

Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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"I Was a Catcher":
Bob Silcox

[Note: This is an edited transcript of a lecture program sponsored by the Riverton Historical Society on 20 April 1989. Bob Silcox was the featured speaker. Comments and questions from some of those in attendance included Elias Butterfield, Karen and Mel Bashore, and Scott Crump.]

Bob: Jed Bills, the county sheriff, used to take us to all the ball games. I remember, I was thinning beets and working for Kay Hamilton and I'd have to quit about noon and walk home, change my clothes, and Jed would pick me up and we'd go to the ball game about 2 or 3 in the afternoon. We did that a couple times a week. he'd come and get us and take us to the ball games.

Karen: How many years did you play?

Bob: I played four or five years and then I went in the Navy. I played in the Navy down in Vallejo, California — Vallejo Naval Base. We used to play the college teams. We played Presidio which was an Army base. At

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that time, Billy Martin, who coached the Yankees [and began playing second base for them in 1950], was playing for Presidio. That was quite a fun experience. He was feisty. He'd clip your head off with that baseball if you was sliding into second. You had to go in low. Well, that's just the way the ball game was played. I'm talking back in the '50s now. I went in the Navy on Jan. the 6th, 1951. It was '51 or '52 when we was down there playing. We used to go over there and play the college kids at Berkeley.

Karen: Did they have a good field here?

Bob: No. The players usually kept it up. It was up there in back of the school where Hardy McFarland lived and Gus did a lot of work on it. Gus also pitched and he caught. Gus played just about anything. We played on that old diamond behind the school.

Elias: There's been a lot of changes since then. There wasn't any grass in those days. Weeds in the middle of it.

Bob: It's smoother. Yes. It was pretty rough. They didn't have the modern equipment. They'd get a piece of old chain-link fence and a couple of guys would pull it around the infield to try to smooth it out. It was more like playing in a cow pasture. That was the only field that the league teams played in.

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Karen: Didn't the churches have fields back then?

Bob: Years ago, the old 2nd Ward church had a diamond, but that was more of a softball diamond. It was small. It was right where the blacktop is now. When we first started the Little League baseball in Riverton.

Karen: What year did they start Little League baseball in Riverton?

Bob: Probably about 1956 or '57.

Scott: Were you in on that?

Bob: I was one of the first ones.

Scott: Why don't you tell us how you got it started.

Bob: I'll tell you who really did get it started was Jack Hatt. He went to a lot of baseball meetings. It was part of the Western Baseball for Boys. We started out with four teams. Bob Coy was a coach. I was a coach and that guy that lived down under the hill — I can't remember what his name was [it was Ike Powell]. But there was four teams. There was the Indians. That's the one I coached. And the Yankees — the one Bob Coy coached. The Giants is the one this other guy [Powell] coached. I can't remember who coached the Cardinals [Gus McFarlane and Henry Steadman]. We probably started that in 1956 or '57.

Karen: What age were the boys?

Bob: It was from ages nine to twelve. The first year that we started, we played back of the church house back here. Then we talked the town out of a diamond down there. Everybody, the kids and all the parents, worked to make this field that they got down there now — the one field, the big field. They've got several down there now. The one right in back of Ren Howard's house [south of Hogi Yogi] is where we started.

[to be continued]

Ninety Years of Memories: Wilford Myers

[Note: This is an excerpt of a transcript of an interview Mel and Karen Bashore conducted with Wilford Myers on 12 January 1985. His son, Merlin, a BYU professor of anthropology, was also present during the interview and some of his comments are included. It is edited for clarity and readability.]

Karen: How did you court your wife?

Wilford: Well, I bought a Ford and we used that. In fact, I had about three Fords in my life. Then I get up and thought I was smart and bought a Liberty car. It was a big car. It had a aluminum engine in it. Oh, yes! We had a lot of fun! We'd go to dances down to Lehi and to Murray. The ward would have Saltair Day and Lagoon Day. We'd all go out there.

Karen: What kind of music did you like?

Wilford: I liked good music. We had a band over here in Crescent. We had good music. They had violins in the band and used a banjo occasionally. There were dances pretty much every week — every Friday night.

Karen: Did you keep dancing after you were married?

Wilford: We danced for awhile, but not too long. When the children started to come, why we cut it out.

Mel: How many other boys worked in the smelter who were as young as you were?

Wilford: There wasn't very many of them. I was about the leader, I'll tell you that! It was pretty much manual work. Yard work. Clean up the yard. We kept the yard down there in the smelter clean and neat. I think I was making fifty cents a day when I went down

I think I was making fifty cents a day when I went down there and I thought that was pretty cheap money.

there and I thought that was pretty cheap money. There was a fellow by the name of Bob Bradford down here in West Jordan who was the boss I was working for. He was a nice fellow to work for. I worked there twelve hours a day. I worked there every day and sometimes we'd work Sundays. All depends on what happened down in the smelter. But we'd generally have Sundays off.

Mel: How did you get to work?

Wilford: We had a cart. We'd hook the horses up to the cart and drive down. We'd take a little bunch of hay down. The horse done all right. Never hurt the horse any. It would take pretty close to an hour to get there. We had to go to work at seven o'clock, then we'd leave at six. I started down there when I was fourteen years old and I worked down there until I was about eighteen.

Karen: What kind of job did you get next?

Wilford: I herded sheep one time for five months. I went out to Rush Valley and herded out there in the winter time. I lived in a sheep wagon. There was a herder and a camp tender. It was the ruling at that time that you couldn't send one man out with the sheep. You had to have a camp tender and a herder. When I came home, I had a little better than three hundred dollars. I put that in the bank. We'd have about three thousand to a band of sheep. At one time the herd belonged to my brother. I herded sheep for Butterfield for awhile and then for Cranes. I never had no trouble getting a job. As soon as I was out of work, I'd go out and seek employment. I'd go right to the people and say, "I'm not working. I haven't got a job. Is it possible for you to give me a job?" Invariably they'd say yes.

Merlin: The people didn't often keep their sheep in town though did they. Very few places had three thousand sheep here in town.

Wilford: Oh, no. They'd brand the sheep. They'd have a branding iron and they'd use paint. They'd use paint that's kind of loud and put that on the back

Sheep men made good money!

of the sheep. That'd stay there for six months. You could tell whose they were by that brand. Sheep men made good money! One of my brothers went out and herded sheep. He put his money right back into sheep. People that owned the sheep would allow you to buy so many sheep a month. He did that. He sold out for twenty thousand dollars. He did all right. Others did the same thing.

Karen: Was there any people or Indians stealing sheep?

Wilford: Never had no trouble with the Indians. Had more trouble with the white people.

[to be continued]

**"I'm Just a Common Old Citizen":
Zach Butterfield**

[Note: This is a transcript of a recorded interview conducted with Zachariah Butterfield on 31 January 1958. He was 94 years old at the time and lived for another six years. Wallace E. Malmstrom and John A. Butterfield of the Temple Quarry Chapter, Sons of Utah Pioneers, recorded his reminiscences.]

All of his children that was alive took their wives either to the old Endowment House or to the temples of the Lord and been sealed together. He was a man that was a hard-working man — Father was. He was honest. I've heard him bear his testimony in the town of Herriman, many and many a time. He told me and told the people that he preached to, he said, "I know this gospel is true." For he said, "I've got it from the Prophet Joseph Smith, a prophet of God."

Fort Herriman was moved from the old fort over to where the little town is now. And a man by the name of Herriman — they named the town after him. Henry Herriman. He was the first man that ever stepped on the ground where the old fort stood, was Henry Herriman. Henry Herriman was called by Brigham Young to go to St. George and help build up that country. And Father stayed in Herriman and lived there the rest of his life and raised his two families.

Now I don't know as I've got much more to say about it, but I've seen this country grow. I've helped build Riverton. I've done a great lot of preaching. I've been called to many positions in this church. Uneducated. I never had the schooling that I should have had, but it wasn't Father's fault nor was it mine. I done my job in the canyon cutting wood. I've cut hundreds of cords of wood out of these western mountains and brought it home and helped cut it up for the womenfolks. Now, I don't know as I can say anymore. I don't want to brag up that I've been a great man. I'm just a common old citizen. I've had these come to me — the missions. I've been called on two missions. I've filled 'em. I've been called into many of the organizations. I was called into the Sunday School after I filled a mission. They put me, when I come home, into the Sunday School after I'd filled a mission. And a little while, they changed bishops and the bishop called me in for his second counselor. And I labored with those two men — brother Charles E. Miller and Bishop Bills for twenty-two years lacking two weeks. And since then I've become a patriarch. I was ordained first by a Seventy down to West Jordan and then I come along and filled these missions. I've filled missions here in this stake and in the other stakes of Zion.

Now I pray for the Lord to still bless me as he has blessed me. I've had a little hard luck. I have five children in the cemetery down here and three wives. Now, I've shed a few tears, but I was a man that never give up.

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[to be continued]

“I’m Going to Love This Town”:
Betty Mitchell Hansen

[Note: These are edited excerpts from an interview Mel Bashore conducted with Betty Hansen on 15 May 2004.]

Mel: Who were some of your teachers at Riverton School?

Betty: Mrs. Brooks. I remember Mr. Newby, the math teacher, because of how he used to take the bench brush to the boys. He really impressed us girls because they’d get out of line and he’d take them up in front of the class, bend them over a desk, smooth their back side out and then whop ‘em with the bench brush when they misbehaved.

He’d take them up in front of the class, bend them over a desk, smooth their back side out and then whop ‘em with the bench brush.

Mel: What’s a bench brush?

Betty: The boys in shop cleaned the shavings off from their wood carving with a brush — a bench brush. Everyone loved Mr. Newby. They respected him and he never hurt anybody. He just whopped ‘em a few times. Sometimes I think it was a good thing.

Mel: Who was the principal?

Betty: N.K. Thompson. As far as I know he was just a real good principal. We later became friends with he and his wife. I really enjoyed going to school in Riverton. Except the boys would tease me. I was so small. They told me I didn’t belong in the 5th grade and took my shoes off and threw them out the windows.

Mel: Do you want to name names?

Betty: No.

[to be continued]

Driving around Town with Elvoy Dansie

[Note: These are edited excerpts from an interview Scott Crump conducted with Elvoy Dansie on 25 January 1986.]

Elvoy: We are now looking at some of the first stores in Riverton. That was one of the first grocery stores that I remember [third building from corner of 1700 W. 12600 S.]. When I first remember it, Dave Bills had a meat market there. Then he turned around and sold it in about 1917 or '18 to his brother, George Bills. George ran it for several years. Then he sold it to Frank Seal. Frank Seal had it for several years and he decided to start to sell automobiles. This was in the '20s. So they built this building on the side and that was their office for selling cars. They had a way to bring the cars in from the back into the display room. They sold Plymouth cars and trucks. At that time, Plymouth was building a truck. Then he turned around and sold it to Joe Butterfield. Joe Butterfield ran it for two or three years. Then he sold it and bought a farm up on the Flat. The corner building which housed a safe was the Jordan Valley Bank. It was built in 1922 as near as I can remember. Alvin Miller built it for the bank. They moved into there and he went on a mission in the spring of '24. The bank closed its doors in February 1932 during the Depression. It was a very profitable bank up to the time of the Depression.

Scott: Who were some of the people that worked there?

Elvoy: Arnold Butterfield worked there for several years. Henry Hurren was the cashier at the time they moved over into the bank. The bank was robbed twice. Henry Hurren caught the robbers both times. One time he chased them down in the field and kicked their butts all the way back to the car.

The bank was robbed twice. Henry Hurren caught the robbers both times.

Over here was a drug store built by Dr. Sorenson. He came into Riverton in 1921 or '22. It was about '24 or '25 when they built the drug store with the office rooms upstairs. Dr. Sorenson had an office room and Dr. Hanson had a dentist shop up there. You could go up there and sit in the waiting room and then go into whatever doctor you needed to go to. Dr. S.C.B. Sorenson was one of the finest doctors we had here for years. After Sorenson quit, they moved the drug store. Then Yeaman moved in and he fixed things.

Where the service station is [northeast corner] is where the old Commercial Building stood. It was torn down in 193[9]. That

was owned by the Riverton 2nd Ward. Leonard Beckstead rented the whole thing and got the steel building put up. It stood for years just as a vacant piece of ground after they tore it down until Leonard moved over. They rented him the whole ground. Then he had to pay the rent on the buildings.

The building that has "Modern Salt" painted on it was built by Vernal Webb. He was going to sell cars. That was built in the spring of 1935. They sold Plymouth automobiles there for awhile. Ed Lloyd had it for quite awhile for a service station/garage. Then he got a job out in Tooele. Since then its just been standing as a vacant building for years and years. They brought the salt in for water softeners. The salt company was only there for about a year. Just south of that on the north part of the ground that the Butterfields have was a two-story building built by Ed Lloyd's dad. It was the post office for awhile, but its been torn down. Butterfields bought it later if I remember right. Then they bought that land from Gwynne Page and moved over across the road. They started out in the old Crane Building over here to the south of us on the west side of the road. The Crane Building was built in 1915 or '16. At the beginning it was a drug store and garage. On the south side of it is where Riverton Motor started out.

Heber Crane built this home where the Evergreen Restaurant is in now. It was one of the finest homes in the area. My Uncle Zach's [Butterfield] home was built in 1910. I've heard my dad tell me that Heber was going to build a better home than Zach Butterfield or Matthews down in Taylorsville because he had more money. This home was all built with hardwood finishings inside instead of pine finishings like most homes were.

Isaac E. Freeman was in with Heber Crane on the show house. The Crane Building was also the show house. The little corner on the side was a drug store. Burt Battison run it, but Burt was not a pharmacist so he couldn't sell

prescriptions. The east corner was the entrance to the show house. That's where you'd get your ticket to go into the show house. The south half of the building was the show room for Riverton Motors and the north half was for the theater. The first show that we saw in there was a free show for all us kids. It was Bill Hart catching his pinto. It showed how he caught this pinto out on the desert. The horse came up to him and he finally got a rope onto the horse. All he had was a belt, but the belt reached out to about twenty feet. It was a western show. If there was a show with Bill Hart in it, everyone went to it because he could do anything on a horse!

[to be continued]

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**RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CRANE HOUSE
1640 W. 13200 S.
RIVERTON, UT 84065**

Death Notices

Marjorie Elizabeth Butterfield Torkelsen (93); widow of Thomas Lacey Torkelsen; daughter of Thomas S. and Martha Bowlden Butterfield; four children

Naomi Garside DiBella (81); widow of S.L. "Dee" DiBella; daughter of Aaron and Annie Myers Garside; four children

Elvoy H. Dansie (94); husband of Bertha Day Dansie; son of George H. and Sarah Ann Elizabeth England Dansie; two children; farmer

Orpha Beatrice Bills Eastman (88); widow of Harvey Rueben Eastman; daughter of Raymond and Della Crane Bills; six children

Besse Fullmer Springer Miller (90); daughter of Oscar and Sarah Phoebe Merrill Fullmer; one child