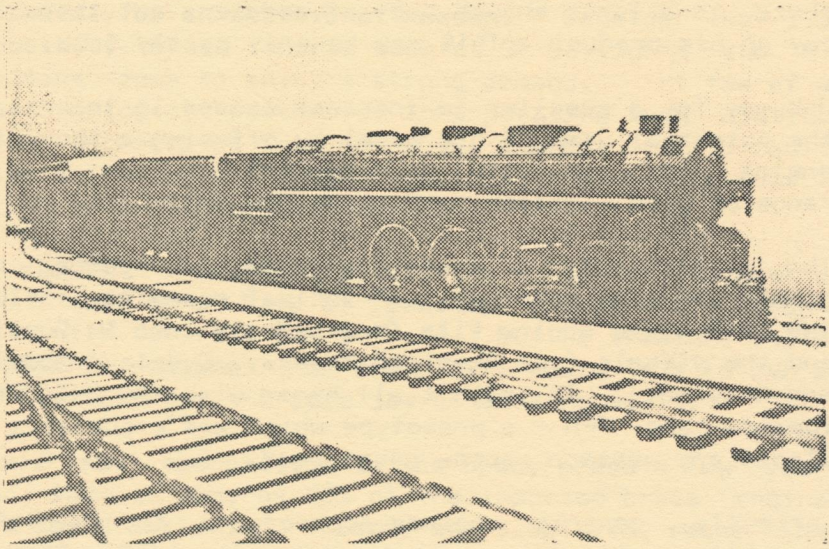
ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the
S Scale Special Interest Group

1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun

April 1986



A New York Central Hudson heads up this passenger train on Dick Karnes' S scale railroad in Seattle. All track is hand laid on this extensive 1:64 pike.
Dave Jasper photo.

Foolscap

Ken Mackenzie
Editor

SYMBIOSIS: Modelers and Their Locomotive Suppliers

Symbiosis is a fancy word which scientists use when two groups benefit from and depend on each other. We modelers have that kind of interdependence with our suppliers, especially locomotive suppliers. Model railroads can't operate without motive power, and very few of us could power our pikes by scratchbuilding.

On the other hand, conventional wisdom says that a supplier can't afford to offer a loco for sale unless there is a large enough body of modelers out there to buy up his product. This may be only partly true.

One way for a supplier to increase demand is to broaden the potential uses of his model by offering a "generic" engine which is useful to many modelers for a wide range of eras, locales, and prototype roads.

The availability of generic engines has spurred the growth of 1:64 modeling. Principal examples include the USRA steam engine kits from S Scale Loco & Supply, and the diesels from American Models, Overland Models, and Oriental. In Sn3, it all began with the C-16 from Tomalco and PFM - a prototype which was excuseable on almost any western narrow gauge road.

Curiously, generic engines appropriate to 1900-1935 branchline railroading have been lacking in S. This is the style of railroad which exploded in HO with the introduction of the Varney ten-wheeler. 1:64 modelers who like smaller, older railroad scenes have predicted the immediate success of any supplier who entered this market, and have felt that such engines would be important to the growth of S.

In theory, such locomotives should be among the most universally useful. Even the largest railroads used small locos for light-duty chores like way freights and switching small yards and industries. Turn-of-the-century steam engines were widely used until 1950, especially in the small towns and yards which we have

enough space to model.

Omnicon Scale Models is now attempting to meet this need with its 2-8-0 and upcoming 4-6-0, but with only modest success. Only about 75 Omnicon engines have been sold so far, in spite of their excellent quality, price, and operational characteristics.

Is it because Omnicon is new and relatively unknown? Is it because the previous unavailability of smaller, older generic motive power has reduced the potential size of this market segment by encouraging us to choose other, more easily modeled styles of railroads?

There may be an additional reason. Consider that 1:64 specialty brass imports such as SP Daylights and NYC Hudsons seem to enjoy a strong demand. Yet few of us have a logical reason for incorporating such distinctive locomotives into our model scenes. It is quite likely that many of these specialty engines are sold to collectors rather than modelers.

Of course, there is a bit of the collector in most of us. Most of us have at least one engine which doesn't fit with our railroad's theme, but we treasure it for emotional reasons. For example, I would love to own an SP Daylight for the pure joy of looking at it.

There was speculation in the hobby press a few years ago that as many as 70% of the imported brass engines are being collected, traded, and displayed, rather than being operated. Collectors, then, may represent a bigger market for our suppliers than we modelers do. If so, the market for generic locomotives may remain small. Collectors are attracted to models which are distinctive and unique, and often very large. The more universal or normal a model is, the less interest it may have for collectors.

Suppliers like Charlie Sandersfeld of Omnicon Scale Models are highly motivated to provide the kind of imports that large groups of modelers agree they need. But if these models sell slowly, he will also have to bring in specialty models for the collector market in order to make ends meet.

Mail Bag

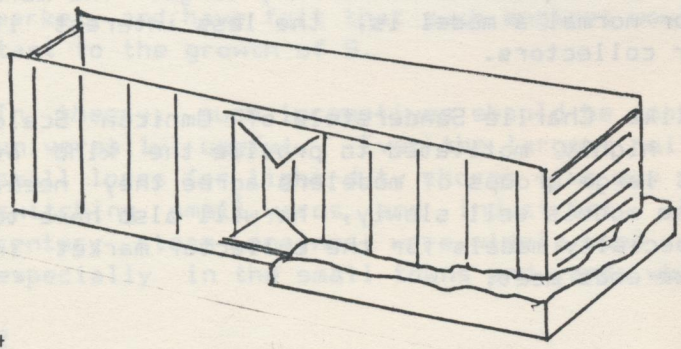
John Bortz wrote a very nice letter to say that the job of Census Chairman was going to be more than he could handle. He wants to provide help and support to the group, but does not feel that he can do justice to this assignment. If another member will lead the census project, John will be glad to help on the committee. Any takers? If not, we will "mothball" the idea for now.

STRETCHING FREIGHT CARS

I am in the process of stretching one of American Models' 40-foot plug door boxcars to make a 50-foot PFE reefer (See p.36 of Easy to Build Model Railroad Freight Cars by Kalmbach Books). This mechanical refigerator car has outside braces (Plastruct "T" sections) which makes it easy to cover up the spliced-in sections. I did not have two cars to work with, so I used styrene fillers to extend the sides by one panel each. Ditto the floor.

The roof posed a problem, because I wanted to reproduce the diagonal raised panels. I tryed cutting and fitting styrene to no avail. Here's how I solved the problem:

1. Using clay or play dough, roll out a rectangular slab on the work bench, about half the length of the car and a little bit wider than the roof. About 1/2 inch thick is okay.

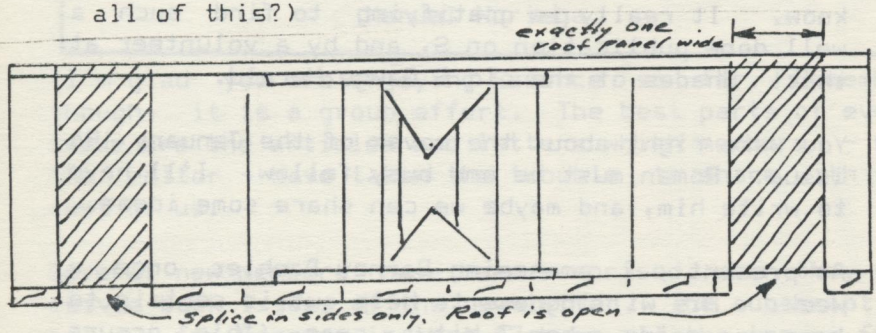


Good shell pressed into clay.

2. Push the roof of an intact carbody shell (minus the roof walk, of course) down into the clay. This leaves a female impression mold of the roof shape in the clay. Carefully remove the shell without disturbing the mold.

3. Your modified carbody shell should have open gaps in the roof near each end. Now invert your modified shell and gently place it into the mold. You should be able to look down into the shell and see the clay impression of the roof panel through the hole in the roof.

   If your styrene side fillers are cut to the right length (exactly one panel), you can now lay one end of your stretched shell into the mold, exposing one roof panel of the mold to the inside of the shell. (Are you following all of this?)



4. Mix enough epoxy to fill the cavity in your roof. Pour it carefully to avoid distortion. Pour enough to fill the cavity and to run over onto the inside of the roof for strength.

5. Let the epoxy harden, and remove the shell from the clay. Repeat for the other end of the car. With a little sanding and filing, you cannot tell where the splices are.

I just bought some new software for my new Commodore 128 computer (Love that Santa!), and as soon as I learn to use it, the catalog project will begin in earnest. I had not thought about listing every item produced by every manufacturer. What a gargantuan project that would be! Rather,

just a simple listing of suppliers with their addresses and an indication of their product lines. I would like to include those who are now out of business.

Tom Lennon

(Thanks, Tom, for sharing your construction technique with us. This is the kind of practical experience that benefits all of us. I think the membership would like to see as much of this kind of information in **Essence** as the editorial staff can get its hands on. Ed.)

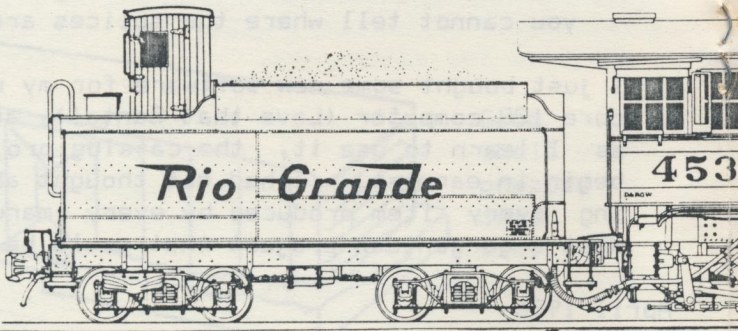
BACK ISSUES

Many thanks for the back issues of **Essence.** If you need any extra money for them, please let me know. It really is gratifying to find such a well done publication on S, and by a volunteer at that! Shades of the old **S Gauge Herald.**

You were right about the cover of the January '86 issue. Roman must be one busy fellow. I'll have to write him, and maybe we can share some ideas.

At present , I am seeing Barney Daehler once a week. His willingness to help out is certain to keep me going when I hit a snag (This occurs quite frequently, unfortunately).

My main problem for a long time has been the lack of a good power truck for my trolleys and diesels. Barney has undertaken to modify an Athern/Proto-Power West chassis to power my Locomotive Workshop 44-tonner. This chassis is geared for the



very slow operation of diesel switchers, and I felt this would be ideal for my logging line, where my 44-tonner would be working. Do you think anyone would be interested in some notes on this project? (You bet! Ed.)

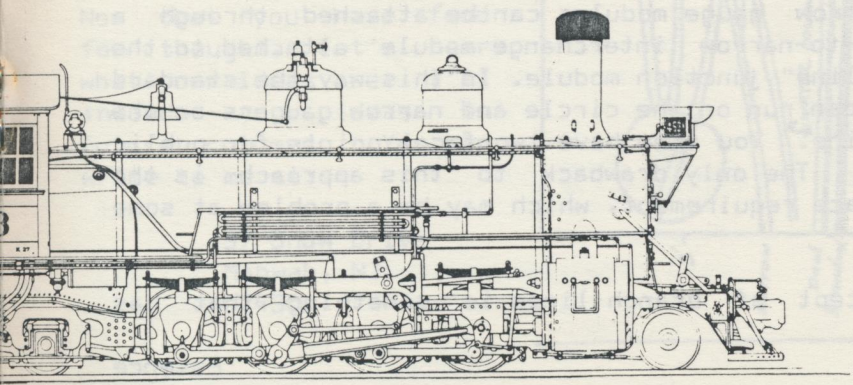
Other projects currently underway are: a scratch-built trolley freight motor (#6 of the Central California Traction Co.) and a scratchbuilt side-door caboose (pg.458 in **MR** of July '48).

Aside from the power truck problems, I am trying to solve the constant lighting marker light situation. Next visit to the hobby shop I'll look into HO working markers. They may be oversized, and just right for S. I'll let you know.

Manuel Noriega

(I'm glad you are enjoying **Essence** so far. Remember though, it is a group effort. The best parts of every issue are the articles and letters which members - not the editor - have taken the trouble to share with the rest of us.

Several new members have been surprised when they received back issues of the newsletter. The subscription policy for **Essence** is that $7 buys all the issues from August through the following July, no matter when during the year you join. New members, then, haven't missed what's been going on. This policy also helps me, because I don't have to publish much repetitious material and I don't have to keep track of everyone's expiration dates separately. Ed.)



Modulitis

Don DeWitt, Chairman
Module Committee

Recently someone made the statement that there are probably more Sn3 modelers than S standard gauge modelers. That really surprised me sitting in New Jersey with Sn3 modelers practically non-existant. I'm relatively new to S (2 years), and I've never been to any of the national conventions (That practice ends in 1986), so I really have no concept of how many S scale modelers are out there. DOES ANYONE?

Anyway, it would be beneficial for standard and narrow gaugers to work together to promote S scale modeling. A larger combined group will convince the manufacturers that there is a good market in 1:64. Also, more "other scale" modelers will see the broader range of standard and narrow gauge modeling.

So how do we work together? Let's combine standard and narrow gauge displays! The S Team is doing just that with their beautiful portable layout, which is sectional rather than modular. I hope that any narrow gauge groups with modules will contact me. However, I'm not sure that there are any Sn3 modules. If there are, please send me information on your construction and electrical plans.

It seems to me that the biggest problem is: how do we interface narrow gauge modules that have single-track mainlines with the typical double-track standard gauge modules? One solution would be to build a "branch line" junction module that brings a single line to an interface where single-track modules can attach.

Then narrow gauge modules can be attached through a standard-to-narrow interchange module attached to the "branch line" junction module. In this way the standard gaugers can run on the circle and narrow gaugers on the branch line. You then have two focal points for public viewing. The only drawback to this approach is the added space requirement, which may be a problem at some shows.

The concept of branch lines is something that has

tremendous versatility for a mixed group (standard and Sn3). One could run standard gauge on the loop and part of the branch, and Sn3 further down the branch.

With this in mind, I offer you a module plan to stimulate your imagination. This plan by Mack James Pierce appeared in the May 1971 **Model Railroader** magazine (reproduced courtesy of Kalmbach Publishing Co.). As designed, this plan would be too wide in S scale (approximately 43"), but the engine facility could be moved to other narrow gauge modules further down the branch.

This plan could be modified for attachment to either double-track or single-track modules at the station end. One of the standard gauge tracks could even be eliminated.

Now that you have food for thought, let's hear what your ideas are. I'll include your ideas in future columns. You can write to me at:

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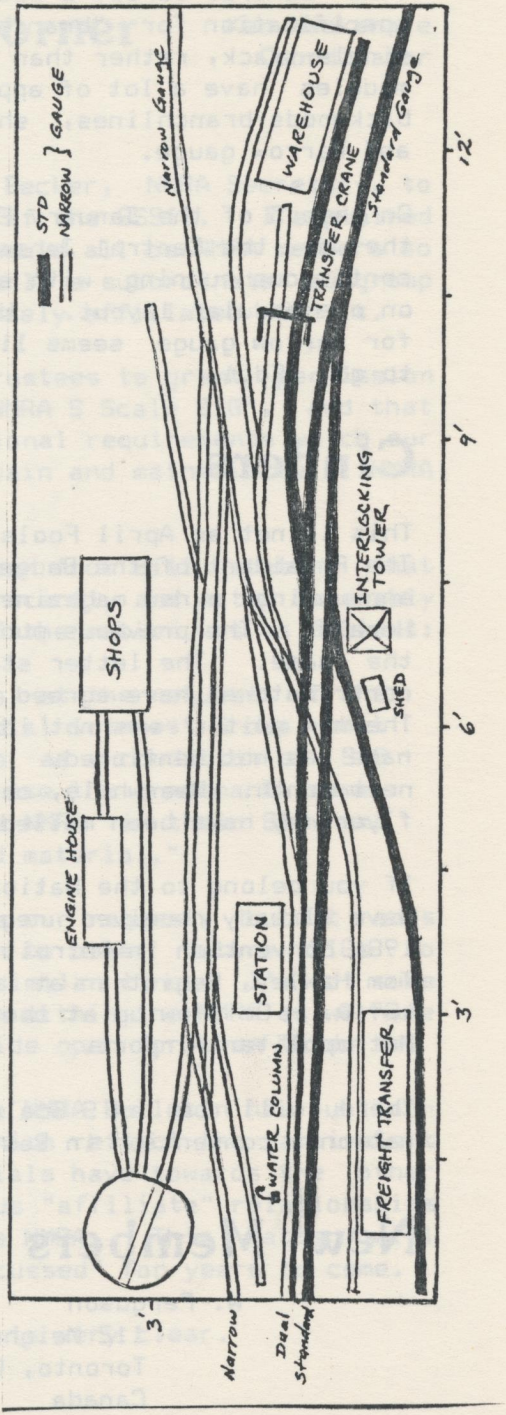
Mahwah, NJ
07430.



(The Central Jersey S Scalers have developed a modular specification for "branch line modules" which have a single-track, rather than double-track, mainline. Such modules have a lot of appeal to those of us who model backwoods branchlines, short lines, logging railroads, and narrow gauge.

On page 5 of the January **Essence** you saw an example of the way the Central Jersey group combines double-track continuous running with single-track branch operation on one modular layout. Using the branch line concept for narrow gauge seems like a very straightforward way to go. Ed.)

Cinders

This is not an April Fools joke, at least I hope not. The President of the Badgerland group received a letter announcing a new magazine to be called: **The S Gauge Herald.** The previous publisher has sold his rights to the name. The letter states that a number of former contributors have agreed to write for the magazine. The new editor was not identified, but Frank Titman's name was not mentioned. Full details will appear here next month. Meanwhile, check with your local club; the flyer may have been mailed to all known S gauge clubs.

If you belong to the National Society of S Gaugers, you have already received registration information for the 1986 convention in Detroit on July 3-5. If not, write Tom Hawley, Registrar at 2311 Strathmore, Lansing, MI 48910. Or show up at the Novi Hilton near the Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

There will be an S Scale get-together at the NMRA national convention in Boston. Hope to see you there.

New Members

W. Ferguson
112 Meighen Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
Canada

Coordinator's Corner

Ken Mackenzie
Coordinator

A PRECEDENT IS SET

Last August I wrote to Bill Becker, NMRA Secretary, to notify him of the formation of the SSSIG. I explained that members of the group would all be NMRA members so that the SSSIG would be clearly a subordinate subgroup of the NMRA, rather than loosely affiliated with it.

I asked the NMRA Board of Trustees to grant permission for us to call our group "NMRA S Scale SIG", and that we be notified of any additional requirements which our group should fulfill to obtain and maintain full NMRA recognition and support.

I have just received a letter from Bill stating that the Board of Trustees met recently and acted favorably on our request. The text of the motion was as follows:

> "MCR Trustee Riley moves at the request of the Secretary that any Special Interest Group that requires NMRA membership as a condition of SIG membership be allowed to use the trademark, name, initials and logo of the NMRA in their SIG name and/or on their published material."

This motion not only grants our request, but it reads like a sweeping invitation to other future SIGs to organize and operate along similar lines. I'm not sure whether other SIGs will form within the NMRA as we have done, but the door is now wide open for them to do so.

For the past year or so, the NMRA Bulletin has published letters and editorials which reflect the ambivalent attitudes which NMRA officials have towards the other SIGs because of the amorphous "affiliate" relationships those groups have with the NMRA. This matter will probably be "cussed and discussed" for years to come.

But the status of our group is very clear.
The NMRA S Scale SIG is in.

ESSENCE
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To:

Essence is the monthly newsletter of the S Scale Special Interest Group (SSSIG), a non-profit special interest group of the NMRA 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 NMRA, 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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Membership fee is $1 per year (August thru July) for NMRA members in the US, Canada, and Mexico. Subscriptions 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.