

HO FOR THE RESERVATION

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Highlighted in any history of Colorado is the Meeker Massacre in the fall of 1879--the event which precipitated the inevitable: the exclusion of the Uncompahgre and White River Utes from western Colorado.

The farewell of the Uncompahgre Utes August 28, 1881,¹ to the land they loved, surrounded as they were by United States troops, is dramatically depicted in print.

The death of Chief Ouray, on a mission to secure agreement to the forced trek westward, has been told many times, scanty as are the available details.

But the interregnum from the departure of the Utes until the approval of the Ute Reservation Bill, July 28, 1882, and the President's

¹ The last band, Colorow's, left September 1, 1881.

proclamation of the former reservation as public land, August 10, 1882, a period of unbounded enthusiasm on the part of the land hungry, might be enriched by the lengthy letters written from the former reservation to the Gunnison Daily Review of 1881 and 1882.

Joseph Blackstock, over 90 at his death, and one of those living on the Western Slope at the time mentioned, used to end his clearly-remembered stories of the past with the nostalgic: "Why we were all young then"; and one feels youth in these letters, and masculinity, for there were almost no women in the beginning of Grand Junction, Delta, and Montrose, about which the correspondents to the Review write. Among the writers were: R. D. Mobley, first post-master of Grand Junction; J. A. Blauvelt, who had been on the staff of the Review before going to the future Grand Junction; and occasionally Governor George Crawford, himself, founder of Grand Junction and Delta, and warm personal friend of Frank Root, Review editor.

The Reservation, the eastern boundary of which was the 107th meridian, only a few miles west of Gunnison City, and which extended on the west to the Utah line, comprised seven-eighths of Gunnison County, then the largest county in the state.

The excerpts or summaries which follow form a part not only of the history of Gunnison County but of the Western Slope. Long geographical descriptions of the country now well known to those interested, and lengthy accounts of the salubrious climate, though colorful, have been, in the main, omitted.

The "Ute Bill" for the exclusion of the Utes from western Colorado was signed by the President June 15, 1880. "Forward March" is the caption of an editorial in the Gunnison Review of June 19, 1880: "At last the Ute agreement has passed Congress. On Tuesday last it was signed by the President and is now a law. The commissioners have been appointed, and an army of 25,000 prospectors and miners are in readiness for a grand march to the Reservation. Hundreds have already gone over and thousands are waiting anxiously for the commissioners who will be on hand in a few days to settle for all time to come the great question that has so long agitated the mining portion of the state."

The Gunnison Daily Review, December 2, 1881, quoting from the Denver Republican, says, in part, "The opening of the late Ute Reservation is almost equivalent to the discovery of a new world. There are about twelve million acres of the domain, and when thickly settled, if walled in, would be self-supporting. This vast empire is to be declared open for settlement by Presidential proclamation (Actually by act of Congress and Presidential proclamation), but the chief executive has been anticipated and at this time large areas within its limits have been and are yet being occupied by agricultural settlers and ranchmen..."

"The Indians are gone forever. There is none to molest or make afraid. The white settler may literally sit under his own vine and shade tree. The Grand, Gunnison, Uncompahgre, Dolores, San Miguel, White River, La Plata, and their tributaries comprise the main valleys of the country under consideration"

There follows a detailed account of the various valleys, beginning with the Uncompahgre.

On Saturday, September 10, 1881, as reported in the Gunnison Daily Review of October 11 (Vol. I, No. 1), J. T. Morris, R. D. Mobley, Judge (W. R.) Keighley, (W. O.) Stevens, and Mr. Keefer made a trip to the Reservation, camping on the Cebolla, 35 miles from Gunnison, the first night. Breaking camp, they "hitched up" and proceeded leisurely, camping in convenient places, their objective being the junction of the Gunnison and the Uncompahgre, which they reached Friday night. Here they remained ten days, each taking up a quarter section of land.

They joined Governor George A. Crawford September 24 and went to the mouth of the Gunnison and the Grand, where they remained four days, all staking claims. "The Grand Mesa," says Mobley, "which commences at the mouth of the river, and runs back for a distance of twelve or fifteen miles, is said to contain upwards of 40,000 acres of the finest land in the state, but it will be worthless until capital is brought in and means devised for irrigating it."

Game was found in abundance--bear, elk, antelope, deer, rabbit, beaver, otter, and mountain sheep. They found the streams full of fish. "A twelve-pound fish was caught at the mouth of the Grand. It made three good meals for the party of five," they reported.

While on their way back to Gunnison, they met a band of ten Utes, accompanied by an escort, headed for the new reservation. Parties

of whites were going and coming. Surveying camps of both the Denver and Rio Grande and Denver and South Park, were already active.

"Nearly all desirable land in the valleys of Uncompahgre, Grand, and Gunnison," they found, "had been already staked."

Under the caption "Uncompahgre and Grand Junction," R. D. M. (R. D. Mobley) writes at length under date of November 15, 1881 (issue of November 16, 1881). He has just returned from a three-weeks' visit to the mouth of the Gunnison and is besieged with questions by eager Gunnisonites.

The soil on the Uncompahgre, Gunnison, and Grand is a rich sandy loam, he tells them, but the land fronting the river has already been taken up by settlers; however, there is still plenty of good land unoccupied in the valleys back from the river.

Town sites at the mouth of the Uncompahgre and the Gunnison have been selected and several cabins built at each: the former, Uncompahgre, where Mr. Van Deventer has started a store; the latter, Grand Junction. Parties are in Gunnison at the time he writes for goods to establish stores in Grand Junction.

"There are probably 50,000 acres susceptible of irrigation and cultivation in the vicinity of Uncompahgre. For twelve miles above and seventeen miles below Grand Junction, there is a valley averaging four miles in width of rich land to be cultivated and watered. In this and adjacent valleys there are 100 thousand acres of good farming land," Mobley assures the land-hungry.

"Steps have been taken in both places to secure postoffice and mail service. Ditch companies have been organized, and in some

places work has commenced. Timber is available. Coal of good quality abounds all the way from the lower Uncompahgre down the Gunnison and the Grand to the Utah line. Both the Denver and Rio Grande and the Denver and South Park have surveyed lines through each of these town sites.

"Governor George A. Crawford is the superintendent of both of these town companies, and his name in such business means success.

"The opening up of this country will be a great advantage to Gunnison and will make a big jobbing trade for the Gunnison merchants, provided they keep suitable stocks on hand. Crawford is backed by rich and influential gentlemen now in the city from Philadelphia, and no pains nor means will be spared to build up good towns."

Editor Frank Root summarizes, in the issue of November 29, a personal letter from his friend Gov. George Crawford, dated November 17, 1881. The Governor says he has been "roughing it" at the junction of the Gunnison and the Grand, sleeping on the ground. "Now he has a cabin 13 by 14 feet with puncheon floor and door, and he has a rude bed. By frequent burning of his fingers, he is learning to cook. Root says, "We judge the Governor has been on the sick list recently for he says, 'Sawing off eighteen logs in one afternoon rested me.' A storeroom is being built for Captain Mobley, 18 by 24 feet."

A later notice says Crawford will probably remain all winter in Grand Junction.

R. D. Mobley writes at column length under attractive headlines, December 10, 1881 (issue of December 15): "~~According to promise~~

"According to promise I will tell your readers something about this country and our journey over it. We left Gunnison on the last day of November and camped the first night at Col. Tom Steear's where we were hospitably entertained. The snow ranged from eight inches to two feet deep on the road to Cedar Station where it disappeared, and from there the ground was bare in the valleys. We slept in houses until we reached Cimarron, and there myself and wife slept in a wagon, and Mr. Collier and John on the ground. From there we camped out very comfortably. The roads were not so bad as we anticipated; in fact are good for winter season. We were seven days on the road, averaging about twenty miles a day.

"At the future-great town of Uncompahgre, we saw our old friends, Messrs. (W. O.) Stephens and family, Captain (F. J.) Anderson and family, Esq. (M. C.) Vandeventer and family, and Judge W. R. Keithley, all of whom were well, and well satisfied with their new homes. Here we found Governor Crawford and Robinson, both healthy and happy. The worst thing the Governor has to contend with is the want of mails--and females, but he anticipates a supply of both soon.

"The immigration into this valley still keeps up, and none but mesa claims are left untaken, but these are probably the best land in the valley if water could be got to them. Several ditch companies have been organized, and some of them are at work. Much of the valley and mesa land will be watered this winter.

"The settlers are all industriously at work building cabins and making ditches and fences, preparing for spring crops. They

confidently expect to furnish Gunnison and the mountain region with fresh vegetables next season. We found the weather splendid--regular old-fashioned Indian summer."

Mobley, on the date noted above, gives a complete geographical description of Grand Junction and vicinity. "The town now has seven houses erected and several more under way. It will certainly make one of the thriving cities of western Colorado. A physician could do well and is needed badly. No Indians have been seen or heard since September."

J. A. Blauvelt, according to the issue of January 9, 1882, "recently an attache' of the Review, leaves tomorrow for Grand Junction, where he will engage in surveying and civil engineering. He held the office of county surveyor for several years in Norton County, Kansas. He is a competent man. Our readers will hear from him."

An all-important bill to Gunnison County was introduced into the United States Senate January 5, 1882, by Senator N. P. Hill (Issue of January 16).

In brief, three sections of Senator Hill's bill were as follows: (1) Reservation to be declared public land; (2) Secretary of the Interior to establish boundaries of the Reservation; (3) Locations already made to be legalized, including mines of the rich Ruby Camp, also coal and agricultural preemptions filed long ago, thus avoiding such troubles as those enacted at Deadwood, and which might result from a mere proclamation. A bill was introduced into the House by Congressman James B. Belford January 16, restoring

to the public domain, and opening to settlement the former Ute Reservation.

On January 19, 1882, Captain Mobley writes at two-column length from Grand Junction.

"A majority of our people are Gunnisonites, and the immigration coming is mostly from Gunnison. Allison and Scott have erected a business building. Messrs. Wood and Saylor, also from Gunnison, have each started in business, and Mr. Wood has commenced putting materials on the ground for a large restaurant and boarding house. The Town Company has erected a large boarding house which will soon be occupied by William Green, lately from California.

"Poor mail service (75 miles from a post office or post road, and payment of 10 cents to 25 cents for every letter we get or send off) is one of our handicaps. We have taken steps to get post offices and post roads, and will be under many obligations to our representatives in Congress if they will hurry these matters up.

"Gunnison should, with the settlers in the Reservation, be interested in opening up a good free wagon road from Gunnison down on the north side of the river over the Grand Mesa by way of this valley as this road would add largely to increasing and keeping the already large trade that Gunnison merchants have with the people of the Reservation."

He goes on to enumerate the inconveniences of the toll road: "Every trip made from Gunnison with two horses and a wagon, via Barnum, from \$10 to \$15 is 'yanked' out of the freighter by the toll road

company. This is extremely hard on the freighters, particularly when they have to drag through snow banks and over steep mountain roads made dangerous to travel by ice and snow...and it does not appear that the owners of the roads are doing anything to make them better. One reason that the road on the north side should be put in good condition in order to keep all the trade, is that there are already schemes on foot to have the trade of the valley turned into Utah--to the end of the railroad there and to the agricultural settlements.

"The following firms are now doing business here with a fair trade: Mitchell and Mistweich, grocers; Laton and Geary, groceries; Irwin and Fenlen, groceries and liquors; Talifarean and McGovern, restaurant; William Green, boarding house; Thomas Williams, blacksmith; Christly and Graham, saloon; Gile and Bates, meat market.

"Governor Crawford is general manager of the Town Company and friend and adviser of everybody. The Governor has formerly kept a free lunch and lodging house, but has now suspended business in that line.

"Judge Harlow and your humble servant dispense the law and are prepared to serve our customers, particularly with the marriage ceremony. We have a standing order of a choice lot to the first lady that gets married in our town, a free ceremony into the bargain. We will tie the knot either hard or soft, light or loose...the offer goes for ninety days, and we will say to the marriageable readers of the Review that in the vicinity there are about 150 single men with only two young ladies.

"The settlers had a meeting here Saturday and formed a settlers' Protective Association to govern the settlement of the country until the land in the Reservation comes into the market. Officers were chosen: Capt. P. Fitzpatrick, president; J. C. Nichols and H. I. Schmitz, vice-presidents; R. D. Mobley, secretary; J. N. McArthur, treasurer; Tom Lester, marshal; George A. Crawford, N. N. Smith, William Nistweich, J. L. Wood, and William Pie executive committee.

"The regulations of the association allow the claimant 30 days after staking his claim to build his house, and 60 days after building his house to get on his claim. If he keeps work going on, he can be absent from his claim four months.

"A Mr. Bonhouser, representative of a wealthy Leadville company, has commenced work on an irrigation ditch that will be, when completed, 45 miles long and will have a capacity sufficient to water the whole valley. Judge Peirson, superintendent of a home company, will soon commence work on another ditch that will run through the center of the valley."

Mobley has kept a detailed weather report since January 1, of which he appends the data, the weather of the Western Slope being one of its drawing factors mentioned in all letters.

An account captioned "Uncompahgre and Grand Junction," occupying the greater part of a page in the issue of January 24, 1882, is written, according to the editor by "a distinguished citizen lately returned from the Reservation."

The charm of the climate at the two places will make them the "winter resort of Colorado." Much space is devoted to the physical and geographical description, reasonably familiar to an interested present-day reader, and so omitted here.

"A post office has just been established at Uncompahgre, called Delta. The mail is carried twice a week by spring wagon from the Cantonment (35 miles) to the railroad commissary tent below Uncompahgre, thence on horseback. In a short time ample stage accommodations will be on that line and on the more direct route down the Gunnison. The post office of the Cantonment being called 'Uncompahgre,' another name 'Delta' had been selected for 'Uncompahgre. Grand Junction post office will be established soon. For the present, letters for Grand Junction should be addressed 'Uncompahgre, Uncompahgre P. O. Col.' until the new office in Delta gets in operation.

"The town site of Uncompahgre occupies about 540 acres, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad along its west side. The survey of the Crested Butte branch runs through it. The Denver and South Park Railway is staked along the north side. The Town Company has built two houses and contracted for more. Uncompahgre gives promise of being a railroad center, and there are many who believe it will surpass Grand Junction.

"M. C. Vandeventer has a store there and has been joined by (Warren) Richardson of the Boston Bakery, Gunnison. (T. F.) Horner, building from Gunnison, has also located there. A ditch four miles long being taken from the Uncompahgre to water the town.

"The Grand Junction town site embraces 640 acres. A ditch eight miles above town will be completed in time for spring crops and planting of trees. A four-foot vein of coal crops out within a mile of the town and underlies the city, while twenty miles distant, near the railroad is a twenty-foot vein. Building timber can be floated down the Grand and the Gunnison and water mills will be established on the town site.

"The graders on the Utah end of the Denver and Rio Grande are within sixty miles of Grand Junction. It is expected that the grading from Utah will be finished past the town in two months, and the cars will be running in July. It is claimed that the Grand River route to Leadville and Denver would have the shortest line and the easiest grade and is likely to become the main line from Salt Lake to Denver. At all events the travel of the rivers and railroads west of the range is to Grand Junction as a glance at the map will show. The Gunnison and its railroad drain the mountain district toward Pueblo, while the Grand and its road will bring in the Leadville Country." The writer asserts definitely that there is no such place as Ute City, the name favored by the government for Grand Junction.

"These two towns, (Delta and Grand Junction) are laid out on a liberal scale. Lots are set apart for the leading denominations for church sites and parsonages, for city hall, engine house, and for all the public buildings required in large cities. Provision is made for parks and fair grounds. A free library and reading room will be established at once in each town. As soon as the ditches are completed, a forester will be employed to cultivate trees along the streets and in the parks."

"It was not the intention of the Town Company to start the towns until spring as there is no material other than logs at present. But the teamsters have told the story in Ouray, Lake City, Gunnison, Crested Butte, Irwin, and the boom has begun. The rush to the late Reservation through Gunnison and to Un-compahgre and Grand Junction this spring will be unprecedented. Gunnison will profit by it as Denver did from the Leadville excitement. Your County Board should at once prepare the direct road down the Gunnison. It is 30 miles shorter and should be free from that nuisance of Colorado, 'toll, toll, toll' over roads, ferries and bridges. Let us have free roads and free bridges. If these are not provided, the trade is likely to go to Utah, where the roads are better and provisions cheaper."

J. A. Blauvelt writes of the much-talked-of garden of the West-- the Grand Junction valley, under date of January 29 (issue of February 7):

COLLON COMENT

"Our party on January 21 were eleven and a half days on the road from Gunnison. We had a fearful time crossing the range in snow. Snow on the Blue was immense; in some places the wheels were nearly out of sight."*****

But later, "Standing as we were far above the beautiful valley and gazing down on its 50,000 acres of bottom and agricultural land with the Gunnison River coming in from the east and the Grand from the northwest, and at the junction a flourishing town where but a few weeks before not a mark of civilization was

visible, was to us a grand panorama!

"Upon arriving at the town the first ones we met were Judges Mobley and Harlow, who will be remembered by the Gunnison people as coming to the Junction last fall....The buildings here consist of cottonwood logs and poles, and a great many are being put up at the present time.

"There are in running order four stores, three whiskey shops, two restaurants, one hotel, two butcher shops, one barber shop, and two blacksmith shops. Inhabitants are scattered over the ranches. At present there are only three women in town, but many will bring families as soon as possible. The entire valley will soon be irrigated...the soil is the finest in the land.

"Your humble servant will stay right here...contracts made for surveying several ditches, completing survey of the town site. I shall get my family here from Gunnison, and get settled on my 160 acres of land--the happiest man in seven states."

On February 9, 1882, the Daily Review is accused by its competitor, the News-Democrat, of selling Gunnison short in the interest of Grand Junction. In a spirited reply, Editor Frank Root says: "We can't see how the interests of Gunnison are in any way jeopardized by treating our new neighboring city at the mouth of the Gunnison courteously...Grand Junction is composed very largely of the respectable citizens and business men of Gunnison...the interests of the two places are identical...if one place grows the other is bound to."

Impatience in the county mounted, that Washington did not act to declare the Reservation public land. M. Rush Warner, Gunnison resident and representative of capitalists from Philadelphia, was in the capital February 9, 1882, to visit the Colorado delegation and present the urgent demands of the people, chief of which was the opening of the Reservation to settlement by proclamation or legislative enactment. Other objectives were a land office in Gunnison, post offices at Grand Junction and Delta, as well as various post roads.

"The post office has now been established in Grand Junction," he reports, "with R. D. Mobley as postmaster. The government did not like the double name 'Grand Junction' and have named the post office 'Ute City,' this being the only name suggested. There is also a post office established at Delta with M. F. Anderson as postmaster."

"But the tug of war," he says, "comes in getting the Reservation thrown open. The secretary of the interior to whom it is referred contends that the government has not yet fully complied with the 'Ute Bill' of January 15, 1880, in the survey and the allotment of Utah lands to the Indians; thus their former home cannot yet be declared public lands."

He gives a lively account of the interest in the East regarding the Gunnison country. He was "besieged for information," and he says recruits are coming from every town or city he visited.

A citizens' meeting was held in Gunnison, February 20, to discuss the opening of the Reservation. The assembly was called to order by Capt. A. J. Bean, Mayor Kubler was elected chairman, and Theodore H. Thomas, secretary. Speeches were made by Alexander Gullett, Gov. George A. Crawford, and Theodore H. Thomas. A committee was appointed to draft resolutions to be forwarded to senators and representatives praying that some action be taken before adjournment, to open the Ute Reservation to settlement. The committee, consisting of Messrs. Wadsworth, Gullett, and Shackelford, drafted telegrams acceptable to the group. The newspaper account closes with HO FOR GRAND JUNCTION in boldface type.

An open letter to the Congressional delegation was drafted at an adjourned meeting and reported in the issue of February 27. At the mass meeting the citizens gave it their hearty approval. Following is a summary of the lengthy report:

Is the land known as the Ute Reservation now a part of the public domain? Is it the duty of Congress to declare said land open to settlement without further delay?

In great detail, the letter answers these two questions in the affirmative. Seven-eighths of Gunnison County is involved; several thousand people have already settled upon it; towns have sprung into existence; post offices have been established; two railroads are extending their lines into the country. Although this land has been practically open for settlement the last six months, an act of Congress declaring it so open

would enable the owners of valuable property to perfect their title. Several thousand square miles of the finest coal land is known to be within the boundaries of the Reservation. Some of the richest gold and silver mines in the state are located therein, valuable minerals, large tracts of grazing, agricultural and timber lands.

This letter greatly enlarged as to detail is signed by W. H. Wadsworth, Sprigg Shackelford, George Simmonds, Alexander Gullett, O. P. Abercrombie, and Fred H. Kellogg.

On March 1, 1882, from Washington, came the news that the amended bill providing for the formal opening of the Ute Reservation, had been favorably reported to the senate by the committee. "Apparent delay is through no fault of the Colorado delegation; the delay is aggravated by reported dissatisfaction of the Utes in Utah; possible dissatisfaction of the Mormons; appeals to Congress by New England," states Root. He quotes the Leadville Herald of February 20, 1882: "The philanthropists of New England continue to appeal to Congress in behalf of the red fiends of the frontier. Not satisfied with the unparalleled magnanimity that has made justice weep in rewarding rather than punishing the devils that murdered Father Meeker and his associates at White River, and subjected the defenseless women to an experience worse than death, these sympathetic souls now come asking the Congress of the United States to extend still other favors, and a petition have 8,000 signatures was presented to the Senate,

championed by the Massachusetts senator and eloquently answered by Senators Teller of Colorado and Preston B. Plumb of Kansas, voicing the sentiment in Colorado."

News came, March 8, that the Ute Reservation Bill that was to come up for final action March 6, had been postponed for one month.

The editor of the Review acknowledges, March 28, 1882, a visit from Joseph Selig of Montrose, president of the Montrose Town Company. "Already there are 200 houses constructed at that place mostly of logs. Soon there will be a considerable number of frame houses, also some of adobe and brick. They have a sawmill with a capacity to turn out 15,000 feet of lumber daily. A ditch 26 miles in length is now being run, which will irrigate large and valuable tracts of agricultural land, the cost being \$700 per mile.

"The town site covers 320 acres. Though only about two months old, the place has about 20 saloons and business houses. The railroad is nearly all graded from Gunnison, except for a little in the Black Canon. Coal has been discovered within three miles of the town; thus the fuel question is settled.

"Coppinger, McConnell and Company will have in operation the 'Uncompahgre Valley Bank' on or about the first of May, and a large new hotel two stories high, 40 by 90 feet, is expected to be in operation by June 1 to 15. Everything looks extremely promising for Montrose; its low altitude admits of the raising

of all kinds of vegetables and fruits."¹²

In the issue of March 14 is the item: "H. R. Hammond is putting on a line of stages between Montrose and Grand Junction. His son, Harry is now there perfecting arrangements. He will be able to put passengers through in double quick time, carry express packages, letters, etc."

By March 21, 1882, the editor of the Review prints the following from the Lake City Silver World: "The town (Grand Junction) is lively. Buildings are going up in every direction. There are over 100 houses already built and about 125 in course of erection. The ranchmen have started to dig several ditches so as to raise crops in the spring. There is a military company with 90 members. Arms have been sent for to Denver and they are on the road."

On March 23, it is noted that David Wood, the great freighter, "returned yesterday from a trip to Grand Junction and other points in the Reservation, and is enthusiastic over what he has seen down there and the prospects of the valleys through which he has traveled."

April 1 marked the first tragedy in Grand Junction in the death of Deputy Sheriff Benjamin A. Scott and John Gordon.

¹² The Montrose election for incorporation was April 3, 1882. Commissioners for the election were N. K. Hunter, James F. Kyle, F. H. Moore, and C. P. Creighton. Number of voters was 100. W. H. Cummings was elected mayor; W. A. Eckerly, recorder; Thos. Heibler, A. Pumphrey, R. C. Diehl, and William Wilson, trustees. Documents of incorporation and plats of Montrose, Grand Junctions, and Delat are all in Gunnison County court house, as Gunnison was the county seat. David Smith was at that time county judge.

Hoodlums had visited the city, were arrested, escaped. Scott led a party in pursuit. With William Nishweitz, Judge Pierson, and John Gordon, he was in the last boat to cross the river. When they struck the main current just below where the Gunnison flows into the Grand, the heavily loaded boat began to sink. Pierson jumped and reached the opposite shore in an exhausted condition. The boat capsized in the turbulent water and Gordon and Scott were drowned. Gordon was 61, a widower, and father of thirteen children. Scott's body was recovered the morning of April 5 and was buried. Burial services were read by J. W. Bucklin and appropriate remarks made by R. D. Mobley, with all the inhabitants out to pay respects.

A three-column account under the heading "Gunnison to the Grand" appears April 11, signed by J. W. B. (John W. Boulden). Boulden's party started to the Western Slope April 9, 1882. After an unpleasant journey through snow and mud, they reached Montrose April 14. There they report that drilling to the extent of 90 feet has not produced water. They feel sure that the Uncompahgre will not furnish half the water necessary for the numerous ranches. They find too much alkali in the soil.

Twenty-one miles farther they reached Delta--their objective point, "more desirable," the writer put it, "than Montrose. The town has two stores, two saloons, and about twelve other buildings. It has splendid water at the depth of eight to ten feet. A grand and picturesque view of ragged cliffs and washouts in the clay hills at the foot of Grand Mesa, about ten miles north of town will not fail to attract all lovers of natural scenery."

"A bridge is being built over the Gunnison at this place, Thomas F. Horner, formerly of Gunnison, having the contract. Ditches are being taken out, both from the Gunnison and the Uncompahgre... There are some very fine ranches on the Gunnison between here and the canon eight miles above, for which the owners are asking for squatter's rights all the way from \$500 to \$5,000 each. All who have ranches in the vicinity of Delta that can be irrigated by the Gunnison River are enthusiastic over their future worth."

The party, awaiting orders from a Gunnison ditch company they were representing, purchased a skiff and headed for Grand Junction, 100 miles, starting March 25. With bedding, supplies, and cooking utensils amounting to about eight or nine hundred pounds, the party started on their perilous trip, the first ever attempted, in their two by ten feet skiff. With Boulden were Joseph Blackstock of Gunnison, who has also written at length of the expedition, and Harry Hurff of Ashcroft.

Boulden writes: "We wonder if the noted explorers, Lewis and Clark, ever experienced such hazardous plunges over rapids and under rocks at railroad speed! Had we been inclined to abandon the trip by water, it would have been impossible, as nothing short of a balloon could have scaled the lofty walls on either side of the river. It was Grand Junction or sink!

"The scenery in the canon is grand, and although we had narrow escapes from being wrecked while being dashed over rapids and losing our baggage, and the temporary or possible permanent loss of breath of one or more of the party, we enjoyed the trip.

"Aside from our boat striking while going over a rapid, from the effect of which we luckily escaped with a boat half full of of water--we met with no serious accident.

"We traveled but a few hours each day, spending considerable time fishing and exploring the scenery.

"About noon on the 28th we came in sight of Grand Junction, and a few moments later, we had left the Gunnison and found ourselves on the broad face of the long-talked-of Grand River. We landed under the gaze of many of the astonished inhabitants, and we then and there praised the ship that brought us safely through--our boat, the Clyde, being the first boat to make the journey from Delta to Grand Junction, have made the trip in 23 hours of actual running.

"The town has several stores, saloons and restaurants, two black-smith shops, one butcher shop, and about 100 unfinished log buildings--in fact, all the buildings in this and other towns spoken of are made cottonwood logs or poles. There are several adobe yards in operation and several others under construction as adobe will be largely used in building this season."

Speaking of the main ditch in which the town company is interested, he says it is being taken out about eight miles above town and covers 100,000 acres, supplemented by smaller ditches. "Prices given are for man and team \$8 cash and \$5 in stock in the company; for a single man, \$1 in cash and \$ 2 in stock."

He speaks of meeting old Gunnisonites: G. W. Boulden, Judge

R. D. Mobley, M. L. Allison, and George Thurston. He gives details of the Scott and Gordon drowning.

From Uncompahgre (Delta) comes a letter dated April 7, 1882.

"The railroad is expected within three months. The D. and R. G. election the Saturday before, leaving Jay Gould out entirely, was highly satisfactory to Delta and means a rapid completion of the main line to Utah.

"The town election April 10 showed 95 votes for incorporation. The sawmill has arrived, and hotel building and Miner's Exchange Bank are soon to be erected. An adobe yard will have stock for sale in a few days.

"The Sanderson coaches will run to Montrose direct instead of to the Cantonment. Thus Montrose will have direct mail service and will be a distributing post office for its section of the country.

"The Town Company will have water on the principal avenues of the town by April 20. The ditch is 26 miles long and will irrigate 25,000 acres."

April 19, 1882, H. R. Hammond, running the stage line from Uncompahgre to Delta and Grand Junction, carrying the mail, we are pleased to learn, proposes to extend the line to Gunnison over the toll road that will be opened next week. This will be good news to all those contemplating a trip to the Reservation.

The Review records, April 24, a visit from John F. Daily, who has been in Delta all winter and is now on his way to Pueblo.

The town site contains 360 acres; besides there are 90 acres adjoining it belonging to the Denver and Rio Grande. It is expected the place will become an important railroad point. Lots 25 by 125 are selling for \$50. The price for corner lots 50 by 125 feet is \$150.

The price of living is \$10 per week at the hotels and restaurants. Flour is \$10 per cwt. Potatoes are five cents per pound; butter, 60 cents; ranch eggs, 75 cents; beef, 12½ cents; ham and bacon, 25 cents. Milk sells for 10 cents per quart.

Gov. George Crawford is president of the Town Company. T. B. Crawford, annephew of the Governor, is general superintendent. F. M. Anderson is postmaster. M. C. Vandeventer is keeping a general stock of goods; McGranahan Bros. (F. M. and C. B.) keep a stock of groceries and drygoods; W. O. Stephens is a prominent citizen and is also deputy postmaster. George Moody keeps a meat market, and also owns a valuable ranch near town. J. R. McDonald is a contractor and builder and owner of a splendid ranch. Mr. Carmichael is a miner and ranchman. Mr. Burkhart keeps a large hay, grain, and feed store. Thomas Hannum is a ranchman. Mr. and Mrs. Hoy keep a store and own a ranch. S. Huffington is a ranchman adjoining town. Mrs. J. R. McDonald is about to start a millinery; Mrs. Thomas F. Horner has a hotel, as have also Mrs. Hepworth and Miss Mary Wilson and sister. Mr. (E. T.) Hendrickson is keeping a boarding and coffee house.

The D. and R. G. Railroad will be running into Delta about the first of August.

The number of buildings up and completed is 40; thos in process number 40 more. Two brick yards are started. Brick and adobe sell for \$7 per thousand. Water is now running down both sides of Main Street. Trees, cottonwood and boxelder, are being set out by the Town Company.

"Uncompahgre or Delta" heads a communication signed "C" in the issue of April 18, 1882. This is quoted in its entry:

"The town of Uncompahgre, sometimes called Delta, at the mouth of the Gunnison is the first in the late Reservation to have water on the town site. I do not speak of well water which is of the best and obtained at a depth of ten or twelve feet. Of these there are six.

"The Delta Ditch Company, George A. Crawford, president, was organized about a month ago and went to work with a will to turn water on the town site from the Uncompahgre. The head of the ditch is about two miles above the town. The ditch is six feet at top and five at bottom. On Sunday it was completed and water was running down the lateral ditches on each side of Main Street, a street 100 feet wide. It will be an easy matter to overflow the lateral ditch on the upper or east side of the street and thus lay the dust, or pipes can be run at very little expense from the ditch on the hillside so that hose and hydrants will supply the place of the street sprinkler.

"The bluff on the north side of the town site is fifteen to twenty feet high and will furnish waterfall for all the machinery the

town will need--the Gunnison and the Uncompahgre furnishing the water. A sawmill and shingle machine to be run by water are already talked of, the logs to be floated down the Gunnison River and Surface Creek. A corn mill will be a necessity this fall, and a flourishing mill next year.

"Our town also has the first bridge and the largest one west of the range. It has been built mainly, as was the ditch, by the members of the Town Company of which George A. Crawford is president. Capt. F. M. Anderson, M. C. Vandeventer, and W. O. Stephens are members. H. E. Rood of Philadelphia and M. Rush Warner of Gunnison are the largest stockholders in the bridge. It might be said there are three bridges, the longest of which consists of three spans of forty-five feet each and two butts of about thirty feet each. It is a truss bridge of good material and workmanship. The contractor was T. F. Horner, recently of Gunnison. The entire cost of roadway and bridges will be near \$3,000. It was turned over by the contractor to the company on April 11, and is now ready for the heaviest teams."

Items from Montrose appear in the issue of April 29, 1882:

"At the new town of Montrose, Buddecke and Diehl are keeping a general store and outfitting house where everything can be had from a paper of tacks to a threshing machine.

"M. E. Hunter is postmaster and R. C. Diehl is deputy. Sanderson's express office is in the same building. The first safe for the town went forward a few days ago for Buddecke and Diehl. The weight of it is about 2,000 pounds.

"Coal has been discovered only seven miles from town, of a very good quality. The sawmill of Eckerly and Company is in operation after a short lapse owing to an accident. Lumber sells for about \$35 a thousand. Wood is worth from \$5 to \$6 a cord."

"J. W. B." (J. W. Blauvelt), writing May 5, 1882, mentions the temporary absence of Grand Junction citizens, due to the fact that court is in session in Gunnison, and the Elk Mountain mining district is opening up. Assessment work is being done; some are disposing of holdings; some are working in the mines.

Quoting: "Give us water! water! is all the cry. Give us water, and we will give you everything else in the shape of fruit, vegetables, and beautiful homes." It is expected that the ditch company will have water on the town site within two or three weeks.

"Nursery men and fruit agents are coming into the valley from different directions. Lots are selling for \$25 to \$200.

"Our mail man gets in here regularly twice a week. His pouch is usually very slim; but it is well, perhaps, for us who are low in finances, as every letter we fail to get saves us 15 cents, which amount we have to pay for each letter received or mailed, in addition to the postage, as there has been no postal service established here yet. But we are daily expecting service once a week."

"The Republicans of the precinct met May 2. J. W. Bucklin, formerly of Gunnison, was unanimously elected a member of the

Central committee. Bucklin has carried with him to Gunnison where he has gone to attend court, a petition for the incorporation of Grand Junction.

"The people here are undergoing quite an ordeal by being compelled to live without meat, having been entirely out of bacon for a month, and since Sheriff Bowman commenced his raid on stolen cattle, and thieves in these parts, no beef cattle have been seen or heard of."

The Review of May 30 announces, with arresting headlines, a mass meeting at the courthouse, the objective that "Congress might be stimulated to immediate action in opening the former Ute Reservation."

The mass meeting was reported May 31 was a lively one. Thornton H. Thomas was elected chairman and W. H. Wadsworth, secretary.

F. H. Kellogg made a concise statement of what had been done in Washington. The bill introduced by Sen. (N. P.) Hill has passed the Senate but had not been sent to the House. A bill introduced by Congressman J. B. Belford, April 3, had passed the House but not the Senate. Kellogg was convinced from talk with those concerned that the Hill Bill was what the people wanted. It provided for the opening of the entire Reservation, while the Belford Bill only legalized locations already made on the land until such time as the President should allot the new reservation land to the Indians, at which time the settlers should also receive titles to their claims dating back to the time they were taken.

Resolutions were passed to be sent to Washington. Ira Brown of Irwin and A. J. Bean of Gunnison were selected to go to Washington to push their claims for action. As neither appointee could go, A. M. Stevenson of Pitkin and Alexander Gullett of Gunnison accepted the mission. "The whole Gunnison country demands that the obstacles in the way of the settlement of this vast body of agricultural and mineral land to which no Ute has claim for nearly a year shall be promptly removed," states the editor of the Review

A later item reports that the two chosen to lobby in Washington did not make the trip.

R. D. Mobley writes June 5 from Grand Junction: "The thing that causes the greatest complaint from our people is Colonel Soliday's toll road.

"All unite in saying that that part of this road from here to Delta or Roubideux crossing is an outrage on the public, especially on new-comers, for old-timers, or those who know the circumstances refuse to pay toll and travel a portion of his road free. Competent judges say that the road now traveled did not cost to exceed \$250 for which they have tried to collect at the rate of \$3.20 from here to Delta for a two-horse team and wagon. The travel goes over the old military road made by Johnson's army in 1858 in returning from Utah, and since then used by the military and immigrants continually, and there never was any use of a toll road, for a small amount of money would have made a good and lasting road. The travel does not go over nearly all of the toll road or their bridge, but stays on the old Johnson trail."

He goes on to say that the town (Grand Junction) will vote on the question of incorporation June 22. Also he announces the appearance of the Montrose Messenger, " a nicely gotten up and newsy sheet." Mr. Roberts is the editor.

UTE BILL PASSED!

The issue of July 24, 1882, carries a telegram from N. P. Hill that the Ute Reservation bill has passed the House just as it came from the Senate. As soon as the news was verified, the popping of thousands of crackers and the firing of guns told the happiness of the town of Gunnison and the entire county. Awaiting only the president's signature, there would be a new land office in Gunnison, thousands would come. It would be a hard thing they said to estimate what it would mean in dollars and cents to the county. "Indeed Gunnison has reason to rejoice!"

Before the President had signed, according to the Review, July 26, 1882, Grand Junction had incorporated, July 20. Captain E. D. Mobley was elected mayor³; P. Westmoreland, recorder, J. Milton Russell, George Thornton, N. N. Smith, and Walter Geary were chosen trustees.

On August 10, 1882, the former Reservation was declared public land. There was at that time no homesteading, only cash entry: \$1.25 per acre of agricultural land; \$5.00 for mineral land.

³James H. Rankin, in "The Founding and Early Years of Grand Junction." Colorado Magazine, VI, 39, says R. D. Mobley was slated for mayor, but in a hastily planned competition. C. F. Shanks defeated him. The Review seems not aware of this.

The laxity of the Government in following out the agreement with the Utes has resulted in the recent decision of the United States Court of Claims that the Government owes the Indians the fabulous sum of \$31,761,207.62, some \$10,000 and more for every brave, squaw, and papoose--but that is quite another story, and a long and involved one.

Gift from Pioneer Museum - 1985



