

The Story of Vern's General Store

In memory of Vernon Johnson

The Story of the First Cream Separator

In 1869 a young man from South Jutland, Denmark, Truels Slifsgaard, born in Aller Sogn in Kristiansfeldt, September 29, 1851, came to this country. He rented a farm in Grundy County, Iowa, nine miles west of Cedar Falls.

In New Hartford, Butler County, a creamery named Fairfield Creamery had been started. Good butter brought a good price. But after transporting the milk to the creamery and waiting for the milk to be hand skimmed, it was, after taking it home, very thick and sour and not fit to be fed to the livestock.

This was a problem. If only some method could be devised which could separate the cream from the milk more quickly.

Truels Slifsgaard's father Jeppe Slifsgaard, born in Aller Sogn in 1827, was at that time a merchant in Skodborg, Jutland. He had become interested in a mechanical separator newly invented by Gustaff De Laval, a Swede, and L.C. Nielsen, a Dane, which used centrifugal force for separation. He wrote his son about this wonderful machine, and after some correspondence, the older gentleman decided to come to Cedar Falls and bring a separator with him for his son.

He arrived in Cedar Falls the 4th of July, 1882. The separator was not finished when he left, but he had with him a good buttermaker by the name of Neils Blom, from Skodborg.

The machine did not arrive in New York until the fall of the same year. It was two months before the officials there could decide how much duty to levy upon this machine, as they did not know how to classify it. They didn't know whether it was made of iron or steel. They finally decided to set the duty at \$93.00.

This was the first separator to be used in this country. The name of it was Burmeister & Waine. The steel bowl was about 18 inches deep and 24 inches in diameter, set in a frame as large as a wagon box. It was a great success. With a speed of 250 revolutions per minute, it was capable of skimming about 2,000 pounds of milk an hour.

Truels later traded his original machine to an implement retailer for a new separator. The original has never been located.

- General Store Hours
- M-F: 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday: Closed