

FIRST DRAFT



GRAND JUNCTION UNION DEPOT/Special to the Sentinel

President William Howard Taft stopped at the Grand Junction Union Depot in 1909 during his visit to Western Colorado to official open the Gunnison Tunnel, which supplies irrigation water to the Uncompahgre Valley.

THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

GJ train depot, 120 years old, opened at historic time in 1906

When the new Grand Junction Union Depot opened to the public in mid-April 1906, a writer for The Daily Sentinel was given a private tour of the building constructed for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, and he was impressed.

"There is nothing to surpass this (passenger) waiting room, in Colorado or in

Utah, in point of finish, decorative effects and conveniences," he wrote.

Within a few days, however, the depot went from elegant passenger facility to a refugee stop.

"A lot of people don't know that just after the depot opened in Grand Junction, an earthquake destroyed everything in San

Francisco and some of the refugees came here," said Samuel

Baseler, a board member of the Friends of the Grand Junction Depot, a nonprofit group working with the depot's owners to raise money to renovate and preserve the building.

Today, owners Dustin Anzure and Veronica Sanchez will host a Rods and Rails car show at the depot, in celebration of National Train Day. Railroad artifacts donated by a local railroad enthusiast also will be on display.

It is all part of activities celebrating 250 years since our nation's founding, 150 years

since Colorado became a state, and the depot's 120th birthday, said Sanchez. The events today at the depot are free to the public.

When it opened in 1906, the depot building on First Street was actually the third railroad

depot in Grand Junction. The first was hastily constructed when the D&RG arrived in this city in 1883. The second one was a more substantial building,

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BOB SILBERNAGEL



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Work on the Grand Junction Union Depot was nearing completion in March 1906. It opened to the public a month later. Within a few days of the opening, it began hosting refugees from the San Francisco earthquake.



BOB SILBERNAGEL/Special to the Sentinel

Dustin Anzures, who co-owns the Grand Junction Union Depot with his wife, Veronica Sanchez, stands by the safe that was an original fixture of the Grand Junction Union Depot. It was recently donated to the depot by Dan Barber, a local railroad enthusiast and former railroad employee.



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DEPOT:

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but it wasn't the pinnacle of elegant design. As the Sentinel wrote in 1906, when discussing the push for the new structure: "For a period of ten years or more, the old Union station has been an eyesore to every citizen." When they visited the station, locals were "overcome with a sense of shame because of what the traveling public thought of it."

After repeated pleas to replace the old depot, the D&RG finally agreed to construct a new one. And D&RG Vice President Charles Schlacks knew just the man to design a new depot: His brother, Henry J. Schlacks.

Henry was best known for designing churches, including St. Paul's Church in Chicago. He helped found the school of architecture at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. The Grand Junction Union Depot is Italian-Renaissance style.

Today, many of the buildings Schlack designed are recognized for their historical importance, including the Grand Junction Union Depot and the D&RG Depot in Salt Lake City, which opened four years after Grand Junction's.

The Grand Junction depot cost \$60,000 to build and was completed in one year. Construction began in April of 1905, and it officially opened to the public on April 17, 1906.

The term "union depot" was applied to any train station that served more than one railroad. Although the D&RG built the Grand Junction depot, it also has served the Colorado Midland Railway, the Denver & Rio Grande Western, the Southern Pacific and Amtrak.

The D&RG was using it on April 18, 1906, when one of the strongest earthquakes ever to



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Grand Junction photographer Adolph Binder took this photo of the Grand Junction Union Depot about 1914.

strike the continental United States hit San Francisco.

The quake, and the fires it ignited, are believed to have killed 3,000 people. An estimated 300,000 people — three-quarters of the city's population — were left homeless. Most of those moved into refugee camps near San Francisco and Oakland. But some chose to head east to stay with relatives or friends, stopping at Salt Lake City, Grand Junction and Denver along the way.

A special train brought the first earthquake refugees through Grand Junction on April 23, and Mayor I.N. Bunting issued a plea to the locals to help them.

"They Must Be Fed!" Bunting wrote on the front page of The Daily Sentinel. "They will have had nothing to eat during twelve hours, and will not be fed again until they reach Salida." He urged housewives to prepare lunches for two or

three people and bring them to the new depot, where tents were erected to store food and serve the refugees.

At the depot, physicians attended to the ill and injured, while volunteers served the donated food, set up cots, and handed out clothing as needed.

Similar assistance was provided on multiple occasion over the next two weeks, but by the end of April the refugee trains had stopped. The Grand Junction Union Depot went back to catering to normal railroad traffic.

Passengers could head east to Glenwood Springs, Leadville and Denver, or south to Delta, Montrose, Gunnison and over the Continental Divide to the Front Range. Or they could travel west to Salt Lake City and Ogden, then on to California. Military troops mustered at the depot during two world wars.

In addition to businessmen,

families and tourists, the Grand Junction depot was visited by celebrities and politicians in its early years. It hosted United States presidents: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and later, Harry Truman. Celebrities who stopped there in its early years included escape artist Harry Houdini, Wild West showman "Buffalo Bill" Cody, and silent movie star Tom Mix.

The depot continued to provide freight and passenger service until it was closed in 1992. That same year, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. It was listed as one of Colorado's Most Endangered Places in 2010.

Since it closed, the depot has had several different private owners. In 2016, it was purchased by husband-and-wife Arizona real estate developers Anzures and Sanchez, even though restoring an old railroad depot hadn't been part of

their long-term plans.

Because Sanchez was born in the Grand Valley and has family here, the couple had visited Grand Junction for many years. In 2015, they bought the building at 545 Main St., and then went to eat at Pufferbelly Restaurant next to the depot, where they learned that the abandoned depot was for sale.

"We couldn't believe this depot was going to be sold on the open market," Sanchez said.

After some initial hesitation, they decided to buy it, finalizing the purchase in March of 2016.

Since then, the couple has worked with the Friends of the Grand Junction Depot, the Grand Junction Downtown Development Association and the Colorado State Historic Fund to raise much of the estimated \$4 million needed to restore the building.

They also have obtained commitments from Amtrak to use the building once it's renovated for its passenger service, and from a local restaurant company to anchor the building with a full-service restaurant. Other retail businesses are expected to offer shops in the building, and a 16-room boutique hotel is planned for the annex building to the south of the main depot.

Renovation of the interior of the building is to begin later this month, Anzures said, after the National Train Day events scheduled for today.

Sources: Author interviews with Dustin Anzures, Veronica Sanchez, Samuel Baseler and Judy Woodbury; historic newspapers at newspapers.com; "The Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake" by U.S. Geological Survey, earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/events/1906calif/18april/; "One Building's Life: A History of Salt Lake City's Denver and Rio Grande Depot" by Brandon Johnson, Utah Historical Quarterly, Summer 2010.

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Obituaries

Allen Ray Crim

December 8, 1953 - April 24, 2026

Allen Ray Crim, age 72, passed away on April 24, 2026 in Grand Junction, CO. Allen was born to Noel and Asta Crim on December 8, 1953 in Grand Junction, CO. The youngest of two children, he grew up on Orchard Mesa and spent his childhood ranging the open areas by the Gunnison River, creating and recording radio shows with his friend Calvin and frequenting downtown establishments. At an early age, Allen began working with his father, Noel, at Valley Radiator Shop on Main Street. This is where he learned many skills, including welding that he used all through his life.

While attending GJHS, he met his soulmate, Sue, in band class. Many variations of their meeting were told over the years, but all centered on the truth that she was the love of his life and they spent almost 55 years together in marriage.

Over the years, Allen's life was defined by his devotion to family, a passion for craftsmanship and a deep love for the outdoors, history and music. He worked tirelessly in an accounting career to support his family and always prioritized the time that they spent together. Allen was often found in his shop, where he worked on everything from woodworking to welding unique "creatures" out of scrap metal.

Allen's fascination with history was expressed through his long-time membership in the Grand Mesa Muzzleloaders, where he embraced the craft and community of the rendezvous lifestyle. Music was a constant thread throughout his life; a lifelong euphonium player, he performed with a local polka band and The Grand Junction Centennial Band, where he also served a stint as Board President. Most notable, Allen was a gifted guitarist and vocalist who found his greatest joy singing for his grandchildren or playing around a campfire.

Allen was a lifelong romantic. He was an artist, a musician and a storyteller. He was passionate and engaging. He was one who knew that life is just a leap of faith; he spread his arms, held his breath, and trusted in his cape.

He is survived by wife, Susan, their children: Jennifer and her husband Jay and Brian and his wife Jen. He leaves behind two grandsons, Owen and William, both of whom he was so proud. Also survived by his brother Noel Jr.

A private service will be held to celebrate his life. Memorial contributions may be made to The Grand Junction Centennial Band.

Obituaries

Grace Yueh-Ching Roberts

01/22/1935 - 05/02/2026

Grace Yueh-Ching Roberts was born on January 22, 1935 in Taipei, Taiwan, into a large family of ten children whose grandfather rose from banana inspector to exporter. Growing up during Japanese occupation, she learned Chinese and Japanese and witnessed wartime hardships, such as soldiers dismantling her home's iron gates. After World War II, she worked for the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group, where she met American soldier Steve Mamich Sr.; after an extended courtship, they married and she immigrated to the United States on Columbus Day 1960 with less than \$100. Settling first in Los Angeles and then Grand Junction, Colorado, Grace built a life of steady work first at a tax preparer followed by a 32 year career at Palisade National Bank where she rose from cashier to Vice President. She raised two sons, was an active member of the Lutheran Church of Messiah and established a lasting legacy of four grandchildren and 1 great grandson.

Funeral Services will be held at the Messiah Lutheran Church in Grand Junction Colorado on Friday May 8th at 10:30 a.m.

BROWN'S CREMATION & FUNERAL SERVICE

Obituaries

Jerry Wayne Searcy

01/01/1940 - 04/22/2026

Jerry Wayne Searcy, of Clifton, Colorado, passed away on April 22, 2026, at the age of 86 surrounded by his children and close friends. Jerry was born on January 1, 1940, in Albany, Missouri. The family moved to Buffalo, Wyoming when Jerry was 4. He graduated from the University of Wyoming, serving in the ROTC unit and on the Rifle team.

Jerry served in the United States Air Force for 21 years, achieving the rank of Major. During the Vietnam War, he flew more than 300 missions as a B-52 navigator. After the military, Jerry moved to Western Colorado. He was a peach farmer, then became involved in breaking, training and promoting the adoption of wild horses.

Jerry is survived by: his sister Joyce (Searcy) Shoumaker, his children Tauni (Jon), Wade (Wendy), and his two grandchildren Jono Crefeld and Thomas Searcy.

A celebration of life will be held on May 17, 2026 at Mesa County Sheriff's Posse Grounds, 648 25 Road, Grand Junction CO, 81505 from 1:00 to 5:00 PM.

In Memoriam

Mary Ann Bissell

January 23, 1944 - May 7, 2020

To hear your voice, to see you smile, to sit and talk to you a while. To be together in the same old way. Would be my dearest wish today.

Kelly

Benjamin Paul Bonnet

Benjamin strolled into God's presence on April 26, 2026. He was the son of Chuck and Kathy Bonnet and the brother of Sean Bonnet. A Celebration of life will be held at the Redlands Community Center on June 14, 2026 at 5:00 P.M. Bring your stories and memories.

BROWN'S CREMATION & FUNERAL SERVICE



Some of us may think that holding on makes us strong, but sometimes it is letting go.