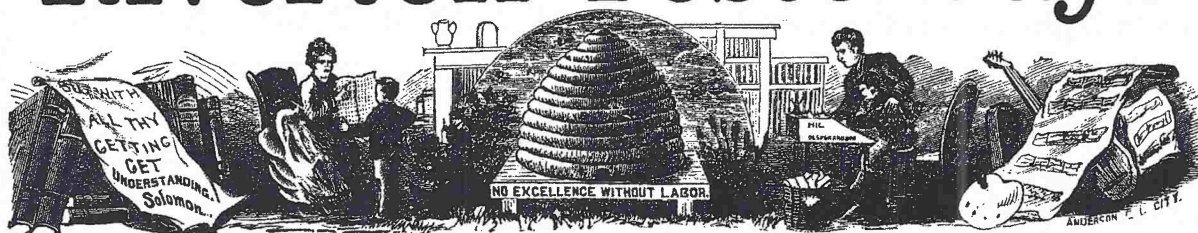


Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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Editor: Karen Bashore

Asst. Editor: Mel Bashore

Address: Riverton Historical Society
Riverton Art Museum at the Crane House
1640 West 13200 South
Riverton, UT 84065
Phone 253-3020

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"I Drove a Stage": Joe Butterfield

[Note: This is an edited transcript of a Riverton Historical Society program held on the evening of 3 December 1986 at the Riverton City Hall.]

When I was a young man, I never thought of the old people being old and I never thought about the trouble they were having — the aches and the pains, the loss of sight and hearing, and those things. If I'd have known all the aches and pains and miseries you go through when you get old, I don't think I'd have worked so hard to make it this far.

Next year it'll be sixty-six years since

I drove the bus. It's a long way back to think. I read this the other day — "When I was younger, I could remember everything, whether it was true or not." That's about the way my memory is now. I can remember everything, but whether to get the exact details, it's quite a difference. There's only one thing that I can do now that I could then. I could add two columns of figures or subtract two columns of figures almost as fast as anybody could do it with one. I can still do that, but I don't get the right answers now.

I didn't drive a bus. It was a stage in those days. There were twelve stages in different parts of this valley. Bob Howard drove the Studebaker. There was three Studebakers, three Oldsmobiles, four Federals, and one Kessell [or Keesell], I believe, and another Chalmers. Sandy Crump drove the Chalmers and Gilmer Hilton from Butler drove the Kessell. The three Studebakers was big boxey cars. They had a lever that the driver opened and shut the door. Mine didn't have that. Mine had a back door and stepped at the back like the old kid wagons did that pulled horses. Then I had a spare tire on the side where the door should have been, but on the driver's side, I had a door.

I drove from my place — that's down Redwood Road a mile to where my mother lived and where I lived till I got married and moved away. I went north and the first passenger I picked up was Grant Mortensen and George Bush (that walked from three miles west down to there). The next stop was Rube Petersen's corner and I picked up Doris Rishton there. Then I picked up Arla Newbold about halfway down and then Marie Holt just before you got to "Holt hill" and so on. A little farther down, I picked up Marinda Beckstead. She turned out to be a Diamond after she was married, but I guess she was a diamond all the time that she rode with me. Then on down till I got down a little ways farther and Frank Mortensen lived there. He had two children

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going to school — twins. Bud and Blossom.

About the second day, the school board give you where to stop like the bus stops now. We couldn't stop for every individual and I had to stop back up where this Beckstead girl was and a couple — Al Wheaton and one or two others.

Frank Mortensen come out there. He was a big fellow and I was just a skinny kid then — not like I am now. He said, "I want to talk to you."

I opened the door on my side. He was on the other side where the kids was and he walked around and he shook his fist at me. He said, "We live right here and that's where my kids is going to get on the bus!"

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I didn't know. I just said, "They told me to stop farther up the road. They have to walk down and back and we start from the center."

"Well, you're not going to do it to my kids!" He says, "Don't you ever leave 'em again! You stop here!"

Well, I went over to school that day. I told Mr. Giles. He says, "Do you know those kid's names?"

I said, "Yes. Bud and Violet Mortensen."

I guess he sent a letter home to their dad. The next morning, I stopped where I always did and they were there. But a little skinny kid and a man come out and shake his fist at you — it worried me.

Then I went on to West Jordan and picked up Vernon Smith, Delila Spratling, the Goodrich girl, and then turned east. I picked up Nell Wheeler and picked up Dolly Burgon and picked up a Gardener boy and then down to the mill where I picked up a girl — Joy somebody. Then I went over to State Street and then back up to Jordan. Then the first part of the season, I had to go back to Crescent and get the second load. The next part of the season, I had to go down to the Midvale Center Street — right down to where the street car stopped. That's another thing — I don't understand why they called them street cars. All the way up to Sandy, they was on the side, not in the street. I guess they was trolley cars. It's just like we call them buses now instead of calling them stages. Then I'd go back to Midvale and get a load there. That was my route — either Midvale or Crescent — except if a bus driver was a little bit sick or something or wasn't there. Sometimes I'd go to Union.

One time I had to go to Fort Herriman. Jim Bodell drove the bus from Fort Herriman. His was a small bus. Mine had five windows on the side and his only had four. It was about 2½ feet shorter. His bus broke down so Giles says, "We don't want you driving up there in the morning cause you might have a snow storm hit you and you won't get there. Can you find a hotel or something to sleep in up there?"

I said, "I have relatives in Fort Herriman and so I can do it." For three days, I stayed with Lewis Jensen and then drove down. I still had to make my second trip to either Crescent or Midvale — whatever they happened to say.

I never had a bit of vandalism. I never had any trouble. They'd get in the back and walk up to the front. I never had to quiet a person. They was just ladies and gentlemen all the time I drove. Sometimes the Midvale kids would sing a lot and make a lot of noise, but no trouble. Another thing I had to do was wash my bus — I better call it *bus* because that's what they call it now. I had to wash it myself whenever it got dirty — about once a month. Mr. Giles was my boss. I took auto mechanics from him. . . . After I had driven the bus that year, I started the next year. That was 1921. I started the next year and that was still '21. Then beet vacation came. I hadn't got all our beets up so I asked him if my brother, Arnold, could drive the bus.

He says, "Well, I don't know him."

I said, "Well, he's my brother."

He said, "If he's as good a man as you are, he can have the job." Just like that. Arnold got the job and he finished out the year.

I've had no bad experiences except one night. We'd been to a football game. We were coming home down Redwood Road and we got just about where Smith's is — that's just on this side of the savings company there where it used to be Gibson's — and the thing stopped. I worked with it and couldn't get any spark. There was plenty of gas and I looked through the distributor cap and I couldn't find anything. The battery cables was all on. Couldn't get a bit of spark. I tried to call back to the office, but it was late then. Football games are after school and we was late. I couldn't get anybody, so the kids helped me push the bus into Smith's yard and we walked home. There was quite a few of us.

They called Mr. Giles "Andy Gump" because he wore glasses like the funny paper, "Andy Gump." And he acted like that sometimes. He would say, "Hey! You want to take the agriculture class on a field day?"

I'd say, "Yes."

He'd say, "Do you want to take the seniors to Saratoga on pleasure day [the last day of school]?" "Field day?" or "Do you want to take this English class somewhere?" or "Do you want to take this group over to the sugar factory?" Things like that. So I had a lot of extra driving and, I guess, I thought that was wonderful because I didn't like school very good anyway. I was out of school while I was doing that.

I had a lot of extra driving and, I guess, I thought that was wonderful because I didn't like school very good anyway.

When I was real young — thirteen years old — we lived down on 13th

West on the west side of the road [approximately 12000 South]. My dad got the chance to drive the horse wagon. We called it the kid wagon — put two horses on a covered wagon and haul the kids. We got up to the corner that used to go down to Tithing Yard Hill and turned east and go down and pick up N.J. Nielsen's children and George William Butterfield's just where the tithing yard was — just as you come up there. We'd get those kids and come up to Charlie Miller's corner and up past Dave Bills's house and then up the Redwood Road till we got to the school. That would be in the mornings and then there was no kid wagon in the afternoon. My father got a job at the Midvale smelter and he rode a colt down to the smelter every morning. He had to be there to work at 7 o'clock in the morning. My dad would drive a horse to Midvale. So I'd hitch up the team of horses — get 'em on the school wagon — and then my mother would drive it up here or I'd sit by her and drive it. She'd turn it around and go home and unhitch the horses and let them go into the stable with their harnesses on and everything. That's what we did for two winters. But the second winter, my mother had a stillborn baby and was very, very sick. So my one sister had to quit school and my dad quit the smelter and he drove the school wagon the rest of that season till April. It wasn't a full season. When the weather got good, we didn't run the horse and wagon — just in the three months when it was real snowy. The snow up in the crossroad that run from Redwood to the Lower Road got so high that they shoveled it out and worked with it so we could run that kid wagon right through it and you couldn't see the top of it. You couldn't see the tops of the houses. You couldn't see the telephone poles at all — only once in awhile if the wires went across the road — you could see the wires. The snow was that deep. We went down to the graveyard with the baby that Momma lost. We had to let the little thing down in her box with ropes. I had to stay up on top of the bank with the sleigh so they could pull thereself back up. The snow was that deep. Between here and Herriman, they used to cut the fences and go back behind. Sometimes, they'd just ride horses to get food. Other times, they'd get a sleigh and a horse and come down to the store to get food. We were snowed in practically a winter. That was the winter of 1917 — the last part of December of '16 and '17.

I got paid one dollar and twenty cents a day to drive a stage. Five days a week. I made six dollars a week. Twenty-four dollars every four weeks. That's what we got paid. When Elias and all my brothers drove the stages, they had to keep 'em here to the school. I was allowed to keep it right in my yard — all this beauty of an Oldsmobile.

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“We Used to Have Fun”: Phyllis Butterfield (cont.)

[Note: Elvoy Dansie interviewed Phyllis Butterfield on 4 November 1986. This is an edited transcript.]

Phyllis: I remember the new [domed] church. We went there a long time before they had the upstairs finished. They didn't have so many people like they do now, but it was kind of inconvenient. The church was never practical, however it was a beautiful church. That wasn't for this day and age, I guess.

Elvoy: I remember hearing Dad [George H. Dansie] say how they'd call four of them to pay \$500 apiece to finish and get the roof on about 1906 or 1907. Your dad was one of them.

Phyllis: Uncle George [Dansie], Charlie Blake, and George Beckstead. That was a lot of money in those days. "Hey. Come on, you guys. You pay this money." But I guess it was never missed and they got the top on.

"Hey. Come on, you guys.
You pay this money."

Elvoy: Wasn't it about 1915 when the new school that burnt down was finished?

Phyllis: Somewhere around there would be about right. I went to school in the old school building for a couple of years. I guess they hadn't got the other building completely finished, because I went to second and fourth grade in the old school building. The top of that old school building was where the teachers lived. They had the old stoves.

Elvoy: I went to school in the fifth and ninth grade in that old school building.

Phyllis: They must not have had that other building completely finished. After awhile they tore it down.

Elvoy: They tore the old one down and the new one burned down in about 1926 or 1927, when they was remodeling it and building it back up again.

Phyllis: I know they said that the people that had built it had set fire to it because they wanted a new building in the first place. I heard David Dahl tell my father that "You can't tell me it

You know how people talk. Someone said, "Oh well, they just burned it to get rid of it."

wasn't combustion from the oil in the paint." He [her father] said, "No one set that house on fire. No one would do that." There was some agitation because I believe they wanted it torn down and [to] start a new one building. You know how people talk. Someone said, "Oh well, they just burned it to get rid of it." But he said, "That wasn't right."

Elvoy: The fire was started where the paint was stored, down in the northeast room. It just went right up through and took the whole thing out. Do you remember when they built the show house, the Princess Theatre?

Phyllis: No, I don't. We used to go there all the time. They'd have serials so you'd keep going the next week to see how it turned out.

Elvoy: That was about 1915 when they built that. Hebe Crane built his home about 1914.

Phyllis: I think it was a little bit later than that, wasn't it? [Editor: According to the handwritten contract on exhibit at the Crane house, it was 1916.]

Elvoy: Carl Madsen built his home after that across from us. I was about five or six years old when he built the home where Mabel Freeman lived. They moved up from the lower road [1300 W. 11900 S.] and built that home there [12469 S. 1700 W.]. They built a little home in the back of the big home because Lynn had to come down and live there. Remember Lynn lost her husband. So they built that little home in the back and they lived in that while they was building the brick home. When Annie lost her husband, they built the other home where Annie Curtis lived. Then they started renting the home out after all of them left home but Jean. Then they built the little home for Jean. Alvin Miller built the home where Caldwell lived for awhile [12389 S. 1700 W.], just north of the home that Willard Dansie built, where Warr's live. Do

remember who built Frank Seal's home [12361 S. 1700 W.]?

Phyllis: Alvin Miller.

Elvoy: Do you remember when Ezra Bills built his home?

Phyllis: I was ten years old. I used to go over and tend the children. Imagine — his children was older than I was! She gave me ten cents. I can't remember whether I took the ten cents back, but my Dad thought it was terrible to take ten cents for tending children. I believe I took it back. I think she gave it back to me. It would be around 1912 or 1913 when it was built [12134 S. 1700 W.]. That land was my Dad's and he sold it to Uncle Lyme Butterfield — ten acres. Uncle Lyme didn't want to build so he sold it to Ezra.

I used to go over and tend the children. . . . She gave me ten cents. . . . but my Dad thought it was terrible to take ten cents for tending children.

Elvoy: Do you remember when Will Torkleson remodeled their home? It was about 1913 or 1914, because I remember they had the bricks stacked out in front to build the home and they put water on the bricks. Dad built that home where Earl Adams is living [12406 S. 1700 W.]. Wilf Crane lived in it for awhile. Do you remember when the canning factory was built?

Phyllis: No. I worked in it and I was awfully slow. I didn't make no money at the beans.

Elvoy: The railroad came in 1914. The cannery came in 1915. Then the poultry plant came in somewhere in the '20s. Do you remember when George Bills took over Dave Bills' store on Redwood Road?

Phyllis: George Bills was in that store in the Commercial Building, too.

Elvoy: Yes. Then he quit that. Joe Parks used to clerk for him.

Death Notices

Monte K. Beck (55); parents were Raymond S. Beck and Ruth Bateman; father of Monte and Jeremy; truck driver

Beverly Elaine Rindlisbach (78); wife of Joseph Burdette Rindlisbach; parents were Peter Johan Peterson and Julia Amelia Anderson; mother of Jolaine Annette, Sharon Elaine, Joan, Joel Craig, Ken, Sandy, Mark, and Keith

Julio Rodriguez Prito (58); husband of Corina Perales; parents were Doroeto and Ignacia Prito; father of Sandra and Sabrina

Donald James Parr (81); husband of Rela May Stratling; parents were James Roy Adelbert Parr and Melba McCulloch; father of Randy, Don, Brent, Beverly, and Ryan; educator/principal/school district superintendent

Notice

The Historical Society is sponsoring a historical lecture/organ recital on the old Domed Church on 30 March at 7 PM. Jack Webster donated the old organ from the Domed Church to the Historical Society and Jack Chidester has beautifully restored it. It now sits on the main floor of the Crane House. You will be able to hear it played again that evening. The organist has to be almost a gymnast because it requires a bit of foot pumping in addition to fingering the keys to make it play! If you attended meetings or events in the Domed Church (or know someone who did) and have memories of those occasions or what the building looked like, please call Karen Bashore (253-3020). This should be a very memorable evening!

Next Issue

More of "I Drove a School Bus": Memories of School Bus Drivers
and Etc.

**RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CRANE HOUSE
1640 W. 13200 S.
RIVERTON, UT 84065**



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Mildred Densley Collection