

RIVERTON YESTERDAYS

VOLUME 1, No. 1, SAMPLE ISSUE

AUGUST 2001

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF OLDTIME STUFF ABOUT RIVERTON, UTAH

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**CONTENTS NOTE: EACH ISSUE WILL CONTAIN SPECIAL
FEATURES INCLUDING ORAL INTERVIEWS, HISTORIES, AND
INTERESTING DOCUMENTS FROM THE EXTENSIVE FILES OF THE
RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY. IT WILL ALSO CONTAIN A
NOTICE OF NEW AND RENEWED SUBSCRIBERS, BRIEF DEATH
NOTICES, EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS SENT TO THE EDITOR, AND
NEWS ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST. IT SHOULD BE OF GREAT
INTEREST TO THOSE WITH TIES TO RIVERTON WHO LIVE
ELSEWHERE AND RESIDENTS OF RIVERTON WITH AN INTEREST IN
ITS PAST.**

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Childhood Memories of the Park Sisters (Part 1)

[Note: These reminiscences of Margaret Park Peterson and Beth Park Bone were recorded 15 September 1988 at a Riverton Historical Society lecture program.]

Beth: This is Margaret and I'm Beth and we're sisters. We are only eighteen months apart.

Margaret: Seventeen months, I think.

Beth: We were so close that we probably grew up with about the same friends and did the same things. We had a good life when we were little kids. We were pampered, I think. Marg was such a cute little baby and we played together and our father and mother just babied us and so did a lot of friends and uncles and aunts.

Margaret: I think that if I had my way and could have gotten in to any overalls, I would have been here in a pair of striped overalls and no hat, no sunglasses — we didn't even know what sunglasses were. That's the way we spent our childhood — with those overalls. That was a fad, girls. We had what we called boy-cuts. They were just plain old boy-cut haircuts. That's the way we lived and we had a good life. As I think of Riverton, I think maybe we had three main divisions in Riverton. Part of it can be from the two wards — the original Riverton Ward and then, I think, the Second Ward took in quite a bit of area. I think there was one more and that I call the Silcox area. Does anybody think of it that way? They almost lived by themselves and until we grew up, there wasn't too much contact with that area of Riverton. Then your neighborhoods all kind of met together. I don't know whether we just had a lot of kids in our house or what we had or whether we had a big yard, but I can remember my whole life, kids there playing "Kick the Can" and "Annie I Over" and "Who's the Boss of Bunker Hill, I Can Fight and I Can Kill" and "Hide and Seek" every night in the summer. Now I can't remember for the life of me what happened when we went back into that house at night — maybe we just went to bed because we didn't have television. Naturally we didn't have

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but I never knew it.

that. But we didn't even have radio. I can remember Elvoy Dansie bringing over the first crystal set that he made, probably with Marv, making that crystal set and bringing it over to our house. That was wonderful. Best friends were everywhere. Of course a lot of it centered around your cousins and we had cousins all around us. You played with those when you were just tiny, but then we branched out as we came to school. I had Mary Morgan, who lived across the street from the school. And Jean Seal's father, Frank, ran the grocery store. And Dorothy Bills, who was the daughter of Blanche Bills. He had a grocery store. And I guess we were poor, but I never knew it. Now those were all quite well-to-do people, I guess. But I never knew that we were poor, so that was good. Our friends did the same things they do now. We had slumber parties only all we did was just call it stay-over-night. We gathered in these homes and had a good time that way. Then the holidays would come around and, oh, if they weren't looked forward to, just like they are today. Of course, Christmas was our biggest one. Our parents gave us as much as they could give us; maybe it wasn't much, I don't remember that. I always wanted a bicycle and I never ever had a bicycle until finally Bill gave me an exercycle. The tree was always kind of secretive. It was decorated behind closed doors or at night. Then in the morning it was all lit up. At first, of course, this was almost before my time, it was the real candles that were on the Christmas tree, but then it became the bigger lights with the reflectors that really showed up those lights. We had a lot of festive eating and a lot of visiting up and down the street with your favorite toy in your hand, going from house to house. New Year's Day was a really special day in Riverton. At first we met in our own ward houses for a dance. That was the event of New Year's Day for all these young kids and we danced and danced. We always had to have a new dress and a new pair of shoes saved for that New Year's Day dance. I don't know what we did there particularly, but that was a special day. Later on they took it into the Commercial Building and we all met together like that — the community. Valentine's Day was just about like we have it today, only those Valentines were so pretty. They had big foldouts and lace all over them. They were so beautiful, but you gave each one in your class one just like you do today, but it was a fun day, too. And Easter was, I think, a little simpler. The day before, we always colored the eggs and then mothers would pack lunches. I remember ours usually went in a tin pail. We would take those even as far as the Point of the Mountain and have a picnic, but mostly we'd go down to the river

bank and look for arrowheads and find them, too. That was a good day, too. But July the 24 was big, big, big! Everybody traipsed in to Salt Lake to the parade and we always went to Liberty Park. I'm sure it was like a family reunion because all the married ones came back. I still long for that day in to Liberty Park. Halloween has become bigger and bigger and bigger as the years have gone by. Sometimes I almost think it's bigger than Christmas any more. It didn't use to be that way. We always used to have a dance in Riverton. Every one came in their costumes. It was usually up in the school auditorium. I don't know what you all did, but we spent a lot of time down on Nielsen's hill — sleigh riding. We always had to have a sleigh, even as I got bigger, like 12, 13, 14 years old. I got a sleigh for Christmas. We always had to have a sleigh and then we'd go down there and sleigh ride and also ski. The bigger boys would set up the little ski jumps and we'd do a little bit of that. Do you all know where that Nielsen hill is? Across from the Tithing Yard Hill, which is a part of our lives down there. Then the canals would all freeze over and we could ice skate. I don't know where those skates came from, but I had a little pair of Sonja Heini's ice skates, little white ones and they came clear up, but it still didn't help me much. My ankles went out just as bad as everybody else's did. The summertime, of course, was just filled with swimming and we all swam down in the canal. It wasn't until a lot later that the pigs started floating down — the dead pigs — and all the pollution came because we were just as free as we could be. In the evening, we looked at the stars, mostly. We'd get a blanket on the lawn and lay there and eat green apples with a salt shaker right close by. We didn't have to worry about sodium content and we ate those green apples all the time. Everybody slept outside, under the trees. My earliest recollection is of cutting out doll clothes in the apple orchard. Sometimes we did that under the plum tree, and cutting paper dolls and other kinds of dolls that we sewed clothes for continuously. Our little treats were always soda crackers and the apples cut up. Our mud pies were made out of mash from the chicken coop. We just put a little moisture in them, some water in there, and you could eat those mud pies. I guess they were not good, but they were edible anyway. Then later on the community, of course, took over and all my brothers played ball. All of them. My dad had played ball on the Bluffdale-Riverton team which was, I guess, quite a noted team. All these brothers played community ball. We'd have these rivalries with Bluffdale, who had a lot of good baseball players. Then it was a downright feud with Draper.

Tom Torkelson and his white teeth. He looked like a god is what he looked like.

After the game, we had to remember every play because after we'd go home we replayed every play over the supper table that was ever made. Dad would instruct and tell what had been done right and what had been done wrong. I don't know if anyone else remembers Tom Torkelson and his white teeth. He looked like a god

is what he looked like. I guess I had maybe a crush or something on him. There he was with his dark skin and then his blazing white teeth running around that track all the time. I just always asked what he cleaned his teeth with. It was charcoal. So I always thought that's what would give you those white, white teeth. Then Dave Madsen, he'd always be out there in the forefront. Every time he'd go around the track, somebody would say he surely does run fast for a big man. I always thought to myself I'd like to scream because that man runs fast for any kind of a man. He was a fast man. Later on we had the girls baseball team. I played 2nd base. There was Leona Silcox and Gladys Silcox and Myrl Butterfield [Wilson]. Ramona Mason [Peterson] was the home run hitter. I never could hit a home run so I always had to bat first because I could get on, but that's all I could do. But mostly I remember Jean Madsen playing ball. She was the librarian at Riverton for so long. She had a crippled back. She was very short and she had these extremely long arms for her body size. When she played ball, of course the ball would come right from the ground and it was very disconcerting to anybody not used to it. So she was our pitcher and we won lots because of her. M-Men basketball was a part of my life because a lot of times it was down in the Commercial Building and we watched those teams and they'd come in from all over. Do you remember how dirty those Bingham players were? And West Jordan players! That Wheaton was so dirty and Elly Smith! I remember the horse pulling that always seemed to go on. We used to have a bandstand that sat out on the school grounds. It was quite elaborate. We had little festivals and Riverton Days. I always was interested in that horse pulling. We had ten grades in Riverton at the time I went to school. Ten grades! We spent all of our junior high school years in there. We had school plays and we had school operettas all the time; maybe several times a year. We had plays maybe more than once a year. I was Snow White when I was just very tiny. I was "Snow White" to Lance Bills. He never called me anything else. I

was always "Snow White." Then there was an operetta called *Crocodile Island*. I was in that and I had one shoulder bare and everybody thought that was bad, too. The teachers were there so long that they became institutions. It's not like you have them two or three years, but they went just all the way through. We had Mick Mousley from Bluffdale. Velma Platt. Mrs. Walton. Miss Angell and Papa Edgell. Then we had that boring Mr. Griffiths. You remember him? Mr. Bradley. These fellows had to teach the sports, too, because they didn't have specialized sports things. So they taught that. Then we had a Miss Sampson who had a hard time teaching us English because we had May Rasmussen who made literature absolutely live for everybody in Riverton. She was so dramatic. Then we had Mr. Victor who directed a lot of those plays. Then there was a scandal about them. Remember she always used to come to the door in a loose robe and everybody swore up and down she didn't have anything on underneath that! So that was always a scandal in Riverton. I think she lived where Jack Smith lived. Anyway, they asked me to discuss discipline. I don't think I had much. Maybe I didn't need it. I don't know. Anyway, my dad did hit me once and I remember it vividly. So it must've been the only time and I needed it real bad then. Mother used to make us go out and cut our own willows when we needed a whipping. You had to think about it all the time while going out to the tree and back, thinking about what kind of discipline you were going to get. Beth and I used to crawl under the bed, but it didn't do any good because Mother would get us out with a broom stick. My mother and dad, I think, loved every one of us. I don't think they showed any partiality. They took us as we came. Dad always saw to it that there was a boxing ring set up in the yard in the summertime. And if the boys needed a little, they had to put on the gloves with whoever they were fighting with. If we wanted anything, we had to work a little bit for it. There wasn't too much opportunity. Girls started with baby sitting. They used to baby sit for ten cents a night. One time, it really floored me because when I got there, all the cabinets were filled with dirty dishes and there was a great big tub full of dirty dishes, too. I was expected to do that. But that wasn't just all. There were a lot of wet beds I was expected to change, too. So I thought that was awful much for ten cents.

[continued in next issue]

Death Notices

Ronald Mark Green (84); died in Roy, Utah; husband of Mabel Frew; father of Mary; parents were Peter Mark and Clara Brown Green; commercial truck driver/railroad engineer.

Wayne Willis Butterfield (85); of Herriman; husband of Mildred Hamilton; parents were John A. and Emma Farmer Butterfield; father of Rita, Weston, Myrna, Rodney, Loretta; farmer/sheepman.

Reed Blaine Butterfield (63); husband of Donna Johnson; parents were Russell and Lucile Burton Butterfield; father of LaNae, Becky, Craig, Cheryl, Lisa, Tammy; Kennecott Copper.

F. Glen Green (84); died in Murray; husband of LoVella Johnson; parents were Joseph G. and Carrie Bills Green; father of Jay, Delwin, Kathy, Jolene, Scott, Jannette, Dannie, Tommie, Karla Jo; salesman/parts man.

Alfred Herbert Richard Schmidt (63); parents were Richard H. and Ursula E. Schmidt; brick mason.

Colleen Craig (52); born in Salt Lake City, died in Riverton; parents were Elvin and Fern Wilde Craig

Letters

Please write us a letter if anything in this newsletter brings memories of the "good old days" in Riverton to mind. We will print excerpts of letters and deposit your historical letters in our archives. We will also print your address so that your old friends can get in touch with you.

A History of Riverton's Jordan River Bridges

On Saturday, 2 June 2001, the old bridge over the Jordan River in the river bottoms on the eastern border of Riverton was dedicated as a part of the Jordan River trail system. Planners were considering demolishing this old bridge and putting in a modern foot bridge until they learned that copies of the old engineering drawings were in the collection of the Riverton Historical Society. The existence of these drawings was a key factor in the decision to preserve the old bridge. Speakers at the dedication included Mayor Sandra Lloyd, Mayor Richard Alsop of Draper, city engineer Leon Berrett, structural engineer Ned R. Harden, Rick Bliss from Jordan River Parkway, and Karen Bashore (who spoke on the history of the bridges in this locale).

Several wood bridges preceded the old iron bridge in this vicinity. Riverton had just a few families in the early 1860s. Draper and Herriman were both more populous than Riverton. In 1853 there were 20 families in

both Draper (then called South Willow Creek) and in Fort Herriman. The first bridge across the Jordan River in the Riverton area was undoubtedly built more to serve the larger towns of Draper and Herriman than it was to serve the few people who lived in the river bottoms of Riverton.

The decade of the 1860s was a golden age of road and bridge building in the territory of Utah. Far-flung settlements all needed to be connected by roads. Rivers needed to be bridged to facilitate travel and commerce. The earliest documented bridge in this vicinity dates to 1862. In a *Deseret News* article (25 June 1862) it was reported: "The bridge that was in building across the Jordan, west of Draperville, has gone down stream." Spring floods in 1862 destroyed or damaged many roads and bridges throughout the territory. In 1864 the county contracted with Archibald Gardner to construct a bridge 90 feet long and 14 feet wide over the Jordan River to connect Draperville with Fort Herriman. Gardner failed to begin work on the bridge so the following year a contract to build a bridge on the county road connecting Draperville and Fort Herriman for \$2,075 was let to Andrew Cunningham. On its completion in late December 1865, county selectman Reuben Miller examined Cunningham's bridge but found it to be defective and not built according to the contract. Although the county minutes do not note it, this Cunningham-built bridge undoubtedly served the public for several decades. This bridge received no further mention in county government minutes until 1896 when residents petitioned officials for a new 48-foot span wooden bridge at a cost of \$960. They argued that the old (1865) bridge was in poor repair.

By 1908, most of the old wooden bridges in Utah were in poor repair. The state began replacing them with steel bridges. In 1909 the Midland Bridge Company of Kansas City, Missouri, was awarded a contract to build a steel bridge for \$5,467. This company was also awarded other bridge construction jobs throughout the state. The Draper/Riverton bridge is one of eight through-truss bridges in Utah. The original blueprints are on file at the state archives.

Children in Riverton used to sleigh ride down Tithing Yard Hill, to the west, right onto and across the bridge. In the winter, many remember the road up Tithing Yard Hill being so slick with ice and snow that when their automobiles reached the bridge, passengers would automatically jump out and start pushing so they could make it up the hill. In the summer, many of the more daring youth used the bridge as a diving platform.

Next Issue

Childhood Memories of the Park Sisters (Part 2)



Do you know who this couple is?
They are in our photo collection but are not identified.



Who are these young people? See any familiar faces?
Help us put some names to the faces.

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