

## FIRST DRAFT

# Trading post could become beehive of activity again

In 1828, Antoine Robidoux, then 34, established the first retail business in western Colorado — Fort Uncompahgre, on the banks of the Gunnison River just west of the present day city of Delta.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Last month, the Delta City Council approved an agreement with the Interpretive Association of Western Colorado to manage and expand operations at Fort Uncompahgre, a city-owned replica of Robidoux's original trading post that was built in the 1990s. It's in the city's Confluence Park, several miles upstream from the original fort.

The Interpretive Association hopes to establish a National Historic Trails Interpretive Center at the fort, based on the original trading post's connection with the Old Spanish Trail.

Robidoux was born in 1794 to a French-Canadian father who had migrated to the small Mississippi River hamlet of St. Louis when it was still under French control.

Antoine and five of his brothers became involved in the fur trade. In 1824, three years after Mexico won its independence from Spain and opened up previously forbidden trade with people from the United States, Antoine and one of his brothers headed west on what would become the Santa Fe trail from Missouri to New Mexico. He made a trip into what would become western Colorado and eastern Utah that same year with a party under the command of an old family friend, Etienne Provost. He met friendly Ute Indians eager to trade, and survived an attack by Arapahos in what is now Wyoming, according to the book, "Antoine Robidoux and Fort Uncompahgre," by Ken Reyher.

Other sources suggest Antoine and one or more of his brothers visited New Mexico, and the territories along the Green and Colorado rivers even earlier than 1824, possibly as early as 1822-23.

Robidoux returned to New Mexico, and then to Missouri. But he soon returned to Santa Fe and became one of that city's leading citizens, being

elected to the Santa Fe City Council in 1827, according to Reyher. The following year, he married the adopted daughter of the governor of Mexico.

Also in 1828, he received an exclusive license from Mexico to trade and trap in the territories we now know as western Colorado and eastern Utah.

Robidoux apparently chose the site near the confluence of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre rivers as the spot for his first trading post because it was along historic routes used by the Utes, who were eager to trade furs to him in return for firearms, metal and woolen goods.

The site also provided a good stopping point on the way to the Green River area and the Uintah Basin, where the beaver were prolific and where a number of European trappers were already operating. The message he carved in the Bookcliffs just west of the Colorado-Utah line shows he traveled between the two regions. Translated, it says, "Antoine Robidoux passed here 13 November 1837 to establish a trading post at the Green River of White." But some believe the last word is actually "Winte," Robidoux's spelling of Uintah, and that the date is meant to be 1831, not 1837.

It is known that in 1832, Robidoux purchased a small trading post near the confluence of the Whiterocks and Uintah rivers in northeastern Utah. For a brief time, he also operated a third post in Brown's Park in northwestern Colorado.

Robidoux hauled his goods from Santa Fe or Taos north through the San Luis Valley, over Cochetopa Pass, then to the Uncompahgre Valley to his post. From there he could ship goods on to Utah, and bring furs back the same way.

By 1844, however, the fur trade was declining rapidly, due to changes in fashion for beaver hats. By then, Robidoux had largely left management of his posts to hired workers from New Mexico. In September, Ute Indians responding to an unprovoked attack from Mexican militia began attacking settlers from New Mexico and the San Luis Valley. In late September, they fell upon Fort Uncompahgre, killing all but one of the workers, who made his way on foot to Taos.

Robidoux's days as a trader in Colorado were effectively over. He spent most of the remainder of his life in St. Louis, where he died in 1860.

The organization is hopeful that with renewed effort and due to its central location just off U.S. Highway 50, Fort Uncompahgre can become "a great gateway" for tourism and recreation in the area.

"Location, location, location," she said. "Why do you think old Antoine built here?"

Visit the Interpretive Association of Western Colorado's website at [www.wcinterp.com](http://www.wcinterp.com).

Email Bob Silbernagel at [bobsilbernagel@gmail.com](mailto:bobsilbernagel@gmail.com).

A sketch of Fort Uncompahgre was drawn by Manuel Antonio Paris, who worked for Antoine Robidoux in 1844. In 1828, Robidoux apparently chose the site near the confluence of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre rivers as the spot for his first trading post because it was along historic routes used by the Utes, who were eager to trade furs to him in return for firearms, metal and woolen goods.

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Interpretive Association of Western Colorado

**ANTOINE ROBIDOUX**  
Also operated trading posts in northeastern Utah and Brown's Park in northwestern Colorado

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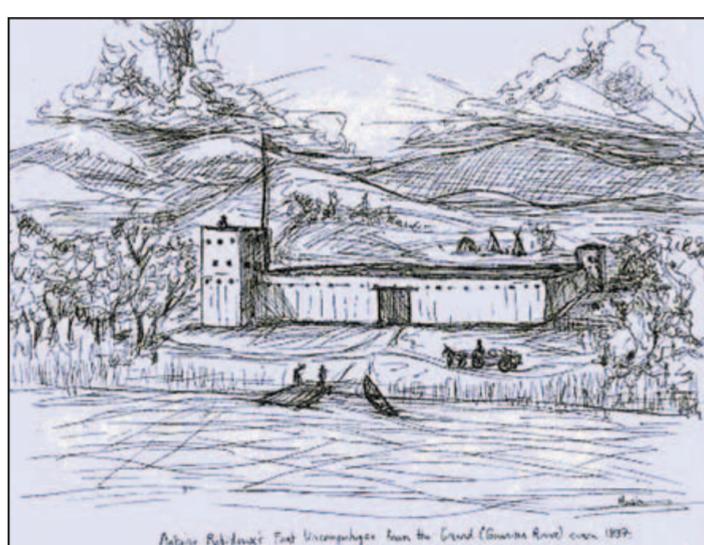
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Living-history actors are shown last year at Fort Uncompahgre. The replica of a trading post is at Confluence Park in Delta, several miles upstream from where Antoine Robidoux, a 34-year-old trader from Missouri, established the post in 1828. The Interpretive Association of Western Colorado hopes to establish a National Historic Trails Interpretive Center at the fort.



Antoine Robidoux's Fort Uncompahgre from the Grand (Gunnison) River circa 1837

# Payday lending jumps in Colorado, attorney general's report says

By GREG RULAND  
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More than 165,000 Coloradans owed \$56 million to payday lenders at the end of 2013, as the number of people taking out high-interest loans continues to climb, according to an annual report published last week by the Colorado Attorney General's Office.

Deferred deposit loans, commonly referred to as payday loans, are unsecured, high-interest personal loans based on a borrower's paycheck that thousands of low-wage earners resort to

each month to cover emergency expenses.

Information about the amount outstanding and the number of borrowers in Mesa and other Colorado counties is not publicly available, since geographically specific information is considered competitively sensitive, said Carolyn Tyler, a spokeswoman for the Attorney General's Office.

At least five of the 750 payday loan locations operated by 250 companies around the state are situated in Grand Junction, according to local records.

The number of Colorado res-

idents taking out payday loans grew by more than 9 percent in 2013 compared with 2012, said Julie Meade, head of the attorney general's Consumer Credit Unit.

The rise is consistent with annual 9 percent increases in the number of payday borrowers reported since 2010, Meade said.

In all, 481,000 Coloradans borrowed \$189 million between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2013, on terms set by the Legislature in 2010, according to the report.

Under Colorado law, fees for payday loans include an origination fee, a cap of 45 percent in-

terest and monthly maintenance fees, Meade said.

"A borrower who takes out a \$300 loan and pays it off in 30 days owes a total of \$21.75, which translates to an 86 percent annual percentage rate (when origination fees and maintenance fees are included in the calculation)," according to Trihouse Enterprises, which operates a website that tracks payday loan laws in all 50 states.

If the borrower waits 180 days to pay off the \$300 loan, he or she (effectively) owes \$240, a 162 percent annual percentage rate, Tri-

house said.

While the total number of payday borrowers increased by 9 percent in 2013, the number of licensed payday lending companies actually decreased from 253 to 250, Meade said.

The annual report is required under Colorado law. It is intended to inform state regulators and industry members about the health and diffusion of consumer lending in Colorado, Meade said.

The total number of payday lenders, payday borrowers and amounts loaned in Colorado are included in the report, she said.

The 2010 Colorado law regulating payday loans is being promot-

ed by the Pew Charitable Trust as a way to rein in payday lender excesses in other states, Tyler said, citing an editorial co-written by Colorado Attorney General John Suthers and former Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter in May 2014 for McClatchy newspapers.

"Almost four years after the law took effect, access to payday credit remains widely available. The loans previously took up 38 percent of an average borrower's paycheck. Now, they take up 4 percent. Borrowers are spending \$42 million less each year and bounced check fees from lenders are down by more than half," Suthers wrote.

## 2015 THIS WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

This week, the 2015 session of the Colorado Legislature will convene. Officially known as the First Regular Session of the 70th General Assembly, this year's session will feature what is known as a split Legislature. For the first time in years, the Republicans will control the Colorado Senate, though with a narrow 18-17 majority. Meanwhile, the Colorado House remains in Democratic hands with 34-31 divide.

As a result, partisan measures that clear one chamber will face tough odds in the other.

■ **Wednesday:** Both chambers will convene starting at 10 a.m. with floor speeches from the leaders of both political parties in each chamber.

■ **Thursday:** At 11 a.m., newly re-elected Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper will deliver his fifth State of the State address to a joint session

of the Legislature. The event will be held in the House chambers, which is large enough to hold all 100 legislators and invited guests.

■ **Friday:** At 11 a.m., newly minted Chief Justice Nancy Rice of the Colorado Supreme Court will deliver her first State of the Judiciary address to a joint session of the Legislature, something the chief justice does every two years.

■ **Next week:** Hickenlooper will hold

his inauguration ceremony and address on Tuesday on the west steps of the State Capitol. All legislative committees will start work on numerous bills, but what they are won't be known until the session begins and those measures are introduced.

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).

## BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Sexual predator alert on TV

A community notification program about a sexually violent predator will air at 7 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. today on the government access cable channel, which is Channel 191 on Charter.

Community notification any time a sexually violent predator moves to or within a community is required by state law. The notification special will last 20 minutes and will offer information about sex offenders, how an offender earns the higher classification of sexually violent predator, and specific information about the predator who is moving into a city. That person's name will be released today.

A sexually violent predator is a sex offender that the state has determined is at a high risk of re-offending, according to the Grand Junction Police Department's web-

site.

### Gun at bar leads to arrest

Andreson Baker Hambright, 37, was issued a summons Dec. 27 on suspicion of obstructing a peace officer who was investigating why Hambright's friend had a gun while drinking at a Grand Junction bar, according to the Grand Junction Police Department.

According to the summons, a person found a revolver in a jacket left on a bar stool at Cruisers, 715 Horizon Drive. While an officer was speaking with the owner of the gun, who was not identified in the summons, Hambright interrupted the investigation and said "it did not matter if (the man) was intoxicated it was his right to have a gun," the summons alleged. The officer responded that an intoxicated person is not allowed to possess a firearm, which made

Hambright upset.

Hambright refused to give the officer his name and refused to leave the area numerous times when asked before his arrest, according to the summons.

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

■ A white 2007 GMC Sierra Denali valued at more than \$20,000 was stolen Friday at 1121 North Ave.

■ Someone broke into a business Wednesday in the 2400 block of Industrial Boulevard and stole cash and other items.

■ Lindell Orr, 54, was arrested Dec. 26 at 2910 North Ave. on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance and drug paraphernalia, as well as an active warrant.

■ Someone broke into a garage in the 300 block of Belford Avenue on Friday and stole property valued at less than \$100 from inside a vehicle parked in the garage.

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



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