

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**

Going to school in winter, we had some very severe snow storms. We made snow angels, tunneled from our home across the ball field to school. The winds made huge drifts as high as the telephone and light wires. Our road was gravel and hard on shoes even when the weather was dry. Many times we put cards in our shoes to cover the holes so the snow and rain wouldn't come through. My father bought a shoe repair stand. It was metal and had different sizes of metal shoes that fit inside of our shoes. He could then resole with leather and put new rubber heels on our shoes. When we could afford them, we would order new shoes from the Spiegel catalog and anxiously await their arrival by mail.

In the early 1940s, local dances were held every Friday night in the school during my teen years. They were held in the old gymnasium to the west of the main buildings. These dances featured a live band. Everyone attended: moms and dads, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and small

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children. It was not uncommon to see a young man go to his grandmother, bow and say, “May I have this dance?” The littlest ones mostly ran around or were held in dad's arms while he danced with them. Sometimes when they were bigger, he would put each of their little feet on top of his large shoes and dance around the hall. Before long, they would be sound asleep in their mother's arms or on the floor. The shag slow dance and the fast jitterbug were so popular. The boys wore zoot suits with pegged legs on their pants and the girls wore full skirts with bobby sox and saddle Oxford shoes. Everyone would gather around in a circle to watch those who had mastered this new art of dancing. Those who liked to sing the popular songs would often ask the band if they could sing from the microphone. They agreeably obliged.

In the summer we would get our friends together and walk to South Jordan, West Jordan or Draper. There would always be those on bicycles who taunted us along the way and some who even threw rocks just to scare, but not to hurt.

We had two Riverton wards in the LDS Church when I was young. I was part of the Riverton 1st ward which was located in the old domed church on the southwest corner of 12775 South and Redwood Road until 1940. Everyone went to church in the old school building in the south upstairs auditorium until the stake house was built where the 3rd Ward now stands. When they built a newer stake house at 13600 South, they took the name of Riverton 1st

Ward and ours became the Riverton 3rd Ward. The church held conferences, meetings, road shows, young men and women's MIA, Relief Society bazaars, parties, Old Folks' days, plays, and they were all very special. Many local people took part in all of these.

During World War II we saw many changes take place. My mother worked for Lute Peterson and helped with the record books. She was an official "ration stamp collector." Items such as gasoline, butter, sugar, other dairy products and sometimes meats were rationed so that soldiers who fought might get the things they needed. Other items were not available or were carried periodically in the stores and everyone rushed for "first come" service. White margarine came out during this time. At first it was just white and later a packet of yellow color was included so you could mix it to look like butter. It never did taste like it or even come close to the taste of today's margarine.

After the war was over in 1943, we saw even more changes. The stores began to have many more commodities — no rationing. On VJ (Victory in Japan) Day we were camped out with the young women in Little Cottonwood Canyon. It was while we were camping that we learned about the victory. We could hardly wait to get back home. When we arrived in Riverton, there were many cars at the gas stations. They filled up their cars and deliberately spilled some gasoline on the ground because it was no longer rationed.

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Back at school in junior high, we took home economics, science, history, health, reading, English and all those things you just have to know. We had a wonderful teacher — Mrs. Anderson — from Sandy, who made Shakespeare a part of my life. Her readings and helping the students participate in each character part made Shakespeare a friend of everyone in the class. The band was a great class and everyone loved Mr. Isaacson, Mr. Anderson and others who taught. The mothers made blue pants with a stripe down the side. The top was a gold satin full-sleeved blouse. How proud they were to wear them. They marched in parades, sometimes even going to Bingham Canyon (the city is now covered by dirt and tailings). We marched up and down the hills of that mining town. Part of Riverton students later attended Bingham High School at Copperton at the mouth of the canyon.

Sometimes during the summer, our folks would give us 50 cents to ride the interurban Orem train to Salt Lake City. The depot was up the Intermountain Farmers. We could ride into town and walk about six blocks to the center of Salt Lake City to see a movie, buy a refreshment at Kress's store

or Woolworth's on Main and 3rd South and then walk back to the train and come home. We often got in a thrill or two by riding the elevator in the Paris Store and asking the elevator operator to take us to the 7th floor — there were only two floors. Or we would go to ZCMI just to look at the expensive clothes.

We loved to go to Stringham's Drug Store in Riverton which was one of the small stores by the former bank on the southeast corner of 12600 South and Redwood Road where Walgreen's presently stands.

My favorite drink was a cherry-orange without carbonation.

The drug store was in the middle of this neighborhood "mall." They employed many Riverton folks and served "on tap" soft drinks. They featured malts, sundaes, banana splits with three different kinds of ice cream, toppings, whipped cream, nuts and all with a cherry on top. My favorite drink was a cherry-orange without carbonation. Betty Hansen, who worked there, tells me that the stools at the counter were mostly occupied by men. Women didn't stop to have these delicacies as often.

Above the drug store were the offices of Dr. S.C.B. Sorenson and Dr. Hansen. Dr. Sorenson was the only doctor in town and took care of everything from colds to tonsils to major surgeries. Everyone in town loved him and he made house calls no matter what time of day or night. He loved Riverton and brought much culture and learning to our town. His second wife, his nurse, set his table every day with the finest linen and silver. Dr. Hansen's office was across the hall from Dr. Sorenson. He pulled many teeth and saved many hours of toothache for our citizens. He was caring and always had an interesting anecdote to tell his patients.

Times have change and will continue to change in our fast-growing city. Many friends have died or have moved away — friends we will never forget (except maybe their names). So many were a credit to the community and gave their services willingly. The new people have added much to our community and if it were still small and material things were not so plentiful, I believe it would be the same type of community we had years ago. We have added beautiful homes, security, and many more activities to our roster which were not possible years ago. Riverton is still a quiet community where people love to live.

Correction

In the last issue in Vi Morris's biography, the school bus driver in the accident was misnamed. It should have been Ferrald "Slim" Silcox.

**"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. This is the final installment.]

Mel: Were there many people in Riverton who weren't Mormons?

Ren: Well, I wouldn't say many, but there was a few. There was quite a few of the Finnish people. They moved down from Bingham and got down here on 13th West just south of the graveyard road. They were all Catholics, I think.

Mel: Someone told me that there was a Jewish man who had a business in the Commercial Building.

Ren: About the only Jewish family we had here was Thomas P. Page. His wife was a full-blooded Jew. She was a Frankland.

Mel: Did she ever join the Church?

Ren: Yes, she did. . . . I used to play ball with Duke Page. Boy! We sure did stick it to Draper! And they never forgot it!

Mel: Do you remember Nicholas Silcox?

Ren: Oh hell! I used to go hunting ducks with him when I was that high [about four feet tall]. He was as old as my dad. My dad was 84 when he died. Hell! We used to brag about who could shoot the fastest. He got older and slower. As I was growing up, I was getting better. He was just like a dad to me. His wife's name was Minnie [Brown]. He married a widow with two kids. He was a damn nice guy. He always treated me nice — and he was a good shot. Boy! We used to hunt quail and ducks and jack rabbits. We'd walk side by side and see which one could knock it over first. When I'd beat him once in awhile, he'd say, "Well, you're learning. You're learning." Old Nick Silcox.

We used to hunt quail and ducks and jack rabbits. We'd walk side by side and see which one could knock it over first.

Mel: The picture I get is that you did a lot of playing, but I know you were a hard worker, too.

Ren: Damn! I never had an easy job until I got to be road supervisor. I've always been a Republican because my dad was. So I got a job on the county as road

By damn! I was among a lot of Democrats and had to keep my mouth shut!

supervisor. And then, of course, the Democrats won. Then one of my best friends got to be county commissioner. I said, "By hell! You're a hell of a friend! Cheat a man out of his job!" He says, "Just lay low for a little while. I'll see what I can do for you." He gave me a job of overseeing the crusher out here where they crush all the gravel to make road base. I was out there and I liked it. But, by damn! I was among a lot of Democrats and had to keep my mouth shut! I stayed four months. The Democrats in this district thought — well, we'll just see what we can do about that old buzzard. They got me fired.

Mel: That must have been tough having to depend on a job according to the politics.

Ren: Yes. As soon as the Republicans got in, they chased all the Democrats out. When the Democrats got in, they wasn't going to let me stay there.

Mel: I guess it seems funny now, but I imagine you weren't laughing too much back then.

Ren: No. Hell! I was out in the open. I went up to the city hall and ran into one of the ladies that worked there. I knew her well. She said, "Ren, I heard you got fired." I says, "Yes. You old Democrat!" She said, "Don't you call me a Democrat!" She said, "There's a job open here on the park — irrigate the park and supervise cutting the lawns." I said, "Heck! I can't only earn so much on Social Security." She says, "We can fix that all right." I says, "All right, I'll take it." She says, "We'll pay you so much and we'll hire your wife to help you." So I got by pretty good then. I was making damn near as much as I was out on the crusher.

“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: Was there water in the South Jordan Canal?

Rulon: There wasn't water in none of 'em in 1934! There was only water in the North Jordan Canal. It comes out down by the river as you go to Draper. That's the only canal that kept water in it the year round in '34.

It was the drought that hurt us! You couldn't get a plow in the ground in '32 and '33. It was too dry.

They had pumps down at Pelican Point. They spent a \$100,000. They made a new canal around up at Saratoga so they could pump it there. Then they pumped it again in order to get it into Salt Lake County. It was the drought that hurt us! In 1932, you couldn't break the clods. You couldn't get a plow in the ground in '32 and '33. It was too dry. There was no rain, no nothin' all winter long. What little snow there was blew on the roads. The roads was full of snow and the farm ground was bare. You couldn't plant nothin'. In order to keep my trees alive, I had to haul a little water and make sure each tree got a bucket of water every week. Lawns all died. There was so many grasshoppers. A guy brought ninety turkeys over and I just turned 'em loose and let 'em go.

Mel: When did water get back into the canals?

Rulon: The upper one had a little water in it for a few months, but in our canal — the Distributing Canal — never had any water until 1946. The Big Canal was only out for the one year — 1934. That was the only year it was out. The Big Canal had water in it about a month out of the whole season in 1934. That's about all the water there was. They'd put the water in one canal in Draper for about two weeks. Then they'd bring it back and put it in either the Little Canal for a week or the Big Canal. They'd put in all they could pump out of the lake. That's all they could pump out — one canal at a time.

Mel: Did the Church relief program ever get here?

Rulon: It wasn't started. It was '36 before the Church started. We had to help each other. When I got that \$20 bill, I give it to my father-in-law so's he could buy groceries. We had to help each other. We had to go to the canyon to get wood.

Mel: Was that a Church project?

Rulon: No. It was a town project. Everybody had to go get what they could. Coal was \$4 a ton. I'll tell you how tough it was for me. On these ten acres, I had a tractor hooked onto a

I needed five gallons of gas. I didn't have any money and he couldn't let me have it.

drill. I drilled this ten acres in about '35 or '36. I went down to Ralph Hamilton's service station. I needed five gallons of gas. I didn't have any money and he couldn't let me have it. Clifton Lloyd's wife was there. This was before she was married. When Ralph went around the other side of the station, I said to her, "I've got to have a couple of gallons so I can finish drilling the grain. I can mark it off with the horses, but I'm right out in the middle of the field. I can't even move my tractor." So I got the gas. She advanced me the money. We were selling a little cream then, so when I got my cream check, I went down and paid her. She says, "I'll have to take it out of my pocket to give Ralph. It's got to be in the register. He's just about to go under. He can't carry anybody." But he said, "I will carry you." So I paid her. That's how tough it was. You couldn't get any money — no way, shape, nor form. I worked for Ketcham for awhile when he tore the Commercial Building down. Then I was called on jury duty so Elvoy took my place pulling nails out of boards. I was taking lumber. They had one or two little shack things down there that I just put on the wagon and hauled home that I used for corrals. I burnt up more scrap boards and wood. I got a \$100 worth of groceries from Lute Peterson in credit for cleaning the mess up. Ketcham give me all the old scrap lumber that nobody wanted. I hauled brick over to Will Torkelson's for a dollar a load and put 'em in his ditch. Herschel Egbert had a dump wagon. I had a wagon that they had used to haul cement in when they put the Riverton road in. I used to take two teams down and trail a team. Hersch Egbert would

meet me. He'd take one team with his wagon. We hauled lots of the rubbish down for a fill around his houses where he had to have a road — that lane going back into his houses. So I got a lot of it moved for nothing. I guaranteed to clean it up for \$100.

Mel: Can you tell me about your dad settling here?

Rulon: When he come back from his mission, he bought this place because the sagebrush was about three or four feet high. Wherever sagebrush is, that's the ground he wanted. He bought it off Bill Newman. Newman had homesteaded 120 acres here and another 120 acres up in Bluffdale about where the treatment plant is. He had a 3-acre peach orchard up there. They dry farmed and raised good peaches up there. They had to haul water to start 'em. They had to fence off the orchard to keep the cattle from breaking his trees down. Father, Will Turner, Gordon Bills, and Tom Hamilton were the ones that had cattle around here. They got together and put a fence around it so the stock couldn't get in. The cattle had this whole country above the Big Canal to roam in the winter time.

Mel: How did they get rid of the sagebrush?

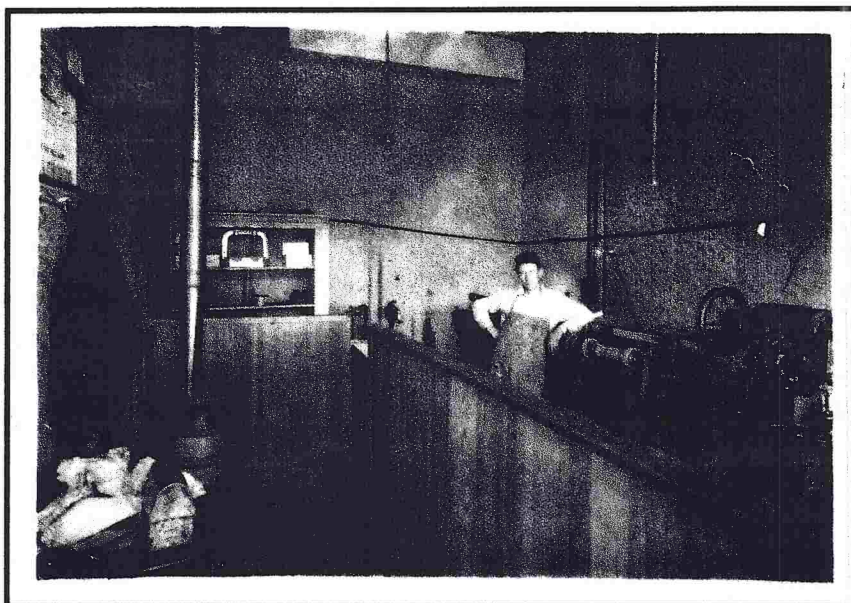
Rulon: They had a rig. It would pull it out about like a spring-toothed harrow. They just pull it out and bunch it up. First they'd set fire to it. Then they'd pull it out and burn it. We dry farmed this for two years. I think we cut two crops off of it. Then the water come in and we started farmin'.

[to be continued]

Death Notices

Mildred Gammell Page (89); widow of Selyf Gwynne Page; daughter of Spencer William and Ethel Davis Gammell; worked at Riverton Drug; 3 children

**RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Cecil O. Poor in his shoe shop in the south end of the Page-Hansen Store, ca. late 1930s.

Donated to Riverton Historical Society by his son, LeGrande C. Poor (presently living in Normal, Illinois), January 2004. Interior views of Riverton businesses are rare; this is the only interior view we have of the Page-Hansen Store. The potbellied stove in the photo is still in possession of the family.