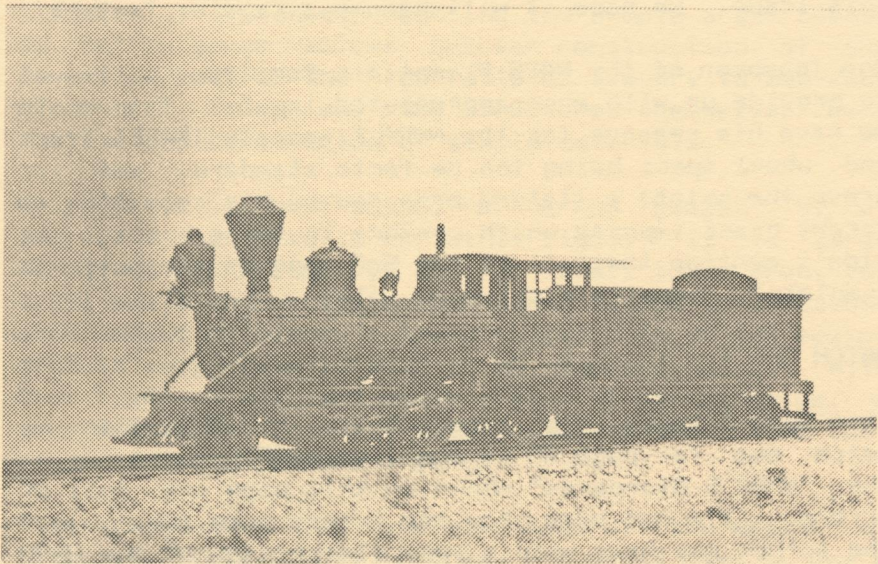


# ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the  
S Scale Special Interest Group

**1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun**

February 1986



This narrow gauge conversion from HO started life as an International Models import from about 1953. It was converted to Sn3.5 (or SnHO) by Dave Jasper.

Incidentally, Dave thinks that it may have been intentionally built to 1:64 due to a mistake by the manufacturer. Such things happened in those days. Its comfortable size may have planted the seed which got Dave into S scale six years later.

Dave Jasper photo.

# Foolscap

Ken Mackenzie  
Editor

As usual, this issue is a potpourri of subjects, including narrow gauge, modules, imported brass, traction, and our old friend: track and wheel standards.

Glenn Berg, the man who brought you the styrene conversion chart in November, is back this month with a very effective and informative article on the virtues of Sn3 modeling.

You met Don DeWitt through these pages last month. His first column as Module Committee Chairman appears in this issue. We hope it will become a regular feature.

Don Thompson of the NASG Promotions Committee continues to provide us with much-appreciated input. This month we have his reasons for the NMRA Finescale (NASG) track and wheel specs being the de facto standard, and (to prove the point) a listing prepared by his committee of recent brass imports which conform to these specs. He didn't mention that all of the Sn3 imports are built to completely compatible specs as well.

## WATCH OUT !

Warn your friends who subscribe to the **S Gaugian** to watch out for page 35 of the January/February issue. The "NMRA S Standards" shown on this page are **full of errors**. I'm not sure how the errors came about, but the author may have used a very old version of the NMRA specs as his basis. I don't know for sure, because I immediately destroy obsoleted copies of the NMRA specs whenever a new set is issued. The latest specs date from 1983, and match those published in the November **Essence**.

## CLARIFICATION

Omnicon Scale Models is concerned lest my comments on John Bortz's letter last month be mis-interpreted. The Omnicon 2-8-0 operates exceptionally well on Finescale (NASG) trackwork. Anybody (even I) could re-gage the wheels for good operation on NMRA S-3 trackwork.

Narrow gauge modeling has many practical advantages. The narrower track gauge permitted sharper curves and a smaller right-of-way, making it more economically feasible and easier to construct in mountainous areas. For the modeler, this means fitting more railroad into a given space. Also, the mountains provide perfect view blocks to separate scenes and camouflage continuous track plans.

Short trains were the norm. We can have realistic operation without a huge selection of rolling stock. And shorter trains seem to go further, adding to the illusion of distance. Modeling the remote areas common to narrow gauge allows quicker construction of the layout because of the high ratio of scenery to man-made elements. Towns and the structures themselves were smaller and constructed of simple materials.

What scale is best suited for narrow gauge? S, of course. The size is certainly right. It is large enough to run reliably, and for detail to be seen, yet still small enough for an operating layout in a reasonable amount of space. The physical size of Sn3 equipment is very close to that of HO standard gauge. With the tight curves and short trains of narrow gauge, a good Sn3 layout can fit into a smaller area than that required for HO standard gauge.

S narrow gaugers can take advantage of the wealth of items available in HO, (whereas On3 would have to use S materials, and HOn3 would use TT).

For example, some useable items for the right-of-way include Woodland Scenics ballast (which goes a long way in narrow gauge), Chooch stone piers and abutments, Central Valley truss and other bridge parts, AIM Products blasted rock tunnel portal, and the Campbell timber portal.

Trestles, another prominent feature in narrow gauge, can be easily constructed from fractional strip wood, which converts to exact scale lumber in S scale due to its 1:64 proportion.

For locomotive kit bashes, MDC's consolidation, class A Climax, and Shay are good candidates. Sn3 Modeling, published by Heimberger House, contains detailed information on such conversions as well as other useful ideas for the S scale narrow gauger. Some HO rolling stock parts are useable in Sn3 too. A few of these would include arch bar and old-time passenger trucks, Walthers old-time passenger roof (available in molded plastic or milled wood), marker lamps and jewels, brakewheels, smokejacks, bells, and Detail Associates wire and eyelets. Styrene boxcar shells can be used to provide a base to which styrene sides, ends, and roof can be added for easy freight car construction. HO Kadee couplers, which have many shank variations and are easily mounted on any car, are ideal for Sn3. For modelers of an earlier period, the Alexander Scale Models link and pin coupler would add a nice touch.

For structures, Grandt Line doors and windows in HO, S, or O can be used as is or modified. Some Campbell windows may be used, as well as their corbels, attic vents, smoke jack, large hinges, and lamp shades. Scale Structures LTD has some white metal castings that would be excellent for S structures. Entire structure kits may be used too. The Revell bakery would make a nice small brick industry. Windows on this structure are of a proper size and height; only the door openings would need modification. Rick's Place by Magnuson would make a good looking small bar in S scale. The door and window openings would have to be filed out and replaced with suitable castings or built up from scratch.

Scenery items designed for all scales are usually intended for the HO and O scale markets. This works out well for S since it falls between the two. Such items as commercial rock molds, Walthers ponderosa pines and knarled oak trees, and Chooch logs and tree stumps will work great in S.

Please keep in mind that in all cases where I mention useable items from either HO or O, I am only giving a few examples. See the Walthers catalog for many other possibilities. Be sure to check out the sections in the O scale catalog of HO items useable in O.

Sn3 also seems to be the fastest growing scale/gauge. Bob Brown, in talking about the latest Narrow Gauge Convention in the November/December issue of "Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette" stated that he was "struck by the number of new Sn3 items". Also in that same issue, I counted 28 ads that were either entirely for S or also included S scale.

There is also a wealth of items available from manufacturers and suppliers that are not new to S scale. Tomalco produces car kits, parts, and flex track. V&T Shops offers locomotive conversion kits, structure kits, and small details such as oil drums and barrels. Scenery Unlimited has flex track and #6 turnouts made by Shinohara.

Triangle Scale Models, recently purchased by PBL (Peter Built Locomotives), has a fine line of styrene freight car and structure kits, as well as cast metal details such as garbage cans, ladders, wheel barrows, fuel storage tanks, and many others. PBL has given us the Cadillac of brass with their Milestone Models series of Sn3 locomotives. Bill Peters also topped off everything that's happened in Sn3 so far with his injection-molded 3000 series boxcar kit. Thank you, Bill !

S scale narrow gauge modeling has come of age. Why not join the fun?

Glenn Berg  
18617 Bernadine Street, Lansing IL 60438

## Modulitis

Don DeWitt, Chairman  
Module Committee

Greetings from New Jersey. As the SSSIG's new module chairman, I would like to establish a continual "friendly" dialog about modular S scale layouts through the pages of Essence. A definition is probably in order here. By **modular layout** I refer to one in which the sections adhere to certain established minimal requirements with regard to rail head height above the floor and distance between double track mainlines, etc.

There may be as many sectional layouts in existence as modular layouts. By **sectional layout** I mean any other type of portable S scale layout. Although our goal is to focus on modules, I think that we can all learn a great deal from the experiences of anyone who has had to dismantle, transport, and set up layouts of any kind.

My immediate goals are to:

- 1) discuss the pro's and con's of circular vs branch line layouts, skyboards, cab control, reversibility of modules, narrow gauge modules, plus anything else that presents itself.
- 2) become a repository for information about each S scale (or mostly scale) modular layout in existence. If someone like me has this information, then I can help the planners of regional and national conventions. Once a planning group knows the space allocation for a setup, then I can provide them with the names of people who have the most useful modules such as corners, yards, branch line interchanges, double-to-single track modules, etc. Then the rest of us can fill in between these critical sections.
- 3) be able to provide new S scale hobbyists with minimal specifications for modules and/or advanced module planning. A lot of the same old mistakes can be avoided if a newcomer can learn about our previous mistakes.

I'm sure there are other issues that need to be discussed so if you think of any drop me a line, and I'll include it in the agenda. For now, these issues are open for discussion, so send me your thoughts. Next time I'd like to deal with Sn3, and how standard gauge and Sn3 modules might interface. After that let's talk about circular vs branch line layouts.

If you know of a modular layout, please send me the name and address of a contact person from whom I can gather information about their modules.

Don DeWitt  
37 Snow Drive, Mahwah, NJ 07430

# Cinders

## Omnicon Scale Models

Omnicon has been working with its Korean manufacturer, Samhongsu, to maximize the operational reliability of its imported locomotives. Charlie Sandersfeld says he has supplied Samhongsu with samples of all the pre-fab turnouts and turnout kits available in S, and asked for a recommendation from them. After extensive tests, the recommendation from Samhongsu was to continue with the current Finescale (NASG) wheel specs, but with an RP-25 code 116 wheel contour rather than the RP-25 code 110 wheel contour used on the 2-8-0.

Charlie wants everyone to understand that he is very sensitive to the concerns which serious modelers have for conformance to standards and reliable operation. He is not an engineer himself, and wants to be guided by the most expert advice available.

The code 116 wheel has a slightly (.005") wider tread, so it is less likely to drop into a turnout frog. It conforms fully to the NMRA Finescale (NASG) wheel specifications.

## Stack Talk

We recently received a copy of Stack Talk, the newsletter being put out by the Central Jersey S Scalers. It is chocked full of news about their plans, projects, activities, and enthusiasm. They are interested in swapping newsletters with any other clubs who publish them. Or you can send three dollars for a year's four issues to: Donald DeWitt, 37 Snow Drive, Mahwah, NJ 07430.

## Templates, anyone ?

Has anyone ever run across a source for templates of dual-gauge turnouts in any scale? Trying to engineer one of these switches with nothing but an HO Shinohara version for a pattern is a real challenge.

# Modeler's Notebook

NASG Promotions  
Committee

Here is a list of the S standard gauge brass models imported during the past three years which comply with the NMRA Finescale (NASG) wheel specifications. All have code 110 RP-25 wheels.

## OVERLAND MODELS

SD40-2 Low Hood w/o dynamic brakes

SD40-2 DD/EMD Wide Cab, CN

SD40-T2 Low Hood, D&RGW

SD40-T2 Low Hood w/ 83" nose, SP

SD40-T2 Low Hood w/ 116" nose, SP

GP38-2 Low Hood w/anti-climber & w/  
extended range dynamic brake

GP38-2 Low Hood w/anti-climber & w/o dynamic brake

GP38-2 High Hood w/o anti-climber & w/ dynamic brake

GP38-2 Low Hood w/o anti-climber & w/o dynamic brake

GP38-2 Low Hood w/o anti-climber & w/  
extended range dynamic brake

GP38-2 Low Hood w/o anti-climber w/small dynamic brake

GP38-2 Low Hood w/ anti-climber & short dynamic brake

GP38-2 Cabless, BN

GP38-2 DD/EMD Wide Cab, CN

E3/6 A Unit

E3/6 B Unit

E3/6 A Unit, AT&SF

E6 A Unit, UP

E6 B Unit, UP

E7 A Unit w/ large number boards

E7 A Unit w/ antennas, PRR

E7 A Unit w/ special side filter vents

E7 B Unit

E7 B Unit w/ special side filter vents

E8/9 A Unit

E8/9 A Unit w/ antennas, PRR

E8/9 B Unit



FA-2	A Unit
FA-2	A Unit w/ antennas, PRR
FA-2	B Unit
J3s	NYC 4-6-4 Hudson w/ standard 12 wheel tender
J3s	NYC 4-6-4 Hudson w/ long distance PT tender
GS-4	SP 4-8-4 Daylight steam locomotive
USRA	2-8-2 Light Mikado
USRA	0-8-0 Switcher w/ standard tender
USRA	0-8-0 Switcher w/ extended vision tender
M53	B&O Round Roof Boxcar, plain door
M53A	B&O Round Roof Boxcar, corrugated door

#### ORIENTAL LTD.

NW-2	phase I/II
NW-2	phase III
NW-2	phase IV
NW-2	phase V
SW-1	phase II
SW-1	phase III
SW-1	V
SW-7	
SW-9	
SW-1200	

#### OMNICON SCALE MODELS

MP	#152 2-8-0 Consolidation
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#### G & W MODELS

NYC	#19000 Caboose, tongue and groove
NYC	#19000 Caboose, plywood

#### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF S GAUGERS

ACF	Covered Hopper, phase II
ACF	Covered Hopper, phase III

# Mail Bag

## FLYER ATTRACTS SCALER

Dear Ken,

Please enter my membership in the S Scale SIG. I am coordinator for the O Scale SIG, but have also built a portable display loop in S scale using five hollow core doors.

One of our O Scale SIG members from Texas picked up a copy of your flyer at the Milwaukee convention and sent it to me with the suggestion that we need something similar. I was at Milwaukee too, but didn't happen to get your form.

I may be writing to you again later this spring in a different capacity, as a member of the Eugene 1987 NMRA Convention Committee. We will be contacting all SIG coordinators regarding their needs and participation in the '87 convention. I have heard nothing from Boston, and last year had a frustrating time trying to confirm meeting space for the O Scale SIG at Milwaukee.

For 1987 we want all coordinators to know well in advance (6 months?) the date and time they have meeting facilities available. We hope that most Special Interest Groups will put together a session that is a meeting of their membership and a clinic in the group's area of specialization for any prospective members that drop in.

Sincerely,  
Gil Hulin

(I hate to admit it, Gil, but I haven't even contacted the Boston folks yet about this year's convention. The kind of session you suggest sounds like just the right thing for a Special Interest Group to put on. Has the

O Scale SIG done it this way at previous conventions? Did you come away with any "do"s and "don't"s that you would like to share?

The hollow core door idea sounds intriguing. I can see where doors would be rigid and strong, but are they heavy? How do you do the "underground" wiring? Ed.)

## RE-INSPIRED

I was happy to see an S Scale SIG listed in the latest NMRA **Bulletin**.

I have been an on-again-off-again S gauger (oops, S scaler) for many years. I get discouraged because there is so little available, and I feel like a loner, so I drop S for a while. Then I look through my old **S Gauge Heralds** and get re-inspired. This has happened several times.

By now I have the tools and skills such that I can scratch whatever I want, and I am really happiest working in S, anyhow.

I am also fortunate to know some outstanding S modelers in my area such as Barney Daehler, Graham Henry, etc., so I no longer feel all alone. Now if this SIG works out, it should give us all a means of exchanging ideas, etc.

One of the areas I have always enjoyed modeling has been traction, so maybe if there are any others with a like interest, we can encourage each other.

Manuel Noriega

(The need to scratchbuild is not as pressing as it was just a few years ago, because an amazing number of new 1:64 models have entered the market. Traction, of course, is an exception.

I can hardly wait to get your reaction to last month's cover picture of Roman Papierz's traction railroad. I took the liberty of sending a copy of your letter to

Roman, and I expect you will be hearing from him.

Roman is not yet a member of the SSSIG, but you can reach him at 5234 West Cullon, Chicago, IL 60641. Dave Koehler, one of our current members, also has an abiding interest in traction. Ed.)

## IN TRACTION

Thank you for the complimentary **Essence** copy and the fellow traction modeler's letter enclosed. I definitely plan to join the SSSIG and have simply not gotten around to it yet.

At the moment my free time has been tied up with a dozen interurban cars I've been trying to complete. It's been a chore, but they are now complete and only require painting and some minor details. When this task is complete, you'll see them running MU-style on the S Team display layout.

Following this, I plan to do some repair work on my traction display, and will at last be able to start on some Deadwood Central interurbans.

Roman Papierz

(Note the correct spelling of Roman's last name. We managed to misspell it consistently in the January issue. For almost a year, Roman has been exposed to my ravings about narrow gauge in the Black Hills. I'm afraid he became infected with some of the same enthusiasm when he saw the pictures of the Deadwood Central's little narrow gauge interurbans in Mildred Fielder's book Railroads of the Black Hills.

I'm not sure how many other narrow gauge interurbans there were, but the Deadwood Central (CB&Q) had three identical little beauties which operated hourly from 1902 to 1924 between Deadwood, Pluma, and Lead, South Dakota. Ed.)

I just saw a copy of *Essence* and felt a few points about the standards problem need to be aired.

First: According to John Bortz, it has been 15 years since the NMRA has had S gauge check gages (the tool). If the NMRA had not run out of check gages, the NASG never would have had the opportunity to make different ones.

Second: It is not fair for S modelers to judge current products to standards that were abandoned by an NMRA S membership vote in 1982. I will admit it is difficult to know what the real NMRA standards are when both the *Essence* and the *S Gaugian* (Jan 86 pg 35) publish the "official" NMRA standards, and 13 of the standards do not agree from one publication to the other.

Third: Most S scalers will admit that there are as many, if not more narrow gaugers in S than there are standard gaugers. With this in mind, how can any serious S manufacturer make equipment that is not capable of common frogging?

Fourth: If compatibility of existing equipment was a criteria for standards, then we would all be modeling to tinplate wheel standards. By making their check gage, NASG took an evolutionary step in getting S standard gauge and S narrow gauge to common frog and improved the operation of the models.

Lastly: In the last twelve months, 6 versions of 4 different steam engines were imported from Korea with code 110 wheels. There are now more imported brass S scale steam engines with code 110 wheels than S Scale Locomotive & Supply has sold kits. Other than American Models' rolling stock (which are easily regaged), virtually everything made in the last two years has had the code 110 wheel. Since 1982, 56 versions of 20

brass models have been imported with a code 110 wheel. Do we really want to go back to the good old bad days?

Don Thompson,  
NASG Promotion Committee

(Thanks for your comments, Don. Although they restate much of what Ken Zieska covered in the November issue, I am publishing your letter in hopes that no more need be said about the pro's and con's of the old versus new standards. All that remains is to petition the NMRA to abolish the old S-3 and S-4 specs in favor of the new ones.

I wouldn't dwell on the code 110 wheel, though. Code 110 is not an essential ingredient in the NASG standard; back-to-back and flange width are the essentials. Code 116 wheels fall well within the new specs, and probably operate more reliably.

Six months ago, I asked an innocent question: Why are the S track and wheel standards in such a muddle? Now I know the answer. In fact, we all know more than we ever wanted to on this subject. The active standard is NASG, and NMRA Finescale is a recommended practice. As far as I'm concerned, NMRA S-3 and S-4 are "no longer operative", as the government bureaucrats would say.

Let's talk about something else for a year or so. Ed.)

## New Members

Gil Hulin

3895 Colony Oaks Drive, Eugene, OR 97405

Joel Lebovitz

630 Grey, Evanston, IL 60202

Manuel Noriega

21 El Carmelo Circle, Oakland, CA 94619

# Coordinator's Corner

Ken Mackenzie  
Coordinator

Are you taking full advantage of your NMRA membership? It takes most of us a number of years to discover and capitalize on some of the advantages of membership.

Do you read the **Bulletin**? I used to skim it, trying to ignore the organizational folderol and inside jokes. But in recent years it has become one of my favorite hobby magazines. The model pictures are inspirational, and the tips and techniques are fresh - not earth-shaking, but useful. This magazine would be an excellent place to see your work in print, and publicize S scale at the same time.

The NMRA periodical index is published annually in the **Bulletin**. It indexes articles in every model publication I've ever heard of. I have kept every index since 1965, when it included the S Gauge Herald's articles.

Have you purchased the NMRA Data Sheets? What a gold mine of information is stored in those 300 pages. Some of the material (on tools and electrical, for example) is a little dated, but the prototype information is ageless. Do you need to know the exact dimensions of a rural mailbox or a D&RGW narrow gauge tie? The Data Sheets will tell you. Fifteen dollars buys you the 300 pages issued up until 1973. Subsequent pages have been issued as **Bulletin** inserts.

Have you attended an NMRA divisional or regional meet? These are small and relatively informal, especially the divisional ones. The last divisional meet I attended had less than 20 entries in the model contest, including all categories. This is a great place to enter your favorite model. By doing so, you may stir an interest in 1:64, or even discover a fellow S scaler you haven't met among the other attendees.

Don't expect to meet any collectors or tinplaters at these events. However, you can expect to meet some experienced, knowledgeable, and helpful people who love railroad modeling. They can be a source of inspiration and fun, whatever their preferred scale.

## ESSENCE

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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.