

INTERVIEW WITH MR. FRED BURNS
Talks about Pomme de Terre Fort and Village
Interviewed by George Shervey
Grant County Historical Society

(251--0 minutes)

Q. 1972. My name is George Shervey. I represent the Grant County Historical Society. I am about to interview Fred Burns who now lives at Kensington, Minnesota. He was born and raised near the village of Pomme de Terre and also the fort. Where were you born and what date?

I was born three miles west of Ashby in 1886.

Q. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

5 brothers and 2 sisters.

Q. And what were their names?

Martin and Dudley and myself and Jay and Archie and Ralph.

Q. How many are still living and where do they live?

There is three of us left. Archie lives at Pelican Rapids. And Ralph lives at Santero, Wisconsin.

Q. When did your parents come to Minnesota or Grant County?

Well, I understand they came here in '52.

Q. To Grant County? Where did they farm if they were farmers or where were they in business if they were in business?

They were farmers.

Q. Can you remember who your neighbors were?

Well, Joe Vogel lived on the north of us, and Jens Tollefson to the East. And John Larson, a bachelor, lived right south of our place.

Q. Do you have any information on your grandparents, where they were born and where they came from?

They were born in Toronto, Canada on my father's side and my mother's folks came from Nova Scotia.

Q. What can you tell us about your experiences of the early times?

Well, there was a lot of bad blizzards. I can remember one time that is many weeks we couldn't see out because the snow drifted around the house so high that we couldn't see over it.

Q. What about the Indians? What do you remember hearing about the Indians?

Well, Mother taught the first school in the town of Main, and there was Indian children that went to her school.

Q. Ah, what about grasshoppers?

They took my folks crop for two years. The first year they flew in and ate up the crops and laid their eggs, and they hatched. And the next year they took the crop and flew out. And they said that when they came you could hardly see the sun they were so thick.

Q. Ah, what church did you go to?

The Presbyterian. And Reverend Goddard, from Elbow Lake, came to Pomme de Terre and preached at the old school house. That was our first church.

Q. Who did you marry?

Mabel Bestial.

Q. How many childred did you have? (Two) Are they still living? (Just the one.) And who is she? (Mrs. Johnny Connesgieser) (Tell him who the other one was) Do you remember who your attendents were? (Kate and Arthur Kallen) How much schooling did you Have? (Very little) Where did you go to school?

District Number 7, right south, a mile south of our home place. May Prestness, wait a minute.

Q. Who was your teacher?

May Prestness

Q. Do you remember the boys playing any tricks on the teacher or on each other? Or on the girls? (Lot's of 'em) Do you remember any real exciting happening?

(311--5 minutes)

Well, I can tell you one thing. Once they had a painter there painting the school house on the inside. And my cousin and I got there before the teacher came and there was a man hole there and we crawled up into the attic. Well, I crawled down but my cousin didn't make it before the teacher came in and she pulled the ladder away and he had to stay there until dinner time.

Q. What do you remember about the old fort Pomme de Terre?

Well, my first recollections of any thing there was just a dining room was left. And I played in that alot of times. But the other, the stockade and that was gone.

Q. Can you tell me about the cemetary where your grandparents were buried?

Well, there was no cemetary here at all when they died and they were buried there right on the farm at the edge of the woods, north of the buildings.

Q. There is an old barn on the old site and I understand that you knew where the lumber came from?

Well, that lumber was all hauled from St. Cloud.

Q. Who built that barn?

Ray Bixley.

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

Well, I remember when the old mill run there grinding feed. Frank Schaeffer at that time owned it. There was a store right north of the bridge there, at that time and there was a dance hall upstairs. That's where we used to dance. Where Olin Thompson's house is now, there was an old couple lived there by the name of Stubbe. And Jake Heel lived on the south side of the river there and farmed. And then the Schaeffers was there. Albert was on the south side of the river and Frank was on the east side of the river, northeast.

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

I think I knew most of them at that time there. There was Frank Schaeffer, he had the mill. And I can't remember the storekeepers name. Albert Schaeffers and them they were always farmers, and big farmers on the other side of the river.

Q. Remember who the blacksmiths were?

No, I do not remember who the blacksmiths were.

Q. Do you remember who the post master was?

No, I don't know that either.

Q. How many residences would you say were located in the village of Pomme de Terre?

Oh, I would say that there were about 8 residences there then.

Q. Are any of the descendants still living as far as you know?

Alfred Schaeffer and Mrs. Ralph Berg were descendants there. And the Jake Heel boys they died in Canada. I know that.

Q. Do you know if there are any of the descendants now living? Of the businessmen there?

Well just, as businessment goes, Elaine and Francis and Wyman Schaeffer...

End of interview

(371--10 minutes)