

June 2002

Annual Subscription: \$10

Riverton Dome Church: Organ Recital and Lecture Program

Note: On 30 March 2002, an organ recital was held in the Crane House. It is the first of what we hope will be many such occasions. In 2001, Jack Webster donated this historic organ from the old dome church to the city. It was beautifully restored by Jack Chidister. Jack Webster was recuperating from injuries sustained in an automobile accident, so his son, Willy, recounted some of the history of the organ when it was in the safekeeping of the Webster family. Jack Chidister described his work in restoring the organ. Several others shared their memories of the old dome church. The following is an edited transcript of the remarks of some of those who shared their memories at this program.

Willie Webster:

We used to actually use it. It had just been down in my dad's basement for many, many, many years. He said, "I'd like to get rid of this thing."

None of us family members could put something as massive as this in our homes. We just kept saying, "Well, Dad, we need to give it to somebody in the city that could appreciate this. That's where it belongs." My dad would love to be here. He says he actually got it from Doyle Nokes. Doyle apparently was in the bishopric over in the church house — the yellow church house, we always call it [1st-3rd Ward meetinghouse]. The organ was in the Primary room. It was broke so the kids would just play it and really was abusing it. So he hauled it home and put it in his basement. He didn't have it there really a long time when he chatted with my dad and said, "I want to get rid of it." I remember my dad bringing it home. I was just a little kid. This has been at least thirty-five or so years ago. He brought it home and at that time the pedals didn't work. He took it apart. He and Bob [Webster] hauled it out of Doyle's basement. They disassembled and took it all apart. He and Bob hauled it out of the basement and hauled it home. He took some straps from some old military machine guns and

At that time the pedals didn't work. . . . He took some straps from some old military machine guns and fixed the straps so you could pump it.

fixed the straps so you could pump it. It just sat down there. I remember coming home one day and he'd had a bunch of his friends over and they moved it down in his basement. It just sat down there. I'm glad it's here. This is where it needs to be. It was painted with black lacquer and it was not the beauty that it is now. My dad felt that that lacquer helped preserve the wood and didn't let it dry out much because it restored beautifully. It's just a beautiful piece of art now. I'm just glad it's here and it's where it should be.

Elvoy Dansie: This is the organ that was upstairs in the main chapel.

Jack Chidister: When it come up to my place to be redone, our neighbor and my wife looked at me and said, "Are you nuts? Are you crazy? How are you going to do this?" After looking at it, it's something that going to take time. It took about 160 man-hours to restore it. This organ was made by the Packard organ company, a subsidiary of the Packard automobile company. As near as we can tell, this organ was manufactured right around the turn of the century or just a little bit later. You notice the grain of this wood — almost like tiger stripes — that's what they call quarter-sawn oak. When Mayor Lloyd accosted me about refinishing this, I told her I'd like to have the opportunity to do it. I appreciate having the opportunity to do this. All in all this is a very fine piece and I appreciate you playing it. It kind of brought tears to my eyes when you started playing it. It sounds so good.

Harry Swofford: I'm the youngest, so I know the least. All these older people have the truth about it all. I moved here in '29. I was twelve years old. I remember going to school the first day and Edgar Aylette says, "You moved to the wrong place when you come to Riverton." He was the first man I knew when I came to Riverton.

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I remember the old church and in the southeast

corner was a classroom and in the northeast corner was a class room. We had Religion Class. We had those two rooms. We came over from the school and had our Religion Class in those two rooms. Then we had our M-Men and Gleaner Girls and Annie Mae Sandstrom and Eldred Hamilton was the teachers. It seemed like then, we met together and not separate like they do now because I remember that one room. After the M-Men and Gleaner Girl meeting, we'd all load up the cars and go to Kelly's to a dance. But that's not talking about the old building. Over here was a big kitchen. It had the biggest stove I can ever remember seeing — the kitchen stove. And there was a stage. And behind the stage on the same level was a baptismal font. I remember baptizing kids in this font. You'd pick up the boards — big, heavy slats about four foot square. You'd tip them up and lay them aside and there was the font. After you got through, you put them back down and then that was the Relief Society room and the stage. We'd go into the old kitchen to change our clothes when we were all wet. Over in the other corner, you went up a stairway to the dome. It was a nursery, but it was also the elders quorum room. [To get inside on the lower level,] you walked right in under those two stairways. You walked right in on the ground floor. No central heating. There was this big range in the kitchen, a stove in the Relief Society room, and one up in the Primary room. In the winter, we didn't hold our meetings upstairs. It was too cold. They couldn't heat it. We all went down on the ground floor into the basement to have our winter meetings. I remember that stairway, climbing up there where we had our elders quorum. My wife says that she taught the Primary up in that classroom, too. They had a little stove to keep warm. There was a trap door. The kids would keep opening it up and that's where the pigeons all lived. Up in the dome.

Bill Cardwell was the custodian of that church. Fifteen dollars a month. Verna and all the kids had to go every Saturday and clean that whole building.

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There was no central heating. There was no plumbing. There was two outhouses out in the back — a his and a hers. Clifton [Lloyd] was telling me the other day that the kids used to come from the school and go over there and smoke in those toilets. They had a good crowd over there because the kids could sneak over there and nobody could see them and they could have a smoke and learn how to smoke after school.

I left in '38 so I missed the tearing down of it, but Fred Lloyd [that's Clifton's dad] cut the roof of the dome in half. He hooked cables on the center part and hooked his tractor on and pulled it over this way and pulled it back over that way. I never found out who did the rest of the tearing it down. Clifton said still down at the old place there's some big old beams that came out of that dome roof. It was all wood-laminated beams to form the big arches over that. I remember the ball park in the back and then they later had a tennis court where we had summer dances.

Dorothy Swofford: My grandfather donated the land for the church — T.P. Page. Now you know where the land came from. It was big enough that he gave the land for the school and the church, to my knowledge. Then he built the Page-Hansen company.

Violet Hamilton: My Grandpa [T.P.] Page got his money from planting a big orchard. We picked the apples at ten cents a bushel. Addie was in charge. She was the boss. We had a cider press. All

We had a cider press. . . . I noticed that they weren't watching for the worms when they put [the apples] in the press. I didn't like the flavor.

the grandkids picked the apples. I noticed that they weren't watching for the worms when they put them in the press. I didn't like the flavor. When I was fifteen, I was teaching a Sunday School class in the old dome church. Eldred said that when he was a young boy, he remembers a dirt floor with sand on the floor. They'd go over and play marbles in the shade of the construction.

"I Drove a School Bus": Willard Bills

[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.]

I think I hold the record for the least amount of bus driving. I had five days. We had a two-horsepower outfit that we run and we never had to worry about getting stuck in the snow. When I was going to school, my uncle Rayme [Raymond Bills] was running one of the horse-drawn outfits down where we live. There's five horse-drawn buses that I know of. There was Ace Butterfield that lived up to the water treatment plant agin' the hills there — in the South Hills. He run one out of Bluffdale. John Huggins run one from the southwest corner of the valley up where he lived. Old Brother Rindlisbach run one from north Riverton. I don't know if there was any more or not. Uncle Rayme had a double-bed wagon with the bows with the canvas on top — planks on each side you sit on. In 1927 he was killed in a farm accident. My dad took over the bus the next fall — 1928. The district got a new bus that year. I remember going back with him down to South Jordan. I think it was there back of Holt's Service. The fellow's name was Peterson who lived in there and had the bus. It was a nice one, all closed in and glass windows, a plush seat along each side. It was a large bus. So we took that home and that's what we used.

I guess about a year after that, my dad got sick — real sick. He asked me if I thought I could drive that bus for a few days till he got feeling better. I said, "Yeah, I can drive it." I think I was eleven or twelve years old at the time. So I started out on Monday and drove the bus. I got by good till Friday when I went up to pick up the kids. I looked up and here was N.K. Thompson coming out of the building. I thought, boy, I've had her now. I'm in for trouble. He came on out.

He says, "How long you been driving this school bus?"

I says, "Oh, I just drove it this week. My dad's real sick and he couldn't do it."

He says, "Do you realize what a responsibility you've got there at your age with this load of kids and this team of horses?"

I said, "Oh, I don't' think it's too much of a responsibility. I drive 'em all the time. Farm with 'em every day."

He says, "Well, don't drive them anymore." This was on Friday.

So I went home and told Dad. He got feeling a little better and he took it over the next week. So anyway, that was the limit of my bus driving days. I figured I could handle that bus just as good as my dad could.

"I don't' think it's too much of a responsibility. I drive 'em all the time. Farm with 'em every day."

“When That Thing Happened in My Life”:
Lovell and Mildred Densley

[Note: Laurel Bills interviewed Lovell and Mildred Densley on 31 August 1986.
This is an edited transcript.]

Mildred: The gals that I went around with at Jordan were in speech and drama. I'm sure that I got the part of Mrs. Lippert in “Daddy Longlegs” because I was the biggest kid there. Nell Clark — the prettiest lady — was the mother figure. It was fun. We would stay after school and come home on the athletic bus. We formed a home economics club. Mrs. Peacock came to me and said she would like to get a home economics club organized. She asked me to help her. I liked Jordan. I still like that Jordan school song: “Jordan High School students are we. Seeking knowledge ever will be.” Emery W. Epperson was the music teacher and he wrote the song. I graduated in 1927. Then I went to the University of Utah and graduated in 1930. There were a whole group of us who rode back and forth on the Interurban. The Interurban was just below the Poultry. It came from Payson into Salt Lake. There were about six or seven of us that got on the Interurban. Les Butterfield's father was the station agent. He'd say, “You damn kids!” The nickname for the Interurban was the “Tall Red Heifer.” The building where we got off in Salt Lake was right down from Brigham Young Monument over on West Temple. We had to go down to First south and Main Street to catch the streetcar. If we missed it, then we were fifteen or twenty minutes late for class.

Laurel: Did you go to college, Lovell?

Lovell: No. After I graduated out of high school, my dad was in need of a good sheepherder. I went out with my father and started to herd sheep. One time, he took me and Ed Price up to Montpelier Canyon. He

I herded sheep for a good number of years — until I was thirty-four years old. That's when that thing happened in my life.

give us five horses and enough grub for two weeks. He started the sheep up this draw and he said, “OK, I'll see you in three weeks.” So me and Ed Price learned to herd sheep. He was a very good camp jack. I was the herder and he was the camp jack. [Allen

Stocking explained that a camp jack does the cooking and cares for the sheep camp.] We got along fine. After that, I herded sheep for my dad. I went down on the winter range. I made up my mind that I'd go with sheep. I liked it. If you make up your mind you like it, you'll like it. If you don't like it, you just as well close the door on it and say goodbye. I made up my mind I liked it and I herded sheep for a good number of years — until I was thirty-four years old. That's when that thing happened in my life.

Laurel: That's when you met
Mildred?

Lovell: Yes. That's when I
married my next-door
neighbor. She went with
me for four summers.
One summer, we had a
very exciting summer up
there. We started to hunt and trap bears. We got four bears.

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and say goodbye.

Mildred: They're frightening! Have you ever seen a bear trap? You
camouflage a place so a bear won't smell anything human. They
step on this pedal and catch their foot and drag it as far as that
chain would go.

Lovell: You have to put a drag on them because if you didn't they'd chew
their leg off and free themselves. If you put a drag on, they'll
figure their getting away. In 1945, my dad was getting quite old.
He sold the sheep in 1945. I came home and got a job at the Utah-
Idaho sugar factory in West Jordan. I started out in about as low
a position as you could get and worked my way up. I got a truck
driving job for quite a while. They was paying more money in the
mill. I thought I'd get me a job in the mill, which I did. In a few
years, I become a foreman. I came up the ladder in that. I boiled
sugar. I got a sugaring foreman's job. I had that for a number of
years until they sold out. At that time, I was sixty-four so I
retired.

Death Notices

Wayne Eugene Silcox (94); husband of (1) Emma Elswood and (2) Dora West Miller; parents were Sidney Ostler and Maria Bates Nell Silcox; born in Riverton, resided in Sandy; Kennecott Copper worker

Delmar Lamar Pedersen (75); husband of Leila Rose Petersen; parents were Chris S. and Nevada Butterfield Pedersen; born in Riverton; Lark Mine and Kennecott Copper worker

Jane Butterfield (103); wife of Willard F. Butterfield; parents were Albaert T. and Frieda Bertha Boehme Price; died in West Jordan; mother of Karma, Jan, Dee, Tamera, Faye, and Sylvia; worked at Rol-Save Store until she was 75 years old

Bernece "Bea" Lovendahl Spencer (93); parents were Christian R. and Emma Jane Dansie Lovendahl

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Riverton Dome Church: Reminiscences and Recollections (cont.)

"When That Thing Happened in My Life": Lovell and Mildred Densley



1929 Riverton 3rd Grade, Pearl Bodell (teacher)

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