

INTERVIEW WITH HENRY OLSON

Talks about the old site of the village of Pomme de Terre.

Interviewed by George Shervey

Grant County Historical Society

(295--0 minutes)

Q. I am now about to interview Henry Olson. He was born and raised in Pomme de Terre township, not too far from the site of the village of Pomme de Terre. Ah, when were you born, Henry?

In 1894.

Q. And where were you born?

In the town of Pomme de Terre, section 25.

Q. Who were your neighbors?

Well, our neighbors at that time were the Bizons, and the same bunch that Glin explained there in Pomme de Terre and the Ludveens and the Stralends to the east and then the Harrisons, of course that was right across the river.

Q. Which church did you belong to?

First Lutheran, Ashby.

Q. What participation did you have in organizations like in the township or the school or county?

Well, ah, that wasn't too much of any as far as I was concerned.

Q. Who did you marry and where?

Rosella Sorenson and that was at the Thorston in Elbow Lake.

Q. Thorston was your pastor?

That's right.

Q. How much schooling did you have?

Oh, that ran for about 3 months a year for five, six years and then it was called quits. In them days we had to haul hay and get ready for spring's work and then when the snow came we went to school again, and tried to make the best of it.

Q. Did you have any special experiences in school that would be of special interest? Like playing tricks on the teacher or on each other?

We were all good ones.

Q. Where did you go to school?

Pomme de Terre.

Q. Do you remember the name of your first teacher?

Kellna.

Q. Who was the county superintendant when you attended school?

Rudolph Streming.

Q. Where in business besides farming?

A little jocking now and then.

Q. Any experience or exciting experience in your horse trading.

Well, there were ups and downs. Sometimes I would get into but... there was all good ones.

Q. What do you remember most clearly about the village of Pomme de Terre?

Well, I remember our folks took us to the Holland town of Pomme de Terre. That was for a debate. And it was the first oyster stew that we had ever tasted and I thought it was one of the greatest picnics that we'd ever been to. If you think they couldn't debate, they really debated in them days. And I really forget who done the debate or who won or anything like that.

Q. Do you remember or did you know any of the businessmen in Pomme de Terre village?

(351--5 minutes)

Well, the main one that I can remember best is Old Man Stubben, we called him at that time. He was blacksmith and if you had a toothache, of course you went to old man Stubben. He also could pull teeth at that time. Between him and Reverend Norman in Ashby that was about all the doctors we had to depend on in them days.

Q. Who was your first pastor?

Well, that was Reverend Norman.

Q. Do you remember the name of the post master?

Well, that was Timothy Heel in Pomme de Terre, was the post master at that time. And that was before the 19, about the 1900's. And then of course we ended up with a mailman and if I am right I believe Gilbert Paulson was our mailman. He had a team of mules and I can also remember the feed bags he had on. He had feed bags that is, that they could put oats in them and he could feed them on the trip around his route.

Q. Do you remember the names of any other businessmen there?

Well we had the Schaeffers and that is quite a feed mill. I can't remember the time that they plowed but the time they were grinding feed, oats, things like that. Why that was Schaeffer. The only one I can really remember back in them days the first one I can remember was Pete Branvold was working for the Schaeffers at that time. He used to grind feed there. It finally ended up they were grinding every Saturday towards the last as I can recollect.

Q. Was the hotel in operation after you can remember?

I can't remember the hotel being in operation.

Q. How about the saloons, were they in...

The saloons, I can't remember saloons.

Q. Hotel or livery stable?

Well, at that time I can just barely remember but as far as my memory, the livery barn that was before my days again.

Q. How far did people come from that brought wheat or grain to be ground at the mill? Do you have any idea?

I have no idea about that.

Q. Do you know what happened to the different buildings as they disappeared from the scene?

Well, if I remember right I think it was 1890, well that's what I heard, in 1898 my folks, that is a dugout we lived in and my sister Lena and I were born in that dugout and then in the winter time we moved a house on Pomme de Terre down the river bottom with horses at that time. So we ended up with a house then.

Q. Oh, did your folks get that house from Pomme de Terre?

That's right. They bought it from Pomme de Terre. Wherever, who ever they bought it from that I haven't got.

Q. Would you have any idea how many residents were in the village?

Well from the time I started school all that was really there was the blacksmith shop and the post office and the dance hall or debate hall, whatever you may call it. That is where they had their gathering.

(412--10 minutes)

And of course in those days Pomme de Terre, there was a lot of inhabitants in Pomme de Terre at that time. There was every quarter was settled and a little more than that.

Q. Do you know what become of some of the other buildings?

Well the dance hall was torn down and then Alfred Anderson in nineteen hundred and something like ten, he built himself a house out of the dance hall. That would be on the Alvin Moe now owns. Well then if I recollect why the pool hall that's in Ashby at this time (that is the old one up against the theater now) that also come from Pomme de Terre at that time.

Q. How about that house that Olin Thompson now lives in?

That one I understand is the house west of Pomme de Terre a half a mile. Olin Thompson spent a few years there after he got married. That also come from Pomme de Terre. And that's still standing and in not too good a shape anymore.

Q. What become of the mill?

The mill that just kind of decayed like everything else. They just quit running it and then they tore the damn out and of course that took the water and I'm not too sure if they ever took the wheel out of there or what they did. That would be run by water power of course in them days.

Q. Did they have a grain elevator in the village of Pomme de Terre?

They had no grain elevator in the village of Pomme de Terre. There was some storage there in the mill which wasn't, I can't remember they had any grain elevator there. Everything was sacked. That's the way they done their grinding. They had so much sacked and...

Q. Are any of the decendents of the former residents of the village of Pomme de Terre still living as far as you know?

Well, of course, that would be the offsprings. That would something like the Schaeffers, like Alfred and Clara and Alice and then we'll slip Wyman in there and his sisters there. And then we'll have to go to Steinart Thompson, I don't know of any there. Then we'll go to Olof Sorenson and that is a lot of them. In fact I'm married to one of Sorensens so that's Rosella that comes in there. And then we have the Monsons. We used to think a lot of Monsons. They were a big dairy men. And I mean big dairy men. Clifford at this time is living on the old Cap Burns place and I think they were about the only ones that had what we called education at that time. And they, I gotta admit bought a lot of cattle and this and that and when it come to law, why they knew more about law, him and his wife than I think anyone in Pomme de Terre township. I think Clifford lived on the...

Q. What do you know about Clifford Munson's folks or did you know them?

Yes, I knew Clifford Munson's folks, both his mother and his day way back in 1900. They were great cattlemen and when it come to education why they both had it.

(471--15 minutes)

Q. And they were good people?

They were wonderful people.

Q. Do you, are there others that you can remember?

Well, of course, the oldest ones that we got now would be Tena Hagen and Mrs. Brenvold and we have Olive Briggs and then there is a lot of Solbies still living. Where was I at? And then of course there was the Olsons. They went by Oliver Olson at that time. Liverson they come from Norway at that time.

My brother Lynn is still on the home place there. That would be down along the river. They call it the Harrison bridge there. And then there's the rest of them are up around Thief River Falls and scattered here and there.

Q. And you Henry is also on them aren't you?

Ya. And then myself, Henry, and then we have Delina of California, and Alvin of Alexandria, Oscar of Ashby and Elsie of Ashby. That takes care of the Olsons on that side.

Q. And that is the end of this interview.

(497--18 minutes)