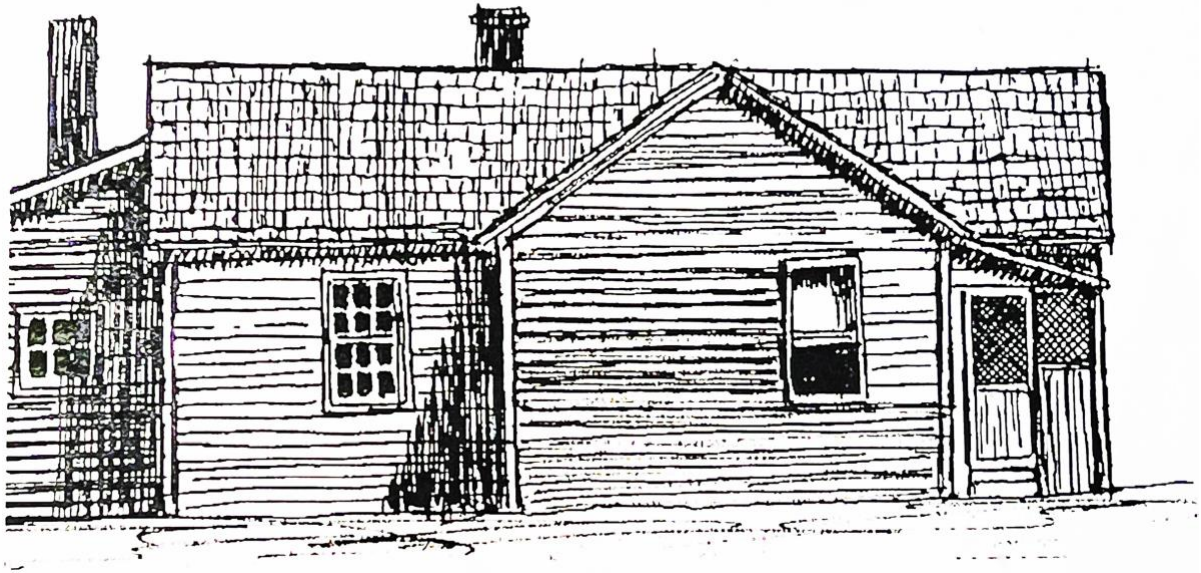
Beyond the Resort:

Life in the Early Saltair Community



Text and sketches by
Nephi Rudolph Hacken (1912-1994)

Edited by Richard Hacken

Introduction:

In ghost-town listings of the American West you will find no mention of Saltair, Utah. This has at least two reasons: (1) the legacy resort branding of "Saltair" evokes a unique and familiar mental image; and (2) the once active salt factory town of the same name has been wiped from the face of the earth.

Imagine, though, that you were able to consult a person born and raised in that historic community. This illustrated essay is the visual and textual report of just such a person, my father. Nephi Rudolph ("Cap") Hacken, the son of immigrants—a Swiss father and an East Prussian mother—was born in a factory-rented salt factory home in 1912. Bearing a first name given to him by enthusiastic LDS converts, he eventually developed the nickname "Cap" to reflect his status as a "captain" of a series of sailboats on the lake.

After settling into later life in the Army Corps of Engineers as a regulator of dams and levees in Northern California, "Cap" gathered drawings and reminiscences of his upbringing on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. These I compiled and edited after his death.

"I Remember the Early Years" is the name of the first section. Here, he describes life as a boy in the community of Saltair and details of the town and his own family house. He relates an early fright he had when trapped on a buggy pulled by a runaway horse. Then he outlines his schooling, first locally then in Garfield—another ghost town west of Saltair. He was fascinated by door-to-door visitors in the family's rented home: the peddler, the iceman and the junk buyer. It was the latter, no doubt, who inspired in him the whimsical saying: "We buy junk. We sell antiques."

"I Remember the Great Salt Lake," the second section, involves a variety of encounters with, and anecdotes about, the lake itself. One environmental note is his youthful vision of the beach as it was before heavy use of its sand in smelting copper and before the excavation of settling ponds. An unforgettable highlight around 1925 was the acclaimed appearance of Rudolph Valentino at the Saltair Resort. As a twelve-year-old, my father peddled popcorn and peanuts at the gala event. A major part of this section details the steps in gathering and milling salt—which was, coincidentally, a septum-destroying process for long-term workers. "Cap" relates later tales of both sailing adventures and workboat commerce on the vastness of the lake, using island sightlines (of Antelope, Stansbury and others) for navigation and as a crude calendar.

"I Remember Traveling by Rail," the third and final section, centers first around the Salt Lake, Garfield and Western Railway (S.L.G.&W or "The Saltair Route"). In the age before interstate highways, it was this railroad company—still in operation to this day—that made possible my father's oft-daily commutes for further education in Garfield, West High School and the University of Utah.

The source of these pages is N.R. Hacken's book, *I Remember Utah*. That full volume—with sketches and textual memories spanning the entire state—is available gratis online using a simple search with the keywords "Hacken I Remember Utah."

- Richard Hacken, August 2022

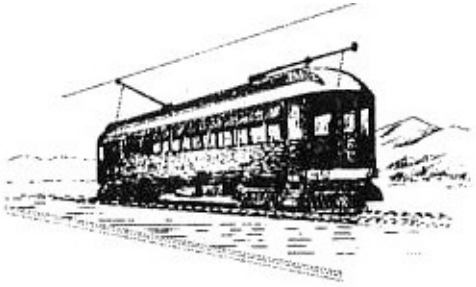
I REMEMBER

THE EARLY YEARS

THE EARLY YEARS

I remember the place where I was born and spent my boyhood. It was a little out-of-the-way place called Saltair, Utah. Geographically, it was located on the south-east shore of Great Salt Lake, about ten miles from Salt Lake City. In spite of the proximity to Salt Lake, the village was isolated because there was very little traffic that passed through on what was called the "Saltair Highway," a gravel road that extended from Salt Lake City through Saltair to Garfield. In my early boyhood, very few people in the village had automobiles. There was a dependable form of transportation that most people used, however: the SLG&W railroad (Salt Lake Garfield and Western).

Saltair was an industrial village devoted to the manufacture of salt. At first the lone



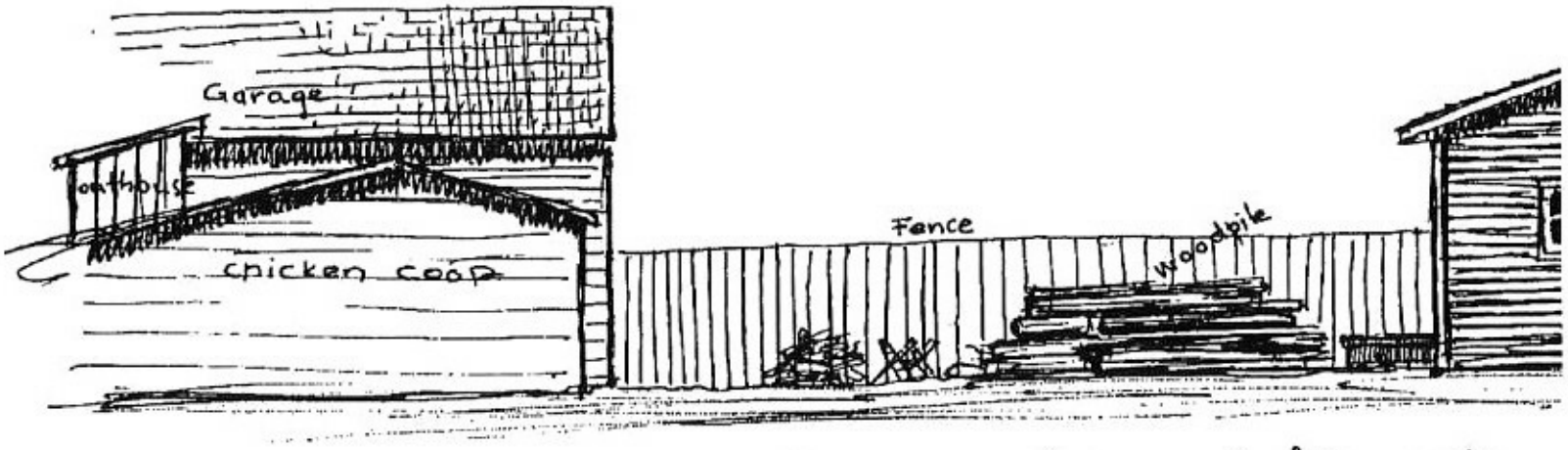
employer was called the "Inland Crystal Salt Company," but later the name was changed to the "Royal Crystal Salt Company." At the center of the development stood the salt mill, where raw salt was brought in from the ponds and processed into the finished product. It was first dried in revolving kilns. Then it was milled into various grades according to use, then bagged or packaged.

The company's claim was that the salt was 99.98% pure.

The people that lived here were all employees of the company. The houses were all owned by the Salt Company and were rented to the workers. They were somewhat more than wood frame houses, even though they were very plain. Each house had plastered walls and was provided with electric lights. There were no bathrooms. Each house was provided with an outdoor privy. In all, there were about 25 houses located in a semi-circle around the salt plant on the west and north sides.

There was a community building that was used for school, church and entertainment. When I started school in the first grade, all the classes were held in a single room. The grades extended from the first through the sixth grade. There were perhaps thirty or so students. On Saturdays, the building was often used for parties or dances, and on Sundays the church services were held there. Practically all the people in the village were Mormons, but they were not all active.

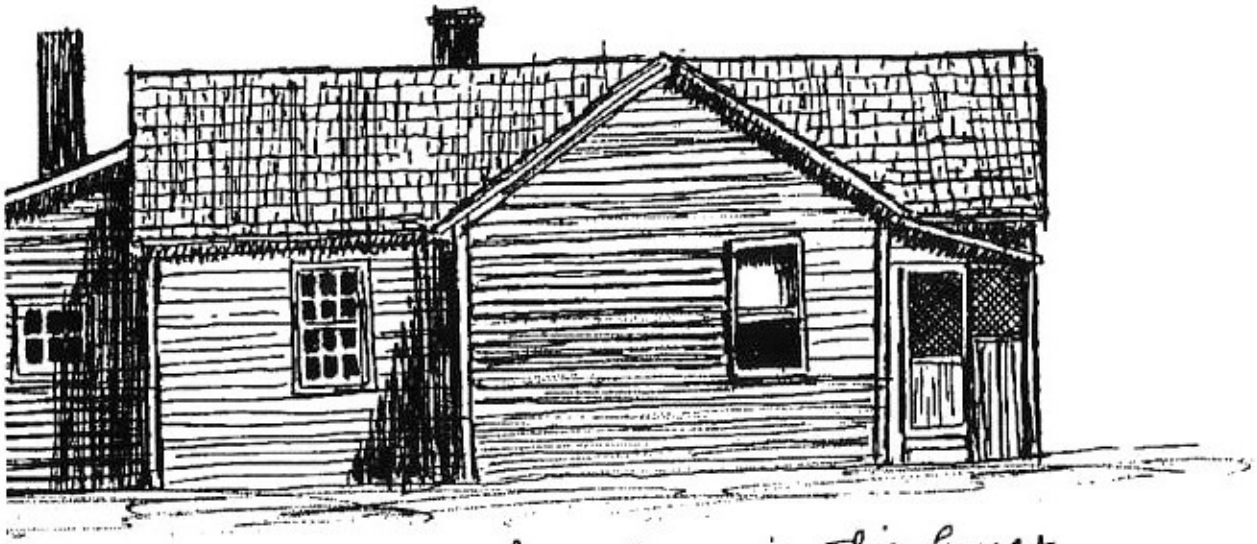
Hacken
Home



View of our home - looking east.
ca. 1927.
Saltair P.O. Utah

Drawn from memory
NRH.

Saltair, Utah



I was born in this house 19 Oct. 1912 and lived here until 1929 or 1930, when the new salt factory was built. House was moved to a new site about 5-6 miles east.

In this area there was no fresh water available, and all the wells drilled here brought up brackish water. Accordingly, concrete cisterns were constructed and water was hauled out from Salt Lake City in a tank car on the railroad. We had no plumbing of any kind. Water was hauled from the cistern for all our needs.

WASH TUB

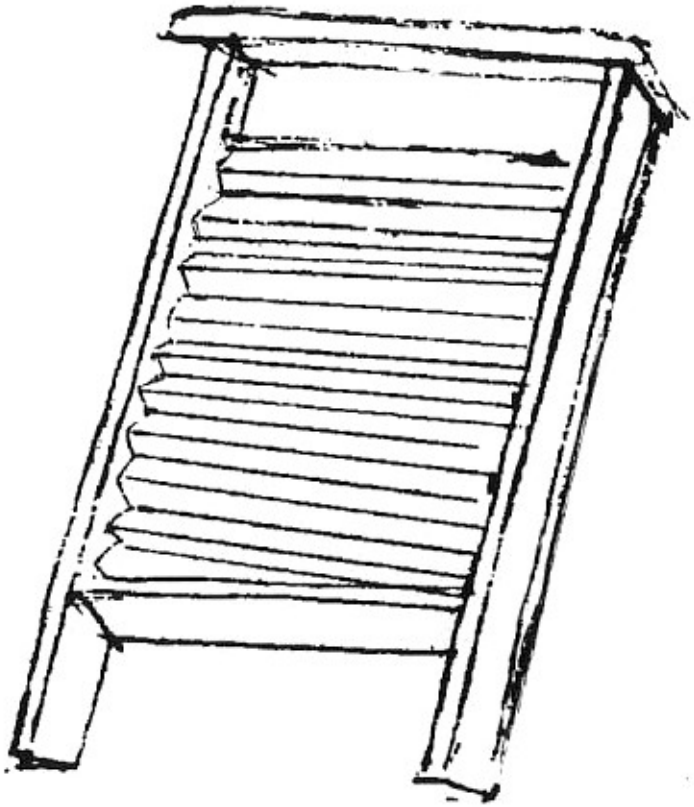
DETACHABLE HANDLE

COPPER BOILER

DESIGNED TO FIT OVER TWO STOVE LIDS

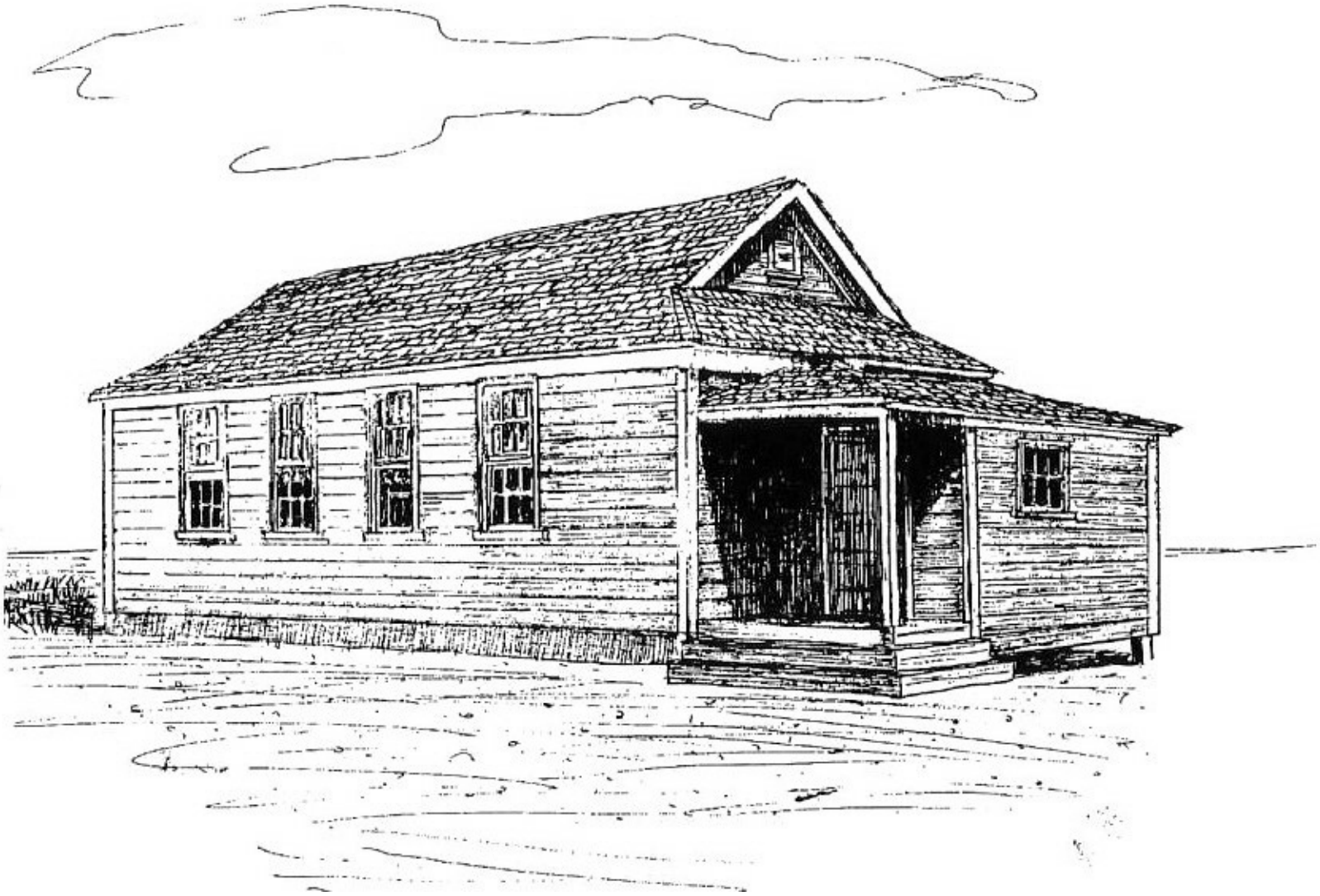
IRON

OUR FIRST WASHING MACHINE



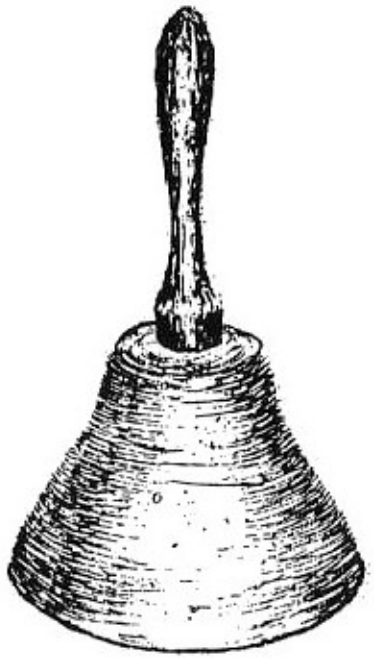
WASHBOARD

I REMEMBER MY SCHOOLING



My schooling began in 1918 in the first grade of a one-room school at the Saltair salt works. There was no Kindergarten or other preschool offerings at our place in those days. Six grades, composed of about twenty to thirty students, were taught by one woman teacher, each class reciting its lessons while the others made an attempt to study.

This may seem an outmoded and inefficient way to teach, but I look back in amazement at the results of this seemingly primitive and archaic way of learning. Perhaps the small number of students made for a better learning experience. In some classes it was almost one on one. All the kids in our school learned to read and write (some better than others to be sure, but none of them came away from the sixth grade as illiterates). For a few, the sixth grade was their terminal education. Most of the others continued through the ninth grade after the Saltair School was closed, and the students were taken by bus to Garfield, about six miles away.



SCHOOL BELL

The school and salt works disappeared many years ago. Their demise came as a result of a fire that destroyed the factory, which in turn caused most of the residents of our village to move away. Some years later, the factory was rebuilt at a new site about four or five miles east of the old location.

I attended the Garfield School through the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. It was here that I was impressed with what I thought a school ought to be: a two-story brick building, separate rooms for each class, a teacher for each class, and -- of all things -- men teachers. There was also a "boss" teacher who was called a "Principal." He didn't teach at all. He had a separate office and seemed to do a lot of paperwork. Often called upon to discipline some students who got out of line, he was a kind man nevertheless, and I soon

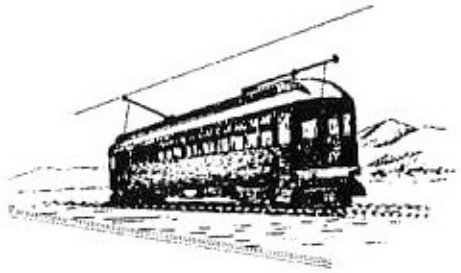
learned to respect him. The Garfield School, along with the rest of the town, was torn down years ago. Nothing is left.

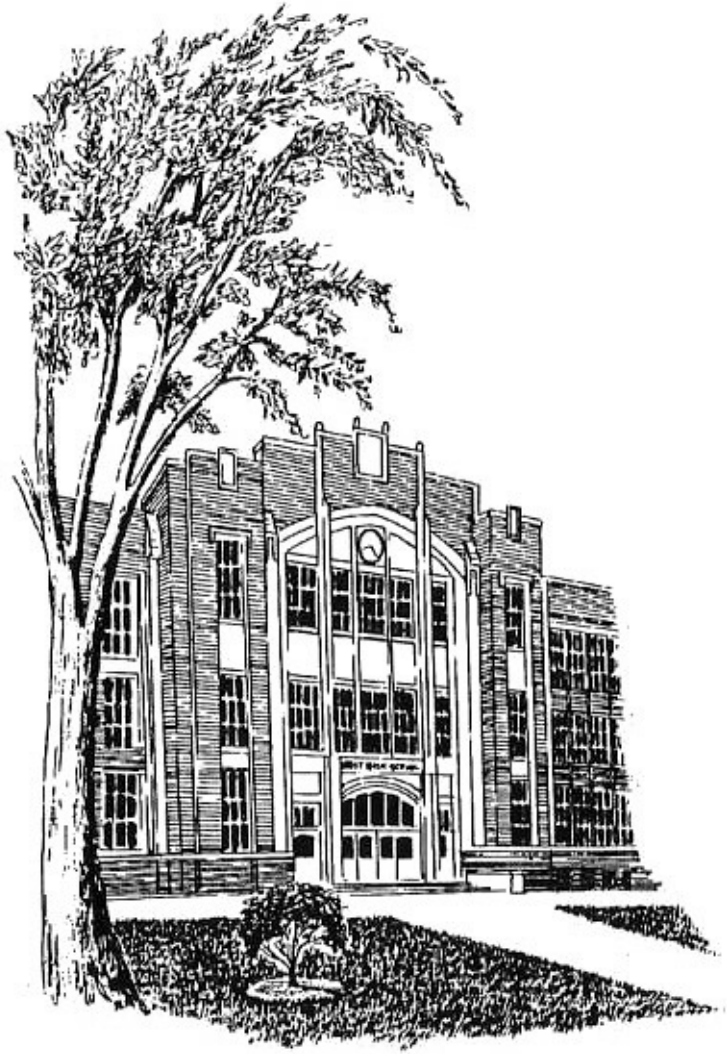
My high school years were spent at West High School in Salt Lake City. I traveled each school day on the electric cars of the SLG&W Railroad which took me within three blocks of the school.

The transition from Garfield to West High impressed me as much or more than the change from Saltair to Garfield. Here was a school that occupied a whole city block. The main building, a three-story brick structure, faced Second West Street and extended for much of the distance between Second and Third North Streets.

There was also a separate gymnasium, a mechanical arts building, and an older academic building in the southwest corner of the block. Taking up the center of the school grounds was the athletic field, consisting of an oval track surrounding a football field. On the west side of the field were the bleachers for the sports fans.

I didn't socialize much with the West High crowd: every afternoon, right after school, I had a train to catch home to Saltair.





WEST HIGH SCHOOL

A WILD RUNAWAY

When I was a child, my mother often visited with a woman friend in Salt Lake City whom she had known in Germany many years before either of them had come to America. Since coming here, both of them had married and were now raising families. My mother had two boys, my brother and me. Mrs. Brinkman had five children -- four girls and one boy.

The Brinkmans lived in an area on the western edge of Salt Lake City. Their house faced west on Redwood Road just north of the Surplus Canal bridge. In addition to the house, there were a barn and some out-buildings on the property. There was also some acreage on which the family raised garden produce. They had no automobile, but kept a horse and a nice surrey carriage for their transportation.

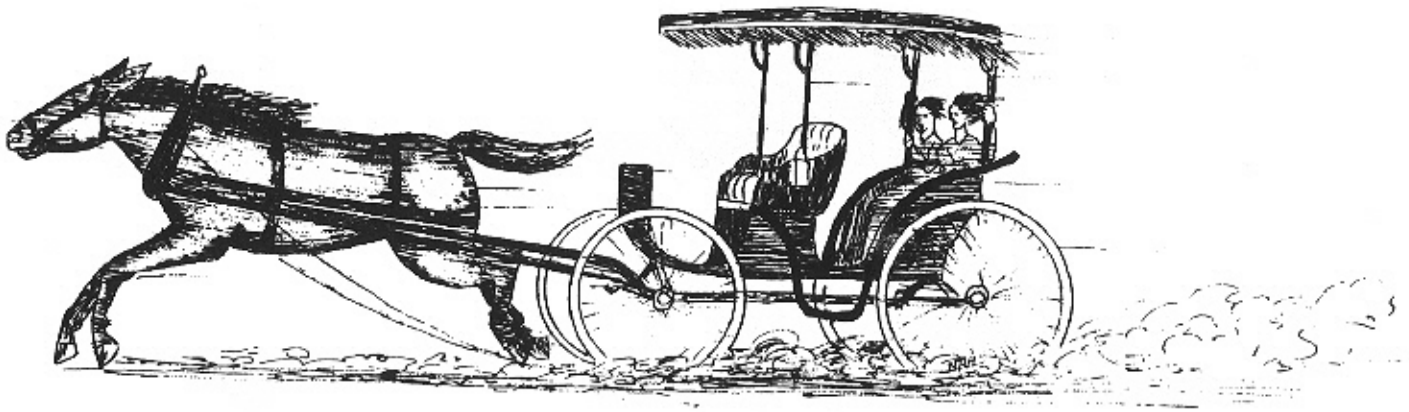
I got along very well with their son Reinhart, although he was about three years older than I. My brother, on the other hand, could not get along with him at all. The girls in the family were named Rebecca, LaRayne, Rachel, and another daughter whose name I can't recall.

On one occasion I was invited to stay with this family without my mother. It was my first time away from home. It was also the first time I got homesick. I suppose that I was about eight years old at the time of this episode, but I remember it as plainly as if it were last week.

One day Reinhart hitched the horse to the Surrey and took me, along with LaRayne, who was about my age, to a locality known as Poplar Grove, a semi-rural place about a mile and a half away. The road from the Brinkman house (Redwood Road) led northward on flat ground, then rose over the grade of the Union Pacific Railroad and again descended to the level of the surrounding ground. About a block north of the tracks, Reinhart turned right onto Indiana Avenue and drove to a store where he bought some household goods for his parents. LaRayne and I stayed in the back seat of the carriage. The horse's reins were tied to a hitching post, but reading the body language of the animal, we realized that he was anxious to get a drink from the watering trough nearby.

When Reinhart emerged from the store, he returned to the carriage and placed the things he had purchased under the front seat. He then untied the reins from the hitching post, ignoring the obvious wish of the horse to get to the water. The horse seemed very insistent and Reinhart was just as stubborn in denying his wish. It was a contest between man and beast. Just as Reinhart moved to mount the seat, the horse suddenly bolted, taking the carriage and two hapless children on a wild erratic course and leaving Reinhart standing in bewilderment in the road. The last I saw of him from the jolting, swaying carriage was a panic-stricken figure running after us as fast as he could go.

By then the horse was running full gallop, fortunately back in the direction of home. The sharp turn from Indiana Avenue into Redwood Road nearly upset the carriage, throwing up a cloud of dust that enveloped us so that we could hardly see. The scene was one of wild confusion. The loose reins had fallen between the wheels and were trailing uselessly along the ground. LaRayne and I were sitting on the back seat, crying in terror and holding on to the roof supports until our hands ached. We were helpless and very badly frightened.



The sight of the horse in front of us galloping away -- with his mane flying wildly in the wind -- was a nightmare to us. As the carriage jolted crazily over the railroad tracks, I thought the wheels would be smashed to pieces. But they survived and the horse raced on, ears back and the bit in his teeth. The carriage was lurching from side to side, and we expected momentarily to be thrown into the rough gravel along the road's edge. But the Lord was with us, for as we approached the house, LaRayne's sister Rebecca caught sight of the runaway and ran to the road to intercept us. She stood in the middle of the road, waving her arms to direct the horse into the yard. She held her ground, and the horse slowed to a trot. He was probably getting tired anyway. Turning into the yard, he didn't stop until he reached the flowing well near the house. At last he took his long-delayed drink. We jumped from the carriage, glad to be on the ground again. We were no worse for the experience except for the harrowing mental torture we had just passed through.

Not long afterward, a badly-shaken and exhausted Reinhart stumbled into the yard and nearly collapsed. His concern for us was evident in the relief he showed at our being safe and unhurt.

THE PEDDLER

During my growing-up years the peddler was a visible part of the American scene. He was the itinerant green-grocer of his day. I have a vivid memory of the fruit and vegetable peddler with his horse-drawn wagon who came to the salt works about twice a month. From the time he arrived at one end of the village until he left at the other end, we kids would follow him and watch and listen as he made sales to the various mothers who bought his wares.

He had a great variety of vegetables: potatoes, carrots, onions, celery, lettuce, and a host of others, including peanuts which he kept in a hard-to-get-at place in the wagon to prevent temptation. In season he would have apples, pears, peaches and plums. I loved the smell of them all, especially the apples.

The smell of the vegetable and fruit-laden wagon was hard to describe. The overall effect was a delicious mixture that I still recognize now and then when I go through that section of the super-market. All I have to do is close my eyes, and I am there once more: watching the peddler make his rounds through the salt works.

The peddler was a small swarthy man who spoke with a Greek accent. However, he seemed to have little difficulty in communicating with his customers. Foreign accents to us were no novelty, because many of the villagers were immigrants themselves. My mother, for example, had great difficulty with the English language. The peddler's name was Jocko -- or at least that is what everyone called him. Jocko was a household word through-out our community.

Jocko began his peddling in Magna and traveled through Garfield to the salt works. For a horse and wagon, that was quite a distance, perhaps six miles each way. But the pace was much slower than it is today, and he did not have to buy gas or oil.

Jocko came to the salt works for many years. Eventually, however, the automobile spelled the doom for peddlers like him. Some peddlers with small automobile trucks came and went, but the age of the peddler had passed. People with autos could now go to town, away from their little communities, and buy their goods there.

Jocko the peddler still remains a vivid memory. It is not difficult for me to recall this little Greek immigrant with a drooping cap and worn coat, waiting on the women of our community.

THE ICE MAN

The ice man and the coal man were seasonal visitors to our community. I suppose that we were among the last of the families to acquire an ice box. It must have been sometime in the middle or late twenties. My parents bought it in Salt Lake City and had it shipped out to the salt works.

I remember how modern we felt when the ice box arrived and was set up in the kitchen. It was not a large one, but to me it was beautiful. Made of oak, it was finished in a golden stain covered with a gleaming varnish. The top part of the box held a fifty-pound block of ice that sometimes lasted a week before it was completely melted. I was given the responsibility of keeping the drain pan from overflowing. However, sometimes I was a little late, and the floor got soaked.

At certain intervals the ice man came around in an old truck to keep the ice boxes of the village filled. Using an ice pick, he chipped the huge blocks of ice in his truck into smaller blocks of 100, 50, and 25 pounds. Then with ice tongs he would sling the block over his shoulders, carry it into the house, and drop it into the ice compartment with a thud. We kids scrambled for the small pieces of ice that were wasted in the chipping. They seemed to be delicious to the taste as we ran our tongues over their chilled surface (to give our tongues a sleigh ride). The ice cubes of today just can't match the delicious ice chips of yesteryear.

Today we give little thought to the old ice box when we open our modern refrigerator, except, of course, when we old-timers refer to it as the "ice box."

[Editor's note: The manuscript also includes a short list of similar traveling workers for whom N.R. Hacken apparently wanted to include reminiscences, including:

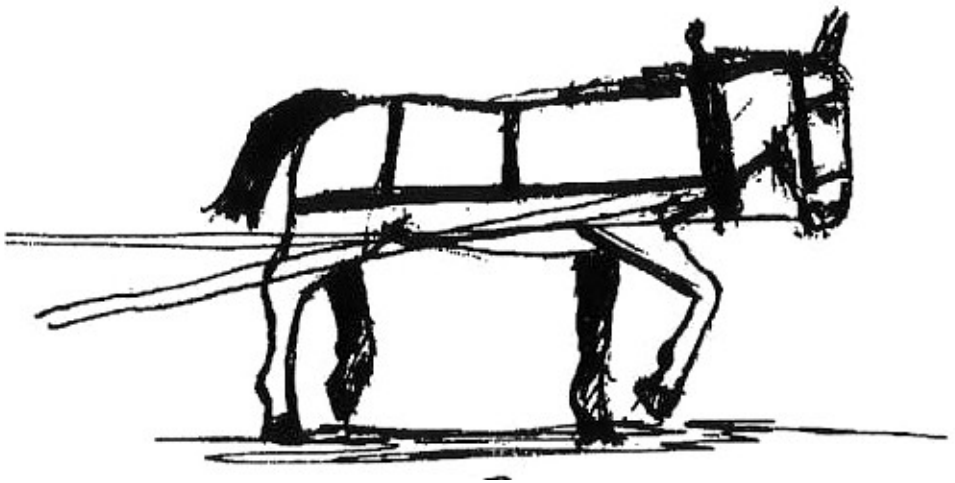
1. The gypsies
2. The sheep herders
3. The junk buyers.

Only for #3 is there a short, completed paragraph:]

THE JUNK BUYERS

About twice a year there would be junk buyers who came to buy old rags, scrap metal, bottles, and almost anything of value. We kids would collect old bottles along the lake shore and keep them in gunny sacks until the junk man made his appearance.

My mother would keep and collect old rags and sell them, too. As a result, there was a corner of the yard devoted to the storage of this junk until the rag man or junk man would make his visit.



I REMEMBER

THE GREAT SALT LAKE

GREAT SALT LAKE BEACHES

The freeway sign reads: "Great Salt Lake Beaches." The exit leads to the broad, flat shore where swimmers and sun worshippers can enjoy the balmy air and buoyant waters in the summer time. The area is barren of all growth, the salt having made everything sterile on the lakeward side of the freeway. The beach is almost as flat as the top of a table. This bleak vista is somewhat compensated for by the lake and the scenic panorama it presents.

It was not always this way. When I was a boy, the land behind the shore was marked with rolling sand hills that supported many shrubs and desert plants that seemed to thrive in the sand.

In the spring there were numerous wild flowers curiously adapted to this unusual microcosm where enough salt had leached from the sand to allow this springtime display. The hills, built by the wind from the sands washed from the lake over the centuries, were composed of what is known as "Oolite" sand particles which are spherical in shape. The hills varied in width from a hundred yards to a quarter of a mile or more. They seemed to form a buffer between the lake and the land beyond.

In the summer time, my playmates and I used to roam these sand hills. We would often pick the flowers and bring them home only to find that many of them didn't seem to respond when placed in water. Our yearly ritual after school closed for the summer was for us boys to have all our hair cut off and to go barefoot until school started again.

It was an agreeable experience when our feet were tender at the outset, to walk through the sand that felt so soft after trudging on hard, rough ground that made us wince at every step. Sometimes the sand was hot and uncomfortable to walk on, but one had only to push his feet down an inch or two to feel the delicious coolness of the damp sand that lay beneath the surface.

Lake
Sky
and
Sand

Today there is no place around the perimeter of the lake where the ecological impact was felt more than the four miles of beach and adjacent land between Black Rock and the old Saltair amusement park. Most of this was due to the activities of the Garfield smelter of the American Smelting and Refining Company (now Kennecott Copper Corp.) The sand hills and shoreline were literally torn up and removed to provide a limestone flux for the copper smelting process (the Oolite sand is a calcium carbonate). For many decades a clamshell steam shovel could be seen loading steel gondolas that were hauled to the smelter. This relentless process left ugly scars on the land in the form of sinkholes and uneven excavation of the surrounding ground.

Millions of tons of material were removed in this way, never to be returned. Then the highway and freeway construction totally altered the land. True, the land was leveled and the roadways constructed, leaving the area as you see it today. But what you see today is completely different from that sight that greeted us many years ago. There is not a single natural feature of the shoreline in this stretch of the beach which has not been removed, changed, or altered. Even the old Saltair amusement park has vanished without a trace.

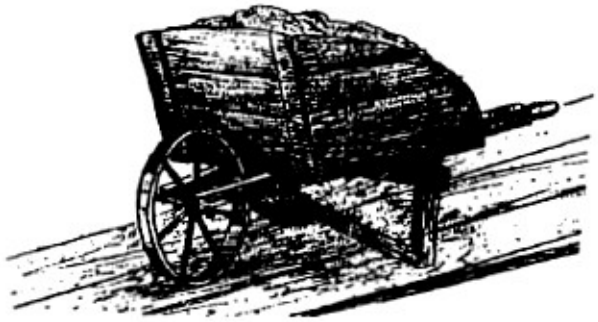
In these days of ecological consciousness, I can close my eyes and see those great sand hills overlooking the inland sea. I can once more look down and see the line where beach and hills met, where sage and greasewood hundreds of years in the making yielded to the harsher alkaline beach. What a great natural asset has disappeared up the smokestacks of the smelter!

"...all our pleasant things are laid waste."

Isaiah 64:11

SALT FROM THE LAKE

In the beginning .....



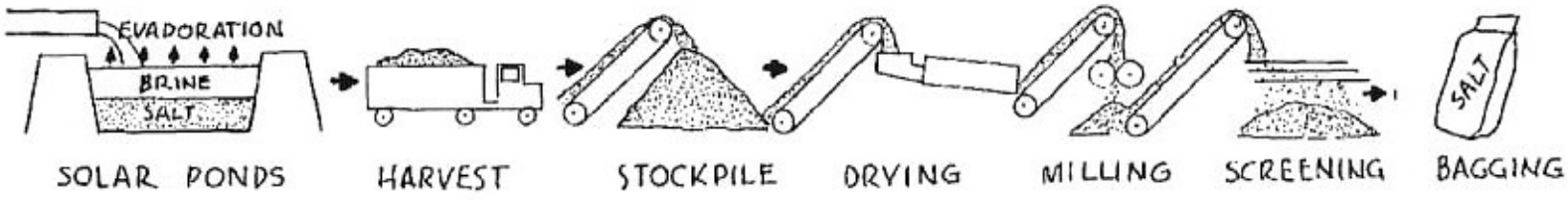
..... there was the wheelbarrow

... and the scoop shovel

....and backbreaking labor

In the winter of 1857-58, Brigham Young sent a quantity of salt to the commander of the United States Army Detachment at Fort Bridger. The military force under his command had been sent out to put down the mythical Mormon Rebellion. In spite of their need, the commander refused the offer, saying that he would not accept gifts from the enemy.

On the basis of that incident, one may conclude that the settlers had already begun the manufacture of salt, most likely from the waters of the Great Salt Lake. Some of the earliest attempts had been made by boiling the salt water. But these attempts were soon superseded. With a salt content of about 20%, it was possible to extract salt from the water by solar evaporation, a process that is still used today.

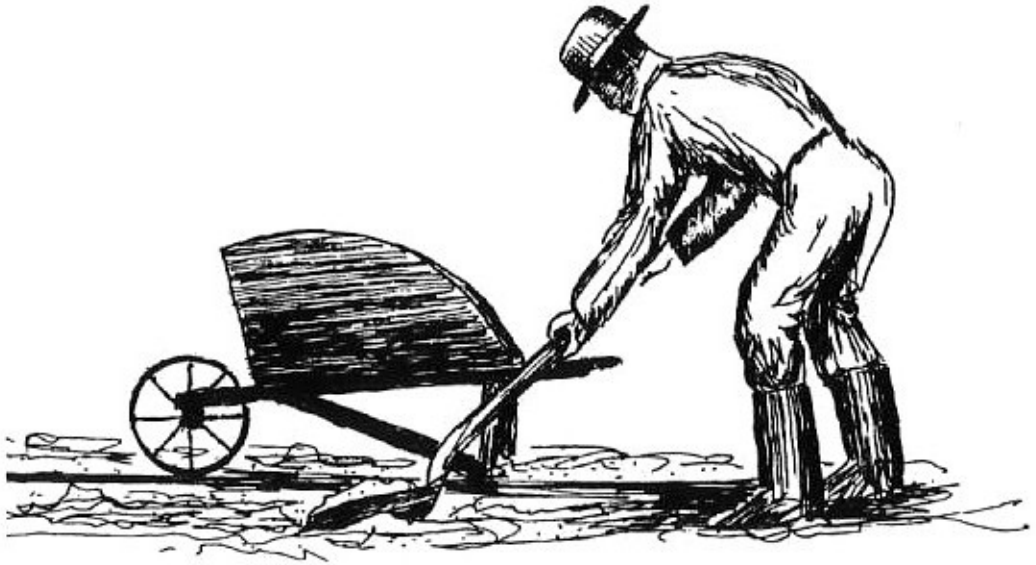


SALT MAKING PROCESS

The lake yielded up her salt. My family knew the savor of salt.

I was raised on salt, so to speak, because my father earned his living by working in a salt factory. The salt company, located near the eastern shore of the lake, was first known as the Inland Crystal Salt Company, then it was renamed the Royal Crystal Salt Company, and finally it was acquired by the Morton Salt Company.

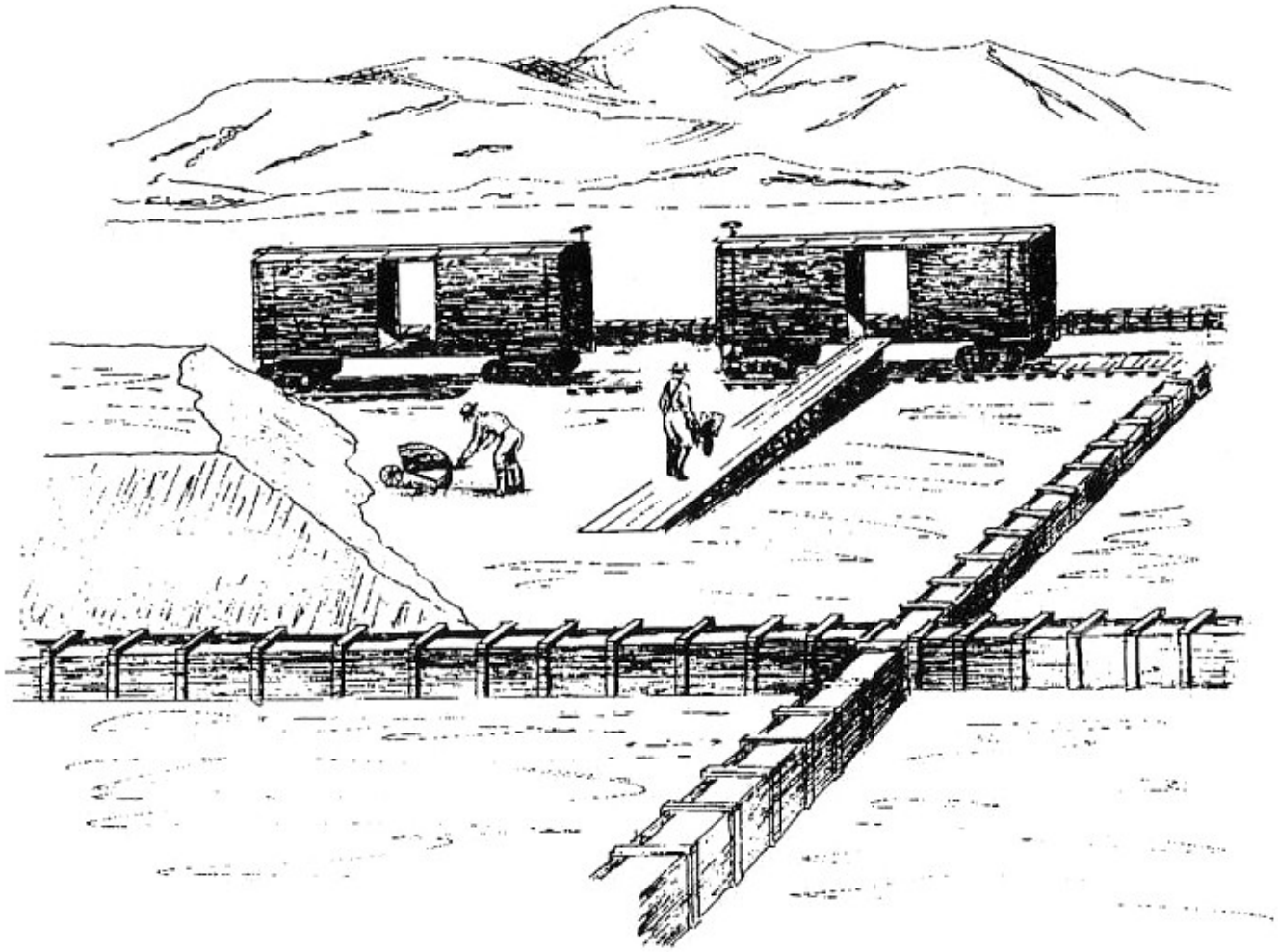
I remember in the 1930's that the plant could process about 150 tons of salt in an 8 hour day. This amount has no doubt increased considerably since that time.



I remember as a boy that the salt "harvest" took place in the late summer. The water pumped from the lake was directed into vast shallow ponds (of many square miles) confined by dikes of wood and mud. The water was then allowed to evaporate into a brine or saturated solution for about 90 days. When the salt crystals had formed to a depth of 8 or so inches, the flow of water was shut off and the ponds were allowed to drain.

Then the harvest began. The ponds were plowed up like a field in preparation for planting. I clearly remember horses pulling plows to break up the hard crystallized salt deposit. Dozens of men then moved in with wheelbarrows and shovels to gather the salt and deposit it in storage piles beside the railroad tracks. They laid planks on the wet salt for a track for their wheelbarrows. Then they built ramps up which they pushed the heavy wheelbarrows to dump the salt in the storage piles which were often as much as ten feet in height. I remember how I marvelled at the heavy manual labor it took to move the salt into the piles.

. . . . To move the salt from the stockpile to the box cars, again the wheelbarrow, the ramp, and muscle power were used

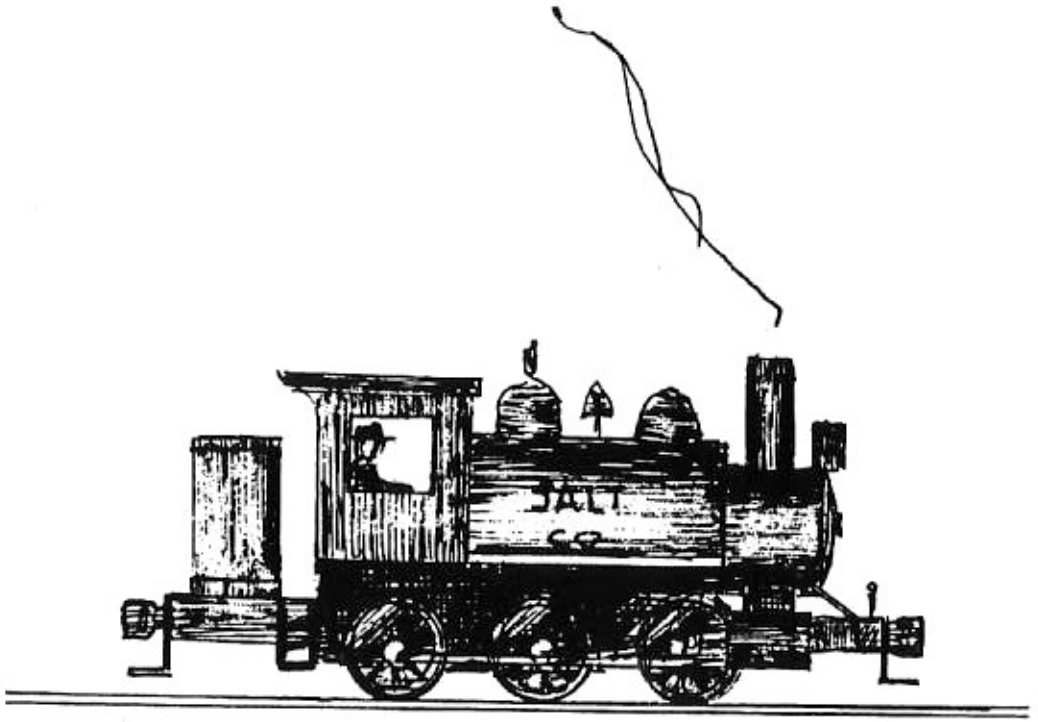


You may never have seen a person with goiter, or, for that matter, know what a goiter is. This enlargement of the thyroid gland in the front of the lower neck has been practically eliminated from our society. But I can remember a time when it was not unusual to see people with that condition, some with terribly enlarged glands. It seemed to me most of these people were in their middle years and often tried to hide their condition by wearing high collars or a form of scarf.

I was about ten years old when someone discovered that a small amount of iodine in the diet could largely prevent goiter from developing. This came about from observations and studies of people in various parts of the country where it was found that those living in areas where there was iodine in the drinking water or where fish were consumed in considerable quantities were relatively free from goiter.

About this time, I remember a man who came to our village where the salt factory was located. This man had the innovative idea that he could mix small quantities of an iodine compound with table salt and thereby provide the necessary iodine to the diet to prevent goiter and other ills. He rented one of the vacant houses and set up what he called the "Iodi-Salt Company." I often went into the building and saw the simple operation that he had set up. Today we would call it a "mom and pop" operation. The equipment consisted of a sizeable mixing machine similar to a plaster mixer--only larger--and some equipment for packaging his brand of salt. The process was simply mixing a small quantity of potassium iodide in powder form with the table salt purchased from our salt company. The treated salt was then packaged and marketed.

I don't remember what happened to the "Iodi-Salt Company," for it was no longer in operation after a disastrous fire destroyed the salt mill in 1927. When the salt mill was rebuilt a few years later, the Royal Crystal Salt Company began making and selling iodized salt. Other salt companies did the same. I like to think that the manufacture of iodized salt started at the Royal Crystal factory at Saltair and that I can recall some of the circumstances of its origin.

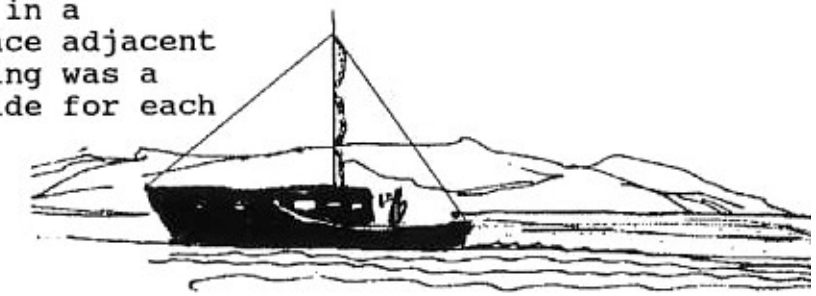


BOATING ON THE LAKE

Living so close to the lake, I found it a source of endless fascination. I spent many hours as a child beachcombing its shores. The beach and shore were lined with driftwood of all kinds--logs,planks, tree limbs, parts of wrecked boats, rags and bottles. The bottles were highly prized because we could sell them to the junk man who came around periodically to buy all kinds of stuff like that. There were other things, too, that were valuable to us. The old nails, screws and bolts of copper or brass--once removed from the wreckage of the old boats--could also be sold. Some of the wood was perfectly good to be used in repairing and building chicken coops and other outbuildings. My father used to gather wood that he would stack in the yard to saw and split for firewood. Most of the firewood we used during the winter was driftwood from the shore of the lake. I often wondered why my father was so obsessed with the collection of wood and the need for cutting and splitting when it was far beyond the need we had.

The answer did not come to me until years later after I had visited Switzerland and the ancestral home in the highlands of Bern. Here I found the ages-old ritual of woodcutting, splitting and storing as the essential spring and summer activity in preparing for the coming winter. The neatly stacked wood in a protected place adjacent to the dwelling was a source of pride for each homeowner.

In later years, I built various watercraft to explore the lake. First there was a rowboat in which I took great pride, but which was stolen from me on two different occasions and recovered. The third time it was lost forever. I then built a canoe that was used more on fresh water than on the lake. The craft was light and could be carried on the top of the car. I could take it almost everywhere. My last effort was a sizeable sailboat that served me well and earned me the nickname of "Cap."



There was a time in the early 1930's when a friend and I decided to take a trip to Antelope Island. With a borrowed boat and rented motor, we took off from the pier at Saltair and headed for the island. It was a thoroughly delightful cruise. We reached the island in a short time and continued up along its west side, coming in to shore several times.

"Cap"

Near the north end of the island the motor gave out on us, and we could not get it re-started. We finally had to beach the boat, stash the motor, and resolve our predicament. We were faced with two problems: how to get home, and how to get the boat and motor back. The first problem was the most urgent. We decided to pass over the spine of Antelope Island, which at this location not very high and did not require much climbing. Descending the eastern slope, a vast panorama was laid out in front of us.

We could see the entire Wasatch Front extending from Ogden on the north to Salt Lake City on the south. A flat stretch of sand--which had been covered by water a few years before--separated the island from the former shoreline. It was now possible to walk from the island to the eastern shore of the Salt Lake.

This is what we decided to do... to walk home.

A ranch house lay about three miles south of us. We made our way to the ranch and found several workers there who were very friendly to us. They took us in a truck down a road on the east side of the island to the southern end, where we parted company with them. We then began the long walk home.

I would guess the walk was more than ten miles. It was way after midnight when we got home. A week or so later, I hired a man from the boat harbor to retrieve the boat and motor.

Portraits left by N.R. Hacken,
many assumed to be self-portraits...

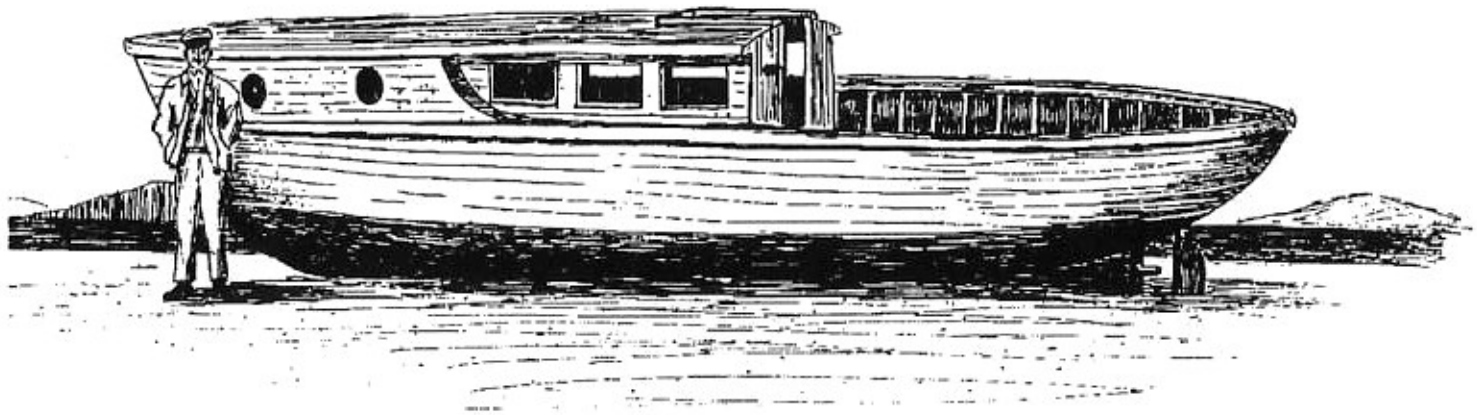
THE WORKBOAT "RUTH"

Like a beached whale, the old workboat "Ruth" lies stranded and helpless on the gray sands off the south shore of Antelope Island. Where once she floated in water eight or more feet in depth, she was left here high and dry following the receding waters of the late 1930's and early 1940's.

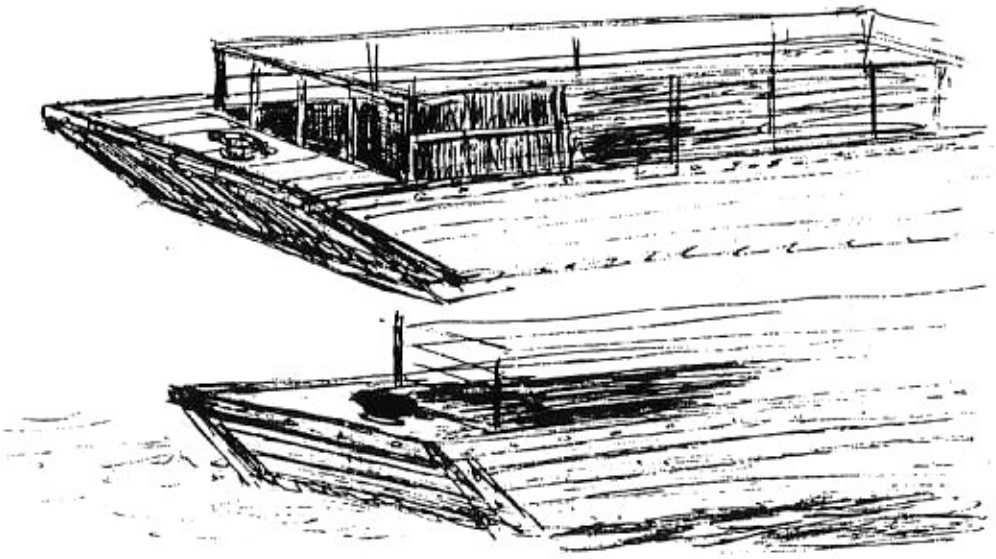
The low water level persisted until the 1960's, then it rose slowly, accelerating in the 80's to reach the highest point in the lake's history.

The rise was too late for the "Ruth," for she disintegrated in the sun and heat of the low water years, leaving her bleached bones scattered about.

A converted pleasure boat, her main task for many years was to tow large live-stock barges back and forth between Antelope Island and Saltair, where a holding corral was built adjacent to the tracks of the railroad. The barges seemed to be quite large, and I would guess that each one could haul 25 head of cattle and about twice that number of sheep.



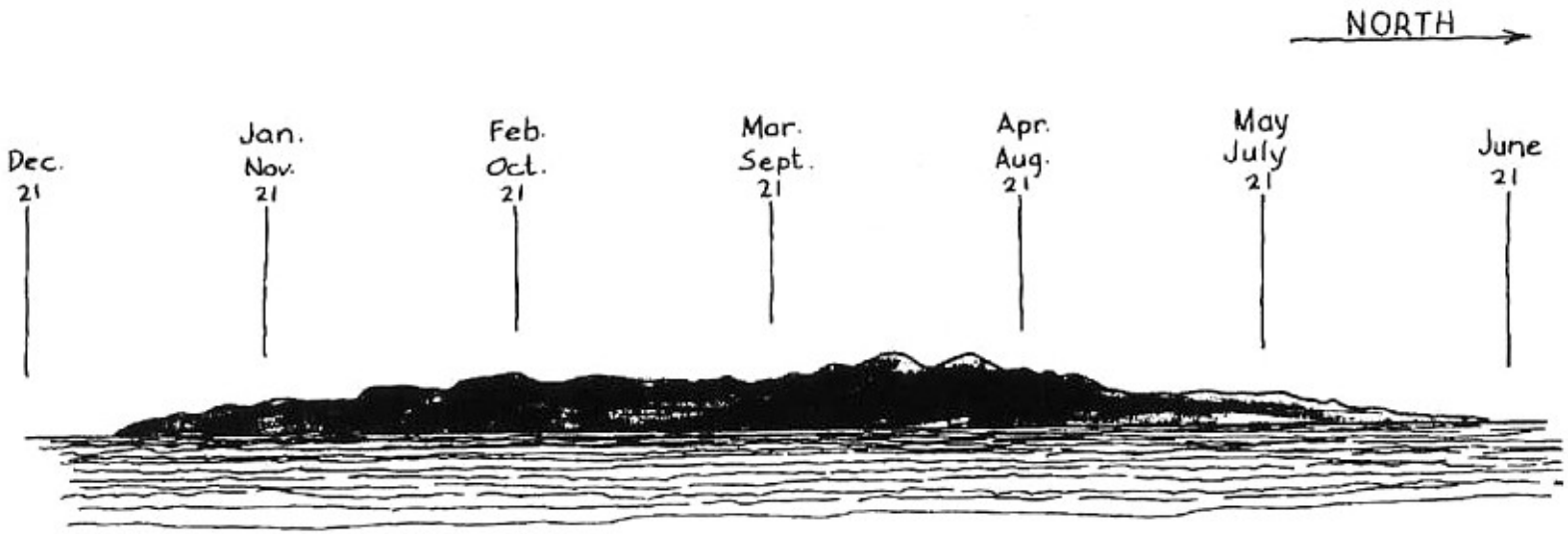
Ever since the early settlement days, Antelope Island was used for livestock. Originally the tithing herds of the Mormon Church were kept here--until the land came under private ownership.



Buffalo were introduced and seemed to thrive there: I still remember once a year when a buffalo hunt was conducted, and the meat was brought to the resort at Saltair for a big buffalo feed. I was surprised how good the meat was. In my young mind, it was every bit as good as beef. I haven't tasted buffalo since then, so I have no way of knowing whether my taste buds have changed in the intervening years.

I remember that in certain years the "Ruth" would bring in barges loaded down with huge sacks of wool... I'd never seen such big sacks. They seemed to be eight or more feet in length and as big around as two men could reach. They were really awkward to handle, for it took several men to move them into the freight cars.

THE ISLAND CALENDAR



Looking westward from certain places in the northern part of Salt Lake Valley, on a clear day you can see forever. The Great Salt Lake provides a break in the mountain-rimmed valley that makes it possible to see glimpses of the flat horizon between the islands where lake and sky meet. A prominent feature on this horizon is an island that extends from the south end of the lake about 15 miles northward. It is really an isolated extension of the Stansbury Mountains and is called Stansbury Island.

It is uninhabited, dry and desolate but it projects its silhouette to thousands of Salt Lakers every day. In the morning sun its flat gray appearance reflects its barren character. Toward late afternoon, however, its appearance changes gradually to provide more warmth of color until it stands out in bold dark contrast against an often brilliant and spectacular sunset.

I was quite young when I learned that the outline of this island could be used as a calendar of the seasons as they came and went. By observing where the sun would set behind the island, we could determine the time of year. Although we had a calendar, we casually used island time as an approximate back up. We could be particularly aware of the winter and summer solstices when the sun had reached its ultimate point of travel, north or south, then seemed to hesitate and reverse its direction. With the extreme points fixed, the equinoxes and months of the year could be fairly well determined.

I remember my mother saying in her native German after noting the winter solstice, "Jetzt kommt die Sonne wieder zurück." (Now the sun is coming back again).

The points shown on the illustration (on the previous page) are approximate and would change with the distance of the observer from the island. The illustration is for locations near the east shore of the lake. From Salt Lake City, the points of solstice would be considerably farther north and south of the island because the island's size is reduced due to distance and perspective.

RUDOLPH VALENTINO
AT THE SALTAIR RESORT

In the 1920's there was no one in the world of moving pictures that could match Rudolph Valentino for popularity as a romantic actor. At the peak of his career, in about 1924 or 1925, he made an appearance at Saltair Resort that the people of Utah remembered for many years afterward. I was a young boy of about twelve and observed this occurrence while peddling popcorn and peanuts from a basket.

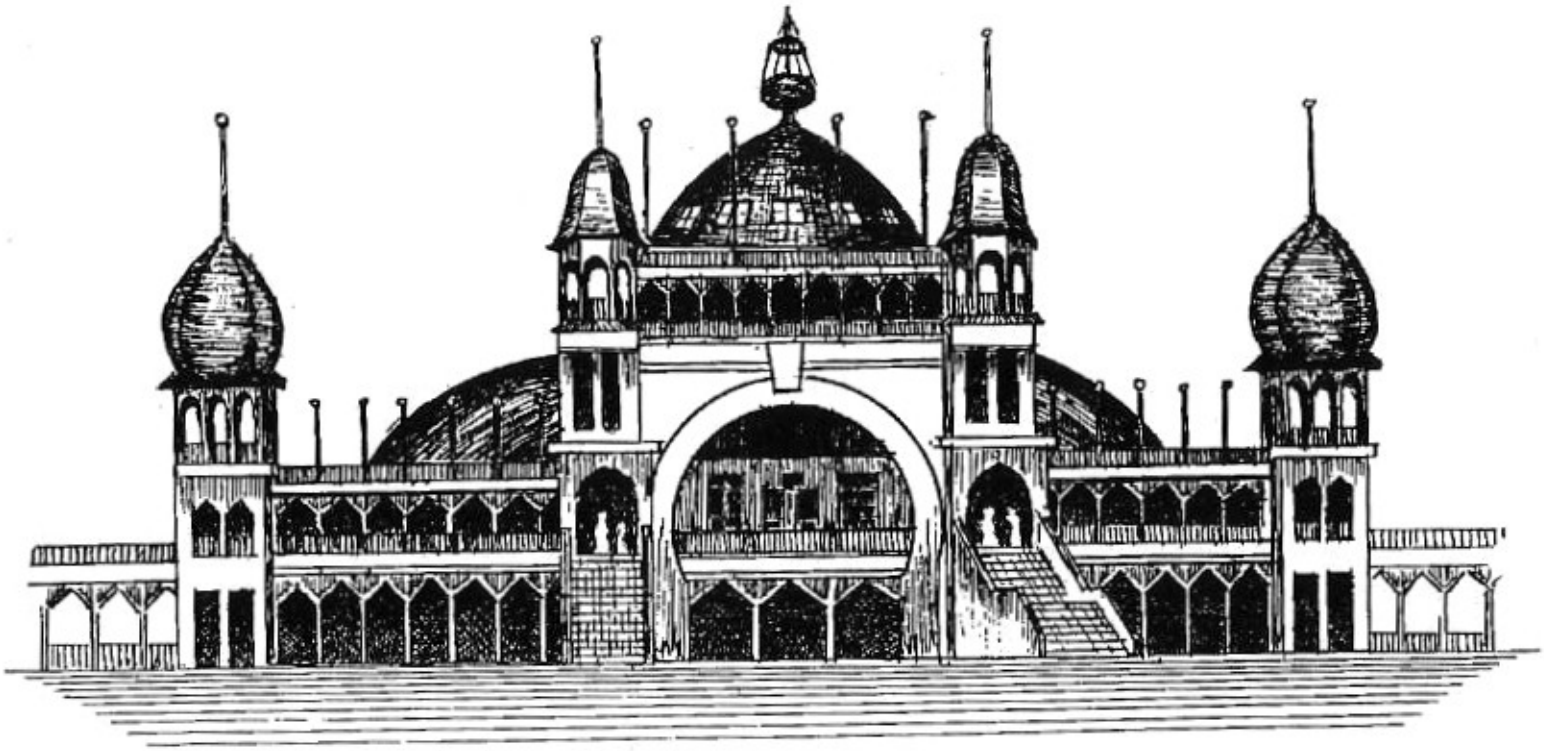
The trains which carried passengers to the resort were crowded to overflowing. Extra cars were added for the occasion. Automobiles kept the dusty roads choked with traffic in two directions--from Salt Lake and from Garfield. Early in the evening, automobiles were parking at the salt works, and crowds of people were walking and running over a mile to get a glimpse of Valentino. Cars were being parked in the sagebrush, any place where space could be found. Then a shuttle car was sent out from Salt Lake to carry people from the remote parking places around the salt works to the Saltair Resort. No one had ever seen anything like this before.

The great dance floor at Saltair was one of the largest in the west. It fairly rocked with excitement as the thousands congregated there. The floor and the excited crowd seemed to suit Valentino admirably. He danced with his beautiful wife in various exhibitions which brought thunderous applause from his admirers. My view of Valentino from a distance was enough to excite my young imagination into becoming one of his admirers.

At about midnight the Valentinos departed. Then the real chaos began. The trains which carried the people to the resort now were saddled with the task of transporting them back to Salt Lake City. Several extra trains were needed. Then came the exodus of the cars--a continual stream heading east for Salt Lake or south toward Garfield.
It must have been 3 a.m. before all the cars were finally gone.

In Xanadu* did Kublai Khan a
stately pleasure dome decree..... Pope

* Pronounced "Saltair"



In the aftermath, huge amounts of garbage were left behind, and it took the disposal crews until the middle of the next day to clean things up. The garbage dump was near the salt works, and I remember the piles of debris being burned. Among them were thousands of programs with Valentino's picture on them. I often think what good collectors' items these would be today.

I REMEMBER

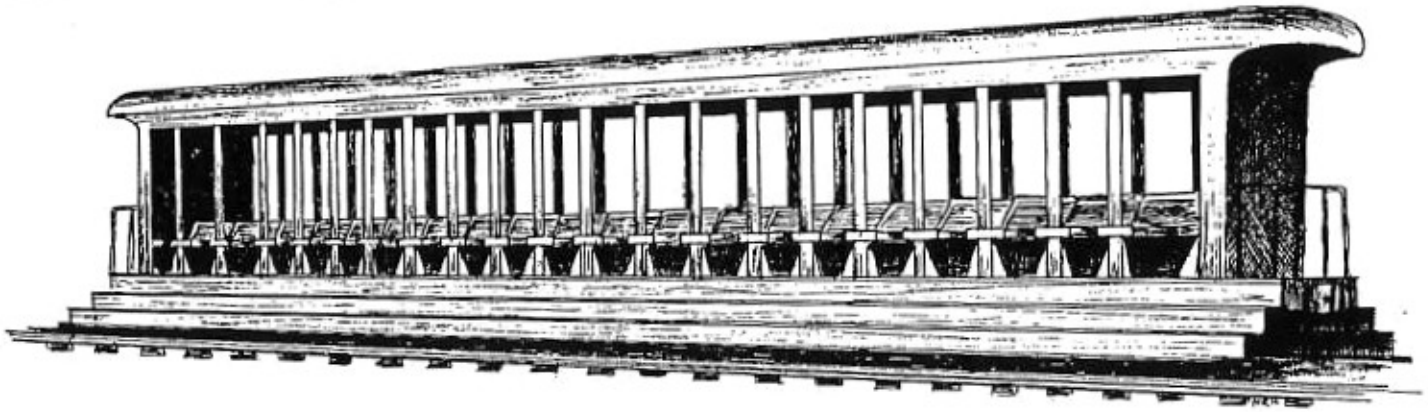
TRAVELING BY RAIL

THE S.L.G.& W.

We had no automobile when I was a small boy. The only transportation to Salt Lake City was a small railroad which played an important part in my life. The Salt Lake Garfield and Western Railway was our vital link to the outside world. Salt Lake City was located about 13 miles to the east of the salt works where I lived.

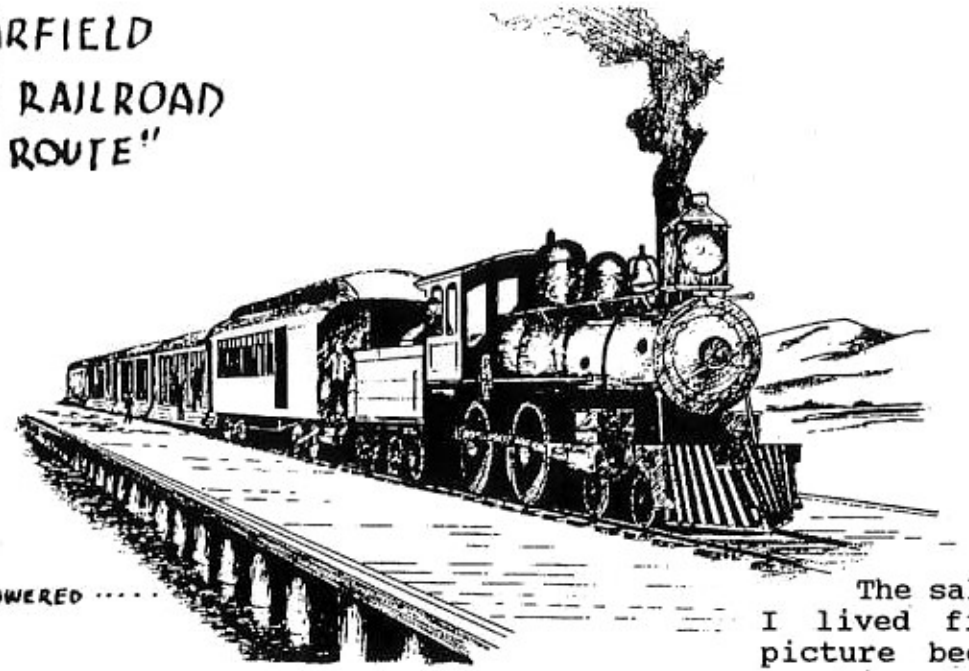
This unique line had a roadbed no longer than 25 miles, but as far as I was concerned, it was the best and biggest railroad in the whole world. The big shiny locomotives were an inspiration to me, and I admired them very much. I suppose that's why I was determined to become a locomotive engineer.

The depot in Salt Lake City was a small ten foot by ten foot ticket office with a wide roof overhang under which were placed a few benches. There was no waiting room. Adjacent and parallel to the tracks at the depot was a refreshment stand which operated only in the summer time.



THE UNIQUE OPEN AIR CAR ON THE SALTAIR ROUTE

SALT LAKE GARFIELD & WESTERN RAILROAD "THE SALTAIR ROUTE"



INITIALLY IT WAS STEAM POWERED .....

There were no platforms or shelters. A tall wooden fence separated the tracks from those of the Union Pacific Railroad switching yards at 2nd South and 4th West. The barns, shops and operating headquarters of the railroad were just east of the Jordan River at South Temple Street.

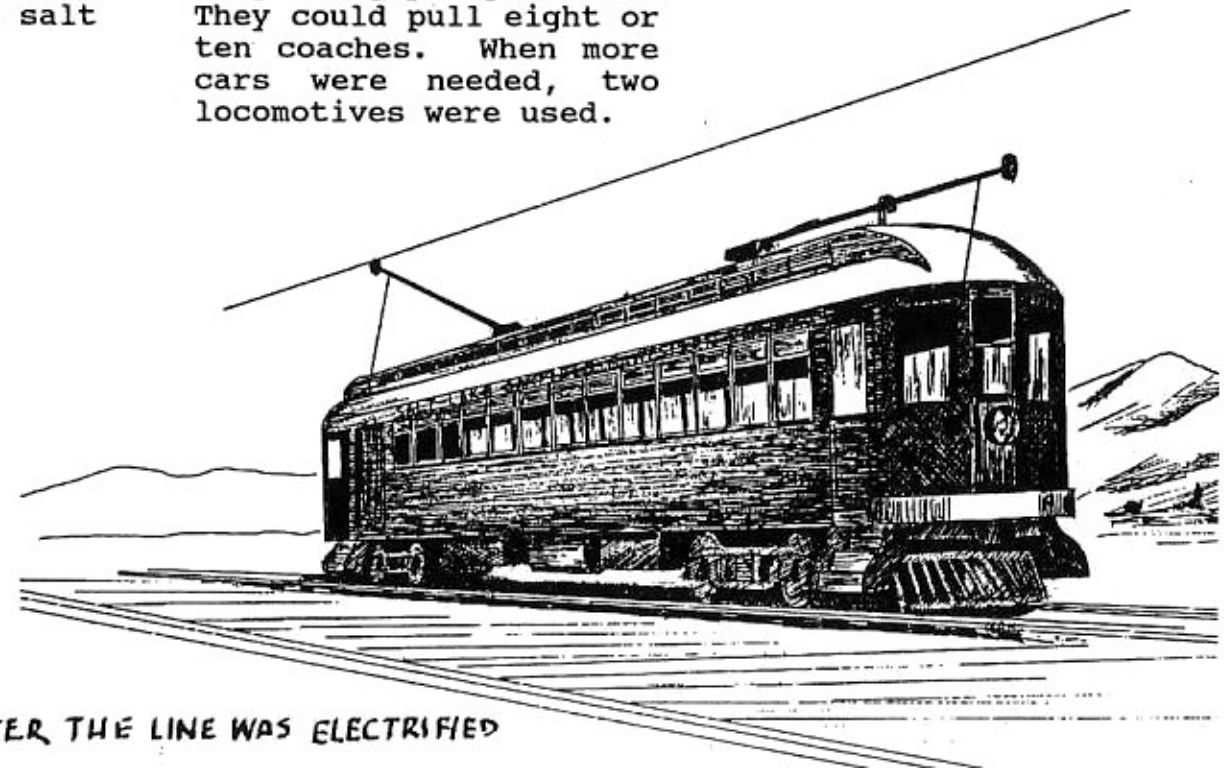
The main (and only) line extended westward from Salt Lake City to the Saltair Resort at Great Salt Lake. The resort accounted for practically all of its traffic during the summer months. Trains ran to the resort every half hour.

The salt works where I lived fits into the picture because of its location on the southeastern shore of the lake. It was just a little over a mile from the resort. The railroad carried freight to and from the salt mill daily. Empty cars were brought to the mill from Salt Lake and the loaded cars were transported in the opposite direction. Thus, the railroad was in operation the year round.

Sometime in the middle 20's the steam locomotives were taken out of service and the line was electrified. Two electrical sub-stations were built, one near the salt works and the other near the airport in Salt Lake. One of them still stands like an empty shell near the old site of the salt works.

The electric locomotives were of the interurban type, with passenger and baggage compartments. There were six of these in service. They could pull various coaches, including the unique open-air coaches that were used during the summer months. They were surprisingly powerful. They could pull eight or ten coaches. When more cars were needed, two locomotives were used.

In the late 1920's and early 1930's I rode this train to school in Salt Lake where I attended West Junior High School and West High School.



..... LATER THE LINE WAS ELECTRIFIED