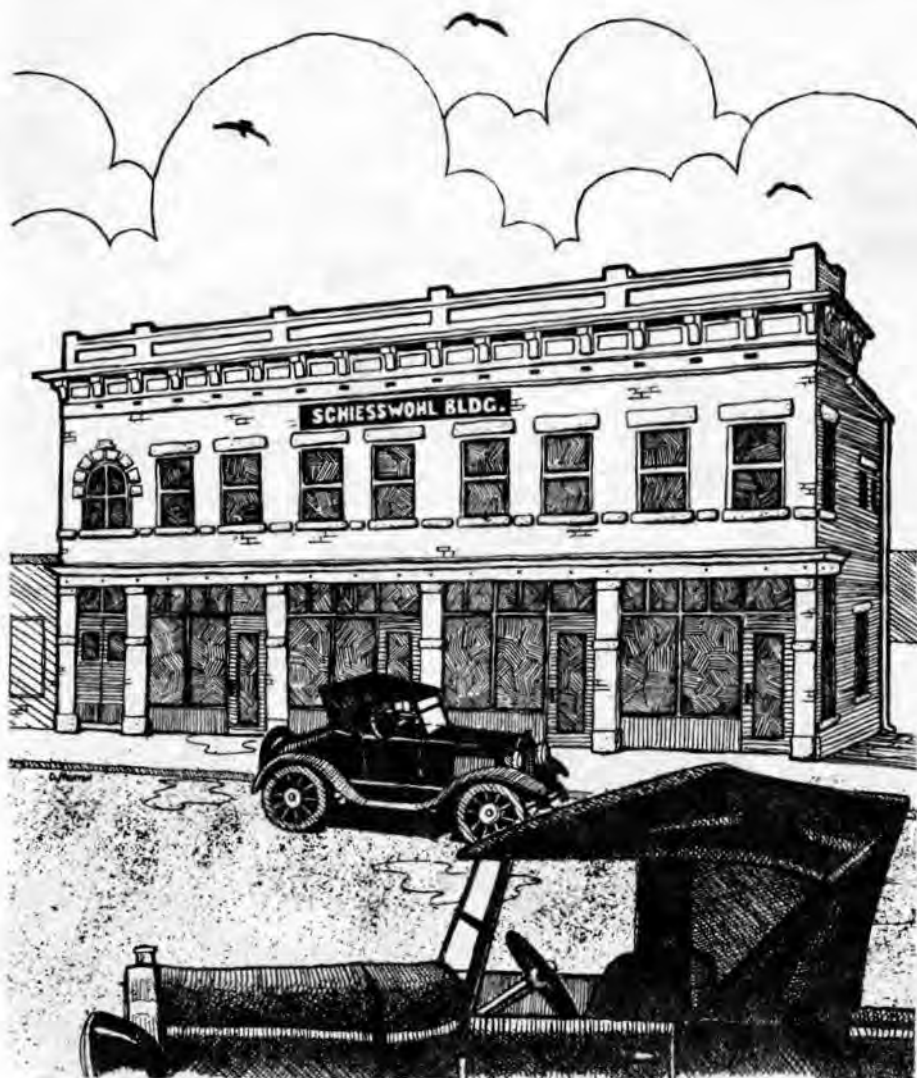


JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE

VOLUME 2, NO. 4

FALL 1937



Mesa college 

JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE is published quarterly by two student organizations at Mesa College: the Mesa College Historical Society and the Alpha-Gamma-Epsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. Annual subscriptions are \$10. (Single copies are available by contacting the editors of the Journal.) Retailers are encouraged to write for prices. Address subscriptions and orders for back issues to:

Mesa College
Journal of the Western Slope
P. O. Box 2647
Grand Junction, CO 81502

All written materials, drawings, maps, photographs and other graphics are property of the contributor. They may not be reproduced without the written consent of the editors of **JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE** or the contributor. Mesa College, the Mesa College Historical Society, and the Alpha-Gamma-Epsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta assume no responsibility for statements of fact or opinions made in **JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE**.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS: The purpose of **JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE** is to encourage scholarly study of Colorado's Western Slope. The primary goal is to preserve and record its history; however, articles on anthropology, economics, government, natural history, and sociology will be considered. Authorship is open to anyone who wishes to submit original and scholarly material about the Western Slope. The editors encourage letters of inquiry from prospective authors. Complete instructions for contributors to the Journal may be secured by inquiry to: Mesa College, **JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE**, P. O. Box 2647, Grand Junction, CO 81502.

JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE

Editorial Board

David P. Bailey
Mary E. Locke
Donald A. MacKendrick
Frankie Odum
Paul Reddin

Technical Illustrator

Michael L. Heinrich

Mesa College Historical Society

President Ken Schwietert
Vice President Mark Hatfield
Secretary Madelyn Reither
Treasurer Roxanne Dennis
Historian Scott Evens

Alpha-Gamma-Epsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta

President Vernon Keller
Vice President Frankie E. Odum
Secretary/Treasurer Chris Ivie
Historian Mary E. Locke

Contents

- The Schiesswohl Building: An Economic
Barometer of Grand Valley Business Activity,
1908-1934** 2
by David P. Bailey
- Book Review** 15
David Lavender, *The Telluride Story*.
- The New Deal Program as Seen From Loma** 17
by Gertrude Rader
- The Peach Festival, 1887-1909:
A Celebration of the Land** 22
by Barbara Bowman



Photo courtesy of Ray Schiesswohl

Schiesswohl family portrait taken around 1910. From left to right: Raymond, Henrietta, Jacob, and Chris Schiesswohl



The Schiesswohl Building: An Economic Barometer of Grand Valley Business Activity, 1908-1934

By David P. Bailey

David Bailey received his B.A. from Mesa College in 1987. He now works in Grand Junction. Mr. Bailey plans to attend graduate school where he will continue his study of history.

For seventy-nine years, the Schiesswohl Building, located on the corner of Sixth Street and Colorado Avenue in Grand Junction, Colorado, has served as a barometer of Grand Valley business activity. Constructed during the Grand Valley's first boom in the early 1900s, the building survived several recessions, weathered the Great Depression, and continues to adapt to the community's business needs. This study is concerned with the Schiesswohl Building's changing use, function, and form as it accommodated to Grand Junction's business growth from 1908 to 1934.

In the early 1890s, Jacob H. Schiesswohl moved from Denver to Fruita after his doctor recommended that he find a healthier climate to speed his recovery from a serious stomach ailment. He decided to move to the Western Slope of Colorado for two reasons: the area suited his needs for a moderate climate, and he felt a good living was possible in the rapidly developing Grand Valley fruit industry.¹

After Elam Blain successfully grew fruit in the Grand Valley beginning in 1884, other farmers followed his lead and planted

extensive orchards of pears, apples, peaches, and apricots in the valley from Loma to Palisade.² Consequently, a very successful fruit industry sprang up and attracted settlers to the Grand Valley. Good profits could be realized even from a small orchard. As a result, Grand Valley promoters disseminated the idea that a man could get rich with only ten acres in "Colorado's Garden of Eden."³ Hundreds of settlers came to the area in hopes of gaining wealth from a small parcel of land. Most would find that they could survive with a small acreage, but that few would become wealthy from a small investment in land.

Schiesswohl had such dreams. He purchased a forty-acre orchard and farm near Fruita.⁴ While farming in 1885, he married Henrietta Yessen. Their first son, Chris, was born in 1897, and a second son, Raymond, was born in 1899. After almost a decade of hard work, agricultural life proved too rigorous for his delicate health, and in 1904 he sold the farm.⁵ He then moved to Grand Junction, using the profits from the sale of the farm to buy a house at 619 Chipeta Avenue.⁶

Schiesswohl was convinced of the potential of the fruit industry and was determined to continue in a fruit-related business. He started selling real estate out of his home, specializing in fruit and farm properties.⁷ His business was successful, perhaps because he had been in agriculture and could relate to farmers. In addition, real estate prices had soared after large numbers of settlers and investors began paying inflated prices for the limited amount of productive fruit property. By 1907, Schiesswohl had acquired enough capital to open a real estate and insurance agency in a rented office at 550 Main Street.⁸ This was only a temporary move because he had decided to build a two story office building in downtown Grand Junction to house his real estate and insurance agency and to assure a steady income from renting the additional office space.

On April 2, 1907, he purchased a vacant lot at the corner of Sixth Street and Colorado Avenue in downtown Grand Junction from James G. Carnahan.⁹ Directly north of the site stood the Mesa County Courthouse, located on the southwest corner of Sixth Street and Main Street, and across the street, on the southeast corner of Sixth Street and Colorado Avenue was Grand Junction City Hall. Proximity to the seats of local government made the location of the new building ideal.

At this time, the Grand Valley was enjoying a boom cycle, as evidenced by the 1907 fruit crop, which consisted of 1,200 railroad cars of fruit worth over a million dollars. The burgeoning fruit industry produced a rising number of real estate

businesses. By the end of 1907, there were 43 real estate agents serving the Grand Valley.¹⁰ Despite the fierce competition, Schiesswohl prospered, and within a year of purchasing the Carnahan property had enough money to begin construction of his new office building. On May 5, 1908, he contracted with Louis Spallone and Nunzio Grasso, two prominent Grand Junction brick and stone contractors, to build the concrete sidewalk, flooring, and structural foundation for the building. The contractors were to "furnish materials for and do all the work and to construct walls, footing, foundation and concrete flooring, excavate the ground for such construction and remove dirt excavated at their expense and construct steps, sidewalks, and gutters for the building."¹¹

J.B. Boyer, a well-known local architect drew the blueprints for the building's foundation. Boyer, a resident of Grand Junction since 1899, had his architectural office at 535 Main Street. He had begun his career as a carpenter and builder; then became an architect and designed many of Grand Junction's business blocks and elegant residences.¹²

The payment clause in Schiesswohl's contract with Spallone and Grasso reflected early twentieth century business dealings, showing that bartering was still used extensively in the Grand Valley. The contract stipulated that six hundred and forty dollars would be paid when half the excavation, piling, and foundation were finished, and the remaining half would come when the basement and basement floors were completed and approved by the architect. Contractors were to provide and give Schiesswohl proof that the structure was lien free. In return, Spallone and Grasso would receive one black driving horse called "Bud," warranty deed to ten acres of land, and eight shares of Grand Valley irrigation stock.¹³

While work was being done on the foundation, Schiesswohl contracted with another architect, J.R. Wilson to design the upper half of the building.¹⁴ Having two architects must have provided some interesting conversations when they discussed their plans for the building. Wilson chose the Italianate commercial design for the two story brick structure, a style very popular for office buildings in the late 1890s and the early 1900s in the western United States.¹⁵ Most of the Italianate structures were two stories and the most common building plan, occasionally varied, included a false front with a tall, narrow deep shop on the main level and a central indented entrance, flanked by large display windows and a door leading to the apartments or offices upstairs.¹⁶ Wilson's plans called for a repetition of this form in a sequence of several shops under the same upper floor, a sheet-



Photo courtesy of Ray Schiesswohl

The Schiesswohl Building shortly after completion, September, 1908. The far right office on the main floor was J. H. Schiesswohl's real estate and insurance office.

metal cornice and roof to create a wider, two-story business block. The most prominent feature of the Italianate design was the decoratively treated sheetmetal horizontal molding on the top edge of the false front, which was included in Wilson's plan for the building.

The Schiesswohl Building plans did not follow Italianate design in every aspect; however, the Italianate floor plan was followed by creating four long and narrow main floor offices measuring 12 feet high, 12 feet wide, and 23 feet long. But instead of a central entrance from the street, the entrance was put on the far left side. The stairs led up to four second-story offices that measured 12 feet high, 12 feet wide, and 18 feet long. The second story offices were smaller than those downstairs because a five-foot wide hallway ran the entire length of the second floor.

Another unique feature of Wilson's architectural plan was the use of Richardsonian Romanesque Revival architecture to enhance the basic Italianate design of the building. The Richardsonian Romanesque style was characterized by the use of rough-textured sandstone building materials and heavy, round rock-faced arches to give a medieval, fortress-like integrity to buildings.¹⁷ The Schiesswohl Building plans included a

Italianate and Richardsonian Romanesque Revival architectural aspects of the Schiesswohl Building



Photo taken by David Bailey

The Richardson Romanesque Revival rough-faced stone arch above the entrance to the second floor of the Schiesswohl Building.



Photo taken by David Bailey

The brick false front that rises above the actual roofline and the elaborate sheet-metal cornice is typical of Italianate Commercial Architecture.

Richardsonian rough-hued arch above the doorway leading to the second floor and the use of massive, rusticated sandstone lintels to accent the windows.

After Spallone and Grasso finished the foundation work, Schiesswohl contracted with the R.A. Matthews Construction Company to construct the building.¹⁸ The total cost of the construction was set at \$4,150.¹⁹ Payment for the construction was scheduled by completion phases: \$1,000 when brick work was completed and accepted; \$1,000 when the rough floors were laid and the roof was completed and ready for acceptance; \$1,525 when entire building was completed in accordance to plans and specifications.²⁰ Schiesswohl added a provision to protect himself from any unpaid bills or faulty workmanship. He specified that the last \$625.00 would not be paid until 65 days after the building was completed, allowing himself time to be certain that the work satisfied him, and that there were no mechanic's liens against the structure for unpaid labor and materials.²¹

Three days after his contract with R.A. Matthews was signed, J.H. Schiesswohl engaged a third contractor, C.T. Trobitz, to put in the steam heating plant, plumbing, and all the gas piping for \$1,100.²² The building was completed in 48 days and Schiesswohl moved into his office on September 1, 1908.

Schiesswohl chose the office on the main floor directly across the alley from the Mesa County Courthouse. His office had been specially equipped with a walk-in vault, measuring 2 1/2 feet deep, five feet wide, and 11 feet tall, made by Sargent and Greenleaf Company of Rochester, New York. Schiesswohl did not trust banks and felt the vault would be needed because of the large number of cash transactions in his real estate business.

The first renting tenant of the new structure was the Linholm Piano Company which opened for business on November 2, 1908. The firm advertised a ten-day opening sale in *The Daily Sentinel* giving \$50 to \$100 off on "their superb line of pianos."²³ On November 11, 1908, Dr. H. Freudenberger, a physician and surgeon, opened his office on the second floor above Schiesswohl's real estate and insurance office.²⁴

By 1909 Schiesswohl offered services in addition to real estate and insurance: he sold Colorado bonds, and made mortgage loans and investments. He dabbled in land speculation during this time. One of his speculative ventures included planning a housing subdivision outside Mack, called the Schiesswohl Addition. The planned subdivision did not materialize because economic problems developed in the Grand Valley.²⁵



Photo courtesy of Ray Schiesswohl

The grand opening of the Super Service Station in 1925. Standing in front of the building is the owner, Ray Schiesswohl.

By 1910, Schiesswohl reached the height of his career. He was a successful real estate agent, owned an impressive office building, and through his land speculation efforts had acquired 341 acres of land worth over \$4,000.²⁶ By the end of 1910, however, two serious problems ended Schiesswohl's business career. First, difficulties developed in the Grand Valley fruit industry. The spread of irrigation in the valley caused the water table to rise, and brought "seepage" which killed the trees by drowning. Also, the rising water brought alkali which poisoned trees.²⁷ In addition, the codling moth, which destroyed apples and pears with worms, had built up a resistance to conventional arsenic spray, resulting in widespread and devastating infestation of the orchards. To curb the spread of the insect, orchardists began pulling trees. Half a million trees were uprooted and destroyed.²⁸ These problems cast a gloom over the fruit industry's future in the Grand Valley.

Schiesswohl decided to get out of the Grand Valley real estate business and minimize his losses, after seepage ruined some of his land.²⁹ By the end of 1910 his real estate office was closed and he had begun to look for a new business venture. Illness prevented this: the same stomach illness that had plagued him in



Photo courtesy of Ray Schiesswohl

The Super Service Station, 1925. The south wall of the Schiesswohl Building can be seen in the background. People are, left to right: Tom Crow, A Texaco truck driver, Ray Schiesswohl, the Super Service Station owner, and W. F. Miles, the Texaco agent for Grand Junction.

his youth prevented him from reentering business. His health deteriorated rapidly and he was never able to go in business again, though he continued to live off his property rentals and real estate holdings.

The Schiesswohl Building, affected by the downturn of Grand Valley economic conditions, experienced sporadic business occupancy from 1911 to early 1917. In early 1912, Schiesswohl's vacated office was rented by another businessman, E.N. Case, who operated a real estate and loan business similar to Schiesswohl's former enterprise.³⁰ However, Case's specialty was alfalfa ranches and general farm lands instead of fruit lands. Case was one of the city's earliest real estate agents, having moved to Grand Junction in 1895.³¹

Dr. Freudenberger moved to the Reed Building in 1912, and a new tenant, Cornelia McMillian opened a dress-making shop in the building.³² The intervening years between 1912 and 1917 marked a slowdown in the Grand Valley business activity. The fruit industry, plagued by insect and seepage problems, faced yet

another problem after 1913: falling fruit prices.³³ The lack of growth is evidenced by the Grand Junction census of 1916, which listed 7,000 people, 765 residents less than the 1910 census had recorded.³⁴ The Schiesswohl Building tenancy during this period consisted of small service industry-related businesses, such as dress shops and barber shops, most of them seldom renting for more than a six-month period.

The economic doldrums of the Grand Valley ended abruptly after April of 1917, when war production bolstered the national economy. The war effort required coal, and the Grand Valley had vast reserves of the fuel. The Grand Junction Coal Company received a 300,000 ton government contract to supply coal to the United States Navy.³⁵ Another type of mineral needed for the war effort was vanadium, used as a steel alloy. Deposits of vanadium located in Western Colorado helped bring mining-related commerce to the Grand Valley.³⁶ In 1918, two mining engineers, R.E. Meserve and F.M. Dunlap,³⁷ and a lawyer, L.L. Morrison,³⁸ rented an office in the Schiesswohl Building, evidently offering technical, and legal skills in the search for mineral wealth. The mining boom slowed after the end of World War I, but steady growth in agriculture and mining helped stabilize the Grand Valley's economy during the 1920s.

In 1924, Schiesswohl's son, Ray, quit his job at the Federal Reserve Bank in Denver and moved to Grand Junction to help his father manage his business affairs and to start his own business. The younger Schiesswohl suggested that his father purchase the two vacant lots behind the Schiesswohl Building in order to provide additional automobile parking and to allow for future expansion.³⁹ Concern about space for parking automobiles reflected a change that had come to the Grand Valley. War-time prosperity and the growing popularity of the internal combustion engine had made automobiles a part of life in Grand Junction. Smart businessmen, the Schiesswohls realized, could not ignore cars. On July 10, 1924, Schiesswohl bought the two lots from Mary Strunk for \$2,500.⁴⁰

In 1925, the Sinclair Oil Company offered to lease the lot for \$40 a month if the owner would build a gasoline station on it. In addition to the lease money, Schiesswohl would receive 3 cents for every gallon of gas sold by the station.⁴¹ Schiesswohl accepted the offer, and contracted W.O. Allison Construction Company to build the station for \$1,300.00.⁴² The completed filling station was a small brick structure measuring 15 feet wide and thirty feet long, with a roofed canopy that extended out above the gasoline pump island. Attached to one of the brick pillars that held up the canopy was a hand operated gasoline pump with a glass bubble.⁴³ A serious problem developed shortly after the station was

completed: the Sinclair Oil Company backed out of the tentative agreement to lease the station.⁴⁴

Schiesswohl needed a lessee immediately, and he contacted Bill Lord, a friend in Denver who was regional manager of the Texas Oil Company (Texaco). By coincidence, one of Lord's gasoline dealers in Grand Junction had refused to renew a lease and was holding out for a better deal. Lord immediately signed a lease for Schiesswohl's filling station on September 9, 1925, and agreed to pay \$60 a month and 3 cents for every gallon of gas sold.⁴⁵ Shortly after signing the lease, the Super Service station opened for business, prominently displaying the Texaco logo.

By 1926, the Schiesswohl Building had for the first time, full business occupancy. The downstairs offices had been rented by Aircraft Press, a printing company, and the upstairs offices had been rented by the Federal Savings and Loan Association, the Eureka Oil Company, and a real estate agent, W.S. Wallace.⁴⁶

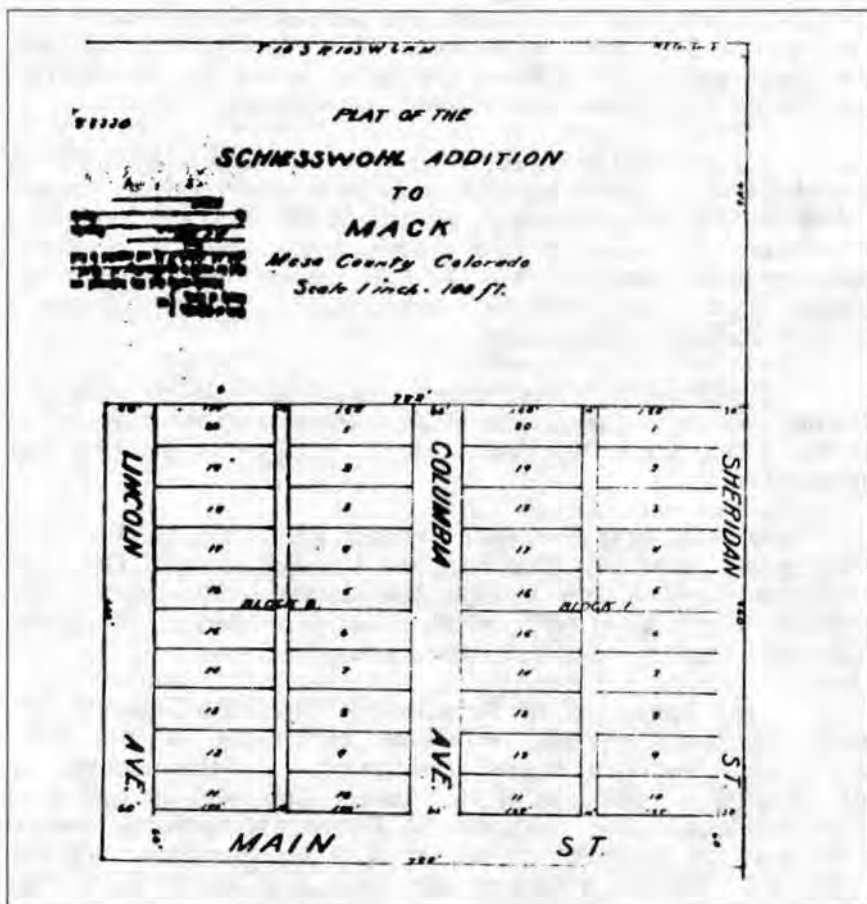
This boom in business was short-lived however, for by 1928 the building was back down to two tenants, Robert Mullen, a dry cleaner, and Kay M. Jorgenson, a barber. This lack of business rentals led to a new use for the Schiesswohl Building: the four upstairs offices were converted into two apartments. Ray Schiesswohl and his wife, Hazel, moved into one, and Bill Murr, a local car dealer, and his wife rented the second apartment.

The Grand Valley in the early 1930s had not been affected deeply by the Great Depression. The Texas Oil Company renewed the lease from Schiesswohl in 1931⁴⁷ and 1932.⁴⁸ In 1932, however, the effects of the Depression began to be felt in the area. The Grand Valley National Bank failed in 1933 and many farms and businesses went into foreclosure, causing a migration out of the valley.⁴⁹

In 1934, the Depression personally affected Ray Schiesswohl when the Texas Oil Company notified him that it could no longer lease his filling station. Schiesswohl drove to Denver in an effort to locate another firm to lease the station. The first oil company representative he talked to was Lou Willkie, the future presidential candidate Wendell Willkie's brother, who was the regional manager for Phillips Petroleum. Willkie did not lease the station, but offered to pay him 5 cents a gallon for regular gas, and 6 cents a gallon for ethyl gas if Schiesswohl would run the station himself. Another provision that Phillips Petroleum wanted in exchange for an arrangement was that two underground gasoline tanks, one 15,000 gallon tank for regular gas, and one 12,000 gallon tank for ethyl gas, be installed at

Schiesswohl's filling station. The larger tanks would enable Phillips to ship large quantities of gas by rail.⁵⁰ Although the modifications would be expensive, Schiesswohl agreed to them because of the generous amount per gallon he would receive from gasoline sales.

When Schiesswohl returned to Grand Junction, he discovered the only logical place to put the large underground tanks was directly below the Super Service Station. Since he was forced to tear down the station he decided to build a larger station.



Map courtesy of Schiesswohl Realty

The plat J. H. Schiesswohl had drawn up in 1909 for a proposed housing addition to Mack. This was one of his speculative ventures during the fruit boom years in the Grand Valley.

He hired the Fred Sperber Construction Company to tear down the old station and build the new one.⁵¹

The new service station, completed by the end of 1934, was attached to the southern end of the Schiesswohl Building and ran in an east-west direction parallel to Colorado Avenue and extended across the two lots behind the Schiesswohl Building. The station lacked the architectural flair of the older Schiesswohl building to which it was attached. The new station, a one story, functionally designed brick building, measured 55 feet across and 30 feet long.⁵² It housed a grease rack, Grand Junction's first indoor car wash, and a small office to carry out the station's business transactions. Two gasoline pump islands were built where the old filling station had stood. Modern electric gasoline pumps replaced the old hand-operated ones.

Schiesswohl borrowed money for the renovation from his family and from the First National Bank in Grand Junction.⁵³ Many people told Schiesswohl he was foolish to spend money on renovations and a new service station in the midst of the worst depression the United States had ever known. But Schiesswohl proved them wrong: this forerunner of the modern full-service gasoline station attracted many customers.

People liked the convenience of filling their car with gas, having it lubricated, and washed all at the same location.⁵⁴ In the midst of the Great Depression, the building's new addition was prospering.

The building of the gasoline station addition in 1934 was the last major architectural change to the Schiesswohl Building. With few modifications, the gasoline station continued to serve the community until 1973, when it was converted to a business office after the Schiesswohls left the gasoline business.

The history of the Schiesswohl Building's business has mirrored the prevailing economic conditions of the local economy. Agriculture, energy, and the coming of the machine age all impacted the economy of the Western Slope and the history of this building. The Schiesswohl Building's historical record served as an economic barometer of business activity between 1908 and 1934, paralleling the bust and boom cycle that characterized the Grand Valley's economy.

NOTES

¹ Interview with Raymond H. Schiesswohl, son of Jacob H. Schiesswohl, Grand Junction, Colorado, 15 November, 1986.

² Richard E. Tope, *An Objective History of Grand Junction*, (Grand Junction: Museum of Western Colorado, 1982), pp. 49-50.

³ *Grand Junction News*, 25 April, 1908. This article traced the development of the prosperous fruit industry in the Grand Valley and is a reprint of an article by Louis Meyer in the *Denver Times*.

⁴ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 15 November, 1986.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ W.B. Anthony and J.C. Kelley, compilers, *Daily Sentinel's 1904 Directory*, (Grand Junction: *Daily Sentinel*, 1904), p. 131.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *R.L. Polk's Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, Vol. 3. (Salt Lake City: R.L. Polk and Co., 1907), p. 156.

⁹ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #66826, Book 120, p. 311. The exact location of the property is Lot 17 in Block 117.

¹⁰ *R.L. Polk's Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, Vol. 3, p. 304.

¹¹ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #75377, Book 58, p. 588.

¹² Sumner and Horn, *The Booster Book* (August 1905) p.31, Museum of Western Colorado Collection, Grand Junction, Colorado.

¹³ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #75377, Book 58, p. 588. The location of the ten acres was at E 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec. 35, Twp. 1 N. R. 1 W. Ute Meridian.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Book 58, p. 597.

¹⁵ C. Eric Stoehr, *Bonanza Victorian: Architecture and Society in Colorado Mining Towns*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), p. 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁸ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #76773, Book 58, p. 597.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #77093, Book 58, p. 599.

²³ *The Daily Sentinel*, 2 November, 1908.

²⁴ *The Daily Sentinel*, 11 November, 1908.

²⁵ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 15 November, 1986.

²⁶ *R.L. Polk and Company, Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, (Salt Lake City: R.L. Polk and Co., Publishers, 1909), p.353.

²⁷ Tope, *An Objective History of Grand Junction*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 15 November, 1986.

³⁰ *R.L. Polk and Company, Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, (Colorado City: R.L. Polk and Co., Directory Publishers, 1912), p.464.

³¹ Sumner and Horn, *The Booster Book*, p. 71.

³² *R.L. Polk and Company, Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, (Colorado City: R.L. Polk and Co., Directory Publishers, 1912), p.421.

³³ Mary Rait, "Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade from 1881-1931", M.A. Thesis, University of Colorado, 1931, p. 80.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁶ Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, eds. *A Colorado History*, (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1982), p. 288.

³⁷ *R.L. Polk and Company, Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, (Colorado City: R.L. Polk and Co., Directory Publishers, 1918), p. 203.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁹ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 15 November, 1986.

⁴⁰ *Deed Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Option, Contract Number #200029, Book 279, p. 82. The exact location of the property is Lots 18 and 19 in Block 117.

⁴¹ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 10 December, 1986.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Sublease, Contract Number 218869, Book 284, p. 597.

⁴⁶ *R.L. Polk and Company, Grand Junction and Mesa County Directory*, (Colorado Springs: R.L. Polk and Co., Directory Publishers, 1926), pp. 406, 424, and 430.

⁴⁷ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #267113, Book 333, p. 137.

⁴⁸ *Contract Records*, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, Contract Number #272766, Book 333, p. 534.

⁴⁹ Paul Reddin, "Hard Times but Good Times: Grand Junction Women During the Depression," *Journal of the Western Slope*, (Winter, 1986):4-5.

⁵⁰ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 10 December, 1986.

⁵¹ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 20 December, 1986.

⁵² Schiesswohl Building file, Mesa County Assessor's Office, Grand Junction, Colorado.

⁵³ Ray Schiesswohl interview, 20 December, 1986.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

BOOK REVIEW

David Lavender, *The Telluride Story*. Ouray: Wayfinder Press. 1987. Pp. 68.

David Lavender is one of America's foremost historians of the West. He has written approximately 30 books and numerous articles about Colorado and the Western United States. Two of those works were nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Lavender's present work is complemented by the work of George Huey, a well-known photographer whose pictures have appeared in *Arizona Highways* and *Natural History*.

The Telluride Story is a narrative and pictographical history of one of Colorado's most colorful mountain towns. Lavender relates the gold and silver discoveries in the 1870s; the tumultuous rise of the town; its heyday; its eventual decline as a mining town; and its rebirth as a ski and recreational area in the 1980s. Lavender's abilities as a historian provide insight into all the periods which he discusses. The book captures the pioneer spirit of Telluride residents, from the early pioneers who faced seemingly impassable mountain trails, inclement weather, and financial uncertainty, to their modern counterparts who converted a nearly abandoned mining town into a bustling ski resort.

Lavender's strong narrative is enhanced by Huey's photographs of Telluride and its mountain surroundings. In addition to fine color pictures, the volume contains many historical photographs printed on paper with an antique finish that gives the reader the feeling of looking through an old photo album.

Lavender and Huey's combination of literary and artistic talent captures the spirit and beauty of this Western Slope town. *The Telluride Story* is available at local bookstores.

Reviewed by David Bailey

THE NEW DEAL PROGRAM AS SEEN FROM LOMA

By Gertrude Rader

Editor's Introduction. The following article records a Western Slope woman's strong reaction to New Deal measures designed to help America's small farmers in the 1930s. The article is a frank and powerful piece of work. For Gertrude Rader and her husband, there was little good about the "New Deal." The government's program for farmers was poorly managed, and the "Helpers" it brought to the Rader farm were inadequately prepared for their position. In fact, to the Raders, these "Helpers" were a nuisance and, in some cases, individuals who said and did stupid things, made survival even more difficult for common rural folks during the Depression.

The Late L.L. Haseman, an interviewer for the Mesa County's Oral History project, wrote this article several years ago from transcripts of interviews with Mrs. Rader. The tapes and transcripts of those interviews are in the Oral History Collection at the Mesa County Library. Mrs. Rader is familiar to most residents of Loma where she lived for many years. Presently she is in Independence Village, Fruita, Colorado.

The editors of the the Journal of the Western Slope neither endorse nor disagree with the opinions expressed in this piece. We view it as a primary document about the New Deal, expressing a heartfelt reaction to a difficult period for farmers on the Western Slope. We welcome articles giving a different view.

In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt initiated what he called a New Deal that he declared would bring greater benefits for labor, the farmer, and the unemployed. What many of the farmers we knew called it would be unprintable.

We were visited by successive young men who declared they were from the Government and had come to HELP! Each would give a run down on his education to try to make a believer out of the farmer and to boost his own ego. We never had the same character twice so this litany had to be repeated with each visitor.

One late afternoon two government "Helpers" came to check on how many "bovine critters" and how many hogs and pigs we had. They decided we had one too many heifers and two too many pigs. They shot all three of them just as the sun was going down. We had a young steer we had intended to butcher in the fall for meat but they selected a yearling heifer out of good stock and decided she was the one to be disposed of. She had been born during the winter and about half her tail and part of one ear was frozen off so they picked her and two runt pigs and killed them and told us to bury them.

We didn't have electricity or even an ice box. We knew we had no intention of letting that meat go into the ground. The animals were young and healthy and we needed meat, so as soon as the government "helpers" were gone we hung the carcasses in a tree and dressed them out and then did our usual farm evening chores. We had to skin the two pigs because we didn't want to take time to boil water and scrape them. Blow flies were plentiful in those days before we had DDT so we had to wrap the bodies in wet sheets to keep the flies away. We had two barrels we used to settle ditch water in, so we emptied and cleaned one of them and filled it with drinking water. Then we added enough ice cream salt to make a brine solution that would float an egg. We worked until almost daylight getting that meat cooled out in the salt water.

The next morning we went into Fruita and got the chemicals necessary to make corned beef and some Morton's pork cure salt. The beef had to be cut into small pieces to fit into fruit canning jars, covered with corned beef solution, sealed, and processed. The pigs, each weighing about forty pounds, we rubbed with the pork cure and rolled in flour sacks. We got it much too salty but we par-boiled it later when we used it. And we followed the Government Helpers' instructions - we buried all that meat, though it was under vegetables in our food storage cellar.

Later we got a government check for \$7.00. We never knew for sure what it was to pay for because another government "Helper" had decided in the meantime that we had 2 1/2 acres too much of wheat and directed that we plow it under. He didn't tell us NOT to run that wheat through the cattle's digestive systems before we plowed it under - so we did.

Late one evening one of the government men came to the house and asked how many sheep we were grazing on our lawn. We knew that if there were sheep in our yard they were not ours so we hurried out with him. Then he said, "I didn't see them, I just heard them. Listen! Don't you hear them?" Would you believe it? He had heard the frogs and toads croaking out in the irrigation ditch and thought that their singing was sheep bleating? I don't know whether it was the same "college graduate" or not who went to the next farm from us and said he was sent to see about some unproductive ewes - except he pronounced it "e-was". After killing five of them he wrote a report to be signed by the farmer which said he had slaughtered "5 yous". Why didn't the government send farm people if it really wanted to help the farmers, rather than those so-called college educated men? It is a really good question. These characters didn't know how to calculate irrigation water rights in an area that survived solely by irrigation; they didn't know how to figure land acreage; they didn't know what crop seed

looked like. As one of our neighbors expressed it, "Farm changes were made with government dollars and hell's help."

We had a piece of land along an irrigation return wash which was eroding. We decided to plant strawberry clover along it to hold the soil. One of these government "Helpers" stepped around it and counted his steps, multiplied that by three as he figured he had stepped three feet with each step, then he divided it by four to get what he said was the square area in square feet. Of course he got exactly one-half of the true area. We could have cashed in on this but didn't and the government agreed to pay for most of the strawberry clover seed.

One day I was planting oats as a cover crop for yellow clover when one of the government "Helpers" showed up and asked what I was planting. I told him it was yellow clover, which was to be the permanent crop. He walked over to a seed sack which my husband had placed along side the field. It happened to be oats. He ran his hand through the seed and remarked, "That's nice plump clover seed." I won't say what I thought of his intelligence because any farmer knows that clover seed is about 1/10 the size of oats. He took a handful of the oats, tied it up in his handkerchief and took it down to Knowles' Feed and Seed Store and asked them what kind of seed it was. When Mr. Knowles told him it was oats he asked to see clover seed. Mr. Knowles remarked that "Even a jackass knows the difference between oats and clover seed."

We had more than twenty head of milk cows in a fenced-in area near our home. One morning we saw some men down there so my husband and I went down to see what they were up to. The men were from the local C.C.C. camp near Fruita and were putting out poisoned bait to kill prairie dogs. They had not asked our permission to trespass on our farm. They used a common tin cup to dip out the oats and they were pouring it right at the top of each burrow. One of our cows was fatally poisoned from eating these oats and we had to call the veterinarian to save four more of our milk cows. We had to dispose of the poisoned cow through the local hide and rendering company, as we couldn't sell her meat locally. We went to the C.C.C. camp to complain, my husband lost his temper, but who could fight the government? The C.C.C. people didn't accept responsibility for our dead cow or our vet bills but they did help to cover the rest of the poisoned oats.

One good thing about the C.C.C. camp, it did give many of the school age boys a chance to go to Fruita schools. Some of the local people objected but I believe it was a good move. They were average in school work and in getting into mischief. They often

got blamed for things they hadn't done and very little credit for the good things they did do. Schooling these young men made a lot more sense than killing off farm animals, (just a few years later meat and dairy products had to be rationed and stamps issued to permit a purchase) or plowing under wheat and then having to eat corn bread a certain number of meals each week because there was a wheat shortage.

At one time the government decided to take pictures from the air to record improvements and to check on crop acreage and livestock feed. One evening two men appeared with pictures to have us identify land farmed by Clarence Turner. Russian thistle (tumbleweed) had blown against the fence for a considerable distance. The men asked, "What is the advantage of having such long haystacks" He showed us the pictures to prove his point and, though I will admit the pictures of the tumbleweed did look something like regular hay stacks, no experienced farmer would have made such a mistake. Shortly after that the tumbleweed caught fire and burned out most of the fence posts. Whether the government "Helpers" had anything to do with the fire we will never know but it never had caught fire before or in the years since.

These so called "Helpers" were a nuisance. They kept the farmers from their work, they asked dozens of questions that weren't even related to farming and they weren't even careful where they walked or what time of day or evening they appeared. We were expected to stop our work to help them. Just who was the helper?

I served as Secretary-Treasurer for the Loma Ditch and Lateral Company and its spur ditches for thirty years. I never had any trouble figuring the irrigation water for each of the farms or dealing with the other irrigation companies in the Valley. But the government "Helpers" were a different story, partly because the same man never returned and we had to educate a new man each time water questions came up. Also, they always listed the farmers in alphabetical order rather in the sequence each received water coming down the line from the headgate. Often they had the Loma Ditch and Lateral mixed in with the Fruita Canal and Land Company. Each new man had to hike up to the ditch to be shown a headgate and how it worked. This was two hours of effort and lots of walking. On one occasion one of these young men said the wrong thing just as we finished figuring water requirements. He hit the table with his fist and declared he was "angry, frustrated and embarrassed at having a WOMAN show him how to figure water needs." It was his contempt in the word "woman" that caused my figures to go into the fire and left him to

refigure for himself. But over a thirty year span one should expect to have to deal with at least one spoiled brat. In my opinion, it was who he knew, not what he knew that got him his government job. All of us felt that the New Deal created employment for men like this at our expense.

The New Deal did benefit the Valley by bringing in many new families in the Resettlement Program, for which we were thankful. Also, it provided a great deal of new construction work for the area. There were many other projects covered by the New Deal but our family was involved only in the farm program. We were having trouble enough just keeping our family fed, clothed, in school, and comfortable without getting involved in any of the other programs.

TAKE THE SENTINEL, and get all the news all the time.

THE DAILY SENTINEL.

TRY A Want Ad in THE SENTINEL--they can't be beat.

Exclusive Afternoon Associated Press for the City of Grand Junction

NO. 171

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1909

GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1909

ONE PER CENT

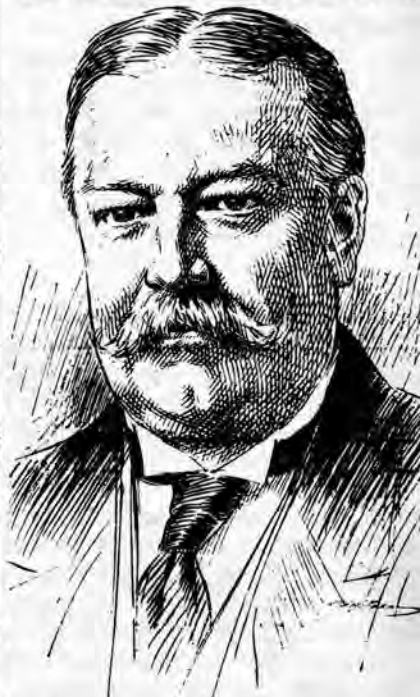
NO. 97

PRESIDENT TAFT, GRAND JUNCTION'S GUEST, CHEERED BY 15,000 PEOPLE A MIGHTY RECEPTION TENDERED NATION'S CHIEF DURING HOUR HE MADE THIS CITY CAPITAL OF THE UNION--MEMORABLE DAY

NUMEROUS Picturesque Features, Meets Famous Indians, Greatest Crowds in City's History--Gov. Shafroth, Secretary Ballinger and Other Notables With the President Not a Hitch in the Arrangements--Complete Story of the Day.

Full Text of President Taft's Speech.

The opening in the morning part of the address delivered this morning at the New County fair at Grand Junction... I feel that upon my return home I entered Colorado... I feel that upon my return home I entered Colorado... I feel that upon my return home I entered Colorado...



What I propose to do is to examine the situation with as much care as possible, and if certain measures seem to be required... I feel that upon my return home I entered Colorado... I feel that upon my return home I entered Colorado... I feel that upon my return home I entered Colorado...

...the President of the United States... the President of the United States... the President of the United States...

News of Taft's visit to Grand Junction dominated the front page of The Daily Sentinel on September 23, 1909.

The Peach Festival, 1887-1909: A Celebration of the Land

by Barbara Bowman

Barbara Bowman earned a B.A. from Mesa College in Behavioral Science with an emphasis in Career Counseling and Guidance. She presently devotes her time to raising her family and working with Young Life, a group devoted to helping adolescents and their families.

The great results of the past ten years of unceasing toil and privation have been fully exemplified in the magnificent displays from orchard and field. The soil has been subdued also, and made to bear so richly and abundantly that it has surpassed even our most sanguine expectations.¹

The newsman who penned these lines for the *Grand Junction News* in 1891 reflected the sense of accomplishment and pride of Mesa County's early settlers. In the decade after the expulsion of the Ute Indians, pioneer farmers had transformed the Grand Valley by digging irrigation ditches which carried water to the thirsty land. The land had responded with bumper crops. Fruit, peaches in particular, thrived in the Grand Valley. As in most frontier areas, settlers, businessmen, and speculators publicized their locality.² Advertising "orchard and field" became a priority for this part of Colorado's Western Slope.

This study focuses on early celebrations, called "Peach Festivals," which were a part of publicizing the Grand Valley and celebrating the style of life there. These festivals, or fairs, reflected the moods and priorities of the residents of Grand Junction and surrounding communities. While other kinds of publicity, like real estate brochures and railroad advertising were the products of individuals or small groups seeking to promote the area, Peach Festivals had a democratic character. They were expressions of community pride designed to interest the population of the Grand Valley as well as outsiders. To appeal to

diverse audiences, they combined boosterism and entertainment. As such, the early Peach Festivals provide insight into how local persons perceived the Grand Valley; what they saw as immediate needs for the area; and how they wished the Grand Valley to appear to others. All the festivals reflected the agricultural character of the area. In addition to providing a look at perceptions of community, the Peach Festivals reveal the character of the largest and most important entertainment ventures in the early Grand Valley.

During a period of slightly over two decades, from 1887 to 1909, three festivals--those in 1887, 1891, and 1909--were successful community celebrations that captured the mood of the common person and the business community. Each fair promoted agriculture; and, in addition, each of the three fairs had distinctive themes. The purpose of the 1887 festival was to prove that the community had overcome its frontier stage, and that it was now a productive agricultural area with a successful business community. In 1891 the emphasis shifted: it was more a lighthearted affair emphasizing entertainment and fun. In 1909, the priority shifted back to something more serious: President William Howard Taft visited Grand Junction, and the community used the fair for political purposes to impress upon the Chief Executive the Western Slope's need for a water project. Thus, in the years from 1887 to 1909, the Peach Festivals reflected the evolution from a self-conscious community emerging from its frontier period to an established Western town with a modicum of national recognition.

Celebrating the productivity of agriculture remained a constant theme in the fairs. Agriculture was expanding, and many believed that the Grand Valley was on its way to becoming a "fruit raising mecca." Advocates of the "fruit raising mecca" position pointed to a number of unique characteristics that combined to make the area ideal for peach orchards. Residents of Palisade believed that the Grand Mesa, located south of the town, and the Bookcliffs north of the town absorbed warmth from the sun's rays during the day and then released it during the night, thereby providing a blanket of warmth on cold nights. "In addition, a breeze called the 'peach wind' blew down the canyon at night protecting the upper valley from frost."³ Peaches received the most attention, but inhabitants planted pear, apple, cherry, and plum trees, and talked about their potentiality too.

Praise for the area developed into full-fledged boosterism. Parties like the Stark Brothers, tree nurserymen, published promotional tracts urging settlement in the Grand Valley. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad produced promotional folders,



Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado

President Taft at Peach Day, 1909.



Photo courtesy of Palisade Library Collection, Museum of Western Colorado

President Taft traveled from Palisade to Grand Junction by automobile. In the photo above, Taft stepped into the auto while the crowd watched. In the foreground, wearing white, are the Peach Queen and her attendants.

and placed advertisements in local and regional newspapers. Civic-minded individuals from the Grand Valley raised the capital to produce a slide show featuring local orchards. The slide presentation became a traveling feature which went to various agricultural shows across the nation.⁴

The spirit which created the slide show also moved local persons to plan the first county fair and stock show to be held on October 6, 7, and 8 of 1887. This community activity brought together businessmen, farmers, stockmen, and homemakers; all with the goal of displaying the great things produced in Grand Valley. As details for the fair emerged, its purpose became clear. It would entertain; and it would document the Grand Valley's growth and agricultural capabilities. For the farmers, there were exhibition categories for "Colorado Fruits," and "Colorado Vegetables" with subcategories covering a myriad of specific kinds of fruits and vegetables. The "Farm Animals" section provided those who raised livestock with an opportunity to exhibit their animals. Displays of private collections of minerals attested to the mineral wealth of the Western Slope. Categories for "Kitchen and Pantry Stores" and "Fine Arts" provided homemakers with an opportunity to display their culinary skills and artistic abilities. Local merchants donated money and gifts to award as premiums.⁵

The *Grand Junction News* supported the project and underscored its serious intent. The event was to publicize the community and to attract the attention of outsiders. In a news article typical of frontier boosterism, the *News* proclaimed:

The eyes of many strangers are now turned to Western Colorado: men with money to invest, farmers in search of land to till, fruit growers seeking the best spot for their vineyards, thrifty laborers wanting to build homes for their families. If every farmer, fruit grower, stock-raiser, and businessman would join the the common effort to make the October exhibition a success, The *News* will, as always, do its share in giving prominence to every exhibit and its owner; and further than that will take the proper means to give more than ordinary circulation to the date and information gathered from the display made.⁶

The tone of the article conveyed the seriousness of purpose of the event: it was a chance to display the area's productiveness; to attract outside capital and settlers; and to advance the fortunes of those who lived in the Grand Valley.

Community leaders worked to make the fair successful, but nature did not cooperate. Three weeks before the fair, a cold night

damaged the fruit crop. Participants scurried about, attempting to find samples of fruit worthy of display. Fortunately, when the fair opened, there were good exhibits. The farmers of the Grand Valley had turned the near disaster into success. The efforts of the local persons became part of the favorable publicity. The *News* praised the local farmers: "No agricultural community could have shown a better or finer lot of farm products on so short a notice."⁷

Newspaper articles detailed the fair, providing information about exhibits that reflected the spirit of boosterism that permeated the event. In this vein, the newsman singled out W.A. Kennedy of Fruit Ridge as one of those resourceful farmers who demonstrated the agricultural productiveness of the area:

W.A. Kennedy of Fruit Ridge made a most excellent showing of pumpkins, melons, turnips, beets, red-peppers, parsnips, and the only samples of artichokes in the fair. Also field corn and popcorn. His display was one of the best and contained a larger variety perhaps than was shown by any other one man....⁸

Displays of products from farms provided an important part of the fair. Another attraction were displays of merchandise. Grand Junction businessmen brought exhibits. Perhaps the most popular was that of M. Strouse, the largest dealer of furs and hides on the Western Slope and a "popular clothing merchant." Wares on display included overcoats, gloves, bear hides, beaver skins, moccasins, and other fur items. Women particularly enjoyed Mrs. S.L. Lewis's exhibit, which included ribbons, lace collars, hats, feathers, and delicate gloves. For fairgoers with a sweet tooth, Herman Hoesch, the town's well known baker, set out elaborately decorated cakes, as well as breads, pastries, and candies. Warren Orr, the druggist, displayed toilet articles like combs, soaps, brushes, and perfumes. Other merchants provided exhibits of furniture, hardware, shoes, stoves, and fabrics.⁹

These displays, along with those of farmers, ranchers, mineral collectors, and local women conveyed the message that the Grand Valley was a stable agricultural region. The various products at this fair indicated that many crops could be successfully cultivated, even in a bad year. All of this was done partially for the local persons, but as the newsman for the *News* had indicated, the effort was also for "The eyes of many strangers." At the time, the fair was a self-conscious exhibit to demonstrate to residents, potential investors, and prospective settlers that the Grand Valley had an active business community offering the amenities of life and was an established agricultural region.

The 1887 celebration was a success, and because of it, the festival became an annual event. However, attendance waned at subsequent fairs, and by 1900 lack of enthusiasm threatened the continued existence of the event.¹⁰ Perhaps the seriousness of the purpose that characterized the first festival no longer reflected the mood of the inhabitants of the Grand Valley. To survive, the fair had to change. The next successful one, that of 1891, emphasized a combination of celebrating agriculture and entertainment. Organizers created a theme for the fair by calling it "Peach Day;" focusing on the peach harvest; and moving the festival date to September to coincide with the end of harvest. The new trademark of the fair indicated that peaches had become the symbol of the Grand Valley. Agricultural exhibits remained; as did displays of handicrafts.¹¹

Entertainment was an exciting new element in 1891. The promoters of Peach Day found a potent drawing card in volunteer fire fighting units. On Colorado's Western Slope, as in most towns across the nation, volunteer fire departments were prestigious social organizations which served as symbols of communities. They generated the same enthusiastic support found for the hometown baseball teams. Members were admired for their work at fires, but also for sponsoring many well-attended social events like firemen's balls. Some towns also had cornet bands, whose members wore colorful uniforms. These were musical groups, but townspeople attached as much attention to their natty uniforms as to their musical ability. They, too, were important representatives of communities.¹² Bringing together the Western Slope's best cornet bands and volunteer fire departments for a "Fireman's Tournament" attracted a crowd in Grand Junction in 1891.

The fireman's tournament provided a parade, competition among cornet bands, and contests among the fire departments. The *Grand Junction News* reported that the participants included: City Cornet Band, Cameron Hose Company No.1, of this city, Grand Junction Hook and Ladder Company, Glenwood Spring Cornet Band, Glenwood Hook and Ladder Company, Glenwood Rough and Ready Hose Company, Aspen Hose Company, Telluride Cornet Band, Montrose Hose Company, Durango Hose Company, Ouray Cornet Band and Ouray Hose Company.¹³

The Fireman's tournament began with a grand parade, which a Grand Junction newsman estimated to be a quarter of a mile in length and "a spectacle splendid in every detail."¹⁴ The colorful and elaborately decorated uniforms of the participants impressed the spectators.



Photo courtesy L. O'Neal Gallery, Museum of Western Colorado

Peach Day exhibition tent, July 4, 1891.

The firemen and bands passed by the grand reviewing stand at Fourth and Main streets to allow the judges to look carefully at all the uniforms. The cornet bands each performed a selection of music of its choice. The best uniforms, in the opinion of the judges, were those of a fire company. The Ouray Hose Company won first place, which brought a \$25 cash award. According to an eyewitness: "They wore white shirts with a blue, quilted silk collar open in front in imitation of a vest, dark pants with [a] narrow gold stripe, and a finely finished blue helmet."¹⁵

After the bands had performed, a local orator, Horace T. De Long, addressed the crowd. This was an age that loved oration, and De Long provided a vivid description of the first decade of Grand Junction's history. In a spirit that reflected the attitudes of the age, he stated that the Grand Valley was settled because the government of the United States had decreed that "the Indian menace to civilization and progress should be removed." Following the expulsion of the Utes, stalwart white men had cultivated the barren soil, and had transformed it into a paradise. He closed the oration by encouraging everyone to enjoy the fine entertainments and contests that would follow.¹⁶

The firemen's contests did please the crowds. The "wet test" was a race in which teams ran 400 feet, coupled onto a fire plug, unreeled 200 feet of hose, and made the nozzle coupling. Water

squirting from the nozzle signaled the end of the test. The volunteers from Aspen registered the fastest time in this contest. The "hub and hub" race consisted of teams of firemen pushing their company's cart in an attempt to register the fastest time. Photos taken at the finish line determined winners. Grand Junction men won this event. A 200 yard sprint climaxed the 1891 affair. Summit Marksbury of Grand Junction outdistanced the others in this foot race.¹⁷

While the activities of the musicians and the firemen were the most popular, other entertainments vied for the spectators. Fairgoers could choose to attend a rodeo, baseball games, or horse races. Hungry festival goers found tables of delectable foods for sale. As the fair of 1891 came to a close, organizers and participants agreed that it had provided a thoroughly enjoyable time.¹⁸ Grand Valley residents had enjoyed seeing cornet bands, watching contests among firemen, and seeing baseball games and the rodeo. Recreation and spectator sports had a place in the Grand Valley. Also there was satisfaction in the fact that Grand Junction had matured enough to attract cornet bands and fire-fighting teams from other cities on the Western Slope.

The flavor of the fair had changed from 1887 to 1891, and the 1909 Peach Festival also had its unique character. In that year the nation's chief executive, the portly Republican William Howard Taft joined the celebration as the guest of honor. This President, whom Theodore Roosevelt had carefully selected to be his successor, had discovered that politics in the nation's capital were trying, and he sought escape. Consequently, from September through November of 1909, Taft took a long-cross country trip seeking relief from the pressures of his office and getting into contact with the common people by accepting speaking engagements at community events. During this extended trip, Taft journeyed to Western Colorado as the keynote speaker at the opening of the Gunnison Tunnel near Montrose.¹⁹

Because he was on the Western Slope, he agreed to come to the Peach Festival. Community leaders saw the President's visit as an opportunity to solicit his support for the High Line Canal project. Experience with the Gunnison Tunnel and the construction of the Grand River Ditch in the Grand Valley had convinced local leaders that large-scale water projects required federal financing.²⁰ Plans to construct the High Line Canal, eventually one of the biggest water projects developed in the area, began in the 1880s when a plan was advanced for irrigating 50,000 acres of land. Financial concerns prevented the launching of the scheme. Without backing from the federal government, it seemed, the canal would never be built.²¹ With these ideas

uppermost in the minds of many in the Grand Valley, political concerns characterized the Peach festival in 1909.

While persons of influence decided on the best way to apprise the President of the Western Slope's pressing needs for water, the fair's organizers worked to make certain that the affair would be nearly perfect, and that the agricultural displays would be impressive. The upcoming visit received much attention; and nearly everyone from the Grand Valley, it seemed, and a goodly number of out-of-town persons planned to visit the Peach Festival to see the President and to hear what he would say about Western Colorado.²²

As a method of celebrating the bounty of the peach harvest, fair organizers had begun the tradition of giving several locally grown Elberta peaches to every person who attended the Peach Festival. With this in mind, in 1909 the fair committee ordered 20,000 peaches, and made arrangements to obtain more quickly if that number proved insufficient for the crowd. A "Peach Queen," Miss Agnes Swisher of Palisade, and nineteen attendants representing the different districts in the county would reign over many of the fair's activities; the queen would have the honor of meeting the President. Attendance at the fair in 1909 was excellent. About 8,000 persons attended on each of the two first days, and on September 23, 1909, when Taft visited, between 8,000 and 10,000 persons were on hand to see him.²³

Seeing the President was part of the appeal of the event, but impressing him with the needs of the Western Slope was the priority for community leaders. A newsman for the *Daily Sentinel* had written a carefully worded open letter to the President which stressed the Grand Valley's need for the High Line Canal.

The President of the United States.

Accept a most cordial welcome from the people of Grand Junction and the valley of the Grand.

That you will view a country today, in this Grand valley, not equalled in productiveness by any other section of the country, you will doubtless be free to acknowledge.

That you will be so greatly impressed with what results may be obtained from irrigation and that it will arouse a purpose to extend the acts of the reclamation service into larger fields is the earnest hope and wish of all the people of this section of this great state.

You will have seen today, Mr. President, that no

more loyal people exist than in this section devoted to the raising of fruit and other products of the soil.

We believe it to be true that the people of this formerly arid region live closer in touch with the national government and its policies than in any other agricultural or horticultural section of the United States.

A project will have been presented to you which simply needs your sanction to make thousands of people residing in this valley, and other thousands to come here, to be constructed. We refer to the High Line Canal project.

That your eyes may be given double power of seeing and your mind be responsive to that sight, to recognize the great uplift your sanction to this great project would bring, is the earnest wish and hope of a people who deserve the action of the government toward making homes for thousands of new people and creating a new empire of loyal people.²⁴

While the crowd gathered at the fairgrounds at the southeast corner of the intersection of Twelfth Street and North Avenue in Grand Junction, Taft visited peach orchards in Palisade. He and his entourage arrived precisely at 10:30 a.m. at the fairgrounds. With him were other dignitaries also on their way to the opening of the Gunnison Tunnel: Secretary of the Interior, Richard A. Ballinger; John F. Shafroth, Colorado's Governor; Senator Charles Hughes; and Representative Edward T. Taylor. At the fairgrounds, Taft first visited the exhibition hall to see the displays of fruit from the Western Slope.²⁵

After these preliminaries, Taft ascended the grandstand and delivered a brief address. He said what the crowd had hoped to hear: he praised the agricultural progress that he had seen, and attributed it to private enterprise and irrigation. He encouraged the people to be patient with government, and, in time and with his help, Washington lawmakers might lend assistance to the High Line water project. He acknowledged the government's responsibility for protecting and extending the country's agricultural land in order to meet America's increasing demand for food. In a growing nation, it was imperative that the government encourage farming.²⁶

He spiced his message with a combination of attention-getting barbs, followed with compliments and good humor that pleased the crowd. To make his point that irrigation had wrought miracles in the Grand Valley, he said that his train ride through the canyon of the Grand seemed to have taken him to "the most God-forsaken spot...on earth." But as he traveled farther down the canyon and approached the areas where irrigation projects delivered water, the land "seems a paradise." He likened the

almost magical impact of water to "rubbing an Aladdins Lamp." He chided the listeners about the variety of political affiliations in Colorado by saying: "you have been all sorts of things out here--populists, silverites, republicans and democrats--and you can't tell just exactly where a man is just at that particular time." To avoid offending the crowd, he then added that such political variance indicated "an independence of thought and a quickness of perception and indicates a rapidly progressing people."²⁷

In his speech, he acknowledged the need for irrigation projects and recognized the fact that government would be well served by helping to fund them. He warned about the slowness of the governmental process, and said that he could not promise any results. But the thrust of his remarks was that he would do what he could to help get funding for the High Line Canal. He concluded his remarks: "May God bless your valley, and may you continue to be as you are--one of the important parts of the United States. Good Luck."²⁸

The spectators received the remarks enthusiastically. Following the speech were a few formalities, including the presentation of a basket of Elberta peaches by the Peach Queen. Then the President was escorted back to a waiting automobile. The procession drove down Twelfth street to Main, down Main to Second, then to the railroad depot. Along the route about 5,000 persons lined the streets, cheering and extending greetings to the President and the others accompanying him. By 11:15, only one hour after his arrival in Grand Junction, he boarded the train which would take him to Montrose and the celebration opening the Gunnison Tunnel. That night people of the Grand Valley ended the Peach Festival with a gala ball.²⁹

The people of the Grand Valley had successfully entertained a President of the United States. His remarks indicated that he would support the High Line Canal project. News would eventually come that officials in Washington had appropriated the funds. The Peach Festival had provided a valuable service to the community.

The year of Taft's visit, 1909, was the most successful year for the Peach Festival. In the years after this, the affair lost its appeal and the Fair Association began to lose money. Perhaps as the city moved into the twentieth century and other forms of entertainment and promotion developed, other groups and activities absorbed the functions of the Peach Festival. In 1923, the Association discontinued the fairs and sold the fair grounds to the city of Grand Junction. The parcel of land became Lincoln Park.³⁰

The early Peach Festivals had served important purposes. In 1887, 1891, and 1909 they had reflected the concerns of the people of Grand Junction, and thereby served as indicators of the moods of the community in various years. In 1887, pride in overcoming the frontier stage marked the event; in 1901 residents had enjoyed a chance to have fun; and in 1909, successfully entertaining a President and exerting some influence on him marked a important stage in the development of the Grand Valley. The early Peach Festivals had served the area well.

NOTES

¹ *Grand Junction News*, 15 September 1891.

² Don Davidson, "The Grand River Ditch: A Short History of Pioneering Irrigation in Colorado's Grand Valley," *Journal of the Western Slope*, 1 (Fall 1986), pp. 1-29; Richard E. Tope, *An Objective History of Grand Junction* (Grand Junction: Museum of Western Colorado, 1982), pp. 2-6, 13; Mary Rait, "Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade from 1881-1931" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1931), p. 40. Hereafter cited as Rait, "Development of Grand Junction."

³ Duane Vandenbusche and Duane A. Smith, *A Land Alone: Colorado's Western Slope* (Denver: Pruett Publishing Co., 1981), p. 150.

⁴ Rait, "Development of Grand Junction," pp. 40-44.

⁵ *Grand Junction News*, 1 October 1887.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Rait, "Development of Grand Junction," p. 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For a good discussion of the place of

volunteer fire departments in community life, see: Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), pp. 216-219.

¹³ *Grand Junction News*, 15 September 1891.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Judith Icke Anderson, William Howard Tait: *An Intimate History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), p. 33.

²⁰ Davidson, "The Grand River Ditch"; and Don MacKendrick, "Before the Newlands Act: State-sponsored Reclamation Projects in Colorado, 1888-1903," *The Colorado Magazine*, LII (Winter 1975), pp. 1-21.

²¹ Vandenbusche and Smith, *A Land Alone*, p. 189.

²² *The Daily Sentinel*, 12 September 1909.

²³ *Ibid.*; and 13 September 1909.

²⁴ *The Daily Sentinel*, 23 September 1909.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; and 22 September 1909.

²⁶ *The Daily Sentinel*, 23 September 1909.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Rait, "Development of Grand Junction," p. 45.

THE PATRON'S PAGE

Those persons who send a patron's subscription of \$25 or more for a one year's subscription make the *JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE* a better publication. Patrons' contributions make possible the publication of special editions such as the biography of Chief Ouray. Also, patrons enable the editors to furnish some complimentary subscriptions to educational institutions and to publish more photographs in each issue. Without the support of patrons, the publication of this Journal would be difficult. The members of the Mesa College Historical Society, the Alpha-Gamma-Epsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, and the editors of the *JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE* thank the individuals and businesses listed below who are our patrons:

Ted & Maxine Albers, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Bacon, Grand Junction
Charles & Velda Bailey, Grand Junction
Josephine Biggs, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Michael S. Bilyeu, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Orville Boge, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. Chris Buys, Grand Junction
Mr. R. B. Carpenter, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. Joe Carter, Alamosa
Cedaredge Public Library, Cedaredge
(Memorial for Mrs. Earle Mills)
Linda Ciavonne, Grand Junction
Iona Coe, Grand Junction
Mrs. Marjorie West Crow, Palisade
Dr. & Mrs. R. B. Crowell, Grand Junction
Peter R. Decker, Ridgway
Dr. Jo F. Dorris, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Lit DuPont, Fruita
Mr. & Mrs. Wm. M. Ela, Grand Junction
Donald Ethridge, Grand Junction
Abbott E. Fay, Paonia
David P. Fisher, M. D., Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. David E. Flatt, Grand Junction
Betty Goff, Grand Junction
Gunnison County Public Library (Memorial Fund for William Walker Gierhart and Lillian Gierhart), Gunnison
Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Hamrick, Cory
Vi Haseman, Grand Junction
Rosemary C. Heaney, Grand Junction
Enno F. Heuscher, M.D., Grand Junction
John & Pat Herson, Grand Junction
Hotchkiss Public Library, Hotchkiss
(compliments of Dr. Woodrow E. Brown)
Ardath Hunt, Loma
Lewis A. Irvin, M.D., Grand Junction
Jerry's Pest Control, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Karl Johnson, Grand Junction
Dr. Vermer C. Johnson, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Miles Kara, Grand Junction

Frank Keller, Grand Junction
Kelly Klingman, Parachute
Robert J. Kretschman, Montrose
Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Liff, Grand Junction
Aaron and Beth Long, Grand Junction
Donald A. MacKendrick, Grand Junction
Gary & Evelyn McNew, Santa Fe
Tom R. Mehs, Colorado Springs
Mesa County Historical Society, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Robert P. Moston, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Melvin R. Muhr, Grand Junction
Jeffrey M. Nakano, M. D., Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. Kenneth E. Nelson, Grand Junction
F. R. Paquette, M. D., Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Rob Peckham, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. John Pendergrass, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. Kenneth E. Perino, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. John F. Peeso, Grand Junction
Daniel E. Pringler, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Prinster, Grand Junction
Mrs. Grace Purcell, Grand Junction
Ann & Paul Reddin, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. David M. Rees, Grand Junction
Katherine B. Roe, Colorado Springs
S. P. Rogers, Grand Junction
Sherkel, Mohler, Dirks, Shenk, M.S.'s, P.C.,
Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Sikes, Meeker
Alan & Linda Simpson, Grand Junction
Betsy A. Sneed, Grand Junction
James E. Stafford, Grand Junction
Ruth Stewart, Grand Junction
Robert & Carol Strobl, Grand Junction
Bud Vermilyea, Grand Junction
Wayfinder Press, Ouray
Mr. & Mrs. Martin A. Wenger, Grand Junction
Frank E. Woodard, Grand Junction
Margaret S. Zeigel, Colbran