

FIRST DRAFT

Before the town of De Beque, there was rugged Ravensbeque

In late June of 1885, Frank Keyes arrived at the new post office at Ravensbeque, Colorado, and picked up his mail, the first mail delivered at the site.

Postmistress Marie deBeque, who was officially appointed to the position on June 29, 1885, said it marked the first regular mail service “up the Grand River” from Grand Junction.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Today the trip from Grand Junction to where Ravensbeque once sat — three miles west of what is now De Beque — is little more than a 45-minute jaunt by car.

But in 1885, when there was no road through De Beque Canyon, it required a rugged journey in one of two directions.

One route took travelers west from Grand Junction to Salt Wash at Fruita, then north to the Bookcliffs and a connection to Roan Creek, and southwest to the Colorado River, then called the Grand.

The second route went east to Rapid Creek, then to Plateau Creek, and finally northeast toward Roan Creek, where people had to cross the Grand River.

In July 1884, Dr. Wallace A.E. deBeque and his wife Marie made the trip from Grand Junction to Ravensbeque, where they were building a ranch. It took them three days, with two riding horses, one riding mule and two pack mules.

“We had a hard trip today in the burning sun,” deBeque wrote in his diary. “Marie nearly played out and I the same.” But, on the third day, he said, “A march of 12 miles brought us, thank Heaven, to the place known as Ravensbeque.”

Ravensbeque was no more than a conglomeration of ranch buildings serving several families, including deBeque’s brother, Col. Robert N. deBeque.

Still, the application to the postmaster general for the Ravensbeque post office said it would serve a population of about 150 people, presumably surrounding settlers.

Wallace deBeque was born in New Brunswick, Canada, in 1841. It isn’t known when he moved to this country, but he served in the Second Maine Cavalry during the Civil War. He was wounded and carried a



SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

The bold line on an 1894 map shows the approximate route taken from Grand Junction to De Beque using Salt Creek.

musket ball in his leg the rest of his life.

Dr. deBeque married his first wife soon after the war, but she died after the birth of a daughter.

He moved to Colorado for his health. By 1881, he was practicing medicine in Fairplay but not enjoying the climate. He complained of temperatures 40 degrees below zero and snow 3 feet deep. “This mild Italian climate (?) is more than I can endure,” he wrote in his diary.

By 1883, he’d left the high country for Grand Junction, which he described as “a straggled out town of boards, adobe and brick.” He added, “Its future may be great but its present is not attractive.”

Friends encouraged him to start a ranch up the Grand River, arguing the outdoor life would improve his health. He did so, but first traveled to Denver, where he married Marie Therese Bonholzer, a widow from Bavaria, in 1883.

They began work on their ranch the next summer. His diary offers insight into their life at Ravensbeque.

“Our garden (except the corn which the mule ate up) looks very well, considering the late date of planting.”

“Saw a rattlesnake today and killed it. Also saw a mountain lion about 300 yards away, but he ran from me, which saved me the trouble of running from him, as I was wholly unarmed.”

“Ralph Ostrom came out with some venison, which

comes very apropos as we were out of meat.”

DeBeque cut cottonwood trees and built a raft. He and Marie used it several times to cross to the southwest side of the Grand River to visit ranchers. It also ferried building materials for the cabin he was constructing.

But when deBeque and his brother tried to use the raft to travel to Grand Junction, it didn’t work. “We had many narrow escapes going through the canyon and finally abandoned the raft a mile and a half below Plateau Creek,” he said.

Dr. deBeque also used his medical skills when needed. On one occasion, he said, a man named Maxwell asked deBeque to treat his ailing mother in a cabin on Rifle Creek.

It was an all-day trip, made longer by high water. “Crossing Roan Creek I had an awful time,” he wrote. “It was a wild torrent. Had to swim my horse. We both came near to going into eternity via the Grand river. Mrs. Maxwell better. I returned home.”

Ravensbeque’s days as a post were brief. Dr. deBeque joined several other entrepreneurs, including Henry Rhone, to develop a toll road through De Beque Canyon that opened in 1886.

They also laid out a new townsite several miles east of Ravensbeque, which they named De Beque after their partner. Dr. deBeque bought the first lot in the town and built a home that still stands



MUSEUMS OF WESTERN COLORADO/ Special to the Sentinel

A portrait of Dr. deBeque, date unknown.

there. He and his family were the first residents.

In May of 1888, Marie deBeque filed papers to apply for a new post office at De Beque. A few years later, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad came through De Beque, and it became an important train stop.

Marie deBeque died in 1896, and Dr. deBeque remarried, this time to French native Marie Louise de la Villitte. The couple met in Mexico City. They had three children, including Armand deBeque, who lived in his hometown until his death in 1998.

Dr. Wallace deBeque died and was buried in his namesake town in 1930.

The postal records for Ravensbeque and De Beque also hint at other small communities that arose, then changed or disappeared. There was Ferguson, which became Silt. There was Hightower, far up Roan Creek. And there was Orson, 14 miles southeast of Ravensbeque.

Even De Beque almost became something else. In 1889, there was a push to change the town’s name to Collbran. The effort failed, and the name was applied to a new town near Grand Mesa.

Sources: “Dr. W.A.E. deBeque and His Pioneering at the Townsite of De Beque,” by Mrs. W.A.E., deBeque II (daughter-in-law), *The Colorado Magazine*, September, 1945; “De Beque House,” *Colorado Encyclopedia*, coloradoencyclopedia.org; *The Museums of Western Colorado; Palisade Historical Society*.

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Arrest made in stolen mountain bike

By AMY HAMILTON
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Some video footage and a Facebook post by Fruita police helped authorities arrest a man on suspicion of stealing an expensive mountain bike from the top of a parked vehicle in a hotel parking lot.

A visitor staying at Fruita’s La Quinta Inn reported his locked mountain bike valued at nearly \$8,000, along with a wheel inside an unlocked camper shell, were stolen the night of March 17, according to the Mesa County Sheriff’s Office.

The Fruita Police Department posted some video footage of the parking lot showing two men getting out of a minivan, cutting a cable and stealing the bike and tire.

A woman called police reporting the vehicle was hers and identified the men, one of whom is John Alsup, 34, who lives with her, according to an arrest warrant for Alsup.

Alsup was arrested Thursday on suspicion of first-degree



JOHN ALSUP

criminal trespassing of an automobile, theft of \$5,000 to \$20,000 and criminal mischief of less than \$300. He received a \$2,500 cash-only bond in court on Friday.

The woman told a Fruita police officer she had been dating the suspect, but the two had split up. She said Alsup and the other man have lots of stolen bicycles at a Grand Junction home and she promised to call police back to offer more information, but she

never followed up and refused to return messages from police, the warrant said.

A Mesa County Sheriff’s deputy told the Fruita officer he is familiar with Alsup, the other suspect and the woman. The deputy said he had spoken with them in person and knew where they lived. The deputy visited the home where Alsup lived at 110½ Anna Court, but Alsup refused to come to the door and opened the curtains to yell at the deputy to leave.

The deputy identified the woman and her van, Alsup and the other suspect in the video.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Fire in shed extinguished

Firefighters knocked down a blaze on a shed, saving a home from fire in the 500 block of 29½ Road on Saturday.

No one was home, and no one was injured when the fire started about 8:30 p.m., according to the Grand Junction Fire Department.

Sexual contact suspected

Mark Anthony Diaz, 35, was arrested on a warrant Thursday on suspicion of two counts each of unlawful sexual contact with a minor and four misdemeanor counts of indecent exposure, according to the Mesa

County Sheriff’s Office. Diaz was handed a \$35,000 cash bond in court on Friday and is prohibited from contact with children, including relatives.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff’s Office:

■ Deputies responded to a report of a burglary in the 500 block of 32½ Road on Thursday.

■ Deputies assisted officers with the Grand Junction Police Department in apprehending Norman Boyd in the area of 28¾ Road.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

■ A juvenile who is known to police was released to a guardian on suspicion of criminal mischief of less than \$300 after being contacted in the 2700 block of Unawep Avenue on May 12.

■ Stephanie Amos, 28, was arrested Wednesday on suspicion of possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of drugs, trespassing, criminal impersonation and several warrants.

■ Tyler Moriarty, 29, was arrested Wednesday on suspicion of possession of dangerous drugs and driving under the influence of drugs.

■ Damaris Carrillo, 55, was arrested Wednesday on suspicion of criminal mischief and domestic violence.

REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Missing kayaker presumed drowned

TELLURIDE — A kayaker who went missing in a reservoir in southwest Colorado is believed to have drowned.

A search for the 21-year-old man from Norwood has been underway at Miramonte Reservoir since Wednesday. The kayaker’s name has not been released.

Authorities say a friend of the man spoke with him while boating, and when he returned to the area about 10 minutes later, he saw that the kayak had capsized.

The boater then called 911.

The search at the 405-acre reservoir about 20 miles south of Norwood has included a dive team and a dog trained to find bodies in water.

Man dies in hit-and-run crash

COLORADO SPRINGS — Authorities are looking for a driver who was involved in a hit-and-run crash that killed a pedestrian in northeast Colorado Springs.

Officers found a man lying on East Woodmen Road on Saturday night. The victim, whose name has not been released, died at a hospital.

The vehicle that hit the man is described as a lighter-colored 1998 to 2000 Ford Ranger.

No other information was released.

The Daily Sentinel (ISSN 1445-8962)
Published every morning at 734 S. Seventh Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501.
Periodical Postage paid at Grand Junction, CO.
Carrier home delivery prices: 13 weeks - \$65.00, 26 weeks - \$130.00, 52 weeks - \$260.00.
Weekend delivery packages: Wednesday thru Sunday - \$244.40, Friday thru Sunday - \$197.60, Saturday & Sunday - \$163.80, Sunday only - \$163.80.
Weekend Delivery includes the following date in 2018: Nov. 22.
Single Copy: \$1.00 daily and \$2.00 Sunday.
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We're wearing jeans for charity at The Daily Sentinel. Ask me how you can help!
we've got heart!

The employees of *The Daily Sentinel* have joined together to adopt a local non-profit organization/charity of the month. We want to help raise awareness and badly needed funds for these organizations that are dedicated to helping people in our community.

MAY JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION: Challenger Baseball

Challenger Baseball is a non-profit division of little league baseball whose purpose is to give mentally challenged and/or physically disabled children a chance to participate in the sport. The program gives disabled children the opportunity to learn teamwork, leadership and responsibility. Kids also make lifelong friendships.

Challenger formed in Grand Junction 19 years ago with 12 kids – currently there are eight teams in the Grand Valley with 72 players overall.

Donations to support **Challenger Baseball** can be made by visiting: www.challengerbaseball.org or by contacting Carma Brown directly at 216-5554.

HEY, BASEBALL FANS!

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THE DAILY SENTINEL
734 S 7th Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501 • Advertising 258-4289 • For Home Delivery 242-1919

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How to reach us: 242-5050. Business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Circulation phones are open 7 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on weekends.
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