

interview

Buxton Project: 424-2104
Narrator's Name: Bessie Lewis
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Place of Interview: Des Moines, Iowa
Interviewer's Name: Joseph Hraba

910

family

Side 2

A. I was the 9th child in the family, see there were 10 children in the family, 5 girls and 5 boys, I was the 9th and believe it or not I'm the only one left now, all of them are gone, brothers and sisters, mother and father all gone, I'm the 9th one. Even my brother younger than I is gone.

Q. When your mother got up I suppose she had to put on breakfast right away?

A. Oh yeah.

Q. What would you eat for breakfast?

food

A. They had bacon and you know they were terrible for bacon and eggs and ham and eggs. They didn't eat much cereal.

Q. Not much cereal?

A. No not much cereal, the men didn't of course the kids did but the men didn't.

Q. What did the kids eat?

A. Pancakes for breakfast and ~~bacon~~ and eggs.

Q. Did you ever have mush?

A. *I didn't eat that much* Yes we had it but we didn't eat it very much.

Q. Okay and then the men, were your brothers working with your dad too in the mines?

A. Yeah they worked in the mines. See my brothers one of them they got to be coal, they got to be a driver you see, driving mules and things around. I've been down in the mines too, he'd take us down there and let us look around.

Q. Well how many of your brothers worked with your dad in the mines?

family needs

A. 4

Q. 4, now would they come home and give the money to your mother that they made?

A. Yes, before they married of course as they grewed they married and had families of their own that they give their money home. They were pretty good about giving their money at home.

Q. I bet they were. Now your mother would have to fix dinner pails for

A. Uh huh, they had to pack their buckets you see, 4 and 5 going to work and sometimes even with all that family you'd have a boarder, an extra man come in.

Q. Did you have a boarder?

A. Yeah we had a couple of boarders.

(circled)

Q. What were their names?

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A. One of them name was Harry Franklin and the other one name was Tom Peaco.

Q. How much did these boarders pay do you remember?

Boarders

A. Well at that time they paid 7 dollars and a half a week course you know 7 dollars wouldn't go for a day now hardly, \$7.50 a week. \$15.00 every two weeks.

Q. Well how much were the men making in the mines?

A. I don't know how much they made, they made way over more than they paid to live. Cause they made good money then. And I know my dad said when he was digging coal that wasn't nothing for him to load from 10 to 12 cars a day. I dont know if these cars were small cars they may put them on ^{the} cages and ^{crushed} them up you see and so I know my dad had a brother named Henry and he wasn't married and he stayed with us for a while and he'd go down to the mines some. I heard my dad tell my mother one day he says I think I'll stop Henry from going to the mine. Mother says what for says who's gonna take care of him. Why she, he said he can do the work around here says you know he don't do nothing but sat around there and sleep, say he's lazy he don't do nothing. Say he don't load 2 cars a day. So he brought Uncle Henry out of the mine and _____ home to stay. So my dad used to load 10 and 12 cars a day and those cars were around a dollar, 80¢ was the cheapest they got for one of them cars, and they'd load them and then the drivers would come and get them and take them down the entry to where the cages is and then they'd put them on a cage and the cage bring them up, up on the top you see they'd put them and then you see they were put in those coal cars in those big flat cars you know they'd load them and ship that coal out of Buxton, Consolidated Coal Company. They had good mines there, good clean coal that's why they had so much work, why so many people were there because the coal was so clean, wouldn't much slate in it and there wasn't too many accidents and things around there then, they had the mines pretty well laid out. That's one thing Buxton did, he taken care of his mines, he taken care of his people that worked for him.

Wages

Q. Bessie, who was Ben Buxton, dodyou know much about the man?

A. I just know his name, his father's name was John Buxton I know they were from Vermont.

Q. From where?

A. Vermont.

Q. Vermont, the state of Vermont?

A. That's where the Buxtons ^{was} were from and he had a fellow that worked for him by the name of John Green, John Green had a large family, John Green's

Q. John Green worked for John Buxton?

A. John Green worked for Buxton at home you know. He drove for him, he used to drive them around and do all of that you know they had coaches, John Green. John Green's son died here not long ago, the last son he had, died right here in Des Moines.

Q. Now John Buxton

A. Ben, the fellow John was the old man but Ben was the man that run the mines.

Q. He ran the mines?

A. Uh huh.

Bessie

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Q. What kind of man was he Bessie, did you know him at all?

A. Yes, I knew him. He had a little girl the same age me and he had 2 girls and a boy. They were awful friendly people, they were awful good people.

Q. They were?

A. Awful good people, good colored people. They had that name, they were very good, awful friendly people and if he hired anybody that worked around didn't treat people right he got rid of them, he didn't keep them cause he believed in living and letting live and that was his motto, Ben Buxton.

Ben Buxton

Q. Ben Buxton was a colored man now?

A. Huh?

Q. Was Ben Buxton a colored man?

A. No.

Q. He was a white man?

A. White man, the man that owned the place. That's who Buxton was named after, his father

Q. Right.

A. He was good people, good to everybody. I guess that's why I got along, But he stayed there and kept that mine for as long and then after Buxton worked out #12, 14 worked they built 15 and 16 out there *mean* out there but they still got that place going out there from Buxton, I forgot the name.

to

mean

Q. *Haydock* Haydah?

A. My sister worked out there but I never did go out there. 16 and 17 and 18 mines.

Q. Now Bessie what time did you go to school?

A. We'd have to be there at 8:30.

Q. At 8:30 and so after the men got off you kids would go to school?

A. Uh huh.

Q. Thank you, but when you were home in the days, what did your mother do at home all day?

A. Well she had to clean up and help sew for the kids you know and do her house work and things around, she had plenty to do, the kids growed up she had to teach them how to do, a lot of cooking to do with a large family you know.

Q. I bet there was.

A. Yeah, a lot of cooking.

Q. On that topic of cooking, what did you have for food? You mentioned breakfast, what about at supper time?

A. Oh we had roast beef, roast pork, ham, pork chops, lamb, lamb *and* was pork chops and

School

Roast

Food

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Just

A. steaks of all kinds. That's one thing Armstrong had, he had a market that had all kind of good meat there and we only had, the fish was shipped in, we only had fish once a week it was shipped in. He had a good market.

Q. Was it frozen fish Bessie?

A. Huh?

Q. Frozen fish?

A. Yeah, he shipped in the fish. He run this market.

Q. Was the fish frozen?

A. Yeah.

Q. What about gardens, did you have a garden in the summertime?

A. Oh yes.

Q. What did you grow in the garden?

A. You raised everything you wanted, raised everything you liked.

Q. Did your mom can?

A. Yeah, we had chickens and we had pigs.

Q. How many hogs did you have on the place?

A. Well we had at one time we had little pigs we had about 22 or 3, see we had 2 big old sows. That's one thing my dad would do, he'd always have plenty stuff around to raise so we'd have plenty to eat all time.

Q. Now you had all those pigs at the house right?

A. Well see we had a large place. You see the house sat on a large lot, that's when we lived in Mutchak. After we moved from Mutchakonak to Buxton we had the same thing.

Q. Did it ever happen in Buxton that keeping animals in the yard was forbidden?

A. Yeah it was. When we moved to Buxton we didn't have much ground as we had in Mutchak see, couldn't have those things. Things that wasn't healthy you couldn't have them around there.

Q. Now I suppose like with garbage, you slopped the hogs and animals ate it didn't they? Was there a garbage dump there in Buxton, do you remember Bessie?

A. Well they took it somewhere, I don't know where they took it. They had garbage truck to pick it up you know. Some people had a cow, we never had a cow but some people had cows according to where they lived and you had to keep your place clean because you couldn't keep all them animals and everything around you know next door to somebody else and all like that, you had to keep those things clean. Buxton was a clean place.

Q. You had an outhouse didn't you?

A. Yeah. We built a well. We were the first one that dug a well cause dad had somebody to come in and dig a well. People used to come there and get water all the time and

we had
in
Buxton

4 + 1/2

- A. people going home from the mines would stop at our house and pump water in the bottle or the bucket and carry it on.
- Q. You had a well in the back yard?
- A. We had a well good yard.
- Q. Did you have a pump?
- A. We had a pump.
- Q. You had a pump huh? Not a bucket, you didn't lower a bucket, you just had a pump on it
- Q. We had a well in Mutchakowak where we had to put an old bucket down and pull the water up but in Buxton we had a pump.
- Q. Now we hear that most people had cisterns in Buxton right for water, rather than wells.
- A. Now that was a hard time, when we first went there it was hard to get a good drinking ~~of~~ water cause it wasn't no water around you know. The place was started up and people had to dig wells.
- Q. Bring water from Eddieville to Buxton?
- A. The people come to dig the wells _____
- Q. Oh, okay.
- A. They had to have water hauled in Buxton for a long time.
- Q. Then what did they do?
- A. I don't know where they got the water from, I know there was tanks. They built a big tank up on 4th Street and then they had water from up there, built a big tank in the yard. _____ just telling me about a girl that died here this week her grandmother lived there where that tank was in Buxton. I just come back here 2 years ago, I moved to Minneapolis, I lived up there 52 years.
- Q. Well let's talk about that just for a change of pace I think. You left Buxton and came up here to Des Moines right?
- A. Uh huh.
- Q. How long did you live in Des Moines?
- A. How long did I live here?
- Q. Uh huh.
- Q. I lived here until 24, and then I moved to Minneapolis. I used to live in a little mining town, not far from here called _____. I lived there for a couple of years and then I come back here and lived in Des Moines, mother and father was here and ~~so I lived in Des Moines~~ _____ this year and so I lived here for a while, I lived here as long as, my father died here. I was living here when he died, he died in 24, he died here, he died in 23, I moved to Minneapolis in 24.
- Q. Why'd you move up there?
- A. I married a man from there, married a man from Minneapolis.

Q. How'd you meet him?

A. Huh?

Q. How did you meet him?

A. Well it was a girl that belong to a lodge that I belong to. I was secretary of this lodge and she lived in Minneapolis and this man he was running a laundry and this girl worked for him and she used to send her money to me for her dues and he used to mail it for her and finally one day he asked her about who she's mailing this money to and she said she's a single woman would you like to meet her and that's the way I met him. And he came here and we got married, my father passed in 23 in November and we got married in 24.

Q. This man just came down here on a chance of meeting you?

A. In 24, we got married in 24 in Minneapolis and I lived in Minneapolis from that time until I came here 2 years ago. He lived there, I moved my mother up there.

Q. What did you do up there Bessie?

A. I didn't do nothing, he ran the laundry, I didn't do nothing only kept house. So mother she came up there with me. I took her with me up there and then we came back. She passed up there, I brought her back here and buried her.

Q. Let's get back to Buxton now, you said your mother, did your mother can?

A. Huh?

Q. Did your mother can vegetables, preserve vegetables?

A. Oh yes, everything.

Q. Fruits?

A. Yes, mother she learn us coming up we had to cook and we had to can and we had to do everything so we did it.

Q. Okay Bessie, tell me what did you put up.

A. Well I used to can tomatoes. I used to can greens too, peaches, apples, pears, make jelly. You don't do none of that stuff now you buy all that stuff.

Q. Now did you put them in glass jars?

A. Uh huh. Put them in glass jars.

Q. What, Mason? Remember the brand, were they Mason brand?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, did you ever can meat Bessie?

A. Meat?

Q. Yeah.

A. I never did.

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Q. Do you remember any of the families canning meat down there?

A. I don't remember if my family ever canned any meat.

Q. So it's primarily vegetables and fruits that you'd can.

A. Vegetables and grape juice and tomatoe juice.

Q. What about school Bessie, can you tell us a little bit about what you remember about school in Buxton?

A. Well they had high school. We had a high school there. I went to high school 2 years and that's as far as I got.

Q. Was school pretty hard there in Buxton, were the teachers pretty strict with you kids?

A. We had teachers come from all over. We had good teachers there.

Q. Do you remember your teacher's name?

A. Yes we had ^{a woman} ~~one~~ by the name of Blackburn.

Q. Blackburn, okay.

Q. I think she was from here wasn't she, Georgie Blackburn. You don't know her. She was from here.

*I wasn't born Aunt Bess.

She had a sister name Ms. Avery. She was from here. Gretrude Lucus.

Q. Remember one by the name of London.

A. Yeah, Ms. London. Ms. London was a teacher there for a long time.

Q. Was that one of your teachers?

A. She wasn't my teacher, she was my brother's teacher, my brother younger than me. Ms. London never taught me.

Q. Which school did you go to there Bessie?

A. She was teaching school there in Buxton.

Q. Which school did you go to?

A. Where, in Buxton?

Q. Uh huh.

A. Just a school is all I know, I don't know.

Q. You don't remember like 1st Street School or anything like that?

A. *What was the name of the school?

Buxton, just Buxton High School, Buxton High School and Buxton Grade School. We went from the _____ class up to the 8th grade and then they started the high school. Beatrice _____ used to teach there.

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Handwritten notes:
 Buxton
 3
 917

Q. Now were there any white people living on your block Bessie?

A. 3

Q. 3, in that part of Buxton just off of downtown, were there quite a few whites living there as well as colored people?

A. Uh huh yes white people lived there.

Q. The reason I want to know Bessie is that we understand from some other people telling us the story about Buxton that Swedetown was viturally all Swedish and all white, is that right?

A. That's right.

Q. Both Swedetown, both East and West Swedetown, is that true?

A. We had a Swedetown in *Mutchakonak* when I lived there, I don't know if they had one in Buxton, I don't know.

Q. There was one in Buxton.

A. Huh?

Q. There were 2 of them in Buxton.

A. They had 2 of them?

Q. Yeah, East and West Swedetown.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, were there any neighborhoods there in Buxton that were all black, no whites? No?

A. Whites were mixed up all time.

Q. They were all over the place there in Buxton?

A. All over the place.

Q. What would you estimate

A. If they couldn't mix up they couldn't stay there.

Q. What would you estimate, was Buxton 90% black, 50% black?

A. About 90%.

Q. There was 9 black people for every one white there in Buxton?

A. What?

Q. Was there about 9 black people for every one white person there in Buxton?

A. That's right. Yep, Buxton was a nice place to live.

Q. Why do you say that Bessie?

Quality of Life

A. I said Buxton was a nice place to live in. You got treated nice there and you got advantages of different things. You belong to the lodge if that was there, you belong to church that was there and everything you wanted to make life happy was there.

Q. You say you were treated nice, were you treated better in Buxton than other places that you lived after that?

A. Yeah I like Buxton better than any place I ever lived because you got a fair chance there. You could go to Albia to school if you didn't want to go to school in Buxton cause Albia wasn't very far. You could go to Albia to school. A lot of people went to Bloomfield. That's not far from Ottumwa. A lot of people took their kids up to Bloomfield to school. Before they got a high school in Buxton they went to Albia.

Q. We've heard a lot of stories about the relations between the races there in Buxton, between black and white people, how would you describe those relations?

A. Well you take some white people that have never lived around colored it was kind of hard for them cause they'd been used to doing everything they wanted to do and didn't give the colored people a chance well them kind of people didn't need to be there cause they couldn't live there very long cause they'd fix it so they wouldn't be there.

RR

Q. What do you mean fix them so they wouldn't be there?

A. They'd make it so hard for them till they'd move away from there. I've known families to move in there and stay maybe 5 or 6 months. They didn't have things the way they wanted them and they couldn't have it the way they want it, the way they been living so the next they'd be moving.

Q. ^{thing you know} Could you give me an example of that Bessie, what would happen?

A. Yeah, I'm telling you Buxton is the place that really give the colored person a chance. Give them a chance to do anything that they wanted to do, they had a chance to do it and they helped them to do it. They helped them to go to school, they helped them to learn different trades and they sent them away. They sent a clerk out of the store. They wanted him to work in an office or something they'd send him to school somewhere and get a training and come back pick up a stenographer job and go off.

Q. So some of these families that would move in these white families didn't like that idea huh?

A. Oh no, they didn't like that but they couldn't help they self cause Buxton didn't change, they really was good.

Q. Who would make it hard for them, what was hard for them and why did they move?

A. Huh?

Q. Why would these families move from Buxton?

A. Why would they?

Q. Why, uh huh?

A. Well because they'd come there and they wanted jobs and we had a man that worked in the doctor's office, he had one leg, his name was Southall. Well they come there they didn't like old South, people would go there and they'd call him all kind of

A. names and everything and Buxton got a hold to that. If they traced it down and they found out it was true that man couldn't stay there, couldn't work there. He had to live like people wanted to live.

RR
Q. And Buxton would ask them to leave?

A. This man Southall was there when they came there and he'd been there a long time, he went from ^{Michigan} Metcha to Buxton and he worked in the doctor's office. He stayed there until he died and if they knew that you was mistreated they seen fo it that you got a fair treatment. They'd bring that fellow _____ to trial, bring him to trial. If you were wrong, then you was wrong. They didn't up hold you in nothning that was wrong. They just wanted the other man to know that this man was all right, this woman's alright. She's just as good as you are. And so if you can't work here some them clerk there in the store, they didn't want to be in the store cause colored people was clerking in there. Well if they didn't want to be there they just had to get out cause they didn't put the colored people out, they had colored people in the store, they worked there.

Q. So this would occasionally happen, a family just didn't like it there and they would move out?

A. That's right.

Q. What accounts for the fairness on the part of Ben Buxton, why was he so fair?

A. Ben Buxton

Q. Not everybody is.

A. I'm telling you, and he visit his families too.

Q. He what?

RR
A. He'd visit his families. The first hundren people that moved to Buxton, every Christmas he'd send them a turkey, every Christmas he'd send that family a turkey and you know he had to give away quite a few turkeys but he'd do it and then he'd do different things for you and old man John Green worked there for him and he was real nice. Nobody never found no fault of Ben Buxton cause Ben Buxton treated you as though he wanted himself to be treated, he treated you the same way.

Q. Did you ever work in Buxton, Bessie?

A. I wann't

Q. No?

A. No, I used to go up there to the Armstrong, the family you see and I used to go up there and wash dishes _____ sometimes up at they house, they wouldn't far from us and so Charlie, his wife's name was Annie before she married her name was Annie Matthews.

Q. Can you name me some of your really close friends in Buxton, what were their names?

A. My close friends?

Q. Uh huh, your close friends,

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A. Well I don't have any now, they're all gone.

Q. Now who were they at that time Bessie, when you lived there?

A. This family you see there, this Armstrong family they were very close to me.

Q. You were close to the Armstrong family?

A. Yeah, Jessie was always close to them. I used to go up there and help her a lot of times.

Q. Any other families you were close to?

A. No, not anybody else I know.

Q. Who were the families close to your family, to your parents? Did your parents see people or have people in the home, visit with one another?

A. Well my dad was a very good mixer like that, he always mixed around with them. Now my dad knew when Hope Armstrong was growing up and so he'd always mixed around with them cause he knew them, he knew when they were young and Hope Armstrong and there was another man there that had a livery stable in Oskulosa, his name was Gladden and he lived in Buxton and my dad was a good friend of Gladden's and Gladden's daughter is the one that married Hope Armstrong. One of the Gladdens. And then John Baxter, he was a clerk at the meat market. And in the store we had a man came from Kansas, his name was A.R. Jackson, Andrew Jackson and he helped Dick Oliver with the band, Richard Oliver and they sent down to Kansas and got him. I don't know who was the instigator of him coming there but anyway they sent for him I know that. He came there, he stayed at our house while he was going through the process of being hired you know, he stayed at our house and he'd go up to the store everyday and he was gone a clerk in the store, gone a help with this band. So finally he was given the job, so he moved his family up there. He had a wife and 2 children and he had a sister and this sister was a widow with 2 boys, _____ they ch_____ and he moved them all up there from Kansas and he clerked in the store and he helped teach the band and he got along just fine. He stayed there until his kids were grown up. His wife wanted to go back to Kansas, they went back to Kansas and his sister's boy, I guess he came here because he came here. He married a girl from here, Morris Sleet was his name and he married a girl from here and they had a family and Sleet she moved back to Buxton, she had a family. And she had a daughter married a minister and this minister was a preacher of a church in Minneapolis and so she moved to Minneapolis and then Ms. Sleet and Morris that was Jackson's nephew they moved to Minneapolis and they stayed there, Morris died in Minneapolis not too long ago wasn't it and they brought him back here and buried him but Mrs. Sleet is still here and so they came from Kansas. Ms. Jackson she's passed down in Kansas. So Jackson he clerked in the store there, he was a very smart man. He clerked in the store there. We had several lodge, London, Mr. Henry London that lived up above you, he clerked in the store in Buxton and Minneapolis too.

Q. Is that where your family shopped?

A. *Not Minneapolis.

A. In Buxton, he clerked in the store in Buxton cause he used to fix stoves. He was a man when your lighting burn out in your cook stove you know he'd come and fix the stoves and thing Henry London did. Him and Liza both clerked in the store in Buxton, They were colored.

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Co Store

Q. Now did your family shop at the company store?

A. Oh yes.

Q. What was the name of the company store?

A. Consolidated Co. Buxton.

Q. Was there a Monroe Mercantile Store?

A. Huh?

Q. Was there a Monroe Mercantile

A. ~~Monroe Mercantile~~ yeah.

Q. What store was that Bessie?

A. That's another, I don't know who those people was come in there and started that store. They started Monroe Mercantile Store. They came from some place and started the store.

Q. Where was that in Buxton?

A. In Buxton right next to the YMCA,

Q. It was right down down then huh?

A. And we had a YMCA there and we had a fellow there by the name of Brown come there teach different things in this Y, he was secretary of the Y so they made things very pleasant for you there. You didn't have to go nowhere for pleasure cause they had it right there.

Q. What were some of the big events in your memory of entertainment there in Buxton?

lodge
A. Well when the lodges would turn out on their day you know. They had a big turn out the band was playing and marching and be dance at night maybe the grand lodge would meet there. When the grand lodge would meet there it was just too bad cause it'd be 3 or 4 days nothing but pleasure all time. Grand lodge meet there, Masons grand lodge met there several times, different lodges and so everything went off there,

Q. A lot of entertainment in Buxton wasn't there?

A. Oh yes. You know when I left Buxton I was just crying because my brother said we was gone move. I said move where. Gona take you to Des Moines dad's been in the mines too long and I've got him a job and take him, he's gone move to Des Moines, I've even got a house that's her father's I've even got a house and we're gone move in. Of course then I started crying, he said now ain't no need of you crying now you didn't cry when I was gone take you to Des Moines one time cause they brought me up here, I'd never seen a minstrel show and he was living here and he said next come to Des Moines I'll come get you and it was a minstrel show come through here by the name of Cole and Johnson.

Q. Cole and Johnson,

A. A minstrel show so he come got me and brought me down here so I'd see, he said you didn't cry then so he said don't need to be crying now cause we're going. We're going to Des Moines and that's all. So he moved U.O. we pulled up and left. He

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A. had a house for us out there it was 221 Chestnut Street where we lived. That's where we lived, he had a house for us she moved us up there. I said you sure got your nerves. He said that's alright I'm gone take dad out of the mines, dad's been in the mines long enough. Many people he said been killed in the mines now he's worked all these years and he's successful and haven't even been hurt and he said I'm gone take him out of there and he took him out and brought him up here.

Q. Do you remember how old you were when you came up here Bessie?

Left Buxton
A. I guess I was around about 18.

Q. About 18 or so?

A. I was calling myself a woman then you know.

Q. And you had moved to Buxton when you were about 13 right?

A. About 13 when we moved to Buxton.

Q. And you moved there in 1901 right?

A. That's right.

Q. Did you moved up here to Des Moines as early as about 1906, 1907?

A. I think it was about 1907, _____ 1908 something like that.

Answer
Q. So what you're telling me Bessie is that you didn't live in Buxton all that long did you, only a few years, only about 5 or 6 years.

A. yes sir

Q. That was about the time that Buxton was at its peak wasn't it?

A. Yeah it was at its peak. You know Buxton had one thing that happened while I lived in Buxton that I didn't they had a big cyclone there.

tell you 1905
Q. I just read about that, tell me about it.

A. At this cyclone there's a big dance that night. I wan't there because I was just a teenager just growing up but I know my sister Lena was at this dance cause she come home that night and woke us all up and told us that there'd been a cyclone and our uncle had been hurt in the cyclone, had blowed away and dad said blowed away, I never will forget that. Dad said blowed. She said that's the news that came down to the dance hall and said we had to go. Gus Watson, Lena said Gus Watson came up to her and said Lena you in here dancing and having a big time and cyclone come blowed Uncle Matitis away. Lena said she thought he was fooling. She said oh its not and so then the news got out then Kenneth Hamilton said I have to close this hall because the cyclone is really true. Blowed my uncle away. Took their house, they never found a stick of that house. Took that house and all of them in it.

Q. When was this cyclone?

A. 1905.

Q. What season of the year, was it in the fall of the year?

A. May 25th.

Q. In May, okay.

cyclone

A. May, 25, 1905 and it blowed the 2 families. They were living down at a place they call 10 junction. That's where my uncle lived and this Blakey family lived there and my uncle's little boy, the baby was 6 years old. Blakey's little girl Georgie was 4 years old, killed the child the youngest of each family and it blowed Uncle Melvin just took the house and he had a son that had been in the army and he was home on his vacation and he said he was satting outside and the wind was blowing he said I'm going in this house before the wind blow me away so he _____ you know, so he walked in the house and he said just as he walked in and say he looked up he could see the sky, the roof was gone off the house, that's all he remembered. The next thing he remembered was 2 days later that was Ed next thing he remembered 2 days later he woke up at our house in bed.

Q. I read just the other night Bessie on account of Buxton by Ruben Gaines, Jr. and he mentions the cyclone

A. Yeah that's right.

Q. And about a case where a man was picked up and sat down in a field and they found him praying out there.

A. That's right George Walker. George Walker had sat outside, oh that was terrible Uncle Melvin and 4 children, Lucy the girl they only had one girl and she had sticks just drove clear through her arm and through her legs. And they never found this boy for a long time, didn't find him for a couple of days. They found him he was still breathing but he was gone Hobert was his name. He was 6 years old and the little Blake girl was 4 years and it killed her _____ they were all blown away. And we had all that to contend with. His oldest son was married and living down in Buxton at the time.

Q. Whose oldest son?

A. The uncle that was blown away and so but his wife when they called them and told them and told them they was gone bring she didn't want it there, said no she couldn't have it, she didn't want them there.

Q. Do you remember Ruben Gaines, do you remember Ruben Gaines, Jr.?

A. Sure I know Ruben Gaines.

Q. What sort of man was he in those days?

A. Ruben's a little younger than I am.

Q. You remember much about him?

A. He's the only boy in his family, he had 2 sisters older. His father run the, his father lived in the other part of Coopertown they called it Gainesville where his father lived and he had several houses over there, Union town and

Pants

Q. Did you know Ruben Gaines Jr.'s wife, she was Chattanooga, Tennessee?

A. Yes I know she is. This wife I didn't know her I just know her when I see her, this his second wife.

Q. The second wife, okay?

from

A. The first wife died. They showed a moving picture here once of Buxton you know once since I been here and Ruben was showing on this picture. He lives in Albia I guess. I think he does.

Q. Right.

A. Yeah that cyclone was an awful thing. They never found one piece of the house, never found one piece of it, took that house, blowed them all away.

Q. Bessie when you were a girl in Buxton did you and your family travel much to towns around Buxton like did you go to Albia often?

A. My father and mother were pretty good Christians you know so they'd travel around these things where Christians go so when the kids growed up they went to the dances and things like that but they didn't, we'd come up here, come to Des Moines

Side 2 — This is actually side # 1

Armstrong
A. Quite wealthy and he had a race track there too and it had a fair and he had horses and he owned a meat market and this is his son that taken care of the meat market that's his son's family. Yeah this is Charlie Armstrong, his father's name was Hope Armstrong.

Q. You have any pictures of Hope?

A. I don't have any pictures of him.

Q. Good, thanks Bessie, who you got there?

A. This is the little Armstrong girl and these are our two nieces.

Q. Bessie why don't we begin, would you please state your full name?

A. My name.

Q. Uh huh.

A. Bessie Lewis.

Q. Bessie Lewis, Bessie when were you born?

A. Where was I born?

Q. When? Time.

A. March 15, 1888. *birth*

Q. 1888, where were you born Bessie?

A. In *Mutchakonak* Mutchakonak, Iowa.

Q. *Mutchakonak* Mutchakonak, Iowa of course. Were your parents from Virginia?

A. Yes they was.

Q. Where at *Stanton* Stockan.

925

- A. Huh?
- Q. Where was it?
- A. Where about in Virginia?
- Q. Uh huh.
- A. Charlottesville.
- Q. Charlottesville.
- A. And Waynesboro.
- Q. Waynesboro.
- A. And Livingston, there's three places there, Livingston, Virginia.
- Q. Were your parents, were they married before coming out to ^{Mutchakonak} Mutchakonak?
- A. Oh yes, they brought 8 children to ^{Mutchakonak} Mutchakonak. There was 10 in our family and 2 born after they came to ^{Mutch} Mutch. I was born in ^{Mutch} Mutch and my younger brother younger than I.
- Q. How many in the family ultimately, Bessie? How many were there in the family, 8, 9, 10 of you?
- A. It was 10 children and mother and father.
- Q. Okay, big family?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What did your dad do back in Virginia, do you know?
- A. My daddy was a, he helped to build that ^{she nantook} railroad.
- Q. Railroad worker?
- A. In Virginia.
- Q. How about your mother, do you know what she did?
- A. She didn't do nothing but take care of the family. She worked, the people before that owned them she worked in their family. Their ~~name~~ name was Farro, George and Amanda Farro.
^{Farell}
- Q. Now Bessie, you're quite certain that your dad was not a miner in Virginia?
- A. Oh no.
- Q. Now I want to ask you a question that's really kind of off the track of your own family history but I've heard a time or two that many of the blacks who came out to ^{Mutch} Mutch from Virginia were miners in Virginia, do you know of any such thing as that? No?
- A. My father's oldest brother was the first one came out there. He was out there at

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family

A. ~~Mutch~~^{Mutch}, he was out there about five years by himself. His name was Addison Rhodes and he was out there by himself, him and his family. He had 2 children and then he came back and got my father and brought out the family and brought out his mother and father, grandmother and grandparents and 2 brothers.

Q. Now would you state your father's full name?

A. Albert Walter Rhodes.

Q. Albert Walter Rhodes. Mother's full name?

A. My mother?

Q. Uh huh.

A. Margaret Elizabeth.

Q. What was her maiden name Bessie?

A. Cropp, C-r-o-p-p.

Q. Okay. Now your father was a miner in Mutch right?

A. Oh yes.

Q. ~~He~~ was a miner, was he a driver or was he a miner?

A. He was a miner, he dug coal for a long time and then when he stopped digging coal he started laying tracks in the mines for the cars to run on. He was a track layer.

Q. Experience in the railroad I suppose huh. Bessie you were born in 88 in ~~Mutch~~^{Mutch} right? Now when did the family move to Buxton?

A. 1901.

Q. 1901.

A. In August.

Q. Why was that move made?

mine out of Mutch

A. Well because ~~Mutch~~^{Mutch} the mines was running out there and so they had this mine over in Buxton and my sister, my second sister she was there before my father because she ran a boarding house and kept the people that was helping to build those houses. And my sister run it. Her name was Mary Miles and her husband's name was Ed Miles and he was a track layer in the mines and he played in the band.

Q. They preceded your own family into Buxton?

A. Yeah, they was over there a year before my father was there. They moved over there in 1900. They moved there when they just had just shacks for people to live in, in order to keep the mines going until they got the houses built, my sister was there then.

mine Mutch

Q. Now Bessie let's stay with ~~Mutch~~^{Mutch} for just a couple of minutes here, What were the mines out of ~~Mutch~~^{Mutch}, what were their numbers?

A. 12, 13, and 14.

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Q. Okay and were those mines all owned by Consolidated Coal?

A. All belong to the Consolidated Coal Company.

Q. Where did that coal ~~coal~~ go, do you know?

A. I don't know. I know they had a place in Belle Plaine, Iowa they had the Northwestern Railroad run a passenger train up there and they used to ship the coal out, I don't know where it went to.

Q. But there was a spur from Belle Plain one down as far as Buxton ^{ultimately} ~~evidentially~~ right?

A. That's right.

Q. What was ^{Mutchakonak} ~~Mutchakonak~~ like, how big was it?

A. Oh it was a large place. It had several little villages attached to it. ^{Mutchakonak} ~~Mutchakonak~~ and they had a little place they called Unionville and Newtown and it wasn't far from ~~Osculoosa~~ ^{Osky} only 5 miles.

Q. Only 5 miles, to the south of Osculsky?

A. ~~Osculoosa~~, Iowa.

Q. Was it south of ~~Osculoosa~~?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you have any way to guess how many people lived in ^{Mutchakonak} ~~Mutchakonak~~ at its height?

A. I don't know how many lived there but I know when my father moved to Buxton it was 100 ^{families} ~~went~~ at that time.

Q. Went at that time, 100 families.

A. Ruben Gaines, they came from Mutchaka to Buxton. Of course people came from all

A. over after they heard about Buxton, a lot of them came.

Q. How'd your family get to Mutchakonak? How and why?

A. How did they get there?

Q. Uh huh.

A. Well I heard they came there on a train.

Q. Why did they come?

A. Well I guess my uncle was there and he was a miner and making good money, made more money there than they made in Virginia cause ^{them} ~~of the~~ slavery days was over and then they had to work cause see they didn't make much money to take care of the family and so a lot of people

Q. Were your parents freed slaves?

A. My parents was.

Q. They had been slaves in their young life?

same

m
descub

pop

928

living

A. Yeah, they belong to, my grandmother both grandmothers, my mother's parents and my father's parents belong to the same people, Amanda and George Farro. And I was in Virginia when I was 11 years old and I even saw the cemetery where they were buried. It was a little place called Athens, Virginia my uncle lived there, my mother's brother and they were buried down in the lot ~~of~~ that place. I even saw that in Athens, Virginia.

Q. You say they made good money there Bessie, do you remember what the wages were in ~~Mutch~~ ^{Mutchak}, the miners?

A. No I don't, I guess I was too little to know about the wages. They didn't let us know nothing about what they was making.

Q. So you moved to Buxton in 1901?

A. Yeah, I was 13 when we moved to Buxton.

Q. What time of year was it that you moved?

A. August.

Q. In August?

A. 1901.

Q. So it was in the summertime and you say at that time about 100 families were moving?

A. Yeah it was 100 families went at one time.

Q. Could you describe that move, what you remember?

A. Well the only thing I know I know they drove. It was quite a ways to drive but I know they drove up there cause in ~~Mutch~~ ^{Mutchak} my father had a livery stable and he used to run a hack line from Mutchak to Buxton to Osculoosa, from Mutchak to Osculoosa and they made 4 trips a day, 2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon and he had horses and all kind of buggies and rigs they called them and so he carried a lot of people over there in his vechicles and things.

Q. When you got to Buxton was there a house waiting for you, did you live in the company house?

A. Yeah the house was free. The house was numbered. Our house was #12 East 1st Street. The first 100 houses in Buxton they numbered them.

Q. Only the first hundred?

A. I know they numbered the first hundred, I imagine they numbered all the rest of them course I wasn't interested in that, I don't know whether they did or not but I know ours was #12 I know that, #12 East 1st Street.

Q. East 1st Street, now East 1st Street was close to downtown wasn't it?

A. We was living what you call right downtown because it was a restaurant not far from us. The meat market wasn't from us, the grocery store and then there's a YMCA up there and all of that wan't far from us.

Q. Before I ask you some questions about downtown Buxton, I'd still like to ask a few more about the move. Do you remember the family just packed up, the household,

Moved to Buxton

my first JM to B

father hack in

Albion

no house at 1st 157/100

929

- Q. belongings, your clothes and one day you moved over to Buxton.
- A. I think Mr. Buxton, his name was John Buxton, I think he had people to look after the moving and you didn't have to do anything only just pack your things up and somebody else come picked them up and
- Q. Just like movers today huh?
- A. Yeah, he had people come from Beason and Eddisville and all around there was people always some kind of truck or something there moving people and he had that done cause you didn't have to pay for moving. That was charged up to the coal company I guess, charged up to Buxton cause he saw that they got over there.
- Q. Do you remember other families moving the very day you moved?
- A. Who?
- Q. Were other families moving the same day you moved?
- A. Yes. I should say 10, 15 families moved the same day. All kind of old rigs and hacks and everything was there hauling out your goods, taking your household goods, taking the family. We had our own cause my father had a livery stable, we had our own convenience to go they didn't have to do nothing but take our household goods cause we had our own rigs to go in.
- Q. Why that day, why was the move that day, did the word go out that it was the day to move or just what?
- A. Well they give you notice when they'd be there and when they'd call you to move they'd give you a notice.
- Q. The company would huh?
- A. They'd give you plenty of time to get ready, be ready to go when they come.
- Q. Okay, well let's go to Buxton now, Bessie. You lived close to town, can you describe downtown Buxton?
- A. Well we had a meat market and then the store, the YMCA was all on 1st Street, that's the same street
- Q. Now who owned the meat market on 1st Street?
- A. The meat market was run by Armstrong and the store had nice clerks in, they had white and colored clerks in the store.
- Q. Is this the company store?
- A. And then they built a bandstand there for the band. You see after we were there a while they had a band and they built a bandstand there and the band go down there, they practiced at the YMCA if when it was chilly but outside when it was warm. We had a good band.
- Q. Who was the bandmaster?
- A. Richard Oliver, _____ one of my brothers played clarinet in the band I had 2 brothers in that ball team.

Bessie
Bessie

Best Band

- Q. Okay let's take the band, how big was the band?
- A. It had about 30 or 40 in it. My brother-in-law played a alto horn, Ed Miles he played an alto.
- Q. 30 or 40 pieces Bessie. What kind of instruments did they play, you mentioned horns they had
- A. All kinds, they had drums and they had big a fellow by the name of Dick Blake, his name was Richard Blake, everybody called him Dick, he had a base horn, a big round thing that went over his head. This horn fitted over his head some kind of way, a great big thing you've seen them kind, that's what Dick Blake played.
- Q. Did they have a string section, violins or guitars?
- A. Yeah they had a string section too.
- Q. People playing violins, you remember violins?
- A. Yeah they played violins and we had a bowling alley there and not very far from us and my uncle had a shoe shop and Uncle Al he had a shoe shop and a barber shop was all in the same building.
- Q. Let me get back to the band Bessie you're really good about this. Not that many people remember the band. You say there were about 30 or 40 memeber, were these members were they paid or were they volunteers?
- A. Oh volunteer, nobody got paid for nothing. It was just recreation for them.
- Q. And you say they had drums?
- A. Drums, they had base drums and snare drums and all kind of horns, clarinets and
- Q. Okay and even the strings. What sort of music did they play?
- A. All I know is just music. Had music book by the size of this but it was full and they used to turn pages and play different things. They really had a good band there.
- Q. do you know what I mean by classical music, would you play things ~~by B~~ ~~Back~~ or would they play marches?
- A. They played all kinds.
- Q. All kinds, huh? When would the band perform, what would be the occasions in which the band performed?
- A. Well they had days they'd play like the 4th of July and they built a fair ground out there and they had fairs and different things, differant days and they built a park, we had a park. In the park they had a big bandstand over there and that's the first time I ever seen a bar-b-que pit, they had built a pit, a man by the name of Tolbert used to cook bar-b-que there. That's the first time I'd ever seen stuff cooked, cause it was cooked outdoors. We didn't know nothing about it we was little kids and we didn't want to bother with it and we wouldn't eat that meat at all, They had 4th of July when they had these big celebrations that man had the stuff cooking there you know but we never eat it, they always had to take us some sandwiches from home. That's the first time I had seen

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Q. And they had a bandstand where the band would play?

A. Yeah.

Q. And people would say around?

A. Sat around.

Q. Where was this, on main street?

A. They build a big hall, we had a dance hall there and we had a fellow from here by the name of Kennix Hamilton come there and give dancing lessons. They had a lot of amusement there.

Q. Where was the dance hall Bessie, was it in the Y?

A. Huh?

Q. Was it in the Y?

A. No it was down in a place they call, a fellow by the name of Franklin Cooper. B.F. Cooper had a drugstore and they called that Coopertown and it was down there a restaura down there and this dance hall was down there.

Q. Now this man, his name again who came from Des Moines what was his name? The dance instructor.

A. Kenneth Hamilton, he was from ~~here~~.

Q. What dances did he teach people?

Bessie
A. I guess he taught them all kind cause I was just growing up, I wasn't allowed to go to. My older sisters ~~am~~ went. Oh he taught dances there for a long time and then they had a fellow by the name of Johnny Christian come there and started a bowling alley. That was right across from not very far from our house, the bowling alley. And Jeffrey's restaurant was there too, they had a big restaurant.

Q. And the bowling alley was on 1st Street?

A. Yeah and B.F. Cooper he run this drugstore. He had a drugstore, they named it Coopertown, different little things around there. There was a man cooked that had a wagon that sold sandwiches and things. You know I told you old man Same Rhodes sold sandwiches and things. People would go down there and they'd be gambling around there at night and get hungry and go up there and eat.

Q. Do you remember a man who had a lunch wagon by the name of Reasby?

A. Yeah I knew him.

Q. What'd he sell on that lunch wagon?

A. Huh?

Q. What did he sell?

A. Who?

A. Yeah I knew Reasby.

Q. This past summer I talked to one of Reasby's sons in Waterloo.

A. Did you?

Q. Yes, his name is Harold.

A. Who?

Q. Harold Reasby and he was telling me that the family would cook 2 or 3 hundred chickens on a Saturday and they would sell them off that lunch wagon. Okay, now what else was on Main Street? You mentioned earlier the company store, can you describe that a little for me Bessie?

Bessie
A. Well there was another drug store down there it was run by Alfred Thomas and John McBride but they were white. They had a drugstore. Of course B.F. Cooper was a colored man, he was from Clinton, Iowa and they had the drugstore along there. They had all kinds of dyes and everything, gambling and everything else.

Cooper
Q. You've mentioned this gambling a couple of times, now was there a lot of gambling in Buxton?

A. I guess it was.

Q. When did you see it?

A. Our boys was just growing up then. There wasn't no gamblers in our family so I didn't know any of them. I know they gambled but there wasn't, this fellow that is a manager of that ball team, Bill Shelton he had a club and that's where they used to gamble in his club and he had a brother named Jim and one named Charlie. But Charlie was younger but Jim and Bill run this gambling club.

Q. Now Charlie Sheldon ran one of Hope Armstrong's, Ruben Gaines' business didn't he?

A. Yeah.

Q. What was he a manager of, he was manager of a store wasn't he?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, now Shelton ran the ball club, now let's talk a little bit about the ball club. Were the ball players paid?

A. No, just paid for their ^{re} ~~fair~~ and going plac^{ing} but they didn't pay them to play, they played for fun.

Bessie
Q. Played for fun. Did the band play at the ball games?

A. Uh huh, the band used to play at the ball game. The band used to even play at some funerals. They had funerals there the band would play, somebody would want the band and the band would play at the funeral.

Q. I understand the band would strike up a tune between every ^{inning} ~~ending~~, is that right?

A. Yeah. that's right.

Q. What kind of ball club was the Buxton Wonders, Bessie? Were they a very serious ball club or did they clown around a lot.

Wonders
news

Hickman

A. Oh yes they was a good ball club but I don't know if they ever lost any games cause everybody the other teams around Belle Plaine and Beakon and Albia and Hickman all those places had ball teams used to come there and play, they used to beat them all times.

Q. Beat them all times huh? Did you go to a lot of the ball games?

A. Yeah, I would follow them around. I was just telling her husband you can see why I'm crazy about a ball game because I've been with my brothers all times at the ball games.

Q. Did any of your family play on the Buxton Wonders?

A. Yes my 2 brothers.

Q. Your brothers, well now tell me

A. I had 2 brothers play on.

Q. Now Bessie could you move from over here, the back row first, move from left to right and tell me the names of these people? Who is this?

A. This fellow's name Wilbert Hickby, he was a pitcher picture.

Q. Hickby?

A. Hickby.

Q. Okay that's the bottom row. Okay whose the man beside him going to the right?

A. Henry Brumer, he was a fielder. That's Bailey, that's one of the fellows that helped _____

Q. Bailey?

A. Yeah.

Q. Bessie do you know his first name?

A. Bill.

Q. Bill Bailey?

A. Uh huh.

Q. Really? Okay now who's this?

A. That's my brother John.

Q. Okay, who's on John's knee there?

A. He's holding somebody's baby.

Q. You don't know who

A. That's a fellow's name Wash^{ing}ton, they called him Pat.

Q. Pat Wash^{ing}ton. Okay could you come over here Bessie.

A. That's Andrew Stovall.

Q. Andrew Stovall?

A. Uh huh.

Q. What position did he play?

A. He played in the field.

Q. Now your brother, what position did he play?

A. He was a catcher.

Q. Catcher?

A. My other brother was a shortstop.

Q. Now who's this man, what did he play?

A. He played in the field.

Q. The man to the right of your brother.

A. And this man played 3rd base, that's Jim Brooks.

Q. Let's go back over here Bessie so we can get this on tape and get it straight.
Who is this man?

A. That's Andrew Stovall.

Q. Okay that's Stovall, now who is this?

A. That's my brother.

Q. That's your brother?

A. Uh huh.

Q. What did he play again?

A. She was shortstop.

Q. A shortstop.

A. Couldn't bat very good but he could play.

Q. Okay, who's this? You know who that is?

A. Yeah, I think that's Andrew Stovall, that's Pat Washington.

Q. Pat Washington.

A. They called him Pat Washington, I forgot his name but they called him Pat Washington.
This is Jim Brooks.

Q. And he played what, 3rd base?

A. Yeah, Jim Brooks he played 2nd base,

Q. Oh 2nd base, Now who's this.

A. That's John Jenkins.

Q. Okay, was there ever a man name King on the Buxton Wonders?

A. Huh?

Q. A man by the name of King, Charles King?

A. No, he must have had the 2nd team, he didn't have the 1st one cause Bill Shelton and this man had the first team.

Q. There was a 2nd team?

A. Oh yes they had another younger kids come up behind these and played and they called they selves Buxton Wonders too but they were younger kids.

Q. Younger kids?

A. Now this is the first team, this is the first team : Buxton Wonders had. And this is a team they used to play so much and this one.

Q. What's this?

A. That's the same team.

Q. The same team?

A. Now this is a team, now that's my brother Charles, that's George Neil and that's Wulfard that's Wilbert Hickby, that's Ed Wise right there. This fellow's name was Linsey, he was from Lexington, Missouri.

Q. That's moving from right to left, the bottom row right on this second picture of the Buxton Wonders.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay who is this man going to the right?

A. His name was Linsey, he's from Missouri.

Q. Second row.

A. And that's Hickby, that's Henry Brumer, that's John Steele he's a ^{pitcher} ~~picture~~ but he didn't have his uniform on that day but that's John Steels, that's Bill Shelton, that's the man that run the team that owned the team. That's Jim Brooks and that's my brother and that's a fellow by the name of Buck Williams, that's Washington, Charlie Beetle and Andrew Stovall.

Q. Well did they charge admission for these games?

A. Sure.

Q. What happened to that money, did they buy equipment with it or just what?

A. I don't know what they done with it. I guess they kept it in their team, buy the

same

2 teams

Hirschel

pitcher

admission

A. uniforms and things, I dont know what they done with the money but I know we paid to go in.

Q. Why the name Wonders?

A. Huh?

Q. Why the nickname Buxton Wonders?

Wonders
A. I don't know why they got the name of Wonders, they just named it that I guess.

Q. I've heard there was a man **who** would walk on his hands during the ball games some- times, do you remember anything like that?

A. Yes, but I've forgotten his name. I know the man used to do that.

Q. Would they clown around like that while they were playing ball, have a good time.

A. I've seen him do it many times.

Q. What else would they do Bessie that was kind of showy, sort of showmanship?

A. Well they always traveled a lot. They traveled when the mines wasn't working you know. They hardly work on ~~S~~aturday and they play Saturday and Sunday in some town.

Q. Was it the case that miners down in Buxton had a lot of time off in the ~~S~~ummertimes, was that slack season?

Season
A. Yes, sometimes they had a strike but not very often. They had strikes sometimes. After the union started then that's when they started to striking around and they had a strike sometimes it'd come out the first of April and ~~it~~ stay out maybe all of April, go back in May. Maybe they wouldn't stay out more than 2 weeks. They'd strike on their wages and things you know.

Q. You say when the union began, when did union begin down there in Buxton?

A. It begin right after the mines got started, after they got all sat up down there and got the houses and things all filled up then the union started and then they had a store see they had a undertaker to come and he worked in the store and he was the undertaker, and they had a big post office. The post office was built by and then they had a Perkins Hotel. This man there by the name of Andrew Perkins he built a hotel there and he ran a hotel, he had several boys and he had his girl worked in the post office and then George Willis, _____ Willis, they belonged to the band. Their mother was, she was ~~what~~ they call a doctor midwife their mother, old lady Willis was.

Q. Were most babies delivered by midwives there in Buxton?

A. Huh?

Q. Were most babies delivered by midwives there in Buxton?

A. Yeah they was. We had a doctor there by the name of Joe Anderson he was a good doctor and then we had a boy that came up, him and my brother the same age, just one day apart, his name was Garter, his name was Eddie Carter and he studied for a doctor. He was a doctor there for as long as Buxton was going he was a doctor

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A. and he married and he moved to Detroit, he died in Detroit. He moved to Detroit, he was a doctor in Detroit, Dr. Carter.

Q. Was your dad a member of the union?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Now was he a union member in ^{Metchewick} Metchewick?

A. Yeah he was a member of the union and they had secret organizations there, they had a masonic lodge, Knights of Pythias and the Odd Fellows.

Q. Now back to the main topic I suppose is that there's quite a bit of leisure time there in Buxton right?

A. Oh yes. They had a lot of fun there, a lot of people come there from different places you know, they'd come there. A lot of people was anxious to see it. They had heard of it you know and they come to see what the town look like and what it was. They came they was surprised they find out the different organizations were there and ~~different~~ entertainments and things was there. We had in the YMCA it was a woman and her daughter came, I don't know where she came from started moving pictures and they only had that twice a week.

Q. Was it a woman and her daughter or two sisters?

A. Oh she came from I think Chicago they say.

Q. Was her name Loy or something like that?

A. Yeah, they had moving pictures.

Q. You remember that name? Bessie was the name of the woman ran the movie pictures by the name of Loy.

A. I forgot what their name was.

Q. They were known as French sisters there right, they were known as French people?

A. Yeah.

Q. What else, what were the other things that people did, now you say there were a lot of lodges there in Buxton, what were the names of some of the lodges there?

A. Oh yes, they had the Masonic lodge _____ they even prospered so they had a Shriner there.

Q. Shriner?

A. Shriners for masonic lodge, they had Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows them three I know was there.

Q. What about organizations for women; which ones they have there for women?

A. Well see the Eastern Star came from Masonics and Household of Ruth came from the Odd Fellows and the Pilanthians came from the Pythias.

Q. Pilanthians huh?

Union

Lodges
mLodges
B

Q. Do you remember the churches there in town Bessie?

A. Huh?

Church Q. What were the names of the churches, can you name me the churches?

A. Well our church, the church that I was raised up in was Mt. Zion.

Q. Baptist Church?

A. Baptist church. We had a fellow by the name of Charles Mendinhall was a preacher there for a long time and the Methodist Church it's name was Bethel. Had two churches there, two large churches.

Q. Do you remember any of the other churches, do you remember the Lutheran Churches for the Swedes?

A. We didn't have no Swedes or Lutheran Churches.

Q. Do you remember a Lutheran church in Swedetown?

Church A. Yeah, I guess they had, we had a Lutheran church in *Mutch* ~~Mutch~~ I know that whether or was I know they had it over in Swedetown but we didn't have it in Buxton.

Q. Okay, now what about a 7 Day Adventist church in Sharpe End, remember that?

A. I knew people that said there was Seven Days Adventist but we didn't have any. We didn't have nothing there but Baptist and Methodist. We had 2 Baptist churches there.

Q. Well what about in Sharpe End?

A. Well Sharpe End had everything it takes for gambling they had it.

Q. Yeah I've heard a lot of stories about Sharpe End, can you tell me a little bit about Sharpe

Crime A. They had everything it takes for gambling they had, even when it comes to fighting and fussing and killing one another, they done that too.

Q. Well tell me about it Bessie.

A. They done that too. I know one boy that lived next door to us, a fellow killed him over a nickel. That's what I told you Bailey Black, you know I told you. They killed him over a nickel, gambling.

Q. Who was the boy who was killed? What was his name?

A. John Coleman.

Q. John Coleman?

A. John Coleman.

Q. Who killed him Bessie?

A. Bailey Black.

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Q. Bailey Black? Over a nickel?

Crimes
A. They got to fussing over a nickel, they was gambling and they say he was killed about a nickel. He lived right next door to us, I was raised up with him.

Q. Was that common having gamblings and

right to
Pr
A. Got kind of bad there after so many people come from different places. When we first moved there you wasn't afraid of nothing cause you knew nearly everybody there but see as the town grew larger and it opened up more mines and then they sent Mr. Hale old man Bob Hale and another man went down Virginia and brought up a gang of people and went up to Baltimore and brought in people to work in the mines you know.

seems
from
Baltimore
Q. This Bob Hale, who was he?

A. He was a fellow that worked there, he worked in the mines.

Q. He was just a miner or was he a company man?

A. Yes he was a miner.

Q. He was a miner?

A. Yes.

Q. But the company sent him out to recruit?

A. The company sent him, yeah they sent him.

Q. To recruit people out of Virginia and Baltimore?

A. Bob Hale was Ruth's stepfather. Our Ruth, _____ Bob Hale was her father. Bob Hale was, you knew him didn't you _____. He used to go and bring people from Virginia and they went up to Baltimore. They done very well till they brought a gang in there from Baltimore. I'm tell you them was the dangerous people, we were scared to go outside at night.

Q. Really?

A. They'd just shoot, they was talking about shooting and cutting. They'd shoot and cut and knock you down, do anything, that gang they brought in there from Maryland, Baltimore?

Q. Well who were some of the people in that gang from Baltimore?

A. I didn't know ~~none~~ of them. They just brought them there to work in the mines you see. Buxton wanted that coal dug and they had to have people to do it. _____

Q. Did they live in a particular part of town, these people from Baltimore?

A. Well they had to live out on 14th Street cause all the rest of the houses were filled up there.

Q. They were filled up. Well how long did you live in Buxton? You moved there in 1901 Bessie, when did you move out?

A. Oh we came here, I forgot the year now that we came here to Des Moines, I guess

Q. Was it after World War I?

A. Yeah after World War I. Her father, my brother, her father was my brother, he was the first one that left our family and come to Des Moines and he come here and he used to lived here for quite a while and then he come back and then he talked to dad and then he got us, he's the one moved us up here. He brought us out of Buxton.

Q. To help you remember, did you go to school in Buxton?

A. Yeah, we had a nice school there. We even had a high school there.

Q. I know, It burned down though didn't it?

A. Yes it did, it burned down.

Q. Now Bessie, you went to school in ~~Buxton~~, what grades did you go to in Buxton?

A. I went up as high as the 8th grade there and then we started taking examinations for high school in the 8th grade and we moved then up here.

Q. Did you go to school up here?

A. I didn't go to school here.

Q. Okay so 8th grade. That doesn't help us much but we know that it was after World War I. When did the people from Maryland, Bessie and the reason I'm going back to this is the first time I've heard about people coming from Baltimore to Buxton, I want to know more about it.

A. They were there. They were bad too. Everybody was scared of them. Everybody was scared and people went in the house at night they didn't come out cause they was bad, they was talking about shooting and cutting, they didn't know when to stop.

Q. Well when did they, do you have any idea when they came to Buxton, the people from Maryland?

A. I don't know what year they came there cause I was getting kind of grown up then so I don't know.

Q. Okay you were, you were a little bit older then?

A. I know we wouldn't allowed to go around where they was cause they was too bad, they fighting and

Q. But you went to Buxton when you were about 13 years old right?

A. I was 13 years old.

Q. Were you 20 or just when?

A. When I come up here?

Q. No when these people from Baltimore came?

A. I don't know how old I was. I must have been around 16, 17 years old along about there. I imagine. I don't know how old I was then. I don't remember. I just remember

School

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A. them being bad I know that. We people that moved up there first we were scared. They didn't have no trouble with us cause we didn't bother them cause we were scared to even look at them hard. They were mean. The people from Virginia wasn't so bad but that bunch they brought in there from Baltimore I'm telling you they certainly was bad people.

Q. Were these all men from Baltimore or were they families?

A. Families.

Q. Families?

A. Families.

Q. Even the families, everybody in the family was mean?

A. Brought in families and brought in single men too I guess and they got to gambling out there where Ed Hutchinson was out there where they call Sharpe End out there. They started killing people out there.

Q. Now the places where they would gamble, I've heard that some people called them shacks, was that the name used around there?

A. I guess so, I never did go there.

Q. Never went out there?

A. No.

Q. Were you ever in Sharpes End?

A. We had a fellow, a man that belong to our church he lived right across from there his name was Harvey, John Harvey he had quite a family and that's as far as I got cause he had girls the same age me and so he lived across from there but no Sharpe End for me and I don't think my brothers ever bothered around there. Cause my brothers wasn't no gamblers you see and so they didn't bother around and they wasn't drinkers and so we had no drinkers in our family and we had no gamblers in our family so my brothers never bothered around.

Q. Bessie you say you were never out at Sharpe End, were you ever in Coopertown?

A. Yeah, I'd go to Coopertown cause I'd go down there to the drugstore.

Q. Okay, were you ever in either East or West Swedetown?

A. No I never was in Swedetown.

Q. You really didn't associate with the Swedes there huh? What about other white people there Bessie, did you know any white people very well in Buxton?

A. A few of them did move from Mutch over there. There wasn't just all colored people in Buxton, there were white people too. They all come from Mutch and around Beakon and Eddieville and Belle Plaine.

Q. Who were some of the white families you knew there?

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A. Yeah, the McBrides and Thomases, we went to school with them. We went to school with them in ~~Mitcha~~ they moved over there. That was a big family of them. Armstrong had a large family.

Q. I know.

A. Hope Armstrong himself was a colored man, his wife was a white woman and they had 12 children and they all grew up right there in Buxton and married. Lottie, the oldest one married John Baxter and then Stelle the next one, we had a doctor there by the name of Cobbs, Stelle married Cobbs and so Anne and _____ one of them married a fellow by the name of Ace Long and young Hope I don't think he ever got married. Ralph married, Ralph was the same age me. Ralph went to school and he married a girl from Utah and then he moved out there and they open a drugstore out there, Armstrongs had a large family.

Q. What ever happened to Hope Armstrong after Buxton closed down?

A. He lived there. He had a beautiful place up there, large acre, he died there.

Q. Oh he did?

A. Yeah, he died. Charlie died, This girl, that's Charlie Armstrong's daughter, she died here in Des Moines not too long ago, she lived here, Lawrence Carter used to go see Daisy all the time, he used to tell me he'd been over to Daisy's, Her name was Daisy and she lived here and she died here, this girl.

Q. Now when you were growing up I suppose you helped your mother around the house didn't you?

A. Oh yes,

Q. Had chores,

A. We had a large family too,

Q. Oh yes. I'd like to ask you some questions now about your mother now Bessie, what time would she get up in the morning?

A. Well see the train went out at 6:00.

Q. At 6:00?

A. Yeah, we had to get up early and get they breakfast and get them off. They had to get down to the train because the train left at 6:00 see they run a train to the mines,

Q. Which mines did your father work while in Buxton?

A. My father worked at #12.

Q. #12, just 12?

A. And then he went over to 14 and laid some tracks _____ there, but he worked at 12 as long as 12 was going,

Q. Did he do 16, or 18 or 19? In addition to 14, did he work 16?

A. Uh huh, he didn't work at 18.

continue

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Q. He didn't work at 18?

A. No.

Q. Nor 19?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Now your mother would get up about what time?

A. Well mother got up, see we had to get up at 4 and 5:00 cause we had to get

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