

Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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“Riverton Has Changed So Much”: Violet Sandstrom Morris

Riverton has changed so much since I was a little girl; maybe not so much as in my mother's life. She saw the world of electricity, telephones, new railroads and trains, planes, and other things come about that people had never dreamed of. All I have seen is the age of the wireless, the computers, men in space, modern airplanes, helicopters, atomic submarines, millions of inventions, and Barbie and Ken.

The big depression started the year I was born — 1929 — and lasted until about 1933 or 1934. My folks came to Riverton in 1923 and my oldest brother Harold was born in a rental unit that stood where the old Crane house was on the southwest corner of 12600 South 1700 West. This little red brick house was a store prior to it being a rental. Gwynne Page had asked my father to come to Riverton to be the foreman of the garage. He held that position until his death in 1941. I was eleven years old when he died.

My parents later moved to Church Street (12775 South) on the street where the old domed church stood. That street no longer is there. I can remember having class in the tiny tower room on the top of the domed church. I probably was only a pre-schooler at that time. We also had Primary in the lower floor below the chapel. The chapel on the second floor was very beautiful with a blue ceiling to represent the sky. The floor slanted from back to front where the pulpit stood. There was a lovely organ which now is displayed in the Riverton Crane House Museum. The stained glass windows were very beautiful. My father was 1st counselor in the bishopric when it was torn down in 1940.

When I was five, I wanted to go to kindergarten because my sister when the year before. However they could not afford to run the kindergarten that year so I was disappointed.

I was still under the age of six when Dad put a bathroom in the house. There were still not many families who had this luxury. I remember walking, sometimes late at night, to the outhouse in the back of the yard. It was better than most because it had two holes.

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We had a new kitchen stove that was yellow and green. It had a shelf above the plates to keep food warm and a temperature gauge on the front of the oven door. On bath nights, we took our bath in a big tub. The water was heated in this big tub on our kitchen stove. We would tack a quilt up to the door between the rooms to keep the kitchen warm. We had a coal stove heater in the dining room, but did not use it all the time. Later we had a coal furnace

in the basement to heat the entire house. Then we had a stoker which automatically fed the coal into the stove. We had to clean out the clinkers (burned coals) before filling the stoker again. We had great 5-foot long iron tongs to reach into the stove to get the clinkers out. The hot water pipe went through the furnace so we no longer had to heat the bath water on the stove. We had a refrigerator that had an empty compartment in the top. We went to the old ice down by the red light to get ice. It would last several days and keep the milk cold. One time it hailed such large hails of ice that we put them in the refrigerator to keep. They were about the size of a small tennis ball.

Our milk was delivered by the Jenson twins — Ruth and Rintha. Rintha died while still young, but many remember Ruth Jenson Lynn. They would bring the milk bottles full every other day and put it on the back porch. Some days we would walk the block to their house to pick it up. When it was winter, the milk

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would freeze sending the cream 3 or 4 inches above the top of the bottle. We would put the cream in a glass, add sugar and vanilla along with some snow and enjoy the best ice cream there was. Not many people ate ice cream in the winter then. In fact, the ice cream makers stopped making it as soon as it got cold. They would start again when it warmed up. They didn't have many flavors, only a few such as strawberry, green pineapple, chocolate, black walnut, and vanilla. My favorite was black walnut.

Our neighbors had milk cows, but I only remember tasting warm milk on two occasions while visiting the William Pages. I preferred it cold. Morris, their son, would shoot us with the warm milk while milking. All we did was stand there with our mouths open and he could squeeze the milk right into our mouths.

Movies were ten cents at the Riverton (Burkinshaw) Movie Theatre located on Redwood Road where part of Peterson's Market now stands. We could get a hamburger and a malt (a shake with malt flavoring in it) for fifteen cents. We could buy candy at "Lutes" (Louis Peterson's grocery) for one cent and pay five cents for a large candy bar. We loved black licorice cigars, dots of taffy on a paper, and all other colored licorice — chocolate, cherry, red, and brown. Root beer barrels, taffy strips, saltwater taffy, caramel suckers, and tootsie rolls were favorites.

We played in the old grandstand on the north side of the school grounds in rain, snow, and in summer because it was covered with a roof. The school grounds were used for playing baseball, football and all kinds of games and picnics. The school slides, giant rides, monkey bars, and teeter totters were available to everyone.

The children enjoyed sports, horseback riding, picking fruit to earn a dollar or two, roller skating in the old Commercial Building, ice skating on the canals in winter time by a bonfire, and swimming there in summer. We often went to Saratoga Hot Springs in Lehi, where they had an excellent indoor and outdoor pool. Even a carnival was set up for our enjoyment. It was common to go to Salt Lake City to Liberty Park for the 4th of July and also for the 24th of July parade.

The school was the center of activity in Riverton along with church and social clubs such as Lions, Lady Lions, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Flower Club, and Literary Club. We had excellent teachers who didn't mind giving of their time to our social activities. My first grade teacher was Ella Mousley who later married the prison warden, Mr. Walton. As Ella Walton, she taught my son — also in the first grade — many years later.

In 1938 a Jordan School District bus was hit by a train in Crescent — which is now part of Sandy City. The weather was a stormy, blinding snowstorm. The bus's destination was Jordan High School. Many Riverton students were aboard the bus. My brother, Harold, fifteen years of age, was one of twenty-four whose funerals were

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held in several public buildings including the school house. Their mothers and fathers had to go to the Salt Lake County Hospital, then located at 33rd South and State, to identify their children. The others whose funerals were in our school were Carol Stephenson, Kenneth Peterson, Neal Densley, Dean Winward, and Roland Blaine Page. The driver was Kenneth "Slim" Silcox, who was also killed. Many tributes were given by officials, church leaders, and teachers. One that was special to me, was that of Edgar Aylett, the custodian of the Riverton schools. Edgar was loved by all of the school children. We could walk into his little office any time during recess or lunch hour and claim his attention and advice. To all who attended the funeral, he said, "Harold has been one of our most energetic live wires for a young man in this town, always willing to help do what he could to assist in every capacity in true unity. . . . He was capable at all times."

[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 9 March 1985.]

Mel: Do you remember William A. Bills, Sr.?

Ren: William A. Bills was my wife's grandfather. He had, I think it was, three or four wives. The wife who lived here in Riverton was a Beckstead — Emmeline Beckstead Bills. Course there's a whole lot of Becksteads.

He took off there and tried to cross the Jordan River and got drowned. They hunted for him for five or six days before they found him.

Whilst he was out here, he had two wives in Salt Lake. The old boy got feeble-minded. He got so he'd run off. Everybody knew him. He was really a great person. He got running away. I think it was in 1915 — he left this place here and went down on 13th West and went down as far as the old Hansen place. He took off there and tried to cross the Jordan River and got drowned. They hunted for him for five or six days before they found him. They found him farther north where they'd fenced across the river to keep their cattle there. He'd went against that and got stalled. They found him there. He lived right across the road [on 12600 South]. Gordon S. Bills owned all this property across the street here and they built another house just a little bit west of where that new one was built. They lived there.

Mel: He was a bishop in South Jordan for a long while wasn't he?

Ren: Yes. I think he was in the stake. There was old Tom Blake, that lived just west across the street from Alexander Henderson. He was bishop. I think this William A. Bills was a counselor. Henry Byram Beckstead was the other counselor. I think that Joe Holt — he used to run a store in South Jordan — he was the first president of the West Jordan Stake. It seems to me like Henry Byram Beckstead was his first counselor. I don't remember who the second counselor was.

Mel: I guess Gordon S. Bills was your bishop, wasn't he?

Ren: Yes. He was in the bishopric for thirty-two years. He was a religious man. He was a good man. I think he lived his religion. I don't know that I would think more of anybody more than I would that man. He married my mother's sister. They had a nice, good family. But the oldest boy — Silas — he was kind of a nut! He went on a mission, too. He come back and — oh, I don't know — he was kind of a nut. He'd been out herding sheep practically all his life. I don't know what become of him. He was a rough character. He was a black sheep. It broke old Gordon S.'s heart. Silas waited until he got older to get that way. He wasn't bad when he was a kid, as far as I can remember. But outside of him, the rest of them was really nice, religious people. His one son was bishop of the First Ward for several years. He was just like Gordon S. He was just a damn nice guy.

Mel: What did Gordon S. do for work?

Ren: Farm. That's all he did, too. Farm and dairy. He always had a lot of stock — dairy cows. His girls would take the milk bucket and go out and squat down there and

His girls would take the milk bucket and go out and squat down there and pump those damn cows!

pump those damn cows! It was all farming here at that time. In the spring, they'd take their cows down here to pasture in the river bottoms. Everybody had a pasture down there. They each had their own pasture down in the bottoms. It wasn't just a wide-open place where anybody could take them. They owned their property down there. On this road [12600 South] and the next road over there [13th West] — hell, the cow shit would be two or three inches deep! There was so many cows walking down the road!

[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.]

Rulon: When the first car come into Riverton, that used to scare the horses. There was Ed Beckstead, and Steadman, and Dr. Hardy.

Mel: Do you remember Dr. Hardy?

Rulon: I'll say I do. He was a good doctor. Most of the people went to him. I don't remember where his office was. I know where Sorenson was. Down by the red light was where his office was. Frank Seal had a store there beside it. It was next to the bank on the second floor.

Mel: Did your dad get hurt when the bank closed?

Rulon: No. When that Jordan Valley Bank closed, I was owing 'em \$960. Vernal Webb had a lot of money in the bank. When the bank closed, my father-in-law had about \$120 in there and he couldn't get it out. He was destitute. My wife's sister from Logan sent a fur coat down for my wife to wear. She knew we was havin' trouble. She also sent a 20-dollar bill. I give the twenty dollars to my father-in-law and that's all he got out of the \$120. They released one cow. He could get one cow released for \$120. I had a good friend — Beck — he helped Hebe Crane and myself. He'd got some extra money from England. We were dealing with him with chickens and one thing and another. He says, "I got the money. I'll help the both of you out." He come over and said, "How much money do you need?" I found out that for \$310 I could save myself \$690 — altogether my loan was for about that. Charlie and Vernal Webb had about \$3,000 in the bank. They took one cow 'cause they needed some milk and for the \$310 was all they got out of about \$3,000. That's how things were when the Jordan Valley Bank went broke. That was about in '32 or '33. They just folded up and quit. I had the cows and couldn't feed 'em or anything. Do you know what they done along

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about in 1934? The government come along and paid me for what cows I had in at that time. They paid me for the same cows that I got released, but I paid the mortgage off so's I had the cows. When they come along, they give me \$11 a head and took 'em — or they'd pay me \$10 and they'd kill 'em in your yard. I said, "If you'll condemn that one, we'll take care of her." So we had to drive 'em all down to my father's yard and they killed four head of animals. We took one of 'em and dressed it and took care of it — one in July and then one in October. When they had plenty of grass around here, plenty of feed, I was able to feed 'em and take care of 'em. So we sold some of 'em at one time and some of 'em at another time. I told them, "I don't want to get any more on relief than I have to." There was five or six that they condemned. We brought them over in Elvoy's corral and killed all of 'em. I took the one and put her in cans. They had a little cannery where we could buy the cans. We put up about four hundred cans of meat and corn. It had a little bit of a sealer. It kept good. That's how we got off relief. We didn't have to stay on relief any longer than I had to.

Mel: Was the government giving out food?

Rulon: Yes. They'd bring the meat and commodities. We'd have to go get it. We had to go down here to the corner where the red light is. People from around here would go down there and get some of it. We had to go into Salt Lake for clothing. They'd give us an order. We could go to the stores and get it. Then they'd pay the stores. When we picked up the stuff, we had to be identified, just the same as we do now to get the butter. Same system. Still works.

Mel: Was there a lot of people in Riverton on government relief?

Rulon: It was practically everybody 'cause there wasn't a sugar beet growin'. You couldn't grow a potato or nothing. There was no water in these canals. From August '33 until May '46 there wasn't a drop of water in the canal. So how in Sam hell! You couldn't grow nothing up here! It was just a dry farm.

You couldn't grow a potato or nothing. There was no water in these canals.

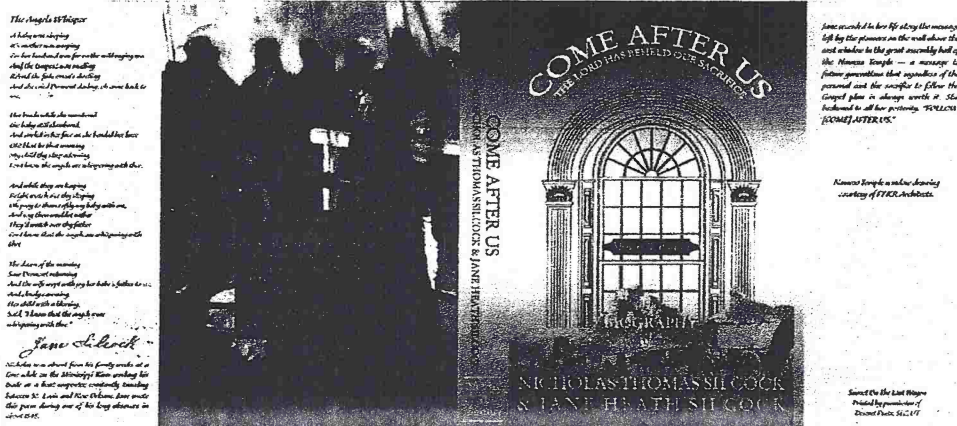
[to be continued]

Death Notices

Orley Edwin Bills (80); husband of Joy Bentley; parents were Joseph William and Rozilla Silcox Bills; insulation business

Wesley D. Lovendahl (83); husband of Elaine Grace; parents were Christian Richard and Emma Jane Dansie Lovendahl

Richard Ward Moon (73); husband of Betty Lou Forman; parents were Artimus and Isabelle Hair Moon; Western General Dairies



I have written an extensive biography of Nicholas Thomas and Jane Heath Silcock. I am a descendant of Nicholas Thomas Silcock through their oldest son Alma. I became fascinated with Silcock emigration and pioneer history and began collecting family histories and stories beginning in the 1970s.

I have spent the past three years researching and writing the family history of Nicholas Thomas and Jane Heath Silcock. The biography chronicles Nicholas' and Jane's single life in Hanley, England, their marriage, baptism into the LDS church, immigration to America, the Nauvoo period—where Nicholas was chosen as one of the main carpenters to build the temple, their exile from Nauvoo, and the plains crossing. The Utah story is of a plural marriage, building the Salt Lake Temple, and pioneering the beginnings of Tooele, Grantsville and Riverton. Their history is a heartwarming and heartrending story of love and loss, having "laid away" over half their children before they themselves passed away.

Nicholas Thomas & Jane Silcock Biography Order Form

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The biography goes to print February 25, 2004. **Please have your orders in on or before February 10, 2004.**

Important Note: If family orders can be shipped in bulk to one Central address, it would facilitate the mailing by volunteers.

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