

FIRST DRAFT

When copper was (almost) king

Early in 1898, when nearly every community in Colorado was hoping for the next great motherlode, people in Mesa County thought they'd found it: Copper had been discovered in Unaweep Canyon.

"Bigger than the Klondike," blared a Feb. 8, 1898, headline in The Daily Sentinel. In April, the paper quoted a U.S. government official who proclaimed that "10,000 people (will) come



BOB SILBERNAGEL

into this district this spring and summer."

It wasn't just local boosterism. The Salt Lake City Herald in May of 1898 called Unaweep Canyon "A New Copper Camp with a Brilliant Future."

Even the Colorado State Bureau of Mines, which was less prone to hyperbole, stated in its annual report released in January 1898 that the Unaweep Canyon copper district "is at present attracting considerable attention, and is said to have strong veins carrying high-grade copper ores."

There were already two mining camps in Unaweep Canyon that year.

Pearl City, which was made up entirely of tent structures, was just a few miles west of Cactus Park. It was named for a Front Range woman, Pearl Payne, who provided the grubstake for one of the first prospectors in the region.

Copper City, which boasted a few wooden frame buildings to go with its mostly tent village, was a few miles farther west toward the divide in Unaweep Canyon.

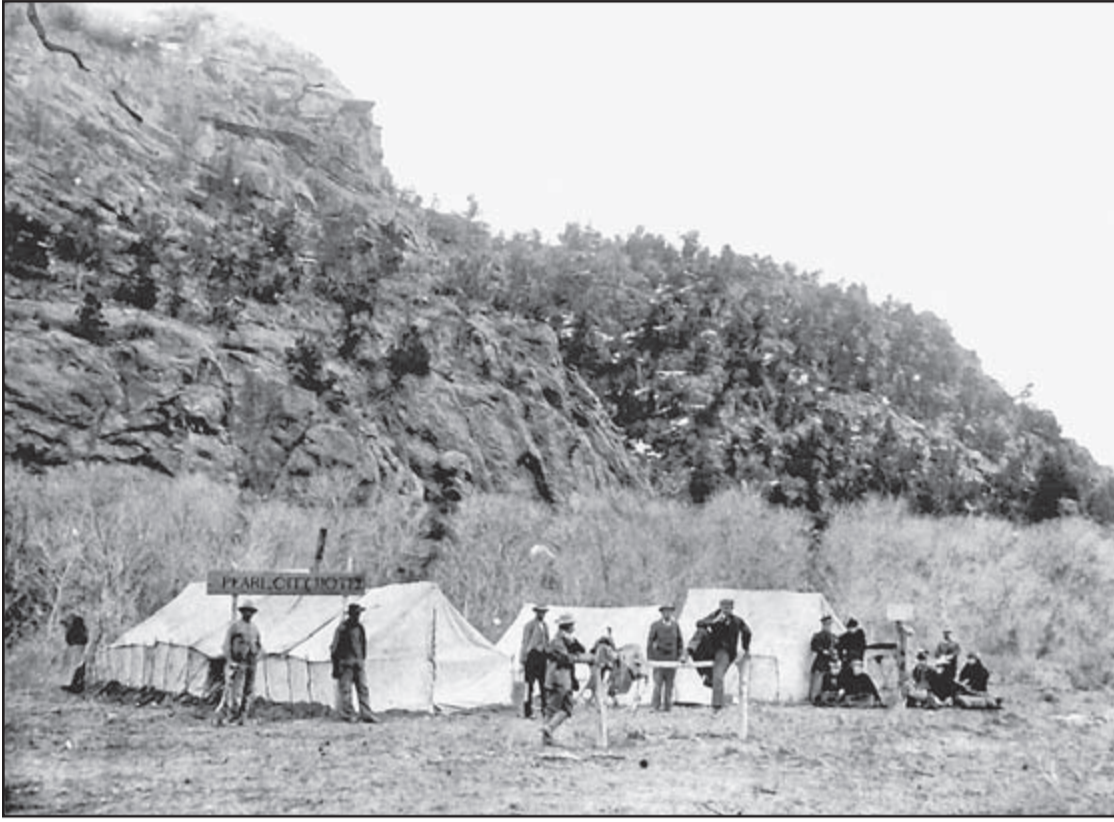
There would be schools, boarding houses and establishments dubiously claiming to be hotels. There were saloons and stores, and families. There were a dozen small mines and many more claims.

Ore was hauled by wagon down Nine Mile Hill to the railroad at Whitewater, where there were more stores and saloons. There was even, briefly, a smelter at Copper City, although it never treated more than a few tons of ore.

It would all disappear before the end of World War I, even though the U.S. industrial economy needed large amounts of copper.

By then, two massive mines — the Phelps Dodge Copper Queen Mine at Bisby, Arizona, and the Anaconda Copper Company's mine at Butte, Montana — supplied much of the nation's needs.

On top of that, the promising



Pearl City, in Unaweep Canyon, as it appeared in its early days.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIE TIPPING

ore veins in Unaweep Canyon failed to live up to their hype, although the optimistic reports continued through the first decade of the 20th century, and into the second.

In 1903, the Unaweep Copper District was "forging ahead," the Sentinel reported. More people were coming, and new claims were being developed, other papers said.

As late as 1913, there were reports of new veins of copper being opened, with one local prospector predicting "a great future" and a new copper rush in the spring.

By 1919, however, the state Bureau of Mines had soured on Unaweep Copper.

"From time to time there has been some activity in this district," the bureau reported, "but no mine of any importance has yet been found."

It's little wonder that Mesa County folks were hoping for mineral wealth. Colorado had been created on such booms, beginning with the Pikes Peak gold rush of 1859.

People nationwide knew the names of Colorado mining metropolises that had sprung up seemingly overnight and created frontier millionaires: places like Cripple Creek, Aspen, Telluride, Silverton, Ouray and the greatest of them all — Leadville.

But busts followed booms, and the worst occurred when silver prices plummeted. The federal government refused to set a base price for silver or make silver part of its monetary

standard along with gold. Just 18 months before the Unaweep boom, William Jennings Bryan declared that bankers and the government must not be allowed to "crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

That same year, gold was discovered in the Klondike, and the boom was on in the north country in 1897. An estimated 100,000 fortune seekers munched through the snow of Alaska and western Canada over the next three years.

Nothing that sensational occurred in the Unaweep Copper District. But by late spring of 1898, The Daily Sentinel could report information such as 16 newcomers arriving in Copper City "to join in the search for wealth," and a stage line from Whitewater to the copper camps was operating beyond its capacity.

One Utah newspaper claimed there were 500 people in each of the two Unaweep Canyon towns by the middle of 1898, but others say the population never topped 100.

Production was measured in pounds, not tons — 4,600 pounds of copper in 1899, according to one government report. How much of that was actually shipped and sold is unclear.

There were newspapers, mail delivery and telephone lines in the mining camps. There was a wood-frame store in Copper City, and two schools, according to Orpha Shugar Hall, who moved to the Unaweep camps with her family as a teenager

and remained until 1912 to marry and raise children.

Then the mining towns evaporated, along with the hopes of immense wealth. When Hall visited the Copper City town site a half-century later, she could find little evidence of her former hometown.

She was interviewed by The Daily Sentinel in 1977, when she was 92.

The 1897 report of the state Bureau of Mines described an alternative source of prosperity for this region.

Grand Junction, the report said, "is a natural commercial center and distributing point for western Colorado and eastern Utah."

Copper didn't become king in Mesa County, but for 120 years since the boomlet, Grand Junction has continued to be the commercial center for the region, and a major agricultural producer, as well.

It has benefited from several subsequent mineral booms and survived just as many busts.

Information for this column came from The Museums of Western Colorado; from a variety of historical newspapers, including The Daily Sentinel, The Salt Lake Herald, and The Engineering and Mining Journal; reports from the State Bureau of Mines; and from a 1914 U.S. Geological Survey bulletin called "Notes on the Unaweep Copper District, Colorado."

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RV parking planned on downtown lot to entice shoppers

By ERIN MCINTYRE
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Downtown Grand Junction wants people driving vehicles of all shapes and sizes to come down and shop.

The parking spaces downtown are on the skimpy side for a full-sized RV, but the Downtown Grand Junction Business Improvement District has a plan to encourage those with big vehicles to come on down.

Soon, free parking will be offered in the empty lot at Seventh Street and Ute Avenue, just east of the police station.

The intent is to encourage people who are passing through town and those who travel full-time to stop in and experience downtown.

Those who park there can walk two blocks to Main Street for farmers market, shopping and restaurants, and can park for free from 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Allison Blevins, the district's communications and marketing director, said they hope to have the lot open by mid-August. The district is in the process of purchasing signs for the vacant lot, which belongs to the city of Grand Junction.

Blevins said the idea came from Shane Allerhelligen, owner of A Robin's Nest of Antiques and Treasures, and responded to the concerns that merchants, restaurants and the Grand Junction Visitor & Convention Bureau expressed about the lack of RV parking downtown.

"We want to make sure that downtown is accessible to all visitors and by previously not having much RV parking, it was an extra burden on that kind of visitor," she said.

Blevins said the city has agreed to allow the parking in the lot until it determines another use for the property.

Two manufacturing companies in Montrose, employing 84, sell to PolyOne for \$86 million

By KATIE LANGFORD
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Montrose manufacturing companies Gordon Composites and Polystrand were sold to an international polymer production giant this week for \$85.5 million.

The PolyOne Corp. produces a vast array of composite and polymer products, including common items like laundry detergent bottles and Otter Box phone cases.

The acquisition is not anticipated to affect the 84 people employed by Gordon and Polystrand or the Montrose community, according to Sandy Head, executive director of the Montrose Economic Development Corp.

"I don't believe there's a negative impact, but every time a corporation that's larger takes over, there's sometimes a change in efficiencies," Head said.

"There could be a little bit of change, but we don't think it will be to the magnitude that they'll be here for a year and then leave."

Gordon Composites specializes in materials used in archery, sports equipment, prosthetics and office furniture.

Polystrand produces thermoplastic composite materials used in transportation, aerospace and more.

The two businesses are expected to add \$40 million in revenue to PolyOne in 2017, according to a statement from the company.

"We expect this technology to become a platform of the future for companies whose products demand strength and design flexibility," said Craig Nikrant, president of specialty engineered materials at PolyOne, in a statement.

Jail in Boulder County cites overcrowding as safety threat

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOULDER — Boulder County Jail officials say overcrowding and mental health issues at the facility are posing a safety threat. A recent study says jail officials are professional, but they are being pushed to the limit.

The jail was originally intended to hold about 290 people. It now has more than 500 people on some nights. Sheriff Joe Pelle has long said that the jail was overcrowded and he has repeatedly asked for more staff.

REGION SENTINEL WIRE SERVICES

Pilot in WWII aircraft crash had pot in system

DURANGO — A recently released report found that the Durango pilot who crashed a World War II aircraft on July 4, 2014, had marijuana levels above the legal limit in his blood.

According to the report by the National Transportation Safety Board, John Earley's blood tested positive for 6.3 nanograms of THC, above Colorado's legal driving limit of 5 nanograms.

Both Earley and his passenger Michael

Schlarb were killed when the vintage plane crashed at the Durango-La Plata County Airport. Schlarb's blood tests were negative for any alcohol or drugs.

Schlarb's wife, Mona Schlarb, says Michael was teaching Earley how to pilot the P-51 Mustang at the time of the crash.

Makeshift speed bump jars Montezuma bicyclists

MONTEZUMA — Authorities have asked a homeowner in Montezuma to back off after a homemade speed bump caused minor injuries to several cyclists and damaged two

bikes. Summit County Interim Sheriff Jaime FitzSimons says deputies found plastic pipes and rubber hoses that formed a makeshift barrier near the home of a disgruntled homeowner.

Several bicyclists had to pay for repairs that cost up to \$500. The helmet of one cyclist was cracked, but no serious injuries were reported.

The homeowner was ordered to remove the barrier and talk with officials about building a legal speed bump with the county for next summer.

Bicyclists are also being asked not to interfere with traffic.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Information being sought on restaurant burglary

Police are seeking information on a burglary that happened at a local restaurant in November.

Berna B's Restaurant, at 2913 Patterson Road, was the victim of the crime that happened sometime between 4 p.m. Nov. 4 and 6 a.m. Nov. 5. The burglars entered the restaurant's outdoor cooler and stole food and alcohol valued at more than \$3,000.

Crime Stoppers is asking that anyone who knows the identity of the people involved in this crime or has information about them to please call 241-7867.

Information reported to Crime Stoppers that leads to an arrest can earn you up to \$1,000 cash reward and you will remain completely anonymous. For information, visit www.241stop.com.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

■ Leonard Valdez, 47, was issued a summons on suspicion of driving with a revoked license and misusing license plates on July 28 in the area of 12th Street and Gunnison Avenue.

■ Glen Petterson, 53, was arrested on July 23 and booked into Mesa County Jail on a warrant.

■ Traften Mullins, 22, was arrested on July 27 on suspicion of trespassing at 1221

N. 12th Street.

■ Amber Hoffman, 23, was arrested on July 28 and booked into Mesa County Jail on a warrant.

According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Office:

■ Deputies took a report of a missing person from the 100 block of Lumley Drive on July 29. Additional details were unavailable.

■ A report of child abuse in the 2700 block of Lexington Court was reported on July 29. The case is pending investigation.

■ Deputies responded to the 500 block of 31 1/2 Road in response to an alleged assault on July 29. They arrested Breawna Wilkins, 28, on suspicion of trespassing, assault and domestic violence.

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We're wearing
jeans for charity
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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.

AUGUST JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION:

The House

At any given time, nearly 160 teenagers are homeless in Mesa County. They sleep in cars, tents and are at serious risk for many forms of abuse. Karis, Inc., with the support of the Western Slope community, operates **The House**. The only licensed shelter for homeless youth on the western slope, **The House** provides teens with warm meals, safe shelter, medical and mental health support, education, and a host of other services, supplied by caring adults. Please join with us and send your tax deductible contribution to **The House**, P.O. Box 2837, Grand Junction, CO 81502.

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