

FIRST DRAFT

# Building a road from coast-to-coast

In October 1912, A.L. Westgard, field representative for the American Automobile Association, visited Grand Junction while exploring a route to Salt Lake City for what he hoped would be a national coast-to-coast auto highway.

But to continue, he had to cross the high desert of western Colorado and eastern Utah.

It would take Westgard and a convoy of enthusiastic Grand Junction motorists 12 days to reach the Utah capital, with most of that time spent between Grand Junction and Price. It required 33 hours just to go from Mack to Cisco, Utah.

"After surmounting almost inconceivable difficulties, at times carrying cars bodily across deep ravines or across flooded rivers and battling with sticky adobe mud caused by two days rain, besides having serious breakdowns of almost every one of the eleven cars, we finally reached the town of Price," Westgard wrote in his 1920 book, "Tales of a Pathfinder."

Westgard dubbed this route "The Midland Trail," and the Midland Trail Association was formed later that year in Grand Junction to promote it.

But there was fierce competition for the first national coast-to-coast automobile route and the tourists it was expected to bring.

Some wanted "The Overland Trail," which followed closely the route now used by Interstate 80 across southern Wyoming, then to Salt Lake and San Francisco. Additionally, a proposed "Northwest Route" aimed from Chicago northwest to Seattle, and a southern route to Los Angeles.

There was also a fight over the Midland route. People in Meeker and Vernal, Utah, wanted it to come through their towns.

Westgard was on assignment from AAA to scope out all of the routes and their difficulties.

Shortly before he arrived in Grand Junction, Westgard laid claim to one of his several "firsts" in automobile travel.

"Our car was the first to cross Berthoud Pass, over the Rocky Mountains west of Denver," he wrote. "The elevation is 11,306 feet and the summit of the pass comes very near being the top of the world."

There was already a dirt road through Glenwood Canyon by this time. But, it's likely he detoured around De Beque Canyon by going south toward Plateau Creek and perhaps down Rapid Creek.

Those obstacles, however, weren't troublesome enough to merit mention in Westgard's book, unlike the trip to Price. He had heard that other motor-



A 1913 map prepared by the American Automobile Association showing proposed coast-to-coast routes.

ists had attempted to drive this section and failed.

Consequently, he said, "I arranged for a meeting of the chamber of commerce (in Grand Junction in October of 1912). At this meeting, I explained the importance of the city of being located on a transcontinental trunk highway and especially on one with so many scenic attractions as the Midland Trail."

He asked for volunteers to accompany him to Salt Lake City, "suggesting that three or four husky fellows occupy each car to enable us to surmount all obstacles by sheer physical strength." He quickly had volunteers for 10 cars.

It's unlikely that Grand Junction's leaders, always eager to find ways to boost their community, really needed Westgard to explain to them the advantages of a transcontinental highway.

In fact, they may have pushed him to pursue the route through this valley.

In any event, by 1914, Mesa County residents were fully on board.

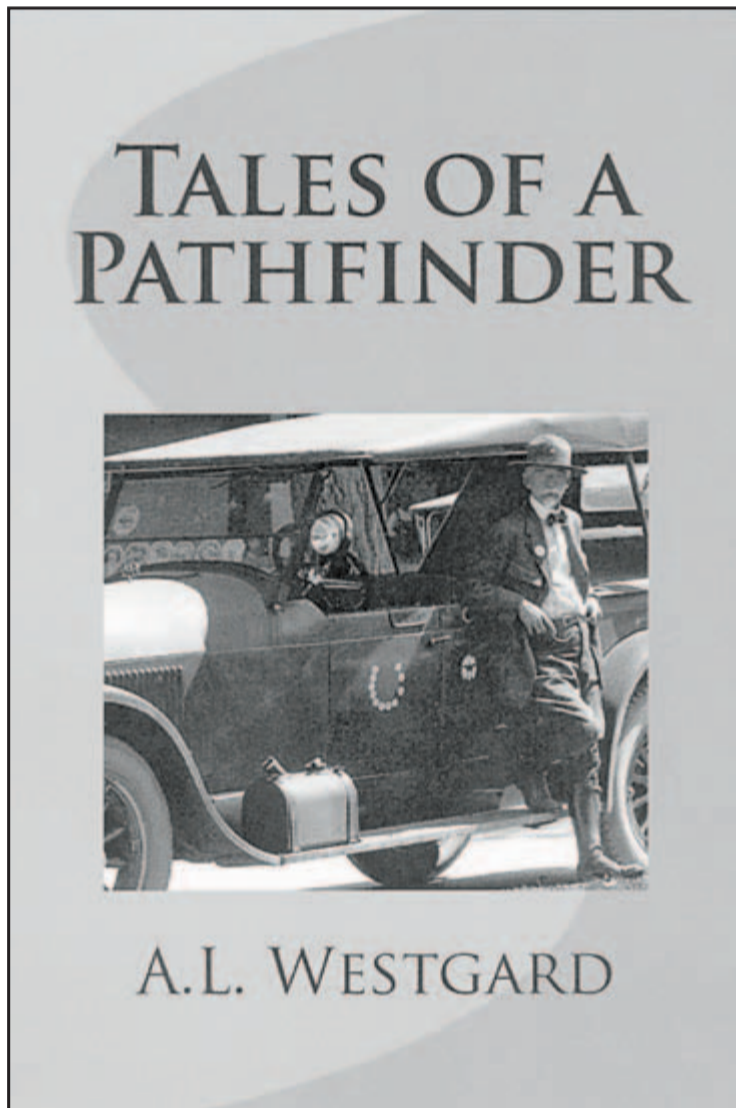
The Daily Sentinel reported in March that AAA expected as many 300,000 autos to travel to California that year by either the Overland or Midland trails.

And, surprisingly, Mesa County residents vowed in April 1914 to raise money to improve the road in Utah, all the way to Thompson, The Sentinel said.

This occurred even though in late 1913 it was announced that the Overland Trail had received the nod as the first coast-to-coast highway and it would become known as the Lincoln Highway.

But the Midland Trail was not abandoned, and it would eventually become known as the Roosevelt Highway.

A southern route through Colorado, essentially following what is now U.S. Highway 50 and called "the Rainbow Route," would be built and promoted.



A.L. Westgard wrote of his route dubbed "The Midland Trail," which ran through Grand Junction, in this 1920 book.

John Otto stumped for a route over Colorado National Monument, through Glade Park and on to Moab, then vowed to leave Colorado when his plan didn't win much local support.

But the main Midland Trail was through Grand Junction. After Westgard drove the trail again in 1913, he marveled that the trip from Grand Junction to Salt Lake required only two days then, not 12.

Still, he remembered that first trip fondly. "It was with genuine regret

that I parted with those fine fellows, 'the boys of 1912,'" he wrote in his book.

In addition to Westgard's book, information for this column came from "Motor Tales, Utah's History Behind the Wheel, Volume 4," by John H. Clark, and from various newspapers. Thanks to Marie Tipping and other volunteers at the Museum of Western Colorado.

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

2015 THIS WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Senate could take up as early as today a routine supplemental budget bill for the Colorado Department of Revenue that includes an amendment from House Democrats on funding a controversial program to give driver's licenses to people in the state illegally.

The Joint Budget Committee, which is split between the two parties as the two chambers are, voted 3-3 on a department request to spend money it's already collected from the drivers. Last month, the Senate also rejected the authorization, meaning the measure is likely to end up before a conference committee between the Democratic-controlled House and GOP-dominated Senate.

**Today:** The House State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee will hear SB44 to lower the state's renewable energy standard. Sen. Ray Scott, R-Grand Junction, got the measure through the Senate, but its House sponsor, Rep. Dan Thurlow, R-Grand Junction, said it isn't expected to fare as well in the House.

**Tuesday:** The House Public Health & Human Services Committee will hear HB1112, the so-called Born-alive Infant Protection Act, which would require medical personnel to provide immediate medical care to a child born alive, even during the course of an abortion.

**Wednesday:** The House Education Committee will debate HB1215 to require Colorado colleges and universities to offer in-state tuition to the children of active duty military personnel if the children completed at least six years of their K-12 education in the state.

**Thursday:** The Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources & Energy Committee will hear SB46 that would lower the state's renewable energy standard for rural cooperatives and municipal-owned power suppliers that serve fewer than 100,000 customers from 20 percent by 2020 to 10 percent. For larger suppliers, the standard would be set at 20 percent, but would allow them to include power generated by customers, such as from rooftop solar panels.

**Next week:** The 2015 session of the Colorado Legislature will enter the second half of this year's session, with the Senate considering several more measures that have made their way from the House, and vice versa.

All floor action and committees can be watched or heard on the Legislature's website at [www.leg.state.co.us](http://www.leg.state.co.us). Check that website to see which measures are available for remote testimony, and how to register to speak.

— Charles Ashby

## Utah among quietest of states in America

By MATT CANHAM  
The Salt Lake Tribune

SALT LAKE CITY — One of the big differences between the West and the rest of the nation is noise.

Florida is loud. Michigan is loud. And the strip of big Eastern cities from Boston south to Washington, D.C., is really loud.

But Utah has some of the quietest land in all of the United States. Monitors in Dinosaur National Monument picked up some of the lowest decibel levels in the study. Even the dense metro area surrounding Salt Lake City doesn't buzz like many of its counterparts nationwide.

This look at noisy America comes from the National Park Service, which gathered 1.5 million hours of acoustical data during an average summer day and used a computer algorithm to fill in the blanks.

Kurt Fristrup, a scientist with the National Park Service, hopes that people will see this map and want to turn those bright yellows, indicating higher decibel levels, down to blues.

His basic tips are to use electric rather than gaspowered equipment when possible. Drive the speed limit because the faster you go, the more noise you make. And make sure that car

has a quality muffler. Why should you care?

Well, Fristrup is focused on the nation's parks. He wants people to enjoy the sound of the wind rushing through trees, of birds taking flight from a branch and of critters rustling in the bush.

Arches National Park and Utah's other national parks are among the quietest places in Utah. Zion, while hushed, appears to be the loudest, with its proximity to St. George.

The reasons the West is so quiet are rather obvious. The states are home to mountain ranges and deserts and are sparsely populated outside of the big cities.

But Fristrup added another reason why Utah is so silent. It is a dry desert.

"Flowing water is a prominent source of sound," he said. And where it is wet, there tend to be more wildlife that, in turn, make more noise.

Those wet areas also have more vegetation that can produce noise when whipped by wind.

Utah can market itself as a place where people can view grand red rock landscapes and experience something unusual in the United States — silence.

## Oil, gas boom scars mar landscape

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER — Oil and gas companies have yet to fully restore land around half of the 47,000 inactive wells in Colorado and 72 percent of those unrestored sites have been in the process for more than five years.

The state requires companies to restore all sites completely to reduce erosion, loosen compacted soil, prevent dust storms and control invasions of noxious weeds. No timetable is set for getting the job done.

## Hunter pays \$390,000 to hunt 1 mule deer

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALT LAKE CITY — This year's winning bidder to hunt a mule deer buck on Antelope Island paid a whopping \$390,000, and that was just for the right to score one set of antlers.

The amount paid by the

24-year-old guide from Canada marked a record in the five-year history of the program run by the Salt Lake City-based Mule Deer Foundation.

The other winning bids have been big, too. Since 2011, hunters have paid more than \$1.4 million to the foundation in

the auctions. The money goes to wildlife conservation on the island in the middle of the Salt Lake.

"Some of the money raised from the auctions helps us run the show, but the majority of it goes to conservation projects to help all wildlife," said Miles

Moretti, president and CEO of the Salt Lake City-based Mule Deer Foundation. "These auctions are helping to conserve wildlife across the country."

The winning bid by Troy Lorenz, a 24-year-old guide from Prince George, British Columbia, came an expo.

## BLOTTER

COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Silt man dies in rollover

A 24-year-old Silt man died after the vehicle he was driving crashed east of Silt early Sunday morning, according to the Colorado State Patrol.

The man's name was not released pending notification of family.

The man was driving a 2001 Volkswagen Passat shortly before 2:30 a.m. when he lost control of the vehicle. It rolled one and a half times, coming to rest on its roof in the westbound lane of Interstate 70 near milepost 98. The driver was not wearing a seat belt, and he was thrown from the vehicle.

### Cabela's shoplifter sought

Crime Stoppers of Mesa County is seek-

ing the public's help in identifying a person who stole items on Feb. 13 from Cabela's in Mesa Mall, 2424 U.S. Highway 6&50. The suspect fled when security officers approached him.

The suspect is described as a white man in his mid-20s, with dark hair and a tattoo on the back of his neck. He was seen wearing a black shirt, blue jeans and a white hooded sweatshirt. A surveillance photo can be seen at [www.241stop.com](http://www.241stop.com).

Anyone with information about the incident should call Crime Stoppers at 241-7867.

### According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

Kevin Cruz, 50, received a summons on suspicion of theft of food and beverage valued at less than \$100 from a business in the 100 block of North Seventh Street on Mon-

day.

Three juvenile males were found in possession of nude photos of a possible juvenile female on Feb. 24. The case was closed because of a lack of evidence to establish the female's age.

A 12-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of damaging school property at 830 Gunnison Ave. on Feb. 23.

Burglars tried to break into a home in the 1900 block of Barcelona Way on Feb. 25. The suspects did not enter the home, but caused damages valued at less than \$500.

Brock Johnson, 19, and Deana Cox, 55, received summonses on suspicion of indecent exposure in the 900 block of White Avenue on Feb. 26.

The Mesa County Sheriff's Office did not release crime reports on Sunday.

Cash 5 Sunday: 10-18-22-23-31

Pick 3 Sunday: 2-8-6

For information, go to [www.coloradolottery.com](http://www.coloradolottery.com).

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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.

MARCH JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION:  
**MESA COUNTY LIBRARY FOUNDATION'S DIGITAL CREATION STUDIO**

The next step in the expansion and improvement of the Central Library is **The Digital Creation Studio**. The studio will bring the power of cutting-edge technology to library users. One of the first digital projects, *Veterans Remember*, will record and digitally preserve the recollections of Mesa County war veterans. **The Digital Creation Studio** is expected to cost \$752,500, and the Foundation seeks to raise \$200,000 toward this cost.  
Please join with us and send your tax deductible donation to:  
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