

Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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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.]

Mel: What was the ceiling of the domed church like?

Eldred: It was just a dome.

Violet: It was painted. It was fancy.

Eldred: The bricks were red brick.

Violet: Kind of not too dark.

Eldred: We took most of the brick to put in the new church house [1st Ward]. We used the brick inside. I was in the bishopric when we tore that building down and also when they first started to build this other 3rd Ward church house. We gave the people so much time for their allotment on the church house to clean the brick. Then they took that brick and used it for the inside room and put the outside brick on the outside. It was kind of a light red brick. We took as much of the lumber that we could use out of the dome church to put in down at the church. I was in charge of putting in the sub-floor when I was in the bishopric. I put in all the pillar work and the sub-floor.

Mel: What do you remember about the old alfalfa mill?

Eldred: I remember when it was built. Part of it was built on our property. Mother and Dad bought some property above the canal and afterwards we farmed that. I think they sold some of it to the alfalfa mill.

They'd bring their own hay in and chop it. Then they would mix it with molasses.

They formed an incorporation. They started the feeding lot up there and started feeding lambs. Different people around here could buy lambs and they'd go up there and the mill would chop their hay and haul it down to their own places and feed their sheep that way. They'd bring their own hay in and chop it. Then they would mix it with molasses. They had a big mixer up in the top of the field that they'd mix it. They would tell them how much grain they wanted or molasses mixed with their feed. They would put it in through their feed to the amount that they wanted and then take it right back home that same day.

Mel: How did they make this molasses?

Eldred: They got the molasses from the sugar beets. There was a factory at West Jordan. They would ship the molasses out of that in big tanks. They would have to heat that up to get it to run into the tanks. They would have steam heat going into it. The alfalfa mill had a big feed lot up there. It was right on the Orem track.

Mel: Where was it located?

Eldred: 13400 South and about 2500 or 2600 West. The Orem railroad run right through it. They would haul their corn out on the railroad track. My brother and I would unload their corn at night when the elevators weren't busy. They built a big cement plant over there at Dansie's when they hard-surfaced these roads here — Redwood Road and from here over to Draper. I drove a team and helped to break up the roads for surfacing Redwood Road. When they was doing the road from Riverton over to State Street, they had a Case steam engine that they used to break up the road. Then they broke the gears out of it. My Uncle Tom was the road supervisor. He had one of the big teams and Dad had a black team. I took the black team. He had his big team and put them on the plow together to break up the road. We'd plow it up and break it up and then they'd scrape it off with scrapers until they got to the grade they wanted on it. Then we'd tear it up some more.

Violet: Why did they have to break it up? They had a good hard surface on it.

Eldred: They had to break it so you'd get the grade for the cement.

Mel: Do you remember the flu epidemic?

Eldred: I had it.

Mel: You did? And you had typhoid fever, too?

Eldred: I did. I had typhoid fever when I was about eight years old. I had it bad. I had to learn to walk all over again. When the flu epidemic come out, the whole family had the flu. I survived that. I was going to high school at the time and I was on the basketball team. After I got over the flu, they found out that we'd had the flu and they wouldn't let me play on the basketball team. They wouldn't let anyone that had the flu play on the basketball team because there had been someone in the state that died on the floor.

[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: We had four horses when you put on a good load of meat. We'd start at four o'clock in the morning and it would take us about two hours and a half to drive to Bingham. Right in this little town of Riverton there were others who peddled goods in Bingham. There was Jim Peterson and Ole Peterson, Tom Foreman, Frank Seal, Dave Jones, and George Hawkins. They called Hawkins the chicken man of Bluffdale. He'd buy all the chickens and take them to Bingham. The Neilson boys would haul two trips a week with loose hay on a wagon. They had a livery stable up there. I was a good-sized kid when they were doing that. There was no cars then. When they opened up the mine in Bingham, all there was is tunnels. So they went into mass production and they started to scoop it out with big shovels. Then they built the flotation mills. Then they built the Garfield smelter. Then's when they made hay! Boy! I'll tell you! There was a lot of money made in Bingham when they started to open up that mine.. All it was was just tunnels going in. There was a lot of leasers when they started to develop it.

Mel: When did you start working?

Ren: We always had a job in the summer. I guess I was about seventeen when I first went up to the mine. I went to school down to the Brigham Young Academy one year. It was a teacher's training school down there. It was mostly high school students that was going down there to learn to teach.

Mel: Did you want to be a teacher?

Ren: Well, I don't know. My mother's brother was secretary to the school and he got me to come down. I lived right there with him while I was down there. And by hell! I took sick the first year I went down there. And by damn! They didn't seem to know what was wrong with me. By gosh! Mother come down and soon as she saw me she brought me home. Dr. Hardy didn't seem to know what was going on or anything. So they took me in to the old Judge Mercy Hospital. A Dr. Kerr and a Dr. Ballinger and a Dr. Maneer were there waiting for me. They was already to go home. Dr. Kerr pulled the covers down and pulled up my shirt and thumped me with his fingers. He

Oh hell! I was so damned scared I could have died right there! But I didn't.

thumped me again and he turned around to the nurse and he says, "Prepare the operating room." Oh hell! I was so damned scared I could have died right there! But I didn't. They went up and they operated on me. Oh hell! I suffered with that, man! Then Dr. Ballinger came up and they cut me open and put three tubes in me. They was about the size of your little finger and they had a safety pin through those holes — so they couldn't lose them I guess. Dr. Ballinger came up and dressed that every morning. The third morning he came up and he was dressing it. He had a pair of little tweezers with a long beak on it and he went down one of these tubes. He says, "Does this hurt?" "No." "Does this hurt?" "No." And then he says, "There's your appendix." And then he says, "How lucky can you be!" And I says, "Why?" He says, "That's your appendix." And I says, "Why didn't they take them out?" They said that I was too weak. I started to get better from then on. I was just in there four weeks. I walked out of there and I felt pretty good. But oh hell! Did it drain, man! They'd dress that sometimes twice a day. So I'm lucky. He says I was one out of a thousand. I guess I was only sixteen or seventeen.

Mel: I've never heard of Judge Mercy Hospital?

Ren: Well you see, that's a long time ago. They torn it down. I'll never forget that old Catholic sister. She'd come up every morning that she come to work. She'd say, "How's my boy this morning?" She'd take my hand and rub it. Oh hell! That would feel good.

Mel: She let you know you were still alive. I guess that ended your days at the Brigham Young Academy. You finished high school before the war started and didn't think anymore about becoming a teacher.

Ren: No. Boy! I'll tell you! That war takes a lot out of you! You don't know how tired you can get and still go on! When we went to the front the first time, we had full packs and your rifle and the damn gas mask attached on the front of you and two bandoliers of ammunition. We started just at dark about nine o'clock at night. You walked fifty minutes and you rest ten till daylight the next morning. Try it! I'll tell you right now, you're so damn tired when you fall out that you just flop! They have to go around and kick them to get them up. That last time that we fell out — and it was just daylight, we walked all night long.

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[to be continued]

"In Them Days": Rulon Dansie

[Note: This is an edited transcript of an interview Mel Bashore conducted with Rulon Dansie on 6 February 1986.]

Mel: Did your mom have to feed all those people who stayed at your house?

Rulon: Oh yes, except for the ones that would leave early in the mornings. That group would get up and cook their own breakfast. They'd get up and go out and feed the horses their grain. Then they'd come in and cook their own breakfasts because they'd try and leave about five or six in the morning. If they didn't get half way to Bingham before the sun come up, if it was miry, they'd have to walk their horses. By going early in the morning when it was froze, they could jog along and get over that strip of mud because it wasn't even graveled in them days. The road just took off there by where Gaylord Johnson's house is, just above the canal down here. They'd take off and go on a diagonal to Bingham right from that point. No road. No canal. No nothing. They had just a dirt trail up through there.

They'd take off and go on a diagonal to Bingham right from that point. No road. No canal. No nothing. They had just a dirt trail up through there.

Mel: What did it look like through there? Was it sagebrush?

Rulon: Oh, yes. I remember when the old steam engine come in here. The Jordan Valley Dry Farm Association had the engine come in and plow it all up. I learned to drive horses when I was nine years old. The canal wasn't even in. Father plowed from Pole Line Road over here where the Mill Creek Stake property is [about 12000 South] clear into the Bluffdale Road. When the canal come through, we had about five hundred acres of dry farm range there one year. That whole country Father had drilled into grain there one year. That was about 1910 or 1911.

Mel: Was there dry farming here earlier than that?

Rulon: That's about the first that I know of. In 1911, he bought this place I'm sitting on. He told me then, he says, "Well, Rulon. Some day you'll own it." When I got married, I lived down where Earl Adams lives. When we built that house in about 1916, we didn't have cement mixers. We just go down to the river and get gravel

and bring it up. Then the next two or three days, we mixed it on a board and put it in a wheelbarrow. That's how we put the foundation on Earl Adams's house. It ain't like it is today. I moved over there in the spring of '24. We built it for Wilford Crane to live in. Then he bought George Bills's house where Joe Butterfield lives now. When I got married, I just lived in two rooms of Dad's until Wilford pulled out of there. But I helped build the house for Wilford and he lived there a year or two. We moved from that house to up here in '27. I said, "If I'm gonna farm, I'm gonna live on the farm." In '27, Frank Seal, who was right across the road here from me, drilled a well. So I knew I could get water off of it. All we had was a hand pump until October. Just about when the water went out of the canal, Frank got a motor put on. This is unjust! Utah Power and Light wanted me to pay \$130. I said, "Now what if Frank Seal over there hooks on? Will he have to pay me part of it or anything?" "No." So I said, "Well, I'll just wait." So we done our washing by hand. We turned the washing machine by hand. Instead of \$130, it cost me \$31. I had to guarantee 'em \$5 a month and Frank Seal had to guarantee 'em \$5 a month year round so's he could pump water. We didn't have the money. It's like when they tore the old Commercial Building down there. I got \$100 to clean it up and haul the junk off. You know what I done with the roof? I brought it right up here and that's what we used to cook with. We brought the old pieces of board and the wooden shingles and that's what we had to burn.

During that Depression, we — in fact the whole ward — went up to the Butterfield and Rose Canyon and cut trees. Maple and oak. There was some big, dry quaking aspen up there in Butterfield Canyon and we just cleaned the whole thing out.

Mel: There was a trail to Bingham, but what kind of road was there to Herriman?

Rulon: There was a road to Herriman. They were on the line. They graveled that, but this other was a cutoff. When the ground started to thaw, people coming from Bingham to Riverton would have to go to Herriman and then back down here. A lot of times they had to go that way. They had to stay on the gravel to keep from miring. The peddlers used to haul hay up there on that cutoff.

[to be continued]

“Everyone Knew Everyone”: Violet Sandstrom Morris

[Note: This is an edited transcript of an interview Joel Denning and CJ Evans conducted with Violet Sandstrom Morris on 9 July 2003 for an Eagle Scout project.]

Q: You had two brothers and one sister. Can you tell me about them.

A: My oldest brother used to take me in to the kitchen and lay down beside me in thunderstorms because I was scared. My second brother is still alive. He always took me to the dances. My sister and I didn't get along. When we fought, we had a little porch in the back of the house and my mother would put us out on the porch and say, “You act like cats and dogs. You live where the cats and dogs live.” If we got up Saturday and we didn't have any chores to be done Mother would say, “Go out and tie yourself to the tree so you'll stay here.” We did. We took a little rope and tied ourselves to the tree. We would stay there all morning. Our friends would come by and say, “Why don't you untie it?” We could have untied it. We said, “No. Mother said to tie ourselves to the tree.”

Mother would say, “Go out and tie yourself to the tree so you'll stay here.” We did. We took a little rope and tied ourselves to the tree.

Q: Where did you go on dates?

A: We went to the Rainbow Rendezvous where we danced. We went to Saltair. We would go to a Friday night dance. We always had Friday night dances. The gymnasium where we had Friday night dances was where jitterbug was started and the shag dance. For the jitterbug the boys had zoot suits — that would be a jacket and pants. The pants would fit real tight. The rest of it was loose. They had a chain on their belt. Some had bright colored suits and some had regular suits. The girls all wore real full skirts.

Q: What was your first job?

A: My very first job was working in a jewelry store. I got \$25 a month. They had a long sword with jewelry and I wanted that so badly. It cost \$30 and I couldn't afford it. I kept looking at the window and one day it was gone. But that wasn't so terrible. I got it for Valentine's Day. It was expensive. The reason I got \$25 a month is because the proprietor did not want to pay the taxes.

Q: What do you remember about the Depression?

A: Nothing. I was born the year that it started.. I was born in 1929. We never thought we were poor. My father never lost his job. He made \$8 a day. When we were little we had to put playing cards in the bottom of our shoes when they got holes in them because we couldn't afford new shoes. Most of the time we used to buy our shoes from Spiegel catalogs because there were no stores in Riverton that sold shoes. It was exciting when that box of shoes would come.

Q: What do remember about shopping in Riverton?

A: There wasn't much shopping in Riverton, but there was a little. Later on we had Wells Fargo which was one of the neatest stores. They had a little bit of everything. I still have some glasses that I got from there. During the war, they had material but most of the good material was rationed. You could only buy so much and that's all that they would sell you. I liked to make my own clothes and I could not buy the material to make my clothes. I started to use drapery material and curtain material because you could get that any time.

Q: What was the best thing about growing up in Riverton?

A: It was a small town. Everyone knew everyone. Sometimes there's something bad about that, but most of the time it's wonderful. The people care about each other.

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Death Notices

Phyllis Butterfield (100); parents were Zachariah and Isabella Dansie Butterfield

Bud E. Bills (74); husband of Belva Withers Bills; parents were Cyrus and Marie Densley Bills; Kennecott employee, small engine repair

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