

ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the
S Scale Special Interest Group

1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun

January 1986



A trolley waits for the interurban to pass on Roman Papirez' 1:64 scale 4' by 8' display of urban traction. Mirrors on three sides give the impression of enormous depth. At night, even the auto headlights glow. Roman casts his own epoxy carsides and ends.

Roman Paperiz photo.

THE PAUSE THAT REFRESHES

Don't panic, the postman didn't lose your copy of the December *Essence* in the holiday mail. You see the December issue never went to press. When we began, several of you pointed out that publishing a monthly newsletter was really tough to do. Well, you were right; it is tough.

Surprisingly, the amount of material hasn't been a problem (although I have almost nothing lined up for the next issue in three weeks). The problem is time, and several things got between me and my keyboard during the holidays.

First, the annual TrainFest sponsored by the Milwaukee area (WISE) Division of the NMRA came to town. It was an opportunity to see 20 or more operating display railroads, including the last showing of the Badgerland S Gauger's heavyweight pike, may it rest in pieces.

Then, I made it to a meeting of the Badgerland club and got signed up to do some (NASG spec) modules for their new "lightweight" modular railroad.

Then, of course, the preparation and enjoyment of the holidays, with time off to design benchwork and mount fluorescent fixtures in the railroad room. Progress!

Then, the attic needed insulation before the energy tax credits expired. I still have fiberglass in my teeth.

Then, the Great American Train Show came to Milwaukee. The S Team sectional S/Sn3 railroad was on display and needed baby-sitting. In the evening, some of the S Teamsters and a couple of the Badgerlanders who were available on short notice met at the *Essence* editorial offices to share some *gemuetlichkeit* and talk about everything from curved trestles to fishplates.

Taking time out to practice the hobby has recharged my batteries. Watch out keyboard, here I come.

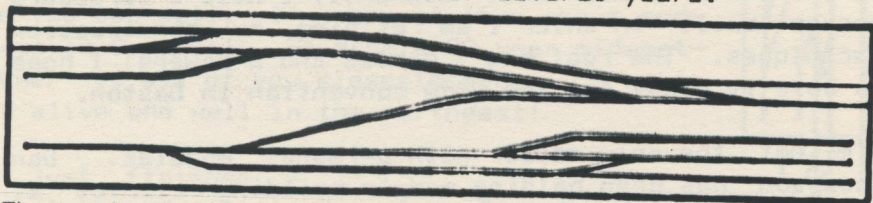
Modulitis

Donald DeWitt

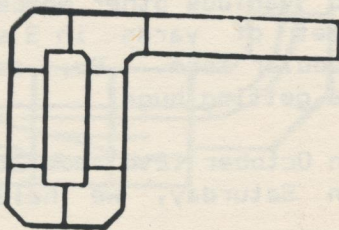
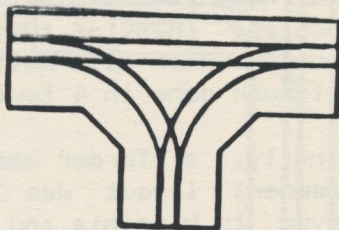
Greetings from New Jersey! I recently joined the NMRA specifically to promote S gauge. I imagine this is a rarity!

Although I have been active in S gauge for only about 2 years, I spell ACTIVE with capital letters. I am a member of the Central Jersey S Scalers, and because of the energy emanating from the club's members such as Don Thompson, Mike Ferraro, Wayne Pier, Kent Singer and Jeff Wilson it is very difficult NOT to become active in S scale. Currently I act as secretary for our club.

We are currently suffering from the most intense case of "modulitis" that I have seen, at least on the East Coast and probably in the USA! About 5 years ago the founders of the club built a 2-section, 16-foot switching module that was and still is very unique. It consists of a two-track mainline with 2 crossovers and two switching leads, one of which passes downhill to a lower storage yard. This module was displayed at many shows in the NY metro area for several years.



Then about 2 years ago the members decided to expand. They built 3 corner modules plus another very unique module. They wanted to be able to run trains to and from the first module without just running in circles. So they built a 2-track T section that allowed the construction of a circle with a tail! Eventually we visualize breaking the circle and using the T section as a junction between 3 branches leading to 3 terminal areas.



All of the above was in place when I joined the club in 1984 after moving from Michigan to accept a position as Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ. I succumbed to "modulitis" during 1985 when I began construction of a 3-section, 12-foot module that focuses on a passenger station and diesel servicing facility.



As you can see, this module is quite involved also, and I have learned a tremendous amount as I have constructed this monster! It has been operational since May, and I spent the summer building the engine house with sanding tower, water and diesel fuel columns, elevated diesel fuel storage tank, caboose fuel oil tank and coal bunker, hand car shed and rail racks.

I am also working on my station which will be a 2-story brick structure based on the station at Port Jervis, NY on the old Erie mainline. Currently I have a cardboard mockup built in which I am refining my construction techniques. The roof has 7 gables and 2 towers! I hope to have it ready for the NMRA convention in Boston.

I'm not the only member with personal modules. Don Thompson has been holding module building clinics at his home as 5 other members have worked on 4-foot modules. Many of them are already planning their next modules which will most likely be 8-footers. You can't get much done in 4 feet.

Finally, a former member of our club who had a large basement layout was Jerry Viemeister. He recently moved to Virginia and sold much of the layout in parts to various other members. Don Thompson has taken 20 feet of yards in 3 sections and converted them to modular form. So, as you can imagine our club layout is getting huge!

On October 12th and 13th we had a module extravaganza. On Saturday, we held our club's 4th annual "Get

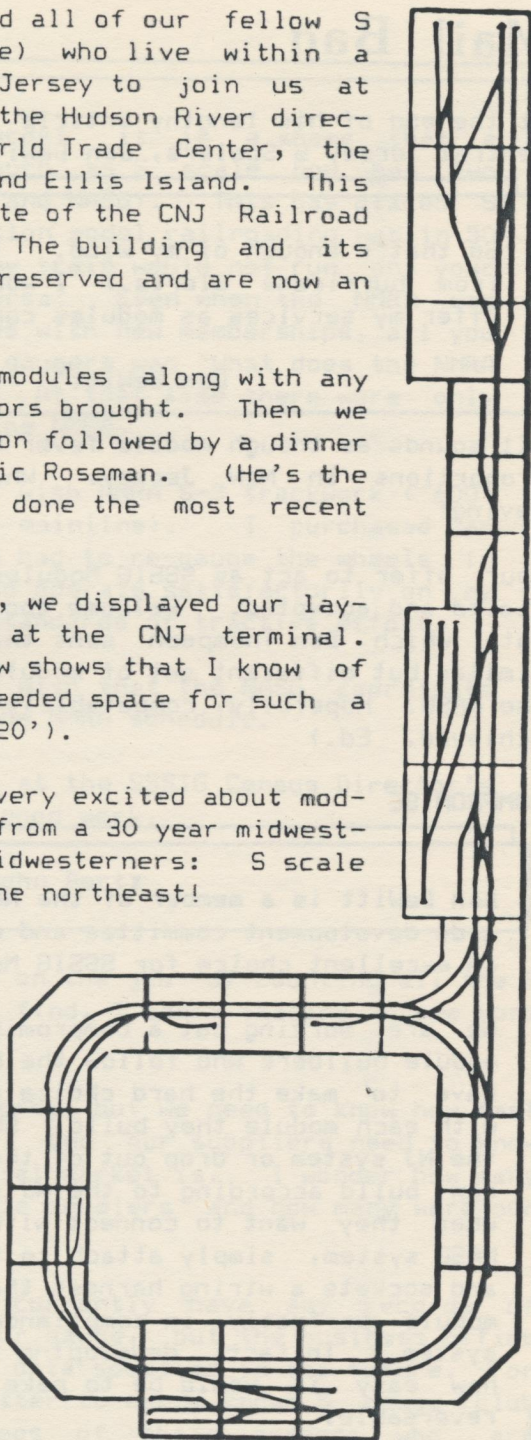
Together". We invited all of our fellow S gaugers (mostly scale) who live within a day's drive of New Jersey to join us at Liberty State Park on the Hudson River directly across from the World Trade Center, the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island. This park is the former site of the CNJ Railroad and ferry terminal. The building and its trainsheds have been preserved and are now an exposition center!

We set up all of our modules along with any others that our visitors brought. Then we ran trains all afternoon followed by a dinner and a slide show by Vic Roseman. (He's the photographer who has done the most recent Walthers catalogs.)

On Sunday, October 13, we displayed our layout at Rail Expo III at the CNJ terminal. This is one of the few shows that I know of that can provide the needed space for such a large layout (73' by 20').

As you can tell, I'm very excited about modules in S scale! So from a 30 year midwesterner to all of you midwesterners: S scale is alive and well in the northeast!

I just finished 4 new tethered throttles for the club which are modifications of the plan just published in the NASG Dispatch by Kent Singer. The modifications were suggestions made by myself and Kevin Ross of the Connecticut S Gauge club, of which I am also a member.



At the end of his lengthy article on the doings of the Central Jersey S Scalers, Don DeWitt wrote:

So that's enough of my wind. (Probably residual from hurricane Gloria.) I would also like to offer my services as modules committee chairman.

Don DeWitt

(It sounds as though module fever has reached epidemic proportions in New Jersey. What fun you must be having!

Your offer to act as SSSIG Modules Chairman is appreciated and accepted. Welcome aboard. I see from the data which Don Thompson sent that your club uses a similar but different set of module specs than those of the NASG. Hopefully, compatability between them can be achieved. Ed.)

COMPROMISE

Don DeWitt is a member of the NASG Modular Standards development committee and would therefore be an excellent choice for SSSIG Modules Chairman.

We are working out a compromise whereby those module builders who follow the NJ system will not have to make the hard choice once and for all with each module they build: Should I stick with the NJ system or drop out of the NJ system? They can build according to the NJ system, and then when they want to connect with modules of the NASG system, simply attach to their own NJ plugs and sockets a wiring harness that will make their module perfectly in compliance with the NASG system. In fact, developing this led me to see how easy it would be to make any NASG module reversable.

Tom Hawley

TIME REMEMBERED

Concerning standards: it is a shame that a minority gauge such as S scale now has two standards (NMRA and NASG). This has placed S scale in the position model railroading was in 50 years ago when my train would not run on your track and vice versa. Even when the NMRA was giving check gauges with new memberships, all you heard from some S gaugers was "What does the NMRA do for S gauge?" At that time there were only 165 S gaugers in the NMRA.

My layout is built with NMRA S-3 trackwork (600' of double track mainline). I purchased an Omnicon 2-8-0 and had to re-gauge the wheels in order to get it to operate satisfactorily on my layout and to my standards of tractive effort.

I agree with your wish that the NASG coordinate major meets with the NMRA schedule.

I will take a shot at the SSSIG Census Director's job. Keep up the good work.

John Bortz

(Thank you for taking on the job of counting all the S scale modelers we can find. I can't imagine anyone more qualified.

It will be a lot of work, but we need to know how fast the scale is growing, and our suppliers need to know how big their potential market is. I wonder how many of those 165 were scale modelers and how many were our tinline ancestors?

The NMRA does not currently have any records of membership by scale or gauge, but the business office hopes to collect this data sometime in the future. For now, I suggest a letter to every known S gauge club asking for the names of their members who are interested in scale modeling. That would be a start.

I agree that it was a mistake for the creators of the refined standards to change the basic track gauge and create an unnecessary incompatibility between the old and new standards (especially when the difference is undetectable to the human eye), but the damage has been done. It should have been easy to develop a set of specs with the same operational characteristics as the Finescale/NASG ones but retaining track gauge compatibility. But it didn't happen that way. Was it Byron or Tennyson who said:

"The saddest words of tongue or pen
are these: 'It might have been.'"

In a way, we have been living with a sort of double standard. No, I don't mean the Victorian double standard toward propriety/monogamy. For years we have had a published NMRA standard which most of us (and our suppliers) have politely ignored while we built to the new Finescale standard. Some of us did so for reasons of accuracy, some for dual gauge compatibility, and most for reasons of expediency - available check gauges and parts made it the easiest thing to do.

I am concerned that the remaining ambiguity about old standards versus new standards is a major deterrent to standard gauge modelers who are thinking about entering the scale. This may be part of the reason why there are more Sn3 scale modelers than S scale standard gauge ones. For the good of the scale, I am anxious to see the ambiguity resolved and a single set of engineering specs adopted as the one and only standard. Unfortunately, that seems to mean the retirement of the old NMRA S-3 specs.

The sad part is that this simplification has the most adverse effect on you and a dozen or so others who had the energy and ambition to build a full-blown S scale model railroad back when the S-3 specs were the only specs. It doesn't seem fair.

I am comforted by the fact that you and the other master S scale builders clearly have the skills necessary to re-gauge modern wheelsets to match up with your older trackwork. Ed.)

SCALE ONLY

I saw a copy of your most recent newsletter at our last monthly meeting of the Central Jersey S Scalers. Good job!

The only comment I have is that if I had not seen the **Essence** at our meeting, I never would have known about it. I'm an NMRA member who reads the **Bulletin** cover to cover, and I can't recall this SIG being mentioned. Maybe I confused it with Barney's. But anyway, please include me as a member.

I also included a Train Stuff catalog for your info. We're scale only.

Wayne Pier

(The December NMRA **Bulletin** probably reached you shortly after your letter reached me. Feast your peepers on page 7 of the December issue. Whether or not you agree with Ken Hampton's pronunciation of SSSIG (as "shig"), he gets my vote as the **Bulletin's** most entertaining writer. I shig probably write and tell him so.

The Train Stuff catalog is reviewed in Cinders. Ed.)

DISPATCH KUDOS

The NASG finally sent me some information, and I became a member. The NASG **Dispatch** looks like it's worth the cost of membership by itself.

I've never had a photo of a model published, but it sounds like a lot of fun. So I think I'll try my luck doing some model photography. Watch for my work in the NMRA **Bulletin**. If I get a really good picture, I'll send it there.

Next time I go to Alexandria I'll check on that (RF&P) rail height, but I don't get down there too often.

I really will let you know when there's anything worth knowing about my layout. Right now there isn't enough to really talk about. I work slow, and S scale makes it easy to be slow.

Ron Limparis

(Thanks, Ron. The more S scale photos in print, the more publicity for 1:64. I agree with you about the **Dispatch**. The latest issue was my first also. Don Thompson did an excellent job. I was not prepared for the **Dispatch** to have all the quality and appeal which I admired in, the old S Gauge Herald. Ed.)

"COMPLETE" CATALOG

Dear Ken,

First of all, thanks for sending along those engine parts. I am starting a scratchbuilding project to build a pair of early Baldwin 4-6-0's. I was hoping to have met you on your latest visit to the Twin Cities, but was out of town when you were here. Perhaps next time? (You bet! Ed.)

Ken Zieska and I have been busy recently building a modular layout which will be displayed at the Hub Hobby Store here in Richfield, MN. Dick Harris, the manager, has agreed to begin stocking S scale in the store. He is starting out with a large stock of American Models and a filler order of other items from Hoquat.

The modules will be on permanent display at the store, but will be available for use by the Pines & Prairies Workshop any time we need them. Dick is paying the cost of construction.

I would be interested in being of some help to you in *Essence*. I have asked Santa for a computer this year, and perhaps it may be of use to the SIG.

One thing I have been working on is enclosed: The

Complete S/Sn3 Gauger. I am compiling all of the information I can get on current and non-current S scale suppliers. I hope to compile a "catalog" showing current products available, as well as items no longer in production. I of course would appreciate your comments on the project.

Tom Lennon

(What a large and worthwhile undertaking! Your listing already shows 116 suppliers and publications, including a dozen brass importers. I assume you will be adding an indication of which are the current suppliers to future drafts of this list, so that newcomers to S scale won't waste a lot of postage writing to non-current suppliers.

The only omission I noticed immediately was the publication Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette, which carries many Sn3 features and ads. 100 pages, 6 times a year. Their address is: P.O.Box 26, Los Altos, CA 94023.

Perhaps your listing, especially if computerized, can help solve a severe problem our S scale standard gauge suppliers have publicizing their products: how to get the word out about new products, and how to keep their established products in front of prospective customers.

The catalogs of Hoquat Hobbies, Scenery Unlimited, and Village Depot list a wide variety of current products. But what about products not carried by these mail order firms? Also, there are necessarily a limited number of pictures in these catalogs; pictures are expensive. I like to see a published review of a product and/or a picture before I buy it.

It sure would be nice to have a listing of available products that told which issue of what publication had a picture or review of the product. Non-current products would be of benefit too, since we see classified ads offering them for sale. If your catalog truly is complete and you wanted to really get carried away, you could assign a unique catalog number to each

product the way stamps and musical compositions are numbered. This would simplify price list preparation for mail order firms and shorten classified ads. Ed.)

1:64 GETS AN OSCAR

I was in HO 3 years ago (where I had been since age 13.). For years I have been tempted to convert to 3/16", but the toy-worship of tinsplate and the toy standards of hi-rail repulsed me.

The first sign of hope for 3/16" (for me) was Claude Wade's (S Scale Locomotive & Supply) line being expanded from the Berkshires to include USRA power, thus enabling a modeler to model 50% of modern steam power for most roads, skills permitting. The entry of American Models and Overland finally gave scale emphasis and prospects of greater variety of locos and equipment - a far cry from the off-again/on-again wheelset crises of the 60's and 70's.

3/16" desperately needs a spokesman publication which encourages manufacturers to follow scale dimensions without compromise... The commitment to make no mention of tinsplate or hi-rail is thrilling!

I was disappointed that Barney dropped the (Fine-scale) SIG, but hope you can fill the gap and grow as well. I am pleased that you also list members.

Oscar W. Kimsey, Jr.

(Yes, 1:64 modeling has come a long way in the last few years. It's almost hard to believe how far it has come, and how fast.

The collection of toys of all kinds is an ancient and honorable hobby, but the collection and appreciation of toy trains seems to me to be a somewhat different hobby than model railroading. The NMRA has a Tinsplate and Hi-rail SIG, but it also has a Trains-On-Stamps SIG.

Hi-rail was an evolutionary step toward scale appearance while taking advantage of existing track and wheel specs and available parts. My first S narrow gauge efforts were with HO track for this very reason.

To me, model railroading is an attempt to realistically model a railroad. While out-of-scale models may jar the effect of realism we are trying to create, it is a matter of degree that is different for each of us.

I think there is sometimes a tendency for us to focus on small issues of realism (such as flange depth), and perhaps lose sight of the things which have a much larger influence on the effect of realism - things such as:

Do the tracks look like real tracks?

Do the trains look like real trains?

Does the railroad have a realistic purpose?

Is it run through realistic scenery?

Do the operators have realistic tasks to perform?

And most importantly: is it fun?

Let me give you an example of what I mean. At the 50th NMRA convention several of us visited an HO railroad on one of the layout tours. The track and wheels were perfectly to spec, I'm sure, and the engines and cars were accurately dimensioned. But all the switches were #4, all the curves were very tight, all of the cars were painted bright shiny colors, and all the scenes were crammed full of trackage. None of it seemed at all realistic. We came away deciding that we had just seen "HO tinsplate".

American Flyer tinsplate and hi-rail are the evolutionary ancestors of today's 1:64 scale model railroading. We owe them a debt of history. It is appropriate to honor one's ancestors.

I, too, am guilty of being unable to look at tinsplate models and get a sense of realism. On the other hand, some hi-rail railroads seem very realistic to me.

Although this group is dedicated to S scale modeling, we have no quarrel with tinsplate or hi-rail proponents. Their interests are served by other hobby groups. Ed.)

FROZEN TUNDRA

I received my NP passenger set from American Models. The paint job is very well done, and I am very pleased.

The Pines and Prairies Workshop picked up three new members in the last two months. We now have fourteen solid members. Not bad for the the frozen tundra of Minnesota. The club has been helping with my layout, but so far all we have done is tear out existing trackwork needed to start building anew.

I built my (Keller) Onboard mixer, keypad, and throttle. All I need is an enclosure to house the mixer and I can test the completed project. I'm excited about doing that.

Ken Zieska

(If I were on the frozen tundra, I'd be "solid" too. Ed.)

New Members

Donald F. DeWitt

37 Snow Drive,

Mahwah, NJ 07430

Oscar W. Kimsey Jr.

P.O. Box 3674,

Augusta, GA 30904

Thomas P. Lennon Jr.

9613 Ensign Circle,

Bloomington, MN 55438

Wayne L. Pier, Train Stuff

2821 Asbury Avenue,

Wayside, NJ 07712

Howard C. Waelder

1115 Benmore Avenue,

Franklin Square, NY 11010

Cinders

PBL has just done for Sn3 what American Models did for S scale standard gauge: they have produced a quality plastic car kit at a budget price. The car is a D&RGW 3000 series boxcar in styrene. I haven't built my copy yet, but the casting and detail parts from Grandt Line and Hathaway Plastics dies are mouthwatering. It's no "shake together" kit, but is advertised as "Assemble in one evening". The introductory price of \$20 (plus \$3 postage and handling) includes trucks, couplers and decals. Contact PBL at P.O. Box 749, Chama, NM 87520.

Train Stuff's catalog includes a full range of heavy-weight passenger car kits, and 5 flavors of steam era boxcar kits (wood or steel sided). Modern car kits include a gondola, 2 uninsulated single-dome tank cars and 4 flavors of box, including a hi-cube type. Where else can you get Finescale/NASG 3-point S scale track gauges for code 125, 100, 83 and 70 sizes of rail? Send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Train Stuff, 2821 Asbury Avenue, Wayside, NJ 07712 for this catalog.

National Association of S Gaugers (NASG) is offering five versions of the 1937 ACF 8000 gallon tank car in brass. The cars will be by Overland out of Ajin. A \$10 discount to members makes your next year's NASG membership effectively free. For a flyer and ordering information, send a SSAE to NASG Clearinghouse, c/o Mike Ferraro, 141B Gordon Road, Matawan, NJ 07747.

Coordinator's Corner

Ken Mackenzie
Coordinator

It's a brand new year, and resolutions are in order. Mine are (1) to answer coorespondence promptly, and (2) to spend at least one hour working on my own railroad for each two hours I spend working on the SSSIG.

It's also time to start thinking ahead to the NMRA national convention in Boston. How many of you are planning to attend? What kind of get-together would you like? How about an SSSIG booth? Let me know.

ESSENCE

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Essence is the monthly newsletter of the S Scale Special Interest Group (SSSIG), a non-profit special interest group of the NMRRA whose primary goals are to provide contact for its members and to act as a forum for the exchange of information on subjects related to S scale modeling.

The opinions expressed in Essence are those of the authors when signed, or of the Editor when not signed, and are not endorsed by the NMRRA, the Editor, or Coordinator unless specifically noted. The Editor reserves the right to edit any and all submissions for clarity, content, and length.

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To:

tions to Essence cost an additional \$6 per year for SSSIG members and \$10 per year for non-members. Subscribers will receive all issues of Essence published in that year.

Essence solicits articles, drawings and photographs on any topic applicable to S scale model railroading. All material submitted is understood to be gratis and contributed for the benefit of the hobby. Deadline for all material published is the first of the month.

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 the Circulation Manager for review. Disapproved copy may not be returned.