

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.]

Mel: Did Draper or Bluffdale close their businesses on a week-day afternoon like Riverton did?

Elias: No. Just Riverton. It gave the businessman a chance to go to Salt Lake and pick up his wares, decide what he wanted to buy, what he needed for the next week or month — all that sort of thing. It give the employees a little time off themselves. Other places closed on Saturdays, but we stayed open.

Bob: Back then, if they had one business in the town of Herriman or Bluffdale, they were lucky.

Elias: Well, that's all they had. They had the one little store — the Dansie store — in Herriman. Before the old Dansie store, it was the Crump store. In Bluffdale, it was the old Parry Service.

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Mel: When did the Riverton businesses go back to working on Thursday afternoons?

Elias: I would imagine in the early 1970s. Competition became a little keener.

Bob: When I left Mortensen's, I started working on Thursday and Saturdays and Sundays then.

Scott: Did you ever play ball against Bingham or Lark?

Bob: Yes. I played against your dad when I was in American Legion. Mickey Collinton was a catcher for Bingham. We played up behind the old high school.

Elias: That was the round you played. You played Draper, Midvale, West Jordan, South Jordan, Copperton, Bingham, Herriman.

Bob: Yes. They had a ball team everywhere they had an American Legion post. Riverton didn't have an American Legion post so we had to go to Draper or Sandy. All those towns were really trying to entice guys like me and Bruce Bills.

Scott: Then you could play for Draper or Bingham or whichever team you wanted because Riverton didn't have a post team?

Bob: That's right. At that time, Bingham had plenty of talent. They had Mickey Collinton who was an excellent catcher, so they didn't need me. I went over to Draper and the next year I went to Sandy. Bob Brown was the coach at Draper.

Scott: Is that what everybody from Riverton did?

Bob: There wasn't that many from here that was that dedicated to playing ball. The only reason that I played ball is because my mother used to do my chores for me.

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Karen: What a mom!

Bob: That's the God's honest truth! That's the only reason I played football is because my mother would do my chores. She took my place doing chores when I was practicing.

Elias: It was easier to practice than to do your chores, wasn't it?

Bob: Well, that's the only way I got to play. Dad never understood. All he wanted to do was work. He was a farmer. He had chickens and everything else. When I came home from school, I had to feed the chickens and stuff like that. My mother would feed the chickens when I was practicing football or baseball. She carried the buckets of mash to the troughs and dumped it in so I could play baseball. They always came to the games and supported me, but they never understood the rules of football or baseball.

[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: Did many people in Riverton get the flu during the 1918 flu epidemic?

Wilford: Good night! The whole town had the flu! I didn't do nothing but take care of the people. I did all their grocery buying.

Good night! The whole town had the flu!

Karen: Did they stay in their homes when they were sick or did they go to the hospital?

Wilford: Good night! They didn't have enough money to go to the hospital! They stayed in their homes.

Karen: Did many die?

Wilford: Yes. We had quite a number of people die. Yes. I'll say! I went in a place where there was nine of them in the family. They was all laying on the floor sick.

Karen: Were you visiting these people in a Church capacity?

Wilford: Well, yes and no. The bishop says, "I want you to go out and take care of these people." Wherever there was sick, why I went out and took care of them. I'd go and get their medicine. It kept me humpin' to keep 'em with their medicine.

Karen: What sort of medicine did they take?

Wilford: It was generally some kind of liquid medicine. It all depend on the doc to whatever he was used to giving. That's what he'd give. See?

Karen: Was there a doctor in Riverton?

Wilford: Yes. There was a Doctor Hardy. I don't know how good of a doctor he was. I didn't think too much of him as a doctor myself, but he's a pretty good man.

Mel: How long did the epidemic last here?

Wilford: Oh, I guess about six or eight months. I was going out to give all my time to the people.

Mel: Did the people wear masks to keep the germs away when they went out?

Wilford: Yeah. A lot of them used masks. They'd put white cloths over their nose and mouth.

Karen: Did you ever get the flu?

Wilford: I got it along about the first part of May, but it was a very light case. I was only sick for two or three days. I was 28 years old and married at the time.

Karen: Did any of your family get the flu, too?

Wilford: Yes, but we got it at the time when it was waning. It was kind of fading away. My brother and his wife got it. I went over there one morning. By golly! They were all laying on the floor. Chris Mortensen got it. He was a big fellow — about six-foot-five and weighed about 260 pounds. He was a really fine fellow. He died and I guess his wife died too.

I went over there one morning. By golly! They were all laying on the floor.

Karen: I remember his daughter, Vera, telling me about how she raised all those children after her parents died.

Wilford: She did.

[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. The interviewers asked him to relate his missionary experiences.]

From there we went from Chattanooga to a family of Saints. We made our home there. We'd go out and then come back and made that [home] headquarters for us. . . . Where'd I left off? I'd just landed in Kentucky. They'd given me a companion from Lehi. A wonderful fellow. He'd been there eighteen months. I was as dumb . . . instead of studying on the range — I never had no education and didn't have enough to read good. Instead of studying, I was trying to make money all the time, like President Grant told us. Trying to make money. But I got this man and he was a fine fella. He took me. "Elder Butterfield," now this is the first day out, "now I ain't a gonna travel very long." We had to walk and ask for entertainment. Oh, I hated that. Sykes his name was. Elder Sykes. John W. Sykes from Lehi. "Elder Butterfield," he said. "I'm going to make a promise to you. When you wear that iron out on that parasol," he said, then you would get to go home. You know I tried my best to wear that iron out so that I could get home. I felt so bad, you know. But he took me and he didn't ask me to do anything for two or three or four days. "Now Elder Butterfield," he said, "it's for your good. Now," he said, "you see what I've done it. Now you ask for entertainment." I started in and I'll tell you, I got mighty humble, too. I had a time.

I was uneducated. See? My goodness! Well, to tell the truth. If it wasn't that they had put me in offices after I come home and let me go to the sheep, I don't know what would have been become of me. But they just kept putting offices on me. I labored there with the bishop for twenty-two years. And then they kept me a-going and a-going and a-going. Then they had me preaching all over the valley. I couldn't but learn lots and learnt the people. I used to know all those people over there pretty near in Draper and a lot of 'em in Sandy because I was there talking to them. And I had a wonderful voice. Sometimes I think it's like President Smith. He said the Apostle Paul was five feet and so many inches — I've forgot the inches. He said he had a squeaky voice — this is the Prophet Joseph — except when elevated and [then] he said he had the roar of a lion. That's what Joseph Smith the Prophet says about Paul the apostle of old. Now I think I've said enough.

[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: If you walk me into the store, what am I going to see in Stringham Drug?

If you walk me into the store, what am I going to see in Stringham Drug?

Betty: You walk in facing the east through double doors. To your right is a nice ice cream soda fountain. If I remember right, it had eight stools. We served malts, banana splits, and root beer floats. Not ice cream cones. To your left was a large area of magazine racks where people could browse if they so desired. Then you go farther to the east, straight into the building and you'd find the store where the counter was — the cash register was. To the left was a large area where they sold tobacco. To the left of that was women's makeup products — beauty products. We handled no jewelry. Then back through some more swinging doors was where Mr. Stringham's domain was and where he filled his prescriptions. It got so that sometimes in a rush, he would call me back and stand right by me because I poured so steady. He would let me fill liquids and watch me. He had two different pharmacists — Frank Robles, a Spanish young man. The other young man — I can't find his name in my memory — a red-headed young man. So I worked with two pharmacists other than Mr. Stringham. But I did everything in the drug store. It got so Mr. Stringham, because of my mother, he would let me go to work at nine, where he'd go in at eight. I'd go in at nine and work till noon and he'd give me two hours off to do what I needed to do at home. Then I would work till seven. I often closed and bagged the money and took it to the deposit to the bank.

Mel: Were there other employees like yourself?

Betty: Before me, but never while I was there. Donna Peterson worked there before I did.

Mel: You handled all the soda fountain work and other sales in there?

Betty: I did.

Mel: You had no other help?

Betty: Not at that time. That soda fountain was always full. We had the sugar factory going at that time. Several of the men from the sugar factory would come this far over

from West Jordan to have our malts. They were good, honest malts! Dr. Sorenson had his offices above us, up those stairs to the south. He would come down. I was a very small girl. He'd say, "Betty, put an egg in that malt and put some weight on you!" I didn't ever add the egg, but I had my malt and my banana splits. We actually added the malt so I can call them malts, not shakes. We did both. A lot of people just liked the hominess of the drug store and the charisma of Mr. and Mrs. Stringham. They were so welcoming to everybody and everybody was their friends. I made a lot of friends. But the sad part was they'd come in and then they didn't want to leave. They'd occupy the bar stools for too long of a time.

He'd say, "Betty, put an egg in that malt and put some weight on you!"

Mel: Could you tell me about the Stringhams?

Betty: Very kind, hard-working, good people. A good sense of humor. Julia was the one that, can I say, she wasn't the backbone. He had the brains. He was the pharmacist. But what Julia said, went. It was clean. It was immaculate. It was always dusted and kept up. The magazines were always in perfect order. She didn't mind people coming in and sitting at the one little table with chairs around it. They were allowed to sit there. They didn't want them on the floors. They lived in Riverton. They were neighbors to Elias Butterfield.

Mel: Were they Mormon Church members?

Betty: Very much so. Yes. Very good people. They didn't have children nor any nieces or nephews that worked there. The Bastian family was their relatives here in Riverton, but none of them were affiliated with the drug store.

[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.]

Scott: What was on the northeast corner of the intersection of Redwood and 12600 South where Hardee's is now?

Elvoy: The first that I remember there, Uncle Jim had a little blacksmith shop. Jim Dansie. Then in about 1920, his son-in-law [Bill Nelson] wanted to build a garage there.

So they jacked this blacksmith shop up on a couple of logs and drug it over closer to the house. He built himself a little garage there. It was about 16x20 feet. He started doing garage work and then he put in a gas pump. Just about the time he'd get under a car, someone would want some gas. So he hired a young man by the name of LaVon Tischner to help him. Business increased and he added another section on to it. Going back to the time when the show house was built, there was a fellow by the name of Tommy Nichols that had a little candy store in the building that was torn down. He had no place to go so Uncle Jim let him move down on the corner. His place faced the Herriman Road. In about 1925 or 1926 it caught fire early one morning and burned down. The garage stood there and Bill quit doing garage work and rented it out. Ralph Hamilton run it for a year. Then he moved over and got the place across the road on the east side. Alonzo Madsen had rented ground off from the church and built a service station there in about 1932 or 1933. Lon sold it to Ralph Hamilton. When I came home from my mission in '38, Leonard and Ed Beckstead had it. When I left for my mission in '36, Ralph had it. It was just a little service station. Then they added an apartment to it. Leonard and Evelyn Beckstead lived in the apartment for several years until they bought the home they live in now. That home was built by T.A. Butterfield.

Just about the time he'd get under a car, someone would want some gas.

[to be continued]

**RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Death Notices

Jane Withers Hardcastle (96); widow of Alma Glen Hardcastle; daughter of
Richard and Sarah Winter Withers; five children