

FIRST DRAFT

Mysterious fur trader left his mark in Utah and Colorado

Sometime in 1831, a French-American fur trader carved an inscription on a sandstone surface near what is today Whiterocks, Utah, not far from the Uintah River. The message said simply: "Denis Julien 1831."

Over the next dozen years, Julien left at least eight rock messages in Utah and one in Colorado. But it would be another century before historians began to unravel the mystery of Denis Julien.

And it wasn't until the 21st century that a detailed biography of Julien was written, showing he operated at least two different trading posts, traded with a variety of Native American tribes and didn't make his way to the Rocky Mountain West until he was in his mid-50s.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

During the latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th century, however, all that people knew was someone named Julien carved his name, often in places along the Green and Colorado rivers that appeared accessible only boat. His most famous inscription, just above Cataract Canyon along the Green River, is next to a drawing of what appears to be a small boat with a mast.

That has prompted speculation that Julien was one of the earliest Euro-Americans to attempt to boat down the Green and Colorado rivers, decades before Major John Wesley Powell made the first documented river trip down the two rivers in 1869.

Julius Stone led an expedition down the Green and Colorado in 1909, and he remarked on the inscription above Cataract Canyon. But Stone also knew little about its author. "It is well known that trappers and hunters visited the river long before the canyons were systematically explored," he wrote. "Possibly D. Julien was one of these."

The 1831 White Rocks inscription had been seen by many people over the years, but no one had made the connection to the carvings along the Colorado and Green rivers until Utah historian Charles Kelly was shown the site in 1931. Then, he began seeking information about Julien's background.

Kelly reasoned that Julien was associated with Antoine Robidoux, who opened Fort Uintah, a trading post near the Uintah River, in 1831.

Kelly contacted authorities in St. Louis, Robidoux's home town, and tracked down documents showing four children belonging to Denis Julien and his Native American wife, Catherine, were baptized in St. Louis between 1798 and 1809.

Kelly also wrote there were five Julien inscriptions "found in different places on the Green and Colorado rivers," all with the date 1836 attached.

He concluded: "Since no record can be found that he survived the year 1836, it seems logical that he may have been the first white victim of the treacherous rapids of Cataract Canyon."

However, thanks to the research of author James Knipmeyer and the observations of others, it is now clear that Julien left several rock inscriptions in the region after 1836.

One, in Echo Park in what is now Dinosaur National



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PHOTO

Denis Julien's most famous rock inscription, in Hell Roaring Canyon on the Green River, upstream from confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers. The date says May 3, 1836. Note what appears to be a boat carved next to it.

Monument, is the only inscription found in Colorado. It says: "DJ 1838." Because the initials are carved in the style of other Julien inscriptions, researchers are certain it was his.

The last carving attributed to Julien was discovered in a remote area of Arches National Park in 1977. It reads: "Denis Julien" "9 6me 1844," meaning Sept. 6, 1844. Although different in style from his other rock carvings, it is consistent with Julien's signature on some written documents, Knipmeyer said.

Whether Denis Julien was born in St. Louis in the 1770s, or moved there with his family when he was young, as so many French-Canadians did in the last decades of the 18th century, it's clear he was associated with French fur traders in the Mississippi River town.

Julien's name appears in the ledgers of St. Louis fur-trade family Chouteau in 1803 and 1805, and he was awarded licenses to trade with the Sioux and Iowa Indians then. He initially operated as an independent fur trader, conducting business primarily with his wife's relatives, the Iowa Indians along the Des Moines River.

In 1805, he opened a small trading post on the east side of the Mississippi River near today's Navoo, Illinois. He and his family remained their 14 years, and he regularly hired other French-Canadians to trade in the backcountry for him.

In 1821 he was listed as a property owner in Prairie du Chien, on the Mississippi River in today's Wisconsin.

By 1824, he had moved to Fort Atkinson on the Missouri River in Nebraska. His children were grown by then, and it's unclear what happened to his wife, Catherine.

In 1825, Julien shot and wounded a man at Fort Atkinson. He wasn't prosecuted, but he soon left the area. In 1826, he joined Francois Robidoux on a journey from Taos, New Mexico, to recover furs cached in Ute country in today's Colorado or Utah.

In 1828, Antoine Robidoux established Fort Uncompahgre on the banks of the Gunnison River just outside today's Delta, Colorado. The same year, three men, in-



Members of the Julius Stone expedition down the Green and Colorado Rivers stopped to examine Julien's inscription in 1909.

cluding Denis Julien, opened a small trading post near the junction of the Whiterocks and Uintah rivers. So Julien was familiar with the area by the time

See **TRADER**, page 9C

TREAT: Local families make 'Elf the Musical' a part of this Christmas season

Continued from page 1C

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCENE IN THE MUSICAL?

"Santa, here?! Oh my God! Santa here? I know him! I know him!"

That is Sloane's favorite line, which Buddy says after hearing that Santa is coming to the North Pole at Macy's.

Remington's favorite line is when Buddy calls himself a "cotton-headed ninny-muggins" because he couldn't work as fast as the elves in Santa's workshop.

For Justin, it's a New York scene when Nicole and both their daughters are on stage at the same time and the family aspect of being able to all be in this musical together. "It's fun to see Nicole exercising her gift," he said, referring to Nicole's musical theater studies in college.

"It's fun to all be on stage together," Nicole agreed.

Theater includes three things most people are nervous to do in public: sing, dance and act, she said.

For children in particular, "it really helps with bravery while growing up," Nicole said. "It's fun to see my kids do it."

WHO IN YOUR FAMILY HAS THE MOST CHRISTMAS SPIRIT?

Both Remington and Sloane raised their hands at this question.

"Can we have a tie?" Nicole said. "These girls make the holidays really magical."

THE WERTMAN FAMILY

Nathan and Mollie and their daughters Sydney, 15, and Carolyn, 8. (Although Sydney has been part of many Theatre Project shows, she had to miss "Elf" so she can sing in Grand Junction High School's choirs' Holiday Extraganza: Silver Christmas.)

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SONGS?

"Silent Night," Mollie said. "It's just beautiful."

But your ears perk up when you hear "The Nutcracker Suite," said Nathan, with a nod to Mollie's dance background.

For him, right now it's "Nobody Cares About Santa" from a scene featuring a group of fake Santas in "Elf the Musical."

"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" and "Santa Baby" are always playing in this house," Carolyn said.

"I think that's what she likes," Sydney said.

Sydney prefers the music from "A

Charlie Brown Christmas." Those songs are usually playing while the family decorates the Christmas tree, something that generally gets done around each year's particular theater production schedule.

In recent years, they have decided to do musical theater as a family, Nathan said.

That way he and Mollie get to spend more time with their kids, Mollie gets to draw on her dance background, "and I don't mind embarrassing myself," he said.

HAVE YOU EVER EATEN SPAGHETTI WITH MAPLE SYRUP?

"No! Because, no!" Mollie said emphatically. "I have not had it. But I want to have it," Carolyn said.

Her sister whispered something to their mom, and Carolyn insisted on knowing what had been said.

"I said that you're a sugar gremlin," Sydney said, and the rest of the family agreed.

"Yes, I have had it. I wouldn't recommend it," Nathan said.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCENE IN THE MUSICAL?

The scene with all the fake Santas at a restaurant with the song "Nobody Cares About Santa" and dancing, Nathan said.

"For me as well," Mollie said.

They also like the scene where Jovie, a woman Buddy meets who is working as an elf at Macy's North Pole (in the film, the store is Gimbels), sings the song "Never Date an Elf."

Carolyn's favorite is the scene where Buddy wrestles with the fake Santa at Macy's North Pole.

"I am going to see the closing show and that's it," said Sydney, who has only been able to hear about the musical's scenes thanks to her choir duties. But she's looking forward to seeing the fake Santas scene, which she had heard about a lot. She even had to help her dad with one of his dance moves for the scene.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAMILY CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS?

Sydney always gets to open the door on the advent calendar on Dec. 2 because that is her birthday, Carolyn said.

And then there are theater performances, which nearly always dictate what they do at Christmastime, Nathan and Mollie said.

By Christmas Eve, though, all the performances are over and it's time to rest and enjoy the holiday, they said.

They bake and decorate Christmas cookies on Christmas Eve and watch "A Christmas Story," Mollie and Sydney said.

Mollie puts together an amazing charcuterie board and grandparents come over and they all just enjoy being together, the family said.

WHO IN YOUR FAMILY HAS THE MOST CHRISTMAS SPIRIT?

"I think me," Carolyn said and her mom agreed.

If you define Christmas spirit as overwhelming enthusiasm, then Carolyn has it, Nathan said.

"For me it's ... the joy," Carolyn said.

If you're out caroling, then it's that joy. If you're listening, then it's the joy of hearing your favorite carol, she said.

"It's the joy of gifts and being around your family at Christmas," Carolyn said.



ANN WRIGHT/The Daily Sentinel

The Wertman family and their roles in "Elf the Musical": Nathan, left, is a fake Santa and backstage help; Mollie, right, is an elf, a New Yorker and a Macy's worker; Sydney, second from left, has been in many Theatre Project shows, but not this one; and Carolyn, second from right, is an elf, present and New York kid.

# Exams are over. I've graduated from imposter syndrome

My heart is with students this week, especially college students, most especially college freshmen.

It will be OK, ducklings. Well I remember the potent and possibly toxic cocktail of terror, adrenaline and s'mores Pop-Tarts racing through every cell of my body during my first finals week. I barely slept. I paced. I picked at my face and ate enough Skittles to paralyze an elephant.

I had never confronted anything so difficult! I was Atlas bearing the entire weight of collected human knowledge on my 18-year-old shoulders!

Plus, that first finals week capped a semester of almost crippling imposter syndrome — a common affliction in freshman year — when I presumed everyone was smarter than me, I sat at the back and never raised my hand lest I be revealed as a gibbering dope who didn't belong there.

It was a very different story in my second go-around with higher education, so today I'm celebrating the profound joy of just not caring.

I entered grad school as a non-non-tra-

ditional student (I'm pretty sure you earn a "non" for each decade between you and undergrad).

Twenty years in the workforce had blessed me with an acute awareness of my ignorance, but unlike in undergrad, I didn't perceive it as a personal failing. Time and experience granted me the perspective that it was something I could remedy. So, I parked my butt in the very front row. Yes, I was that student, the one almost universally loathed by their 21-year-old classmates.

I always did the reading. I was always prepared for group assignments. Questions? I had 'em! And I was going to ask them all, dang it, from my perch in the middle of the first row.

One time, in an evening environmental public health class, our professor arranged for a guest lecture from the manager of the landfill. Fascinating guy! I had so many questions! As I raised my hand again (and honestly, it was only like the third time), I heard a classmate behind me sigh.

Undergrad me would have been cowed and humiliated. Shameless, non-non-tra-

ditional me did. Not. Care. And it was glorious.

(Though, to be honest, I did have the briefest spasm of wanting to turn around and hiss, "I AM PAYING TO BE HERE, YOUTH!!! IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO ASK ABOUT METHANE CAPTURE, THEN GIVE ME \$200!!!" But I didn't because, you know, ducklings. They frighten easily.)

Point being, I have really appreciated the particular liberation that has come with each passing year, freeing me from the anxiety that used to accompany a classmate's annoyed sigh.

I mean, I want to be kind and get along with people and be a responsible, thoughtful member of the herd. That's important to me! But at the same time, do I really care what some random chucklehead thinks? I do not.

Growing older is not all bad, it turns out.

While youth is often fraught with the feeling that everyone is watching all the time, now I know that's not the case. Oh, I know some people are, the people I love and about whose opinion I care, but everyone else? They're up in their own heads just like I am.

This isn't to say I don't still wake up at 2 a.m. and torture myself with thoughts of something stupid I said or did 20

years ago, but I'm a little more lenient with myself these days. I'm a little more likely to remind myself that a.) I'm probably the only one who remembers and b.) who cares?

So, the other day I was ringing a Salvation Army bell (you can sign up at [registertoring.com](http://registertoring.com); it's pretty fun) and someone coming out of the grocery store wished me a merry Christmas. I had been singing "Jingle Bells" in my head so that I could ring the bell in rhythm to the song, so I replied, and I quote, "Jingle!"

Embarrassing? Kind of. But also... I didn't know that person. I probably will never see them again, so I can't claim to care whether they thought my reply was weird. Plus, why would they?? I would be charmed if someone wished me jingle! Please feel free to!

All of which is to say, finals week is very hard, students, so please stay hydrated, please get some rest if you can and next semester, ask the question if you have it. You're no dumber than anyone else, and no one but you is going to remember anyway. ■

Rachel Sauer is at [rs81501@gmail.com](mailto:rs81501@gmail.com) and once received a 98% on a paper, so she went to her professor and argued for the other 2%, which was bonkers and yet she was unbothered.



RACHEL SAUER

## TODAY IN HISTORY

### Sunday, Dec. 10

Today is Sunday, Dec. 10, the 344th day of 2023. There are 21 days left in the year.

#### Today's Highlight in History:

**On Dec. 10, 1913**, South Africa held a memorial service for Nelson Mandela, during which U.S. President Barack Obama energized tens of thousands of spectators and nearly 100 visiting heads of state with a plea for the world to emulate "the last great liberator of the 20th century." The ceremony was marred by the presence of a sign-language interpreter who deaf advocates said was an imposter waving his arms around meaninglessly.

#### On this date:

**In 1817**, Mississippi was admitted as the 20th state of the Union.

**In 1861**, the Confederacy admitted Kentucky as it recognized a pro-Southern shadow state government that was acting without the authority of the pro-Union

government in Frankfort.

**In 1898**, a treaty was signed in Paris officially ending the Spanish-American War.

**In 1958**, the first domestic passenger jet flight took place in the U.S. as a National Airlines Boeing 707 flew 111 passengers from New York to Miami in about 2 1/2 hours.

**In 1964**, Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, saying he accepted it "with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind."

**In 1967**, singer Otis Redding, 26, and six others were killed when their plane crashed into Wisconsin's Lake Monona; trumpeter Ben Cauley, a member of the group the Bar-Kays, was the only survivor.

**In 1994**, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize, pledging to pursue their mission of healing the anguished Middle East.

**In 1996**, South African President Nelson Mandela signed the country's new constitution into law during a ceremony in Sharpeville.

**In 2005**, actor-comedian Richard Pryor died in Encino, California, at age 65.

**In 2006**, former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet died at age 91.

**In 2007**, former Vice President Al Gore accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with a call for humanity to rise up against a looming climate crisis and stop waging war on the environment.

**In 2019**, House Democrats announced two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, declaring that he "betrayed the nation" with his actions toward Ukraine and an obstruction of Congress' investigation; Trump responded with a tweet of "WITCH HUNT!" At an rally in Pennsylvania, he mocked the impeachment effort and predicted it would lead to his reelection in 2020.

**In 2021**, tornadoes slammed into Kentucky, Arkansas and three neighboring states, killing more than 90 people, including 81 in Kentucky.

**In 2022**, Morocco became the first African country to reach the World Cup semifinals by beating Portugal 1-0.

## Death Notices

**Mary Evelyn Williams**, 97 of Collbran, CO, passed away on November 11, 2023 Grand Junction, CO.

**Francine Kohl**, 67 of Grand Junction, CO, passed away on December 7, 2023 at Community Hospital. Services will be held at a later date Vocation: Retired 3rd Grade Teacher at Taylor Elementary in Palisade, CO

**Florencio Fundazuri**, 79 of Fruita CO, passed away on November 4, 2023 at St Mary's Hospital. There was a service held on December 2nd, at the Sacred Heart Church in Fruita

**Dennis Gene Johnson**, 68 of Clifton, Colorado, passed away on December 5, 2023 at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Grand Junction, Colorado. Graveside service December 16, 2023 at 1:00 pm. Mesa Cemetery, Mesa, Colorado Vocation: Miner

**Daniel Appleton**, 84 of Grand Junction, passed away on November 28, 2023 His Home. December 19, 2023 @ 1pm at the VA Cemetery Vocation: Retail He is survived by his sons, Daniel and Anthony Appleton, daughter, France Appleton, 7 grandchildren, and 7 great grandchildren.

## Obituaries

### Margaret King

September 1, 1936 - December 2, 2023

Margaret "Candy" King peacefully passed away on December 2nd at Larchwood Nursing Home in Grand Junction, Colorado, surrounded by her loving family.

Candy was born on September 1, 1936, in Jackson County (Altus), Oklahoma, to Marvin and Margaret Landers. She is survived by her devoted husband, Gordon, her son Roger (Kathy), grandsons Colby (Tammy), Dallin (Sarah), and Kaden, her granddaughters Ashley Sparks (Josh) and Brittany, as well as her cherished great-grandchildren Emilyn, Adelaide, Bailey, Brooke, Helam, Auriella, and Carson. Candy was preceded in death by her son Gordon Ray, her father and mother Marvin and Margaret Landers, and her sister Ann Clem.

Candy loved to teach children to read, and taught first grade in Roswell, Dexter, and Farmington, New Mexico. She attended Levelland High School in Levelland, Texas, and graduated from Eastern New Mexico University in Portales in 1960. During her time at Eastern, she was a majorette in the marching band and was selected as homecoming queen fall of 1956. On September 6, 1957, she married the love of her life, Gordon King, and they celebrated 66 amazing years of marriage.

Candy enjoyed being a loving wife, mother, grandmother, teacher and friend to many. She was very creative and had a passion for drawing and painting. Candy was very kind, and loved making friends. She also had a fondness for slot machines.

Candy's remains have been cremated, and a celebration of her life will be held in Dolores, Colorado, in the summer of 2024, with the exact date to be determined.

In memory of Candy, please consider making donations to The Alzheimer's Foundation or Shriners Children's Hospital.



## Obituaries

### Mary Anne (Benson) Stone

August 1, 1943 - November 14, 2023

Mary Anne (Benson) Stone, the first of seven has now gone to Heaven and joins her parents T. L. and Marion Benson. She is also reunited in Heaven with her closest sister Barbara Benson.

Mary Anne was a beautiful woman. Her inner beauty illuminated the room when she walked in. Her heart was so generous and tender she often put her needs last. She was kind beyond measure throughout the many years of caring for her six younger siblings along with her daughter Catherine, whom she loved so much. Her patience was often tested the many times she drove all of them around, jumbled tightly in her tiny red Volkswagen Beetle. Nevertheless, she kindly and lovingly treated her siblings with grace and dignity. Mary Anne personified "grace and dignity" in her own right.

Throughout her life, anyone who met her instantly loved her because her heart was so big. Sadly the world has lost one who was too beautiful and tender for this world. We will always love you.

Family members wish to thank Mantey Heights for their excellent care of Mary Anne in her later years. Also, thank you to Hope West for their assistance with her care.



### Robert Warren Noble

September 29, 1943 - November 30, 2023

En route to a vacation, Bob Noble suffered a heart attack that led to his death ten days later. He died at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in New York City with his wife Carolyn at his side.

He was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and as the child of what he called a "government gypsy" he grew up in several states, wherever his father's job took them. After graduating from Louisiana Tech University in 1965, he began his own career as a government gypsy. He retired in 1999 after working for Social Security, Medicare and the Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services.

It was with his move to Grand Junction in 2010 that he truly found his home. For many years he was president of the Grand Junction Newcomers Club. He looked forward to the weekly meetings of the Friday Bagel Group. As an auxiliary member of the Art Center Guild, he relished selling brownies at Music in the Grapevines concerts. He loved baseball caps, music, travel, and quiet times reading, and was always ready for a schmooze.

He is survived by his wife Carolyn White, sons Warren (Angela), Colin (Shay), Jacob and Malcolm, stepdaughter Rebecca Fischer and a host of friends.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held after the holidays.

Donations may be made in Bob's name to The Art Center of Western Colorado. Please also consider registering as a donor at [DonateLifeColorado.org](http://DonateLifeColorado.org). He would have been delighted to learn that his 80-year-old liver would give someone else another chance at life.



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Antoine Robidoux founded Fort Uncompahgre in Colorado and Fort Uintah in Utah. Denis Julien was associated with Robidoux and probably worked for him at Fort Uintah during the 1830s.

## TRADER: Julien left his mark in Utah and Colorado

► Continued from page 3C

Robidoux purchased their store, rebuilt a larger store a few miles away and renamed it Fort Uintah. In fact, Julien may well have accompanied Robidoux when he traveled from the Gunnison River to the Uintah River in November of 1831.

When Julien began exploring the banks of the Colorado and Green rivers beginning about 1836, it was likely to find new sources of beaver and other fur-bearing creatures. Whether he hiked into the sites where he inscribed his name or used a boat is unknown.

By the time he inscribed his name on the wall in Arches National Park, the fur trade had declined dramatically, and so had Antoine Robidoux's fortunes. Angry over the deaths of some Utes in Santa Fe at the hands of New Mexico officials in the summer of 1844, Utes in Colorado attacked and burned Fort Uncompahgre in September, and later Fort Uintah. Robidoux, who was not present at either when the attacks occurred, abandoned the trading posts.

Julien may have been making his way between the two posts in the aftermath of the attacks, Knipmeyer speculated, and traveling on to Taos. He would have taken an out-of-the-way route to avoid contact with the Utes, and that's likely when he carved the inscription in Arches.

After carving that message, Julien disappeared from the historical record. In 1938, a Denver newspaperman said Julien had gone to California with the Robidoux brothers, and had died there. But Knipmeyer could find no record of him in the Golden State.

Also in the 1930s, a historian in Wisconsin wrote that Julien had returned to Prairie du Chien, and was buried in that fur-trade community. But Knipmeyer could find no record of Julien being there after the 1820s.

Denis Julien was about 70 when he carved his 1844 message.

Sources: "The Mysterious 'D. Julien,'" by Charles Kelly, Utah Historical Quarterly, July, 1933; "The Life and Times of Denis Julien, Fur Trader," by James H. Knipmeyer; "The Denis Julien Inscriptions," by James H. Knipmeyer, Utah Historical Quarterly, January 1996; "A Canyon Voyage," by Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, 1926; "Canyon Country," by Julius F. Stone, 1932.

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