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THE COVER: The drawing of Mary Rait was done by Charles Hardy,
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Editor's Introduction. It is a pleasure to publish "Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade from 1881 to 1931" by Mary Rait. Miss Rait did the work as a Master's thesis in history at the University of Colorado in 1931. The document has become an indispensable (but often difficult to locate) source for historians and others doing research on the early years of the Grand Valley. In addition to being helpful to scholars, the editors believe that residents of the Grand Valley and general readers will find the manuscript interesting.

Bringing this work to press proved a time-consuming task. Its length and the fact that over half a century has transpired since it was written made the process difficult. All copies which the editors located carried the notation that the manuscript, although passed as a Master's thesis in history at the University of Colorado, needed to be proofread. Furthermore, the manuscript seemed to fall somewhere between a secondary and a primary source because it combined research from published sources, interviews, and the author's personal observations about the Grand Valley in 1931. Because of the uniqueness of the manuscript, the editors chose not to change the perspective of the document; therefore, it contains references to "the present time" which refer to the early 1930s. Altering the chronological perspective would have required considerable rewriting of the text and would have, in our opinion, taken Mary Rait's personality from the document. All editing has been done with an eye to preserving the flavor of the original work. The work appears as two separate issues because of its length and our budgetary restraints.

Conversations with those who knew Mary Rait as a student and colleague convinced the editors that it was necessary to communicate the respect and enthusiasm she generated among students and faculty at Mesa College. For this perspective the editors asked Mr. Robert Showalter, Emeritus Dean School of Humanities/Fine Arts and Emeritus Professor of English, to share his memories of the lady. In the following paragraphs, Mr. Showalter provides a glimpse of those things that made Mary Rait special.

At the beginning of the Fall Quarter of 1938, my three brothers and I were seated in a classroom awaiting the beginning of a course in United States History. At the lectern stood a statuesque lady, Vice-President, Dean of Women, and Professor of History. This lady was Mary Rait. I recall this moment, one of many moments, as one of the most memorable of my college days. Miss Rait opened her class lecture with a statement that was to become one of the most prophetic comments of history. She said (this is not a direct quotation, but it is the essence of her remarks):

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to hear from and see much more of the Chancellor of Germany, Mr. Adolph Hitler. His actions and rule will eventually affect not only Europe but will encompass the entire world." You all will recall from your own knowledge of history that Mr. Hitler had just unleashed a form of warfare that became known as Blitzkrieg (Lightning warfare). This was a combination of strategy and tactics totally unexpected and unknown to the Allied powers. It resulted in the subjugation of Europe in the initial years of World War II and brought England to near defeat. To her class these kinds of profound insights demonstrated that Miss Rait's courses of instruction were founded on reality, as well as the more sophisticated studies of theory and ideology. The entire class realized that we were under the instruction of a superior academician.

However, this was not my initial introduction to Miss Rait. I had met her in the Fall of 1935 when I had enrolled as a Freshman at Mesa College. I was in awe of her at that time and this aura of scholarly intellectualism has been sustained throughout the years.

This lady was and continues to be the very symbol of what Mesa College was at its inception in 1925 and is at the present Mesa State College of 1988. In a very unpretentious building at Fifth and Rood (where the present City of Grand Junction Administration complex now stands) the students knew from the very outset that they were in the world of the academe. The building was not important; we were in the presence of the most dedicated and scholarly faculty that graced any institution of higher education. At the very pinnacle of these devoted educators stood Miss Mary Rait. She labored most diligently to see that the standards of scholarly endeavors were maintained.

Miss Rait was instrumental in the initial work and final realization of Mesa College moving to the present campus on North Avenue. The first aspect of this was the construction of Houston Hall, named for two distinguished contemporaries of Miss Rait, Dr. Clifford Houston and his father Elmer G. (Pop) Houston, who worked diligently to sustain the growth and excellence of the college.

The dedication of this new facility took place in 1941. Mesa College thus continued to maintain its academic excellence and to provide a means for an innumerable number of people to gain and to profit from a college education.

In 1957, I had the distinguished privilege of becoming a member of the faculty of Mesa College. As a former student and now a colleague of Mary Rait, I found this great teacher and administrator to be a role model I very much wished to follow. Miss Rait was not just the Vice-President of Mesa College; she was and has become a constant reminder of what the role of Mesa College was to this community and what its growth to its present status within the Colorado State College System would become. Her philosophy continues to influence the concepts and growth and excellence which she herself always practiced.

Words inscribed on a piece of paper are inadequate to portray the stature and dignity of the lady, Miss Mary Rait. There is so much that words do not capture of the true and full extent of this great lady to whom so many owe so much. Thus I submit this introduction to her thesis on the Grand Valley in a state of total humility.

In addition to Mr. Showalter, the editors wish to thank several persons who made possible the publication of "The Development of the Grand Valley." Mr. Robert D. Rait, Mary Rait's nephew, granted us permission to publish the document and was most gracious during the year while the manuscript was being edited. David N. Wetzel of the Colorado State Historical Society allowed us to reprint information in chapter four which had originally appeared in the *Colorado Magazine* as "Development of the Peach Industry in the Colorado River Valley" in the November issue of 1945. Another thank you goes to Janet Mease, an alumna of Mesa State College's history program who went to the University of Toledo as an editorial assistant on *The Historian*. She returned to Colorado to begin work on a Master's thesis on the Southern Utes, and she offered to do much of the editing. As always, Judy Prosser-Armstrong of the Museum of Western Colorado was most helpful in locating photographs for our publication.



“DEVELOPMENT OF GRAND JUNCTION AND THE COLORADO RIVER VALLEY TO PALISADE FROM 1881 TO 1931—Part 1”

by Mary Rait

CHAPTER I INFLUENCE OF NATURAL FEATURES

Grand Junction is favorably located at the junction of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers, midway between Pueblo and Salt Lake City. About fifteen miles east of Grand Junction, the Colorado River canyon widens into a valley suited to agricultural and horticultural development. The valley is narrow at the east end, opening gradually from a canyon just wide enough to permit a railroad to parallel the river, and widening to about fifteen miles at Grand Junction. The convergence of valleys and streams offers natural roadbeds. The main valley extends along the river for about forty miles. The district came to be known as the Grand Valley before the name of the river was changed from Grand to Colorado.

The Grand Valley is on the Pacific side of the Rocky Mountains, facing southwest. The mountain range shelters it from many of the storms and blizzards which frequent the eastern slope. Most of the severe storms and cold fronts moving in from the Canadian northwest pass down the eastern slope of the Rockies. The continental divide forms a great barrier which few storms can cross, and then with only a small portion of their severity.¹ The atmosphere of the valley is warmed somewhat by air currents from the hot deserts of the

Southwest before they come in contact with the snows of the main continental divide.

The valley is almost surrounded by mountain ranges, canyons, hills and mesas. It is nearly immune from damaging hail and wind storms and a cyclone has never been known in the history of the valley.² Grand Mesa, which has an average elevation of about eleven thousand feet, over six thousand feet above Grand Junction, lies just east of the valley. The broad flat top of this mountain is covered with snow until late spring, thus keeping the air cool in the valley below and tending to prevent development of crops until warm weather has come to stay.

Grand Junction is particularly well favored in the matter of climate. If the mesas were higher or more rough, snow would remain all summer, and probably cause late frosts, which would destroy the fruit, one of the chief products of the valley.³ Because of protective mountain ranges, the valley has a longer growing season than most of the districts of similar latitude and altitude. Although at an elevation of approximately 4,600 feet, the average growing season is of about the same length as that at Springfield, Missouri; Lexington, Kentucky; and Asheville, North Carolina. The average growing season of 182 days is practically one month longer than that at Denver. This long season makes possible the growing of a great variety of crops.⁴ A canyon breeze often keeps the temperature in the Palisade section from ten to fifteen degrees higher than that farther down the valley. This breeze is warmed by the movement of the air from a greater elevation to the lower level of the valley. The velocity of the air movement decreases as the valley widens, and heat is lost by radiation.⁵ The Little Book Cliffs, which border the valley on the north, are of a sandstone formation. They store up heat during the day, which keeps the temperature from dropping so sharply at night, especially where the valley is narrow. The temperature at the foot of these mountains is appreciably warmer than it is one mile from them.

The normal precipitation of the valley is 8.3 inches a year, not sufficient for crops without irrigation. The moisture content of the air is low. The winters are short; snow falls on an average eighteen days during the season. The average wind velocity is four miles per hour. In the summer the velocity is 6.2 miles per hour. This is an ideal condition, for the winter cold is not greatly felt, and in summer the slightly accelerated air movement prevents stagnation of heat and keeps the valley comfortably cool. The mean daily range in temperature is twenty-six degrees, providing cool nights. The mean daily change is slight, averaging 3.5 degrees.⁶

The high altitude, dry air and lack of extremes in temperature make

this a healthful climate. The death rate, 13.08 per thousand, is low, especially in view of the fact that many people with impaired health come to the valley for its climate.⁷

Professor Charles F. Davis of the State Agricultural College, at the request of parties investigating the valley, made tests of different specimens of soil. His report states: "None of the specimens of soil contain any materials which should prevent high fertility. On the contrary, each contains those elements which are well known to be of high value in any soil."⁸ There are three general types of soil: a red sandy soil, a light colored sandy loam soil and a heavy clay loam, known as adobe. The light-colored soils reflect heat during the summer, thus preventing the scorching of young plants.

A diversity of ores is found in territory adjacent to Grand Junction. Uranium and vanadium are found in paying quantities in the Paradox Valley, while gilsonite, manganese, copper, lead, zinc and silver are found in the mountainous districts around Grand Junction. Lime rock is also found in large quantities.⁹

There is a good water supply for the irrigation of fertile and tillable soil. The Colorado River is the largest in the state and the Gunnison carries almost as large a volume of water. Both of these streams can be used to develop a large productive agricultural area in this region. The hills around Grand Valley furnish summer range for a great number of sheep and cattle.¹⁰

The greatest disadvantage which the valley faces is isolation caused by the surrounding mountains. The territory close to Grand Junction is incapable of supporting a large population, and the valley itself is limited. Markets, therefore, can be reached only by crossing mountain ranges. This has proven a constant handicap to the economy of the Grand Valley.

NOTES

¹Ernest L. Felton, Meteorologist, *Grand Junction Weather Bureau Report*, p. 2.

²Benton Cannon, "Grand Junction," from Sidney Jocknick, *Early Days on the Western Slope of Colorado, and Campfire Chats with Otto Mears* (Denver: Carson-Harper Co., 1913) p. 2.

³*Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁴Felton, *Grand Junction Weather Bureau Report*, p. 1.

⁵Felton, Interview, 26 February 1931.

⁶Felton, *Grand Junction Weather Bureau Report*, p. 2.

⁷*Daily Sentinel*, 10 May 1931, Part 2, p. 3.

⁸C.W. Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado* (Grand Junction: Mesa County Democrat, 1886), p. 34.

⁹W.H. Olin, *Grand Valley Project*, (Denver, 1928) p. 4.

¹⁰Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, p. 34.

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT BEFORE 1881

The earliest Spanish explorers of western Colorado left no record. When Escalante made his famous journey through that section in 1776, most of the streams, especially in southwestern Colorado, had already received Spanish names from former explorations. These earlier Spanish travelers, from settlements farther south, may have been prospecting, or pursuing bands of Indians.¹

Records of fur traders and prospectors in the immediate vicinity of Grand Valley are meager, for the arid valley had little to offer these men. Colorado was overrun by adventurous trappers in the 1820s because of the high value of beaver skin. However, most trappers and prospectors followed the White River, and those who reached the Colorado typically used it to reach the Gunnison, where trapping was good. The canyon of the upper Colorado proved an effective barrier. In 1826 James O. Pattie with a group of French trappers followed the Gila River to the Colorado, and the Colorado to its source.² In 1824 William Becknell led a party of trappers on the Western Slope. The same year William Huddart and fourteen men reached the Colorado River, where they came upon Antoine Robidoux and a party of five trappers.³

Explorers likewise left scant documentation. Marcus Whitman, on his famous journey from Oregon in 1842, passed through the present site of Grand Junction. From there he followed the Gunnison River, crossing Cochetopa Pass.⁴ Captain John Gunnison, sent by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to survey a possible railroad route, also crossed the range at Cochetopa Pass in 1853. He followed the Gunnison to the Grand River and then moved westward into Utah. Lieutenant Edward F. Beale and a party of explorers had preceded Captain Gunnison over this route by a few months. John C. Fremont's last expedition into Colorado the next year followed the same trail. However, these men were not trail breakers. The route was well known to the Indians and the name Cochetopa, the "pass of the buffaloes," indicates that these animals were the real discoverers of the route.⁵

At this time western Colorado was occupied by Indians,⁶ who were nomadic hunters. In the Gunnison and Grand River country there were about four thousand Utes.⁷

In 1863 the government established a large reservation for the Ute Indians, but this was reduced by cessions made by the Indians in 1868, 1873 and 1878.⁸ These cessions took from the Indians the eastern and southern sections of their reservation, where valuable minerals had been discovered. Despite the formal agreements, fighting continued, with

Indians making raids on white settlements near the reservation. White men searched for gold or silver on Indian lands. This and settlement on Ute territory caused more conflict.⁹

One of the most disastrous outgrowths of this friction was the White River Ute Massacre (or Meeker Massacre) in 1879, which increased the cry, "The Utes must go." This, together with strong, steady pressure of whites who desired to settle on the land held by the Indians, led the United States to open negotiations with the Ute tribe. The chiefs agreed to obtain the consent of the tribe, if possible, to the cession of their reservation in Colorado, with certain exceptions.¹⁰ This agreement was ratified by Congress June 15, 1880.¹¹ After some delay, the Indians reluctantly surrendered all claim to lands now included in the counties of Mesa, Delta and Montrose, and received from the government lands in severalty in the territory of Utah.

White pioneers had reached the Ute reservation at certain points several years before this cession. Settlers wished to enter agricultural lands in order to supply mining camps with produce. Some of the Western Slope's frontier settlements were both agricultural and mining. Gunnison, for example, was founded in 1874, and experienced a boom in 1879 because of carbonates found in the vicinity. An enormous amount of prospecting was done there, and the growth of the town was prodigious for a few years. Most of the important mines in that locality were discovered between 1879 and 1882.¹² A boom followed, but the inaccessibility of the place, consequent lack of a market for ores, and high cost of supplies undermined the courage of the pioneers, so that most of the people were ready to leave for new fields by 1880.¹³ The little mining town of Ouray was founded in 1875; Silverton, in 1874; and many other small mining camps flourished on the Western Slope.¹⁴ Most of these towns contributed some settlers to the lands ceded by the Indians in 1880.

Some pioneers also came from the west to settle the land ceded by the Utes. As early as 1855 a Mormon settlement had been made at the present site of Moab, Utah. Mormon settlements, including Price, in what is now Emery County, Utah, were made in 1879.¹⁵ The desert area to the west prevented a large movement of population from that source.

NOTES

¹L.R. Hafen, "Coming of the White Men," in L.R. Hafen, and James H. Baker, *History of Colorado*, 5 vols. (Denver: Linderman Co., Inc. 1927), p. 274.

²Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Early Western Travels 1748-1846* (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur M. Clarke Co., 1904-1917), XVIII, p. 14.

³Baker and Hafen, *History of Colorado*, I, pp. 306, 308.

⁴*Ibid.*, I, p. 337.

⁵*Ibid.*, I, pp. 346, 348, 811.

⁶Central Colorado, eastern Utah and northern New Mexico were occupied by other tribes of Utes.

⁷A.E. Spiva, "Utes in Colorado, 1863-1880," M.A. thesis, Boulder, University of Colorado, 1929.

⁸Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 4 vols. (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1890), II, pp. 189, 190, 415.

⁹Spiva, *Utes in Colorado*, pp. 61, 63, 70.

¹⁰The exception was a strip of land in the southwestern corner of the state, held by the Southern Utes.

¹¹*U.S. Statutes at Large*, XXI, p. 199.

¹²C.B. Goodykoontz, "Settlements of Colorado," in Baker and Hafen, *History of Colorado*, II, p. 460; Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, p. 148.

¹³Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, IV, p. 155.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, IV, pp. 247, 308.

¹⁵Letter, 22 May 1931, Andrew Jensen, Assistant Historian, Latter Day Saints' Church.

CHAPTER III SETTLEMENT AND EARLY HISTORY

The opening of spring, 1881, found the frontier towns closest to the reservation crowded with people anxious to enter the reservation and take possession of the more desirable locations.¹

In late August General R. McKenzie, who was in charge of United States troops placed in the district to prevent any trouble between Indians and settlers, was ordered to remove the Utes to their new reservation in eastern Utah. General McKenzie's command had been strongly reinforced. He had nine companies of cavalry and nine of infantry within a radius of five miles from his headquarters. His camp was about seventy-five miles from the site of Grand Junction, twenty-five miles below Ouray.² The troops prevented the entrance of settlers until the Utes had gone. One small party of settlers, having made two attempts to pass the picket lines and enter the reservation before the formal opening, was forcibly detained.³

At five o'clock in the morning, September 4, 1881, the bugle of the post sounded permission to enter the reservation. Soon the impatient, prospective settlers, a number of whom had been camped about a mile to the rear of the post, were under way. Most of these first settlers came by way of Gunnison, which had been reached by the railroad in 1881. A small number entered from the west at about the same time.⁴

The valley was a barren waste, as viewed from the heights south of the Grand River. Cottonwood trees fringed the river, but elsewhere the valley was covered with sage brush, a typical desert country. The first party to enter the valley, William McGinley, J.C. Nichols, and O.D. Russell, forded the river near the present site of Grand Junction on September 6, 1881. As they entered the valley, they could see the reluctant Indians moving out toward the new reservation. These men staked the first ranches in Grand Valley.⁵

In preparation for opening the reservation to settlement, a survey had been made by the federal government in 1881. On September 26, 1881, six men, Governor George A. Crawford, Judge R.D. Mobley, M. Rush Warner, J.W. Bucklin, and two Philadelphia men, Alison White and H.E. Rood, selected section fourteen, township one south, range one west, of the Ute Meridian as a townsite. They returned to Gunnison for provisions, and there organized the Grand Junction Town Company on October 10. The site was surveyed in January, 1882, and plats were printed in June of that year.

The town was laid out on a liberal scale. Four blocks were set aside for parks, one in the center of each quarter section. This gift for parks

may have been inspired by the intense heat of the first summer on the barren, treeless desert. Fronting on each park were four lots for ward schools. Grounds were also set aside for a central high school square, public hall, city infirmary, Young Men's Christian Association, and lots for leading religious denominations. In the center of the section were grounds for city and county buildings.⁶ The citizens voted unanimously on June 22, 1882, to incorporate the town of Grand Junction.⁷ The town site was duly entered in the land office at Leadville, December 6, 1882, by the first mayor, Charles F. Shanks.⁸ The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, then building from Gunnison toward Grand Junction, secured half of the stock of the Town Company. The Town Company had workers start at once, hauling logs and erecting cabins. The lands about Grand Junction were rapidly filed upon by pre-emptors. Ranches bordering the river were taken first.⁹

Grand Junction was one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest railroad station at Gunnison. For three months not a store existed; all supplies were purchased at the cantonment below Ouray or at Gunnison. A feeling that the Indians might reappear caused insecurity. However, the small bands of Indians who did visit the village were friendly parties who came to trade.

There were no houses except log cabins. Windows and doors were of burlap sacks; roofs and floors, of dirt. A little later some houses were built of adobe. The lumber used was cut by hand. The Henderson brothers sawed out 15,000 feet, most of which was native white pine lumber, by whipsaw, on Pinon Mesa in one season. This lumber they sold for \$160 per thousand feet. It was used chiefly in making doors, window frames, counters and shelving. Their first work was to furnish lumber for a ferry boat. For some time Grand Junction remained a city of log cabins and tents.¹⁰

Surveying parties reached the valley about the same time as the settlers, coming down the Gunnison River. The Denver and South Park Railroad Company's workers reached the settlement first, then came the Denver and Rio Grande. The latter group passed down the valley toward the Utah line. The railroad surveying and grading camps furnished most of the money in circulation.¹¹ The first store was a tent, with a small stock of cheap clothing, which followed the railroad construction camps on the desert.¹²

A meeting was held in November, 1881, and a petition circulated for signatures, asking the government for a post office. There were at that time about fifty residents in the settlement. By common consent the name Grand Junction was adopted. Mail had been addressed: Cantonment on the Uncompahgre, Ute Indian Reservation, Gunnison

County, Colorado. The post office was established as Ute. The end of the railroad was then only a dozen miles beyond Gunnison, and the office was not on a government route. The mail addressed Ute was brought in by a private carrier, who made trips between the end of the track and Grand Junction. He charged twenty-five cents for a letter and fifteen cents for a paper. In July, 1882, star route service was established. After the railroad reached town, the station and town were both known as Grand Junction. An application to change the post office to the same name was acted upon favorably.¹³

A school supported by subscriptions was established in the summer of 1882. The school house became the home of the first Sunday School in town, one which was almost universally attended. Saloon keepers closed the saloons for the hour and attended regularly. It also served as a social center for the community.¹⁴

Although the valley had fertile soil and a favorable climate, no crop could be raised until labor and capital had been expended for an irrigation system. This necessitated greater expense than pioneering in a country where rainfall was sufficient for raising crops.

Early in the spring of 1882, twenty-two ranchers along the Grand River above the town site formed an irrigation company. They built the Pioneer Ditch above these ranches, and had water from the river running early enough for crops. A number of ranchers constructed water wheels to lift irrigation water to elevated tracts of land. The results of these efforts more than met their expectations. The Pacific Slope Ditch, started a little later, was built mainly to supply the town with water. It reached some ranches below the town site. It was finished and able to supply needed water by July 1. A large part of the work of digging these ditches was done by hand by the ranchers.¹⁵

The leading citizens felt the settlement needed a newspaper and they convinced Mr. Ed Price of Denver to start a newspaper. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad agreed to carry his printing outfit as far as their line was completed, to Delta, free of charge. While he waited for the stage from Delta to Grand Junction, Mr. Price secured twenty subscriptions and some advertising for his proposed journal. The freight on this printing plant from Delta to Grand Junction, a distance of forty-five miles, was three hundred dollars. The first issue of the *Grand Junction News* was printed October 27, 1882. The first copy off the press sold at auction to the Democratic candidate for representative from Gunnison County, for fifteen dollars. The paper had good patronage from the first.¹⁶

In the fall of 1882 the Denver and Rio Grande narrow gauge reached Grand Junction. The railroad bridge across the Grand River

was still a temporary affair when the first train, which consisted of one passenger coach behind twenty freight cars, crossed. Population increased rapidly after this, and some of the hardships of pioneer life passed away. Before a railroad link, most groceries were hauled in by wagon, and freight charges made them very expensive. Because of the local ranches, beef had always been cheap, with the best of beef steak selling for five cents a pound. Furniture was mostly homemade. Grand Junction had a building boom with the arrival of the railroad. Any sort of tent or shanty which would offer shelter for the winter was rushed to completion.¹⁷ Materials used in building changed as the manufacture of brick became an important industry. Four brick and adobe yards opened during the summer of 1882. The best clay and sand were found in abundance. Brick and adobe sold at from ten to twelve dollars a thousand at the yard. Adobe bricks were frequently made on the building lot. This saved hauling, and the resulting pit answered for a cellar. A saw mill was started in timber sixteen miles south of the town, and lumber and shingles were delivered to construction sites in the city.¹⁸

Gunnison County extended from the Saguache Mountains to the Utah line, one hundred and forty miles long and eighty miles wide, and many believed it was too large and its population too scattered to be effectively governed. Citizens in the vicinity of Grand Junction held a mass meeting and petitioned the state legislature for a new county, with Grand Junction as the county seat. Grand Junction sent W.J. Miller, the first attorney of the city, to Denver to look after its interests while this measure was pending. On February 17, 1883, citizens received word that Mesa County had been created. The county remains as it was outlined at that time. Mesa County assumed \$7,208 of the indebtedness of Gunnison County. The biggest celebration yet held in the young town followed the receipt of this news.¹⁹

The early population of the valley was largely agricultural, consisting of people who settled in the valley to make homes. Others came to engage in business in the new city, and most of these remained. Some came for speculation. Railroad laborers provided a transient element. Cattle rustlers, horse thieves and gun fighters represented Grand Junction's rougher element. After the railroad reached Grand Junction, more families came in and the town assumed a more substantial character. The population originated from all portions of the country. Many were from other towns in Colorado. Perhaps a majority came from the central states. In 1907 Grand Junction celebrated Iowa Day, and a crowd of three thousand attended. It was stated at that time that there were twice as many in the valley from Iowa as from any other state.²⁰ The city observed Iowa Day for a number of years. Later, residents also

celebrated Missouri Day. A number of families prominent in the early days were from New England and Pennsylvania. Quite a few originated from the South, as shown by the fact that the first church built was the Methodist Episcopal South.

Settlers scattered from Grand Junction to the mouth of the canyon fifteen miles to the east, choosing the locations where water could be most easily obtained or where soil seemed most fertile. One of the most significant factors in the development of the valley, one which has raised many problems since, was that of working out a satisfactory irrigation system. This territory undulates gently from the Little Book Cliffs on the north to the Grand River. In irrigated countries the lay of the land is of great importance, because land levelling is an expensive proposition. Most of the land in Grand Valley can be watered with little work.

Matt Arch purchased a controlling interest in a new irrigation company, and reorganized it under the name of the Grand River Ditch Company. He planned to construct a great canal which would cover the bulk of the easily irrigable land in the valley. Local ranchers worked on the ditch, asking only for living expenses until the enterprise should be self supporting. The ranchers thought the ditch might be used to drive mills, carry boats and float heavy timbers.²¹ Even after miles of excavation had been completed, the work had only begun. Dissatisfaction followed. Arch had no money. Bonds in the amount of \$75,000 were sold to the Colorado Loan and Trust Company of Denver. This sum was not sufficient and Arch sold the ditch to outside capitalists. The announced policy of the new ditch company alarmed the farmers, who declared the water rate too high, and who threatened to build another ditch, cutting under the big canal. The results were disastrous: endless litigation, no water, loss of money and loss of faith.²²

Under a system of compensation, a consolidation of the smaller companies under one management was accomplished, and harmony prevailed for a time.²³ The amount of land under cultivation steadily increased. The ditch was well constructed, and property holders realized that the presence of water was the sole cause for the rise in land values. The Grand River is not a stream from which small canals can be constructed cheaply. It is wide and deep, with precipitous banks and a swift current. It has at all times, especially in early summer, tremendous force which destroys all but substantial and expensive head gates.

By 1888 the receiver of Grand River Ditch stated that all persons holding water deeds or contracts would be protected in foreclosure proceedings. The Grand River Ditch had never been a paying investment, although the company had invested thousands of dollars trying



Photo courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado
The Grand Junction jail, 1890.

to make it profitable.²⁴ Again litigation followed. Those under smaller ditches were urged to consolidate. Water right holders were advised to buy the ditch. As a result the principal ditches, the Grand River Ditch, forty-five miles long; the Independent Ranchmen's, twelve miles long; and the Mesa County Ditch, ten miles long, merged to become a Grand Valley system of irrigating canals. This was hailed as the best step the ranchers had yet taken.²⁵

Two pumping plants on the south side of the river watered orchards and alfalfa meadows. Several private ditches tapped small streams tributary to the Grand River.²⁶

The Mount Lincoln Ditch Company's location gave it a key to the watering of several thousand acres. Work started in May, 1892, on pumping plants on the Grand River three miles east of Palisade. The pumping plants would lift water to irrigate land east and north of Grand Junction. The company traded water for land, and sold fruit land, which was rapidly rising in value, to settlers. Water power irrigation plants require less miles of ditch than do gravity canals.²⁷

Coal was soon discovered within one and a half miles of the town site. No county in the state contains a larger supply of superior coal than Mesa. The Uncompahgre Plateau, Grand Mesa and the Book Cliffs all rest on immense coal beds. These crop out at Grand Junction, Rapid Creek, and along the whole range of the Book Cliffs. Along the east side of the Grand River veins can be traced along the foot

of Grand Mesa. At Rapid Creek the Grand River Coal Company obtained six hundred and forty acres of coal land containing eleven veins, varying from six inches to eight feet in thickness. Early work was done on the eight-foot vein.²⁸

The Book Cliff Coal Company opened a mine about nine miles northeast of town, which did much toward supplying Grand Junction with coal. The company opened an eleven and a half foot thick vein of good quality. The promoters tried to establish a resort near their mine. They constructed an artificial lake, drives, and pavilions, attempting to popularize their resort. The Book Cliff Railroad, eleven miles of narrow gauge, was completed in 1890. The terminal stood at the west end of Main Street. This company planned to supply coal to the railroad and ship a large tonnage to other points.²⁹ They had excellent coal in large quantities, and the grade to the city was easy and natural.

The Mesa Point Coal Company opened a mine on the delta between the Grand and Gunnison Rivers. This three foot thick vein was opened for the purpose of supplying cheap coal for the flour mill and other enterprises which might locate in Grand Junction. The coal could be placed on cars without being hauled twice. Other mines were opened north and northwest of Grand Junction.³⁰ The presence of such vast coal deposits led to much talked of and long continued hopes of making Grand Junction a center for the smelting of ores mined on the Western Slope.³¹

The level nature of the valley itself made road building easy. However, Grand Junction soon began to look beyond the valley. As early as 1885 the local newspaper published the following article:

Grand Junction's greatest need at present is roads. Three great outlets, or inlets, are needed to give her the trade that centers here naturally. First, a road up the Grand River to the Garfield County line. A toll road is in construction up this river. This would bring tributary a territory larger than any two New England states. . . . Second, a road up the Salt Wash . . . northward to reach the people on the White River. Third a road to the south, to reach the cattle and ranchmen on the Dolores and in Paradox Valley.

Last, and most important, perhaps, a bridge across the Grand River. This is a matter not only of public advantage, but of the lives of men and women. Each spring from three to twelve people are swept away by the angry river.³²

The early settlers had come into the valley by the poor but clearly marked Gunnison River route or by railroad. As soon as the railroad reached Grand Junction from Gunnison, people felt the need for a road to Glenwood Springs. Glenwood's freight came through Leadville,

across the continental divide. Ranchmen inhabited the valleys between Grand Junction and Glenwood and local people felt all this business should be transacted in Grand Junction. A letter from the merchants of Glenwood Springs endeavored to interest the merchants of Grand Junction in a road up the Grand River. They proposed a road to the Mesa County line, and wanted a road built through Mesa County to connect with theirs. Freight from Leadville to Glenwood was five cents a pound.³³

A company was organized to build a toll road up the canyon of the Grand River to the Garfield County line. The management of the company fell to Henry R. Rhone of Grand Junction. The company financed its endeavors by the sale of stock in the Roan Creek Toll Road, the issuance of Toll Road Scrip, a negotiable promise to pay, due in two years, and receivable for toll. Scrip replaced money for wages. Capital was borrowed from Denver capitalists. Mr. Rhone also went to Salt Lake seeking aid, but the merchants there had little trade in Grand Valley and declined to assist. Finally aid from the county was secured to finish the road. The thirty mile long road cost \$18,000. The first wagon passed through to Glenwood in December of 1885, and two stages started services between Glenwood and Grand Junction the following spring.³⁴ Toll rates were \$2.50 for a vehicle, with a charge per head for livestock driven over the road. This remained a toll road until the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, building down the Grand River in 1889 and 1890, bought the company, giving them the right to use the toll road's right of way.³⁵ A stage carrying mail and express left Grand Junction and went to Glenwood, Meeker, Aspen, and returned in four days.³⁶

Another early road extended to the plateau country east of the valley. In this case dissension about the route delayed construction.³⁷ The cattle interests in Plateau Valley opposed the road because they wanted the district to remain cattle country, not farmland. This attitude was characteristic of the stockmen in the grazing country around Grand Valley.³⁸

An act, authorizing state aid to the extent of \$25,000, for building a bridge across the Grand River south of town was passed in 1885.³⁹ This innovative measure in Colorado legislation supported more than local needs. It supplied a bridge which benefitted a large area on the Western Slope. County funds supplied the remainder of the cost of the bridge — \$15,000. Workers constructed the bridge from native lumber and native rock hauled across the river on the ferry east of town.⁴⁰ After plans were made for the bridge at Grand Junction, the Grand Junction Board of Trade wrote the Utah territorial legislature

concerning a road westward. The letter pointed out that travel had gone through Wyoming to avoid the Grand and Green Rivers. If Utah would construct a bridge across the Green River, it should turn traffic this way.⁴¹ This suggestion was not carried out until some time later.

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, coming from the east by way of Gunnison, terminated in Grand Junction. The Rio Grande Western, a separate company, owned a right of way from Grand Junction westward. The latter company completed a line from Grand Junction to Salt Lake City in the spring of 1883. Grand Junction was enthusiastic about this new connection with the outside world. Although both roads were narrow gauge, neither ran trains over the line of the other. Trouble ensued between the two roads over trackage and the terms of a lease of the Rio Grande Western to the Denver and Rio Grande. A war occurred in the latter part of June and early part of July, 1884. The Denver and Rio Grande captured all the rolling stock which came into Grand Junction from the west and sent it to Whitewater. A construction train travelled west with orders to tear up the rails near the state line. Grand Junction was not a disinterested spectator. The war, and high water on the Gunnison River, cut off all communication for two weeks. Neither of the roads was of great value without the other, and they arranged a satisfactory lease.⁴²

Improvements by the railroads, especially the Denver and Rio Grande, meant much to the new town. Grand Junction built a roundhouse, machine shops and depot as soon as possible after the arrival of the railroad. A substantial river bridge was built. The contract with the town company made Grand Junction a division point. This brought in capital and furnished labor.⁴³

The valley of the Grand River was as yet unoccupied by a railroad, although it had been surveyed by two companies. Being rich in coal, iron and cattle, it was considered the best route to the west through Colorado. Local boosters and newspapermen felt that at least six systems were interested in this route and were hopeful of soon being on a broad gauge transcontinental line.⁴⁴ When Grand Junction learned that the Denver and Rio Grande was certain to build a broad gauge road down the Grand, residents felt certain that other roads would arrange to use their tracks from Pueblo or Denver to Grand Junction, and from there use Rio Grande Western into Ogden.⁴⁵

Both the Denver and Rio Grande and the Rio Grande Western widened their roads to standard gauge through Grand Junction in 1890. That year the Denver and Rio Grande also completed its road down the Grand River to Grand Junction. The Denver and Rio Grande and the Colorado Midland had both built from the eastern slope to the New

Castle coal mines, seventy-five miles east of Grand Junction. There they waited two years, each looking for an advantage. They then decided to build a joint line to Grand Junction. The completion of the line was celebrated by an excursion. Two train loads of strangers, mostly from Glenwood Springs, were met in Grand Junction by a parade, given a reception, and shown the wonders of the valley. The press of the state was well represented, and the valley received favorable comment.⁴⁶

The Grand Valley's first crops were vegetables and grain, which would meet the immediate needs of the settlers. The first year, Elam Blaine planted some fruit trees which had been brought by prairie schooner in a slow and toilsome journey across the continental divide. They were grown in Fremont County and brought to the valley by Gideon Frasier in May, 1882. Mr. Blaine's experiment was watched with great interest. In two years' time the trees bore fruit. When Mesa County was first occupied, prominent fruit growers predicted that it would become a great fruit growing section of Colorado. Mr. D.S. Grimes, a fruit man of Denver, stated: "This is the most admirable place for fruit culture that I ever saw."⁴⁷

Mr. Grimes selected two thousand acres of land between the Grand and the Gunnison Rivers. For temporary irrigation, he planned to put in a pump. He established a nursery north of the river near town. Fruit farms were located on both sides of the Grand River, and at the mouth of Rapid Creek, fifteen miles east of Grand Junction. Much interest was taken in the growing of fruit. Each year thousands of trees were set out. Five years after the opening of the valley almost every farmer had from a few trees to a large orchard. Crops were frequently planted in the spaces between the small fruit trees.

Almost all varieties of the hardier fruits, and a few nuts were tried. Peaches proved the favorite. In these early peach orchards many different varieties, most of which did not prove to be good commercial fruit, were tried. In the eighty-acre peach orchard of Rose Brothers, in all twelve thousand trees, there were 4,000 Crawford, 1,000 St. John, 500 late Crawford, 3,000 Alexander, 500 Heath Cling, 500 Old Mixon Free, 1,000 Beersmock, 1,000 Foster, and 1,000 Susquehannah.⁴⁸ None of these varieties is found in large quantities in the valley today, and most of them are no longer even mentioned.

In the spring of 1887, frost damaged apricots and peaches. An unusually mild winter had caused the fruit to bloom early, and April frosts occurred.⁴⁹ The following year peach trees were damaged by winter cold, following a warm fall. The result was a decrease in the number of peach trees planted. Pear, apple,

cherry, and plum trees had gone through the winter without injury, and were planted in larger numbers.⁵⁰

The fruit growers of Mesa County met in Grand Junction and organized a horticultural society in 1889. They felt that fruit growing was the great industry of the future. Indications then showed that half a million trees would be planted the next season. In 1889 the Board of Trade issued a circular that carried the following statement:

The markets for Grand Valley fruits are all the principal cities and mining camps of the state. . . . The opening of the new broad gauge road to Aspen and Leadville will add to the facilities for disposing of all that can be grown here. . . . If there should be an over supply, then a canning factory will be in order. The settlers need have no fear of being unable to dispose of produce.⁵¹

Fruit shipments increased rapidly, and shipment by car load proved more profitable than in smaller amounts.

The Grand Valley Fruit Company, organized in 1890, bought two thousand acres of fruit land, which it planned to subdivide into ten-acre tracts and sell to settlers. The company sent representatives to Denver, who succeeded in disposing of a large portion of the land. They advertised that a ten-acre tract of fruit land would pay for itself ten times in five years after it began bearing, and that fruit trees could not be raised fast enough to supply the market created by the settling of the Rocky Mountain region.⁵² Fruit pests were mentioned in only a few instances, and it was urged that steps be taken to destroy them.⁵³

The valley was well adapted to the cultivation of grain also, but poor prices for wheat and oats discouraged production of these crops. Stock raisers from the surrounding country occasionally drove in herds of cattle to feed before shipping. This helped the market, and kept alfalfa in great demand.⁵⁴ Red clover, another valuable crop, was found to eradicate objectionable salts from alkaline land.⁵⁵

Strawberry culture proved successful and profitable in the valley's early period. Many strawberries were planted, and the mining camps furnished a ready market.⁵⁶

The success of their undertakings and the enthusiasm of the population led to the decision to hold a county fair and stock show at which the "wealth of the valley and the richness of the hills could be shown." The dates October 6, 7, and 8, 1887, were set for the fruit fair. Merchants offered premiums. Mesa County had, the preceding year, taken first prize at the State Fair for the best peaches.⁵⁷ The cooperation of businessmen, farmers, and stockmen made the fair a success with displays of surprising excellence and variety.⁵⁸

The fair became an annual feature and drew many visitors from the surrounding country. In 1890, however, the fair, with the exception of the races, was declared a failure. The following year, promoters renamed the celebration "Peach Day," and set its date in September, when Elberta peaches ripened. Many features of a fair were retained, and all visitors were served peaches and grapes. This celebration became widely known and drew many visitors. By 1895 ten thousand people from outside the city thronged the streets of the little town and tons of fruit were necessary to serve the crowd. Many crossed the range and came from surrounding mountain ranges. The railroads granted special rates to increase attendance. There were large displays of fruit, grain, and vegetables. Two pavilions were erected in a park. William Jennings Bryan spoke to an immense crowd on September 5, 1895. Races remained a popular feature. This festival extended over two or three days each fall.⁵⁹

The social life of the early Grand Junction community centered to a great extent around the school. The first school opened late in the fall of 1882. There was one teacher, and the school was supported mainly by subscription. The need for better school facilities was soon felt, and, after some delay, bonds to the amount of \$10,000 were voted for the construction of a brick school in Grand Junction.⁶⁰ The school grew rapidly. By 1885 there were two hundred students and four teachers. Books were solicited for a high school library, and entertainments and spelling bees were held to raise money for it. The district was soon forced to rent a room for part of the school work. Bonds for \$15,000 for the construction of a new school building were voted unanimously.⁶¹ Soon a new eight-room brick building was being hurried to completion. Outlying districts organized and established schools also. As ranches were small, the population was denser than in most rural districts.

Early agitation induced the Department of Interior to locate one of the Indian Schools being instituted by the government in the area. One hundred and sixty acres of land a mile and a half east of town were procured and donated to the government as a site for the school. Congress passed a \$23,000 appropriation bill to immediately erect a building for an industrial school to educate the children of tribes tributary to this point. The contract price of the building was \$13,000 and the contract was awarded to a local firm. This left \$10,000 to be used for the farm and general improvements.⁶² For a few years the school faced hard times because of dissension among the faculty and lack of support by the government. The Indian School overcame these difficulties, and in 1892 ninety-nine students, the full capacity of the

institution, were enrolled. School officials were obliged to refuse eighty-six applicants for lack of room. The Indian School needed more buildings, shops, farm equipment, and fruit trees. Students were reported as doing well in school and in applied arts. The school was called Teller Institute in honor of Senator Henry M. Teller.⁶³

In August, 1891, a two week session of Teachers Normal was held in Grand Junction. The state and the counties constituting the district paid the greater part of the expenses.⁶⁴

By 1886 four churches had been organized, and buildings erected. These were the Methodist Episcopal Church South, Baptist, Catholic, and Methodist Episcopal.

Grand Junction owed much to the Grand Junction Town and Improvement Company, which had added to its early growth and prosperity. This vigorous company did much to advertise the town. It bought and sold real estate, built cottages, then rented or sold them, aided in construction of irrigation ditches, erected business buildings, and did as much as possible to contribute to the general interest and prosperity of the town and its inhabitants.⁶⁵ Later, however, the Town Company was criticized as following a selfish policy. Residents urged the Town Company to do more to attract industries and capital to Grand Junction. The company owned four thousand lots, and much other property which it was accused of holding for speculation. Since the company would gain most from growth of the town, its critics felt it should sell land at a low price to attract residents and outside capital.⁶⁶ The Town Company retained extensive interests in Grand Junction until 1899, when it sold out to the city of Grand Junction.⁶⁷ The Grand Junction Board of Trade, organized in 1884, became active in the interests of commercial relations of the city.

During the earliest years, an irrigation ditch supplied water to Grand Junction. Wells provided drinking water. Citizens realized the need for a good supply of city water but disagreed as to the source of supply. Litigation over the contract's terms delayed completion of a water system until 1888.⁶⁸

Despite hardships Grand Junction continued to grow. Successful farming contributed significantly to the town's prominence and stability. The population in 1890 was 2,030.⁶⁹ A flour mill was built in 1887, an electric light plant installed in 1888, and a street car system in 1890. This system paid at once, and its patronage increased steadily. The city's buildings were mostly of brick, streets were wide and well maintained, and sidewalks had been built in all the downtown portions. Many trees had been planted as the result of a definite campaign by city officers and influential people.



Courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado (Chamber of Commerce Collection)
Looking east, Hoodoo Street, 1880

Local men organized the Grand Valley Loan and Trust Company in 1883. This company aided development greatly by making loans on farm lands and other good securities. The town had two banks which aided stable development.

For amusement the people depended largely upon themselves; a fine spirit of democracy existed. The first Sunday School Christmas tree brought out a crowd of two hundred.⁷⁰ There were many saloons and gambling was popular. City officials organized a volunteer fire company early. An Athletic Club was also organized and fully equipped. The Grand Junction Cornet Band was popular; the local military company became something of a social unit; and the Jockey Club (which put on an extensive program of winter races) was active for a number of years. The Mesa Opera Rink was erected in the fall of 1885. It had a hardwood floor, a stage and scenery, and was used for all amusements.

It is surprising how soon these pioneers began to look toward desirable summer resorts. As early as 1883 Grand Mesa was alluded to as a summer paradise. Pinon Mesa, to the southwest, was pointed out as the coming summer resort because of its proximity to the city, climate, and scenic attractions. Kannah Creek was also cited as a suitable resort for the hot season. References to these resort points, especially the Mesa Lakes, increased as time passed. Promoters demanded a road to make Mesa Lakes a popular resort.⁷¹ A stage line from De Beque to the Mesa Lakes advertised in Grand Junction papers through the summer of 1891, picturing:

An hour's ride from Grand Junction on the Denver and Rio Grande or the Colorado Midland, from De Beque an easy stage coach with relays of horses will take you safely to the camping ground in four hours . . . Rates, round trip, three dollars. Baggage one dollar per hundred pounds.⁷²

The wagon road added greatly to the convenience of camping. In 1892 a comfortable log cabin hotel was constructed. The Hotel Company and a number of private parties built other cabins. The number of people from the valley taking advantage of the pleasures to be found there increased each year.



Courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado (Palsade Library Collection 79.23.50)
Hike up old "Stagecoach Trail", 1912. Left to right: May Stokes, Mary Rait, Kate Phillips Wills, Edna Wiggins, Mabel Eyer Asmussen, Minnie Lee Groner, Ellen Wiggins McRae, Nellie Bricker DeVoe.

NOTES

- ¹C.H. Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado* (Grand Junction: Mesa County Democrat, 1886), p. 2.
- ²Sidney Jocknick, *Early Days on the Western Slope, and Campfire Chats with Otto Mears* (Denver: Carson-Harper Co., 1913), p. 222.
- ³William McGinley (one of those detained), Interview, 23 February 1931.
- ⁴Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, pp. 1-3.
- ⁵McGinley, Interview, 23 February 1931.
- ⁶Original town plat is in County Clerk's office, Grand Junction, Colorado, Book 1, pp. 1 and 2.
- ⁷*Grand Junction News*, 28 October 1881, p. 1.
- ⁸*Record*, County Clerk's office, Book 1, p. 2.
- ⁹*Grand Junction News*, 28 October 1882, p. 1.
- ¹⁰Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, p. 4.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 3.
- ¹²J. Clayton Nichols, letter in *Daily Sentinel*, 27 January 1906, p. 9.
- ¹³McGinley, Interview, 23 February 1931.
- ¹⁴Mrs. Nannie Underhill, Interview, 22 February 1923.
- ¹⁵*Grand Junction News*, 14 April 1883, p. 1.
- ¹⁶Letter from Mr. Ed Price, *Daily Sentinel*, 2 March 1930, p. 1.
- ¹⁷*Daily Sentinel*, 2 March 1930, p. 1.
- ¹⁸*Grand Junction News*, 2 December 1882, p. 1.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, Special Edition, 17 February 1883, p. 1.
- ²⁰*Daily Sentinel*, 27 July 1907, p. 1.
- ²¹*Grand Junction News*, 24 March 1883, p. 1.
- ²²*Ibid.*, 23 September 1884, p. 1.
- ²³*Ibid.*, 4 March 1886, p. 1.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, 21 July 1888, p. 1.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 2 January 1892, p. 3.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 2 January 1892, p. 3.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, 28 January 1893, p. 1.
- ²⁸Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, p. 84.
- ²⁹*Grand Junction News*, 9 May 1891, p. 1.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, 12 January 1889, p. 1.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, 16 October 1889, p. 1.
- ³²Darwin P. Kingsley, "Roads," *Grand Junction News*, 3 January 1885, p. 3.
- ³³Letter from Merchants of Glenwood Springs, *Grand Junction News*, 30 August 1884, p. 1.
- ³⁴Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, pp. 17-21, 61-66.
- ³⁵Mr. Henry R. Rhone, Interview, 4 May 1931.
- ³⁶*Grand Junction News*, 17 April 1886, p. 1.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*, 12 May 1883, p. 3.
- ³⁸Horace L. DeLong, Interview, 22 October 1930.
- ³⁹*Session Laws of Colorado*, 1885, 27 (House Bill No. 374).
- ⁴⁰*Grand Junction News*, 14 November 1885, p. 6.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, 26 February 1886, p. 1.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, 3 May 1884, p. 1, and 19 July 1884, pp. 1, 3.
- ⁴³Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, p. 45.
- ⁴⁴*Grand Junction News*, 19 May 1888, p. 1.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 7 December 1889, p. 1.
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 13 December 1890, p. 1.
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 9 December 1882, p. 1.
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 10 August 1887, p. 1.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 2 April 1887, p. 1.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 18 March 1888, p. 1.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, 11 November 1889, p. 1.
- ⁵²*Ibid.*, 1 February 1890, pp. 1, 3.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, 9 February 1892, p. 2.
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 26 September 1885, p. 1.
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 29 October 1888.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 21 June 1890, p. 4.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 24 September 1887, p. 1.
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 26 November 1887, p. 1.
- ⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 5 September 1895, p. 1.
- ⁶⁰Haskell, *History and Description of Mesa County, Colorado*, p. 18.
- ⁶¹*Grand Junction News*, 5 July 1890.
- ⁶²*Ibid.*, 14 November 1885.
- ⁶³*Ibid.*, 27 February 1892, p. 1.
- ⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 4 July 1891, p. 1.
- ⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 3 January 1885, p. 3.
- ⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 13 July 1889, p. 3.
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 19 November 1899, p. 1.
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 7 July 1888, p. 1.
- ⁶⁹United States Federal Census, 1900. Vol. I, Population, Part I, p. 440.
- ⁷⁰*Grand Junction News*, 30 December 1882, p. 1.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*, 28 May 1890, p. 4.
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, 27 June 1891.

CHAPTER IV THE FRUIT INDUSTRY

The first few years of development in the valley were a period of experimentation. Settlers found fruit raising to be the most profitable branch of agriculture, and for some years it remained the most important industry in the valley. The fruit set out in greatest quantities around Grand Junction during the early period was the peach. The tree comes into bearing at four or five years of age, while the apple does not yield a profitable crop until the tenth and sometimes as late as the twelfth year. Growers around Palisade set the majority of the early orchards with apples. This condition was reversed later.

Early orchardists made a common mistake of planting a little of every variety of fruit. As production exceeded local demand as well as the demand from nearby mining towns, which paid a high price for fruit, growers learned that many of these varieties were not suited for commercial purposes. Growers were advised to specialize in varieties for which a market existed: in apples, Missouri Pippin, Winesap and Jonathan; in peaches, the Elberta.¹ In 1904 the *Palisade Tribune* stated that four-fifths of the peach trees to be planted in the Palisade district that year would be Elbertas, which had been found to stand up in shipment better and net more money than any other variety.²

Each year the acreage of orchard lands increased, and there was at that time no better opening for those desiring to engage in fruit culture. One of the best examples of rapid development was in the east end of Grand Valley. The land there slopes to the south, receiving the sun's rays more directly. The valley is narrow, sheltered by mountains, has frequent canyon breezes, and the soil is excellent for fruit. This land opened for settlement at the same time as the land around Grand Junction, and a few enterprising and far-sighted farmers set out orchards before there was any other development in that section. They hauled water from the river to little trees, a task requiring high courage and endless labor. Later, the Mount Lincoln Ditch was built to carry water to several thousand acres of land, which included some of the finest fruit land in the valley.

The town of Palisade was laid out in the spring of 1893. It sat at the east end of Grand Valley, on the main line of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. In a short time, farmers had plowed much of the upper valley and set it to trees. The settlers raised grain and vegetables between tree rows while they waited for trees to begin bearing.³ Many of the early settlers who came to the valley and started orchards, in many cases

on borrowed money, later became the valley's most substantial citizens.

A spring frost destroyed the fruit in most of the valley in 1896. The Palisade district, because of its natural advantages, had a crop as large as could be matured without injury to the trees. An account of Peach Day in Grand Junction stated that the day was celebrated in spite of the crop being smaller except in favored districts. Palisade's exhibit was without doubt the most attractive in the pavilion; a great variety of excellent fruit was displayed. The bulk of the county's fruit crop that year was to be gathered from orchards in that locality.⁴ In 1898, a severe winter hurt peaches in the lower valley. The Palisade section, having less extreme temperatures, saved the reputation of Grand Valley as peach country. More young peach orchards reached maturity there each year and car lots were shipped daily. The *Grand Junction News* held that little or no danger existed of ever having a crop failure, on account of the temperature being more even than in the lower valley, and that Palisade should be strictly a peach growing locality.⁵ Such statements may have been overly optimistic, but it shows the reason for the reversal of the apple and peach areas, and led to a veritable boom in the Palisade section.

Building in Palisade and vicinity displayed remarkable growth for a little village. Real estate values soared. A new irrigation company, the Stub Ditch Company, making use of a pumping plant, built a ditch above the Mt. Lincoln Ditch, cutting close to the Book Cliffs. This brought water to a sizable area of valuable peach land. So eager were settlers to take advantage of this opportunity that numerous orchards were set in advance of the ditch, and water had to be hauled to them for at least one season.

During the year 1906, when the boom neared its height, the population of Palisade increased thirty percent; four thousand acres of peach land were added to the irrigated area; fifty percent more fruit was shipped than during any previous year; building improvements doubled; and real estate reaching a total of \$1,075,000 passed through the hands of real estate dealers.⁶ Late in 1908 a six-acre peach orchard, improved, sold for \$24,000. These elevated prices held for a number of years. Real estate sales for 1908 totalled two million dollars.⁷

The *Orchard Bulletin* of Stark Brothers, a pamphlet issued by the company in 1905, gave its first page to an article entitled "Colorado's Peach Orchard." This was, perhaps, the most extensive advertising any part of the valley had received — 100,000 copies were sent to all parts of the United States. It read in part:

Palisade is the peach orchard of Colorado. . . . The district is so small the little town might be compared to the office or packing house of one orchard, in which some 3,000 people find employment at this time. The favored district is three and a half miles west, two miles east, and from one to four miles north and south of the little village. It contains practically all of the peach crop of Colorado. It is the only section of Colorado, if not of the United States, which has never had a failure of peach crop. All fruits succeed equally well there. Pears are profitable, apples are good . . . Peaches average the best profit, in some cases netting \$1200 to the acre. . . . Most of the orchards are from five to ten acres in size.⁸

Similar statements in Denver and Rio Grande Railroad folders and local papers, based on figures from various growers advertising the high yield from lands and the large return on capital invested in this area, kept up the price of real estate.

In 1908 "Palisade Peach Day" was held in the Denver offices of the Colorado Midland. The following year a carload of Clifton cantaloupes and one of Palisade peaches were sent to Denver for advertising purposes. A parade, led by the Colorado Midland band, hauled peaches and cantaloupes through the streets to the Colorado Midland offices where they were given away.⁹

Some questioned the practice of stressing the high price of Grand Valley land, as it prevented investors coming to the valley. An editorial, "From \$25 up, Not from \$4000 Down" emphasized the fact that much good land sold at reasonable prices.¹⁰ A partial crop failure in 1908, due to a late freeze, led fruit men to declare that another failure would depress the price of real estate.¹¹

The shift in the lower valley from peaches to greater amounts of apples and pears was accomplished during the same time. In 1897 Grand Junction placed pears and apples for the first time on the market.¹² The demand for winter apples was good, and pears were profitable. Grapes and prunes were produced, but later dropped. They froze too often and profits in good years did not compare with the steadier profits from hardier fruits. However, the last few years have seen orchardists again planting larger acreage of grapes. Bad conditions in other fruits and a better knowledge of how to care for the grape plant to avoid such frequent damage are chiefly responsible for the change.

In 1909 Mr. William Frey of Clifton reported the enormous yield of sixty bushels of apples from one tree. This tree brought its owner a net gain of \$120. From his entire orchard of eighteen acres Mr. Frey stated the yield, on completion of harvest, would be 7,000 bushels, and the income over \$15,000.¹³

Many felt that the valley needed advertising in order to get the best market for fruit. Mass meetings were held in Grand Junction and a booster fund raised.¹⁴ The Edison Film Company, assisted by the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, made a set of Grand Valley fruit slides in the fall of 1909. These slides ran for one week in Madison Square Garden, in October 1910, and the New York City Board of Education asked permission to use them in the New York City schools together with other pictures of irrigated countries.¹⁵

Grand Valley was well advertised at the Chicago Land Show held in November, 1910. Much promotional literature was distributed, two lectures were given, and the Grand Valley pictures shown every day during the show. The president of the show invited Mr. Mahoney, secretary of the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, to speak to a congress of fruit growers from thirty-seven states on the Grand Valley and its resources.¹⁶ At Chicago the Colorado exhibit was judged the finest and Grand Valley fruit took most of the prizes. Mesa County took forty-three premiums.¹⁷

Mr. Mahoney, on his return from the Chicago Land Exposition, said he had been handicapped by having no fruit to sell or give away as samples. The Hood River region sold a vast amount. Colorado fruit was more in demand, but he had not enough to sell. Mr. Mahoney said he refused fabulous prices. He predicted that good results would follow, as the Grand Valley had received good newspaper publicity.¹⁸

The superior size and quality of Grand Valley fruit is proven by the fact that, from 1890 to 1902, judges awarded Mesa County first premiums for fruit displays at all of the State Fairs but one. The fruit entered was largely from this section of the county. During this period Mesa County received 61 first and 352 second premiums. Other entries received 58 first and 582 second premiums.¹⁹ These displays provided good advertisement for the valley.

Fourteen varieties of Grand Valley apples were sent to Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, in 1908, to be entered in the annual exhibit there. They won sweepstakes and blue ribbons.²⁰ At the national apple show in Denver in 1910 a carload of apples from Grand Junction won the first prize of \$1,000.²¹ Grand Valley apples again took first prize at the International Apple Shippers' Convention at Cleveland in October, 1913. The Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association sent and entered six or seven boxes which competed with apples from all fruit producing sections. The Hood River display took second prize.²² In 1914 Mesa County took 102 premiums at the State Fair.²³

The *Fruitman's Guide*, published in New York, and perhaps the most representative paper of the fruit trade, speaks in 1909 of Elberta peaches

from Grand Valley as "in a class by themselves, the finest in the world." A car of Palisade peaches reached New York that year; they sold for a fine price and their grading and packing aroused much favorable interest.²⁴

Peach Day, held annually in Grand Junction, served to advertise the Palisade section to surrounding communities. In 1904, in view of the fact that the peach no longer represented Grand Junction's leading product, the celebration became the Mesa County Industrial and Fruit Fair.²⁵ Excursions were run from nearby towns, and exhibits and programs were usually kept to a high standard. The large attendance at these fairs proved their popularity.

The high point in interest was reached in 1909 when President Taft came to Grand Junction as a guest of the city for an hour. Organizers set the fair date to include September 23, to take advantage of Mr. Taft's visit. Interest in the proposed Highline Canal irrigation project was partly responsible for the President's stay there. He spent about twenty minutes in the exhibition hall, then made a short speech to a crowd of over 8,000 at the grandstand. Mr. Taft was given a box of the finest Palisade peaches by the Peach Queen, a Palisade girl who had been elected to that office.²⁶

The Fair Association, which had handled the celebration for a number of years, after a time began to lose money on the event. After 1923, they discontinued the fairs,²⁷ and later sold the fairgrounds to the city for use as a park.

Growers saw little danger in the overproduction of fruit, for the development during the first fifteen years was paralleled by steadily increasing prices. They concentrated on specialization and the improvement of their product.

By 1906 the apple crop of the valley was estimated at 1,200 car loads. A car load contains about 500 bushels of fruit, whether packed in boxes or bushel baskets. This was a year of prosperity in Mesa County; every crop was a record breaker. Over 1,700 cars of fruit were shipped from Palisade and Grand Junction.²⁸

In 1910 the crop exceeded the shipping capacity of the railroad equipment. The Denver and Rio Grande was forced to borrow locomotives, and both roads borrowed all the cars available to handle the heavy apple crop. The quality of this crop proved disappointing; a long, hot, dry spell in the summer increased the ravages of insect pests. The average net yield from fruit land at this time stood at \$400 an acre, with bearing apple and pear orchards selling at from \$750 to \$1,500 an acre. Near Clifton one rancher stated that he had netted \$700 annually from fifty-four Winesap apple trees since he had bought the

orchard five years previously.²⁹ The 1911 apple crop reached 1,800 cars, but the apple market had declined. The fruit crop, as a whole, brought in over a million dollars. The peach crop was light, but the market good. It was considered a successful season.³⁰

There was difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of refrigerator cars during heavy harvests. Peaches and early pears, being perishable, had to be rushed to market and crowded the railroads. Palisade alone shipped over 100 cars (50,000 bushels) of peaches a day during the rush of Elberta harvest. The cars were iced in Grand Junction, sent to the loading point, filled with fruit, then returned to Grand Junction and re-iced before they started to market. In addition, the fruit industry faced an insufficient supply of ice, delays in shipping, and a lack of the necessary laborers for temporary employment. Car shortage also handicapped apple shipments some years, but apples are not so perishable and a short delay did not mean disaster.

Prices dropped because of overproduction, lack of railroad facilities for handling these large crops, and lack of organization and cooperative effort among growers. The peach industry, especially, developed faster than people could organize and keep up with it. The fruit ripened before growers could get it picked, packed and shipped. Both pears and peaches were sent out of the state too ripe and reached markets in a damaged condition. Many who had bought land under boom prices were unable to make payments.

Local marketing associations claimed to be getting the best prices possible.³¹ Pears were generally more profitable during low price years than either peaches or apples. In 1913 there were reports of \$800 and \$900 an acre being made from pears in the Clifton district.³² In earlier years returns had been better, ranging as high as \$2.90 a box. A one and three quarter acre pear orchard yielded 1,000 boxes which averaged \$2.40 a box in 1907.³³

Palisade shipped out practically half of the entire fruit crop of Grand Valley in 1913. Of the shipments from that point 800 cars were peaches, 35 pears, 140 apples, and 100 mixed fruits — a total of 1,075 cars. Grand Junction shipped 415 cars of apples, 95 of pears, 10 of cantaloupes, and 2 mixed cars — a total of 550 cars. Clifton shipped 227 cars of apples, 75 of pears, 90 of cantaloupes, and 15 mixed — a total of 407 cars. The cantaloupes were raised almost entirely between tree rows in growing apple orchards. That year peaches paid, on an average, \$400 a car, apples \$600 a car, pears \$900 a car, and cantaloupes \$350 a car.³⁴

Orchardists soon became critical and dissatisfied because fruit which sold for a fair price in eastern markets paid low returns to the grower. For the peach industry, these were the darkest years. Prices started

upward during World War I. In spite of partial crop failures and price fluctuation, the upper end of the valley has been prosperous, although prices have never equalled those of the boom period. The apple industry improved only temporarily. After the war, conditions became even worse. The price of pears fluctuated more, paying well a few years.

The tendency toward a decreased acreage of apples, because of failure to check insect pests, and the consequent increased cost of production and decrease in the amount of marketable apples was evident by 1924. This was a big crop year. Peach and pear shipments showed a healthy increase; apple shipments dropped from 2,081 cars in 1923 to 1,247 cars in 1924.³⁵

The 1929 crop of peaches from the Palisade district exceeded 1,800 cars. A new record for one day's shipment was set at 175 cars. More Elberta peaches went to New York than to any other point. Shipments were also made to Boston, Quebec and New Orleans, as well as nearer points.³⁶ The acreage of peaches has increased, because of land opened by the Orchard Mesa Irrigation Project south of the Colorado River.³⁷ The east end of Orchard Mesa was practically all planted to peaches. Some ranchers near Grand Junction were again trying peaches, because of the failure of apple orchards.

The problem of organizing to market fruit early engaged the attention of Grand Valley growers. For the first few years, growers sold the fruit locally or sent it to commission houses. In 1891 several individuals organized the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association. This pioneer, local organization was incorporated with a capital stock of \$25,000. Its purpose was to market Grand Valley fruit more advantageously. It handled the fruit on a commission basis, and shipped produce to commission houses. The association soon extended its business to maintain a commission house throughout the year, and handled all kinds of farm produce. The Fruit Growers' Association was of inestimable benefit to the growers of the Western Slope; they standardized the grading and packing of fruit and, in general, prevented the glutting of small markets. The association handled four-fifths of all the fruit produced for a number of years after its organization, and all of the growers profited from its operations.³⁸ The percentage of fruit handled by the association was later estimated as high as ninety-five per cent.

The Fruit Growers learned that Denver commission houses transshipped Grand Junction fruit to Durango, Rico, and other nearby points, and thus undersold direct shipments of the local association to those points. The association corrected its early practice of shipping most of the fruit to Denver houses, by shipping to markets beyond



Courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado (Palisade Library Collection 79.23.132)

Farmers bringing peaches to the Western Slope Fruit Growers' Association in the early 1900s.

Denver in refrigerator cars. The first shipment to Chicago did not reach its destination in good condition. The peaches were not properly packed for so long a haul, and the association suffered a considerable loss. Their problem was to get the fruit to the consumer in prime condition.³⁹

The Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association prospered from the first. After 1897, it expanded the capacity of its operation almost every year.⁴⁰ Large dividends were declared in stock or cash.⁴¹ In 1902 the association doubled the capacity of its packing house in Grand Junction and opened a branch in Palisade, adequate at that time to care for the crop there.⁴² In 1906 the association increased capital stock to \$100,000 to support the rapidly growing fruit business.⁴³

The directors of the association attempted to organize the growers of the Western Slope. They wished to control the entire output of fruit in order that they might improve prices through better marketing. However, they found it impossible to organize all growers. They stated that as long as Palisade and Whitewater growers continued to ship independently, and to put most of their fruit on Colorado markets, growers would receive poor prices.

The Fruit Growers Association provided more than just marketing advice. It shipped in, and sold to growers supplies for packing fruit, and spray materials. The association investigated and advised growers on the best methods of controlling insect pests, time to spray, and chemicals to use in sprays. It also sent out field men who instructed the growers and worked for uniformity in pruning, harvesting and packing of fruit. This group provided a valuable service, as many settlers had no previous experience in fruit growing, and conditions on the Western Slope differed from those in older fruit districts.⁴⁴

Some growers and townspeople had advocated cooperative marketing since 1895, with the first large shipment of fruit. They wanted the growers to hire an agent who should handle the fruit, to be paid a salary, not a commission. The advantages and disadvantages of the plan were discussed freely, but no one attempted to carry out such a plan until much later.

The Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association installed an evaporating plant in 1900. They hoped this would avoid the waste of fruit too ripe to ship. Peaches and pears were dried. It was used primarily, however, for prunes, which were dried in greater quantities than anything else, with gratifying results. The output was of good quality. The association received orders from Denver and Pueblo for a car load of dried fruits the first season. The basement of the plant was fitted for packing and storing.⁴⁵ The prune tree blossoms too early in the spring to be safe from frost in the valley. Over a number of

years, growers learned that other fruits paid better. The decreasing number of prunes led to the discontinuation of this plant after several years.

It was announced late in 1903 that two associations would handle the fruit crop of 1904. A number of Palisade growers organized the Palisade Fruit Growers' Association. Those pressing for a separate organization did so largely from local pride. The upper valley growers did not wish to aid the development of a Grand Junction organization. They resented the use of Grand Junction labels on their peach boxes, wishing the fruit to advertise their own town. The old association thought it best to leave the field, but some of their largest shippers from Palisade and most of the stockholders insisted on continuance of business there.⁴⁶ The following spring the Independent Fruit Growers' Association was organized in Grand Junction by some of the fruit growers who thought there was room for another association.⁴⁷

It may have been the desire to combat the implied criticism of two alternate associations which led the Grand Junction group to state that the matter of markets as well as of insects had been settled satisfactorily. Others shared this illusion. The annual report of the Grand Junction Association in 1905 stated that unsatisfactory returns were due to a poor quality of fruit, poor packing, or at times to a poor market. The Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association that year had shipped cars of fruit to twenty-two states, to Canada, and to Mexico.⁴⁸ Shortly thereafter, apples were shipped from the Grand Valley to Europe and Australia.

The Palisade Peach Growers' Association, organized in Palisade in 1906, was the only association to try a community packing house. Members brought in their fruit and it was packed at the association platform. The members felt that this avoided unnecessary duplication of machinery and equipment, and unnecessary scattering of skilled packers and box makers, who might not be kept busy by one fruit raiser. The fruit and pack could be inspected easily, and could be in the car on ice immediately after packing.⁴⁹ However, lack of room to handle the fruit, expense of equipping the plant, waste of fruit, difficulty of supervision, and mismanagement made the experimental effort a failure.

The next plan tried in Palisade under the name of the Western Slope Association was organized in 1911. In this cooperative venture, the grower purchased as many shares of stock as he had acres of bearing orchard, the fruit from which he would ship through the association. This plan sought to keep control of the association in the hands of the fruit shippers themselves.

These various associations flourished; during the prosperous years of the fruit industry their annual reports all showed finances in good condition, and they paid large dividends. With the coming of hard times the weaker ones were forced out of business, or consolidated with stronger organizations. Throughout this time the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association handled the largest part of the valley's crop.

By 1912, low returns for fruit made growers criticize the associations. At the annual meeting of the Grand Junction association, attended by over 600 members, growers passed resolutions asking for greater economy on the part of the management, and that box material be sold as cheaply as by competitors. The management asked for an increase in the commission charged, arguing that a lack of funds handicapped its operation. The commission charge, originally five percent, had been raised to seven.⁵⁰ The 1913 annual meeting witnessed the discussion of substituting a flat charge on each package handled for the commission charge. This measure was voted down, but adopted later that year by the Palisade Fruit Growers' Association.⁵¹ The Grand Junction Association made the change in 1914.

In 1914 the biggest and finest fruit crop, with the best pack and grade, sold for the lowest price in history. The Grand Junction Association's annual report placed the blame on disloyal and panicky growers, dull business, war disturbances, high price of sugar, failure of growers to follow instructions, and overproduction of apples. It recommended the elimination of orchards on poor land, the reduction of poor varieties of fruit, and the retirement of unintelligent, unscientific orchardists. The middleman, whom the growers blamed, was declared to be the least of many causes for poor prices. This association had shipped 2,534 cars of fruit in car lots, by freight that season.⁵²

Critics charged that the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association had become an immense commission house. A newspaper statement, typical of the sentiment, showed that cash and stock dividends had made great profits for the investor. One hundred dollars invested with the association in 1897 or before, was worth \$2,700 in 1915.⁵³

Some ranchers, dissatisfied with these conditions, turned to smaller cooperative selling organizations, and to cash buyers. Some of these, lacking sufficient financial backing, were forced out of business or became bankrupt. The Fruitvale Farmers' Union issued an urgent and timely warning against selling fruit without careful investigation.⁵⁴ Farmers' organizations formed throughout the valley to undertake the marketing of fruit, hoping to give better returns. Results were not satisfactory.



Courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado (Palisade Library Collection 79.23.134)
Workers in a cluttered packing shed in Palisade.

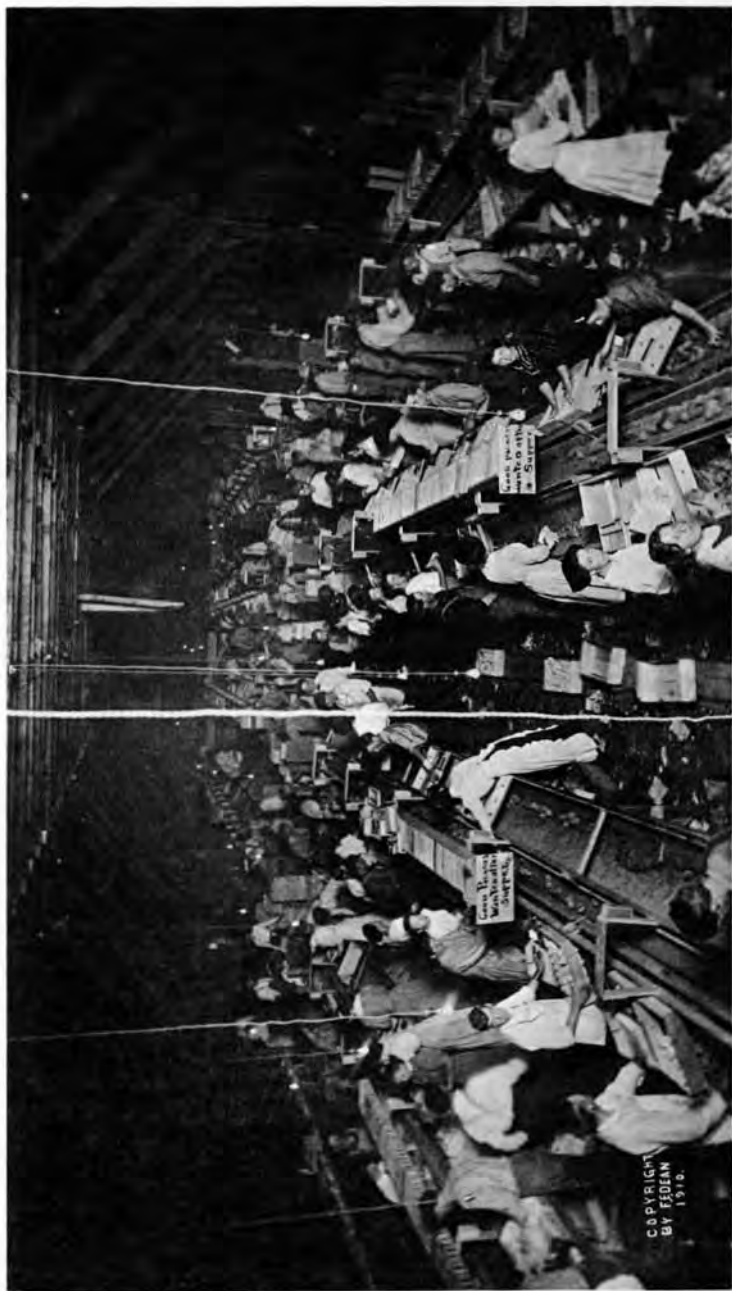
In 1922, and for a few years following, promoters carried on a campaign to sell Western Slope fruit in the eastern slope cities. The Farm Bureau backed the movement. Local papers ran advertisements for some time, urging the use of fruit grown in the valley, especially apples. Extensive advertising was done in Denver, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs. An Apple Week was instituted in 1923.

In the fall of 1913 and the spring of 1914 a campaign was carried on for the consolidation of fruit associations. This movement started in Palisade with a mass meeting of growers seeking a solution to the desperate plight of the peach industry. Later they made an effort to include the associations of Grand Junction as well. All agreed that the competitive system hurt the growers' interests. The new plan aimed at a systematized distribution of Grand Valley fruits and the elimination of congested markets.⁵⁵ The existing organization could not find an agreeable scheme of organization and this commendable plan was dropped. However, they did appoint a joint marketing committee composed of representatives from each association. These representatives met regularly during shipping season in an effort to quote uniform prices.⁵⁶ Even this effort at uniformity was maintained only during the fruit season of 1914.

The United Fruit Growers' Association of Palisade, a cooperative sales organization, was founded in 1923. This association took over the plant of the Western Slope Association. There was general dissatisfaction with existing organizations, and a feeling that they operated solely for profit. The main object, however, was to get the selling and distribution of peaches under one head. In this effort the new association succeeded more nearly than any other organization. The leaders of all fruit raisers drew up plans after consulting with local growers. All producers in the Palisade district were urged to become members and a majority did so.

One factor in the success of the new association was the Co-operative Marketing Act, which the Colorado legislature passed in 1923.⁵⁷ This act profited from the experiments and weak points of previous case rulings relating to cooperative marketing. The organization could bind members to an exclusive shipping contract. A cooperative organization could handle capitalization much as a corporation could. Before passage of this Marketing Act, such organizations had been handicapped on this score.

The United Fruit Growers' Association is unique. It is the most cooperative of any fruit association. Estimates from a large number of growers showed that the average amount necessary for supplies per acre of producing orchard was \$112.50. The growers' contract with



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Courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado (Palisade Library Collection 79.23.131)
Scene in Peach Growers Association packing shed, 1910.

the association provided that each member give a note to the amount of \$112.50 per bearing acre. Due the first of December each year, the note bore no interest until maturity. The member's note was renewed each year unless he wished to withdraw from the association. The contract also bound the grower to ship all produce with the association.

The association used the growers' notes as collateral, borrowed money and paid cash for supplies; thus the new association was financed without advancing capital and without selling stock. The discount obtained for paying cash for supplies more than paid interest on the notes. The association levied a package charge, the same as that charged by other associations. The non-profit organization returned excess revenue to members on the basis of the amount of fruit shipped.

The various associations are working at present on a plan for a central selling agency, each to be represented according to the number of cars of fruit shipped. It seems doubtful that this effort will prove any more successful than previous ones.⁵⁸

Talk of diversification to make the valley more nearly self-supporting became common. Additional factories for canning fruits and vegetables, and an evaporator were discussed as possibilities to help marketing. Fruit promoters advocated an increased consumption of fruit to create a demand and establish a market for high-grade fruit. The grower was advised to reduce the number and varieties of fruit trees, and specialize in those most marketable. Grand Junction sent a petition to Congress asking government aid in a fruit marketing probe,⁵⁹ but nothing was done.

The Colorado Agricultural College conducted a fruit survey in the valley in 1917. The survey revealed an average orchard size of eight and eight-tenths acres. The mean cost per acre of arsenical spraying was twenty dollars; the cost of one spray, \$3.40 per acre. The average cost of lime and sulphur spray was \$6.65 per acre. The average yield per acre was 135 boxes of apples (a box is one bushel), 145 boxes of pears (a box slightly under one bushel), and 640 boxes of peaches (a box weighs 20 pounds). The average cost of production for a box of apples was 61.2 cents; pears 60.5 cents; peaches 31.2 cents. The report concluded: "Grand Valley will continue to be a favored fruit growing section."⁶⁰

Due to higher wages for labor, increased cost of chemicals, greater number of necessary sprays and other factors, the cost of production has increased since 1917, especially for apples and pears.

The problem of insect pests, one which has grown constantly more serious, presented itself almost as soon as the fruit industry was established. The most serious pest for apple and pear growers is the codling

moth. As early as 1894 the *Grand Junction News* told growers that the codling moth had to be fought diligently, and advised methods of control.⁶¹ Other articles appeared dealing with the San Jose scale, woolly aphid, and red spider.

In 1897, in accordance with an act passed by the state legislature in that year, the office of county horticulturist was created in Mesa County.⁶² This officer inspected nursery stock, studied fruit conditions in the county, and did experimental work⁶³ to find methods to control insect pests. He advised growers about preparing and applying sprays to destroy various insects.

No one could deny the fact that the codling moth was increasing and doing real damage. The Mesa County Horticultural Society devoted most of its discussions for some years to control of insects, especially the codling moth, and area newspapers ran instructive articles. Horticulturists held that, if growers applied arsenic spray thoroughly after the blossoms fell, nine-tenths of the worms would be destroyed. However, because the eggs hatch in eight to ten days, a second spray applied after that interval was necessary to destroy the remaining insects. Those who believed in being thorough suggested a third application. In spraying, unity of action among fruit growers is necessary. If some spray and others do not, it is largely lost labor, because the codling moth migrates in the insect stage. It was believed the destruction of all insect pests required joint action.⁶⁴

Ranchers placed bands of burlap or other material about the trunk of the tree. The worm takes refuge in such a place to pupate. By examining the bands at intervals of eight to ten days, insects in various stages of development could be killed. Some horticulturists instructed ranchers to burn torches all night; growers placed the torch in a pan of crude petroleum so the insect, after flying into the torch, would fall back into the pan of oil. Many growers held that moths could be destroyed in this way.⁶⁵ This is one of many plans tried which has since been proven useless and discarded. Light does not attract codling moths.

The long dry summers made control difficult if not impossible. The ranchers increased the number of sprays applied, thus raising the cost of producing apples or pears. Other experiments (such as traps of various kinds) were tried, but efforts failed to check the damage. Many pests presented problems, but the codling moth is the only one which threatened the fruit industry.

One spraying with a lime and sulphur solution before the bloom opens catches most of the insects which attack the peach tree or fruit. The most serious of these are the twig borer, the San Jose scale and Howard scale. A later spray of tobacco is necessary some years when

aphids become troublesome. A recent problem has been the appearance of mildew, or "brown spot," on the peach. This is a fungus growth, for which spray in the fall with Bordeaux Mixture is beneficial.

Growers' institutes, held under local auspices, and a growers' short course held in Grand Junction for a number of years starting in 1908, by the Colorado Agricultural College, discussed pest control as well as pruning, grading, packing, soil conditions, and other growers' problems. These courses were well attended, showing the farmers' desire to find solutions to their problems.⁶⁶

By 1910 the Grand Junction Fruit Growers' Association recommended that its growers ship no wormy apples. Many individuals mistakenly believed that they must ship all fruit produced. The same year the Fruit Growers' Institute passed a unanimous resolution favoring a law to prohibit shipment of wormy apples outside the state.⁶⁷

Owing to continued ravages of the codling moth, many apples and pears were not fit to ship. In 1919 pest districts were created, which included practically all of the fruit area. Every grower raising fruit in the district was required by law to spray regularly.⁶⁸ The Farmer's Union studied the problem. Figures showed that the loss to the valley in fruit ruined by the codling moth in 1920 reached half a million dollars. Local growers decided to eradicate the pest at any expense.

Data presented from Wenatchee, Washington, showed how the same pest was practically eliminated after taking the crop the preceding year. The unions petitioned the state legislature for larger appropriations for entomological work; they obtained a ruling that apple trees not sprayed be cut down.⁶⁹ Entomologists held meetings throughout the valley, urging that growers scrape trees to remove hiding places of insects, band them and spray consistently.⁷⁰

By 1927 the deputy state entomologist stationed in Mesa County stated that the district's orchard area had decreased forty percent, and the cost of spraying had increased 365 percent since 1915. The infestation was fast approaching a point where it could destroy the industry and the entomologist advocated redoubled efforts.⁷¹ By 1930 it was acknowledged that control methods had failed, as evidenced by hundreds of acres of cut orchards in Mesa County. Growers applied eight to eleven sprayings depending on weather and other conditions; yet the moth steadily increased.⁷² The Grand Valley, because of its longer growing season and warm dry weather, has more broods of codling moths per year than perhaps any other apple-growing section of the country. There has never been a complete freeze-out, so moths live over from year to year.⁷³

Increasing the problems of ranchers was a 1926 interpretation of the Pure Food and Drug Act by the Department of Agriculture that required that spray materials be wiped from fruit before it was packed for shipment. This act affected the cattle industry as well because ranchers had occasionally "leaded" livestock by allowing them to eat foliage from sprayed trees as well as crops raised between tree rows of sprayed orchards.

The question concerning spray residue on fruit had been raised in 1922. Congressman Taylor referred the matter to the heads of the Bureau of Marketing and the Bureau of Chemistry, and he assured the growers that no law against it existed.⁷⁴ Following the promulgation of the order to remove spray, test cases were brought to the courts, the court upholding the federal law.

The first season's experimentation in methods of removing spray residue resulted in loss to the grower. The keeping quality of the fruit was injured from wiping and excessive handling, and inspectors still rejected fruit as having too much lead.

During this time government officials experimented with different methods of removing the poison. By the second year they advocated a bath in weak hydrochloric acid solution, a thorough rinsing, then drying before packing. At first no machinery existed for this kind of work, making treatment extremely expensive. Fruit growers can now get machinery which handles it with a fair degree of satisfaction.

Another problem was the late spring frosts. The hardier fruits and peaches in protected districts were usually safe. However, the trees which bloomed earliest and all crops in exposed portions of the valley were frosted frequently enough to worry growers who depended exclusively on fruit. For a time the problem seemed to evade solution. However, as the valley was narrow, the idea of using smudges and fires to raise the temperature at critical times was gradually accepted. The weather bureau issued frost warnings during April and early May. By 1908 there was considerable smudging. The mayor of Grand Junction urged citizens to burn smudges in town, burn leaves and trash in yards and valleys. Advocates of this plan theorized that the smoke blanket, as well as the heat from fires, raised the temperature. Town residents were urged to go out to orchards and help smudge, and many did so. That year over 150,000 tiny stoves were used to heat orchards in the vicinity of Grand Junction.⁷⁵ Growers and associations enthusiastically declared that the valley need never lose another crop. There was partial loss that year, but sections which had smudged heavily had raised the temperature sufficiently to save the fruit.

The practice of smudging became standard, especially around Palisade where the narrower valley made results easier to obtain. Orchards there were smaller, and contained more of the tender fruits. The National Orchard Heater Company of Grand Junction sold many thousands of coal oil (diesel) burning heaters in the valley, as well as large numbers in Utah and the Northwest. Many other types were also used locally. Growers struggled frequently to save the crop. Smudging might be necessary only an hour or two before daybreak, or it might be necessary all night for several consecutive nights.⁷⁶

Many growers smudged unnecessarily. It was impossible to know what temperature fruit would stand at various stages of development; hence people would become alarmed and fire their heaters without cause. After several years of low prices, many ranchers were unable or unwilling to put this extra expense into the crop. Some smudging is still done, especially for apricots and other tender early fruits.

The harvesting of a large, perishable fruit crop necessitates a great deal of additional labor for a time. This is particularly so in the peach district, where 1000 cars (500,000 bushels) of Elberta peaches must be harvested within two weeks. Growers require skilled laborers if the fruit is to be harvested with the least loss. However, trained laborers are never available in suitable numbers.

Laborers who come in from the outside frequently come too early and in too large numbers. This is partly due to misrepresentation by employment bureaus and to injudicious advertising.⁷⁷ Lack of employment or late employment often causes hardships among these people. Some years the shortage of labor has resulted in crop loss. If there is rain, followed by warm weather, the fruit can not be moved fast enough. Local labor bureaus have been established frequently in Grand Junction and Palisade to aid in placing laborers. During the war years this serious problem was partly solved by the use of boys, girls, and women as both pickers and packers. Many men in Grand Junction left their work for a few days and went to Palisade to help save the peach crop.⁷⁸

The last few years the difficulty has been that a larger number of transients have come to the valley than can be used. Taking care of the number of these often destitute workers presents a real problem. Some places become crowded with people camped in parks, along roadways, and in orchards. Automobiles enable larger numbers of laborers to come in and bring their families. Many of these people know when to come to the valley for work, and they return year after year. There are also "fruit tramps" who work this district as they follow the fruit industry through the country. Thus, the larger percentage of available



Courtesy of The Museum of Western Colorado (Palisade Library Collection 79.23.1)

"Smudging" to protect orchards from cold temperatures was common in the Grand Valley. This picture was taken circa 1911.

experienced labor has helped solve the problem of marketing fruit with less waste than formerly.

The problem of pears and apples, being less perishable, is less acute. The harvest can be stretched over more time and requires fewer workers. The decreasing acreage of these fruits in recent years has made it possible for local labor to harvest most of the crops.

Talk of a canning factory in Grand Junction dates to an early period. The chief motives of promoters were to avoid dumping on an overloaded market and to utilize ripe fruit. It was held that such a factory would favorably affect the price of fruit in general. Investors never realized their expectations. Grand Junction felt that if they offered a sufficient bonus, a cannery could be located there. The people of Palisade were also working for one.⁷⁹ A factory was installed in Palisade in 1902, and operated on a small scale. The equipment was later bought by Mr. Arthur Currie. Outside companies and local promoters continued to investigate the possibility of a factory site in the valley, but nothing was accomplished until 1912. Mr. Arthur Currie announced that an investigation just completed gave every encouragement, and he would build a canning factory in Grand Junction to be ready for the 1912 season.

The factory's contracts with vegetable growers were liberal. The amount and variety of crops under contract increased rapidly. In a few years the capacity of the plant doubled. The company had no

difficulty in increasing its contract acreage as the returns were sure, and compared favorably with those received in other lines of agricultural work.

The cannery has not used as much fruit in recent years. Tomatoes have been the most important product handled throughout. There is also a large acreage of pumpkins, string beans, and some pimento peppers. Apricots, apple butter and sour (or pie) cherries are also canned.⁸⁰ Sour cherries are always in large demand. During the 1930 season the cannery turned down orders for five cars of cherries, worth \$25,000, because they could not get the cherries. Western Colorado is well adapted to the growth of cherries, and Mr. Currie thinks this would be a profitable venture.⁸¹ At present sour cherries are not raised in quantity and growers find it more profitable to ship with the associations or sell to truckers who haul fruit to nearby mountain towns.

Aside from the sugar factory, perhaps no other industrial plant in western Colorado pays out so much cash directly to farmers and producers as the Currie Company. About \$175,000 a year is paid to 1000 different individuals. The company furnishes seed to get uniform quality, and plants are contracted for with greenhouses and sold to the farmers. The Currie Company even sends out field men to train the growers.⁸²

Several small canning enterprises have proved successful. The largest of these is the Grand Valley Canning Company, located a few miles from Grand Junction. It obtains seeds, plants and sugar from local firms and uses only local help. This cannery was organized in 1920 by two enterprising farmers. It is a distinct community asset and always has a waiting list of growers wishing to sign the producer's contract.⁸³

Construction of good roads has made possible the extensive trucking of fruit to mountain districts. This trade utilizes some of the ripe fruit, as well as standard grades of packed fruit. It is usually profitable to both the trucker and the grower. The greater proportion of this trade reaches districts which do not have railroad connections. Fruit is taken in this manner as far as Leadville, and into Utah and Wyoming.⁸⁴

NOTES

- ¹*Grand Junction News*, 10 February 1894, p. 1.
- ²*Palisade Tribune*, 2 January 1904, p. 1.
- ³*Grand Junction News*, 2 January 1893, p. 1, and 9 September 1896, p. 1.
- ⁴*Ibid.*, 5 September 1896, p. 1.
- ⁵*Ibid.*, 10 September 1898, p. 1.
- ⁶*Daily Sentinel*, 31 December 1906, p. 1.
- ⁷*Palisade Tribune*, 2 January 1909, p. 1.
- ⁸*Grand Junction News*, 30 December 1905, p. 1.
- ⁹*Palisade Tribune*, 11 September 1909, p. 1.
- ¹⁰*Daily Sentinel*, 15 April 1902.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, 28 January 1909, p. 1.
- ¹²*Grand Junction News*, 17 August 1897, p. 1.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, 23 October 1909, p. 1.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, 27 July 1909, p. 4.
- ¹⁵*Daily Sentinel*, 7 October 1910, p. 4.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, 4 November 1910, p. 1.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, 21 November 1910, p. 1.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, 11 December 1909, p. 1.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, Special Edition, May 1903, p. 1.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, 9 January 1908, p. 1.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, 7 January 1910, p. 3.
- ²²*Ibid.*, 7 October 1913, p. 1.
- ²³*Ibid.*, 19 September 1914, p. 1.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 6 October 1904, p. 1.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 23 September 1901, p. 1.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, 27 December 1923, p. 8.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, 21 December 1906, p. 1.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, 2 January 1911, p. 1.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, 29 November 1911, p. 3.
- ³¹*Grand Junction News*, 21 October 1912, p. 4.
- ³²*Daily Sentinel*, 5 September 1913, p. 1.
- ³³*Ibid.*, 8 September 1907, p. 2.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*, 8 December 1913, p. 1.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, 30 November 1924, p. 1.
- ³⁶*Ibid.*, 12 September 1929, p. 8.
- ³⁷Discussed in Chapter VII [in Winter 1988 issue].
- ³⁸*Grand Junction News*, 17 March 1896, p. 1.
- ³⁹*Ibid.*, 25 September 1897, p. 1.
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 23 January 1904, p. 1.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, 26 January 1901, p. 1.
- ⁴²*Daily Sentinel*, 6 June 1902, p. 1.
- ⁴³*Grand Junction News*, 30 December 1905, p. 2.
- ⁴⁴Henry Hottes, interview, 29 December 1930.
- ⁴⁵*Grand Junction News*, 27 October 1900, p. 4.
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 26 December 1903, p. 1.
- ⁴⁷*Daily Sentinel*, 30 March 1905, p. 1.
- ⁴⁸*Grand Junction News*, 28 December 1905, p. 4.
- ⁴⁹*Daily Sentinel*, 18 March 1907, p. 1; *Palisade Tribune*, 3 February 1907, p. 1.
- ⁵⁰*Daily Sentinel*, 19 January 1912, pp. 1, 4.
- ⁵¹*Palisade Tribune*, 20 February 1913, p. 3.
- ⁵²*Daily Sentinel*, 18 February 1915, p. 1.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, 16 February 1915, p. 1.
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 19 August 1916, p. 6.
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 9 December 1913, p. 1.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 10 March 1914, p. 1.
- ⁵⁷*Session Laws of Colorado, 1923*, 411 (House Bill No. 242).
- ⁵⁸(Covers material on United Fruit Growers' Association) G.W. Bowman, interview 16 November 1930; A.M. Echternach, interview, 13 December 1930.
- No legal difficulties have been encountered in connection with the operation of cooperative marketing organizations; there are no legal restrictions against cooperative marketing. In Colorado, according to Scott W. Heckman, Attorney for a number of years for Farmers' Cooperative Exchange, Inc., Grand Junction. (Interview, 9 June 1931.)
- ⁵⁹*Daily Sentinel*, 4 December 1914, p. 1.
- ⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 16 April 1917, pp. 1, 6.
- ⁶¹*Grand Junction News*, 3 February 1894, p. 1.
- ⁶²*Session Laws of Colorado, 1897*, 168 (House Bill No. 63).
- ⁶³*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴*Grand Junction News*, 22 January 1898, p. 1.
- ⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 17 July 1897, p. 1.
- ⁶⁶*Daily Sentinel*, 1 February 1908, p. 3.
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 18 January 1910, p. 1.
- ⁶⁸*Session Laws of Colorado, 1915*, 258 (Senate Bill No. 265).
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 1921 (Senate Bill No. 583, Amended Senate Bill No. 265, 1915).
- ⁷⁰*Daily Sentinel*, 9 December 1920, p. 1.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*, 7 June 1927, p. 7.
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, 12 November 1930, p. 8.
- ⁷³Henry Hottes, interview, 29 December 1930.
- ⁷⁴*Daily Sentinel*, 25 August 1922, Section 2, p. 1.
- ⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 29 April 1908, p. 1.
- ⁷⁶*Grand Junction News*, 1 May 1909, p. 1.
- ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 14 September 1909, p. 3.
- ⁷⁸*Daily Sentinel*, 6 August 1917, p. 1; 28 August 1918, p. 4.
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 14 October 1901, p. 1.

⁸⁰*ibid.*, 16 May 1914, p. 1; 17 March 1929.

⁸¹*ibid.*, 29 June 1930, p. 8.

⁸²*ibid.*, 29 June 1930.

⁸³*ibid.*, 22 June 1930, p. 8.

⁸⁴Some of the material in this chapter is based on the writer's observations and experience.

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