

## FIRST DRAFT

# Cass Hite embraced a rugged life prospecting river in Glen Canyon

Cass Hite was a well-known prospector in Utah and Colorado by Sept. 9, 1891, when he encountered fellow miner Adolph Kohler in Green River, Utah.

Kohler had created a company with a name almost identical to Hite's company, and he tried to raise money for a mining venture in south-

eastern Utah by letting people think Hite was involved. When Hite exposed his scam, Kohler threatened to kill him.

Hite said he went to see Kohler in Green River to settle their dispute peaceably. But when their meeting ended, Kohler lay dead and another man was wounded, the victims of Hite's pistol.

Hite always claimed he shot in self-defense, after Kohler fired a rifle at him from 15 feet and missed. Still, he was convicted of second-degree murder in October 1892. He spent seven months in the Utah penitentiary before the governor pardoned him.

Among those urging Hite's pardon were people in Grand Junction and eight of the jurors who convicted him.

Hite, a resident of Glen Canyon on the Colorado River for nearly 30 years, could inspire anger and even fear among those he met. But mostly he was respected and viewed kindly, even by those who sent him to prison. He was a man of many contradictions.

He may have done business with outlaws such as Tom McCarty, but he was partners with respected businessmen like those who developed gilsonite deposits in Utah.

Hite was friends with Jack Sumner, who had accompanied John Wesley Powell on the first expedition down the Colorado River in 1869, yet Hite lived long enough to meet some of the first recreational boaters to travel the river.

He often expressed his disdain for the Mormon church

and for Indians in general, but he had close friends among both groups.

Hite was an educated man who gave frequent interviews and wrote erudite letters to newspapers in Colorado and Utah. But he was also a self-promoter and a bit of a huckster, constantly predicting the next great mining bonanza.

Author James H. Knipmeyer provides an engaging portrait of Hite in his book, "Cass Hite, the Life of an Old Prospector," published by the University of Utah Press this year.

Knipmeyer is a Missouri native who has spent nearly 40 years visiting the Colorado Plateau and recording historic rock inscriptions in the region, including many by Cass Hite.

As a teenager in 1963, Knipmeyer and his family crossed the Colorado River on the ferry at Hite Crossing, Utah, just months before the site was flooded by Lake Powell.

Contrary to popular history, Knipmeyer makes a strong case that Hite Crossing was not named for Cass Hite, but his brother, Benjamin. However, it was Cass Hite who led Benjamin and other family members to the region.

Lewis Cass Hite was born in 1845 on the Hite farm in Illinois. He may have caught the prospecting bug early, when his father, Lewis Hite, headed to

California during the 1849 gold rush.

Cass worked on the farm and as a printer's apprentice before leaving home at age 21 for mining camps in the Northern Rockies. After a few years, he returned to his family.

He was briefly engaged to a local woman, but she left him and Hite never married. Shortly afterward, he departed permanently, to New Mexico, Mexico, Arizona, Texas and, eventually, Colorado. He was in Rico and Telluride before heading to lower elevations.

Although there was much wealth to be obtained in the high mountains, Hite decided desert mining was more to his liking.

While prospecting near the Utah-Arizona border in 1882, Hite wrote a letter to the Durango Herald, expressing joy at leaving the hardships of the mountains. "I can hardly speak of the healthfulness and delightfulness of the climate here without seeming to exaggerate," he added.

Three years earlier, Hite had been among those who helped recover the bodies of James Merrick and Henry Mitchell, two men killed while searching for a silver mine on Navajo land.

Hite spent several years unsuccessfully looking for the Merrick-Mitchell mine. During that time, he met and was befriended by legendary Navajo leader Hashkëniinii (often spelled Hoskininni).

Hite lived several months with Hashkëniinii's band, repeatedly asking about the

Merrick-Mitchell Mine and other silver deposits. He thus earned the nickname, "Pish-laki," an Anglicized version of the Navajo word for silver.

But Hashkëniinii declined to show Hite the mine. Instead, he and his son led Hite to places where gold and silver could be found along the Colorado River.

Cass Hite spent the next three decades prospecting at various places along the lower river. He developed what he called Dandy Crossing, which later became known as Hite Crossing.

He left for two seasons to search without success for a fabled lost gold mine in the Uintah Mountains. Prior to that, he was gone during his imprisonment over the Kohler shooting. But he always returned to the river in southeastern Utah.

He touted the area's mining prospects, saying in one letter to a Denver newspaper, "I think, candidly that the Colorado River placer fields are the most valuable in the United States."

He worked with Easterners to start a mechanical dredging operation in the river below Hite Crossing, but it proved a failure and was abandoned.

He lived alone, eventually near the mouth of Ticaboo Creek, but was never a hermit. He was friendly and outgoing to those who visited.

Other miners and speculators came and went. But Cass Hite remained in Glen Canyon until his death in 1914.

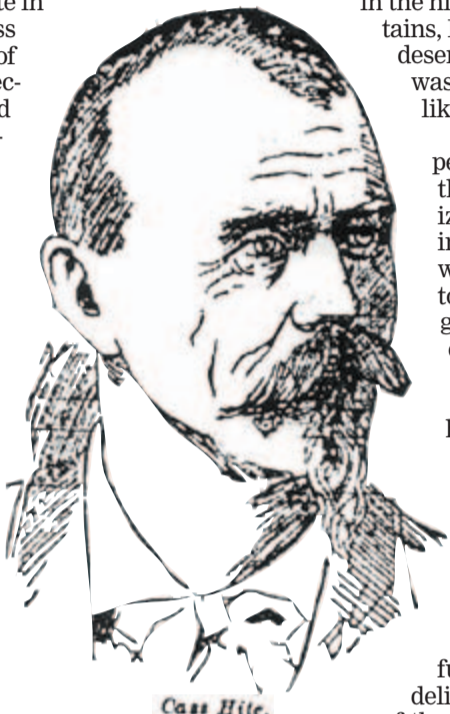
Although it's hard to prove what occurred 125 years ago, Knipmeyer said he leans toward Hite's self-defense version of the events at Green River. "I think, all in all, he was a good person."

*Information from this article came primarily from an interview with James Knipmeyer and his book, "Cass Hite, The Life of an Old Prospector," which is available at Out West Books and Grand Valley Books in Grand Junction. Other information came from the Museums of Western Colorado.*

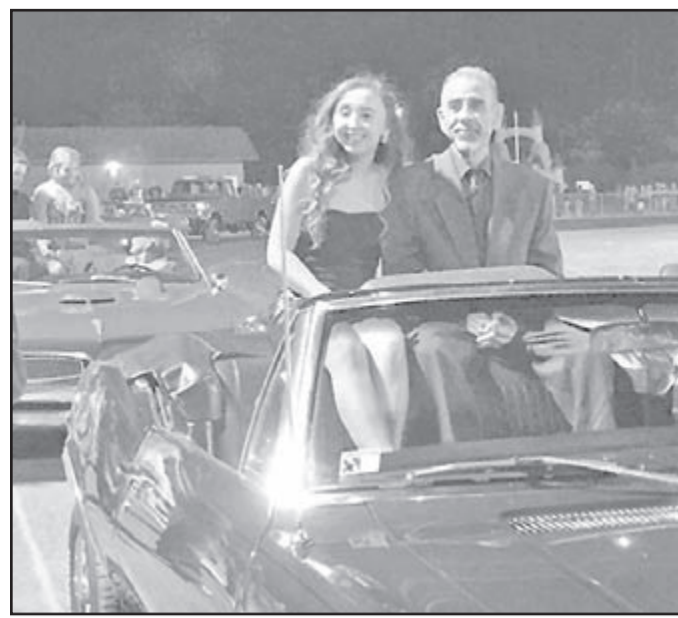
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BOB SILBERNAGEL



Cass Hite.



SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Junior Emily Martinez attends Delta High School homecoming events with her date, her dad Ben Martinez.

## Delta father ill, but escorts daughter to homecoming events

By KATIE LANGFORD

Katie.Langford@gjsentinel.com

When Delta High School junior Emily Martinez asked her date to escort her during homecoming week, she had no doubt he would say yes.

Emily asked her dad, Ben Martinez, to escort her to the week's events. Ben, a volunteer firefighter for 20 years, was diagnosed with stage four pancreatic cancer in August.

When Emily tied with another student for homecoming royalty, the school and students decided to have two junior girls honored at the homecoming football game.

"The best part was seeing my dad's face when he saw everyone," she said. "It's the first time he's been out to see everyone since he was diagnosed, and (the best part was) to see everyone stand up and cheer louder than they

cheered for anyone."

Through the roller coaster of emotions, from a cancer diagnosis to trying to celebrate every moment, Emily said she's grateful to live in a tight-knit community like Delta.

"It's been crazy with so many emotions and everything, and my school and our whole town has been so helpful," she said.

Elaine Lang, Emily's mom, said it was an unforgettable experience for her daughter.

"She is Ben's only child and biggest source of support, so it meant the world to her not only to get to be a part of the homecoming court but have her dad be a part of it as well," Lang said. "Delta High School is really sweet and supportive of its students, and I think it meant a lot to both of them."

## Hiker dies in fall from cliff

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAYTON, Utah — Davis County Sheriff's officials say an 18-year-old Layton woman died in a fall from a popular hiking spot.

Sgt. DeeAnn Servey said Sunday that, based on where her body was found and the weather conditions, detectives believe Alexys Hipwell accidentally slipped and fell in Adams Canyon.

Hipwell went hiking between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. Saturday.

She contacted her parents via Snapchat during her hike.

But they went to the canyon when she failed to return home. A bystander called 911 and a search and rescue team was dispatched around 9:15 p.m.

Searchers located her body around 12:30 a.m. at the bottom of a 70-foot cliff.

## Towns worry about glacier water supplies

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK — Colorado communities that rely on water from dozens of glaciers and glacier features in Rocky Mountain National Park are concerned because the glaciers are shrinking as temperatures climb and winter snowfall becomes more uncertain.

Water from the Poudre, Colorado and Big Thompson rivers get meltwater from dozens of glaciers and glacier-like features around the park.

Park glaciers always vary in size depending on the seasons,

*Even a small loss in the snow and ice that feed rivers in northern Colorado could have a big effect on water supplies to Fort Collins and other nearby communities.*

but low snowfall amounts could keep them from being replenished. A change of a few degrees when temperatures are near the freezing point can turn snow into

rain.

Between the 1990s and 2005, the glaciers started to shrink at an increasing rate. Rocky Mountain National Park's glaciers were already small by comparison.

The biggest glacier in Rocky Mountain National Park is about 31 acres, according to a study in 2007.

A two-year study is underway to find out how the glaciers have changed in area and volume since 2005. Scientists will be using historic maps, climate records, photographs and measurements to better understand what's happening.

Scientists will also study how

glacier melt influences rivers, by measuring streamflow and collecting water samples to see how much water glaciers contribute to rivers, the Fort Collins Coloradoan reported.

Even a small loss in the snow and ice that feed rivers in northern Colorado could have a big effect on water supplies to Fort Collins and other nearby communities.

Paul McLaughlin, an ecologist at the park's Continental Divide Research Learning Center, said changes in the amount of water and temperatures could also damage delicate river ecosystems.

## BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Man accused of assault

Timothy Vermillion, 24, of 2520 D Road, was arrested on Sept. 21 after he called 911 and told dispatchers he had just choked and beaten his pregnant wife and threatened to kill her, according to law enforcement records.

Mesa County sheriff's deputies responded to the home and arrested Vermillion after investigation revealed that he had been arguing with the woman about his pending move to another state and injured her. "She would not listen to him so he grabbed her by her throat and choked her," according to the arrest affidavit. Vermillion also said he threatened to kill her if she wouldn't stop, and the argument continued until their landlord came out and separated them. The woman told deputies that Vermillion choked her and punched her side, back and face.

Vermillion was arrested on suspicion of second-degree assault by strangulation, third-degree assault against a known preg-

nant victim, and menacing threats of death.

**According to the Grand Junction Police Department:**

■ Samuel Crowther, 30, was issued a summons for alleged DUI on Sept. 19.

■ Charles Rothenberg, 41, was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs after police contacted him for driving the wrong way on a one-way street on Sept. 22.

■ John Gault, 41, is suspected of stalking, burglary, violating a protection order, habitual domestic violence and resisting arrest. A warrant for his arrest was issued on Sept. 19.

■ Scott Bosserman, 35, and Robert Straley, 45, were issued summonses on suspicion of third-degree assault for injuring each other in the 500 block of Main Street on Sept. 21.

■ Ernesto Pena, 38, of 312 N. First St., was arrested on Sept. 21, for several outstanding warrants for failing to appear in court.

■ Anthony Gonzalez, 39, was issued a summons on Sept. 22 for allegedly entering

a motor vehicle at 2790 Riverside Parkway.

■ Stephen Roussin, 29 was arrested after police contacted him in the area of 2977 Riverside Parkway on Sept. 22. He was allegedly driving a car with fake license plates and had drug paraphernalia, and police found he had three active warrants.

**According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:**

■ May Yarian, 57, of 561 29½ Road, was arrested on Sept. 22 for a warrant for violating probation.

### Montrose death investigated

The Montrose County coroner is investigating the death of Deanna E. Snyder of Olathe, who was found dead on Sept. 23 in Montrose. Dr. Thomas Canfield, the coroner, said an autopsy is scheduled to determine the cause and manner of death. The case is under investigation by the coroner's office and the Montrose Police Department.

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