

NARRATOR'S NAME: GUS HOLM
TAPE NUMBERS: 1-A AND 1-B
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: AMES, IOWA
DATE OF INTERVIEW: JUNE 20, 1980
INTERVIEWER'S NAME: JOE HRABA AND ELMER SCHWEIDER
FOR: BUXTON PROJECT, ISU

Q. (ES) WELL, THAT'S ONE OF THE KINDS OF THINGS WE'D LIKE TO KNOW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT. CAN I BORROW YOUR CHAIR? ALRIGHT, THANK YOU, SIT DOWN, JOE.

Q. (JH) THANKS, ELMER, WHEN DID YOU LIVE IN BUXTON?

A. Well, let's see ... I was ten years old when I got there. And I'm seventy-seven years old.

Q. (ES) SEVENTY SOMETHING.

A. _____

Q. DID YOU COME FROM ... DID YOU COME FROM WHERE? SWEDEN?

A. Sweden.

Q. YOU CAME OVER FROM SWEDEN?

A. Yeah, I had a brother who lived in Buxton. That came before me,

Q. I SEE.

A. My older brother, I lived with him. _____ I worked in the mine sometime after that. I worked with three different _____.

Q. WERE YOU A MINER IN SWEDEN?

A. Uh-uh.

Q. WAS HE A MINER IN SWEDEN?

A. Huh?

Q. WAS YOUR BROTHER A MINER? HE CAME OVER TO THE NEW COUNTRY WITH A NEW PART ... AND HOW DID YOU END UP IN BUXTON, THEN? OR HOW DID HE GET THERE? YOU WENT TO SEE HIM, IS THAT RIGHT?

A. Well, I moved to this country, and of course I had to _____.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. And he worked in the mines and I worked there, along with him. Cause I got in through him.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. And then he went out in the corn.

Q. NOW HOW DID HE GET TO BUXTON? DID HE COME RIGHT STRAIGHT TO BUXTON WHEN HE HIT?

A. Yes, I think he did. Oh, wait a minute now, _____ I believe he worked for farmers for a little while.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. Cause there was more money in the mining than there was on the farm. So that's the reason he went down to the mine.

Q. (ES) AND THEN HE WROTE OVER AND TOLD HE WAS MAKING GOOD MONEY AND YOU CAME OVER OR YOU WERE GOING TO COME ANYWAY?

A. I don't remember nothing much about that. I expect that I was just going to move ... you know how old people is (?)

Q. YEAH, THAT GOES SOMEWHERE, I EXPECT.

Q. (JH) HOW LONG, HOW LONG DID YOU SPEND IN BUXTON? 5 YEARS, 10 YEARS?

A. Maybe four or five.

Q. FOUR OR FIVE YEARS?

A. _____

Q. WAS IT BEFORE OR AFTER WORLD WAR ONE?

A. Before.

Q. BEFORE. WERE YOU IN BUXTON DURING THE WAR? DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

A. I was in the war myself.

Q. SO IT HAD TO BE BEFORE THE WAR?

A. Yeah.

Q. OKAY, DID YOU LEAVE BUXTON TO GO INTO THE ARMY?

A. No, I think I was on the farm.

Q. (ES) YOU WENT INTO THE ARMY FROM THE FARM, THEN. OKAY

A. I went into the army, see, Oskaloosa _____

- Q. (ES) UH-HUH. YOU TOLD US YOU REMEMBERED WORKING WITH BLACKS. WERE THERE MORE BLACKS THAN WHITES IN BUXTON THEN?
- A. I believe so, yeah.
- Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE MINE? WAS IT CONSOLIDATION COAL COMPANY MINE?
- A. Well, it was ... yeah, it was ...
- Q. IT'LL COME BACK.
- A. Number seven something, I think they called it number seven.
- Q. UH-HUH.
- A. And then I worked in number 18, _____
- Q. WERE YOU MINING THEN?
- A. No.
- Q. WHO WERE YOU ... DID YOU LIVE IN A BOARDING HOUSE OR DID YOU LIVE WITH YOUR BROTHER AND HIS WIFE?
- A. I did for a time and then he went out to the farm, I think.
- Q. UH-HUH.
- A. And then _____ with my brother, you know. So I visited, but _____. They had a son ... He was working in the company store. Two dollars _____
- Q. (ES) YOU SAY THE SON WAS WORKING FOR THE COMPANY STORE?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. WHAT DID HE DO FOR THE COMPANY STORE?
- A. Well, I think he delivered groceries.
- Q. I SEE.
- A. For some time.
- Q. UH-HUH. THAT WAS A BIG COMPANY STORE, I HEAR.
- A. It was.
- Q. WERE THEY ... DID YOU HAVE TO BUY THERE IF YOU WERE WORKING ON THE MINE? DID YOU HAVE TO BUY AT THE COMPANY STORE?

- A. No, uh-uh, _____ I don't know much, the superintendent, or something. So he quit. Buying for the company store in Buxton. There was a Swede store. _____ Name was _____ but I don't know _____ nothing about him.
- Q. DO YOU REMEMBER WHETHER THE STORES, WERE THERE A LOT OF STORES IN BUXTON?
- A. No, I think there was only the company store and it had everything.
- Q. UH-HUH. BUT IF THE SWEDE FELLA RAN THE STORE, THEN APPARENTLY ALL THE STORES WEREN'T RUN BY BLACKS. DO YOU REMEMBER IF ANY OF THEM WERE OWNED BY BLACKS?
- A. I don't hardly think ... but I don't know, I don't believe so. I don't believe blacks had no _____ at that time.
- Q. (JH) WHAT DID BLACKS DO BESIDES MINE THERE?
- A. I don't know, _____ I think.
- Q. (ES) DID THEY LIVE IN COMPANY HOUSES, OR DID YOU HAVE PRIVATE HOUSES?
- A. I think they had company houses, most of them, Buxton did. In East and West Swede town, see.
- Q. UH-HUH.
- A. Course there was a house between the private ... my brother had _____ In East town, I think it was.
- Q. DID THE BLACKS ALL LIVE IN ONE PLACE AND THE WHITES ALL LIVE IN ANOTHER, OR WERE THEY ALL MIXED UP?
- A. They were all mixed up. _____ I was staying in Buxton _____
_____ It was mixed up.
- Q. DID THAT WORK PRETTY WELL, OR WERE THERE ANY KIND OF RACIAL PROBLEMS?
- A. Not a bit.
- Q (ES) NOT A BIT. DID THEY HAVE ANY FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS, OR ANYTHING THAT WENT ON?
- A. Oh, yeah. And Buxton had a good baseball team.
- Q. BUXTON WONDERS.
- A. Yeah. I don't know what they called them.
- Q. I HEARD THEY WERE GOOD.

A. Yeah. They played in towns all around there.

Q. (JH) WAS THE TEAM ALL BLACK .. OR WERE THERE WHITE PLAYERS ON THE TEAM?

A. They were white.

Q. WHITE PLAYERS?

A. Yeah.

Q. WHITE AND BLACK.

A. I don't know whether there were blacks or not. I don't remember that.

Q. (ES) NOW WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE MINES? DID YOU ACTUALLY MINE, DIG FOR COAL?

A. Yeah, I dug about a ton.

Q. UH-HUH. SO YOU WERE ACTUALLY A MINER, THEN?

A. Yeah.

Q. YOU MENTIONED EARLIER ABOUT GOOD PAY. DID THEY PAY REAL WELL IN BUXTON, OR BETTER THAN YOU COULD GET SOMEWHERE ELSE?

A. Better than the saw mill (?) _____

Q. SO HE GOT OUT OF THE MINES?

A. Uh-huh. _____

Q. (JH) HOW MUCH DID YOU MAKE? DO YOU REMEMBER? HOW WERE YOU PAID? WERE YOU PAID BY THE WEEK?

A. We got a dollar and a nickel a ton.

Q. (ES) A DOLLAR AND A NICKEL, A TON, HOW MUCH COULD YOU MAKE IN AN EIGHT HOUR DAY?

A. Well, it all depends. If you didn't get enough cars, you wouldn't make a lot _____

Q. WHY WOULDN'T YOU HAVE ENOUGH CARS? WERE THEY ... SOMEBODY ELSE LOADING IT OUT OR WAS THERE ANY FAVORITISM ON HOW MANY CARS YOU GOT?

A. No. _____

Q. UH-HUH.

A. If you didn't get very good coal, you know.

Q. UH-HUH, THE SEAM WAS TOO NARROW.

A. Huh?

Q. (ES) THE SEAM WAS TOO NARROW OR NOT VERY GOOD COAL THAT DAY, OR ...?

A. No, no. Some days we got _____. Other days we didn't.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. Yeah.

Q. (JH) HOW MANY HOURS A DAY WOULD YOU WORK?

A. About eight hours a day.

Q. ABOUT EIGHT HOURS A DAY, HOW MANY DAYS A WEEK?

A. Oh, six.

Q. DID YOU HAVE SUNDAY OFF?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. SUNDAY OFF?

A. Sunday was _____. Then we used to work half a day.

Q. HALF A DAY ON SATURDAYS.

A. Yeah.

Q. I SEE, WHAT WOULD YOU NORMALLY DO, THEN, ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS? WOULD YOU ... AND WITH YOUR FREE TIME ON SUNDAY? WHAT DID PEOPLE IN BUXTON DO?

A. Well, Buxton had a ball team, you know.

Q. (ES) YOU MENTIONED YOU WORKED EIGHT HOURS. WERE YOU A UNION MAN?

A. Yeah.

Q. WERE ALL THE MINES UNION?

A. All the mines were union. _____
Yeah, we had the union, all the time.

Q. (JH) WERE MOST OF THE MINERS FAMILY MEN IN BUXTON? MEN WHO WERE MARRIED ... WIVES AND MAYBE CHILDREN? OR WERE MOST OF THEM SINGLE MEN LIKE YOURSELF?

A. Oh, no. Family men.

Q. MOST FAMILY MEN?

A. Family, _____

Q. (ES) DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVED THERE WHILE YOU WERE IN BUXTON?

A. Well, I believe there was about ten thousand.

Q. TEN THOUSAND?

Q. (JH) TEN THOUSAND.

Q. (ES) THAT'S A GOOD SIZED TOWN.

A. Yeah.

Q. AND MAINLY THEY TRADED AT THE COMPANY STORE, THOUGH?

A. Mostly.

Q. MOSTLY.

A. And _____

PAUSE IN TAPE

Q. (ES) YOU'RE SWEDISH. WERE THERE LOTS OF SWEDES IN BUXTON, OR NOT VERY MANY?

A. Oh, there were several of them. We had East Swede Town and West Swede Town.

Q. OH, EAST SWEDE TOWN AND WEST SWEDE TOWN.

A. Yes, (laughs)

Q. (JH) WHAT OTHER KINDS OF PEOPLE WERE THERE IN BUXTON?

Q. (ES) WERE THERE ITALIANS?

A. Oh, yeah.

Q. WERE THERE ANY GERMANS?

A. There might have been, but I didn't see any.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. I don't know that there wasn't.

Q. (JH) NOW YOU SAY THERE WERE TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE THERE. HOW MANY OF THEM WERE BLACK? MOST? FIFTY PERCENT?

A. Oh, I suppose fifty percent.

Q. WERE MOST OF THE MINERS BLACK?

A. Most of 'em were. _____.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE THEY CAME FROM? DID YOU EVER HAVE ANY BLACK FRIENDS THERE IN BUXTON?

A. Black friends?

Q. UH-HUH.

A. Yeah.

Q. DID YOU ASSOCIATE WITH BLACKS OUTSIDE OF WORK?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. NOT MUCH? DID YOU EVER GO INTO ANY OF THE BLACK MINERS' HOMES? WERE YOU EVER INVITED INTO THEIR HOMES? FOR A MEAL, FOR EXAMPLE?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. WHERE WOULD YOU SEE THEM, AT PUBLIC GATHERINGS? AT A BASEBALL GAME OR DID YOU GO TO THE Y.M.C.A. AT ALL?

A. _____ no, _____

Q. NO?

A. Once in a while ... I was a little green at that time you know.

Q. (ES) COULD YOU SPEAK ENGLISH WHEN YOU CAME OVER?

A. No.

Q. YOU HAD TO LEARN ENGLISH AND EVERYTHING? YOU CAME OVER AT ABOUT TWENTY...

A. Yeah.

Q. ALL RIGHT.

A. Left Sweden to escape the military.

Q. YOU LEFT SWEDEN TO ESCAPE THE MILITARY, YOU GOT OVER HERE AND WENT IN ANYWAY.

A. Yeah, that's right.

Q. IT DIDN'T WORK OUT TOO WELL? DID THEY HAVE A SWEDISH CHURCH?

A. Yeah.

Q. DID THEY SPEAK SWEDISH IN SERVICE OR DID THEY SPEAK ENGLISH?

A. I think they spoke 'em both.

Q. THEY SPOKE BOTH?

A. Yeah.

Q. WAS THAT A LUTHERAN CHURCH?

A. Huh?

Q. WAS IT A LUTHERAN CHURCH?

A. _____

Q. IT WAS METHODIST. DID BLACKS AND WHITES GO TO CHURCH TOGETHER IN BUXTON?

A. No.

Q. NO? BLACKS HAD THEIR OWN CHURCHES?

A. Yeah.

Q. (JH) DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT THOSE CHURCHES ... WERE THEY BAPTIST CHURCHES?

A. I couldn't tell you that.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE BLACK MINERS TELLING YOU WHERE THEY CAME FROM BEFORE COMING TO BUXTON?

A. _____, I forget.

Q. OKAY. (ES) NOW WHEN YOU CAME OVER YOU COULDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH. DID YOU LEARN ENGLISH IN BUXTON? DID YOU GO TO ANY SPECIAL CLASSES OR DID YOU PICK IT UP FROM THE MINES?

A. I learned it from English speaking friends.

Q. NOW YOUR BROTHER WHO CAME OVER EARLIER, HE COULD SPEAK ENGLISH BY THE TIME YOU GOT HERE?

A. Yeah, he learnt, yeah.

Q. HOW MUCH OLDER THAN YOU WAS HE?

A. I don't know, he _____ was my oldest brother, _____ was ten or twelve years older than I was.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN WERE YOU BORN, DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

A. _____.

Q. WELL, IT WILL PROBABLY COME BACK TO YOU.

A. Yeah.

Q. WERE YOU MARRIED IN BUXTON? WHERE WERE YOU MARRIED?

A. In Oskaloosa.

Q. AROUND OSKALOOSA. YOU WERE IN THE MINES ABOUT FOUR YEARS AND YOU CAME OVER WHEN YOU WERE TWENTY?

A. Let's see ... _____.

Q. TWENTY FOUR OR FIVE. DO YOU THINK ... IT WAS A HAPPY TOWN? IN BUXTON? THERE WEREN'T RACE RIOTS OR ANY OF THAT KIND OF THING?

BACKGROUND NOISE

A. _____

Q. OH, REALLY? WHAT WAS THIS A ... DO YOU REMEMBER WHY? WHAT HAPPENED?

A. Oh, I don't know _____

Q. (JH) WAS THERE VIOLENCE WHEN YOU WERE IN BUXTON?

A. Not that much. _____ kind of thing.

Q. WERE THE BLACKS AND WHITES PAID THE SAME AMOUNT, I SUPPOSE THEY WERE BY UNION RULES.

A. Union.

Q. NOW WHEN YOU SHIPPED, DID THEY HAVE A SCREEN SO THAT YOU WERE ONLY PAID FOR THE COAL THAT DID NOT GO THROUGH THE SCREEN, OR DID THEY JUST PAY YOU FOR THE CHUNK COAL?

- A. _____

- Q. UH-HUH.
- A. _____
- Q. AND THE UNION HAD A WEIGH MAN UP THERE THAT WEIGHED YOUR CAR OF COAL.
- A. No, we had a man _____

- Q. UH-HUH. WERE THERE SCHOOLS IN BUXTON FOR CHILDREN? GRADE SCHOOLS?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. HOW ABOUT HIGH SCHOOLS? WAS THERE A HIGH SCHOOL THERE?
- A. I couldn't tell you that.
- Q. DON'T KNOW FOR SURE?
- Q. WELL, IN THE SCHOOLS YOU KNEW ABOUT, DID BLACK AND WHITE CHILDREN GO TO THE SAME SCHOOLS?
- A. I believe they did.
- Q. THEY DID. OKAY.
- Q. (ES) BUT IT WAS MOSTLY A FAMILY TOWN WHEN ... NOT VERY MANY SINGLE PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF?
- A. Oh no, I wouldn't say it was _____ . _____
walking distance.
- Q. UH-HUH.
- A. _____ number seven.
- Q. HOW DID YOU GET TO WORK WHEN THEY WERE FURTHER AWAY, DID THEY HAVE A --?/
- A. Yeah.
- Q. YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WALK TO THOSE.
- A. Oh, no.
- Q. THEY CAME BY AND PICKED UP ALL THE MINERS FROM YOUR PART OF TOWN AND CARRIED THEM TO THE NEW MINE.

- A. _____ come into town _____
- Q. COAL TRAINS, YOU'D ALL GET ON THE COAL TRAINS AND RIDE TO THE MINES THEN.
- A. There were passenger coaches,
- Q. PASSENGER COACHES ...
- A. Yeah.
- Q. HOW MANY COACHES WERE THERE ON ONE TRAIN? ONE? TWO? THREE?
- A. Oh I couldn't tell you.
- Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW MANY WORKED IN THE MINE? HOW MANY WORKERS WERE THERE IN THE MINE?
- A. Let me see, they had mine number sixteen, number seven, and number eighteen, and I believe nineteen was working too, _____ in Buxton.
- Q. I SEE.
- A. _____
- Q. WERE THERE TAVERNS IN BUXTON? SALOONS?
- A. Oh sure.
- Q. (JH) DID MEN GO THERE? DID MOST OF THE MEN GO THERE?
- A. Oh I don't know ... _____
- Q. UH-HUH. (ES) NOW THAT'S ALSO THE PERIOD WHEN THEY HAD PROHIBITION. DID THEY HAVE A LITTLE MOONSHINE GOING TOO?
- A. I couldn't tell you that.
- Q. CAN'T REMEMBER.
- A. I think they had.
- Q. WE TALKED TO SOME OTHER MINERS AND THEY SAID "YEAH," THEY CAN REMEMBER MOONSHINE ALL RIGHT.
- A. Moonshine.
- Q. YEAH.
- A. _____ Women come on the train.
- Q. (JH) WHERE DID WOMEN COME FROM?

A. _____ (Laughs)

Q. (ES) OSKALOOSA, THEY'D COME IN ON PAYDAY.

A. Well, I don't know _____

Q. BY THE TIME THEY LEFT THE MINERS WERE BROKE AGAIN, IS THAT IT?

A. I have no idea. (Laughs) _____

Number 10 _____ when I needed money. (Laughs).

Q. (ES) DO YOU REMEMBER BUXTON AS BEING A GOOD EXPERIENCE? AS FAR AS A YOUNG MAN GROWING UP? DID YOU LEAVE THERE WITH BAD FEELINGS OR DO YOU HAVE GOOD FEELINGS ABOUT BUXTON?

A. I think I left with good feelings about Buxton.

Q. YOU NEVER HAD ANY BAD EXPERIENCES, THEY PAID YOU ON TIME ...?

A. If you stayed sober you could _____. But if you got drunk, _____.

Q. WHAT WOULD THEY DO, PUT YOU IN JAIL IF YOU GOT DRUNK AFTER DARK?

A. No, they ... _____

Q. OH, THEY PICKED YOUR POCKET, AND YOU WERE BROKE THEN.

A. Yeah. You were broke until the next payday.

Q. (JH) DID THAT EVER HAPPEN TO YOU?

A. No.

Q. NO?

A. I guess I was safe.

Q. WERE THERE POLICEMEN AT BUXTON? A SHERIFF, ANY KIND OF LAW OFFICER THERE?

A. I don't remember, I didn't have no dealings with any of them.

Q. OKAY.

A. _____ East and West Swede Town.

Q. UH-HUH.

Q. (ES) DO YOU KNOW WHY IT WAS CALLED SWEDE TOWN, WERE THERE MOSTLY SWEDES THERE OR DID THEY JUST NICKNAME IT THAT?

A. Oh, it was mostly Swedes.

Q. (JH) WHAT DID YOU THINK WHEN YOU GOT TO BUXTON AND SAW BLACK PEOPLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE?

A. _____

END OF TAPE 1-! and 1-B.