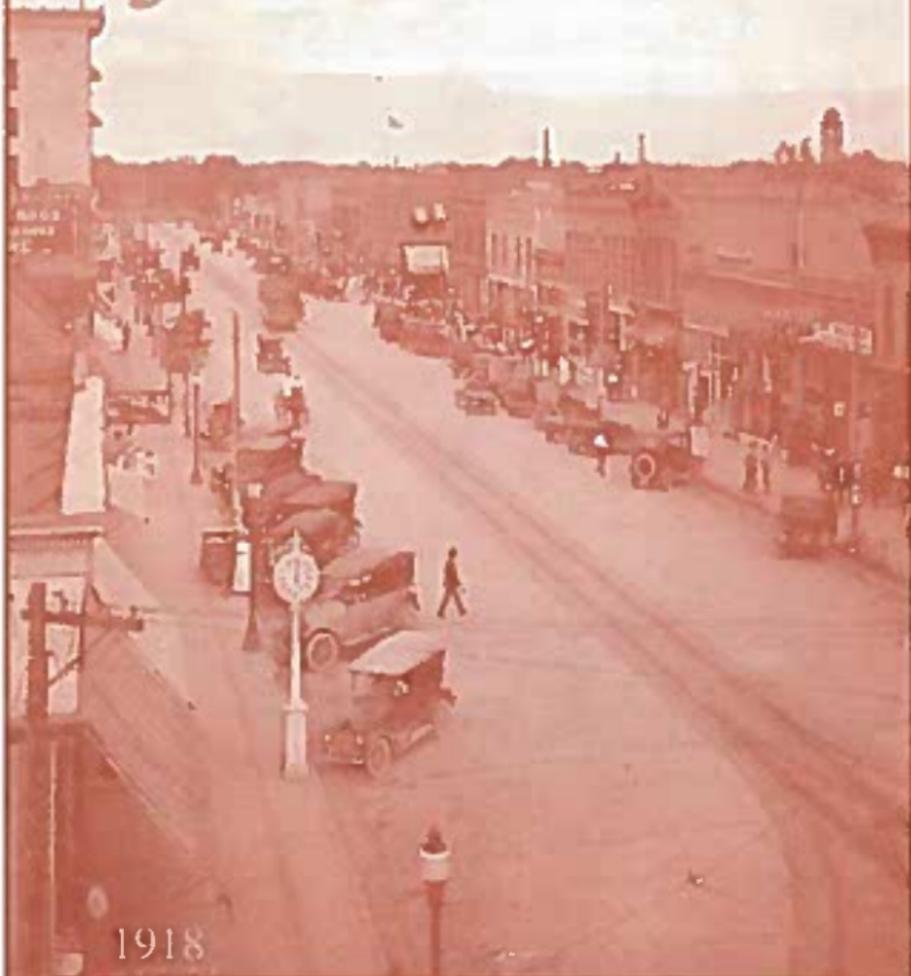


DOWNTOWN GRAND JUNCTION



1918

A HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR



A PROGRAM OF THE
COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STATE HISTORICAL FUND

GRANTS FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

THE HISTORY

1. Denver & Rio Grande Western/Colorado Midland Union Station

ADDRESS: 119 Pitkin Avenue

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1905-1906

BACKGROUND: Renaissance Revival-style building with front entry Tuscan columns, terra cotta foliage trim and ceramic red roof tiles. This is one of the few existing structures from Grand Junction's

past as a major railroad center. It has been unused since the late 1980s. Local residents formed a "Save The Depot"

committee in the early 1990s to help keep the station from being torn down. Slowly the building has been undergoing preservation by different private owners since 1994.

FASCINATING FACT: This is the first major public building designed by Chicago architect Henry Schalk, who later started the architectural department at Notre Dame University.



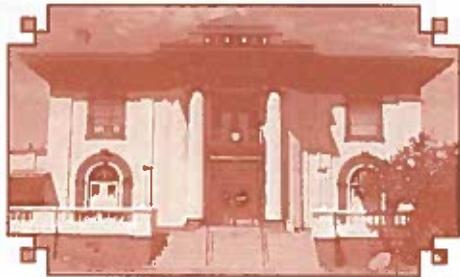
2. Elks Club Lodge #575

ADDRESS: 249 South 4th Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1913

BACKGROUND: The town's first Elks Lodge meeting took place in 1900. The organization grew at a fast pace. Thousands of club members from Colorado and Utah attended the opening day ceremonies at the present-day building. A one-story room for dancing and an enlarged meeting room were later added to the south side of the original Italian Renaissance-Style structure.

FASCINATING FACT: The second floor interior ceiling is composed of numerous small stained glass panels, each bearing the name of a deceased lodge member.



3. Whitman Park

ADDRESS: 4th & 5th Streets, Ute & Pitkin Avenues

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: Part of the original 1881 city plan.

BACKGROUND: First named Cottonwood Park, it was changed to Whitman Park in 1922. Oregon Territory pioneer Dr. Marcus Whitman and a guide crossed the Grand River just south of the park during the winter of 1842. Whitman was traveling from his mission near today's Walla Walla, Washington to the east coast. Severe winter weather and warring Native American Indian tribes forced the men to travel on a more southern route instead of taking the Oregon Trail.

FASCINATING

FACT: During the early 1900s there was a small bandstand for live performances by local musical groups.



4. Whitman School/Whitman Educational Center

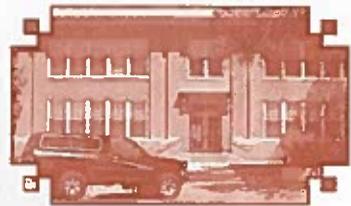
ADDRESS: 248 South 4th Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1925

BACKGROUND: This structure was used as an elementary school until 1965, then was sold to the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber then rented the building for \$1 a year to a brand new Museum of Western Colorado. It remained the main museum building until 2000, when the museum moved into the larger C.D. Smith building half a block east. Recent

restoration uncovered much of original exterior, including the school name lettered in stone over the front door. The museum won a special award in 2001 from the Colorado Historical Society for the building's rehabilitation. It now houses offices and conference rooms.

FASCINATING FACT: Some believe the old school is haunted by an early-day female teacher. However, a male janitor who died from a heart attack while shoveling coal into the boiler during the 1930s is the only documented death to have occurred in the building.



5. Grand/New Grand/St. Regis Hotel

ADDRESS: 359 Colorado Avenue

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: The original two story east wing was built as the Grand Hotel in 1895. The third floor, east wing and cupola, enlarged it onto Colorado Avenue.

The front of the building and two-story west wing were added in 1906. The name was changed to St. Regis at that time.

BACKGROUND: It was known in Grand Junction as a place for good rooms and meals at a lower cost than the town's fancy hotel, the LaCourt (no longer standing). The Oriental Room and Cocktail

Lounge - added in the 1930s - offered a spacious dance floor and live music. The switch from railroad travel to automobiles hurt business.

From the 1970s on, the hotel opened and closed several times. Extensive interior rehabilitation in the 1990s resulted in the present-day use as offices and apartments.

FASCINATING FACTS:

A. Beginning in 1932, western Colorado's first commercial radio station, KXFJ, operated from the hotel for several years.

B. In 1915, Jack Dempsey, then fighting around Colorado as "Kid Blacky", punched out four crooks as they walked up to the hotel bar. These same men had robbed Dempsey and his new manager along the road from Delta several hours earlier. Dempsey recovered all the stolen money.



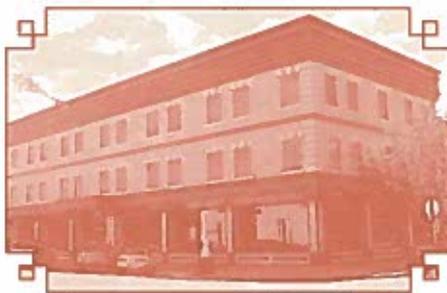
6. Electric/Enterprise Building

ADDRESS: 101 South 3rd Street

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: The first two floors were built in 1913 and a third floor was added in 1918.

BACKGROUND: This is one of the first all-steel frame structures in western Colorado. It was primarily built to house the massive Ideal Engine which provided electricity to the

town's trolley system, the Grand Junction and Grand River Valley Railway. Offices for the trolley company and early electric and



gas utilities were also in the building. After the trolley system ended service in the early 1930s, dozens of various businesses utilized the structure, including the Hoel-Ross Business College. Detailed restoration in 2004 returned the exterior to its 1918 appearance.

FASCINATING FACT: *The steel frame was originally designed to support five floors. The fourth and fifth floors were never added.*

7. Reed Building

ADDRESS: 362 Main Street

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: The first floor was built in 1903. The second floor was added in 1908.

BACKGROUND: This is the site of one of the town's early hotels, the Crawford-Brunswick House. Town founder George Crawford passed away in his hotel suite in 1891. That hotel was torn down in the early 1900s. Colorado Springs businessman and multi-millionaire Verner Z. Reed bought the property and built the present-day structure in two stages. In 1915 one of the early stores in the James Cash Penney system

opened in the building and remained until 1981. The structure later housed Dinosaur



Valley, the first separate paleontological division of the Museum of Western Colorado. Extensive reconstruction in 2004-2005 resulted in an exact reproduction of the 1908 exterior. There are new apartments and condominiums on the second floor with stores and offices on the first floor. The restoration effort resulted in awards from the Colorado Historical Society.

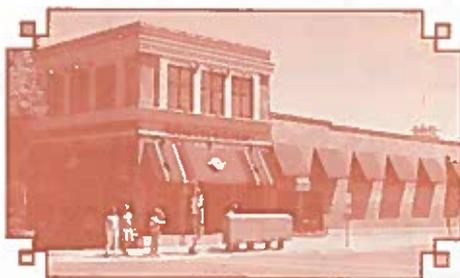
FASCINATING FACT: *The illegal Biltmore Club, a well-known gambling hall, owned and operated by Walter "Big Kid" Eames, occupied much of the second floor in the late 1920s and 1930s. During an attempted robbery in December of 1938, Eames was murdered by one of three masked men armed with a sawed-off shotgun.*

8. Sampliner's/Rockslide

ADDRESS: 401 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1890

BACKGROUND: Portions of the existing building probably date to an original 1890s brick bank. The Sampliner brothers opened one of the town's first all men's clothing stores in 1895. The clothing lines offered were expanded by a second company,



Rush-Sanford, and again later by Brownson's. Instead of tearing the old building down, the owners of the present-day Rockslide Brewpub &

Restaurant went through a full-scale rehabilitation in 1994.

FASCINATING FACT: The original blue and white tiled "Sampliner's" is still intact in the front entry floor.

9. Mesa Drug/City Market #1/il Bistro Italiano

ADDRESS: 400 Main Street

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: Some of the first floor is possibly part of an original 1890s building. Additional construction was done in 1906.

BACKGROUND: The first structure housed a general store on the first floor with "furnished rooms" on the second floor. It is unknown when the second floor was demolished. Mesa Drug opened inside the structure in 1918 and remained until 1987. It was one of the last true soda fountain/lunch counter businesses in town. The current restaurant opened in the mid-1990s.



FASCINATING FACT: The Prinster brothers opened the very first City Market grocery store in the back half of the building in the 1920s. The store eventually grew into a large multi-state grocery store chain.

10. Bannister's/Boomers

ADDRESS: 436 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1890

BACKGROUND: William Bannister opened a furniture store/undertaking business here in 1897. Ignoring the two small original city burial grounds on the north side of town, Bannister established a small cemetery just for his customers on Orchard Mesa. The City eventually bought out and enlarged that cemetery. The undertaking business died out, but the furniture store was continuously operated by various family members until 2002.



FASCINATING FACT:

A. It was not unusual for small pioneer western towns to have one businessman who owned a saw mill, sold raw lumber and/or made furniture and caskets out of the lumber.

11. Grand Valley National Bank/First National Bank/Dalby, Wendland Building

ADDRESS: 464 Main Street

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: 1910 and 1921

BACKGROUND: This is one of the most important, intact, original architectural exteriors in Grand Junction. The original part of the building, constructed in 1910, replaced a smaller stone bank on the same location. It was constructed with ornate terra cotta

egg-and-dart motif pilasters and a projecting cornice, which was an unusual style for the area. Grand Valley National Bank ceased operations during the Great Depression under a federally mandated "bank holiday." A re-organized First National Bank opened in 1934. (Please turn over.)



(Continued from front.) The first Dalby, Wendland business opened in one room in the building in 1949. That company purchased the entire structure in 1986.

FASCINATING FACT: *The original north-south building along 5th Street was only two rooms and one hallway wide. It was an odd, skinny-looking structure. A two-room wide addition facing Main Street was added in 1921, resulting in a reverse-L structure with a better appearance. The seam where the two brick sections meet can be seen from Main Street.*

12. Bengé's Shoe Store

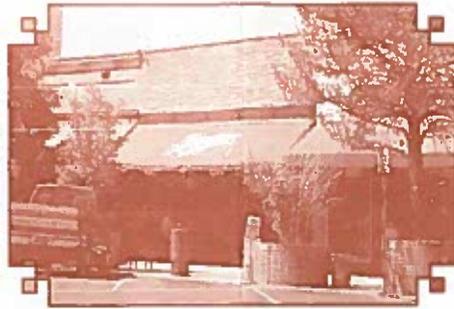
ADDRESS: 514 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1890

BACKGROUND: This is Mesa County's oldest continuously owned and operated business and one of the oldest shoe stores in Colorado. After moving here from Iowa, Bert "The Shoeman" Bengé opened the first store in the 400 block of Main Street in 1911. He moved to the present location about 1921. Business was continued by

his son Harry and now by grandson Bruce. The oldest horse in Mesa County, a carousel animal bought by Harry in the early 1950s, is still an attraction in the store.

FASCINATING FACT: *The structure is a narrow building on a typical lot size first offered by the original Grand Junction Town Company. In 1881 town officers purposely mapped out narrow, 25-foot wide downtown lots, hoping businessmen would buy at least two or more lots for larger buildings. It is likely the original builder at 514 Main could not afford more than one lot.*



13. Majestic/Mesa Theater

ADDRESS: 534-540 Main Street

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: Mid-1890s and 1909

BACKGROUND: One section of the building was originally the Mesa Opera Rink, which was enlarged and reopened as the Majestic in 1909. Live theater and musical performances were offered in between "electric theater" showings. Some of the first silent films and the first movie with sound in western Colorado were shown at the Majestic. The theater later added a projectionist-controlled organ. By picking the correct paper music roll, the organ would play

the appropriate chase, romance, comedy or other background music for silent movies. The organ also supplied special sound effects such as gunshots, locomotives or the beat of horses' hooves.

It was renamed the Mesa Theater about 1930, and remained in operation as a movie theater until 1987.



Not used for years, it was re-opened as a venue for live musical groups in the 1990s.

FASCINATING FACT: *A 1915 movie admission price was 5 cents. By the 1930s, it was 10 to 25 cents (depending on seat location), and by the 1960s, the cost was \$1.*

16. Cooper Theater/Avalon

ADDRESS: 645 Main Street

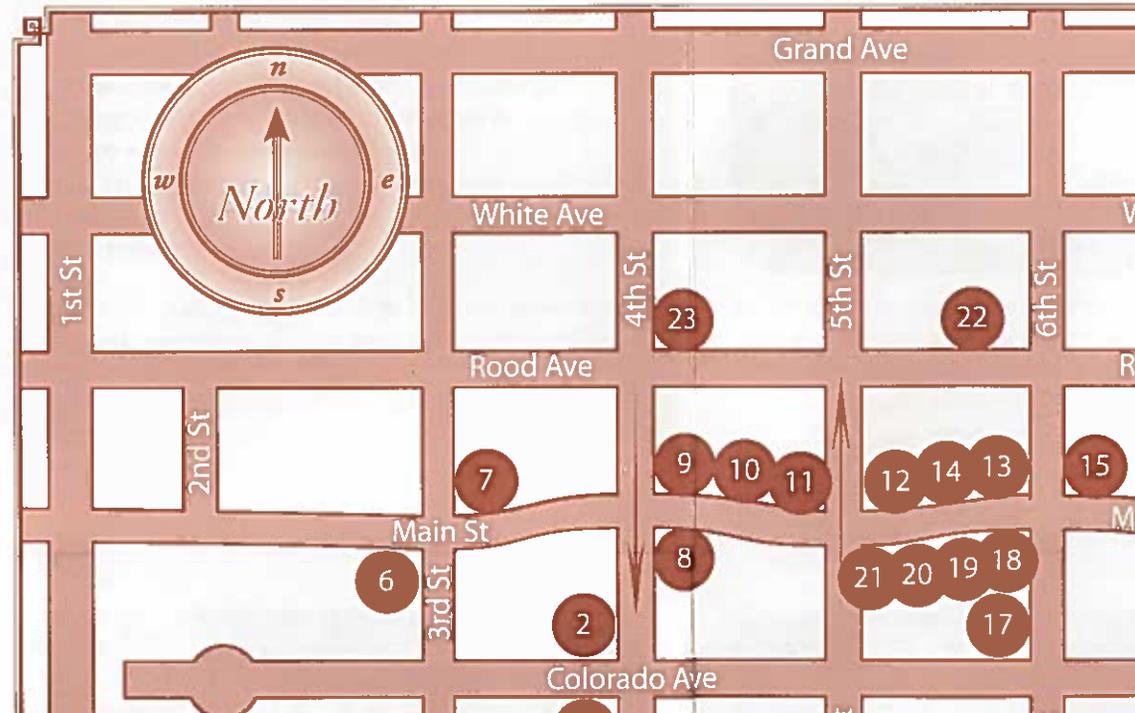
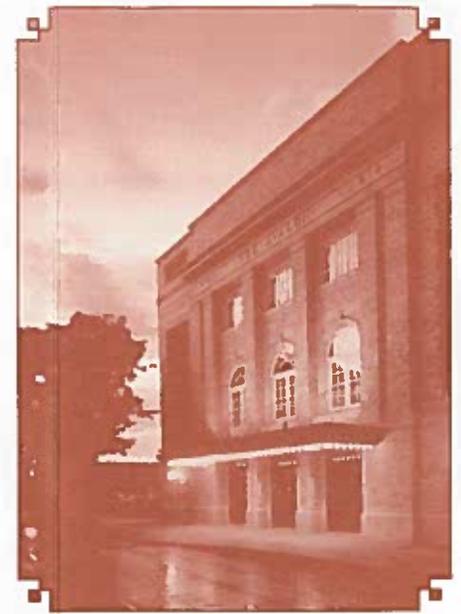
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1923

BACKGROUND: Construction of the Avalon was a major community project directed by *Daily Sentinel* publisher Walter Walker and other civic leaders of the day. A variety of live entertainers and musicians performed on stage during the 1920s and 1930s, often during a railroad travel break between Denver and Salt Lake City. School graduations and other types of community events also took place in the Avalon. As movies became a popular attraction, the Cooper Theater Company bought the building in the 1940s. The detailed Beaux Arts facade was covered with plain modern materials.

The Cooper closed in the late 1980s. The

non-profit Avalon Committee helped save the structure and has reproduced some of the destroyed exterior details and returned the theater back to its 1923 appearance.

FASCINATING FACT: *The original projection booth, still in use, is steel-lined. Doors and windows are kept open with wire rope held in place with lead seals. Early films were made of explosive celluloid. If a film caught on fire, the lead seals would melt and slam the doors and windows shut. The projectionist would have been killed, but hopefully the theater and ticket holders would survive. Such a fire never occurred at the Avalon.*



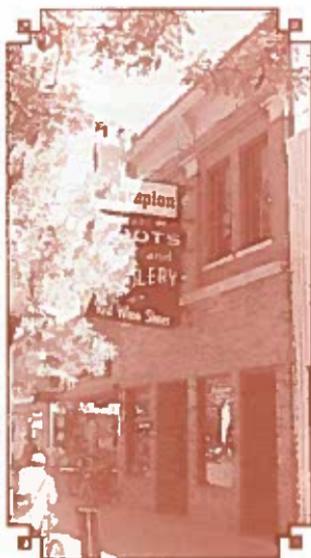
19. The Daily Sentinel/Champion Boot & Saddlery

ADDRESS: 545 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1907

BACKGROUND: *The Daily Sentinel* first operated from at least two different rented structures. This two-story false-front building was constructed as the newspaper's first permanent home. *The Sentinel* remained at this location until 1924, when a new office and print shop were built at 634 Main Street.

FASCINATING FACT: *Although the Sentinel began publication in 1893, and is still in operation, at least 27 other Grand Junction/Mesa County newspapers have come and gone since the 1880s.*



20. Margery Building

ADDRESS: 519-527 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1905

BACKGROUND: This was the first Grand Junction project by businessman Verner Z. Reed, who went on to own buildings and real estate in numerous states and foreign countries. This building is named after one of his daughters. It is an excellent example of a classic detailed commercial building of the era. The second floor offices and first floor stores have been used by dozens of individuals and companies. When the 1940s sheet metal front was removed

during the 1980s, most of the 1905 exterior was surprisingly intact.

FASCINATING FACT: *The second floor "Margery Building Dance Hall" was the scene of prom dances, lodge meetings and 1920s-1930s dance contest marathons. It is now primarily used by artists for studio space.*



21. Fair Building

ADDRESS: 501-511 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1904

BACKGROUND: Pioneer businessman William J. Moyer constructed a small wooden store on this site in the 1890s. The present large brick structure was home to his Fair Store from 1904 until the 1930s. Moyer was not only a Grand Junction business and civic leader, he and his wife privately helped fund everything from road construction to the Y.M.C.A. to college tuition for local students. The couple was best known for establishing the Moyer Pool for the city so young people could have a safe place to swim. After Moyer lost the store during The Great Depression, Montgomery Ward utilized the building for 50 years.

FASCINATING FACT: *For better or worse, John*

Abbott, the fictional main character in Dalton Trumbo's "Eclipse" was loosely based on William Moyer.



14. Kress/Mercantile Building

ADDRESS: 542-546 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1929

BACKGROUND: One of the later stores built as a part of the national Kress Department Store chain. The first Samuel S. Kress store opened in Pennsylvania in 1887. By the late 1940s, 264 Kress stores were in operation. Although stores in the major U.S. cities were more ornate, the Grand Junction building matched the other small stores. All were designed by Kress architects working in the New York City company headquarters;

all store plans were personally reviewed and approved by Mr. Kress. All the stores also had a basement and main selling floors, a warehouse within the same structure, and an office mezzanine. All stores were also made of pale yellow brick. The Grand Junction store closed in 1975, and reopened as the Mercantile the same year. Many subsequent owners have rebuilt the interior several times. The last remaining Kress stores in other states closed in 1980.

FASCINATING FACTS:

A. The distinctive trademark, a curved "Kress" inside an intricately carved box, was also part of every store's exterior. The Grand Junction

trademark is still visible toward the top of the roof peak. B. Only 90 original Kress stores are still standing across the nation.

15. United Hardware/Interiors, etc.

ADDRESS: 602 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1924

BACKGROUND: Unusual hand-painted tiles were added to the brick and terra cotta exterior during construction. The Biggs and Kurtz families owned some of the largest Grand Junction companies during the early and mid-1900s. They built this building and opened United Hardware, a new retail division of their large hardware and lumber ventures. Retail hardware was not as productive as hoped. The building served as Manuel's Department Store from 1933 to 1962. Other past occupants included Keith O'Brien's from 1963-1984; Capps Furniture from 1985-1993 and Interiors, etc., 1993 to present.

FASCINATING FACT: Manuel's built large vaults underneath the front Main Street sidewalk for use as storage of fir coats during warmer months.



17. Schiesswohl Building

ADDRESS: 123 South 6th Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1908

BACKGROUND: A commercial office structure built by Jacob Schiesswohl, this building is still owned by his family. The original ornate false front and decorative sheet metal exterior is still visible. A Richardsonian stone arch and stone lintels accent the second floor. Over the years, the structure has housed many different businesses.

FASCINATING FACT: The Schiesswohl family also opened Grand Junction's first full service gas station and car wash in the 1920s just south of the building.

18. Mesa County Courthouse/Main Street Bagels

ADDRESS: 559 Main Street

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1885

BACKGROUND: The structure was first built as the two-story Mandel Opera House. A large open second floor meeting room was used for the town's first court, church services, weddings and public meetings. It was then purchased by Mesa County and used as the county courthouse from 1885 until 1924. It was then used by many businesses, including L. Cook Sporting Goods and Capps Furniture. The second floor was probably removed in the 1930s, possibly to save on property taxes. The remaining part of the building was remodeled with a new brick veneer and Art Deco stained glass.

FASCINATING FACT: A walled-in vault that originally housed the county safe is now used as an oven area for the bagel shop.





22. Mesa County Courthouse

ADDRESS: 544 Rood Avenue

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: 1922-1924

BACKGROUND: The Main Street courthouse was very overcrowded by World War I, so Mesa County announced a design contest for a new courthouse. Many architectural designs, arguments and cost-debates later, this neo-classical design by Eugene

Groves was accepted. The modern brick and glass annex was added to the back of building in 1974. Although the original, elegant exterior remains intact, the inside has been remodeled numerous times.

Extensive rebuilding, beginning in the late

1990s, returned most of the interior back to the original design. The former second floor courtroom is now home to the Mesa County Commissioners.

FASCINATING FACT: Marble from Marble, Colorado and granite from nearby quarries were used on buildings in many other states. But several still-standing buildings such as the courthouse, and some long gone Grand Junction structures, were built with Indiana limestone.



23. Grand Junction Post Office/U.S. Courthouse/Wayne Aspinall Federal Building

ADDRESS: 400 Rood Avenue

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: 1915 and 1933

BACKGROUND: It was the first structure built expressly to house a permanent Grand Junction post office, as well as other federal agencies. The building then doubled in size when the east wing was added in the 1930s. A zipper-like stone seam connecting the old



and new sections is noticeable on the front. Some of the 1922 conferences resulting in the Colorado River Compact were held in the building. The Compact regulates river flow allocations and electric generation for seven states. When the new post office was built across the street in 1966, the building was renamed for long-time district U.S. Congressman and Palisade resident Wayne Aspinall.

FASCINATING FACT: The downtown area soil is very porous. This Indiana limestone structure was one of the first very heavy buildings to go up. It was not long before the building started to slowly sink. Additional congressional funding was needed to excavate the building and to add underground support pilings.

At the junction of the Grand . . .

When compared with most other American "Old West" locales, the settlement that developed at the junction of the Grand (now Colorado) and the Gunnison rivers is fairly new. However, thousands of years of fascinating history occurred long before the first town builders arrived in the Grand Valley in late 1881.

While living in crude pit houses from 800 to about 1375 A.D., the Fremont people left behind colorful, mysterious rock art. Various Ute tribes lived and hunted across most of today's states of Utah and Colorado. Archeological sites, wild horse herds and dozens of unusual Ute words, such as Unawweep, Ouray or Uncompahgre: "a spring of red colored water, hot and ill tasting" are everyday reminders that the Ute spirit still touches the land.

Trespassing through Ute territory and the Grand Valley began in the 1700s with Spanish explorers, treasure seekers and priests. By the early 1800s trappers and traders had joined the parade. They were quickly followed by U.S. government survey teams and U.S. army explorers.

When the last of the west-central Ute tribes were forced out of the area, the event made national news. An entire, undeveloped region was now open for ranchers, homesteaders and town builders. Kansas politician and town builder George Crawford already had two Kansas towns on his resume. With the backing of investors, he formed the Grand Junction Town Company and began mapping out a one-square mile city site just north of the junction of the two rivers.

Primarily because of its key geographic location, the town grew at a decent rate. Other events and activities helped: becoming the seat of the new County of Mesa in 1883; the arrival of railroads in 1882 and 1889; the development of area coal and fruit industries; the establishment of the Colorado National Monument in 1911; becoming the center of the radium, vanadium, uranium, oil shale and natural gas drilling and mining from the 1920s through today.

Lots of businesses and people have – and will continue to – stop and leave, come and go in Grand Junction throughout the last 125 years. Yet many of the downtown area buildings still stand, and in a sense, still live on.

www.downtowngj.org
www.wcmuseum.org
www.coloradohistory.org

This project is/was paid for in part by a State Historical Fund grant from the Colorado Historical Society.