

The First Cream Separator in the United States

By T. P. CHRISTENSEN

English inventors gave us the spinning jenny and the power loom; American inventors, the reaper and the grain binder; Danish and Swedish inventors, the centrifugal cream separator.

In 1878, the Swede Gustaf De Laval and the Dane L. C. Nielsen made the first practical centrifugal cream separators. The Danish firm in Copenhagen, Burmeister and Wain, manufactured the Nielsen separator, but patents were also sold to an American firm which manufactured the separator under the name of the Danish Weston, a modification of which again became the more recent Reid separator.

In a few years after 1878, Danish and Swedish separators were in use in the Scandinavian and other European countries. Canadian and American dairymen began to import the machines in 1882. It was a Danish immigrant in Iowa who brought the first separator to the United States.

The large influx of Danish immigrants to the United States began in the eighteen forties and fifties when small settlements were formed in Wisconsin and Iowa. The Civil war checked the stream of immigrants for a few years, but it set in again with greater volume after the close of the war. At this time many Danish immigrants settled in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and the surrounding country. A large settlement grew up in the country around what later became the village of Fredsville. The name had been given to the village by the Danes and signifies "village of peace."

To this settlement came in 1869 one Truels Slifsgaard from northern Slesvig, Germany, now a part of Denmark. Truels rented a farm and patronized a lo-

cal creamery, operated on the shallow pan plan, which was more profitable for the farmers than the individual farm dairy because it made it possible to produce a uniform grade of butter. But there was this great drawback to the plan that the milk from the creamery was frequently sour before it could be used for calf feed.

In writing to his father, Jeppe, in Slesvig, Truels told about his farm problems, about the current change in American farming to more diversification, and the revolution, which the rapidly expanding dairy industry was working. Jeppe was much interested, and when the newly invented cream separators in Denmark had stood the pragmatic test, he at once apprised his son of the fact and proposed to bring one to America together with a Danish buttermaker.

CUSTOMS OFFICE HELD UP SEPARATOR

Jeppe and the buttermaker, Niels Blom, took passage for the United States early in 1882. The two had no difficulties in satisfying the authorities in New York City themselves and at once proceeded to their point of destination, but the separator was held up for two months in the customs office because the officials could not make out whether the thing was made of iron or steel. Contemporary metallurgy had developed so fast that we should not be surprised that official brains were sometimes put on the rack. After mature deliberations, however, the officials decided that the machine was made of steel and charged a duty of \$93, which was promptly paid.

With the assistance of Mr. Blom, father and son set up the separator in what became known as the Danish Creamery at Fredsville. There it did service for eleven years, though it was difficult to get repairs for the separator since these had to be obtained from Denmark. The Danish Creamery was first privately owned. Later it became a cooperative institution.

Both Jeppe and Truels lived to good old age. In 1926, I received a letter from Truels in answer to an

inquiry. He wrote that the Danish Creamery had long since been dismantled, and that the cream separator set up there in 1883 was the first ever brought to the United States. This was a bit of startling information for the ordinary aids to study, such as annuals and encyclopedias contained practically nothing about this matter. But subsequent thorough and prolonged study of the subject has made it clear that he was right.

The cream separator which Jeppe Slifsgaard brought to the United States in 1882 had a 24-inch bowl, a speed of 250 revolutions per second, and was capable of skimming 2,000 pounds of milk per hour.

Principal Sources: "Danske i Amerika," Vol. I, Pt. 2, Minneapolis, 1908; "Nordisk Familjebok," Vol. IV, Stockholm, 1925; "Iowa Agricultural Yearbook," 1888.

God's Obelisk*

A joking soldier named me "Devil's Tower";
 But God created me, a tapered spire
 To raise all searching eyes above the earth,
 To lift their vision upward to the stars.
 The Red Men gave to me a fabulous birth
 That saved three maidens from an angry bear;
 While men of science patiently explain
 Me as a monolith, volcanic-born.
 In homage, Roosevelt proclaimed this site
 The first of many Monuments, so pines
 And native flowers could thrive around my base.
 A thousand tapered pentagons of stone
 Compose my whole. Each fluted shaft alone
 Would crumble, fall, disintegrate to dust;
 Together as a triumphant whole they have
 Endured. The blasts of hail, bombastic winds
 Of fifty million years proved trivial
 As dew on blades of grass. God's Obelisk
 Upon a mountain top, I symbolize
 The permanence and peace of unity.

—Mae Urbaneck

*This poem won first place in a state poetry contest sponsored by the Wyoming Federation of Women's Clubs in 1956.

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