

## Reflections of Our Past – Franklin County Historical Museum- Latimer, Part I

Marion Township was originally part of Washington township, but was developed as a separate subdivision in the spring of 1874.

The village of Latimer was laid out in 1882 by C. L. Clock in Section 19 of the then Marion Township, the tract of land being owned by J. F. Latimer a banker of Hampton. The land was purchased by H.A. and Charles Clock with Harriman's First and Second Additions, North's Addition and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Clocks Additions, and Miller Addition later added to the tract of Latimer.

Latimer was originally settled by people of Danish ancestry with German Lutherans moving to the area shortly thereafter.

In the early days there was an elevator, lumber yard and the Clock and Clock General Store all run by Charles Clock. There was a wooden sidewalk, a row of maple trees and an apple orchard belonging to P. M. Damm. Mr. Damm was the first blacksmith and did a flourishing business in horse shoeing and wagon-making. His son, John S. Damm, opened a second blacksmith shop which had several owners over the years and was in operation until 1950.

The first post office was established in 1887 located in a small building north of the depot which was both post office and residence with Egbert B. Hill as postmaster. Later the building was remodeled, enlarged and made into a hotel. When delivering the rural mail in early days the mailman had to deal with roads which, when it rained or snowed, turned into a sea of mud. Edward Sawtelle, Sr., the mailman, at times was unable to continue down the road due to the mud and would leave the horses to graze and finish his route on foot. He would strap the mail on his back the next morning and reverse walk the route to where he left the horses and vehicle and drive them back home.

Latimer was incorporated in 1901 with E.B. Hill as first mayor, T.P. Johnson as clerk and F.D. Smith as treasurer. Councilmen were Ole Hansen, Peter Guldberg, George Kaus, P.M. Damm and Fred Rodemeyer, Sr. Some of the businesses were a bank, blacksmith shop, creamery, doctor's office, drug store, elevator, furniture store, hotel, harness shop, livery barn, millinery-dress shop, newspaper, photography studio, pump house, post office, restaurant, stockyards, telephone office, plus a school.

In 1902 the Chicago Great Western Railroad was extended west to Omaha and some Latimer residents were afraid Latimer was doomed and eight or 10 families had their house moved and placed on new foundations in Coulter.

On April 04, 1905 twelve women met at the home of Emma Roemer to organize a society which would raise funds for a park. Charter members were Mrs. A. Hanson, Mrs. J. H. Van Vorhis, Mrs. F. H. Dohrman, Mrs. F. D. Smith, Mrs. H. J. Roed, Mrs. J. H. Hansen, Mrs. H. H. Roemer, Mrs. G. G. Krause, Mrs. Arthur Andrews, Mrs. T. P. Johnson and Mrs. H. H. Reynolds, note that in 1905 "ladies" always went by their husband's name. This Park Society was a big deal and membership grew from 12 to 44 in the first year. Five days after the first meeting the society met with the first president, Mrs. D. M. North, presiding. Mrs. North wanted the society to purchase a plot of land next to her house, feeling the park

would up the value of her home. When she did not get her way, she resigned immediately and left in a huff. Mr. A. Hanson, editor of the Latimer Star and husband of one of the society members, mentioned the incident in the paper. The next day Mr. Hanson met up with Mrs. North at the post office where she accused him of printing bad things about her and proceeded to rap him on the shoulders with a cane. He ignored her and she continued to scold him shouting that "They call themselves the Park Society, but they are buzzards!!" Eventually Mrs. North got tired of hitting him and left and Mr. Hanson went back to his newspaper office and wrote up the affair to the delight of Latimer residents.

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