

## Grand Junction As I Knew It

### By Joseph Adam Booker

#### Part I of II

I am a Native born son of Grand Junction, and this is what I remember of the Junction in the 20's, 30's and 40's.

Grand Junction was nearly laid out in a square, with North Avenue as the northern side, and South Avenue as the south side, then First Street as the west side and Twelfth street as the east. The names streets ran east to west and the numbered streets north to south. Main Street from 7<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> held most of the businesses on both side of Main Street. However, there were some businesses on Rood as well as Colorado and some of the numbered streets.

I will start with the businesses on Main Street, as it was the main business district of Grand Junction. On the north side was the Daily Sentinel building. The Sentinel used boys as delivery boys in the residential area. The boys had to get subscriptions from the people they delivered the paper to, and collect for the paper; some boys sold papers in the business area, as well as at the bus station and railroad station. It was a great privilege to be a newspaper boy. Next was Piggly Store, and the corner was Manuals store. On the South side was the Avalon Theater, (note; Saturday was double feature day. If you were under twelve years old, you could get in for ten cents; adults cost twenty-five cents. The show started with newsreel, then upcoming features, followed by the movie, then a cartoon, then the second movie and a cartoon. All of what was shown was black and white.), Benges Shoe Store, Warbeck's Sporting Store, and Copeland's Drug Store. On the south side of sixth there was Mosslanders Poolhall, a barber shop, and Montgomery Wards Department Store. On the corner of Fifth Street was the First National Bank, it was the Tallest Building for that time, above the bank were offices. One I remember was Dr. Hards, a dentist. He and his family lived on the north side of the 10 hundred block of Gunnison Avenue, and I lived on the south side of Gunnison Avenue, coming on down there was a candy store that made candy and had box candy. I bought a box for a girl one time. Next was a restaurant run by some Chinese. Next was L.C. Cooks, Jewelry and sporting store. Next was Mesa Drug Store with a soda fountain, later they had a restaurant. On the north end was the first City Market. My father, Adam Booker, was one of the partners. The Prinster brothers bought out Dad's partner. Dad was a fourth partner for five years. He sold to Prinsters and opened the Grand Market and Grocery on the north side of Fourth Street, (more to come). Back to Fifth and Main Street. On the south east corner was Walgreen Store and lunch counter. There was a barber shop, two poolhalls, the senate and Interstate. On the corner was Brownson Clothing Store. They sold Hart Shafter and Mark suits, which were the best suits a man could buy. On the corner of Fourth Street was the United State Bank, and next there was Bryan and Wolfort Drug Store with an entrance on Main and Fourth Streets. Next was John Cadez Liquor store, the Mission Theatre, a barber shop and a bike store. My father bought a delivery bike so I could deliver groceries to his customers. It had a small front wheel and a large rear wheel with a coaster brake that was very powerful and a kickstand at the front, and a large basket with a lid. Boy, I could deliver some large loads on it!

On the north corner of Fourth and Main was J.C. Penny Store. The main think I remember is the way the clerk served you. He or she would write up the items you bought, and then put it and the money you gave in a tube and then pulled a cord and sent it up to the cashier. The cashier made the change and sent it back to the clerk, and the clerk gave you your change. The clerk wrapped your purchase in paper and tied it with string. Next to J. C. Penny was Cadez's candy and cigarette whole sale store. Then was a book store that sold newspapers from all over, plus magazines, comic books and books. Next was Kivia Theatre that showed westerns, and B movies. On the corner of Third and Main was Gambles Store that sold about everything. Upstairs over Gambles, was the Ross Business School, were secretaries were trained. It later moved down to the ground floor and became Ross Business College, which later became Mesa Junior College and Mesa State College.

Across from Gambles was a hotel, but I can not remember the name of it. On the northeast corner was the Ford sales and repair garage. Across the street on the south east corner was the Dodge and Plymouth sales and garage building. In the same block was Enstroms Ice Cream Store. It was the best retail and wholesale ice cream in Grand Junction as it still is today. On the southwest corner was the La Court Hotel. It was the best hotel in Grand Junction; it was very fancy and had a great restaurant. Across the street was the first drive-in restaurant. This is where the high school boys and girls went for hamburgers and drinks after a ball game, or a dance. The waitress would take your order, and bring it to the car, she hung it on the side of the car, and collected for the order. The food was delicious and cheap.

Coming west on Main Street to the railroad tracks, on the northeast corner was Sam Pantuso Grocery Store, it later became a restaurant. East on Main was the Pacific Fruit Wholesale Company. It sold fruit and canned products; they introduced Del Monte and Standby items. I remember going with my father to can opening parties, this was their way of introducing their products to the retail stores. The Independent Lumber Company was on the south side of Main Street. It was the largest lumber Company in Grand Junction.

*To be continued in the next Mesa Dwellers: Part II will be on the side and number streets of Grand Junction.*

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Submitted by Larry Eucher, August, 2009*



## Mesa County School Districts 1881 – 1951

For the next few issue we will be looking at some historical information of the Mesa County School District #51.

would like to thank the Museum of Western Colorado Library, Grand Junction, Colorado, for directing me to the book written by Albert and Terry LaSalle, "A History of the Districts and Schools that became Mesa County Valley School District Number 51, 1881-1951" and also to the Mesa County Valley School District 51 for supplying the booklet to me. With Albert and Terry LaSalle's and the District 51's permission, I am publishing some of the information from the book for educational purposes only.

### Early History of Education –Events that led to the formation of District 1

The Grand Valley was part of Gunnison County and was also part of the Ute Indian Reservation in 1881. By the fall of 1881 the Ute Indians had been moved to another reservation in Utah, and the Grand Valley was open to settlement. Shortly thereafter George Crawford filed for the incorporation of the town of Grand Junction. Mesa County was formed February 11, 1883, with Mesa County School District 1 to be formed that same year.

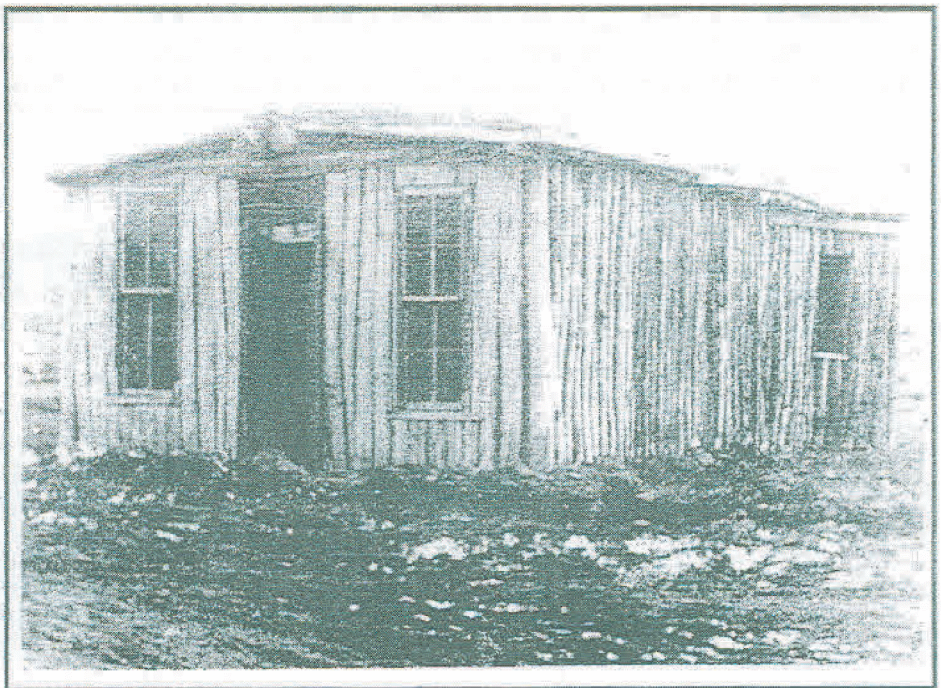
Dr. Harrison E. Stroud of Grand Junction was appointed superintendent of schools by Governor Grant in 1881, when the valley was still part of Gunnison County.

The first election in the Grand Valley was an election for a school board. The election was held June 1, 1882. W. M. McKelvey, O. D. Russell and Dr. H. E. Stroud were elected to the first school board. O. D. Russell was one of the first founders of Grand Junction, and Dr. Stroud was the first doctor.

### The First School

The first school in the Grand Valley was in Grand Junction. It was located on the south side of Colorado Avenue between 4th and 5th Streets. A charter had been secured in Gunnison which was the county seat in 1881.

A small picket house used for the school already existed on Colorado Avenue. It was made by digging a shallow trench, and then standing poles, side by side, perpendicular in the trench. More poles were laid across the top of the structure, then brush and dirt were added to form the roof. There was a hole for a window in the west side. This picket house became the valley's first school. It was a subscription school funded by private contributions.



*The first school in the Grand Valley was in Grand Junction on the south side of Colorado Avenue, between 4th and 5th streets.*

*(Photo Museum of Western Colorado)*

In June of 1882 Miss Nannie Blain was hired to teach the school's first term, a three month summer session. Her pay was \$50 a month; however, the last month's payment was in the form of a city lot on East Main Street. There were 28 students in this first school, ranging from kindergarten to the eighth grade.



## The Demise of the First School

Miss Blain also started the first Sunday School held in the school house. In order to have the floor dust free on Sundays, the president of the school board, Dr. Stroud, hauled water by bucket from the town well. Because the town well was about three blocks away, and it required six buckets of water to do the job, Dr. Stroud looked for an easier solution to hauling buckets of water. He decided to dig a trench to the school from a small ditch that ran along Colo-

rado Avenue. By morning the soil softened, the cottonwood staves supporting the school house spread apart, and the roof caved in. New accommodations were needed.

The board acquired another cabin, but it was not satisfactory, so the term was completed in the Armory Hall.

After the end of the first school term Nannie Blain married Mr. Underhill, and he "took her away."

The first structures in Grand Junction were of log construction with one room and an opening for a window. The window was covered with some type of cloth such as a flower sack. Some doors only had a blanket covering them, while others were of split poles fastened together. The barber shop in Grand Junction had a blanket door. All the cabins of the early settlers had dirt roofs and earthen floors.

## The Second School

A great debt is owed Dr. E. H. Stroud. With the departure of Nannie Blain and the collapse of the first school building, Dr. Stroud was responsible for raising funds, acquiring a second school building, and hiring a new teacher. The following information from *The Grand Junction News*, 1882-1883, told the story.

The school board president, Dr. H. E. Stroud, accepted the "very thankless task, and yet very important and necessary one" of "soliciting money to defray the expenses of starting a school" in Grand Junction. (*Grand Junction News*, December 2, 1882)

Thanks to Dr. Stroud a second building was found: "...Dr. Stroud's adobe building on Main Street between 7th and 8th, where they have nice comfortable quarters." (*Grand Junction News*, December 16, 1882)

The Grand Valley's second teacher was welcomed: "Miss [Isa] Calwell, came in from Kannah Creek Tuesday night, and took charge of the School at this place Wednesday morning." (*Grand Junction News*, December 16, 1882)

It also boasted that "now the merry voices of the



The Grand Valley's second school, Isa Calwell teacher.  
(Photo Museum of Western Colorado)

school children are heard at four o'clock. 'School's out,' you know." (*Grand Junction News*, December 16, 1882) (Adapted from *The Grand Junction News 1882-1883*, A Cultural History by Leslie Young)



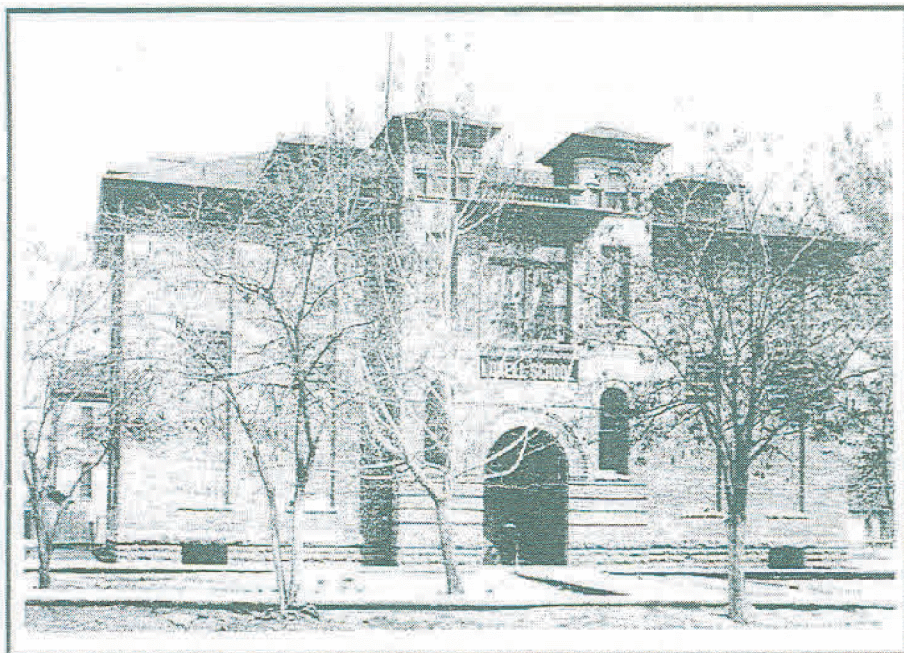
In 1882 the buildings along Colorado Avenue in Grand Junction were Dr. Stroud's office, the barber shop, meat market, a combination bakery and restaurant, two stores, seven saloons, and one hotel with two rooms.

#### First Public School Built with Tax Money

On February 11, 1883, a bill creating Mesa County was passed by the legislature and signed three days later by Governor Grant. The Grand Valley was no longer part of Gunnison County.

Superintendent Stroud was once again

instrumental in gaining the funds needed to further the interests of education. By May of 1884, school bonds of \$10,000 were passed, sold for \$9,700, and contracts let to half a dozen local concerns for a new school building, Lowell School. Mesa County's first public school paid for by tax funds was finished by the end of the year.



**LOWELL SCHOOL 1884-1925**  
5th St. between Rood & White

#### History of Lowell School

1884-1925 Public School  
1926-1939 Grand Junction  
Junior College  
1940's State & county offices  
1950's-1990's City offices -  
Administration  
2000 all original structures were  
removed for new City Hall

#### District I

#### **LOWELL SCHOOL** (continued)

In the spring of 1884 construction of the first part of Lowell School began. This first building became the middle section in 1889 when five more rooms were added. Another section added in 1907 provided a total of 13 rooms. The building was constructed of yellow homemade bricks.

All grade levels were taught in this building until the Franklin High School was built in 1891. The lower grades continued to be taught at Lowell School until 1925-26 when a bond issue was passed allowing the construction of a new Lowell School on 7th Street between Grand and White Avenues. The second Lowell building is now being used as the R-5 High School (2001).

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According to the school laws of Colorado, it was necessary for a new district to have a three-month term of school taught by a duly authorized teacher holding a valid certificate and paid for by subscription (donations by private individuals) before funds could be obtained for a public school.



## LOWELL OVER THE YEARS

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### **The Junior College at Grand Junction**

In 1925 when the new Lowell School was completed, classes for the newly formed Junior College at Grand Junction were held in the old building. Firsthand accounts in 2001 from former students of the Junior College say the old building was in great disrepair. Old Lowell was used by the Junior College until 1939. In 1940 the college moved into its new home in the building that would later be Houston Hall on the new campus at 12th Street and North Avenue.

### **Lowell in the 1940's, Community Service Building**

After the junior college moved to North Avenue, a variety of agencies used the old building. It was

used as the County Library, and WPA (Work Projects Administration) classes were taught there.

### **City Administration Building, April 5, 1949**

On April 5, 1949, a bond election was held in Grand Junction for the conversion of the old Lowell School into a city administration building and auditorium. The vote passed 1619 to 489. The property has continued to be used for city purposes up to the present (2001). Since 1949 the original building has undergone significant demolition and remodeling, so by 2000 little of the original structure remained. In 2000 all of the old buildings were removed and replaced with a new city hall.