

History of Bureau County
an Oral History

Vera Fletcher, Interviewee
Of Princeton, Illinois

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Narrator's Name: VERA E. FLETCHER
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Interviewer's Name: MEREE ROUTH
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Q: My name is Merle Routh and I am visiting today, September 26, 1975, with Mrs. Glenn Fletcher who lives at Princeton, Illinois, and who is a direct descendant of Bureau County's first permanent white settler, Henry Thomas. Is this true, Vera?

A: Yes, Merle, I am a great-granddaughter of Henry Thomas, a heritage of which I am justly proud. My grandmother, Emily Jackson, was his daughter.

Q: Then who were your parents, Vera?

A: My father was her son, James Jackson; my mother, Lilly Bayer Jackson.

Q: Can you trace somewhat the history of how and when the white man first visited Bureau County?

A: According to Bradsby's 1885 "History of Bureau County, Illinois" early white people visited the area for several reasons. Among them was the love of wildlife, a desire for adventure, to hide from crimes they had committed elsewhere, and to trade with the red man. Some married a squaw, painted themselves, and forever waged war against the early pioneers. White men were possibly here one hundred years before the exploration of the country by Joliet which was in the seventeenth century, his expedition getting under way in June, 1673. During these one hundred years, attempts were made at settlement and permanent possession of the land. Lodges were only temporary, since their motive was to exchange trinkets, whiskey, and eventually powder with the untutored savage for his pelts and furs. These lodges were mostly made by French fur trading companies. Such men as Bulbona, for instance, visited only temporarily

since they found themselves surrounded by fierce enemies ready with scalping knife, hiding in ambush, or in bold war paint to torture the old, the young, the innocent, and defenseless.

Q: What about their food, Vera?

A: Food was scarce; malaria was common; houses were merely brush sheds, no protection against the elements, the thieving savages and prowling wild beasts. Meat was abundant, however: prairie chickens, wild turkey, quail, squirrels, and wild hogs, deer, buffalo, migrating geese, swans, and ducks. Tables and furnishings were simple; gourds served as dishes, occasionally a cup, a pewter dish, spoon or wooden bowl and occasionally an iron skillet which was brought from the East made up the household equipment.

Q: How early were these trading posts established?

A: Well, according to Matson, there was none north of Springfield except the one a short distance below the mouth of Bureau Creek, which was standing in the fall of 1821. This was a double log cabin which belonged to the American Fur Company and occupied by its agent, Gordon S. Hubbard. Close by stood two other cabins which were built by the fur company. In one lived Rix Robinson, a Connecticut Yankee, and in the other, the well-known Bulbona. Both had married squaws and raised a large family of half-breed children. After the settlement by Henry Thomas, Bulbona established his own trading house at Bulbona Grove where he conducted his own business.

Q: What led -- what event led more the white people through this area?

A: Well, as early as 1825 there was quite a settlement at the lead mines about Galena, the road connecting it with the settlements below by the

way of Rock Island.

Q: That was a roundabout way, wasn't it?

A: In the spring of 1827 Mr. Kellogg with three wagons and a drove of cattle went directly from Peoria to Galena, a distance of 160 miles, through an open, unsettled country saving, thereby, about sixty miles. Others followed this route and it soon became a beaten road known as "Kellogg's Trail." Henry Thomas was among this group accompanying Mr. Kellogg. He was so impressed with this wooded area with water in the streams as clear as crystal and surrounded by the wide open prairie, so on May 5, 1828, he with his family in a wagon drawn by three yoke of cattle came to Bureau and built the first cabin within the limits of this county. The cabin stood by a small branch, by a spring, and by the side of the Galena Road, being located in the northwest quarter of Section 33, town of Bureau. His endeavor was followed soon afterwards by three young men, Edward, Justus, and John L. Ament building at the east end of Red Oak Grove, Town of Walnut. Then came Reason B. Hall to the southeast quarter of Section 34, Town of Hall. However, he remained only a few months when he moved south of the Illinois River.

Q: Who were some of the other settlers?

A: In the fall of 1828 John Dixon settled at Boyd's Grove, staying only about eighteen months. In the spring of 1829 Amos Leonard and Daniel Dimnick built cabins in the surrounding timber, by the side of springs, and on the north half of Section 32, Selby, but occupied them only a short time. Also in the spring of 1829 Timothy Perkins and Leonard Roth made claims in Leepertown, and Bulbona, a French Indian trader, at Bulbona Grove in the Town of Wyandot. In the spring of 1830 Ezekiel

Thomas and Abram Stratton settled on farms, as did John M. Gay. About the same time Charles Boyd bought Dixon's claim at Boydd's Grove; Joseph Smith, ~~that's~~ Dad Joe, settled at Dad Joe Grove and Elijah Epperson built a cabin on the southeast quarter of Section 5, Princeton. At the same time Sylvester Brigham, James Forristall, Justus and John L. Ament made claims on the east side of Main Bureau Timber in the Town of Dover. Also that same spring Daniel Dimmick built a cabin on Section 25, LaMoille, where he stayed with his family about two years, and then abandoned his claim and left the country. That fall William Hall located on the present site of LaMoille and stayed until the spring of 1832 when he sold to Aaron ^{Gunn} ~~Dunn~~. Around Tiskilwa claims were made by Robert Clark, Dave Jones, and Michael Kitterman. In the summer of 1831 two claims had been made on the Princeton prairie: one by Curtis Williams on Section 21 and one by John Williams on Section 17 when the Hampshire Colony came here.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about the Indians that were here in this territory?

A: Most of the Indians were of the Pottawatomies tribe, low and filthy in their habits but peaceable and quiet when not under the influence of liquor. Fur traders say more Indians lived within the limits of Bureau than any county in the state. Tiskilwa had many chiefs; some with numerous wives and hundreds of followers. Here at one time lived the half-breed Mike Girty who was a great thief and cutthroat. He was not a chief but did spend much of his time as interpreter among the fur traders.

Q: How was the county governed?

A: Well, it was first under the jurisdiction of St. Clair County, then

Madison, then Pike, then Fulton, next Peoria, and lastly Putnam. It became Bureau County in 1837. In 1831 Putnam County, having new boundaries made by the legislature, was organized in accordance with the act. The county was divided ~~was divided~~ into four precincts, two on the east side and two on the west side of the Illinois River. Those on the west side were called Bureau and Spoon River; the former was made to include all of this county and a small portion of Putnam, Marshall, and Stark Counties. The first general election was held at the house of Elijah Epperson on the first Monday in August at which nineteen votes were cast, whose names are as follows: Henry Thomas, Elijah Epperson, Leonard Roth, John M. Gay, Mason Dimmick, Samuel Gleason, Curtis Williams, Justus Ament, John L. Ament, John W. Hall. Adam Taylor, Daniel Dimmick, Thomas Washburn, Henry H. Harrison, Abram Stratton, Ezekiel Thomas, Hezekiah Epperson, E. H. Hall, and Anthony Epperson. All these men later did much in the administration of Bureau County. John M. Gay and Daniel Dimmick were elected Justice of the Peace but the latter did not qualify. So for many years Gay was the only Justice of the Peace on the west side of the river, and he was the only person to take acknowledgement of legal papers or administer the marriage rites, and so forth. Abram Stratton and Sarah Baggs was the first couple to be married in Bureau County. They had to defer their wedding two weeks waiting for the Justice of Peace, John M. Gay, to obtain his commission so he could marry them.

Q: How did the white settlers get along with the Indians?

A: In the spring of 1831 there were only sixteen families in Bureau while there were about 1500 Indians. Although the Indians appeared

friendly, frequently visiting the settlers and sometimes assisting them in raising their cabins, still they were apprehensive that all was not right. Black Hawk had attended a feast on Bureau the summer before and many Pottawatomies had agreed to assist him in retaining his village. After his return to his village at Rock Island, Governor Reynolds issued a call for volunteers to remove him and his band west of the Mississippi. A traveler on the Sac and Fox Trail reported that five hundred warriors had collected at Barren Grove and he believed they were going west to assist Black Hawk. During this heated time the settlers heard the firing of cannons at Rock Island and believed fighting had commenced. In truth this was only a salute ordered by General Gaines to celebrate the bloodless victory as the Army approached and the Indians fled across the river. However, the report of the cannons was heard on Bureau and every person fled from the county, some going to Peoria, others to Hennepin. A few met at Princeton and after consulting with Chief Shaubena he advised the women and children to leave immediately, leaving only the young men to stay and raise the corn since he felt there might be trouble.

Q: Was this what was known as the Black Hawk War?

A: No, it was the spring of 1832 when about thirty families lived on the west side of the river in probably forty cabins when the settlers learned that Black Hawk, with his band, was ascending Rock River and the governor had again issued a call for volunteers, but they thought there would be no fighting as in the year previous. However, Shaubena notified the settlers about the middle of May just while all were busy with their crops that hostilities had begun, that Stillman's army of which Henry Thomas was a member, was defeated and an attack could occur any

any moment. Only the fleetness of Henry Thomas' horse saved him from being tomahawked as he made his way the 52 miles home. Word spread from cabin to cabin and in a few hours all settlers had fled, some by wagon, others on horseback and some by sleds drawn by oxen; some going to Peoria, some to Springfield, and some to Hennepin. Had they delayed their departure just a matter of hours would have been fatal to many. That night about seventy warriors led by the half-breed Girty came to Bureau and visited almost every cabin only to find the settlers had fled. There was a fort at Hennepin and some settlers remained there as rangers and guards. About two weeks after the settlers fled, Major Baxter with two companies of rangers from St. Clair County came to Bureau and built a fort where Henry Thomas lived, calling it Fort Thomas, and occupied by them during the war. The Indians visited Bureau several times and killed chickens, pigs, and cattle and robbed some of the cabins and sometimes laid in ambush for days to kill the settlers as they would return to look after their stock. They killed Elijah Phillips north of Dover and burned Reverend James Sample and wife west of Princeton. It was about September first before the war ended with Black Hawk a prisoner, and settlers returned to their claims only to find many of the hogs and cattle missing, their gardens and corn fields grown up to weeds, their wheat and oats matured but not having been harvested, had fallen to the ground. Everything seemed gloomy to the settlers on Bureau, winter approaching, their crops a failure; but, fortunately, there were good crops in Putnam County east of the river where they obtained a supply.

Q: Then was the trouble ended with the Indians when they had Black Hawk as a prisoner?

A: No, there was a third Indian war due to a squaw and papoose of the Winnebago chief ~~Nagwasee~~ being killed by troops in pursuit of Black Hawk, mistaking them for Sacs and Foxes. The chief tried to avenge himself on the whites, visited many Pottawatomies' villages to persuade them to make war. A large body of Winnebagos collected on Green River and held council near New Bedford with the Pottawatomies. The Indians galloped across the prairies but no longer visited the settlers' cabins. They were shy and unfriendly and avoided meeting the whites. They did not return to their own village, planted no corn, and their furs were exchanged for ammunition instead of clothing. Three years in succession the settlers were driven from their homes so some became sick of the country and never returned. Just what the intentions of the Indians were is not known, but whatever they were it caused great concern among the settlers and even though there was no bloodshed, it prevented people from improving their claims or raising good crops.

Q: I've heard of the Hampshire Colony. Just where and what was that?

A: Well, in 1831 a party of emigrants from North Hampton, Massachusetts, settled on the Princeton prairie. Before coming west they organized a company and a religious society with the understanding that they should settle together as a colony. Dr. N. Chamberlin made a claim south of Princeton. Eli and Elijah Smith built a double log cabin on Bureau Bluff three miles north of Princeton. Others making claims in and around Princeton were E. S. Phelps, C. G. Cass, Aaron Gunn, George Hinsdale and John G. Blake. Blake taught school at ten dollars per month and after three years residence sold his claim for twenty-five dollars. Elijah Smith was appointed post master, the mail being

obtained from the Henry Thomas post office on West Bureau just once a week. A church was organized consisting of six members which formed a nucleus of the Hampshire Colony Church of Princeton.

Q: You spoke previously of the government of the county. Can you say a little more about how Bureau County became independent?

A: An election was held on the first Monday of March in 1837 after an act passed by the legislature in February setting off the County of Bureau and fixing its boundaries. This was not to take effect unless the whole county, which was Putnam as well as Bureau, favored it. It is said many illegal votes were cast on both sides; those on the west voting for while those on the east voted against. The issue carried by a majority of thirty votes for the division. In June, 1837, an election was held to elect county officers; court was ordered held in Princeton in the Hampshire Colony Church until 1845 when a courthouse was built and a jail, twelve feet square with hewed logs lined with sheet iron together with a frame building, and Bureau County was well into existence. There were formed 23 whole townships and two fractional ones and in 1849, township organization was established. Growth was slow due to the Indians and the wild nature of the country but in 1836 there was a large emigration and the population more than doubled during the year. Land was sold to the newcomers at a high price. Produce was high. Some was brought up the river to supply the needs while cattle, horses, and sheep were driven from the southern parts for sale to the settlers. The prairies of Bureau County were the last to be settled but by 1854 all the land was entered due to the settlers making claims and paying for it with products raised on their farms. Many wealthy farmers started in this way.

Q: What did the settlers do for education of their children?

A: Many private schools were opened in the dwelling of the teacher. The basement of the Hampshire Colony Church was used as a place of learning for many years. Often rude shacks were erected close to the settlements and winter terms were very well attended. The one in Bureau Township being such that the attendance necessitated a two-room building to accommodate the more than eighty pupils during the winter term. The school terms were short, there being a spring term, a fall term and a winter term. Graded systems were not prevalent; pupils were taught mainly the three R's. The Princeton High School was organized under a special act of the legislature and was the first township high school in the State of Illinois. It was completed in 1867. Its course of study was five years.

Q: What about the churches?

A: At first there was a circuits -- a circuit rider visiting various settlements and holding services in the homes of the settlers. These were infrequent, sometimes only monthly. Finally districts were formed and the people met and held their devotions in groups more regularly. The Presbyterian Church was organized October 26, 1837. This was an outgrowth of the Hampshire Colony Congregational Society and was known as the Second Congregationalist Church of Princeton. In 1844 it became Presbyterian. The first meeting of the Congregational Society was held October 20, 1831, in the home of Elijah Smith. Other houses, mostly log cabins, served as meeting houses until 1835 when they erected their first house of worship.

The Church of Christ was organized March 8, 1840; the Baptist Church in 1836; the English Lutheran on February 27, 1858; the Episcopal on

April 15, 1856. The Methodist, while holding services in homes and the county commissioner's house as early as 1836, didn't build their house of worship until 1840 or 1841. The Catholics built their church in 1856 or 1866. The German Luthern Church of Red Oak was organized in 1855; the Bunker Hill Church in 1856. The West Bureau M. E. Church was organized in 1832, meeting in the Newton Schoolhouse, while the Wesleyan Methodist was organized in 1843 and also met in a schoolhouse.

Q: I believe we have given quite a resumé of the various interesting facets of Bureau Coutny. Now, let's get back to its first white settler and talk about him and his family, Vera, do you know where he was born and something about his parents?

A: Wes, Merle, Henry Thomas was the son of Arthur and Mary Waynes Thomas and was born in Harrison County, Virginia, in 1800. The family of Arthur Thomas moved westward as did that of his brother, Reverend John Thomas and wife Sarah Owen Thomas. Arthur was a captain in the War of 1812 and he and his son John met tragic death when a band of Indians scalped them and hung them from a branch of a tree. Their bodies were found the next day by a searching party sent to locate them. This took place near Bellefontaine, Ohio, so the bodies were buried there. Henry, being twelve years of age at the times, is thought to have been placed in the home of his uncle, Reverend John Thomas. As the families were chiefly farmers, they bought and sold and acquired some wealth. They left their Ohio homes and friends and came to Illinois, perhaps being tempted by news of the lead mines near Galena, Illinois.

The first recordings of Henry Thomas' business transactions at our county courthouse is in the Edwardsville Book A, page 103 when he sold

24 quarter sections of land, that's 3,840 acres, to Richard Bibb, Junior, of Russelville, Kentucky, in 1826 and 1827. Then in the Putnam County Book Number 1, page 624, he sold the southeast quarter of Section 36-14-6 to Henry Sweet. In Bureau County he acquired an eighty acre tract for each of his six daughters. These all lay adjacent to and north of his home quarters.

Q: Besides farming, did he have other interests?

A: Indeed, there are many "firsts" connected with his life history while in Bureau County and that of the county township in general: he was the first permanent settlement in Bureau County; he built the first house in Bureau County that upon his claim; he was the father of the first white child born within the county. That was Mary Thomas, his third child. She was born January 15, 1830. The first ground plowed in the county was done by Henry Thomas on June 10, 1828. The first fort built in the county was Fort Thomas during the Black Hawk War of 1832. The first post office in the county was the home of Henry Thomas. The first postmaster in the county was Henry Thomas in 1831. The first cabin built for a temporary home was that of Henry Thomas. In 1834 Mr. C. C. Corss was the first to buy any article in Princeton. This was a horse collar bought at the store of Mr. Haskill. Bureau Township was the first to consolidate six one-room schools into its present District 250. This was the first consolidated school in Bureau County. The first wedding was, as I mentioned earlier, that of Abram Stratton and Sarah Baggs.

Q: Do you know any facts about him or his family? Are they still living in Bureau Township?

A: Henry Thomas and wife Mary, or Polly, had two sons and six daughters. When they came to Bureau Township they had a son, Austin. In October of that year, which was 1828, daughter Laura was born, but since Mrs. Thomas returned to Tazewell County to be with relatives for the arrival of the blessed event, Laura is not given the honor of being the first white child born within the county. In January of 1830 daughter Mary was born and she is given that honor. Other children born to the couple were Sarah, who married Theron Lumry; Harriett, who never married; Emily, who married first Jacob Houck. He was killed during the Civil War and she then married Robert Jackson. Henry, who was bitten by a rattlesnake as a young baby playing on the floor of their cabin; and Electa, who married Charles Martin. Of these children, none spent their entire -- entire lives in Bureau County but Emily settled in Bureau Township before her marriage to Robert Jackson and some of their children spent their entire lives on her home place. To date only one great-grandson of Henry Thomas still lives in Bureau Township and that is Major Jackson, who was born in 1896. Several great-granddaughters have lived their entire lives within the limits of Bureau County though.

When Mrs. Thomas returned with her new daughter, Laura, she brought with her to Bureau Township a niece, Elizabeth Baggs, whose father had drowned leaving the mother with several children. Elizabeth was a young girl of twelve years of age at that time and she continued living in the Henry Thomas home until her marriage to George C. Hinsdale. When Elizabeth was fourteen years old, an Indian chief came to the cabin one day to buy her to make a wife for his son. Mr. Thomas, thinking it was a joke, agreed to swap the girl for the chief's pony. Next day he, with

some of his friends and his son who came to claim his bride, called on Mr. Thomas to carry out the trade. Mr. Thomas told him that she did not belong to him and that he could not trade without her parents' consent. The chief insisted on the trade, but when he found it could not be done -- (PAUSE) when he found it could not be done, he became very angry, saying as he left that there was no reliance in the promise of a white man.

Q: That must have been a narrow escape for Elizabeth. Are there other experiences with the settlers that you might tell us about?

A: Well, one day a strange man came to the home of Abram Stratton and his wife Sarah Baggs, who was a sister of Elizabeth Baggs, and looked around giving no reason for his curiosity. Mrs. Stratton asked who he was but Mr. Stratton did not know. She asked what he wanted, and Mr. Stratton said he did not know but thought he wanted to jump their claim. With such suspicion, Mr. Stratton asked his wife to pack a light lunch for him and he would start immediately for Dixon. It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon. However, Mr. Stratton started walking and arrived at the land office in Dixon just as it opened the next morning. He went in and entered his land, then went outside to rest. Up came this strange man who had visited the Stratton home the previous day. He entered the land office and said he wished to enter a piece of land and gave a description of it. The land agent told him that this piece of land had been entered by Mr. Abram Stratton who was sitting outside. Thus, only by a few minutes was the home of the Strattons saved.

Q: It looks like the one that got the land entered first was the one that was the owner whether he really was the settler or not.

A: The complete simplicity of Henry Thomas is fully exemplified by a story of Alexander Boyd, who called at the early settler's house to electioneer for a certain man for sheriff. He finally told Mr. Thomas his business. When Mr. Thomas said, "No, I'll not vote for him for sheriff because the last election I voted for a certain man for sheriff and the very next day after he was elected, he came out and served me with a hatfull of papers. No, indeed, I don't need a sheriff." The cream of this joke is Mr. Thomas was a man who was honest, peaceable, quiet, and was never in debt or had lawsuits, and the fact was he was probably as little troubled by officers serving papers, unless summonses to act as jurymen or something of that kind, as any man ever in the country. But he stuck to his joke and would not go near the election.

Q: How did the children react to the Indians when they were seen approaching?

A: That can best be answered by relating a story about the children of Samuel Fay. This being such an unsettled area, Indians would roam about at will, some friendly to the white man and others not. The children did not know how to judge which were the friendly ones and so they lived in great fear and would run to what they thought was safety when they saw an Indian approaching. The children of Samuel Fay would hide under the bed. As the children peeped -- or as the Indians peeped through the windows and saw the children run for this spot they considered it a very amusing incident and laughed heartily.

Q: Tell me something about the scenery of Bureau County at this time.

A: Bureau County contains no high peaks nor deep valleys. Still it is not without scenery. The high rolling prairie in the northwest and the

timber along the creeks is as beautiful scenery as nature can give.

Before there were houses or any evidence of civilization, the prairies were covered with flowers of every hue, presenting a beauty of landscape not met with today. The water in the streams was as clear as crystal at all seasons of the year, as no plowing had been done to muddy their current. Almost every day deer were seen feeding on the prairies, and the wild turkeys were heard in the groves. At night the howling of the wolves would make one feel far from civilization.

Q: Was it very hard to take out a claim in those early days?

A: No, you simply staked your claim, got it recorded, and the government issued deeds for as little as \$1.25 per acre. Fences had to be built and these consisted mostly of rails and made crooked so that they were hog tight. Later they set out hedge plants which made fences. These proved a nuisance and were pulled out and replaced with posts and woven wire as it became available.

Q: How did the farmers work their ground for planting?

A: The ground was plowed with a wooded plow, with an iron edge, drawn by oxen or horses. All they had to level the ground with was wooden frame harrows. Wheat was usually the first crop on the soil as they thought it did better than corn. Fields averaged about twenty acres so that was all one man could care for. When they were ready to plant corn they marked out the ground with a single shovel plow going each way across the field, and then they dropped the corn by hand and covered it with a hoe. To cultivate it, they plowed it with one horse and a single shovel plow, going twice between each row. Sometimes instead of picking the corn from the field, they cut and shocked it for fodder for winter

feed, the corn being shucked out in the barn. After the corn was harvested, wheat was sowed by hand in the cornstalks. In the spring the cornstalks were cut down with a corn knife. The oats were sowed in the spring by hand. When harvest time came they were cut by hand with a cradle, raked by hand, and tied in bundles with a strand of the straw and shocked. Later they used reapers to cut the grain and tied it by hand. The threshing was done with flails on the barn floor. Oh, another word about the cradle. It was something like a scythe. On the handle were four fingers the shape of the scythe blade, the first one being the length of the blade, the others each being a trifle shorter.

Q: What did the settlers do with their surplus grains?

A: Well, the nearest markets were Peoria and Chicago. The grain was hauled there by oxen or horses, the trip taking a week or ten days. Later a market opened up at Hennepin and DePue and one at Peru. They received about fifty cents a bushel for the grain but had to take half in cash and the other half in merchandise.

Q: Life was certainly slow in those days compared to times now and you certainly had to work very hard for what little you got. Do you have more stories about this early life?

A: Yes, at first the cabins were merely log cabins, some only three-sided with a blanket hung on the fourth side for a door. Later in the timber south of the West Bureau bridge, C. C. Corss built and operated a saw mill which was run by water power. The lumber was sawed at this mill that was used to build the first schoolhouse in Bureau Township. In the year 1846 C. C. Corss and Mr. George Hinsdale built a larger one on Mr. Hinsdale's land. It was run by water power, the water coming

from the West Bureau Creek. They built a dam across the creek to hold the water which ran the wheel that ran the saw. When the water was high they ran day and night but they did not always get the logs all sawed before the water would get too low. This mill ran for about seventeen years, sawing the lumber for many early settlers' houses. Among them was the house on the land of C. C. Corss and it still stands today. However, all that is left of this mill today is a part of one sill, a part of the bank of the mill pond above the mill, and the mill race.

Q: Were there other kinds of mills used?

A: There were mills along Bureau Creek run by water power to grind the grain into flour, but when the water was low the grain had to be hauled to Rock River to be ground.

Q: What kind of life did the women folks have during those early days?

A: The wives of the pioneers had to spin the yarn to knit their socks and mittens. They had their own wool part of the time, and not having a carding machine, they had to take it sometimes to Rock River to have it carded. They would spin the yarn and also knit by candlelight. They had to stand at first to spin the wheel and run it with their foot. Finally they got one where they could sit. I mentioned their working by candlelight. Since there were no lamps, they had to use candles which they made themselves. They bought the candle wicking and took a small hazel stick and hung the wicking double over it, then dipped it into melted tallow. When it was set they would dip it again, doing so until it was the size they wanted, putting half a dozen on a stick and having several sticks which made several dozen candles at a time. Later they used molds by putting the wicking in the center of the mold and filling

it with tallow.

Q: It seems like the settlers cared for their needs by using whatever they had at hand rather points to the fact that perhaps things were very expensive. Can you site any proof of this?

A: Well, take postage for instance. They did not use postage stamps at first. The one receiving the letter paid the postage, which was twenty-five cents. No envelopes were used. The letters were written on fools cap or large sheets of writing paper, one-half only being written on. It was then folded in such a way as to form an envelope, sometimes being sealed with a drop of sealing wax. Postage dādn't always remain at twenty-five cents. At one time it was lowered to ten cents and in 1846 it was lowered to five cents. Then the whole system was changed so that the sender paid the postage, it being three cents and later dropped to two cents. The stage routes were replaced by railroad. The offices were built in the towns where for years people went to get their mail. In 1901 the great rural system started, bringing the mail daily to the house doors.

Q: Burials are quite expensive today. Can you tell me how they were cared for in those days?

A: Well, Henry Thomas and his wife were buried on their farm. Usually the neighbors and relatives dug the graves and cared for them after the burial. However, C. C. Corss set aside a two acre plot on his farm for burial purposes only. No charge was made for burials as long as the neighbors would dig the graves. However, with the change in times and as people had more money, it became harder to find neighbors able to donate their services so in 1967 the first charge was made for a burial

in this cemetery. Quite a number of Bureau County's pioneers are buried in this plot. Henry Thomas and his wife's bodies were removed from their farm and placed in the cemetery. C. C. Corss and his wife are buried with well-marked graves as are George C. Hinsdale and his wife, Samuel Fay and his wife, Isaac Hill and wife, George Mowry and wife, Robert Jackson and his wife, Dad Joe Smith and his wife, also his son Nicholas Smith and two wives, and Job Hill and his wife. Both Robert Jackson's wife and Job Hill's wife were daughters of Henry Thomas.

Another cemetery within the limits of Bureau Township is located north of the Bureau Township School and is called the Roggy Cemetery. Most of the bodies buried there have been removed and buried elsewhere due to the fact the cemetery was never cared for.

Q: Do you know when Henry Thomas died?

A: Yes, it was during the year 1843. He had made his will and it is recorded in the county courthouse and dated in February, 1843. He passed away soon after making this will.

Q: Vera, I know that you have spent a great deal of time and effort in getting this information together. I doubt if anything like this had ever been assembled, and it is so very much appreciated because these are the things that we want to remember and will be forgotten some day if something like this isn't done. Now, I also know that you spent a great deal of your life in teaching children and I think that that is something also that should be given a great deal of credit. Tell me something about it.

A: Yes, I graduated from high school and in those days, one could take a teacher's examination and get certified. That's how I got my start

in the teaching field. I. . .

Q: What year was that?

A: That was 1921. And I had to teach school in order to further my education in college. However, my father did see that I got my first summer course before I did any teaching at all. So that's the way I worked it, going to school during the summer and teaching during the year. In all I taught forty years at full time and five years at part time. I've been retired now about six years.

Q: Forty-five years teaching. That's wonderful. Okay, I just thank you so very, very much for the time. Enjoyed it very much.

Janet Kankaala
Transcriptionist

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