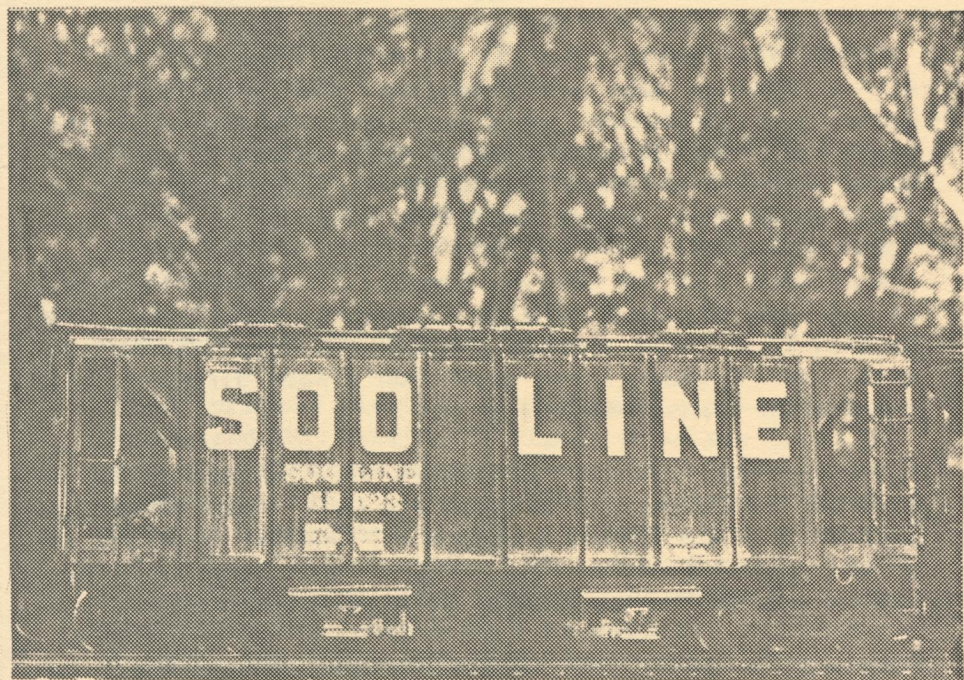


ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the
S Scale Special Interest Group

1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun

June 1986



This well-weathered Soo Line car started life as one of the brass covered hoppers which were imported two years ago by the National Association of S Gaugers as a combined promotion and service to the 1:64 scale modeling community. We look forward to pictures of the ACF tank cars being imported by the NASG this year.

The finished model and photo are by Ken Zieska.

S-GAUGERS COOKOUT
at
NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION

All S-Gaugers who are attending the NMRA National Convention in Boston this July are invited to be the guests of the Bristol S-Gauge Railroaders Club, "The World's Oldest S-Gauge Club", for a cookout and S-gauge mini-layout tour before departing Boston.

The cookout will be held on Sunday, July 27th, at Noon, at the home of Ron Mistretta, in nearby Brookline. The Bristol Club will arrange a pickup at the convention site, or S-gaugers can reach Ron's home directly via the Boston transit lines.

Following the cookout, attendees will be treated to a tour of Tom Coughlin's classic and well-known Berkshire Central S scale layout in Melrose. Another S layout is an additional possibility. The Bristol Club will then return you to the convention site by about 5 PM.

Complete details and cookout-registration will be available at the Hoquat Hobbies booth in the convention hall. Stop by and sign up!

Questions about details may be addressed to Doug Peck; 6 Storeybrooke Drive; Newburyport, MA 01950 (617-465-8798).

Plan to join the members of the Bristol Club for this get-together while you're in "BeanTown"!

OMNICON'S DOIN'S

This long, newsy letter from Charlie Sandersfeld didn't fit in the last issue, but the data is still current. Charlie plans to have a sample of the 4-6-0 at the NASG convention in July.

THE BASIC (MoPac) 2-8-0

30 locos left. All reports from customers are very positive. Several modelers converted them to Soo Line, D&RGW and CP. I'd appreciate photos of these. (Us too. Ed.)

The backhead detail kit for the 2-8-0 and the 4-6-0 will be available late April. These are super castings, and will require some skill to attach either with solder or ACC. Some drilling is required.

THE BASIC (Erie) 4-6-0

This project is in production with shipment scheduled for late April '86. From the looks of the specification drawings and conversations with Samhonsa, this will be a very superior model. Special attention has been given to our already precision drive train to avoid bucking when going downgrade under load and to achieve scale speeds. The wheels will be code 116 to better handle the sometimes-less-than-scale frogs in some S scale turnouts.

The model will feature an extra boiler front with centered headlamp so either version can be modeled. Kadee S scale couplers will be supplied for tender and pilot beam. All O.S.M. models are backed up with replacement parts, extra detail castings, and 30 complete mechanisms for scratch builders.

OTHER NEWS

1986 should bring the introduction of an Omnicon Pennsylvania K4s. We are awaiting final prices, and will publish them as soon as we accept them. It's our intention to produce 100 K4s and 50 L1s locos along with extra mechanisms. A special price will be available to those who order one of each.

We are sparing no horses on these models. Each will have the appropriate tender with unique PRR trucks. Each will feature an entirely unique drive train. Each will be available with a "modernizing" kit. Each will be priced with the modeler in mind. Custom painted models will be available on request. We expect these models to be superior to any in any scale.

Response has been very positive, and the success of this project will be largely due to the hard work and research done by Michael Byers of Pennsylvania.

For 1987 and beyond, we are looking to produce something for everybody. To begin with, we are considering a two-version Ma & Pa 4-4-0 with baggage and coach. Many S scalers have requested smaller power, and we feel the Ma & Pa offers a very appealing assortment of equipment to satisfy these requests. Of course, active interest is required. For the big power guys, a PRR M1 is being planned. For the juice nut, a PRR GG-1, and for them good old boys out west, a UP/SP Harriman 4-6-2.

Now don't get me wrong, these are all "wish list" right now. However, being the only exclusive importer of S scale (standard gauge) quality models, I'm anxious to fill the desires of most modelers. As other ideas mature, I'll try to keep everybody informed.

Happy S-Scaling - Let's all make S grow!
Charlie Sandersfeld

(It is not only great to hear what's happening now, but maybe even more fun to get a peek at what the future might hold. Thanks for including us in on your thinking. Is your comment about an "appealing assortment of equipment" a hint that an assortment of Ma & Pa engines may eventually see the light of day?

Any day now I expect someone to complain about the amount of Omnicon coverage in *Essence*. But we publish the material which comes in. If the other suppliers would like equal time, they are going to have to write us. Nothing would please us more than to be treated to this kind of letter from a different supplier every month. Ed.)

SINGLE TRACK MODULES

I wrote to Tom Hawley asking whether the NASG draft module standards had ever contemplated the inclusion of a standard for single-track modules. His reply was:

Yes, we in the NASG could have "standards" for single track modules; they'd be just about the same as what we now have, but just one track. In fact, thanks to Don Thompson of the CNJSS, a member of the NASG Board of Trustees, the NASG standard for spacing between mainline tracks already says "if there are two tracks..."

Tom Hawley

(Apparently this implies that I could build a single-track module which was more in keeping with branchline, short line, or midwestern style railroading and the module could fully conform to NASG modular specs. This may solve a major dilemma for a lot of modelers. It certainly does for me.

Of course, I may not be able to find a group of fellow modular modelers who are willing to run my single-track module as a part of their double-track setup. Is anybody else out there interested in building single-track modules compatible with the NASG specs? If so, please write to *Essence*. Ed.)

NMRA MODULE STANDARDS

As you know, Tom Hawley is the Coordinator for NASG Module Standards. He sent along the following letter which he received from the Chairman of the NMRA Engineering Committee:

TO: Tom Hawley DATE: 9 March 1986
FROM: Jim Monroe SUBJECT: Module STDS, S Scale

We in Engineering are making progress in the development of Module Standards, but slowly because we are still getting inputs from the membership.

Regarding S Scale Standards for modules, we see no reason that the NASG standard should not be adopted by the NMRA. Since you speak for the S scale community, we will use your data in the Standards for S Scale when next we issue the data package for member review.

We trust you will keep us informed of any and all revisions to your module standard so that we will have up-to-date data for the NMRA Standard.

Regards,
J. P. Monroe

(This is very good news. A possible hassle seems to have been avoided. You may recall that the NMRA Engineering Committee published a set of draft standards for modules in all scales. These drafts were published in the May 1985 the NMRA Bulletin. The primary purpose of the draft was to establish some fundamental terminology as a basis for further technical standards in each scale.

The drafts went further, however, and suggested dimensional standards for modules in each scale. The underlying philosophy of the dimensions seemed to be that key dimensions for modules in one scale should be proportional to those for the other scales. I don't know why anyone thought that was important, but the

result was a proposed set of dimensions for S, N, (and perhaps some other scales) which differed from established practice in ways which seemed to some of us to be more disruptive than useful.

The effect on NTRAK would have been to obsolete literally thousands of existing modules, and NTRAK took issue with the proposal. Don Thompson and Tom Hawley did the same on behalf of S scale. We all were concerned because the NMRA draft was at odds with the proposed NASG and Central Jersey specs. Ironically, the draft appeared at about the same time as Tom Hawley's fine Bulletin article on the practical ability of S scale modelers from different parts of the country to hook up their modules and run compatibly because they had all built to the proposed NASG specs.

Hmmm. Now if the NMRA Engineering Committee recognizes the NASG as "speaking for the S scale community", maybe something similar can be done with the old NMRA track and wheel specs. Ed.)

HERALD CLUB CAR

You may want to inform your readers about the Club Car column of the **S Gauge Herald**, and where they should send their club news or club ad. Send your input to:

Gene Fletcher, Editor
S Gauge Herald Club Car
5445 Adams Road
Brunswick, ME 04011

Club ads are free, but should not exceed 30 words.

Glenn Berg

(Thanks, Glenn. Readers, please pass this address along to the Secretary of your local S club. I'll get out my stubby pencil and send in a plug for the SSSIG. Ed.)

NEWS FROM THE BRISTOL CLUB

I need a lot of help. I am the president of the Bristol S Gauge Club. The NMRA National Convention is to be held in Boston this July, and we have been trying to figure out what we can do to help.

We cannot bring a module. We have been working on one, and have had it operating at three local shows, but it is not good enough for the NMRA. We have made mistakes, and while it works well with American Flyer, scale models will not stay on the track. We designed it for both scale and American Flyer, using .148 rail. I fear that our gauging is incorrect and will have to be reworked this summer.

Tom Coughlin, who is one of our members and who gave me a copy of *Essence*, has suggested that we have a picnic after the convention. I wonder whether that would be of interest to you. The picnic would be for S gaugers and more a chance to swap ideas than anything else.

I would like to get some details of the NMRA Convention to learn what is being planned for S gauge. Any information you can give me would be appreciated.

I should add that the Bristol Club is split up between the NMRA and the NASG. We have conducted the national NASG Convention in Woburn, Massachusetts, and many of us have attended all recent NASG conventions. Our ties, however, with the NMRA are not close. I think they should be closer.

Reginald H. Smith, Jr.

(The announcement of your club's S-GAUGER COOKOUT just arrived, and is featured elsewhere in this issue. You do us all a great service by volunteering to host what promises to be a super get-together.

At NMRA national conventions, folks from far away often leave for home on Saturday so as to be back at work the following Monday. I hope some of our fellow modelers from the West Coast can stay over for the cookout. I had planned to head for New York on Saturday, but I would hate to miss this outing. Maybe our family can rearrange its plans.

The huge staff here at SSSIG headquarters has gotten nothing done as far as formal arrangements for the NMRA convention are concerned. Having heard only from John Bortz and Don DeWitt, I figured we would probably meet in a phone booth or on a layout tour bus. I had hoped to organize an inexpensive dinner meeting (we have to eat anyway) one evening in the middle of the week, and get the word out to the attendees via the convention bulletin board and via flyers at the NASG booth.

The Bristol Club sounds very much like our Badgerland S Gaugers club here in Milwaukee. We have more tinsplate members than scale, and are also building NASG modules with code 148 rail so that all members can run their equipment.

There are several problems with this approach. For one thing, no commercial flex-track or tie-strip is available in this rail height, so we are forced to hand-lay all the trackwork. This is a major learning experience for our non-scale members. NASG tracklaying gages for use with code 148 rail are available from Train Stuff, I assume you are using these.

Another problem is that an open-frog switch can be built to operate with AF or with scale equipment, but not with both. Closed-frog switches must be used if both kinds of equipment are to be operated. They can be ordered from Earl Eschleman.

Also, we have found that it is important to spread out the track gauge toward the maximum permissible dimension (.905) when going around curves, so that longer wheelbase scale engines don't bind. We use the check gage provided by NASG when laying the curves. The jury is still out on the operability of our trackwork. (Ed.)

Modulitis

Don DeWitt, Chairman
Module Committee

In the next few issues we will begin talking about "standards" and "recommended practices" for module construction. During the last few years, Tom Hawley and about 15 S scale enthusiasts from all over the country have been wrangling with the problem of how to build modules so that they are truly modular.... in other words, so that a Minnesota S-module can be joined with a Florida and a New Jersey S-module, etc.

If one looks around for advice from module builders in other scales, one can find many opinions. But the most organized effort has clearly been that of N scale modelers via the NTRAK approach to modular railroading. (See the recent Bulletin cover story.) Their careful organization has enabled them to build some truly wonderful layouts. So where does S scale stand?

Tom Hawley's NASG committee has just recently finished its recommended module standard and has sent it to the NASG Board of Trustees for final approval. (This will also be the NMRA's recommended module standard for S. See Mailbag. Ed.)

There are only four mandatory standards now (assuming approval by the NASG Board of Trustees). These deal with track height above the floor, the type of wheelsets that the track will accommodate, the distance between double-track mainlines, and the electrical control system.

1) Wherever you intend your module to **interface** with someone else's module, that point should be 42 inches above the floor. Obviously you should build your module legs so that they are adjustable around that point because most floors are not flat.

Let me make it perfectly clear that between the module INTERFACE points you can be at any height which you desire as long as you can attain that height within a reasonable distance. (There are no current standards which dictate maximum grades on a modules.) If you are planning to build a module with a grade, then it has to

be long enough to attain the new desired elevation and return to 42 inches at the opposite INTERFACE point. Probably then, the module will have to be built in **sections**, unless you have a semi-trailer truck available.

This is a good time to emphasize another piece of terminology. One can say that a modular layout is built of many modules which may or may not be made up of module **sections**. For instance, my module is currently made up of three 4-foot **sections** which are 30 inches wide. Only the end **sections** have a standard modular INTERFACE on one of their ends. A modular **section** need only conform to the wheelset standard and the electrical system standard, if it has no INTERFACE.

2) The second standard states that the track must accommodate wheels and wheelsets which conform to the NASG (NMRA Finescale) S-4 wheel and wheelset standard.

3) The third standard deals with the distance between mainline tracks when a double-track mainline is built. If your module has a double-track mainline, then the centers should be exactly 2.75 inches apart at the INTERFACES. Note again that you can spread the tracks apart between INTERFACE ends, if you wish.

There are NMRA **recommended practices** for minimum radii and for distances between mainline tracks on curves to accommodate the overhang of long steam locomotives and passenger cars. These will be discussed in a future "Modulitis" column when we deal with corner module construction.

Also note that there is an emphasis on the word "**when**" in the first sentence of this standard. Those who wish to build modules using the branch-line concept (as discussed in a previous issue) do not need to concern themselves with distance between mainlines, and can place their single track anywhere they care to, so long as it satisfies the other standards at the INTERFACES.

4) The last standard deals with the electrical system of modules, and as you can predict, this standard is complicated. A great deal of careful consideration, as

well as reflection on actual experience has gone into development of a workable control system. There are currently two electrical control systems in common use.

The first is a more simple system which allows you to quickly become operational and is less expensive. This "Rail-To-Rail System" was first developed for S modules for the Delaware Valley S Gaugers club by Matt Lacko and Lee Johnson in the 1970's. As with many simple systems, one often outgrows the simplicity and seeks more sophistication.

The NASG Module Development Committee and the Southeastern Michigan S Gaugers club have developed what is known as the "Cab/Block System". This system allows the operator to transfer his train to the other mainline while using the same throttle. Incorporated with this idea is the ability to "electrically kill" a module so that you can isolate a train from the rest of the layout and operate another train on another module on the same mainline track. In addition, the Cab/Block system uses common-rail wiring which the Rail-To-Rail system does not.

As you might guess, each system has its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, I will begin describing the systems in detail in the next few issues and point out their distinctions and encumbrances.

(Hey, wait a minute! Does the NASG recommended standard for run-through modules accomodate both electrical systems? If not, which one? Stay tuned for the next exciting episode. Ed.)

There are no other stipulations beyond these four in the recommended NASG Module Standards, so your creativity is pretty unrestrained. As you read this column during the next few issues, the NASG Module Development Committee would certainly appreciate your feedback if something moves you to words. You can write me at 37 Snow Drive, Mahwah, NJ 07430 or Tom Hawley at 2311 Strathmore Road, Lansing, MI 48910.

Finally, if you really want to see how modules are built, how they are wired, how they are scenicked, AND

how well modules from all over the country go together in a huge modular layout, go to the NASG Convention at the Novi Michigan Hilton Hotel on July 3-6 and you will see it all! If you do show up, introduce yourself to the dark-haired, bald and bearded man from New Jersey - that's me. The red-haired, balding and bearded man from New Jersey is Jeff Wilson of Hoquat Hobbies.

Coordinator's Corner

Ken Mackenzie
Coordinator

READ THIS BEFORE VOTING YOUR NMRA BALLOT

A while back I spent a pleasant evening with six other S scale modelers. It was my first chance to really get to know some of them. The talk was rich with modeling tips and rumors of future S products. Over coffee, the **Essence** was mentioned. Several of those present were not NMRA members, but had heard of the SSSIG.

We got to talking about why they were not in the NMRA. This was an important topic, because of the disturbing decline in NMRA membership. The reasons given by the non-members boiled down to: not enough value received for the money. Specifically, they felt (1) that \$20 was a lot to pay, (2) that the **Bulletin** was probably the major part of the cost, and (3) that the **Bulletin** was of little value compared to the other advantages of NMRA membership.

I protested that the **Bulletin** was one of my favorite hobby magazines because it carries such a large percentage of all-scale information, but I didn't convince anyone. In the days that followed, I worried about what the non-members had said. Was this the reason for the drop-off in membership? If so, the SSSIG approach (of making subscription to the publication an optional extra) might solve the problem.

At the Spring Regional NMRA Convention in Milwaukee, I sought out Dick Cecil. I had worked for Dick on the 1985 National Convention, and knew him well enough to ask his opinion on this subject. I told him what the

non-members had said and how the SSSIG charges separately for **Essence**. Imagine my surprise when he responded: "We do the same thing with NMRA memberships; there is a half-price rate if you don't want the **Bulletin**. I take the half-price membership myself. Of course, the half-price 'NO BULLETIN' rate doesn't get a lot of publicity in the **Bulletin**."

Before you rush to the phone and try recruiting any new NMRA members with the bargain rate, you'd better read the rest of this column.

By now, you will have received your NMRA ballot. On the ballot you will be asked to vote based on election information published in the April **bulletin**.

As I scanned the proposed changes to the constitution, I noticed that there was no explanation of what was different between the old language and the new. Since the subject of dues was on my mind, I read "Change A" carefully and discovered that the "NO BULLETIN" bargain membership rate is absent from the new language. I'm not sure what else is different, but it appears that a "yes" vote for Change A will be a vote to eliminate the NO BULLETIN membership rate.

In the area of Standards, the only effect on S scale is to move the NMRA maximum flange depth closer to actual practice and closer to the NASG/NMRA Finescale numbers. This is goodness.

Be sure to mail your 1986 NMRA ballot. Only 10 or 15 percent do. If we don't vote now, how can we complain about the outcome later?

New Members

John M. Durstewitz

63 Crestview Drive; Bernardsville, NJ 07924

Roy J. Meissner

Box 3003; Merton, WI 53056

Reginald H. Smith

Box 404; Wenham, MA 01984

NEWS RELEASE March 18, 1986

THE S GAUGE HERALD RETURNS!

TTL Corporation has obtained the publishing rights to the MAGAZINE THAT REVIVED S GAUGE from former publisher, Wallace E. J. Collins. The HERALD represented the Gauge as a forum for scale and hi-rail operators for 18 years, and has been sorely missed since it was last issued in 1978.

The S GAUGE HERALD returns with the July-August issue, coinciding with the NASG annual convention. It will feature a 50th anniversary celebration of the inauguration of the NYC MERCURY streamliner that once operated between Detroit and Cleveland with a cover painting of the locomotive and an article with sketches, photos, and plans for this famous train.

The cover painting by Wayne Shipp is printed in color, and will be made into a poster and included as a bonus to those subscribers on record before July 1, 1986. The poster will be signed and numbered by the artist and will be available separately.

The magazine is printed on glossy paper and retains many of the familiar columns from the past. It will also feature a new format as well as departments in keeping with the recent developments in the gauge.

Herald subscriptions are:

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\$27.00 for 2 years,
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S Gauge Herald
4600 Duke St. Box 427
Alexandria, VA 22304

Rollain E. Mercier
Editor/Publisher

ESSENCE

5969 Sugarbush Lane
Greendale, WI 53129

EDITOR - Ken Mackenzie

CONTRIBUTORS - Don Dewitt

Tom Hawley

Charlie Sandersfeld

PHOTOGRAPHER - Ken Zieska

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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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Membership fee is \$1 per year (August thru July) for NMRRA members in the US, Canada, and Mexico. Subscrip-

To:

tions to Essence cost an additional \$6 per year for SSSSIG 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.