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JH

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NARRATORS NAME: ALEX ERICKSON

TAPE NUMBER: 16

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: DRIVING TRIP TO BUXTON

INTERVIEWERS NAMES: ELMER AND DOROTHY SCHWEIDER

FOR: BUXTON PROJECT, ISU

A....And she never wanted to go to Buxton cause she was scared of colored people. The people down there.

Q.(ES) OH, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.

A. And in that house is where that fellow live that was on that picture of Buxton. That light fella, and he said they always got along with the colored people. He was on that...

Q.(DS) THAT T.V. PROGRAM.

A. He lives in that house right there.

Q. OH! WELL, NOW YOU DON'T AGREE WITH HIM THAT, <sup>then</sup> YOU KNOW, CAUSE HE SAID THAT HE WAS IN THEIR HOMES A LOT.

A. Well, he married the one...his wife is half colored.

Q.(ES & DS) OH!

A.And over ~~here~~ <sup>there</sup> is where my uncle used to live, you go up here about a mile and you turn, and those people you mentioned, they had a Slavish name.

Q.(DS) OH, YEAH. DU-BALLA? <sup>Durbala</sup>

A. Du Balla. (?) They lived over there.

Q.(DS) OH, OKAY.

A. About a mile and a half from here.

Q. OKAY.

A. Almost where them trees are.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. Through there.

Q. DID YOU KNOW THEM?

A. I knew some of the boys.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. And this was Armstrong's land here. He owned all this.

Q. THIS IS HOPE ARMSTRONG'S?

A. This is Hope Armstrong's land.

Q. Uh-huh. THE LADY THIS MORNING, HER NAME IS SILFRANCO (?), AND HER GRANDFATHER WAS A DU BALLA. SHE MENTIONED TATE'S CORNER.

A. That was Tate's corner there.

Q. (DS) THAT WAS...SHE...

A. And one of them, he worked at 18 and the steam pipes had froze up so we couldn't work and the train come home. And the train brought us back home. And when he come home, one of the Tate's men was in there with his wife. And he beat his wife up and broke her glasses. She left him. And those Tates, they were the first ones to bring automatic pistols to Buxton.

Q. (DS) WERE THEY BLAKE, THEN?

A. They were so you wouldn't think they was colored.

Q. I SEE.

A. So, this is the farm right here, where we saw where they was going to lynch that colored guy.

Q. OH. SO THAT'S WHERE HE MANAGED TO...THEY CAUGHT HIM....

A. But they've torn down the barn and rebuilt the house and everything, so it don't look like the same place.

Q. SO WE'RE ACTUALLY SOUTH OF BUXTON RIGHT NOW.

A. You're on the edge of Buxton.

Q. WELL THE LADY THIS MORNING SAID SHE THOUGHT THAT THE TATES WERE INVOLVED IN SOME KIND OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITY, BUT SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS.

A. They were horse traders and bootleggers and they stole stuff, harnesses were traded ~~and~~ and all such stuff as that.

Q. (ES) NOW WHO'S PLACE IS THAT?

A. I don't know who lives there. People by the name of Jones lived there when they was going to have that hanging party, lynching party there. And here's where the Armstrong house...

Q. (DS) RIGHT HERE. NOW THAT WAS A PRETTY BIG HOUSE...

A. Yeah, it burned down.

Q. OH, IT DID?

A. Yeah.

Q. NOW HE APPARENTLY WAS, OH, FAIRLY LIGHT-SKINNED, TOO.

A. He looked like a Mexican. And he kept his hair cut so short you couldn't see whether it was kinky or not. And this belonged to a fellow by the name of Larson. This was the farm. And my uncle lived right on this knob here. This was East Swede town here.

Q. EAST SWEDE TOWN NOW.

Q. (ES) AND WEST SWEDE TOWN WOULD BE OVER THERE.

A. No, over there. You can't get in to that.

Q. (DS) SO ALL OF THIS AREA WAS COVERED WITH HOUSES.

A. Yeah, my uncle lived there, Olson's lived here, and we lived a little further down here, and there was almost our next door -2-

A....neighbors, we lived kind of, ~~out~~ in here. And then next right along here is where the people lived that got the prize

Q.(ES) OH, THE PRIZE FOR...

Q.(DS) OH, THE YARD.

A. Yeah. And the people <sup>but</sup> named Blooms lived here. And these were all Larson's. They bought this farm and they all built on that side. And you go straight.

Q.(ES) GO STRAIGHT, ALRIGHT. NOW WHERE IS THE CEMETARY, THEN?

A. Oh, the colored cemetery? We...you can't see it. Here Larson had a store, Swede <sup>follow</sup> had a store.

Q. OH, THIS IS LARSON'S STORE RIGHT HERE.

SAP

A. And Dr, Maytert, he had an office there, right across from there. There was a couple of houses. And there was a nice big farm house, they tore it down.

Q. NOW IS THAT DUMP OVER THERE, WAS THAT THE MINE?

A. Where?

Q. WAY JUST IN THE VALLEY THERE, JUST OVER THOSE TREES YOU CAN SEE SOME...

A. There was no mine there, unless they're stripping something. There's a little mine down here. My uncle lived right on this corner here.

Q.(DS) WAS HE A MINER?

A. Yes.

Q.(ES) DO THIS IS OLD BUXTON?

A. Yes. Here's where Bloomgreens lived, <sup>had</sup> and my aunt lived on that knoll. This, that's Mahaska county on that side of the road and this is Monroe county on this side of the road.

Q.(DS) OH! OKAY.

A. And right on that little knoll right there, that's where my aunt lived, they wouldn't let her build, they wouldn't rent any land to her so she rented a lot from this farmer here.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT TOWNSHIP THIS IS FROM MAHASKA COUNTY?

A. No, I don't know. Now right down here, by this ditch here they had a blacksmith shop.

Q.(ES) UH-HUH.

A. And here...Coopertown started here. They had houses along there They didn't have that \_\_\_\_\_ this was last year. And this was company houses all through here, and just about in here was a company house, and was a German man by the ~~the~~ name of Hoffman, he was a shoe cobbler at the company store. Him and his wife got in a fight on a Sunday morning, and she had a butcher knife and -3-

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A....he had an axe, and they went after each other and they killed each other.

Q.(E & DS) OH, MY!

Q.(ES) THAT LOOKS LIKE AN OLD COMPANY HOUSE ~~WHERE~~.

A. This way you turn to go to Buxton down to the store, this road here.

Q. AND THEN YOU TURN LEFT.

A. Yeah. And right across the bridge, do you remember there's a tunnel.../?

Q.(DS) CAN WE GO DOWN THERE?

A. Yeah. Do you remember those fellas that played the piano? Gaines?

Q.(DS) YES.

A. He lived right by that bridge there.

Q. OH!

A. That was Gaines's. And this was the drugstore...owner of the drugstore. And then right along here they had a pool hall, and a grocery store, and a drugstore and a barbershop. And then right along in here they had a Methodist church. And then further on they had a colored church. And then there was a creek there, and a bridge across it, and they had, there was a restaurant. And then there was a mortuary.

Q.(ES) THIS IS THE MAIN PART OF BUXTON RIGHT HERE.

A. Yeah, and the railroad tracks run right by this fence here. See there's that warehouse.

Q.(ES) YEAH.

A. It's falling down.

Q. IT'S FALLING DOWN, ISN'T IT? NOW, SEE, ELMER THESE ARE THE ONLY TWO BUILDINGS, NOW. THE BUILDING AND THERE'S THE FOUNDATION OF THE, ~~WHAT~~ I GUESS WAS THE BANK VAULT. A LITTLE BIT FARTHER UP.

A. It's okay there, you can go on up and get around by the company store. \_\_\_\_\_

Q.(ES) AND THAT'S ALL THAT'S LEFT.

Q.(DS) THAT WAS A, YOU SAY THAT WAS A STORAGE PLACE FOR THE DEPOT, THEN, THE BUILDING THAT'S FALLING DOWN.

A. \_\_\_\_\_ Maybe you can just pull in there.

Q.(ES) I CAN TURN AROUND HERE. AND THE COMPANY STORE WAS ON UP HERE A WAYS.

A. Well, it was just right along in here.

Q.(DS) RIGHT IN HERE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE COMPANY STORE.

A. \_\_\_\_\_

Q.(DS) WE HAVE SOME STEPS OVER THERE.

A. I don't know. They were the steps...yeah, they were the steps, I think to the white house. That's about what they were. Do you want to get out and look around?

Q.(ES) LET ME GET TURNED AROUND, SO I KNOW WE'RE ALRIGHT, THEN I KNOW WE'RE ALRIGHT, THEN I KNOW WE CAN GO...WANT TO GET OUT AND LOOK, DOROTHY?

Q.(DS) WELL, I THINK, I DON'T HINK I CAN \_\_\_\_\_ ANYTHING VERY WELL. I'LL JUST SIT AND WAIT FOR YOU. YOU REMEMBER EVERYTHING REAL GOOD. (LAUGHS)

A....Coopertown, and then it was Cooper <sup>is Drug</sup> ~~Strip~~ store, then it was Bingham's grocery store, then it was a big dance hall right there there was a pool hall further back, and there was three houses there and a doctor lived in one, and a tailor lived in one and a family by the name of ~~Smiths~~ lived in one. And one of the Smith boys, he was a great gambler, and he went...when the mines shut down, he went...he drove a Buick, and he dressed good, wore a diamond ring and he went to Williamson to try to get a job in the mines, and they was all white people there. So the boss looked at him and said what do you want? He said I'm looking for a job. He said I thought you come here to buy the mine. (laughs)

Q.(ES) SO THIS IS COOPERTOWN?

A. This is Coopertown right here, and they had a tailor shop on that side, and there's a livery barn there, and then down here they had a drugstore and a second hand store. And Ruby Gaines, he lived right across the creek here. Right on that little bump there. And \_\_\_\_\_ had <sup>two</sup> row of houses here, one on each side of the road and that was called Haystown. And they had a photograph gallery there, and women's they sold women's hats. And then they had a man there he'd draw the hack lines.

Q. DID BLUFF CREEK EVER FLOOD?

A. Oh, yes, it flooded.

Q. AND DID IT FLOOD OUT ALL THESE HOUSES DOWN IN...?

A. No ,it didn't. It didn't get up to the houses, you know. And this man Spitfer that lived here, he had a big heavy set woman, and he was kind of a hustler, he had machinery and he worked for other farmers, did...Pamburing their oats and stuff. And she had a girl, her dad was killed in the mine, and then she had a young hired hand. And the girl got pregnant, and the husband had got the hired girl pregnant and she got a divorce, and he got that place and she married the hired hand, she got herself a young man.

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Q.(ES) OH, MY.

A, But I noticed the Spitfer's are back there, so they <sup>had children and they</sup> got the farm back , so I guess the old lady died. Here this Union back there, you can't see it, but back there was a mine and here was two row of houses, and that was the foreman's or the bosses house, for the union mine.

Q.(ES) AND THEY'D ALL COME IN AND CATCH THE TRAIN AND GO MINING?

A. Well, the mine was right back here.

Q.(DS) HE SAID THERE WAS A UNION MINE BACK HERE. NOW DID THAT HAVE A CERTAIN NUMBER, THEN?

A. No.

Q. OR DID IT JUST...

A. That was the name of the town and the name of the mine. Union.

Q. I SEE.

A. Just like that was Buxton, this was Union. I thought maybe you could see the cemetary from here, but you can't see it from here. It is almost straight across from here.

Q. ELMER, WHY DON'T YOU LET ME GET A PICTURE FROM HERE, WOULD IT BE DANGEROUS TO STOP HERE FOR HUST A MINUTE?

*School*  
A. There was a bus from Buxton to Bussey for the high school and the kids from the last three ~~or~~ <sup>four</sup> years, they got to go to high sbhool in Bussey. (pause) This is Hayes' farm. They used to have a great ~~big~~ big house here.. Just about like the house that sits across from us.

Q.(ES) NOW WHICH WAY DO I WANT TO GO HERE?

A. We go this way to Bussey.

Q. NOW IF I WENT THAT WAY...?

A. You'd go to ~~to~~ Hamilton.

Q. HAMILTON AND THEN BACK TO LOVILLA.

A. No, we go...we won't go to Lovilla anymore, we'd be hitting number 5.

Q. LOVILLA IS DOWN THAT WAY.

A. Yeah. I thought you'd maybe like to go through where \_\_\_\_\_ used to be.

Q. OH, YEAH.

A. It used to be a mining town. There's nothing there, you can't see it's been a mining town, but we can go through there. They had three mines there.

Q.(DS) ELMER, WHY DON'T YOU JUST TRUN <sup>S</sup> THAT RADIO ON REAL LOW AND MAYBE I CAN HEAR THE SCORE AND THEN YOU CAN TURN IT OFF AGAIN. JUST I CAN HEAR IT RUGHT HERE.

Q.(ES) CYCLONES WHAT?

Q.(DS) CYCLONES TEN TO SEVEN.

Q.(DS) IOWA STATE IS PLAYING THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA TODAY IN A FOOTBALL GAME.

A. Oh, I thought...that's right...

Q. YEAH, WE'RE KIND OF INTERESTED IN THE SCORE. I GUESS IOWA STATE'S AHEAD RIGHT NOW.

A. \_\_\_\_\_ . And he used to run a meat market in Buxton. I hunted in all these ditches here.

Q.(ES) AFTER RABBIT.

A. Rabbit, squirrels, coons, possum. These were \_\_\_\_\_ here. This house, this farm here. They went to school in Buxton, their children. They drove a horse and buggy, and then they'd drive past Hayes's there, and they had one boy and he'd ride with them.

Q.(ES) HAVING A PICNIC.

A. Yeah.

Q. LOOKS LIKE AN OLD HOUSE TOO.

A. This is a country church. We'll turn there and go that way. the farmers have cut down a lot of the timber. These ditches used to be big trees.

Q. AND THEY JUST CUT IT DOWN TO MAKE LAND OR WAS IT...?

A. I think they...

Q....OR WAS A LOT OF IT FOR LUMBER?

A. ...Oh, no, I think they've cut it down just to make land. Fence posts and stuff like that. (PAUSE) Someone's used that stop sign for a target.

Q. YEAH. That is LIBERTY. BE BUSY TOMORROW PROBABLY.

A. Yeah, it will be. Then we turn that way and hit a paved road.

Q. I SUPPOSE IN THOSE DAYS A GOOD LONG TRIP WAS A TRIP TO KNOXVILLE.

A. Well...

Q. MAYBE DES MOINES.

A. Yeah. A trip to Albia was kind of a long trip.

Q. YOU WERE GOING TO ASK, DOROTHY, ABOUT THE MINE HEADQUARTERS IN ALBIA.

Q.(DS) OH, YES. AH...

A. I don't think there's anything there anymore.

Q. REMEMBER WHEN THEY BUILT THE DISTRICT 13 HEADQUARTERS? IN ALBIA?

A. Yes.

Q. IS THAT BUILDING STILL STANDING?

A. I don't know whether it is or not, but it seems like some people were over there to see about it and I don't remember what happened. But I think it's transferred to some other part of the country.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. Of the union.

Q.(DS) I WONDERED IF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING WAS STILL STANDING, THOUGH, WHAT THEY CALLED THE LABOR TEMPLE.

A. It wasn't very big. I went with my cousin there when my uncle died, and he wanted some kind of compensation. You turn here. Turn and go down ~~the~~ way. Now over on this side of the road was Durham and they had three big mines. And Northwestern took the coal out. Had three big railroad mines. And you can't see a thing here. Can't see anything of the mines or anything.

DERFY

?

Q.(ES) BUT THERE WERE THREE BIG MINES RIGHT OVER THERE.

A. Uh-huh, yes. One of the men lived in Bussey and worked here, and some lived in the mining camp.

Q. YOU'RE RIGHT THERE ISN'T A THING. YOU CAN'T...

A. Can't see that there's ever been a house here, a foundation or anything. In those days they just laid a pile of rocks here and a pile of rocks there and just built a house on that.

Q. THERE'S PROBABLY STILL A LOT OF COAL DOWN THERE.

A. There probably is. There 's a cemetary <sup>about a mile from</sup> ~~over~~ here, east of here, and that's where <sup>a lot of</sup> ~~all the~~ miners are buried.

Q. NOW IS THAT A WHITE CEMETARY?

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A. Yeah. They didn't have no colored people in Durham. They didn't hire any colored. They were all white. Where those houses are, that's where the road closes. And that's paved from there on in.

Q. THAT GOES THROUGH BUSSEY.

A. That goes through Bussey, and goes from Bussey to Oskaloosa. There went a chipmunk across the road.

Q. YEAH. I THOUGHT IT WAS A PHEASANT BUT IT'S A PILE OF HAY.

A. I saw...I went to the dump the other day and I saw a pheasant on the road. I went early in the morning about 8:00.

Q.UH-HUH.

A. I heard them talking about it and they said Iowa had ~~5~~ more pheasant than any other state. I thought Dakota had.

Q. I THOUGHT DAKOTA HAD MORE THAN IOWA, BUT...

A. That's what I thought, but they said Iowa had more...

Q. AT LEAST WHEN WE LIVED IN DAKOTA, A LOT OF PEOPLE CAME UP TO...

A. There's a lot of nice timber there. I'll bet there's a lot of squirrel over there.

Q. YEAH. I BET THERE ARE.

A. But it's so thick you couldn't see them hardly.

Q. UH-HUH, THEY'RE PRETTY SNEAKY. OF COURSE...

A. Yes.

Q. WITH THE PRICE OF A SHELL TODAY, YOU'D HAVE TO GET ONE WITH NEAR EVERY SHELL, OR YOU'D GO BROKE.

A. I used to go out to Old Tipperary and hunt. Before I was in the army there, he and his son got about a thousand acres out there and it's awful hilly. And I used to go out there and hunt. That big tree there, I put up a \_\_\_\_\_ which ~~stayed~~ there for awhile until we got new neighbors, and the kids had bebe guns and they shot 'em and they left. They'd shoot with the bebe gun. Squirrels left. That's the water tank at Bussey.

Q. THAT'S BUSSEY. <sup>ES</sup>

A. That's Bussey.

Q. NOW WAS THERE A MINE NEAR BUSSEY OR AT BUSSEY? <sup>ES</sup>

A. No. I think Durham was the closest big mines. There might have been some years ago that I don't know anything about. That's the nearest that I know of. I bought my first car here.

Q. IS THAT RIGHT? <sup>ES</sup>

A. A Model T. Ford.

Q. WHAT YEAR WAS THAT? <sup>ES</sup>

A. That was in 1921, I think, yeah. 1921.

Q. (ES) A '21 MODEL T FORD.

A. And I bought it in March, and in September lightning hit the garage and wrecked the whole thing up.

Q. (E & DS) OH, MY.

A. But I had it insured for 500\$ dollars. So, that's what I got. I think I paid 750\$ for it.

Q. (ES) THAT'S A BIG LOSS AT THAT TIME.

A. Well, I drove it during the summer.

Q. UH-HUH.

A. And then they dropped, so it was cheaper. And that building there is the Legion hall over there. That's where we used to have our homecoming. Now you turn at this stop sign and go...

Q. RIGHT.

A. That one comes from Buxton.

Q. THIS ONE COMES FROM BUXTON

A. If you come through Hamilton.

Q. This looks like a pleasant little town.

A. Yeah this is a nice little town. No colored people here. That's a <sup>W.F.W.</sup> little apartment building here...

Q. ....COAL MINE HOUSES AND TOW OF 'EM MOVED IN.

A. Here's the park right ahead of us and here's where they celebrate every fourth of July. Turn and go that way. Now here's the sharp turn. Now make another turn.

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A. Kind of prosperous looking <sup>white</sup> town. A lot of new homes.

Q. (ES) YES, THERE ARE.

A. And there's no work around here. <sup>Quite a few</sup> ~~A lot~~ of these people work at the Veteran's Hospital in Knoxville.

Q. OH, DO THEY?

A. Yeah, they drive.

Q. THERE'S A dirt HOUSE. THEY'RE GOING TO KEEP WARM THIS WINTER.

END OF TAPE ERICKSON AND TRIP DESCRIPTION OF BUXTON.