

Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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Ninety Years of Memories: Wilford Myers

[Note: These are edited excerpts of 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: I forgot what teacher it was. I guess I was whispering around and it got out too loud. The teacher said to me, "You stay in two hours after school tonight and get your punishment." Then when the time come, she said, "You're staying in for two hours." She said, "Now you write your name two hundred times." I wrote my name two hundred times so she could find no fault with it. I finished before two hours so she said to write it two hundred times again. So I wrote it out. I was honest about it. "Well," she says, "this is the same writing that you showed me before." I says, "Well now, this is what I wrote the first time and here's what I wrote the second time." "By gosh," she says, "you have written it. Well, I'll tell you what you didn't do. You didn't bring down your "f" down low enough below the line." That's what she said. I can't recall her name. She was tall. By gosh, she had discipline in her!

"You stay in two hours after school tonight and get your punishment."

Mel: Were there just about as many men as women teachers?

Wilford: No, I think there was more women. It seemed like we got all the strict ones. They didn't hesitate to punish us.

Thomas P. Page was a pretty nice old fellow. He stuttered. You couldn't hardly put his sentence together because he stuttered so darn much. He was a pretty smart old fellow. He traveled around the world three different times.

Merlin: Of all the descendants of Tom, there was only one that stuttered. That was Roland's boy, Blaine. He had a hard time. He got killed in the bus accident. Oh! That was a blow to this town! You couldn't forget it. Just a pall fell over this whole south end of the valley.

Mel: Were you in school at that time?

Merlin: I was. I took a different bus.

Wilford: For some of them, providence must have stepped in there cause it kept a lot of people from school that day or made them late.

Merlin: Harry Page had a boy, Dexter, who was supposed to be on that bus, but he sloughed school that day. Of course, his parents were absolutely beside themselves. There was no account of him. Then he came home. He'd been to Salt Lake City that day and had sloughed school and didn't go on the bus at all. There were several things like that that happened. It was an amazing thing. Some took that bus every day of their lives, then for some reason, that day they didn't do it. We were in class—first period. They called the teachers out of class. They came back and told us about this accident. They dismissed school immediately. I had Paul C. Boyce in algebra class at that time. He went out and came back and told us that this bus coming from Riverton had crashed.

Dexter . . . was supposed to be on that bus, but he sloughed school that day.

Wilford: I was hauling beet pulp to the sugar factory in West Jordan. I guess it was about 98% water. You'd feed that pulp to the cattle and it would increase the flow of milk in the cows. I guess it was due to the fact that it was 98% water. I was driving out of the lane to the sugar factory in West Jordan and I heard somebody yelling. I turned around and looked. There was a big span of bays coming with a big empty wagon just as hard as they could run. I didn't want to stop them with my team so I just took and threw the brake a little up, wrapped it around, and got off my wagon and run back. That big team was just a-coming down there! Oh! Were they coming! I threw my hands and arms around. They didn't stop at all. Just as they got up to me, I put my hands on the neck yoke. I raised myself and I climbed right up on top of the horses and got ahold of the reins and bit in his mouth. I stopped him. Now that was quite a daring thing, wasn't it?

[to be continued]

Law Enforcement in the 1950s: Max Parry

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

Max: I had a guy that come to the beer joint all the time. That's Jennie's. He'd always drink and then he'd drive home. He lived in Bluffdale. Every night. I kept stopping him and talking to him for quite some time. It didn't stop him. So this one night I picked him up. I says, "Now, look! You're going to quit drinking or I'm going to take you to jail." And I turned around and I headed to jail. I had a partner with me. He was sitting in the back seat. He put his arms up over the back seat. He put his chin up like that. And he says, "Max. I don't care what you do to me or where you put me. I'm not going to stop drinking and I'm not going to stop smoking." What do you do? I turned around and took him home to his dad. Of course, he was maybe about twenty-eight years old at the time, but he wasn't married. We run into all kinds of things in a little city like this.

I remember when we had that school bus accident. Of course, I was in school at the time. I went over there. Most of them were my friends. That was a little hard to take.

Mel: Were you in high school?

Max: Yes. The bus driver was Slim Silcox. He was a pretty good guy. A real nice guy. All those caskets lined up there. It was too bad. It was terrible.

When I was working on the road, we had young kids that would go out and steal gasoline. They'd suck it out of the cars, steal hubcaps, and all that kind of stuff. We had a lot of that. We had an occasion that one of the farmers was losing gas out of his pump. He come down to me and he said, "What can you do?" I said, "I think I can take care of that for you." So I got some fluorescent powder. You can see it under a light. I put it on the handle of the pump spout that went in the car. I put quite a bit on it. You couldn't see it. It was just like face powder. But when you got the infrared beam on it, it would show up and illuminate. He

knew me. I thought they did, but he didn't. He was a lot bigger than me. He said he was going to tackle me. I says, "I don't think you better."

He says, "Why not?"

I says, "I got a lot of friends here."

He says, "None of 'em is going to stop me."

So I turned around and I says, "Well, we'll see." Gene Fullmer was there and his two brothers. They walked out of the group and says, "I think we can help you." He turned around and got back in his car and left.

On another occasion, there was a tavern — Jennie's. I went down there. That happened to be when I was checking taverns. I went down there and walked in there. I went behind the bar. I says, "You know you're only supposed to be selling beer here, don't you?"

He says, "Yeah. That's all we got."

So I went back in the back and I got down on the shelves underneath and there was the liquor. I didn't arrest him or anything like that. There was

eight guys sitting at the bar there, drinking beer. I took those bottles of whiskey and turned them up and dumped them in the sink. One of the guys that I knew very well, he says, "Oh, don't do that! Don't do that!"

I had another opportunity down at the rodeo grounds down here at the park. I happened to be working that day. There was some noisy guys over on one end of the bleachers. I was sitting in the bleachers with my family. They were over there standing at the end of the bleachers. They was cussin' and drinkin' and yahoooin'. They were there drinking from bottles. Now what am I gonna do with them? So I did about the same thing with them. I went over and showed 'em my badge. Now, everybody's watching at that time. The whole place was watching. I went over there and took the liquor away from 'em and I poured that on the ground. Everybody clapped their hands and we sent 'em on their way. Some of it you had to take care of on your own.

There was eight guys sitting at the bar there, drinking beer.

[to be continued]

"Right Here in Our Little Old Town of Riverton": Crime and Police Matters

Max Parry served as a sheriff in Riverton in the 1950s. His memories of law enforcement in Riverton fifty years ago may spark forgotten moments and events of the local past. We often tend to picture the past as idyllic and different than the present with its many problems and troubled social conditions. Max's memories help us recall that crime and other social ills were part of life in Riverton in the near past. As Max phrased it, crime even happened "right here in our little old town of Riverton." There was a need for law enforcement well before Max's time. In this and future issues, we will reprint news articles about police and criminal matters found in old newspapers.

Highwaymen Foiled

Riverton had two stirring events Saturday night, the second being in a way consequent on the first, for if the local Thespians had not given a dramatic performance, the highwaymen who held up the treasurer after the "show" would have sought other fields.

The local dramatic talent gave a performance of the little drama entitled "Because I Love You," and after the audience had departed the treasurer of the opera house started for his home with the receipts tucked away carefully in an inside pocket.

He had almost reached the door of his house when two men stopped in front of him and demanded the money in his possession. Instead of complying, he took to his heels, ran for dear life and outdistanced his pursuers easily. Later the matter was reported to the police and from the description he was able to give the local authorities are satisfied that the would-be robbers are the men who robbed the postoffice last Thursday night. The police say they have information which will lead to the arrest of the criminals within a day or two.

The performance of "Because I Love You" was attended by a large audience, and the performers received a flattering reception. The principal roles were taken as follows: Mrs. Marina Hansen as Imogene Courtleigh; John Hansen, Jr., as Horace Verner; Eugene C. Miller as Bud Tyson; Charles Millard as Ira Courtleigh, and Carrie Bills as Ginger, the gypsey.

Two men stopped in front of him and demanded the money.

Ogden Standard Examiner, 30 January 1905

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: The community had a great deal of fun playing baseball in those days. Every town had baseball teams. They'd get together about every weekend and play baseball. Draper and Riverton had somewhat of a competition on holidays. One would have it on July 4th and the other would have it on the 24th. They still do. Draper has the 24th and we've taken the 4th to have our celebration. When I was a kid, it used to vary.

Every town had baseball teams.

Scott: Tell me about the old city hall on Redwood Road [presently used as the Senior Citizen Center].

Elvoy: Bill Petersen built it. The city incorporated in the '40s and got going enough so they could build them a town hall. They built a town hall and a fire station. The fire station had been down in the Page-Hansen place for quite some period of time. That's where they stationed the fire truck after they were able to get one over here to Riverton. When they built the city hall, the south part was for offices and the north part was for the fire station and for the fire truck. They had a big door so they could get the fire truck out in a hurry and get going. After they built the new city hall that we have now, then they converted this over into the "Senior Citizens."

Scott: Where was city business conducted before the city hall was built?

Elvoy: Most of the city business was conducted down here at Butterfield Motor. Elias was clerk for the town and he used to collect the water bills there. Prior to that time, Louis Madsen used to collect the Riverton Pipe Line Company water bills in the old David Bills store. The city didn't have a home until they built this home over here. I think Elmer Seal was president of the town board at that time. There was a president instead of a mayor. There was a town board instead of a city council. This piece of ground west of the school house was known as the town park. There was a race track clear around it. In the northwest corner was a corral to put in the

animals for the rodeo and the chutes. A 100-foot long grandstand stood on the north side for a good many years. On the south side of the park was the orchard of Page-Hansen's. These

They had the run out in the field so that they could get all the sunshine they needed.

trees around the grass have all been planted since then. The school has taken it over instead of the town and they have kept it up pretty well. There wasn't any grass in those days. They had to keep the weeds down. The orchard was also west of it. Page planted practically the whole farm that he had here, about fifty acres, into orchards and trees. After he died it was divided up and changed around. The road on what they call Church Street [12775 South] was nothing but a lane way. Bill Page wanted to put in some chickens so he bought a piece of ground off his uncle, Thomas P. Page. Up on the corner here he brooded a bunch of chickens. He had a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pipeline run up there to this brooding house. As soon as they was big enough, they had the run out in the field so that they could get all the sunshine they needed instead of having to be cooped up in the house all the time. Some of the older homes you see here surrounding the school grounds come along in the '30s. But it used to be all orchard. The '30s and '40s was when most of this was built here. There was quite a bit of space back of the old domed church house that was used for parking cars and buggies. On our celebrations, there was a building back there that they could sell hot dogs and soft drinks. They didn't have as big a variety as we have now. That was west of the grandstand. The ground was all planted into trees by Thomas P. Page between he school house and the church house. It was a nice little park there.

Scott: Then the domed church was between this road here [12775 South] and the school building.

Elvoy: Yes. This was known as Church Street. The domed church set about 75 feet back off from Redwood and about 30 or 40 feet south of this road [Church Street]. There was a little lane that went up next to it. The bulk of it set about where the back of Mom's Fabrics is now. It had a pipe fence around it — wooden posts every ten feet with this 2-inch pipe running between it.

[to be continued]

"We Had Good Times and Bad Times":
Owen Seth Hamilton

[Note: These are edited excerpts from an autobiographical sketch written in 1986.]

I was born on January 4th, 1904, in Riverton on Redwood Road at 13310 South 1700 West. It was one of the worst winters we have ever had, so they told me. My mother was thirty years old when I was born. I was the third child of the family: Marie, Everett, myself, Edith, Vesta, Weston, Mary, Ruth.

We had good times and bad times, the same as they do now, except there was always a job for us. We had to work, but that was good for us. I'm not complaining about that. It was milk cows, feed chickens, go to school, come home, feed cows and feed the chickens and I did most of the milking. Everett liked to feed the horses and was busy also. Weston was never much of a farm boy. He had other things on his mind and that was where his mind was. His ambition was there and he worked hard with the rest of us. Weston was a deep thinker. He would take six cows on one row and I would have 8 or 10 cows on the other row and I was working hard to get though and he would be sitting there with his hands on his knees thinking. I used to yell at him and he would work like heck for a few minutes and pretty soon he was right back in the same position. We all got along good with one another.

We made our own fun. It didn't cost anything and we did the things that were there. We didn't have to go someplace or buy something. We enjoyed ourselves on skates and sleighs and anything that was in season. We used to do a lot of shooting. I remember one incident that has bothered me and worried me ever since. We were hauling hay in the field on hay racks. It was all horses then. We went over to the Morgan Road and made the turn. Bill Newman, Sr. came across the road with his pants hanging on one side and the suspender on the other. He always put up one suspender, no hat on, his hair sticking in the air. He was nice to talk to though, but he stopped us and we talked to him for awhile. Bud Bills had the shotgun in his hand and we always had black powder shells. So we got talking and Bill rolled a cigarette and put it in his mouth. Bud Bills said, "I ought to shoot that out of your mouth." He said, "Go ahead." And bang! He did it so quick. With black powder and all the shells, you shoot and then run forward to see if you hit what you shot at. All Bill had left hanging in his mouth was the stub of the cigarette. His face was really black from this black powder.

All Bill had left hanging in his mouth was the stub of the cigarette.

[to be continued]

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