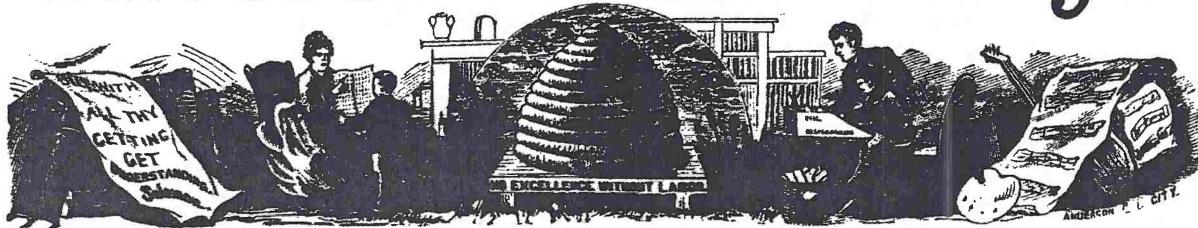


Riverton Yesterdays



Volume 3, No. 2 September 2003

A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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Riverton on the Internet

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"As We Go Along in Life": Elias C. Butterfield

[Note: This is an edited transcript of an interview Scott Crump conducted with Elias Butterfield on 10 May 1991.]

Scott: Have there been any books that have had an influence on your life?

Elias: I'm a different kind of reader than most readers. A lot of people sit down to read a book from cover to cover. I sit down and browse a book. If I like a paragraph, I read it. If I don't like the next paragraph, I skip it. I do that with church books. I don't hardly ever read continuously in a book.

Scott: What's your favorite movie?

Elias: I always liked western movies. I go back to the William S. Hart, Hoot Gibson, and Harry Carey days. I always liked John Wayne. He was a man of action and that's what I like. I didn't ever care for Clark Gable. My wife thought Clark Gable was wonderful. But I don't think Clark Gable was anything.

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Scott: What's your favorite type of music?

Elias: Sweet, melodic, melody. Not jazz, but on the other hand, not high-brow stuff. I like Glenn Miller, Guy Lombardo, Eddy Duchin on the piano.

Scott: What kind of TV show do you like to watch?

Elias: Murder and suspense mysteries. Perry Mason. I like Hunter. That sort of thing.

Scott: What do you like to eat best?

Elias: Potatoes and gravy and meat.

Scott: What's your most memorable failure — something where you really screwed up?

Elias: Have you got until 2 o'clock in the morning? I can tell you a recent one. Some bank stock was worth \$8 a share one year ago and it's worth \$24 this year and I didn't buy any. That's a failure.

Scott: What advice would you give to future Rivertonians that are growing up now? You've had the experience of living in this town almost all of your life. What kind of advice would you give? to future residents? to future church leaders?

Elias: Number one — I would tell them to learn how to work — and I mean really work! Don't just do a little and then stand on the shelf. Learn how to work! If they've learned how to work, then put forth an effort to make something of yourself. Develop yourself. They ought to do something in life to develop themselves — develop their memory, read good books, or push forward and make something happen. I have a saying in my life: "You've got to make it happen." It doesn't happen on its own. My other saying is: "If you could do fifty-one percent right, you're still in business." I've got another saying: "Look both ways twice when you drive on the highway. It's the second car, the second train that kills you."

Scott: What do you see for the future of Riverton? What's Riverton going to be like in twenty years?

Elias: I see Riverton becoming too big a city. It's already too big a city. There are already too many intricate little details in Riverton that have to be done. It's going to become a bigger, bigger, and bigger city. It's going to become one massive city. Time for people like me to go out in the country somewhere.

Scott: Do you think you'll move to the country?

Elias: No, but it's a good idea. See, my trouble is I've been turn-sided. What a lot of people do when they retire is they move away to some small little burg. They don't have to worry too much about little details. I didn't do that. I said to my brother, Almon, "Almon, it's a good thing we get old and die off." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because we're born into a society that we're able to cope with. We grow up with that society, but as we get older and as we go along in life, you get old like we are. The young people come along and we're out of step. They're marching to their tune and we don't have a tune any more. Our band leader is gone and we don't have a tune. It's a good thing we die and get out of the way so they can take over." I see the new generation coming along and taking control and doing things that I wouldn't even dream of or wouldn't even think was decent to do.

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“I Can Remember”: Eldred and Violet Hamilton

[Note: This is an edited transcript of an interview Mel Bashore conducted with Eldred and Violet Hamilton on 29 January 1986.]

Eldred: Tommy Nichols had a candy store right on the northwest corner of the intersection. Kids used to go there to hang out. It was mostly a confectionary. Dave Bills had a meat store. They had a slaughter house where they slaughtered their beef and pigs down there on the canal. They used to take meat to Bingham and Lark twice a week.

Violet: His wife used to render all the lard out. She had a big kettle on the stove and a stick in it. They used to sell it back in the store.

Mel: Did your folks take their tithe to Tithing Yard Hill?

Eldred: I guess they did. There was a scale there where they'd weigh hay and stuff.

Violet: All that I remember about the Tithing Yard was the sleigh rides we used to have down that big old hill. Everybody used to go down there sleigh riding. Right on the road. There wasn't that much traffic. No hassle. It was quite a long walk, but it was worth it we thought.

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Eldred: We used to go over and sleigh ride on what they called the Green Hill. They had a foot bridge to go across the canal right down to the Green home. We used to get up on that hill and slide down. We had a bob sleigh. We'd start up on the hill and go down around under it and make the curve so we could go way down toward the lower part of the hill.

Violet: It's right on the edge of Bluffdale on the Lower Road where it curves down around.

Mel: What would kids do in the summer time?

Violet: Play games like hop scotch.

Eldred: We'd play Old Sow.

Violet: I don't remember Old Sow.

Eldred: These guys would make a big circle and each one would have to dig a hole with a stick and hold his stick in. The old sow, he'd have to bring the can in and get it into the center or else we'd get his stick into somebody else's hole so they'd have to change places. When he'd get in there close to us, we'd knock the can as far as we could then he'd have to go bring it back.

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Violet: We used to play kick the can and run sheep run. When we moved to Bluffdale, we had quite a hilly place there on our farm. We could sleigh ride out there on the hills in winter.

Eldred: I played on the basketball and baseball team starting in the 7th grade. The basketball courts was outside. They were just on the ground on a dirt surface. The standard was just a pole stuck in the ground. It was a school team. Basketball got to be quite popular about when I was in the 7th grade.

Mel: What can you tell me about the custom of all the Riverton businesses closing every Thursday afternoon?

Violet: We had a half a day off when I worked in the store on Thursday afternoon. I don't know why.

Eldred: All the businesses would close at one o'clock on Thursday afternoon. We'd have half a day off on Thursday. A lot of the workers take the afternoon and go to Saratoga and places like that. They'd usually have a baseball game going in the afternoon. They only closed the businesses during the summer. They didn't do it in the winter. It was a recreation day. Sometimes we'd catch the interurban train up to Salt Lake. But it was hard to get anything done because by the time you could catch a train, it was about two and the last train coming out was at 6 o'clock. So you didn't have too much time by the time you got in there and back. It stopped at every little town and picked up passengers. I remember when they built that railroad. After they got it graded pretty good, they laid the track and then they hauled the gravel in by railroad to gravel it with. Some of the local people got contracts to grade different sections with fresno scrapers and some of them with just a little hand scraper.

[to be continued]

"They All Call Me Ole": Lorenzo "Ren" Howard

[Note: This is an edited transcript of an interview Mel Bashore conducted with Ren Howard on 2 March 1985.]

Ren: After he lost his sheep my dad [Samuel H. Howard] got into politics. John C. Mackey was county commissioner and he was a sheep man and Dad knew him. He gave him the job of road supervisor. He held it for sixteen years. Then after that he was county sheriff. He knew everybody and everybody's kid in the biggest part of this end of the county. They knew him, too. He got a lot of kids out of trouble.

Mel: What would a road supervisor do?

Ren: He took care of all the roads. I can remember that we sawed lumber and made culverts and put 'em across the roads. He stayed in long enough that he graveled Redwood Road from 13400 South clear to 11800 South all one spring! He nearly lost his job over it, but he got by. The people that would come out and build the sidewalk, he'd give 'em a job graveling the road. Boy! Those teams were just one after another there all the time! And by gosh! It didn't take 'em long to do it! It just seemed like all they'd have to do is just ask and everybody'd turn out and do it! Same way with the ball park. Boy! They'd get up and clean that off and clean that up.

It just seemed like all they'd have to do is just ask and everybody'd turn out and do it!

Mel: It sounds like real community spirit.

Ren: You bet! It was a day of help one another. If someone got sick, half of the town would be up there getting his hay up. I can remember there was about fifteen wagons come up here on one farm — hell, I was just a kid — and they got his whole first crop of hay up! It never cost him a nickel!

Mel: What can you tell me about your grandfather, Samuel Lorenzo Howard?

Ren: Well, sir! He was a happy-go-lucky person! He wore a goatee. I don't think I ever remember seeing him without it. He was a public-spirited man. Everybody liked him. He spoke with a strong English accent. But see, he was quite young when he come over. I think he was along ten or twelve years old. He had two

sisters that was younger than he was. It was he and the two sisters that survived the cholera in Winter Quarters.

Mel: Did your grandfather marry more than one woman?

Ren: No. His wife was married before. She was married first to Archibald Gardner. They had one child. It was James Hamilton Gardner. He's the man who went on a mission and learned to make sugar and he was the head of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company for years.

Mel: Do you know why she left Archibald?

Ren: Well you see, this Archibald Gardner married her mother and the daughter about the same time. I guess she fell in love with Lorenzo and left Archibald. Then they got married and moved out to Riverton.

Mel: It sounds like there was a big age difference between her and Archibald.

Ren: Yes. Well you see, they used to do that. You know — old Brigham! He kinda' took care of the young girls, too.

Mel: What did you think of the A.T. Butterfield barn?

Ren: Well, George F. Beckstead built it. He married a sister to my grandmother — Charlotte. My dad started in the sheep business with him. When they went broke, he took out bankruptcy. My mother was quite a religious person. She disagreed with Dad about taking out bankruptcy, so he didn't. George F. did and he stayed in the business and pulled himself out pretty good. He sold the place to A.T. Butterfield and moved to Provo and lived down there. He died soon after.

Mel: Some people think that Kletting, who designed the dome church, may have also designed the Beckstead barn. What do you think?

Ren: Well, it could be, but knowing George F. Beckstead, you didn't tell him much of anything! No, sir! He was a kingfish! But he was well liked. People liked the old boy.

**But knowing George F.
Beckstead, you didn't tell him
much of anything! No, sir! He
was a kingfish!**

Mel: Many of the old farmers were very strong-minded men.

Ren: Yes, they are. It takes a strong person to combat the difficulties they face in farming. They'll go along and it'll look just fine, then all at once they have a bad season and they're broke. It's peculiar, but that's the way it runs. I had a farm up here on the Flat. It was forty acres and I was getting along just fine. Heck! Good as could be! Dad was helping me. Well, all at once, we had two dry seasons. No water. Couldn't farm. It just burnt right up. That was all. Well, I wasn't alone. That whole west side went broke, nearly all of them. Yes. Just about all of them moved off of the Flat. Just one season it was bad and the next season was worse and that killed them all. They had to start all over again. Those people with four or five children just couldn't make it. Then people with a little money and a little credit come in and they took it all over.

Mel: They made hay on everybody else's misfortune?

Ren: Yes. And it's been pretty good ever since. It's sure funny. That was during the Depression. Farmers didn't get hurt too bad as long as they could raise their crops and get rid of them because help was cheap then. But those that was in debt got hurt. Of course the Federal Land Bank owned most of it. Those people with some good credit and a little cash bought the whole Flat.

Mel: Were you dry farming then?

Ren: Yes. Then the water come back in the canals and it's been good ever since. But what made it bad back then, there's so many of them built homes on their farms and had good corrals and barns and they lost it all.

[to be continued]

Death Notices

Trulen G. Bills (91); parents were Ezra Lars and Harriet Ethyl Bills; widow of Vola Anderson

Charlette Buhler Densley (72); widow of Leon Huffman Densley

Clarence A. Ball (99); widow of Jennie Anderson; mining machinist

Max Scal Beckstcad (77); parents were Mary Ellen Scal and Edward Byram Beckstead; husband of Carma Butterfield Beckstead; mink farmer

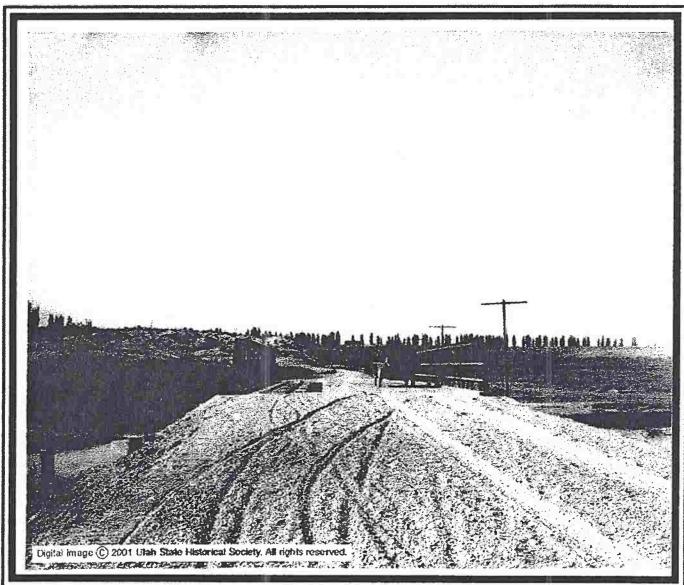
Riverton on the Internet

Look at the kind of things you can see on the Internet! Lots of Riverton history! There are six different views of the old Jordan River bridge in the Shipler Collection on the Utah State Historical Society web site. See them at www.history.utah.gov/Photos/C275/welcome.html. There is a growing number of articles about Riverton in different Utah newspapers that are being digitized on the University of Utah web site. To see those, go to www.lib.utah.edu/digital/unews/. Just search for Riverton on either site.

Riverton Postoffice Robbed.

Burglars robbed the Riverton post office early Friday morning January 27, and were prevented from robbing the store of Seth Pixton by the courage and ready wit of two young men who slept in the place.

About 1 o'clock the young men were awokened by the noise of a door being broken in. They waited in silence. When the burglars masked and armed, appeared, one of the boys, Heber Frankland, tried to shoot with a pistol he had. Four times he drew the trigger, but the weapon failed to explode. "Hand me the shot gun" he cried to the other, referring to a weapon that existed only in his imagination. This alarmed the burglars and they ran, pursued by the boys. At some distance from the place the burglars turned and one of them shot. Frankland tried again and this time his gun exploded. One of the burglars fired a parting shot at him before disappearing in the darkness. An examination afterwards disclosed that the post office had previously been robbed. A searching party failed to discover any trace of the men though articles they had dropped in their flight were found.



Jordan River Bridge
looking west at Tithing Yard Hill
20 October 1910
Shipler Collection, Utah State
Historical Society

American Eagle, 28 January 1905
University of Utah Marriott Library's Utah
Digital Newspapers Project

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