

2017 THIS WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

DENVER — A major to-do sparked between Republicans who control the Senate and Democrats the House over a bill that would help prevent rural hospitals from seeing cuts in money they receive from the state's hospital provider fee, a program that funds health care for the poor. The bill also would take that fee program out from under the revenue caps mandated by the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, a process called enterprising, which TABOR allows.

The Republicans also want to lower that revenue cap to offset the amount of money the state could keep by enterprising the fee. The dispute is by how much, if at all.

- **Today:** The House Finance Committee is to hear SB40, a measure that would require governmental agencies to provide electronic documents in Colorado Open Records Act requests.
- **Tuesday:** The Senate Finance

Committee may hear HB1242, a measure that would send to voters a proposed sales tax increase to fund transportation projects.

- **Wednesday:** The Senate Judiciary Committee is to hear HB1288, a measure that would change the state's recent felony DUI law to ensure that drunken-driving laws spend at least some time in jail.
- **Thursday:** The House Transportation

Committee is to debate SB229, a measure that increases penalties for motorists who violate the move-over-or-slow-down law if they cause bodily harm or death to an emergency service worker on the highway.

- **Friday:** This day is reserved for floor debate on bills that reach that stage in the House and Senate.
- **Next week:** The Legislature is running out of time to complete its business, not the least of which is the

state's \$26.8 billion budget, which still hasn't been completed because of discussions over transportation funding and the hospital provider fee. At this point, there only will be two and a half weeks left. By law, the Legislature must adjourn by midnight on May 10.

Scheduled committee hearings

are subject to change. All floor action and committees can be watched or heard on the Legislature's website, leg.colorado.gov. Check that website to see which measures are available for remote testimony, and how to register to speak.

— Charles Ashby

# FIRST DRAFT

## Gold ambitions led to marvel of engineering in Dolores Canyon

In May, 1891, Nathaniel Turner — manager of the firm that had recently completed the hanging flume in Dolores Canyon — optimistically told the Grand Junction News that the flume was operating just as intended to mine for gold.

“Washing (of gravel and rock) has been in progress for the past 10 days,” the newspaper reported, based on information from Turner, “and everything looks promising for a speedy and profitable return to the company.”



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Turner's prediction proved incorrect, however. Gold production wasn't as great as hoped, and Turner's company was in constant financial turmoil.

Turner wasn't the only one to tout the promise of the wood-and-steel engineering marvel that clings to the rock high above the Dolores River. A year earlier, the national Engineering and Mining Journal had been equally enthusiastic.

“This work will show how easy it is, when backed up by enterprising capital, to bring water ... to points which were always thought to be inaccessible,” the Journal said in May 1890. “The total cost will be about \$75,000 when finished, and it is expected to be completed within a few months.”

But the Journal was also wrong. The actual cost was between \$165,000 and \$175,000. And it required more than a year before the flume was partially completed. Turner's company built seven miles of flume, and planned to construct another three miles to reach the northernmost of the company's five mining claims along the Dolores River. Instead, it only reached the southernmost of those claims, and never went farther.

The five mining claims were filed from 1883 to 1885 by the Lone Tree Mining Company, a group of Salt Lake City investors. Lone Tree engaged in conventional placer mining on one claim, using limited water from nearby Mesa Creek.

In 1887, Lone Tree sold its claims to the Montrose Placer Mining Company, which consisted of investors from East



THE MUSEUMS OF WESTERN COLORADO

The Dolores Canyon hanging flume in operation, carrying water to mining claims.

St. Louis, Illinois. The company was managed by Turner, a somewhat mysterious figure who had reportedly gained experience in hydraulic mining in California.

Turner decided hydraulic mining was the best way to utilize the claims, and conceived the idea for a canal and flume to bring abundant water from the San Miguel River for the task.

Placer mining involves washing sand and gravel in sluice boxes so that the heavier gold is left behind. Hydraulic mining is an industrial variation in which water is shot through a nozzle at high pressure onto the face of a cliff or gravel deposit, washing away tons of gravel, rock and dirt that is run through a large-scale sluicing system.

The Montrose Placer Mining Company constructed seven miles of flume in 1890 and 1891. Another three miles of canal carried the water from the San Miguel River to the wooden flume.

Pine lumber was logged in the La Sal Mountains of Utah, and cut into large planks. At least 18 wagon trails were built

to carry materials to locations on the rim of Dolores Canyon, where they could be lowered to the workers below.

Workers were suspended by ropes to mark the grade the flume was to follow, and some were likely suspended while drilling holes for the thick bolts that were drilled into the rock to anchor the flume. Later, the workers used a cantilevered derrick attached to the end of one section of flume to construct the next section.

The problem for Turner's company wasn't the flume. It was the ore.

The gold recovered from the hydraulic washing proved to be too fine to be collected in appreciable amounts in the sluicing operations. The hydraulic mining in 1891 continued at least into July, but it's not clear how long it went on after that.

A year after Turner's optimistic proclamation, the U.S. General Land Office informed the Montrose Placer Mining Company that it still owed money for one of its five claims. Apparently, Lone Tree Mining had not made the final payment on the claim.

Montrose Placer Mining

Company was unable to pay. Turner left the company in disgrace. But in 1893, when the company was sold at a sheriff's sale, Turner reappeared to purchase it. He formed the Vixen Alluvial Gold Mining Company.

In 1897, Vixen obtained \$21,000 in additional financing. Turner and the company apparently intended to complete the final three miles of the flume and begin hydraulic mining on the other four claims. But that never occurred.

The entire system was lost in a court judgment in 1899, then sold again in 1900, this time to a new company called the Montrose Mining Company, whose investors were actually from the Front Range.

The new company filed documents saying it worked its claims for four weeks in 1903, but quit because it ran out of water.

The property was sold one more time, but there is no evidence that any work on the mining claims was conducted after 1903. The flume and mining claims were abandoned by 1904, although settlers and ranchers had already begun scavenging wood from the easily accessible portions of the flume.

A century after the flume was abandoned, an effort began to preserve it. The nonprofit Interpretive Association of Western Colorado, working with the Bureau of Land Management, and with assistance from a Colorado State Historical Grant, the JM Kaplan Fund and John Hendricks of Gateway Canyons Resort, contracted for studies of the flume's construction and its history. In 2012, 48 feet of the flume were rebuilt, using construction techniques similar to those used in 1890 and 1891.

The flume is listed on the National Register of Historic Structures and is the longest historic structure in Colorado.

*Information for this column came from "History and Background of the Hanging Flume," by Alpine Archaeological Consultants of Montrose; "Flume Work of the Montrose Placer Mining Company," The Engineering and Mining Journal, May 17, 1890; Interpretive Association of Western Colorado; and from Zebulon Miracle, curator at Gateway Canyons Resort.*

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## BLOTTER

COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Careless driving alleged

A pregnant driver and four passengers in her car were injured in a head-on collision last summer when a 31-year-old woman allegedly veered into oncoming traffic in their lane near Seventh Street and Elm Avenue in Grand Junction, according to arresting documents.

Rebecca Ann Wilkerson, of Clifton, was told Friday in court she could be charged with careless driving resulting in injury, drug possession and possession of an illegal weapon as a result of the July 18 wreck.

All five of the other car's occupants were hospitalized; the pregnant driver was monitored for several hours by labor and delivery hospital staff, an affidavit for Wilkerson's arrest said. The wreck tore out the stitches from one passenger's recent vasectomy, the

report said. The other three passengers suffered minor cuts, bruises and burns.

Wilkerson, who suffered "facial fractures" and cuts and bruises during the crash, refused to cooperate after being hospitalized. However, police found hypodermic needles, two bags of suspected methamphetamine, a bag of suspected tar heroin and two butterfly knives in the car, the report said.

Mesa County Judge Michael Grattan ordered her held on a \$25,000 cash-only bond in the case.

### Robbery reported in Fruita

Fruita police are investigating an early morning armed robbery Sunday at a Maverick station, 1103 U.S. Highway 6&50.

Someone called 911 at 6:40 a.m., Fruita Police Sgt. Kevin Paquette said Sunday af-

ternoon.

"A male wearing all black and armed with a semi-automatic handgun came in the door and demanded cash," Paquette said.

Paquette said the man, who was wearing a mask, walked away from the store with an undisclosed amount of cash with him.

No further information was available, but Paquette said anyone with information on the case should call dispatch at 970-242-6707

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

- Christopher Herrick, 59, is accused of harassment and domestic violence April 12.
- Laura Smith, 58, and Gilbert Cantu, 29, are each accused of drug possession April 16.
- Narl Eastman, 56, is accused of driving under revocation and traffic offenses Friday.

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**Real Estate West**

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.

**APRIL JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION: CASACOURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES**

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courtroom and other settings. CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to ensure these children don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in an inappropriate group or foster home. If you would like to join with us and help this committed organization, please send your donation to

**CASA, 744 Horizon Court, Suite 230, Grand Junction, CO 81506**  
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In Mesa County there are 275 children in the CASA program who need a volunteer and the number grows every week. You could be their voice. Call 242-4191 to volunteer today.

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