

**Providence City Oral History Project
AUDIO TAPE LOG**

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Interviewee(s): Keith Watkins
Interviewer: Rachel Gianni

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Project editor: Lisa Duskin-Goede

General description: This is a topical transcription with some word for word excerpts. Keith Watkins lives at 330 East Center in Providence, Utah. Some edits provided by Keith are notated within parenthesis. Tape numbering (Log #) is continuous from side A to B. *Note:* There was some question about the spelling of "Braegger". (See page 3 of 12.) We went with Braegger, instead of other spellings we have seen (Bragger and Braeger.)

(Log #) Topic, contents

Side A, Tape 1 of 1

Keith Watkins Family History Book

(005) We put together a book, the personal histories, I'm going to give that to you. And you can take it and use whatever you want out of that book; it's copyrighted, so as long as you give us recognition for what you use. I was born in Ogden in 1925. There's a lot of information in this book that pertains to that early part (1930-40) of Providence. You're welcome to it. There's a lot of good stuff about Providence, particularly familiar with the mercantile establishment as it was.

Watkins Grocery

() The story about that old building which was Watkins Grocery at one time till 1942. They closed down in '42; and my mother subsequently leased the building after WWII to Mathews, who was a butcher for Henry Theurer who had a competing store across the street. It's an interesting development, how Henry Theurer bought the building out from under Keith Matthews because he was quite a competitive threat. What happened was that Keith was in there operating, doing quite well. A real estate agent stopped by and wanted to know if Mom would be interested in selling the building. And so they negotiated a price at \$7000. On that same day (this information comes from the abstract of title, so it's a written legal record) it was a transfer of that same building from the real estate agent Crockett to Hen (Henry) Theurer which was the competitor across the street.

Through those years (1932-42) my mother operated that store, competing with Mr. Theurer. It was a very competitive situation. Henry Theurer, his operation was quite essential to Providence City in many respects. He had a coal business besides his mercantile business, the groceries, the dry goods and things like that. A lot of the people worked at the quarry during the summer and throughout the winter time they would be laid off. Back in those days, a lot of the businesses did business on credit. Henry Theurer carried a lot of those people through the wintertime to be paid in the summer. Of course, he charged them interest and he absolutely forbid any of those people shopping at Watkins across the street. My poor mother run the business from seven in the morning till nine o'clock at night, seven days a week in order to keep it going. So when she sold out in '42 she was most happy to get out from underneath it and Theurer was happy to see it finished too. But when Keith Matthews then left Henry Theurer and started running his little operation over there. And the only way Henry Theurer could get rid of him was that he bought the building out from underneath him. When I bought the building back, I dealt with the two Theurer older boys and they heard about what Mr. Theurer was attempting to do to buy that building, and then they told their dad, "Dad, you know you just can't do that in this small town." Well, he tried, and Mr. Crockett told me after the fact that he was acting as Theurer's agent in negotiating this sale, he went to Mr. Theurer. Mr. Theurer had been bombarded by his boys, "Don't do that," so he tried to get out of it and Crockett said, "Too late, I bought the building." And so he then, when Keith Matthews's lease expired, he was moved out of there. So he did eliminate that competition. So it's kind of interesting, you've got a mercantile merchant that's well established in town, he's a mover and a shaker, he was the power. Then you've got this other little store that tried for years to survive. Seems like every small town in those days had a power structure and he was in the mercantile sense, that's what he was. The information is in that book, about page ten. What it says in *Providence and its History*, that Henry Theurer bought the building from Mom and then he leased it to Keith Matthews. He did no such thing. He bought the building to get rid of Keith Matthews. That's explained in great detail, "Building History" page eight.

The acquisition of Watkins Grocery

(070) They bought the building, Dad and Mom in 1932. He was a traveling salesman. They had family problems, he was not much of a factor in the early years, then they were divorced, so Mom was on her own. So in 1932, I was six or seven years old so I grew up in that store because it had an apartment in it. We lived there and worked out of it.

Children's involvement in the Store

(075) As we got a little bit older, there were a number of things that we could do. A lot of the trade was on penny candy. There was an excellent array on penny candy and it was good candy. You'd stand at the candy case as little kids with their penny or two and look over the whole array and finally pick out what they want. We could help out in that sense. We used to oil the floor. You'd sweep it. It was a wood floor and they had an oil treatment that you'd put on the floor that would make it easy to sweep up and you wouldn't have the dust because there was an awful lot of dust in those early days. Because we didn't have the hard surface roads.

A lot of times we would watch the store while Mom would be in the house, in the next room doing housework. When somebody would come into the store and we little kids would yell, "Store!" and Mom would come up and wait on the customers. A lot of those customers, too, we delivered groceries to. A lot of those old widows would call up and want a yeast cake. She would send us on these delivery errands. Even flour in fifty pound sacks, when we got bigger we would carry and deliver.

(093) It was an important part of the city at one time as you can see from those pictures. When I bought it, I went into the service and spent three years in the service and then come back and it was 1946 when I got back and spent a year and then I got married and moved away. Then this building transaction happened during this period.

Printing business

(099) I quit high school because I've always had a passion for printing. I was given a little printing press when I was a kid. Santa Claus of course. I learned quite a bit about printing with that little thing. I got printing catalogs. I knew the names of a lot of the equipment, the shipping weight and its price. But I didn't know how to use it. But I had this fascination for printing and so I quit school and went to work for the *Herald Journal* in 1942. I came back after the war and eventually went back to work for them. When I returned and before I went to work for the *Herald Journal*, I went to work for a weekly newspaper called *The Cache American*, it was a competitor to the *Herald*. It was put out in Logan. They went broke and I wound up with their equipment personally. This was about 1950. Then I went to work for the *Herald Journal*, the *Herald Printing Company* actually. To operate my equipment, I had to do work that didn't compete with my employer. I worked all day over there and then I worked all night at home as we did just specialty printing in the basement of our home in Logan. We needed more space, so that's when I contacted Theurer to see if he could sell that building back to us. That's when I bought the building. Providence was really the foundation as we grew up. That building you see, we built onto that building five different times. The business grew, and staying in Providence wasn't the smartest thing we ever did.

Watkins Printing expansion and parking

(122) We started the printing company about 1950 and it's still going now. It's down on 12th South in Logan. And then we'd still be in Providence if it hadn't been for Providence City Council. Clyde Braegger was the mayor at the time. Our City building was right adjacent to the old Providence pavilion. I grew up with that Providence pavilion. When I came back after the war, the pavilion had been taken down, it was a blank field. I was elected to the City Council in 1955 and I planted grass there and it was used as a park. But when Mayor Braegger and his troop thought it would be grand and swell to build a City office, for sentimental reasons where the old Providence pavilion was because Providence City had had their offices in that building for a time. So they built the building there. Mayor Braegger came to me and said, "Keith I know you were looking to acquire this property for expansion for your company for parking etcetera." We were planning on building onto our building, we needed space badly. He said that it was important to them for sentimental reasons that they build this new City building there. He said, "I'm going to let you park your cars in there, at least we can help you that

much.” Well, that lasted until the next mayor came in and he told us to get our cars out of there.

Watkins Printing Leaves Providence

(142) Watkins Printing company does several millions of dollars worth of printing a year. They were the biggest sales tax payer all through those years and they would still be there had Providence made a wiser decision to put the City building some place else, for instance down on Zollinger Park. They could have put it here by the shed (city shops.) This property over here, there’s a house and there’s a parking lot. Hoyt Kelly bought that. It was a house and a pasture. He bought the entire property. He gave the pasture to the City so they could use it for parking for Von’s Park. They kicked the ideas around that maybe they’d put the City offices up here, right adjacent to the city shed and so forth. But that fell through because of the sentimentality; they had to have it there where the old pavilion was. Because of that Watkins Printing Company had to leave town, or they’d still be in Providence.

Products from Watkins Printing

(159) It’s a major commercial printing and envelope manufacturer. There really are not that many envelope makers nationwide. One thing the wife and I did when I was operating part time when I worked at the Herald Printing Company when I was foreman over there; we started the mail order wedding announcement business. We had wedding dealers in eighteen states and thirty-six employees eventually, is what it turned out to be. We made our own wedding announcements, we fashioned them. We used specialty papers and had an awful hard time getting envelopes, so we bought the machinery and got into envelope manufacturing for that purpose. We manufactured business envelopes, the general run of the mill commercial printing. We printed books. It’s developed into a lot of beautiful four color work. They have offices in Salt Lake and Ogden and had a truck go back and forth and do all their production here in Logan. It’s a substantial commercial printing business.

Personal printing equipment

(175) I’ve got a little printing museum out here in this building. I’ve got some old (historic) equipment. I’ve got one press that goes back to 1831. It’s similar to one that the *Book of Mormon* was first printed on in 1830.

Growth of Watkins Printing

(182) We just kind of have had steady growth. I guess I was kind of aggressive in building the business, we did cover a large area. One of the things that was very interesting, I always had a problem with Providence City about as I had a problem because I was in Providence. We didn’t get this work *because* we were in Providence, we got it *in spite* of the fact that we were in Providence. Our old building down there was on 13th South and 7th East if you were to use Logan City numbering system. That’s not very far out from Main and Center. What I wanted to do, and I tried desperately to get Providence City to do, was change their street numbering to correspond with Logan, like River Heights. It would be one continuous, it would be so much easier for fire responses, and emergencies, anyhow. Rather from going from Logan from one

numbering system to a different one. This street out here would be 13th South, instead of be Logan, it'd be Providence. I'd get a call from a conference up at USU, they'd need some printing and I'd discuss with them from over the phone, "OK, we can accommodate you" "Where are you located?" "We're over in Providence" "oh my" Immediately that gives them the mental image I'm out on the county someplace. Then I had to explain to them, "No we're only five minutes away from you, 13th South and 7th East." Then they would handle that and they would move.

Business from the University

(204) It used to be that Utah State bid all of their printing. There were a lot of the shops that would bid cutthroat prices. They would cut the price 20/25%, sometimes 30% just to have work flow. Not that there would be profit involved. Then the University put in the reproduction shop, no big deal. But like human nature, even if I was in charge of it, if I want this baby to grow, and it grew and grew. Finally they tried to do all of their printing on campus and not buy anything off the campus. But what they charged for it got so expensive at the various schools up there, they were unhappy with it because it was impacting their budget. But the president said "you will support a non-campus printing shop" Then finally they've got it now so they still do a lot of work up there but there's an awful lot of work that they bid out.

Sub-let work

(217) A lot of the work that Watkins Printing did was we were a "printer's printer." We had equipment and the capability to do what the average printing shop could not do. We did a lot of work for other printers: sub-let broker work like making these envelopes. We helped out various printing companies down in Salt Lake, Ogden, up in southeastern Idaho. We did hot stamping embossing and die cutting, we had large presses for die cutting. We did bindery work. The binderies in Salt Lake were commercial binderies and we were doing substantially the same thing they were doing in certain areas, so we did a lot of that. A lot of specialty work.

Equipment

(231) We would buy it on the market. If we could see a need of something, get into the market, we would shop the market and see what was out there. Originally it was all American made but the unions took care of that. They actually broke a lot of the American companies because of their rules. I had a book to do in the Swedish language. For the linotype machine I would need matrix that had the accents and so forth. I sent and ordered into Mercantaler, this was in April, and it drug on and it drug on and they promised shipment, they didn't ship. Finally in August I got in touch with the manager and I said, "I've got to have that made, I've got so much committed to this job and this customer's going to tell me to hand it in my ear, matter of fact he's told me that." He says "Keith, there's nothing I can do for you. The order's in, they're a very democratic union shop. Your order goes on the top, they work off the bottom. That's the way it is." They take their own good sweet time doing it. I could have bought mats out of Italy in two weeks. 'Course, I was going through an American company then. Then they closed down two weeks for summer vacation and nothing's done. That's what happened to the Manufacture of the American Printing Equipment. If you needed a part from them, it

might take you six weeks to get it. You can get it out of Sweden faster. Eventually all the American manufacturers went overseas and adopted German names and converted to German and we started buying German equipment. If you went down to Watkins Printing Company right now you'd find there is quite a number of German presses. The biggest most expensive presses, the color presses, they are Japanese. It's a darn shame that's what happened to the industry. My old printing shop out here, I've got all cast iron, old stuff. It's just junk according to today. It's operational, you can do beautiful work on it. My wife calls it the "old printer's playpen." I've got this one press, 1831, First book of Nephi on there. Young people can ink and they can pull an impression of a section of the First book of Nephi. There's no plastic out there, but there's not much value there. The old presses of course, they're worth quite a bit but the rest of it is just cast iron. My philosophy is that I don't trust computers. "If it's not cast iron, how good can it be?" I decided I'd retire when I started buying equipment I didn't know how to turn on, time to move on.

Competitors

(275) There were some local shops, (Square One is a good one) and some are gone, they're all gone now. Smith Printing was primary one, and of course my old company, Herald Printing Company. Various Salt Lake, bigger companies.

Salt Lake connections

(280) I'll tell you a little sideline, to tell you how interconnected this world is. We had some good costumers, we had a large press, a Webhead press and that fed from a roll of paper. You could print on two sides and it goes through a folding process and we take up a folding signature off the end. It's a very cost effective way of doing a lot of book and magazine work. In Salt Lake, one of the biggest printing facilities down there was the Deseret Press which is a Church owned press and they were doing commercial work besides the *Improvement Era* and a lot of Church work. But they did so much commercial work in there that they farmed out a huge amount of the Church work, and a lot of the Salt Lake companies were living off of the Church work, the overflow they got from the Deseret Press. Salt Lake County down there in their wisdom, they raised their property taxes so high in one jump at one time that the Brethren took a look at the operation with Deseret Press: "This is dumb and stupid. We're doing this commercial work." Printing business isn't very profitable. If you can make 5% after tax, you're really doing quite good. They said, rather than pay all this increased property tax, let's quit doing commercial work and just do Church work. So all of the printing shops down there in Salt Lake thought they'd been trying to get the Church out of commercial work for years because they thought they'd inherit all that plus all the Church work they were doing. Well, what happened was that the Deseret Press was doing the *TV Digest* and it was a huge printing job. When they announced they were quitting, it went to somebody else, maybe in Indiana. There were two major printing shops in Denver at the time and there two big shops in Salt Lake that their lifeblood was this overflow. They lost that overflow work. They sent a salesman in our area and started hitting on our Webpress customers that were using this web press to use their work. They were getting so desperate, their bidding got so low that one particular company, they had a whole mountain of paper in the warehouse, they would bid jobs just to unload inventory just to

convert it to cash. Not entirely as dumb as it sounds. These two shops in Denver had been there for a hundred years, great competitors in that market area. One of them went broke and the other one had to downsize dramatically because Salt Lake had sent their salesmen over into Denver and was pulling work out of Denver. The Salt Lake County raised their property taxes, it disrupted the whole scheme of things and it affected a whole bunch. That's how this world turned. We were competing with the big boys, still are.

Other printing businesses in Cache Valley

(330) The Herald Printing Company just announced they're quitting. There's a place called Sprint Print, there's Neilson Printing up to Preston, and Square One in Logan. I don't know who's out there. I'm an old dinosaur, what do I know. I walk into the printing shop and get these looks like, "keep moving, keep moving fella." They don't need me. That's their world. It was mine, now it's theirs and they're welcome to it.

Mercantile history of Providence

(338) I can tell you about the early years, the '30s and '40s. Those were very hard times and the business was very competitive and when you're doing business, opposing an individual like the competitor was, Mr. Theurer. He was related to so many families in town and the Watkins were some outsider. They were really tough and lean years. Providence at that time wasn't very big and Watkins was just getting just a small portion of the grocery business in town. When Dad and Mom established the place, they put in a fountain, so it was Watkins Grocery and Confectionary. Their major business was the grocery out of there but secondary was the confectionary end. A lot of people worked in the field during the day and they came down for a ten cent malt in the evening. Mom had to stay open on Sundays because of the Sunday business came to her because everybody else was closed. She didn't want to be open on Sundays but it was a matter of survival. They were hard years. When you focus on small towns, one individual, the kingpin of the town who directs a lot of the events through the way he operates his business, Providence personified that. Hoyt Kelly can tell you about that individual.

Employees

(369) We've always been real good printers. Very professional, very capable people. I've trained a lot of folk down through the years. We have five children and they all grew up in the printing shop and they learned a trade there. When I retired and turned the business over to them and they all worked in various phases of it. Now the three of them have gone on to work elsewhere. Our youngest daughter, she was exceptional in bookkeeping. She's now an accountant at Cache Valley Electric and doing very well. Another daughter is the Treasurer over at North Logan. Another daughter that did type setting, she's in Yuma and she works for an outfit, I don't know how to explain it, they have series of schools and she talks to people and recruits them to bring in these troubled youngsters into their school system. So she's really doing quite well. That's the number one daughter. The youngest daughter's husband, he is the production manager at the plant. Number one son, Dennis Watkins, he's the manager. He's very good at meeting people and selling. He's got a lot of good people skills. Number two son works back in the printing shop, he's like his dad, he's happier if he's getting his face dirty and getting ink on his hands. His name is David. He operates presses, he's capable of doing almost

anything in that printing shop. From beautiful four color press work to take on a complex numbering to take on die cutting job. So, those two boys have two different skills. One dependent on the other. The son-in-law, Robert Richardson, he's done an excellent job, purchasing agent and managing the work flow throughout the company. All the kids grew up in the shop and learned skills that served them well.

My philosophy years ago, when I was at the Herald Printing Company, I found out that the difference between hiring a good mechanic, a good tradesman, and a good guy. You might get a good mechanic, but you don't necessarily get a good guy. So I hired some good mechanics through the years that turned out to be a pain the rumpstiltskin (bad apples.) So I adopted a philosophy that I will hire an individual that's basically a good individual and make a mechanic out of him as opposed to hiring a good mechanic and try to make a good guy out of him. You just can't do that. One thing I've learned too is that I don't care if you need additional employees or not, but all of the aces, the people that are exceptional, they don't move from job to job. And once in a while a plant will close down or something of that nature, or somebody moves into the area and he happens to be an ace, an exceptional talent, I've always found it to be profitable to hire that guy. You don't need him, but he always worked in and he worked out to be profitable employee for you and then you have a good relationship. There was a number of them. I forget names.

In searching for employees, I'd run an ad in a local paper, but I got the best results out of advertising in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. I hired an individual once out of Philadelphia. They moved here. There are people that live in the area and they have family or friends that are elsewhere that want to come into the area, so they're looking at those ads. I hired one fellow out of San Francisco. I had a very complex press. It was called a Perfector, prints front and back at the same. A sheet fed press, not that row fed press. It takes a good, intelligent, even tempered individual to run those babies because they test you. I ran an ad trying to find somebody. A woman up in Salt Lake called me and told me her brother up in San Francisco desperately want to make a change, would I interview him. So I interviewed him. He turned out to be a real great pressman. He was with us till he retired. Two or three years after he came to work for us, his brother was working in a printing shop down in San Francisco. He liked what he heard about this country up here, so he came up and applied and I talked to him and we put him on and it wasn't very long after I made him shop foreman. He was a real ace. Incidentally he was an archery champion in California at the time. Most of these guys were hunting and they liked the hunting that we had here. He's retired now. He's living up in Idaho. A lot of the old guys are retired, doing something else.

Right now I think the company has about fifty, but prior to my retiring I had about forty. I retired in about 1991.

Frustrations of running the business

(476) What really bothered me, I just loved to work printing equipment hands on. I had frustrations with people. Dennis, number one son, he's the opposite. He's really great with people. One of the biggest reasons why I retired is that that a certain percentage of the population as a whole, and even if you try to control your employment, you want to

hire just good guys, well the numbers catch up to you and sooner or later you're going to get a clinker. And I've had a few clinkers. I remember sitting in my office one day and I was dealing with a problem. This is not fair. You do a lot of good work, some outstanding work, but once in a while, somebody in the back does something dumb and so you've got a job to do over, you got a problem. If you got to do it over, you've got a customer that's unhappy. A lot of them are reasonable people and they know that is human error. You work together and you solve your problem. But there are some that are very unforgiving. It's not fair, and I got so I couldn't handle that kind of thing. So I went out. Different people, different talents. That's the way the old world works.

The Grand Jury Investigation

(504) We had a real problem here. Back in 1975. There's a little chapter on that in there. (In our book.) When I was in the City Council, this goes back about fifty years ago. At that time, things were changing. Before that time, all the growth was in the cities. Everyone wanted to be in the city. About that time it was changing, people wanted to be outside the city. We built an elementary school down here in 1956, based on the population census and what they had they figured that would be good for a few years. They built in 1956 and grew out of it in 1956. Being on the City Council, we were starting to get a lot of interest on subdivision in Providence. This was the new thing. We were a small town with a couple of LDS wards. We conferred with the county surveyor at that time, Moser, and engineer. A lot of the interest was on the south bench. The wisdom that they came up with was that we would come from the Hyrum highway 3rd South straight up to 2nd East and then beyond Edgewood Hall. That was the plan, it was to be a dedicated boulevard, a non-stop boulevard. The problem was between 1st East and 2nd East there was a huge ravine. We didn't have the money at that time to do anything with that road, but we adopted a long range policy of having a fill put in that ravine, that when the time came that it was filled up, which was in a dedicated road area going from 1st East to 2nd East up past Edgewood Hall, then that road would be completed. It was 1975 we had an excellent group of people serving on the city council, I mean they were good. One MD, some businessmen, three bishops or ex-bishops, they were just an extraordinary group of guys. Hoyt Kelley is one of them, Glade Davis, he was mayor at the time, Dr. Bishop was one of them, Kenneth Spuhler was one, Olsen, can't think of his first name, (Blaine) Jack Thompson. They decided now is the time, they hired up a bulldozer, went up and started leveling that hill. On 1st East and 3rd South, the road comes up and it deadends there, (on 1st East) looking south, Wedgewood hall is immediately on the southeast and there's a little winding road that goes up there, that was where this road was supposed to be. So, they're up there cutting this. Some of the new move-ins, they went berserk. It was overgrown, it was green. There was a doctor from the university, very important fellow, still member of the community, lives in that area. He got very much involved, and his wife. One woman even laid down in front of this bulldozer. They went and testified. (At the Grand Jury currently being held in Logan.) *(There was a grand jury over in process in Logan at the time. Editor's note: Not clear what he refers to here.)* That was brought about because some outspoken people thought the county was doing some dastardly things. There was a developer involved too. That will be Hoyt's aspect of this story. These guys (the councilmen) all got indicted. All of the sudden, here comes the sheriff deputy and they took and handcuffed them and

they fingerprinted them. It was a terrible thing. I just got off the city council and I knew what the whole story was, so I contracted to get a page advertisement in the paper, (Herald Journal) I was going to get a lot of people to support these guys because my feeling was these guys on the city councilman be treated heavy-handed like that, who are you going to get to run for city council? We gave it a name of "Committee for the Preservation of Government in Providence." We went through a whole series of things, TV and newspapers articles, radio stories; it got a lot of publicity. When this went to court, the judge immediately threw it out.

Side B, Tape 1 of 1

() (The law states) They could do their own work up to \$3000, over that should they bid it. They'd spent like \$3300 or something like that. It was miniscule. It was miniscule the way these guys were treated heavy-handedly like they were. The judge threw it out. Through the following years, they got the record expunged but had those people, that doctor from the University and he's still a heavy hitter up there and his wife and their cohorts, if they had of kept out of it, Providence City right now would have had a boulevard going from that (Hyrum)highway right up on the hill. He lives there, he lives right next door to it. He owned the supporting property. He has a lot of unkempt growth. They just love that growth. You don't cut down green growing things for some people, but you do within a roadway. Anyway, it was one of the most unfortunate things that ever happened.

Over here on 1st North, the building up here east of us (on the Bench) is growing and it's getting more and more. We have a constant parade of cars and trucks and whatnot past our road. (Center Street) It's the only way in and out of those properties up there now. This is Center Street and if you go over one block and if you look east, you find a home right dead east at the end of the street. It's the Fredericks property and it's owned by Erwin Fredericks. Twenty years ago maybe, he offered to sell it to the city. A 65 foot width right up through that property including the old house for an appraised value of \$68,000. The mayor at the time, a college professor says we can't afford it. What a businessman would have done, when you're in business you always have a budget and always have a shopping list, when I free up some money I need to purchase this. I can take one step ahead or I can improve my production or so forth. One thing you learn is that opportunities come at the worst possible time. You either take advantage of them or they're gone. But now a college professor, everything comes from a budget, so he refused to enter in that agreement with that individual for \$68000 and right now Erwin Frederick would tell you he's tickled to death that the city didn't buy it. He still owns the property; we still have a dead end up there. But the opportunity to have direct straight across up on this hill was denied was because of that call up on that hill, (3rd South) it was denied because of these tree huggers. Read all about it. It's page 104, "Committee for Government Preservation in Providence" I have supporting newspaper articles and picture and so forth.

Old Pavilion

(661) That old pavilion was really great. Back in the 1930s when we were growing up they used to have dances in there. They had movies in there. I don't know if you've ever heard of Rin Tin Tin, but that was a dog. My first Rin Tin Tin movie they played in there. They played the ward basketball in there. Back in those days, these dances, they were just robust. Folks would come from all over. We had a grand time.

There was a rock jail in the back. It had a cement top. It was a two room jail with a steel door in the front immediately behind the old pavilion. It had a black chimney coming out of the top of it. (Concrete top.) The only guy they ever put in there was the guy who built the jail. He got locked up for "drunk and disorderly." It never really was used very much. These neighborhood kids, no names mentioned here, dismantled the chimney on the top and then that gave them a square opening going down through this cement roof. So they took out the bricks on that chimney on the side facing opposite the door. So the neighborhood kids used that as a gathering place for quite some time.

The pavilion went down during the war. Back in those days, a lot of the old fences were just slab boards. They were a solid fence and they were gray and they were a fire hazard, really. That (the pavilion) was surrounded by a fence like that. The building itself got disuse as time went on. A lot of the windows were broken out, used less and less and finally it wasn't used at all. When I went into the service, I don't think it had been used for some time. The fence was dilapidated. At that time, the school board started the policy of building gymnasiums on their schoolhouse, like we have down here now. They didn't do that in Paradise and in North Logan; they did it in conjunction with the community. They called it the community building. It was attached to the school and they had their hot lunch in the basement and had their gym and stage and everything upstairs. It was a good building. The city offices downstairs. Lions Clubs had a room downstairs and that's what it was. When that went into the planning, I guess that's probably when the old pavilion went down. What happened to those quote "community buildings", eventually the school board kicked everyone out and they just wound up to be school buildings. Small town small politics.

In the old pavilion they would always have plays. They had some good plays. Those bazaars went on for three days and they were great events. They had a lot of little booths, stuff for the kids, wishing well for the kids.

Sauerkraut Days and Church involvement

(705) That was a church function. There were the two wards and they were very competitive in sports and everything else. There was a North and a South ward. It was very competitive and there were certain feelings that built up over time. I'm not sure what it was but I think it was when they built the church house down here. Everybody participated, the old Rock Church and the big red addition. But then when they split the ward, I think 2nd Ward had to build their own building and this other group of people in the 1st Ward now, they didn't help them out there. I think that was something to do with it. But then there was the competitive spirit. I don't know how the bazaars started, but all my years in town, early years, they were the grand festival. They were in the fall. One ward would have theirs and I think they alternated and they would have three days

and they would have the plays and the sauerkraut dinner and the turkey dinners and with the Relief Society quilt booths and everything that went with it. It was just a grand event. We'd have two of those every fall. They were just very important social events for the town of Providence. Amazingly, so many people came from out of the area to attend them, some movers and shakers came in from Salt Lake.

Personal heritage

(722) I'm Danish and Welsh. That was one of our problems moving into town, we didn't mesh with these German/Swiss people. I went to school with a fellow by the name of Elwood Weidauer. His father's name was Walt. During the late '30s and early '40s there was what they called the German Bund and that was an organization in the United States and they honored the fatherland. Hitler was rebuilding Germany and they thought that was the greatest things because Germany had been torn asunder after the end of WWI. The allies treated them very harshly and unfairly which indirectly caused WWII. A lot of these Germans in the United States still had this fondness for the old fatherland. When WWII broke out, in the store, it was more than once, we had federal people in there investigating some of our local Germans. One of them was this Walter Weidauer. He was the father of my friend Elwood, went to school with Elwood. There was a lot of Germans, very much so. (We were called "Little Berlin.")

Family

(740) My dad was a wholesale grocery salesman. He was doing real well in Ogden. In 1928 they sent him up here and he did really well up here. He decided they'd move to Logan. We lived in Logan for a couple or three years. Our building down here, (5 South Main) the guy had gone bankrupt, the owner at that time. A guy by the name of Cederland. Dad bought the building from the people that opened it at that time and then started Watkins Grocery and Confectionary. That was his business background. He grew up in a family grocery store down in Ogden. Very successful family grocery store. He had a great district grocery store in West 25th Street (Ogden, owned by my grandfather) and he was contracted to my grandfather to Union Pacific to supply their commissary. He built my grandmother a big fashionable home up on Washington Boulevard. (Because of the depression), a grand house on Washington Boulevard is now a parking lot. The main drag in Ogden out on 30th. It's kind of ironic, one generation that some people put everything they have into, their love and faith and whatever and sacrifice dearly for and in a short span of time, hey it's a parking lot. So, Dad grew up in the grocery business and it was a business opportunity. (It appeared to be a business opportunity.) Unfortunately, he being a traveling salesman, that didn't work with his family life and he lost it all. If you read in the record there, you read in the abstract that my mother's name was Deane, Edna Deane Watkins, she went by Deane. When the divorce took place, Dad deeded the building claim deed over to her.

Tour through Watkins Printing

(770) See fieldnotes for 11-9-05