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Buxton Project: 424-2104  
 Narrator's Name: Herman Brooks  
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 Interviewers Names: Elmer and Dorothy Schwieder

Q. \*Buxton then, I mean because you lived in a place where there wasn't any discr, what if you hadn't lived in Buxton? What if you had moved from Mutchka to Des Moines in 1900, wouldn't your life in Des Moines have been pretty different than it was in Buxton?

A. Oh yes much, much.

Q. \*I guess that's what I'm trying to get at is that Buxton was special in a sense that there was no discrimination or that's discrimination.

A. Well let's put it like this. Well we didn't know what discrimination was. We all \_\_\_\_\_ together, we worked and played together so what else can you do? You work and you play and linger together.

Q. And it went well?

A. Everything went well, there's no killing and no shooting, no murders and so.

Q. \*You know I think that's really an important to make because that meant that it really was a different community in 1900.

It really was cause so many others there was terrible prejudice. But Buxton was different.

A. Yes now you take at Beaken, Beaken was near Mutchka, Mutchakonak. Beaken was right out of Oscloosa, Iowa. Now they were very prejudice there.

Q. In Beaken?

A. In Beaken and they used to have, I never was in Beaken as close as I lived to it but they say it used to have a sign nigger don't let the sun go down on you.

Q. The old sunset law in Beaken.

\*In Beaken, you never saw that yourself?

A. No I never was in Beaken.

Q. \*But you heard other people talk about it?

We heard that at one time there was Klu Klux Klan pretty active in Monroe County too but maybe that was later on.

A. No the only Klu Klux Klan that I can recall they started up a little Klan there in Klan in Des Moines but it didn't last long.

Q. A little Klan activity in Des Moines it didn't really go very far?

A. No it didn't go far, it didn't get to first base. But Beaken was the only place in Iowa that was prejudice.

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- Q. That had the sign. Beaken's not that far away either, this is right in the neighborhood.
- A. No it was right from Osculoosa over there, Evans.
- Q. Evans and Beaken and Hykeman.
- A. Hykeman and Hawkin and all those places. But I can't recall of any trouble that they ever had over there.
- Q. \*I'll bet that's the blacksmith shop isn't it. I'll bet that's your relative that work in the blacksmith shop?
- A. That's my brother on the left, he was a blacksmith.
- Q. \*And that was at Buxton then?
- A. Uh huh. That was at Buxton behind the big grocery store.
- Q. \*Now he worked for the company then as a blacksmith, he worked for the company?
- A. Yeah he worked **as** a blacksmith for years. For years, for years.
- Q. \*Well you certainly have some interesting pictures. I'm trying to just go through and pick out the one that I think would apply you know to Buxton, and we can ask about. I must say I certainly see some fancy clothes.
- A. We were great dressers then.
- Q. \*You made the comment, oh say now that's really different. You made the comment that you went to church, did you go to church just on Sunday morning or more than that?
- A. Well when we were small we had to go to the Baptist Sunday School in the morning and the Methodist Sunday School in the afternoon.
- Q. \*Oh did you really? Now why was that because they just thought you needed a double dose?
- A. Well that's what they believed in and that's what we had to do.
- Q. You were so bad you took two shots out you to get you all straighten out \_\_\_\_\_
- A. We had to go to Sunday School and church twice a day.
- Q. \*Do you remember many revival meetings?
- A. Oh yes, they used to have those revival meetings. That was one of the main things that they would have. The Baptist would have them and then the Methodist would have them.
- Q. \*How would those work, I've heard about revival meetings all my life but , what did you do at revival meeting? At the end was ~~this~~ where you went forward and
- A. Well they would sing and pray and they would try to entice the youngsters to join the church you know and what not you know.
- Q. \*And so that would be at the end that you would come up to the front of the church and then pledge yourself to God?

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- A. Uh huh yeah.
- Q. \*Were they quite successful you think?
- A. Well yeah they were pretty good but sometimes you
- Q. Get a little backsliding now and then?
- A. Lived down for a while.
- Q. \*And another man too that apparently, at least that we've heard so much about was George Woodson, not Woodson, Hope Armstrong.
- A. That's what I was trying to find this, if I find this book but I'm pretty sure she's got it because she asked me to let her read it and because I was reading it not too long ago see and it tell all about Hope Armstrong. He came to Mutchakonak, Iowa of course I can't recall when he came to Mutch but my father em he came from Virginia and then he came there and well he was a coal miner for a while.
- Q. Hope was?
- A. Hope was yeah and he got in with the company and then he went back to Virginia and brought over a lot of colored people, colored miners?
- Q. \*Did he do that to hire those men as strike breakers or just because they needed additional workers in the mines, do you remember that?
- A. Did they do what?
- Q. Would they come as strike breakers or did they just need
- A. Oh no, they would come, they would come now just like Hope Armstrong he would go from Mutchakonak to Virginia and bring in maybe 15, 20 or 25 or 30 men you know to work in the mines.
- Q. They just needed workers?
- A. Yeah they needed coal miners. And he got to be a big shot.
- Q. Now he was a pretty big and eventually most of the miners joined the union, became union miners.
- A. Oh yeah. I never would forget the night that they formed that. What was the guy's name? White.
- Q. \*John White, do you remember John White?
- A. <sup>yeah</sup> I remember the night that they, his first meeting in Buxton.
- Q. With John White form union.  
\*Isn't that something?
- A. I remember his first meeting.
- Q. \*That's interesting.
- A. It was a wonderful thing though because you see they used to, what we call fire at noon see and then you had to work down there in all that smoke and stuff in there and you

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- A. couldn't see just staggering around down there and you could feel that stuff just cutting on your lungs, you cough up \_\_\_\_\_ be as black as midnight.
- Q. And then they cut that out in the middle of the day didn't they and they just shot after you left?
- A. Well you see at that time they was working 10 hours a day. Dog can tell time about good as you can. It must be about 3:00 isn't it?
- Q. Yeah it's right at 3:00.
- A. She can tell time good as you can.
- Q. Is she used to going some place at 3:00?
- A. I take her for a walk, I generally take her for a walk.
- Q. It's about walk time.
- \*Well maybe we can, let's see.
- A. No, take your time.
- Q. \*Okay, I think that's you isn't it?
- A. That's me.
- Q. \*And do you still have, do you recognize the two people on this?
- A. Very much so. The girl that you like so, this is her sister. Her husband was a tailor. And this lady is from Lexington, Missouri. She was a school teacher and she was just visiting there in Buxton, uh huh but I think she's dead now. I'm trying to think of her name. Now this lady here is name Grandberry.
- Q. \*Grandberry?
- A. Grandberry, the two Grandberry brothers had a tailor shop there, they were tailors there in Buxton, and that's one \_\_\_\_\_ that's his wife.
- Q. \_\_\_\_\_ Grandberry?
- A. \_\_\_\_\_ Grandberry yeah and this lady's name Lottie, it's been so long these are old see. Lottie she lived in Lexington, she was well she was younger than my mother much younger than my mother that gal. She used to come to visit us all time and from Lexington. That's my daughter.
- Q. \*Oh that's your daughter?
- A. That's Kathelene.
- Q. \*Oh she's just a beautiful little girl.
- A. That's Kathelene.
- Q. \*Oh that's beautiful. Let's see, oh we wondered what that was.
- A. What this was?

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- Q. That's a horse.
- A. You know what this is? This is the blacksmith shop, no.
- Q. The livery?
- A. I'm trying to picture what it is myself now. At first I thought it was the blacksmith shop. Then I thought once it was a hotel.
- Q. Oh I don't think it's the hotel but it might be the blacksmith shop alright.
- A. It looks like the blacksmith shop. That's what it looks like to me.
- Q. Alright we'll call it the blacksmith shop then.  
\*And what was your sister's name then?
- A. Her name was Lottie.
- Q. \*Lottie, that's beautiful. And then some of these I don't have any idea whether they would be in Buxton or not.
- A. I think that was our home in Des Moines.
- Q. \*I thought it would be a little later. And this family picture  
Now that's a lodge picture isn't it?
- A. Yeah these two boys, McDowell is their name, McDowell.
- Q. Were they matrons, or were they patrons, master of the lodge?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. \*Would that have been in Buxton then?
- A. That was in Buxton.
- Q. \*In Buxton?
- A. Uh huh.
- Q. \*Do you remember their first names by any chance?
- A. Manny I can only remember the other one's name was Manny, Manny McDowell. I can't think of the, well it'll come to me.
- Q. He's the master of the lodge, Manny McDowell?  
\*And they're brothers then?
- A. No.
- Q. \*Oh they're not brothers?
- A. No, they not brothers.

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- Q. They're brothers but not blood brothers.
- A. Yeah not blood brothers no. Now this is my mother's brother and his family. I think that's Cleatus. I don't think it's but one of those living now. See that picture was a old, old, old
- Q. Old, old picture.
- A. Cause Aunt Sadie's dead and Uncle Lonnie he's dead and I think 2 of his daughters are dead.
- Q. \*Now did they live at Buxton too or they lived in Missouri?
- A. No, Lexington, Missouri.
- Q. \*And this was inside the blacksmith shop at Buxton then?
- A. This was the company blacksmith shop behind the store, behind the big company store. This was right behind the store and that's where the company, well they fixed all the stuff and welded it and made it
- Q. And sharpened your picks and all that kind of thing?
- A. No no not here.
- Q. Not there?
- A. That was done at the mines when they sharpened the picks and the \_\_\_\_\_ at the mines. This is behind the company store down \_\_\_\_\_ down in town see.
- Q. \*What was your brother's first name then?
- A. Aadison
- Q. \*Aadison.
- A. Aadison Albert.
- Q. \*A-a-d-s-o-n.
- A. A-a-d-i-s-o-n.
- Q. \*That's a good picture.
- A. Now I don't know whether there's one there from the mines or not.
- Q. \*All of these I'm just curious.
- A. That's a boy friend of mine from Detroit. He lived in Detroit, I don't know whether he's still living or not, I haven't heard from him in a year. That's Kathelene and me.
- Q. \*Oh that's your daughter again. Oh that's a lovely picture, oh my.
- A. And that's my brother again. That's
- Q. \*\_\_\_\_\_ in Lexington?

A. In Lexington and this is my mother's oldest brother and wife but they're both dead now.

Q. \*Now this fellow looks like he's got a porter's cap on or some kind of a railroad.

A. That's him.

Q. \*Oh that's him again?

A. Uh huh, he was on the railroad then, he was running on the railroad.

Q. Yeah and he's sitting in one of the cars off of the railroad track.

\*Oh yeah I guess he is. That's a good picture. What is his first name then?

A. Alonzo.

Q. \*Alonzo?

A. Uh huh.

Q. \*That's a good picture.

A. A-l-o-n-z-o.

Q. \*Just a couple, now this must be you and two of your brothers?

A. That me and my two pals.

Q. \*Two pals?

A. Uh huh, both of those are dead. \_\_\_\_\_ this boy lived in Ottumwa, he died in California, he died not too long ago, just a little bit before my wife and this boy he was a great ball player and we used to play ball together. I can't recall his name now, not right now but it'll come. Yeah years and years ago.

Q. That's a long time alright.

\*And that's your little daughter again isn't it?

A. Yeah that's Kathelene.

Q. \*She sure a pretty baby. That's quite a fancy picture with the dog.

A. Yeah, I was a big gambler then.

Q. \*That's you on this?

A. Yeah. This boy is still in Detroit, that's me and my dog.

Q. \*Now is this in Detroit?

A. Uh huh.

Q. \*That'd make a marvelous picture.

Let me see that.

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Q. \*Let's see, this one is your brother again. That one I recognize, oh yeah this one was you, that's your pose and this was, what was your brother's name here again?

A. Alonzo.

Q. \*Alonzo okay and then this one

A. That's Dr. London, that's my cousin. That's Dr. London.

Q. \*That's Valetta's brother?

A. Uh huh.

Q. \*Okay, I hadn't seen a picture of him and that's you and he then?

A. Uh huh.

Q. \*Oh boy that's a good one. Yeah, that'd make a real good one.

Now name, get the names on them.

\*Are we gonna take this and try to duplicate it too then, how do we mail that back Elmer?

\_\_\_\_\_ and send it back.

\*Were you interested, were you going to come out to the Buxton picnic this year?

A. Well I want to go, I want to go but of course now I don't like to drive, I can't drive very far. My legs are, my doctor told me to stop driving.

Q. Maybe the best thing to do would be to quickly get the camera, well I'd have to put film in it.

A. No take it.

Q. \*We'll just wrap it up very very well.

Now let's start up in the corner there. Who is this gentleman?

A. Let me see if I can, let me see his name is Herman Réasby.

Q. That's the gentlemen next to the dog on the bottom row.

A. Austin Turner.

Q. Austin Turner is in the middle.

A. Herman Brooks.

Q. And that's you.

A. And I'm trying to think of this boy's name now. That's Lennard Curry.

Q. The second from the left is Leonard Curry.

A. Lloyd Lee.

Q. Lloyd?

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A. L-l-o-o-y-d

Q. Lloyd Lee in the middle in the back row.

A. And how well do I know these boys. Now this boy has a son in Waterloo. He's a very good friend to Valetta and he died, this boy died in Cleveland not too long ago, he was a great tumpet player.

Q. Valetta will remember him.

\*Why don't you hand me those and I'll put everything back in here.

A. Oh no just drop it down in there.

Q. \*I'll put them back in here, there we go.

A. Let me see there Herman Reasby, Austin Turner, Herman Brooks and Leonard Curry and Lloyd Lee, well well that's what you get for getting old.

Q. Well that's still excellent. That's a lot more than we knew before we started alright.

\*Maybe if you

What we'll try to do is get a print made and send it back and then you could tell us who the other 2 were.

A. They'll come to me.

Q. They'll come to you I'll bet you.

\*And then that one, that's just marvelous.

A. Yeah both of these boys are dead. We were great pals, we were hot stuff then.

Q. \*Now was that in Buxton, was that picture?

A. Des Moines.

Q. \*This was after you moved to Des Moines?

A. Uh huh.

Q. \*Do you remember their names?

A. This was Authur Wilson, that's his name.

Q. \*Was that Paul Wilson's brother?

A. Paul?

Q. \*Did he have a brother name Paul?

A. Uh huh.

Q. \*Paul was his, okay we know Paul Wilson.

A. And see there was John Wilson,          Wilson, Clark Wilson, Paul. I think Paul is the youngest one.

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Q. I think that's right.

A. Paul is the youngest one see.

Q. And that's Paul Wilson's brother?

\*Authur.

A. Authur. Now he has a son in Buffalo, New York, he's been there for years and years and years I think he retired from the police force there, Authur.

Q. And then who is this?

A. His last name is Carry, \_\_\_\_\_ his first name.

Q. That's still plum good.

A. His name is carry, that's Wilson and that's Brooks. Yeah we was fast pals you know. This boy died with a heart attack.

Q. \*Brings back lots of memories I'm sure.

A. Yeah.

Q. Well I think we've taken a lot of your time what we'd like to do.

A. That's quite alright, I'm glad to do it cause Valetta would you know and I told her well aint presentable and I said I don't do much cleaning you know by yourself you know.

Q. \*Well I guess I asked you about that, do you think there's a chance you could come to Des Moines by bus then or some other way?

A. Oh I'd fly.

Q. \*Oh you would fly.

What we need Herman is your signature there it just tells us that we have a right to use the tape and use the pictures, you're welcome to read it but in order for us to use anything we have to get permission from you.

\*Let's use a pen Elmer, I've got a pen here.

Dorothy's got a pen here somewhere instead of a pencil.

A. I've got 2 or 3 pens here but they red.

Q. \*Oh red, let's see, I've got a

You got a ballpoint in there if you dig around and find it.

\*I've got a ballpoint right here, that ought to work \_\_\_\_\_

There we go she thinks that'll do. Could I turn this off.

\*Yeah. In many coal mining camps the women kept boarders, did your mother ever keep boarders or did she do outside work like taking laundry or any of that?

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- A. Well my mother used, I used to drive my mother from Mutchakonak to Osculoosa to do day work. I would take her and bring her.
- Q. \*So she would work for families then in Osculoosa?
- A. In Osculoosa, uh huh.
- Q. \*Do you remember any idea how much she was paid or how long she worked each day or any of the details of the thing?
- A. I think they got a \$1.50 a day I think.
- Q. \*Would this be almost every day then she would go, a week day or?
- A. Well she'd        3 days a week. But I remember quite well, mother and father used to go Saturday nights from Mutchka to Osculoosa and they would buy 7 and 8 dollars worth of food and take my 2 sisters and me a half an hour to carry it in the house, now \$7.00 won't buy nothing.
- Q. \*Now that's interesting, they'd go to Osculoosa instead of trading at the company store.
- A. Well they'd go up there at night.
- Q. \*So the company store didn't know what you were doing then?
- A. Oh no they didn't care.
- Q. \*Oh they didn't care?
- A. No.
- Q. \*In some coal camps you had to trade at the company store.
- A. No you didn't have to, not there.
- Q. Not there?
- A. No, you didn't have to. It wasn't but one thing that you was suppose to do on a coal camp and that's go down there and try to make some money in the mine.
- Q. Well you think you got anything more?
- A. Is there anything here that you want to take you're welcome to it, anything? It don't make no difference what it is.