



**P.O. Box 114  
Hwy 3 West  
Hampton, Iowa 50441**

**Newsletter  
Volume 23 #4  
December 2007**

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### **FCHS Closed for Holidays**

The Franklin County Historical Museum will be closed from Thanksgiving Week through January 14th, weather permitting.

Appointments only will be available. Please call Shirley Pitsor: 641-456-3994.

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### **Question**

Does anyone have the sign that was posted at the place of the first fatal auto accident, in Iowa? It was about three and a half miles south of Hampton along US 65.

“Lady Bird” Johnson, was the “First Lady” at the time, and advocated beautifying the United States roadsides, by removing signs along the way. The Historical Museum would like to have it on display.

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### **Memorial Gifts**

Since Sept 1, 2007, we have received memorial gifts in memory of:

#### **Denny Jones**

From: Marian Sanders-Smith  
Terry Wheeler

#### **Milo Greimann**

From: Mary Marquard  
Margaret Burmester  
Jo Coonley

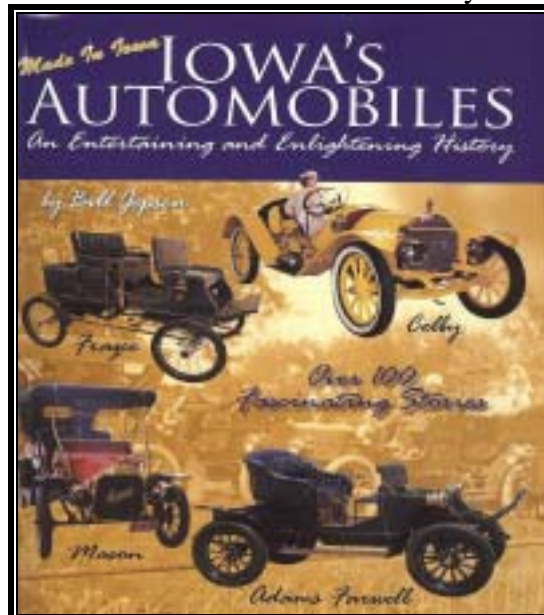
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### **News from Yesteryear October and November of 1947**

- Geneva voted YES for a new water system.
- A new county garage was constructed at Faulkner.
- Zimmer Plumbing and Home Appliance opened in Hampton.

### **Iowa Automobile Book Is Available**

The book, “Iowa’s Automobiles - An Entertaining and Enlightening History”, by Bill Jepsen, of Boone, is on sale at the Kaleidoscope Book store in Hampton. It is a beautiful, illustrated, hard cover, 315-page book. Am I promoting it? In a sense, because of my help, Mr. Jepsen has donated one of the books to our Historical Society.



Back in 2005, in the museum, I answered the phone when Mr. Jepsen called, asking about “Hobbies’ Accessible Automobile”, manufactured right here in Hampton. I told him I’d never ever heard of it, but that “I smelled a story!” With what little I could find, I sent to him and was able to write about it in a newsletter. Leslie Hobbie, of Hampton, was the manufacturer. In the book, Mr. Jepsen tells of it, along with other sources of material and stories of many other autos manufactured here in Iowa.

This summer, he informed me it was nearly ready for the publisher. Our Historical Society board voted we ask him to speak at our annual meeting in September, which he did. I introduced him, having only met him that night. All present found him to be an enthusiastic and exuberant speaker. One man said, “I don’t know much about old automobiles, but I am going to buy his book.” Even the ladies present, were enthused.

On Dec. 6, 2007, Mr. Jepsen will be at the Kaleidoscope for a book signing, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. If you already have the book, bring it in and he will sign it for you.

## Danish Archivist Visits Hampton

Hampton and the surrounding communities have had the pleasure of meeting Birgit Flemming Larsen, of Aalborg, North Tutland, Denmark, in November 2007. While here, she stayed with Everett and Doreen Petersen, of Hampton. It was my privilege to join the luncheon with Birgit, Mary Marquard, Dorothy Jingst, Carol Jones and Ann Koenigsberg on Tuesday, Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>.

Birgit was here for a special purpose. She examined some of the Danish letters received by Chris and Anna Nielsen, written in the early 1900's. Some of the letters were correspondence between the two during their courtship in Denmark.



Chris, Anna and their daughters Petrea and Nelsine owned and lived in the former Harriman home, on the west side of Hampton. They had a dairy, called Whiteside Dairy, doing all the work by themselves. The girls drove the dairy wagon, delivering milk, cream and butter to Hampton residents. After the deaths of the two unmarried "girls", the acreage was given to the Franklin County Historical Society, provided it was restored and preserved. Many people have worked on this project, making it a show place. The Nielsen's came to the United States in 1905.



Birgit is a retired Archivist from the Danish Immigration Archives, in Denmark. They have been tracing Danish Immigration around the world, many of which settled in Franklin County, chiefly in the Coulter area.

Birgit, who is a member of the Danish American Heritage Society, (DAHA) told me that some of her duties included; taking care of all documents, arranging a catalogue, answering letters from those who immigrated to various countries, giving lectures, etc.

She is not a stranger to America, having been here 10 or 12 times. She is a good friend of Jim Iversen, president of the DAHS. Jim is the one who spoke at the Danish dinner at the Hampton Country Club on April 22, 2007. He told of the 1900 letters, written in Danish, that were found all over the Harriman-Nielsen house, in all kinds of places. Taking them home in boxes, he arranged them in chronological order. He told that this was a prize collection of history of one family for over a century. That point made it very interesting to the DAHS and also to the Elkhorn, a Danish settlement in southwest Iowa.

Although he was not a translator of such a project, he knew one who was qualified, and asked Birgit for help in this project.

She met the challenge head on, spending a month here, but barely scratching the surface. She chose those letters that seemed to be the most informative, but is far from being done. I told her she had better come back, as she said she leaves for home on Nov. 30. She agreed, but as to when, I do not know. Birgit is excited to return, for the project is interesting, and intriguing, but very time consuming, but she likes the people of the U.S., finding us very friendly, not only in the Midwest but also in the East.



**Birgit Flemming Larsen**  
(Courtesy Hampton Chronicle)

She is fairly footloose, being a widow of many years and has 3 children, two boys and a girl and 6 grandchildren in Denmark. I found her delightful and very interesting. She learned the English language by age 10. In high school she also learned French and German. Recently she has learned to speak Italian. She is cordial, and has a sense of humor- a very lovely lady.

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## Chapin Postmaster and Service Retired

On August 31, 2007 the Chapin Postmaster, Jim Healy, retired and the Chapin Post Office ceased operations. Letters were sent from the U.S. Post Office to Chapin residents, to inform them that rural route delivery would now come from Sheffield.

These letters told a history of the first rural routes. I asked the Sheffield Post Master if I could use this info in my newsletter. She told me I could.



**Unknown Postman from 1913**

### RFD History

Today it is difficult to envision the isolation that was the lot of farm families in early America. In the days before telephones, radios, or televisions were common, the farmer's main links to the outside world were the mail and the newspapers that came by mail to the nearest post office. Since the mail had to be picked up, this meant a trip to the post office, often involving a day's travel, round-trip. The farmer might delay picking up mail for days, weeks, or even months until the trip could be coupled with one for supplies, food, or equipment.

John Wanamaker of Pennsylvania was the first Postmaster General to advocate rural free delivery (RFD). Although funds were appropriated a month before he left office in 1893, subsequent Postmasters General dragged their feet on inaugurating the new service so that it was 1896 before the first experimental rural delivery routes began in West Virginia, with carriers working out of post offices in Charlestown, Halltown, and Uvilla.

Many transportation events in postal history were marked by great demonstrations: the Pony Express, for example, and scheduled airmail service in 1918. The West Virginia experiment with rural free delivery, however, was launched in relative obscurity and in an atmosphere of hostility. Critics of the plan claimed it was impractical and too expensive to have a postal carrier trudge over rutted roads and through forests trying to deliver mail in all kinds of weather.

However, the farmers, without exception, were delighted with the new service and the new world open to them. After receiving free delivery for a few months, one observed that it would take away part of life to give it up. A Missouri farmer looked back on his life and calculated that, in 15 years, he had traveled 12,000 miles going to and from his post office to get the mail.

A byproduct of rural free delivery was the stimulation it provided to the development of the great American system of roads and highways. A prerequisite for rural delivery was good roads. After hundreds of petitions for rural delivery were turned down by the Post Office because of unserviceable and inaccessible roads, responsible local governments began to extend and improve existing highways. Between 1897 and 1908, these local governments spent an estimated \$72 million on bridges, culverts, and other improvements. In one county in Indiana, farmers themselves paid over \$2,600 to grade and gravel a road in order to qualify for RFD.

The impact of RFD as a cultural and social agent for millions of Americans was even more striking, and, in this respect, rural delivery still is a vital link between industrial and rural America. Today even high-rise office buildings, malls, etc. are on rural routes.

Article courtesy of U.S. Postal Service

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### Local Long Time Carrier

The FCHS Museum has a collection of wedding anniversary write-ups from the past 40 years. I spotted one without a date or the name of the paper from which it came. It was of Louie Christensen and Mary Jaspersen, of Latimer. What interested me was the fact that Louie had been a rural mail carrier who served Latimer and Coulter for 29 years.

Is that a record? If not let me know about others. With lots of searching, I found that the item came out of the Hampton Times, on September 13, 1949. They were married on September 18, 1899 in Latimer.

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Franklin County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 114  
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### A Harvest Time Contrast

Now that the fields of corn and beans are bare it's time to reflect on the harvest. Prices for early October 2007 are good; beans selling for \$9.00 a bushel and \$3.00 a bushel for corn. I was told it cost 20 to 30 dollars per acre to have it combined. A good crop of corn could be 175 to 200 bushels per acre and beans 60 bushels per acre. The cropland and amount of rain and when it comes, makes all the difference in the world. In contrast, the following is a letter received in April 1890, by J.M. (Mike) Menning, grandfather of Wanda Spainhower. It makes very interesting reading.

Loveland, Iowa, April 27, 1890

Dear Sir:

*I received your letter some time since. I was very glad to hear from you. I am still on the Missouri River bottoms. I have now worked for Christain Jos. Gillmione, here for very near a year and half. Now I get \$10.00 in the winter and \$18.00 a month summer. People here are different than in northern Iowa. They don't care when a man quits, if he wants to and all of us fellows that work by the month husk corn, either by the bushel or by the day. They pay two and a half cents a bushel and team furnished and board. This is some of the best corn huskers around here, I ever saw. I can pick out several that can crib 75 bushels a day, every day in the week and husk it good., but they have better corn to husk in than in northern Iowa. We raise more wheat here than oats. It seems to do very well. We have got 100 acres sowed this year and 80 acres of corn. They pay 2 cents and 4 cents for threshing here. They don't raise scarcely any tame hay here. I haven't seen a particle of clover since I came out here. I am glad to hear that you are making money. I believe you was born for a thresher. I would like to see little George. I suppose he has growed a considerable since I saw him last. I have a splendid place to work I get up when I get ready and always quit at 6 o'clock. Give my regards to Minnie and tell Jack Halfingel to write if he can.*

*Goodby, George Hanks, Loveland, Pottawattamie, Iowa.*

*PS I am not homesick yet and don't believe I ever will be. Geo.H*

(Little George, is Wanda's father. Loveland ,IA was north of council Bluffs, about where I- 680 intersects I-29.)