

FIRST DRAFT

Delta bank robbery left 3 dead, questions unanswered

Delta, Colorado, didn't fit the profile of an old, Wild West town in 1893. It served the needs primarily of nearby farmers and ranchers, not raucous miners. Furthermore, the town fathers had passed ordinances prohibiting firearms within town limits and banning females from saloons, either as patrons or employees.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Even so, around 10 a.m. Sept. 7, 1893, Delta was the target of one of the most notorious bands of bank robbers then working in the West, the Utah-based McCarty Gang.

Thanks primarily to the efforts of a sure-shot hardware store owner, the attempted robbery of the Farmers and Merchants Bank was a bust. Most of the stolen money was recovered and the bank suffered a loss of just \$294.86.



ANDREW TREW BLACHLY

Two of the three robbers were killed and the McCarty gang effectively ceased to exist.

Unfortunately, bank co-owner and cashier Andrew Trew Blachly was shot and killed by one of the bandits.

Delta author Jim Wetzel, who is director and curator of the Delta County Historical

Society Museum, has detailed the events surrounding the 1893 robbery, and provided details of the lives of the key people involved, in a book titled, "Banks, Bullets & Bodies: A Failed Robbery in Delta, Colorado." It was released this fall.

Wetzel has been conducting research on the robbery intermittently for a dozen years. He began doing so, he said, "because I thought there was a lot of misinformation in other books and magazine articles" about the holdup.

Among the questions raised by the initial reporting were: How many robbers were involved? What was the escape route for the lone survivor? And what was the relationship between the McCarty and a man named Richard Stiles Mow?

Only three McCarty Gang members were known to be involved in the robbery attempt — gang leader Tom McCarty, his brother Bill and Bill's son, Fred. Bill and Fred were shot from their galloping horses as they tried to escape

down an alley. Hardware store owner W. Ray Simpson used a single-shot Sharps rifle to shoot each of them in the head. Tom McCarty escaped and, although trailed by three different posses, was never captured.

However, Wetzel makes a persuasive case that there was likely at least one other gang member involved. He or she would have been holding relay horses for the fleeing bandits at the gang's camp 15 miles northwest of Delta near the mouth of Escalante Creek.



Tom McCarty, the leader of the McCarty Gang, survived the robbery attempt and escaped. Though he was never captured, he did send several threatening letters to W. Ray Simpson, a hardware store owner who shot and killed McCarty's brother, Bill, and his nephew, Fred, as they were fleeing on horseback down an alleyway.

posse members who discovered the remains of the gang's campsite in Escalante Canyon found "eight horses and a mule ... all good runners," according



Photos SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL/The Delta County Historical Museum

Delta's Main Street as it appeared in 1893. The Farmers and Merchants Bank, which was targeted by the notorious McCarty gang, would have been on the left, out of sight in this photo.

to a contemporary account in the Delta County Independent. Even if there were extra horses meant for each of the three robbers, why would eight horses be found at the camp?

Moreover, Wetzel notes that having a colleague outside of town holding relief horses was typical modus operandi for the McCarty Gang. The tactic was used in most of the six known McCarty Gang bank holdups — conducted over three years and in three states — that preceded the Delta robbery.

Finally, since the three McCarty's who took part in the Delta robbery were known to have spent the night of Sept. 6, 1893, at a hotel in Delta, who

kept a campfire going in Escalante Canyon? The smoldering remains were found by one of the posses.

That camp was near the Mow family homestead at the mouth of Escalante Creek, and Wetzel points to evidence that suggests Mow and his family may have known the McCarty's before the robbery.

Wetzel also puts to rest the notion that W. Ray Simpson and his family left Delta County in 1898 out of fear that Tom McCarty would retaliate for Simpson killing Bill and Fred McCarty.

McCarty did send several threatening notes in 1895 to Simpson, then Delta's postmaster. But Simpson and family didn't leave until three years

later, when his wife, Mary Ann, was having a difficult pregnancy and sought better medical facilities in Michigan.

Simpson received honors, both in Denver and Delta, for his efforts to stop the 1893 bank robbery. But his name has largely been forgotten in history, while that of the McCarty Gang lives on. Wetzel does a good job of trying to correct that fact, and of telling the stories of people like Andrew Trew Blachly and his family.



BILL MCCARTY Shot and killed while fleeing scene along with his son

"Banks, Bullets & Bodies" is available at Out West Books at 533 Main St. in Grand Junction or The Delta County Historical Society Museum at Third Street and Meeker in Delta.

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De Beque retail pot shop looks to open near New Year

By AMY HAMILTON
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De Beque's first recreational marijuana store plans to open around the first of the year, according to operations manager Jim Roberts.

Officials at Kush Gardens, 4550 U.S. Highway 6&24, off the Interstate 70 exit to the town, have been working to bring their building up to code and meet state standards required to operate the facility. But Roberts said Friday that the delay in opening has mostly been because the team made some design changes to their soon-to-be-open retail space.

Kush Gardens was approved by De Beque leaders for retail sales of marijuana. Once open, it will be the first retail marijuana store I-70 motorists encounter heading east into Colorado.

That likely will bring in plenty of people from the Grand Valley and Utah eager to shop for marijuana, according to De Beque Town Administrator Guy Patterson.

"If you really want your marijuana, you're going to drive to get it," he said.

Roberts said the shop plans to offer all types of available marijuana products, including bud, concentrate products, edibles, and more medically used CBD tinctures and oils.

Patterson said De Beque officials closely watched as Palisade asked its residents whether they wanted recreational sales of marijuana in their town limits. Palisade voters narrowly rejected the notion in November.

That paved the way for De Beque — with its location just off I-70 — to benefit from sales from out-of-towners and motor-

ists passing through, Patterson said.

"It was so critical that Palisade didn't approve it," Patterson said. "A lot of sales will come from across the state border. People are coming in and purchasing marijuana. Let's not pretend that's imaginary. That's real."

Patterson said the opening of Kush Gardens is the beginning of retail and growing operations in the small, interstate outpost of about 500 residents.

Three more marijuana-related businesses are in some phase of the application or planning process. Patterson said he fields at least one new inquiry a week about proprietors interested in setting up some kind of marijuana-based business. Town board members did not place restrictions on the number of recreational marijuana businesses that could operate there.

Marijuana-related businesses are subject to some extra taxes, which are conservatively expected to raise \$100,000 next year. Those funds have already been budgeted to help ailing infrastructure and De Beque's annual Wild Horse Days festival.

As hoped, some people are opening or working to open businesses that do not sell or grow marijuana, like the plans for a restaurant in the downtown core, Patterson said. Currently, the only place to sit down and grab a bite is the Subway connected to the Kum & Go convenience store off the interstate exit.

"We maybe have an 18- to 24-month window to capitalize on this," Patterson said, referring to the likelihood that other municipalities will soon vote on or allow retail sales of marijuana. "We're seeing a fair amount of activity. It's very exciting."

Storm warnings issued for Colorado

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER — A strong winter storm is moving into the Colorado mountains and it is expected to bring up to 2 feet of snow to some areas by Monday.

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center says impressive snowfall amounts are possible from this coming storm.

Forecasters say snowfall rates could increase to 2 to 3 inches an hour at times, causing whiteout conditions on the roads. Chain laws for commercial vehicles are in effect for major roads west of the Continental Divide.

Forecasters say there is a small chance of either rain or snow on the Front Range.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Vending vandal sought

Authorities are seeking help in identifying a woman and a man who broke into a soda vending machine at the Orchard Mesa Laundromat, 757 1/2 U.S. Highway 50 on Oct. 28, according to Crime Stoppers of Mesa County.

The suspect was a white man wearing dark jeans, a dark hooded sweatshirt and yellow gloves. The female suspect wore dark jeans, a gray hooded sweatshirt and red gloves. The duo caused more than \$3,000 in damages and stole more than \$300 in cash. The surveillance video can be viewed at www.241stop.com. Anyone with information about the incident should call Crime Stoppers at 241-7867. Anyone offering information that leads to an arrest can earn up to \$1,000 cash reward.

According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

■ Nathan White, 51, and Jeffrey Jones, 54, were cited Friday on suspicion of disorderly conduct at 104 White Ave.

■ Peter Horowitz, 21, was cited Friday on suspicion of driving with a restrained license in the 2800 block of North Avenue.

■ Misha Gutierrez, 28, and Brian Paul, 33, were cited Friday on suspicion of tres-



passing at 1600 North Avenue.
■ Cameron Sizemore, 24, was cited Friday on suspicion of driving under the influence and failure to use a turn signal

at North 14th Street and Mesa Avenue.

■ Property worth less than \$3,000 was stolen in a burglary Thursday at a home in the 300 block of Kennedy Avenue.

■ Ronald Wells, 48, was cited on suspicion of driving on a canceled license, operating an uninsured vehicle and expired plates, at 28 1/2 Road and North Avenue.

■ Sydney Cannon, 50, was cited on suspicion of driving under the influence after crashing a motorcycle Thursday at Fourth Avenue and Riverside Parkway.

■ Counterfeit cash was passed Wednesday at a business in the 300 block of Main Street. The loss was under \$300.

■ Someone reportedly used a financial device belonging to an at-risk adult in the 600 block of 25 1/2 Road, causing a loss of more than \$5,000. An investigation is active.

The Mesa County Sheriff's Office did not release jail booking or activity reports Saturday or Sunday.

Cash 5 Sunday: 3-5-7-12-25

Pick 3 Sunday: 1-0-2

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