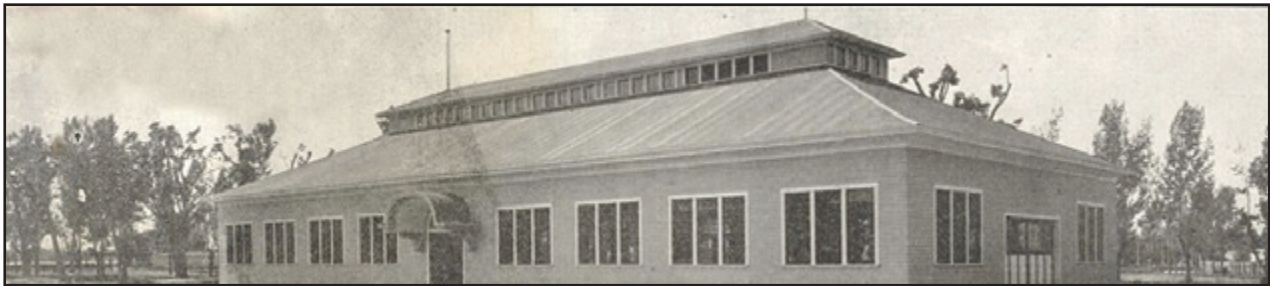


FIRST DRAFT



Lincoln Park Auditorium as it appeared sometime after 1924. Date is unknown.

CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION FACEBOOK PAGE

THE GATHERING PLACE



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The title of this photo in the DPL archive is “New Exhibition Hall at Grand Junction fair grounds,” with a date range of 1880-1900. But if it was built before 1900, it had to be the earlier exhibition hall that was torn down in 1923. However, it has the same upper window configuration as the later Lincoln Park Auditorium, also shown on this page.



THE DAILY SENTINEL THROUGH WWW.NEWSPAPERS.COM

This 1969 advertisement for a ski swap may have been the first printed reference to the Lincoln Park “Barn.”

Lincoln Park Barn has served as dance hall, convention center and recreation facility

In the summer of 1923, there was a brief controversy over demolishing the old exhibition hall at Lincoln Park, replacing it with a new one and completing the construction in time for the county fair in mid-September.

In early August, The Daily Sentinel urged the city to delay the project so that it wouldn’t interfere with a large Church of God camp then underway at the fairgrounds at Lincoln Park.

However, City Manager George Garrett and others wanted a new building erected in time for the county fair that was to open on Sept. 12.

Bids were taken, contractor V.R. Bush was awarded the project, and the cost was reported at \$9,000, not including the roof. But the project was immediately delayed because the structural steel needed for the building was not available.

Even so, it appears from newspaper accounts in 1923 that a partially completed building was in use during the county fair: On Sept. 15, 1923, the Sentinel reported, “All exhibitors were delighted with the new exhibition hall as it is much easier to keep clean and cool.”

However, the building that became known as the Lincoln Park Auditorium — it was not Lincoln Park Barn until decades later — didn’t officially open to the public until the summer of



BOB SILBERNAGEL

1924. The first event, on June 4, was a dance featuring the Harris Orchestra.

That was fitting, because throughout the auditorium’s early history, dances were the most frequently held events.

The auditorium had a 120-foot-by 60-foot dance floor, billed as the largest in Western Colorado.

It also had a large stage and it could provide seating for up to 1,000 people. “It will prove an ideal place for all kinds of meetings,” the Sentinel declared, “and will be available for school and other local theatricals.”

So, while dances were frequent, conventions were nearly as ubiquitous. In fact, the second major event held at the auditorium that summer was the opening ceremony for the combined Colorado-Wyoming Grand Army of the Republic gathering that commemorated veterans of the Civil War.

Throughout 1924, there were a variety of similar events. Some 3,000 former residents of Missouri who were then living in Colorado descended on Grand Junction for a reunion, to hold parades and horse and mule races at Lincoln Park, and a large dance in the auditorium.

There were almost-weekly dances, sponsored by a variety of groups, including the American Legion’s big Armistice Day Dance, held on Nov. 11.

One thing that was not held

at the auditorium or Lincoln Park in 1924 was a county fair. Despite the purported success of the 1923 fair, there seems to have been no planning for a 1924 fair, despite the urging of the Sentinel and some local businesses. The reasons for not planning a fair were not explicitly stated in newspaper stories, but some stories hinted at financial difficulties for the fair.

Even so, in March 1924 the Sentinel reported there were efforts to have something like a fair: “The club workers in the county will have a fall program in the shape of an all-day session and exhibition at Lincoln Park this year, whether we have a county fair or not. The boys and girls will have their pigs and calves.”

That event was held in September. But there was no county fair. It turned out that the 1923 county fair was the last one held at Lincoln Park.

That doesn’t mean the Lincoln Park Auditorium was abandoned, however. Dances continued regularly. High school basketball games were held there, along with car shows and style shows.

In 1926, in lieu of a county fair, a multi-day Chautauqua was held at the auditorium, featuring multiple musical performances, lectures, vaudeville acts and live theater.

Over the coming decades, there would be conventions for statewide horticulture and agriculture groups, fraternal organizations such as the Odd Fellows, and church-related organizations such as the Seventh

Day Adventists.

Both Democrats and Republicans held county conventions there. Boy scouts and girl scouts often held events in the building.

Professional wrestling matches became a regular feature at the auditorium in the 1940s. So did the annual Lion’s Club Carnival, which was held at the Lincoln Park Auditorium well into the 1970s.

As one might expect, the auditorium was also used for war-related activities during World War II. There was a Victory Ball in July 1942 that attracted 1,500 people and raised \$19,000 for the war effort through the sales of war bonds and stamps.

Over the next few years, the auditorium served as a location to say farewell to Marines, sailors and soldiers headed off to the war. A film about the attack on Pearl Harbor was shown there, and there were regular dances to raise more money for the war.

In April of 1945, once the war in Europe had ended, the Lincoln Park Auditorium became the collection center for a massive clothing drive to assist European war refugees.

In the post-war years, the number of dances seemed to taper off at the auditorium. But there continued to be events such as home and boat shows, events for businesses to display merchandise for hunters, fishermen and outdoor sports enthusiasts. The Latin-Anglo Alliance held a dance there in 1975.

Through most of these events, the building was still referred to

as the Lincoln Park Auditorium. The earliest printed reference I found to it being called the Lincoln Park Barn was a 1969 advertisement in the Sentinel for a Powderhorn National Ski Patrol Ski Swap. The nickname was probably used by many in the community before it made its way into print.

In 1980, the Barn was renovated by the city, after it had been condemned as a fire trap. At first, the city planned to demolish the building. However, a citizens’ campaign dubbed “Save the Barn” raised \$30,000 to refurbish it. That was matched by the city, and work was conducted to modernize the restrooms and the electric wiring, floors were resealed and new basketball hoops were installed.

Since then, the building has continued to be used by the community. There have been gun shows, conventions and private gatherings for events like anniversaries. The city Parks and Recreation continues to hold classes and events there for things like yoga, tai chi and line dancing. It is still available for rent through the City of Grand Junction.

Sources: Early editions of The Daily Sentinel at www.newspapers.com; “1922 Fair offered four days of stunning entertainment,” by Joe Zeni; City of Grand Junction Facebook page; “Lincoln Park Barn, Grand Junction Colorado,” www.mar-mot.org; additional information provided by Joe Zeni.

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JUDY SILBERNAGEL

Lincoln Park Barn as it appears today. There are only five windows on the upper level, compared with 20-plus in the two earlier photos.