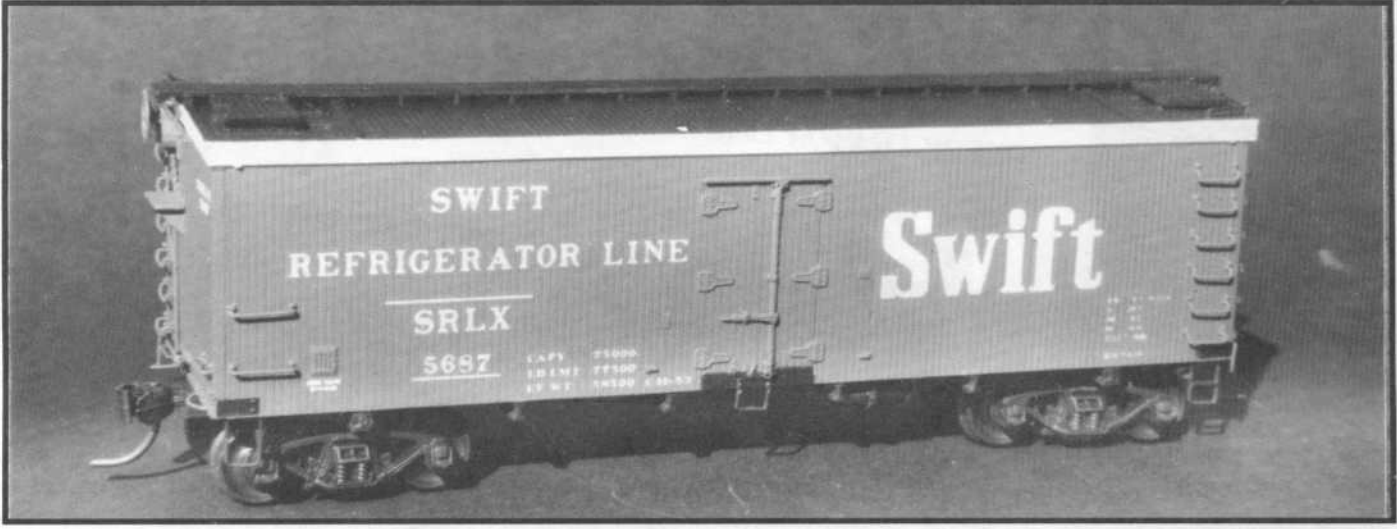




# Swift Meat Reefers



Meat reefers were perhaps the most distinctive and colorful aspect of railroading. Meat packing, as an industry, had its start in supplying the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war, the meat reefer was developed to enable the packing industry to bring meat to the American table from the Great Plains. It preceded the produce reefer by a couple of decades. By the 1890s, Armour & Company dominated the U.S. reefer industry--meat and produce--and provided most of the cars and icing facilities nationwide. Through the intervention of the federal government, Armour's dominance was broken. Other packers built reefers, Swift, Wilson and Cudahy having major fleets. By the Thirties, the Swift fleet was the largest. In 1931, it was bought by General American. From outward appearances, nothing changed. The cars still bore the Swift name and reporting marks, SRLX. After the General American purchase and lease-back, however, the fleet consisted of both Swift designed and built cars and new General American cars.

Meat reefers were unique in several respects. The cars were used for carrying the cargo of the owning or leasing packer. Most often the cars carried animal carcasses--on meat hooks--from the slaughter houses to the "branch" houses throughout the country. At these locations the carcasses were converted into cuts and processed meats and distributed to local buyers. "Branch" houses numbered in the thousands with the greatest density where there were large population concentrations, such as the northeastern U.S.

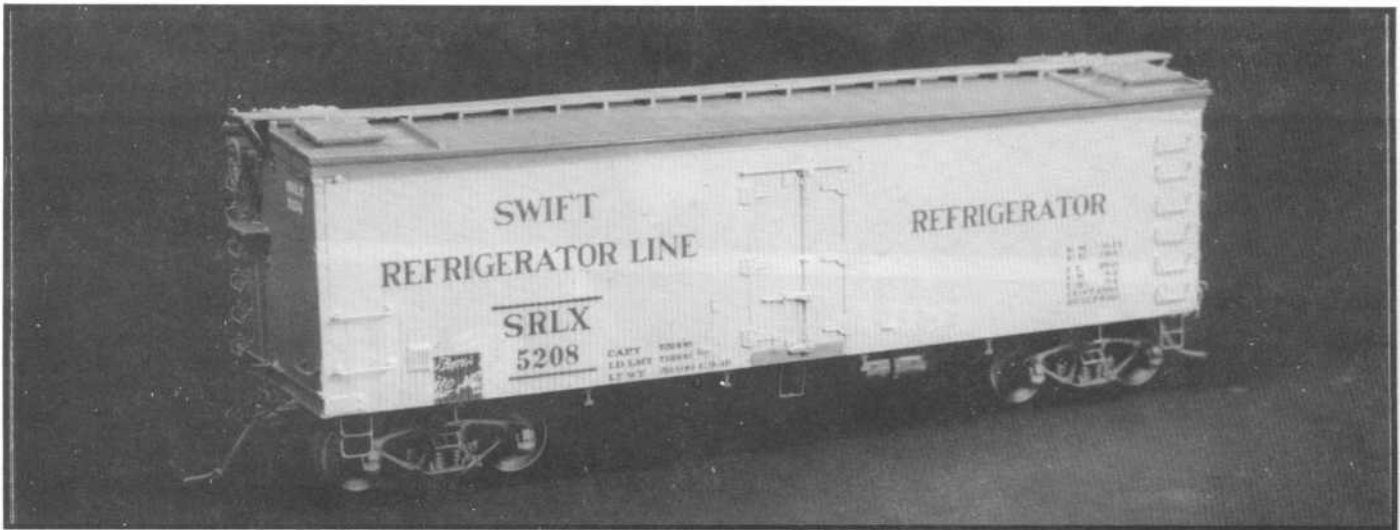
The meat reefers also were distinctive in that they were traditionally shorter in length than produce reefers. Most meat reefers during the steam era were 36 to 38 feet in outside length, some four or five feet shorter than their produce counterparts. The common explanation is that the spacing of doors at company plants required shorter cars.

The meat reefers were frequently cooled with brine tanks, not ice bunkers. These retaining tanks held a solution of ice and salt. The Swift cars were almost universally brine tank cooled and were charged at the packing house before loading. Enroute, the cars were replenished with crushed ice and salt, frequently from the second deck of an icing platform.

The major movement of meat reefers was from the Midwest to the big population centers of the country. Railroads competed for this traffic and some secondary lines garnered an inordinate share of the business. For example, the Erie, Nickle Plate and B&O competed aggressively with the Pennsy and NYC for east coast traffic. While the two big roads carried more meat traffic than the smaller roads, the smaller ones carried more in proportion to their mileage and train movements. The Milwaukee was the largest handler of meat reefers in the mid-Twenties, both originating traffic off its Midwestern main and branch lines and handling shipments to the Pacific Northwest. The Santa Fe dominated the southern California market. Other Midwestern roads--such as IC,



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MoP, CNW, CMO, CB&Q, CGW, M&StL, Katy and Wabash--had heavy traffic in meat reefers.

Meat reefers were rolling advertisements for the products of the packers. When the "golden era" of billboard reefers was ended in the mid-1930s by ICC fiat, the lettering became simple. At the end of World War II, restrictions ended and the reefers again displayed the famous logos of the industry--Armour, Swift, Cudahy, Wilson--in numerous bright styles. The colorful car was back.

Though meat reefers pioneered refrigeration on rail, by the 1920s they were no longer advancing the technology. While the railroads began converting to steel reefers in the Thirties and did so in wholesale fashion in the Forties, the meat reefer fleet stayed heavily dependent on wood cars. Even after World War II, Cudahy was buying new 37' wood meat reefers that would pass for a design from the Teens. These wood cars were in service even into the late 1960s. The classic meat reefer spanned the period from the turn of the century to the era of high cube boxcars virtually without change in size and construction.

Sunshine Models begins a series of short meat reefers with two Swift designed and built cars, the 5200 and 6700 series 37' wood cars. These cars had wood superstructure, double wood sheathing and steel underframes. The roof was tongue in groove wood, as well as the hatches. The 6700 series, built in the mid '20s, features a shorter door and riveted plates at the ends of the bolsters and cross ties. The 5200 series, built in the late '20s, is a bit shorter in length but with a taller door and an open underframe. They represent the cars built before General American purchased the Swift fleet.

The Swift cars were painted in a simple black lettering on yellow-orange sides with red end and fascia during the Thirties and early Forties. In 1948, Swift introduced a red and white banner on the right side, a concession to the return of large advertising. At the end of 1949, Swift converted to the well remembered cabooses red with white lettering scheme. In the early Sixties, the cars were placed in a silver paint with oval Swift Premium logo. All four schemes lasted well beyond the period of authorized employment. Sunshine provides decals for lettering the first three schemes. The roofs of meat reefers were a contrast in color and age of the wood. Swift roofs were painted black--as was the underbody--but the entire roof was not repainted when boards were replaced. A typical roof would show old and new painted boards, as well as old and new unpainted ones.

Swift cars typically were adapted to AB brakes early on, though the vertical brake staff remained in use well after World War II. The cars generally rode on light weight A.R.A. cast steel side frame trucks, usually called "Bettendorf" trucks.

The Swift meat reefer kits consist of gray castings of the major parts and commercial detailing parts. Specially designed decals, a Prototype Data Sheet and full instructions are included.

Sunshine will continue the meat reefer series with cars lettered for Oscar Mayer, Cudahy, Dubuque, General American, Wilson and others. Not all new kits will be announced immediately in the hobby press. If you would like to hear of future meat reefer releases as soon as they take place, please send a SSAE--marked Meat Reefers--with your order for Swift cars.



- \_\_\_ Kit #24.1 Swift 5200 series reefer, yellow-orange scheme, black lettering (1930s-50s), \$25
- \_\_\_ Kit #24.2 Swift 5200 series, yellow-orange scheme, black lettering, red & white banner ('48-50s), \$25
- \_\_\_ Kit #24.3 Swift 5200 series reefer, red and white scheme (1950-60s), \$25
- \_\_\_ Kit #24.4 Swift 6700 series reefer, yellow-orange scheme, black lettering (1930-50s) \$25
- \_\_\_ Kit #24.5 Swift 6700 series, yellow-orange scheme, black lettering, red & white banner, ('48-50s), \$25
- \_\_\_ Kit #24.6 Swift 6700 series reefer, red and white scheme (1950-60s), \$25
- \_\_\_ Part #TP 40 Plastic, black, non-magnetic, A.R.A. design five coil spring trucks with steel wheelsets, \$5.00
- \_\_\_ Part #D.1 Kadee #5 couplers, one set, with kit \$1.25

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Add \$3.00 for shipping per five kits in U.S. ( MO residents add 5.975% ), Canada \$5.60 for two kits

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