

SIDE  
TWO

Audited  
2/15/82  
JH

Buxton Project: 424-2104  
 Narrator's Name: Charles Lenger  
 Tape Number: 60  
 Date of Interview: 7/22/81  
 Place of Interview: ~~CA~~  
 Interviewer's Name: Joseph Hraba

- Q. Remember anything about the church up at Lavilla, do you recall any
- A. I was baptized there I know. I was baptized
- Q. St. Peters
- A. St. Peters Church in Lavilla, Iowa.
- Q. Remember much about the church and people there?
- A. Well I didn't know so much about them then as I was older you know.
- Q. Now, let's see. I'm just sort of changing topics now Charles. Who were the friends of your family in those days in Buxton, remember the people?
- A. Will there was \_\_\_\_\_ were good friends and the <sup>Houtas</sup>~~Whotas~~ were good friends and the neighbors were all good friends, everybody in there fit into the neighborhood, and all of the other people you did business with were friends.
- Q. Who were your friends?
- A. Who are my friends?
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. Well my friends at the time were, as a youngster let's see, I think my cousins. I had two cousins.
- Q. What were their names?
- A. Their name was Lenger but they were just relatives, other than that I don't
- Q. There were another Lenger family there in Buxton?
- A. Yeah, there were Lengers in Buxton, yes.
- Q. What was their father's name?
- A. Mike Lenger.
- Q. Mike Lenger and that was your dad's brother?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay, and so you played with your cousins a lot?
- A. Yeah.

Rec

Q. What did you kids do when playing, what were some of the things?

A. We'd play marbles you know and monkey see, oh \_\_\_\_\_ probably games like batting the ball or something you know.

Q. You were talking earlier about ice skating on the reservior.

A. Yeah we did that too. That was in the wintertime.

Q. Sled, did you go sleding?

A. Oh sled, oh sure I remember them. The sleds was \_\_\_\_\_ and I remember that always. The sled was bought at Thomas Drugstore. My father happened to, we was off I think on Saturday morning we went over and he didn't tell me he was gonna buy a sled, so he bought me a sled and it had snowed and so he pulled back home. We had a great time with the sled after and then we used it going down toward the pond there.

Q. Slid down

A. Go right ~~down~~ that street and go down and go right to the pond, we didn't go right on the pond but we wasn't allowed there, because your parents cautioned you you know. Even if it was frozen they wasn't trust you know.

Q. Did you ever see the Buxton Wonders play ball?

A. Just when I was with an uncle of mine but not too much.

Q. Not too much huh?

A. No.

Q. You spent a lot of your summer up here in Ossu~~loosa~~ didn't you?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you get around Buxton much, Charles when you were a kid to different parts of town?

A. Well mostly West and East Swedetown.

Q. Your own neighborhood of course?

A. Yeah because on East Swedetown we'd go to the Larson grocery store. I remember most of our groceries were bought from the, well afterwards we bought some at the company store but we bought quite a few things at the Larsons.

Q. Why was that?

A. Well I don't know whether the price was better or not, I don't recall now but my father was a great one to shop.

Q. Can you describe Larson's store to me, how big was it?

A. It was on the corner that I know of this corner and it's, let's see how would it be. It's hard for me to say.

Q. If you'd walk into the door, what would one see?

Swedit

Larson store

350

*L.A. Brown*  
A. You'd see all general merchandise, candy. He had a lot of candy and had all kind of can goods and well some meats but mostly flour and sugar and the basics.

Q. So foodstuffs.

A. And a lot of other food items.

Q. What else did they sell?

A. Well if they sold any other items like clothing or anything I wouldn't know too much about that cause

Q. You don't remember?

A. My father and mother bought some things but like rugs and things like that I don't recall.

Q. What else about the downtown area do you remember?

A. I remember the main store and the meat market and the YMCA.

*down*  
Q. ~~Your~~ <sup>The</sup> Armstrong Meat Market?

A. Yeah. There was Hope Armstrong's boys run the meat market.

Q. Did they sell anything besides meat?

A. That's all I know.

Q. Okay,

A. There was Charlie Armstrong, Art but they call him Hope too, and Emory Armstrong, he was the youngest of the Armstrongs.

Q. I've heard Emory was kind of a man about town.

A. Yeah he was.

Q. Kind of a gay <sup>blade</sup> ~~barbate~~?

A. Nice looking colored guy. I forget what percent <sup>that</sup> they said, his mother was a white woman. Hope was a negro. But Emory was always women all like to go trade with Emory cause he was played up to everyone you know.

Q. He would kind of flirt with them huh?

A. Yeah that's what bought business you know. And then he married a white woman and I see where she just died here about 3 or 4 months ago.

Q. What was her name?

A. I don't know but I just see where. I didn't pay too much attention about it but I just see where Emory's wife passed away.

Q. Where was she living Charles?

A. Near Albia on the farm. Oh yeah they run the turkey farm so that must be

551

- INTERSTATE  
 INTERSTATE
- A. in an ~~interstate~~ now and I don't know who taken charge of it.
- Q. What other rememberances do you have of the Armstrong family there?
- A. Well I didn't know Hope Armstrong.
- Q. You didn't know Hope?
- A. I've heard about him. He worked with Ben Buxton. I guess that's how they got their men to come there cause they offered them good money and a salary like. What was it 10 dollars a day they offered them when they offered them when they went down south or went back east to the still mill area where the immigrants all come you know. There was Belgians and then to Philadelphia a lot of these people come and they were all nationalities you know, Swedes and Germans, Belgians, Slovaks and Yugoslavians I guess, Kheisan, CROATIANS, all these.
- Q. You remember all those kinds of people?
- A. Yeah because they talk about them you know. They talk about those different ones you know. My father would talk about them. There was different ones that come to this country and go to work in the mining because these men were out after them you know cause they wasn't able to get men to come to work in the mines. They knew the foreigners were good workers. Ben Buxton hired, if he knew that you were from Europe, my aunt told me cause she was quite a gal and she said Ben Buxton would talk to her and he'd say Mary I need some men, real workers. She said I know some men, they're in Europe that would like to come to this country and he said well if you bring them and have them come over I'll give them a job and he did. He was that way with all nationalities.
- Q. This was your aunt he goes to?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Mary who?
- A. Lenger.
- Q. Where was she?
- A. She lived around Hamilton on a farm. But she lived in Buxton company. Well she lived there but afterwards they bought a farm around Hamilton and even cleared their land. The land wasn't even cleared. It was timber and her husband he was quite a worker and the boys were all workers. Some of our cousins of mine. And they really knew how to work.
- Q. What other evidence do you have Charles that he recruited? Do you go to Europe to recruit?
- A. No, just go back east.
- Q. Back east, to these towns one would find concentrations of Slovaks, blacks,
- A. Yeah, they'd go down south for the blacks I guess.
- Q. Who, did Ben Buxton do that or did he have somebody
- A. He had Hope Armstrong do it.
- LABOR RECEIPT

↳ 1002  
RECALL

Q. He would send Hope?

A. Yeah. Ben worked in the east you know.

Q. You heard that Ben himself went back east?

A. Well I just overheard through, Ben was the, I just don't know because I didn't know him at all. Rubin Gaines lived there.

Q. Did you know Gaines?

A. I just knew him by, I didn't know him too well but I knew him when. He just passed away here, he was 91 or 92 years old. He lived around Albia. He was in the documentary film.

Q. That's right. Were you ever down at Sharpé End? The south part of Buxton.

A. Not too much.

Q. Not too much huh?

A. I don't recall too much about Sharpé End.

Q. Go ahead, I'm sorry.

A. That's alright.

Q. Was your dad in any of the Slovak lodges?

A. Yes.

Q. Which one?

Slovak

A. The First Catholic Union.

Q. What's that the Jednota

A. Yeah.

Q. Was he an officer?

A. Yes.

Q. What was his office?

A. Secretary.

Q. He was secretary huh? Where would those men meet Charles?

A. Oh they'd meet in the different homes, the different Slovak homes.

Q. Now you're part of that still aren't you?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you know Olsaskey from

A. Irvin Olsaskey?

Q. Yeah.

A. He's the treasurer.

Lodg

Q. Right, I've talked to him.

A. Irvin Olsaskey?

Q. Uh huh.

A. Yeah, Irvin and I have been friends forever. I'm secretary and it all fell on to me and him after, not too many members in this area.

Q. That's right. In the old days they had

A. Oh it was started, oh quite a number, there must have been about 500 or so belong to it.

Q. 500 there

A. When the mines was all going and everything.

Q. There in Monroe County?

A. Well all over, Mahaska County, Monroe and Lucas and all through this area, all the counties.

Q. You would guess about 500 members at that time?

A. I just estimated. But see after the mines left people all left and moved away you know some went back to Cleveland, Ohio some of them Pennsylvania, some went to farming. A lot of these fellows that's out on these farms they took up farming after the mines closed down. Had no other choice, didn't have anything else.

Q. That's right. Remember a man name Andy Smith?

A. Smith?

Q. Slovak, name is changed.

A. I know <sup>Andy</sup> ~~Anthe~~ Smith.

Q. Yeah, that's it.

A. And Annie, his sister. They live there on the farm.

Q. Right.

A. Yeah I know them.

Q. What's it Steve OLSLASKY I forget the ~~lodge~~ but they. Do you remember the Jednota lodge, did they have one for women?

Lodges

A. Yes they did but I'm not, they didn't have too many members and with this lodge we have a few women in this lodge but there was another one separate but that was run by another group of women but this lodge only has just like if the husband put his wife in or something like that.

Q. You mentioned earlier about being in the YMCA, did you frequent the YMCA?

A. Well not as a physical deal because that was on the lower floor.

Q. What was on the lower floor?

y

A. Well they had physical training different you know, play ball and. They had the games you know but I wasn't familiar with that because I was too young. Well I was thinking of we went to the movies.

Q. Go ahead.

A. Movies a lot.

Q. That's right we want to talk about the Lanloy sisters.

Langlois

A. Yeah, the Langlois, they were cousins. I don't know why they say they was sisters.

Q. They were cousins, not sisters?

A. No they were cousins.

Q. How do you know that?

A. Well that's what Adriene told me.

Q. What were their names again, Adriene was one of them?

A. Adriene and

Q. How did she spell that? A-d-r-i-e-n-e maybe?

A. Something like that.

Q. Okay and the other was what?

A. It was Helene.

Q. Helene, okay.

A. She was the one that was a rough type of woman. She put on a big hat and run those horses, she had one of those two deal and those horses would fly and she'd give them one, that's the way she hauled her stuff you know from this theater down here to film to White City where they run the other one. That's how they worked you know. And this other Adriene, she was a showman if there ever was one.

Q. What do you mean?

A. Well she'd get up on the stage there and announce they'd advertise the movies of the week you know and she'd play the piano, she was a wonderful musician and the silent day movies you know you had to have, and she was great and when they got, they just yelled and whooped it up when she got up there. She was a great one for

Q. And she announced the coming bills?

A. Yeah that's right, even if they did put the bills up you know like they do. They plastered out in front of the they had a board, billboard and they had Ruth Rowlin and Pearl White serials, you know and Eddie what was it Eddie somebody else. They had those every Friday you know the serials for two runs and you'd have to go back the next week to see that. It was interesting. Movies was our great deal of entertainment.

Q. That was a great joy for you huh?

A. Yeah.

Q. You mentioned that the Langley <sup>815</sup> cousins now traveled a great deal.

A. Well they traveled before they come to, see first they come to Oskaloosa after they left eh circus.

Q. They were with the circus?

A. They were with the circus, they left. No first what did they do? They was in France, Paris. From Paris they went to Russia. I don't know what the tie-up was, never did say. They were kind of close, I don't know whether they was of any royalty or something. And then they traveled to Russia and from there they, I don't know they got back to Paris I don't know their families had problems. So they come to America. I guess they joined the circus.

Q. Did they ever tell you when they came to the United States?

A. No.

Q. Okay and they joined the circus?

A. Yeah.

Q. Which circus? Did they ever say?

A. I think it was Ringling Brothers.

Q. As what, what did they do in the circus?

A. Well I don't know. In those days you know there's a lot of things in the circus was for entertainment but I don't know what they did. And what else did they do? On later years she gave lessons, piano lessons.

Q. They were in the circus and they somehow filtered out of circus work

Langlois  
A. And they come here to Oskaloosa, they have to be in here.

Q. What did they do here in Oskaloosa?  
OSKY

A. They run the LYRIC theater before they moved down to Buxton.

Q. And then they ran the theater in Buxton?

A. That's what they did.

Q. Which was on which floor of the Y?

A. It must have been on, I was trying to think of the floor, I think it was about the third floor, I think.

Q. What was the second floor then Charles?

A. I just don't recall. I think the first floor is where they had their different physical things.

Q. You remember a reading room in the Y?

A. I've heard of it.

Q. You'd go up there. They just had movies just on a weekend or during the week?

A. Well now that's during the week too.

Q. During the week too. When would the movies start at nights, 7?

A. Yeah about 7:00 I imagine, 7 or 8.

Q. 7 or 8 huh? And last until when?

A. Oh it was usually after 10 when we got home.

Q. How much did they charge?

A. Oh I don't know, it wasn't too much.

Q. Did you talk to the Langlois?  
Langlois

A. Yes

Q. Two women. Well how did that come about, did you start to strike up a friendship with them at one time?

A. Well I knew the Langlois, we knew them as going to the theater you know but I didn't know them too well until after I moved to Bucknel, that's where I got acquainted with them a lot better.

Q. Oh they moved to Bucknel too?

A. Oh yeah, they

Q. How did you get acquainted with them Charles?

A. Well I guess it was because I sold popcorn, they had a popcorn stand and you see they'd run the theater there and then also they had a dance hall all in one there and the popcorn stand on the edge of that building.

Q. The Langloys run that dance hall?

A. Yes with Charlie Armstrong. It was tied in with him. He built the building, Charlie and Annie Armstrong, that was Charlie's wife and then Daisy Armstrong, that was their daughter. But the Langloys they run that for entertainment. They thought they was gonna have the same deal like there was in Buxton you know. It was entirely different. You had more white people.

Q. In Bucknel?

A. Yeah, I thought so. You had a few colored but not as heavy as Buxton.

Q. What happened to the blacks when Buxton started declining?

A. They all scattered, they went to Detroit, Waterloo, Des Moines, Ottumwa, all these. Some come to Oskaloosa but there's not too many here. There not too many black people here. The ones that was here are deceased.

Q. And not that many followed the coal mining\_\_\_\_\_

A. No they went into the factories and things like that. Took city jobs and jobs of governance and buildings and things like that.

Q. What else about the Langloys sisters that's worth mentioning? You're one of the few people I've talked to that really is knowledgeable about those two women.

A. Well they were educated.

Q. What do you mean by

A. I don't know. They seem to know their way around the world and they could get along, they had a good personality. Only the one they call Helene she used to get mad at people cause they call her names you know.

Q. They'd call her names?

A. Uh huh.

Q. Why?

A. I don't know, cause the way she dressed. She'd wear this skirt that kind of look like leather you know and a blouse on and a big hat you know.

Q. What would they call her?

A. Oh Ben.

Q. Ben?

A. Ben, she didn't like that

Langlois

to Buxton Bucknel

right out

Ben

Q. They call her a man's name?

A. Yeah.

Q. Because she must have been very masculine then?

A. Well she was kind of heavy but she was a real French lady.

Q. Called her Ben?

A. Yeah.

Q. And she didn't like that?

A. Well hell she cussed them.

Q. Who would call her that?

A. Oh different ones if they was mad at her you know, probably worked for her at one time.

Q. Did Adriene have any nicknames?

A. Oh no.

Q. She was sort of above that?

A. Oh yes she was above that. She dressed real nice, had nice clothes, wore her hair nice and a blondish \_\_\_\_\_

Q. You might not know this and just say if you don't. Did these two women have any male companionship?

A. Not that I know off.

Q. They were pretty much isolated?

A. Yes they were.

Q. Well I don't mean isolated. They had a lot of human contact?

A. Yeah.

Q. But it was mainly <sup>in</sup> business?

A. Yeah, that's right.

Q. What's happened to them, where'did you loose contact with them?

A. I'll tell you where I loose contact, well they used to live in Knoxville.

Q. When was this Charles?

A. Oh let's see now. We have to go back, let's see now Knoxville. No Pershing, they went to Pershing. They left Bucknel and went to Pershing and I guess they had a little theater there, a skating rink but they didn't do too much with it. So they worked here let's see what year was that, about 1930 I imagine they left

Lenger

A. Bucknel and go to

Q. And went to Pershing?

Lyn

A. Yeah, and then they were living there, yeah they were living there and running the theater cause I know they were and then Helene come into Oskaloosa and I'd be working in the drugstore she'd come and see me to get medicine for her sister see and that's how I got acquainted with them too quite a bit you know on account of medication she bought for herself. And then after she left Pershing, they moved to Newton, Iowa and Helene, yeah they lived in Newton I don't know about until they passed away and they're buried in Newton. But I know Adriene, Helene passed away Knoxville, she had a heart attack and then they buried her out at Newton because that's where her sister was living. And so Adriene taught French language also. She used to teach people of means you know in Newton the French language, they'd take you know courses with her and then after she got sick I understand and she was buried right there and that was the last that I heard of them.

Q. You remember the Buxton band?

Buxton

A. The Buxton band was more of a colored band.

Q. Did you ever see them perform?

A. I didn't see them perform, maybe at the games but I was small that I didn't pay too much attention. We were more interested in the carnival that come to Buxton you know and things of that nature.

Q. Now I have just a couple, or some more questions and then I'll end my thing and we could cover whatever needs to be covered \_\_\_\_\_. Now we've heard many different versions about the relations between the races there and between the different nationality groups. What do you remember, do you remember any friction in Buxton or did people get along pretty well with one another, how would you characterize that?

RR

A. I'd say they got along real well.

Q. They did?

A. They was real well. You would have the friction like you have here now.

Q. They wouldn't have?

A. No it seem like the whites and blacks got along real well.

Q. That meant that

A. They might have had their little deals on the weekends and the men would fight in their own crowd, the blacks would fight the blacks but it wasn't that rough.

o

Q. It wasn't that rough?

A. I didn't think it was.

Q. Was there any intimacy between black and white in a sense that they shared their private lives with one another or was this, or what you're talking about was

Q. more in public?

A. Yeah.

Q. It was more in public than in private?

FR

A. That's right.

Q. And so would you characterize there in Buxton at least as you knew it is that the white people and their private lives, like Slovaks would stay with Slovaks and or what? How would you characterize it?

A. Some but not all would.

Q. Not always?

A. You would have other friends you know.

Q. For example, did your parents have black friends?

A. Well the black friends would be the neighbors, the Bingamen.

*Bingamen*

Q. That's right you told me that before.

A. I can remember Mrs. Bingamen, she always talked to my mother.

Q. So it was a little bit more complexed than I was characterizing it?

A. Yeah.

Q. But blacks were made the same amount of money as whites?

A. Yes they did.

Q. They were free to go where ever they wanted to go in Buxton?

A. Spend their money freely, this gold, they was paid in gold.

Q. We've seen photographs where blacks were really dressed well.

A. They dressed well and their mouth was full of gold, gold teeth. They were great ones

Q. They liked gold teeth?

A. Oh man.

Q. Really, you remember that huh?

A. I remember that and I remember how they loved to dress you know and the women have beautiful dress.

Q. You remember the ostrich plumes on women, feathers?

A. Yes that and their fine clothes. They were great ones, that store would bring all those kinds of clothes from the east you know. They had buyers. They sure would sell them. Well they could, they was paid in gold.

*clothing*

561

Q. Did the whites dress nearly as well as the black?

*clothing*

A. Oh yeah we had the white women that was real nice, they dressed well too. Well there were businessmen there you know and besides the working men's wife they had money too.

Q. But did the blacks and whites tend to dress a little bit differently than one another, was there a little different style of dressing?

A. Well it might be a little but not too much.

Q. Not too much, okay. How were blacks treated in towns outside of Buxton, do you recall any of that?

A. No.

Q. No, that's beyond okay, our reach. How about labor trouble, do you remember any labor trouble?

A. Well I don't remember too much labor trouble. There was strikes yes.

Q. Did your dad work year round?

A. Yes.

*miss  
Season  
very*

Q. Okay, was he ever, was there any slowing down in the summer months?

A. Well maybe a little but not too much.

Q. You remember continuous employment through the year?

A. Yeah.

Q. The last I want to ask, you have any photographs or any other memorabilia of Buxton?

A. No I don't have cause it seems like it got lost.

Q. They all got lost huh?

A. We didn't save, I don't know whether mother got some of the things but I don't have anything around and we didn't take too many pictures like some people did. You know everybody takes pictures today but in those days you took pictures that's mostly portraits you know, you didn't take a lot

Q. On very very special occasions. Well that TAPS me out. Is there anything that you'd like to say that I haven't covered, that we haven't covered yet about Buxton?

A. Well I think we covered just about everything. That little book that I showed you has a lot of things that comes to my attention.

Q. Do you remember having been a good life for people in Buxton or just so so.

A. I thought it was a good life.

Q. Why?

A. Well as I look back from now what we were dealing with you know, even with the recession and economy and then people worked.

Q. There was no unemployment there?

A. Everybody worked. We didn't want to get a check, we never got anything from welfare. Everybody seem like had a good life because they had money.

Q. You remember there being what'd be called expendable income in Buxton, people had enough?

A. They seem to, that's the reason they got along.

Q. That's a very good point.

A. Now you don't know how they're gonna get along if this economy doesn't straighten out. I heard men

END  
SIDE 2