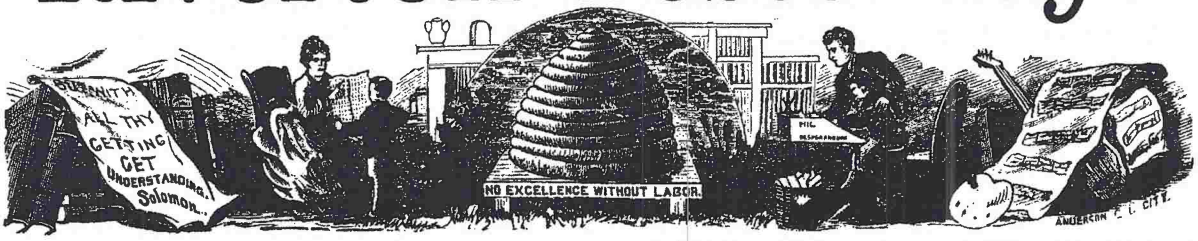
Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

In This Issue

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Stirring Up Old Memories — with Evelyn, Vivian, and Mike (cont.)

[Note: John McCormick, a historian with Utah State Historical Society, interviewed Evelyn B. Dreyer, Vivian Brown, and Mike Crane on 12 August 1980. This is an edited transcript of that interview. Original interview is in Utah State Historical Society and a copy is in Riverton Historical Society.]

Mike: We lived east of town a little bit. My dad worked up there at Dansie's. My mother knew how to start the old Model T. She cranked her up and went up to Dansie's to get Dad for something. She went up there and couldn't stop it. She went around the house and back over and into the garage to stop it.

Evelyn: When they paved Redwood Road, it was just a narrow road. We could roller skate right down the middle of it. They had the old cement plant up in George Dansie's field. Elvoy's driveway is where they came down with the cement truck.

Mike: They used to drive the old horse and wagon to bring the kids to school. There was a little old heater in there. About half the time it would burn the straw trying to keep the kids warm.

Vivian: There was one year they took the sixth grade out and put in kindergarten. When they took out the sixth grade they put in two seventh grades — an A and a B. I went to the B. That was the higher and the A was the lower and most of the boys stayed in the A and most of the girls went to the B. By the time we graduated from high school there was one boy. Clifton Lloyd was the only one that started the first grade with us that graduated.

Mike: They moved it up a grade and back a grade that one year. That was the section I was going into. I think they had four grades — A, B, C, and D. A was the lowest and on up. I was in the lowest class and my dad said, "It don't matter. I think A is higher than D." The thing of it was, ninety percent of us had to help on the farm in the fall of the year. If you didn't have fundamentals, your schooling was really poor.

"It don't matter. I think A is higher than D."

[to be continued]

"More Fun Than Un-Fun":
Ted Seal

[Note: Mel Bashore interviewed Ted Seal on 8 August 2002 in West Jordan. This is an edited excerpt from that transcript.]

Mel: Where was the post office?

Ted: At that time, it was in the Crane building in the northeast corner. There was a little corner cut out there. Next door south of it was the entrance to the theater. The theater was L-shaped and this post office was cut out of the corner of that area where the theater was. We would get freight that came in on the railroad. There was a station there for the railroad. It was one of the very few stations. Most of the other places — if you wanted to catch the train passenger-wise, you would literally have to flag the train down. It would stop for you down at Myers Lane or down at J.R. Peterson road or wherever. They did not stop unless you would flag them down. They did stop at the Riverton station because there was always some freight or mail that had to be unloaded. Of course, most of the big freight came in railroad cars. They would shuffle those around after the last passenger car that came around midnight and prior to six in the morning. In that same area where the cannery was, there used to be a beet station. The farmers would bring their sugar beets in and they would load them into coal cars. The Orem Line would bring them down to the sugar plant in West Jordan. The farmers would bring their sugar beets into that beet station. A lot of the farmers still were doing it by team and wagon. Trucking was not predominant at that time. Of course the railroad went out of business in 1946. They went into bankruptcy. They didn't have any choice. Trucking had evolved and there was a lot of it being trucked even into that station.

After the year when we lived in Salt Lake, we came back to Riverton. That was in the mid-1930s during the Depression. We were hurting like everyone else, but we were not hurting near as bad as some of the other people. But we didn't ever talk about it. As far as we were concerned, we were just like everybody else. We didn't get to flaunt the fact that we could have new shoes relatively whenever we needed them. But some of the other poor kids my age needed shoes, but

Some of the other poor kids my age needed shoes, but they didn't get new shoes. They had to make do with what they had.

they didn't get new shoes. They had to make do with what they had. It wasn't until years later that I realized how fortunate we were.

My dad was able to keep his farm through the Depression. His farm was under what they called the Millionaire Ditch. They pumped the water out of Utah Lake to get it in that canal. It was very costly to pump. But even if they could have pumped, the water was so far back because Utah Lake had receded, that there was no water in that canal for five or six years. So the farm, as many others, just lay dormant. He was able to pay taxes on the farm from the profits from his store, but he couldn't farm because there was no water. We would go up in late spring and harvest some hay that just got water from the late spring storms. But there was just one crop of it. There wasn't anything the rest of the year. He didn't even make an attempt to do any planting. He knew it was futile. It was just spending good money for bad.

We had chickens like a lot of other people had at that time. One coop would hold about five hundred and the other coop would hold about three hundred fifty laying hens. We were in the chicken business. There were numerous chicken people in the Riverton area. There was a time when Ross Egbert worked at Utah Poultry in Salt Lake. He told me that there was a time when they shipped a car load of eggs a day out of Salt Lake to various markets. Seven car loads a week went out of this area — out of Salt Lake. That's a lot of eggs to be going out of an area like the Salt Lake Valley.

Mel: Can you tell me some memories of when you came back to Riverton and went to school.

Ted: They had a sandbox inside the classroom for the 1st and 2nd grades. The teacher got provoked at me because I threw sand out of the sandbox onto the floor. That's about my total remembrance of 2nd grade. That's in the school that's there now. It would be the north end of the school. That room that I'm speaking of would be on the lower floor on the left side as you're coming in what used to be the main door. At that time, they combined first and second grades.

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[to be continued]

"Riverton's Main Street": A Look Back at the Old Business District

Note: On 31 August 2002, the Riverton Historical Society sponsored a program looking back at some of the old businesses in Riverton. We thought it was timely for this retrospective look since many of the old business buildings have recently been demolished. The following is an edited transcript of the remarks of some of those who shared their memories at this program. The remarks of others who spoke that evening will be printed in future issues.

Dorothy Swofford

Over the years, when I was young, I saw different businesses start up and close and changes all the time along Redwood Road. So it didn't stay the same all the time. . . . I worked for Rol[and Page] — a good-looking, handsome guy. 1937 is when I got familiar with Rol-Save. I graduated from high school and Uncle Rol came and asked me if I would work in his store. That was just so wonderful because it was the Depression. There was no money. There was no jobs. I hadn't even thought about working really. I was only seventeen. But he asked me if I'd like to come and work in his store. I found out that my education had just begun when I got in the store because Rol taught me many, many things. He was a little bit like his dad [Thomas P. Page], I think, but much more gentle and kind about it. But he had certain rules for us to follow and certain things for us to do and we worked hard. We didn't just sit around and play and have fun.

There was no money. There was no jobs. I hadn't even thought about working really. I was only seventeen.

Meredith and Rol were running the store in the Page-Hansen company and Rol pulled out and decided to start his own store.[1] It was just really a small beginning. He soon bought the [Jordan Valley] bank building. It just happened that my husband[-to-be], Harry, came to build shelves and to get the bank ready so we could move into it. We got acquainted there. There was always windows to shine and shelves to dust and clean. We put out a weekly sales slip on penny post cards so we

[1] Noel Page's recollections in the next issue will clarify and elaborate more on this ownership change.

had to type that up and do it through the mimeograph and send it out once a week. Some of the sales you can't believe! It was interesting to work there and get acquainted with people and know everybody that moved into town and everybody that moved out and all about them. It was just a fun time for me. Things were so hard then. Most of the men were on WPA and making $55 a month if you can imagine. I started out at ninety cents a day at Rol-Save. When I quit a year later, I was making around $1.35 or $1.40.

Harry and I couldn't ever date on Saturday nights because that was when everybody came to the store. We were just swamped and you had to take care of each customer. You had to write down each item. You had to total it. If it was a charge — Uncle Rol had quite a few people on the books — you had to have a running balance. So it kept us busy, especially on Saturday nights. We would think we were going to Covey's dancing or something like that, but very, very rarely would we get away before way late. That was what happened to our dating.

It was kind of the barter system. People brought eggs, butter. If they had vegetables in the garden, they brought them and Rol would tell us how much to allow them so that they could take something back home with them. He went to town once a week to get supplies so he could provide almost anything anybody would want. If we didn't have it in the store, he would say, "Well, I'm going to town and I'll get it for you." And he would. Very seldom that he wouldn't come home with it. It was that kind of a store. Gradually he built up his inventory. He had a lot of inventory in that little store.

If we didn't have it in the store, he would say, "Well, I'm going to town and I'll get it for you." And he would.

We used to slice our lunch meat. He had a little meat counter. He would have a butcher or someone come with the meat. They would bring the cheese which was round and on a big wooden [plate]. We packaged rice, macaroni, and even sugar, in sacks. We had butcher paper that we rolled the meat in, but the packaging was so different. Now you go in and everything is packaged and neat and clean. We had sacks and we had some paper that we could wrap stuff up in. We would cut the lunch meat, cut the cheese, cut the bacon. The bacon came in a slab. We had to slice it. I remember Ardella, who ran the beauty shop. She'd come in Saturday night. They must have always had a nice breakfast on Sunday because she'd want us to slice the bacon thick — slice the bacon thicker. We couldn't get it thick enough for her.

One other story I want to tell you. Somebody came around with a big bag of beans — they said. So Rol looked at the beans in the top. They looked really good. They looked nice — big chili beans. So he put them over by the counter for us girls for us to bag them into little bags. I worked with Thelma Peterson — and me and Rol. We got down a little ways and there was gravel in the bag. It was a big hundred-pound bag. We got down a little bit and they had put gravel in it. It had the beans just up there on top. I was telling Harry about it and he said the same thing happened at the Bills' store. He saw the bag. There had been a hole in this bag. They had put the beans in there around the hole and filled it up with gravel. Can you imagine anyone doing that! You can see that times were hard and they were just working every angle they could to get along.

Somebody came around with a big bag of beans — they said. So Rol looked at the beans in the top. They looked really good. They looked nice — big chili beans. . . . We got down a little ways and there was gravel in the bag. . . . they had put gravel in it. It had the beans just up there on top. . . . times were hard and they were just working every angle they could to get along.

I enjoyed working there and Rol was a good, Christian gentleman. You know before I went to work there, he always brought Mother something Christmas eve — a bag of sugar, a bag of flour. Mother was a widow with eight children. I thought, well he does that because she's his sister-in-law. I thought that was wonderful. And then when I came back to Riverton to live, I was talking to a lady down on the Lower Road — I won't tell you her name — but she was not of our church. But she told me the same story — that Rol always brought her something Christmas eve. He brought her a gift. Usually it was something very practical. It was sugar or flour or something that was very practical and that he knew she could use. He was a fine gentleman. He was a good boss. I enjoyed that year that I worked for him.

"In My Growing Up Years" — Don Petersen

[Note: Mel Bashore interviewed Donald B. Petersen on 9 April 1986. This is an edited excerpt from that transcript.]

Don: We milked the cows and took the milk and put it in the milk house in the cooler in a bowl of cement. There was a lot of cold water in it. We'd just stick the ten-gallon can in there and fill it up with milk and let it get cold. We'd stir it up once in awhile with a stainless steel stirring device so it would get cold faster. We'd just leave it there all night. My Uncle Martin was a milk man. He'd come the next morning and get the milk. The biggest source of money that my father earned was from milk that the cows produced and also from eggs that we sold. Sometimes my mother would make a few extra pounds of butter and take it up to the store and trade it for other things that she needed. It was very revealing to me as I grew older that we had fared so well — and yet fared so poorly in other ways. Not having any money, we never went hardly to a state fair or anything. Sometimes we went to Salt Lake City. When I got a little bit older, I had hope of getting spending money to go to Salt Lake and do a little bit of Christmas shopping. But other than that, the Depression was kind of a hard experience. It wasn't until World War II came along that we really began to pull out of it.

Mel: What did you use to heat your home with?

Don: We used to get coal. We used to have an old wood pile. I had to go out and chop wood. We had a coal pile out by the granary. I'd bring buckets of coal in. That was my job for quite a few years.

Mel: Besides the bank, what other businesses failed during the Depression?

Don: Utah Poultry. That was where my father worked. He got his job there during the Depression. They had built a new Utah Poultry over in Midvale, so they seemed to be doing very well. He was working for Utah Poultry in Salt Lake where he started out selling eggs to people. They moved him out to Riverton as the manager when they finished the Poultry in Midvale. Other than Riverton Motor, I think it was one of the biggest businesses in Riverton. My father also farmed at this little farm here. He also ran a large 140-

acre farm in South Jordan at 114th South. He ran that for Rufus K. Hardy of the 1st Quorum of the Seventy for about twenty-five to thirty years. He ran the farm for him. We had to herd our cows up there to the farm in the lower forty acres. My job was to take the cows up and bring them home in time for milking.

Mel: What are your memories of the train-bus accident?

Don: I was in the tenth grade at Jordan High School. In fact, that was the very same route that all my older brothers and sisters had taken to go to high school the year before. In 1938, they changed the route. The year before, the tenth grade had been up in Riverton. In 1938, they put the tenth grade back over in Jordan High so they had to make some changes on the bus route. A lot of the children that were killed in that bus were friends of mine. We had just barely got over there to Jordan High School. We hadn't had a chance to go to any classes when they announced over the intercom that there had been an accident. Some of the children had been killed. We didn't find out until we got home.

A lot of the children that were killed in that bus were friends of mine.

Death Notices

Miller James Crane (75); husband of Mae Mangum Crane; parents were Heber L. and Ann Eugenia Skinner Crane; father of Donald, Lola, Mary Lee, Penny; owner of Crane's Greenhouse

Next Issue

More "Stirring Up Old Memories," "More Fun Than Un-fun," & "Riverton's Main Street"

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

WANTED

OLD STOCK CERTIFICATES OF RIVERTON BUSINESSES

to display in Crane House

Just Acquired: 1893 Utah and Salt Lake Canal stock certificate

copy to be printed in next month's newsletter