Site of Blue Mesa Dam in the Black Canyon near Sapinero. Photo courtesy U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, Curecanti Unit.

Artist's conception of the Blue Mesa Dam when it is completed within the year. The structure will begin to store water some time in 1965. Photo courtesy of U. S. Bureau of Reclamation. Curecanti Unit.

GUNNISON

A Short, Illustrated History

BETTY WALLACE

Author of
GUNNISON COUNTRY

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A Short, Illustrated History

BETTY WALLACE

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The Coming of the Whites

High on the southwestern slope of the Colorado Rockies lies an area known as the Gunnison Country. It encompasses broad valleys, varying in elevation from 7,500 to 9,000 feet, and towering 14,000-foot crags. Here the face of nature is as that of other mountain regions—grass-cloaked bottom land, willow-fringed streams, eye-soothing sagebrush slopes, and lofty peaks with their alternate shades of dark green pine, fir, spruce, the light shimmer of aspens, the rock-ribbed crests tipped with snow.

Only the surface is familiar. What marks the region as different from other portions of the West is the succession of shadowy figures that pass before the inner eye. The lazy smoke of the Ute campfires rises from mesa and streamside. Their tepees spire the evening dusk. Notes of song and laughter, the guttural murmur of voices, drift on the gentle breeze.

Trappers and fur traders, Spanish gold-seekers and missionaries arouse the yapping Ute's dogs, stir the camp to activity to welcome these strangers. These are the hazy, grey-shrouded predecessors of the post-Civil War migration of prospectors, adventurers, and settlers that will soon swarm into the broad valley of the Gunnison. Here at the junction of the two streams—the Gunnison and the Tomichi—a town will rise, like the hub of a wheel, its spokes leading out to richly varied lands.

To the east lies the Continental Divide, over which Highway 50 now traverses Monarch Pass at an elevation of 11,302 feet. Marshall Pass, named for Brigadier-General William L. Marshall of the Army Engineers who discovered the pass in 1873, crosses the Divide at 10,846. Once the scenic route of the narrow-gauge Denver and Rio Grande railroad, the grade is still a passable auto road. Cochetopa Pass, lowest into the area at 10,032 feet, gives access from the San Luis Valley. To the south lies the alpine-crested Sawtooth range, and to the north, the Elk Mountains, perpetually snow-capped.

Within the folds of the mountains and little valleys encircling Gunnison lie the old mining camps, many of them truly ghost towns, but some resorts inhabited in the summer months

by Texans, Oklahomans, Californians, Kansans. From the flat river bottoms of the Gunnison and Tomichi, ranches extend probing fingers into the hills, seeking out summer pastures.

Near at hand, Tomichi Dome stands a blue sentinel at the upper end of the valley; to the north Mount Carbon and the Elks shelter the region; to the west, Blue and Black Mesas rise on either side of the Black Canyon; and to the south Hartman Rocks and Tenderfoot Mountain stand virtually in the dooryard of the town.

Until slightly more than a century ago, only the Ute Indians shared the secrets of this mountain region. They came to the high valleys of the Gunnison as early as 1650, when acquisition of horses from the Spaniards had made possible summer hunting on the Western Slope of the Rockies and in the San Luis Valley. Traveling over Cochetopa (literally Pass of the Buffalo), the Utes found not only deer and elk in the high country of the area, but also some buffalo herds in Taylor Park and the Powderhorn. By the time the first French trappers and early gold-seekers had penetrated the region, however, these herds had disappeared, and the first chill of autumn sent the Utes scurrying to lower altitudes of Eastern Colorado.

Although Spanish horses, too, had enabled Juan Rivera to reach the Gunnison River at Delta in 1765, and Escalante the North Fork of the river as far as Paonia in 1776, no white man of record had entered the Gunnison Valley. Here, close to the game-filled mountains, bunch grass for the Ute ponies grew thigh-high, and no marauding plains Indians disturbed the peace of the cool star-studded dawn.

It was into this country of happy hunting that Captain John W. Gunnison led his little band of troops and surveyors on an autumn day in 1853. The aspen flamed on the distant hillsides, but frost had not yet driven the Utes from the valley. Smoke from the tip of Signal Peak heralded the news of the strangers: a small detachment of cavalry, sixteen great wagons, each pulled by a six-mule team, an ambulance wagon, and a small vehicle loaded with surveying instruments. Captain Gunnison, a topographical engineer and graduate of West Point, was in charge of the group delegated to explore and survey a railroad route through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. With him as his next-in-command rode Lt. E. G. Beckwith of the Third Artillery, a topographer, an astronomer, a surgeon, and a botanist. The troops were out of Fort Leavenworth and under command of Captain Morris. Their chief work, in the absence of Indian resistance, was to build a road over which the heavy wagons could pass. Antoine Leroux, noted guide of Taos, had led the party over the route from the old Santa Fe Trail into the Arkansas Valley.

From there the group crossed Poncha Pass into the San Luis Valley, and then entered the Tomichi Valley by way of Pass Creek, a little north and east of Cochetopa Pass. Sometimes the wagons required twelve mules to pull them up the steep bluffs, and sometimes ropes, held by men on the slopes above, were needed to keep the wagons upright on the descent.

Once the floor of the valley was reached, however, the wagon train had little difficulty moving toward the Elk Mountains to the north. Delighted with the region, Gunnison wrote, "The agreeable and exhilarating effect of the pure mountain air... exhibits itself amongst our men in almost constant boisterous mirth." He recognized the hazards ahead in the rugged Elks when he added, "Our animals...soon become exhausted and stop from the weight of their loads." Hence he turned south to follow the river to the deep gorge of the Black Canyon. Accepting the advice of the Indians who had ventured to meet the little caravan, that the Canyon was impassable, Gunnison and his party crossed Blue Mesa into the Uncompahgre Valley, little dreaming that one day a railroad would, indeed, penetrate the "impassable" canyon.

His brief sojourn in a country that was to take his name for valley, river, county, and town, was, apparently, a happy one, and certainly more fortunate than his venture into Utah. There, near Sevier Lake, on October 25, a war party of Pah-Utes fell upon his advance exploring party. Captain Gunnison, stepping from his tent with his hands weaponless and uplifted in a sign of peace, fell with fifteen arrows in his body. Four of the men escaped to carry news of the disaster to the main camp, but the rescue troops came too late, and only the dead were found. The men had not been scalped, but several, including Gunnison, had their arms cut off at the elbow.

The epaulets from the uniform of the young captain were subsequently recovered from the Indian who had hacked them from his shoulders, and were, in 1885, presented to the City of Gunnison by Captain Gunnison's brother. The silver plate, with inscription memorializing the occasion, disappeared with the dissolution of the erstwhile Chamber of Commerce of the 1880's, but the epaulets may be seen today in the display case in the lobby of the First National Bank in Gunnison.

In further tribute to this handsome explorer, a memorial stone was placed in 1947 on the corner of Virginia and Wisconsin streets, opposite the post office. Perhaps the greatest tribute to this man lies, however, in the fact that this country through which he led the first small wagon train has retained, despite all its progress as a thriving community, that "pure mountain air" of which he wrote more than a century ago.

The next wagon train to pass through the Gunnison Valley came in 1858, when Colonel Loring's military detachment of fifty wagons and three hundred men entered from the west. Guided by Leroux, the group went up the Gunnison and Tomichi valleys and out over Cochetopa Pass.

The ink was scarcely dry on the Gunnison-Beckwith and the Loring reports before pressures of an expanding nation pushed the Utes from their winter buffalo grounds on the eastern slope of the Rockies. (These reports were the only official ones recorded of the area until the time of the Hayden surveys. On July 1, 1874, a pack train of engineers, with Henry Garnett, topographer, in charge, left Denver to explore the region. They came by way of Fairplay, Mosquito and Tennessee Passes to the Arkansas, then to Taylor Park, Spring Creek, Cement Creek, and down East River to its union with the Taylor. They passed through the Gunnison Valley, up the Tomichi and over Cochetopa Pass on their way back to Denver, having mapped the topography, drainage, and geology of this entire region in three months and nineteen days. They saw only two people in the Gunnison valley—Hartman and Kelley of the government cow camp. This was the second of a series of surveys that began in 1873 and were completed in 1876.)

Gold had been discovered on Cherry Creek in 1859, and the Indians were "encouraged" by the gold-hungry miners to vacate those premises. Ute-Mexican incidents flared in the San Luis Valley. The only solution seemed to be another treaty, and on March 2, 1868, the Utes accepted as a reservation the territory bounded roughly by a line north of the southern border of Colorado Territory, past the present towns of Pagosa Springs, Gunnison, Crested Butte, and Basalt, to a point near where Steamboat Springs now stands, then west to the Utah line. Gunnison and Crested Butte would lie a little to the east of the reservation.

The Tabeguache Ute band was intended for an agency on the Los Pinos River in La Plata County, but when the group crossed Cochetopa Pass, the Indians refused to go any farther. It was a case that, if Mohamet would not go to the mountain, the mountain would come to him, so the government officials designated the little tributary to Cochetopa Creek as Los Pinos, and thus resolved the impasse.

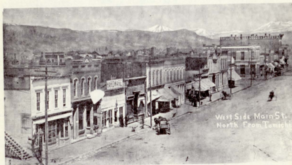
Houses for the first agent, Lt. Calvin T. Speer, for a resident farmer, a miller, a carpenter, and a blacksmith were constructed around a 200-foot quadrangle; and a corral, mill, stable, cellar, scales, warehouse, schoolhouse, and carpenter-blacksmith shop were added. Later a four-room house for Chief Ouray and his wife Chipeta was built south and east of

the quadrangle. (Many old-timers insist that Ouray—all evidence to the contrary—is buried on the hillside across from the Agency. These claims, as well as those of more authoritative sources, occasioned one Gunnison editor of a later date to express the opinion that "Ouray must have more bones than Heinz has pickles.")

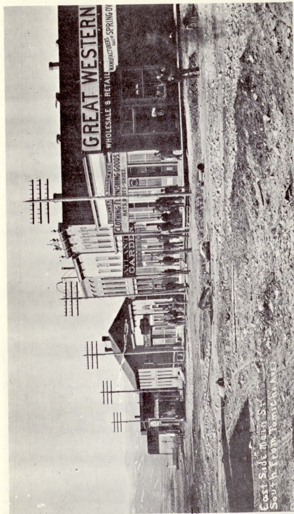
Because of transportation difficulties in providing the Utes with annuity goods—it sometimes took nearly two weeks to negotiate the sixty-five miles from Saguache to the Agency—a cow camp was set up in 1871 near the present site of Gunnison. The camp was located west and south of the union of the two rivers—the Tomichi and the Gunnison. J. P. Kelley was in charge of the first government stock to arrive—640 cows and 1160 sheep.

Indian reservation agents were customarily recommended by the various church boards in the country, and it was the Unitarians' turn after Speer had been on the job for two years. He was relieved of his duties and Jabez Nelson Trask appointed. Trask early displayed that peculiarity of temperament that was to mark his short term, by walking from Denver to his new job instead of waiting for less arduous means of transportation. His mode of dress—a swallowtailed coat with huge brass buttons, pre-war pants with flaring bottoms, a beaver hat, and enormous green goggles—sent even the Indians into paroxysms of glee.He was a Harvard graduate, intelligent in some respects, and undoubtedly honest, but his books were a mess within six months and his methods of converting the savages into "civilized beings" showed a painful lack of practicality. He was "sacked" ere the year was out, and the summer of 1872 General Charles Adams arrived to take charge. Adams promptly fired all the employees except Kelley, whom he retained as assistant to Alonzo Hartman, who came to the cow camp in the valley on Christmas Day, 1872. Herman Leuders and Sidney Jocknick took a hand with the stock, also, and Leuders is credited with having built the first corrals. Hartman is said to have constructed the first cabin on the property which later was to become his famous Dos Rios ranch. (At least one old-timer, L. H. Easterly, says that a Mr. Wall and a Mr. White had previously (1870) built the first cabin—a squat log shack—at the junction of the rivers, and that Hartman built his end-to-end with the first structure. The cow camp did not come into being until 1871, and if Easterly is correct, Kelley found a ready-made home, even before Hartman's arrival. This point, obviously, cannot be clarified, since no one saw much significance at the time in recording who built what and when.)

By 1872 the miners who were flocking into the Elk Mountains and the San Juans, could no longer be restrained from taking what they wanted on Ute lands. In seeking to force another treaty to satisfy the miners, Indian Commissioner Brunot discovered that Ouray's son, stolen some years previously by Plains Indians, was still alive, and a promise to help recover the boy was used to secure cooperation from Ouray. (The son was never returned to Ouray, and the story goes that the young man refused to be repatriated.) In 1873 the Utes met with the Commission at Los Pinos, agreed to further reduction of their reservation, and a treaty was ratified by the United States Senate in April, 1874. The Utes were to retain hunting privileges in the Elks and San Juans, and they were removed to the Uncompahgre in the fall of 1875. Frictions arose there, leading to further restrictive treaties, and they ultimately traded their Colorado hunting grounds for the somewhat bleaker regions of the Uintah Basin of Utah. Otto Mears, the road builder of the San Juans, was engaged to move them out, and it is said that he himself paid the Utes two dollars per head to move on.



Gunnison in 1882, west side of Main Street north from Tomichi. First building on left is the Frank Adams store, second is the Hartman building, still standing and bearing the date 1881 in the arch at center of the roof front. Steele's Hardware is next. The three one-story and the two two-story frames from mid-block to the corner of Virginia were destroyed in the 1902 fire. First National Bank, Gunnison Brewery, and the Webster three-story appear in the second block. On the horizon snow-capped Mount Whetstone and Mount Carbon overlook the Ohio Creek Valley.



West side of Main Street from Tomichi south.(Mislabeled by photographer as "East Side.") The three two-story frames between the corner and the Red Lion Inn constituted Gunnison "Red Light" district in the roaring Eighties. Beyond the Gunnison Feed, Sales Stables is a tent dwelling.

A Dream Takes Shape

While these last years of finagling with the Indians were going on, another man had his eye on the Gunnison Country. He was far different from the little hard-headed businessman, Otto Mears, but he, too, would leave his mark on the region.

In 1874 Sylvester Richardson sold one hundred acres of land near Denver for a yoke of oxen with which to drive over the mountains to the Gunnison Valley—a valley he had seen and fallen in love with the year before as a member of the second Parsons Expedition.

Slightly more than a decade later, Richardson was still seeking his dreams beyond the mountain. He left Gunnison with one span of mules, a companion as unfortunate as he, and three dollars in his pocket. But in that decade he had been MR. GUNNISON: geologist, surveyor, carpenter, druggist, physician, teacher, musician, playwright, assayer, lawyer, journalist, and historian.

Richardson had come to Denver in 1860, worked as a wagon-maker and teamster, and even tried ranching, a line of endeavor for which he had absolutely no taste. The innumerable chores of farming bored him, and he usually left most of them undone. After he had used up the fence rails for firewood instead of going to the nearby forest for wood, he and his wife left their little farm five miles from Denver and returned to Wisconsin. But Richardson had breathed the air of the West, and he was back on the streets of Denver within a year. He heard talk of the miners who had penetrated the Elk Mountains in 1872 and returned with reports of fabulous veins of ore on Rock Creek, and Richardson determined to look into the matter for himself.

Fortuitously, Dr. John Parsons was organizing another expedition to the area, and Richardson joined as geologist. In July, 1873, the men set out—thirty in number, with eight teams, and a number of pack animals—to explore the Elk Mountains.

The party camped near Los Pinos Agency and asked permission to go forward into Indian Territory. Ouray's word in their behalf drew a grudging consent from the Ute council,

and the party moved on to the cow camp and thence northward to the junction of Slate and East rivers.

While Richardson and an assistant set out to explore the region geologically, Parsons and his men began work on a blast furnace on Rock Creek. Too much native sand was used with the brick, and it would not stand the heat necessary to melt the ores. Parsons' employees deserted to prospect on their own, and Richardson, after fully reporting to Parsons on the area for which he had been engaged, set out on a six-hundred-mile walk. He examined the Crystal River area more thoroughly, discovered the marble deposits there, traced carbonates from Cochetopa Pass on the south to Red Mountain Pass on the north, and on Spring Creek near Dead Man's Gulch.

In late October he fell in with a pack train returning to Denver, and went back to that city "determined that white men and women should in time possess and occupy the fair land" of the Gunnison. Richardson's mind was already seeing a thriving town near the two rivers, great ranches, humming mills and smelters, and he was resolved that even the panic of 1873 should not deter him.

In January of 1874 he bent his efforts to persuade friends to go with him to the Gunnison Country. He drew with crayon on large sheets of paper a map of the Gunnison region. He pointed out the similarity of the valley location to the hub of a wheel, with mining areas encircling within a radius of 25 to 40 miles. He pointed out that numerous streams centered at this one point in the valley, and that the small valleys offered natural water-grade roads. He pointed out that any railroad through the region would center in this valley. The enthusiasm of this lank, bearded man with the deep-set grey eyes infected his listeners, and on February 15, 1874, a joint stock company was formed, with $6,000 capital and $100 shares distributed among thirty members. One article of the company agreement specified that there should be no liquor sold on the colony grounds.

On April 10 the little band, "a motley crew... some twenty in number," set out for his land of dreams. An unseasonable two-foot fall of snow hit them barely twenty miles from Denver. They reached the Riley ranch near Colorado Springs only after abandoning some of the wagons and doubling their teams. Those who remained at the ranch for ten days recouped their spirits to push on over the range, but a few had already turned back.

The caravan set out anew on April 22, traveling through Colorado Springs and Ute Pass, through South Park, and down Trout Creek to the Arkansas, then over Poncha Pass and

Cochetopa Pass. They were camped eight miles north of Los Pinos Agency on the 10th of May. The stock was weakened from the trip, Indians were everywhere, and Richardson could only partially allay their fears by asserting that his survey of the previous year had indicated the proposed site for Gunnison City lay east of the reservation line. They were not satisfied until he had his surveyor run another line as they traveled down Tomichi Creek.

On May 21 the men camped on the east bank of the Gunnison River, "without a dissenting vote, ready to testify that the valley of the Gunnison was fairer and better than it had ever been presented to be by anyone. They were glad they had come." Each member drew by lot 160 acres until about 31 quarter sections had been taken.

The first colony cabin, a rude, dirt-roofed structure, was built by Richardson, and work begun on about twenty more by the rest of the company. The colony seemed on the road to success when dissension broke out over the platting of a town and the location of a bridge. Before the summer of '74 passed, fully one-third of the men had taken off for the mining districts where wealth seemed more immediate.

By September, however, the decimated colony had established itself to the extent that the men talked of bringing their families over in the spring. Coal had been discovered on Ohio Creek, the soil had proved fertile for potatoes and garden stuff, and an abundance of good water presaged the century to come without a crop failure.

New colonists arrived from Denver and Trinidad. Among the recruits from Trinidad was the Charles G. Tingueley family, whose daughter Annie was to provide the valley with its first wedding when she eloped with J. P. (cow camp) Kelley on Christmas Night a year later. A Mr. Yates and a Mr. Greenwood had settled on the Tomichi in '74, and were, according to Richardson, the first ranchers in the valley.

That winter of '74-'75 about twenty persons remained in the valley, scattered within a thirty-mile radius. These included the men at the government cow camp, the two families from Trinidad, and the Denver men. Of the original colony only Richardson alone remained, the others having either deserted outright, or else gone to Denver for the winter, avouching their intention to return in the spring. The last to leave the valley stored their goods—tools, clothing, bedding, etc.—in the Griffith cabin. During the winter nearly everything was stolen, an open violation of the unwritten law of the West that permitted a man to leave his cabin unlocked with the understanding that anyone in need might use it, but certainly not

pack off all its contents. Perhaps it was just that the stayers knew better than anyone that those returning to Denver would not be back. Indeed, of the original stock company, only Griffith and the Outcalt brothers—John and Will—returned to the valley to rejoin Richardson in the spring.

The summer of 1875 presented two aspects: miners were thronging to the San Juans and Lake City to the neglect of the Elk Mountains; the sawmill brought with such difficulty from Trinidad the previous fall had little business; and the first high water had taken out the bridge over the Gunnison. On the other hand, the Utes were to be removed to the Uncompahgre, the valley would be thrown open for settlement, and a number of new settlers had arrived.

The first Fourth of July celebration was marked by a total absence of intoxicating liquors, a sumptious feast of all available delicacies, and an oration-sermon by Professor Richardson, who exhorted his seventy-five listeners to remember their pioneer heritage and admonished them to live for higher aims than wealth.

The spring of the next year, 1876, found the townsite almost deserted. Richardson's utopia had failed to hold its settlers. The sawmill had been moved to Lake City, and Richardson's hopefuls had rushed to the booming camps of Ouray and Lake City. He struggled to save his colony, but there was little activity in the region except for the slowly-increasing influx of ranchers. The August Mergelmans had taken up land up the Gunnison, and the David Smiths were ranching four miles west on what is now the Phelps place. A daughter of the Smiths, Ella Heiner, wrote for local papers some years later the story of those pioneer days.

Their cabin was of logs, without floor, doors, or windows. When winter came, the father made a door of logs shaped with an ax, put together with wooden pins. There were no nails and no hinges. The home was typical of those of her neighbors: a little homemade furniture; for cooking, a frying pan, camp kettle, dutch oven, and coffee pot; dishes of tin, iron-clad knives and forks, and—always—Utes who asked for biscuits and "coffee water."

If things were not going so well for Richardson's little settlement, there was, nevertheless, some progress in '76. A post office was established with Hartman as postmaster, and it was no longer necessary to depend on Lake City, sixty miles distant, for postal services. The job was scarcely very lucrative, for Hartman declared he often could have placed all the valley mail in his vest pocket that first year.

Colorado became a state, but there were few in the valley to celebrate the event. That the few who did remain that

winter of '76-'77—mostly ranchers—were aware of cultural needs is evidenced by record of a short-term school taught in a squatter's cabin on the Smith ranch. (First school in the town itself was a brief session in 1877 in an old shoe shop on lower Main Street.)

That winter the state legislature passed a bill severing the Gunnison region from Lake County (of which it had been a part during Territorial days), and establishing Gunnison County—an area containing 12,000 square miles, eighty-five miles wide and one hundred forty miles long, extending from the foothills of the Continental Divide west to the Utah line. (In 1881 the legislature carved Pitkin County out of the northern portion of the county; and in 1883 created the counties of Montrose, Delta, and Mesa from the western part. This left Gunnison with 2,137,600 acres enclosed in a strip eighty-five by sixty-three miles wide, still one of the larger counties in the state.)

In the spring of 1877 the first county officials took office: W. W. Outcalt, William Yule, Lyman Cheney, commissioners; David Smith, judge; Samuel Harvey, clerk and recorder; Amby Hinkle, sheriff.

At a second commissioners' meeting April 14, 1877, Amos O. Milner was sworn in as assessor; James Gates, coroner; Robert Stubbs, justice of the peace. One of Judge Smith's first duties was to mediate a dispute between two ranchers who had "stepped off" a boundary line. The trouble arose from the fact that one of the litigants was a very tall, long-legged man, and the other a short, stout fellow, whose steps were very short. Smith held court under a tree, but neglected to make a record of his decision in the matter. Stubbs, for whom Stubbs Gulch is named, was already the only justice of the peace in the region, having been authorized to perform the Tingueley-Kelley wedding Christmas of 1875.

On May 22 Gunnison was named temporary county seat, and by July had acquired a full slate of appointed officers which included J. P. Kelley as county treasurer. He and Hartman had earlier dissolved partnership in the store-post office. Hartman had filed on the cow camp land, stocked his own cattle, and eventually became wealthy. His Dos Rios mansion—still standing—has no counterpart in the area. The Kelleys and Tingueleys sold out in the midst of the 1882 boom and moved to New Mexico to ranch, also acquiring considerable wealth.

In the county's first election, October 2, 1877, J. A. Preston, John Parlin, and Cheney were named commissioners, the last-named for a one-year term; Kelley, treasurer; Harvey, clerk; George Yule, sheriff; Frank McMasters, superintendent of the (non-existent) schools; Milner, assessor; W. T. Cornish,

surveyor. Milner apparently never took office, but it was May, 1879, before John Hays was appointed to fill the vacancy. John (Jack) Howe, from whom Jack's Cabin (then called Howeville) got its name, was elected commissioner November 3, 1878, for a three-year term, replacing Cheney. W. S. Ditto, a judge of the first election, recalled that the voting place had no table, so an old mess box served as one. A second attempt at forming a town company failed—for want of a few dollars, according to Richardson.

By the time of the 1879 election things in the valley were definitely looking up. The overflow from Leadville began to seep over the range. The silver camps of White Pine, North Star (then called Lake's Camp), Quartzville (later Pitkin), Ohio City, Gothic, and Irwin were already entering the boom stage. Hillerton and Tin Cup in Taylor Park were vying for leadership, gold having been discovered there in 1859, with the Grey brothers operating sluices from 1860 on. Hillerton had incorporated as early as May, 1878, and by fall of 1879 boasted a bank and the county's first newspaper, the Hillerton *Occident*. Crested Butte, with its great coal deposits and site as gateway to the Elk Mountains, had begun to show that growth that would within a short time rival the county seat.

This feverous activity in the mountains surrounding Gunnison encouraged another attempt to plat a town, and on June 5, 1879, a new town company was organized. It consisted of ex-Governor John Evans; Henry C. Olney, editor of the Lake City *Silver World* and owner of the Hillerton paper; Louden Mullin; Alonzo Hartman; and, of course, Sylvester Richardson. The site comprised one hundred sixty acres, eighty acres school land, and the remainder divided in ownership between Hall and Olney. Wide avenues and streets and irrigation water down each street were features of the new plans which were put into execution that summer.

Unfortunately the winter months brought "cabin fever" and dissension. The town company split into two factions—East Town and West Town. Mullin and Richardson withdrew to champion West Gunnison; Hartman, Evans, and Olney remained with the East. Richardson's supporters seemed to be the more vigorous at the outset, inducing the South Park to select a depot site in West Gunnison, and the greater number of business houses went up on West New York and West Tomichi avenues. Indeed, much of the business district remained in West Town for the first year or more. La Veta Hotel, destined to be Western Colorado's most ornate hostelry, chose the west side of town for its location, and the Gunnison *Review*, most enduring of the early newspapers, occupied a shack in Richardson's division.

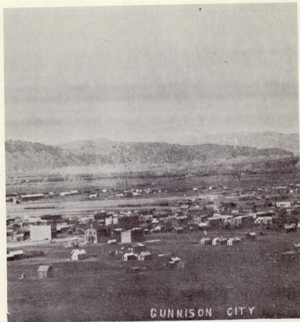
By 1880 Richardson, "this prince of visionaries," could happily write, "It is gratifying in the extreme for the writer to realize that all he has predicted and labored hard to accomplish is now verified.... As Gunnison county is teeming with life and the bustle of business, the writer feels that he has not labored and suffered in vain, for the realization of his one great aim in life—the settlement and development of the Gunnison Country."

While the good professor might be exaggerating somewhat, it was, nevertheless, true that an almost constant stream of humanity was pouring into the Gunnison Country. A Pueblo *Chieftain* correspondent in May, 1880, in one day counted 250 wagons bound for Gunnison, and beyond, and "the end is not yet, for far away on the Saguache road, there is a long line of white wagon covers."

And this was along one of the many roads leading into the Gunnison Country. From the time when the Territorial legislature had first chartered toll roads, these avenues of traffic had been hopefully extending ever westward toward Ute land, foreseeing the time when these lands would be open for settlement. Of the thirty-eight chartered between 1861 and 1863, none came closer than Arkansas City (Salida) and the San Luis Valley, but as the line of Indian ground receded, these toll roads advanced.

The period from 1875 to 1880 showed the greatest development in toll road building. Lake City was still the focal point of the area when Otto Mears and Enos Hotchkiss built the Saguache and San Juan Wagon Toll Road via Indian Creek to Lake City in 1874-75. Lake City had a second toll road—the Antelope Park and Lake City Wagon Toll Road from Del Norte—before mineral discoveries on the upper Tomichi, Quartz Creek, Irwin, and Gothic brought a booming toll road business to this county. Forty-five such roads were chartered in the Gunnison region in 1879 and 1880, but many were not started and many more never finished. The principal ones over which travelers for the Gunnison Country could come were the Poncha, Marshall Pass and Gunnison Toll Road, and the Monarch and Gunnison Toll Road from Arkansas City; the Helena, Alpine, and Elk Mountain Toll road and the Alpine and Chalk Creek Turnpike, from St. Elmo; the Gunnison and Grand River Toll Road from the west—all chartered in 1879. By 1880 in-county road building reached its height, with toll roads running to all the major mining and ranching areas, and of course to the ends-of-track as the railroads approached the valley.

Of the 1880 influx, the earliest to dare the treacherous spring weather of the mountains were the prospectors. As soon as



Gunnison, photographed from Smelter Hill in 1881 or very early 1882, reveals at the left the old stone Masonic building, and just north of it the courthouse with its high board fence connecting it to the jail. Immediately west of the courthouse is the first Recorder's office (pictured separately elsewhere). Beyond this the Tabor House can be seen, farther west the Episcopal church and Pine Street school with the Terrace just north of it, and between the school and Terrace, but farther west, the Yule and Mullin Feed Barn (pictured elsewhere). West of these, slightly right-center of picture, the two-story Edgerton House obscures the early construction work on La Veta Hotel. On the edge of town the South Park roundhouse is easily visible. To the south of the Edgerton House, Dave Wood's freighting corrals and barns appear, surrounded by a tent village. D&RG engines send up smoke at the left. Photo courtesy Dr. Lois Borland.

Gunnison, looking east from the top of La Veta Hotel in 1882. The main avenue extending from left corner diagonally is New York, and the avenue a block north is Tomichi (Highway 50). Identifiable buildings include: lower left foreground Ferd Shaver's barber shop and near it the log cabin that is still a residence; center, left, the Burnett Iron Foundry, now the site of the Safeway store; just beyond it to the right, the Episcopal church and to its left, the Pine Street school; distant left, the Parks and Endner Planing Mill, the cupola-topped residence still in use at the corner of Spruce and Georgia, and opposite it the brick terrace. In the right half of the picture may be seen the Webster building (Gunnison Hotel), the First National Bank, the Tabor House (Palisades Hotel), Scott block on Tomichi, the stone hardware building on Main, and the Red Lion Inn on lower Main at extreme right. Visible beyond these are the courthouse, the top of the old Masonic building, the bell tower of the Colorado Street school, and the Moffet Smelter on the hill. Signal Peak and Tomichi Dome are the irregular protrusions on the skyline. Photo courtesy of B. H. Jorgensen.

they could force a way through the snow and mud, they came by every means at hand: on horseback or by wagon, often on foot, trailed by their jackasses—the euphonious Rocky Mountain canaries. Some carried their packs, being too low in fortune to afford even a burro, but all convinced they would "strike it rich" in the morning. They faced an April blizzard that year which was enough to discourage all but the most gold-fevered.

By the middle of May, tents sprawled on either side of the Gunnison—east and west—housing at least five hundred people, most of them men. It was a time when a loaf of home-baked bread, an ironed shirt, a fresh egg, a can of beans, commanded fabulous prices. The men cooked in the open before their tents, and slept to the accompaniment of braying jacks.

The newcomers learned all the tricks of survival, one of which was to build a fire in a sheltered bank, dig a hole when the ground thawed sufficiently, build another fire in the hole, and when it was burned down, bed down in the ashes.

The first Barlow and Sanderson stage rumbled into Gunnison streets in a cloud of dust June 11, 1880, the trip from Arkansas City marking the extension of a stage line that had pioneered from Missouri to Arizona. The four passengers that climbed down from the rough stage wagon must have been a bruised and begrimed lot. Even the later refinements in stagecoaching added little to passenger comfort. Travelers expected to be sandwiched in, bounced and jounced, wind-blown, alternately baked and frozen for hours on end. If these first passengers found less than ideal accommodations at the end of their long, hot journey, there is no evidence that any turned back from their adventures. Perhaps it was just that, as a later feminine arrival put it, they were all too battered to survive such a trip back and would have to await the extension of the railroad for a sane return. And the railroads—two of them—already had their rails pointed toward the Gunnison Country in this summer of 1880.

Richardson was indeed edified to see his valley blossoming with life, and energetically threw himself into as many enterprises as he had ideas—and those were numberless. He operated his coal banks at Mount Carbon, projected a terra cotta and brick plant; organized the Gunnison and Lost Canyon Toll Road and the Mount Carbon and Grand River Toll Road; and was connected with the Black Mesa road to the Uncompahgre. His Cebolla road to haul coal to Lake City, which he built for $2,000, he sold to Otto Mears for $1,000—a business deal altogether too typical of Richardson.

He spent months experimenting with soils in effort to make a good grade of cement, but about all he got for his pains was

the irreverent title of "Old Cement." He was equally unsuccessful in getting his valley soil to produce substances for a good grade of paint for his planned paint factory.

He owned a great number of city lots, and put up countless buildings—many in actuality, and many more in his dreams. He proposed to build an opera house or "I am going to build a bank on this corner," just as casually as most people would have said, "I think I'll have trout for dinner." Meanwhile, his stationery and drug store served the community in a variety of ways: as a church, law office, school, political and social gathering place.

When not pursuing another dream, he was writing for the local papers, corresponding for the Colorado *Farmer* or eastern newspapers, making speeches on any and all occasions, providing entertainment as speaker or musician for the West Gunnison Literary Society. His literary aspirations culminated in publication of the Gunnison *Sun*, the first issue of which appeared September 29, 1883, carrying in its prospectus the proposal to be "independent in all things, neutral in none." After a comparative short season—chiefly through the heated election campaign of sheriff-aspirant Doc Shores—the *Sun* set, after the manner, unfortunately, of most of the Professor's ventures. This continuing interest in things literary, however, brought Richardson some measure of happiness after he left the Gunnison Country to establish Richardson, Utah. There he married his second wife, Marian Muir, a writer and poet of no little ability, whom he had met through her contributions to the *Sun*. Although he died May 5, 1902, at Morrison, Colorado, his hopeful spirit pervades all record of early Gunnison history and breathes on the neck of succeeding generations of empire builders.

Incorporation of Gunnison City was completed March 1, 1880, and F.G. Kubler named first mayor. By June 5, the town had twenty-five business and professional men, and twenty-one buildings on the town site. The brick courthouse, still in use and much added-to, was erected that year. The Red Lion Inn, put up on lower Main Street by Joseph Adams in 1879, was joined by three more hostelries: the Tabor House, the Cuenin House, and the Gunnison House. The first sermon preached in town was given in the billiard hall of the unfinished Cuenin House in June, 1880, although church services of some sort had been held at Richardson's cabin in the summer of 1878 by the Rev. Gage of Pitkin.

The town was becoming civilized, for churches of many denominations were building that summer. The Rev. C. H. Koyle is credited with having established the Methodist church here. Richardson recalls that Koyle was a good fellow, willing to

sleep on the floor and cook out-of-doors—"a sky pilot of red blood." Koyle tried his first sermon out on Judge Patton on a hillside where they had gone to cut firewood. The Methodists used the Mullin House for services until completion of their church on the corner of Tomichi and the Boulevard, on the site now occupied by the Gunnison Locker Plant. It was the first structure in the town designed entirely for worship services. Its bell was rung for the first time on Christmas Day, 1880, by Annie Haigler (later Mrs. Alonzo Hartman), who had the most votes in a campaign to raise money for the church.

The Baptists, with the Rev. H. S. Westgate as pastor, held services in a law office in 1880. The Presbyterians, led by the Rev. A. L. Loder, a "reformed typo," met in a large tent on Main Street during the summer, and then worshipped in the Baptist Church when that edifice was completed in early 1881.

The Catholics were established by Easter Sunday, 1881, and the Congregationalists gathered in a building on Pine Street by November, 1882. The Episcopalians held their first services in the summer of 1880, with the Rev. J. F. Spalding, bishop of Colorado, officiating. The present stone church of the Church of the Good Samaritan was dedicated Christmas Day, 1882, by the Rev. Duck.

By July 10, 1880, the population of Richardson's little colony had grown to one thousand, and there was talk of vying for the designation of state capital. (In a vote taken the following year, only thirty-four local ballots were marked in favor of Gunnison as capital, compared with 2,408 against the choice.)

East River Valley above Almont is representative of the fine ranching area in the Gunnison Country. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library Western Collection.

West side of Main Street, north from Tomichi Avenue, about 1881. The cigar store and its adjacent Moses L. Bloch Dry Goods store near the corner of Virginia Avenue became the site of the First National Bank in 1882. The Bennett and Lowe meat market just beyond the Gunnison House probably became the J. D. Miller Market within the year.

Gunnison, looking northwest from La Veta Hotel in 1882, reveals the Dawson House, near left (later the Brunton place), the Ditto store and Ball residence immediate foreground facing south across New York Avenue. Twelfth Street and Tomichi Avenue intersect in mid-center of picture, with the 1882 Ohio Street school at the northern end of Twelfth. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library Western Collection.

The Spur of Destiny

Before all the high hopes of Richardson and the rest of the founding fathers could materialize, Gunnison needed the investors that came in the wake of prospectors. A sawmill on Lost Canyon, once a passable road was dug out, provided lumber at $60 to $65 a thousand for these enterprising men, and within three months, from May 15 to August 15, 1880, two hundred buildings went up. These included a grocery, hardware, clothing store, printing office, brewery, livery stable, schoolhouse, and—crowning glory of that first summer of building—the two-story Cuenin House on West New York and Tenth, with its twenty-three sleeping rooms, sample rooms, 100-person capacity dining room, billiard parlor, and a bar. If these buildings were not architectural beauties, they were, at least, more substantial than canvas, and gave an air of permanence to the wind-blown sagebrush flat where tents were still the predominant structures. The Gunnison *Review* of June 19, 1880, reports twenty hotels, restaurants, and boardinghouses, fifty-four unfinished buildings, and sixty-six business houses.

Gunnison's first bank, the Bank of Gunnison, was organized east of the range early in 1880, with a capital of $30,000. The board of directors consisted of H. A. W. Tabor of the First National Bank of Denver; Irving Howbert of the First National of Colorado Springs; George Fisk of the Bank of Leadville; S. G. Gill, and Alonzo Hartman. It was Gill's duty to shepherd the investment into the country, which he did by accompanying the safe, containing the bank's capital, on its long freight-wagon journey, from Alamosa. An oft-told story relates how he watched the precious safe on the loading platform for days before it was finally put aboard a freighter, and how, when refused passage on the freight wagon, he volunteered as wagon train flunky in order to bring the first bank safely to the region.

Within a year a second bank came into being, the Miners' Exchange. This, like the first one, was state-chartered. (It was a time when lax state banking laws allowed almost anyone with two-bits and "prospects" to start his own bank.) On May

East side of Main Street, taken in 1882, from the Red Lion Inn, shows the stone building still in use by the Gunnison Hardware, Murray's Saloon on the corner of Main and Tomichi (where Lallier Drug stands now), and the old Palisades Hotel farther up the street on the corner of Virginia and Main. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library Western Collection.

2, 1882, the Exchange became federal-chartered as the First National Bank; and on June 12, 1883, the old Bank of Gunnison secured a federal charter as the Iron National. The latter bought the stock and the name of the First National on December 8, 1884, and for more than thirty years remained the only bank in Gunnison. It celebrated its eighty-second birthday in 1964 with completion of a beautiful new building to replace the familiar red brick that had been a landmark on Main Street since 1882.

Colonel Jack Haverly, minstrel show king, got in on the ground floor of the Gunnison boom. He owned an interest in Gunnison's first newspaper, the Gunnison *News*, and invested $250,000 in the mines, $103,000 of it in the Bullion King at Irwin when it was an undeveloped hole in the ground. He

owned 2,000 town lots in Crested Butte, Irwin, and Gunnison; coal land in Washington Gulch; a dozen or so silver veins at Gothic; several ranches, and a sawmill. An inveterate gambler, it was said that he lost more money over the green cloth than he ever did in the mines.

If Haverly left no monuments, he did leave some interesting tall tales relative to his sojourn here. One concerns his walking up to a faro game the night of his arrival in Gunnison. "What's the limit?" he wanted to know. "The sky," carelessly responded the dealer, sizing Haverly up as a dude. When Haverly pulled a thick wad of bills from his pocket and started to peel off ten or so, the dealer gasped at the hundred-dollar notes and hastily backed down. "I meant our local sky. It's only twenty-five bucks high here!"

Colonel W. H. F. Hall—for both Haverly and Hall the title seems to have been an honorary one—settled in the valley in the fall of 1878 and subsequently amassed considerable wealth with investments in the region. He started the Gunnison *News* in April, 1880, but before the paper was really well under way it recorded, in its May 22 issue, the death of its founder.

The one thing the appearance of the *News* had done was to drive home to local promoters of the district the importance of a newspaper as an organ to secure further investments and expansion of capital in the area. It was fortunate, indeed, that on the death of Hall, a man of the calibre of E. A. Buck took over the fortunes of the paper, securing complete control from other partners, Haverly and C. S. Boucher, in February of 1881. Buck was an editor of New York *Spirit of the Times*, a man given to leading, not following—a reputation he sustained throughout his career in county affairs. In all the early journals, including those of his rivals, his name is mentioned with respect, evidence of local recognition of the vital part Eastern capital was playing in Gunnison County development.

Buck invested $150,000 in real estate and mines, and owned Boucher's Addition to the Town of Gunnison, where his enterprising spirit manifested itself in the setting out of 1,000 shade trees to relieve the barrenness that had given Gunnison the derisive title of "Sagebrush City." He built 250 miles of telephone line to the mining camps and to Leadville and Aspen, and proposed to build his own railroad line to his coal fields on Ohio Creek if the incoming railroads could not meet what he considered a reasonable rate. He spent little time in Gunnison, but the influence and effect of his dollars were everywhere visible. Following a visit here in 1881, he went to Europe in interests of the region, and his *News* bannered the country consistently. He donated the first church bell, endowed the E. A. Buck Hose Company, and offered help to

the bankrupt public schools in the spring of 1882. Buck's help in that direction was refused: the more charitable said the offer appeared as a loan, which the board was unable to see any way of repaying, but which would have been acceptable as a gift. More partisan opinion held that the offer had been refused because the board was Republican and Buck was a Democrat. To have accepted help was to admit their own inefficiency. Anyway, the school, built in 1881 at the corner of Tomichi and 8th—and still occupied eighty-three years later as a residence—was forced to close before the end of the year.

Buck's *News*, a seven-column folio published on Saturday, faced the ordinary vicissitudes of 1880 Gunnison, being printed at first in a two-room log cabin near the southeast corner of Main and Tomichi, opposite the Red Lion Inn. Parts of the roof were missing, and, on occasion, part of its walls when a runaway team took off a section of the front of the building. Within the year the *News* consolidated with the Gunnison *Democrat*, a five-column quarto which had made its appearance August 4, 1880, to become the *News-Democrat* under N. P. Babcock, Editor. Babcock, a long, lean individual, promptly dubbed "the tall darning needle" by Eugene Field of the Denver *Tribune*, was well able to hold his own against the vituperous attacks of his arch-rival, the Gunnison *Review*.

A month after the first edition of the *News*, the second newspaper in town, the *Review*, made its appearance, with Frank A. Root and H. C. Olney, owners. Root was editor, Olney being occupied with his Lake City *Silver World* and his position as Land Office Registrar.

Root, with his son Albert, a boy of fifteen, walked the seventy-five miles from Saguache to find that the type and material for the projected newspaper had been upset a time or two en route from Denver, and the whole pied lot had been dumped on the corner of Tenth and San Juan Avenue to await their arrival April 21. Since the *News* had made its debut just four days previously, it seemed imperative for the *Review* to lose no time in getting into the fray. A rude building was started in West Gunnison, with the floor laid first, the hand press and type cases installed, and the walls assembled around the plant. There was not a shingle in town, and—like the *News* office—its roof leaked in about fifty places. The compositors spent as much time waltzing back and forth to keep their materials out of the rain as they did actually setting type. The wide cracks in the floor might have been considered less than a handicap, for at least the water could run on through without being swept out.

The Edgerton House, built in 1881, and still used as the residence of pioneer Roger Teachout.

This residence at the corner of Spruce and Georgia was built no later than 1882 and is still in use.

East side of Main Street, taken in 1882 from the First National Bank, shows the Tabor House (later called the Palisades Hotel) on the corner, Vienna Bakery, and the two-story frame buildings now occupied by an antique shop and the Johnson Restaurant. The building with the front ornamented with the gable and circle design was the home of the *News-Champion* for more than fifty years. Extreme right Gunnison Hardware stone building is visible, and extreme left the old stone Masonic building in whose basement the pioneer Gunnison *News* was published in the 1880's.

Despite the rain, late spring snows, and strong winds whipping through the unchinked walls, the *Review* made an auspicious entry into the world at three o'clock Saturday afternoon, May 15. The first copy was auctioned off at the corner of New York and Tenth for $100, by none other than Sylvester Richardson himself, and the proceeds donated to the Methodist Church. Its backers were jubilant that the first copy had gone for almost twice that of the first issue of the *News*, which had brought only $56.

Other journals rose and fell during the succeeding boom days of the county—the *Free Press* on September 10, 1881: Richardson's *Sun*, September 29, 1883; the *Colorado Mining Journal*, September, 1884; Gunnison Weekly *Republican*, December 4, 1884. These either suspended or consolidated with the *News* or the *Review* within a very short time. The *Review* hyphenated with the *Free Press* as the *Review Press* the first of August, 1882. Both the *News-Democrat* and the *Review* had become dailies—the former in June, 1881, and the latter on October 11 of that year.

As the boom faded, they dropped back to tri-weeklies, then, by 1884, again to weeklies. For a time the *News-Democrat* suspended, to be revived shortly as the *News*.

During nearly ten years of their predominance in the field, these two rival publications—the *Review Press* and the *News-Democrat*—battled furiously on every issue. The story of their rivalry, as champions of East and West Gunnison, is epic in itself.

In 1891 the *Review Press* became the property of C. E. Adams, who changed its name to the *Tribune* and issued the first edition under that masthead on January 17, 1891. It ran until 1904 when Adams sold to Henry F. Lake, Jr., already owner and editor of the *News-Champion*, a hybrid of the *People's Champion* established in 1894 by George C. Rohde (sic), and the old *News*. On January 18, 1932, Lake's paper absorbed the Gunnison *Republican*, which had been started in 1902 by C. T. Sills.

The Gunnison *Echo* made its appearance in the early 1930's, later changed its name to the *Courier*, and is currently published with the *News-Champion*. The former comes out on Monday, and the latter on Thursday.

Youngest member of the newspaper brotherhood in Gunnison is the Gunnison County *Globe*, which issued its first paper on May 23, 1957. The Crested Butte *Chronicle*, begun in 1963 to boost that community as a winter report, is printed in the *Globe* office, but concerns itself only with news of that mountain town.

Known as the Lightley house, this residence was completed in the early 1880's.

Tomichi Avenue west from Main Street in 1881. The Methodist church can be seen in the distance, on the corner of the Boulevard. It was the first building for public worship in Gunnison.

Competition among the current publications is no less real than in the old days, but language is considerably toned down, and there is little resemblance to the early journalism that battled over every issue at hand.

All the county newspapers of the 1880's were united in one cause, however: to bring more and more capital to the country. Paramount was the need for a smelter to reduce the wagon-loads of ore streaming from the hills, so it was with rejoicing that Gunnisonites learned that E. R. Moffet of Joplin, Missouri, had decided to build a smelter in Gunnison. It was constructed on the hill north and east of the city—just above the present site of Western State College—and "blew in" December 16, 1882. Although it worked intermittently for a few years, no amount of promotion could disguise the fact that the process was not a paying one, and its abandonment in the mid-Eighties was a foregone conclusion. Later experiments with smelters—the Lawrence smelter a mile north of town, and the Lewis' Tomichi Valley Smelter—were equally discouraging.

Gunnison City was still riding the upswing of the boom in 1881, however. Dave Wood's large freight outfit was advertising service from his huge warehouse in Gunnison to Lake City, Capitol City, Delta, Montrose, Ouray, and all points south and west. Wood had 500 head of horses, oxen, and mules at work from his twelve-lot corrals on Tenth Street, and in one day handled as much as 500,000 pounds of freight—400,000 of it being ore and the other 100,000 supplies for the mines. He moved with the advance westward of the railroad, eventually moving himself out of a job. The Sanderson stage line fared no better, of course, with the last of its coaches leaving Gunnison August 22, 1882. The stage barn was torn down in December of 1884, and, along with two lonesome Concord coaches, shipped by rail to Montrose.

Wood and Sanderson might well foresee the end of their mule and horse-drawn services, but for other investors, Gunnison, in 1881, was still a wide-open field for acquisition of wealth. That year a German count and his countess financed the first oil drilling derrick in the valley. It was located about a mile northwest of the King Ranch on the Ohio Creek road to Irwin. If they found oil, newspaper records fail to disclose it. The possibilities of striking oil in this much-blessed country, engendered periodic spurts of optimism from those who felt that—with everything else Gunnison County had—she should surely have oil. In 1902 at least three organizations of county residents kept the idea alive; and twenty years later, local newspapers were still plugging the possibilities. Oil had been struck, presumably at 335 feet, on the Dollard ranch near Castleton in July, 1920. This proved a false alarm, and to

date Gunnisonites have had to content themselves with the hard-rock kind of gold.

But back in 1881 anything seemed possible. This was the year that John Lawson made the first cigar in the city, and that W. L. Clark took charge of a poor house to accommodate four patients—all middle-aged males.

In the fall W. B. Spencer advertised for fifty subscribers, at $80 a year and $10 initial fee, for a telephone system in Gunnison. By October 28, he had his quota of fifty signed up, and in November began setting up poles. The lines were not actually in service before the first of the year, 1882, with the first wire strung from the "central" office to the D&RG freight office in mid-January. By the end of the month the system was operating throughout the town.

Among the fifty first subscribers were Sheriff J. H. Bowman, Mayor F. G. Kubler, the Mullin House, Miners' Exchange Bank, *News-Democrat*, Parks and Endner Planing Mill, Yule and Mullin Livery Stable, Yard's Dance Hall, George Walsh Saloon, and Dave Wood's Freight office. J. A. Dofflemeyer was in charge of the first switchboard, and Jennie Pomeroy the first "hello girl." A switchboard 14 x 8 inches, with space for six signals, is in possession of the local office, and is believed to be that used for the Gunnison-Irwin connections late in 1882.

Although one-third of the businessmen had discarded the phone by June 15, 1883, as too costly, the system operated until late in 1885, at which time it was discontinued for a number of years.

East side of Main Street north from Tomichi gives a closer look at the Tabor House, the city well, Vienna Bakery, Conrad's (later the Murray) Saloon.

"The Mighty Hopes That Make Us Men"

The year 1882 proved to be the meridian year of Gunnison's boom, with the entry of St. Louis capital to give impetus to a number of projects. Benjamin B. Lewis was the moving spirit of the group of Missouri investors. Lewis, president of the Kansas City and Great Northern Railroads, was looking for a field in which to invest part of the immense fortune he had amassed in grain deals, when he heard of the Gunnison Country. Investigation inspired his determination to make Gunnison "the Pittsburgh of the West," aspirant to out-distance Denver.

By spring of 1882 Lewis and associates (J. W. Harrison of St. Louis; J. H. Shoonemaker and J. P. Gray of Pittsburgh) had acquired four hundred acres of iron fields and fifteen hundred acres of coal land in Gunnison County.

For several months Gunnison people heard rumors of a huge steel and iron foundry to rise in the valley. An editorial in the *Review Press* encouraged such hopes. "The location of iron and steel works at Gunnison has thrown a bomb shell into Denver's future which causes the greatest commotion ever experienced in the Queen City of the Plain." Local residents celebrated with bonfires and torchlight parades; lots rose from $100 to $400 in value. Unfortunately the celebration was a bit premature—the foundry never rose higher than its foundation.

Another project dear to the heart of promoters and public alike was the Gunnison Gas and Water Company organized in 1882, also backed by St. Louis money. D. J. McCanne, resident manager for the Lewis enterprises, was put in charge of a $200,000 plant to supply the town with gas and water. Prior to that time, early citizens had got their water in a variety of ways, and candles and the good old kerosene lamp had provided lighting. The first "water works" had consisted of a picturesque character named Dobe John, a flop-eared ox, a dilapidated sledge, and a barrel. With the barrel filled from the well in front of the Red Lion Inn, this nondescript outfit circulated about the streets of the town—such as they were in the winter of '79-'80—and supplied thirsty residents at a dollar a barrel. (One would guess that during those first summers of the town's existence, most of the bathing took

This 1882 picture of Pine Street from the lots south of Tomichi Avenue shows old Pine Street school, and across from it the Outcalt Brothers Stables.

South side of Tomichi Avenue from the corner of Tomichi and Iowa. The Purrier Hay, Feed & Coal business bears the date of 1883, and the Farm Machinery building, 1888. Three service stations now occupy the site shown here. Photo courtesy of Robert H. Walker.

place in the Tomichi River, and that in the winter, melted snow provided water.)

As the town settled down with more permanent dwellings and businesses, wells sprang up everywhere, two of them in the middle of Main Street where they were as yet no hazard to traffic. Mule teams and jack trains constituted the customary means of transportation, and wisely steered themselves around well sweeps.

With the planting of trees, irrigation water became a necessity, and the city financed the extension of the Hartman ditch, which took its supply from the Gunnison about eight miles from town. The ditch irrigated several hay meadows on its way down the valley, and it was necessary to hire a ditch tender for about $800 a year to keep the flow constant. This was the situation when B. W. Lewis became interested in the site of his "Second Pittsburgh."

Lewis promptly instructed McCanne to run some preliminary levels to see if it would be possible to develop adequate water power from the Gunnison River. The surveys showed that, by bringing the water down the valley to Smelter Hill, and dropping it to the level of Tomichi Creek, 500 horsepower could be expected. It was not until 1889, however, that McCanne was able to convince the city of the practicality of this venture, and then only after a Supreme Court ruling of 1886 declaring illegal some $305,000 in county warrants, had threatened financial disaster to town and county. The ditch was built for $1,000, the city council holding up payment until the canal was in operation, and this same ditch serves Gunnison streets today—cursed by some who insist that it breeds mosquitos, but ardently defended by those who appreciate the "country" town atmosphere engendered by clear running water along the broad, cottonwood-shaded streets.

McCanne's Gas and Water Company functioned more or less satisfactorily during the years before 1900 and the municipalizing of city utilities. Gas lines were laid early in '82, and in September of that year, Ed O'Geran lighted the first blue flame. On March 3, 1893, the town authorized the company to substitute electrical current for gas.

The summer of Gunnison's zenith, business lots were selling at $1,000 to $5,000, and residence lots from $100 to $500. The town was lively, indeed, and, said the *Review Press*, "It is impossible for a deaf man to miss the noon hour here. Electric fire alarm, a foundry, several planing mills, and saw mills whistles at 12:00." Six brickyards were going full blast, two daily newspapers served the area with wire-service from Denver and remote ends of the country, and even a street car company was organized. Plans were made

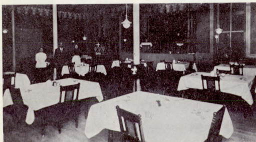
North side of Tomichi Avenue, east from Pine Street, in 1882. Two blocks east of Main Street Gunnison's only lynching took place, when a Negro was hanged from the Crooks Livery Stable sign. The place is now the site of the office of the ABC Motel.

Virginia Avenue west from Main Street in the fall of 1881. Pine Street school bell tower may be seen over the roof of the blacksmith shop. The narrow white-fronted building with the sign across the top is that of the *Free Press*. The two-story building at the right was Gustav Levi's store, and later became the Beibel saloon where Wyatt Earp presided over the faro table.

to run the lines from the South Park depot east along New York Avenue to Iowa, and then north to the courthouse. The Daily *Review Press* said, in its April 22, 1882, issue: "The Gunnison Street Railway which heretofore has existed only on paper, is now organized on a sound financial basis, and prepared to forthwith commence operations. It is now believed that the line will be built and in operation between the east and west ends before fall." The stockholders had met at Capt. Mullin's house to consolidate what had been two companies heretofore. The first line was planned to go from Main Street to Tenth on one of the principal avenues, yet to be selected.

The next mention of the street car venture appears in the April 24, 1883, issue of the *Review Press*. The newspaper reported a meeting of the Gunnison Consolidated Street Railway Company which had taken place the previous day. Thomas C. Brown is named as president; A. J. Bean, secretary; Sam G. Bill, treasurer; Brown, Gill, Marian S. Waller, Gustav Levi, and Joseph Cuenin, directors. They voted to begin work immediately, although their charter did not require them to do so before July, according to the *Review-Press*. Bean and Gill were commissioned to go to Denver to make arrangements for the material. Capital stock is listed as $50,000.

No further mention is made of the street car project, and it is doubtful that any track was ever laid, although there is some evidence that a block or two may have actually been graded and a few rails put down.



Dining Room of La Veta Hotel, scene of the Grand Opening banquet in 1884, and of many gala occasions from that date to its final closing in the early 1940's. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

Building LaVeta Hotel

"Too low they build who build below the skies."

Of all the projects of the St. Louis capitalists the most famous and enduring was La Veta Hotel, which was completed in 1884 at a cost in excess of $200,000. As early as September 1, 1881, there had been talk of a $75,000 hotel for West Gunnison, and a new $30,000 one for East Gunnison, both of which the *Review Press* believed were badly needed by growing Gunnison.

George Williard of Ironton, Ohio, first undertook the construction of a large hotel, and under his direction and that of Louden Mullin, West Gunnison investor and promoter, the basement was excavated and foundation walls begun in the spring of 1881, on South Boulevard and Gunnison Avenue. When Williard suffered financial reverses that forced him to withdraw from the project, B. W. Lewis took over in August, 1882. He organized the Lewis Hotel and Improvement Company, retaining the position of treasurer for himself, and promptly moved ahead with construction of the hotel.

By October the structure had risen 125 feet above the street, and by November 13, 1882, the Daily *Review Press* reported the brick work completed and only the roof needed to complete the enclosure. Interior work occupied the winter, with Parks and Endner contractors for the woodwork. Vaults for the office arrived April 1, 1883, and eighteen boxes, weighing 3,600 pounds, with $2,000 worth of locks, were in place by the end of April.

On May 10, 1883, D. C. McCanne reported that the building was completed except for a few inside furnishings, fixtures, etc., and that carpets were already being made up in St. Louis to fit each room. First lessee, Clark D. Frost, was so chagrined that the hotel was not open for the Fourth of July that he threw up his contract, and McCanne had to serve as manager when the hostelry finally opened in 1884.

Up to this point the Gunnison newspapers all referred to the new building as the Lewis House, but Mr. Lewis, according to McCanne, objected to the hotel's bearing his name. Since all the linens, rugs, draperies, silver, lobby chairs, etc. had

Gunnison's Main Street north from New York Avenue in 1881 shows on the near left the Red Lion Inn, with the Oyster Depot and Atlantic Gardens beer hall in that block. Across Tomichi on the left the Adams and Hartman buildings and the Gunnison House are identifiable. On the right are Brumfield's Gallery (the Gunnison Hardware stone building) and, a block up the street, the Tabor House. The well at the intersection of Virginia and Main is plainly visible.

already been marked L. H., it was necessary to find a name to fit the monogram. McCanne hit upon the happy thought of La Veta, having heard of La Veta Pass. La Veta, "the vein," seemed singularly appropriate for an enterprise designed for "carrying life to the great Gunnison Country."

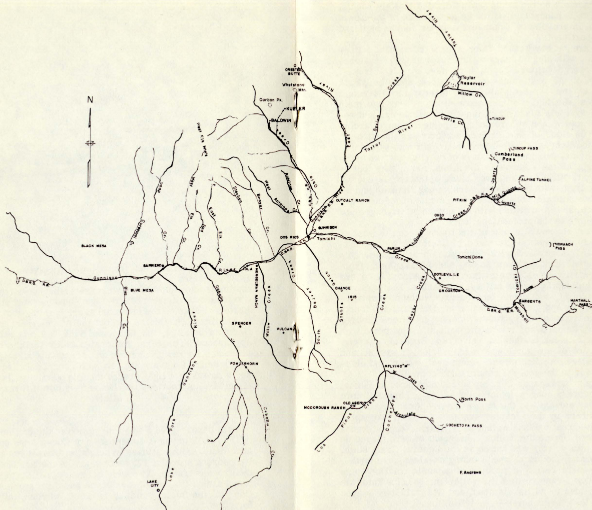
N. J. Bliss of Hannibal, Missouri, was engaged to assist McCanne. Bliss brought with him about twenty-five experienced hotel persons. Among them was a crew of Negro waiters, including a quartette of singers who entertained guests and visitors in the hotel parlors.

Although its Grand Opening was not celebrated until May 22, 1884, sleeping and dining accommodations were opened to the public April 15, and the billiard room and bar went into operation May 1, with "good music and free lunch."

Gunnison's Main Street from New York Avenue north in the 1930's retains a few familiar landmarks of the 1880's. On the immediate left the two-story frame that housed the Atlantic Gardens and adjacent "Red Light" businesses still stands. Across the street the stone hardware building looks much as it did in 1881. On the site of the Adams store, next to the Hartman building, the Gunnison Bank & Trust had made its appearance. The First National a block farther north still presented its red brick face, and across the street, the IOOF Hall loomed. Gone are the city wells and the Palisades Hotel, and a new traffic light graces the intersection of Tomichi and Main. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library Western Collection.

Local papers gave a full description of the edifice:

"The building is a combination of Queen Anne and modern architecture, four stories in height, with basement and garret. It covers a space of 125 feet square. A mansard roof covers the front entrance. Two wide balconies, built into the structure, extend in front of the second and third stories. In addition to the main building is an L kitchen, thirty feet by forty feet.


N
CRESTED BUTTE
Whetstone Mtn.
Carbon Pk.
KUBLER
BALDWIN
West Elk Mtns
BLACK MESA
SAPINERO
BLUE MESA
Gunnison
River
D.&R.G. R.R.
IOLA
DOS RIOS
GUNNISON
Tomichi
OUTCALT RANCH
SPENCER
VULCAN
POWDERHORN
LAKE CITY
Taylor River
Taylor Reservoir
Willow Cr.
Lottis Cr.
TINCUP
TINCUP PASS
Cumberland Pass
ALPINE TUNNEL
PITKIN
OHIO
PARLIN
Tomichi Dome
MONARCH PASS
DOYLEVILLE
CROOKTON
SARGENTS
MARSHALL PASS
CHANCE
IRIS
FLYING "M"
North Pass
OLD AGENCY
MCDONOUGH RANCH
COCHETOPA PASS
F. Andrews

"The basement on the Boulevard is divided into six rooms, one of which is handsomely fitted up as an office of the Lewis Hotel and Improvement Company; another is the bath and barber department.

"There are on the ground floor a bank containing a fire-proof vault, with elegant black walnut furniture; three store-rooms; a large billiard room, forty feet by fifty-six feet, having six of the best tables manufactured, and a bar, back of which is the largest plate glass mirror in Colorado; a gentlemen's reading room, separated from the two main entrances by plate glass partitions of novel design and remarkable beauty; and the rotunda, a perfect gem of architecture. The floor of this rotunda is forty feet by fifty-six feet, and the light is admitted from above through hammered glass skylights. The inside finish is of costliest native wood. To the right of the rotunda is the dining room, fifty feet by eighty feet, furnished with carved black walnut tables, chairs, and sideboards, with the most expensive gas fixtures and all modern conveniences. The kitchen is a model of neatness and convenience, and is provided with all inventions in ranges and utensils known to the professional cook.

"The main stairway is one of the finest pieces of work of the kind in the west. It is made of fine black walnut, ash, and oak, and is covered with corrugated brass plates. This stairway alone cost between $6,000 and $7,000. Aside from the three stairways is an elevator. On the second floor are about forty sleeping rooms and a large parlor. The parlor is richly furnished, and opens on a balcony which commands a view of the city and of the Elk Mountains. The third and fourth stories consist of sleeping rooms, making in all one hundred and seven. The halls and rooms throughout are carpeted with the best and latest designs of velvet and Brussels carpets. The furniture of the hotel was made exclusively for it, and has the letter L worked into it. Steam heat, water, and electric bells add to the general comfort and convenience."

An Eastern newspaper correspondent compared the hotel to a "peacock among a lot of mudhens"—a phrase "more striking than elegant" to the *Review Press* editor.

The furniture in the sleeping rooms was itself expensive and ornate—great oak and walnut beds, marble-topped stands and dressers. One suite, which subsequent owners played up for all it was worth, was known as the General Grant suite. As traditionally sound as the Washington-slept-here myths, the idea was in reality a product of a public relations pipe dream. When Grant visited the valley in 1880, La Veta was not yet an idea in Williard's head, and General Grant stayed at a much less lavish hotel—the Mullin House.

Skating rink east and south of La Veta Hotel provided fun for young and old in 1882. The unfinished La Veta Hotel dominates the background and dwarfs the nearer Edgerton House, which is still standing and is the home of old-timer Roger Teachout. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

The lobby of the La Veta Hotel during the proprietorship of the Joseph Howlands. The tall clock bearing a record of the infrequent sunless days in Gunnison stands directly behind Mrs. Howland. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

To the four hundred or more of "beauty and chivalry" who gathered May 22, 1884, for formal opening of the magnificent structure, the trials and tribulations of the valley's first colonists seemed far away indeed, and probably none but a local editor stopped to think that "Five years ago the Utes danced their war dances along the Gunnison, perhaps on the very site of the present La Veta."

The event of the formal Masonic-sponsored opening was heralded in the *Review Press* under a huge banner:

BANQUET AND BALL
Grand Formal Opening of Gunnison's Pride, the La Veta
The Beauty and Chivalry of the Western Slope Assembled
Why so Magnificent a Structure in This Mountain Fastness
Passing Pertinent, Pointed Personals on
Peculiar People Present

Beginning with the observation that "no social event ever occurred in Colorado that attracted so much attention as the banquet and ball given last night by the Masonic Fraternity of Gunnison in honor of the opening of the La Veta Hotel," the writer continues to give a full account of the building of La Veta, the detailed description rendered above, and a full report of the banquet program and appointments, followed by two columns devoted to the ball, describing in detail the apparel of the ladies and even the conduct of some of the dancers.

The huge dining room was decorated with flags and bunting and potted plants, and flowers and vines festooned the center columns. Negro waiters hovered over snowy tables gleaming with silver and fine china. The welcome speech by Dr. Norman Jennings and the response by District Judge M. B. Gerry, in all the flowery rhetoric of the day, were reported in full, but there were no "postprandial speeches" to mar enjoyment of an excellent meal.

Following the banquet, the tables were removed and dancing began. The "Programme" included the Grand March, quadrilles, lanciers, waltzes, schottisches, polkas, and galops. The women had preened for weeks, and their gowns—forty-six ladies' toilettes were described!—were elaborate concoctions of white dotted mull, grosgrain silk, silk brocade, lace, Indian Lawn, tarleton, velvet, satin, embroidered muslin, taffeta, cashmere, plush, Lousine silk in all colors of the rainbow—canary, heliotrope, pink, red, turquoise, violet, green.

"Old wedding suits came out strong" among the men, and boutonnieres were everywhere in evidence. "It makes some men very, very thirsty to dance a half hour," and "when

La Veta Hotel was Western Colorado's most pretentious hostelry when it opened in the spring of 1884. Its glories gone, it has been razed to the first floor, stripped of its portico, and reduced to a drab-faced "mud-hen." Photo courtesy of Gunnison Newspapers, Inc.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Howland's private dining room at La Veta Hotel. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

champagne foamed, temperance hung her head." One observer commented, "Dancing is sometimes called the 'graceful art.' From the movements of some it might well be called the 'lost art.'"

The party went on until dawn, and the newspaper spread was almost as long, proportionately: it occupied the entire front page and half the fourth, with a three-by-six cut of La Veta in the center of the front page.

Unfortunately this affair proved to be something of an anti-climax to Gunnison's boom, for ere La Veta opened, there were already empty business buildings in the town. Despite the *Review Press* boast that "Ambitious but jealous rival towns that have laughed at Gunnison as a sagebrush and sand patch will soon see the smoke and steam from numerous furnaces, manufactories, foundries, etc., rising about us," a decline of interest in the region had set in.

Joe Cuenin took over La Veta June 1, and, in an effort to spur business, inaugurated free hack service from the uptown district for breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner. Rumors persisted that Lewis was in financial difficulty, and when fall came the hotel closed for the winter. It re-opened April 2, 1885, with R. Olney as the new landlord, but October 15, the *Review Press* announced that it had closed for the winter. It seems apparent, however, from a news item dated December 17 of that year, that portions of the hotel were opened for use, since a masquerade ball was to be held there on New Year's Eve.

On March 2, 1889, the *Review Press* announced that La Veta would shortly be sold under a deed of trust, and from that day forward, the hotel passed through a succession of ownerships. In 1890 the *Solid Muldoon* of Ouray was advising passengers to eat on the train because La Veta food was "poor."

In 1912 Manager Joseph Howland inaugurated the policy of serving free meals to guests on any day the sun failed to shine in Gunnison. A record was kept on the big lobby clock, and up to the time of its final closing, free meals had been served only about twenty times—a circumstance that rated the hotel's appearance in Ripley's "Believe It or Not" cartoon.

On September 21, 1943, this remnant of Gunnison's glorious heydey went on the block at a sheriff's sale. Mortgagee J. H. Sanders was the only bidder, bidding the $200,000 edifice in at the figure of the judgment, $8,350. The hotel was subsequently sold and wrecked down to its basement section, which today houses several residence apartments and business firms.

Murder, Mayhem and Mirth

"By struggling with misfortunes, we are sure to receive some wounds in the conflict."

Gunnison's founder, Sylvester Richardson, did not live to see La Veta—crowning glory of boom days—come down to the "mud hen" category, but he must have seen some other highly displeasing things in his Gunnison of the 1880's. By that time the town was thronged with some 5,000 residents, with at least an equal number in the dozens of mining camps within the vicinity.

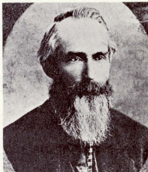
The town was as wide open as any frontier town, with saloons far outnumbering other businesses. "Six females of doubtful virtue arrived in the city last Thursday," reported the *Review Press*, and the Red Light Dance Hall, Fat Jack's Amusement Palace guaranteeing "sacred music to dance to on Sunday evenings," and the Atlantic Gardens with drinks and free lunch at midnight were only a few of the houses of entertainment advertised in pages of the newspaper.

While the first killing reported in the brand-new *Review* on May 9, 1880, occurred at Ohio City when two men "shot it out," subsequent issues revealed that Gunnison itself was not long in catching up. No edition was without report of some sort of crime, from simple robbery to murder. Jake Smith and Frank Lewis "shot up the town" in true Hollywood style in September, 1881, wounding only one unlucky bystander. The men fled to Barnum (Powderhorn), and apparently were exonerated of any criminal intent since they were drunk at the time.

At the Henry Anderson saloon on the corner of Tomichi and Wisconsin, Charlie Wood refused to pay for his drinks, backing up his refusal with a large knife. Anderson struck him over the left ear with a beer bottle. Wood was, according to the paper, "not expected to live and Anderson is in jail." Wood died, but Anderson went back to running his saloon.

Two laundrymen assaulted a Chinese competitor, and a mob tried to lynch the victim. Sheriff Yule intervened and prevented

A happy pioneer citizen—one of a group of Swiss - French early colonists — posed for this photo of his winter transportation at the intersection of Main and Georgia. Right background is the Colorado Street School (1882), and the Sylvia Carroll residence just north of the courthouse. Photo courtesy of Robert H. Walker.



Sylvester Richardson

Pioneer restlessness led him to found the Gunnison Colony, and launch the settlement of the Gunnison Valley in the early 1870's. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

Dobe John and his ox supplied thirsty residents with drinking water from the well in front of the Red Lion Inn during the winter of 1879-1880. Photo courtesy of Gunnison Newspapers, Inc.

the disgrace, but the Chinaman left town as soon as he was able to travel.

Another attempt at lynching was more successful when a group of masked men took an Italian laborer, accused of murdering his D&RG boss, from temporary quarters in the courtroom at the new courthouse. The poor fellow probably died of fright and choking as they dragged him along Iowa Street, but the mob hanged him for good measure. He was suspended from the Crooks' Livery Stable sign on Tomichi, now the site of the ABC Motel.

Obviously Gunnison needed a better jail, and one to house a hundred prisoners was begun that fall and completed in January of 1882. Prisoners were transferred to the new quarters on January 14, and recently-elected Sheriff J. H. Bowman prepared to occupy the apartment on the second floor. (This jail stood until 1942, when it was razed to make way for a new one. It could have at no time held one hundred persons, unless, of course, they all stood up during their confinement. The brick for the new jail came from Gunnison's West Town schoolhouse—later the county hospital—constructed in 1882.)

Most murder trials culminated in hung juries or acquittals on the pleas of "self-defense" or "I-was-drunk-when-I-did-it." Gunnison's only legal execution took place in December of 1881. Thomas Coleman, a Negro, was strung up on an especially-built scaffold near the south wall of the courthouse. A high board fence was constructed to bar the deed from public view, but many of the curious swarmed to the roof of the Masonic building across the street, into nearby trees, or top of the courthouse to partake of the entertainment.

Since it was late December and the ground was frozen, there was some delay in preparing a grave for the fellow, and the *Review*, with its customary frankness, reported on December 24 that Coleman's beard had grown a half inch since he was hanged the previous Friday. Youngsters of the town dared each other to go into the building where he lay, feeling that touching him was some sort of proof of courage.

By 1883 Gunnison district court had four murder trials on the docket at one sitting: La Tourette from Tin Cup, McBratney from Irwin, and McLees and Yard from Gunnison.

McLees, while serving as a policeman in 1881, shot Cal Hayes in Hayes' saloon. First trial in November, 1882, resulted in a hung jury and the second in '83 in acquittal.

The Walsh-Yard fracas grew out of a conflict over a dance hall girl. Walsh was the proprietor of the Bank Saloon on the west side of Main Street a couple of blocks north of Tomichi Avenue. Yard had come to town in '82, opening a blacksmith shop and soon thereafter the Palace Dance Hall. He was a

man of six feet, thin-faced, with hair a trifle longer than the average man, and looked to be "a gent whom it was not safe to monkey with."

Despite Yard's appearance as a pretty cool customer, Walsh persisted in his attentions to Viola. The two men finally met in the Globe theatre on upper Main Street in November, 1882. One word led to another until Yard struck Walsh in the face with his fist. Walsh drew his gun on Yard, but Yard dodged and ran from the room. In a few minutes a bombardment of shots resounded on Main Street. Walsh dropped dead, Yard was arrested and promptly posted bond for $10,000. His first trial ended in a hung jury, and his second, in 1884, acquittal. After all, some fifteen or twenty shots had been fired from at least two guns, and no one could ever be sure just which one struck Walsh. Perhaps some of the scores of street loungers added a few shots to the evening air, just on general principles.

It was expensive—and usually futile—to try the accused. Ben Smith was acquitted of the Stahl murder, says the daily and "after all the expense of finding him and bringing him back from the mid-West!" The newspaper moaned in its July 5, 1882, issue that it had already cost the county $4,000 to prosecute McBratney for the shooting of Tom Casey on Indian Reservation land near Irwin two years before. The case had been remanded to Gunnison County for trial that summer. McBratney was, however, one of the few convicted.

Alfred Packer, who had been sentenced to hang in district court at Lake City in April, 1883, for murdering and eating his companions near Lake City in the winter of 1874, was given a new trial in 1886. After legal battles involving a Supreme Court ruling that Colorado, through a legislative oversight, had no law covering murder during the time of Packer's offense, the case came up at Gunnison on a change of venue from Hinsdale County. A month after the verdict at Lake City, Packer was still in custody and lambasting the Gunnison newspapers for what he felt was unfair treatment. "I am not hung yet, by a damn sight," he told. *Review-Press* interviewer May 19, 1883. In reference to *News-Democrat* articles on his first trial, Packer further declared, "When they see me they won't act so brave.... Now, here is this editor of the *News-Democrat* in this town. He was very bold at first, but he wilted when I met him."

By the time Packer reached re-trial in 1886, he was enjoying his publicity immensely, making horsehair watch fobs and chains for the youngsters who visited with him through his cell windows, and proudly having his picture taken at Dean's Photograph Studio. The trial in August, 1886, took less than a week, and resulted in a life sentence.

The local newspapers were waging, in 1884, a campaign to clean up the city, declaring that "the city is very lax in law enforcement and shootings have become entirely too frequent." (Nothing was said of the fact that in a recent assault case, the jury had been out only ten minutes before convicting the defendant.) Robberies were frequent, and it was hazardous to walk from Main Street to La Veta Hotel at night. Even hacks were sometimes stopped by these city highwaymen, and more than one visiting miner with his "dust" was relieved of his poke, especially if he imbibed too freely at the ubiquitous saloon. Rolling a drunk became a common practice, and even those who were not so drunk were occasionally "rolled" en route from the saloon to hotel room.

The victims could little appreciate the "Western flavor" of these little pranks, but they all enjoyed some of the odd characters that appeared on the city streets from time to time. Among these was Aaron Dubar, better known as "Cochetopa Shorty." Dubar drew some sort of government pension, and when he came to town once a month to get his mail, he usually cashed it and went on a drinking spree. If the city officials didn't catch up with him, he could be seen rambling homeward, balancing precariously on the seat of his spring wagon, a jug on the seat beside him (or even hooked on a finger en route to his mouth), and a song on his lips. Sometimes the kids had swapped a front and rear wheel of the wagon to give his vehicle a rollicking movement, but Shorty never minded. He just showed up the next month to get his check and indulge in another spree.

When the city needed some work done on its streets, the *Review Press* might report such an item as this of June 7, 1883:

"The great Cochetopa prospector has been in town several days and is now a guest of the city. He was prospecting on the Virginia Avenue rock pile this morning, a member of the chain gang, and from the way he was putting in the heavy licks, we wondered if he had not struck it rich."

Perhaps Dubar made some improvement, however, for the *Review Press* reported March 21, 1885:

"The Cochetopa waltz was successfully performed today by Marshal Harper. He took the 'Emperor' in charge and waltzed him to the cooler. The last time was seven months ago."

Ellen E. Jack provided local residents with some hilarious moments in those early days, also, although they dared not laugh openly. Mrs. Jack, more often called "Captain Jack," owned an interest in a number of mines and ran a boarding-house about where the Mobil station stands on Tomichi and Iowa. She could out-swear and out-shoot most of her male associates.

Alva Adams, who was later to be governor of the state, is credited with preserving this tale of her abilities. It seems he was a passenger with Mrs. Jack on a stagecoach bound for Gunnison, where he intended to open a hardware store. In two valises at his feet was his entire stock of goods, part of it guns and ammunition. When the stage was stopped by suspicious-looking characters, the occupants of the coach quickly armed themselves from the contents of the bags, and Mrs. Jack shot it out along with the men, only with better aim.

Sisters-under-the-skin (but from considerably "better" element of the town) were the two women who tangled over the chickens of the one eating the garden of the other. The latter was hailed into court, charged with hitting her neighbor over the head with a hoe.

By 1899 the men complained of women entering the saloons, and the city marshal was instructed to put a stop to this.

The story of Gunnison's wild days had a few brighter elements. When Sheriff Bowman was reported killed by a horse thief he was pursuing near Ouray, in April, 1882, a large posse, with a wagon and rough-box for the corpse, set out to avenge his death and bring him home. Happily they met the sheriff returning, successful and very much alive.

Despite the peace campaign of the newspaper, killings continued to occur frequently throughout the 1880's, but were more widely spaced by 1889 when an irate husband carved up a homewrecker and was commended by the newspaper for having done so.

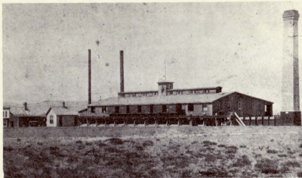
Population of the city declined to 1200 in 1900 and to 1026 in 1910, but life was never dull, and there continued to be occasional shootings after the turn of the century. Tom Tresize killed John Poos in 1903; George Crawford shot Ed Cornforth in 1923; and as late as 1963 Gunnison had its barroom shooting. Justice has proved less swift but more certain as the years have advanced.

Graver threat to Gunnison's survival than the "odd balls" or the boys—or girls—with itchy trigger finger, was fire, the bugaboo of every hastily-constructed town; and early Gunnison knew its share of disaster. What the *Review* called the "first big scorch" in Gunnison destroyed five buildings on Main Street in June, 1881. The blaze started from the bursting of a lamp used to heat coffee in the Delmonico Restaurant, and spread to the two-story Biebel building and to Joe Woodward's shoe shop. Everything between the Red Lion Inn on South Main and Owen's Saloon on the corner of Tomichi and Main went up in flames. The rest of the block was saved by buckets of water dipped from the ditch. The fire occasioned an editorial blast from the paper to the effect that

Second home of the Gunnison *Review*, on the north side of New York Avenue, between Eleventh and Tenth Streets. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

First home of the Gunnison *Review*, on the corner of San Juan and Tenth, showing buildings added toward New York May, 1880. Photo courtesy of Library, State Historical Society of Colorado.

Captain John W. Gunnison led the first wagon train, a surveying outfit, through the Gunnison Valley in 1853, giving his name to valley, river, and town.



This Tomichi Valley Smelter was located a little southwest of La Veta Hotel in 1884-86, and was only one of the many B.W. Lewis Company enterprises in the region. Photo courtesy Dr. Lois Borland.

All that remains of the Tomichi Valley Smelter is this huge clinker, dubbed "tar rock" by the younger generation of recent years. The boys found masses of tar clinging to the rock, and pulled off chunks to chew with great gusto. Photo by C. E. Hagie, courtesy Library, State Historical Society of Colorado.

The Cuenin (later the Mullin House) occupied the northwest corner of New York and Tenth. Highway Fifty now crosses the lots on which it stood. Here General Grant and his son stayed in 1880. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

"the lesson is worth ten times what it cost if it will arouse property owners to secure an efficient fire department."

Several fire hose companies were organized thereafter, but Gunnison continued to have its periodic blaze for some time: Lindauer's wholesale and retail liquor store worth $15,000, on Main and Tomichi in 1884; the Guthiel brewery and residence in 1887.

Gunnison's worst holocaust came in 1902. At six o'clock on Easter Sunday morning, bells and firearms aroused citizens from their beds. The fire had started in the Nestor Saloon and spread to envelop more than a quarter of the block in the heart of the business district. Walker's Meat Market and Weinberger's Cigar Store were swept away; the Latimer & Allen store, Anderson Barber Shop, Schmitz Tailor Shop, and Latimer Hall were damaged by smoke and water. A blaze in the same place on Easter a year before had been spotted and stopped, and the defective flue presumably repaired.

A second fire in the heart of the town occurred just across the street in March, 1905, burned the upper story of the Palisades (the old Tabor) Hotel, and did much damage to the lower floor on which the post office and Gunnison *Republican* newspaper plant were situated. A second fire at the hotel July 17 of that year finished the destruction, and the remaining stone walls were torn down to leave an unsightly hole on Gunnison's Main Street for nearly fifty years. A brick office building was finally constructed on the site in 1952. A libel suit over a newspaper headline, "Insurance the Incentive," resulted in a hung jury.

Main Street's most recent loss from flames occurred on Christmas Night, 1962, when the Allen Shoe Shop and Smitty's Barber Shop, in the middle of the block just north of Tomichi, burned. Despite the below-zero temperatures that plagued the volunteer fighters, neighboring stores were saved. Obviously the less-incendiary building materials and better equipment of 1962 were a far cry from the primitive bucket brigades of the 1880's.

Gunnison had been in great haste to build, but by the mid-Eighties, the "boom" element of her growth had disappeared, and threat of fire was only one of the many problems facing the city. Curtailment of the boom was a result of several forces: failure of a number of efforts to smelter out the ores satisfactorily, poor transportation facilities from the mining camps, and general depression throughout the country. There was no spectacular "bust," for the area's economy was based on prospering ranches as well as mines, but population began to decline.

Nevertheless, the city headed into the second half of its first decade with an interesting assortment of business and professional services, among them one dentist, five doctors, nineteen lawyers, seven hotels, two gunshops, three bakeries, five restaurants, five feed stables, four drug stores, three breweries, four dry goods stores, four brick yards, three millinery stores, four blacksmith shops, four meat markets, a bank, a greenhouse, an opera house, and seventeen saloons. (Almost one lawyer per saloon.) There were six churches—one Catholic and five Protestant—a WCTU, one teacher each of Spanish and German, two daily and three weekly newspapers, three brick schoolhouses—one on Twelfth, one on Colorado, and one on Pine Street—and a great deal of optimism still evident.

First courthouse in Gunnison consisted of this Recorder's office photographed June 21, 1880. Officials, left to right, are J. R. Hinkle, Deputy Recorder; Ed Mitchell (from the Cochetopa); Misses Field and Schooley; Mr. Bowler; Miss Annie Haigler (later Mrs. Hartman); S. B. Harvey, County Clerk and Recorder; W. T. Clark, Deputy; H. L. Rose. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Sullivan.

Gunnison County Courthouse in 1881 formed the nucleus for the present building which consists of this section and a number of wings added at various periods of growth, the most recent in 1958-59. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library WesternCollection.

Courthouse Gang in August 1881. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library WesternCollection.

This dirt-roofed log shack is said to be the Richardson cabin, first dwelling within the present city limits, and is labeled "1877." Richardson complained, in 1880, that it had been stolen and moved to a nearby ranch.

The Gunnison Brewery and Beer Hall was the most imposing building in the block on the west side of Main between Virginia and Georgia in 1880. The three-story building (GunnisonHotel) would appear at the right within a year. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library Western Collection.

In 1931 this was all that remained of the 50x60-foot Yule and Mullin livery barn, built in 1880 at New York and Fourteenth. It was removed shortly after this picture was taken by C.E. Hagie. Photo courtesy Library, State Historical Society of Colorado.

The Church of the Good Samaritan, Episcopal, dedicated Christmas Day 1882, is the only one of the early church edifices still standing and in use by its congregation. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library Western Collection.

First National Bank constructed in 1882, and replaced by a modern building in 1964, stands on the northwest corner of Main and Virginia. Just north of it is the old gambling house. Wyatt Earp ran the faro game in the early eighties. Center of the block the Gunnison Brewery, and north of that looms the Webster building (now the Gunnison Hotel). Photo courtesy Library, State Historical Society of Colorado.

Southwest corner of Main and Virginia the day of the Easter Morning fire of 1902. Eight business buildings were destroyed in the blaze. Photo courtesy Denver Public Library Western Collection.

Palisades Hotel (Tabor House) fire in 1905 left a pile of rubble on the southeast corner of Main and Virginia. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library Western Collection.

Rivalry of the Rails

"Their hearts, contemptuous of death, shall dare
His roads between the thunder and the sun."

Irrevocably tied with the development of the Gunnison Valley were the two narrow-gauge steam-driven railroads that began building to the scene as soon as the mines at Leadville and in the Elk Mountains attracted attention. The Denver and Rio Grande, with General William J. Palmer, at its head, had reached Canon City in 1874; the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe had built from Pueblo to Santa Fe in 1876. Both roads waited further developments over the range.

In 1878 the Santa Fe made the first move, a grading from Pueblo to Canon City. Although the D&RG had run some preliminary surveys west along the Arkansas River to Arkansas City (Salida) as early as 1871-72, no further work had been done. The Rio Grande took up the gauntlet, and there ensued for more than two years the titanic struggle for the Royal Gorge—a struggle which, though fascinating in detail, is no part of the Gunnison story except in its outcome.

Early in 1880, a compromise, entailing a large sum of money, gave the Gorge and the unfinished roadbed to Palmer and his Rio Grande. Palmer readily recognized that "the contest for the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas was in reality a fight for the gateway, not to Leadville only, but to the far more important, infinitely larger, mineral fields of the Gunnison country, the Blue and Eagle Rivers, and Utah."

Meanwhile the Denver and South Park had started a line from Denver in answer to the wild clamor of the swelling tide of miners and businessmen for "the steam cars" to carry their supplies and ore. To a committee from the mining area, sent to argue their need before several of the leading companies, President John Evans had written that there was no probability that any other line would be built except the South Park, and it was a serious question yet as to whether or not any railroad could be constructed over the range. The South Park and the Rio Grande at the time had an agreement for common

track over the Chalk Creek route to Buena Vista and Leadville. Actually, the South Park had already contracted for the route into Pitkin, and engineers were making final surveys to bring the rails into Gunnison as soon as men and money could build it there.

This was the situation that prevailed when the D&RG and the Santa Fe reached their agreement over the Gorge in February, 1880. A month later occurred the rupture in the Gunnison Town Company, which led to the establishing of two separate divisions, East and West Gunnison. Quick to seize the apparent advantage offered by a line already building into Gunnison, the West Towners went all out to bring the South Park to the West side. Richardson and Mullin engineered the purchase of a thousand acres of land in this section to be used for town and railroad purposes, as an inducement to the South Park.

On June 29, 1880, the contract was let for building of the depot at the corner of New York and Ninth. The West Towners were wild with delight, a rejoicing that was soon shared by their rivals, the East Towners, when it was learned that Palmer's D&RG would also build into Gunnison. The contract between the South Park and the Rio Grande was annulled by D&RG victory over the Santa Fe at the Royal Gorge, and there was nothing but the usual road-building hazard to prevent Palmer's road from coming on into Gunnison if it so wished.

Two routes were considered by Palmer: over Monarch Pass or over Marshall Pass. Final location survey of the line over Marshall started about the first of June, 1880, and in September the contract was let for completion of the track into Gunnison. All former amnesty between the two roads was forgotten, and the race was on.

The South Park had the advantage of time and distance, but it had chosen a much more difficult terrain for its route over Altman Pass. While yet in agreement with the Rio Grande over the subsequent use of the route, its engineers decided to bore through the Divide, and the work began in January, 1880, just previous to the settling of the dispute between the Rio Grande and the Santa Fe.

Crews began on each side of the mountain, expecting to complete the near-1800-foot tunnel by late spring or early summer, and to have the "iron horse snorting at our door" by November. But the planners had not figured on the severity of Colorado winters at the 11,500-foot altitude. In addition to the thin air and intense cold that slowed the men down, the snow piled so high that merely clearing the way so men could go to work cost the South Park an estimated $75 a day. The

Interior of the South Park's Alpine tunnel, photographed in 1962. Eighty years after its construction, the redwood timbering still glistens solidly above the old rails. Much of the roadbed is under water, but in this stretch the rails are still above the water line. Photo courtesy of J. L. McClelland.

western approach to the tunnel was entirely blocked most of the winter, and often laborers had to get to their work via shafts in the mountain. During some of the heavy storms, the men had to move in linked lines from work to their cabins to keep from getting lost in the blizzards that swept the high range. Frequently their clothes were frozen before they could reach a place of shelter.

Such adverse working conditions made steady help almost unprocurable. Very few men worked more than a month. Of ten thousand workmen who came, given free transportation by the Union Pacific, few stayed more than two days. Effort was made to keep crews of 200 to 300 working daily, but on several occasions almost the whole force quit. Only the relatively high wage induced some to endure the cold and wind and to stay through winter months, and work never stopped altogether.

The tunnel, 16-1/2 feet high, and 16 feet wide, was to be arched and timbered with California redwood, some 460,000 board feet being brought from the coast at a cost of $80 to $110 per thousand. About a million and a half board feet of false timbering would be required. The tunnelers encountered almost solid rock, and three streams of water seeping in the bore had to be sealed off or drained.

With such monumental difficulties of terrain and weather, it is a miracle that the bore was ever completed. Although the tunnel entrances were on a curve, so accurate was the engineering that when the first breakthrough came at 8:30 a.m., July 26, 1881, the headings came together within 11/100ths of a foot; the distance within was within 7/100th of a foot; and the level within was within 94/1000th of a foot.

On this momentous day, the South Park rail head just reached Hancock on the east side of the pass, but the Rio Grande, building over the lower Marshall Pass, had steamed into Sargents, only thirty miles from Gunnison, having topped the pass June 21, 1881.

The Rio Grande had not found it easy going over Otto Mears' old toll road route on Marshall. The principal headache was labor. "Since November, 1879, there has been an average of at least one thousand laborers per month shipped from Denver and Pueblo to the various grading camps. In addition to this our company has advanced the fares of two hundred men brought from Canada, two hundred fifty from St. Louis, three hundred from Chicago, one thousand from Kansas.... In nearly all cases the men deserted; many went to the mines, a few returned to their homes, and the Lord probably knows where the rest are." The men could see little in the thousand-foot difference in elevation of the two passes to distinguish between the cold and snow of Marshall or that of Alpine.

By July 31, 1881, the Rio Grande had reached Parlin, and for the week remaining, crowds came out from town to watch the shining rails go down. Those who could not come, listened for the shrill whistle of the work train and tried to guess at just what point in the Tomichi Valley the iron horse had neighed.

On Saturday, August 6, the track was laid across Main Street. No Gunnison Sunday before or since ever saw such an army of workmen as swarmed to put down the side tracks, switches, and the Y, to run the Crested Butte branch line north from Bidwell as far as Virginia Avenue that day. At least a quarter of a mile of construction and flat cars, loaded with rails, spikes, fish-plates, frogs, and switches, extended on the main track. Two monster engines, the Pacific Slope and the Grand Canyon—first locomotives in the Gunnison Valley—hooted and puffed. Rumors flew that a passenger train would arrive at two o'clock in the afternoon, and nearly the entire population of the city, East and West portions alike, gathered at the bottom of Main Street to witness the event. The train did not arrive, but the excitement of the day kept the crowds circulating until far into the night. Sidewalks were a solid mass of moving humanity; hotels were jammed with out-of-towners in from the mining camps for the celebration; restaurants, saloons, and gambling houses were riotous with excitement. Monday morning, August 8, when the first passenger arrived—an engine, tender, two coal cars, baggage car, and two coaches, the Albuquerque and the Saguache, made up at Sargents and carrying ten or twelve passengers—too many Gunnisonites were sleeping off aching heads to notice its quiet arrival. At 11:30 the first train out of Gunnison departed for Denver, and that afternoon a special arrived, bringing the Rio Grande officials to dicker for a site for a depot. They had been unable to come to terms with Mullin of West Gunnison for a depot on the Boulevard because Mullin had demanded what they considered an enormous sum for the property. (That spring Mullin and Williard had started excavation for La Veta Hotel on the site the Rio Grande wanted.) The railroad settled for a spot at Fourteenth and Bidwell. As soon as La Veta was completed, however, the Rio Grande moved its depot into the south end of the building, where it remained until 1929, when it constructed a new building at the bottom of Main Street on Bidwell Avenue.

By fall, 1881, the line had been completed northward to Crested Butte and its rich coal fields, and from thence spurs to Floresta, to Irwin, and up Washington Gulch to Pittsburg. The road extended to Sapinero in 1881 also, but the line to Lake City up the Lake Fork was not built until 1889.

That everybody was not happy by the extension of the railroad is evidenced by this story of August Mergelman, who resisted efforts of the D&RG to buy right of way through his ranch at Iola. When the railroad finally secured an injunction forcing him to let the crews build through his property, Mergelman turned a mean bull into the field. The bull treed the men, and when they asked the rancher for help, he is said to have replied, "Show your papers to the bull."

The South Park, meanwhile, continued timbering the Alpine Tunnel, which it completed December 1, 1881—nearly four months after the first Rio Grande locomotive had steamed into Gunnison. It was September 1, 1882, before the rails reached the city limits of Gunnison. Two hundred six passengers boarded the cars at 6:15 a.m., Sunday, September 3, for a daylight run to Denver, reaching that city at 8:00 that evening. It was necessary for the passengers to get on the train at Main Street, for the frogs at the crossing of the D&RG tracks were not put down until two days later. On Thursday, September 6, Ticket Agent Henry Ames was dispensing tickets from the depot on Ninth Street, instead of from his temporary quarters in the basement of the Tabor House. Henceforth the regular daily runs of the South Park were established to and from that point.

While the second-run railroad had slipped into town without the fanfare associated with the imminent arrival of the D&RG the year before, nevertheless, the townspeople were jubilant to realize that Gunnison had not one, but two railroads. The possibilities seemed limitless, with competing lines for freight and ore hauling.

On the evening of September 5, the citizens staged a mammoth rally in honor of South Park officials. The *Review Press* reported a generous supply of cigars, beer, and powder on hand for the occasion, and "buildings in the neighborhood were draped in flags. A rope was stretched across New York Avenue.... Early in the evening a bonfire was built in the middle of the street... a temporary bar on the north side.... There appeared to be something wrong with the powder or those who attempted to fire it, for the next forty or fifty trials resulted in total failures. Giant powder was next secured, and with this, reports loud enough for the purposes, announced to the city that the celebration had opened."

There were the usual oratorical accompaniments—nine in number—the briefest being that of Mayor Moses, who said, "Boys, I'm not much of a speechmaker, but if you'll follow me, I'll set 'em up."

The South Park officials still had large plans for expansion northward and westward—this despite the fact that by the

time their trains had reached Gunnison, the D&RG had already sent its first train through the Black Canyon. The South Park contented itself, however, with building no farther than seventeen to twenty miles north to Baldwin and the Kubler coal fields.

Told the Black Canyon was impassable—just as the Indians had told Captain Gunnison nearly thirty years before—General Palmer had, in January 1881, started surveys, lowering his men into the gorge by means of ropes and scaling ladders. Actual construction of the roadbed was begun in the summer of that year, and completed at the cost of $165,000 per mile.

Construction had been almost as difficult as blasting out of the Alpine Tunnel had been for the South Park, and sometimes almost as cold. During the winter days there were stretches of the canyon that the sun never reached, and one day in January the thermometer did not rise above 33 degrees below zero. At least a hundred men lost their lives in construction here, mostly from premature explosions of giant powder.

It was fortunate that Palmer did not persist in following the canyon through to Delta, portions of that section running to a depth of 2800 feet, with only 25-foot width in places. One may be sure that had Palmer determined to build through it, he would have done so.

It was not until August, 1901, that an attempt was made to penetrate this deepest section of the gorge, with a view to determining the feasibility of taking water through a tunnel to provide irrigation for the arid lands of the Uncompahgre Valley. The first exploration failed after five men had battled the raging river downward from Cimarron for twenty-one days, but a second attempt by A. L. Fellows of the Bureau of Reclamation and W. W. Torrence of Montrose, was more successful, and laid the groundwork for ultimate construction of the tunnel in 1909.

The D&RG and the South Park ran parallel tracks from Parlin to Gunnison until 1911—nearly thirty years—at which time the South Park abandoned its line. The railroad had discontinued service between Hancock on the east side and Quartz on the west the previous year to disconnect the Quartz-Gunnison section from its main line. While there were financial difficulties of another nature plaguing the South Park, the decrease in freight and extreme hardship and expense of keeping the line open in winter were given as reasons. Indeed, the snowfall at that altitude can well be imagined.

In March, 1905, several train crews were marooned at the west portal for sixteen days. The boardinghouse consisted of

two box cars, and there were not enough blankets, so the men took turns sleeping. The engine men spent most of their time in the warm cabs. For a week the men dined regularly—three meals a day of bread, meat, spuds and coffee. The second week the fare was reduced to two meals of beans, carrots and coffee. The last few days the men subsisted on carrots and coffee made from grounds that had been boiled over and over. The fifty men emerged from their isolation "sunburned to the color of a boiled lobster" and with great growth of beard, but otherwise in good health.

With such annoyances as this, it was not surprising that the South Park officials came up with an exchange deal February 15, 1911, which enabled the D&RG to take over the Quartz-Parlin run. Included also in the agreement was the Baldwin and Kubler branch on Ohio Creek. South Park rails Parlin to Gunnison were left until the summer of 1923, when crews moved in and removed them by September 17 of that year. The D&RG service from Quartz to Pitkin was virtually stopped by July, 1933, and April 8, 1934, permission was given to abandon the Pitkin-Parlin branch. By July 26 the entire line from Parlin to Quartz had been dismantled.

Throughout the years there were intermittent rumors of plans to broad-gauge the Rio Grande lines. Parallel with reports of "financial stringency" on the part of the road in 1907, local papers were carrying nebulous promises of railroad officials to broad-gauge Marshall Pass that year. These promises were repeated for the Gunnison-Montrose line in 1910, and intermittently thereafter, almost to the eve of the abrupt moving of the Third Division offices to Salida in February, 1925. Once this was done, the lines in the Gunnison area began to shrink measurably. The ax fell first on the Crested Butte-Floresta Branch in 1929. Other abandonments followed rapidly: Quartz to Parlin, 1934; Sapinero-Lake City, 1936; Castleton-Kubler, 1943; Castleton-Baldwin, 1946; Crested Butte-Anthracite, 1947; Sapinero to Cedar Creek, 1949. The Lake Fork roadbed was converted and opened to auto travel January 1, 1949.

When the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company closed permanently the Big Mine at Crested Butte in 1955, the act served as a death knell for the D&RG in the Gunnison Valley. That year the Crested Butte branch and main line from Sapinero to Poncha Springs was abandoned. Regular passenger service had not been conducted over the line from Montrose after August 25, 1936, nor to Salida after November 24, 1940, except for a few weeks one summer in the early 1940's, when a broken highway bridge at Sapinero made it necessary for the Rio Grande buses to carry their passengers via railroad from Gunnison to Montrose.

The lifting of the rails in 1955 brought a lump of disappointment and nostaliga even to those who had never ridden the little passengers over Marshall or Cerro. Several excursion trains took loaded coaches over the pass and through the Black in the summers of 1947, '48, '49, in a last frantic effort to experience the thrills of mountain railroading. One unfortunate woman with the last excursion Memorial Day, 1949, tumbled into the waters of the Gunnison River during a pause in the Canyon. Her body was never recovered. Thus circumstance brought to a violent end the little railroad's conquest of the Canyon.

These excursionists would doubtless have been as excited and thrilled in 1949 by a bona fide hold-up as were those passengers who experienced the Gunnison Country's only train robbery on July 14, 1902. On that date, the Rio Grande passenger was descending Marshall Pass about ten miles above Sargents, when Engineer Perry Ruland noticed three men who appeared to be flagging the train. This was not unusual, for fishermen and hunters often stopped the obliging little train almost anywhere. By the time Ruland could discern the ties and boulders on the track and the guns in the hands of the flaggers, it was too late to give any warning to his crew, to the passengers, or to the helper engine following him down the pass. As the train ground to a halt, three men in white masks and light-colored suits took control of the train. A shot through the cab of the helper engine held it at bay. Ruland was knocked out with a gun butt, and Conductor Mike Guerin and Brakemen O. W. Barton and T. H. Thurman were kept under surveillance by one of the bandits. Fireman Marion Myers was sent through the cars at the point of a .30-.30 Marlin to tell everyone to get out and go up the track, where they were relieved of their money and jewelry.

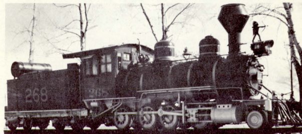
Many hid money and rings in their hose, shoes, or shirt waists. Very few men were searched thoroughly, and the women not at all. Some tossed their wallets and rings into the bushes and rocks alongside the tracks, and P. A. Newman of Lake City managed to slip away up the hillside for a better view of the holdups. He got left when the train pulled out, for the bandits spotted him and detained him. He rode the helper engine into Sargents.

The mail clerk shut his car up tight, and the bandits had the good sense to leave Uncle Sam's property alone. The express safe was blown up and the car so badly damaged as to require a replacement when the train reached Gunnison. One hysterical woman, who had propelled herself into the lap of a very large gentleman sitting behind her, was reassured with a pat and "Never mind, madam, just sit there if it is any comfort to you."

It was all over in less than a half hour, and the train was told to move on to Sargents, where it waited for several hours while the helper engine took a sleeper-load of people back to the scene of the holdup to recover the articles and money they had hidden in the brush and rocks. The train reached Gunnison at two o'clock that afternoon, with its passengers—especially those who had lost little or nothing—in high good humor. Most of them regarded the affair as a highly interesting experience, "worth the trip to be held up so dramatically."

When the rail-lifting crews came along this stretch of track 53 years later, none of the young men knew that a few gold pieces or diamond rings might still be buried in the gravel and rocks beside the track.

The roadbeds of these conquerors of the Rockies—the South Park and the Denver and Rio Grande—have become jeep trails and stock drives. Their right of way has been fenced in, converted into highways, or surrendered to the ravages of rockslide and brush. In Gunnison the only reminder of their days of glory are little No. 268—Cinder-Ella—on the pioneer museum ground at the eastern edge of Gunnison, and the lonely wail of a locomotive whistle preserved on one of the local laundries.



D&RG No. 268—Cinder-Ella—rests on the newly-acquired grounds of the Gunnison County Pioneer and Historical Society at the eastern limits of the town. Placed at an angle to Highway 50, the mighty little coal-burner seems to be steaming out of the meadow toward the passersby. Photo courtesy of Dr. Lois Borland.

"Three Acres and a Cow"

While all the fervent scramble was going on to make Gunnison the "Pittsburgh of the West," "The Future Metropolis of the Western Slope,"—any and all of the splendid names applied to promote the country and its mineral wealth—another type of settler was quietly and persistently establishing a way of life that was to sustain Gunnison throughout the calamitous Nineties. This was the rancher who, early sensing that the Gunnison Valley's more dependable wealth lay in her fertile meadowlands, began taking up land as soon as the area was opened for settlement.

Several years before gold and silver discoveries rocketed into being the boom camps of Tin Cup, Irwin, Gothic, White Pine, and Pitkin, the Gunnison and Tomichi valleys were parceled up into fine ranches. A few miles above the spot where Richardson hoped to place his city, August Mergelman settled in 1875, moving to the ranch ten miles west in 1877. This first ranch was soon to belong to John B. Outcalt, one of Richardson's earliest and most enthusiastic colonists. P. T. Stevens took up land at Iola in '77, followed by his brother, A. K., the following year, and Ed Teachout arrived on Ohio Creek to ranch in '78.

The two men Richardson mentioned as first ranchers on the Tomichi (fall of '74) apparently did not stay, for earliest records of ranching in that area attribute the first place to the W. B. Munson family who came in 1876. A daughter, Mrs. Susie Mitchell, recalls that her father kept saddled horses in the barn at all times, in case of an Indian attack. Most of the time, however, those early ranchers were on friendly terms with the few Utes who strayed back to their old camping grounds from the Uncompahgre reservation. Mrs. Mitchell remembered with amusement the time her father gave some kittens to a Ute, who put them inside his shirt to carry home—probably for his stew-pot. When the cats began scratching, he did an impromptu dance that delighted little Susie. The Munsons are also credited by early newspapers with bringing the first Hereford cattle into the region, a breed destined to become known far and wide as high-class "Gunnison beef."

DOS RIOS RANCH 1888
Left group: Alonzo Hartman, with his wife, Annie, and their two children, Bruce and Hazel. Right group: Lelia Hall, Thomas and Mary Haigler, Mrs. Hartman's parents. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Sullivan.

Alonzo Hartman's Dos Rios Ranch in 1876, showing the post office, and the cabin built in 1870. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Sullivan.

The D. A. McConnels came to the Tomichi region about the same time to take up land, and the Doyles, from whom Doyleville got its name, arrived in 1877. The Crooks brothers, C. E., Ed, and John, settled there in '77 also, and gave their name to Crookston, a later railroad stop.

On the Tomichi eight miles east of Gunnison, J. P. Elsen had started the '76 Ranch, taking his brand from the year of founding. This place is currently owned by Jim LeValley, after having gone through a succession of ownerships—those of the Rausis Brothers, Tom Stevens, and Tom Field.

By 1879, the names of Augustus and Louisa Biebel, J. D. McKee, and Ed and Henry Teachout appear on Ohio Creek; Jim Andrews and C. L. Stone on the Cebolla. Andrews bought up placer claims to form his ranch, now the lower Howard place.

Before another year had passed, there existed what might also be termed a "boom" in the ranching business, and a report of a trip by the *Review* editor up the Ohio Creek tributary to the Gunnison, reads like a Chamber of Commerce brochure. Fine hay meadows and new log houses and barns were everywhere in evidence, but there was little appearance of plush prosperity. Isolation added to slender means made ranching a hazardous hand-to-hand fight for survival. Women as well as men worked in the fields, harvesting the hay crop by primitive means, driving the stock in from the open range where it summered as long as weather permitted, milking cows, raising chickens, peddling milk, butter, eggs, and garden stuff.

The loneliness of ranch life was mitigated by the endless work to be done in proving up a homestead, and the early ranchers and their helpmates were reconciled to a life of toil. (When August Biebel died in 1888, leaving his widow and two little girls, the three women pitched in to make the Biebel place on Ohio Creek one of the most prosperous ranches in the valley—a prosperity that enabled the family to endow Biebel Memorial Chapel, Gunnison's present Community Church.)

With roads well-nigh impassable in winter and early spring, the rancher had to lay in his staple grocery supply in the fall, and augment his larder with the plentiful wild game, especially deer, elk, and trout, and with dairy products. He must be satisfied with mail service perhaps as seldon as once in three or four months, and his children with long, cold miles afoot, on horseback, or by sled, to the little country schoolhouse—a trip frequently immortalized to most unappreciative descendants!

In the beginning there was no railroad to transport the beef to markets in Denver, Kansas City, Omaha, and Chicago. The mining camps and Gunnison took most of the supply, with wholesaling, butchering, and retailing entirely local operations. It was 1885, in fact, before the newspapers recorded the first shipment of beeves from the Tomichi valley over the Rio Grande.

The winters of '75 through '78 were mild, and cattle were let run the range until very late, some of them throughout the winter. When hay was scarce it was just as well to let the stock take its chances in the hills. It was not unusual for the beef roundup to take place as late as December on favorable years, and the animals were not fattened for market on anything except the nutritious bunch grass of a range as yet not grazed down.

The winter of '79-'80 was excessively severe, however, and ranches reported heavy livestock losses when deep snow blanketed the pastures. Hay sold for as high as $240 a ton—when it could be procured at all. The winter of '80-'81 was not much better, with hay selling at $50 to $100 a ton. The ranchers were learning the hard way that they must harvest enough hay to feed their stock through a long winter.

Irrigation became a vital factor in encouraging meadow growth, but fortunately there was plenty of water for all—as Richardson had foretold in his sales talk to the first town colony. For years there was no need for a water commissioner, no large company-owned ditch, no worry over "water-rights."

With the increased stand of hay came the problem of garnering it. Isolation, poor roads, and lack of ready money impeded the use of machinery, and the advent of the first mowing machine and the first threshing machine—a diminutive, two-horse affair brought into the county by Matt Arch in 1887—was heralded as a great event in the county's growth.

The ranchers learned early the value of cooperation, establishing "cattle pools" for some supervision of summer range that survive today in the Taylor Park Pool and the Powderhorn Pool. They helped each other with the hay harvest much the same way as mid-western grain-raisers had learned to do, sharing machinery, men, and teams.

Once the hay was stacked and the beeves rounded up, there was wood or coal to lay in for the winter, harness to mend, and tools to sharpen and repair, on long snowbound evenings. For the women the winter meant sewing, quilting, nursing youngsters through croup, diphtheria, measles, scarlet fever. An all-day visit to a neighbor was a real event. It was not an easy life, and the weak ones sold out and moved on, leaving

Gunnison County with a hard core of independent, courageous ranch folk who sustained the valley, and, indeed, the town and mining communities, when silver was demonetized in 1893 to bring an end to dreams of mineral wealth.

The passage of the Homestead Act of 1916 brought the last of what might be termed "settlers" to the Gunnison Valley.

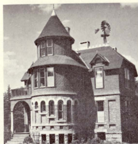
The Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association was organized on May 10, 1884, for protection from rustlers, sheep, disease—and government. John Parlin was its first president, with Lon Hartman, vice-president. Within a year it had a membership of twenty, including S. B. Outcalt, Lee Lehman, J. P. Elsen, A. E. Hyzer, A. M. Carpenter, F. C. Lightley, James McBride, W. F. Buckey, W. P. Sammons, C. A. McGregor, Gus Mergelman, C. L. Stone, P. H. Vader, T. W. Gray, Lon Hartman, H. C. Bartlett, and Dick Ball.

While many a cattleman had got his start with a few scraggly remnants of the Indian herds and a few mavericks, the rancher had to work too hard for his place in the economy to tolerate rustling, and there was surprisingly little of it going on in the Eighties. If there was, it seldom reached the court—perhaps the ranchers just had rather stringent measures of their own to discourage it. (A surge of "mechanized" rustling between 1914-1917 plagued Gunnison stockmen, but there were few convictions.)

Sheep were introduced into the county when hard times showed ranchers that they might be more profitable than cattle, but it was many years before they were really accepted by the old-time rancher. Early attempts to bring the animals in met with rebuff. A group of cowboys—80 or 90 in number—shot most of the herd being moved into the Cebolla. Attempts to put sheep into Taylor Park proved no more popular, and ranchers who hoped to retain membership in the Stockgrowers Association carefully refrained from admitting ownership of any of the hated "woolies."

Cattle herds in early years seemed to be relatively free of disease, which was fortunate, since there were not the serums and veterinary care available that the modern rancher has today. As for the government, the stockgrower—ever an independent cuss—made his protests against regimentation, homesteading, and range fees felt more effectively through his Association.

They did not surrender their independence in this direction without a fight, however. When the Gunnison National Forest was established May 1, 1905, editorial response in the Gunnison Country was immediate. The *News-Champion* heralded this "infringement" on the open range rights of the cattleman with a banner headline three inches high and a massive deck:



This mansion at Dos Rios, built by the Alonzo Hartmans in 1893, is now part of a homesite development. Old-timers can only hope that this unique remnant of Gunnison early glory will not follow the fortunes of La Veta Hotel and be destroyed. Photo courtesy Gunnison Newspapers, Inc.

A picket fence still encircled the Court House Square when this picture was made of an early Cattlemen's Days fish fry on the lawn.

Charter members of the Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association organized in 1884 included, standing, left to right: Sam Outcalt, Lee Lehman, J. P. Elson, A. E. Hyzer, Archie Carpenter, Frank Lightley, unidentified, William Buckey. Seated: W. P. Sammons, E. A. McGregor, A. W. Mergelman, Columbus Stone, Palmer Vader, T. W. Gray, Henry Bartlett, Richard Ball. Photo courtesy Mrs. Ruth Sullivan.

IMMENSE FOREST RESERVE
HALF OF COUNTY SET ASIDE

Theorists in League with Railroad Attorneys and Sheepmen Contrive to Withdraw from Settlement Over a Million Acres in Gunnison County

Pursuing the idea through three columns of type, the voice of the region declared that the unanimous protest earlier forwarded to Washington by the County Stockgrowers had been ignored, that the whole idea was a plot on the part of the railroads to profit from land sales and of the sheepmen to secure equal grazing rights with cattlemen, and that the move would "absolutely kill the industrial advancement of the country." Granting that preservation of our forest was essential, no one could defend such "idiocy" as withdrawing from settlement a million acres of land.

The fee of twenty to thirty-five cents a head for livestock seemed excessive to the stockgrower and the group carried the fight against Forest Chief Pinchot hot into the autumn, seeking lower rates because of the shorter season of range use.

When the first supervisor, William Kreutzer, arrived to govern the original 963,395 acres alloted to the district, he had a major problem of diplomacy on his hands. That he succeeded is apparent from subsequent newspaper articles praising his administration of forest reserve affairs.

One story of his "diplomacy" concerns a visit to Crested Butte. Ranchers had gathered there to protest forest reserve restrictions, and when the supervisor arrived, met him on Main Street with drawn guns. Kreutzer returned to his horse, took his rifle from the saddle, and faced the men. "All right, men, if this is the way you want it, start shooting!"

He lifted his rifle, and the cowmen shamefacedly sheathed their guns. Conference resolved the difficulty, and Kreutzer upheld the National Forest Reserve regulations.

Tracts were added to the Gunnison from the Cochetopa National Forest in 1929 and in 1942; from the Rio Grande and from the Grand Mesa districts in 1954, to bring the total acreage to 1,660,050. Recreational use of the forest was supported by a Gunnison public by this time thoroughly aware of the tourist potential of the area.

In the eventual acceptance of the Taylor Grazing Act, ranchers have, once again, proved themselves highly adaptable. Range fees and limited lands has forced most of them to cut, profitably, their herd size or to buy summer pasture,

and many of the old ranches at higher elevations have been taken over for just such purposes.

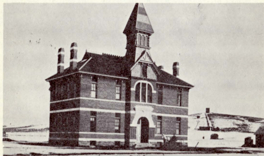
Modern ranching has become even bigger business than it was in 1899, when thirty-four of the one hundred heaviest taxpayers in the county were ranchers. Within the last two decades, herds have been cut to fit the grazing permit level, and operations have extended into a field of showmanship undreamed of by the struggling landowner of the 1880's. Typical of the show class aspect of stockraising is the experience of Daniel I. J. Thornton, who set a record in January, 1945, at the Denver Western Stock Show, with the sale of two Hereford bulls for $50,000 apiece. The bulls were paraded in downtown Denver, and the Brown Palace Hotel literally rolled out the red carpet to greet them. The following November, Thornton sold a third bull for $50,000 to a Cincinnati breeder. His dispersal sale in September, 1947, drew buyers from all parts of the United States, Canada, and South America, and netted just under a million dollars.

Thornton's sensational livestock and his ability to "show" them threw the handsome westerner into the public eye with a bang people did not forget. In November, 1950, he was elected governor of Colorado after a short, whirlwind campaign following the death in October of the regularly nominated Republican candidate. He served for two terms, ultimately sold his holdings in the Gunnison valley, and now devotes his time to other interests.

There were no Dan Thorntons in the Gunnison Valley in the 1880's, but people then, as now, enjoyed a good show. Racing, riding, and roping contests on a Sunday afternoon between neighboring ranches were, before long, transferred from the corral and pasture to Gunnison's Main Street. By the end of the century, town dwellers were seeing horse races and bucking contests on the Fourth of July, as well as the customary hose cart, wheelbarrow, burro, potato, and three-legged races. An organization called Cattlemen's Days came into being in July, 1901, and presented the first full-scale rodeo on Main Street.

As the yearly celebration expanded into a three-day show, the participants moved from Main Street to an arena and track of their own, and by 1905 railroads were giving excursion rates to visitors from all over the state. These early wild-west displays also included, for a number of years, a free barbeque and fish fry. A horse show and Hereford show were added early in the 1940's and Cattlemen's Days in mid-July is still Gunnison's big "blow-out" of the year.

Added to this celebration, hunting, fishing, skiing, ghost-town browsing have all done their part in giving the Gunnison country a balanced economy, and have grown increasingly important. Resorts, some of them quite elaborate, now dominate much of the land along Highway 50 and the Gunnison River. Big game hunting—deer, elk, and bear—draw thoustands of red-capped, red-coated nimrods into the hills every fall; and spring and summer witness the almost bumper-to-bumper arrival of the fishermen. This hosting of the vacationer has become, with the ranches, "big business," and one of a magnitude never dreamed of by Richardson in his wildest hopes for the valley.



Colorado Street School, built in 1882, occupied the lots on which the present Chipeta Hall of Western State College now sits. Photo courtesy of Mrs. S. J. Miller.

Colorado State Normal School during its first summer. Photo courtesy of Mrs. S. J. Miller.

The Western Slope Acquires a College

"The honor of the conquest is rated by the difficulty."

The founder of Gunnison colony did dream, however, of the third facet of stability for his town—a Normal school. As early as 1882 Gunnison newspapers were commenting editorially on possibilities of such an establishment. In 1885 State Senator A. M. Stevenson introduced a bill in the legislature for just such a school at Gunnison. It was rejected, and by the time the bill was revived in 1896, other Western Slope towns had the same idea, which further impeded progress in this direction. However, by 1901, State Senator C. T. Rawalt succeeded in putting through a bill appropriating $2,500 for land for a state Normal school, and Governor James B. Orman signed the Act April 16.

Few Gunnisonites, in their jubilation, could see at this time the long hard fight ahead, not only to secure funds for building, maintenance, etc. but also to keep the school. As late as the 1930's efforts were still being put forth by Western Slope neighbors to move the college from Gunnison—a threat that seems to be, once and for all, properly dead and buried.

The first trustees—C. E. Adams of the *Tribune*, Henry F. Lake, Jr., of the *News-Champion*, and Rancher T. W. Gray—met in June and promptly moved to secure a site. They chose forty-one acres in the northeast section of town, on the rise approaching the Moffet Smelter hill, and by the spring of 1903, the ground had been surveyed and fenced, 550 shade trees planted to augment the 150 already on the premises, drives laid out, and lawns seeded. Through donations of cash and land, the work had been completed, and the trustees could report twelve whole cents left from the $2,500 allotment.

A bill for $18,000 to maintain the site thus established passed the legislature in 1903, but was vetoed by Governor Peabody, suddenly made economy-conscious, some said, by jealous rival towns. It was May 5, 1909, before money was appropriated for construction of a building, and then only $50,000. There were no funds for furnishing or for

equipment. However, the occasion merited the red-lettered announcement appearing above the masthead of the *News-Champion* on May 7, 1909: "We Have Secured the Western Slope Normal School at Gunnison. Hard work and persistence won the day. It will win other good things. It will win broad-gauging of the Colorado and Southern and extension to Delta. It will win manufactories. This is the turn of the tide. Things are moving all around us. Now is the time to push for Gunnison."

The *News-Champion* recalled that it had been nearly a quarter of a century since Stevenson had introduced the first bill for the school, and predicted that population would triple within the next five years to bring back those boom days of the mid-Eighties. That the growth was less phenomenal than this was through no fault of the local optimists, for the school united the town as no other project had been able to do since the days of the Lewis "Pittsburgh of the West" promotions. The new board of trustees—S. P. Spencer, Joseph H. Collins, John A. Steele—let the contracts for immediate construction, and the cornerstone of North Hall of what is now the Taylor Hall complex was laid October 25, 1910.

In 1911 the legislature voted $10,000 for equipment and $25,000 for maintenance and staffing. Governor Shafroth cut the equipment allocation in half, and vetoed the entire salary-maintenance bill. Determined that the Normal would open that fall, come hell or high water, local citizens advanced $10,000 without interest, and the doors swung open to the first class of twenty-four students in September, 1911. Operated under the aegis of the teachers' college at Greeley, the Normal welcomed C. A. Hollingshead as principal over both the two-year Normal Advanced and the four-year Normal Elementary (high school). No tuition was charged Colorado residents, but out-of-state students paid $5 per term. The county high school shared the use of faculty and put up most of the maintenance money in those first lean years, while the city donated light and water for the first five years. The students made it a point of honor not to be absent that first frigid winter—in defiance of the dire predictions of Gunnison weather published by newspapers of rival towns. By dint of transfer students from other state institutions, the Normal was able to graduate its first class on May 31, 1912—five women. Three more received the two-year certificate at the close of summer school. The student body was predominantly feminine, and the first lone male graduate did not appear until commencement in 1913.

Gunnison's first school building bears the date 1881 above the door. With its interior modified, the structure is still in use as a residence. Photo courtesy Frank Tikalsky.

Old Pine Street School, built in 1880, with the "coffee mill" house on the far right background (now occupied by the Wayne Lickiss family), and the Parks and Endner planing mill left background. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Sullivan.

Financial difficulties continued to plague the school, with local representatives having to wring each dime from a reluctant legislature up to the time of establishment of the first state mill levy for the college in 1915. During the winter of 1913-14, the teachers agreed to serve at half pay until February 1, when money for operation might be pried from the lawmakers.

A strong bond of loyalty, a sense of building for the future, obsessed both faculty and students, and carried the school through those first harassed years. By 1918 the loans of the fifty-nine citizens who had put up the money to launch the first classes had been repaid in full.

That the problems were not all financial appears evident in an early journal of the principal, regarding one member of the faculty: "Because of her youthful appearance, together with the fact that she has not learned a pseudo dignity necessary to avoid criticism of a small community, I have found it unwise to use her in the training (high) school work. She is, however, a highly efficient teacher of college students."

The administration complained of the cattle grazing on the campus, and suggested that the wire fence was sometimes cut by eager cowmen. If students and faculty would not, as a matter of pride, complain of the below-zero temperatures, they did complain of the everlasting mosquitoes, and the college biology department expended much effort in seeing an adequate curb for the pests.

Rules of conduct were quite specific: Women students were not allowed out after dark without a chaperone, and dancing was permitted only by special dispensation of the Dean of Women. Girls caught out after hours were called up before the Dean, who wagged her head in despair and declared, "What *can* you girls find to do *after nine o'clock!*"

With the coming to the Normal of James H. Kelley as president in January, 1914, the school knew the leadership of a man with a "rare personality, combining a good sense of public relations and a scholarly academic interest." This year the college was severed from the Greeley Normal, Kelley becoming the first official to bear the title of President of the Gunnison school.

Kelley stayed five years, during which time the Normal maintained a steady growth and a reasonably amicable relationship with the legislature.

Samuel Quigley became president in 1919, and during his tenure he saw the school expanded (1920) to a four-year program. In 1923 the name was changed to Western State College and the school made a Liberal Arts college. The official colors were chosen—crimson from the Indian paint

brush and slate from the sagebrush on the nearby hills. About this time, the huge "W" on Tenderfoot Mountain was constructed to be the largest college emblem in the world. The late Twenties saw a spurt in housing construction, although it was 1930 before Central Hall, begun nearly thirty years before, between the first building and the high school (built in 1919) was completed.

First intercollegiate sport was basketball, inaugurated the winter of 1920-21; football followed in 1922. The college had a radio broadcasting station in the mid-Twenties, and brought many guest lecturers—among them Padraic Colum, Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost—to the rostrum here during the Quigley administration.

In 1934 the college made good use of the high-mountain location and its ideal summer climate to bring nationally famous band directors to the campus for the first annual Band Camp. Expanding into choral and orchestral fields, the camp in thirty years became one of the most distinguished music camps in the country, and drew entire families to Gunnison—parents to enjoy the varied vacationland entertainments of mountain and stream, and the youngsters for an intensified two weeks of learning and fun on campus.

The depression years brought only temporary slowing down of enrollment growth, for students might pay their fees with farm produce which was used by the cafeteria or bought by the faculty. Ironically, the physical plant was doubled during these years. The curriculum extended to include the Master of Arts degree in a number of fields, and in 1955, a six-year program was added. Today Western State College is experiencing the post-war boom in attendance common in this decade to all institutions of higher learning.

Sylvester Richardson's drug store building near the corner of Tenth and New York, facing south, served as meeting place for church and political gatherings. It stood until the mid-1930's, when this picture was taken by C. E. Hagie. The tree is still there, but the lot vacant back of Bouchard's station, and only the tree and the fire plug (barely visible at far left) remain to identify the location. Photo courtesy Library, State Historical Society of Colorado.

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From the End

Spring New Beginnings

Of all the dreams of the men who came to the Gunnison country almost a century ago, few were fulfilled in just the way these pioneers expected. Mining, once the white hope of thousands, has dwindled to spasmodic, one-man operations of development and exploration. Even the uranium boom in the mid-Fifties, which saw the hills again swarming with prospectors, this time carrying Geiger counters, and practically every square inch of unpatented land staked out, did not survive beyond a decade. The opening of the Thornburg mine on the Cochetopa, the Pinnacle Exploration operations on Marshall Pass, and the uranium mill at Gunnison were but an echo of the feverous activity of the early 1880's.

Ranching, alone of all the dreams, still exists, but in a style far beyond that of the first homesteaders. Commerical and highly specialized beef raising has blended with a new aspect of the times—the tourist business—to produce a hybrid, dude ranching. This, too, is passing into yet another era, for with the completion of Curecanti dam currently in construction near Sapinero, river fishing on the lower Gunnison and in the Black Canyon will be a thing of the past. The large lake to be formed by the dam presages sail-boating, water skiing, and deep-lake fishing such as the region has never seen before. Nearby ski areas promise increasing recreational use of the mountains in wintertime. The college, on a year-around basis, appeals to students of varied interests—among them the summer semi-vacationer and the winter sports addict.

With the three-pronged income of livestock industry, tourist business, and college, the economy of the region is more stable than it has ever been, and the extremes of "boom and bust" are no part of the present scene.

The traveler approaching the heart of the valley, whether from east or west, on new, oiled highway, is aware of the sweeping ranchlands, the backdrop of mountains—from the grey-green slopes of sagebrush to the distant blue-green of spruce, pine, aspen, and rocky pinnacles tipped with snow. Along the hillsides, among the gashes left by the uranium-seeking bulldozer, there are traces of the old stagecoach roads and the grey-yellow slag piles of old prospect holes. Huddled in remote corners of ranch barnlots, old cabins speak of the less prosperous occupancy of a bygone day.

Within the town, hundreds of the old cottonwoods planted by civic endeavor seventy years and more ago shade the streets down which the clear water still runs, although now frequently encased in concrete gutters instead of sod ditches. It is only a matter of time, perhaps, before civic improvement will realize paved streets, parking meters, elimination of the cottonwood and open curb ditches, and a neon-lighted Main Street and Tomichi Avenue will have converted Gunnison into a replica of every other progressive town west of the Mississippi.

A portent for the future may lie, however, in the difference in the kind of traveler now coursing the valley. The newcomer in the 1880's was seeking wealth, and expecting hardship and sacrifice to achieve it; the present traveler is seeking to be "re-created" in the mind and body, seeking to draw strength from valley and mountains to sustain him in his struggle in an outer, man-made world. If the tremendous effort that went into the building of the early toll roads, the railroad grades, the development of mines, of ranches, and of towns in the Gunnison country is not to go to waste utterly, then something of those times must be retained, to give strength and solace to a harried generation.

The twentieth-century visitor who comes with the ability to see beyond the billboard, the garish motel sign, the outer surface of a pleasant little town, will find the same lush valley and the same blue hills that were dear to Sylvester Richardson's colonists and to the hordes of ore-seekers of ninety years ago. All that the region ever was to these, and more also, it is today—waiting to be discovered anew by whoever would approach with the eye of imagination and the ear attuned to history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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An especial note of thanks goes to Frank Andrews for his painstaking map portrayal of the Gunnison area and the town of the 1880's.