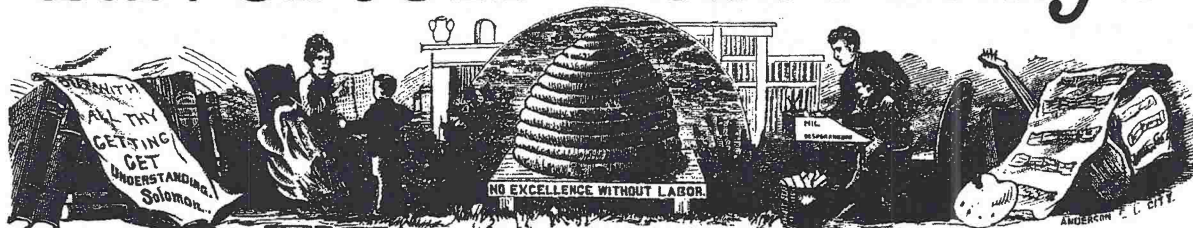


Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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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.]

Evelyn: There used to be a resort called Crystal Hot Lakes down by where the prison is. The water was hot. That's where we used to take our Saturday night bath every week. Whenever we worked in the fields, we'd go up there and take a bath. There's just a little ledge, not very wide, to stand on there. You couldn't find a bottom any place else.

Vivian: They had bath houses and all that up there.

Evelyn: The people that had a resort there went broke or something. Anyway, they quit. After they closed, kids would go up there swimming. They'd try to find the bottom.

Vivian: A lot of people drowned. They'd go up there drunk and try to find the bottom.

Evelyn: A lot of people from Salt Lake came there. They didn't know the lake like we did. When we went in, we were awful careful. There would be days that they couldn't find those bodies. I don't think they ever found some of them.

Mike: I think they were pretty well cooked when they finally came up.

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Evelyn: They would drag them up with hooks.

Mike: They threw a big iron in one time trying to find the bottom. It melted it.

[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.]

Ted: When I was in the seventh grade, I took band. LaVar Isaacson was the teacher. I was playing the cornet. I was on the last row. Standing in back of me was Paul Butterfield, the kid that was playing the drums. He flipped me with a spit wad and hit me on my right ear. I can still feel it right now. Everybody was flipping spit wads at the time. I put my horn down. I stood up and reached in my pocket. I got some paper and wet it down good. I got an elastic out. I turned around and flipped it at Paul. I didn't hit him. Old Isaacson beat his baton on the stand and wanted to know what I was doing. I said, "I'm flipping a spit wad." He kicked me out of his band. I was done. If you were doing something wrong, it wasn't nothing to get hit with a yardstick. I don't say it braggingly, but I was hit a number of times with a yardstick. I didn't go home and cry to my momma about getting hit with a yardstick because I'd have got a wallop. My mother would have got ahold of my ear and taken me back up to school to find out what I had been doing wrong. Not what that nasty teacher had been doing.

We played softball in gym class in the spring. I was playing second base and my cousin, Lee Beckstead, was playing third base. The gym teacher came up to bat. He hit a little blooper. His name was Sterling Jensen. He was a real good teacher. He put up with a lot of stuff from us. His name was Mr. Jensen. Of course, all the teachers were Mr. or Miss. He hit a little blooper and started trotting down to first base. Lee, over on third base said, "You'd better hurry, Sterling, or you'll never make first." Boy, I'll tell you, he touched first and he shot past me on second base like a bullet and went over to third base and literally jumped on Lee and said, "The name is Mr. Jensen!" That was all. I mean, that was the end of that. He let him know. He went past me like a buckshot out of a gun.

He shot past me on second base like a bullet and went over to third base and literally jumped on Lee and said, "The name is Mr. Jensen!"

[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. The following is an edited transcript of the remarks of Ted Seal. The remarks of others who spoke that evening will be printed in future issues.

Ted Seal

My father was Franklin E. Seal, Jr. He had the grocery store. My dad worked for the Bills' family in the Bills store. He started there in May of 1907 driving a meat wagon to Bingham twice a week. A housewife would say, "I want that part." So he'd come down and hack off some meat. They'd take it out. He did this — not solely, for he worked in the store also — for about nine years. At the end of that time, he was managing the store. This was in 1916. At that time, he left for about two years and went to work up in the mine up in Lark. He was making pretty good money up there. All at once, the mine wasn't working any more. So he wasn't making any money. So he came back to work again in the Bills' Market. In June 1920, he married my mother, Lydia Orgill. This was after his first wife had passed away leaving him with three small children — five, seven, and nine years of age.

In March 1921, my dad purchased the market from George S. Bills. My mother had worked in the Page-Hansen Store and Cooper's Mercantile down in West Jordan. They both knew something about the mercantile business. At this time the building was a free-standing building. In the

If you wanted your kids to learn anything about the birds and bees, all you had to do was send 'em in [Butch Madsen's barber shop] to get a hair cut.

summer of 1922, having purchased ground from Dr. S.C.B. Sorenson, they did in fact build on to the building. They built on about thirty feet onto the back of the building. That back part was where they moved in to. Prior to this, they had been living down about where Johnny Steadman later lived. Across the street, of course, was Butch Madsen's barber shop. If you wanted your kids to learn anything about the birds and bees, all you had to do was send 'em in there to get a haircut. Can you imagine having a family of two adults, one infant and another on the way, besides the three older children, living in an area of about three

hundred and forty-five square feet with no inside bathroom facilities? They lived in this small area until about 1924 at which time they built on to the south side of the store on ground they had bought from Dr. Sorenson. That became their residence until 1928 when they built a new home on Redwood Road at about 12300 South. We just used to say the second purple brick house on the east side of the road. We didn't have house numbers.

About this time, the post office moved into the south building which had been our family's living quarters. In 1934, my folks leased a store in Salt Lake City. We moved into Salt Lake City and hired someone to run the store. In the latter part of 1934, we returned to Riverton and got back in the store. At that time, my dad decided that he was going to sell automobiles. He sold them in the south wing of the store. He sold Plymouths and home appliances — Kelvinator refrigerators and ABC washers. This continued until the fall of about 1937. At that time, he bailed out of the automobile business and went into dry goods — overalls, gloves, and work clothes for the farmers. Not many people could afford gloves. They had to work without them. He sold work shirts and hardware like beet knives. About 1938, we joined the Independent Grocers Alliance which is more commonly known as IGA. At that time, we replaced the old wooden shelving in the store. We became really modern. At that time, they introduced the beginning of self service in the grocery stores — [a cane-type basket]. We had seven of these. We weren't very successful. People didn't use them. They still came in and said, "I want some eggs or cheese." We still had to go and get each individual thing that the people asked for. Probably sixty percent of our business was charged so you had to handwrite everything.

From 1942 to 1945, items were rationed. After we got through tallying up how many dollars the people had gotten in merchandise, you had to tally up the points for ration stamps which were

Ration stamps . . . were required to buy things. There were green stamps and red stamps and sugar stamps.

required to buy things. There were green stamps and red stamps and sugar stamps. I don't remember what else, but there were a number of them. The red ones were good for meat products. The blue ones were other items: canned goods other than canned meats. About this time, oleo margarine was almost unheard of in the state of Utah because the state of Utah was a "dairy state." The dairy association was very powerful. It was powerful enough that they were able to put such a high tax on oleo margarine so it wouldn't come into the state and cut into their sales. It was just virtually unknown. In the point system, oleo

margarine required about half as many points per pound as butter did so we did get margarine coming in. They had one brand. It was Nucoa, put out by Best Foods. It was white because they wouldn't let it be colored yellow. There was a little bubble of yellow coloring in it. You'd knead it with your hand and get it warm and mix the coloring in so that it would be yellow. Most of the time it turned out just yellowish-streaked. Some canned goods, in addition to being rationed, were allocated by our supplier. Even though you had the points to get things like canned pineapple and tuna fish, there just wasn't enough to go around. We would not put these things on the shelf because there were people who traveled around to all the stores shopping for pineapple, canned salmon, and things like this. So we didn't put them on the shelves. We saved them for our regular customers. It was mandated that stores would be open from 8 AM and you had to close by 6 PM — and 8 PM on Saturday — to conserve electricity for war time. You couldn't open before 8 AM. In addition to that, there was also the Office of Price Stabilization. They would come around to the stores and check to make sure that we weren't charging 23 cents for a can of peas when it should be 22 cents. You had to pamper those guys when they came around, too. We operated the business until the 31st of October in 1948 at which time we sold the business and the real estate to Joseph P. Butterfield.

About 1933, right after Roosevelt went into office, we had the bank holiday nationally. They closed the bank because people were

There was no note. There was no witness. Nothing!

running into the bank to get their deposits back. So they declared a bank holiday. All banks across the country closed on that day. About two-thirds of them didn't open the next day — one of which was our Jordan Valley Bank here in Riverton. On that day, Heber S. Crane — more commonly known as H.S. — came across the street and asked my father, "How are things going?" My dad said, "How would you feel if all your working capital were over there in the bank all locked up?" H.S. walked across the street and came back with \$500. He gave it to my dad. There was no note. There was no witness. Nothing! He just gave it to my dad. He had sold some sheep just the day before and had cash money. This is the kind of people that were in Riverton! Our store was about 2140 square feet.

Dr. Sorenson's office was above the drug store, next to us. He was about 55 or 57 years old. There were eighteen steps going up to his office. Every day at ten minutes of two — you could set your watch by it — he would park his car and come open that door and he would run up eighteen steps — not taking two or three at a time, but run up each one.

A Summer in Riverton in 1928 with Grandpa and Grandma Madsen

[Introductory note: Brigham D. Madsen was born in 1914 and raised in Pocatello, Idaho. Madsen had a long and distinguished career as an historian. He was on the faculty of BYU, Utah State University, and the University of Utah. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. He received an Honorary Doctor of Humanities from the University of Utah and a Distinguished Service Award from the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. He has received numerous awards for his published histories about Patrick Edward Connor, B.H. Roberts's studies of the Book of Mormon, the Montana Trail, Shoshone Indians, and the Bear River Massacre. He has roots in Riverton. His grandfather was Carl Madsen and his grandmother was Annie Crane Madsen. His father was Brigham Andrew "Brig" Madsen, who was born in Riverton in 1891. Following are some excerpts from his published autobiography [*Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Western Historian* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 20-23] pertaining to Riverton and Riverton people. We enjoyed a delightful visit with Brig and his daughter, Linda, at the Crane House on 14 December. Brig's grandfather, Carl Madsen, built the Crane House in 1916.]

Annie [Crane] inherited beautiful red hair from her father, and passed it on to my sisters, Ann and Phyllis. It must be a dominant gene; when I attended a Crane family reunion in the early 1950s in Herriman Ward, about half of the 200 or so people there had red hair. I have always admired my sisters' beautiful hair, but they have resented looking "different" in a way that attracted unwelcome jokes.

Annie Crane at seventeen accepted a marriage proposal from a young man and prepared her wedding dress; but when she saw him with another girl, she indignantly called off the wedding. A few months later, she met Carl

My grandfather was the undisputed head of the Madsen household.

Madsen, a Danish immigrant, who was doing some carpenter work for the family for whom she was doing housework. They were married on November 30, 1887, despite her mother's disapproval. Carl, thirteen years older than Annie, was a widower with two children. Elizabeth and the other two wives of James Crane [Brig Madsen's paternal great-grandfather] told Annie that they would never take her part against her stepchildren. They needn't have worried, because red-headed Annie showed no favoritism for her own ten children over the two; in fact, when shopping, she always gave the stepchildren the first choice of what she bought. I was a grown man before I discovered that Uncle Charley and Aunt Mary were not Grandma's children. Carl and Annie had a devoted though not demonstrative, marriage. They were both industrious, pragmatic, and excellent managers, certainly a necessity in rearing their twelve children. My grandfather was the undisputed head of the Madsen household, and both had fiery tempers; but to some extent, they

balanced each other. Grandmother skillfully managed family relationships and intervened when Grandfather's explosions became dangerous to others.

Carl Madsen operated a small farm in Riverton and built houses and small buildings while his growing family helped in both endeavors. Annie had the typical hard work and cares of a farm wife of the late 1800s and joined her husband in insisting that all of their children learn the advantages of industry and dedicated work habits. As her biographer wrote, "Grandma was a very particular housekeeper — almost to the point of being a fanatic about it." (Lorena Madsen Smith, "Annie Crane Madsen," 3) For example, if she found a spot on a dish, the errant dishwasher was forced to do the whole batch over again. Annie was just as particular about her own appearance and that of her children. Also, "she liked to get done in a hurry." One of her children remembered that when the butter delayed "coming," she "raised her voice to it." The losing of her temper and the coming of the butter always seemed to coincide, so her children can be forgiven for thinking there was a causal connection.

Like her mother, Annie was well organized, a good manager, and very generous. All of her children remember carrying a particular red bucket filled with food to a neighbor in want. Danish immigrants who knew Carl frequently stayed with the family for a month or two while they found a location in their new country. . . .

I came to know this remarkable woman because in 1928 when I was thirteen, my father sent me to spend the summer with his parents in Riverton, Utah, because I was not "going to be allowed to lie around all summer like the lazy boys of the neighborhood" in my little village of Alameda, Idaho. During those three months, I learned to love Grandma Madsen very much and to admire and respect my stern and hardworking Grandpa Madsen. I particularly remember Grandma's "parlor" which I was allowed to enter only on the sabbath. It was meticulously cleaned and arranged, and I sat on the old horsehair sofa during these periods of reverence, usually listening to Aunt Desna, about age eighteen, play appropriately subdued pieces on the piano.

My grandfather operated a farm of five acres and, that summer, was also building a large barn for a neighbor. I worked with him every day either doing carpentry or cutting and hauling hay and other farm chores. We worked from sunup to sundown six days a week but never on Sunday.

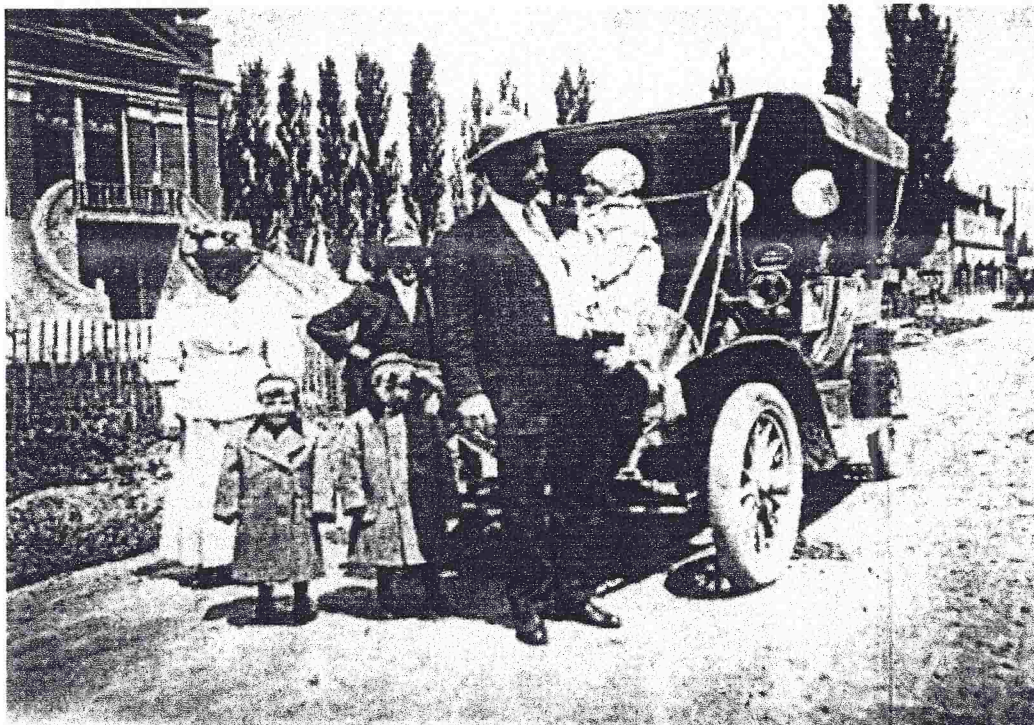
We worked from sunup to sundown six days a week but never on Sunday.

Annie Crane died at age fifty-eight on May 19, 1929, after suffering from a heart ailment for ten years. She was fifty-eight. My sturdy Danish grandfather outlived her by another seventeen years, dying at the age of ninety.

[to be continued]

Death Notices

Sterling Christian Jensen (88); born in Sandy, taught school in Riverton before owning and managing J. P. Jensen's Sons Grocery in historic Sandy [see Ted Seal's interview on page 3]



Mystery Photo

This photograph was found in a local antique store. In the background is the dome church (on the left) and the Page-Hansen Store (on the right). The short man to the left of the lady with the hat is the owner of the car. Other photos in the collection show him also visiting Malad, Idaho, in his touring car. What is the year and model of the car? Who are these people?

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