

INTERVIEW WITH VICTOR SETTERLAND
By George Shervey
Curator--Grant Co. Historical Society

Q: Today is September 27. My name is George Shervey. I am the curator at the Grant County Historical Society. The year is 1973. I am about to interview Mr. Victor Setterland of Barrett who was born and has lived all of his life on this farm.

Q: Victor, where were you born and what date were you born?

The third of February 18 hundred eighty-eight.

Q: And where?

In a dugout in Erdahl Township.

Q: Where did your parents come to Minnesota or Grant County?

They come to Grant County in the spring of eighteen hundred eighty-four.

Q: Did they tell you why they did leave Europe to come here to live?

Well, they thought they could make a better living for the family because they had seven kids already.

Q: Did they come by steam or sail boat?

They come by steamboat but they come two different times. Father come in the spring and he worked in North Dakota and bought tickets in North Dakota and come back to Minnesota to find a place to live and the family come in the fall. Mother and the seven kids come in the fall. How they made it across-- could keep those kids together--seven of 'em. The youngest was two years-- able to walk. That was Vernard, went by the name of Benny.

Q: How did they come to Grant County? Did they come by railroad, wagons, or horses?

Well, they lived in Douglas County see, and they borrowed team of horses, or yolk of oxen--a wagon to come out here and mother and father--they borrowed a team of horses and went out to where the dugout was made to pick out the land to see where it look on and mother saw the first train that went through on the railroad--was then the Northern Pacific Railroad that was a freight train-- not a passenger train--that was a freight train.

Q: You mean that this is where the Soo line now is?

That is where--where the Soo Line now is.

Q: Do you know who their neighbors were when they first came here? Do you remember?

Well, they went to get acquainted. They had two neighbors--Christopher Betland and John Betland, his brother. Christopher Betland was a soldier.

Q: Yes, he was a Civil War Veteran.

Ya.

Q: Ya. I'm going to ask you about some of your experiences of your early life like blizzards or grasshoppers or stuff like that. Did you have any particular interesting to say about that?

Well, all I knew was that father had a little crop in and they had hail. This was before, after the grasshopper time see. And they were entirely wiped out. And Father went to a neighbor John Betland, who was well to do. He come here ten years before father, homesteaded in section six where Martin Johnson now lives. And he asked what he could do to get seed oats for next spring. Well old John Betland said (John was his name), "You can get seed oats from me and you pay when you get crop. You don't have to pay it" Father said that was--that was an awfully good offer. John Betland he was a Norwegian and awful head strong man but he had common sense. He said "You pay me when you get crop--You don't have to pay me 'til then". Well father said that was great help so this John Betland in person he went broke toward the last.

Q: Is that so?

(5 min.---058)

Because after his wife died it seemed he died with her physically. Father kept him here just on account he gave him...He stayed here free several times for many years. He'd tell about his adventures. He drove with his oxen from Kenyon, Minnesota all the way to the homestead here in section six. And he had a cow, two oxen, eight sheep and he lost one on the way and he walked behind them all the way. All the way he walked behind those sheep and kept them together and when he come to cross the Chippewa River here in Elk Lake Township section thirty-six the water was too high so he couldn't cross it. Because the current would carry the sheep off. The sheep would swim. So he had to go up to section one in Elk Lake where the Meeker Mill was established to get across and got lost on directions so he camped up here where...the last night he didn't know what to do. He was lost entirely. He was on the wrong track. And he had two boys with him, Andrew was the yougest and Swen was the oldest. And Swen took care of Edward, he was the baby and Mrs. Sigmanna, his wife drove the oxen and John walked behind. Well, I suppose they had a slough there. And they camped where Hutchingson lives now up here. They camped there the last night and got some food together and fried some more pork, I suppose and pancakes and had something to eat. And milked the cow what little the cow milked and she had for the kids and put them to bed and during the night he heard the dog bark and he said that must be his brother Christopher, he got here eighteen-sixty-seven. Then he was right. Then he went to sleep and the next morning he got to his brothers and that was a difference of only one to two miles. That was the history he got together and I know that John Betland--he was well to do and he had a storm--a severe storm--a snow storm. I don't know what year it was but he lost some sheep. Well, my folks were poor and never had anything and they died poor and mother asked if she could shaer those dead sheep for wool. "Well you sure can". She sheered the dead sheep to get wool to card and spin and make socks and mittens for the family. That's how that comes and that takes us into another history of the family and father

you know he had seven kids and nothing. He bought a yoke of oxen and I heard of 'em but I never remember them. And he sold the oxen for three cents a pound or three and one half. They were fat and they weighed four thousand four hundred pounds. That's two ton and four hundred pounds.

Q: For the team, you mean?

For the two. And one was black and one was reddish, I was told. But the hard center piece of his ox yoke--the hardware in the middle of the yoke--that clamp and the ring is in the family yet but it is with a nephew.-- Joe. I gave it to a nephew and I gave the yoke away. He was and--and he bought the team of horses they were a buggy team--they were both spavined but they done a lot of work. And it was a neighbor named Edward Nash that owned the team and father wanted to buy one then and that was the first team that I plowed with and I was eight years old at the time and we raised --we had those mares and raised lots of colts--we had ancestors from those mares. And then he bought a yoke of white oxen. They were smaller and cheaper. And what I remember of the oxen working on this farm was they had the two oxen and the two mares hitched on a breaking plow and Lord-- I got two of the cleaveses of the originals on the plow. I got that yet. And I managed to save out antiques & stuff out of the family so I managed to have the candle sticks that mother had in her trunk from Sweden. Her scissor and two frying pans they had made in Sweden when they had--when they started housekeeping. And the coffee pot. And Father's first watch he ever owned in his life. I got that yet and mothers scissors yet. So that's quite a collection from the family.

(136 - 10 minutes)

Q: I would like to take a picture of those frying pans and those utensils if you have them.

Ya. I got them here.

Q: Before we go. Well one thing I'd like to talk to a little bit about is that there seems to be a stagecoach station here on this property. Do you remember--Did it have a name this station and what do you remember about that?

Ya. I did have the name in a book but somebody carried it off with the book so..I had a history of Douglas and Grant and I think that is in this session of Goetzinger in Elbow Lake got the books. But the stage coach station was discontinued here. And the way I understood it--there was a fencing quarrel here. I got a piece of wire left from that--that's all. And there was some confusion about that fence. Somebody else had possession of that land before it was sold at public auction. And father bought the land. They told him, "You can put in a bid" said slip of paper. P.T. Setterland bids so--so much an acre for that particular land., Northeast quarter of twenty eight; range forty one west and so on. Well he could write that because he was a good writer. Well, there was an auctioneer. said "Who wants to bid so and so." Well, father said its nothing for me to look for. They were bidding over me. He said, he didn't understand what they were talking about because he come from Sweden. And they came after him and said "Why you bought that piece of land--railroad land." It

Q: Do you know anything about the buildings that were on the site of this station?

Well, I know where they were at but they were destroyed by fire before I remember it. All we could salvage was a few articles. It was a settling. It was shaped like a small pick axe. That they used to clean out the hoofs on the horses when they got caked on them snow and dirt and rocks in--it was a small pick axe. I lost track of that and it was a hatchet that we picked up here and that, that I got yet. The hatchet. I got it laying right here. That's was picked up here when the place had hiding away. But the stagecoach has been discontinued, because the railroad come into Barrett not passenger service but freight. I don't know. There was several years before there was passenger service. And when they were allowed passenger service they run the passenger train into the river and killed several people. And four bodies they didn't find owners for so the railroad company bought a tract of land from Lerass Olson, now occupied by Oscar Jensenm and established a cemetary and fixed it and buried the four bodies there and donated the cemetary to the village of Barrett.

Q: Do you know the location of the burial? Do you know where the burial is for those four people? Can you find the spot?

I can find the spot where the four were buried because they buried the Doctor there and the druggist and the _____

Q: near the same place?

Near the same place. I can find the spot today where the four bodies are buried.

Q: The Historical Society would be interested in putting up a marker, t there. So you'll have to show that to me.

There should be a marker there because nobody knows what all that stuff meant. It wasn't platted on the platt. So they asked me of course. I'm one of the oldest ones. And I kinda have a foxy memory for old things, not new things.

Q: Did you hear anyone telling about the buildings here? What they were? What kind of buildings were here?

(12 minutes)