Riverton Yesterdays

Volume 4, No. 5 December 2004

A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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Annual Subscription: $10

"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.]

Scott: Did you get any support for the Little League from the town or the county or was it all self-supporting?

Bob: You got support from the businesses. Some businesses wanted to hang their sign out there on the fence. There was a lot of donated labor. If you had a boy playing, you'd go down there and you'd probably help mark the field or rake it or help put up the fence. Usually the league president's wife sold snow cones and candy bars in the concession.

Scott: There was no city or town upkeep?

Elias: No. Nothing at all at that time. The city wasn't doing anything. In those days, the city didn't have any money.

Bob: Nope. The only source of revenue that the city had was the water bills.

Elias: That's right. There was no taxation. Strictly the water.

Scott: Is the Little League still run the same today?

Bob: They have more teams now. They have several minor leagues. Back then when a kid didn't get picked for a team, he was out. I mean, he just went off crying because there was only so many kids. But today everybody plays. It's a heck of a lot better. It's always been my philosophy that if you build more ball parks, you can build small jails. That the reason I got involved with it.

If you build more ball parks, you can build small jails.

[to be continued]

Ninety Years of Memories:
Wilford Myers

[Note: This concludes the interview Mel and Karen Bashore conducted with Wilford Myers on 12 January 1985 and begins a third interview that Mel conducted with Wilford and his son, Merlin Myers, on 26 January 1985. Merlin was an anthropology professor at BYU. It is edited for clarity and readability.]

Wilford: Chris Mortensen was a hard worker. His brother, Frank, wasn't near the worker that Chris was. They owned the property where this house is sitting on clear over to that road [11400 South] north of here — a half mile. They had eighty acres in here. He got in his head that he wanted to put in an orchard. He put it in from this road [Redwood] to quite a ways over in the field all orchards. He finally convinced himself that there was going to be nothing in that business for him so he pulled most of 'em all up. He had hundreds of trees in here. They were mostly apples, but he had some pears. He had a pretty well mixed-up orchard. But Chris Mortensen was a fine man. A good man. He got into the business of raising potatoes. He got connected up with a fellow by the name of I.W. Frank, a wholesale man in Salt Lake City. He'd ship them into him and he'd sell 'em for him.

Chris Mortensen . . . . convinced himself that there was going to be nothing in that business for him so he pulled most of 'em all up.

[12 January 1985 interview concluded]

Wilford: Thomas P. Page sure traveled, I'll tell you! I liked the old gentleman. He had his faults like the rest of us does, but he wasn't a bad fellow. He was a pretty fair man. Every Christmas he sent out to the widows a half ton of coal.

Merlin: He had a feeling for the people and I think he enjoyed having those kids come to the Christmas party and get all excited trying to find their present on the tree. He had some pleasure in that. The people of Riverton, Herriman, Bluffdale, and to some extent, South Jordan and Draper, patronized him. He didn't want all the good

to be on his side. He wanted to share with them. I think there was a very definite aspect of that in his soul. We study economics in non-industrial circumstances and we feel that the difference between market-oriented people and non-market-oriented people is that the economy is embedded in social relations in the non-market kind of society whereas the reverse is the case in the market-oriented society. Their social relations are embedded in the market. It's the market that dominates and in the non-industrial, it's the social relations that dominate. Thomas Page was still dominated by the social relations to a very large extent. I think that's quite obvious from his behavior generally. He was a part of the whole system and he wanted to do his part.

Mel: I have heard that his store was the largest store south of Salt Lake City in the county.

Merlin: I don't think there was a bigger one — even in Murray. I don't think there was any of them that could compare with Page-Hansen. There was the Madsen Hardware Store in Murray. This was probably older than Madsen's Hardware. There used to be a J.C. Penney Store in Murray, but that came much later. I don't think there was a store in Midvale bigger than this one.

I don't think there was any of them that could compare with Page-Hansen.

Mel: Riverton appears to have been a commercial center.

Merlin: It attracted people from this end of the valley — from West Jordan, South Jordan, and to some extent, Draper. Draper never had a store that could compare with Page-Hansen's.

Wilford: Pretty close. They had a big co-op store there. It was a big store. Page-Hansen sold pretty much everything. He sold wagons, farm equipment. It was the main general merchandise store in Riverton for a long time.

Merlin: He had everything in that store. People could buy material cloth. You could buy flour, dried fruits, vinegar, and they had an apple barrel.

[to be continued]

"It Was a Busy, Busy Place": Max Parry

[Note: These are edited excerpts from an interview Mel Bashore conducted with Max Parry on 23 August 2004.]

Max: You'd order chicks from Utah Poultry and they'd order 'em in. They'd ship the chicks in in big boxes. You'd pick 'em up and take 'em down to your farm. The Poultry was very similar to IFA. In the back half of this Poultry they had feed. They had another tier where the people would bring their eggs in in great big cartons. They had separators there where they separated the eggs. They'd bring 'em in and stack 'em there. Eldred Beckstead would candle the eggs in that loft. That's what his job was all day long — to candle 'em. He was up in the north part of the building. He sit there all day long. He got so he could shuffle four eggs — two in each hand. Move 'em around and put 'em to the light to see if they had any blood in 'em or anything. He did that for a long time.

> Eldred Beckstead . . . . got so he could shuffle four eggs — two in each hand.

Mel: Did the coal yard have a cement base floor?

Max: Yes. You've run into the coal [exposed during road and building construction in 2004]. That's where it was at. Sometimes you'd have two car loads there, but not too often. It wasn't too big. It wasn't there to begin with when it started. When we first started using that coal yard there, everything had to be lump coal. They didn't have stokers for their furnaces. But eventually they got to the point where they could sell that slack and put it in a stoker to burn in the furnaces. It was easy to put in. My father used to sell the stokers in the Commercial Building. Then they went to putting in slack and we put that in the school. They'd take a whole car load of coal to fill up that big bin they had in the basement of the elementary school. It would take us awhile to get that unloaded. You'd throw it over the side, but then when we got the tractor fixed up we could do it much quicker. During the Depression in the 30s, people didn't have any money. We would take a pickup truck full of coal up to their house. But when things was really tough, they come down in their cars with a gunny sack and we'd

fill it up for fifty cents and they would take it home. Everybody burnt all the wood they had around the place and they come down and get the coal. It was all lump coal at the time because nobody had stokers to run it. As far as I know, they had a nice train station there. You could just sit down and wait for the train.

Mel: Could you describe the station for me?

Max: OK. On the east side of the building they had like a patio. You could walk out onto it and walk straight into the train that's stopped there. Urban cars is what they were. You could walk into the north end of it. The south end of it had the office there for the train station. It had the teletype machines in there. The mail come in to there. [Leslie E.] Butterfield was the station man. He lived down on 134th South. He'd come up from the post office which has had two or three places down here on Redwood Road with a cart. He'd pull it up there and load those bags of mail and packages on that and take it down and put it in the post office and sort it out. In the north section, they had a big pot-bellied coal stove — so the people could keep warm while they were sitting there waiting for the train. There was chairs and benches all the way around that waiting room. If the people went to Salt Lake, they would get all dressed up in their best clothes. They'd go up here and catch that train. When I went to school at the West High, that's the way I went in. I went in on that train in the morning and come back in the evening. It was quite convenient. It was too bad that they abandoned it and turned it back over to the farmers. They took all the track out and we leveled the track bed through here. They piled the ties up and if a farmer needed some fence posts or something, they'd just go get 'em.

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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.]

Betty: We went sledding in the winter. Delbert Page owned all this property over here to the west that we now own. He would flood that and make an ice rink. Us kids would skate there. Some of the braver ones went to the canal, but I never went down and skated on the canal because of the water. I was afraid of water. We all had ice skates. No roller blades. We all had sleighs and we went sleigh riding.

I was afraid of water.

Mel: Where did you go?

Betty: It's called Lover's Lane now, down here in Riverton where all those beautiful homes are being built now. It was pretty rough sledding, but we'd slide down those roads and off the better hills. We used to bicycle ride. We would ride from here over to the Draper crossroads, out to the state prison, down through Bluffdale and back to Riverton. We did that at least once a week often on Saturdays of course.

Mel: On big balloon-tired bikes?

Betty: Yes. I often wish I had one of those bikes back again. Easy to handle and comfortable riding. We used to do a lot of walking. We would cover this town walking. Good exercise, but not thinking of exercise. We would walk and we would sing. We were singers. That's just what we enjoyed.

[to be continued]

Death Notices

Betty Mitchell Hansen (75); wife of Eldon Harry Hansen; parents were Alfred Preston and Alida Justesen Mitchell; 4 children

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: Morris and Merrill handled lumber and coal. The coal used to be shipped in on the Salt Lake and Utah Railroad. They'd unload it out of the boxcars and haul it down and put it into bins here at the back. You'd come up and get your ton of coal or whatever you wanted. You'd have to shovel it out of the bins into your wagon and weigh it on a set of scales that was on the south side of the building. The Page-Hansen Store was the largest department store this side of Murray I guess. It was considered the best store in the south end of the valley. When T.P. Page used to run the store he used to have a sign in there: "You might beat our price, but you'll never beat our merchandise." He had the best of everything you could get. He always carried the best clothing, shoes and boots or anything. He didn't want you coming back and say it was no good. At Christmas time they had their toys that they would bring in for the sale. A couple of days after Christmas all the kids would gather here to the store and draw numbers and go through the line. Santa Claus would give you whatever gift your number called for. The numbers were given out according to your age and sex. In 1914 I got a little Indian suit. It was a little brown Indian suit with fringe on the side and with a headband with half a dozen colored chicken feathers. It was one of the best stores! You could get anything in there that you wanted. He had as complete a line as any store in the county as far as department stores were concerned. At one time they even had a grain mill. You could bring up grain and get it ground for feed for your pigs instead of feeding them whole grain. When Page-Hansen built the building he set it back so the horses could have a tie-post away from the road and not be on the road. There was a tie-post from in front of Morris and Merrill to the north side of the Page store. You could tie your horses up to them and go up into the store and buy and then come back out and untie your horses and go. You can kill the motor on a car and it will stay there, but your horses had to be tied up because

"You might beat our price, but you'll never beat our merchandise."

sometimes something would scare them. They'd get nervous and move or they didn't just stand steady. You couldn't kill them and start them up again like you do with an automobile. East of the Page-Hansen Store was a home. Rose Hansen lived in the home. Later Hattie Freeman bought the ground off of Rose Hansen. Rose's husband was the partner in the Page-Hansen Store. He was in this store with Page for several years and then he died. Rose Hansen clerked in here when I first knew her. When she got older, she retired and married Chris Lovendahl. They moved down into the home where Bill Mason is now living until they passed away.

Scott: Were there other stores in this building complex back then?

Elvoy: It was just Page-Hansen and Morris and Merrill. Page-Hansen started out selling lumber and coal and then Morris and Merrill came and took over. Gwynne Page ran the Page-Hansen Store for several years. I think in 1922 he got out of the store and went into the automobile business with Riverton Motor. Roland Page took over the store for a year or two. Then Meredith got a hold of the stock and took it over. There are a lot of stories about how it was done, but I don't know. But anyway, Meredith became manager of the store and from then on it went down. He never kept the store up like his dad and brother did. I think he was of the idea that he was going to sell the store and get all the money out of it and quit. I guess he did. He has rented the building out since then to different ones. Lute Peterson at one time had a meat market in it. Ron Page had a radio repair and sales shop. At the present time, Sharon's sells large appliances. During the depression years, Morris and Merrill sold out and Arthur J. Orr came in and took over the business. He was here for several years and then he sold to Websters. Across the street is a beer parlor that used to be a hamburger stand. It was just a little small place where you could go in and get hamburgers and soft drinks. Then they found that there was more money in beer than soft drinks and hamburgers. They changed it into a beer parlor with these apartments on top.

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[to be continued]

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