

## BUXTON: BLACK METROPOLIS OF IOWA

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### I

By 1901 Monroe County had displaced Polk County as the biggest coal producing county in Iowa and was to retain this leadership for nearly a quarter of a century. The coal extraction in this county would average 2,500,000 tons per year during that period.<sup>1</sup> Even now Monroe County leads in the number of abandoned mining camps that sprang (a valid verb in the case of these towns) into existence prior to World War I.<sup>2</sup>

The birth of the town of Buxton coincided with the beginning of the Twentieth Century and within a few years had burgeoned into a community of approximately 6,000 people, nearly all of whom were oriented to the mining industry in Monroe County, Iowa. For nearly two decades this was a bustling, active, and prosperous mining camp boasting modern conveniences that were unavailable in many areas. In its third decade of existence the decline that had earlier commenced accelerated as the result of the old mines being exhausted, the declining demand for coal, plus the emerging labor problems. Today the rolling hills of northern Monroe County barely reveal the presence of this city. The old warehouse remains as a refuge for a herd of cattle, the vault stands erect against the skyline looking quite out of place, and a few other remains can be detected by the imaginative observer. Many such towns have gone the way of Buxton, but few remained as alive in the

memories and recollections of old timers as this one. In more recent times the literature on mining camps is keeping Buxton's history alive with considerably more distinction than most of the other camps.

This paper proposes to do two things. First, the story of Buxton will be retold, not an especially obscure one as a good number of articles on this subject demonstrates. The other intention of this presentation is to interpret the Buxton experience in terms of sociological definition of community, an approach that has not been too well consolidated in the literature on Buxton. This observer will attempt to demonstrate that Buxton was a significant community experience (if not a community experiment) for the 4,000 or so Negro residents that made up approximately 75% of the people in this camp. It appears from the notes and papers in the files of Dr. H. L. Olin, preserved at the Iowa State Department of History and Archives, that he intended to develop such a study in his book on Iowa coal mining. Unfortunately for the historiography of Iowa this project was ended at the fifth chapter with his death in March, 1964. Dr. Olin was a professor of chemical engineering at the State University of Iowa for over thirty years and had contributed generously to scientific articles on Iowa coal. But his writings also displayed considerable skill as a social observer, and it appears that he was going to interpret the Buxton experience in his book. Although it is certainly a presumptuous declaration, this writer hopes that in some small way this paper fills some of the void that Dr. Olin surely would have filled.

## II

Buxton was the creation of Consolidation Coal Company, in 1900 a subsidiary of the Chicago and Northwestern railroad. (Many recent sources have erroneously referred to it as the Consolidated Coal Company, perhaps a minor misstatement, but incorrect nevertheless.) This company was the result of a corporate reorganization in the middle of the 1870's by H. W. and W. A. McNeill (brothers) effected through the financial resources of promoters in Eastern Iowa cities. These two men made Consolidation one of the largest such operations in the state and certainly the most innovative and progressive. Its

innovative approach is indicated by the development of coke ovens; its progressivism will be treated later in this paper. Consolidation was the largest coal operation in Mahaska County centered in the Muchikinock Valley. When Buxton was established nearly all of the personnel and equipment in Muchikinock was moved to the new camp.<sup>3</sup>

The Northwestern railroad contracted for the purchase of Consolidation in 1881, a sale that witnessed the transfer of \$500,000 from the railroad's treasury to the former owners. In the next few decades the Consolidation Company would be the "greatest of all Iowa's coal mining companies."<sup>4</sup> A high percentage of the power supply needs of the railroad was supplied by the nineteen Consolidation mines that were opened over the years. When the operation ceased in the 1920's the company was making plans to sink mine number 20. None of Consolidation's coal was used for sale to consumers, rather it was used for power generation; i.e., locomotives and equipment.

Another background development that is important to this study is the importation of Negro laborers into this area of Iowa in the 1870's. The sources do not agree as to exactly when this occurred, but at the outset strikebreaking was the motivation. The depression in the 1870's and the subsequent labor disputes brought this solution to strikes in several instances in this decade. However, after 1881 the Consolidation Company initiated the practice of recruiting black miners as a ready, dependable source of labor, not to nullify the effectiveness of strikes. Recruiters were sent to Southern states, the Virginias most notably. H. A. (Hobe) Armstrong, a Negro businessman in Muchikinock, was especially utilized in this effort which continued throughout the 1880's. After 1890 active recruitment was ended, but communications from Negro miners brought others into the field.<sup>5</sup>

It is also worth noting that migration became increasingly a solution for the Southern race problem to which increased numbers of blacks in that section of the country turned in the last few decades of the Nineteenth Century. Many of these migratory experiments had resulted in considerable disillusionment, of course, but many Southern Negroes had listened very

intently to such appeals. Their frame of mind, then, was often one of considerable interest in migration. Furthermore, these movements to the Iowa coal mines seldom resulted in disillusionment, for, despite the hardships, the prosperity was considerably greater than previous environments. When Hobe Armstrong offered transportation and twenty dollars per week until they were on their own as miners, the lure was obviously difficult to resist. About 3,000 miners were recruited by Consolidation agents.<sup>6</sup>

The first structures to be erected in Buxton went up in June of 1900. The expanding needs of Consolidation prompted them to send a survey agent into areas of Mahaska and Monroe Counties, searching for lands that would yield significant amounts of coal. Consolidation spent a sizable \$275,000 for over 10,000 acres of land in 1900, most of it in northern Monroe County. Although this was quite an expenditure, it was approximately in line with the agricultural values of Monroe County lands at the turn of the century. Ben C. Buxton replaced his father as superintendent of the mines and named the new camp after his father although some of the accounts incorrectly state that Ben named the camp after himself. Ben was only twenty-five years old at this time. There was virtual mass transfer from old Muchikinock to the new center of operations on the rolling hillsides of Monroe County, and growth was very rapid. At first the Buxton correspondent for the *Iowa State Bystander*, which billed itself as an "Afro-American" newspaper and was published in Des Moines, listed the names of the newcomers, but by the fall of 1902 the writer could only vaguely refer to more arriving every day.<sup>7</sup>

The population of Buxton is a subject of considerable disagreement. Estimates found by this researcher range from 5,000 to 12,000 with the most agreements occurring in the last few years on a 9,000 figure.<sup>8</sup> Most of the articles in the last twenty years seem to accept this particular figure, although they give no information on the basis for an estimate. Despite its size Buxton was never incorporated as a municipality, evidently because the company wanted to keep its absolutism intact, although this in no way means that it was a totalitarian entity as will be demonstrated later in this essay. There was

at least one movement inaugurated to incorporate, but apparently the residents, too, displayed little enthusiasm for such an idea since taxes would likely be increased.<sup>9</sup>

It is this writer's belief that Buxton was never more than 6,000 and was probably around 5,500. The population estimates of Buxton have grown somewhat as the proverbial fish story: the size of the fish grows in direct proportion to the time elapsed. The overwhelming judgment in the references made at the time Buxton existed was around the 5,000 to 6,000 figures. The census reports for this period also support such a conclusion. Most of Buxton was in Bluff Creek township of Monroe County with some of its overlapping into Jefferson township of Mahaska County. The census figures for both townships between 1895 and 1925 are given as follows: (The years ending in 5 are from the Iowa Census, and the years ending in 0 are from the U. S. Census.)

	<i>Bluff Creek</i>	<i>Jefferson</i>
1895	880	745
1900	998	969
1905	4874	2164
1910	4854	2585
1915	4482	1474
1920	3306	1085
1925	1124	908

These figures indicate 7,659 residents in the two townships in 1910. Deducing from the above figures that each township had about 1,000 permanent residents, this leaves slightly more than 5,500 people in the Buxton area. (The camp was spread out with several "suburbs.") Further assuming that it would not be too difficult for the census takers to miss five hundred in such a mining camp atmosphere, this would place the total at 6,000.

Despite this observer's revision downward of the usual given population for Buxton, this in no way makes it a less significant community. A town of 6,000 is hardly inconsequential and is considerably larger than many county seat populations of today.

At least 4,000 residents were Negroes. This would be a two to one ratio of blacks to whites and agrees minimally

with all the estimates made at the time. The figure may well have been larger than 4,000 during the peak of mining operations around Buxton.

The decline and death of Buxton occurred very rapidly after World War I although the decline started even before the war. As early as late 1914 the editor of the *Iowa State Bystander* lamented that, "Buxton is no more the famous old live money making business whirl and enthusiastic band of labor. To one who has bees [been] there once each year since it was organized and has seen it at its height and now to see it one can hardly imagine the great change. . . . The population of Buxton now will not exceed 2,500 of which perhaps 1,500 are colored."<sup>10</sup> People began moving to Consol, Bucknell, and Haydock in order to be closer to mines 18 and 19 for Consolidation was still going strong. After the war, production declined, and then mine number 18 gave out in 1927. A few days after the abandonment of 18 a strike was called at number 19, and the ensuing stalemate meant that no more coal was brought up despite the fact that 100 cars were loaded at the bottom of the shaft.<sup>11</sup>

In rapid succession the residents moved away, the businesses closed their doors, and Buxton entered the ranks of being a ghost town. In 1929 one of the few residents would write to a friend who formerly lived in the town that, "The grass has grown quite high in the office yard now and the whole place looks so neglected and forlorn. You know we have no Doctor now. Your papa is gone. The office doors stand open day and night and there is nothing in any of the rooms."<sup>12</sup>

### III

A primary purpose of this study is to demonstrate the significant community experience felt by the citizens of this "black town." A relatively simple but concise sociological definition has been utilized for the purposes of this paper. A popular sociology textbook defines the term "community" as follows:

A community is a local grouping within which people carry out a full round of life activities. Defined in greater detail, a community includes (1) a grouping of people, (2) within a geographic area, (3) with a division of labor into specialized and interdependent functions, (4) with a common culture and a social system which organizes their activities, (5) whose members are conscious of their unity and of belonging to the com-

munity, and (6) who can act collectively in an organized manner.<sup>13</sup>

To demonstrate the Buxton experience as meeting these criteria will involve an examination of the working conditions, the intended permanence of the community, the black economic self-development, and the cultural and social life of the town.

Consolidation Coal Company was the best mining concern in Iowa for which to work. The wages, working conditions, leadership, mine inspector's reports, and recollections of former miners testify to this conclusion. The pay at the height of the coal mining boom was ten dollars per day, a sum that placed jingling coins in the pocket of men who had known little prosperity before coming to Iowa. There was no discrimination in pay; black and white were paid the same, and tensions did not exist between the races because of any pay disparity. There were never any massive accidents that occasionally occurred in other areas of Iowa, and throughout the boom period maximum days of labor per year were enjoyed, and thusly a positive *esprit de corps* was evident. This does not minimize, however, the fact that life in the mines was indeed harsh. It would be tempting to romanticize the life and work of the miner, but, nevertheless, conditions were relatively good. A man who worked in the mines thirty-seven years (twenty-seven for Consolidation) told this observer that the Consolidation Company was the best he worked for and he seemed to look upon these years as the "good old days." He also stated that the miners were well aware of the fact that they were working for a progressive company.<sup>14</sup>

The reports of the state mine inspectors on numerous occasions singled out Consolidated for praise. In 1903 the mine inspector reported that Number 10 mine of Consolidation Coal Company had the best ventilation fan in the county.<sup>15</sup> Two years later a different inspector said their mines were the best equipped and best ventilated in the state.<sup>16</sup> By 1912 Inspector Rhys T. Rhys declared that, "Were this company leading only in matter of production of coal it would have been no great credit to them; but I am pleased to report that they are also making commendable efforts to lead in things that tend to make mining safer for life and limb. They desire not simply

to make their mines to comply with the law, but are showing willingness to make any reasonable additions beyond the requirements of the state law where a greater degree of safety to their employes may be secured."<sup>17</sup> The motivation for this unprecedented praise was the establishment by Consolidation of a Mine Safety Inspection Committee composed of a representative from labor and management for each mine. This committee was to inspect all parts of the mine and compose a written report to the company on a monthly basis.

Also a factor in the commendable conditions at the Consolidation mines was the leadership. In his ten years as superintendent, Ben C. Buxton displayed attitudes that, although patrician in tone, were not generally evident in a mine superintendent. His genteel New England background perhaps best explained this humanitarian leadership. Prizes were awarded for the nicest gardens, families for a time got a turkey on Christmas, and occasionally syrup was distributed to the workers fresh from the Buxton estate in Vermont.<sup>18</sup> He tried to keep the saloons out of Buxton, but of course this was a losing battle, noble as the intention might have been. Ben had a letter in a 1906 issue of the *Iowa State Bystander* offering seventeen cash prizes ranging from \$200 to \$5 for the greatest production outputs by Buxton miners.<sup>19</sup> A few months earlier the same paper had asserted that, "Too much praise cannot be given to this company for raising the life, tone and building for the miners where he and his family can at least have some of the home comforts."<sup>20</sup>

Even as early as 1903 the editor of the *Iowa State Bystander* wrote, "They [leaders of Consolidation] are liked by the thousands who know them. There is no better company for men colored to work for I dare say in the United States."<sup>21</sup> Many of the miners could reminisce as one did to a reporter, "I worked for the Consolidation Coal Company for twenty-nine years. They have been happy years to me."<sup>22</sup> Consolidation Coal Company had to be the most enlightened mining company in the state, possibly the nation.

It almost seems as if Buxton was intended to be a permanent community although the experience had been that the camps lasted only as long as the coal. The construction of the



homes was certainly such that they were a vast departure from the near shack-like conditions of many camps. All the houses were constructed by the company but were quite substantial. All had at least five rooms and were built on tracts of about a quarter of an acre each, which left plenty of space for yards and gardens. These homes were then rented to the families for eight dollars per month.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, they were painted in a slate or grey-green tone in contrast to the usual whitewash or red paint that was splashed on the camp structures. Buxton, even then, looked different from the customary mining camps, and the interiors and yards also displayed this difference. Buxton had all of the physical appearances of a permanent city, and it is interesting to note that when the company store burned down in 1911, the company erected a better and more modern facility. "The Buxton Souvenir Number" of the *Iowa State Bystander* could confidently report that, "It is certain that the coal will not be exhausted in the twentieth century."<sup>24</sup> A miner in 1910, surveying his surroundings, could easily have felt that Buxton would continue forever.

One of the significant identification factors for the members of this "colored metropolis of Iowa," as one resident called it, was the economic and business involvement on the part of blacks in the town.<sup>25</sup> There was not a rigid philosophy dictating that blacks must be kept in a mining status. An article in 1912 concluded, "The town is run and controlled by colored people," and then went on to enumerate the claim. The editor pointed out that the following black businesses or businessmen existed: The postmaster and his assistants, two of the four drugstores, all five of the barber shops, all four of the cafes, two out of the three meat markets, a baker, two doctors, two attorneys, the hotel, ten out of the sixteen teachers, and two justices of the peace. The article went on to list the many other property owners and mentioned some of the fraternal organizations that had been organized. He could furthermore declare that Hobe Armstrong was the "richest colored man in Iowa."<sup>26</sup>

It was very tempting for a mining company to exercise total control over its community. But this was not the approach in Buxton, perhaps again because of the enlightened leadership of the Consolidation Company. The *Iowa State Bystander*

could even report the presence of a cigar factory, the only one in Iowa operated by Negroes.<sup>27</sup> There was also a beauty shop, while at the same time there was no such facility available in the county seat of Albia.<sup>28</sup>

A major factor in the community identification was the fact that the cultural, social, and political opportunities provided a full spectrum of activities. As important to the town as anything was the Y.M.C.A., built in 1903 at a cost of \$20,000 with the bill being paid by the company. This three story structure offered a variety of activities including reading, lectures, exercising, lodge meetings, movies, billiards, roller skating, or musical events.<sup>29</sup> At first the miners were a bit reluctant to take advantage of the new facility, and apparently the Consolidation people threatened to turn the facility over to the whites.<sup>30</sup> Acceptance soon occurred and the facility quickly found itself as the center of the town's social activity. This was the first Negro Industrial Y.M.C.A. in the United States.

The churches also played a major part in the lives of Buxtonites. Two major organizations provided for the spiritual needs of the Negro miners, St. John's African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) and Mt. Zion Baptist. Also a fairly active but small Congregational group existed for awhile as did a Mission A. M. E. Church. In addition, several white churches existed separately, and there appears to have been no integration in spiritual affairs. The Buxton correspondents writing in the *Iowa State Bystander* consistently referred with pride and enthusiasm to the activities of their churches and their auxiliaries. As early as the fall of 1902 it could be reported that, "Buxton made a good showing at the conference [A. M. E.] this year, Des Moines was the only one ahead of us in dollar money."<sup>31</sup> A former teacher in the community recalled, "I think I never saw church members so spiritually imbued."<sup>32</sup>

In the middle of the winter of 1913-14 the Buxton correspondent could report that nearly 2,400 people were counted as being in attendance at one of the seven services held on a recent Sunday.<sup>33</sup> A few months later the editor of the *Iowa State Bystander* claimed that only about 2,500 still lived in Buxton. Ministers of the Gospel would be delighted to approach that percentage again, although the editor's estimate

for the total population is probably a bit low. But it is obvious that organized Christianity was singularly important to the families in the camp and undoubtedly exercised a stabilizing and sobering influence.

Social, religious, and literary clubs were also in great abundance. Various issues of the Buxton news in the *Iowa State Bystander* refer to such organizations as the Household of Ruth, Sunday School Union, Self Culture Club, Fidelity Club, Tabernacle Mission, White Vest Knights, Home and Foreign Mission Circle, Etude Music Club (discussing the life of Beethoven), Booker Washington Literary Society, Syndicate Club, Mutual Benefit Literary Society, Oreole Music Club (discussing the life of Mozart, obviously trying to compete with Etude), and the Athenian Literary Society. Most certainly this was not a primitive mining camp on the wilderness, but was a community far advanced in social organizations. Fraternal organizations were also very common. The Masons, Odd Fellows, Elks, Knights of Pythias, Knights of Tabor, and the Modern Woodmen had lodges in Buxton.<sup>34</sup>

Sports activities also generated a great deal of enthusiasm as well as pride. The Buxton Wonders baseball team was the terror of the diamond and played teams near and afar. Some of these athletes would have been able to play professional baseball if Jackie Robinson had broken the color line 50 years earlier.<sup>35</sup> The Wonders were indeed the athletic pride of Buxton. Such things as music also generated similar emotions as the Buxton Band was the pride of the residents. This group of skilled musicians was organized quite early in Buxton's existence and never involved fewer than thirty pieces. This group also displayed its talents around the state, including appearances at the state fair.

The toughness and violence in Buxton was second only to that of Dodge City according to traditional stories. A critic of the thesis advanced in this paper could point to the lawlessness and charge that such a climate could hardly invite community identification. However, it would certainly appear that Buxton was no more violent than other mining camps; and possibly less. This in no way denies the presence of fighting and rowdiness, for the sheriff's blotter in Albia demonstrates

that many miners failed to live a sober life.<sup>36</sup>

Almost all of the violence, however, could be attributed to drinking, fighting, and domestic quarreling. Such things as crimes against property or robberies were virtually unknown. Many former residents have attested to such; i.e., "I lived there until the end and we never locked a door."<sup>37</sup> Only recently a former resident has written, "I never heard of purse-snatching or house-robbery."<sup>38</sup> When violence did occur in Buxton, it was, as in other such camps, the result of delinquency often encouraged by whiskey or beer, often in combinations with temptations provided by outsiders. "Not a little of the lurid fame of Muchy and of the Buxton of a later time was due to the presence of underworld characters—gamblers, prostitutes and bootleggers—who swarmed in from larger towns on payday Saturday nights to reap their gruesome harvest," states H. L. Olin in his chapter on mines and mining towns.<sup>39</sup> Although Dr. Olin perhaps exaggerates the role of the outsider, this was obviously a problem when more than a thousand miners would be emancipated from their Saturday labors with considerable cash.

Over the years one finds in the news emanating from Buxton many references to the peaceful state of the camp. When something disturbing did occur, the news might commence like this: "The lethargic state that often prevails in a town like this was suddenly thrown off . . ."<sup>40</sup> When the editor of the Mount Pleasant paper visited Buxton in 1910 he felt there was, "probably less crime than in any town of its size in the state of Iowa."<sup>41</sup>

Racial relations were fairly good, especially considering the times. This in no way minimizes the tension that did indeed appear, but definitely the situation was much better than in the country as a whole. Many historians have concluded that this period was the "nadir" for the American Negro. Newspapers almost daily had something in their pages about lynchings, race riots, and discrimination. Such men as Vardamon and Tillman were preaching racial hate from their Congressional pulpits. But such graphically strained relations were foreign to Buxton. Hobe Armstrong felt that the race problem could be solved by intermarriage and thus he married a white woman

and all of their children who married took white partners. Certainly they experienced some censure for their actions but nothing serious. A former resident perhaps summarized some of the reasons: "They all knew each other, worked the same place for the same pay and lived in the houses built to the same specifications." In Buxton, she said, we had, "all white affairs, all colored affairs, and all all affairs."<sup>42</sup>

George Woodson, one of the Negro attorneys in Buxton, became the Republican nominee for Monroe County's seat in the Iowa House of Representatives in 1912 after defeating two white challengers in the June primary. He was the first of his race to be so honored by either political party in the state of Iowa. Although he was defeated in the election, probably because of his race, his nomination in the primary is an item of amazement for 1912. In many areas of the country, especially in the South, the suffrage was being withdrawn from blacks. In Iowa this was not occurring, and in fact, an Iowa Negro got on the ballot in a contested primary in a county that registered a majority of white voters.<sup>43</sup>

Buxton's politics was extraordinarily homogenous-overwhelmingly Republican. In the 1904 Presidential election, for example, Buxton registered 705 votes for Theodore Roosevelt, Republican, and only 31 for Alton B. Parker, the Democratic candidate. As with most other American Negroes, Buxtonites were still voting for the party of emancipation. In fact this Republican allegiance may have upset Monroe County politics a bit. After the 1902 elections the writer of the Buxton news in the *Iowa State Bystander* declared, "This county heretofore has been a democratic county, but since Buxton has sprung up the whole politics of the county has changed."<sup>44</sup> The writer was exaggerating the political effect of Buxton; but during the 1890's Monroe County Democrats had experienced considerable success under the banner of William Jennings Bryan, and as late as 1898, elected a Democrat to Congress.<sup>45</sup> But the emerging Republican strength in the county would likely have come regardless of Buxton, given the state and national political trends. Nonetheless, the political unity of Buxton meant that the townspeople could feel a set of common interests when they journeyed to the polls.



*Courtesy of Author*

**Buxton's Warehouse—now used as a  
cattle shed.**



*Courtesy of Author*

**Remains of the Company Store. (B. Shiffer's article in ANNALS (1964) says that this was the Hotel but the author believes this assumption to be incorrect.)**

## IV

Rhys T. Rhys was a mine inspector for many years in the second mining district of Iowa and demonstrated on many occasions, in his reports to the Governor, a good deal of technical knowledge on mining. However, he also demonstrated acumen as a social scientist in his 1916 report when he made the following observations:

Mining life is often misunderstood and miners are regarded frequently by those not familiar with mining conditions as a class of vagabonds . . . the roving life of a large majority of the miners is not one of choice, but is one forced upon them by the exigency of finding a new bread line. It is a great error to suppose that the mine workers and their families are taking delight in continually moving from one isolated coal camp to another. It is wrong to think that they have no desire for a permanent resting place, nor a longing for a home which they could call their own in some good locality where they could rear and educate their children into better and more capable men and women. . . . It is the owner of the camp that decides the number, size and the mode of its dwellings; owns and marks its streets, employs its labor; sells its food and supplies, and also that determines what manner of men shall dwell in his creation. . . . It [closer examination] would also disclose that there is in their hearts a constant craving, not for a shack to tent in but a home to dwell in, located within reach of steady employment, and of the educational and social advantages of some well established community. Any employer of labor that fails to recognize, or, that refuses to encourage these noble desires in his employees is unquestionably blind to his own best interest, and commits a great wrong when he so circumscribes the lives of his men as to make their aspirations [sic] for the ownership of a home and of education impossible to be gratified.<sup>46</sup>

Although Buxton was not specifically mentioned in his editorializing, he may well have been thinking how close this community had come to avoiding the usual characteristics of a mining camp. No camp could avoid all of these negative situations, but Buxton perhaps most closely approached such an existence of the Iowa mining camps. Inspector Rhys ended his comments by declaring that "No more mining camps in Iowa" was an appropriate goal. The miners, he said, should commute from the established towns.<sup>47</sup> His call for the cessation of mining camps was not too far away but not for the anticipated reasons of the inspector.

Today there are fewer than 50 men actively employed in Iowa coal mining, and Buxton and many other towns have

joined the ranks of ghost towns. Now "ghost town" isn't even the appropriate terminology; Buxton is only a memory. Most of the memories, however, are positive ones for Buxton was not a typical mining town. There were few mining camps described with such an outburst of pride as was Buxton by the correspondent for the *Iowa State Bystander*: "Buxton is the hub of the universe—of course I ment [sic] Boston, but still a person would think so if they view the great incoming of people, hear the rapid click of the business wheels, and hear the echo from the halls of intelligence—ah Buxton!"<sup>48</sup>



*Courtesy of Author*

**Taken in Cemetery — is very overgrown and rough. Note how tree has grown around stone.**

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Thomas D. Landis, "A History of Monroe County, Iowa As a Coal Mining Center" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Northeast Missouri State Teachers College), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Jacob Swisher, "Mining in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, XLIV (October, 1945), p. 317.

<sup>3</sup>Hubert L. Olin, *Coal Mining in Iowa* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1965), pp. 44-49.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.



<sup>6</sup>Beverly Shiffer, "The Story of Buxton," *Annals of Iowa*, XXXVIII (Summer, 1964), p. 340.

<sup>7</sup>*Iowa State Bystander* (Des Moines), July-November, 1901.

<sup>8</sup>Shiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

<sup>9</sup>"Shall Buxton, Iowa be Incorporated?," *Iowa State Bystander*, January 19, 1906, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>J. L. Thompson, "Editor's Observation," *Iowa State Bystander*, November 27, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Shiffer, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

<sup>12</sup>Letter from J. E. Stetzer to Marion Carter, June 16, 1929, in the E. A. Carter Papers, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa. (The postmark is smeared but appears to be 1929.)

<sup>13</sup>Paul B. Horton and Chester L. Hunt, *Sociology* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1968), p. 428.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Emanuel Blomgren, Albia, Iowa, June 26, 1971.

<sup>15</sup>John Verner, "First District Report," *Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Mine Inspectors* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1903), p. 33.

<sup>16</sup>James A. Campbell, "Second District Report," *Twelfth Biennial Report of the State Mine Inspectors* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1905), p. 71.

<sup>17</sup>Rhys T. Rhys, "Second District Report," *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the State Mine Inspectors* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1912), p. 47.

<sup>18</sup>J. A. Swisher, "The Rise and Fall of Buxton," *The Palimpsest*, XXVI (June, 1945), p. 186.

<sup>19</sup>*Iowa State Bystander*, May 4, 1906, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, November 17, 1905, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, September 18, 1903, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>"As Others See Buxton," *The Albia Republican*, March 10, 1910, p. 4. (Reprinted from the *Des Moines Register and Leader*, February 20, 1910.)

<sup>23</sup>H. L. Olin (ed.), "Memories of the Buxton Mining Community," Tape recording made September 1, 1963, State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.

<sup>24</sup>*Iowa State Bystander*, September 18, 1903, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, January 15, 1909, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, December 27, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, October 27, 1905, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Adrienne Moser, "Buxton Was Once a City of 9,000," *Oskaloosa Daily Herald*, April 20, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Shiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-342.

<sup>30</sup>Minnie London, "As I Remember." (Manuscript in H. L. Olin Papers, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines. Originally published in several newspapers in 1940.)

<sup>31</sup>*Iowa State Bystander*, September 18, 1902, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup>London, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup>*Iowa State Bystander*, February 6, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 1911-12.

<sup>35</sup>Interview with Emanuel Blomgren.

<sup>36</sup>*The Albia Republican*, 1910-11.

<sup>37</sup>Letter from Clayborne Carter to H. L. Olin, Olin Papers.

<sup>38</sup>Hazel Nylander, "Buxton was not really a 'tough town'," *The Daily Herald* (Oskaloosa), August 3, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup>Olin, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup>*Iowa State Bystander*, January 16, 1903, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup>Stanley Miller, "Albia and Buxton As Seen By the Mount Pleasant Editor," *The Albia Republican*, December 15, 1910, p. 11. (Reprinted from the Mount Pleasant *Free Press*)

<sup>42</sup>Letter from Marion Carter to H. L. Olin, Olin Papers.

<sup>43</sup>*The Albia Republican*, June-November, 1912.

<sup>44</sup>*Iowa State Bystander*, November 14, 1902, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>*Iowa Official Register* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1902), p. 267.

<sup>46</sup>Rhys T. Rhys, "Second District Report," *Report of the State Mine Inspectors for Biennial Period Ending December 31, 1915* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1916), p. 41-42.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

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## THE ICARIANS IN IOWA

by

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Surprising little has been written about the three Icarian communities that were founded in the area around Corning. In fact a complete list of the material written on the communities would be quite imposing, but it is difficult to find a complete objective account of the communities. Most of the materials were either written during the life of the communities and hence did not have the complete picture or take a partisan view of the disagreement that caused the original community to be dissolved and two new communities to be formed. In addition some documents have been discovered that shed considerable light on that disagreement. In the following I have attempted to pull together the various sources

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