



## 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary NEWS RELEASE

Date: May 21, 2008

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### Residents: We Want Our Own County!

**How a citizen effort in 1882 led to the creation of a new county 125 years ago.**

Back in the early 1880s, people who lived in the Grand Valley had to travel all the way to the county seat in Gunnison to do official county business. What is now a 2.5-hour drive was even more of an inconvenience in the days before automobiles.

Back then, the area now known as Mesa County was part of a sprawling Gunnison County. By the fall of 1882, the steady growth of Grand Junction and its surrounding areas led to a desire to divide up Gunnison County. A mass meeting of citizens was held in Grand Junction on December 28, 1882, with the purpose of sending "...a petition to the Legislature praying for a new county, with Grand Junction as the county seat."

A bill authorizing the creation of Mesa County was signed by Colorado Governor James Grant on February 14, 1883. A census in that same year recorded 729 men, 144 women, and 133 children living in Mesa County.

The Democratic and Republican parties each nominated a full set of county officials, which—according to the Grand Junction News—the governor then ignored in making his appointments.

Other interesting tidbits from 1883:

- Grand Valley Canal established, and the Independent Ranchmen's Ditch organized to irrigate farms west of Grand Junction.
- Charles W. Haskell established the *Mesa County Democrat*. First issue printed on March 30<sup>th</sup>.
- African-American community obtains town lots for church site.
- Unit of State Militia established (Co. F., "Grand Valley Guard")

***Save the date! Mark your calendar for the morning of June 14<sup>th</sup> (Flag Day) to come celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mesa County. Join us for FREE cake and ice cream and lots of fun, family-friendly activities!***

***"Many faces, many places. One community—Mesa County."***