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**THIS MONTH: • ANNUAL INDEX • LIONEL '74
• KITBASHED INDUSTRY AND TRANSFER CABOOSE**



Two photos: 470 Railroad Club; Wayne Daniels Collection

Milk trains, milk cars and creameries

by Chuck Yungkurth

A brief look at the former railroad milk industry and related equipment with tips on how to model milk cars and a creamery.

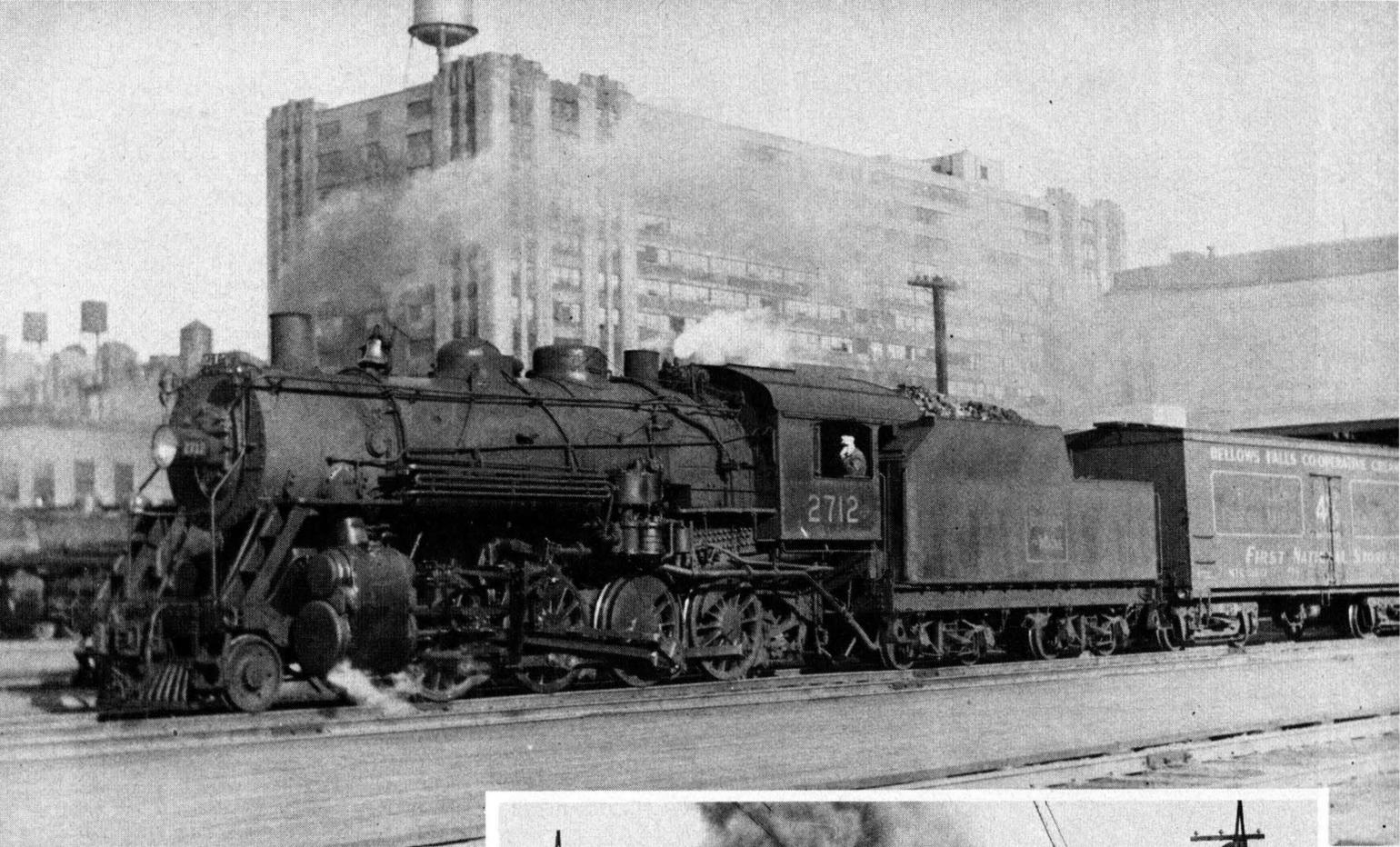
Milk traffic formed an important part of the railroad business for many years. Creameries were located in many small towns in the dairy regions of New York, Pennsylvania and the New England States, as well as in many other parts of the country. Special milk cars were built and used up until the mid-fifties, and solid trains of milk cars were run by railroads such as the O&W, the Lackawanna, the Erie and the Rutland. The variety of equipment as well as the type of operation possible makes milk traffic an interesting addition to most model railroads. Books such as *Eastern Steam Pictorial*, *Erie Power* and *The O&W*

Story provide background material for modeling milk trains. Of course, if your taste runs to low-nose diesels and hi-cube cars and you want to be strictly prototypical, you're sort of out of luck. These modern innovations in railroading appeared after the demise of the milk car and milk train.

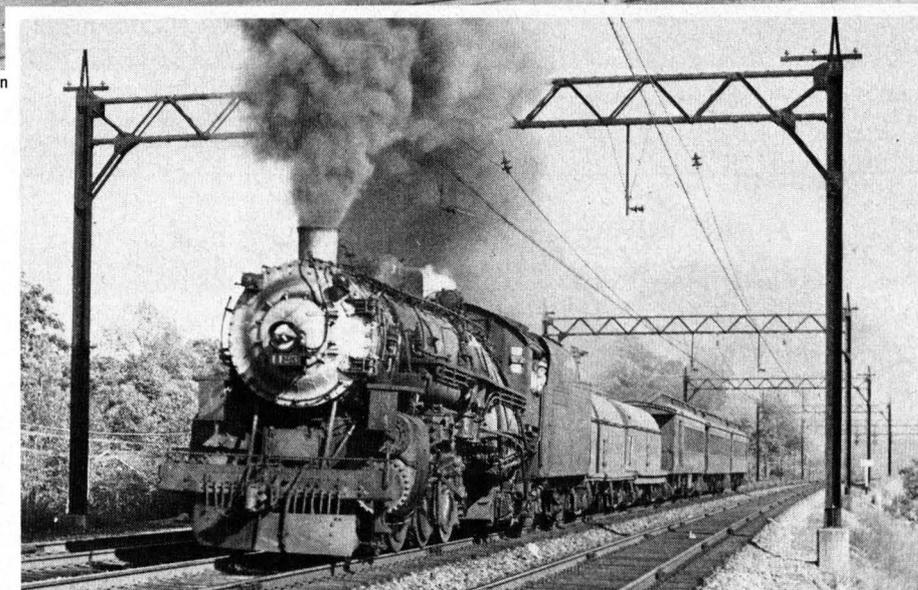
On the major Eastern railroads, milk trains consisted of up to 20 milk cars with an old coach or combine on the end for the train crew. Since the train literally stopped at every gate post and small hamlet, it usually also functioned as a local passenger train. Railroad stories and anec-

dotes are full of "milk runs" where passengers endured trips at what seemed like a snail's pace while the train made innumerable stops to pick up milk cans and milk cars. Often stops were made in isolated areas to pick up a few milk cans from a farmer at a grade crossing or milk platform. As the milk business on the rails dwindled due to highway competition, mail and express was frequently assigned to these trains. Hence, the typical milk train at the beginning of dieselization consisted of six or eight milk cars, an express reefer or two, maybe four mail storage cars, and the always-present old coach on the end. Milk was also an important commodity on short lines such as the Maryland & Pennsylvania, the Huntington & Broad Top and the Unadilla Valley. On these short lines, milk was hauled in milk cars on scheduled trains to junction points where the cars were turned over to main line roads for shipment into major cities. The milk cars were often handled on freight trains on short lines. A not uncommon sight on a branch line was a milk car cut in behind a gas-electric.

Milk cars were both furnished by the railroad companies and owned by dairies or car-leasing companies. Many private owner cars had colorful painting and lettering schemes which make them interesting pieces of rolling stock on model railroads. Railroad-owned milk cars were almost always unique in design and were frequently built in the company shops. Milk cars were generally used on trips of ten or twelve hours duration, so re-icing from platforms was not required as in the case of the conventional refrigerated freight car. More modern privately-owned cars were of steel



Right: Jesse Wilson



A small steam locomotive or a single unit diesel provided sufficient tractive effort as a rule, such as the B&M RS3 (opposite) trailing two Brookside/B&M milk cars in a typical New England setting or, in earlier days (top), a B&M Consolidation and a colorful Bellows Falls milk car (made in HO by Train-Minature). A Lackawanna Pacific was typical power for that road's milk trains, even under the commuter district's catenary (above). Borden milk cars behind 1125 are offered in HO by Nickel Plate Products.

construction and used glass-lined tanks to hold bulk milk. The milk was chilled prior to loading in the tanks, and the insulation kept it cool until the car arrived at its destination. A few dairy companies had special flat cars which were equipped with passenger trucks, steam and signal lines, and other passenger train appliances. These were used to carry two tanks which could be transferred from a truck to the railroad car—sort of an early day containerized service. The Borden Company had some very distinctive milk tank cars which had sloping ends and a smooth, curved roof which blended into the car sides; it has been available in model form (HO).

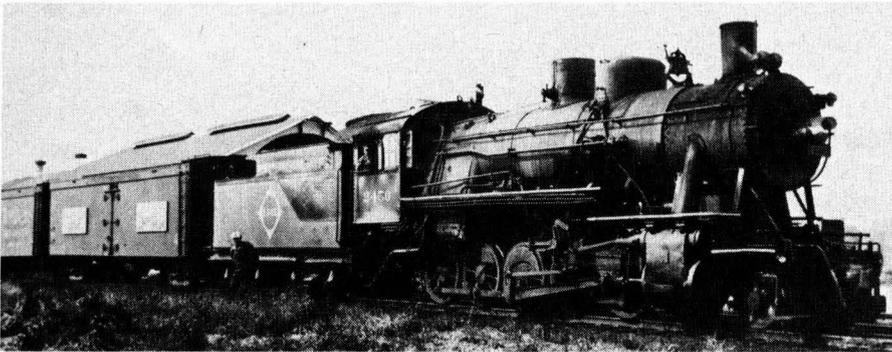
There is confusion in some modeler's minds about the difference between a milk car and an express-refrigerator car. Actually, the differences are not always clear-cut. The express reefer is a general purpose car used to carry highly perishable commodities long distances in passenger trains. They usually have roof ice hatches and conventional outward-hinged refrigerator car doors. More modern express refrigerators have plug doors. All have high-speed trucks and are owned by railroads or express companies. Express reefers are often seen in hot-shot freights or empty in regular freight trains. However, milk cars were built to haul a single commodity short distances on scheduled routes. As previously mentioned, they usually did not have roof ice hatches for stage icing. Often they had doors which opened inward instead of the typical outward hinged refrigerator car doors. There is no clear dividing line between the two classes of cars, but some are obviously milk car while others are clearly

express reefers. A lot of cars fall into a gray area between the two types. It is possible that some railroads may have built one class of cars to be used in both kinds of traffic.

In HO the fine Ambroid Great Northern car wood kit is a classic example of an express reefer. Model Die Casting's plastic car kit is more typical of a milk car because of the lower height and other proportions of the car body. The Athearn car is a good example of a car that falls midway between the two distinct types and could be classified as either a milk car or an express reefer. The HO modeler is fortunate in having

these cars available in many lettering schemes, allowing him to assemble an interesting milk train with little effort. Main Line and Red Ball also make milk and express car kits. Red Ball still has castings available for those who wish to scratch-build other types of milk cars. The Borden car was imported by Nickel Plate Products in HO brass. O scalers also have milk cars available, but the N scale enthusiast will have to scratchbuild or kitbash.

The HO Model Die Casting car can easily be back-dated into an older style of car by removing the steel underframe and adding truss rods. The proportions of the D&H and



A typical scene of yesteryear: small steam locomotives picking up loaded milk cars from creameries on Chuck Yungkurth's HO Bellefonte & Snowshoe (top) and on the Erie at Mansfield, Pa., on October 9, 1936, as a J-2 "Russian Decapod" went about her daily chores. Model was kitbashed from an AHM kit.

Lehigh Valley cars shown in the photographs are almost identical to the MDC car. A bit of cutting would remove the regular doors and permit making fold-in doors of scribed wood or plastic. Both Champion and Walthers make interesting milk car decals in O and HO.

While milk trains and cars have disappeared from the railroad scene, many creameries and dairies are still in evidence along trackage throughout the country. Some are still functioning in the dairy industry, although they do not utilize railroad transportation. Upstate New York is dotted with abandoned creameries, a few of which are shown in the accompanying illustrations. Almost all of these buildings were of wood construction, although some were of brick or cinder block. Invariably they were of sprawling configuration, the result of many remodelings and additions-on to increase capacity. They frequently had odd roof lines and a hodge-podge arrangement of doors and windows. Every creamery I have found was either gray with white trim or all white.

The essential parts of a creamery are the main building, a boiler room or house for the steam used in processing, loading doors and platform for unloading milk cans from wagons or trucks, and a siding with loading platform for the milk cars. In later years, milk tank trucks were used to pick milk up from bulk tanks at the farms and deliver it to the creamery, so a milk tank truck is not out of place at creamery even though the milk was shipped out by rail. A tall stack for the boiler was a prominent feature, as well as various vent and blow-down pipes on the roof of the boiler house. A coal bin was provided to store the fuel for the boilers; sometimes the coal was simply stored in a pile. Coal was delivered by rail, usually in gondolas from which it was hand-shoveled into the bin or pile. Some very large creameries were equipped with pits between the rails and a conveyor system so that hopper cars could be unloaded. The coal storage was located at the far end of the siding so that unloading a car of coal (which might take two or three days) would not block the siding for the daily movement of the milk cars.

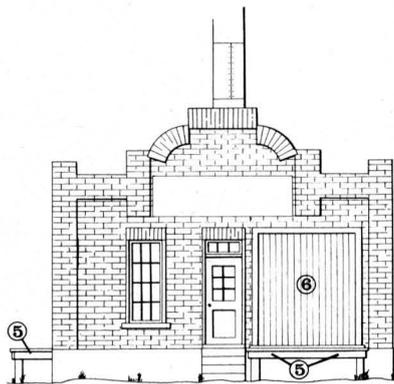
Putting a creamery on my short line model railroad was brought about by recalling the Huntington & Broad Top interchanging milk cars with the Pennsylvania at Huntington, Pa., in 1950. The new plastic milk car kits were also a motivating factor. The H&BT train was made up of a classic 4-4-0, two Abbott's Dairy milk cars and a blue combine that was once a Brill gas-electric. The train pulled in across the main line from the PRR station and set the two milk cars off on the interchange track. A diesel switcher picked the cars up and later tacked them on the head end of a local Pennsy passenger train pulled by the usual K-4.

Scratchbuilding a creamery did not fit into the schedule of Jobs To Be Done on the layout, so I looked over my accumulation of plastic building kits to see what could be modified to do the job. I finally selected the AHM "Gruesome Casket Company" kit and modified it as shown in the photographs and sketches. I painted it white with Floquil, using a brush and putting it on in rather smeary fashion. The paint practically dissolved the plastic and, along with

A kitbashed HO creamery

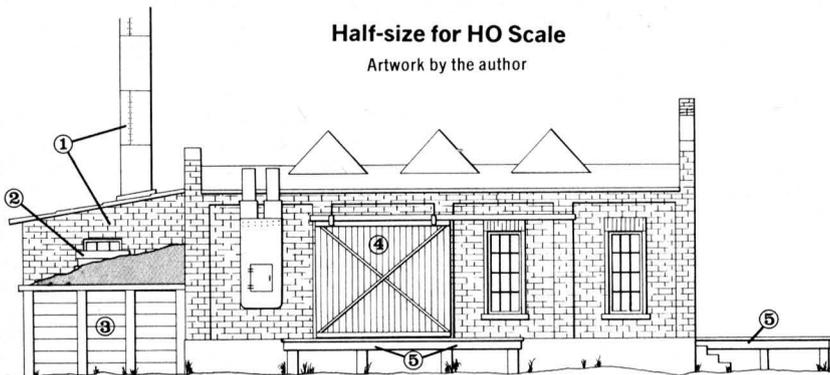
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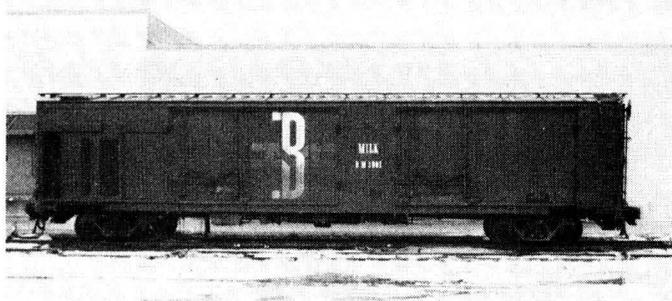
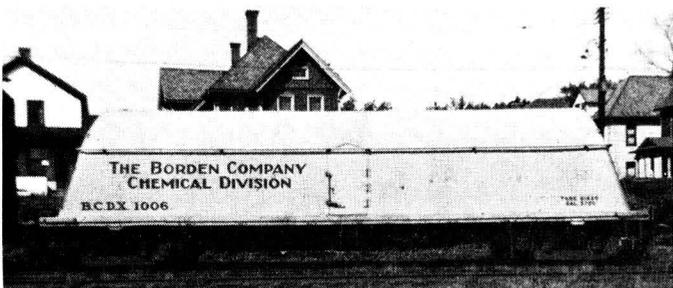
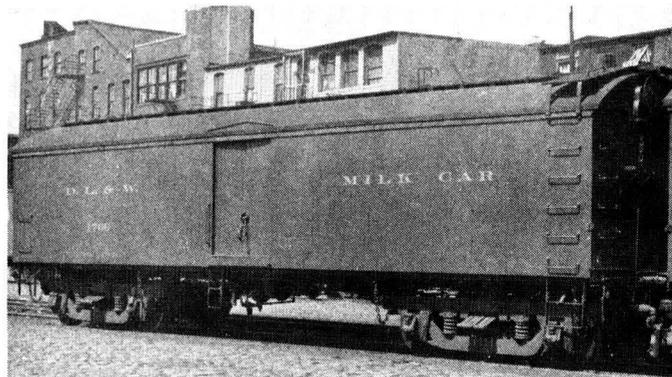
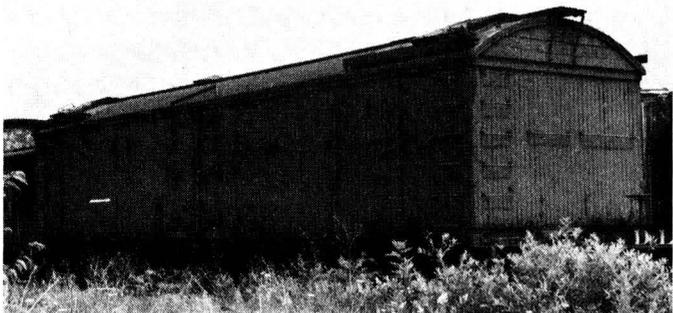
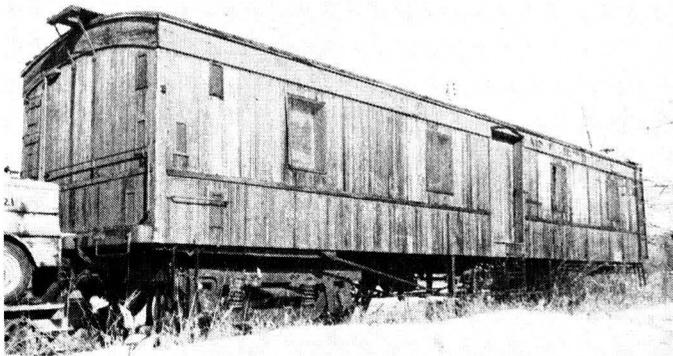
1. Boiler house and stack from Casket Company kit.
2. Stripwood planks glued over window opening part way up to simulate boards used to keep coal from breaking windows.
3. Coal bin built up from stripwood or parts from AHM sandhouse kit.
4. Milk car loading door and guide from Casket Company kit; it is necessary to cut off door guide from the door and glue it back on so door "slides" to right instead of to left.
5. Truck unloading and car loading platforms built up from scribed wood sheet and strips.
6. Door for unloading trucks made from scribed wood sheet; framed door with wood strips.



Half-size for HO Scale

Artwork by the author





Clarence Tharp

Chuck Yungkurth

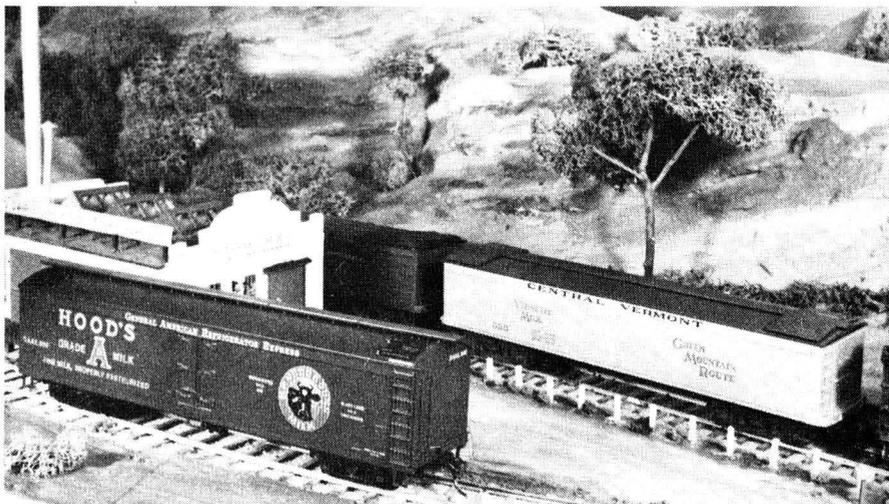
Clarence Tharp

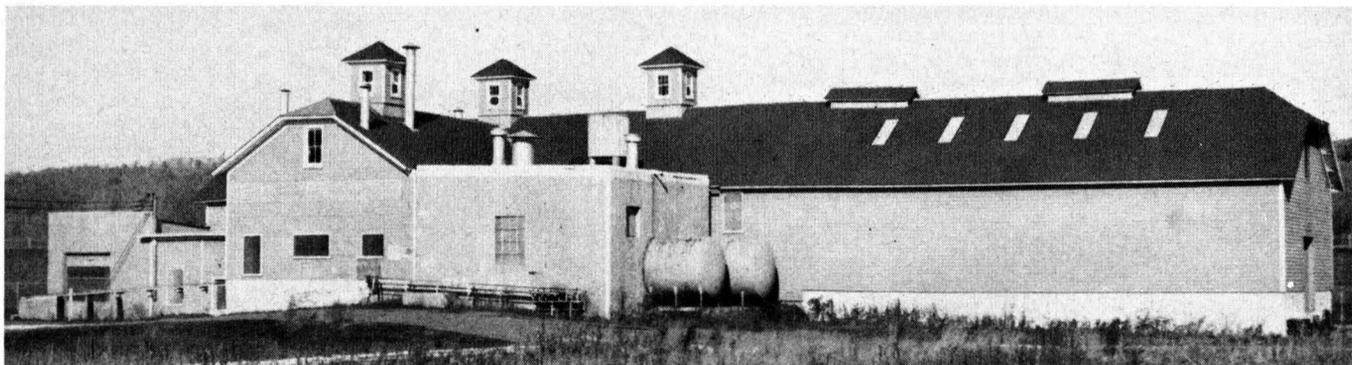
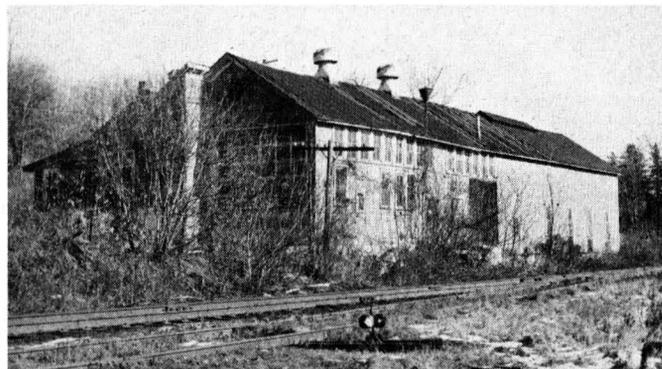
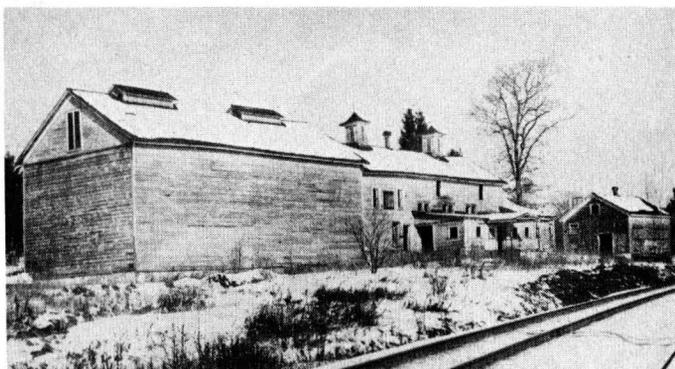
Richard Conard

The milk cars

D&H maintenance car (top left) began life as a milk car, but currently serves as a storehouse at Tunnel, N.Y. LV 94053 had been downgraded to ice service when photo was taken. Ice hatches and doors on DL&W car (second row left) indicate its ancestry as an express reefer. DL&W 1766's short length, deeply rounded roof and high-riding body give it unique appearance; color was coach green with buff lettering in this 1947 portrait. Former Borden milk car (third row left) was converted to chemical service. These cars were once common in East in several schemes ranging from white with black lettering to red with yellow lettering. Rounded bottom on Borden milk car GPEX 997 is unusual. Modern B&M car (above) is an insulated plug-door box, while B&M twin-door car 1901 (above right) appears to have mechanical cooling. Suitable HO milk car models include Athearn (foreground, right) and MDC (rear) kits, although both have ice hatches. Lower profile of MDC car is more typical of milk cars.

RAILROAD MODEL CRAFTSMAN





All photos: Chuck Yungkurth



The creameries

Both cheese and milk were shipped from imposing building at Tunnel, N.Y. (two top photos). Tracks in foreground are the D&H main between Binghamton and Nineveh Junction, N.Y. Stub of boilerhouse stack and platform where milk was once loaded can still be seen. Creamery on Lehigh Valley at Smithboro, N.Y., has not seen rail service for years (second row), but odd window arrangement, broken roof lines, outside stairs make it ideal for modeling interest. Rear view of same structure shows proximity to railroad. Crowley Milk Company (above) operated this creamery at Nichols, N.Y. It was served by Lackawanna, with tracks running behind the building. Although it had been served by truck for the last 20 years or so, it did serve as a creamery until 1969. Another excellent candidate for modeling is the former creamery at Barton, N.Y. (left). Small size of Erie-served creamery and lack of difficult shapes ease construction pains, and it could serve quite nicely as a small factory or a mill.

the smeary paint job, nicely gave the effect of weathered white paint over brick. A few bricks were scraped clean of all paint with a model knife to heighten the appearance of chipped paint. The resulting building is probably a bit small for a creamery, but it fit nicely into the sort of space that is available on most layouts. I'm sure there

are other plastic buildings which could be adapted, and scratchbuilding a creamery would make an interesting project.

No matter what type of pike you have, adding a source of milk traffic will enhance your passenger train operations. Watching a pair of E8's stop the train on the main short of the station, back into a siding to

pick up a milk car at the local creamery and then pull up to the station after recoupling to the train would make a unique bit of action for a model passenger train. This is exactly the way the Erie handled the situation in towns such as Hancock, N.Y., in the early diesel era, and you can easily reproduce it in miniature. ☐