

INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED SCHAEFFER
TALKS ABOUT POMME DE TERRE VILLAGE & FORT
INTERVIEWED BY GEORGE SHERVEY
GRANT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(562--0 minutes)

Q. My name is George Shervey. I am about to interview Mr. Alfred Schaeffer, an early pioneer of Grant County and Pomme de Terre township. When were you born and where were you born?

I was born in May in 1895 in Pomme de Terre township, three miles southwest of old Pomme de Terre, the old Pomme de Terre village.

Q. Who were your parents and who were your brothers and sisters?

Well, my parents were Mr. & Mrs. Albert Schaeffer. And I had 3 sisters and 2, 1 brother. Freeman Schaeffer was my brother and then Mrs. Clara, Mrs. Ralph Burns, my oldest sister and Mrs. George Everson and it was Eva and then Alice is Mrs. Sigrud Pearson, and Freeman Schaeffer was my brother.

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

Well, my father was born in Minnesota at Pine Island that's in Goodhue County in Minnesota and he came to Grant County in 1872. And my mother was born in Canada and they came to Minnesota in 1878.

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

Well, my father farmed three miles southwest of Pomme de Terre. He bought a farm there in 1888. And my mother's folks, they immigrated to Fertile, Minnesota. And they were farmers up there and lived on the farm up there until my mother was married to my dad, in 1872, 1892 I should say.

Q. Can you remember who your neighbors were as a youngster?

Well, I can remember quite a few of them from down around old Pomme de Terre there and right around home. There was Sam Torgeson and there was the Heels and Heels and then there was the Harrisons and the Olsons, Oliver Olsons and the Thompsons and the Browns, Joe Brown's dad, old Henry Brown that lived down there in Pomme de Terre and then it was the Weisners and Chet Burnes they lived up east of Pomme de Terre there.

(621--5 minutes)

And there was the Martinsons and Monsons and Nels Olsons and Jacob Harber and then the Foxes lived right north of, a half a mile north of my home place there. And there is Loggie Johnson and John Johnson. Oh there was several more but I don't remember all of them.

Q. What church did you belong to?

Well, I belonged to the Presbyterian church when I was younger at home. The folks went to the Presbyterian Church. At first we went to church in the

old Pomme de Terre schoolhouse. They had services down there, different denominations had services down there and then when I was married why then I joined the Christ Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

Q. Who did you marry?

I married Margaret Wallers, a daughter of Mr. & Mrs. William Wallers. They lived over by Ashby. And then we were married in 1920.

Q. And where were you married?

We were married by Reverend Gross in the church that was down in Pomme de Terre just a half a mile east of my home.

Q. What participation did you have in the different boards of the county like county, township, school, church and so forth?

Well I was on the school board in the home district out in Pomme de Terre township for three years. Well, I was on the church board for 33 years and I was on the town board for 18 years and the creamery board for 18 years.

Q. How many children did you have and where do they live now?

Well we have three daughters and the oldest daughter, Delight, is married to George Haber, they lived a half a mile north of the old haome farm north of Elbow Lake here. And then Deloris she married Mervin Marsh, he's at Sauk Rapids, Minnesota. And then Judy, the youngest daughter, she married a pastor, Reverend Clark Giese, and they're at Wagner, South Dakota at the present time. And that's it.

Q. How much schooling did you have?

Well, I never had any more than 8th grade. Went through the 8th grade.

Q. And where did you go to school?

Well I started school down in old Pomme de Terre. And then in 1900 Mrs. Hinckley, Mrs. Amos Hinckley was my first teacher.

(682--10 minutes)

And then Arthur Pennock was one of my teachers and then a Miss Martel was my third teacher down there. And then after we had the school out in the country, a half a mile east of my home out here, then Mrs. Henry Martinson was the first teacher there. She taught three years. And Mrs. Lars Mohagen taught out there for a couple of years. And then there were other teachers in between of course.

Q. Do you have any information on your grandparents?

Yes I have, my grandfather and grandmother on my father's side the date they came to Pomme de Terre was a hundred years ago. In 1872. And my grandfather was August Schaeffer, he was born in Saxon, Germany in 1830

and his wife was born in Wittenburg, Germany in 1831. And they came to America in 1851 and they settled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And they lived there for about 10 years. Then in 1861 they moved to Pine Island in Goodhue County in Minnesota. That's by the way where my father was born. And my grandfather bought half interest in a flour mill there. When he sold his interest there in 1867, he moved to Sauk Center where he worked in the flour mill for a while until 1872. In 1871 he went down to Pomme de Terre looking for land. He wanted to get land of his own. Being a miller and the water being the only power they had in those days, see he saw the large quantity of water up in the old mill pond and that's all he saw was the river feeding out of it and a good chance of plenty of fall so that you'd have a chance of building a waterfall. So in 1872, he came back up to Pomme de Terre and he bought 400 acres of land. And in 1873 he built a mill race and the mill. He also bought a piece of land on the east side of the river in section 24.

(742--15 minutes)

That is where the mill and the flour mill and the elevator were built. They built the elevator and flour mill in 1873, and the lumber was hauled from Sauk Center. Sauk Center being the only, that is the end of the railroad. And that was hauled up to Pomme de Terre with oxen and horses. During the next few years, the Milwaukee and Great Northern Railroads, surveyed through Pomme de Terre and everyone had an idea that they would soon have a railroad. But the Great Northern decided to build farther east of Ashby. At the same time the Soo Line surveyed through Elbow Lake. And started to build through there so that the Milwaukee left entirely and Pomme de Terre was left without a railroad. In the winter of 1874 and 1875, my grandfather and the boys and his sons hauled flour by oxen to Breckenridge, and loaded it onto a flatboat in the spring and floated the flour down to Winnipeg, Canada. The farmers for miles around Pomme de Terre would haul wheat to Pomme de Terre to the mill to have their flour ground. And some of them living quite a ways out would take their whole years supply at one trip. The Pomme de Terre grew and had 2 stores and 2 saloons, a blacksmith shop and a livery barn and a hotel and a small overnight place, and a Post Office. And not getting a railroad and the mill burned down in 1888, and the town just started to deteriorate. No rail service so it soon died out. The only one of the first buildings left is the brick schoolhouse. My father was 11 years old when they came to Pomme de Terre. He went to school there. I also started school there in 1900. My grandfather and grandmother had 5 children, 6 children. Four boys and two girls.

(800--20 minutes)

Clara, the oldest one, married Williams. They moved out to Tacoma, Washington and she died out there quite a few years ago. And they had four and Mary she was the 2nd daughter she went out to Tacoma, Washington also. And they had the four boys. It was Herman and Albert and Frank and the oldest boy, died when he was only 32 years old and I don't remember what year he died in. But he was only 32 years old when he died. My grandfather died in 1898 at Pomme de Terre and my grandmother died at Pomme de Terre in 1904. I have told you now and we have talked about what I have taken from records that my grandfather had written down and also some that my father had written down and then in hearing my father and Albert and Herman, my uncles, talking about different times they would be talking about old Pomme de Terre and their home and so on. So far as the exact

location of the buildings and so on I don't remember so well. And the fort I don't remember too much about that because I can remember some logs sticking up there that is a mile and a quarter, a mile and a half east of Pomme de Terre. But just exactly where the fort was I don't remember. But it was north and a little west of the Clifford Monson house now.

Q. And this is the end of this interview.

(850--19 minutes)