

FIRST DRAFT

Historic GJ buildings survived multiple changes in downtown

When Chet Allen purchased the old Bannister's building at 436 Main St. in Grand Junction, which he now leases to the owners of ThunderStruck Valley, he found it had an unusual feature. There was a freight elevator from the basement that was used to ferry



BOB SILBERNAGEL

caskets and furniture up and down during the days when the building was a furniture store and a mortuary. Allen had no need of the elevator for Boomers, the jazz club and restaurant he initially operated in the building. So, Allen sealed it off. "But it's still there," he added. "We made a point of leaving it there in case there is some need of it" in the future.

William Bannister opened the furniture store at 436 Main in the mid-1890s, Allen said, and the elevator was installed sometime between 1900 and 1910.

Allen's building is among the oldest retail buildings in Grand Junction. According to a city of Grand Junction brochure of historical buildings in the city, the building was constructed about 1890, less than a decade after Grand Junction was founded.

A half-dozen structures in downtown Grand Junction date from the same time — before the turn of the 20th century. One is Benges Shoes at 514 Main St. It is believed to be the oldest continuously operating shoe store in Colorado. "Maybe even west of the Mississippi," said Bruce Benge, the current proprietor of the store.

His grandfather, Bertrand Madison Benge, founded the store in 1911, in another building. He moved to the current site in 1921.

Because May is Archaeology and Historic Preservation Month, the city is encouraging people to visit or view some of the historic structures. A walking-tour brochure listing two dozen of these old buildings is available at City Hall.

The Museums of Western Colorado, whose facilities include the 1925 Whitman Education Center, one of the buildings on the walking tour, is also celebrating this month. It kicked off events May 1 with its 50th anniversary celebration.

On May 13, the museum opened a new exhibit at its downtown location, 462 Ute Ave. "Western Colorado Weaponry: Tools of Survival and Conflict Exhibition," which explores everything from weapons used by Paleolithic people to hunt mammoths in what's now western Colorado, to bows and arrows used by early Utes, to firearms brought by Europeans. It will run through Feb. 12, 2017.

In addition, the Museums'



What the inside of Benges Shoes looked like in 1921.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRUCE BENGE/Special to the Sentinel



The Benges storefront, as photographed in the 1920s.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRUCE BENGE/Special to the Sentinel

Dinosaur Journey facility at 550 Jurassic Court in Fruita is hosting an exhibition called "Tyrannosaurus Rex and the End of the 'Age of Dinosaurs'" through Sept. 18. The exhibit opened last Friday.

The museum is also hosting a variety of trips and events this month, as it does every month. The final event will be a Museum Gallery Tour at the main museum May 26, led by David Bailey, the curator of history for the museums.

The old buildings in downtown Grand Junction offer their own glimpses of the community's history, both in the bricks and mortar and in the stories of the different businesses that operated in them.

For instance, the building that houses Main Street Bagels at 559 Main St., was built in 1885 originally as an opera house. It also housed church services, and much later, a sporting goods store and furniture retailer. But for nearly 30 years it served as the Mesa County Courthouse,

according to the city's walking tour brochure.

Mesa Theater at 538 Main has been a theater since its beginning in the mid-1890s, but it was originally known as the Mesa Opera Rink. Later it became the Majestic Theater and is believed to have shown the first movie with sound in Grand Junction. It became primarily a music venue in the early 1990s.

The address now listed for Benges was once a retail store called the Bargain House, according to county records dating to 1904. By 1907, the business listed at that address sold pottery and pianos.

Bruce Benge said he was told the building later housed a hardware store and perhaps a sporting goods store before his grandfather took over the building. The photos on this page show what the store looked like shortly after it moved into its current location. Most of the chairs, the original cash register and some of the other fixtures are

still present in the store.

Chet Allen's building at 436 Main provided a home to the Bannister's Furniture business from its earliest days until the store closed in 1999.

William Bannister opened the furniture store and funeral parlor in the mid-1890s. Later his two brothers and a sister joined the business, and it was for a time called Bannister Brothers and Silcox.

The combined business operated by Bannister wasn't unusual at the time. The 1904 Mesa County directory listed three other furniture store-funeral parlor operations.

Bruce Benge grew up in the family store when his father, Harry S. Benge, ran the business. Bruce went to college in the early 1970s, then spent three years working for the National Park Service. He returned to the store in 1975 and, he said, "I've been here ever since."

Benge's store has survived for more than a century — through multiple economic crises — because the owners have always provided good products and have "treated people like they want to be treated," Bruce said.

For Allen, it's gratifying to own one of the oldest buildings in the city, even though he now leases it and no longer operates his own business there. "Regardless of downtown's struggles, it's still the place to be," he added.

Information for this column came from Chet Allen, Bruce Benge, a Daily Sentinel article by Priscilla Mangnall, the city of Grand Junction and Mesa County Libraries.

Bob Silbernagel's email is bobsilbernagel@gmail.com.

REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Police shoot, wound man in Boulder

BOULDER — Boulder police shot and wounded a man who had been firing a handgun into the Boulder Creek in a downtown area popular with joggers, cyclists and strollers, police spokeswoman Shannon Cordingly said Sunday.

Hours after the violence on a sunny Sunday afternoon, police armed with shotguns patrolled the area near the city's main library. Officers were seeking an unidentified man who had been with the wounded man and had run from police, Cordingly said in a statement. It was unclear if a single shot heard after the police shooting was connected to the earlier encounter, Cordingly said.

Police had responded after dispatchers received multiple 911 calls around 2:15 p.m. about a man shooting into the creek, Cordingly said. The man pointed his gun at two officers, at least one of whom shot at him.

Man's body found near Animas River

DURANGO — The Durango Herald reports that the body of a 40-year old man discovered along the west bank of the Animas River has been identified as Kansas resident Randy Shaw.

The newspaper reported that around 2:30 p.m. Saturday, a worker spotted Shaw's body behind a West Park Avenue home, downstream from the Main Avenue bridge. The body was in a sleeping bag, covered in brush near the river's edge.

Detective Sgt. Deck Shaline said an autopsy would determine if foul play may have played a role in his death. There were no obvious signs of trauma, Shaline said.

Cathy Seibel, the LaPlata County deputy coroner, said it's unclear how long Shaw's body had been along the riverbank.

Small change means big cost for schools

LOVELAND — A change in state safety codes means the Thompson School District will have to replace the knobs on 1,140 doors at a cost of up to \$600,000.

The state fire code was updated in 2015 to address a need for teachers to quickly lock their doors from inside their classrooms in the event of an emergency, the Reporter Herald reported.

Schools have been able to use magnets over locking mechanisms, allowing doors to be easily opened throughout the day and still lock quickly by simply removing the magnet. But by Jan. 1, 2018, that fix will no longer be enough, and all doorknobs in all schools statewide must be changed. The doors are designed to create a barrier during a fire, and the magnets interfere with the seal that creates that barrier.

"It's amazing that this little thing affects so much," said Dan Maas, the Thompson Schools chief operations officer.

Teen stabbed by sword, is recovering

HERRIMAN, Utah — A Utah teenager is recovering after police say his friend stabbed him with a sword during a sleepover.

Unified police Lt. Lex Bell says the incident happened around 6 a.m. Saturday at a home in Herriman.

KSL-TV of Salt Lake City reported the suspect took a sword from the sleeping victim's blade collection and stabbed him in the abdomen.

The victim's parents ran into the room and called police. Authorities say an officer tried to Taser the suspect but it was ineffective. Bell said firefighters entered and helped subdue him. The victim was flown to a hospital and is stable.

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Teen facing felony charge

A 14-year-old student at West Middle School is facing a felony charge of second-degree assault after punching another student in the face during an incident that was purposefully videotaped by a bystander who was told of the impending fight.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department, Elijah Robles is seen on video on Thursday walking away from school and punching another 14-year-old student in his left cheek, knocking him to the ground and leaving him temporarily unconscious.

The victim is seen on the video, sitting stunned on the ground and watching Robles run away. The victim did not provoke the punch and the video shows that Robles was the aggressor, the affidavit said.

The victim sustained a laceration on the

inside of his cheek and he was taken by his parents to Community Hospital for treatment. A physician determined the victim sustained serious bodily injury. Robles told police he had told the victim they were going to fight after school and that was why the incident was being filmed. Robles said he punched the student because he was upset at the way the student treated him earlier in the day, the affidavit said. Robles also was arrested on suspicion of a misdemeanor charge of fighting in a public place.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

■ Arthur Archuleta, 49, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of domestic violence and third-degree assault.

■ Annette Kiera Garber, 27, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of possession of

drug paraphernalia, possession of drugs and failure to appear on a warrant.

■ Joshua Scott Melton, 31, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of crimes against at-risk people, identity theft, two counts of forgery, four counts of fraud, three counts of theft, contempt of court and two count of failure to appear for a municipal warrant.

■ Carrie Ann Michalowski, 35, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of domestic violence and third-degree assault.

■ Andrew James Stewart, 32, was arrested Saturday on suspicion of drug possession, possession of drug paraphernalia, driving as a habitual offender, obstructing a telephone, harassment and failure to appear on a warrant.

The Grand Junction Police Department did not release an activity report on Sunday.

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