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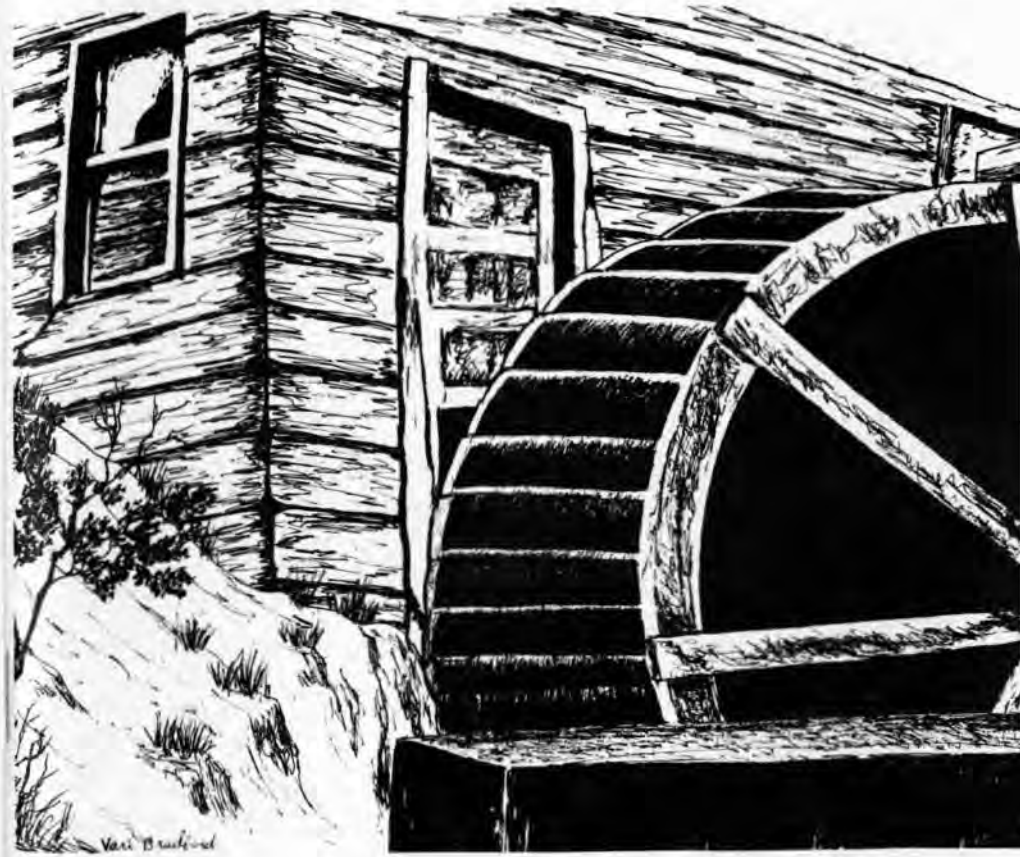

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THE COVER: The cover drawing of the Crawford mill is by Varina (Vari) Bradford, a senior art major at Mesa State College. Vari Bradford grew up on a ranch near Gypsum, Colorado. After graduation, she plans to become a professional wildlife artist.

Contents

"THE CRAWFORD MILL"

by Geneva Curry

Geneva Curry and her husband Wayne have been Cedaredge residents since 1957. Mrs. Curry graduated from Mesa State College in 1988 with a major in English. It is the author's hope that the following article will generate enthusiasm for the restoration of the Crawford mill.

Providing suitable industry that would not only provide jobs and generate income but also would produce a locally marketable product has invariably presented a challenge to promoters of small rural communities. The history of the Crawford, Colorado flour mill, established in 1920, represents a typical case study of such an industry. The experiences of the mill's various owners, their financial struggles, the technical problems they faced, their difficulties in establishing markets for their product, and their high hopes and failed dreams are typical of hundreds of similar enterprises undertaken in the developing Far West.

In the post-war slump of the early 1920s, a flour mill symbolized both industry and progress to the community-minded citizens of Crawford, Colorado. It would utilize a local product, wheat, and an available resource, the Clipper Ditch, which ran through the town. The men whose names appear on the April 10, 1920 articles of incorporation were men of vision, with their stated intention being "to erect ... and operate ... and maintain flour and planing mills and power plants, and ... to buy and sell at wholesale or retail the products of its mills and power plants...."[1] To finance the venture, the backers offered stock for public purchase.[2] Many of the area farmers joined the co-operative undertaking.

Most likely the Clipper Ditch inspired the idea. The ditch, like the flour mill, had started as a co-operative venture, with prospective water users supplying money and labor.[3] The 1885 articles of incorporation show thirty-two shares of stock with a capital value of $3,200. The members lost no time beginning the ditch; the work started that winter.

Photo courtesy of Charlie and June Todd

This picture, taken about 1922, is the oldest known photograph of the mill.

By utilizing the farmers' slack season, the work was completed with little expense except the energy and ingenuity of co-op members. An example of their ability to improvise is related in the following incident: "They didn't even have money for powder; to get rid of the big rocks, they burned brush on top of them until they got hot, then cracked them with cold water carried in buckets from the Smith Fork."[4] The co-op idea was not unique to the mill or to the ditch; many of the area's irrigation projects utilized the concept.[5]

The Clipper Ditch may have inspired not only the co-op method of financing, but also the original idea of a mill as well. The impetus may have come from a salesman who spotted the waterfall, got somebody interested, and sold them a flour mill. "It was a complete job." Support for the hypothesis that a salesman planted the idea comes from the fact that there were other mills in the area with the same brand of machinery. Because "people were anxious to get things moving,"[6] the Crawford Milling and Power Company was incorporated on March 24, 1920. The records list five thousand shares and $25,000 in capital stock.[7] On July 12, 1920, the new corporation received a bill from the Anglo-American Mill Company of Owensboro, Kentucky for $2,686.32. On July 27, F.R. Sweet, George L. Tracy, W.T. Kirkpatrick, Olaf Olson, and Swan Linman took out a note at the Crawford State Bank for that amount. On the same day, the officers of the company, C.F. Revell, President, and F.R. Sweet, Treasurer,

signed a note to repay it by November 1, 1920 "with interest at the rate of 10 per cent. [sic] per annum from Date until paid."[8]

Anglo-American's was not the only bill presented. On December 24, 1920, "The Independent Lumber Co/C.E. Goddard, Manager," filed a lien against the Crawford Milling and Power Company for "material furnished and labor performed." The document stated that "The amount of credits thereon is $199.80 balance due $1843.30."[9]

Quite possibly someone from the company that sold the milling machinery came to set up the mill, although local people also worked on the project. One was Henry Kraai, who "hauled stuff" for the new mill right after he returned from service in World War I. He only got "half paid" for his work, since it was a co-op venture. And Otto Porter remembers that Harry Gingrich, who had originally come from Aspen to work on the Fruitland Reservoir, "was a carpenter, and he built that mill...."[10] The community celebrated the building's completion with a dance to which "everybody, for miles around, went."[11]

The big drive wheel and the Fitz waterwheel came by railroad from Pennsylvania or Kentucky. The waterwheel was shipped in four sections: the transportation bill came to $1600.[12] The new enterprise chose a clipper ship as its logo. The investors knew of a miller, and they hired him to start running their new mill.[13]

Although the original miller's name is not recorded, it is known that "William Hopkins — founder of the [Crawford] *Chronicle* and one of ... the organizers of the co-op ..." tried his hand at milling and then "hired Charlie Carville to make the flour, with Hopkins continuing as manager of the mill."[14] Both Hopkins' and Carville's names appear in the company's cash journal for 1922. Carville's wages for January and February of that year totaled $265.76, while Hopkins received $104.16 for the same period. Carville drew his last check from the mill in June of 1922, with an hourly wage of 44 cents. The company's new miller, L.A. Cure, does not appear on the books until October 4, 1922. Wages for occasional mill help range from 37 to 44 cents an hour, but such help is only randomly entered on the pages of the 1922-1924 cash journal. Hopkins' name, as mill clerk and bookkeeper, still appeared in the carefully kept journal and on the Crawford Milling and Power Company checks as "by Wm. Hopkins, Treas."[15]

Hopkins' cash book reveals a cross-section of the Crawford community through its grain-for-flour exchanges (George Stafford, 104 pounds of wheat for 52 pounds of flour); breakfast food purchases (W.M. Head, 5 pounds for 40 cents); flour sales (A.B. Critchlow, 500 pounds for $16.10); and grain sales (John Doe, wheat, $1.60). Hopkins' slanted, precise handwriting shows operating expenses for such things

Photo courtesy of Merle and Evelyn Lund

The Fitz water wheel. The wooden flume is visible just above the wheel.

as engine parts, coal ($14.40 per ton), as well as bags ($196.03).[16] The cash book tells of the mill's struggle for economic survival, but it omits the other problems – insufficient utilization of available power and an uncooperative spirit within the co-op.

Apparently no one had calculated how much power would be generated by the Clipper Ditch water falling over the impressive-looking Fitz waterwheel.[17] The operators soon learned that the water was insufficient for that size wheel. "They could have gotten by if it [the waterwheel] was ten feet higher."[18] The ditch also raised another unforeseen dilemma: although the mill was entitled to "water flowing in the first party's ditch [The Crawford Clipper Ditch Company] across said premises for the purpose of ... maintaining water wheels ..."[19] sufficient quantities were only available up to about the 4th of July each year. After that date, the water flow was either too low or frozen during winter, which was the mill's busiest season.[20]

To solve the problem of reliable power, the owners purchased a noisy, kerosene-powered engine. The neighbors always knew when the mill switched from water power to the engine, and closed the windows facing the mill.[21] Bills for kerosene appear sporadically in Hopkins' accounts: White Eagle Oil Company, January 20, 1922, 100

gallons, $22.25; January 23, 1922, 215 gallons, $56.64; January 28, 1922, 100 gallons, $22.25; February 2, 1922, 200 gallons, $47.55.[22]

If all of this kerosene was used in the engine, it may explain why the mill purchased a fifteen-horsepower gas engine in February, 1922 for $600, for which the seller received forty shares of stock valued at $5.00 each "to apply on [the] engine contract."[23] Although the new engine may have alleviated the power problems, it could not change the pressures on the co-op framework itself. Because they owned stock, grain growers often felt that their produce should be accepted even if of inferior quality. They argued that the mill had to grind the grain of stockholders.[24] Insufficient power for the mill, a power struggle among the mill's owners, and the company's lack of capital prevented the operation from significantly benefitting the community.

In November, 1924, after only forty-three months of operation, the Crawford Milling and Power Company holdings were transferred to a new group which called itself The Crawford Flour Milling Company.[25] Although five names appear in the articles of incorporation: Arthur B. Critchlow, K.C. Collins, Olaf Olson, W.B. Roe, and Eric Carlson,[26] it was W.B. Roe who ran the mill with the help of William Hopkins as clerk and bookkeeper, and L.A. Cure, who continued as miller. Other help was hired as needed, including Russell Barnett who remembers the mill and the work there.[27] Farmers brought their grain to the east side of the building where the truck or wagon was weighed. The sacks were then unloaded and carried through the double doors and the grain dumped into a bin. An "endless" belt with bucket-like cups scooped up the grain and carried it to the storage bins. The vehicle was then re-weighed to determine the tare and the grain's weight.

Once the milling season got underway, the tempering bins on the second floor were kept filled, since the wheat required seventy-two hours of conditioning before it could be properly milled. This tempering, or conditioning, required heat to insure the even distribution of moisture through the grain.[28]

Summer was the slack period, a time when a day's routine at the mill was selling feed or custom grinding grain for a farmer. "It didn't take two or three of us to do that," Barnett recalls. He always found something that needed to be done; there was always the accumulated bran to sack. When any of the stockholders came around, Barnett made sure that they found him busy, even if he was only sweeping floors.[29] Floor sweeping was a necessary chore, especially during the milling season when a light tan powder sifted onto machines and men. "We'd get a little sweaty, and the flour dust would stick to us," Barnett said. The dust was a normal part of the milling process.[30]

One milling procedure that went on year around was the preparation of breakfast cereal. There was good demand for the coarsely ground wheat that L.A. Cure milled. It had to be dispersed from the storage bin into hand-held paper sacks and then weighed for the amount that the customer wanted. A good-sized sack could be purchased for a quarter.[31]

The procedure was a little less primitive if the customer wanted flour. The cloth sack fit over the spout on the bin, and the flour came down the chute when a lever was pulled. "It came down — fifty pounds. It was supposed to, anyway. There was a set of scales, and if it went over, you took out a little bit. If it went under, you had to put in a little bit before you sewed it up." The white sacks had a picture of a bundle of wheat and the name, "Clipper Flavo," on it.[32]

Most of the farmers traded their wheat for flour, sometimes taking as much as a ton of flour.[33] Only the big stockholders ever got money for their wheat.[34] Baked goods in the Crawford area most likely contained Crawford mill flour. Although there was little choice of brands — the only other suppliers were the Sweet store and Zelenthius' General Store — women were particular about their flour. They knew that soft wheat made better biscuits, while hard wheat made better light bread.[35]

Just as Crawford residents had little choice of flour brands, they had little choice about their water supply. It was either carried from the Clipper Ditch or bought from "Robert Sutton, who went along the street with two big barrels mounted on a skid, pulled by one horse."[36] But while Barnett worked at the mill in 1924 and 1925, the town of Crawford installed a water system.[37] "Everybody was tying into it."[38] There were other signs of progress in the community. A cheese factory had been started;[39] Crawford milk producers had a choice of two cream-buying stations;[40] and the bank had a new cashier and major stockholder, Leslie Savage, who had not only purchased A.E. Brown's stock, but his Cedar Street residence as well.[41]

The spirit of growth and competition may have gotten out of hand in November, 1926, when a fire of suspicious origin destroyed Zelenthius' General Store, Welborn's Drug Store, and the Crawford State Bank. Although it was suspected that a competitor of Zelenthius might have set the blaze, the man "vanished after the fire, abandoning the [Sweet store] building."[42] It became the new home for the drug store,[43] while the bank relocated temporarily to the back of the barbershop.[44] Within a year the bank building was completed, boasting of "electric lights ... from the plant at the Leslie Savage home."[45] The year 1927 saw the rebuilding of the Crawford State Bank; the year 1928 saw the dissolution of the Crawford Flour Milling Company.

On December 13, 1928, creditors won a judgment against the company for $2408.92. The suit involved promissory notes held by L.S. Galyen, K.C. Collins, and W.B. Roe, as well as money owed to A.B. Critchlow for wheat and sacks. At the sheriff's sale, L.S. Galyen was the "highest and best bidder" for the property, after which he, Collins, and Critchlow assigned their interests to W.B. Roe.[46] Roe, "a kind of public citizen," owned two ranches and was president of the bank.[47] In addition to his bank and ranch interests, he shipped in Holstein cows from the Carnation milk farms and sold them to area dairymen. He turned his ranch management over to a Mr. Wilcox. "Wilcox ran the ranches; Roe ran the mill."[48]

Under the new owners, the mill had one winter season as a flour mill, and then it served only for custom grinding and as a feed store.[49] An advertisement from the March 13, 1930 *Crawford Chronicle* states that W.B. Roe had "A full line of Purina Products for Chickens and Cows," as well as "SULPHUR FERTILIZER – $30 per ton – Now available in 100-lb. sacks," and requesting: "Let me do your custom grinding and cleaning." All of this was available from "W.B. Roe at the Flour Mill Building."[50] He was still there in 1931, "paying cash for all kinds of grain,"[51] and by then he was also mayor of a town hard hit by the Great Depression.[52] He owned a mill designed to provide food for people and for livestock, but both of these populations were struggling against the double hardships of economic conditions and drought.[53] Some people were helped by federal relief funds which provided work on the local school building and grounds.[54] During the lean depression years, Roe sold the mill several times to persons who thought they could succeed at milling, but the people, "having tried it once, would never try it again."[55] The dream was gone; only the mill remained.

In 1935, Walter and Merle Lund of Paonia "discovered" the abandoned Crawford mill and brought their father, Christian Lund, to look at it.[56] Neither of the brothers had ever operated a mill,[57] but Walter had majored in agriculture in college; Merle had majored in chemistry; and both had raised wheat. Their assets consisted of Merle's $400 bank account and Walter's Ford pickup truck.[58] Walter and Merle, with some help from their father, bought the mill for $1200 in June of 1935. Merle moved to Crawford to run the mill.[59]

Since the mill had stood vacant for some time, the Lunds spent weeks cleaning and repairing before opening for business. "It was in very bad shape. It hadn't been used for a flour mill in a long time, just a feed mill. It involved entirely separate machinery."[60] The men put on a new roof and painted the building. No ladder in the country could

"Beat, Cedaredge." and hand them their second defeat of the season. The two schools' junior high teams will also play.

Courtesy of Crawford Community Library

This page from the Crawford Chronicle, *January 28, 1931, is a sampling of the town at that time.*

reach the heights necessary in the back of the mill, especially above the waterwheel, so the men worked from scaffolds hung from the third-story windows.[61]

The mill was a dangerous place to work. Although electricity had reached Crawford in 1932,[62] the mill had no lights nor did it have safety features. Consequently, the new owners learned to find their way around in the dark interior, avoiding the exposed belts and pulleys which ran the machinery.[63] "There were no cages around them. You had to watch what you were doing," Walter recalls. Actually he did "watch what he was doing," but, one night, he could not keep the continuous belt from slipping. Frustrated, he kicked it on and caught his foot in it. The belt picked him up, carried him to the top, and threw him down on the floor. Merle also remembers being caught, not only by the belt but by the machinery as well. While standing on the mixer, checking the flow of water into wheat, his overalls caught in the machinery. He "did not budge," but the force was so great that it pulled the heels off his shoes.[64] Adding to the safety problem, the top story had no flooring, so the men had to walk the rafters. Later, they built a "walking" floor.[65]

The fledgling business took on a new partner when Merle married Evelyn Bates, a Crawford area native.[66] The newlyweds made their home "right by the mill in a little house Merle fixed up."[67] Walter and his wife, Esther Hinkle Lund, continued to live in Paonia, and Walter drove to Crawford each night.[68]

The new mill owners struggled to make a living. "It was Depression: the times were terrible."[69] When they started, the town of Crawford had three grocery stores,[70] a drugstore, telephone company, garage, two service stations, a bank, newspaper, postoffice, lunchroom/poolhall, cream-buying station (one had already gone out of business), a saddle-making and shoe repair shop, hotel, blacksmith shop, an apiary outside of town, and a barbershop which was open "once in a while, usually Saturdays," since the barber also farmed for a living and came in once a week to give haircuts.[71] A cheese factory, started with high hopes in 1925,[72] had already closed.

The brothers started their milling venture with breakfast food; ground and mixed feed from which they produced poultry starter, grow and lay mash; and also did custom grinding. They soon learned what other millers already knew: custom work was time-consuming and unprofitable. They learned to trade flour for the wheat, as did most mills.[73]

There was no one to teach the enterprising new owners, but there was a "wonderful book of instructions" that had come with the original equipment. Although they had had no experience, the book's explicit directions concerning wheat cleaning, conditioning, and milling showed them "exactly what to do." Getting the wheat ready and into the right

Photo courtesy of
Merle and Evelyn Lund
The Lund Brothers: Merle in the doorway, Walter outside.

condition was their first lesson. The procedure, from grain to flour, required three days to complete.[74]

The process began with cleaning the wheat. Wheat entering a mill contained mud, dust, stones, and "foreign" seeds, so a cleaning process was imperative. For removing the larger impurities, the Lunds used the Clipper mill, "an ordinary cleaning thing." To remove other grains and seeds, they utilized the Carter Disc Separator. This machine consisted of "wheels, which set one right beside the other," and a "series of discs containing dents." These various sized discs removed not only large seeds such as wild oats, but also ones as minute as wild morning glory. It was a "wonderful cleaner, a beautiful machine."[75]

To continue the cleaning process, the partially-cleaned wheat next entered a "grain scrubber," which removed the microscopic natural products. Even though some of their customers insisted that they wanted "the whole grain with nothing removed," the Lunds cleaned the wheat to dislodge these "dirty, irritating" natural pollens. Nor did

they put it into livestock feed, although it was a common practice. The Lunds bagged and disposed of these impurities. They did not want to "feed that stuff to anything."[76]

When the wheat left the scrubber, it went into a four or five foot long mixer where water was added. Since the mill had no city water at the time,[77] the millers carried it from the nearby W.B. Roe home and dumped it into the tank. Later, they bought a new, two-gallon gasoline tank, made a hole in the bottom, and soldered "just the right size pipe" onto it. They gauged the amount of water by the movement of the wheat. As soon as possible, they installed city water. The men also improvised a system for heating the water, since, without it, cool weather slowed the curing of the wheat. Satisfactory commercial heaters were not available, so the men devised their own.[78] The addition of water and the application of heat "put the wheat in the best possible condition for the grinding operation and the extraction of the flour in as pure a state as possible" and improved "the baking properties of the milled flour."[79]

From the mixer, the wheat went to two tempering bins for seventy-two hours. This allowed the moisture to become evenly distributed. The wheat was then milled in the same sequence in which it was tempered. The number of tempering bins set the mill's capacity at fifty barrels of flour a day; it could not be increased.[80]

From the tempering bins, elevators transferred the wheat to the American (Midget) Marvel flour mill, a self-contained unit where the wheat was ground into flour. The test of the millers' skills came in the adjustment of the unit's twenty-five pound iron rollers,[81] which had to be so carefully balanced that they were exactly alike at both ends. This delicate adjustment "made the miller," and determined the mill's profit. According to the instruction book, the mill was designed to produce seventy-two pounds of flour from one-hundred pounds of wheat. This was the production necessary to make a profit. The new millers could not adjust the rollers that evenly, so they only obtained sixty-six pounds of flour. This lower quantity produced a high quality flour, which was "way better" than that of the larger mills.[82]

Some of the weight loss also occurred because they did not put the lightweight flour in with the finished product. Fans removed this "flour-dust" to a container on the roof. Later, they added it to feed instead of putting it into the flour as many millers did. This removed some of the flour's discoloration and made less work for the bleacher. This "flour-dust" resembled fine cake flour, but when Mrs. Roe wanted to try some for a cake, she soon learned that it "looked like cake flour, it acted like cake flour, but it didn't bake like cake flour."[83]

Photo courtesy of
Betty Curry

Wheat scrubber or scourer

The American (Midget) Marvel not only contained the iron rollers, but also the five cylinders that held progressively coarser silk material used in the "bolting" process. "Bolting," a sifting or sieving procedure, was "the only way to grade the flour and take out the bran." The Lunds purchased the various textured silks, called Bodman's Old Reliable, from their American supplier, Anglo-American Mill Company of Owensboro, Kentucky, which had imported the material from Switzerland. Merle Lund remembers that it resembled balloon cloth. These silks fit a particular reel and were fastened on with corset lacing so that they would not "flap." To insure that no flour leaked out, the millers pasted a strip over the lacings. The men tested the flour frequently by smoothing it down with a "flour slick." Bran in the flour indicated a hole in a silk and, perhaps something worse, a stuck elevator.[84]

The flour produced by the (Midget) Marvel had a yellowish tint, which the Lunds sought to remove. Xanthophyll, a natural pigment in plants, was responsible for the hue, and some "natural bleaching, due to oxidation of the xanthophyll" would have occurred during storage,[85] but the Lunds, like most millers, chose to speed up the process. Instead of chemical bleaches, the mill utilized an "electric spark" machine, which operated continuously when the mill was running. Driven by a belt, this piece of original mill equipment was "about six inches in diameter, an inch and a half wide and made a spark about three or four inches long. The air went up through the spark and crept through a pipe into a cylinder twelve inches in diameter and ten feet long."[86] This passage of air over the spark gave off a gas, ozone, which caused a bleaching action on everything but bran particles remaining in the flour.[87]

Although the flour retained a slight yellowish tint, the Lunds preferred the spark method over the chemical bleaching process used by the larger mills to achieve a pure white flour. They considered the non-chemical method the best and "the most modern way," since it "did not add anything or take anything away from the flour."[88]

The final step in the milling process was to get the flour in bags. The bagger, manufactured by the S. Howes Company of New York, required an operator to start the flour. A spiral within the machine controlled the flow, and an iron flywheel on the machine's left side allowed for some adjustment. The millers filled 25 and 50 pound sacks, judging from experience when they contained approximately the right amount. Each sack was then set on the scales and the correct weight achieved by the addition or removal of flour.[89]

The Lunds started milling flour in the early winter, using wheat grown on their father's Paonia farm the previous season.[90] They hauled this last-season wheat to the mill, emptying the bins for the new crop.[91] This put them into production before the Crawford grain was ready. Since the elder Lund raised the same amount of wheat every year, this worked out very well. Although Crawford area farmers raised "beautiful, hard, red wheat," the quantity did not always meet the mill's needs,[92] and the Lunds often hauled wheat from Utah for their business. Local soft wheat became chicken feed.[93]

Once production began, the men ran the mill night and day, with Walter driving the often snowpacked Paonia-to-Crawford road for the night shift.[94] Although they would have preferred to close on Sundays, this would have produced off-color or "gray flour" when they resumed operation. Until it warmed up, cold wheat yielded "gray flour," which the Lunds and their customers found unacceptable.[95]

Photo courtesy of Betty Curry

Third floor, where the belts and pulleys go "over the top."

The waterwheel also necessitated round-the-clock operation. In the winter, ice could collect, and, although the wheel kept turning, it would "groan," since it was not quite straight or "true."[96] Once the wheel stopped, the men had to chop it free from the imprisoning ice.[97]

When the Lunds bought the mill, they had heard rumors that the former owners had left a four-hundred gallon underground tank, filled with kerosene. One day, when there was little to do, they decided to see if the story was true. The old kerosene engine, "taller than a man," still stood in the basement, fastened to the wall with strap iron secured by big bolts.[98] By following the pipes which led from the engine, the Lunds eventually unearthed the fabled "four-hundred gallon" storage tank, which turned out to be a forty-gallon water boiler. The Lunds, who always enjoyed a good joke, put a big sign in front of the mill — "Kerosene for sale, 10¢ a gallon." It was not long before Carl Wilson, blind owner of a small grocery store, hurried over and asked, "What's this I hear about you having kerosene for sale?" The Lunds replied that indeed they did. "Oh," said Wilson, "what am I gonna do? I can't even buy it for that." The men assured him that the legendary storage tank contained only forty gallons, but he remained unconvinced until the sign came down.[99] The long-stored kerosene, when burned in a lamp, produced only a faint flicker of flame.[100]

Once the mill began producing high-quality flour, Walter and Merle sought outlets for their product. After calling on merchants and leaving a sample, orders began trickling in.[101] The men had to "sit back and wait a bit" for business to pick up.[102] Merle remembers that, "the first time I hit $12 a day for total intake – not just profit – why, it was a pretty good day."[103] Eventually, they were making deliveries twice a week to Fronk's in Paonia, Wiggins' and Stoneburner's Hotchkiss markets, as well as grocery stores in Austin, Delta, and to Wick's grocery in Cedaredge.[104] Although their early delivery equipment was "primitive," they eventually used a "very classy" Diamond T truck on which they loaded the sacks and then covered them with a tarpaulin or "tarp" to keep them clean. The Lunds considered attractive delivery equipment essential for successful merchandising. This, along with the quality flour, soon provided a market for all that they could produce.[105] During World War II, the millers were hard pressed to fill the demand.[106] Evelyn Lund took the orders on the Delta Co-op telephone.[107] The directory listed them as "Lund Bros. Milling Co." The number to call – 32.[108]

Photo courtesy of Betty Curry
Angle view showing the sifting reels which held the "silks."

Photo courtesy of Merle and Evelyn Lund

The Lunds added this large area for grain storage.

The Lunds worked to keep the mill clean. During the slack season, they disassembled the tin-lined elevators and scrubbed them with boiling water.[109] Also, they turned the stored wheat from one bin to another to keep it cold enough that weevils would not hatch.[110] One of their competitors had predicted that the Crawford mill would soon have "bugs," but the brothers' action prevented that.[111]

The flour went into distinctive-looking white sacks with the Lunds' own "Jolly Miller" logo printed in blue letters and sporting a whimsical figure in bright red. The logo originated from a high school art class to which Walter Lund had offered "$25 for the best design they could come up with."[112] These 25 or 50 pound sacks not only held the flour, but they also provided sturdy material from which to make dish towels, or, perhaps, family "unmentionables." The bright colors did not always come out, even after repeated washings.[113]

At one point in the mill's operation, the commercially purchased sacks were not readily available, so the Lunds produced their own.[114] They bought several thousand yards of attractive solid color or print material, usually from the Montgomery Ward or J.C. Penney stores in Grand Junction.[115] At these establishments, yard goods clerks were sent scurrying to their posts by the announcement, "Here come the people who make their own flour sacks."[116]

The men built a machine to facilitate the sack-making process by laying the cloth out at the right width for easy cutting. They purchased a sack-sewing machine which had only two positions – fast and stop.[117] They affixed their own tagboard labels by hand and had a "good-looking flour sack" when they finished.[118] The colorful cloth reappeared in the community as aprons, blouses, and other apparel.[119] The amount of material needed for a particular garment often influenced flour sales. To those who had to move the sacks, it seemed that customers always wanted the sack that was on the bottom of the stack.[120]

The Lunds, like the original owners of the flour mill, tried alternate power sources. They purchased an engine from a wrecked car, a Stutz-Bearcat, which had run into a train. Although the engine supposedly was good, the men could not make it work properly, nor could they keep the exhaust fumes from being sucked into the mill. And, like the earlier kerosene engine, it was noisy.[121] When the men considered running the mill with a combination of water power and electricity, they were told that there was probably not enough voltage in the area to accommodate them. The men tested the theory by purchasing a small electric motor – voltage unknown – and when they "put it on the line, people in town couldn't run their electric irons or anything else."[122] In the spring, when the creek was high, the waterwheel produced so much power that it ran the meter backwards. The electric company soon "got wise ... and put a rachet on it."[123] The electric motor and the waterwheel worked very nicely together, with the motor acting as a clutch and brake for the wheel, which had no governor. There was no way, however, that the huge wheel, turning rapidly from the water's force, could be stopped quickly. It would have torn the mill apart. Instead, the millers dropped a gate, allowing the water from the flume to go over the spillway instead of onto the wheel.[124]

Although the millers had a practical appreciation for the waterwheel, most people were content to merely watch it work. When the Lunds added a large storage area onto the original building, people stopped to see the addition and stayed to see the wheel.[125] For those who did not want to bother the millers, a short walk along the open ditch provided a pleasant place for wheel watching.[126]

Realizing that the mill's success required an increased demand for their product, the brothers wrote a carefully worded ad, took it to the *Crawford Chronicle* and eagerly awaited the issue's arrival. Instead of their inspiring message, only the ambiguous question, "Why Buy Flour?", appeared above the Lund Bros. Mill name. Disgusted by the paper's negligence, the men decided to let their product sell itself.[127] In the

Photo courtesy of Merle and Evelyn Lund

The Diamond T delivery truck, around 1945. The scales in the left foreground had been designed for wagons. The Lunds used to tell prospective employees they would be hired if they could park the truck on the scales' wooden deck. When properly packed, there was only an inch left on each side and on the front and back. The scales were removed when Highway 92 was improved, since they were, literally, "in the road."

late 1940s, they set up a display in the Delta County fairground's old exhibition hall in Hotchkiss and gave attractive cream-colored, two-cup flour sifters, along with a sample of their flour, to fairgoers. The sifters bore the admonition: "When sifted down you find/Jolly Miller Flour/makes better bread." In addition the millers distributed convenient "calendars with pockets."[128]

In another promotional scheme, the Lunds filled a Jolly Miller flour sack and offered it as a prize for the person guessing the flour's weight. Charles Swisher recalls that:

> The contest was already over when Dan McIntyre, one of the early men up there [at Crawford], came in to town, but the winner had not picked up his prize. As Dan stood there, a man walked up to him and said, "Bet I can come closer to that sack's weight than you can." Dan glanced at the sack and saw that the weight had already been posted.

Realizing that the man didn't know that the sign was there, he took the bet. The man gave the numbers as near as he could remember them from the earlier announcement. Dan read the numbers off just right, and won the bet.[129]

To provide an outlet for their grain byproducts, Walter and Merle opened a feed store in Paonia in 1941, which Walter helped their brother Carroll operate. They had a mixer, a grinder, and a "set-up" to add concentrated vitamins to the feed. Walter, after working seven years at the mill, decided to devote his time to the store. He especially appreciated not having to make the drive to Crawford each night. In addition to the feed store, the men gradually purchased land, and Walter began raising fruit.[130]

By 1949, the Paonia interests occupied an increasing amount of the men's time. Their brother Carroll had been unable to continue at the feed store because of a back injury caused by a fall from a ladder.[131] After fourteen years of business in Crawford, the men decided to sell the mill. In August, 1949, the Jolly Miller logo, the established markets, the Fitz waterwheel, the mill and its contents became the property of "Crawford Milling." Merle and Evelyn left their "little house" and moved to Paonia to help with the family interests there.[132]

The Crawford Milling owners, Charlie and Maxine Burch, had grown up in the area.[131] Merle Lund stayed on for several weeks to teach the new owners the milling procedures. The process, once learned, was "not difficult," but the work itself was hard and involved long hours. Maxine Burch remembers that, soon after they bought the mill, she was working at 2 a.m. filling flour sacks, while her baby, Butch, slept. The only lighted area was where she was working, and the machinery's noise prevented her from hearing a dark-suited man walking toward her. She had just dipped up a scoop of flour to fill a sack when he tapped her on the shoulder. Startled, she whirled, flinging the scoop's contents on his black suit. The man, a family friend, had been returning from a meeting in Delta when he saw the mill's light and had stopped to visit.[134]

The Burches continued to use the waterwheel/electricity power combination the Lunds had utilized. When children turned water into the flume one night and washed it out, the Burches used the electric motor exclusively.[135]

Although their flour and other grain products found a ready market,[136] expenses continued to climb. Much of the hard wheat necessary for flour came from Utah or Twenty-five Mesa (west of Delta, Colorado), because Crawford farmers, like those in most of the nation, were growing less wheat.[137] Government programs like the

Courtesy of the *Delta County Historical Society*

This advertisement appeared in the May 8th, 1958 75th Special Edition, Anniversary of Delta County issue of the Delta County Independent.

Soil Bank paid them to keep their land out of production. Government regulations added to the millers' problems by decreeing that the

electric spark machine must be replaced with chemicals which the officials considered more "sanitary." Faced with the purchase of machinery necessary for the chemical bleaching of the flour, the Burches evaluated the situation: machines were expensive; the building was old; and better roads and more women in the work force encouraged out-of-town shopping and diminished home bread-baking. But it was Bodmer's Old Reliable silks that determined their decision. The silks, supplied to the mill by Anglo-American Company since 1920, became unavailable, and the Burches sought other suppliers. When located, they found that the silks carried price tags of $200 each and the American (Midget) Marvel required five of them.[138]

In 1962, Crawford Milling closed. Charlie Burch traded his miller's apron for a construction worker's hard hat and Maxine continued to "work out" in addition to her homemaking tasks. No one except curious youngsters disturbed the boarded-up mill until Luce Pipher, a Crawford area native,[139] purchased it in 1971.[140]

Pipher hoped to restore the mill and its handmade oak equipment and make it into a museum. But, by the time he bought it, it stood open with papers strewn across the floor and graffiti scribbled on the boards. Even a stenciled warning concerning the mill's combustibility had been altered to read "SMOKING IN THIS MILL."[141] Pipher tore off the dilapidated storage shed and removed the mill's office portion. He had six men helping remove the old lean-to structure when the chimney, no longer supported, collapsed, and sent the workmen scurrying for cover. The chimney originated in the basement, where it had served the large cast-iron coal furnace. The mill's new owner had "all kinds of visions for fixing it up and getting it painted and looking real nice." He installed an aluminum roof on the three-story building, since the old roof leaked badly. But he "just had so durn much other stuff to do" that he eventually sold it, after working on it "off and on" for several years.[142]

The new owner, Robert McFerrin, had been attracted to the area by the mountains, and, like Luce Pipher, hoped to see the past preserved. He found the old waterwheel especially appealing, since he had a lifelong interest in the picturesque and functional wheels. He had thought of restoring the equipment and using the property to display local memorabilia, but, like the previous owner, he had other interests and obligations.[143]

A local real estate firm lists the property as "Historic old mill on Hwy. 92, water and sewer taps included."[144] Those who view the mill pick their way along the creaking floor boards, past the vandalized machinery, and up the use-smoothed stairsteps. From the paneless

Photo courtesy of Betty Curry

The Crawford Mill as it appeared in October, 1988.

third-story window, they can see a log cabin which once housed early Dutch settlers,[145] and, looking down, the Fitz waterwheel is visible, standing in the dirt- and debris-filled forebay. Going out, they may edge past a gaping hole, once covered by a floor register, beside which weary night-shift millers dozed in the dark mill, lulled by the wheel's groaning, and wakened to a room filled with spark-like flashes of static electricity from belt and pulley ends.[146] Outside, no evidence remains of the wagons and trucks that brought grain to the mill and then were driven into town so the families could shop until their order was ready.[147]

The Crawford flour mill was built from the dreams and hopes of community-minded local citizens in the uneasy days of the early 1920s. Perhaps, in the economic slump of the late 1980s, "men of vision" will once again find a use for the Crawford flour mill – possibly the only one on the Western Slope which has buildings, machinery, and waterwheel basically intact[148] – and people will say, as before, "We're real proud of that mill."[149]

NOTES

[1]Records, Delta County Clerk and Recorder, "Index to Articles of Incorp.," Bk I, Doc. 94242. 10 April 1920 (hereafter cited as Doc. 94242).

[2]*Ibid.*

[3]Mamie Ferrier and George Sibley, *Long Horns and Short Tales: A History of the Crawford Country,* Vol. I: Places (N.P., 1982), 21 (hereafter cited as *Long Horns*).

[4]Records, Delta County Clerk and Recorder, "Index to Articles of Incorp.," Bk I, Doc. 775, 17 November 1885; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 20, 21.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]Interview, Merle and Evelyn Lund, Paonia, 14 November 1987 (hereafter cited as Lund Interview I). Mr. Lund stated that the Montrose and Plateau [City, possibly Collbran] mills were like the Crawford mill.

[7]Doc. 94242.

[8]Bill and notes in the possession of Luce Pipher, Crawford, Colorado.

[9]Abstract, Entry No. 33, in the possession of Robert McFerrin, Bridge City, Texas.

[10]*Ibid;* Telephone interview, Henry Kraai, Crawford, Colorado, 7 January 1988 (hereafter cited as Kraai Interview); Interview, Otto Porter, Crawford, Colorado, 25 September 1988.

[11]Interview, Maxine Burch, Delta, Colorado, 25 September 1988.

[12]Telephone interview, Luce Pipher, Crawford, Colorado, 14 November 1987 (hereafter cited as Pipher Interview I). Mr. Pipher remembers hearing that the wheel came from Kentucky (possibly Tennessee), and that the transportation cost $1,600.00; Lund Interview I, Merle Lund remembers hearing that the wheel and the drivewheel came from Pennsylvania.

[13]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[14]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 93. The authors state that the "co-op was established early in the century," and "W.B. Roe took over the mill in 1917," which would imply that the Hopkins-related mill was even earlier; Kraai Interview, Henry Kraai stated that H.W. Gingrich was the "main instigator" of the mill, and that name appears on the 1920 deed of incorporation; although an earlier date is sometimes mentioned in interviews (also note the 1918 date on the Crawford Milling advertisement, page 00), along with the possibility that the mill burned and was replaced by the 1920 mill, no tangible evidence has been discovered, as of this date. Also, the Anglo-American Mill Company bill, the bank notes (see End Note No. 8), and the Independent Lumber Company lien (see End Note No. 9) would suggest the later date.

[15]Cash journal, 1 January 1922 to 31 December 1923, in the possession of Luce Pipher, Crawford, Colorado; Bank notes in the possession of Luce Pipher.

[16]Cash journal.

[17]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[18]*Ibid.*

[19]Abstract, Entry No. 34, in the possession of Robert McFerrin, Bridge City, Texas.

[20]Lund Interview I, Evelyn.

[21]Telephone interview, Mrs. C.Y. Reed, Crawford, Colorado, 14 November 1987 (hereafter cited as Reed Interview).

[22]Cash journal.

[23]*Ibid.*

[24]Lund Interview I, Merle; Telephone interview, Maxine Burch, Delta, Colorado, 20 February 1988 (hereafter cited as Burch Interview II).

[25]Abstract, Entry Nos. 101542, 11297, 117540, 122276, and 123221, in the possession of Robert McFerrin, Bridge City, Texas. On 5 April 1921, The Crawford Milling and Power Company filed a mortgage deed which "Secures payment of 22 prom [sic] notes aggregating the sum of $5,500 each in the denomination of $250," naming William Hopkins as Trustee. On 27 November 1923 a "decree of foreclosure" was entered in favor of William Hopkins and Erick Carlson, as Trustees, against the company. Although the firm was able to redeem their unpaid taxes, the foreclosure was settled by a sheriff's sale, at which the collateral notes and the flour mill itself went to the "highest and best bidder," William Hopkins. After the legal waiting period, Hopkins signed a warranty deed to The Crawford Flour Milling Company, stating that he had only fulfilled his duty under the Trust agreement and "no consideration passed to him"; Records, Delta Clerk and Recorder, "Articles of Incorp., Bk I, Doc. 122854, 1 November 1924. The agreement stated that: "the amount of capital stock shall be $25,000 divided into

25,000 shares $1.00 each," and that "said company shall be under the control of a Board of 5 directors...."

[26]*Ibid.*

[27]Interview, Russell Barnett, Paonia, Colorado, 14 November 1987.

[28]*Ibid;* Lund Interview I; Burch Interview II.

[29]Barnett Interview.

[30]*Ibid;* Burch Interview II. Maxine Burch also remembers that the mill was hard to keep clean and that it required constant sweeping.

[31]Barnett Interview.

[32]*Ibid.*

[33]*Ibid;* Interview, Marie Wetterich, Cedaredge, Colorado, 8 September 1988. Mrs. Wetterich remembers that her father would take a wagonload of sacked wheat every fall from their Fruitland Mesa farm to the Crawford mill and return with sacks of flour which he stored on shelves that he had built under the stairway. One night the weight of the flour broke the shelves and sent the sacks crashing to the floor.

[34]Barnett Interview.

[35]*Ibid.*

[36]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 54.

[37]*Ibid;* Peggy Barnett, "Crawford: A Good Little Town." *Journal of the Western Slope* 2 (Spring 1987), 55.

[38]Barnett Interview.

[39]Barnett, Peggy, "Crawford: A Good Little Town," 61; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 85.

[40]*Ibid,* 70, 71.

[41]*Ibid,* 62, 64.

[42]*Ibid,* 84; Barnett, Peggy, "Crawford, A Good Little Town," 62.

[43]*Ibid;* Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 84.

[44]*Ibid,* 64.

[45]Barnett, Peggy, "Crawford: A Good Little Town," 62.

[46]Abstract, Entry Nos. 142063, 142376, 145675, and 145676, in the possession of Robert McFerrin, Bridge City, Texas; Summons, L.S. Galyen vs. The Crawford Flour Milling Company, 17 November 1928, copy in the possession of Geneva Curry, Cedaredge, Colorado.

[47]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[48]Telephone interview, Mamie Ferrier, Crawford, Colorado, 14 November 1987; Lund Interview I, Merle.

[49]Kraai Interview.

[50]*Crawford Chronicle,* 13 March 1930.

[51]*Crawford Chronicle,* 28 January 1931.

[52]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 98.

[53]Barnett, Peggy, "Crawford: A Good Little Town," 62.

[54]*Ibid,* 59.

[55]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[56]*Ibid.* At this time, the Lund family had lived on the Western Slope for a little over 20 years. "Railroad propaganda" and the relentless "Nebraska wind" had prompted the move.

[57]Lund Interview I, Evelyn.

[58]Interview, Merle, Evelyn, and Walter Lund, Paonia, Colorado, 27 September 1988 (hereafter cited as Lund Interview III).

[59]*Ibid.*

[60]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[61]*Ibid,* Evelyn.

[62]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 79.

[63]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[64]*Ibid;* Lund Interview III, Walter.

[65]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[66]Lund Interview II, Evelyn. Evelyn's father, Ed Bates, had come from Nebraska around 1910 to help his aunt and his grandmother on their Crawford ranch. Her mother's family, the Hintons, had come by covered wagon from Pueblo, Colorado, in 1903.

[67]Lund Interview III, Evelyn.

[68]Interview, Walter Lund, Paonia, Colorado, 16 January 1989 (hereafter cited as Lund Interview IV).

[69]Lund Interview II, Merle.

[70]*Ibid,* Evelyn. Ol Lewis owned one of the grocery stores, a "tiny, one-room affair where he sold meat, groceries and such things."

[71]*Ibid.*

[72]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 85.

[73]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[74]Lund Interview II, Merle.

[75]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[76]*Ibid.*

[77]Barnett, Peggy, "Crawford: A Good Little Town," 55; End Note No. 35.

[78]Lund Interview I, Merle.

[79]*Ibid;* Dedrick, B.W. *Practical Milling* (1924; rpt. Manchester, Tennessee; Society for the Preservation of Old Mills, 1989), 82; Copelan, Cyril Leslie, and Norman L. Kent, "Flour and Flour Milling," *Chamber's Encyclopaedia,* 1966 ed., Vol. 5: 715 (hereafter cited as *Chamber's*).

[80]Lund Interviews I and III, Merle; Dedrick, *Practical Milling,* 544. Barrel capacity is 196 pounds of flour.

[81]Lund Interview I, Merle. The heavy, cast-iron plates were built by Sterns-Rogers Company of Denver, Colorado.

[82]*Ibid.*

[83]*Ibid.*
[84]*Ibid.*
[85]*Chamber's,* 717.
[86]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[87]*Ibid;* Lund Interview III, Walter. "When we ran it, it made the radios squawk"; *Chamber's,* 717.
[88]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[89]*Ibid;* Lund Interview IV.
[90]Lund Interview III, Merle.
[91]*Ibid,* Evelyn.
[92]*Ibid,* Walter.
[93]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[94]*Ibid.*
[95]Lund Interview IV.
[96]*Ibid.*
[97]Lund Interview III, Evelyn; Fitz Water Wheel Co. *Fitz Steel Overshoot Water Wheel* (1928; rpt. Society for the Preservation of Old Mills, 1989), 16, 33. Although the book states that the steel wheel provides "freedom from ... freezing," it also suggests that "in exposed location[s] ... the wheel should be installed inside of buildings ... and the water brought to the wheel in a watertight flume...."
[98]Lund Interview I, Merle; Lund Interview III, Walter. The bolts and straps indicated to the Lunds that the former owners regularly started the engine with ether, which "blew the head off."
[99]Lund Interview I, Merle. Carl Wilson had lost his eyesight through a gunpowder accident; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns,* 59, mentions that "Wilson was interesting, in that he was totally blind, yet he managed to run the store; he walked alone around town, was able to find things on the shelves, and could make change himself."
[100]Lund Interview I, Evelyn.
[101]*Ibid,* Merle; Lund Interview III, Walter.
[102]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[103]Lund Interview II, Merle.
[104]Lund Interview I, Merle; Lund Interview III, Walter.
[105]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[106]*Ibid,* Evelyn.
[107]*Ibid,* Merle; Barnett, Peggy, "Crawford: A Good Little Town," 57.
[108]*Crawford Chronicle,* 21 October 1941.
[109]Lund Interview II, Merle.
[110]*Ibid;* Lund Interview I, Merle.
[111]Lund Interview II, Merle.
[112]Lund Interview III, Walter.
[113]Telephone interview, Opal Lynch, Crawford, Colorado, 14 November 1987.
[114]Lund Interview I, Evelyn; Lund Interview III, Walter.
[115]*Ibid;* Lund Interview I, Evelyn.
[116]*Ibid,* Merle.
[117]*Ibid;* Lund Interview III, Walter.
[118]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[119]*Ibid,* Evelyn; Interview, Luce Pipher, Crawford, Colorado, 22 February 1989 (hereafter cited as Pipher Interview II). Pipher remembers that he wore shirts made from flour sack material until he was fifteen.
[120]Lund Interview I, Merle.
[121]*Ibid;* Lund Interview III, Walter.
[122]*Ibid;* Lund Interview I, Merle.
[123]*Ibid;* Interview, Charlie and June Todd, Paonia, Colorado, 4 January 1989. Charlie Todd heard the story when he was working for the electric company.
[124]Lund Interview III, Walter.
[125]Lund Interview I, Evelyn.
[126]Reed Interview.
[127]Lund Interview II, Merle; Lund Interview III, Walter.
[128]Interview, Josephine Gore, Delta, Colorado, 12 October 1988; Pipher Interview II.
[129]Lund Interview III, Merle; Telephone interview, Charles Swisher, Cedaredge, Colorado, 6 February 1989.
[130]Lund Interview I, Merle; Lund II, Walter and Merle; Lund Interview IV.
[131]*Ibid;* Interview, Eunice "Judy" Loucks, Cedaredge, Colorado, 27 January 1989.
[132]Lund Interview I, Evelyn; Lund Interview III, Walter and Merle; Lund Interview IV.
[133]Burch Interview II. Mrs. Burch's mother's family, the Flynns, had migrated from Pitkin, Colorado, where they had sawmills. Mrs. Burch's father, Everett Harrison "Harry" Briggs, a miner, had come from Fairplay, Colorado. Charlie Burch's father, Tillman "Barney" Burch, had brought the family from New Mexico in 1927 to the Crawford area where his wife, Ione Berry Burch, had relatives.
[134]*Ibid.*
[135]*Ibid.*
[136]*Ibid;* Telephone interview, Thayer T. Morris, Delta, Colorado, 7 November 1988. Mr. Morris, a retired Delta optometrist, remembers making monthly trips to Crawford especially for "ten or twenty pounds" of the flour.

[137]Burch Interview II; Lund Interview III, Walter and Merle; Telephone interview, Colorado Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, Denver, Colorado, 2 February 1989:

Delta County Totals

Year	Total bushels (spring and winter wheat)	Acres harvested
1922	186,248	6,524
1935	146,812	5,182
1949	85,560	3,070
1962	23,390	672

[138]Lund Interview III, Walter and Merle; Burch Interviews I and II.

[139]Burch Interview II; Pipher Interview II. Luce Pipher's father, Alexander, had worked from Ohio by way of California to Austin, Colorado. He was so impressed with the mountains that, at job's end, he "drew his time, bought a saddle horse and went up to Crawford" where he took up a homestead in 1915. Katie Claudine Collins' people were early Virginia settlers of Crawford's Clear Fork area. She was teaching school on Leroux Creek when Alexander Pipher "ran off" with her.

[140]Abstract, Entry No. 335528, in the possession of Robert McFerrin, Bridge City, Texas.

[141]Pipher Interview I; the sign is on the mill's first floor.

[142]Pipher Interview I.

[143]Telephone interview, Robert McFerrin, Bridge City, Texas, 22 March 1989.

[144]Telephone interview, Dick Steckle, Lands End Realty, Crawford, Colorado, 22 February 1989.

[145]Interview, Marie Wetterich, Cedaredge, Colorado, 8 September 1988.

[146]Lund Interview IV.

[147]Telephone interview, Bertha Linman, Paonia, Colorado, 22 February 1989.

[148]The author's continuing research reveals that, where other mills once existed, either the machinery has been removed and the buildings have been converted to other uses; new buildings have been built on the old foundations; or no trace of the mill remains.

[149]Telephone interview, Nellie Dodge, Crawford, Colorado, 22 February 1989.

"THE SURVIVAL OF JUDAISM IN A FAR WESTERN TOWN: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO"

by Rex Newkirk

Rex Newkirk is a 1989 graduate of Mesa State College. He has traveled to Kibbutz Zova in Israel and plans to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem next year.

So Israel will live in safety alone;
Jacob's spring is secure
in a land of grain and new wine,
where the heavens drop dew.
Blessed are you, O Israel!
Who is like you,
a people saved by the Lord?[1]

At the junction of two powerful rivers on the Western Slope of Colorado's Rocky Mountains, a small Jewish community thrives. This miniscule community began concurrently with the founding of the town of Grand Junction in 1882. In accordance with the Mosaic blessing printed above, the Jews who moved to the townsite located in the Grand Valley found the land fruitful and, through the past century, have secured a place for "Jacob's spring."

The survival of Judaism is an enigma long pondered by religionists, historians and social scientists throughout the world. The refusal of

the amalgamated and dispersed tribes to relinquish their cultural and religious heritage has boggled the Gentile mind since the days of Nebuchadnezzar and the beginning of Judah's exile from the land of Israel. Perhaps the word survival seems a bit strong when speaking of the continuance of a Jewish community in less than hostile circumstances, but a short consideration justifies its use: if a Jew is harmed because of the faith, Judaism remains unscathed; if a Jew ceases to be Jewish, that is, if he or she assimilates, Judaism itself is threatened with extinction. Jewish response and adjustment to the latter, more dangerous, threat of ethnic, cultural, and religious assimilation may be seen in this study of the "survival" of Judaism in Grand Junction, a once isolated Colorado town.

Secular scholars usually attribute the survival of Judaism to its institutional adaptations of Mosaic Law, adaptations developed during two and a half millenia of dispersal among the nations.[2] In Grand Junction, Judaism had no rapacious mobs of Christian peasants or government persecutions to deal with, as it did in Europe. However, it also had none of the institutional conveniences that allowed Jews to remain a distinctive group. Judaism's principal obstacle in Grand Junction was the isolation of its minute Jewish community.

Assimilation has always been a major threat to Judaism in the United States. Imigrants, especially Jews, felt pressures to conform to the American pattern. Badly maligned in ethnic characterizations, Jews wanted to escape Old World stigmas and become fully Americanized.[3] Many attempted to leave their religious and ethnic heritage completely behind. Others discretely practiced an abridged form of their religion and adopted many American characteristics. Without rabbis, who did not arrive in the United States until the 1840s, an American Jewish tradition of religious improvisation grew. When rabbis did arrive, they often belonged to the German reform movement, which promoted many of the practicalities already adopted by Jews in American frontier areas. Reform Judaism encouraged Jews to keep whatever laws they could, make amendments where necessary, and discard laws they found impracticable. It allowed Jews to modify their ceremonial behavior, making them more compatible with their Christian neighbors.[4]

Large numbers of Jewish immigrants began arriving in the United States in the 1840s. Between that time and 1880 the United States' Jewish population rose from 50,000 to 250,000.[5] Most immigrants chose to stay on the Eastern seaboard. Though some filtered inland, few went as far as Colorado. In 1877, only 260 were residents of Denver's Jewish community on West Colfax Avenue.[6] That same year Colorado's Jewish population was estimated at only 422.[7]

Beginning in 1881, large numbers of Jews immigrated to the United States from Russian-occupied lands, quadrupling the American Jewish population in twenty years. Because Denver had a reputation as a place to recover from tuberculosis, many Jews from Eastern sweatshops moved West to seek the cure. Relocation programs sponsored by organizations such as B'nai B'rith and by wealthy Jewish individuals, most notably Baron de Hirsch, helped some make the move. By 1912 Denver's Jewish community had grown to 15,000.[8]

Jews who wished to remain traditionally observant of their faith stayed near urban centers with large Jewish communities. Grand Junction, located halfway beween Denver and Salt Lake City, Utah, both urban areas with sizeable Jewish communities, received few of the immigrants from either the German or Eastern European mass migrations. Like many frontier locations, Grand Junction's social environment was not conducive to a highly ritualized Orthodox form of Judaism. The absence of rabbinical authority and institutionalized specialists required impromptu decisions and sometimes completely precluded observance of Rabbinic Law. Without a *shohet* (a ritual slaughterer), Jews were unable to keep kosher. With no *mohel* to perform circumcisions, the sign of membership with Abraham in God's covenant could not be administered properly. Without at least ten Jewish men, they could not even say ceremonial prayers for their dead.[9]

The town's first permanent Jewish settler, Morris Strouse, arrived in 1882, soon after the town was staked out. Grand Junction's *Daily Sentinel*, in an article commemorating Strouse, characterized him as a man who led a "blameless ... life."[10] Indeed, living a blameless life, in the eyes of their Gentile neighbors, became the quintessence of religion for Grand Junction's Jews. Their shops stayed open on the Sabbath, they ate whatever they wanted, their children went without any semblance of Jewish confirmation and sometimes attended Christian churches. But they remained Jews because they were born Jews and they saw themselves as Jews.

Grand Junction's early Jewish settlers were prominent and enterprising individuals. Morris Strouse, Mike Loeffler, Albert and Joseph Sampliner, and the Krohn family, all did well in Grand Junction at a time when Jews suffered exclusion and abuse in Denver. Remnants of the first mass migrations (1840-1880), they exhibited Horatio Alger qualities that brought financial success and respect in frontier areas.[11] For instance, Joseph Sampliner, born in 1864 on a ship sailing from Austria to America, became mayor of Grand Junction in 1901. Arriving in 1895 with a wagon filled with goods purchased cheaply in declining mining towns, he and his cousin Albert established themselves as

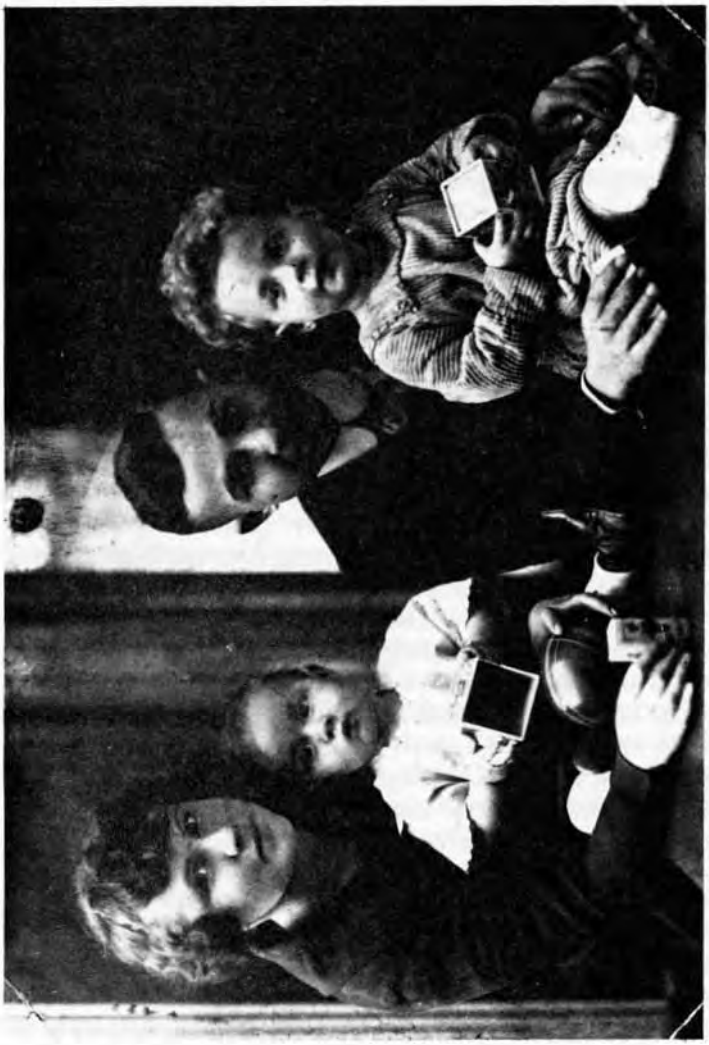
distinguished owners of a fine clothing store and became members of the boards of several financial institutions and civic organizations.[12]

Excluding the Krohns, who eventually converted to Christianity,[13] there were perhaps four Jewish families in Grand Junction in 1910. At that time the city's population was 7,754.[14] Of the four families, two involved intermarriages: Mike Loeffler married a non-Jewish woman and moved from Glenwood Springs to Grand Junction in the early 1900s;[15] and Albert Sampliner also intermarried, taking an Episcopalian bride in 1895.[16]

Morris Strouse exemplified the tenuous Jewish presence in Grand Junction during its early years. An immigrant from the Germanic kingdom of Wurttemburg, he arrived in New York in 1853. Strouse was a small eighteen year old on arrival in the United States, but he had apprenticed as a merchant for three years and could make his own way. After twenty-nine years of moving about the American frontier, he arrived at the new townsite of Grand Junction and made it his permanent home. During his remaining forty-five years, he became a local celebrity and the most conspicuously Jewish person in town. His wife was Jewish, his children married Jews (in other states),[17] and, when he was commemorated in the local paper, his Jewishness was always noted with remarks about "his race" [sic].[18]

Russian Jewish immigrants began arriving in Grand Junction after the first decade of the twentieth century, bringing with them a new pattern of settlement. Instead of sporadic individual arrivals, Jews began to arrive in groups. The Joseph Leff family moved to Grand Junction from Denver and was soon joined by their friends, the Liffs, who arrived in 1915. The Liffs made up several households. A Jewish son-in-law of the Leffs, Louis Spector, moved to Grand Junction, also.[19] Unlike the earlier Jewish arrivals, who began passing away in the 1920s, this generation of settlers interacted and their arrival marked the beginning of Jewish community cohesiveness in Grand Junction.

Jews met little resistance in Grand Junction, even during the 1920s when Ku Klux Klan membership was in vogue. The nascent xenophobia of the early part of the twentieth century had little overt effect on Grand Junction's small group of mostly native American Jews. Grand Junction's Klan was more interested in maintaining conservative politics. However, someone did burn a cross on Max Liff's lawn in the late 1920s. Nathan Liff, Max's son, speculates that his father's second marriage, to a Gentile woman, might have prompted the cross burning. The Ku Klux Klan lost political power in Grand Junction in 1927,[20] the year of the first Passover celebration in that town.[21]



Max Liff with his first Protestant bride and their sons, Nathan and Walter, in 1920.

POPULARITY

Because we are successful in providing the sort of Patterns and Models—that men like—at the Price they prefer to pay, is the reason why "Loeffler's" is the busy Clothing Store of Western Colorado featuring

Hart Schaffner & Marx Clothes

In a large variety of the season's new twists, worsted and fancy cashmere.

25.00 35.00 50.00

AND MORE

LOEFFLER Super-Values

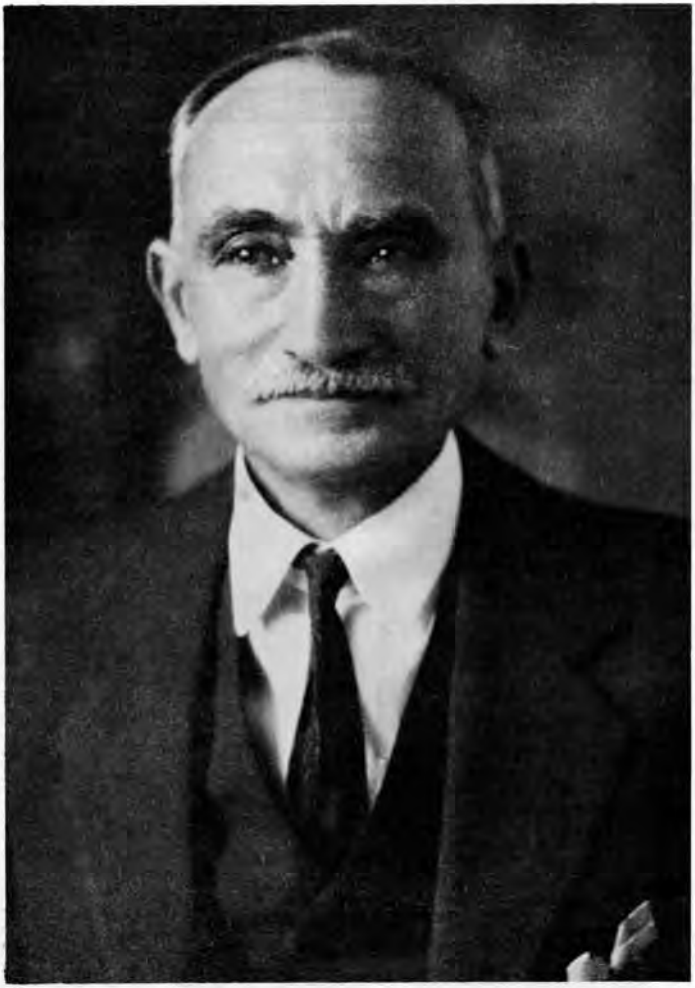
Good quality clothes. Gaberdines, silk mixtures, clear worsteds, Conservative models, the new double breasted vest suits—

23.45 27.45 35.00

LOEFFLER'S

A typical ad from Loeffler's Quality Clothing Store.

In the late 1920s, an age when "informal but firm quotas" often limited Jewish residency,[22] an incident concurrent with the Sedalniks' arrival has a familiar ring. Samuel Sedalnik was approached by a



"Dad" Liff, patriarch of the Liff household and dignified tailor. Along with Joe Liff and Louis Spector, he arranged for the first Jewish Community Seder *in 1927.*

member of the town's Chamber of Commerce and told he should take his family and go back to Denver because Grand Junction already had too many Jews.[23] Sedalnik stayed and his critic later became a customer of Sedalnik's L. Cook's jewelry store.[24] By 1937 Grand Junction's Jewish population numbered twenty-three in a city of approximately twelve thousand.[25]

Grand Junction's permanent Jewish settlers shared basic traits: nearly all were self-employed merchants, highly acculturated, and religiously

Photo courtesy of Fannie Ruth Susman

Rudolph "Rudy" Susman, a well-known personage in Grand Junction.

lax. They came to Grand Junction because it seemed a likely place to prosper, being the largest city on Colorado's Western Slope and a bustling railroad town between two large commercial centers, Salt Lake City and Denver. Typical of Jews all over the nation, they were temperate, industrious, informed, self-employed, and good business people. They were clothing merchants, tailors, owners of all-purpose stores, and junk dealers. As independent entrepreneurs they lived contentedly among Gentiles, separated from any large Jewish population by hundreds of miles of rough roads.

The estimation of Jewish religious fervor in Grand Junction must take into consideration what was possible. In 1927, when there were twelve Jewish residents in Grand Junction,[26] Passover was celebrated for the first time. Jews met at private homes to celebrate the High Holidays (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) beginning in the 1930s.[27] Their celebration was informal and unorthodox, yet it was an affirmation of their membership in the body of Israel.[28]

Yahrzeits were instrumental in early Jewish group congregations in Grand Junction. Each year on the anniversary of a loved one's death, Jews would search each other out in order to form a *minyan,* a quorum of ten, to say prayers in honor of their dead. While certain basic Judaic institutions, such as the burial society, went ignored in Grand Junction, *yahrzeit* observance began as soon as there were enough Jewish men over thirteen to form a *minyan.*[29]

What the Jews of Grand Junction lacked in religious zeal, they made up for in civic spirit. They joined clubs, fraternal orders, and benevolent societies. Rudolph Susman, who arrived as a merchant in partnership with his in-laws, Gilbert and Mary Gordon, in 1938, spent a prodigious amount of time on community and charitable involvement.[30] Some promoted sports, notably Samuel Sedalnik, who, along with his brother-in-law Louis Cook, sold sporting goods. Sedalnik, and an Austrian Jewish refugee, Doctor Richard Waldapfels, promoted the construction of the first ski-slope on the Grand Mesa, near Grand Junction.[31]

Adolf Hitler's genocidal search for and persecution of anyone with Jewish blood impacted Grand Junction's Jewish community. Informed Jews realized how much world-wide empathy Hitler's movement to eradicate their "race" received. From their own experience, many religiously unaffiliated Jews knew that their Jewishness existed more in the minds of the Gentiles they associated with than in any of their own actions or characteristics. Stories of Gentiles showing up to check Jewish children for horns remained firmly implanted in their view of their own orientation in a ponderously dominant Gentile society. A brief review of their past assured them of the vicissitudes of Gentile behavior towards their people.[32] World War II, then, was a time when Jews faced hostility. The result was that Grand Junction's Jewish community became more cohesive.

Grand Junction had no Jewish organizational or institutional edifices until the early 1950s. A close association of friends sharing a common ethnic background, their interactions were limited to occasional social engagements. As a group, they did not become involved in partisan politics, although as individuals they sometimes did. Mike Loeffler, for instance, worked hard to bring better roads into the area.[33]

Photo courtesy of Beth Long

Purim celebration of Jewish survival in the American Lutheran Church of Grand Junction.

The isolation that Grand Junction's Jews experienced became less significant as transportation and communication facilities improved in the mid-twentieth century. Each report of Zionist victories in Israel boosted local Jewish self-esteem. Jewish settlers, mainly Russian, continued to move into Grand Junction at the rate of a few families per decade until the uranium boom in the early 1950s. Then new Jewish families arrived to fill energy-related positions.[35] Although the energy population was transient, it significantly changed the Jewish community.

Jewish community organizations began in the 1950s with the arrival of the three Travis brothers, Dick, George, and Marshall, and their families from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Accustomed to conservative Jewish observance, they were unwilling to accept the lack of Judaic practice they found in Grand Junction and immediately organized meetings. Grand Junction's thoroughly acculturated Jews, whose religious practice had amounted to informal celebrations of the High Holidays and *yahrzeit* memorials, began to attend regular formal gatherings. Services, held at first in the La Court Hotel, grew in attendance until more spacious accommodations became necessary.[36]

The Travises stayed less than a decade. Services continued, however, under the leadership of more established families. In 1966 a *bar mitzvah* (a Jewish confirmation service for adolescent males) was held for Dan Rosenthal, grandson of the Sedalniks, at the Cafe Caravan. Community celebrations of Passover and the High Holidays were also held in public buildings during the 1960s. The congregation, after moving from one location to another, found a more permanent meeting place in an auxiliary chapel in the American Lutheran Church.[37]

Young professionals from larger cities began replacing the older generation of merchants as leaders of the community in the 1970s. Feeling deprived of the religious facilities of the large Jewish communities, they decided something must be done to ensure the proper Jewish upbringing of their children. In 1979 four mothers began a religious school for their five children. The congregation became more visible in the press and, in 1982, hired a full-time rabbi. In 1986 the congregation bought a building which became a combination Montessori day-school and Temple, and listed itself in the telephone book as the Jewish Community Center.[38] Following a gradual shift from Reform to Conservative Judaism, the congregation began using Hebrew in their services and took a congregational Hebrew name, Ohr Shalom, meaning "light of welfare or peace."[39]

Today perhaps only half of the estimated two hundred Jews in Grand Junction belong to Congregation Ohr Shalom.[40] Many of the older members of the community have stopped attending services, leaving religious responsibility to the relatively new and younger population. Fluctuating between forty and fifty families, the members of Ohr Shalom volunteer their services in leadership and teaching positions. Members receive a monthly newsletter with information of activities including celebrations of all Jewish holidays, *bar* and *bat mitzvah* classes, and contemporary observances such as *Kristallnacht,* a remembrance of the German Holocaust.[41]

Although the Jewish community faced little resistance in Grand Junction, it grew slowly and remained small. Jewish presence in the city, until recently, hinged on Jewish willingness to separate from the vestiges of their culture and the full practice of their religion, while keeping a nominal grasp on their heritage. Reform Judaism acted as the vehicle for maintaining Jewish heritage at a time when more traditional Judaic practice was both impractical and impolitic, providing the flexibility and adaptive means necessary to sustain a Jewish presence in Grand Junction.

Thus, Judaism survived in Grand Junction, despite its small and inauspicious beginnings. The early Jewish settlers of Grand Junction,

Photo courtesy of Beth Long

Hebrew and Jewish religion class taught by Beth Long.

willing to conform to their circumstances, but unwilling to disclaim their heritage, maintained their Jewish identity with a minimum amount of ceremony. The religious observances they chose to include in their lives, however informally, were crucial in maintaining the propinquity and cohesion of the group. Ceremonies such as the *yahrzeit,* as well as observance of Passover and the High Holidays, brought the Jewish community together and confirmed its membership in the incorporeal body of Israel. Although the group seemed unconcerned with religion and intent on being unobtrusive, it increased its religious functions in accordance with its growth and capabilities. When latecomers provided inspiration for Temple services, they found willing and loyal congregants among the local and more permanent Jewish community. When the young urban professionals moved to buy a building and augment religious practices, they found the older members of the Jewish community ready to support their efforts.

Judaic survival in Grand Junction has, perhaps, not been so enigmatic as elsewhere in Jewish history. The pressures to assimilate in Grand Junction, if they existed, were covert and strictly social. The Jews who adapted to the social environment of Grand Junction played crucial roles in the continuance of a Jewish presence in an isolated area

of the American West. They remained true to their heritage and played a part in the growth of a far Western town, while laying the foundation for Judaic growth. As predecessors of the current religiously active Jewish community in Grand Junction, they walked the fine line between acculturation and assimilation, and created a legacy of community involvement without loss of small group identity.

NOTES

[1]*Oxford NIV Scofield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 223.

[2]Herman Wouk, *This Is My God: The Jewish Way of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 19.

[3]Charles E. Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p. 43.

[4]Max L. Dimont, *The Jews in America: The Roots, History, and Destiny of American Jews* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), pp. 55-57.

[5]*Ibid,* p. 125.

[6]Harriet Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews: A New Life in the Far West* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), p. 216.

[7]Ida Libert Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim: The Story of the Jews in Colorado,* 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Quality Line Printing Co., 1979), p. 76.

[8]Rochlin, *Pioneer Jews,* p. 216.

[9]*Ibid,* p. 206.

[10]*The Daily Sentinel,* 1 November 1928.

[11]Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim,* p. 188.

[12]*Daily Sentinel,* 5 February 1924.

[13]Letter to the author from Ed Krohn, 15 September 1988.

[14]Suzanne Schulze (ed.), *A Century of the Colorado Census* (Greeley, Colorado: University of Northern Colorado, 1976), p. 208.

[15]Mesa County Library, Oral History Collection, Rudolph and Fannie Susman interview (OH308 #1).

[16]Interview, Pat Gormley, executor of Albert Sampliner's Grand Junction properties, 22 November 1988, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[17]Information from the Strouse family Bible in the archives of the Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society at the University of Denver.

[18]*The Daily Sentinel,* 28 August 1927.

[19]Mesa County Library, Oral History Collection, Nathan Liff interview (OH893 #1).

[20]J. Kenneth Baird, "The Ku Klux Klan in Grand Junction, 1924-1927," *Journal of the Western Slope* (Winter 1989), p. 51.

[21]Nathan Liff interview.

[22]Silberman, *A Certain People,* pp. 22-23.

[23]Mesa County Library, Oral History Collection, Bert and Mary Rosenthal and Herschel Sedalnik interview (OH488 #1).

[24]Interview, Bert Rosenthal, 9 July 1988, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[25]Allen Dupont Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado 1859-1959,* The University of Denver Department of History Series *The West in American History,* No. 1 (Denver: The Hirschfeld Press, 1960), p. 322.

[26]*Ibid,* p. 177.

[27]Interview, Gilbert and Mary Gordon, 12 July 1988, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[28]Wouk, *This Is My God,* p. 67.

[29]Gilbert and Mary Gordon interview.

[30]Rudolph and Fannie Susman interview.

[31]Rosenthal and Sedalnik interview.

[32]Silberman, *A Certain People,* p. 24.

[33]Rudolph and Fannie Susman interview.

[34]Silberman, *A Certain People,* p. 222.

[35]Rudolph and Fannie Susman interview.

[36]*Ibid.*

[37]Gilbert and Mary Gordon interview.

[38]Torah Aura Productions, *Grand Junction, Colorado: Homemade Jewish Community,* a narrated slide presentation, 1983, available in the archives of The Museum of Western Colorado in Grand Junction, Colorado.

[39]Interview, Beth Long, 22 November 1988, Grand Junction.

[40]Interview, Denise Gabbay, 28 December 1987, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[41]*The Daily Sentinel,* 5 November 1988.

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