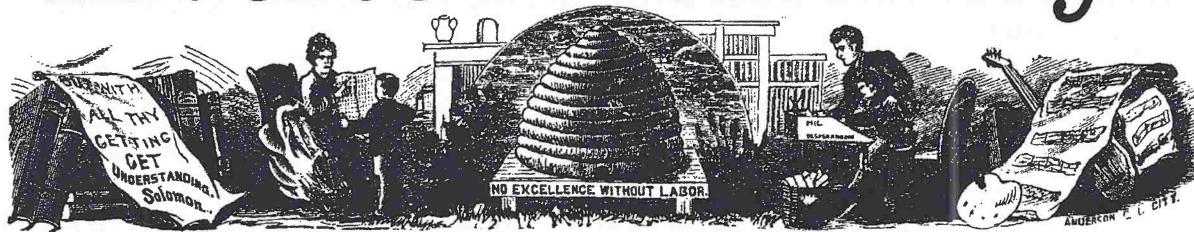


Riverton Yesterdays



Volume 1, No. 12 July 2002

A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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Riverton Dome Church:
Organ Recital and Lecture Program (cont.)

Note: On 30 March 2002, an organ recital was held in the Crane House. Following is an edited transcript of the remarks of Dorothy Swofford, Elvoy Dansie, and Beth Chidister who shared their memories at this program.

Dorothy: I remember when we were singing that song [*High on the Mountain Top*] that Joe Green used to be the chorister. He had a beautiful, strong voice. I just loved to hear his strong, beautiful voice singing this song that we just sang. It brought back such memories. I remember playing tennis on the tennis courts out there and watching the ball games. It was just the center of our lives. Of course, it was a small country town. Like Harry said, we dated at church and got married and moved to Salt Lake. Then we came back twenty-five years ago.

I want to tell you one more thing about my grand-father's funeral. His funeral was at the church house. I had three of my brothers that helped carry the casket. The granddaughters were the flower girls. We lined up all down that stairway on the south side and held the flowers. Lots and lots of flowers. The boys carried the casket down the steps. My three brothers said the casket just about got away from them. The stairs were steep and grandpa was a *big* man!

Elvoy: In September 1908, one of my cousins passed away. They had her funeral in the dome church. Sometime during that summer or spring of 1907, the bishop got up in church and said that he had a dream and he dreamed that there was four men in Riverton could pay five hundred dollars more and that would be able to put a roof on the church house. He named the four men and the next week he had his two thousand dollars extra. They gathered all they could. They got the roof on the church sometime in 1908. It wasn't finished when I first remember it — the upstairs. When I was baptized on the 3rd of February in 1918, I

went over to Sandy and was baptized in a chapel over there. I came back home and was sitting downstairs. The stage was on the west side about three feet higher than the floor. That's where the dignitaries sat. The steps to come up to it were on each side. The bishop asked if anybody had been baptized during that time. I jumped off of my seat and started up to the front and went up the steps. They confirmed me a member on the 3rd of February in 1918. In 1920, they dedicated the chapel. Elder Reed Smoot came out and dedicated the chapel. I remember the meetings that we had. There was Sunday School at 10:30, church at 2 on Sunday. On Monday night at 7:30 was priesthood meeting. Tuesday afternoon was Relief Society at 2 o'clock. Tuesday night was MIA meeting. Wednesday afternoon as soon as school was out was Primary.

The reason the building was torn down was because of the fact it was too hard to heat and the church would not put any money into it. The ward never had any so they decided to build the Third Ward where it is now. They got the building torn down and you know what happened. December 7th of 1941. It was impossible to do any building. But they did save the benches. The benches that's in the Third Ward are out of the old dome church. When I came home from my mission, sometime along in the summer time, they asked me to speak in the building. They were using the upstairs at that time. It was warm enough in the day time to use the upstairs. But it was torn down because of the fact that it was just too hard to heat. They figured they could save as much material as they could and build a new church.

Beth:

When I think of the old dome church, I think of all the fun that we had around there. The school was right next to it. Right next to the church was the grove. It was quite a big grove — a lot of trees in there. Back of the school was the ball diamonds and the

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grandstand. We had so many good times.

We had Primary in the top of that building. I can remember seeing those kids run clean up to the very top. The kids just loved to go up there. We were held back in the 10th grade. We had to stay in Riverton in our tenth year. We couldn't go to Jordan because it was too full over there — too packed. We were held back. So we had seminary here. The first seminary teacher was Mrs. Glover. Emma Bills and Elsie Crane were the ones that played the organ and Tira Hamilton. They had a choir and it was led by Fred Webb. Do you know him?

Elvoy: Yes. He was a shoe maker. He had a little plaque in his place: "As a rule a man's a fool. When it's hot, he wants it cool. When it's cool, he wants it hot. He's always wanting what it's not."

Beth: As Elvoy said, he was a shoe maker and he played the violin. Phyllis [Butterfield] was saying, at one time, somebody was up talking and talking too much. Fred Webb got up and said, "Sit down! You've done enough talking! Let somebody else do some talking now!" I guess he was kind of a sharp man. . . . We thought that Carl Madsen did have a lot to do with it because Jean Madsen said that when she was cleaning out the house, there was some plans in there rolled up. She thought he had a whole lot to do with it.

I'm 83 now. I've lived in Riverton all of my life except for ten years. I've never moved out of our ward. I remember Mary Jane Crane. She would not go to any other ward except the Second Ward. She insisted upon coming to the Riverton Second Ward. She was supposed to go the Third Ward, but she wouldn't. She'd walk down and come to our ward all the time. She had a mind of her own.

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**"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.]

Laurel: Mildred, you graduated in 1930. How long did you teach school before you married Lovell?

Mildred: Forever! I went down to Sevier County to teach junior high. I spent six real interesting years there. That was good experience because I'd never been away from home. Uncle Edward Orgill had a Ford. He took Mother, me, and Aunt Edith down to Elsinore to get me settled in. I could hardly keep tears back. I taught everything.

Lovell: My father was named Mose Densley and my mother was Emily Priscilla Huffman. I have four brothers and one sister. Once me and my older brother, Clifton, was out hauling hay one day and we thought the wagon would need greasing. We took the bolt off the wagon and tried to slip the wheel off. The wheel dropped off and dropped down and there we was trying to get it on. Clifton and I lifted and lifted. Finally we jacked it up and got the wheel back on. I never greased another wagon since!

Mildred: My dad's name was Jesse Edgar Aylette. He was originally from Grace, Idaho. Mother was born in Riverton. She was the second oldest child. She was born to Edward J. Orgill and Mary Farmer. They had ten children. I think they met at a dance. Dad was the janitor of Riverton School. I think all of the kids liked him. When the kids would have to walk through the snow drifts to get to school, he would always let them go down in the boiler room and take their boots and coats off. He'd put them over chairs and get them dry. All of us kids worked at that school. I was the sputter-box of the family. I worked under protest, but I worked. It didn't hurt me. The floors had to be scrubbed. Dad

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rigged up a scrubber on a handle. We scrubbed and mopped those floors. Later they oiled them. My first grade teacher was Naomi Duke. She was a pretty lady. My second grade teacher was Miss Swenson. She was beautiful. There were too many kids in that grade and not enough in the third grade, so six of us were taken out of Miss [Esther] Swenson's room and put into Mary Hansen's room. I wasn't very happy, but it worked out for the best. I was tall and large. There was Ailene Steadman, Vilate Crane, Pearl Bringhurst. It was a good school and there were good teachers. I was very happy. After I got through here, we went to the junior high school. In the meantime, this one burned down. The Scotts from Provo had been painting. It was in summer. All of a sudden, there was an explosion. It burnt. They rebuilt it. We walked to school. I can remember walking over the headstones in the cemetery and sinking clear down to my hips in the snow.

I got baptized by Edward Bills. His mother was Viney Bills. She lived down the cemetery road, just above the canal on the south side. I got baptized in the canal just beyond Dave Bills's home. You went along the canal bank. Dave Bills had his slaughterhouse back

there. He killed all of the cattle and sheep. He made two weekly trips to Bingham to sell meat. He would have those cattle or sheep killed and let all of the entrails run into the canal. That's where we were baptized. We didn't know it at the time, but it didn't stunt me! I grew! Gordon Bills lived just below Dave Bills. Ellen was his first wife and Lena was his second wife. Ellen lived right close to Dave Bills and Lena lived down under the hill.

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Local News

Several buildings in the old commercial section of Riverton were demolished in June 2002. They included the Jordan Valley Bank (Rol-Save store), Stringham Drug, Bills Market, F. E. Seal Auto Sales, Vernal Webb's (Ed Lloyd's garage). All these buildings dated from the 1920s and 1930s. Also demolished were the laundromat (location of former post office) and Aaron Densley's circa 1900 home was torn down in February.

"When I Was Growing Up": Reid Nokes

[Note: Mel Bashore interviewed Reid Nokes on 8 October 1985. This is an edited transcript.]

Mel: Did your grandfather [Charles Mormon Nokes] ever mention his prison experiences to you?

Reid: No. I think that at one time, my grandmother had gone to Manassa, Colorado. That was something to do with that polygamy setup on account of that time there was a lot of persecution against that thing.

Mel: Did you know his other polygamous family very well?

Reid: Not too well. I've known all the children of that family, but we never were really close to them. There was fifteen children combined in the two families. My grandfather's first wife was Caroline Hamilton. She's an aunt to Mary Stockings and Owen Hamilton and Eldred Hamilton and Elmo Hamilton.

I've known all the children of that family, but we never were really close to them. There was fifteen children combined in the two families.

Mel: Did many of your grandfather's children stay in Riverton?

Reid: No. The only one that stayed in Riverton after his first wife and after my grandmother passed away was my father. The rest moved away. My grandfather's families seemed to keep separate, apart quite a bit. My grandfather's first wife lived in the south room of our big house when I was a child. She passed away in 1925. I was only six years old at that time. She was a tall, slender woman. My grandfather was a little chunky. He wasn't what you call real fat, but my dad was quite chunky until late years. It seemed like most of our line were chunky.

Mel: What are your memories of your school years?

Reid: I remember the old school building before I went to school.

They tore that building down. They had a school building just north, where the north school building is now. It was a yellow brick building and it burnt down. The first building that they rebuilt was the north building, where the yellow brick building was. Then they built the south building a year or so later. That was where the little hall was upstairs and the principal's office below. The building in back where the big gym is, was built in 1930. When they were building it, I would crawl through the tunnels down below where the heating tunnels were. All the rest of the kids would, too. I started to school there in 1925 or 1926. I went to school there until the tenth grade. I skipped the sixth grade. The reason we skipped the sixth grade was the school district didn't have the money to keep an extra grade so they took the sixth grade out that year — in about 1931. I lost all the money in the Jordan Valley Bank when it went broke. I had \$4.38 in my little bank book and I lost all of it. That meant a lot when you had a little bank book like that. The president of the bank at that time was Almon T. Butterfield. [Thomas Ellis Butterfield was his son and lived directly across the road from Reid.]

Mel: Do you remember that old brick barn?

Reid: Real well. I'd been in the top of it several times. I worked in the hay with them. When I was seven or eight years old, I used to ride the big old derrick horse pulling the hay up on the hay derrick. They had forty acres of ground. I'd go up and ride the derrick horse. My father had bought a farm up below the canal between about 13800 South and 134th South, right against the canal. It was quite rough ground, but it would really raise good potatoes. My older brother, Corydon, and I would go up and pull weeds. I wasn't big enough to do much because I was just a little shaver. On the way home, we'd sometimes get a ride from Zacharias Butterfield. He had a big old touring car — a Graham or something like that. He'd give us a ride home. He was a kind, old gentleman. He was a hundred years old when he passed away. At that farm, the hay was taller than I was. It was real fertile ground. Some of the potatoes on that ground were a foot long — russet potatoes. That was virgin soil because it was just broken out of sagebrush. Harold Berrett was a great potato man. A few years later, he farmed that ground with Lee Lloyd and they raised a lot of potatoes on Zach Butterfield's old ground.

Death Notices

Max Clyde Phelps (71); husband of (1) Dorothy Laursen and (2) Linda Rawlings; parents were Clyde Burdette Phelps and Arthella Bachman; raised in Riverton; real estate, insurance

Bee Brown (77); wife of Douglas T. Brown; parents were Lorenzo M. and Helen Bills Howard; mother of Paula, Julia, Larry, Suzanne, Sam, and Sydney; long-time Jordan Valley Hospital volunteer

Clarence W. "Bolley" Giles (86); husband of Clarissa Nielsen; parents were James Joseph and Florence Louella Winder Giles; father of Mary Lou, Allen, and Jim; 8-time state horseshoe pitching champion, Utah and Salt Lake Canal water master, in Riverton Hall of Honor

Ralph Crane (80); husband of Afton Densley; parents were James Henry Wilford and Sarah Ann Bills Crane; father of Jeffrey and Daniel; post office employee, service station owner

Notice

As you can see on the masthead, this issue marks the first year anniversary of the *Riverton Yesterdays* newsletter. It has been fun for us to put out. It has also been heart-warming to hear the joy and fun that these memories have brought to subscribers. We have taken pride in getting it in the mail on time for most to receive it on or about the first of each month. We hope it has been interesting enough that people will want to re-subscribe. We will tuck in a reminder note for those of you whose subscription will be up with this issue.

We have tried to peg our subscription price low enough to cover postage (which is increasing), copying, labels, tape cassettes (for recording interviews), and all the little minutia that arise in putting out the newsletter. We think if we can keep a minimum of twenty subscribers that it will justify the time it takes to issue the newsletter. A few of our subscribers passed away this year, so if you enjoy receiving the newsletter, please re-subscribe. In terms of trying to attract new subscribers, we have begun sending complimentary issues to old-timers who no longer live in Riverton. If you know of someone who resides elsewhere who might be interested in learning about the newsletter, let us know and we'll send them a complimentary issue.

**RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Demolition of Old Riverton Commercial Buildings, June 2002