

George Addison Crawford, Founder of Grand Junction, Colorado
His last days and final resting place
Part Two of Two

In this article we will look at the last few months of George A. Crawford's life and the burial and re-burial of his last remains.

When George Crawford, J.W. Bucklin, M. Rush Warner Richard D.Mobley, Allison White and Henry E. Rood names were placed on the survey stakes driven into the ground in September, 1881, for the town site of Grand Junction, a rule was adopted by George Crawford that only members of the town company to have streets named after them were the non-residents Allison White and Henry Rood. The town company members living in the new city would not have street named after themselves.

J. Clayton Nichols one of the first men in the area, agreed to build a cabin in September of 1881 for Crawford, which George would use for an office and home. The structure stood in the middle of what is now Ute Avenue, between 2nd and 3rd Street.

Nichols asked Governor Crawford why he had planned a whole town site, with streets and alleys, when one street would be enough because Grand Junction as barren as it was couldn't produce anything but "greasewood and horned toads," and would be nothing more than a trading post for Indians. Crawford replied, "Oh Clayte, the railroads will come and this will be a big town someday."

George Crawford had a vision for this new town and Nichols said "if his body had been commensurate with his vision he would have been a giant. His confidence in the "Western Slope Empire" inspired others to stick until they saw in reality what he saw in visions."

The founding men who helped finance and layout the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County, Henry Edward Rood died in Philadelphia in 1884 at age 49, Allison White, half-brother to George Crawford died in Philadelphia in 1886 at age 70, and Judge Richard D. Mobley died in Grand Junction, Colorado in 1893, at age 60, after being hit by a train. He is buried in the Masonic Section of the Orchard Mesa Cemetery.

In late 1891, George was ill with tuberculosis or consumption as it was called at the time. He was living in the Brunswick Hotel on the Northwest corner of 4th and Main Street. Letters were being written back and forth regarding George's health from nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters of George A. Crawford, all over the country. Some of these letters are in the archives of the Museum of Western Colorado, Loyd Files Room.

Of interest are the letters that mention family members being stopped from visiting George by a lady friend of his, Mrs. Laura C. Scudder, a widow who had just moved from Wilmington, Delaware in 1890, and was now living in the Brunswick Hotel and helping to care for George. Monroe Allison who would become one of George's estate trustees was being kept from talking to George, and one day Mr. Allison got very angry at Mrs. Scudder and shook his finger in her face and gave her a good lecturing. George's niece, Josephine, mentions that "Uncle George will never marry that woman" and the

whole town seems to hate her for what she is after. Also the letters speak of the fact that the family must wait until Mrs Scudder leaves the hotel to get in to see Uncle George. Uncle Will Crawford, George's brother, brought his boys in to see George, but Mrs. Scudder said he need not bring the boys back. One day Uncle Will was watching from his office as Mrs Scudder went for a walk and he went to the hotel and Mrs. Williams took him in to visit Uncle George. Mrs. Scudder later found out and Mrs. Williams got "H— on a racket." Josephine also wrote in her letter she could "write a whole book on that deceitful old thing of a woman who tried to smooth things over with kisses and hugs. She loves us as much as we love her."

Charles B. Rich, his nephew wrote December 24, 1890, that Uncle George is about the same and not doing well and that he was improving but then had a relapse and has a bad cough at night.

On January 27, 1891, Charles Rich wrote again to his Aunt Elizabeth Crawford McKinney, "Uncle George, a little easier than yesterday. Sank very rapidly yesterday, may last a couple of days." and "At time is rational."

The next day Wednesday, January 28, 1891, at 4:15 p.m in the afternoon, as per the Crawford Family Bible, George Addison Crawford died at the Brunswick Hotel in Grand Junction, Colorado. His body was taken by Harvey C. Bucklin, the undertaker for preparation; the funeral was Friday, January 30, 1891, at the Methodist Church and at the service the school children marched around his funeral bier before his burial. He was temporarily interred in a brick Masonic Vault for 7 years, 9 months and 5 days.

The story of Crawford's passing was printed in the Grand Junction Star on January 29, 1891, and the Grand Junction News on January 28, 1891. The News stated that George Crawford wanted to be buried on the summit of the hill, overlooking Grand Junction, and he directed that a vault be built and his body placed therein.

In an old ledger, on the inside of the cover, barely discernable, in George's own hand writing, is his will. This old ledger also contains other items of importance to the Crawford and related families. It is presently (1969) among the belongings of Marilyn Crawford Fillmore.

His will was dated December 2, 1890, and in it there is no mention of the disposition of his remains or vault to be built on the hill overlooking Grand Junction, but there is listed a request that Mrs. Laura C. Scudder now of Grand Junction, be given a sum of one hundred dollars per month for her natural life provided she remained unmarried.

Charles B. Rich and Monroe Allison are listed as the Trustee's of the estate and the probate was filed in the Mesa County Court on February 5, 1891.

With George's death there were a number of expenses for the estate trustees to pay. In 1891 Harvey C. Bucklin, Undertaker received \$250. A payment was made of \$162 for three rooms at the Brunswick Hotel for George Crawford, Mrs. Scudder and Mrs. Williams. W.J. Hammond received \$22 for livery payment for the funeral and L.M. Miller received \$13.50 for services during George's illness.

George Crawford had borrowed over five thousand dollars from Yep Mow, a local laundry owner in town and a Christianized Chinaman and U.S. Citizen (as described in the local newspapers) and in 1892, the estate paid him \$5513.45. The estate also paid George's laundry bill of \$2.75 to Yep Mow. And in July 1897, Mrs. Laura C. Scudder received lump sum payment of \$5321.50 as settlement for her interest in the estate.

There is an unpublished letter dated March 9, 1897, from Charles B. Rich, Trustee of the Crawford Estate on Grand Junction Town and Improvement Company letterhead regarding the tomb, where he writes, *"There are some little things that will have to be considered at the proper time, one is a suitable resting place for Uncle George's remains. A good brick vault now contains them but is only temporary. A substantial stone vault of artistic design will be built on a site he selected as his final resting place."*

On July 9, 1898, the Daily Sentinel reported, "Sometime during Thursday the body of the late George A. Crawford, the founder of this city, which has reposed since his burial in 1891, in the vault of the Masonic order, was removed to the high prominence, overlooking this city, immediately back of the present Orchard Mesa Cemetery. The site is one of the most beautiful in this entire valley and overlooks this city and the valley of the Grand River, from the mouth of the canyon to a long distance to the west and was the place that the deceased had designated to his executors as the place where he desired finally to lay. A vault has been erected by John J. Lumsden and while not of any great ornate beauty, is substantial and will last centuries. The place selected for the last interment of the remains of George A. Crawford was a site picked out by him and is a point near where he first beheld the beautiful Grand Valley stretching away toward the Wasatch Range of Mountains."

On May 18, 1898, Charles A. Armstrong of Arapahoe County, Colorado sold for \$25 to Charles B. Rich and Monroe Allison, Trustees of the estate of George Crawford, deceased, by Deed recorded in Book 63, Page 343 of the official records of the Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, the current 250 feet by 250 feet piece of property for the current vault site or 1.43 acres more or less.

When Governor Crawford's remains were moved in 1898, the trustee paid from the estate, \$10 to J.D. Boyer, for plans and specifications for vault; \$25 to C.A. Armstrong for vault land; \$30 dollars to A.J. McCune for a survey; W.H. Gilley \$5 for vault information; three payments totaling \$1525 to J.J. Lumsden for vault construction; and \$150 to H.C. Bucklin, for moving Crawford's remains to the new vault.

On March 1, 1953, the Daily Sentinel reported that because of ongoing vandalism the city needed to take title to the tomb site for maintenance purposes. It was determined since the estate trustees, Charles B. Rich and Monroe Allison had both passed away, that the county treasurer could issue a deed to the city and Mesa County Treasurer and Public Trustee, Burrell Reynolds, made a presentation of a deed to W.D. Ela, Council president. The deed to the City of Grand Junction was recorded on March 5, 1953, in Book 579, page 599 in the office of the Mesa County Clerk and Recorder.

However, vandalism continued and George's brass name plate with his birth and death dates was found torn off his tomb on April of 1968, and reported in the Daily Sentinel on May 8, 1968. Soon thereafter members of the Central High School Key Club asked the city parks and recreation department if they could clean up and fence the tomb to keep the vandals out. A photo of the clean up of the tomb was published in the Daily Sentinel on May 16, 1969 and again on May 16, 1971.

The tomb remained under attack by vandals and in 1982, Herman Vorbeck wrote a Centennial story on George A. Crawford and his tomb, Herman wrote, "The Father of Grand Junction's tomb on the hill overlooking the city was now a desolate, barren mesa surrounded by weeds and a rusty metal fence, there is only a small sign, its paint chipping and cracking, inside the gate, which is secured only by a bent, metal hook, vandals have chipped away at the sandstone tomb and the inscription on the rock is so faded it can hardly be read and that at this time in 1981, there was no special day for George Crawford who had laid patiently in his tomb for a hundred years, still watching over the valley he knew carried so much potential for growth and a prosperous future."

As an author and historian, in my book, Mesa County Assessors, 1883-2008, I showed a photograph of the sad condition of the founder's tomb. I started sharing the photos of the tomb to all that would listen. When I spoke with Kathy Jordon she was also appalled and she with the help of Marie Tipping, started writing stories about the tomb in Daily Sentinel history section.

The Grand Junction News on January 29, 1891, reported: "He is gone, and for the good that he has done in his life and as a founder and builder of towns and cities, especially our own beloved city of Grand Junction, he will live in the memory of our people. And as the years roll by and new people come in to make their homes with us, we will point to them his grave on Yonder Hill, and say: Here lies the founder of Grand Junction."

George Crawford was known as a gentleman, pleasant, sociable, affable and polite. He was known to be generous and kind to those in trouble, and many owe him a debt of gratitude for assistance in time of need.

The heading above George Crawford's newspaper, The Grand Junction Star always said:

"INDEPENDENT IN ALL THINGS: NEUTRAL IN NOTHING."

That was George Addison Crawford.

Garry W. Brewer

Story Teller of the Tribe, Finder of Odd Knowledge, Uninteresting Items, A Bore to his Grandchildren, a Pain to his wife on spelling, but a Locator of golden nuggets & truths and pearls of wisdom.

Sources:

Sources and Photos Special Thanks to; Abstract & Title Company of Mesa County, Scott Williams & Staff; Wanda Allen; Museum of Western Colorado, Loyd Files Room, Michael Menard & David Bailey; Bill Buvinger; Grand Junction News Records; Daily Sentinel files; Snap Photo; Mesa County Library; Progressive Men of Western Colorado; History and Business Directory of Mesa County, 1885; United States Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men of Kansas; Probates of Mesa County 1883-1900; City of Grand Junction

Cemetery Information, Vicki Beltran; J. Clayton Nichols History; George Crawford diaries; Herman Vorbeck, Centennial celebrations; Kathy Jordan Records; Ken Johnson; Marie Tipping; Garry Brewer book, Mesa County Assessors 1883-2008; Grand Junction Star files; Seventy-fifth Anniversary Mesa County Lodge 55 1958; Lodge 55 Cemetery book 1889-1906; James Rankin History of Grand Junction; Richard E. Tope, History of Mesa County; Edwin Price, Yesteryear; James W. Bucklin History; Miss Merle McClintock History; Thomas B. Crawford History; John J. Lumsden History; Harvey C. Bucklin History; Bill McGinley History; Crawford Family Bible; Terry Mangan History; Annabelle McKinney Dorsey History files; Colorado State Archives, Paul Levit & Kevin Luy, Archivist; Marilyn Crawford Fillmore Files; John Groves, Lodge 55; Robert W. McLeod, A Valley So Grand; Frances Strock Document 364, number 3;