

Buxton Project: 424-2104  
 Narrator's Name: Lou Walraven  
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 Interviewer's Name: Joseph Hraba

- Q. Lou, will you again state for me your full name?
- A. Louis, L-o-u-i-s A. Walraven, W-a-l-r-a-v-e-n.
- Q. Okay, Lou, when were you born, what was the date?
- A. The 12th of December, 1888.
- Q. Where? *12th*
- A. Oskaloosa.
- Q. Oskaloosa, okay. Now, Lou I forget some of these questions so I'm gone just have to repeat, things that we've gone over and I know so be patient with me please. Now, how long did you stay in Oskaloosa?
- A. I was born in Oskaloosa and my step-father he was a *hauling* engineer for Jack Ramsey in #3 mine in Beakon and we moved from Oskaloosa to Beakon.
- Q. When was that Lou, do you remember when you moved to Beakon?
- A. I think
- Q. How old were you?
- A. I think I was between 10 and 12 years I guess.
- Q. And you moved to Beakon?
- A. And I went to work in the Garfield mines. Jack Ramsey was the superintendent. That was \_\_\_\_\_ in Oskaloosa.
- Q. When did you go to work Lou, how old were you?
- A. 12 years old.
- Q. 12 years old you went in the mine. What did you first do in the mines Lou?
- A. I was a trapper. Just open the doors for the mules and the drivers to pull the cars through.
- Q. How long did you do that Lou, how many years?
- A. I just couldn't tell the exact time because when the mines shut down there and
- Q. They did in Beakon, they shut down in Beakon?
- A. Yeah.

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Q. When was that, do you remember?

A. Well it was kind of a worked <sup>out</sup> off mine and they finished up there, my folks then moved to a little place south of Oskaloosa named, it was a little coal camp built by Johnny Price, he was from Oskaloosa. And there was only about 20 something odd houses there.

Q. What was the name of the place?

A. Eland.

Q. Eland, that's right.

A. E-l-a-n-d.

Q. How long did you reside there, Lou?

A. I stayed there until, but I didn't work in the mine. My step-father rented ground and I done the farming. had horses and cows and chickens whatever and he run the engines, the hausting engines.

Q. How big a farm was it?

A. Well it was rented and the different patches here and there that was available. And we raised everything, corn, beans, anything that was

Q. Did you plow by horse at that time or an oxen or what?

A. Yeah, horses.

Q. A team of two or how many?

A. We had three horses and one of them was a dappled grey horse and he was something to look at.

Q. A beautiful horse?

A. Oh just perfect. He was cut proud. He was just like a Shed Horse but he didn't have the ability to hold a mare. And they had a Cultivator there to plow the plow ground and the corn and every time they stopped the damn cultivator would fold up like a book. After you get that straighten out, the mare had she get horsey and this dappled horse he'd get all excited and they get the harness turned all upside down and the cultivator fold up and I had to work overtime.

Q. Now Lou, about how many years did you do that, help your stepdad?

A. I would say about from 13 till 18.

Q. Till 18? Now after that in Eland, did you then move directly to Buxton?

A. Well, yes.

Q. You did?

A. Well I got married in 1912.

Q. And how old were you when you got married Lou?

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- A. I was 19.
- Q. 19. Now I've forgotten your wife's name. Would you tell me?
- A. Bertha.
- Q. Bertha?
- A. Uh huh.
- Q. What was her maiden name Lou?
- A. Pierce.
- Q. Her father was this Johnny Pierce?
- A. No.
- Q. No?
- A. No. Her father was a law, a marshall or whatever they called it for the town of Buxton.
- Q. He was a marshall for the town of Buxton huh?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What was his name?
- A. Bill Pierce. *Family*
- Q. Bill Pierce, okay.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. And Bertha had been living in Buxton when you met her I suppose huh?
- A. Yes,
- Q. And you were living in Eland at the time that you met her right?
- A. Yeah, right.
- Q. How'd you come to met her Lou?
- A. Well I just don't recall how we met but I had a accident and had back trouble.
- Q. When this accident was?
- A. It happened in a place called Cricket. It was just a little mine oh about a mile from the Eland mine.
- Q. And this was while you were living on the farm in Eland you worked in the Cricket mine too?
- A. No, I never worked in the mine. I went to work in the Buxton mine, at 14 Buxton. It was just about a mile and a half from Cricket and the Cricket mine was named

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- A. after Bill Cricket. He was the sheriff in Oskaloosa \_\_\_\_\_. And my stepfather he got sick and died there in Cricket and so I had to take over the family and there was 6 of us.
- Q. Okay, your mother and who else Lou?
- A. Well I had 3 brothers and I adopted this sister from my stepfather \_\_\_\_\_ so that make six of us, of the kids.
- Q. Okay, were you the oldest Lou?
- A. I was the oldest, yeah.
- Q. So you had to go to work and you worked first at #14?
- A. 14.
- Q. But you were still living though on the place in Eland when you were working at 14?
- A. No, we were living at a place called Cricket.
- Q. Okay, you had since moved to Cricket?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. And your stepfather at that time was died while in Cricket?
- A. Yeah, he was hauling engineer.
- Q. Was it a mining accident, or what happened to him?
- A. Well he chewed tobacco a lot and he got I guess cancer or something of the sort and he was sent to Des Moines and was operated on but it was too bad, they sent him home and he didn't live very long after that.
- Q. Okay.
- A. And so I had to be the head of the family.
- Q. That's right. That's when you went to work. How old were you when you went to work in 14?
- A. In 14, oh I must have been 17.
- Q. About 17?
- A. About 17 or 18.
- Q. And you married at 19 right?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. You can't exactly remember how you met your wife?
- A. There were neighbors that we visited from Eland and Cricket and when I got disabled I was running a grocery store in Cricket and I got all my stuff from Oskaloosa and I had to haul, had a ford pickup and this Boerma her name was Rolston. She married

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A. George Rolsten. And she came up and my wife would go to Oskaloosa and get material and we just ~~sale~~ in the store, tools for the work in the mine and I had to go to Ottumwa to get them. Well my wife would go to these different places to get material for the store, she was taking care of me. Got a nurse maid and keep the store \_\_\_\_\_

\*How you been?

Pretty good for an old guy.

\*I brought you a late Christmas present over.

Thank you very much.

\*Christmas and birthday. Sorry to interrupt you.

Q. Don't worry. Okay, now when you married you moved into Buxton, didn't you, Lou?

A. No, when we first married

Q. Where'd you live?

A. This town of Cricket. It was just a small community town and the farm that this mine was built on was owned by two brothers by the name of Hatfield and ~~the middle~~ <sup>mile</sup> of the woods and they had a race horse that they exploited and raced in Oskaloosa. So from then on when the mines closed up there at Cricket then we moved to Buxton.

Q. What year was that when you moved to Buxton?

A. I don't know. Let me see, I was 19 when we moved to Buxton.

Q. You were 19, okay.

A. And they run trains out. Consolidated sold all the coal to the Chicago Northwestern Railroad and they run a train out of Belle Plaine, the Chicago Northwestern and they brought all the coal.

Q. Yeah, there was a spur line off of the main track, right, at Belle Plaine that came all the way to Buxton, didn't it?

A. Yeah, and it crossed the <sup>M? STL</sup> track at <sup>W</sup> right and then there's different mines along the way, White City, Durfy, Pershing and all the way clean down through Lavilla clean out to Buxton and Buckneal. Buckneal was just kind of a, well that was a mine. They had a few houses around the mine for officials and it was called the Consolidation Coal Company.

Q. Let me ask you some questions about Buxton, Lou. When did you move there? Do you remember the year in which you first moved to Buxton? Was it past 1900?

A. Yeah, I got married.

Q. When were you born again now Lou, 18 what?

A. 1888.

Q. 1888?

A. Yeah.

Q. And it would have been about 1907, does that sound right, when you moved to Buxton?

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*Approx.*

A. ~~Possibly~~, yeah.

Q. How long did you live there Lou when you moved?

A. Well I lived there till the miners when on strike there in 24, 1924 and instead of settling the strike they closed the mine up and that was the end of Buxton.

Q. First thing I want to know about Buxton, Lou, what were the mines there? Was 14 the first mine that was sank?

A. It was 14, there was no 13.

Q. No, 13 okay \_\_\_\_\_

A. There was a 14, and 16 and 17.

Q. It skipped the 15?

A. It skipped the 13.

Q. It skipped 13 but there was a 14. Was there a 15?

A. 14. 14 was the first mine that I worked in Buxton. And then I worked in 16 and 18 and 19.

Q. Was there a #15 mine?

A. Yeah.

Q. Was there a #17 mine?

A. Yeah.

Q. But you didn't work those mines?

A. And they run the miner's train to each one of these different places. They had 15 was east of the town of Buxton. And they all had several houses around the mine, around the shaft, around the surrounding country. It was scattered pretty well.

Q. Now was there lower mines than 12, was there a #10?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Where was that located?

A. It was south of the town of Buxton.

Q. What was the very first town, I mean not town but very first mine that people worked at out of Buxton?

A. 14.

Q. 14 was the first one, okay?

A. Yeah,

- Q. What were the numbers of the mines around Mutchakinok?
- A. Mutchakinok it was just 2 or 3 miles outside of Oskaloosa but I never worked there.
- Q. You never worked there?
- A. I had an uncle, my wife's brother he was an engineer too. Mutchakinok it worked out and they had a strike there and then Ben Buxton brought in a bunch of negroes from Virginia and \_\_\_\_\_ in Mutchakinok.
- Q. We've heard that that year was about 1888, does that sound? Well that was about, you were just being born at that time weren't you?
- A. I ~~wouldn't~~<sup>asn't</sup> very old.
- Q. Do you remember Mutchakinok at all?
- A. Barely, I couldn't.
- Q. What do you remember about Mutchakinok?
- A. I think Buxton mines I think started at 8.
- Q. At 8, okay.
- A. At 8. And when they brought in these bunch of niggers<sup>negroes</sup> from Virginia to break the strike at that mine.
- Q. Was that at 8?
- A. That was before the Buxton mines opened.
- Q. Before the Buxton mines?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay, what colors were the miner's trains? Were they different colors, the different trains or were they all the same color?
- A. They were all the same color.
- Q. What was that?
- A. They were red.
- Q. They were all red?
- A. The coaches were all red and they had one train go from Buxton to toward Pershing and I just don't remember, well #8 and it was close to these other little mines \_\_\_\_\_ different places like Durfy and each little mine had a name of its own.
- Q. Now Lou what part of Buxton did you live in?
- A. I lived right downtown, right down by the depot.

Q. Right by the depot. What street did you live on?

A. 1st Street, and the first house,

Q. That was a company house you lived in wasn't it?

A. Yeah, a company house.

Q. Do you recall what you paid in rent?

A. I think about \$8 a month.

Q. About \$8 a month. Did that change over the years?

A. No Oh sure, --- no elec. lights or nothing.

Q. What'd you have, a couple of bedrooms upstairs Lou?

A. 2 bedrooms.

Q. 2 bedrooms up. Did you have a living room and a dining room downstairs?

A. The kitchen and the dining room was all one room, and the living room was off to itself.

Q. Would you have a coal stove to heat <sup>the</sup> ~~place~~ what, the dining room or living room or where?

A. It was a pot bellied stove.

Q. Right.

A. A pot bellied stove. Carried it in and they had a little shed for you dump your coal.

Q. Did someone deliver coal to you?

A. Someone done what?

Q. Yeah, did people come deliver coal to the house or did you have to go?

A. Yeah, they delivered it.

Q. Who did that?

A. The company, the Consolidated Coal Company.

Q. What'd they have coal wagons come around?

A. Yeah, with a team of mules and

Q. And you said you'd store it in a shed out back huh?

A. Yeah.

Q. A coal shed.

Co house

etc

A. Back in the lot

Q. Was it right next to the outhouse or what?

A. A little outdoor privy.

Q. Most of the houses there, including your own, what did you have a coal shed and then the privy huh?

A. They were separate.

Q. They were separate buildings, okay, separate out buildings okay. Did you keep any livestock on the land, any chickens or?

A. Yeah, we had plenty chickens, kept <sup>5</sup> cows.

Q. You had cows right on the

A. mine I'm getting ahead of my story here because when I first went to work in the mines we didn't have any stock. My stepfather he didn't want me to go to work in the mine so he bought, rented land and he bought machinery to operate the mine but he ~~the~~ <sup>rented</sup> ground, patches of ground. He had maybe 6 or 8, 10 or 15. They were quite a ways. I had to get up at 5:00 in the morning, feed and curry the horses, harness them and then we would get breakfast and I'd do all the farming

Q. Back to Buxton, were you telling me you didn't have cows on your lot?

A. No.

Q. But you did have chickens Lou. Did you have any hogs out there?

A. Not at Buxton.

Q. Some people had hogs I understand huh?

A. Oh yes. mine but not directly in town

Q. Where would you buy your groceries? Did you buy them at the company store or where?

A. Yeah, in Buxton, yeah.

Q. Now there were other grocery markets weren't there?

A. Yeah.

Q. What were their names?

A. Armstrong.

Q. Hope Armstrong.

A. Hope Armstrong.

Q. What did he call that Lou?

A. Armstrong Butcher Shop.

- Q. The Butcher Shop okay, Armstrong Butcher Shop.
- A. But the company they had a big store,
- Q. Was it just called the company store by people or did it have a different name than that?
- A. Just the big store.
- Q. We heard that there was also Monroe Merchantile Store there. Do you remember that store?
- A. Anna's
- Q. Monroe Merchantile?
- A. Oh Monroe Merchantile yeah. Well they had little stores on the outside of the parameters of the Buxton itself.
- Q. They did?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. They had more than one store there?
- A. On the outside parameter of the town of Buxton.
- Q. Let me get this straight now Lou, there was more than one Monroe Merchantile Store?
- A. I don't know cause we never traded anyplace, only at the store.
- Q. At the company store?
- A. Company store.
- Q. And at Armstrong's on occasions huh?
- A. Armstrong was the butcher, meat, that was the only thing they done
- Q. Was groceries delivered to the door for you Lou?
- A. No, we had to go get it.
- Q. You had to go get them? Did you use the check off system?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Yeah. Do you remember Lou, was it typical for you to have quite a bit left over after you had bought you know, paid your rent and the necessities of life were taken care of.
- A. It was checked off.
- Q. Yeah, did you have some savings there? Were you able to save some money?

A. No.

Q. No?

A. No.

Q. I'm curious about that. Do you think that, you know the people you associate. I remember you know we talked when you were up at the hospital about your friends there. The people you knew pretty well Lou, was that true of them too, is that there just wasn't much saved down there in Buxton?

A. Very little.

Q. Very little?

A. Very little if anybody saved. You got paid, the working get the face and then        \$1.21 a ton, the       , the slack and the small stuff it was just discard and put out on the dump and get wet why it was down <sup>would</sup> and it was just sulfur.

Q. Well in all of those years, we think about 1907 until 1923        were you able to save much money?

A. No.

Q. No? Now didn't you run a little store or something?

A. Yeah.

Q. Where was that again Lou?

A. That was at Cricket.

Q. That was at Cricket again. When'd you start that up?

A. Oh when the mine shut down there, closed up for a while.

Q. When was that Lou?

A. Let's see. I was about 19 years of age and so there was 7 of us        the company and they shut the mine down and an uncle of mine got 7 of us fellows to rent the mine from a banker in Oskaloosa, the name of Frank. He owned the equipment. So we started a company of our own. They called it the Equality Coal Company.

Q. Equality Coal, when was this Lou?

A. Well I was only 19 years of age.

Q. You were at Buxton when you were 19 weren't you?

A. Well after we sold the mine out, after we got it to operating it filled up with water and it took about a month to dry out so you could get in and out of there and when we got it to going        operation we sold it to Bill Flynn was the bookkeeper in Buxton for \$20,000. Well a couple of them that dropped out, so we split that among 5 of us and that was the end of our operation in that mine but Bill Flynn, he was from Chicago. He was pretty well off and he married a girl in Buxton. Her name was Issacson and so after some time he opened up a slope.

A. He shut the shaft down and about a mile <sup>out or</sup> a mile and a half a shaft of Cricket, he sunk a slope and had a side track from Buxton and back tracked up to Durfy.

Q. Well did you work in 14 after you sold out of the Equality Mine or was working in 14 prior to that?

A. I worked 14 after that.

Q. After that, okay. Go head Lou, I'm sorry.

A. Well then I opened up this little store that was already there and I run it.

Q. What'd you sell at the store?

A. <sup>es</sup> Grocery.

Q. Groceries.

A. Groceries and tools.

Q. Tools?

A. Tools.

Q. Miner's tools?

A. Mining tools, yeah,

Q. Some of the miners sat around there and played cards in the <sup>kl</sup>light, didn't they, when they weren't working?

A. Yeah. Finally cut a little, well I owned two houses right close together. I took the partition out of one house and bought a pool table, put up a pool table and on weekends I'd run a card game. And sold weiners and candy and such as that. I never dealt in any liquor you know but I done pretty well at it.

Q. Could they bring their own liquor in if they, did you allow that, Lou?

A. Well yeah.

Q. Yeah?

A. Yeah, there was a lot of bootlegging going on.

Q. Oh yeah.

A. They had shacks all through the community. You could get beer and homemade whiskey anyplace.

Q. What was most of the homemade whiskey, was it corn mash or what?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. What did they call it?

A. Booze.

*Ch...*

- Q. Just booze, that's what you remember it as? Okay. Now how long did you own this pool hall and the store?
- A. Well I don't know. Let's see, 2 or 3 years. I don't remember just how long it was. When Flynn bought us out there I moved to Oskaloosa and I bought me another, me and another Swede fellow there, bought in a garage right behind the theater on the square in Oskaloosa and run that a while and me and the guy that I was partners with couldn't agree and fell out and my mother had moved and the kids to Peoria, Illinois and so I had to kind of look after her. I drove back and forth. They'd come see me when I run out of money I had to take care of them. But I always managed to get enough enough to buy what what ... need. I think I had one of the first Model T cars that was in that community.
- Q. In Buxton?
- A. Yeah. I bought it at Bussey.
- Q. Did quite a few people there in Buxton have automobiles?
- A. No.
- Q. No?
- A. I think there was probably about 3. Ben Buxton his self he had an automobile and he took from one mine to another.
- Q. Do you know what kind it was? Was it a steamer or gas
- A. It was one that you had to crank. One that was pretty fancy at that time. Had no top and had to get out and crank it. But at that time I think that was the only one in town and as time went by the ones that was most prosperous they'd buy an automobile of some kind. I worked myself up I had a buick and that's when we moved to Oskaloosa I had a garage and I would, I lived up over the garage and a doctors want to go out and see somebody out of town ...
- Q. You'd drive him huh? I'd drive myself out to
- A. I'd drive them doctors out.
- Q. You started your family in Buxton, didn't you?
- A. Huh?
- Q. Didn't you start a family in Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay, now I remember you had one boy?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay, and was he born in Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Where was he delivered?

- A. No, he wasn't born in Buxton. He was born in Huntsville, Missouri. I worked in a mine in Huntsville, Missouri.
- Q. And that was after you left Buxton, right?
- A. My mine just ain't clear on what time I went.
- Q. But you're certain that the boy was born down in Huntsville, Missouri, huh?
- A. Oh yeah.
- Q. Okay, not at Buxton. Who were your friends there in Buxton? Can you tell me their names? The people you knew around about.
- A. Well Ed Buckneal.
- Q. Ed Buckneal.
- A. He was the mine was away from the camp around the mine and Ed Buckneal was the foreman of 19 Buxton and so they named that Buckneal. That's oh probably a mile. Somebody named the camp of 19. Each mine had a camp of its own and they run trains to all of them.
- Q. Who were the other people you knew there?
- A. Oh I knew some of the big shots like Joggerson.
- Q. What do you mean big shots?
- A. Well the Buxton mines were owned by the Consolidation Coal Company.
- Q. And they were headquartered in Chicago huh?
- A. Well now the run mines in Glisby, Illinois. I worked in there. I worked in the mine Glisby a while. But you had to, in Illinois you had to have liscense to work at the face to dig coal. And I got there and I had to get a liscense \_\_\_\_\_ I worked there a week, drove mules. I didn't like that so I quit and went back to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q. Who was this Joggerson?
- A. He was the big shot of this superior coal company, in the mines at Glisby, Illinois.
- Q. Did you know Joggerson in Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Did he reside in Buxton?
- A. Yeah, no he didn't die.
- Q. No, reside. Did he live there?
- A. No.

- Q. Did he live in Buxton?
- A. No, he lived in Illinois. He wasn't there all the time.
- Q. Okay, what I was asking you is who else did you know in Buxton?
- A. Oh I knew
- Q. You knew Armstrong?
- A. Yeah, and Bill Pierce, he was the marshall and a fellow by the name of Dave Johnson, that I worked with. He was a Swede fellow. He's dead.
- Q. Did he live in Swedetown?
- A. He lived at \_\_\_\_\_ after the mines closed up there and I've been down there. My parents are buried out to Bethel Church, just a couple miles out of Buxton and from there I was just scattered everywhere, any place that I could make a buck. And the summertime

## Side 2

- A. When they closed up altogether there, no money and I went to Oskaloosa, I went to Peoria, Illinois and I started in \_\_\_\_\_ mine, started a grocery business in \_\_\_\_\_ And I lived there, oh I think about a year and then me and my uncle fell out so I packed up my little furniture that I had and moved back to Oskaloosa.
- Q. Did you belong to any of the lodges there in Buxton, Lou?
- A. I belonged to the Indians.
- Q. That's right and didn't the officers used to dress up like Indians at their meetings?
- A. Oh yeah, yeah.
- Q. Okay, did you go to church there in Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Which one did you attend?
- A. Well the colored people had the church of their own and the white people had this one church.
- Q. Do you remember what the name of the church is?
- A. A Christian Church.
- Q. A Christian Church, okay.
- A. And at this, in the downtown section of the stores and drugstores, Johnny Thomas run the drugstore and one of his boys had a drugstore here in Des Moines on 6 \_\_\_\_\_ but it just sit right close to the Jewish Community Center, just a block from the Jewish Community Center. Alf Thomas.

- Q. Did you ever hold any office in the union down at Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What were you, Lou?
- A. Not in Buxton. I was president to the local in Cricket for a couple of terms.
- Q. Did you ever meet John L. Lewis?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. You knew him?
- A. Yeah. I don't think he ever worked in the face. He was a mule driver.
- Q. He was?
- A. And he was president to the local at Quincy.
- Q. Blacks were brought in to break the strike there in Mutchakinok but didn't they ultimately join the union and they were also union miners?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. Were there any labor unrest in Buxton? Was there any problems with strike breaking or anything?
- A. No.
- Q. No?
- A. There's Cricket was right on the line you might say of Mahaskie and Monroe County and so they never bothered me. If one come and see what was going on and see if they could bring any charges against you cause Johnnie liquor and sold candy and Waners had it and Waners and made sandwiches and sold sandwiches and had a card game started on Saturday afternoon. We worked a half day on Saturdays, paid twice a month.
- Q. What were your wages, Lou? Do you remember?
- A. I think at that time it was \$2 and a few cents for mule drivers.
- Q. For a day?
- A. Yeah, a day.
- Q. Now on Saturday the game would start, huh, Saturday?
- A. Start the card game right after the pay day and it would run till Monday morning, when the mine opened up again.
- Q. Well how late into the night would you run a game?
- A. All night.

Q. All night?

A. All night.

Q. No fooling around there, and all day Sunday too?

A. Yeah, Saturday.

Q. Were there house limits on the stakes? Were they playing any poker there?

A. Oh there was, they just had a small lot \_\_\_\_\_ Buxton didn't have any water. They hauled their water in tanks.

Q. I'm talking about the card games at your place. Was there any limit to how much you could bet?

A. A nickel ante Always had a table full and a nickel ante and a nickel cut.

Q. Was it mainly poker games?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Now these were all miners playing?

A. Yeah.

Q. Miners working around Buxton. Were there any blacks that came into your place?

A. Oh yeah.

Q. So it was a mixed crowd, racially mixed?

A. Oh yeah.

Q. Did they gamble too \_\_\_\_\_

A. Foreigners, Frenchmen, Polacks, any nationality or whatever.

Q. They were all there huh?

A. They were all there and they was just like one big family.

Q. Who helped you with the place? You know if you're running a game from Saturday afternoon up until Monday morning, was your wife with you there too or just who?

A. No, my wife lived in the house right next to it but I done it all myself.

Q. You'd stay up that whole time huh Lou?

A. And I always had a full house. I built a table myself with a box underneath and had one of the fellows up there playing 10 Cut games, had a slot put the chips in. They'd buy chips and anybody open pocket, pot called and thing like that I got an extra cut. One of the fellows that you were playing do the cutting for you.

- Q. Did you ever have any trouble Lou, were there any arguments or fights?
- A. Never had a bit of trouble.
- Q. Not a bit of trouble?
- A. No. But they were trying to close me up there.
- Q. Who's they?
- A. The officers from Mahaskie County and the officers from Monroe County but Albia was so far away that they wouldn't send any officers out there and the ones from Mahaskie County, of course they had to come from Oskaloosa. So there was kind of border between the two counties to see which was gonna prosecute me if they caught anything illegal going on. But I was never bothered at all.
- Q. Now you were a miner all through those years in Buxton weren't you Lou, as well as having this business on the side?
- A. I worked at 14, I worked at 16, 18 and 19. I worked at four different mines.
- Q. Were there any real characters that you remember in Buxton that you'd like to tell me about?
- A. There was all kinds of them there. And there was hardly ever a pay day went by there wasn't a killing,
- Q. Oh really?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Where did those killings happen?
- A. At places where they were in these card games, outlined places and selling, made their own beer, their own whiskey and it was mostly all colored that done the killing. They didn't mix in their games and it was hardly ever a pay day went by that there wasn't killing.
- Q. Were there many killings involving both blacks and whites, where a black would kill a white?
- A. No mostly all black.
- Q. Black killing black huh?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay, now do you remember any murder cases there in Buxton, the names of the people?
- A. Well no, not really. I knew one. I worked with a big negro fellow there named, let's see what was his name, great big fellow and I was a trip rider and helped cage 8 this and you had two loaded cars was up higher when they empty and the empties would go off here to the left and \_\_\_\_\_ and one could \_\_\_\_\_ from one cage to the other, two cages, one for the and cross over \_\_\_\_\_. Once in a while we'd get a car in there what you call \_\_\_\_\_ cage and pull off the empty, the car on to the side. he was pulling this empty off \_\_\_\_\_ houses up there after you cut off a car and bring it down to him put on the cage \_\_\_\_\_ his name.

Q. You can't remember his name, huh?

A. Booker Stone.

Q. Booker Stone?

A. Yeah.

Q. We've heard that Ben Buxton also brought in some blacks from Baltimore, Maryland. Do you remember?

A. Mostly from Virginia.

Q. Mostly from Virginia huh. But after Virginia people came, we heard that then blacks came from Maryland. You don't remember that huh?

A. I wouldn't know where they came from. They brought them in there to break the strike.

Q. What percentage were blacks in Buxton? Were they 50%?

A. Well when Buxton first started up there, I expect it was 75% black.

Q. Okay, but that's when it first started up. Did that change over the years?

A. Yeah. It changed. The black people got organized, a union and you mentioned him a while ago there.

Q. John L. Lewis?

A. Armstrong.

Q. Armstrong?

A. They owned the butcher shop. I knew all of them.

Q. Now did the percentage of black people decrease or increase over the years?

A. It decreased.

Q. It decreased, more whites moved in?

A. Yeah.

Q. Or did more blacks move out?

A. More blacks moved out.

Q. Where'd they go? Do you have any idea where they went?

A. They just scattered out. A lot of them I think was from Alabama.

Q. What are the changes that occurred there in Buxton in the years that you lived there? Did the population start to decline after a while?

*Racial  
conf*

- A. No, each mine had a camp of its own. So the town of Buxton it never increased or decreased. It was just there all the time.
- Q. Were there any changes in Buxton over those years?
- A. In what way?
- Q. I don't know. Do you remember anything changing there?
- A. Nothing changed that I knew of. Of course they had a lot of accidents and John was the United Mine Workers lawyer, attorney. *Taken*
- Q. He was?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Did he live there in Buxton or where?
- A. No, he lived south of Albia. But he was in the state house here as an Attorney General at one time.
- Q. Attorney General. Now you said you knew John L. Lewis, Lou. Can you tell me, where'd you met him? How'd you know him?
- A. Well he worked in the mines at Lucas.
- Q. At Lucas?
- A. Yeah. And I don't think he ever worked at the face mine. He was president of the local.
- Q. He was president of the local and that's how he got started huh?
- A. Yeah and he got the mine of the mines there and he just had a big mouth.
- Q. He was quite a speaker wasn't he?
- A. Yeah. He had eyebrows got darn just like I got hair on my head, great big full face and eyebrows got darn stuck out that far. At one time when they had a strike he was, he wouldn't stop. The law tried to get him to stop the strike and he was him and the miner's union was fined \$19 million cause he wouldn't call off the strike.
- Q. He and Harry Truman used to bump heads a lot didn't they?
- A. I don't know but he was for the union all the way, all the time. *the strike*
- Q. Do you know how he got from being a president of the local in Iowa to being president of the entire Mine Workers Union?
- A. I didn't know but I don't know just how it came about. He got to be president of the whole United Mine Workers and before he died he had his daughter in there at the office. He moved to Washington. That was his headquarters.
- Q. Now after Buxton, you moved to Oskaloosa, right Lou?

A. Yeah, well I moved to Oskaloosa and I moved to Peoria and went in grocery business with my uncle there and I didn't stay there very long. Me and him fell out. And then I went back to Oskaloosa and when the mine shut down Frank Shafier was the banker there in Oskaloosa and that's when a bunch of fellows got together and started this Equality Coal Company mine.

Q. I see.

A. Sold it out to Bill Flynn. He was the bookkeeper for the Consolidation Coal Company.

Q. Lou, I have one last question of you. Were blacks union officers in the union in Buxton, miner's union.

A. In some parts of the mines, in some different. Each mine had a local of its own. In Buxton itself the president of the local was a colored fellow.

Q. Remember his name?

A. Let's see. I can't recall his name now.

Q. That's okay, we'll find it.

A. I knew him well at the time cause all.

Q. You had meetings, regular meetings?

A. Oh yeah.

Q. How often?

A. Every two weeks.

Q. Every two weeks?

A. Yeah.

Q. On what days?

A. I think it was on a first and second Friday.

Q. Where would you meet, Lou?

A.           

Q. There was a union hall there? Where was that, Lou? What part of town?

A. It was right in there where the company store was, depot.

Q. What'd they call it? Did they call it the union hall or was it know by some other name other than the union hall? Well that's it for the day, Lou.

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Audited

Buxton Project: 424-2104  
 Narrator's Name: Wairaven  
 Tape Number: 21B  
 Date of Interview: 1-17-81  
 Place of Interview: Des Moines, Iowa  
 Interviewer's Name: Joseph Hraba

A. I was driving an entry. Just had a straight 8 foot wide space to go into the mine and got so much a yard, by yardage, so much for the coal, so much to a family. We made pretty good money. I think, well at that time be little over a hundred dollars a piece. Every two weeks was pay day, twice a month. But the pay days run the 1st Saturday after the 5th and 20th. Eric Brown he was the bookkeeper and he was, had some kind of office here in Des Moines after the mines closed up. And his wife lived in Des Moines for a good many years and then she went back east. Her husband's daughter took her back east.

Q. Now was the pay there, <sup>more than</sup> did the Consolidated Coal Company pay miners ~~for~~ the pay scale was in surrounding areas? Was the pay around Buxton better than pay in some of the other mines here in Iowa?

A. Well yes and no because it varied, depending on the \_\_\_\_\_ of the family and they had a check off at the company store. They'd get anything charged to the company store but they took it out of their pay. They paid off in gold.

Q. But the pay itself, do you remember it being pretty <sup>good</sup> pay for mining at that time?

A. Depending on the place they were working at, what kind of conditions. Now <sup>kind of</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>between</sup> the coal was and how hard it ~~was~~. <sup>you worked</sup>

Q. I understand Lou that there was good size <sup>vein</sup> of coal in some of the mines in Buxton, is that right?

A. Yeah. Where I worked, the last place I worked we had 6 foot of \_\_\_\_\_ coal, 6 foot <sup>vein</sup> of coal. It was just clean

Q. Lou I want to double check again. When were you born? You were born in what, 1888?

A. 1888.

Q. And you were born, what was the name of the town again?

A. Oskaloosa.

Q. That's right, you were born in Oskaloosa. And then had moved to Beakon, right?

A. Right.

Q. And then to Cricket and then to Buxton, right? Okay. So what you're telling me Lou, in short is that the wages there in Buxton with the Consolidated Coal Company weren't necessarily better than wages in some of the other mining operations?

A. Well they were all unionized. Didn't vary very much.

Q. Do you recall, why were blacks brought into Buxton?

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- A. Well they were brought into Buxton when they had a coal strike in Virginia and they brought them in.
- Q. There was a coal strike in Virginia?
- A. Yeah, and they brought them in from Virginia to work in the mine as scags. They called it, it was close to Oskaloosa. It was about 4 miles south of Oskaloosa. It was called Mutchakinok.
- Q. Now where did you hear this about the strike in Virginia?
- A. I didn't know anything about it. I was never there.
- Q. Yeah, you heard that there was a strike in Virginia and these men were out of work? Who brought them in?
- A. Well, who brought them in, I don't know but Ben Buxton was the one that operated the mine and run the whole shebang.
- Q. Had you ever heard him authorizing Hope Armstrong to go get blacks from Virginia?
- A. No.
- Q. You don't remember anything like that?
- A. Hope Armstrong I think was on his own. He married a white woman.
- Q. But you don't remember him having any role whatsoever, that is Hope, in bringing the blacks out of Virginia?
- A. I don't think so.
- Q. Okay now they were brought into Mutchakinok, when was that?
- A. Well it was before my time. My uncle worked at #9 in Mutchakinok and I presume it must have been because it's been worked out years ago and
- Q. Before the turn of the centry huh?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. I presume that 9 was owned by Consolidated too.
- A. Yeah, I presume. It was called Mutchakinok. The first that I knew of the Consolidation Coal Company was at Buxton.
- Q. Now you say the blacks were brought in as scags?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Do you remember any turmoil at that time in Mutchakinok when blacks came in?
- A. I never heard of any.

- Q. Never heard of any? Do you remember blacks being employed in significant numbers in mining operations other than those owned by Consolidated in Mutchakinok and Buxton and Haydah?
- A. No.
- Q. Blacks were not as much present in Iowa mining around Buxton as they were there in Buxton?
- A. Very few.
- Q. Very few. But most of the Black miners in southern Iowa that you remember Lou were employed first in Mutchakinok and then around Buxton, right? Okay, and just a few in other mining operations, locally owned, etc.
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay, good. That's the kind of story we get from other people too. Although in other places they say there were a few blacks in mining.
- A. Well they kind of scattered from Mutchakinok and Buxton but mostly Buxton. Because they were accepted more in Buxton than they were at Mutchakinok. They were kind of isolated at Mutchakinok.
- Q. Do you remember black people having any trouble in the surrounding towns when they would leave Buxton, Lou?
- A. Only at Beakon.
- Q. Beakon, what happened?
- A. Well they wanted to go to Oskaloosa or some place like that and they didn't <sup>have</sup> show their face in the window on the train or get on the platform. There was a bunch there throwing rocks shooting at them or anything. They weren't allowed in Beakon at all.
- Q. That was pretty rough for black people?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. Why was that, Lou, why Beakon?
- A. Well it was a white town and didn't want no blacks in there.
- Q. What about towns like Lavilla and Albia?
- A. Albia is kind of a small mixture of Blacks. What they call negroes, they accept them but \_\_\_\_\_. There weren't too many blacks there.
- Q. Okay. Were blacks treated in towns like Albia or Oskaloosa and other towns badly as they were treated in Beakon?
- A. No. I remember one time me and another black fellow went to Oskaloosa to a circus and we was just wondering around the town and we went into a pool room, a pool hall and was gonna have a game of pool and we started playing a game and they come and stopped us and told us no colored in there wel have to get out

- Q. Would you say that'd be pretty typical of the towns around Buxton in those times?
- A. I don't know. I never visited very many places around there. Ottumwa it was just about like Oskaloosa. They didn't care to
- Q. They didn't care to have blacks in there huh? Okay. So would it be fair to say that in Buxton there, Blacks were treated a lot better than they were in the other towns around Buxton?
- A. Right.
- Q. Why was that Lou?
- A. Well they worked with them and mixed with them in a certain percentage \_\_\_\_\_ they just accept them as friends and I worked with several people. I remember one time I worked with a fellow name Booker Stone. He was a great big black fellow and me and him worked together. I was the trip rider and helped cage and he was the cager and me and him worked together fine. I got along.
- Q. Remember any of the doctors there in Buxton?
- A. There was Dr. London I believe was his name. That's the only colored doctor that I remember.
- Q. Did his mother teach school there in Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Minnie B. London?
- A. I don't know what her first name was.
- Q. Do you remember any crime or rough stuff there in Buxton?
- A. Every Saturday night somebody got killed.
- Q. What would happen, Lou?
- A. Well they get into a shack where you know there was no license place to drink and they had shacks all over the country around out there and get to shooting craps and somebody get mad and somebody get killed, every Saturday. Whites never mixed in that.
- Q. What did they call those houses where that went on?
- A. Shacks.
- Q. Shacks? Do you remember any prostitution there in Buxton?
- A. Well not too much.
- Q. Not too much, you don't remember that.
- A. I don't remember that.
- Q. Well we get certain stories of prostitutes there in Buxton.

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- A. Well I guess there was quite a bit of it done but then that's every place.
- Q. Where were the rough parts of town? Were they all over Buxton or were there certain places in Buxton?
- A. There was Sharpe End.
- Q. Sharpe End.
- A. And Coopertown. They was on different ends of Buxton. And the other little outside surrounding communities ~~shacks~~ *shacks together to drink, carouse*
- Q. You remember any, just a few more questions, Lou and I'll let you get to your *what have you* getting out of the hospital today. Remember the holiday celebrations? Do you remember the picnics that they had in Buxton?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Can you tell me a little bit about that on 4th of July?
- A. Well they had ball games and different things that they usually have at carnivals and drinking \_\_\_\_\_ do whatever they could. Well you might say it was back woods doers altogether, anything went, nobody bothered them, no law \_\_\_\_\_ anything or anybody.
- Q. Do you remember a lot of parades and band concerts on holidays?
- A. Oh yeah. But it'd be mostly all colored.
- Q. Colored again, huh? On holidays would it be fair to say that the whites went off on their own excursions and blacks on their own or was it mixed?
- A. Well partially. Some did and some didn't. It just depend on what they desired or who you wanted to correspond with or play with.
- Q. Did you ever go to dances, Lou?
- A. Oh yeah.
- Q. Where at?
- A. Lavilla, Albia and they had kitchen dances in different communities.
- Q. What do you mean kitchen dances, go to someone's house?
- A. Somebody's house. It was mostly all *cornucop* two steps.
- Q. Would food be provided and drinks at these dances at someone's house?
- A. No, they had to furnish their own drinks.
- Q. Bring it with you, okay, BYO huh? Okay. When you look back at this, what have you done now since, how long did you mine after you left Buxton?

- A. I mined out here for a while at Wolf Creek Mine.
- Q. Is that out by Ankney or where?
- A. Yeah out that way, south of town here. I worked there a while and my brother-in-law he got sick there and died and that was the last of that. I don't think it ever opened up again.
- Q. When did you get out of mining, Lou? Do you remember the year?
- A. 1940.
- Q. In 1940? You mined up to 1940. Was Wolf Creek the last place you mined?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. What did you do after that, Lou?
- A. Well I was custodian at the Jewish Community Center a year there and when the war was ending I went to Gudings and worked in the powder plant there and I worked there until the construction was over and I got laid off there and I worked in the waterworks in Burlington for some time and from there I went to, I bought a house trailer and moved to California. Went out there and worked in the shipyards out there for 4 years.
- Q. It was in 1950?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay.
- A. I worked in the shipyards until 64. I had to retire \_\_\_\_\_ had a steel hip joint in my right side. Of course that wasn't the cause of injury it was just a rupture I guess. I hit my backbone in Cricket and I was part operator of the mine at that time. Cricket mine had shut down and a fellow by the name of Frank Shafier, he was a banker in Oskaloosa and he got a bunch of us fellows when the mine shut down there to open it up and take a different route, different entries go to different localities of where the coal scene was bigger and I was one of the owners. I think there was 7 of us in there and we had employed, at one time I know 30 or 35 people and we had to have them insured and we had to have ourselves insured. But when I got my back broke I couldn't collect any damages because I was part owner.
- Q. Well then after you retired from the shipyards out in California, did you come back here to Iowa?
- A. No. I developed rheumatism and I couldn't walk very good and I moved up to the northern part of California to what they called Clear Lake, Clear Lake Island. The only clear water lake in California and I lived there until 71. My wife was kind of went off her rocker and my boy lives here.
- Q. Here in Des Moines?
- A. He lived here in Des Moines at that time. He wanted us to come out here where he could kind of look after us and we moved here and then him and his wife bought a house trailer and moved to Montezuma or Lake Ponderosa and they lived there until his wife got cancer and she died in 1973.

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Q. You've had really a very long life, Lou. As you look back on life there in Buxton as compared to these other places that you've lived, you know, what does your heart tells you? Was Buxton a good place to live, was it kind of kind of a mediocre place to lived or was it a bad place to have lived?

A. Which place?

Q. Buxton.

A. Well we had a pretty fair place to live. It was right close to the depot and a big fixing area and had close neighbors and we knew all the officials of the company. The Consolidation Coal Company was a subsidiary of the Superior Coal Company in Illinois.

Q. Would you say, Lou, would it be fair for you to say that Buxton was the best place you ever lived in?

A. Oh no.

Q. No?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. Well I've lived in a good many large places. Well I guess Des Moines is about as large a place I've lived. I lived in Chicago a while. I had a brother living there and I worked at the steel mill for a while and I run a grocery store in Peoria, Illinois and I sold that out and moved back to Oskaloosa and went into a garage business in Oskaloosa right behind \_\_\_\_\_, You ever hear of \_\_\_\_\_ in Oskaloosa? Well one of them run a pool hall and the other run a picture show. I was living right behind the picture show.

Q. One last thing Lou. Do you have any photographs or any other documents in your possession, at home that is, of Buxton, about Buxton?

A. Not of Buxton itself.

Q. Okay. We are of course interested in anything like that, take a look. Now your wife's maiden name again was what?

A. Hoopes. H-o-o-p-e-s.

Q. You had just the one son right Lou?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. He used to live here. He's 68 and he's worked for Boss Transfer Company here in Des Moines. He had a wreck and they sued him. It was a good many years ago, had a leg cut off. He's \_\_\_\_\_.

*handicapped too*