

Rice River and Beaver Townships – John and Elsie Bottila

Interviewed by: Margaret Sherman 10/30/1995

Transcribed by: Jennie Hakes

Cassette tape label: **Rice River & Beaver Township – 10/30/95, John & Elsie Bottila**

Note

This was a very interesting tape. The people are looking at and commenting on plats of the townships being discussed; just listening to the tape doesn't give you all the information because you can't see the maps. I am sorry I didn't catch a lot of the names; most of them sounded Finnish and I had some trouble understanding the accent. Perhaps someone could find the map and correct my misspells and omissions. It would be nice to file a copy of the map along with the hard copy of this transcription. I included maps of the townships at the end of the transcription. – Jennie Hakes

Side A

Introduction

Margaret: The date is October 30, 1995. I'm Margaret Sherman, now Commissioner of District 5 in Aitkin County. And I'm interviewing John and Elsie Bottila from the Rice River community and we're talking about the former Rice River – er, Riverside School that was built in 1918; now is the Rice River Township Hall. The township owns it, but it's also being used for many community activities as well as the Rice River Senior Center. And so we'll continue on with our discussion. It happens to be in Township 46, Range 23, Section 8, and it's right on State Highway 65, south of East Lake.

The Riverside School

So we'll continue our discussion now. Tell me more about the Riverside School. You feel that it was built the year of the 1918 fire, John? Was that correct?

John: Yeah, it was. Yeah.

M: OK. And it continued as a four-room –

Elsie: No...

M: Two-room.

E: First, the one room to begin with.

M: Oh, one room to begin with.

E: And then later on they built the... added another room to it.

M: OK.

E: So they had two teachers.

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J: In 1936, they added on that extra room.

M: OK. And when it was torn down and the Senior Center was built, do you have any idea when that was?

E: Oh, dear. (unintelligible)

M: I do know that, let's see, when my parents had their 60th wedding anniversary – which would have been in 1975 – it was there then. So... But maybe we can add that information when you find that information.

J: I don't exactly know, but... (pause) it must have been after the '50s.

E: Yeah. Well, remember when they tore that Rice River Hall floor...

M: They used that flooring from the old Rice River Hall.

E: The dance hall.

M: The dance hall, OK. OK.

J: No, the floor was used from the school.

E: Well, I wondered (unintelligible).

M: From this school?

J: Yeah, because they burned that old Rice River Hall, and the floor wasn't ever torn out of that, yeah.

John Bottila's family

M: I see. Uh huh. OK. OK. John, maybe you want to add a little bit now. Actually, your home where you are – were you born and raised then in Section 24 of Rice River Township?

J: No, I was born in St. Louis County.

M: Oh, you were born in St. Louis County.

J: Biwabek, Minnesota.

M: Where?

J: Biwabek.

M: Oh! OK. Biwabek, yeah. In fact, I was just to Giant's Ridge, so I know where that is, yeah.

J: But I must have been a little baby when they moved, because I don't know nothing about them...

M: OK, so who was the first child born, then, in your family here?

J: In my childhood?

M: Uh huh.

J: Daisy.

M: Oh, Daisy was born here.

J: Yeah, she would have been 91 years old now July 1, if she would have lived a couple more weeks.¹

M: OK. So can you tell me how old you are, John?

J: How old she was?

M: How old you are?

J: Who, me? 88.²

M: You're 88. OK. So actually, you were born in Biwabek and Daisy was born there, too?

J: I think she was born in Rice River.

M: Oh, she was born in Rice River.

J: Or Beaver Township. Either one.

M: OK.

J: Because, ah, she was born 1904, and they used to associate with a family by the name of Anderson in Beaver Township. She was born in Beaver Township.

M: I see, OK. And then, so... and then you were born in Biwabek, and then who came next, then?

J: Stella.

M: Stella. Where was she born?

J: Rice River.

M: Oh, she was born here in Rice River?

J: All the rest of them were born here.

M: OK. And what year was that, then?

J: Stella was born in...

M: Probably 1905 or so? Is she 90 yet?

J: She was... I'd have to look it up. She died, too, you know.

M: Yes, I understand that. I'm real sorry to hear that. Yeah. But then there... all the rest of them were born here...

¹ If he means July 1, 1995, Daisy would have been born in 1904.

² He would have been born in 1907.

J: All the rest were born at that place, you know.

M: So you're probably one of the oldest families...

J: Right now, yeah.

M: ...in Rice River. And of course, the Orjala's - Elsie's family – was here many years, too. Were they here before your family?

J: I don't think so.

M: No.

J: I had an aunt, she was a midwife, you know. I think the rest of them were all born here – she took care of that.

Rice River Township

M: I see. Uh huh. OK. Well, as you look at the map, here John, what else can you identify if I'm a tourist coming to Rice River? What could I locate on my own, if I had a map? What could I find here that... I would imagine... Is part of the part of the refuge, now, part of Rice River Township, or not? That isn't it? It's Lee Township, where the refuge starts, right?

J: No, I think that's Davidson Township.

M: Yeah, Davidson and part of Lee, probably. I think there, where Engstroms were, and also where Freemans are, that's Lee.

J: That's...

M: Lee Township. Yeah. Uh huh. OK. But what else could you see here that's history?

Green Valley School

M: On, let's see, on County Road 57, there was another school in there, and it later was used for a church.

J: That was closed. There was a school here, you know, where Kangas is, in Section 10 line there. That's where I went to school to begin with.

M: OK. Oh, that's where you went to school.

J: Yeah, that's where... I started there, but then they moved the building down the line down by that Randa's place. Because they gave them an acre of land so they moved it over there.

M: Where Ina Randa's farm was. Uh huh. So, was that Ano Randa's father's farm, then?

J: Yeah.

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M: Oh, it was. That was... Oh, I see. OK. So actually that, where Asa Kangas, that was where Loretta Olson's, they had that.

J: That's right.

M: So that would have been in Section 10. OK. Section 10, and then that was called what school? Do you remember?

J: (unintelligible)

M: I wonder if that's the one that...

J: Well, there was Riverside, Green Valley, and Sunnyside, so that was Green Valley School.

M: Oh, that was the Green Valley. OK. Uh huh.

J: I lived about 5 miles from that school. We... when we come here, they used to have a bus, horses. And all the kids come here (unintelligible).

M: Was that kind of an enclosed bus?

J: Yeah, they had a canvas over it, yeah.

M: Yeah. I've seen picture of those and it's hard to believe that kids could keep from freezing. Although I suppose on the real cold days, you didn't have school.

J: They had a little stove there, a little heat, too.

M: Uh huh, OK. And then they moved that, then, to...

J: To Section 12.

M: To Section 12. OK. And that was there, then, until... It was a school, and then it was a church, and then...

J: Well, they built a new school there, in 1920, I think it was '27 or somewhere. They built a new school.

M: Oh, they did.

J: Yeah. And that was a church after that.

M: OK.

J: The old school was torn down.

M: OK. OK. That burned now? I went by and it wasn't there.

J: Yeah. Somebody burned it, yeah. I don't know why. There was a fire, yeah. Some hunters owned it, and I don't know why they burned it, but they did.

M: Oh, that's a shame.

J: Who was that, now? (seems to be talking about someone who just walked by).

E: George (unintelligible).

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M: So, anyway, then anyway they still called it the Green Valley School, even when it was moved.

J: Yeah, it was called Green Valley School.

E: Did John tell about the first school they had?

J: Yeah.

M: The Kangas place?

E: Yeah.

M: On Section 10. And then they moved that to Section 12, and then that old school was torn down, and then they built the new school, and then that, then, was later a church, right?

E: Um hm.

M: A Lutheran church.

J: Yeah.

E: Yeah, it was a Lutheran church.

M: Uh huh.

E: I know, because Gene (?) Randa, not Gene Randa, but Helen and Gene (can't make out the last name) got married there, you know, because we built it that way.

M: And Arvid and Marlys, and Beatrice and Bart. That would be Arvid and Marlys (unintelligible).

J: They had funerals there, too.

M: Yes. Um hm. OK. So as you look at the map, Elsie, what other thing sticks out in your mind that would be a tourist attraction or some history that people would enjoy knowing the location?

E: What about the Rice River Cemetery?

M: Yes, that is... let's see.

J: Section 9.

M: Section 9. OK. Section 9 is the Rice River Cemetery, and...

E: There's a lot of older people that families are buried there.

M: It's well kept.

E: Um hm.

M: OK. And it looks like there's probably about 5 acres there.

J: Yeah, there is.

E: This summer, they cleared it. They got more area there now. It's much bigger.

M: Uh huh. OK. And as we're going along down 57, you know, actually, right off from 57 in Spalding Township is where my grandmother came to.

E: And I (unintelligible) the Davises there. Yes.

M: So I hope that gets into the Spalding history, because that's kind of where our roots were as well.

The Rice River Dance Hall

E: And then in the corner where the (unintelligible) cemetery is, that Rice River dance hall was located.

M: Yes, it was.

E: Right there in the corner.

M: Uh huh.

E: On Highway 57.

M: And that's torn down. In fact, one time when Vince and I came through there, it was still standing, but...

E: But these people that bought that property got rid of it. It lasted there for many years.

M: I thought it was in pretty good shape at that time.

J: I understand that was all done by free labor there, that first hall. There was only 1 man on the payroll.

M: Oh, is that right?

J: (unintelligible) they would take up the (unintelligible) and everything... 1915 I think someplace there.

M: It was built in 1915?

J: Yeah.

M: And it stood the 1918 fire, too, didn't it?

E: Oh, yeah.

M: Yeah.

E: John was a janitor at that hall for many years. Caretaker.

M: Is that right?

E: (Laughs)

M: Oh, we had many good dances there, didn't we? I think of Bill and Helen's wedding dance, was there.

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E: Ours was there.

M: Or maybe it was another... no, I guess Bill and Helen's probably was in Lawler.

E: Where was Bill and Helen's?

J: Huh?

E: Where was Bill and Helen's wedding dance?

J: They had it in Lawler.

M: Yeah, but I do remember seeing...

E: Ours was in 1934.

M: That's a few years ago, right?

E: (Laughs)

J: The best dance floor they had around here at that old restaurant.

M: It was a good one, you bet. You bet. OK. So anything else that you can think of down there? Where are the pretty leaves in the fall?

E: On Number 4 and Number 27. Beautiful leaves!

M: On 4 and on 27, huh? OK.

E: Um hm. Going into Aitkin on 4. They were just gorgeous this fall.

M: OK. And, uh (pause), and also on 27. So that would be on County State 8 Highway and State Highway 27.

E: And then on 27 is that old (unintelligible) one of the first...

M: ... oh, that's OK. That's fine. Is that Gerald Quade (not sure of the spelling) who owns that now?

E: Um hm.

M: OK.

E: His mother lives through the (unintelligible)

M: OK, on Section 28 is the old... and what was Mr. Beckman's ... Andrew's father's name?

J: John.

M: Oh, that was John. But then, there was also a John that was a son, right?

E: Mrs. Beckman's name was... what was her name? She used to deliver eggs.
(Laughs)

M: OK. If we think about that, we'll come back to it, OK? And any other, any other place on there that you can think of?

Jack's Shack

E: Well, what do you think of this Jack's Shack, because that was...

J: There was the old Follow (spelled phonetically, not sure what the name is) place, no, Dixon place.

E: That was beyond. But I mean on Beckman's land is Jack's Shack, and that was owned by Jack Beckman.

M: Yes.

E: That was the first place...

M: Was he Jacob, then? Was Jack Beckman...

E: Well, they called him Jack, but I suppose...

M: OK. So on Section 28, um, (she is talking out loud while writing her notes) Jack's Shack first owned by – that was Jacob Beckman, huh?

E: Um hm. Jack, you know.

M: Yeah.

E: And Lillian. His wife, Lillian.

M: Yes. OK. I remember them well.

E: Well, it was a small, small log building there in the corner, and he had...

M: Yes.

E: ... and he had a gasoline station there and everything else.

M: Yeah.

E: Another one that had a little station on the place used to be Leamington, Nils Leamington. Out on Number 4. By Rush River.

M: There by where Bodie's, then?

E: Yeah, my brother, John, lived there for a while. And Laux's, John Laux's used to live there. Leamington was the first... William Leamington, I think his name was, the father. And then his son, he had a little shop. And we used to go down the river with the... down Rice River with our boats, and we'd stop there at his little place. He had candy and that kind of stuff to sell, you know? (Laughs)

M: Uh huh. Had a store...

E: Well, it's gone now, but it used to be...

M: Yeah.

E: The early... that must have been in the '30s.

M: Is that right?

E: Yeah, because...

J: Yeah, '30s. Here on 7 there was always the Dixon place if you went too far, and the Follow place...

E: Yeah, they didn't go far, but they sure (unintelligible)

J: And the dam right there.

M: OK. And then...

E: And then there were Siro's and Beckman's and Karvonen's houses on that south road that went way in the sticks there.

M: Can you point that out to me? Is that that 27, Section 27, is that it? Where Karvonen's house? I remember them coming to the store when I worked at the Co-op Store, and I never did know where they lived, but I thought it was down that road. No?

(Sounds of them trying to find it on the map. Can't make out the words, though)

M: Was it a... see, it shows where there is, probably a very poor, poor traveled road.

E: They used to call it the corduroy road, because Alma Lundeen wrote a book on it, and so many people have it and they just love them books.

M: Oh. Alma Lundeen?

E: Uh huh. Alma Lundeen. Wayne Lundeen's wife.

M: OK.

E: He was a schoolteacher. Both of them were schoolteachers.

M: OK. So that would tell about that road and the people living in there.

E: (unintelligible). They got the book there.

M: Uh huh.

E: That's on 27, anyway.

M: It's off from 27 and in Section 27, do you see that road going south here, would that be it?

E: Different names. (unintelligible)

M: I hope I have the other plat map. Let's see.

Section 27

E: Well, here! Now I see it. Way up here. (sounds like "Hay") Anderson and Howard Anderson, they still own that property. And this stretch here, that would be almost 34, isn't it.

M: Yes, yes. But that was the road that corduroy comes from.

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E: Yes, they were the last ones on that, on that road, and the Siro's were across from Anderson's.

M: I see. OK. Was there any school down there years ago, or did they have to come to...

E: No. The school was on 27...

J: Sunnyside.

E: ... a little ways from Beckman's.

M: Oh, that's where Sunnyside was.

E: Yeah, on the south side of 27.

M: OK, does that...

E: Across from Kjalmer Hooder's.

M: OK, where Hovde's are now, huh?

E: Kjalmer Hooder's, this was. It would be across from here. This (unintelligible) that would be in 28, then.

M: OK.

J: (unintelligible) across from Kjope place.

E: Well, yeah, Kjope's, too...

M: Did Hooder's buy Kjope's?

E: No. Hooder's are... live on that road...

J: Haltonen.

M: Haltonen.

E: Jacob Haltonen.

M: I remember them.

E: Yes, they had that place where John Renape live now. And he was one of the first School Board members, too, or the Town Board members. Haltonen, my dad, and Anderson...

M: I remember Mrs. Haltonen because she had such a large goiter. Yeah, remember that?

E: Um hm. Yeah.

J: I thought Mr. Haltonen made the township buy that Rice River (unintelligible).

M: Oh, Mr. Haltonen did? Oh.

J: ...Rice River...

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E: This was where the river runs here.

M: Sure, sure. Yeah, that would be Section 21, where now it's...

E: Well, yeah, Kjope's... Kjope's was uh, the school was across here. Sunny...

M: Stanley Davis? Russell Nielsen? Is that where...

E: Maybe that's where Kjope's would be. Yeah, so that's... across from there was the school.

M: OK. There's one acre in there. Is that...

E: That's (unintelligible) where the school was.

M: OK.

E: It was in (unintelligible) there. Sunnyside School, they called it.

M: Sunnyside School. OK. I'm trying to think, then, let's see, that would be Section 27 actually, wouldn't that? And Section 21, the Hooter place would be the Haltonen place.

E: Jacob and... Jacob Haltonen?

M: Was it H-A-L-T-O-N-E-N?

E: Jacob? H-A-L-T-O-N-E-N.

M: Yeah. OK. I remember that. OK. And he was probably one of the first school board members, er, township members, and named -- probably named Rice River Township.

J: No, I think Oscar Anderson.

E: Oscar Anderson and my dad was when (unintelligible). I think I got that information someplace.

M: OK. Who did you say was the other one? Haltonen, Orjala, and...?

E: And Anderson. Oscar Anderson.

M: Were they related then to Esther Anderson?

J: Which Esther?

M: The Esther that used to live in Beaver?

E: No, no, no. John's related to that one.

M: OK. Who are you related to?

J: Esther. Yeah. I was her guardian for over 30 years when she got (unintelligible).

M: Oh, is that right? Yeah. OK. Now, anything else here that you can fill in? We go down quite a ways down 27.

E: Then there was that... there was that Henry Kann there, too, on that road.

M: Oh, that was on 27.

E: Um hm. Beyond that. Just beyond that Anderson road there.

M: I remember Henry Kann. Yeah. Yes. So that would be Section 27 – 34. OK. And that was K – A – N – N, right?

E: Kann? Well, just K – A – N – N.

M: OK. Anything else that you can think of?

E: Supposed we missed the highway (unintelligible).

M: No, that's fine. I can always do that, Elsie.

E: Then when you go on that, after Henry Kann's, then there's those, you mentioned those Follow place.

J: They're beyond.

E: ...Henry Kann's.

J: The same place (unintelligible). That goes further up. And he burned in the house there. The house burned, yeah.

M: That was Dixon or...

J: Dixon.

M: Oh, Dixon burned.

J: Yeah.

E: D – I – X – O – N. Dixon. What was his first name?

J: That I have no idea. Anyway, they...

M: Was that in the '30s, then?

J: That was way before. I don't know. I don't even remember him.

E: I bet his 20s.

J: He may be dead before '20.

E: Oh.

M: OK.

J: (unintelligible) married one of the girls, Dixon, and John Field, Jr. married (unintelligible) married her. (Unintelligible) ... next place, it was 65 here, there was a...

E: It was on the same side as the railroad...

J: Helmann Ball (sic?) was the name anyway.

M: OK.

E: B – A – L – L.

J: He had the TB first...

M: Uh huh.

J: ...and Steve died, and then Mr. Ball had it, and they had some real husky son by the name of Oscar. He died of TB. Yeah. And there was about 3 girls, too, but I don't think the girls had it. Oh, Johnny Bodin (?) and one of the girls (unintelligible) from Rice River. And there was Hannah and – I don't know if you remember that Nyquist place south there by Lawler? Maybe you don't remember it – Tony Radda.

M: I remember...

J: Nygaard was his name. Mike (unintelligible)...

M: Oh, yes! Yes!

J: Yeah. Mike...

M: But that was on 27, down further.

J: Lawler.

M: Oh, I thought that was in Beaver Township.

J: No, no. That was in Lawler.

M: Sabo Township.

A murder

J: Sabo Township, yeah. They had there... goes down a big hill there, I don't know how far they had the place there. I don't know that people (unintelligible) was involved that, too, you know, that Hannah, her husband...

E: Hannah.

M: Uh huh.

J: Whether the wife was involved in that killing...

M: But didn't they come and hide someplace on Enkquist's place or something down here?

J: They hide all over here, they were looking for him.

M: Yes, I remember Mother saying that.

J: At first they shot that taxi driver from Duluth. By Carlton and Aitkin County line. They hired him to haul 'em. He had an old Shantler-Dart And they hired him. There was Hinkonen, and (unintelligible – he mentions two other names I can't make out). They were all involved in that.

M: So what actually was the reason they were trying to kill the man, then?

J: I don't know.

M: No one seems to know.

J: Nobody seems to know. That was just...

M: Yeah, but Mother used to say when we would go through Beaver Township then, to Moose Lake, you know, to my aunt's there in Barnum – she always would say, "Oh, that was so horrible!" You know. That was such a horrible thing. Everybody was so scared because they didn't know where they were, and then they found him in this house, or whatever. And the house is gone now. I think when they built 27 then, a lot of those houses were taken out of there.

E: This would make a lot of interesting storybook.

M: Yeah, they could write a...

J: Mike Pokenen, he was the sheriff at that time, and he...

M: Oh, was he?

J: I guess he (unintelligible) they were looking for them. They finally... This young fella, Lukonen (unintelligible) just north of Hemlock Lake, you know where that is.

M: Um hm.

J: He had a place there. And then they had a father by the name of Mari. That's what I can say, but I heard afterwards that the young fella, Lukonen, he was dating this Mary (unintelligible). And (unintelligible) wrote a letter to her. Something like there was a \$500 reward, you know, to whoever reported where they are, and she reported it. And that's why they got him first.

M: Ah.

J: And (unintelligible) why they got him into (unintelligible), and Mike Hinkonen, way up north in the woods, lumber camp, where they got him. He was working the lumber camp. Yes.

M: How many years did they have to stay in jail, then?

J: Well, it was like Mike Hinkonen, he got life, but he was lucky. He was lucky, he went nuts.

M: Ah.

J: Then he was in (unintelligible) in Hastings, Minnesota.

M: St. Peter?

J: Yeah. He was sentenced 1931 for life and he died 1933 already, yeah. And the young fella, he got out, because (unintelligible).

M: Is that right.

J: Because, you know, he was in Lawler maybe (unintelligible).

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M: Uh huh. So how many ended up dying, then? Just one. Or none? Did somebody... How many died in that shooting?

J: Oh, that's Nygaard.

M: Nygaard, OK.

J: That's what they say, he's the one that got killed, that Nygaard. And Hinkonen.

M: Hinkonen, too.

J: And then that taxi driver from Duluth, I think his name was Jones.

M: Oh. OK. Huh. Well, anyway, that's interesting. But Mother never really knew the story, you know? She knew that that... and evidently if they were up north at Hemmila's, they were pretty close to my mother's! Where my mother lived.

E: Art Avo's lived up behind there...

J: And uh...

M: But I was thinking of Andrew Pella. Was he related, then, to Herman Pella?

J: No.

M: No relation.

E: The Beckman boy.

J: No.

E: John Beckman's son.

J: Who?

E: Andrew Beckman.

M: No, Andrew Pella.

E: Oh, Pella. OK.

J: All I know that he had a (unintelligible). He didn't have no relatives.

M: Oh, he didn't.

E: He was a bachelor.

M: OK.

J: As far as I heard, he kinda worked for the sheriff's department. (unintelligible)

M: Oh. Interesting. OK. Are there any Native American burial grounds in Rice River Township, or any communities that were Native Americans, where the Indians lived? Do you remember any area that...? Not when you were here, they were all in East Lake, then. OK. Yeah. OK. Any historic trails where... you know, before cars. I mean, did they come in on Rice River. I mean, I know that my uncles and my grandma then had a

sawmill on Rice River in Spalding Township. Was that a way to move logs, or anything...

J: They used go on the river, the logs.

M: So then if those logs were moved through on the river, then they probably were cut down in Rice River Township, right?

J: Well, it could have been, yeah. I don't know.

M: Yeah. Were there... well, there was Ken Freeman's sawmill.

J: Huh?

M: Ken Freeman's sawmill. That would have been...

J: Well, that was afterwards, I think.

M: That would have been in Section 6, right? Or was that in Lee Township?

J: I don't think he had anything in... I think it was further up.

M: That probably was...

J: ...the St. Croix Mill or what? I don't think so. (unintelligible)

M: There weren't any in Rice River Township.

J: No, I don't think so.

M: OK. Is there a... there's a cemetery over there by, by where that old church was, right?

J: Rice River, you mean?

M: Yeah.

E: There was no church there.

M: Well, when it was a school, and then it was a church, was there a cemetery behind there?

J: No.

M: No?

E: All we had was (unintelligible).

M: This is the Rice River Cemetery, huh?

E: But the... by this Wall Street that used to be by Hemmila, it used to be called... No, it's here, by Hemmila's here, that used to be old Wall Street that went to the east side. And they called it Wall Street because (laughs) he was (unintelligible).

M: You mean the one that cut across there?

J: Yeah, it runs by Section 8. Section 8 line it goes through... Number 10 where the Rice River Hall used to be, that first hall.

E: Yeah, it was there. Exactly to that corner.

J: Well, I never... know the people wonder why they call it a Wall Street, they've been wondering that. I never knew, either, but Alma Lundeen wrote that book, and she said they sent all the money, funds (unintelligible) so that's why they called it Wall Street.

M: (Laughs) And it was (unintelligible) that little Section 5 creek, too? Right? So there must have been a little bridge there.

J: Yeah, there was a bridge.

M: It's not there anymore, though, I suppose. Yeah. But that is where you went in to Arkin (unintelligible), right? That would be on the north part of...

J: See, there was no road...

M: ...Section 8 and 9?

J: ...from Rice River Hall, where your grandma (unintelligible). There was that one mile there was no road there. That was built about '77 (unintelligible).

M: I see.

J: Anyway, I know John (unintelligible) was the county commissioner at that time it was built.

M: Yeah. Someday I'm going to back and look at, you know, all of the county commissioners from day 1, too. See, Aitkin County was established in 1857 and the state of Minnesota was organized in 1858, so Aitkin County was a county before the state was a state. They were part of that territory, so I guess it was like part of... broken off from the St. Louis County area. So... And I don't know how Carlton County got involved there. I don't know when they came into existence.

OK. Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about that you can share with us?

E: Well, uh, did you want to know some of the... you mentioned some school board members that were... because there were 3 schools in Rice River.

M: Um hm.

E: And on this side, we haven't mentioned nothing on this side. Just on the east side.

M: Uh huh.

E: Uh – the south side. Um. Of course, John Salos lived right here next to us. John and Lena Salo. And the Kangas's lived here on this place. Anna and Victor Kangas.

M: I remember that.

E: And then they had a school there in the swamp. (unintelligible)'s father, they lived... (unintelligible) a teacher, Mrs. (unintelligible) or whatever it was, a teacher, first teachers

here? And seems to me when I would walk to school, it was in a low area. They had a shack where she stayed.

M: I remember that.

J: There was no school before that was built...

E: I know, but I mean, she lived in the shack and then they had the school here, see? Some of the teachers stayed at Jack (unintelligible), too. Boarded.

M: Mrs. ... and they lived on the corner, then, huh? (Unintelligible)

E: No, Jack (unintelligible) lived here. Right next to us.

J: Where Number 4 goes out.

E: No, that was later. But I mean when the (unintelligible).

M: When they sold the farm, then they built the little house on the corner.

E: Yeah, on the corner. That's later. Anyway, my dad was on the school board for years.

M: And that was John Orjala.

E: Um hm. My dad. Yeah, he was on the school board.

M: In fact, he was on the Co-op store board with my dad and Kjalmer (unintelligible)...

E: ... (unintelligible) on the Midriver Bank Board. Oh, dear. (unintelligible) was on the school board here, too.

M: Um hm.

(unintelligible – mentioning more names)

M: You know, somewhere along the way, we have to get all of these names down in a book, because I think of all of the old bachelors that used to live here and also... right.

E: (unintelligible) ...on this side. (unintelligible) lived along the east side for a long time, but then we moved on this side, too. (unintelligible) this little house on the highway here.

M: Yes.

E: And John Keebe

M: Yes.

E: (Laughs)

M: There are all those people, and it seemed like on holidays they were always invited to other homes. I'm thinking of Spalding Township. And I don't want to get this mixed up with Rice River Township. But, um, we always invited the bachelors for holidays.

E: (unintelligible)

M: Well, I really appreciate your taking time this evening and... this evening with me, and if there's anything else that you'd like to see added to the map, and we can... I can leave that with you, and I can also leave the paperwork.

E: Would it be of interest about John? John Audia. He was the first commissioner from this township, wasn't he?

J: No.

E: No?

J: From this area, yeah.

E: From this area, I mean. Who else?

J: There was somebody from McGrath before John Audia.

E: I meant from Isle.

(end of Side A)

Side B

M: ...in 1901. You know, how they came with horses and so on, I just can't imagine in the wintertime, getting your supplies. But maybe you got enough supplies in the fall of the year to last most of your winter, too. So that you didn't have to go to town. But I remember Dad saying that... I know, from the experience of working in that co-op store in East Lake, um, there was a tremendous business. Especially on milk check day.

J: Yeah.

E: It's too bad (unintelligible).

M: Yeah.

E: But anyway, I don't remember... when John was in the first (unintelligible) place they had behind, across from the road... his folks' farm on the Fourth of July. And they made a platform (unintelligible) (laughs) for the Fourth of July picnic and whatever and (unintelligible) ice cream cones or whatever. (Laughs)

J: We had the first ice cream cone truck. That was 1920. Dale was born. Right across from my home place. Dale was born that morning, too. 1920.

E: Yeah, on the Fourth of July, yeah.

M: Well, I remember my folks had their wedding dance and they just built a platform and had a dance. That was 1915. Yeah.

J: Well, like the old Beckman's place, they used to have a lot of church services there.

E: Nick Beckman, he... Nick Beckman (unintelligible), too, didn't he? You know, a service business (?). And he (unintelligible) those babies.

Aitkin County Historical Society

M: Oh, yeah, I remember that. That was, um, John. John Beckman, yeah. Well, you know, coming that distance... say, for instance, a pastor would come from Aitkin or McGregor or wherever, that was a long way to come, right?

E: Um hm. The only one that used to come later in the years, remember Leivista? And who was that other one, John? That sang so loud?

J: (can't make out the first name) Niemi...

E: (again, can't make out the first name) Niemi.

J: ... was the first one...

E: ...the first one...

J: And Henry Sarvo was the other one. They was the first ones.

M: But your church services were in the Finnish language, right?

E: Um hm.

J: Yeah.

E: And mostly in the home. They had a lot of them in the homes.

M: Um hm. OK. If there's anything else that you want to tell me, otherwise I'll stop the tape and just say thanks for sharing with us, and we will...

E: (unintelligible) ...get it better in order.

M: That's fine. That's fine. And what I'm going to do, is I'm going to leave some papers with you, and then, as you think about it, you know, just write it down and we'll get it. Because we do have some time before we put this into a book.

E: Oh, you're going to do it...

M: Yeah. We're going to do... Actually, what we're going to do is a map. We've been talking a lot this evening about the old-timers of the Rice River community, but that's very important for the Historical Society. When people come to the Historical building and want to know something about their former residents of Rice River Township... They're going to try to get something put together and it's going to be a long, tedious job, but with the help of people like you, I'm sure they're going to get a lot of history out of it.

J: Yeah, well, there aren't too many old ones left.

E: They're all gonna go. John, of course, has a pretty good memory.

M: We'll just have to get a recorder for John and he could just keep telling stories. (Laughs) OK. Thanks so much! Sure. Thanks a lot.

(break in tape)

Home-made shingles

M: We're going to come back to John. John's got a real good story for us about log homes and how they cut their shingles. John, go ahead.

J: Well, they had white pine (unintelligible) about that length.

M: About a foot or a foot-and-a-half.

J: The real thing. And I can't remember exactly. But there was some kind of knife (unintelligible). They'd go around and around the table and make those shingles. I mean, they were the real thing, the shingles. Most of the house is that homemade shingles. They lasted a long time, too.

M: OK. And I remember seeing some of the old buildings with those on!

J: Then they had to saw their lumber, too. Yeah.

M: Sure.

E: Your dad made skis and coffins, too. John's dad. Used to make coffins.

M: Oh. So I suppose there were members of your family that didn't live – you lost some children in your family, too?

J: (unintelligible) At one time there was a lot of white pine here, you know.

And home-made coffins

M: And you made white pine coffins.

J: And, yeah, he made quite a few coffins, my dad.

E: For different people.

M: Yeah.

J: And he made 'em just (unintelligible). He kinda (unintelligible) them up a little bit. But I know he made for Abraham Anderson, Beaver, and some others here, too. Yeah. There was no undertakers here.

M: Sure.

J: No.

M: Did you ever have a chance to read the books, "The Immigrants?"

J: What?

M: "The Immigrants?" Have you read those books? There's also the movie, and I've seen the movie and I've read the books and they're really interesting, and it's – you know – very similar to what you're saying, how they made the coffins, and...

E: Yeah, and then a lot of logging I know when Dad was there. He (unintelligible) there in Lee Township and Rice River here, and they hauled a lot of timber from there. I used to go and cook at the campground (unintelligible). There was about 20 of us.

M: Yeah.

E: That was pretty...

M: Those logging camps, you know... people would travel from one location to the other to work, and bring the logs to the mill. I remember...

E: But they'd... first they'd get down the river, too, in the early days.

Beaver Township

M: Yeah. Well, what do you know about Beaver Township? Anything that you can help me with that?

J: I think, I think his name was John Mays, he was the first... one of the first settlers, he come to Beaver Township.

M: OK.

J: And I don't know who else, maybe Hepela's and Sepponen.

E: Leipola?

J: Yeah, I suppose Liepola was one of them, too, you know. And (unintelligible), I think they were early settlers, too.

E: Mays.

M: Um hm. John Mays.

E: Audeos.

M: There were Audeos that were... lived on that 27, County 27 south of Lawler there. I can't remember the first name, but there was... the son was like Arnie Audeo.

E: Nikolai Audeo.

J: Nikolai, yeah.

M: OK. I suppose it would be, today it would be Nicholas, I suppose.

E: Yeah.

M: OK. Um, and I imagine, if you... did I give you the map of Beaver there?

(sound of opening map)

M: What did I do with this... (unintelligible)

E: Up here. Mrs. Anderson (unintelligible). She was a long-timer. Because her mother came there in 1903, I think, from Finland.

J: Yeah.

M: See, there's still... Oh, Roy Audeo was another one.

E: Yeah, their sons.

J: Arnie. Ed.

M: Yeah.

E: John (unintelligible), too.

Schools in Beaver Township and township hall

M: Um hm. OK. Actually, as far as the schools were concerned, do you remember where they were?

J: Who?

M: The schools? The schools in Beaver Township?

J: Schools? There was one school by Yubera's there. (unintelligible) by Yubera's, right on that (unintelligible) by 27 there, by the side of the road. And then there was one by where old Beaver Hall used to be. Where they got, they built a hall, a township hall, there was a school there.

E: A dance hall.

J: Huh?

E: A hall.

J: No, they had a regular school there.

E: Yeah, but they had a hall, too, someplace.

J: They had a hall, too, yeah.

M: By (unintelligible)?

J: Huh?

M: By (unintelligible)? But, see, I remember at the county line there, Nevises were in the corner there, weren't there?

J: Nevis?

M: Yeah. Or they bought that.

J: They bought that, Nells and (unintelligible) they were... they bought... there was a business place there.

M: Yeah.

E: (unintelligible)

Aitkin County Historical Society

J: My folks used to get their first mail from Daver from Moose Lake (unintelligible) Minnesota. It's still on the map someplace, Ronald, Minnesota.

M: Uh huh. It's on here. You see here? That's Ronald. I didn't realize that that was Ronald. You know? All I remember that there was a county line tavern there on the corner.

J: It was (unintelligible)

M: Ronald was further west.

J: Yeah, this way.

M: Yeah. From there. OK. But now, where the Beaver church is in Section 27, OK? Was that always the church there? I mean, as long as you remember, was there a church there?

J: There was an old log church first, right close (unintelligible) there's a big hill there, and that's... it was a log church, it was a small church.

M: Uh huh.

J: Up this... What they got there now, why, that was built afterwards. As far as I know, John Randak and John Yubera built that church. That's what I heard. That's what I heard, anyway.

M: Uh huh.

J: Yeah.

M: John Okera and...

J: John Randak.

M: Yeah. OK. Um, and there is a cemetery there.

J: Cemetery right in that (unintelligible).

M: Um hm. And...

E: Beaver Hall was located...

M: And Beaver Hall was...

E: ...located right there where the...

M: Let me give you one of these so you can... (sound of rustling paper)

J: That's (unintelligible) that poster. That's Beaver Hall was right there, and the school was on the other end of the road.

E: Yeah, so they were both together there.

M: So actually where you go down, let's see, I'm trying to think. OK, look between Section 29 and 30 as you're going south there, now where May Makela lives?

J: May Makela?

M: Uh huh.

J: He lives...

M: That was Section 30? Right in the corner up there? See? That road does not go on the section line. 27 doesn't go on the section line.

J: Going towards Lawler?

M: Yeah. Actually, yeah. Was there a Beaver Hall or Beaver school close by there?

J: No.

M: That was further east, OK? So there was nothing in that corner there that you remember.

E: Well, then, going a little more east on 27, I think that's where the Beaver Hall was. On the north side. Where the school house used to. I remember that. (Small laugh)

M: OK. Was that close to...

E: Where (unintelligible). Yeah, Dean Hupta's name is there. Is on that road, isn't it, John? Um hm. Mike Scharof is on that road, too.

J: Mike Sharof is, yeah.

M: OK. A back road. OK. So then, in section...

J: (unintelligible – someone's name)

M: So between Section 20 and 21 on that road is where the Beaver Hall was. And school?

E: And the school? Wasn't there a school there, too? The first school house. Wasn't it there, John?

J: Yeah, that's... I don't think... there should have been May Mestala's (unintelligible). There's 2 miles to where Millward Township hall. But I don't know where Inkvist's went to school. Well, I don't know. They had to walk, you know.

M: Down to Millward?

J: Yeah, I don't know if they must have had a school there someplace, but I don't know.

M: OK. Well, I'm going to be working with Millward, too, and maybe I can ask them. But this is really good. And you say the Okara school was up there on 27 north?

J: Little ways from Yubera's. It was on a hill there, yeah.

M: OK. There's one acre of land. You think that might be it, huh? See, in the corner there? Where Richard Uker is? That probably has never been straightened out, unless there's a cabin there or something. You see, where that 79 acres is? It looks like 80

Aitkin County Historical Society

acres, but one acre must be designated for something else. OK. So, actually, there were 2 schools about 2 miles apart then?

J: Oh, yeah.

E: Um hm.

M: Ah hah. And was that called the Okara School?

E: Yes, I think that's what they called it. Um hm. And Okara... close by (unintelligible), you mean.

M: Yeah, up there by where Dick's road goes in there. Doris evidently is back in there.

E: Out there on that same road.

M: So, was it in off the road? Was it in off from 27 or was it right on that road, down that road?

J: Which road was that?

M: The Okara School.

E: Was it on... it was back on...

J: Beaver Hall... no, Beaver School.

E: There was the first school by Okara, Andrew Okara's.

J: It was right on back, right on the highway there. That 27. (unintelligible) It was right close to the road.

M: OK. Every 2 miles, then was a school. Because we didn't have buses. OK. So we've got the Beaver Hall, the Beaver School, and the Okara School.

J: And then there was that, I don't know what school you call that, was by Beaver Hall. It was a school, anyway, that's where they went, like Anderson's and all them from county line, I guess they all came there, yeah. Well, there was nothing. We had to walk to school, too, 2 1/2 miles.

M: Sure.

J: (Laughs)

E: He walked about 20 miles! We got (unintelligible). (Laughs) We had the longest distance. (Unintelligible)

M: I would imagine there probably were some other schools up there. I'm looking between Section 23 and 24, in that area. I don't know if there is anyone that had...

E: The Tivonen's, they live out there. I don't know what would be there, John.

M: Yeah. I bet there was a school there somewhere too. And probably it was called the Ronald School, huh?

E: Yeah, Ronald School.

Aitkin County Historical Society

J: Right.

E: There was a Ronald School

J: I know it could be, because all the kids from the county line they had to come there. (unintelligible).

M: Oh. OK.

E: Helen, Helen Okara lives there yet then. That spouse. Right there on 27.

M: Oh, she does?

E: Um hm. But her husband passed away.

J: Joe Okara. Joe, he died. Yeah.

M: So, actually, were Pelhonas (?) in Carlton County? Their house?

J: No, they were right...

M: They were right on the line there.

J: Yeah, where Timinens. (unintelligible)

M: Yes, Michael Timinens. That's between...

J: Victor Himonen and I don't know...

E: Weems. There's a Timinen...

M: Nancy Timinen.

J: Nancy. That's where Beltomas live.

M: Oh, OK.

J: South. South from 27 they lived. Yeah.

E: John lived on Rice River, on that side of the township, so he got news of that area better.

M: Ah hah. Actually, part of your land was in Beaver Township, right, John?

J: Yeah. My folks' land, it joined Beaver Township. Yes, next to Beaver Township, yeah. (Long pause) Yeah, there's Ronald there, I (unintelligible).

M: Yes. Somebody complained it wasn't on there, so... I'm going to look at my map here, because I don't remember seeing it. Yeah, it is on here, too. I've an older plat map here.

J: We got a postcard, I don't know, my mother's pictures were mailed from Ronald, Minnesota.

M: Oh, really?

J: Yeah. (Laughs)

Aitkin County Historical Society

M: So there was a Post Office?

J: Yeah, there was a Post Office.

M: And probably a store as well?

J: I don't know the mail got there, but that's what they had to get it.

M: Isn't that something?

J: Came from (unintelligible).

M: OK. Was there ever – getting back to Rice River Township now – but, was there ever a Post Office in Rice River Township that you're aware of?

J: No, not that I know of.

E: Um um.

M: You always got your mail in East Lake. OK.

J: The (unintelligible) used to get at Lawler, but then... then Oscar Johnson from McGregor, he had a route. He went, I don't know how, he went Lawler and then you know (unintelligible). And that 57 (unintelligible)? He used to come there and go to, I suppose you have to go down Wall Street and then go to McGregor, yeah. We had to go...

M: Carl Johnson was the other mail carrier.

J: Yeah, Carl was from East Lake (unintelligible), then Carl Johnson was there. Plus he had a different route. He went here on Freeman's road and then come back here and then come to the corner here and then he went 27 and then...

E: (Laughs)

J: That was a long route with the horses yet in the wintertime when the roads go bad, too.

M: Yes. And when you did get a car, the heaters in the car wasn't... they weren't the best. And not only that, but remember those little fans that you had to have to blow the frost off from the windshield?

J: Yeah. (Laughs)

M: Not too many cars on the road in those days, though. (Laughs) OK.

E: And the cars, they had that kind of hard plastic, you know, (unintelligible) after awhile. (Laughs)

M: Yeah. Imagine those Okaras, and most of those, then, went to Lawler to do their trading in Beaver Township.

J: Yeah. Well, but maybe first ones, there was no Lawler, there was nothing there. Most of them went to Moose Lake to begin with, first, too.

Aitkin County Historical Society

E: Didn't you say once that, who was that rolled that barrel of salt or something at Moose Lake?

J: Well, I don't know, but Hemila, Zachary Hemila's brother, he lived in that old schoolbus and they said that he rolled a barrel of salt from Moose Lake! (unintelligible) I don't know! (Everyone laughs)

E: Maybe he did.

J: But anyway, Art Vento he had a... you know, down in a basement, that's where he used to live. And he had a ox. Team of ox, you see, (unintelligible) you know?

M: Uh huh.

J: They say he went to Moose Lake, when he got back, why, he left the coffee in that coffee pot, it was cold. So he turned right back and went to Moose Lake with the oxen to get another coffee pot.

(Lots of laughter)

M: That's wanting coffee pretty badly, isn't it? I think I would have bought a can or something of coffee. Oh, that's interesting.

What do you know about Split Rock? I know there's a creek. Anything... any history there that you know of any...?

J: Well, Split Rock. I think you should connect...

E: Lundquist.

J: ...Lundquist about that.

M: OK. What was Ellen's maiden name before she married?

J: Huffenbeck. Huffenbeck.

M: Yeah, but before she married Huffenback.

J: Maki.

M: Oh, she was a Maki!

E: Um hm.

J: She was a Maki, yeah. They all used to live there, yeah.

M: Oh, OK. So, um, there were Makis married to Fields, too, weren't there? Not the Fields, not Bill Fields. But there's another Field from Beaver, isn't there? But they're not related?

E: No, they weren't there before (unintelligible) weren't they?

M: Oh.

E: Did he move to Aitkin? That Field? That's the one.

Aitkin County Historical Society

M: Yeah.

J: Oh, yeah.

M: That's Bob Field. But now, Ellen Maki was... See, there were all the Makis from Spalding Township.

E: It was Leonard Maki's brother to Ellen.

M: Oh, Leonard Maki is...

E: Yeah. He died now, but I mean his brother was a (unintelligible).

M: OK.

E: Um hm.

M: And actually, she's in Millward. Yeah. So she was Ellen Maki, sister of Leonard Maki.

J: Leonard Maki, he lived in Beaverville on 27.

E: Yeah, right on 27. His wife is still there.

J: Where that Ronald Post Office used to be, right across the road from that.

E: I know that's where it was.

M: OK. I'm thinking of Halverson. Carl Halverson, now that's in Carlton County.

J: That's Carlton County.

M: Yeah, OK. I'm trying to remember the people on that, on that road, and I don't travel it that often, since my grandpa... You know my grandpa lived with my aunt in Barnum, so we would travel that road quite a bit. And we'd also go through Otumba. And that way.

J: Oh, yeah.

M: To get to...

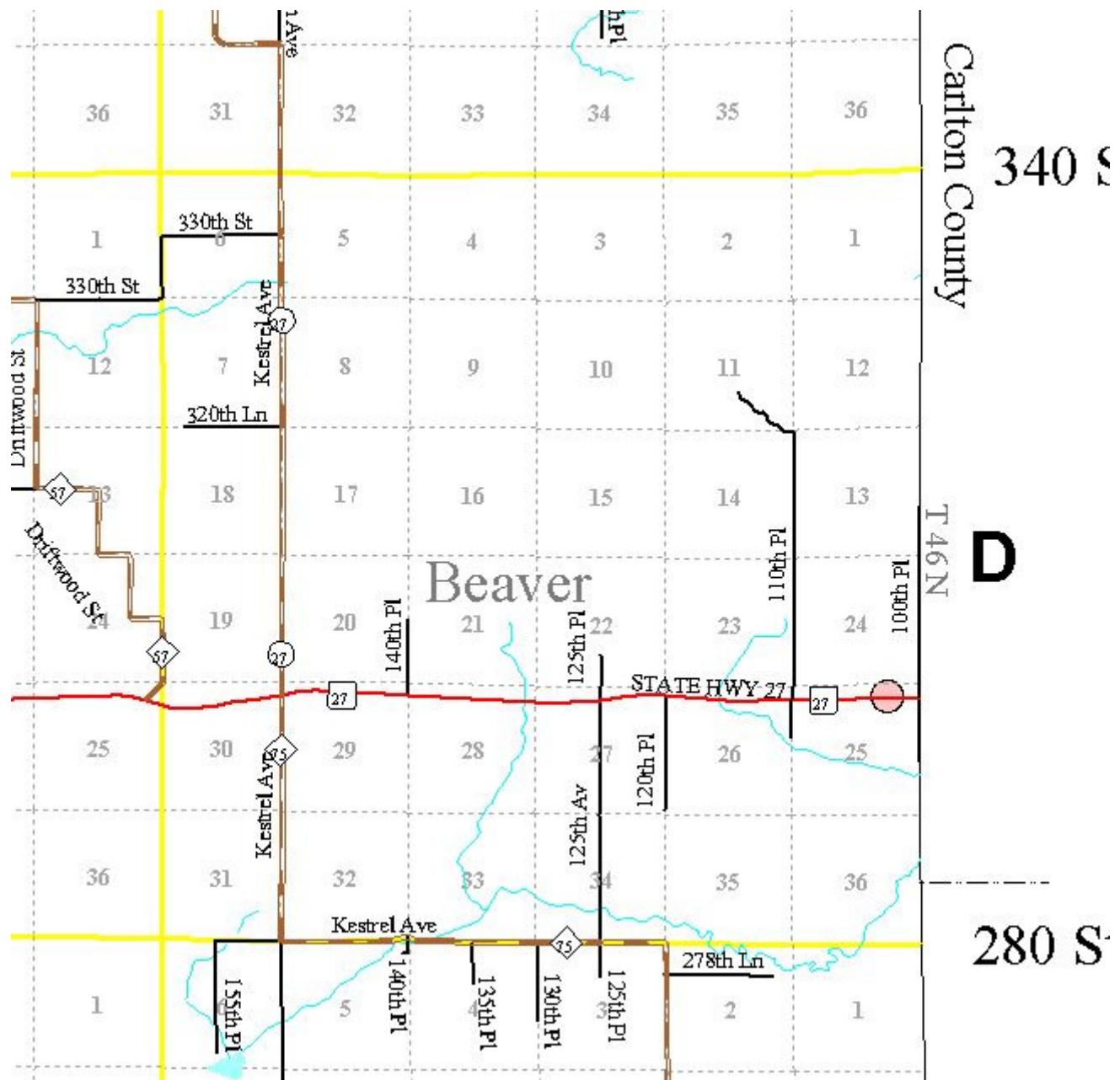
E: Have you contacted somebody in Spalding there?

M: Someone else has that. I thought maybe I would get that one, but somebody else is doing that one. Yeah. So. But I can leave a Beaver here, too. Let's see. Oh, you've got one. OK. You've got one Beaver. Do you need another one? Let's see. You probably need another paper. Let me give you another paper for that, because you may talk with some of those Beaver people and then come up with some more history. (unintelligible) OK. Well, thanks again!

(end of Side B)

Beaver Township

As of 11/21/2001



Rice River Township

As of 11/21/2001

