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THE COVER: The drawing is by John H. "Jack" Murray, a Firefighter/  
Paramedic who has served the Grand Junction Fire Department for the  
past seven years. Mr. Murray has been interested in art since childhood.  
He moved to western Colorado from California at the age of thirteen.

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## **VOLUNTEER TO PROFESSIONAL: A HISTORY OF THE GRAND JUNCTION FIRE DEPARTMENT**

by Robert Strobl

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Robert Strobl is a graduate of Mesa College who received his Associate of Arts degree in 1974. He is now a Battalion Commander in the Grand Junction Fire Department. Former Mesa College History Professor Dan Roberts encouraged Mr. Strobl to begin this study.

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History reveals that man has always felt a need for protection from fire. Pioneers of Grand Junction quickly recognized this need because of the area's climate, parched land and limited water. Consequently, early plans included provisions for a Fire Department. George Addison Crawford filed claim to the town site of Grand Junction on September 26, 1881, and the following January, Samuel Wade surveyed it and set aside several lots for the fire department. These lots, located on the south side of Colorado Avenue between 9th Street and 10th Street, were never utilized for their intended purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Fire hydrants, also known as fire plugs,<sup>2</sup> appeared early in Grand Junction's history. By 1886, fire hydrants were present in the city. However, the water system was poor and the city lacked fire fighting equipment. Grand Junction was a city of 1200 persons, struggling to establish the rudiments of a fire protection system.<sup>3</sup>

Not until July 16, 1889, did citizens meet to organize a Fire Hose Company. Thirty-eight concerned persons attended the meeting to elect B. K. Kennedy the temporary Fire Chief. "Barney" Kennedy had been born in Ireland; emigrated to the United States; and finally settled in Grand Junction in the mid-1880s. Many early townspeople knew this Irish-American for he had served as town marshal, and he had been a garbage hauler, a service for

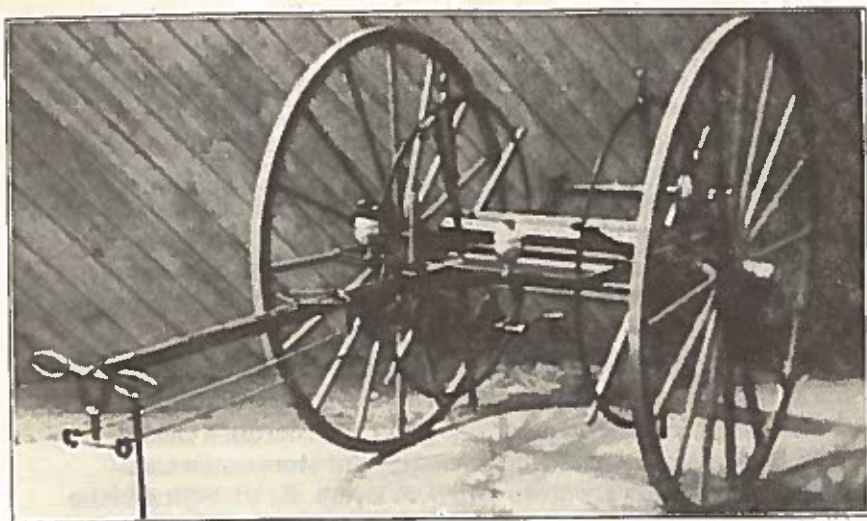
which he charged forty-five cents an hour or fifty cents a load. Kennedy believed Grand Junction needed a Fire Department, and he had acted as the moving force behind the establishment of it.<sup>4</sup>

In organizing their hose company, Grand Junction's firefighters adopted, with minor revisions, the constitution and by-laws of the Rescue Hose Company of Central City, Colorado. Among the provisions of these documents appeared the requirement that the Company would meet the first Friday of every month to transact business and practice fire fighting techniques. Members who missed meetings or left a fire would be fined one dollar for each infraction.<sup>5</sup>

Funds totalling \$350 to start the Hose Company came from two sources--a private citizen and the Grand Junction City Council. The local benefactor was James Cameron, a Grand Junction businessman, who owned a cigar store and was a partner in a hardware store with J. F. Byers. At a meeting of the Company on September 9, 1889, Cameron offered to donate \$100 for suits and equipment. The delighted members accepted the offer, and passed a resolution naming their organization the "Cameron Hose Company." Although Cameron was instrumental in the formation of the hose company, he never became a member or participated in fire fighting.<sup>6</sup> The remaining \$250 came from the City Council.

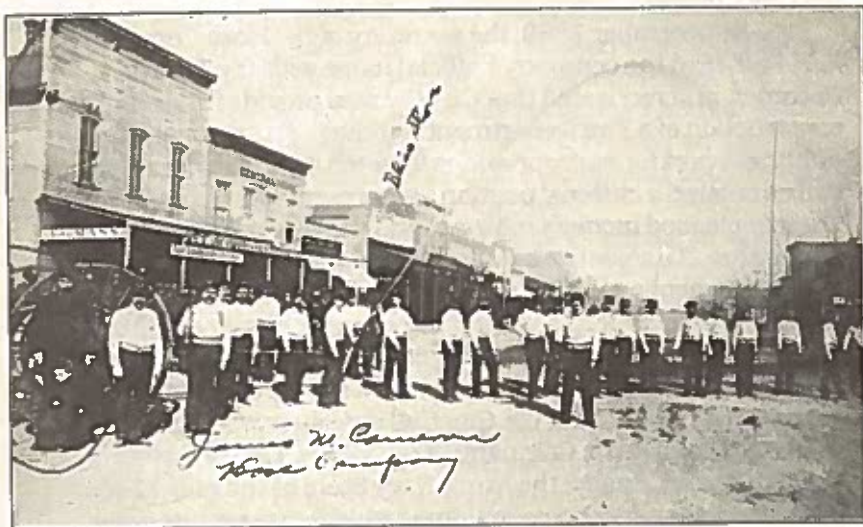
In December 1889, the secretary of the Hose Company, A. F. Paff, filed the company's official name with the Town Recorder, and requested that City Council provide funds for the construction of a Fire Department building. To demonstrate public support for appropriations for such a project, Secretary Paff circulated a citizens' petition and presented it to the Council. The city pleaded money problems, and the new building did not materialize. To solve the housing needs, City Council agreed that the Department could occupy the ground level of the City Hall, a brick structure which stood at the southwest corner of Fifth Street and Colorado Avenue. City offices occupied the second floor of the building.<sup>7</sup> This arrangement served the Department's needs until 1914. Later, the City Hall structure would find other uses: the Biggs-Kurtz Company in the 1920s, Laycock Motors in the 1930s, and, finally, the Army-Navy Store in the mid-1940s.<sup>8</sup> Also, in a later period, this building would figure prominently into the history of fire fighting in Grand Junction.

The newly formed Hose Company needed a hose cart, and the members purchased a 1886 model hose cart, Grand Junction's



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Cameron Hose Company with hose cart. James Cameron is at far left with son, Jamie.*



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*1886 model hose cart. Grand Junction's first piece of firefighting equipment. Restored in 1970 by firemen.*

first piece of fire fighting equipment. It carried two-and-one-half inch diameter fire hose in fifty foot lengths on a reel. Three to five hundred feet made up the hose load. At a fire call, the volunteers seized the tongue and pulled the hose cart to the fire location. One man connected the loose end of the hose to the fire plug while others laid out the hose as they continued on to the fire. The hose coupling was disconnected from the rest of the hose on the cart, a nozzle attached to the open end, the fire plug turned on, and water applied to the fire with the pressure from the plug.<sup>9</sup> The hose cart, housed on the first floor of City Hall, stood behind two large barn-type doors which opened out onto Colorado Avenue. Another large door opened on to the alley side which allowed easy access to the horse-drawn engines acquired later.<sup>10</sup>

By 1890, Grand Junction had reached a population of 2,500 persons. Fire protection had improved since the 1880s, but the situation was far from ideal. One hose cart still constituted the fire fighting equipment; firefighters had 2,000 feet of hose; and there were 34 men in the company. The city had a total of 55 fire hydrants. Plans were being made to expand: the men wanted City Council to purchase a hook and ladder truck.<sup>11</sup>

An important change in the technical aspects of fire fighting in Grand Junction came with the introduction of horses. These animals released men from the task of pulling or pushing fire equipment to the scene of fires. Furthermore, horses could pull larger loads and bigger equipment, and they traveled faster and farther than men pulling carts.

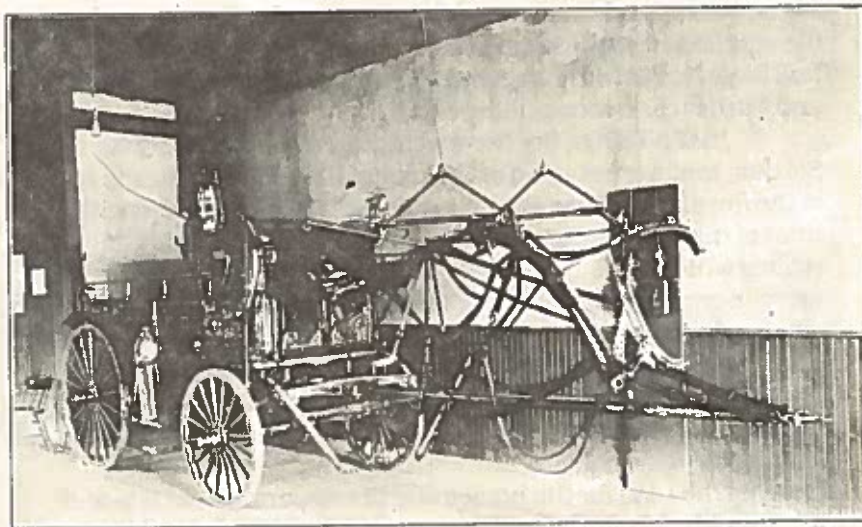
In the 1890s, fire horses came to the Grand Junction Fire Station, and were stabled at the rear of the building. At the sound of the fire alarm, these animals automatically proceeded to the front of the Fire Department building and backed under the rigging which firefighters lowered by pulleys. Upon reaching a fire, the crew would unhitch and lead the horses from the scene of a fire, away from the frightening noise, confusion, and showers of sparks and embers that could burn their hides.<sup>12</sup>

The age of horse-drawn equipment made dogs a standard feature of fire houses because horses ran faster if a dog were leading the way, chasing away stray animals and otherwise clearing the road for the horses and fire apparatus. Black-and-white-spotted Dalmatians, with an inherent love for running with horse-drawn carriages, served the purpose in many cities.<sup>13</sup> Grand Junction's Fire Department did not own a Dalmatian, but it did have a large dog that served the purpose.



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Cameron Hose Company with team of horses, Sam and Jack.*



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Rigging mounted to ceiling was lowered by pulleys. Horses, Sam and Jack automatically backed under rigging at sound of alarm.*

In the early years the Cameron Hose Company limited its numbers to thirty-five, and admission to the company constituted a mark of distinction for men of Grand Junction. Becoming a member of the Hose Company was no easy matter. Firemen selected prospective members carefully; investigated their character, and subjected them to a trial period before accepting them. A membership committee screened applicants, and then the entire Hose Company either elected or "black-balled" individuals. Most of those who became members were men of means--merchants, manufactures, and professionals. The Hose Company was as socially exclusive as a private country club. To be a firefighter was to be somebody, and individuals with social aspirations sought membership. The social status of belonging to the Company, teamwork, and pride in the beautiful machines were rewards of membership in the Company. The physical challenges of firefighting--work in inclement weather; dangers of smoke, fire, and falling walls; and physical exhaustion--were also inducements.<sup>14</sup>

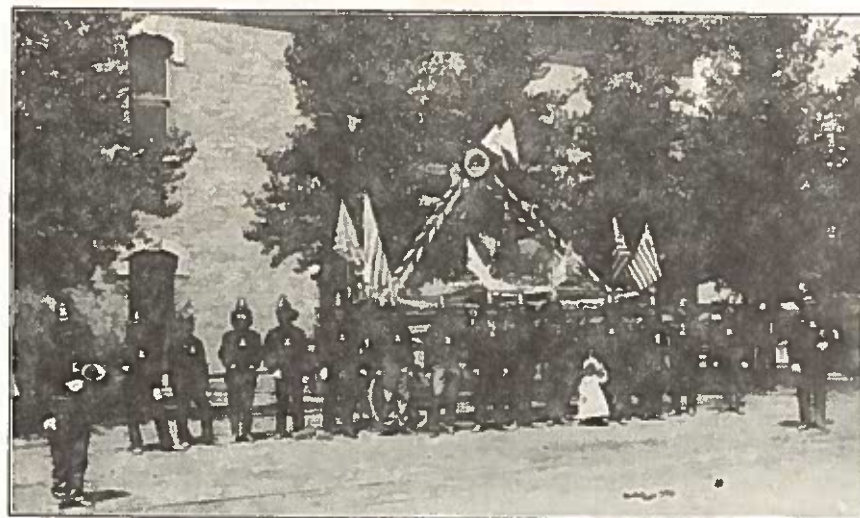
The volunteer organization exhibited its place in the community with the Company-sponsored Firemen's Ball, a masquerade festivity held annually on Christmas. Though the event was purportedly staged to raise money for the Company's expenses, it usually did not, due to the organization's generosity in handing out complimentary tickets to visiting firemen, businessmen, and newspaper editors. Traditionally, the firemen had to dig deeply into their own pockets to put revenue and expenses into balance.<sup>15</sup>

In 1891, the firefighters sought to improve their operation by adding a second firefighting unit, a Hook and Ladder Company.<sup>16</sup> Such Companies performed important functions. They rescued victims from burning buildings, and also had the responsibility for salvage, overhaul, and ventilation. Salvage was the process of protecting household goods during a fire. Since, in most instances, removing all a victim's possessions from a burning structure would be time-consuming and impossible, firemen in Hook and Ladder Companies covered household goods with tarpaulin, or tarps, to prevent or lessen water and smoke damage. Tarps placed on carpeting prevented damage and staining from charcoal. Salvage operations, of course, created good public relations when properly performed. Ascertaining that the fire was completely extinguished was called overhaul.



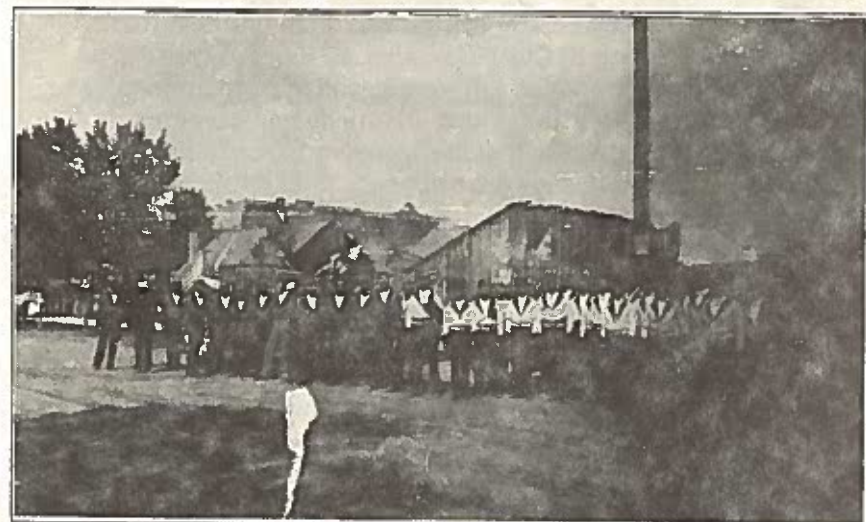
*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

**Fire Station at Fifth Street and Colorado Avenue with horses, Sam and Jack, in center. This is an example of the pride in membership in the Fire Department.**



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

**Hook and Ladder Company.**



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

**Cameron Hose Company and Hook and Ladder Company, February 1891.**



Accomplishing this often necessitated chopping holes into floors, walls, and ceilings to locate "hot spots," or hidden pockets of fire.<sup>17</sup>

Ventilation was alleviating dangerous gaseous pressure within a burning structure. Hot smoke and gases trapped inside a building, caused temperatures to rise. If the super-heated air, smoke, and gases were not released, a smoke explosion (or back draft) became inevitable. To eliminate this critical condition, members of Hook-and-Ladder Companies cut a hole in the roof at the highest and hottest location. This released the poisonous gases and smoke, and cooled the fire area, allowing firefighters to advance and extinguish the fire. A volunteer fireman chopping holes in a burning building sometimes angered property owners who did not understand the principle of ventilation. Ventilation was--and still is--the most misunderstood function of a fire department.<sup>18</sup> Salvage, overhaul, and ventilation--these were functions that could be added if Grand Junction could organize a Hook and Ladder brigade.

On January 23, 1891, the Cameron Hose Company requested that Chief B. K. Kennedy and George R. Barton investigate the possibility of organizing a Hook and Ladder Company. Their efforts led, on February 13, 1891 to an organizational meeting of the Grand Junction Volunteer Hook and Ladder Company at City Hall with B. K. Kennedy serving as chairman. Kennedy and Barton were a good team to promote the expansion of volunteer firefighting. Kennedy had been the moving force in getting the first firefighters organized in the city, and Barton was the well known owner of a moving and storage business located directly east of the fire department. Barton loved baseball, and sponsored a city league team named "Barton Moving and Storage." To help the proposed Hook and Ladder Company, the members of the Cameron Hose Company voted to donate the proceeds of the next Fireman's Ball to the new group.<sup>19</sup> This was a significant symbolic gesture, but not a substantive one because the balls seemed always to lose money.

Five members of the Hose Company volunteered to assist the Hook and Ladder Company for one month. Membership in this organization was not to exceed thirty-six, and the Company designated Tuesday nights for drilling and business meetings. Grand Junction now had two separate firefighting units which worked together to protect the city. To facilitate cooperation, on February 23, 1891, the Cameron Hose Company and the Grand



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Peach Day celebration.*



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Peach Day parade.*

Junction Volunteer Hook and Ladder Company held a joint meeting to elect a chief with authority over both companies. As stated in the Hose Company's minute book: "J. F. Byers was elected unanimously and in a handsomely made speech, Mr. Byers thanked the organizations for the honor conferred upon him and sent for the cigars."<sup>20</sup> No doubt, the cigars came from the Cameron Cigar Store.

On July 3, 1891, the Hose Company organized a committee to ask City Council to furnish uniforms for the Company. The volunteers got their uniforms, but this required a change in the name of the organization. Members of the Council took the position that if the city were to supply uniforms, the Fire Department should carry the name "Grand Junction." As a result of this meeting, Cameron Hose Company refunded \$100 to Cameron, and changed the Company's name to the Grand Junction Hose Company No. 1. City Council then furnished uniforms--or at least the top half of them. Members of the volunteer group sported matching hats and shirts thanks to City Council, but the expense of trousers was more than city Council could bear.<sup>21</sup>

Grand Junction firemen sought something else to improve their performance: a gymnasium where they could harden their muscles and increase their endurance. On February 18, 1893, the Hook and Ladder Company and the Hose Company held a joint meeting to discuss the establishment of a Fire Department gymnasium on the second story of the City Hall building. Mayor L. M. Miller granted the Department the use of an upstairs room, if the Department would furnish all fixtures for the gymnasium. To use the facility, non-firefighters paid \$2 per month.<sup>22</sup> This may have been Grand Junction's first health club.

Uniforms and a gymnasium were important, but money matters continued to plague the volunteers, and they approached City Council with a plan to increase revenues. The Company requested that City Council pass an ordinance requiring each insurance company to pay \$5 annually into the Fire Department fund, arguing that a Fire Department decreased the losses by fire, thereby saving money for insurance companies. The City Council passed the measure.<sup>23</sup>

Those matching shirts and hats that local firemen wore, the gymnasium where they worked out, and City Council's willingness to assess insurance companies indicated much about the importance of volunteer Fire Departments in Grand Junction

and other cities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Firemen represented their cities, and they proudly demonstrated their abilities before appreciative onlookers at tournaments held during community festivities. In Grand Junction, Peach Day celebrations provided the occasions for such tournaments. Firemen were not the only attraction, visitors could take tours of the city and listen to talks on agriculture; however, firefighters' activities were the most popular attractions. These included foot races and demonstrations of firefighting skills, such as ladder drills and straight-away races.<sup>24</sup>

At the Peach Day celebration, in September, 1891, the firemen were conspicuous. They participated in a parade in honor of the City Council; held races with various Fire Departments; and sponsored a ball with profits going to the Department.<sup>25</sup> The firefighters got good coverage in the local paper, perhaps due to the fact that Chief I. N. Bunting, the third Fire Chief, was editor and publisher of the *Daily Sentinel*. During Bunting's tenure, the Hose Company enjoyed extensive news coverage, especially of participation in out-of-town fire tournaments and local Peach Day celebrations.<sup>26</sup>

By August of 1893, Grand Junction was a city of 3,000 persons. There were seventy volunteer firemen, two hose carts, a hook and ladder truck, and fifty-five fire hydrants.<sup>27</sup> The city, thus, had relatively good fire protection, although limited equipment indicated future needs. The Grand Junction Fire Department had come to reflect the sense of pride that people felt for their city. Most agreed that without the volunteers that Grand Junction could not have progressed so rapidly. In many ways, the Fire Department symbolized what local persons held most dear, including the idea that people in the city cooperated and lived harmoniously. Newspaper accounts of fire meetings indicated pride in the organization and stressed the high morale demonstrated by their camaraderie, unanimous votes, fellowship, and genuine respect for one another.<sup>28</sup>

Fire Departments symbolized the community and a successful team within it generated real enthusiasm. A Fire Department's running team generated the same kind of local support as a baseball team or any other competitive group that carried the city's name. With an eye for the public's attention, early volunteer Fire Departments sought to field winning teams. In 1894, the Grand Junction Fire Department produced one of the



Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado

*Firemen's competition at a Peach Day celebration.*



Photo courtesy of  
Museum of Western Colorado

*I.N. Bunting, third Fire Chief. Bunting was managing editor of the Daily Sentinel and gave good coverage of Fire Department events.*



Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado

*Grand Junction Fire Department racing team 1895. As stated by family of Fred Manty they held the worlds record for straight away race of 150 yards, with time of 16 & 2/5 seconds, and state record for wet test with time of 27 & 2/5 seconds. Standing left to right — Owen Kearns, George Tupane, A.F. Rush, Truman Ketchum, Charles Knowels, Sam Teneick, Kneeling — Perry Rogers, Malcolm White, Fred Manty. Setting — Pearl Knowels, Carol Knowels Mascot, Hayden Greene.*

state's best running teams, and the community enthusiastically stood behind it. As its reputation grew, Colorado cities sent invitations to the team. Because the racing team brought notoriety to Grand Junction, its members, at a June 7, 1894 meeting, petitioned the City Council for travel expenses and \$2 per day spending money for each man when the team represented the city in such places as Glenwood Springs, Telluride, Montrose, and Central City. Team members divided winnings from the competitions.<sup>29</sup>

In 1894, competition among Fire Departments was a central feature of the Grand Junction's annual Peach Day Festival. In addition to Grand Junction, teams representing Aspen, Cripple Creek, Colorado Hotel, Canon City, Georgetown, Telluride, and Georgetown paid entry fees and competed for cash awards in straight-away, foot races, and ladder drills. The local Fire Department furnished rooms for all visiting firemen. The firemen's contests attracted crowds, but the activities lost money, and the firemen signed a promissory note for \$75 to meet expenses.<sup>30</sup>

The contests staged in Grand Junction offered standard firemen's events. The straight-away test was a timed race featuring three-man teams beginning at a common starting line. One member of the team connected the hose to the hydrant and turned on water with a hydrant wrench. While this fellow worked at the hydrant, another fellow ran forward dragging hose and connecting two hose sections together. The third man ran toward a target 150 feet away, and connected a nozzle to the far end of the second hose section. If all went well, a stream of water knocked over a target. However, if something went wrong, such as a broken hose connection or the nozzleman losing control, spectators were drenched. The fastest teams received: first place, \$75; second place, \$40; and third place, \$20.<sup>31</sup> Such prizes were worthwhile in an age when many working men earned less than a dollar a day.

Foot races featured individuals running timed 200-yard dashes. This was later revised, and team members pulled and pushed a hose cart, in an event which came to be called the "hub and hub" race. The prizes for this were: \$15 for first place; \$10 for second place; and \$5 for third place.<sup>32</sup> Ladder drills had two variations. In one, three men carried a ladder to a designated structure where they raised the ladder, and two men held its base while the third climbed to the top in a timed race. A later

revision of this race had the ladder in place, and teams dragged a hose to the base of the ladder. Then one team member took the nozzle end of the hose to the top of the ladder while the other two turned on water and gave moral support. Water squirting from the nozzle signalled the end of this timed event. The prizes were: first place, \$15; second place, \$10; and third place, \$5.<sup>33</sup>

In 1895, Grand Junction's Hose Team placed first in every race it entered. The team held the world's record in the straight-away race--150 yards with a time of 16 and 2/5 seconds--and the state record for the wet test with a time of 27 and 2/5 seconds. Its members were: Owen Kearns, Tom Rogers, Edd Sumner, George Tupane, A. F. Rush, Truman Ketchum, Charles Knowels, Sam Teneick, Perry Rogers, Malcom White, Fred Manty, Pearl Knowels, Hayden Greene, and Carrol Knowels, mascot.<sup>34</sup>

The rules and regulations of the hose races during Peach Week in September 1897 were published with the prizes for the wet test to be \$200 for first place and \$100 for second place. The straight-away test prizes would be \$125 for first and \$75 for second place. The official rules given to contestants read:

Race to be run against time.

Distance to plug three hundred feet.

Begin to pull hose within 30 feet of plug; attach hose to plug with at least two threads; lay 200 feet of hose; attach nozzle with at least two threads and get water.

All couplings to be bare and made by hand. Team to consist of thirteen men or less. Two men to pull hose; one to break coupling; one to put on nozzle; one of the hose pullers to be plugman, who shall make the connection at the hydrant and turn on the water. The plugman, hose-puller, coupling-breaker, and nozzle-man to be named before the race.

All carts to weigh equal after hose is on and no cart to carry less than three hundred feet of hose.

All teams to have no more than 10 feet of hose hanging loose, from end of coupling to center of reel.<sup>35</sup>

Peach Day activities reflected a popular and glamorous side of volunteer firefighting, but mundane, day-to-day matters demanded the attention of the men. Firefighting required planning, coordination, and hard work at the fires. Fires always attracted a crowd, and spectator safety at fires became a concern.



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. Collection*

*Chief G. P. Rogers who resigned in 1902 following a reorganization of the Fire Department.*



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Chief John Dickerson, First paid Chief July 7, 1902.*

To protect onlookers, the Hook and Ladder Company and the Hose Company appointed two members each in April of 1896 to stretch a rope around burning buildings, and prevent observers from passing beyond the rope and endangering themselves.

Inadequate equipment plagued the Hook and Ladder Company, and its members, in May of 1896, submitted a request for more paraphernalia to City Council. However, City Council did not authorize an expenditure. The problem of poor water pressure, which dated back to the earliest days of the city, still hampered the efforts of the volunteers. Firemen reported that they had extinguished a fire in the public schoolhouse's wooden drain pipe, despite "very poor" water pressure.<sup>36</sup>

The Department needed a chain of command and persons to be responsible for specific assignments; consequently, members elected a Chief, Assistant Chief, Secretary, Treasurer, Janitor, and Teamster. Election of officers for the Hook and Ladder Company on April 29, 1897, prompted a request that City Council pay a monthly salary of \$40 to the teamster, to be used, in part, to furnish hay for the horses.<sup>37</sup>

Improving fire protection meant keeping men on duty twenty four hours a day, a condition that probably developed in 1897. Again the firemen approached City Council with a request, and the city fathers agreed to purchase cots if men could be found to sleep in the firehouse. Five men volunteered. Three men stayed in the fire station from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., and a night shift worked from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. In the event of a blaze, those at the station sounded the fire alarm, and off-duty firefighters and citizen volunteers came to help. Some firefighters got special consideration. Married men received an extra four hours off every other weekend, and the Captain could go home for meals.<sup>38</sup>

February of 1898 brought more discussion of consolidation within the Fire Department. Could Hose Company No. 1 and the Grand Junction Volunteer Hook and Ladder Company unite into one Department? Discussions about consolidation became academic when City Council passed an ordinance abolishing the Grand Junction Volunteer Department and creating a paid City Department.<sup>39</sup>

The Council had considered the matter for some time. Interestingly, finances were a major argument for a professional Fire Department. Perhaps a paid Fire Department would be less expensive. Volunteers received no salaries, but it seemed that

they were constantly before City Council requesting financial assistance for Peach Day tournaments, expenses at out-of-town races, and additional fire equipment. While cost accounting was a perfectly logical rationale for the move to a professional Department, talk about replacing volunteers with a paid firefighters was a political bombshell. The volunteers were proud of their status and their record of service to the community. Now, in their view, the City Council had arbitrarily replaced them with salaried employees.

The move to a professional Department required time. To aid in the transition, the City Council authorized a plan to combine volunteers and professionals. Volunteers could continue as firefighters until their certificates expired. Since the certificates were issued by the city for a five year period, this meant that within five years all volunteers would be out of the Fire Department. This plan angered some volunteers, and a struggle ensued.<sup>40</sup>

The central issue of the dispute between the City Council and the volunteers was money. Had the volunteers really been an expense? Fireman Jonathan Hynes spoke about the matter and characterized the Department as a dedicated and hard-working group which the city had neglected. In his analysis, City Council had put no money into the Department's activities. The Peach Day Committee and interested townspeople, not the city, had helped the volunteers. Both volunteer Companies firmly denied that the City Council had paid any expenses, and that the city had no cause for the ordinance. The disgruntled firemen passed a motion to notify the City Council that the present department would disband if forced to serve under the new ordinance.<sup>41</sup>

In the end, the contesting parties reached a compromise. The volunteers made the following resolution and entered it into their minute book on June 17, 1898:

That this (Department) committee ask the council to appropriate the sum each year of \$400 to be divided as follows: one-half to be divided equally among the members, the other half to be prorated to the members according to their attendance at fires and meetings as per the Department secretary's books. That we elect our own officers--Chief and Assistant, subject to their (City Council's) approval, and they (City Council) appoint the teamster and janitor from the department.<sup>42</sup>

With this resolution, the volunteer Department continued to serve, and received funds directly from the city. This arrangement satisfied both parties for the next four years. The volunteers remained but now received pay, so the City Council had a paid Fire Department. Obviously, this measure really solved nothing. It was a compromise that lasted only temporarily. A growing city required a truly professional Department.<sup>43</sup>

Several months after the resolution of the conflict, the Grand Junction Milling and Elevator Company at 715 South Seventh Street burst into flames on November 3, 1898. The following morning there was "nothing remaining of the mill except the stacks of flour and burning and smoldering bran, the great smokestacks, the foundation, and the engine room."<sup>44</sup> Fire Department personnel estimated the loss at \$30,000. Insurance covered only \$11,500. The *Daily Sentinel* reported that the firm might not rebuild, though loss of the business would be a severe blow to the community. To some the message was clear: fire protection must become a priority.<sup>45</sup>

Fortunately for the city, three months later a new mill, tall enough to serve as a landmark for the entire city, had been completed and stood ready for business. The *Sentinel* called the new mill and elevator, "a structure which would be a credit to any city--it towers three full stories in height and built in a strong and liberal manner."<sup>46</sup> Three quarters of a century later, the mill, then owned by Mesa Feed and Farm, would again make the news.

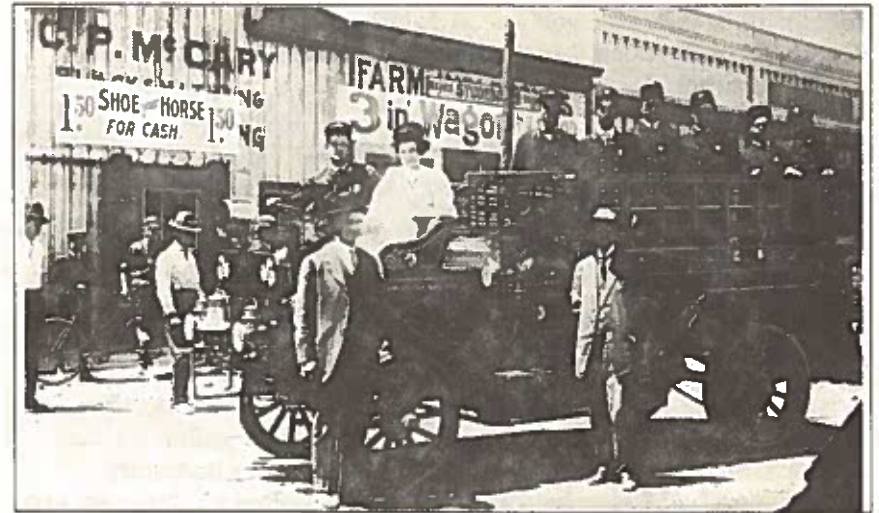
At the end of the 19th century, Grand Junction, home to 5,000 persons, undertook projects to improve fire protection. The city had a combined total of about twelve miles of 4, 6, 10, and 12 inch water mains. The city still drew its water from the Grand River for its fire hydrants, and a water works project was underway which would take water from the Gunnison River and deliver it to a reservoir on a hill two miles south of Grand Junction, 214 feet above the elevation of Main Street. This new source of water doubled the water pressure and greatly improved the quality of fire protection. The Fire Department consisted of two paid firemen and 14 volunteers. For equipment, the city possessed two hand hose carts, and one horse drawn hose cart. Fire alarms went by telephone to the firehouse, where firemen then activated a whistle at the electric light plant to alert others.<sup>47</sup>

Another change was the conversion, begun several years earlier, from a volunteer to a paid group. The volunteers left



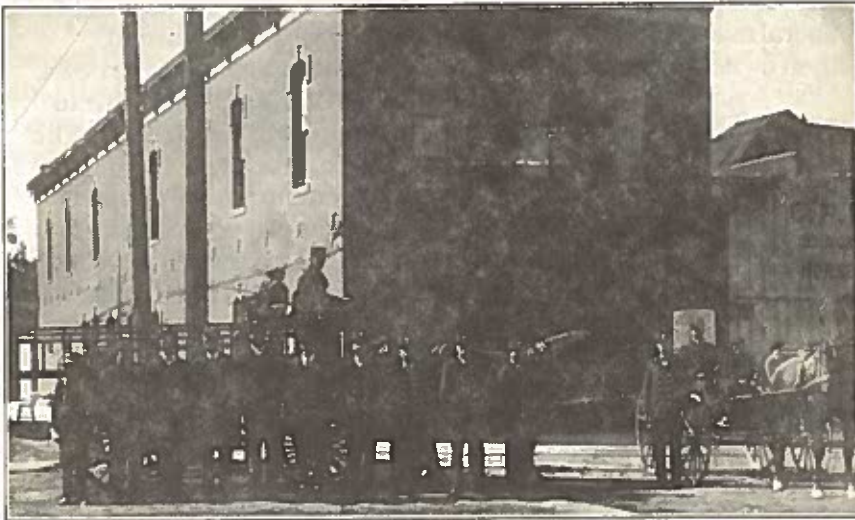
*Photo courtesy of Museum Western Colorado*

*First paid full-time firefighters. July 7, 1902. Left to right: Chief John Dickerson, Del Newell and Ed Innes. Note dog mascot.*



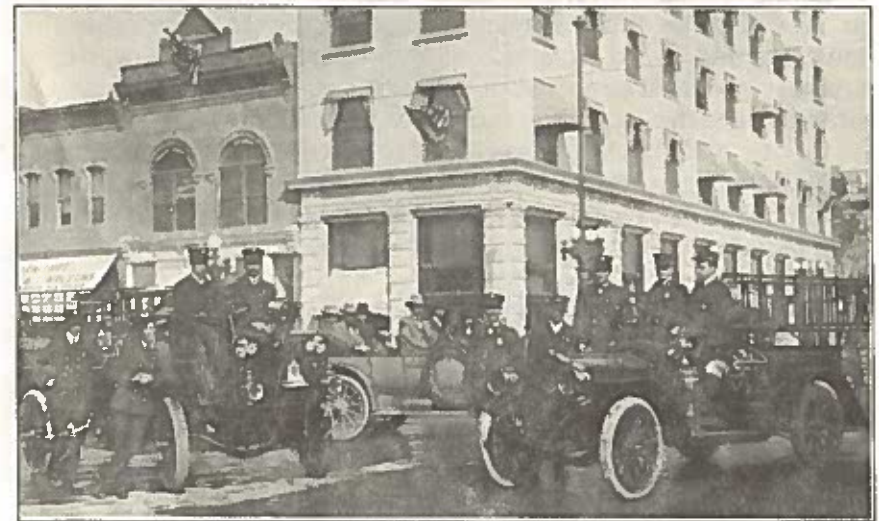
*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*Grand Junction's first motorized truck, 1911 Seagraves. The department was so proud of this new equipment that they displayed it frequently.*



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*1907 Fire Department at Fifth Street and Colorado Avenue. City Hall occupied top floor.*



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*1911 Seagraves truck on display at Fifth and Main Street.*

firefighting of their own volition on July 2, 1902, when Chief G. P. Rogers, recommended that the volunteers resign as a Department. A reorganization followed, and a new unit called the Grand Junction Fire Department emerged. Chief John Dickerson, Del Newell, and Ed Innes became the first full-time, paid firemen.<sup>48</sup>

Reports on the Fire Department in 1904 and 1907 indicated that the Department's personnel remained the same: three paid firemen assisted by twelve volunteers. Two horses, Sam and Jack, pulled a combination hose wagon and hook and ladder truck to fires, and there were still two independent hose carts which men sometimes rushed to fires. These independent hose carts were kept at the homes of firemen living in the eastern part of town, an arrangement which improved fire protection for that part of Grand Junction. There were four, five gallon chemical fire extinguishers in the Fire Department's inventory. The city now had 77 fire hydrants. Alarms usually went by telephone to the fire house.<sup>49</sup>

By 1912, significant changes had occurred. The water supply for the city was much improved, because now Kannah Creek augmented the water supply, and the city had a reservoir with a three million gallon capacity. Grand Junction boasted twenty-seven miles of water mains and 113 hydrants. The Fire Department consisted of a Chief, six professional firefighters, and six men who assisted at large fires. Also, the official reports indicated that Grand Junction had a total of two miles of concrete and asphalt paved streets within the city limits, an improvement which helped the equipment move to fires more rapidly.<sup>50</sup>

In 1912, the Department moved into the age of the internal combustion engine with the purchase of its first fire truck--a 160 horsepower 1911 model Seagraves fire vehicle sporting solid rubber tires on wooden hubs, a hand-cranked siren, and a bell. A 150 horsepower Thomas vehicle, which carried a 35 gallon chemical tank came to Grand Junction the same year.<sup>51</sup> Housing these new machines posed a problem because there simply was not enough room to store the new machines, the old hose carts, and the horses in the quarters on the ground level at City Hall. It appeared that Sam and Jack, the team of horses, would have to be sold. Chief Jack S. Hynes wrote to the mayor of Hotchkiss, Colorado, offering to sell them. "Since getting our big auto fire wagon, we have no room for our fire horses," the chief wrote. He added, "this well-known team, Jack and Sam, ages six and seven respectively, when colts, cost the city \$500 and can be sold any



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

*1911 Seagraves truck on display at Fifth Street and Rood Avenue. Left to Right: Fred Jenkins, Claude Headrick, Fletcher Farmer, Armin Herman, C. C. Faulkner, Roy Morris, Arthur Leonardson, Driver Thomas Todd, Commissioner of Public Affairs (name not known), Chief Jack Hynes, Assistant Chief George Bower.*



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

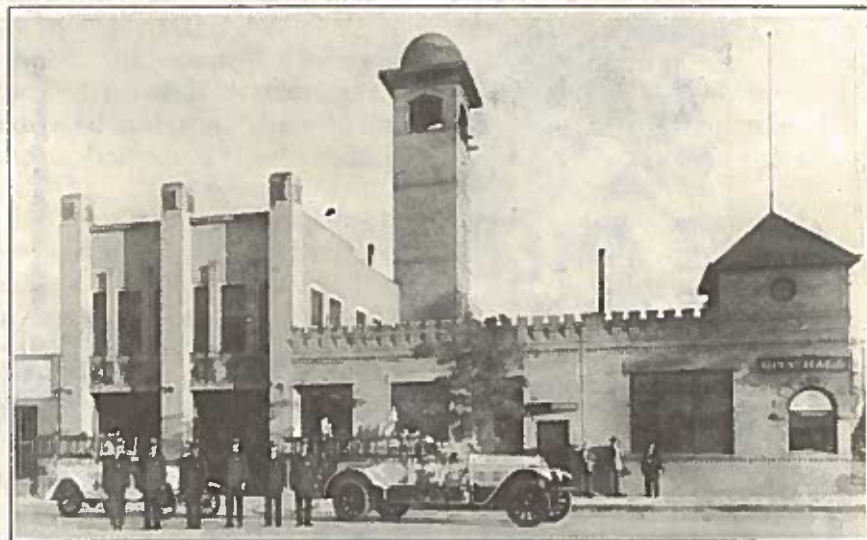
*1911 Seagraves engine on display at Fifth and Main Street. Note hose streams reach above the First National Bank building.*





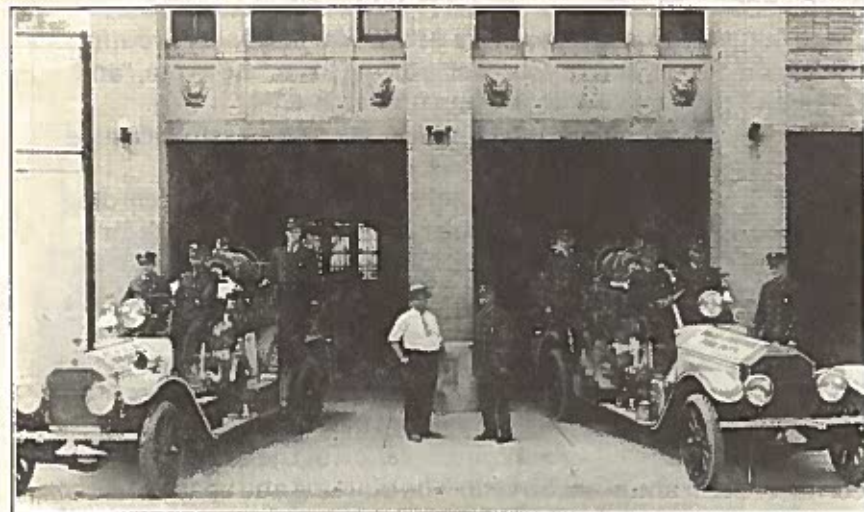
*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

**Chief Jack Hynes who served as chief from 1910 to 1931.**



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

**Fire station at 611 Colorado Avenue, built in 1914. Police Department and City Hall are on the right. The hose tower housed the siren.**



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

**1921 and 1922 American LaFrance trucks purchased following the ice house fire of September 22, 1918. L.R. Bert Peck, John Schmidt, C.I. Kissell, City Manager J.P. Soderstrum, Chief C. L. Downing, Kenneth Harris, Assistant Chief Charles Hurnell, Joe Cerney, and Chas. Bennett.**



*Photo courtesy of Museum of Western Colorado*

**1921 American LaFrance fire truck decorated for a parade.**

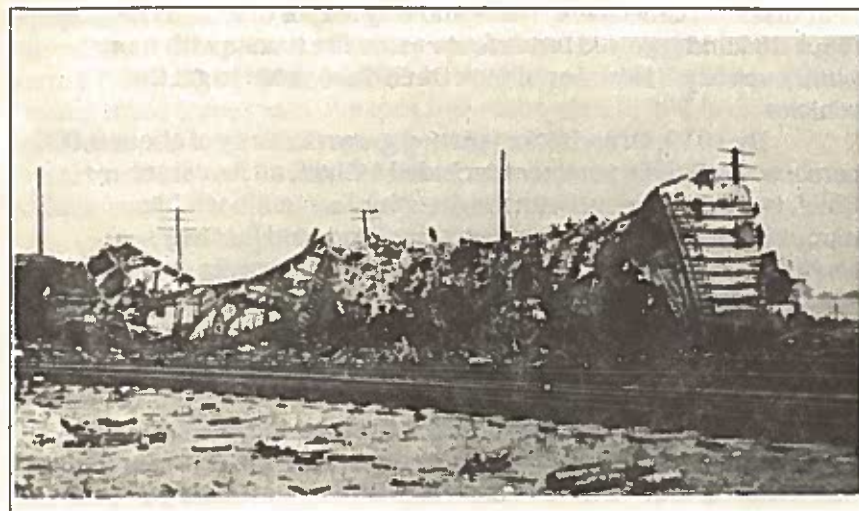
day for \$600." Chief Hynes offered Hotchkiss the team and an entire outfit of fire gear--a value of \$1550--for \$800. "This outfit would add a great deal to your fast growing town," he wrote, "and the horses can do street work when not at a fire."<sup>52</sup>

The sales pitch must not have proven successful because Furman L. Kelley, a lifetime resident of Grand Junction remembered, that as a boy, he enjoyed watching them. According to Kelley, the horses served out their time doing street work for the City of Grand Junction.<sup>53</sup> Keeping Jack and Sam meant congestion in the fire house, so the firemen confiscated a rack in a neighboring blacksmith's shop for hanging their fire coats.<sup>54</sup>

It was increasingly apparent that the Fire Department needed better quarters, for the trucks needed protection from the elements. The first move came prior to 1914, when the Department occupied a temporary location at the southwest corner of Sixth and Main Streets. The building and space were similar to the station location at 5th and Colorado Avenue, however, instead of going out the front door, the rigs all pointed toward the back door and exited into the alley. More suitable surroundings came in 1914 when the Department moved to a specially built Fire Department building located at 611 Colorado Avenue. A new Police Department and City Hall structure bordered the Department on the west.<sup>55</sup>

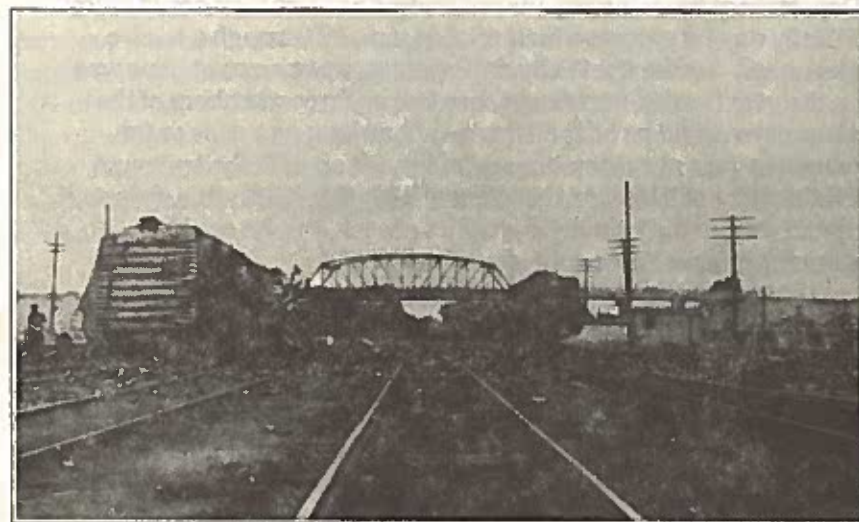
Grand Junction's Fire Department was now modernized, but a fire in 1918 demonstrated that the city needed to do more to protect the citizenry. On September 22, 1918, fire engulfed an empty ice house in the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad freight yard. The structure was a tinderbox because it was made entirely of wood with 12 inches of sawdust insulating the walls. Because of its highly combustible quality, E.W. Dewell, the railroad superintendent, speculated that the building had prompted a "firebug" to set the fire. Winds whipped the flames which destroyed the ice house, then the entire freight dock, and twelve railroad cars and their contents. Firemen feared that large sections of the city might be reduced to ashes.<sup>56</sup>

Firefighters eventually stopped the holocaust in the railroad yard, but it had demonstrated major inadequacies in fire protection. The blaze had required considerable manpower: all the firefighters, many railroad workers, and scores of volunteers. Insufficient fire equipment and the persistent problem of poor water pressure had hampered their efforts. As a result of this



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

*Munition shells at the location of the explosion.*



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

*Explosion site in railroad yard looking north to the Grand Avenue viaduct.*

near disaster, Chief Jack Hynes and City Mayor C. E. Cherrington requested and received funds for two new fire trucks with more water capacity.<sup>57</sup> However, it took three more years to get the vehicles.

By 1919, Grand Junction had grown to a city of about 9,000 persons. Its Fire Department included a Chief, an Assistant Chief, two fully paid men, and eight volunteer "call men," so named because they were called to fires and paid for their services. The equipment included the 1911 Seagraves engine which carried a fifty gallon chemical tank and a thousand feet of hose to affix to the city's water system. The Fire Department's second vehicle was a Ford one-ton truck with a thirty gallon chemical tank and 600 feet of hose.<sup>58</sup>

In 1921, the inauguration of a two-platoon system guaranteed that a full crew of firemen was always on duty, and that a second crew could be called into action in an emergency. From a fire protection standpoint, the two-platoon arrangement was good. Implementing it required the hiring of two additional men. With this new system, one crew worked a twenty-four hour shift while the other had that amount of time off-duty. Off-duty men had very little freedom because they had to listen for the fire siren and to be available for call-back at any time. As the Department increased its manpower, one or two men could enjoy a "Kelly day," a system which rotated time off through a twelve man crew. Under the "Kelly day" system, a twelve man crew was on duty for twenty-four hours, but two or three members of that same crew could be off for a day's shift as long as a nine or ten man crew was at the fire house, and those on a "Kelly day" were available for call back in the event of a big fire. With this system, a man was on duty ninety-six hours a week, but he could sometimes have three consecutive days off.<sup>59</sup>

During the 1920s, the Fire Department became a more modern fire protection unit. It had a Chief and Assistant Chief, five paid firefighters, and eight call men. The Department owned two American LaFrance fire trucks. The old Seagraves vehicle was gone, having been traded in on one of the new vehicles.<sup>60</sup> By the mid-1920s there were approximately twenty-six miles of underground pipe in the city water system, ten miles of paved streets within the city limits, and 140 fire hydrants.<sup>61</sup> Fire Department expenditures totalled \$10,837.48 in 1922; \$11,983.30 in 1923; and \$16,797.19 in 1924. These figures included salaries for the firemen, fuel and supplies, new equipment, repairs to

equipment, repairs to the fire building, fire hydrant rental, and miscellaneous expenses. Salaries constituted the biggest line item: \$7,857.50 in 1923, \$8,267.48 in 1924, and \$9,117.00 in 1924. During these three years, firemen had responded to 200 fires, and had traveled a total of 233 miles getting to them. The Department, from 1922 to 1924, had saved about half a million dollars worth of buildings and other property.<sup>62</sup>

Firefighters performed other duties for the city when not actually fighting fires. They weighed various vehicles on the city scales and collected a twenty-five cent scale fee for the service. During a three year period, they weighed 16,150 vehicles, and got a total of over \$4,000 for that service. Many persons living outside the city did not have access to potable water, and they bought it and hauled it home in tanks. Firemen filled such water tanks from the municipal system for the rural folks at a charge of fifty cents a load. During the years 1922-1924, the firemen sold 8,427 tanks of water, a service that brought the city \$4,213. Receipts from the scales and water tank filling paid about one third of the firemen's salaries.<sup>63</sup> Firemen also issued building permits, inspected electrical wiring installations in the city, and repaired flat tires on the city's vehicles. On their days off, firefighters made fire inspections at businesses within the city.<sup>64</sup>

In the years 1930 through 1936, the Department's salaried personnel consisted of a Chief, two Captains, and four firefighters. In addition, eight call-men answered each alarm. Four call-men went to the Fire Department to bolster the force there. The other four called the telephone operator, gave a code word to receive the location of a the fire, and then proceeded directly to the it. The code word changed every month to prevent unauthorized use.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1930s, the budget for the Fire Department ranged from a low of \$11,447.18 in 1933 to a high of \$14,344.98 in 1936. Salaries for individual firemen were something under \$2,000 a year, good pay for the depression years. The Fire Department still relied on the two American-LaFrance fire trucks. Firemen enjoyed more comfortable rides to fires in the 1930s because the solid rubber tires on the vehicles had been replaced with pneumatic tires. The change in tires was the result of a state law which required brakes incorporated into the wheels, something not possible with hard rubber tires mounted on wooden hubs. Also, a better siren alerted the firemen. Prior to July 1935, a steam siren, located at the power house of the Public Service

Company, sounded the public fire alarm. When the steam plant closed, the city installed a large electrically operated siren on the roof of the fire station. Everyone in Grand Junction knew the sound of this siren because it blew two times each day--at precisely 12:00 noon and at 9:00 p.m. to signal the curfew when all children were to be off the streets. Firemen still weighed vehicles on the city scales and sold tanks of city water.<sup>66</sup>

In the early 1930s, Grand Junction hosted the state convention for firefighters, an event which brought men from all parts of Colorado for "fire college" and contests. "Fire college" consisted of classroom instruction in advanced firefighting techniques. The contests, reminiscent of the old Peach Day festivals, gave teams of firemen from various cities an opportunity to compete against one another. These contests were held on Ute Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Wooden bleachers provided a place for spectators to watch as firemen matched their abilities in ladder drills, wet tests, and straight-away tests.<sup>67</sup>

A "fire college" in Grand Junction, internal combustion engines, and an electrical siren--these represented changes from the days of volunteers; but the Fire Department's social role remained. Firefighters restored broken toys and gave them to the needy at Christmas. Men, with time on their hands, visited the fire house because something was always happening there. Poker and checkers were standard diversions. Firemen in the twentieth century, like their predecessors who had started a gymnasium, were proud of their athletic ability. These men formed boxing and softball teams, and were anxious to play anyone. Athletic ability sometimes even enhanced a person's chances of getting a job with the Fire Department. Frank Kreps, known for his softball-playing, was hired, in part, because he was an outstanding athlete. However, he proved that he was more than just a ball player by rising to the position of Fire Chief.<sup>68</sup>

Diversions like checkers, poker, boxing, and softball attracted men to the firehouse, and conversations kept them there. Gossip and talk about politics were common at the firehouse. Fire house conversation often centered around humorous stories that the firemen told. When chronicling their Department, firemen agreed that an early-morning fire in an old abandoned building produced the greatest loss of life. The official fire report on this blaze said that there were 3,000 fatalities--all cockroaches. Another favorite story concerned a burning barn

and chickens. At this, firemen chased the frightened birds from the building, only to watch the chickens quickly return to it. It was reported that the firefighters enjoyed roast chicken for supper that night. Firemen laughed about the friendly reception they received when called to a Grand Junction house of ill repute. The grateful women who worked there invited the valiant firemen to stay--or to return when they were off duty.<sup>69</sup>

Firemen enjoyed telling about a call to help a young woman in labor. With the woman was a young man, assumed by the firemen to be the lady's husband. They instructed him to go to the bedroom and prepare her for the trip to the hospital. The "husband" helped the female with several intimate details before the trip to the hospital began, and he then agreed to accompany them to the hospital. During the trip, the firemen asked for information that would be needed at the hospital: what was her age, who was the family doctor, and what was her blood type? The befuddled man finally announced that he did not know the woman or anything about her. He had simply been at the woman's house waiting for his girlfriend to return when the excitement started. Upon hearing this news, the firemen quickly stopped the vehicle; the man disembarked; and the squad and woman continued on to the hospital.<sup>70</sup>

Practical jokes were a standard feature of the firefighters' lives. Rigging an automobile coil to a metal chair shocked unsuspecting victims when they sat down or touched the chair. One such victim was Chief Downing, who saw no humor in the incident, and attempted to stop such foolishness--with little success.<sup>71</sup>

New recruits, particularly when acting as dispatcher, often became the butt of practical jokes. Before the days of regularly paid dispatchers, firefighters rotated that duty. A common prank was to call a rookie firefighter, and report a fire at 330 South Sixth Street, the address of the main fire station. When rookies sounded the alarm, the captains would patiently explain that that the fire station was not on fire. Firemen sometimes went to great lengths to play a practical joke. For example, two firefighters on one crew stretched thirty feet of surgical tubing through the ceiling, positioning its open end above the bunk of another crew member. A gentle squeeze on a bottle hidden in another room, caused droplets of water to fall on the face of the man in the bunk. The unsuspecting victim reported that the roof leaked.<sup>72</sup>

Altering a comrade's "bunker gear" was common; however, pranksters were careful not to do anything that might endanger a fireman. "Bunker gear" consisted of a man's safety clothing such as helmet, boots, fire-resistant coat, pants, and gloves. The term, "bunker gear," originated because firemen placed all their necessary gear near the foot of the bunk, so they could dress quickly when an alarm sounded. Pranksters sometimes filled bunker boots with shaving cream. Occasionally, the bunker pants were placed backwards over the boots. When answering an alarm, the unsuspecting firefighter would jump into his boots, pull up the pants, and discover the improper location of buttons. Since fire trucks waited for no one, the firefighter went to this particular call with trousers on backwards, and an open fly on his backside.<sup>73</sup>

In 1943, while World War II raged, the people of Grand Junction got a first-hand look at what war must be like. This fire would be a topic of conversation for many years in the city, and Grand Junction's Fire Department was at the center of the action. At about 2:00 a.m. on June 27, near the site of the 1918 ice house fire, two railroad carloads of ammunition en route to the west coast, exploded, starting a spectacle that would last for four hours. Railway officials later determined that when the brakes were applied, sparks had ignited the underside of a car, and this detonated the munitions. Shrapnel and shells ripped apart boxcars and bombarded the part of the town near the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway ticket office. The noise and flashes of light produced by exploding munitions provided quite a show which attracted large numbers of spectators who came to witness the excitement. The firemen faced real problems: the safety of the spectators was a concern; the exploding ammunition was dangerous, and the fire had to be contained. During the fire, four persons were injured. One of those hurt was Henry Tebo, a Grand Junction fireman, who received lacerations on his leg when a piece of shrapnel shattered the fire truck's windshield and sent glass flying. The Fire Chief, Charles Downing, lost an arm because of an exploding shell.<sup>74</sup>

When the explosions stopped, there was a great deal of smoldering wreckage. Spent brass cartridges and ammunition were everywhere. Some were found as far from the yard as Fourth Street and North Avenue, a distance of over a mile from the fire itself. People who lived near the rail yard found material from the explosion for some time. Some children in the city figured out



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

*Railroad employees looking over damaged railroad car and yard.*



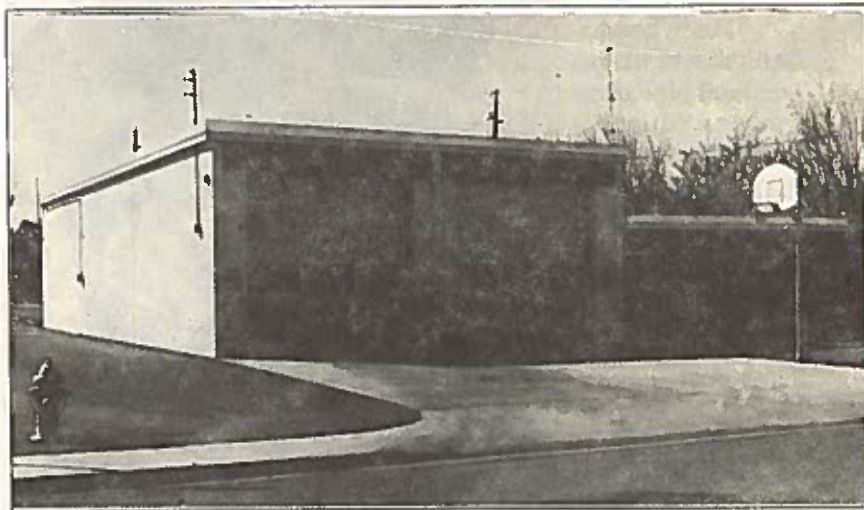
*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

*Chief Charles Downing, seventh Chief who served from January 1, 1931 to July 1954.*



*Photo courtesy of G.J.F.D. collection*

**Grand Junction Fire Department in 1949. Left to Right (Back Row): Jack Schmidt, Frank Kreps, Melvin Drexel, Fred Mattison, Kenneth O'Key, O. D. Harrigan, Melvin Augustad, C. W. Moore, Captain Brady. (Front Row): C. I. Griffith, R. T. Mantlo, J. T. Varlandigham, Chief Downing, Captain Plowman, A. H. Gavin.**



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

**Fire Station #2 at 1135 North Eighteenth Street. Occupied January 1960.**



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

**Hose tower located at the southeast corner of the main station at 330 South Sixth Street. In addition to drying hose, the tower, serves as a training tower for smoke drills and rappelling.**

a way to get a large caliber brass shell for themselves, despite the warnings that touching the debris could be dangerous. Cleaning up the mess fell to the city crews and engineers who came from Camp Hale. One of the Army men, Colonel Harry Hewitt, had a hand badly mangled during the cleanup. Most live shells were detonated, and then buried, probably in an isolated site somewhere west of the city. Everyone talked about the fire, read accounts about it in the *Daily Sentinel* for some time, and many worried about the injured Fire Chief who would remain hospitalized for several months.<sup>75</sup>

The sensational circumstances surrounding Downing's injury explained part of the interest; also, he was a native of the Grand Valley and a popular man. Born in Grand Junction on January 12, 1892, he joined the Department in 1919 and became Chief on January 1, 1931. Replacing Downing on a temporary basis created problems. When an unpopular temporary replacement was eminent, the entire Department went to City Hall with badges in hand ready to resign if the proposed appointment were made. The selection of Roscoe Combs, a man from Fruita with no firefighting experience, as a temporary Chief resolved the problem. One particularly vocal firefighter almost lost his job because of this incident. Chief Downing supported his men, agreeing to come back to work only if no one was fired and everything else remained the same. He returned as Chief and served until July of 1954.<sup>76</sup>

There was disharmony in the Department in 1943 when Chief Downing returned; he reorganized the Department and separated the factions. One crew wore black hats and carried a "black crew" designation and included Captain K.O. Harris, Engineer Clarence Plowman, Firemen Frank Kreps, Kenneth O'Key, and Alvin Gavin. The other crew was the "red crew" and included Captain Joe Brady, Engineer Henry Tebo, Firemen Jack Schmidt, Jim VanLandingham, and Bill Moore.<sup>77</sup>

The Grand Junction Fire Department grew in the 1940s. In 1947, for example, the personnel consisted of a Chief, an Assistant Chief, and ten firemen. These men used equipment which was getting older. The two American-LaFrance engines were still in service. A Chevrolet vehicle, which carried a pumper tank, had been added for city and rural use. Grand Junction, home to about 12,500 persons, now had many paved streets.<sup>78</sup>

The Grand Junction Fire Department had extended its protection beyond the city limits, a service financed by a mill

levy paid by people living outside the city. These rural districts included Orchard Mesa, Redlands, Appleton, and Fruitvale. In these outlying areas, untrained citizen volunteers assisted the professionals at fires. When a truck responded to a call in any of these fire districts, neighborhood people would follow the truck's siren to the blaze. Once at the fire, the citizens enthusiastically helped the firemen. Sometimes, however, their assistance was a problem. At a fire on the Redlands, the helpers, acting on their own volition, "ventilated" a residence by throwing rocks through the windows. They did not understand that "ventilation" had to be coordinated with placement of hose lines to bring water to extinguish the flames that would erupt in an area with an air supply. With the windows broken in the Redlands structure, the fire accelerated and the residence burned to the ground. Another problem was that volunteers left the scene of a fire when the blaze was extinguished, refusing to help with the mundane tasks of cleanup and picking up and reloading the hose which they felt fell to the firemen since they received a salary for doing such things.<sup>79</sup>

Problems like the loss of the house on the Redlands led to a better organizational structure which incorporated the four rural districts into one. A board assumed responsibility for purchasing and repair of equipment for use in rural areas, and for contributing money to the Grand Junction Fire Department to pay part of the firemen's wages. This arrangement resulted in two sets of equipment in the Grand Junction fire house: one for use in rural areas, and another for in-town calls. In the 1940s, the rural districts contributed a sum that paid the salary of three firemen; secured rental space for their equipment in the firehouse; and covered the costs of gasoline and the other expenses related to out-of-the-city fire protection. The rural districts paid their way, strengthened local fire protection, and gained the services of professional firemen.<sup>80</sup>

The 1950s brought several serious fires. The Appleton School, a large stucco-frame building burned to the ground. Wooden pallets stored near the Miller canning factory, located at South Avenue and Ninth Street, caught on fire, and the blaze spread to the cannery itself. A livestock auction barn at the west end of North Avenue burned. The Anderson Furniture Store which had experienced three fires in its history, had another one in the 1950s. Townspeople remembered the fire at the Chevrolet showroom and garage at 200 Main Street because firemen,



*Photo courtesy of  
G.J.F.D. Collection*

*Fire hydrant at rear of  
main station at 330 South  
Sixth Street. This hydrant  
is used for training and  
pump testing of the trucks.*



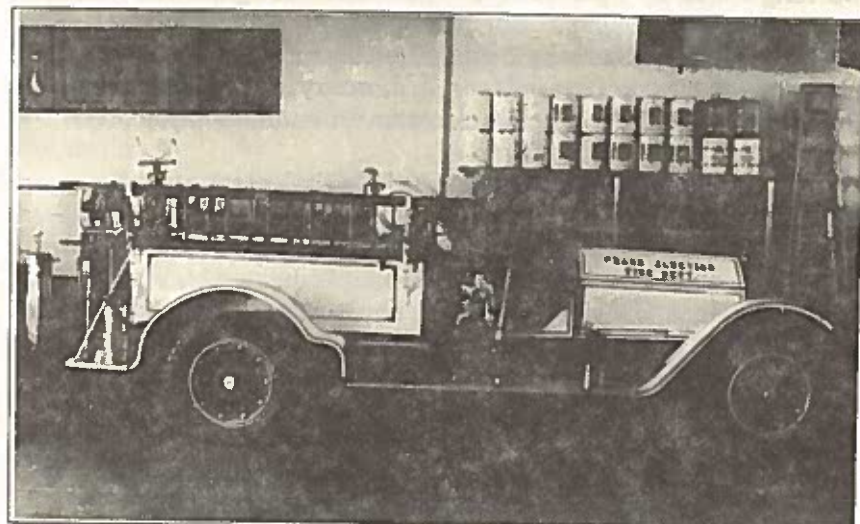
*Photo courtesy of  
G.J.F.D. Collection*

*Chief Frank Kreps  
who served as  
Chief from 1955 to  
to 1974.*



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Siren on pole at northeast corner of main station at 330 South  
Sixth Street. It was not mounted on tower because vibrations  
might have damaged the tower.*



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*1922 American LaFrance engine after restoration.*



wearing air masks, entered the building and drove new Chevrolets and Cadillacs from the showroom floor. Firemen remembered a call to a two-story apartment complex on South Avenue because the event demonstrated that irrational behavior sometimes resulted from emergency situations. The panicked apartment-dwellers threw possessions out of the upstairs windows before vacating the building. Dishes, furniture, television sets, and other items shattered as they hit the sidewalk and pavement. When the occupants emerged from the building, they carried unbreakable items like pillows, blankets, and clothing which would have survived a fall from the windows.<sup>81</sup>

A bowling alley on Rood Avenue burned late one night, and this blaze nearly took the life of a man. Captain James Vanlandingham became disorientated while searching for the seat of the fire in the smoke-filled basement where he could see nothing. The total lack of visibility panicked him, and almost caused him to remove the self-contained breathing apparatus. However, at the last moment, he realized that removal of the equipment would mean certain death. After this incident, he always stressed to other firefighters the importance of remaining calm and rational.<sup>82</sup>

The 1960s brought increased professionalism and new buildings. At the insistence of firemen, City Council reduced working hours to 72 per week. Firefighters investigated the cause of fires more scientifically than in the past, and watched more carefully for signs of arson. During the 1960s the Department got expanded and improved facilities. In January of 1960, some firefighters moved into a new substation (Substation #2) located at 1135 North Eighteenth Street.<sup>83</sup>

In 1961, an ancient boiler belched a ball of flame and caused a fire at the main station, located at 611 Colorado. There were two telephone lines into the building: the regular phone line and a direct line to Substation #2. The super-heated blast melted the communication wires, fusing the two lines together. The shorted wires put the interlocked Police and Fire Department radio and telephone system out of business, as well as a fire warning system connecting the Veterans Hospital. Consequently, the fire alarm did not sound and no messages could be sent from the building. On-duty firefighters received a telephone call from Fire Station #2 on the regular telephone system saying that their fire alarm phone kept ringing. Before that call was finished, the regular phone went dead, too. Despite the communications

difficulties, the fire was extinguished, but authorities realized that the Fire Department needed more up-to-date surroundings.<sup>84</sup>

On September 1, 1963, the Grand Junction Fire Department moved into its present location at 330 South Sixth Street, a one-story structure that cost \$125,000 to build. Firefighters gladly left the old fire station on Colorado Avenue. "The only thing we miss is our poles," one firefighter said. The new building had many amenities, but the men were particularly enthusiastic about the rectangular tower on the southeast corner where they could dry hoses, master setting ladders, carry hoses to the top of a smoke-filled stairway, and practice rappelling. The Department's own fire hydrant even stood behind the station.<sup>85</sup>

The firemen awaited the arrival of the big siren which was to be moved from the old station and mounted on the roof of the tower. However, City Engineer David Hickman barred the siren's installation because he feared that its vibrations might damage the new structure. Hickman recommended the siren be mounted on a pole outside of the fire station. A fire house without a siren inconvenienced firefighters. Chief Frank Kreps explained that this situation created a hardship to his off-duty men, because, without the siren, the only way to alert men at home would be by telephone. Kreps stated, "A man off-duty could hardly be expected to spend his time glued to the telephone." Chief Kreps did not object to mounting the siren on a pole, but he explained: "we've about spent our budget, and we have to watch costs." On February 2, 1964, with special approval of funds by the City Manager, workmen mounted the siren on a pole at the northeast corner of the station.<sup>86</sup>

During the 1960s, several big fires made the news. On August 19, 1961, a spectacular blaze destroyed the Mesa County Canning Corporation at Third Avenue and Seventh Street. Damage at the fire was estimated in excess of \$225,000. A towering pillar of smoke brought hundreds of spectators to the scene. All of Grand Junction's firefighters came to fight the blaze. In addition, police and civilian volunteers carried hoses as the swiftly moving flames kept forcing the firefighters to retreat. The property also housed the district office of the Magobar Mud Chemicals Company. When this portion of the building burned, powerful chemical explosions rocked the surroundings. After the fire, two firefighters received treatment at St. Mary's Hospital: Hoyt Brown for blistered feet and Jess Longwell needed a tetanus

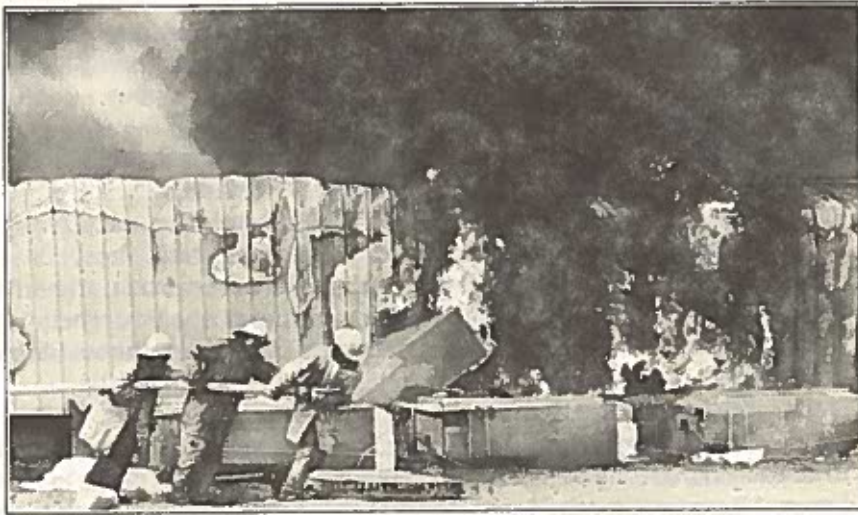


Photo courtesy of Bob Grant of the Daily Sentinel

Firemen at work at Daily Sentinel fire of April 9, 1974.



Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl

Fire Station #3 at 582 25 1/2 Road. built in 1975.

shot due to a puncture wound from a rusty nail. Assistant Fire Chief Joe Brady, uncertain of the cause of the fire, speculated that a lighted cigarette left in the building on Friday night or an electrical short had started the fire.<sup>87</sup>

A flash fire, on January 20, 1963, whipped through the *Daily Sentinel* Printing Company's plant at 642 Main Street and caused over \$100,000 in damage. Despite the destruction, there was no delay in the publishing of the newspaper. A crewman's close call caused firemen to talk about this blaze for some time. Firefighter Wes Painter, fighting the fire in the smoke-filled building, fell fifteen feet down an elevator shaft. Luckily, he landed in a huge bin of waste paper, and suffered only a bruised right shoulder and sprained right arm and hand. Other firemen quickly lowered a ladder to him, and two comrades boosted him to safety.<sup>88</sup>

On a cold February day in 1964, George Biggs, of 2237 H Road, watched helplessly as flames reduced his home to ashes. No fire engines had come because the home stood outside of the rural fire protection district. As a result of this incident, Clinton O'Brien, one of Biggs' neighbors, launched a campaign to bring the area under the protection of the Rural Fire District. According to O'Brien's calculations the decreased cost of fire insurance would more than pay for the \$2 to \$4 (1.4 mills) increase in taxes.<sup>89</sup>

Within a year, the area had been incorporated into the District. Today, the entire Grand Valley has fire protection: volunteer Departments serve Clifton, Glade Park, Palisade, Central and East Orchard Mesa, and Fruita; while Grand Junction has the only full-time paid Department on the Western Slope.<sup>90</sup>

A flash fire gutted the Fabric Lane Store, on Grand Junction's Main Street, on Thursday, April 16, 1964. This fire followed several other serious fires in the downtown area. In addition to the *Daily Sentinel* fire, the Excelsior Dry Cleaners (south side of the 400 block of Rood Avenue), Manual's Department Store (northeast corner of Sixth and Main Street), and a used car lot (Seventh and Main Street) had fires. When the firemen arrived at Fabric Lane, the fire was far ahead of them. It was a serious fire--but not without a light moment or two. While the flames leaped, a small wide-eyed boy in the crowd observed: "I sure hope they don't let it burn all that good cowboy stuff in the next store."<sup>91</sup> After the fire was quelled, firefighter James H. Shue emerged from the burned building wearing his regular street shoes with uniform trousers which were soaked and blackened to

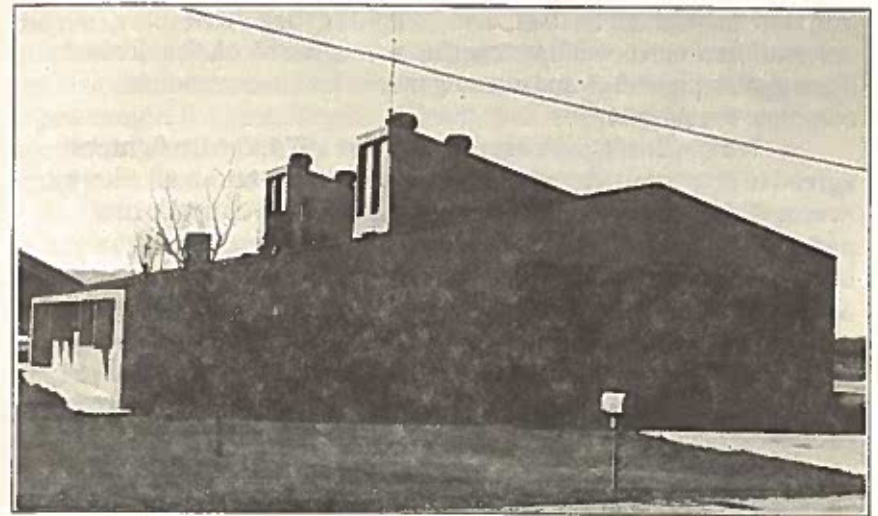
his knees. "I am sure glad I didn't wear my nice new rubber boots and get THEM all wet and dirty," Shue said, squishing water as he walked away. The experience with inappropriate footwear stuck with him. When he became Battalion Chief, he always insisted that firefighters wear ALL of their protective clothing.<sup>92</sup>

In February 1967, vandals started a \$200,000 fire in the Orchard Mesa Junior High School at 2736 C Road. This pre-dawn fire caused no injuries; however, ten firefighters and four trucks battled the blaze for three hours. The 700 students did not miss a day of school; instead they rode busses to Bookcliff Junior High School for half-day sessions. Two juvenile boys later admitted setting the fire.<sup>93</sup>

The Kuner-Empson Cannery, located between Seventh and Eighth Streets on First Avenue, had a fire on September 3, 1964 that destroyed more than a million cans. The round cans--wrapped in heavy, protective paper and stacked floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall in a second-story storage loft--provided plenty of air space to encourage the fire. Fortunately, there were no injuries, but other cans had to be found for the upcoming tomato canning season.<sup>94</sup>

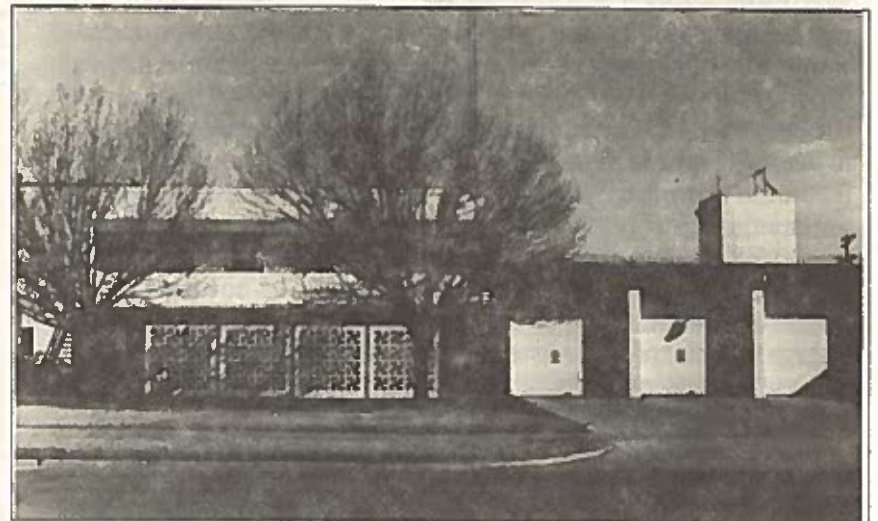
Since its beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century, Grand Junction firemen had tried to raise money for Departmental expenses. Fund-raising activities continued in the 1960s. In an effort to earn extra money, in December 1965 the men scheduled a variety show with nationally known country and western artists. Local merchants supported the event by selling over \$3,000 worth of tickets. However, the Denver promoter proved to be a scoundrel who left with the funds and provided no show. In a desperate rescue effort, firefighters formed their own committee and brought Loretta Lynn and others from the Grand Ole Opry to Grand Junction.<sup>95</sup>

In May of 1968, Grand Junction firefighters began a labor of love: restoring the 1921 American La France truck retired from service in 1955. From the Fire Department, the truck had moved to the City Water Department which used it to pump out reservoirs on Orchard Mesa. One day, however, the operator of the vehicle had fallen asleep on the job, and a rod had shattered the engine block. The vehicle then had gone to the Frank Dunn Auto Salvage, where it sat for a number of years. Grand Junction firefighters had convinced Mr. Dunn that the historic vehicle should be restored. Dunn agreed, stipulating that the truck could not be owned by the city; that it could not be used to fight fires;



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Fire Station #4 at 277 27 Road, built in 1979.*



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Main fire station #1 at 330 South Sixth Street. The lower level was originally built and occupied in 1963. The second story addition came in 1977.*

and that it could not be sold. The firefighters began the restoration project, welding together an engine block that looked like a jigsaw puzzle. Some missing pieces had to be made to complete the project.<sup>96</sup>

When Chief Frank Kreps retired in 1974, the firefighters agreed to give Frank the truck. It was stored at Station #3 where Kreps, with the help of others, had the vehicle looking like new and ready for its first public showing within a year. The engine became a standard feature in Grand Junction's parades and found a permanent home in the Mesa County Sheriff's garage.<sup>97</sup>

The traditional Firemen's Ball ended in 1969 because City Manager Richard Gray believed that local businessmen felt pressure to purchase the tickets. To replace this source of funds, each member of the Department contributed \$1.50 per month to the Firemen's Fund to pay for recreational and shop needs, trip expenses, state association dues, newspapers for all stations, and other designated donations. City Council also augmented the fireman's fund with a \$300 per year allocation designated for convention expenses.<sup>98</sup>

Until January 1, 1969, the Fire Department provided free emergency ambulance service to the residents of Grand Junction and the surrounding areas. To begin reducing Department responsibility for this service and insure that the city's squads would be available for emergencies, City Council levied a per-call fee of \$15 for city dwellers, and \$20 plus mileage for those outside the city limits.<sup>99</sup> Since alternative ambulance services were available from a local mortuary, City Council hoped that the \$15 fee would encourage people to use the private ambulance service for emergency transports. In May 1975, the City increased its fee to \$30 for residents of Grand Junction and \$40 for those outside of the city. By 1986, charges reached \$90--plus an equipment assessment, and, if outside the city limits, an added mileage charge. These measures were to make the Department's professional personnel and sophisticated equipment available to those persons who faced real emergencies.<sup>100</sup>

A test of the Fire Department's rescue capability came on May 20, 1970 when a circus tent injured many persons. A crowd of 800-900 spectators, many of whom were children, were in the tent at 6:00 p.m., with only two acts remaining on the program, when 64-miles-per-hour gusts of wind snapped the guy ropes along the south edge of the tent and carried the tent and poles up and across the arena, dumping them behind the grandstand on

the north side. The tent, 120 by 240 feet, did not collapse on the audience. Instead, witnesses said it went up like an umbrella. As the tent and poles went flying over the north grandstands, the guy ropes caught the tent, flinging it down to earth. Frightened spectators quickly left the stands. Fortunately, many of the uninjured stayed to help those needing help.<sup>101</sup>

Firefighter Ralph Erskine headed the rescue squad. Upon reaching the scene and seeing the magnitude of the problem, he called the firehouse, asking for all the manpower and equipment available. Unfortunately, none came to aid him, because Departmental policy was that men and equipment had to be at the fire house so they would be available for other possible emergencies. However, police, sheriff's officers, and private citizens assisted Erskine and other members of the rescue squad in transporting about eighty injured persons to area hospitals. This incident brought policy changes relating to emergency calls: henceforth, the officer-in-charge was authorized to request all the equipment and manpower necessary to meet such emergencies.<sup>102</sup>

Grand Junction's most damaging holocaust spread through the industrial area in the southern part of town on April 9, 1974. The call came to the firehouse at 7:53 p.m.: extinguishing it took the night and part of the following morning. High winds caused transformers located near the Mesa Feed and Farm Supply elevator to arch. The winds fanned it, causing it to leap to the American Linen Supply Company on the east side of Ninth Street at Second Avenue. As firefighters battled that blaze, flying embers landed on the *Daily Sentinel* press room and the newsprint storage room. Fire made its way into the building through the rooftop air conditioning system and quickly destroyed a new offset press and stacks of newsprint. Flames from the the press room spread to lumber stored near the fuel tanks at Continental Oil Company two blocks away. Driven by the wind, flames roared toward H and M Electrical and quickly engulfed it. The holocaust had caused approximately \$5,000,000 in damage.<sup>103</sup>

Containing this fire required all seven of the Department's fire vehicles, forty-two Grand Junction Fire Department personnel, nearly all the full time lawmen in the county, and more than twenty-five men from the Clifton, Orchard Mesa, and Fruita Volunteer Fire Departments. Two firefighters required hospitalization, Jack Brandhorst for smoke inhalation

and Glen Dickerson with a severely cut arm. Dickerson remained off-duty for five weeks following tendon-repairing surgery. Roscoe "Rocky" Boothe, a Grand Junction firefighter, lacerated his right thumb early in the fire, but, he worked throughout the night. The following morning, Boothe went to the hospital where he had eight stitches in the thumb. Charles Teed, City Community Relations Officer, had watched the firemen that night and summed things up the heroic efforts: "I think the people of Grand Junction ought to be proud of their fire department."<sup>104</sup>

The debris from the fire was a hazard for some time. Ten days after the fire, newsprint rolls at the *Daily Sentinel* flared anew and were quickly extinguished. The elevator at Mesa Feed and Grain still smoldered for more than a month. Later, Chief Mantlo, the City Building Inspector, and other top officials agreed that the three reinforced concrete grain silos at Mesa Feed and Farm Supply must come down. The structures were more solid than expected: it took a crane, with a five hundred pound ball, ten days to demolish the heavily reinforced elevator at the north end.<sup>105</sup> The others still proudly stand today--as they were originally built after the fire of November 3, 1898.

Another fire in the 1970s destroyed an historic building, the first home of the Grand Junction Fire Department at 461 Colorado Avenue. Later, in the 1920s, the building was the home of the Biggs-Kurtz Hardware; Laycock Motors occupied it in the 1930s; and the Army Store came to it in the mid-1940s. On January 24, 1977, an early-morning blaze levelled the landmark.<sup>106</sup>

Two days later, police arrested a pair of transients for liquor law violations. One of the men, Leonard Donald Ingalls, asked the officer if he could get clothing from his room at the St. Regis Hotel before going to jail. Police officer Schumacher accompanied Ingalls to the room and there he observed items "that could only have come from the Army Store." Obviously, this was the man responsible for the fire. Later authorities learned that he had set it to cover a robbery in the store.<sup>107</sup>

On April 16, 1975, the Grand Junction City Council adopted the 1973 edition of the Uniform Fire Code as a precaution against fires. Many citizens opposed its acceptance, fearing that their homes would have to meet the specifications in the code. However, the worry was unwarranted because regulations applied to new construction and remodeling--not existing structures.<sup>108</sup>

The Grand Junction Fire Department extended its community involvement on October 29, 1975 with the inception of the Fire Auxillary. This young peoples' group offered training and career guidance in firefighting and rescue operations through Explorer Boy and Girl Scout programs. The Auxillary increased awareness about fires, and induced two participants, Dale Robbins and Genevieve "Ginny" Chase, to become firefighters in Grand Junction. Others in the Auxillary pursued firefighting and related emergency medical careers. The first Fire Department supervisor of the group was Wes Painter assisted by Directors Robert Strobl, LeRoy Johnson, Don McGuire, City Personnel Director Pat Bittle, and two people from the community. Chief R. T. Mantlo served as a non-voting executive officer.<sup>109</sup>

By the 1970s Grand Junction had grown into a city, and its expansion required more buildings and updated information systems. In July of 1975, firemen occupied Substation #3 at 582 25 1/2 Road, and by November of 1979, Substation #4 at 277 27 Road on Orchard Mesa was in operation. Fire poles returned to the Department in 1977 when the main station got a second story addition which provided living quarters for firefighters. The new second floor cost, \$250,000, a figure double that of the original building. This new addition foreshadowed events to come because facilities were made for the future employment of female firefighters. Departmental offices, which remained on the main floor, gained a computer system and a central dispatching center for the Fire Department, Police Department, and Sheriff's Department.<sup>110</sup>

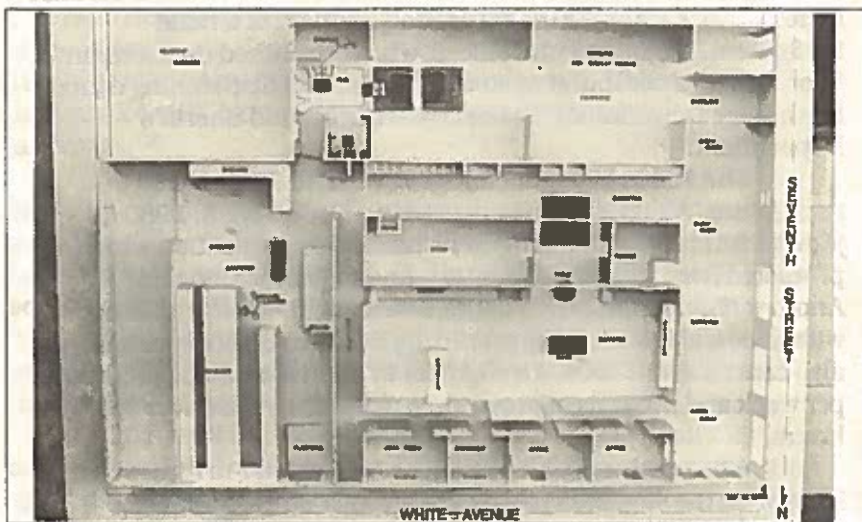
The 1980s brought changes to Grand Junction's firefighters. A majority of them voted on December 8, 1980 to join the International Firefighter Union, an organization which promoted fire safety, burn centers, and improved benefits. Another change, which firefighters welcomed, was compliance with a federal law restricting on-duty hours to 63 hours per week also came in the 1980s. Firefighters in 1988 are on duty 56 hours per week and must receive overtime pay for any time over 53 hours.<sup>111</sup>

A fire on June 10, 1982 at the Ackerman Furniture Store, located on the southeast corner of Seventh Street and White Avenue, marked a milestone in the Department's history. This fire produced a court trial and generated much publicity because it involved arson. At the time of the fire, Chief R. T. Mantlo did not suspect arson but he had not dismissed it. When asked about it



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Fire, police, and sheriff dispatching center in 1987. Located on main floor of main fire station #1.*



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Scale model of Ackerman Furniture building used in trial of Mickey Ackerman.*



*Photo courtesy of G. J. F. D. Collection*

*Chief R.T. Mantlo, tenth Chief. Served as Chief from 1974 to April 4, 1986.*



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Chief Richard E. Greene, the eleventh Fire Chief. Appointed May 12, 1986.*

after the fire, he said: "You never rule it out, but there is no evidence of arson." Later investigation gave reason to suspect criminal wrongdoing. Consequently, on February 3, 1983, Mickey Ackerman, Mark Eberly, and Shyron Brown were charged with arson. Lieutenant Bob Keeling had investigated the fire, and his testimony in the trial led to the conviction of Mickey Ackerman. Shortly afterward, Mark Eberly admitted that he knew about the planned fire, but that he had nothing to do with it. After Ackerman's conviction, Ackerman himself indicated that Brown had nothing to do with the arson, and Brown and Eberly accepted charges of a lesser nature.<sup>112</sup>

On April 4, 1986, R. T. Mantlo retired after forty-one years in the Department, with the last twelve years as Chief. Mantlo distinguished himself as a Chief who served his community. For many years, Mantlo played "Santa," always staying to hear the very last child's wish. He served as the first chairman for the American Red Cross chapter in Grand Junction; he initiated training programs to teach tactics and strategy to volunteer firefighters on the Western Slope; and in the Grand Junction Department he introduced Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) instruction through St. Mary's Hospital. This program improved the Department, established its leadership in "EMT" programs on the Western Slope, and prepared the Fire Department for the introduction of paramedics to the staff. As Chief, Mantlo had secured improvements for his firefighters: he saw two additional substations built, and had equipment upgraded to the extent that Grand Junction owned some of the finest fire and rescue vehicles in the state. After retirement, "R. T.'s" popularity led to his election, in April of 1987, to the Grand Junction City Council.<sup>113</sup>

Mantlo's successor, Richard E. Greene became the eleventh Chief of the Grand Junction Fire Department on May 12, 1986. His appointment marked the first time that an out-of-town candidate was selected for the position. Greene initiated numerous progressive changes, including reassigning manpower to the substations, giving each station a four-man crew, and making two stations (Station #1 at 330 South Sixth and Station #3 at 582 25 1/2 Road) paramedic engine companies. This redistribution of firefighters made it possible for fire trucks with paramedic and rescue equipment to have better access and a shorter "running time" to most locations in the city. Quality Ambulance, a local company, provides transportation for victims needing hospitalization. Quality Ambulance's service



Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl

*Genevieve "Ginny" Chase. First woman firefighter in Grand Junction. She started training with five other new recruits on April 6, 1987.*



Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl

*Hazardous materials trailer built in 1987. The front half of trailer was set up as communications center with a reference library. The back portion of the trailer carries protective clothing and containment supplies for hazardous wastes and/or spills*

enables the firefighters to return to their station and be prepared for the next call.<sup>114</sup>

April 6, 1987, brought Genevieve "Ginny" Chase to the Department. She became the first female firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician-I. While attending high school in Pagosa Springs, Ginny became interested in emergency medical training. She requested and received permission from the State of Colorado to take the EMT course and test before her eighteenth birthday. She passed the class, and then worked as a volunteer for the Pagosa Springs ambulance. After graduation from high school, Ginny moved to Grand Junction to attend Mesa College. To help with college expenses, she worked part time for Quality Ambulance, and enrolled in an advanced EMT course offered by St. Mary's Hospital. A requirement of the course was that she work in an environment which provided experience in emergency situations. This led to an internship with the Grand Junction Fire Department. She applied for membership in the Fire Department's Auxilliary, which provided training in firefighting and rescue practices. When openings for the Fire Department came, Ginny took the physical and agility, written, and oral examinations with over 500 male and female applicants. Her high scores on these tests, experience in the Fire Auxilliary, and the support of the other firefighters made the transition of having a woman in the firehouse go smoothly. While Ginny was the first female in the Grand Junction Fire Department, she was not the first firefighter in her family. Her great-grandfather had been a firefighter, and had died going to a false-alarm fire.<sup>115</sup>

Equipment lists and statistics indicate that Grand Junction's Fire Department has grown tremendously in the century it has existed. It began with enthusiastic volunteers who pulled a single hose cart to fires. Then came horse-drawn equipment, followed by a variety of vehicles powered by internal combustion engines. Today, the Department's equipment includes: four first-line pumper trucks, two reserve pumpers, one aerial platform, one aerial ladder, one rural tanker, two rescue squad units with paramedic equipment, one hazardous materials unit, and four officer's vehicles. Contemporary rescue and paramedic equipment is state-of-the-art, with a degree of sophistication that the early firemen could not have imagined. Although the equipment inventory has grown, the staff is not as large as it has been in the past. In 1988 there are 60 members--including the Chief, administrative staff, and fifty-one

firefighters. The total area covered by the Department in the 1890s was approximately one square mile. Today, protection is provided for approximately ninety-one square miles--eleven square miles within the city limits and eighty miles in the rural areas. There are over 1,700 fire hydrants which must be serviced annually by Department personnel.<sup>116</sup>

While firefighting paraphernalia, numbers of square miles, and unionization separate today's firefighters from their predecessors, today's crews share the same spirit that moved the early firemen. All understood the pride of being a firefighter. Although better equipped and better educated, Grand Junction firefighters still face the same dangers as those of old. Fire in all ages has threatened life and property. Fighting fires has required determination, bravery, and a dedication to mankind. Grand Junction firefighters, volunteer and professional, have served their community well throughout the city's history.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mesa County Block Book #130, Office of Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, City Hall, Grand Junction, Colorado, 1883, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Nearly all new equipment and new methods of firefighting were first introduced in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, and were subsequently adopted by smaller towns. The large cities had developed a water system using bored-out crude logs that were tapered and fitted together.

Every half block or so a wooden plug was inserted into this water system. This plug then was removed to obtain water. If there was not a plug near the fire site, a hole was dug down to the log and an opening was chopped into the log to provide needed water. As the hole filled with water, bucket brigades were formed to relay water to the fire. The new location was then marked and a plug inserted into the hole. The term "fire plug" has carried down to the present-day firefighters.

<sup>3</sup>"Sanborne Fire Maps," (Sanborne Map Company: New York, New York, 1960) Map #4009. Sanborne Fire Maps hereafter cited as Sanborne Fire Maps, followed by year and map number.

<sup>4</sup>William L. McGuire and Charles Teed, *The Fruit Belt Route: The Railways to Grand Junction, Colorado 1890-1935* (National Railway Historical Society, Rio Grande Collection: Grand Junction, Colorado, 1891) p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Fire Department Minute Book, July 16, 1889 to May 7, 1900," p. 2, Grand Junction Fire Department Collection, Museum of Western Colorado Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. pp 4-5.

<sup>7</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hose Company Minute Book, July 16, 1889-May 7, 1900," p. 6, Grand Junction Fire

Department Collection, Museum of Western Colorado Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Frank Krepis, 10 January 1978, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>"Mesa County Block Book #130," p. 130.

<sup>11</sup>"Sanborn Fire Map" for 1890, Map #4009.

<sup>12</sup>Charles E. Thomas, ed., *Fire Service Orientation and Indoctrination* (Stillwater: Oklahoma State University, 1975) p. 35.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Quadrangle Book, 1954) pp. 216-219.

<sup>15</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hook and Ladder Company Minute Book, February 13, 1891 to June 1, 1897," p. 19, Grand Junction Fire Department Collection, Museum of Western Colorado Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>16</sup>The term, "Hook and Ladder" originated in London in 1189 when the first Lord Mayor of London dictated that houses in the city could only be built of stone and covered with slate or burnt tile roofs. He banned the dangerous thatched roofs. The citizens, at the time, were also to provide a ladder and a barrel full of water by their doors. Fire hooks were provided by the firefighters to drag off burning thatch and hook into gables or other apertures to pull down a burning house to create a fire break. Some hooks were so large that horses were harnessed to them to pull down a building. Many houses were later built with iron rings in the gables for inserting the hooks in case of fire. Although the Grand Junction Hook and Ladder Company never used extremely large hooks, a smaller version was used on the end of a long wooden pole. These hooks were used to pull down plaster walls and ceilings. Today, these hooks are referred to as "pike poles."

<sup>17</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hose Company Minute Book, July 16, 1889-May 7, 1900," pp. 23 and 37. R. T. Mantlo interview,

5 May 1987, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>18</sup>Everett Hudiburg and Carl A. McCoy, eds., *Fire Ventilation Practices* (Stillwater: Oklahoma State University, 1970) pp. 3-5.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hose Company Minute Book, July 16, 1889-May 7, 1900" p. 37.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>22</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hook and Ladder Company Minute Book, February 13, 1891 to June 1, 1897" p. 19.

<sup>23</sup>Frank Krepis Interview, 22 May 1973, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>24</sup>Therese Westemeier, "Colorado Festivals," *Colorado Magazine*, XXX, no. 3, July 1953, p. 193-215.

<sup>25</sup>Barbara Bowman, "The Peach Festival, 1887-1909: A Celebration of the Land," *Journal of the Western Slope*, II, no. 4, Fall 1987, pp. 22-33.

<sup>26</sup>*Daily Sentinel* (Grand Junction, Colorado), 3 March 1894.

<sup>27</sup>"Sanborn Fire Map" for 1893. Map #6462.

<sup>28</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 30 March 1894. See Appendix A for this article and other representative newspaper stories about the Fire Department during this era.

<sup>29</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hose Company Minute Book" July 16-May 7, 1900" p. 75.

<sup>30</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 15 September 1894.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. *Grand Junction News*, 15 September 1891.

<sup>33</sup>Frank Krepis Interview, 11 January 1978.

<sup>34</sup>Notation on back of Photograph donated by Fred Mantly Family. Grand Junction Fire Department Collection, Museum of Western Colorado Archives. Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>35</sup>Rules and Regulations Governing the Hose Races To Be Run at Grand Junction, Colorado, September 7 and 9, 1897. During Peach Week." Museum of Western Colorado Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado, F-664.

<sup>36</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Hook and Ladder Minute Book, February 13, 1891 to June 1, 1897" p. 62

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. p. 72.

<sup>38</sup>Mantlo Interview.

<sup>39</sup>Grand Junction Volunteer Fire Department Minute Book, June 8, 1898 to June 13, 1902" pp. 1-5. Grand Junction Fire Department Collection, Museum of Western Colorado Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid. pp 1-7.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 8 November 1898.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>"Sanborne Fire Map" for 1899, #3380.

<sup>48</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 8 and 9 July 1902.

<sup>49</sup>"Sanborne Fire Maps" for 1904 and 1907, #7148 and 9890.

<sup>50</sup>"Sanborne Fire Map" for 1912, #5398.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Interview with Frank Krepis, 20 June 1973, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>53</sup>Interview with Furman L. Kelley, 10 June 1986, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>54</sup>Krepis Interview, 20 June 1973.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 23 September 1918.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>"Sanborne Fire Map" for 1919, #5398.

<sup>59</sup>Report of Municipal Activities of the City of Grand Junction for the First Three Years Under the Council Management Form of Government, Years 1922, 1923, and 1924." P. 41, Central Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>"Sanborne Fire Map" for 1926, #CHIC.

<sup>62</sup>Report of Municipal Activities... Years 1922, 1923, and 1924." p. 41.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. p. 42

<sup>65</sup>Report of Municipal Activities of the City of Grand Junction for the Years of 1930 to 1936" p. 24, Central Records,

City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. and Manto Interview.

<sup>67</sup>Manto Interview.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Interview with Leroy Johnson, 19 June, 1972, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>71</sup>Manto Interview.

<sup>72</sup>Interview with Make Gozdek, 5 April 1984, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>73</sup>Manto Interview.

<sup>74</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 28 June 1943.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. and Manto Interview.

<sup>77</sup>Manto Interview.

<sup>78</sup>"Sanborne Fire Map" for 1947,

#CHIC.

<sup>79</sup>Manto Interview.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Interview with Frank Kreps, 17 January 1986, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 19 August 1961.

<sup>88</sup>Interviews with Wes Painter, 5 January 1986 to 28 May 1986, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>89</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 9 February 1964.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 17 April 1964.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. and Painter Interviews.

<sup>93</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 2 February 1967.

<sup>94</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 5 September 1964.

<sup>95</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 3 December 1965.

<sup>96</sup>Interview with Frank Kreps, 14 April 1974, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Interview with Frank Kreps, 15 August 1969, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>99</sup>Interview with Helen Carmack, 4 June 1977, Grand Junction, Colorado and *Daily Sentinel*, 6 May 1975.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 21 May 1970.

<sup>102</sup>Interview with Richard Green, 18 June 1987, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>103</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, 10 April 1974.

<sup>104</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 10 April 1974.

<sup>105</sup>Interview with R. T. Manto, 8 June 1974, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>106</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 24 January 1977.

<sup>107</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 26 January 1977.

<sup>108</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 17 April 1975.

<sup>109</sup>Department memo to Directors, 30 October 1975.

<sup>110</sup>Interview with R. T. Manto, 16 November 1977, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>111</sup>U. S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, Employment Standards Administration, *Federal Register*, Vol. 52, No. 11 (16 January 1987), "Applications of the Fair Labor Standards Act to Employers of State and Local Governments; Final Rule." Part II, 29 CFR, part 553, pp. 2015-2016, 2022-2024, 2028, 2035, 2040-2041, 2043, 2045. James S. Maloney and Victoria M. Bunsen, *Public Employer's Handbook on the Fair Labor Standards Act* (Denver: Colorado Municipal League, 1987), p. 1, 8, 10-11, 14-18, 20-21. Interview with John Patterson, 26 March 1988, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>112</sup>Interview with Bob Keeling, 5 May 1983, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>113</sup>Interview with R.T. Manto, 6 April 1986, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>114</sup>Interview with Richard Green, 18 June 1987, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>115</sup>Interview with Genevieve Chase, 1 March 1988, Grand Junction, Colorado.

<sup>116</sup>Interview with John Knudsen, 10 March 1987, Grand Junction, Colorado.

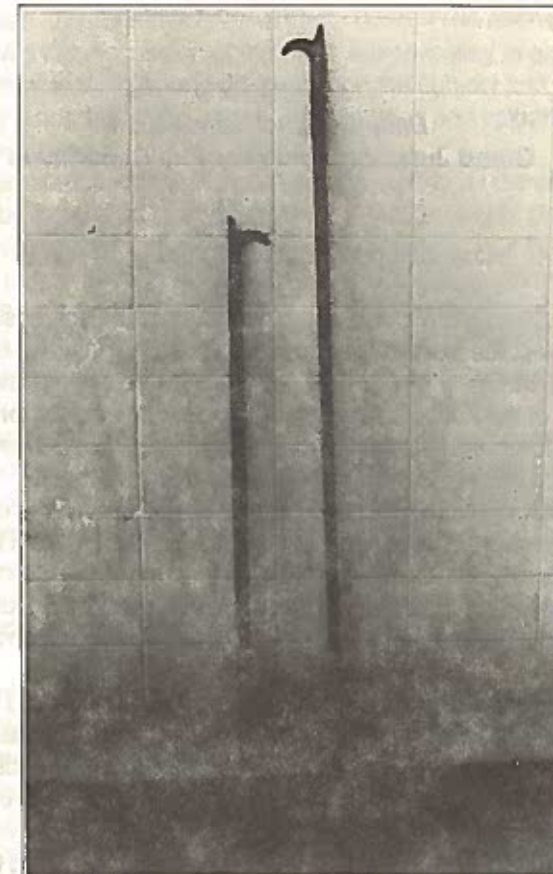


Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl

*Pike poles used by Hook and Ladder Company to pull down plaster walls and ceilings. Tools like these are still used today.*

**APPENDIX A**  
*Daily Sentinel* articles on  
Grand Junction Volunteer Fire Department

March 3, 1894 - "Hose Company Elects Officers "

The annual election for officers of the Grand Junction hose company took place in the department reading room last night. The occasion was the means of drawing out a full attendance of the membership of the hose company to participate in the election.

It was a foregone conclusion that in the head officer of the company there would be no change and the result bore out the prediction. After transacting the regular routine business of the company, the election of officers proceeded with the following results: Foreman, Fred W. Mantey; first assistant foreman, Chas. B. Birch; second assistant foreman, J. J. McQuillan; secretary, J. W. Driscaoll; treasurer, Joseph E. Dulmaine, Standing committee--W. P. Reeder, chairman; George Ryan and W. G. Struthers.

To the election of a foreman there was no opposition and Mr. Mantey was accorded that honor with a unanimous vote. Fred W. Mantey, who will now begin his second term as foreman of the Grand Junction hose company, is one of the best and most popular firemen in the city. He is a successful business man and his genial personality has bound the membership of the company over which he presides in close ties of friendship. In person he is tall of commanding appearance and on duty has demonstrated that he is every inch a brave fireman. Under his management the hose company has prospered and the city may well feel proud of the organization. Of his assistants and the entire roster of officers the above well fits their efficiency.

Following the election the members were bountifully feasted and good cheer prevailed in the assembly room of the department. A cordial invitation had been extended to the other wing of the department, the hook and ladder company, and its members present were cordially treated by their other firemen.

March 30, 1894 - "Fire Department Meets "

A special meeting of the members of the Grand Junction fire department was held last evening at the reading room of the department. The special meeting called out a large attendance of the members of both companies and considerable work was done. The main business of the evening was the discussion of the most effective way to extinguish fires. Considerable discussion was had upon the subject and was indulged in by a number of the members and good and valuable suggestions were made.

A motion prevailed that a committee of one, to be the chief of the department, be appointed to appear before the council and present the needs of the department, which consisted of a number of items, one being for two patent shut-off nozzle tips. A memorial was also ordered prepared to the city council asking them to assume the bill for medical attendance of Phillip Earnest who was severely injured while attempting to perform his duty last Monday night. Information discussion was held upon various subjects.

It seemed to be the desire of the department to keep intact the appropriation made by the council, that in case of a tournament this fall, available funds would then be in sight. After a very interesting session of one hour and twenty minutes the meeting adjourned.

May 25, 1894 - "Will Go to Glenwood "

The members of the fire department held a meeting at the reading room of the department last night to take action upon the invitation of a sub-committee of the Western Colorado Congress to compete in a tournament in that city Thursday, June 7th.

After an informal discussion of the proposition to go to Glenwood, a motion was unanimously carried that it be the will of the department that a running team, representative of the department be selected to compete at Glenwood. Fred Mantley, foreman of the hose company, was unanimously elected captain of the team, with Perry Rogers as assistant.

In discussing whether or not the invitation should be accepted the point was made that for the past three years the department has accepted no invitation which it has received to attend tournaments in any of the surrounding towns and cities; that should this continue to be the policy of the department, no outside companies would accept the invitation of this department annually sent out for the tournament held

during Peach Day week. It was also considered that this trip could be undertaken at a small cost and would in no way interfere with the coming annual tournament of the department.

A committee consisting of three, Geo. R. Barton, Harry Jones and Joseph E. Dulmaine, were appointed to receive subscriptions toward defraying the expenses of the running team. It was decided by Captain Mantey that the team go into training at once and it will meet tonight for active practice.

Previous to the adjournment of the meeting a communication was received from Howard T. Vaile, contract agent for the Colorado Telephone company, who propose to erect a line to this city, stating that on behalf of the company he desired to offer the department the use of the phone free of cost, and that their company would grant the privilege to the fire department to attach any alarm wires to their poles if they so desired. On motion of Mr. Dulmaine's a resolution thanking the company, through Mr. Vaile, was made a matter of record.

Persons desiring to subscribe any amount towards defraying the expenses of the running team to Glenwood are requested to place their subscriptions with the committee named above.



*Photo courtesy of Bob Strobl*

*Patented shut-off nozzles first used in late 1880's.*

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