for publication would be appreciated. Your membership in the SSSIG would be appreciated. If you would like to write a column regularly or sporadically, it would be welcome."

In his response, Barney suggested a side-by-side comparison of the standards (elsewhere in this issue). He made four key assertions:

- 1) The NMRA track and wheel standards S-3 and S-4 are incompatible between S and Sn3.
- 2) The NASG standards and the NMRA Fine dimensions given in RP-3 and RP-4 are virtually identical, and are both compatible with the NMRA standard for Sn3.
- 3) Most S scale equipment currently being imported is gauged to the NASG/NMRA Fine dimensions.
- 4) Wheels gauged to NMRA S-4 dimensions will not operate on switches laid to NASG/NMRA Fine specs.

This is old news to those of you in Barney's former SIG, but I always thought that "finescale" meant something approaching AAR perfection.

No wonder Barney feels that a consensus on standards has been achieved. Are his assertions true? It may depend on the way you define the terms "compatible", "standard", and "consensus".

If this discussion doesn't generate mail, nothing will. Ed.)

Modeler's Notebook

The following table is a side-by-side comparison of the current track and wheel specifications for 1:64 models.

TRACK SPECIFICATIONS:		NMRA	NMRA	NASG	NMRA
		Std.	Fine	Std.	Sn3
GIVEN:		-----	-----	-----	-----
Track gauge	G (min) =	.875	.883	.883	.563
" "	G (max) =	.891	.900	.905	.579
Check gauge	C (min) =	.823	.833	.839	.519
Span	S (max) =	.775	.797	.799	.478
Flangeway width	F (max) =	.058	.053	.053	.051
Flangeway depth	H (min) =	.039	.028	.030	.028
Point spread	P (max) =	.802	.813	.819	.509

WHEEL SPECIFICATIONS:		NMRA	NMRA	NASG	NMRA
		Std.	Fine	Std.	Sn3
GIVEN:		-----	-----	-----	-----
Check gauge	K (max) =	.823	.833	.839	.519
Back-to-back	B (min) =	.777	.800	.800	.480
Wheel width	N (min) =	.124	.108	.108	.108
Flange depth	D (max) =	.031	.028	.030	.028

DERIVED:					
Flange width (max)	$T' = K - B =$	.046	.033	.039	.039
Tread width (min)	$W' = N - T' =$	.078	.075	.069	.069
Wheel gauge (max)	$G' + K + F' =$	.869	.866	.878	.558

RP-25 wheel code (min)	=	125	110	110	110
RP-25 wheel code (max)	=	125	116	125	125

RP-25 WHEEL CONTOUR CODES:	Code	Code	Code	Code	
	125	116	110	88	
GIVEN:	-----	-----	-----	-----	
Wheel width	$N' =$	.126	.116	.110	.088
Flange width	$T =$	.036	.031	.030	.025
Tread width	$W =$	.090	.085	.080	.063
Flange depth	$D' =$	.028	.026	.025	.023

The tables on the facing page need some explanation.

The column titled "NMRA Std." is based on the standards S-3 (track) and S-4 (wheels) of the NMRA; so is the column titled "NMRA Sn3". These were last issued in 1983.

The column titled "NMRA Fine" is taken from the NMRA recommended practices RP-3 and RP-4 for fine scale, issued in 1982.

The column titled "NASG Std." is taken from the S-3 and S-4 standards of the National Association of S Gaugers, as accepted in 1981.

The table at the bottom shows values for wheel shapes from the NMRA recommended practice RP-25, issued in 1982.

Reading down the rows, the numbers labeled "given" are the specifications themselves. The numbers labeled "derived" are computed mathematically from the specs.

The RP-25 minimum and maximum wheel codes for each spec are those whose dimensions all fit within the limits of wheel width, tread width, and flange width for that spec.

SURPRISE

Curiously, code 125 RP-25 wheels don't meet the maximum flange width limit for NMRA Finescale. This appears to be the only significant difference between the NASG specs and the NMRA Finescale ones.

New Members

Alex Huff
P.O. Box 398, Wagner, SD 57380-0398

Dick Huff
P.O. Box 685, Wedderburn, OR 9749

Gary A. Waite
360 Fawk Avenue SE, Salem, OR 97302

WHAT IS A SIG, ANYWAY?

SIG stands for "special interest group". Many large national organizations and professional societies have them. They are groups of members who share a strong interest in some specialty within the general subject matter of the larger organization. Some societies provide for membership in one or more of their SIGs out of the normal membership dues. More often, a SIG will have its own additional dues. Most issue their own publications and conduct occasional special events.

HOW LONG HAS THIS BEEN GOING ON?

Five years ago the NMRA recognized the need to develop an active SIG program. By this time a number of large, active special interest groups (such as NTRAK and the National Association of S Gaugers) were already around. In a surprising number of cases, members had dropped out of the NMRA in favor of a specialty group. To get thing off to a quick start, the NMRA formed "affiliate relationships" with these existing groups. To be a SIG of the NMRA, only the officers have to be NMRA members. Today, less than half the members of NMRA SIGs are members of the NMRA.

The NMRA SIGs are of two separate types: railroad historical societies and modeling specialty groups.

The affiliate relationship makes a lot of sense for the historical societies. In general, they contain very few modelers. Their work, however, is invaluable to the hobby. As most of our favorite prototype railroads (or periods) fade into the past, the records and photographs preserved by the historical societies become a primary source for modeling information.

However, the modeling SIGs are another story. In some ways they operate in competition with the NMRA. Of course, competition is healthy. The major SIGs, like NTRAK and the Teen Age Model Railroaders, would not be so popular unless they delivered services which the

NMRA fails to provide. Another attraction is that their dues are usually cheaper than NMRA's.

Unlike the other SIGs of the NMRA, the S Scale Special Interest Group (SSSIG) is composed entirely of NMRA members. We are a subgroup of the NMRA. We have applied to the Board of Trustees of the NMRA for permission to use the term "NMRA" in our name, if we choose to do so, to make our relationship clear. Where NMRA services to S scale modelers and decisions affecting S scale modelers are concerned, we intend to be involved.

Help Wanted

ESSENCE CONTRIBUTORS to send photos, news, and opinions for publication in the newsletter. Write or call Editor Mackenzie, (414)421-5919, with tidbits or whole draft articles.

ESSENCE REPORTER. Did anyone go to the National Narrow Gauge Convention in Columbus? Please send news of Sn activity, modelers, and products to Editor Mackenzie.

ESSENCE GRAPHICS EDITOR to provide artwork, photo-reduction, and layout design for the newsletter. Write or call Editor Mackenzie.

SSSIG MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN to plan and enact programs for attracting new members to the S Scale Special Interest Group (SSSIG). Call or write Coordinator Mackenzie (414)421-5919

SSSIG CENSUS DIRECTOR to compile a list of all known S scale modelers. Call or write Coordinator Mackenzie.

SSSIG PUBLICITY CHAIRMAN to spearhead programs which increase awareness of S scale in the NMRA and the hobby. Call or write Coordinator Mackenzie.

SSSIG MODULES CHAIRMAN to coordinate the efforts of the group in the refinement of NMRA module standards for S and Sn3. Call or write Coordinator Mackenzie.

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PHOTOGRAPHER - Ken Zieska

Essence is the monthly newsletter of the S Scale Special Interest Group, whose members are members of the National Model Railroading Association. Deadline for all material published is the first of the month.

Membership in the S Scale Special Interest Group is \$1 per year (August thru July). Subscriptions to Essence are \$6 per year for members and \$10 for non-members. Change of address must be received 4 weeks in advance; second-class material is not forwarded.

Essence solicits articles, drawings and photographs on any model railroad topic applicable to S Scale model railroading. All material submitted is understood to be gratis and contributed for the benefit of the hobby.

Ads are not solicited. However, pre-printed advertising material which is deemed of interest to members may be included with the newsletter. Ad material must be cut or folded to 5-1/2" by 8-1/2", and may be printed on one side or both. Advertiser supplies 100 clean copies. The cost per issue for inclusion of ads in the newsletter is \$5 per 5-1/2" by 8-1/2" sheet and \$10 per 8-1/2" by 11" sheet. Send a copy of proposed mailing to Circulation Manager for review. Disapproved copy may not be returned.

Except for official reports, opinions expressed herein are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of the organization or its members. Neither should the organization or contributors be blamed for any of the Editor's crackpot ideas.

To: