

Clyde Ball recalls early days in Meridian - MT Jan 15, 1948

It was a cold, rainy day just forty years ago, January 8, 1908, that I landed in Meridian. Teddy Roosevelt was president of the United States and James H. Hawley was Governor of Idaho. There were no graveled streets in Meridian (just mud) and the old board walks were still here.

The city council was composed of J. M. Anderson (chairman,) Will Palmer, Ed Hartman, Elmer Sims and Charley Pickett,

There was just one automobile hereabouts them - an old right-hand drive with buggy wheels, owned by Joseph Doane, whom we affectionatly called "Sockless Jerry."

Early School Teachers

To the best of my memory the grade school and high school were operated together, the first four grades were in an old dilapidated frame building where Keller's Market now stands.(East 2nd, between Idaho & Pine) The teachers were Hester M. Spackman (whom we often, and appropriately, called Spankman). Ethel Tolleth, Nellie Tolleth and Miss McGrew. Among the teachers over where the grade school now is (NW corner at Meridian and Pine) were J. J. Caldwell (principal), Neal Nash and A. W. Fuller, but don't think I ever knew any of the others. The school board consisted of Will Palmer (who later did a magnificent job of helping to get the new high school building), Dr. H. F. Neal, J. A. Watts, John Waggoner and W. W. Groves.

The law in Meridian was represented by Jeff Kyle (marshall) and L. K. Deck (constable) and George Whitlock (Justice of the peace).

Good Baseball Team

As I remember Meridian had one of the best baseball teams in the valley, among the players were Frank Anderson, Frank Long, Ed Hartman, "Tubb" Daly, Jim Waggoner, Oscar Zimmerman, Dee Herron; and Frank Matcham was water boy.

Dr. H. T. Nichter (a veterinarian) ran a livery barn just east of the Methodist church where the Davis, Raynor, Taylor and Kennedy families now live, and Will Palmer ran another where the creamery is now located. Construction had just started on the new Methodist church, William Crosby Ross was the minister, H. G. Powers was the christian minister. (Harvey Powers was an ordained Methodist Protestant minister from MO)(William Crosby Ross was not a pastor in Meridian, J. H. Ross was.)(Rev. H. E. McLeod was the pastor who "built" the church in 1908)

E. G. Duncan (Dunkin) had a general store, where John Petty's now stands. In a building just east of the Boise-Payette Lumber Co. S. H. Griffith and Charley Pickett made spray in the spring and cider in the fall.

J. A. Fenton had one lumber yard where the Boise-Payette now is and Henry Taylor had another just east of where the Meridian Market (Parkin Hall) is now located, and Elmer Sims and J. W. Harrell operated another in the building occupied by The Meridian Times.

Hotel on Bank Site

The hotel business was quite flourishing because it usually took two or more days to go anywhere. Rose Huber operated a hotel where the Broadway (Long's Hotel) apartments are now, and Mrs. Guymann managed another, where the new bank building is being erected. (Meridian Hotel & the First National Bank). There were two banks, one where the bank now is with J. J. Jones as president, and E. C. Pfaffle cashier. The other occupied the room where the Elite Cleaners are now, and to the best of my memory the personel was Howard Davison and Thall Stevens.

The building now occupied by McFaddens Market was divided. Frank Long ran a pool hall in the east half. Next to this on the west was a butcher shop,. The two very efficient managers were Ed Hartman and Joe Daly.

Barber Bestenbostle

In the next room an old Dutchman by the name of Chriss Von Bestenbostle had a barber shop, Fred and John Adams also had a barber shop but I don't recall where it was located.

The room now occupied by W. A. Gano's plumbing shop, housed the same drug store now owned by J. J. Rice and it was managed by Sam Wilson, The drug store which is now Meridian Drug Center was where Arthur Frazier's office is now located, with M. W. A. Hayden as manager.

Harry Tolleth and Harry Champlin operated a grocery store in the room now occupied by Mr. Leninger's harness shop. There were two saloons, one operated by Hugh Rohrbaugh where the Meridian Cigar Store now is, and "Dad" Bayzer (Bazor) had another just east of the site of the creamery but I don't recall the exact location. There were more buildings along there but as to just what was in them my memory fails me.

First I.O.O.F. Hall

The Odd Fellows hall was where the Western Auto Store now is (Chriswissers, Broken Bucket saloon), but I don't remember what was down stairs in the building. Just east of there was a picture-show and Geo. E. Atwater had his real estate and insurance office in the same building. Homer Champlin and his mother operated a bakery and restaurant in the same room where our bakery is located and Clem Hedges and some of his boys had a general store in the other side of the building.

The Post Office, was where Drs. Jewell and Brunn have their offices. Dr. S. M. C.

Reynolds was the postmaster and "Uncle" Jim McIntosh and S. W. Hutcheson were mail carriers. There were two telephone companies. Martin Burns operated the Bell Co. In a room at the end of a hall between the Dr's. offices and the Meridian Pastime, and the office of the Meridian Independent owned by Homer Tolleth was up stairs over where Arthur Frazier's office now is.

The building now occupied by the Meridian Pastime was divided, Herman Barz having a grocery store in the east half and Harry Madden a harness and shoe shop on the west side. Dr. H. F. Neal's office was over where the bank now is and Dr. C. L. Dutton's office in the building now occupied by the Rice Pharmacy.

Hand Printing Press

The Meridian Times was published on an old hand printing press by Tommie Wilson's father (I don't remember his first name) and was located on the site of the new furniture store now being erected. (Gambles store originally the Robison furniture store - later Western Auto)

Frank Slater did hauling with a team of horses. There were two blacksmith shops. A Mr. Russell operated one on that lot where the Veltex service station now is and P. H. Snow operated the other where Fuhrman and Neitzel garage is located. Incidentally, my father, a horseshoer by trade, came to work for Mr. Snow and that is how we happened to settle in Meridian.

J. M. Anderson divided his time between a furniture store and an undertaking establishment on the present site of the Legion Hall.

Horse-drawn Fire Engine

There was no city water system and the only means of fighting fire was a small pump drawn by a team of horses and to the best of my memory Jake Eames was fire chief.

The only people who come to my immediate attention as living in the same house today as they did then are Yale Thurman, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Taylor, Mrs. Dr. Neal, Mrs. Harry Tolleth and Grandma Peer.

A friend asked me the other day what I remembered the best about early Meridian and without the slightest hesitation I replied that the fondest memories that I will ever have about Meridian or anything else are the games of baseball that I and the other boys used to play where the Cash Bazar, Funeral Home, Idaho Power office and Variety Store now stands. But alas! One day a man named Ed. Mathews built a blacksmith shop (the horseshoe prints are still in the cement walk in front of the Idaho Power office) and away went our play-house forever.

Tribute to a Pioneer