

FIRST DRAFT

Herrick killings were an early love triangle with public

Newspapers provide the first rough draft of history. — Philip Graham.

A deadly love triangle led to two of the earliest murders in Mesa County, as well as a jail break and the end of the public careers of two county officials.

Henry A. Herrick, 46, and his wife, Maggie, 35, moved to Mesa County in early 1883.

In June of 1883, Henry purchased land near Kannah Creek.

The ranch was a little west of where U.S. Highway 50 now runs, off Bean Ranch Road, said Anita Clark, now 90. Clark grew up on Kannah Creek and recalls hearing about the Herrick killings as a child.

Maggie didn't stick around long. By mid-July of 1883, she had left Herrick and was living in New Mexico. Herrick obtained a divorce and soon became involved with a widow named Margarette Thompson.

Thompson was called a "housekeeper" by the Grand Junction News, and she would later be described as a tall brunette who was missing most of her front teeth. Even so, Maggie Herrick saw the woman as something other than a "housekeeper."

Maggie arrived in Grand Junction by train on July 25, 1883, and left on horseback the next morning to visit the Kan-

nah Creek ranch.

Henry Herrick later said he and Margaret Thompson were riding together in a wagon when they encountered Maggie on the road between Whitewater and Grand Junction.

They began arguing, and Henry told Maggie he wanted nothing to do with her. "Soon after she drew a revolver and shot Mrs. Thompson in the back, the ball going through the heart and causing instant death," according to an early history of the county. Thompson had a young daughter and was pregnant when killed.

Henry Herrick galloped his wagon to Grand Junction and found Sheriff Martin Florida. Maggie Herrick was arrested the same day.

During an August inquest, one witness who talked with Maggie after the murder asked why she hadn't shot Henry also. "She said she would have, but she happened to think of his mother, and would not, for her sake," the News reported.

Maggie remained in jail until late October, when County Judge Robert Cobb allowed her to visit the Kannah Creek ranch under the sheriff's supervision to identify cattle belonging to her.

Sheriff Florida advised Maggie not to go near the ranch house while he searched for her cattle, but she ignored him.

She encountered Henry Her-

rick, wielding a shotgun, who demanded she leave the property at once. After exchanging heated words with Herrick she started to leave, a witness said. Then, Herrick blasted her in the back with his shotgun. She died with eight pieces of buckshot lodged in her back.

Florida managed to arrest Herrick before he could escape. He was held in the county jail, awaiting trial.

In the meantime, voting was held to choose the first county elected officials. Mesa County had been established in February 1883, carved from Gunnison County. Officials for the county, including Sheriff Florida and Judge Cobb, were appointed shortly thereafter, but had to stand for election in November.

In late October, the sheriff made it clear he didn't think fellow Democrat, Judge Cobb, was fit for the job in large part because of his handling of the Herrick court cases.

According to Florida, the judge signed the decree approving the Herricks' divorce, but after the killing of Margaret Thompson, he represented Maggie Herrick and overturned the divorce.

Then, after Henry was arrested for his ex-wife's murder, Judge Cobb was his defense attorney. At the same time, Cobb remained the judge who would hold the initial hearings in the case.

In early November, Mesa County residents voted to replace Judge Cobb with R.D. Mobley. They also rejected



BOB SILBERNAGEL/Special to the Sentinel

Bean Ranch Road, looking north toward Kannah Creek and Grand Junction. Herrick ranch, where Maggie Herrick was murdered, was believed to be a short distance west of here.

Florida's election bid and chose William Innis as sheriff.

Perhaps that's why Florida became less than diligent about his duties. On the evening of Dec. 23, while Florida was absent, Henry Herrick escaped from jail with the help of an accomplice. When Florida returned that evening, he didn't bother to check on his prisoner. He discovered the escape the next morning.

Florida took that evening's train to Ogden, Utah, and returned four days later, reporting that he had found traces of Herrick in Green River, but

no farther west. He also sent telegrams to points in southern Utah, where he believed Herrick had fled. He claimed there was no chance Herrick could escape the law enforcement search.

That was an overly optimistic opinion about finding someone in the rugged country of southeastern Utah that harbored fugitives well into the 20th century.

Herrick was never seen again. It was later learned that he had sold much of his property in early November, and he apparently took all the cash from bank accounts belonging to Maggie Herrick and Margaret

Thompson.

Anita Clark said Thompson was buried on the Herrick ranch off Bean Ranch Road. But the gravesite has been lost with recent development in the area.

Anita Clark and Marie Tipping, with the Museum of Western Colorado, provided invaluable assistance for this column. Information also came from "Wicked Western Slope," by D.A. Brockett and "History and Business Directory of Mesa County," by Chas. W. Haskell. Bob Silbernagel's email is bobsilbernagel@gmail.com.



BOB SILBERNAGEL



CHRISTOPHER TOMLINSON/The Daily Sentinel

I-70 TRACTOR-TRAILER CRASH

A tractor-trailer that was hauling pork products sits in the median of Interstate 70 at mile marker 41 early Sunday morning after the truck drifted off the side of the road. The Palisade Fire Department got a call at 6:50 a.m. Sunday about the crash, which closed the westbound lanes of I-70 for a short time. The driver of the truck was uninjured.

County re-evaluates budget

By GARY HARMON
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The first draft of the 2016 Mesa County budget depended heavily on shifting money from capital projects to the general fund to balance the \$58 million spending plan — a budget technique that appears to be expressly prohibited by a 1981 vote that established a 2 percent county sales tax.

County officials said they are re-examining how to deal with inability to move money out of the capital fund.

"We are working through various scenarios and continuing discussions with the County Attorney's office to figure out what all our options are," County Administrator Frank Whidden said in an email to The Sentinel.

The Mesa County Commission is now considering the budget, which must be adopted by December.

Undergirding the county's budget is a \$2.96 million line of new revenue identified as "Indirect Cost Allocation — Capital Fund." The 2015 budget does not have a similar revenue

stream. Without the nearly \$3 million in new revenues, the budget presented by the administration would be out of balance by that same amount.

Another feature of the budget proposal was the use of \$1.5 million in anticipated turnover within the general fund, a new source of revenue.

The preliminary budget Whidden presented to the commission left most department budgets unchanged. The Sheriff's Department, for instance, was set to increase 0.17 percent from \$22.6 million to \$23.2 million.

The District Attorney's Office was set to slip slightly, 1.95 percent, from \$3.6 million to \$3.5 million.

Economic development spending was projected to increase from \$633,750 to \$651,200, or 2.8 percent.

The budget proposal left current spending of \$375,000 on the Museums of Western Colorado and \$23,500 on nonprofit organizations.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Shoplifting suspects sought

Crime Stoppers of Mesa County is seeking the public's help in identifying suspects who stole food from Walmart, 2881 North Ave., at about 1 p.m. on Sept. 13.

One suspect is identified as a white female with brown hair, about 24 to 28 years old and between 5 feet 7 inches to 5 feet 9 inches tall, weighing about 150 to 169 pounds. The woman was wearing blue jeans, a black tank top and glasses. The other suspect is a white man with blonde hair between 23 to 26 years old, and between 5 feet 10 inches to 6 feet 2 inches tall, weighing 160 to 170 pounds. The man was last seen wearing a black T-shirt with a graphic, blue jeans and a baseball cap.

The surveillance video is available at www.241STOP.com.

Anyone with information about the suspects should call Crime Stoppers at 241-7867. Anyone who provides information leading to an arrest can earn up to a \$1,000 cash reward.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Someone used the financial information of another person, stealing \$750 from a business in the 1800 block of North 12th St. on Sept. 16.

- Donald Murray, 38, was arrested Oct. 15 on suspicion of possession of a schedule II controlled substance, possession with intent to distribute, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a dangerous or illegal weapon at 555 28 1/2 Road.

- Quentin Spiller, 18, received a summons Oct. 19 on suspicion of marijuana possession, possession of marijuana drug paraphernalia and alcohol possession in the 1200 block of Cannell Avenue.

- Someone attempted to use fake currency at a business in the 2800 block of North Avenue on Wednesday.

- Aranada Branning, 25, was contacted in a traffic stop in the area of 12th Street and Patterson Road. Branning was arrested on suspicion of possession of a scheduled II controlled substance.

- Someone entered a person's yard and home in the 500 block of 28 Road and attempted to steal items on Wednesday.

- Nicholas Hollingsworth, 28, received a summons on suspicion of stealing less than \$1,000 in items from Walmart, 2881 North Ave.

- Marc Coca, 52, and Steve Wagner, 52, received summonses on suspicion of trespassing after being contacted at the Fifth Street overpass and the railroad on Friday.
- Someone stole items valued at less

than \$300 from a vehicle in the 1600 block of Cannell Avenue on Tuesday.

- Michael Gersh, 37, received a summons Friday on suspicion of following a person in a public place in the 1600 block of North Avenue.

- Peter Arendas, 49, was arrested Friday on suspicion of menacing a person with a deadly weapon.

- Torin Eggen, 28, was arrested Friday on suspicion of criminal impersonation, drinking and driving, violation of a protection order, not having proof of insurance, driving under restraint and failing to use a turn signal in the North 400 block of Chipeta Avenue.

- Hannah Lowe, 25, received a summons Saturday on suspicion of disorderly conduct in the 600 block of Main Street. In the same incident, Stephanie Ford, 23, received a summons on suspicion of disorderly conduct and third-degree assault.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

- Alta Diane Carroll, 44, was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of domestic physical harassment after drinking alcohol and tearing her boyfriend's shirt during an argument at The Ale House, 2531 N. 12th St.

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