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Splendid Public Temples:
The Development of Libraries in Mesa County, Colorado 1892–1997

Donald A. MacKendrick*

"Next to the churches and school houses of America come the libraries as factors in the enlightenment of every grade of society," entoned Grand Junction newspaperman I.N. Bunting to a large crowd of citizens gathered to dedicate the opening of the city's first public library building in July, 1901.[1]

To Bunting the elegant, if diminutive, new library was a "splendid public temple," a gift of Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate turned philanthropist, and of the women of the community who long had labored in its behalf. Indeed, the new Carnegie Library seemed to symbolize the western Colorado city's cultural arrival. After almost two decades of struggling to survive, Grand Junction had grown from a rude pioneer hamlet of tents and rough lumber homes, saloons and merchandising houses in 1883 to a city of "real culture." Elegant churches now lined White Avenue; handsome brick schools graced the city's center, and stately Victorian mansions were springing up along North 7th Street. And now, a library![2]

Library services were slow coming to Mesa County. A pioneer in the effort was Margaret Ogilvie, a transplanted Bostonian, who in the 1890s took it upon herself to establish a library in every school in the Grand

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Valley, a considerable undertaking in a day when Mesa County was divided into thirty-six districts, most with only a one-room school. Ogilvie, with contacts in the eastern states, solicited books from friends and acquaintances who made periodic shipments to what they must have regarded as the culturally impoverished western Colorado frontier. How many schools actually got libraries as a result of the Bostonian's efforts is not known, but in June 1899 she opened number eleven in the Mount Lincoln School near the fruit-growing town of Palisade. The collection consisted of three hundred books and was named in honor of Frances E. Willard "who gave her entire life to the cause of temperance," another cause Ogilvie seems to have followed. By December 1899 she announced she had received one hundred books for a Palisade school library and more were expected to arrive from the east soon.[3]

Margaret Ogilvie also was involved in a movement among a group of Grand Junction women, the wives of prominent businessmen and professionals, to establish a public library in the city of Grand Junction. About 1892 Ogilvie invited a number of women to join her in the study of Spanish and American history that they might better appreciate the World Columbian Exposition scheduled to open soon in Chicago. This study group evolved into an organization known as the Isabella Club and, later, the Twentieth Century Club. In 1896 the Twentieth Century Club joined with another Grand Junction women's club, the Grand Mesa Club, to form a Library Association. The Library Association rented a one-room sod building on Main Street at the site of the present Avalon Theatre and began collecting books. Others were allowed to utilize the association's reading room by paying a two-dollar fee. Thus Grand Junction's first library was, in effect, a private subscription library.[4]

The subscription library was but a first step toward establishing a city library supported by tax funds. In 1899, pressed by the Library Association to act, the Grand Junction city council adopted Ordinance 82 "establishing a city library." With a city library established on paper, Mrs. B.F. (Amanda) Jay, the association's librarian, began corresponding with Andrew Carnegie to obtain a grant to build a city library. In January 1900, Carnegie agreed to a grant of five thousand dollars, if the city would agree to provide a building site and guarantee $1,200 per year for library operation. In February a delegation from the Library Association appeared before the city council to obtain the guarantees Carnegie demanded. The women apparently had done considerable lobbying, because the council drew up and passed unanimously a resolution authorizing "the mayor and

clerk to sign a guarantee to provide $1,200 annually for support of the library." It was a commitment of considerable magnitude since state law authorized the city to levy no more than one mill for library purposes and one mill at the time raised but six hundred dollars annually. Apparently the council was willing to dig into the general fund to support the library project.[5]

Early in 1901 the city authorized architect J.B. Boyer to request bids on the library which was to be constructed at the southeast corner of Seventh Street and Grand Avenue. A construction contract for $4,798 was awarded to J.E. Stull. Since the building would cost virtually all that Carnegie had granted there was little left for furniture, fixtures or books. To provide for the latter, Amanda Jay again petitioned Carnegie for funds and was able to obtain a second grant of three thousand dollars. The final cost of the building, furniture and fixtures was $7,200.[6]

The new Carnegie Library was tiny by modern standards: 31 x 43-feet with a 10 x 14-foot loggia. Yet it was an imposing edifice done in the Greek style with cathedral windows on the front and Corinthian columns supporting the loggia. Though book capacity was about five thousand volumes, the Library Association possessed only nine hundred volumes in its subscription library. This collection together with subscriptions to nine newspapers (including the San Francisco *Daily Chronicle*), eight magazines, and a "fine piano," was turned over to the new library.[7]

The new library was officially dedicated on July 25, 1901 with mayor J.M. Sampliner as master of ceremonies. The Citizen's band provided music; the Reverend Robert Sanderson invoked the divine blessing; and *Sentinel* publisher I.A. Bunting delivered the dedicatory address, the central theme being that "the women and not the men of the city were responsible for the building of the splendid public temple." He then called "upon the whole people to sustain and support the library for the benefit of the youth of this city."[8]

There was a problem in carrying out the newsman's plea: the new library's meager book collection contained practically no children's books! To remedy this deficiency the Grand Junction *News* launched a fund-raising campaign. Twenty-five cent donations were called for to build a fund of one hundred dollars, a fourth of which was quickly supplied by the local Masonic Lodge.[9]

Until the 1930s the Carnegie Library served the city of Grand Junction which nearly tripled its population in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Utilization of the library increased as the population grew. By

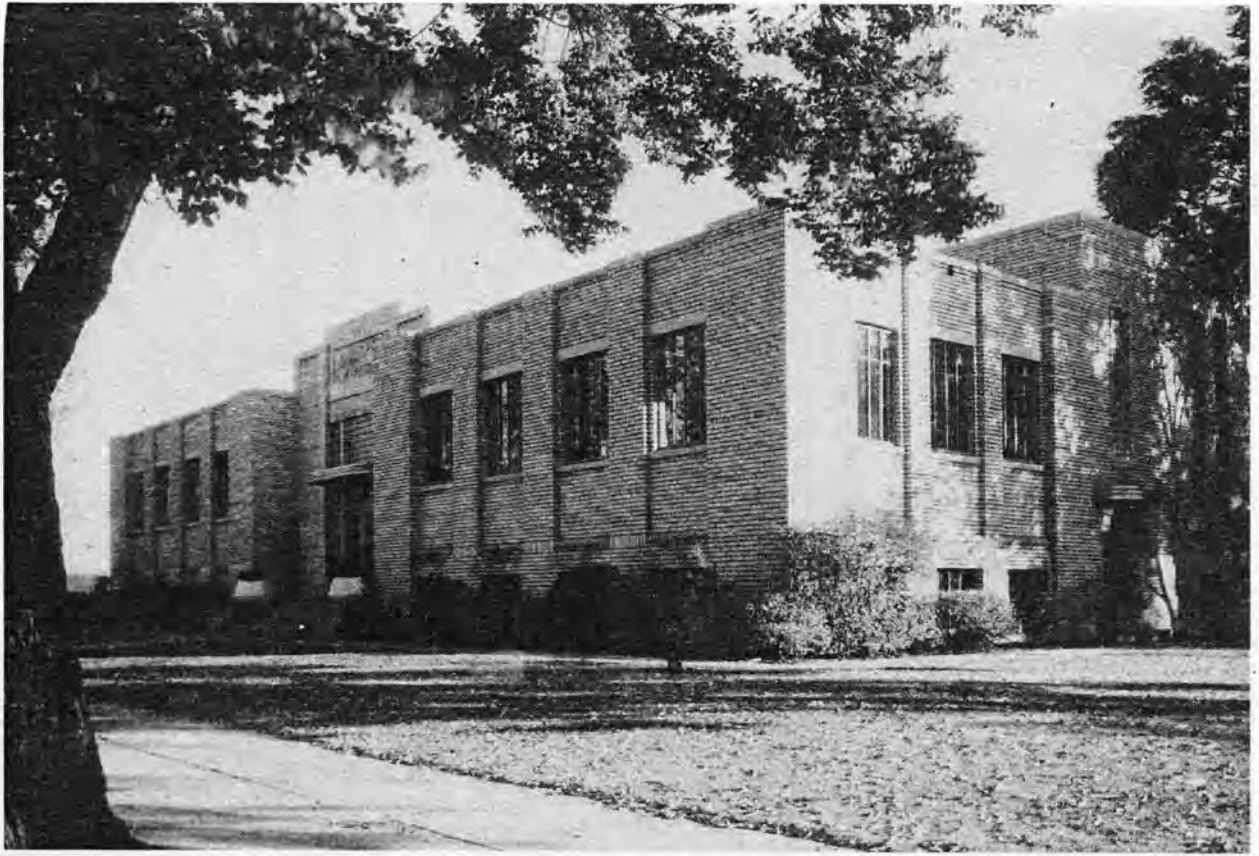
January 1916 the Carnegie's shelves were jammed with seven thousand books; it had loaned in excess of twenty-seven thousand books in 1915 and had served nearly forty-five thousand visitors. At the time the library was presided over by Camilla Wallace, a straight-laced spinster who took it upon herself to protect young patrons from "unsuitable books." The Carnegie had an elegant, hand-crafted checkout desk which became the depository of Miss Wallace's restricted collection. One patron remembered the restricted shelf being referred to as "Miss Wallace's Inferno," but doubted that "the sequestered volumes were torrid enough to justify being called an inferno."[10]

By the 1930s the tiny library clearly was no longer adequate and agitation began for a new facility. The Carnegie Library, editorialized the *Sentinel*, was a "horse-and-buggy era" facility "endeavoring to serve the needs of a motor-age population." Complained the editor: "Grand Junction is advancing culturally and educationally as well as numerically. Yet the library remains the city's stepchild as far as any special attention to its needs is concerned."[11]

Though the newspaper's call to action came in the depths of the Great Depression, the time was actually propitious. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was vigorously pursuing civic projects that promised to create jobs, especially if communities were willing to pitch in with matching funds.

Early in 1937 the Grand Junction City Council began discussing the need for a new library and in January decided to put the issue to a vote of the people by proposing a library bond issue to provide matching funds for seeking a grant from the Public Works Administration. The voters approved the bonds by a 549-266 vote in April 1937 and in August the PWA granted the city $32,707 (45% of the cost of the new building). The City Council selected a site for the new building on the southeast corner of White Avenue and 5th Street. Architect Robert K. Fuller was engaged to design the building. A $62,347 construction contract was awarded to Olson and Pennick of Denver and construction began early in 1938. The completed building was accepted by the city council in October 1938 and a month later the Carnegie Library was closed and the new "White Avenue Library" opened its doors.[12]

The new twelve thousand square foot library was nine times as large as Carnegie and had a book capacity of twenty-five thousand volumes. The three level structure consisted of two floors above ground and a basement. The ground floor housed large adult and children's reading rooms, reference room and library offices, while the upper floor had space



Grand Junction Public Library, Fifth and White.

(Mesa County Public Library Collection, Research Center and Special Library, Museum of Western Colorado, 1988.40.)

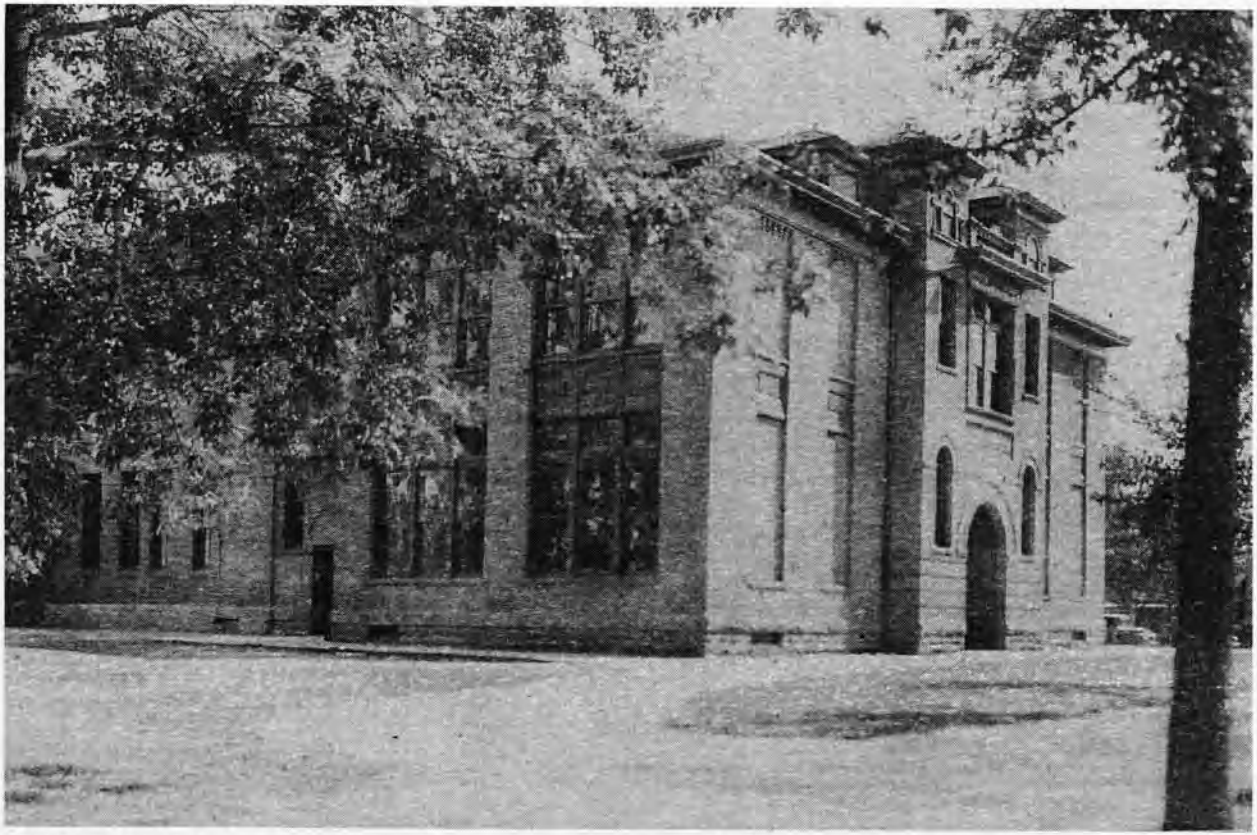
for book stacks, an art room, and a conference room. A lecture room, a workroom, storage rooms, rest rooms and the heating plant were located in the basement.

Architecturally the new library, which faced north onto White Avenue, was of the Art Deco style, done in light stone and brick. Just south of the library was the old Lowell School which was occupied by Mesa Junior College until 1940 when the college moved to its North Avenue campus. After the college moved, the old school, dubbed "the Community Center," housed several New Deal operations in the county including the county library, which had developed in the 1930s through the joint efforts of the Works Progress Administration and the National Youth Administration. Later the structure was remodeled and became Grand Junction City Hall.[13]

Meanwhile, other Mesa County communities had developed libraries. About 1920 a group of women in the town of Collbran organized a "study club" which established a public library, which operated temporarily out of the I.O.O.F. Hall. In 1922 the library was moved to the Congregational Church's Community House. The Collbran facility was a totally volunteer operation. Not even the librarian was paid until 1948. The Study Club not only provided volunteers to operate the library, it also built "shelves and mended books, and held money making projects to support the library." The small book collection owned by the library was regularly supplemented by bulk book loans from the State Library and, later, from the Mesa County Library.[14]

The Collbran library continued to operate out of the Community House until 1991 when the Plateau Valley Friends of the Library acquired the Stockman's Bank building on Main Street, remodeled it, and turned it over to the town of Collbran for use as a library. By that time, the Collbran library had become a branch of the Mesa County Library system.[15]

Development of a public library in the town of Palisade also dates from the 1920s when a group of Palisade women began ordering books in quantity from the State Library's circulating library. The women would take turns dispensing the books from their homes. In 1930 a somewhat permanent site for this dispensing operation was established in the home of Mrs. Filmore (Grace) Duncan at 212 Bower Street. In 1934 a "real library" sponsored by the local PTA and supported by a ten-dollar-a-month appropriation from the city and by food sales and donations was opened in "an old building on Main Street next to the pool hall." Two years later it was moved to a tiny 220 square foot city-owned building on Second Street where it remained until 1953.[16]



Mesa Junior College, Fifth and Rood.

(Mesa County Public Library Collection, Research Center and Special Library, Museum of Western Colorado, F829.)

In 1953 the Palisade library was moved to the Bower Garage on East Third Street and remained there until 1968 when a combined municipal building and library was completed at the same site. The Palisade Women's Club and the city library board were prime movers in the drive to obtain funding for this new facility which included a $40,000 bond issue and a $21,324 grant from the State Library.[17]

With only a small collection of its own, the Palisade library, like its Collbran counterpart, was long dependent upon bulk loans from the State Library and the Mesa County Library. However, by 1968 when it became an associate branch of the consolidated county library system, it had acquired a collection of over ten thousand volumes, had two thousand borrowers, operated a summer reading program and in every respect had a viable and active independent library operation.[18]

The Depression Era witnessed the development of a library system to serve Mesa County's rural citizens and schools. The impetus for this development came from two New Deal agencies: Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA).

Early in 1937 Mesa College Librarian Lillian Sabin took leave of absence to organize a statewide library system to serve the state's rural areas. Before the end of the year this system, which was under the auspices of the WPA, had established forty-four rural library centers in sixteen Colorado counties. A center was established in Mesa County in 1940.[19]

Simultaneously, the NYA was executing a plan for rural library services in Mesa County. Organized in 1936 and headquartered at the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce on North Fourth Street, the project was financed and staffed jointly by the NYA, Mesa County, and local school districts. The NYA paid the salary of a professional librarian, Elmer Brittain, while the system's reading rooms were staffed with Mesa College NYA students.[20]

NYA reading rooms were established in sixteen rural communities in Mesa County such as DeBeque, Appleton, Hunter, Loma, Glade Park, Purdy Mesa and Pear Park. Reading rooms also were provided for two government labor camps in the county and for the Goodwill Industries on South Fifth Street in Grand Junction. By the fall of 1937 the NYA operation was employing fifteen NYA students and held a book collection of seventeen-hundred volumes plus a small library of motion pictures. Beginning in the summer of 1937, the NYA also conducted an outdoor summer reading program in Grand Junction city parks.[21]

By 1940 public libraries were in operation throughout Mesa County. Town and city residents received library services from libraries in Grand Junction, Palisade and Collbran. The NYA library served the rural areas, rural schools and smaller towns. In 1940 a branch of the WPA's state-wide rural library system was established in Mesa County in Grand Junction's Community Services Building at Rood Avenue and Fifth Street giving the county two unnecessarily duplicative rural library operations, but not for long. By the end of 1940, the NYA library was moved out of the Chamber of Commerce and its collection merged with that of the State Library branch giving the area a single countywide library financed and staffed by the WPA.[22]

The WPA library operation, referred to henceforth by local media as the County Library, continued the rural services pioneered by NYA to schools and small communities and made bulk loans to the community libraries in Collbran and Palisade. Also, a bookmobile was put into service to deliver books throughout the county.[23]

A crisis came to the County Library late in 1942 when Franklin Roosevelt ordered the closing of the WPA. Without federal funding, the prospects for continuing the County Library seemed bleak. Rural schools had become dependent upon the services the NYA had initiated and which the County Library had continued. County Superintendent Sadie Hogsett met with the Board of County Commissioners late in 1942 to urge county financial support to keep the County Library in operation.[24]

WPA funding ended on February 1, 1943. The commissioners agreed to pay the salary of a single librarian until February 15 while the library negotiated with school boards to take over financing.[25]

If not for a hardy band of volunteers led by county librarian Irene Wubben, the County Library would no doubt have gone down in 1943. Financially strapped school districts were in no position to finance the operation; little was forthcoming from the State Library, which not only did not take over when the WPA pulled out, but withdrew much of the book collection and the bookmobile being utilized by the County Library.[26]

In the interim, the County Library continued to operate as best it could with the help of volunteers. Members of the library board and Girl Scouts gave assistance and when funds ran out, Irene Wubben continued to serve as librarian without salary.[27]

Meanwhile, a solution to the crisis was developing. In November, 1943 the County Library Board dissolved itself and turned the library over to Mesa College. As a temporary solution to the financial crisis the col-

lege agreed to appropriate one thousand dollars per year to support the library budget of approximately $2,500. The county commissioners and the school districts provided the remainder of the funds. In 1951 more stable financial arrangements were achieved as Mesa College assumed sole responsibility for the library and was authorized to levy up to .5 mills of tax on county property. Irene Wubben, whose husband, Horace, was President of Mesa College, continued as librarian and Mesa College students were recruited to assist.[27]

In 1949 the County Library moved out of the old Lowell School to the basement of the White Avenue Library where it remained until 1959 when it relocated to a vacated grocery store at 616 North Avenue.[28]

With a stable financial base the County Library began expanding services. Schools largely abandoned their own libraries, turned over their book collections to the County Library and began relying on bulk loans from the countywide operation to supply their library needs. Bookmobile service was restored utilizing a vehicle obtained on loan from the State Library. Regular routes were established with checkout points on Orchard Mesa, the Redlands, Loma, Mack, Collbran, Mesa and Gateway. During this period of stable growth, community libraries opened in Fruita, Clifton and DeBeque, which were heavily dependent upon bulk loans from the County Library.[29]

Another stage in Mesa County library development came in the 1950s and 1960s when a movement began to consolidate all library services in the county under a single administration.

The library consolidation movement seems to have originated within the Grand Junction city government. Faced with the necessity of building a new, larger library facility, city leaders were drawn to the idea of ending Grand Junction's library operation altogether and shifting library services to a county entity. In the fall of 1956 City Manager Robert E. Cheever reported to the city council that there had been considerable talk about consolidating the city and county libraries, both of which operated out of the White Avenue facility.[30]

The city took leadership in organizing a "feasibility committee" consisting of representatives from the city and the governing board of Mesa College. Though at least one meeting of this committee occurred, nothing came of this early consolidation effort, most likely due to opposition from the college. In October 1956 the College Committee discussed consolidation at length. County librarian Irene Wubben argued against consolidation on grounds that the missions of the two libraries were so differ-

ent that an incompatible marriage would result. The committee concurred and passed a motion to oppose a merger of the libraries. Thus when the feasibility committee met later in October, the college had already taken a position against consolidation, accounting for the fact that the committee ceased to function after only one session. Then, in 1958, the County Library moved out of the city library to leased space on North Avenue, signaling a more distinct separation of the city and county operations.[31]

The consolidation idea remained dormant until 1964 when the City Library Board recommended that a new library be built that would provide "regional services." The Grand Junction City Council responded by appointing a citizen's committee to establish a regional library.[32]

A significant problem with consolidation emerged: there was no statutory authority for a tax supported countywide system. Accordingly, consolidation was once more delayed while promoters of the idea, including the Grand Junction City Council, the county commissioners, and the Chamber of Commerce sought a legislative solution. In the 1967 session of the Colorado General Assembly, two bills were introduced to allow for county library consolidation. One, the Norgren Bill, allowed consolidation under what was essentially a special district completely independent of all local political bodies. Mesa County consolidation proponents in favor of a bill introduced by Mesa County Representative T. John Baer, Jr, opposed the Norgren Bill. The Baer Bill passed in April removing the statutory roadblock to consolidation. The statute provided for indirect control of a consolidated system by the county commission, which would appoint a library board, approve the library budget, and authorize a mill levy not to exceed 1.5 mills for library operation.[33]

Once statutory problems were resolved, consolidation proceeded with unprecedented dispatch. Mesa College, now under the leadership of Dr. William Medesy, quickly endorsed the merger. In May, 1967 an open meeting of representatives of the college, Mesa County, and the City of Grand Junction was held and when no public opposition emerged, all three entities quickly passed necessary measures to affect the merger under the terms of the Baer Bill.[34]

On July 1, 1967 the new consolidated county library system began operating under the leadership of former city librarian George Van Camp. However, nearly seven years passed before a new central library facility was built. Meanwhile operations at the two existing facilities on White Avenue and North Avenue continued without interruption under the new

administration. About the only changes in the system during this period involved incorporating the community libraries in Palisade and Collbran into the county system, thus completing the administrative consolidation of all library services in the county.[35]

Planning, arranging financing, and locating a site for a new central library began shortly after the county took over the consolidated system. After rejecting the idea of a government "superblock" proposed by architect John Porter which would have included a library plus office space for city and county offices, and after examining at least five other sites for a new library, the county commissioners decided to purchase an abandoned supermarket on the five hundred block of Grand Avenue for renovation into a library.[36]

Early in 1973 work began on the new facility. John Porter of VanDuesen and Associates was the architect and Henry Blaylock was the general contractor. The old supermarket was completely remodeled and three additions were made: a circular meeting room (later named "the Kiva"), a 7,200 square foot children's library and a bookmobile garage. Total space in the structure was about 35,000 square feet, almost three times as large as the White Avenue Library and nearly thirty times the size of the Carnegie library. Total cost of the new central library, including the site, was $862,000, over one hundred times the cost of the Carnegie.[37]

The book collections in the White Avenue and North Avenue units were merged and moved to the new facility late in 1974, a process that took a month to complete. Dedication of the new central library was held in January, 1975 with Governor Richard Lamm as principal speaker. The children's library was also dedicated and named in honor of long-time county librarian Irene Wubben.[38]

During the two decades following consolidation the Mesa County library system continued to evolve. New branch libraries were opened in Gateway (1982), in DeBeque (1991) and on Orchard Mesa (1994). The latter two branches were cooperative operations with local school districts and were located in public schools for the joint use of the schools and the general population. These additions brought the number of branches to seven. A new bookmobile was acquired in 1981 and in 1987 an integrated computer system (called MARMOT) was installed to link the central library with its branches and with other libraries throughout the state, thus bringing the system into the computer age.[39]

These advances came despite growing budgetary problems resulting from the 1.5 statutory mill levy limit imposed on library taxes. An attempt

made in 1984 to get voter approval of a tax increase failed, becoming the first time in Mesa County history that voters rejected a library tax proposal. Resubmission to voters in 1990 resulted in voter approval of a 3.0 mill levy, thus easing the library's decade-long financial problems. As a result, additional staff was hired, expenditures for books and materials increased, library hours that had been significantly reduced during the hard times were expanded, and important capital improvements were made, both in the central library and the branches.[40]

In 1991 a final development in the administration of the county library system occurred when the county commissioners agreed to create an independent county library district which gave the library's Board of Trustees complete control over personnel, budget, and administrative operations. The commissioners retained authority to appoint library trustees but otherwise separated the new Mesa County Library District from county administration. The financial stability of the library once more was assured when, in 1997, voters reaffirmed the 3.0 mill levy ratified in 1990. Reaffirmation was needed because of a state constitutional amendment that placed significant restrictions on budgets and taxes and raised a question about the authority of the library trustees to levy the full 3.0 mill levy approved by voters in 1990.[41]

As the Mesa County Library District approached the 21st Century, library supporters could take pride in a well organized and administered library system which included a well-stocked central library in the city of Grand Junction and seven branches serving outlying areas of the county. Popular support of the library had been registered not only at the polls but also in patron use of the library's services. By the end of 1997 the system had sixty-two thousand card-carrying patrons and an average of over one thousand persons visited the central library or one of its branches every day. However, there is one significant problem that will have to be faced in the new millennium: how long can existing library facilities, especially the central library, adequately serve Mesa County's burgeoning population, growing at the rate of 2.2% per year?[42]

In a press interview in 1975 at the time the Grand Avenue central library was dedicated, Patrick Gormley, Chairman of the library's governing board, predicted that the new facility would serve the community very adequately for the next two decades. Architect John Porter, speculating on the needs of the library in the future, predicted that the county's next library would be much smaller due to technological advances in information storage as books and other published materials were replaced by

microfilm, microfiche, computers and other electronic retrieval equipment. Gormley's "two decades" passed in 1995 and though there had been significant technological advances in information storage, Porter's prediction of a "smaller library" is not on the horizon. In fact; during the 1980s and 1990s, as the library increased its electronic storage capabilities, the book collection grew by over forty thousand volumes with no indication of growth slowdown or decline. As the city of Grand Junction outgrew the old Carnegie Library and its more spacious White Avenue facility it would appear, as the new century approaches, that the county system is on the verge of outgrowing the Grand Avenue central library.[43]

NOTES

[1] *Grand Junction News*, 3 August 1901. Hereafter cited as *News*.
[2] Ibid., *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel*, 26 July 1901. Hereafter cited as *Sentinel*. Though no definitive history of Grand Junction exists, the flavor of the city's development is captured in Dave Fishell, *The Grand Heritage: A Photographic History of Grand Junction, Colorado* (Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA: Donning, 1985.)
[3] *News*, 3 June 1899, 9 December 1899.
[4] Alice Wright, "Mesa County Library Has Come a Long Way Since Founding in 1896," *Colorado West*, The Sunday Magazine of the *Sentinel*, 26 January 1975. Hereafter cited as Alice Wright, *Change*; *Sentinel*, 1 January 1939.
[5] *News*, 17 February 1900; *Colorado Statutes at Large*, Revised (Denver, CO: Smith Books, 1908), 3971.
[6] *News*, 3 August 1901.
[7] *Sentinel*, 26 July 1901; *News*, 3 August 1901.
[8] Ibid.
[9] *News*, 23 November 1901, 30 November 1901, 14 December 1901.
[10] Alice Wright, *Change*. The elegant checkout desk was transferred to the White Avenue library after the Carnegie closed and then to the Fruita branch where it continues in use.
[11] *Sentinel*, 6 November 1936.
[12] Ibid., 10 January 1937, 4 August 1937; *Minutes*, Grand Junction City Council, Bk. 18, 47-48, 1 September 1937.
[13] *Sentinel*, 1 January 1938, 1 September 1940, 19 September 1940, 3 January 1943; *Historic Building Inventory*, Colorado Historical Society, Site 5ME8628. When the White Avenue library was abandoned in 1975 it was remodeled and became part of City Hall, also.
[14] Jan Dulaigh and Nancy Karlson "The Collbran Library," Unpublished MSS, n.d.
[15] Conversation with Terry Pickens, Director, Mesa County Public Library District, 13 January 1998.
[16] Clipping, "New Home for Palisade Library Climaxes 20 Years of Effort by Community Group," *Scrapbook*, Palisade Library History, 1984, no pagination.
[17] Ibid., Clipping "Voters Approve City Hall Bonds."
[18] Ibid., Clipping "Palisade Library Added to Mesa County System."

[19] *Sentinel*, 31 October 1937, 19 September 1940.
[20] Ibid., 5 April 1936, 18 March 1937, 29 April 1937, 13 May 1937.
[21] Ibid., 20 October 1937, 23 October 1937.
[22] Ibid., 1 September 1940, 19 Sept. 1940.
[23] Ibid., 3 June 1943.
[24] Ibid., 4 December 1942, 3 January 1943; *Proceedings*, Board of Mesa County Commissioners, Bk. 11, 22, 21 December 1942.
[25] *Sentinel*, 3 January 1943.
[26] Ibid., 3 January 1943, 10 November 1943.
[27] Ibid., 10 November 1943, 5 December 1943; *Minutes* Mesa College Committee, 27 October 1953; Wilda Hollyfield "History of the Mesa County Public Library," Mesa County Oral History Project, Tape OH , 22 November 1988. Hereafter cited as Hollyfield *History*.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] *Minutes*, Grand Junction City Council, Bk. 25, 224, 19 September 1956.
[31] *Sentinel*, 28 October 1956; *Minutes*, Mesa College Committee, 11 October 1956.
[32] *Minutes*, Grand Junction City Council, Bk. 29, 114, 16 September 1964, Bk. 29, 137, 8 November 1964.
[33] *Sentinel*, 4 April 1967, 18 April 1967, 27 April 1967.
[34] *Newsletter*, Mesa College, Vol. 5, No. 28, 2 May 1967; *Sentinel*, 7 January 1967, 2 June 1967; *Minutes*, Grand Junction City Council, Bk. 31, 34, 5 July 1967; *Proceedings*, Mesa County Commissioners, Bk. 15, 2, 26 June 1967.
[35] Hollyfield *History*.
[36] *Proceedings*, Mesa County Commissioners, Bk. 15, 86, 29 March 1968, 406, 12 April 1971, 490, 17 January 1972, 531, 22 May 1972, 532, 31 May 1972, 544, 10 July 1972; *Sentinel*, 3 May 1972, 7 May 1972, 12 May 1972, 18 May, 1972.
[37] Carol Edmonds, "The New Library," *Colorado West*, Magazine of the *Sentinel*, 18 November 1973. Hereafter cited as Edmonds *New Library; Proceedings*, Mesa County Commissioners, Bk. 15, 569, 29 September 1972, Bk. 16, 93, 29 June 1973, 111, 20 August 1973, 167, 10 December 1973. The DeBeque Branch was not exactly new; a branch had been operated out of the DeBeque City Hall both before and after consolidation in 1967. DeBeque had been without a branch for about five years before 1991, however.
[38] Edmonds *New Library*; Hollyfield *History*; *Sentinel*, 26 June 1975.
[39] Terry Pickens, "History of Mesa County Public Library District,"

Unpublished MSS, Apr. 1993. Hereafter cited as Pickens *History*; Conversation with Terry Pickens, Director, Mesa County Public Library District, 13 January 1998.

[40]Ibid., *Sentinel*, 4 November 1984, 7 November 1984; Pickens *History*.

[41]Sentinel, 5 November 1997; Pickens *History*.

[42]Conversation with Terry Pickens, Director, Mesa County Public Library District, 27 January 1998.

[43]Ibid., Edmonds, *History*.

Jerome B. Wheeler. (Photo courtesy of the Aspen Historical Society)

History of the Wheeler Opera House
Aspen, Colorado, 1889–1894
by Bertha Louise Shaw*

The Wheeler Opera House building, with its restored Victorian structures, stands taller than the surrounding colorful contemporary architecture. It also faces Aspen Mountain from which much of the silver came to make its construction possible. An unpainted wooden fire escape crisscrosses its front, the week's food specials are advertised in the east windows of the first floor grocery, Pitkin County Library hours are posted inside the corner door, and a coffee house sign points to the basement. Thousands of tourists who go to Aspen, Colorado annually to enjoy its world-famous mountain resort facilities and cultural opportunities are probably unaware that the three-story brick building in the heart of the business district was a symbol of progress and culture in the 1890s. Curious tourists frequently question townspeople about it and then usually ask why one of Colorado's finest opera houses was built in an isolated mining town where usual opera fare seemed out of place.

The answer to this question lies in the economic and social developement of Aspen from its beginning in 1879, when prospectors found silver, through the Panic of 1893. During these years the miners and men of wealth who followed the prospectors transformed the raw camp into a model little city, only to see it decline with the silver crash. One of the most important of these "transformers," Jerome B. Wheeler, silver baron and railroad developer, built the Wheeler Opera House and gave

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Aspen cultural advantages little known in the stereotyped and short-lived mining camps of the times.

Just ten years before professional performers began traveling by rail from Denver to Aspen to perform at the Wheeler Opera House, prospectors searching for gold in 1879 trudged and rode horseback sixty miles from Leadville over what is now Independence Pass into the Roaring Fork Valley of the Colorado Mountains. After making camp near a big spring, they found outcroppings of silver—and still more silver—everywhere in the wash of the Roaring Fork River.[1] They staked claims immediately and started mining. Until late that fall, other prospectors straggled over the rugged trails to find silver. News of a Ute Indian uprising nearby drove many of the miners out, but by 1880 they returned and many others joined them, staking claims at what was known as Ute Spring Camp.

Ute Spring, later to become Aspen and Pitkin County seat, lay eight thousand feet above sea level isolated from smelters, silver markets and the world in general. Even so, quite a little community developed in 1880, and by 1881 a temporary boom[2] resulted in the packing of silver ore out to Leadville at four cents a pound by mule and burro. The same animals packed food and supplies back to camp. Soon, newly-developed toll roads permitted faster and less-costly ore transport by wagon.[3]

The bustling camp's first entertainment was provided by the women who accompanied their prospector husbands. Some fourteen women stayed over the winter of 1880-81. They started a Sabbath School and later a singing school which became so popular a large tent was set up for it. Nearly everyone in camp came.[4] Also, seven musicians who called themselves the Hamton Glee Club invited many residents to Beard's Hall for a banquet after which a musical program and dancing took place.[5]

News of rich ore strikes traveled fast and attracted many kinds of people. Summer brought prospectors, businessmen, and even a pioneer theater man. John Tudor built, and in July 1881 opened, Aspen's first theater, the Tudor Theater Comique. The Tudor family staged burlesque featuring glamorous Mamie.[6] Tit Marsh, a *Rocky Mountain News* correspondent, visited the place and described the entertainment which the Tudors offered the miners:

> The "theatre" opens its doors two nights in the week—Saturday and Sunday—and is patronized (as well as the bar) principally by the miners. Pretty good houses are attracted, for purchasing a drink gains you admission to the show. The TUDORS hold forth and give the

> "boys" broadsides of dead and gone jokes that were middle-aged fifteen years ago. There is quite a contrast between it and the Tabor Grand [Denver]. The bar is the principal feature, all covered by a large wall tent. The seats are narrow rough boards, and the stage is without a drop curtain. A piano, violin and cornet discourse discordant sounds to soothe the restlessness of the audience between long waits—for drinks.[7]

Although Aspen's population had grown to about one thousand by 1883 and much ore had been taken from the newly-opened mines, growth of the city was retarded by lack of transportation to railheads. Hauling ore by wagon over the range to Granite or Buena Vista was expensive and slow.[8]

At this time Jerome B. Wheeler, a New Yorker who had brought his wife to Manitou, Colorado for her health,[9] paid a short visit to Aspen and immediately recognized the economic potential of the mining camp. In a matter of hours he had bought mine property and an unfinished smelter and ordered it completed.[10] To provide coke and coal for the smelter, he bought a coal mine[11] and later had a toll road built to it.[12] His influence on Aspen's early economy was made clear in an editorial which stated in part that when he first came "the camp was dead, but after his purchases, it revived immediately."[13]

The immensely wealthy and energetic Wheeler, a Civil War veteran[14] and former flour merchant, had learned and practiced astute business methods as controlling partner of R. H. Macy Company, the large New York City dry goods store. Wheeler's fortune and social stature had not diminished when he married the widow of former company executive Robert Macy Valentine.[15]

Wheeler did not settle in Aspen, but he continued to influence its economy as an executive and investor. He organized the J. B. Wheeler Banking Company[16] and the Aspen Mining and Smelting Company with himself as president[17] but left operation of these and other enterprises to his subordinantes. " He bought property after property on Aspen Mountain paying liberal prices," one editor wrote of him, "and followed up these purchases with fearless expenditure for development."[18]

By late spring of 1885 a stampede to the silver city had swelled its population to over five thousand. Eight doctors, thirty-one lawyers, fifteen civil engineers, and two dentists were among the professional men

who came to share the wealth.[19] The place was like a bee-hive. "Pedestrians, horseback riders, and vehicles of all kinds were coming and going on most of the streets. Long pack-trains were packing ore. Hundreds of miners were working around the clock."[20]

Enterprising businessmen and the usual camp followers offered a variety of entertainment for Aspen residents with twenty-six saloons, five billiard halls, one dance hall, fifteen sporting houses, one opera house, and one variety theater. The Rink Opera House built by Edward Rice[21] brought "first-class troupes over the range in stages" and was used for roller skating and a place for public performances of all kinds.[22] In the same year, Charlie Boyd, an experienced variety trouper who had played with Haverly's Minstrels in Denver and later managed the Globe Theatre in Leadville, arrived to manage the Aspen Theater newly built by C. J. Coles and John Eitel. In 1886 Boyd changed its name to the Theatre Comique, and the *Aspen Times* rated the operation of his profitable variety theater in this way:

> Outside of the box-work,[23] which in western variety shows is a necessity, there is not a feature of Charlie Boyd's Comique which would offend the most fastidious pleasure seekers.[24]

"Railroads follow the miners" was a typical saying which became a truth in Aspen. The Denver and Rio Grande Railway actually raced to lay tracks to town[25] ahead of the Wheeler-promoted and partially owned Colorado Midland Railroad from Leadville to Aspen in 1887.[26] Cost of hauling a wagon of ore over the range was cut from $35.00 when these railroads hauled a ton of it to Denver for $8.00 and to Leadville for $4.00. Soon ore was shipped out at the rate of fifteen hundred to two thousand tons per week.[27]

Just as the railroads carried fabulous amounts of silver ore out of Aspen, they brought in more people and supplies to boost all business and improve property values. For example, E. C. Rice's Rink Opera House, the "family" theater, was renovated in 1888. The five hundred seats were numbered, the entire building was ceiled with "Chicago lumber" to improve acoustics, extra stoves and an exit door near the stage were added[28] and tiered seats were placed in the gallery.[29] The railroads also transported stock companies with their own scenery to Aspen to vary the usual Rink program of roller skating, church services and benefits, masquerades, and home talent shows.

Other entertainers also came by rail to help Charlie Boyd make good his advertisement of "a change in programme every night at popular prices."[30] His Theatre Comique, in a building much smaller than the Rink, featured variety such as singers, dancers, jugglers, boxing matches (sometimes in the afternoon), gymnasts and other small combinations. Boyd, active in many Aspen activities, was popular with patrons and performers alike.[31]

Shortly after the Rink Opera House improvements were publicized, J. B. Wheeler, in town on business, announced that work on a new bank building would start May 1, 1888, and that it would be furnished with a "public hall, complete with stage fixtures." Aspenites, delighted about this and the fact he had sold his interest in the Macy Company, thought Wheeler would become a resident.[32] As usual, he did not stay long, for when he was not at his beautiful summer home, Windermere, in Manitou Springs, Colorado, he was in New York, Chicago, or any place else business beckoned.[33]

During early construction of this new combination bank and "public hall," this editorial concerning it and Wheeler's faith in American business appeared in the *Aspen Times:*

> This building is one that would be a credit to any city. When someone asked him how he expected it to pay, he replied, "Oh! This is a great country, and every dollar put into such improvements will clearly come back with a splendid profit."[34]

The two thousand additional residents who arrived in Aspen during 1888 saw vast street improvements and construction of the most important building put up that year, the three-story opera house block.[35] As the entire building neared completion, Ralph A. Weill, the first opera house manager, arrived in town and gave such a glowing account of the plans for furnishing the opera house that a reporter wrote this:

> It became evident from the description of the furnture, fixtures, stage and scenery that are being ordered for the opera house that Aspen is to have the second best opera house in the state.

The corner rooms on the ground floor were finished first and on

March 20, 1889, all Wheeler Bank employees and officers, except Mr. Wheeler who was not in town, greeted friends and patrons invited to celebrate the opening of the new J. B. Wheeler Bank. The magnificent quarters with entrance floor of marble tile, richly carpeted offices, cherry furniture from Chicago, much plate glass, polished brass and pink marble and, of course, the latest and best vault and safety deposit boxes served as a sample of Wheeler's practice of providing the best and most-handsome business and city improvement money could buy.[37]

As tenants occupied other quarters of the building, elegance continued to be in order and seemed to serve as a prelude to the opening of a handsome opera house. Into the "L-shaped" area around the bank on the first floor, clothier Louis Weinberg set up his "palace of fashions" with its many new brass fixtures[38] and elegant reception rooms, "one for the ladies at the Mill Street entrance and one for the men at the Hyman ave.[sic] entrance."[39] Even the Opera House Tonsorial Parlors in the basement had the latest in Koch's patent reclining barber chairs, full-length plate glass mirrors, hand-painted cut-glass bottles for bay rum, and a bathroom with even temperature that no bather might catch cold.[40] Weeler's Aspen Mining and Smelting Company had corner rooms over the bank on the second floor. His attorney, W. W. Cooley, had the two "elegant" west rooms, and Dr. Paul of the Aspen Mine had the two carpeted east rooms. Among other professional men on the floor was Dr. Bryant, a dentist.[41]

Just a few days after the bank opening, the announcement that the opera house would be named for Jerome B. Wheeler was made in New York by Manager Weill. He said that Wheeler had foreseen the possibilities of Colorado and reportedly had investment there of "no less than seven million dollars." Then he explained that the investor had filled Aspen's need for a good theater by providing a handsome and well-equipped opera house second only in Colorado to Denver's Tabor Grand.

> For a number of years Aspen has been sadly in need of a handsome place of amusement. The city has fully 9,000 inhabitants, and the nearest place where a good attraction could be seen was Denver which was 200 miles away. Mr. Wheeler has supplied the want, and the opera house which he has erected is one of which even the great city of New York need not be ashamed. In fact, we have not gone outside of this city for principal decorations and furnishings, and I think that when it is completed he can claim the neatest and best appointed opera house in the state outside of the Tabor Grand.[42]

Artists's rendition of the Wheeler Opera House, circa 1890. (Photo courtesy of the Aspen Historical Society)

The ten-month construction of the opera house block gave Aspen's economy a boost. It had provided work for professional builders, contractors, and skilled workmen from Denver as well as for local firms and laborers. New rental space permitted merchants and professional men to plan enlarged business in more spacious and attractive rooms. Additional personnel to maintain the big building meant more money would circulate.

Construction of a three-story brick and stone building was new and unusual in Aspen where hastily and often flimsily-built structures had been normal for the mining camp. Having a handsome opera house in the best building in town was still more desirable and the populace was eager to see it and be a part of its opening.

The opera house block was scheduled for completion by April 1, 1889;[43] however, the builders may not have anticipated the kinds of mistakes and accidents that occurred with the Wheeler Block. Excavation began early in June, 1888, at the corner of Hyman Avenue and Mill Street in the center of Aspen's business district.[44] Wheeler had bought two lots there four years earlier from J. E. Freeman for $2,000.00.[45]

Plans and specifications for the city's largest brick and stone building had not arrived from Denver when news was out that the opera house room would be sixty by one hundred feet, one-fourth larger than the Rink.[46] Within the month local contractors learned they could submit construction bids for the big $75,000.00 edifice;[47] later, the Aspen Plumbing Company secured the plumbing contract.[48]

Peter Wilson had started work on the basement before Denver architect W. J. Edbrook arrived in July.[49] Late in August, Ross, Frazier and Company, the Denver contractors for the mason work, were busy, with Mr. Ross as supervisor.[50] Progress on the second story was so rapid in September[51] that woodwork was added to the third story in October.[52]

Mr. Kelper, the superintending architect whose experiences included construction of some of the largest buildings in Chicago and other eastern cities, stated that the building was one of the most solid and convenient he had ever built. He pointed to the door step of the bank as evidence. It had been bedded solid by mistake and the settling of a fraction of a inch would have broken it, but it remained intact. He said that the bank room would be ready for occupancy by January first and he expected to see the rest of the building completed before April first.[53]

Sidewalks around the building were completed in November,[54] and work was rushed to get the roof on so the mechanics could "defy the weather"[55] and work inside. As stone cutters worked at "dressing up the corners" of the building, townspeople noticed the east wall looked strange.

A reporter attempted to explain it this way, "The apparent concavity in the east wall is an optical illusion which the dressing down of the corners will probably correct."[56] The architect arrived shortly, checked the wall, and reportedly insisted that the wall be torn down although the contracting superintendent felt such action was unnecessary.

> Architect Edbrook of the new Wheeler block has just been in the city and a report has just been started that he notified the contractors that they would have to take down the east wall of the building. Ever since the building went up, the wall has had the appearance of being "dished." It is now shown that such is the case.
>
> When Mr. Davis, superintendent for Hallack and Howard, was asked about the report regarding Mr. Edbrook's action, he said that he did not think the wall would be taken down. It was perfectly safe and he would be willing to submit it to the highest authority obtainable. The building was of unusual strength, he said; it might be crowded with all the people who could get into it and all might be crowded at once without causing a tremor in the massive structure. Mr. Davis explained that the "dishing" was caused by the wall being built of both stone and brick. The inside has a little opportunity to settle, while the outside is solid. The result is that there is a tendency to draw the wall in, thus causing the hollowness that appears about the second story.
>
> An effort was made to see Mr. Kelper, who has superintended the work, but he could not be found. If the architects should refuse to receive the building a nice point would arise because of the fact that they have directly superintended the work, and it would probably be claimed by the contractors that defects should have been pointed out before the work had been entirely finished.[57]

Obviously the decision was made; two days later the *Aspen Times* reported, "Mechanics were at work yesterday preparing derricks to be used in taking down and rebuilding the wall of the opera house if it shall be decided to do so."[58] Details of the reconstruction plans were told:

> The work of taking down the east wall of the opera house block will commence as soon as the floors and roof can be shored up. The wall will be taken down to the sills of the hall windows except at the ends where the wall is straight. Two derricks will be used and the work will be done quickly.[59]

It should be noted here that W. J. Edbrook was the architect for the Tabor Grand Opera House in Denver. Coincidentally, one wall of that opera house fell into an alley during winter construction and had to be rebuilt.[60]

The work of rebuilding the east wall of the opera house block went fast, but two days after Christmas the newspapers forebodingly announced, "The rebuilding of the opera house wall will be completed this week if no mishap is met with."[61] However, at twelve forty-five on January 3, as a swinging scaffold twenty-five feet above the sidewalk gave way, four workmen fell. James Richardson, a member of the stone-cutting firm of Ross and Richardson, fell in a window area and received bruises and a head cut. James All, an elderly man who landed on some lumber, suffered a spine injury and was "out of his head'." Previously he had been hurt on the job when struck by a falling brick. Philander Moore and William Watson struck stone pavement. Moore's skull was fractured and his right elbow shattered; Watson's back was severely injured and one ankle was wrenched.[62] As a result of this accident, an editorial in the *Aspen Daily Times* started a campaign to build Aspen's first hospital which was completed on September 1891.[63]

In spite of the accident, construction moved along rapidly as a steam heating apparatus was installed and plasterers began work on the first floor.[64] Completion of the exterior included the word BANK carved in the stone above the door and massive steps which led to the J. B. Wheeler Bank quarters.[65] No other building in Aspen was so solidly and well constructed or finished with such detail.

The same high-quality construction and finish work were evident in the opera house where "Wheeler spared no expense in making it perfect in all its details."[66] An Aspenite familiar with the town's theater growth could hardly believe the progress the new opera house represented. He rated it the best in the city as he wrote this about its opening:

> To an old-timer it was a sight long to be remembered that was witnessed. It seems but a fiew [sic] months

> since the only place for meetings of any kind was some improvised hall in a balloon building. Later on came the Rink opera house, more commodious, more comfortable and presenting many of the features of a well appointed theatre. These are now superceded [sic], but those who have been familiar with the various stages of development could scarcely realize the change that has taken place until they stepped within the doors of the opera last evening.[67]

To reach the auditorium of the Wheeler, patrons used the main entrance on Hyman Avenue. The ticket office was located on the ground floor under the wide stairway[68] which was finished with a highly-polished wood balustrade. On the third floor at the top of the stairs was a "ladies" retiring room and a cloak room adjoining the auditorium."[69]

Modern and dazzling lighting equipment enhanced the house. The chandelier, a work of art, was suspended from the handsomely frescoed ceiling by a wire rope.[70]

> Those who have been fortunate enough to secure seats will be delighted and surprised when they assemble in this perfect "bijou"of a theatre, and the electricity sparkles, crackles and radiates from the thirty-six branch chandelier in the centre of the ceiling and from around the house. This chandelier is the crowning glory of this beautiful house, being made of hammered brass, handmade, trimmed with silver and set with three dozen incandescent lights, each with an opalescent shade, flaring out at the end in the form of a flower.[71]

New and unusual theater lighting was introduced at the Wheeler. There must have been dimmers[72] installed on stage to control house and stage lights, for a reporter in describing the house lights wrote this:

> These lights are so regulated that their strength can be increased and decreased as the scene may require, by ingenious apparatus on the stage. This will enable Mr. Robert Cutler, the property man, to give necessary effects in every case.[73]

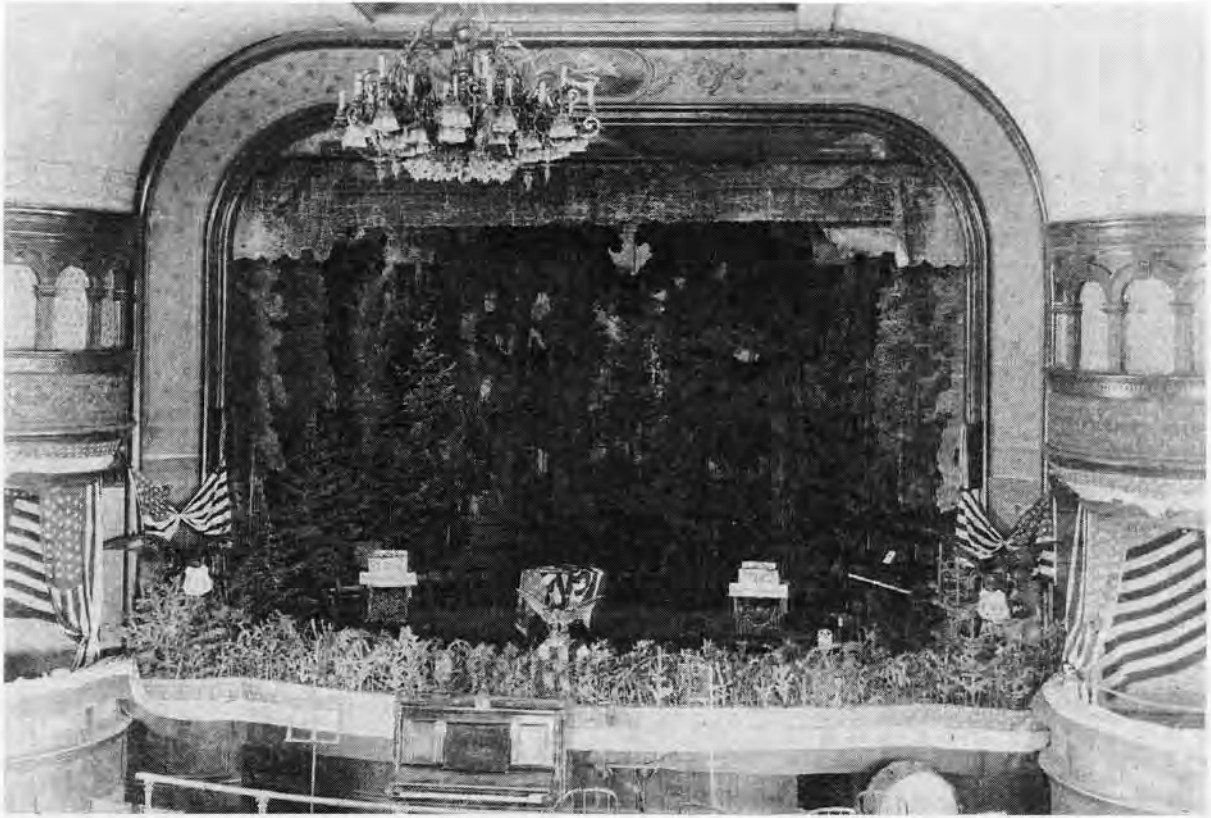
Wide aisles and the seating arrangement of the house allowed for plenty of room and good visibility of the stage. On the floor sloping toward the stage was the parquet, 599 seats, divided in the center by a commodious aisle carpeted in crimson. The side aisles were similarly carpeted. No attempt had been made to crowd in seats. Two stairways at the back led "to the balcony seats regarded by old theater-goers as the best in the house" because they furnished "the best and most exalted view of both the audience and stage."[74]

Opera chairs "of the most improved make" had brown morocco leather-covered cushioned arms and spring-cushioned seats "with wire frames under them to hold gentlemen's hats." They were capable also of being turned up "to facilitate the ingress and egress of persons going in and out between rows of chairs."[75] These chairs, now stored in James Parsons' Isis movie theater in Aspen, look narrow and uninviting,[76] not at all like they looked to an 1889 theater patron who compared them with those at the old Rink Opera House:

> The metamorphosis from the high-set, stiff-backed, straw cushioned racks in the Old Rink Opera house, to the spring-cushioned, morocco covered opera chairs will immediately translate the fortunate auditor from Tophet to Olympus. The spectator is no longer compelled to draw heavily upon his imagination as his condition is comfortable and his eye is feasted.[77]

The five chairs in each of the two proscenium boxes appeared more comfortable and elegant.[78] Upholstered in gold plush, they blended with the lavish gold and red decor of the boxes.

> The proscenium boxes are semi-circular in shape, and their domes are bedecked with silver stars in an azure sky. These are constructed of cherry wood inlaid with gilt lincrusta-walton. The brass rails resting on the soft scarlet velvet of the box arches stand out in bold contrast with the gilt paper that adorns the walls within. The damask portieres, gracefully looped, furnish a refuge for the retiring occupant of these boxes from the gaze of the audience. The boxes are so constructed, that the fortunate possessors can get the best view of the stage and auditoriun, and can be seen or not at pleasure.[79]



Interior of the Wheeler Opera House, Eagles Club function. (Photo Courtesy of the Aspen Historical Society)

An early engraving of the auditorium shows orchestra space provided immediately in front of the stage. An iron pipe railing served as a divider between the first row of seats and the orchestra area.

Although the brick building was practically fireproof, the fire escape ladders on the west side of the building[80] may not have been considered adequate for emptying the house quickly in case of emergency. Possibly the fact that the opera house was on the third floor and could hold more people than any other theater in Aspen prompted a grand jury investigation of the entire Wheeler Block for safety. Their report, which indicated that the building was almost fireproof,[81] described fire precautions for the stage and satisfaction with Wheelers's plans to provide an additional fire exit by building an iron stairway on the outside of the west wall. The new iron stairway, made in Denver,[82] was put up in September.[83] Aesthetically, the black stairway may have been preferable to the old ladders, but practically it was of little value in winter and early spring. It served as a convenient attachment for ice and huge icicles as snow melted and dripped from the roof.[84]

The opera house itself was designed and built to fit the Wheeler bank building, not vice versa. This limited the stage size to fifty-one feet wide, twenty-six feet deep, and twenty-five feet high, but left little space backstage when scenery was in place. Ralph A. Weill, first manager of the Wheeler, had announced that there were twenty-six complete sets of scenery which he had selected from designs furnished by the best scenic painters in New York,[85] but a later description stated that the "large and commodious" stage was "fitted out with fifteen full sets of the finest scenery and stage settings."[86]

If all of these fifteen (or twenty-six) sets of scenery were stored on or above the stage, they probably included back drops with wing pieces or curtains for masking since there was not space for other types of scenery. Photographs of the stage and some of its original scenery indicate that the Wheeler had the usual "stock" scenery of the times which frequently included ballroom and outdoor settings. Scenery pieces were probably standard and could be used interchangeably for several sets. This might account for the "revolving scenes" mentioned in the following description of scenery used for the first home talent performance.

> ...[S]ome six of the new revolving scenes that are on the opera house stage will be set for the Peak Sisters and Penelope. One of these will present a beautiful parlor, an imitation of that of Mrs. Jaimie [sic] Potter's residence in New York and there will be a grate with a real fire in it.[87]

Photographs of the stage do not reveal any draw curtains, but a roll curtain is obvious. It probably was this curtain Manager Weill described as a drop curtain when he told a New York *Daily Mirror* reporter about the new Wheeler.

> By the way, what do you think is the subject of the drop curtain? It is a representation of the Brooklyn Bridge, painted by Burke [of the Chicago Opera House] from sketches obtained in this city, and is one of the best pieces of work of the kind I have ever seen.[88]

Perhaps the drop curtain symbolized the coming of city life and the world to Aspen. Designed by two New Yorkers, world famous for their scenic art, and painted by no less than Chicago's opera house scene painter Burke, it pictured not only the bridge and the East River, but ships from all over the world.

> The drop curtain in itself is an artistic study being the combined effort of Messrs. Charles Graham and Homer Emons, two of the best scenic artists in the world. It is a painting of the East River Bridge, that great artery of trade and travel connecting the great metropolis of the United States with its millions of suburban population on Long Island. It presents a moonlight view of the greatest suspension bridge in the world under which a large Boston steamer is passing with ease and grace, whilst the immense forests of masts of ocean greyhounds, loading and unloading their costly burdens for and from every part of the world are sketched with the minutest detail.[89]

Provision had been made to bring scenery and properties from the alley below onto the small stage through a large door in the center of the back stage wall. Along the rear right of the back wall a small stairway led to a floor just below the stage where dressing rooms were located. Of them Manager Weill said, "We have seven dressing rooms, besides that of the star, and they will be under the stage and nicely fitted up. In fact, they will be rooms in fact — not cells."[90]

The stage "had all the modern appliances," but only the lighting equipment was described. A photograph shows footlights, and one may

assume that lighting equipment included dimmers because the strength of the house lights could be increased or decreased from stage.[91] Very likely the stage was equipped with a treadmill. A review of *The County Fair* testified to the fact that an actual horse race took place on the stage. It stated that the trained horses "came in for their share of applause" as their "efforts to win the race caused much excitement."[92] Another production, the Civil War play *Shenandoah,* required a horse on stage. In one scene, Aspen citizen Dan John rode a horse hired from the local livery stable of Trowbridge and Grey.[93] An advertisement for another play offered "a genuine old mountain coach drawn by genuine broncos."[94] According to Wayne Callahan, an Aspen pioneer who as a youngster attended the Wheeler frequently, horses actually did appear on the stage. Callahan said he saw the well-trained horse used in Shenandoah led up the forty-eight steps and five landings of the main stairway, and he added, "It took approximately forty-five minutes to do it. That horse was probably blindfolded to bring him down or maybe he was backed down."[95] Another pioneer, Robert C. Weise, recalled that his father told about a horse named Cold Molasses which was lifted in a sling from the alley behind the opera house up through the scenery door at the back of the stage.[96] Callahan said he had seen *The County Fair* production and there were three or four real horses on the stage.[97]

A photograph of the stage following the 1912 fires shows absolutely no scenery left; all timbers were charred and a pile of black rubble lay on the stage floor. During renovations new flooring was placed on stage removing all evidence of trap doors which might have been there originally. The big charred grids above the stage are still in place and in use.[98]

No evidence is available concerning the location of the property room. Its stock, however, had "everything necessary for the production of every known play and opera" including "tropical flowers and rare plants from the delicate orchid to the famous edelweiss of Switzerland," all conscientiously reproduced.[99]

Although the Wheeler stage seemed to be well equipped, scenery and unusual mechanical devices necessary for the popular realistic scenes and extravaganzas were carried by many traveling stock companies. However, for the touring company producing *The Ivy Leaf*, Robert Cutler, the Wheeler's first stage manager, created the "Ivy Tower" which was "one of the numerous pieces of mechanism that had been conceived by the brain and produced by the hands" of Cutler.[100] Four years later William Van Hoorebeke, one of Aspen's talented young amateur's, produced what

was considered "the finest piece of stage scenery seen at the Wheeler for some time. . . It was a cataract of living water."[101]

Opening of the Wheeler Opera House gave the economy, social life, and prestige of Aspen a boost. Much publicity heralded the opening on April 23 and 24 as townspeople made ready for the occassion by purchasing finery they had not needed before. One clothier advertised that he had prepared early for the male opera patrons by stocking full dress suits and introducing a line of "fine fancy spring suits suitable for any dress occassion."[102] Milliners swamped with work on made-to-order opera hats had to reject last minute requests and a reporter from the *Denver Republican* wrote a story that surely gave Aspen prestige:

> The theater is a little gem. It was built by J. B. Wheeler, the millionaire miner, who had done so much for this section, and its appointments are all perfect. The opening was a full-dress affair and the audience was by far the most brilliant assemblage that has ever gathered in the "New Empire."[103]

The grand opening of the Wheeler Opera House was publicized in many ways. John Coleman of the Leadville Tabor Opera House had come to Aspen to paste billboards,[104] the corner Drug Store across from the Wheeler sold tickets, and the newspapers carried the following theater advertisement:

Tuesday and Wednesday, April 23 and 24
CONRIED'S
English Comic opera Company
Under the personal direction of Mr. Heinrich
Conried, in a Grand Spectacular Presentation
of Mr. Adolph Muller's Beautiful Romantic Opera
"KING'S FOOL"
80 - ARTISTES - 80
Including Professor Hartl's Original Viennese Lady
Fencers
Bewilderingly Beautiful Marches
Dazzingly Electrical Effects
Enchanting Music
Grand Fencing Contest for a purse of $150 offered by
Aspen citizens.[105]

Other advertisements indicated that Aspen merchants were offering fineclothing and accessories specifically for Wheeler opening patrons.

> Gentlemen who propose attending the grand, full dress opening of the Wheeler Opera House, on Tuesday night, will be pleased to know that the Weinberg Clothing Co. has just received a large assortment of the finest quality of full dress black cloth coats and low cut vests, and black doe-skin vests. They also have a large assortmentof black folding opera hats, and silk hats for gentlemen, also "crush" hats for ladies.[106]

Before Easter, ladies knew Milliner Rhine had a good assortment of the popular opera hats,[107] but according to the Staats, Hunt and Company advertisement, the demand for made-to-order millinery had exceeded the supply by opening day.

> "Rush and crush" hardly expresses the situation as to trade in fine millinery for the opera. We can take no more orders today, as it will tax our whole force to the utmost to complete engagements at 6 o'clock.[108]

Staats also had a dozen or two "beautiful pattern hats and opera bonnets as well as a few China fans, fine handkerchiefs, neckwear and kid gloves left for the occasion."[109] E. L. Hunkin had "tulle or illusion" hats, fans, kid gloves, ruching and a few choice beaded wraps and opera shawls for sale, in addition to three dozen pearl opera glasses to rent.[110]

On the afternooon before the Wheeler opening, the Conried Opera Company was not the only talent Aspenites planned to welcome. A large crowd gathered on Mill Street from the Clarendon Hotel (corner of Mill and Durant) to the Denver and Rio Grande station to await the arrival of the opera company and Professor Norris' dog show which was booked at the Rink Opera House that night. About three o'clock, as Charlie Boyd's band from the Comique marched down Mill street to the depot to receive the opera company, spirited horses pulled three landaus with red, white and blue ribbons and rosettes in the wheels to receive the dogs. At least three thousand people watched the animated scene. Some seventy-five opera company members came up town first; a few stopped at the Wheeler, but most of them continued two blocks to the Clarendon. As "one thou-

sand or more small boys" cheered, the landaus carried some thirty or more dogs of all kinds to the Rink.[111]

A few desirable seats at $2.50 were available when the Wheeler box office opened at six-thirty, but afternoon newspaper announcements listed other entertainment at lower prices for that night. Obviously, the Rink manager considered the Wheeler competition for in his advertisement the following appeared: "The opera company [Conried] tonight is nothing compared to Prf. Norris' thirty performing dogs. Prices $1.00 and $0.75 for adults. Children $0.25." Veteran theater man Charlie Boyd had shown his public spirit and cooperation in the afternoon by taking his band to meet the opera company. Boyd's usual daily "ad" simply listed D'Ennery's *A Celebrated Case* plus a variety of minstrel and music. A week-old "ad" for the Palace Theatre, a variety spot, announced: "Each performance closes with a sparkling afterpiece. Admission — Patronize the Bar and walk in."[112]

That Tuesday night the scene on Hyman Street must have been colorful as opera patrons in their finery came from every direction, some on foot and others in horse-drawn carriages. Billy Tagert, veteran livery man, recalled that $5.00 was the carriage fee to transport four people to the house and call for them after the performance.[113]

The opening of the Wheeler was hailed as "one of the most notable events in the history of Aspen's most eventful year." It was a night to remember. Every seat in the house was sold as eight hundred first-nighters in full dress took their places. The scene was more like that in a city theater than one in a mining town. The ladies, charming in their expensive new costumes, fairly glowed in the brilliantly lighted theater. Each lady was handed a perfumed satin program and a fine bottle of perfume as souvenirs of the event.[114] Leading gentlemen of the town appeared in swallowtails to honor the occassion. As greetings were exchanged, everyone seemed delighted to be on hand for the inauguration of the beautiful new theater.[115]

Shortly after eight o'clock the curtain was raised and the big, glamorous, and elegantly costumed Conried Company presented a comic opera, *The King's Fool*. The audience anticipated a musical treat, but they were fascinated with the fencing exhibition and listened with interest to the announcement that the same lady fencers would fence for a prize offered by Aspen citizens the next night.[116]

When the performance ended, celebration of the theater opening continued through the night. George B. Brown, an Aspenite who missed none of the excitement, said that champagne flowed and "nobody went to bed that night."[117]

Where the after-theater festivities were held is not known, for Aspen hostelries were crowded and could not house all of the out-of-town visitors who came for the opening. Some people had to "spend the night sitting in chairs in billiard rooms." Every hotel, lodging and boarding house was filled and had to turn customers away. "Before supper time" the Clarendon and Windsor Hotels had no rooms left so cots were set up in hallways for guests.

Interest in the opening was more than local. Editor C. C. Davis of the *Herald Democrat* and Manager James H. Cragg of the Tabor Opera House came from Leadville and a correspondent came from *The Denver Republican.*[118]

Although there was no standing room at the Wheeler or the Rink, some normally curious ten-to-twelve-year-old boys were determined to see the grand opening. Their resourcefulness resulted in inexpensive and air-conditioned box seats.

> A score or more of these public spirited youths took in "The Kings' Fool" last night from private boxes with additional comfort of being able to masticate popcorn and smoke cigarettes all the while.Their means of ascent were the fire escape ladders, on the west side of the Opera House, and the little iron railed balconies outside of the windows were the boxes. They first raised, by subscription early in the evening, silver change to the amount of a dollar, with which an admission ticket was purchased by one of their members. This young gentleman upon obtaining admission to the body of the theatre deftly run up the inside blinds high enough to admit of a full view from the outside boxes. It is needless to say that the boys were happy.[119]

On Wednesday, second day of the opening, several Aspen men arranged for an extra bit of celebration at three o'clock in the opera house. They put up a cash prize for the lady fencer from the Conried Company who could make the best score against Theodore Rosenberg, architect and fencer from Glenwood Springs, Colorado.[120]

That same night some young boys saw *The King's Fool* without paying and made a little money "on the side." They hung around the ticket office early and when Mr. Frost left it for a few minutes, he left the little

Wheeler Opera House. (Photo courtesy of the Aspen Historical Society)

half-door at the back of the office and behind the stairs open. The boys took about ten or fifteen general admission tickets, used what they needed, and sold the rest for twenty-five cents each "right in front of the door of the theater."[121]

Opening of the Wheeler Opera House was indicative of Aspen's uniqueness among Colorado's mining towns. According to George W. Lloyd, a mining engineer who knew mining towns, Aspen was the "opposite" of the many camps characterized by what was known as the "rough element." This, he explained, implied "a lack of refinement and cultivation in the citizens, an enterprise to gain wealth rapidly but not to build up homes and substantial business blocks." However, in Aspen, he added, with the building of fine homes the "pleasures of a refined society" had come, and the "erection of the Wheeler" was a connecting link between the social world and the business world.[122]

Aspen's best-constructed building housed its best-furnished theater. Solidly built of brick and sandstone, and partially rebuilt for safety, it was practically fireproof. Fire-fighting equipment on the stage and an adequate iron fire escape added to safety features in case of fire or panic. Audience enjoyment was a prime factor considered in the furnishings and equipment of the auditorium. The sloped floor with comfortable seats permitted visual and physical comfort. The splendid surroundings of fine woodwork, elegant draperies and frescoed walls, all superbly lighted by the handsome chandelier created an aesthetic atmosphere to remove patrons from the work-a-day world of the mining town. The stage was equipped to provide the best possible conditions for artists to perform. In its limited space, the Wheeler stage offered what a modern city theater of that time might have had: eight dressing rooms, the finest obtainable scenery produced by professionals, the very latest lighting eqipment and appliances and finally, a technician to handle the equipment and build any new stage mechanism needed.

The glamorous opening of the house, packed by citizens and strangers in full evening dress, marked acceptance of the Wheeler as Aspen's finest theater. It was *the* place to see and be seen.

Opening of the handsome Wheeler may have encouraged other theater improvement. Tom Moore refurbished his variety theater and held a "grand reopening" of the Palace Theatre with "an entire company of Eastern stars." Admission was the same as before: "Patronize the Bar and Walk In." Moore was the only theater man who advertised for talent in local papers. The following appeared at the bottom of his theater adver-

tisement: "Artists of acknowledged ability can always procure two weeks or more at this Theatre, with a surety of getting their salary."[123]

Business was good for everyone as four thousand tons of ore were shipped out weekly.[124] J.B. Wheeler invested and developed more mine properties and then financed building of the Jerome Hotel, another "elegant improvement for Aspen."[125] The fine one hundred-room brick hotel which cost $125,000.00 to build and $40,000.00 to furnish opened in November of 1889.[126]

Silver powered Aspen's economy and, although prices had declined throughout the eighties, the huge bodies of ore in the area made mining profitable. Early 1890 held great promise for the silver mining future; passage of the Sherman Act that year guaranteed large government silver purchases which brought its prices up temporarily.[127]

Though the Wheeler most likely never turned a profit, for five years it gave color to Aspen's hectic social life by providing an array of entertainment events catering to virtually all tastes: Shakespearean drama, opera, plays of every genre, musical concerts, minstrels, lectures, boxing matches, mind readers, burlesque, art exhibitions, high-kicking dancers and elocutionary contests. Between professional performances the theater was available for local talent productions, religious services, high school graduations, political rallies and conventions, and holiday celebrations.

Prosperity reigned in Aspen, and her residents used part of their silver riches for civic and cultural improvements such as new churches, a hospital, the county courthouse, two light and power plants, and new schools.[128] As historian Frank Hall wrote of the city, "it was . . . the handsomest, most substantial and attractive mining town in the Rocky Mountains...there was no lack of capital for the extension of any legitimate enterprise."[129] In the wave of prosperty, E. C. Rice again refitted his Rink Opera House, changed its name to the Tivoli Theatre, and employed W. R. Weston as manager. Advertisements offered first-class entertainment every night and Saturday afternoon at popular prices. Family rates were seventy-five cents, fifty cents, and twenty-five cents.[130]

Touring troupes were arranged mainly through a Denver booking agency called the Silver Circuit, owned by Peter McCourt, a former salesman and dry goods clerk turned entrepreneur and brother-in-law of H. A. W. Tabor, silver tycoon and builder of opera houses in Leadville and Denver. Touring performers traveled by railroad and since Denver was a railroad hub, McCourt conceived the idea of a threatrical circuit originating in Denver and serving smaller theaters in Wyoming, Colorado and

Utah railroad towns. Two-night stands of touring professionals were standard when the Wheeler first opened, but dwindled to one-night affairs as Aspen's economy failed and crowds became smaller.[131]

Silver prices declined and the wave of prosperity ended as the railroads merged and cut off some of their ore cars to Aspen,[132] thus reducing the amount of silver that could be shipped out. Business failures followed and closing-out sales were advertised in the area.[133] A nation-wide stringency in money prevailed in early 1891[134] and was evident in Aspen in June when the Palace Theatre closed because of poor business.[135] Silver prices continued to edge downward; Charlie Boyd quit managing the theater Comique, and by early 1892 the two men who had attempted to operate it also gave up.[136]

Bar silver prices plunged that spring, but many mine owners and managers continued to operate mines at a loss, hoping the prices would change for the better. Finally they had to decide whether to close down the mines or to cut the price of production.[137] Miners of low-grade ore were laid off[138] and mine owners began to look for ways to recoup losses.

Mine litigation had already cost J. B. Wheeler much money, so he began disposing of investments. After disposing of his coal and coke interests for about a million dollars,[139] he and his wife sold the Jerome Hotel to Arch Fisk of Denver for $125,000.00. Perhaps a reporter figured the Wheeler Opera House Block was the next in line for sale when he asked Wheeler Bank Cashier Tissington if Wheeler were quitting Aspen. The answer was negative: "On the contrary, he is as thoroughly identified with Aspen as at any time in his career. He knew he wasn't a hotel man—but it improved Aspen."[140]

Nothing could stop the dropping silver market, and in July of 1893, the Panic was on; in fact, people almost stampeded to get out of Aspen to find work. Some walked with packs on their backs; others rode horses, wagons, or the "rods." Those with enough money traveled by train.[141]

The town was not deserted, but there was not enough work producing other metals for all the miners. Despite help from civic groups organized to relieve the suffering,[142] hunger and destitution prevailed. Wheeler came in August to assure payment to depositors of his closed bank.[143] Promises did not feed the hungry, so the Chamber of Commerce sent a man with a four-horse team "down the valley for potatoes and other produce" to feed the "183 families — totaling 950 people who had received aid" by late September.[144]

Like early prospectors, Aspenites lived "off the land," picking ber-

ries, fishing the streams, and hunting deer and elk[145] in the hills, as J. B. Wheeler looked for another venture in Cripple Creek, Colorado— "the greatest gold mining district in America."[146] During winter, suffering increased when diptheria and scarlet fever plagued Aspen.[147] To aid the needy, Wheeler sent eighteen head of cattle.[148]

Thus after a decade of frenetic growth, the silver bubble burst and Aspen's economy collapsed. Mines closed, railroads cut services, businesses failed. The glory days of the Wheeler were done, also. Crowds dwindled, the number of professional troupes engaged declined, and Aspen's elegant opera house was often dark. Sixty years later in front of the Red Onion Saloon, a wrinkled old miner, sharing a wooden bench with some of his cronies and curious tourists, reminisced about the old silver days. He paused, looked up at Aspen Mountain, and then finished his story with , "Hell, we're the only things left, and we're mineralized. We got silver in our hair and lead in our rumps."

NOTES

[1]Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Co., 1895), 272.
[2]*Aspen Daily Times*, hereafter *Aspen Times*, February 25, 1888.
[3]Len Shoemaker, *Roaring Fork Valley* (Denver: Sage Bools, 1958), 35-36.
[4]Ibid., p. 43.
[5]Frank L. Wentworth, *Aspen on the Roaring Fork* (Lakewood, Colorado: Frank B. Rizzari, 1950),128.
[6]Ibid., 62.
[7]*Rocky Mountain News*, September 20, 1881.
[8]Shoemaker, *Roaring Fork Valley,* 81.
[9]Bettie Marie Daniels and Virginia McConnell, *The Springs of Manitou* (Denver: Sage Books, 1964), 85.
[10]*Aspen Times*, February 25, 1888.
[11]Shoemaker, *Roaring Fork Valley,* 69.
[12]Ibid., 84.
[13]*Aspen Times*, August 12, 1888.
[14]*The Denver Post*, December 3, 1918.
[15]Margaret Case Harriman, *And the Price is Right* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Co., 1958), 32.
[16]*Aspen Times,* March 21, 1889.
[17]John G. Canfield, *Mines and Mining Men of Colorado* (Denver: By the author, 1893), 41.
[18]*Aspen Times*, August 12, 1888.
[19]Ibid., May 9, 1885.
[20]Shoemaker, *Raoring Fork Valley,* 92.
[21]*Aspen Times*, May 9, 1885.
[22]Ibid., November 30, 1890.
[23]When not performing, women variety entertainers "worked" the boxes to get men to order "expensive drinks." *The Denver Post*, August 15, 1920. Quoted in Melvin Schoberlin, From *Candles to Footlights* (Denver: The Old West Publishing Co., 1941), 196.
[24]*Aspen Times*, January 1, 1887.
[25]Shoemaker, Roaring Fork Valley, 116.
[26]Marshall Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies* (Denver: Sage Books, 1961), 104.

[27]*Aspen Times*, February 25, 1888.
[28]Ibid., February 12, 1888.
[29]Ibid., February 16, 1888.
[30]Ibid., January 19, 1888.
[31]Ibid., January 3, 1888.
[32]Ibid., February 23, 1888.
[33]Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies*, 139.
[34]*Aspen Times*, August 12, 1888.
[35]Ibid., January 3, 1889.
[36]Ibid., February15, 1889.
[37]Ibid., March 21, 1889.
[38]Ibid., March 29, 1889.
[39]Ibid., February 18, 1889.
[40]Ibid., April 12, 1889.
[41]Ibid., March 19, 1889.
[42]Ibid., March 26, 1889.
[43]Ibid., November 15, 1888.
[44]Ibid., February 23, 1888.
[45]Lots R and S, Block 81, Clerk and Recorder's Book of Pitkin County, Colorado, Book 14, 349.
[46]*Aspen Times*, June 5, 1888.
[47]Ibid., June 1, 1888.
[48]Ibid., June 24, 1888.
[49]Ibid., July 11, 1888.
[50]Ibid., September 1, 1888.
[51]Ibid., September 28, 1888.
[52]Ibid., October 27, 1888.
[53]Ibid., November 15, 1888.
[54]Ibid., November 23, 1888.
[55]Ibid., November 28, 1888.
[56]Ibid., December 1, 1888.
[57]Ibid., December 7, 1888.
[58]Ibid., December 9, 1888.
[59]Ibid., December 11, 1888,.
[60]Elmer S. Crowley, *The History of the Tabor Grand Opera House, Denver Colorado, 1881-1891*, (Denver University, M.A. Thesis, 1940), 8-11.
[61]*Aspen Times*, December 27, 1888.
[62]Ibid., January 4, 1889.

[63]Ibid., September 9, 1891.
[64]Ibid., January 12, 1889.
[65]Ibid., March 21, 1889.
[66]Ibid., March 26, 1889.
[67]Ibid., April 24, 1889.
[68]Ibid., April 26, 1889.
[69]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[70]Ibid., April 8, 1889.
[71]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[72]Resistance dimmers were used about this time. Samuel Selden and Hunton D. Sellman, *Stage Scenery and Lighting*. (2d. rev.; New York: F.S. Crofts and Co., 1938), 312-316.
[73]*Aspen Times*, April 23, 1889.
[74]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[75]Ibid., April 8, 1889.
[76]Interview and personal observation in Aspen, Colorado, June 19, 1964.
[77]*Aspen Times*, April 23, 1889.
[78]Ibid., April 22, 1889.
[79]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[80]Ibid., April 24, 1889.
[81]In 1912 two fires eight days apart and both supposedly set by a "fire bug" occured on and around the Wheeler stage. The first fire was minor, but the second caused damage estimated at $30,000.00 and destroyed all scenery, stage equipment and properties. *Aspen-Democrat Times*, November 21, 1912.
[82]*Aspen Times*, July 24, 1889.
[83]Ibid., September 8, 1889.
[84]Personal observation, 1950-1954.
[85]*Aspen Times*, April 23, 1889.
[86]Ibid., January 1, 1893.
[87]Ibid., April 28, 1889.
[88]Ibid., March 26, 1889.
[89]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[90]Ibid., March 26, 1889.
[91]Ibid., April 23 1889.
[92]Ibid., June 15, 1892.
[93]Ibid., June 17, 1890.
[94]Ibid., April 18, 1891.

[95]Personal interview with Wayne Callahan, June 22, 1963, Aspen, Colorado.
[96]Personal interview with Robert C. Weise, June 24, 1963, Aspen, Colorado.
[97]Personal interview with Wayne Callahan, June 22, 1963, Aspen, Colorado.
[98]Personal observation, June 15, 1962.
[99]*Aspen Times*, April 23, 1889.
[100]Ibid., May 8, 1889.
[101]Ibid., March 29, 1893.
[102]Ibid., April 21, 1889.
[103]*The Denver Republican*, April 24, 1889.
[104]*Aspen Times*, April 20, 1889.
[105]Ibid., April 21, 1889.
[106]Ibid., April 21, 1889.
[107]Ibid., April 18, 1889.
[108]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[109]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[110]Ibid., April 24, 1889.
[111]Ibid., April 24, 1889.
[112]Ibid., April 23, 1889.
[113]Personal interview, June 23, 1962, Aspen, Colorado.
[114]*Aspen Times*, April 24, 1889.
[115] "Editorial Notes," *Colorado Magazine*, XX, No.6 (November, 1943), 239-240. Interview when Mr. Brown presented Colorado State Historical Society with the program and one of the original chairs from the opera house.
[116]*Aspen Times*, April 24, 1889.
[117] "Editorial Notes."
[118]*Aspen Times*, April 25, 1889.
[119]Ibid., April 25, 1889.
[120]Ibid., April 25, 1889.
[121]Ibid., April 26, 1889.
[122][George W. Loyd, ed] *Colorado Mines: A Souvenir of the New Mining Exchange Building* (Denver: Privately printed, n.d. [probably early 1890]), 45.
[123]*Aspen Times*, June 12, 1889.
[124]Ibid., June 9, 1889.

[125]Ibid., November 28, 1889.
[126]Canfield, Mines and Mining Men, 33.
[127]LeRoy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People*, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc, 1948), I: 457.
[128]Shoemaker, *Roaring Fork Valley,* 33.
[129]Hall, *History of the State of Colorado,* 276.
[130]*Aspen Times*, November 30, 1890.
[131]Henry Dudley Teetor, "The Silver Theatrical Circuit," *Magazine of Western History* XIII, 740-741; Barnard Hewitt, *Theater U.S.A., 1668-1957* (NY: McGraw Hill, 1959), 256.
[132]*Aspen Times*, November 25, 1890.
[133]Ibid., December 19, 1890.
[134]Ibid., January 3, 1891.
[135]Ibid., June 24, 1891.
[136]Ibid., February 9, 1892.
[137]Ibid., May 15, 1892.
[138]Ibid., May 19, 1892.
[139]Ibid., July 12, 1892.
[140]Ibid., August 26, 1892.
[141]Ibid., July 20, 1893.
[142]Ibid., July 8, 1893.
[143]Ibid., August 7, 1893.
[144]Ibid., September 25, 1893.
[145]Ibid., October 10, 1893.
[146]Ibid., October 24, 1893.
[147]Ibid., November 18, 1893.
[148]Ibid., November 21, 1893.

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