

Robertsville, Connecticut – Tunxis Creamery

The Tunxis Creamery, a co-operative enterprise located on what is now 31 Old Creamery Road, was organized in 1889. Homer Deming was its secretary, treasurer and manager, which meant that he was the most important officer in the organization. During the nineteenth century, dairying was the chief branch of farming throughout the county. Up to about 1880, the making of cheese in factories and the home production of butter and cheese were the chief branches of dairying. Even 10 or 15 years later, with the exception of farms near railroads, cheese was an important dairy product. Co-operative creameries were started about 1880 and these, within a few years, almost entirely supplanted the cheese factories and the home manufacture of cheese and butter. From 1880-1895, co-operative creameries increased in the state from less than half a dozen to over 60. Starting about 1900, there began a constant decline in butter making and a constant increase in the shipping of milk.

The Tunxis Creamery started in a modest way and kept adding and increasing until in ten years it was as complete a plant as any in this section of the country. Steam power was used exclusively, giving this creamery great efficiency. This efficiency was increased by a never-failing spring of pure water, which in the warmest weather never reached a higher temperature than 44 degrees, enabling them to cool their cream without the use of ice. [As an aside, a true spring will always reflect the average yearly temperature, or norm of the area in which it is located. This is true anywhere in the world. Springs on the south side of Beech Hill have a year around temperature of 46° F.]

The machinery was all leading edge technology and the capacity of the creamery was 400 pounds daily. This was shipped throughout western Connecticut, Hartford, New Haven, Winsted, Torrington, etc. The Tunxis Creamery Association manufactured under the brand name "T.C.A.", which was given the highest quality rating in the market. This creamery received the product of some 800 cows.

With the coming of affordable refrigeration and ever-increasing efficiency in transportation, milk and cream became the most cost effective way to sell dairy products, and the co-operatives began to go out of existence, the victims of evolving technology and public taste.

All during the time this creamery remained in service, there was a bridge across Still River right in front of the building. By the late twenties and mid thirties, it still spanned the stream, but was almost abandoned and the subject of heated debates in town meetings as to the course of action the town should take in either repairing it, abandoning it or removing it. The flood of 1936 severely damaged the structure, and two years later the Hurricane of 1938 finished the job. In the mid twentieth century the long-abandoned creamery building was converted into a private home and remains so to this day.