

Midvale History Museum: Not just another building

By **Natalie Clemens**

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MIDVALE — From a plethora of aged pharmaceutical supplies to a brown floral wreath crafted entirely of human hair, Midvale's history is frozen in time in a one-room building on Main Street.

The building is only three years old, but the stories it contains are timeless.

Artifacts, pictures and tales from the Goffs, the Whitmores, the Matthews and other early Midvale families sit protected in wooden cases in the Midvale History Museum. And according to Boyd Twigg, the items housed in the museum are essential tools in saving Midvale's memories.

"You know if we don't preserve this stuff nobody knows anything about it," said Twigg, Midvale Historical Society president and former Midvale mayor.

Stories of early residents like Peter Malstrom fill the museum. In 1903, Malstrom donated his land to the East Jordan Ecclesiastical Ward for a cemetery. Two weeks later he was killed while working as a conductor for the railroad. He was the first person buried in the land that he donated, which is now known as the Midvale Cemetery.

Displays like the one filled with articles and pictures of Don Lind, a local astronaut who traveled into space in 1985, also sit untouched in the museum. As well as memorabilia like baseball shoes from early Midvale athlete Frank Kammiker, which rest in a donated wooden case.

The museum also contains a small furniture display that shows what the interior of a Midvale home in the late 1800s or early 1900s would have looked like. It includes a big oval-shaped metal basin that served as a bath tub for early settlers, an old washer and dryer, and pots and pans that once served as toilets.

"People don't have any idea what it used to be like for pioneers in the 20- or 30-degree weather to go to outside to go to the bathroom," Twigg said.

Many of the museum's antique artifacts come from local residents.



August Miller, Deseret Morning News

A floral wreath crafted entirely of human hair is one of the many items on display at the Midvale History Museum. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m.



August Miller, Deseret Morning News

The museum contains a furniture display that shows what the interior of a Midvale home in the late 1800s or early 1900s might have looked like.

Like a piece of an old cabin that was donated from a Midvale couple. A few years ago the couple bought a home on Wasatch Street, and when they went to tear it down, they found an old cabin nestled inside the house.

"You would have never guessed that cabin was in there," Twigg said.

The walls of the home were built carefully around the small cabin. The museum has pictures and a slab of wood, which has an 1875 newspaper lining, from the small cabin. The cabin was disassembled and sold to a man from Manti for \$14.75.

Museum volunteer Bill Miller of Sandy has donated a few items to the museum, including a portable Victrola that he bought when he was 16. He said he enjoys the interesting artifacts while volunteering at the museum.

"I don't work here. It's not work, it's fun," Miller said.

The museum has acid-free boxes full of an almost complete collection of the Midvale Sentinel, the city's newspaper that began in the 1920s and ended in 1987. There are also old local yearbooks and photographs of early Midvale residents.

"We get a lot of folks that come in and love to spend time looking at them," Twigg said.

Old citation books from the police department are also available at the museum for public inspection.

"It makes it kind of fun, especially if great grandfather was speeding — doing 20 in a 10," Miller said of sifting through the citations. "I think the fastest I saw was (someone going) 45 in a 25."

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When school groups come to the museum they are sent on a scavenger hunt to locate various artifacts at the museum. Miller said younger generations are more interested than older generations in the historical memorabilia.

"The kids just are enthralled with it," he added.

The museum moved from the old Midvale City Hall to its current location, 7697 S. Main., in June 2002. Midvale city owns the property and pays the bills, but volunteers from the Midvale Historical Society staff the museum.

Twiggs said people are losing interest in history, but the Midvale Historical Society has several plans to increase attendance. One idea is to form a South Valley Museum Association.

"That way we can work together as a group so we can learn from each other," Twiggs said.

The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from noon to 4 p.m.

Museum volunteers would like to see more Midvale residents take advantage of the museum's rich history.

Not only is the museum important in preserving the past, but Twiggs said residents can also learn about their early ancestors by visiting the museum.

"There's a lot of people who probably lived in Midvale a lot of years and have roots that they don't know about," Twiggs said.

This past summer, a woman called the museum and told Twiggs she had seen a picture of her mother in one of the museum's displays.

"She came down and we scanned the picture of her and she said, 'That's the only picture I have of my mother from that age,'" Twiggs said.

When people come to the museum they gain a glimpse into their past, Miller said.

"When they walk through that door they walk into a different world," he said. "But until they walk through that door, the museum is just a building."



August Miller, *Deseret Morning News*

"There's a lot of people who probably lived in Midvale a lot of years and have roots that they don't know about," said Boyd Twiggs, historical society president.

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