

Narrator's Name: Bessie Lewis
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A. Nine years old. I guess I was 9 the first time we went. We went back to Virginia and she taken me and my youngest brother because the other kids was all born in Virginia and we went back there. That's when I saw Virginia. I went back there, my mother went back there around _____. Charlottesville, Waynesboro all the different places where my dad used to work and where they built that Sheandoah railroad. He and Rev. Bates worked on it together and so I've seen all of that. So I have a cousin now that lives in Charlottesville, Virginia. She's been out here to visit me not too long ago and she's always hunting up people, writing and telling me about it.

Q. To make these connections, to keep them all straight in your mind, especially with material.

A. Reuben Gaines knows me.
*She told you things that you haven't heard from other interviews.

Q. Some. Do you remember, Bessie, do you remember among the white people, we know there were Swedish people down there, we also hear that there were Slovaks, do you remember any of those people?

A. No, the only ones I remember, we had a lot of Hungarians.

Q. Hungarians?

A. Yeah, they was around there. Those Slovisk people I know was some there but I don't remember.

Q. The Hungarians, what were some of their names, Bessie, do you remember some of the family names?

A. Well, we had one family by name of Lucus.

Q. Lucus.

A. Uh-huh, they were Hungarians and the Hungarians have been around, I've been around them quite a while. And then we had another one by the name of, a Swedish family, by the name of Mylanders.

Q. Now these Hungarians, were they immigrants from Hungary?

A. Yeah.

Q. They were?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. They came to Buxton to mine coal?

A. They came to Muchy first and from Muchy to Buxton.

Q. Remember any Italians?

A. Huh?

Q. Italians?

A. I don't know, I don't remember. I never had much to do with Italians, but with Swedish and Hungarians I had, I went to school with a lot of Swedish girls.

Q. We were talking earlier about midwives and such, Bessie and, what were some of the home remedies that your mother would use for sickness?

A. I don't believe I could tell you what they was 'cause I was too young to know then. I never knew what they was, I knew she was a midwife. I know many children that she delivered.

Q. Your mother was a midwife?

A. Uh-huh. You know Myrtle ____, Myrtle Wesley, well her brother Punch we call him, mother brought him in the world and Maurice Strong. I don't know how many mother didn't bring, she brought them in.

Q. How would she do that Bessie? Would she start...

A. She'd go to their house. Her or the doctor, I don't know what she done.

Q. Would she attend to the woman before birth, start looking in on her?

A. Yeah, she attended to them before the birth, before the birth of the child and attended to them after the birth until the child was around 2 weeks old. I know she used to go every morning to bathe this child. I remember when she'd go until the child 2 weeks old and the mother is able to do it. I know when she did it for Maurice Strong and for Punch Wesley, Myrtle's brother.

Q. Okay, do you have any idea what she got paid for that?

A. I don't know, I don't know whether she got paid or not. I couldn't say. I imagine she did but I don't know how much.

Q. Now you could tell that I....

A. You know in them days older people didn't tell the kids them kind of things.

Q. You can tell I have a little bit of a cold Bessie. When you were a kid and you had colds what did your mother do for them?

A. Colds?

Q. Uh-huh.

- A. Well she'd give us, we used to take camphorated oil then we had the sniff up mentholatum and different things like that. And for whooping cough, I had whooping cough once and I forgot what she give me and this child had the whooping cough, came over to our house right here in Des Moines when she was a little girl and she was out playing with my nephew and she started to cough and my mother said to her mother, said, "Well that child's got the whooping cough. Eubertha, she didn't know you had whooping cough." She said, "Well she's had a cold for two or three days." Mother said, "She's got a whooping cough, bring her in here." And they brought her in and mother got some lemons and different things she fixed for you when you had the whooping cough and then Walter took 'cause my mother was really what I call a doctor. She could really doctor on kids and things, she took care of her. She had whooping cough when she was a little girl. She said, "She's got the whooping cough," and the funny thing about it her mother didn't know she had it. Mother knew she had a cold but she didn't know she had the whooping cough, that's what wrong with her. Said, "Bring her in here," they brought her in, she was a little girl about like that.

- Q. Do you remember anything else, Bessie, about your mother ministering to the sick, especially in the family?

- A. I know when, I can't think of this woman's name now, I think her name was Bowles; she was sick and she sent for Mother. Mother went up there and come back and she didn't tell us this woman had a baby. We didn't know it for three or four days, and I saw her son named Robert and he said to me, says, "You know we got a little baby at our house?" I said, "You have?" He said, "Yes," say it's a little boy. So I told Mother, I said, "Robert said they had a little baby at their house." She said, "Yes they have, said the baby is about 4 or 5 days old now, and I said, "Well why didn't you tell us," said, "what do I want to tell you for, what are you gonna do about it?" She said, "there's no need of telling you the baby was there, it wasn't your baby," and so she had brought this baby, she brought this baby so she said it wasn't no need of telling you, so we used to always go around and after that whenever we see anybody we thought they was gone have a baby we'd tell her, 'Mother so-and-so gone to have a baby." She said, "Who told you?" And we'd tell here. I said, "Are you gone get it?" She said, "No, I'm not gonna get it." So that's the way it went, 'cause she was a great doctor.

- Q. Now you said a little while ago Bessie that Buxton was really a good place to live in your eyes.

- A. It was.

- Q. And why was that? We've mentioned that there was a lot of entertainment there in Buxton, what else was good about Buxton?

- A. Well I don't know, we had a lot of entertainment, we never got lonesome for nothing course when certain days come why they always had a place for it over in the park different places there. They even had, they even built a nice cemetery there in Buxton and we used to go over there and look at the tombstones. "Cause we thought they were pretty you know, we were kids, we used to go over there and so we had all kind of, you didn't have to go nowhere for entertainment 'cause you had it there and your lodges were there and your church was there and when they get

- A. (cont'd) ready for baptism, we had a big reservoir where they'd take you down and baptise you in this reservoir, if they didn't baptise you in the pool in church, and so we had everything.
- Q. Now you mentioned that people were treated fairly there in Buxton too. Did you find that you were treated much more fairly in Buxton than you were in Des Moines or Minneapolis or about the same, or what?
- A. Well I think we were, I think we were treated fair because we was just what I would call, I might be wrong, but what I might call, we were just a bunch of ignorant people taken out of a town into another town and he saw that we had everything to make us happy and to make the families happy.
- Q. Mr. Buxton did this?
- A. Fixed everything for you so I just call that a good thing.
- Q. Is it true that people would just check off at the store what they bought?
- A. Yes. The first of the month they had what they called ordering days, the 1st and 15th and what you got the first that was charged that following week and what you got the 15th was charged that following week and then every two weeks you get your statement and they took out for the groceries.
- Q. Would it be fair to say that people really didn't have to worry about money in Buxton?
- A. Didn't have to worry about money in Buxton.
- Q. We have seen pictures where the women had ostrich plumes at \$25 a piece which is, oh my goodness, a lot of money in those days.
- A. Yes, yes and you'd get things you know and they ordered things and just say for an instance that you want to get some furniture, well it wasn't no furniture there, it wouldn't no furniture store therre and they'd furnish whenever you wanted to get this furniture, maybe you'd been to Albia or Eddieville or Belle Plaine, someplace where they had these stores, all you had to do was just let them know it and they'd send and get that stuff for you. You didn't have to want for nothing. They'd send and get it. If you wanted a new davenport and you picked it out all you had to do just let them know it, they'd send and get it. Of course they paid for it and you paid them, they'd take it off.
- Q. So there was enough money in Buxton for most of the families that they could live without really worrying?
- A. Yes, without any worry they furnished up your house for you, and then just take off so much every two weeks. They wouldn't take it all in a great big lump sum, you know.
- Q. Did people dress up a lot in Buxton?
- A. Oh, they dressed like a fashion plate.

Q. Did you?

A. I remember one time, the first time I ever seen Eva Abby, she came to Buxton and it was muddy. And she said, "Oh my Lord, I've heard so much about this place I just come here to see what it look like and I came here in all this mud." So she had to buy some rubbers. so she bought her some rubbers and she stayed at our house and she said she never had been entertained as she was entertained there. Everything she ever wanted or heard of was right there.

Q. What did she mean by that Bessie? What did she actually do?

A. At that time she was living in Minneapolis and she came to Buxton.

Q. And she said Buxton was better than Minneapolis?

A. Well she said that she had everything she wanted, of course, she didn't have to work for it, you know down there. In the big city, you know, well you got a big family maybe the wife or somebody would help you to work, make some money, well down there the wife didn't do nothing but take care of the home, and they had everything too.

Q. What did she do during her visit to Buxton?

A. She come down there and stayed ten days at our house.

Q. Where did you take her, did you take her to dances?

A. Yeah, she went out to everything, went to the race tracks, she went to the park, she even went to the cemetery.

Q. What about this race track?

A. Huh?

Q. What about the race track?

A. Well they built a place for it. We used to have fairs, you know, like county fairs.

Q. Was it near Buxton, the race track?

A. It was in Buxton.

Q. Okay, where at, Bessie? Off of downtown?

A. Well it was out near the ball park.

Q. Out near the ball park, okay.

A. OUT near the ball park.

Q. And they had horse races out there, did they?

A. Yes, they had horse races, my father used to own a race horse.

Q. How often would they have horse races?

A. Every year, once a year, had a fair once a year. Just like you have it.

Q. For how long, Bessie?

A. A whole week.

Q. A whole week. So once a week they would have horse races there in Buxton. I imagine there was a lot of betting on those races.

A. Yes I guess it was. I don't know who was winning and who wasn't, but I know my dad had a race horse. He never drove it. Mother used to tell him all time: "You got somebody else to drive it, you let them get hurt, not you." He had somebody else drive his horse, he had a brother.

Q. Did your parents drink liquor?

A. My mother didn't, just a little bit now and then, my father didn't drink very much. We never had any hard drinkers in our family. Of course they all, I know when Dad used to keep it, I hadn't seen one of them jugs for a long time, a jug a half a gallon jug, and the top of it would be dark brown like this part would be brown and this part would be light. Dad used to keep that whisky in it, I know that.

Q. Did he ever make home brew?

A. We never did. But it was a family moved there from Oklahoma and that's the first time I ever heard of home brew. She used to make this home brew. She moved there, moved right back of us and she used to make home brew. It was some kind of beer, wasn't it?

Q. Yeah.

A. I think so.

Q. Well Bessie is there anything that I've missed that you want to tell me about Buxton? I really can't think of any more questions to ask you at this time. You have anything?

A. Yes, I tell you I spent a many pleasant day in Buxton. *I don't know whether she understood you when you asked her about friends. I don't know whether _____ the names 'cause she's told me about lots of people that was friends, I don't know whether she understood that.

Q. It's not that important. Bessie, we've heard that there were no foundations on most of the houses, they were set on logs, is that right? You recall your own home?

A. Not very many.

Q. Not many had foundations?

A. They had foundations.

Q. They did?

A. Some of them had basements.

Q. Okay, tell me about that, now that's the first time I've heard that.

A. Well them that had basements was families that dug the basements themselves.

Q. They dug out from underneath the house, huh? Were you in those basements?

A. Yeah, cause we had one.

Q. You had a basement?

A. We had a basement, we had a cave, you know a cave outside, you know, we had a cave.

Q. A storm cellar?

A. A well and a basement.

Q. Bessie was there a footing poured in this basement, did it have a concrete wall or a brick wall?

A. Dirt wall.

Q. Just a dirt wall?

A. Dad put some boards around it.

Q. Okay, well let me ask you more directly, Bessie, you know what archeologists do? You know they dig in the earth to see what people left behind? What do you think they're going to find? What has been left behind by people who once lived in Buxton?

A. Well I really don't know, it's kind of hard to say.

Q. There was a bottling works there, they made Coca Cola didn't they in Buxton?

A. Yeah.

Q. We never heard that they had a brewery, a beer brewery in Buxton, did they?

A. A brewery?

Q. Yeah, they never brewed beer in Buxton did they?

- A. Well they had one up at Sharp End, now I don't think they had...
- Q. Well that's right, that's home brew but we understand also that the bottling works they made a lot of, they made different flavored pop. Do you remember the bottling works where they made soda pop in Buxton.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What was it called, Buxton Bottling Works?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Who owned that Bessie, do you remember?
- A. I don't know. I think Armstrong owned it, no it was a fellow that run a drugstore there by the name of Alfred Thomas and McBrides, McBride and Thomas. I think they had that. They had a drugstore just before you got to Coppertown.
- Q. Okay, now Bessie some people have told us that there were different, distinct classes of people there in Buxton. Do you remember that being the case? Who were the prominent families there in Buxton? Were there prominent families that were sort of the upper-class of the town?
- A. I know what you mean.
- Q. Okay.
- A. Well I don't know whether they prized themselves, this old man Perkins I told you that built this hotel, he was quite a prominent fellow there.
- Q. Okay, what about the Lee family?
- A. Who?
- Q. Lee.
- A. Reed?
- Q. Lee, L-e-e.
- A. Yeah, there was quite a family of them. They had Daisy and quite a big family.
- Q. Okay the Perkins, can you think of anybody else?
- A. I know the Perkins and the Lees.
- Q. Were the Armstrongs kind of prominent people there in Buxton?
- A. They kind of stayed to themselves, see they was a mixed family. They kind of stayed, of course their girl as far as Hobe's concerned he was but she never went out much 'cause she always had the little baby around. She had children very fast and so there was always a lot of kids around so that kept the mother at home. But

A. (cont'd.) old man Hobe was into everything. And Charlie, Charlie was his oldest son then he had young Hobe. And young Hobe was just like, he was just like a fish out of the water. He'd dip in here and dip in there and dip in here and dip in there and he did that all his life. He never did marry nobody. And then Ralph and Art came along. Ralph, he married and went up to Utah so that kind of split that family up. But the Lees, we had a family there by the name of Pughes too, you know.

Q. Pughes?

A. Rob Pughes, one of the Lees married in the Pughes' family.

Q. There was a Brown family at the YMCA, right?

A. Yeah, that was W. A. Brown. And before Browns we had a family there by the name of Johnson that had the place that the Browns had. Johnson and she didn't like it. He liked it there but she didn't like it very well so they didn't stay too long. He was secretary, he was the first secretary of the Y we had, this fellow name Johnson. But she didn't like, so they didn't stay too long.

Q. Who's the man when you were there who was head of the Masonic Lodge, you remember?

A. Huh?

Q. The man who was the head of the Masonic Lodge.

A. Yes, it was a fellow by the name of Cory.

Q. Cory, remember his first name Bessie?

A. Wilson Cory.

Q. Wilson Cory?

A. Used to be a constable there too.

Q. Okay.

A. Wilson Cory, Wilson Cory had two sons, Robert and Talmadge. Wilson Cory and then Wilson Cory had a brother who was a very prominent barber, his name was Piet. They always called his self Pietette, his name was Peter Franklin, they always called his self Piet. He had a barber shop right across from Cooper's drugstore. Then he built himself a house, Cooper built a house right next to the drugstore and Cory moved in there. He was in there quite a while.

Q. Okay, by the way, is the offsprings that's Wilson Cory, are they still alive?

A. Huh?

Q. The offspring?

A. Yeah.

Q. The children of Wilson Cory, are they still alive, do you know?

A. *Are any of the Corys still alive?

Talmadge, the last one, he died not long ago. Then we had another family there by the name of Jones. I never did know Mrs. Jones. She died when I was quite young. But the girls was raised up there and they was all quite prominent. She had a girl by the name of Cornelia married a fellow by name of Peyton Reeds and they were quite prominent, and Fannie. Fannie's name was Graves and they were quite prominent there at that time.

Q. Do you remember a place in town called Gobblers Knob?

A. Yes.

Q. Where was that?

A. _____ on Gobblers Knob, that's where Annie Joe used to live, that's where Coop Wilson's father, mother lived and who else lived up there, Moores, John West Moore and Pete Moore, they all lived on Gobblers Knob. I knew nearly all families up there.

*What does that mean?

Q. We don't know.

A. They just name it that. I don't know what they named that place Gobblers Knob for. Baysoar, her folks lived there. Addison, they lived up there, Addisons lived up there on Gobblers Knob.