

## FIRST DRAFT

# April an important month for pioneer John D. Reeder

John D. Reeder may not have shared T.S. Eliot's belief that "April is the cruellest month," but there is no doubt April was momentous for the one-time Mesa County sheriff and Palisade mayor, the man for whom Reeder Mesa is named.

Here are some good and bad events in Reeder's life that occurred in April.

He had his first view of the Grand Valley on April 1, 1883, and was disappointed.

He suffered his first election loss for city treasurer of Grand Junction on April 7, 1891.

He was married in Grand Junction on April 29, 1896.

His horse was shot out from under him in April 1897.

A libel suit filed against a Missouri newspaper in April 1897 raised questions about Reeder's arrest tactics.

A rifle mercantile company announced in April 1904 that Reeder would be manager of its new store in Palisade.

Reeder was twice elected mayor of Palisade, beginning in April 1909, but he also lost two re-election bids in subsequent Aprils.

It was November, not April, of 1895 when Reeder was elected Mesa County sheriff. He had already served four years as undersheriff.

While serving as undersheriff, he foiled two attempted jail breaks, chased and caught a prisoner who had escaped from the train near Minturn. He retrieved yet another escapee — his own pet bear — which Reeder kept at the county jail.

John D. Reeder was born in northcentral Missouri on July 7, 1861. He was 21 when he read about the glories of the Grand Valley in a Denver newspaper and decided to move to what he believed was "a Garden of Eden."

He rode a passenger train to Gunnison, then joined the crew of a work train for the final leg of the journey to Grand Junction, where he arrived late on March 31, 1883.

The next morning, Reeder surveyed his surroundings and wasn't happy. It was mostly desert as far as he could see, with only a few rough log houses.

"And that was April first," he told The Daily Sentinel's Merle McClintock in 1938, adding that he believed he'd been the victim of a cruel joke. "I had expected there would at least be trees, beyond that thin line of cottonwoods along the river. But there was nothing, and I decided to get out."

But the train he hoped to catch had already left that morning, so he remained in the



BOB SILBERNAGEL



MESA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
Former Mesa County Sheriff and Palisade Mayor John D. Reeder as he appeared in 1930.



PALISADE TRIBUNE, SEPT. 15, 1939  
John D. Reeder crossing new highway bridge east of Palisade in late 1930s. Probably the last photo taken of Reeder.

Grand Valley and never left.

He worked on ranches and for local businesses. By 1891, he had served as clerk of the county court, deputy county assessor and deputy postmaster in the city. For a time, he carried mail horseback between Grand Junction and Meeker and drove a stage to Glenwood Springs.

In early 1888, he located the first ranches on Kannah Creek and what became known as Reeder Mesa.

It's not clear when Reeder joined the Sheriff's Department, but newspaper articles list him as undersheriff in October 1892, when he shot a fleeing jail escapee in the leg and recaptured him.

The Sentinel endorsed Reeder for sheriff in September 1895, saying, "For the past four years he has acted as deputy sheriff of the county and in that capacity has been conscientious and painstaking in the performance of any duty assigned to him."

He was sworn in as sheriff in January, 1896, and had been in the job only a few months when he married Ida May Johnson in Grand Junction.

The Reeders joined the social elite of the small city. Social gatherings at their home included the likes of lawyer and banker Samuel McMullin, rancher W.P. Ela, railroad detective and deputy U.S. Marshal Cyrus "Doc" Shores and Daily Sentinel Publisher I.N. Bunting.

As sheriff, Reeder chased hunters illegally shooting quail on private land, arrested people on warrants from other states and accompanied prisoners by rail to Denver or Cañon City.

However, the shootout on April 7, 1897, involving a nighttime chase across rough country, was anything but routine. A bullet glanced off the skull of Reeder's horse, Trix, and it fell to the ground but survived. The outlaw, Ed Young, surrendered when he was shot in the leg by Undersheriff James Whitley.

Young, who had escaped from Montrose County Jail where he'd been held on horse-theft charges, was also a partner in a cattle rustling scheme with Frank White. Together, they sold cattle to Harold Carlisle of Kansas City, Missouri. Reeder traveled to Kansas City to arrest Carlisle in early 1897, and an interview he gave to a Kansas City Star reporter prompted Carlisle's libel suit.

Reeder said Carlisle had knowingly received stolen cattle at Dallas Divide, but Carlisle maintained he was innocent and was only arrested to make him testify against White.

Charges against Carlisle were dismissed soon after he arrived in Colorado, and charges against Ed Young for shooting Reeder's horse were dropped a few months later.

By then, Reeder was no longer sheriff. He lost his re-election bid in November, 1897. As the Grand Junction News put it, "but for the unfortunate division in the ranks of the republicans" over gold-versus-silver issues "he would have been re-elected by a large majority."

Still, Reeder stayed involved in community affairs. He was a leader in the fledgling Mesa County Camera Club. He was a leader in the Masons.

He had a ranch northwest of

the city until July 1900, when he was hired by J.W. Hugus and Co. to manage a new store in De Beque. He and Ida May lived there until 1904, when Hugus opened the Palisade store.

By 1907, Reeder was managing the store, was cashier of Hugus company's Palisade Bank, and had been elected to the Palisade Town Board of Trustees. He was elected Palisade mayor in 1909 and re-elected a year later, both times on an anti-alcohol platform.

Reeder served successfully for another year, but lost his 1911 re-election bid to Herman Kluge. He failed the next year to win the mayor's job back.

Even so, he and Ida May remained in Palisade. He purchased a large fruit farm. A vocal booster for the fruit industry, he served as vice president of the Mesa County Business Association.

He drove the first automobile across a new bridge over the Colorado River east of Palisade in the early 1930s.

John and Ida May Reeder had no children. She died a few years before John's death in September 1939.

Despite his initial poor impression of the area, the Sentinel said, "Mr. Reeder helped make the present Grand Valley one of promise to thousands of other emigrants seeking a new home in a productive land."

Sources: The Daily Sentinel and Grand Valley News at newspapers.com; Palisade Tribune at Colorado Historic Newspaper Collections.

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## IN BRIEF SENTINEL STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

### 35th case of COVID-19 reported

Mesa County Public Health reported Sunday the first positive case of COVID-19 since April 1. That makes the new total 35. A previous total of 35 was based on a Garfield County case mistakenly attributed to Mesa County. There are 75 tests pending results in Mesa County with two people hospitalized. Montrose County reported another five positive cases and is now at 77. Garfield County also reported another five cases and now has 70. Delta County is up three to 22 cases.

### National Guard to test 3 nursing homes

COLORADO SPRINGS — Democratic Gov. Jared Polis has announced that the Colorado National Guard will be sent into three of the state's largest nursing homes to conduct coronavirus testing.

"We really need even better planning, better protections to stop the spread of the virus in these facilities, particularly as the stay-at-home order and these severe restrictions in place roll off, we need to really up our game in practice in all the senior care facilities across our state," Polis said.

The state Department of Health and Environment identified COVID-19 outbreaks at 100 different facilities across the state, including 10 in Colorado Springs where 13 residents have died from complications due to the new virus and another five are suspected, The Gazette reported.

More than 520 patients have tested positive at nonhospital health care facilities and at least 138 patients have died, department officials said.

Colorado began visitation restrictions and started implementing screenings into senior facilities last month.

### Romanoff wins spot in Dems primary

LONGMONT — Democratic U.S. Senate candidate and former Colorado state House Speaker Andrew Romanoff has earned a spot in the June 30 Democratic primary that will choose a challenger to incumbent GOP Sen. Cory Gardner.

Backed by progressive Democrats, Romanoff won an overwhelming majority of votes at a party assembly Saturday that was conducted remotely because of the coronavirus, The Denver Post reported.

Romanoff will likely face two-term Gov. John Hickenlooper at the primary. Hickenlooper petitioned his way onto the primary ballot.

Saturday's assembly vote eliminated candidates Stephany Rose Spaulding, a university professor, and Erik Underwood, a onetime Republican who worked for former Ohio Sen. George Voinovich.

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## BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Woman crashes 5 times

Kristine Chavez, 29, is accused of reckless driving, driving under the influence and vehicular eluding, and received a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond from Mesa County Court last week.

A woman called police about 5 p.m. Thursday and said an unknown female had entered her home through an unlocked door; the female claimed she used to live there, according to the arrest affidavit.

The unknown female, later identified as Chavez, reportedly crashed into a fence on the property and seemed intoxicated.

Seven minutes later, a report was made that a vehicle had crashed into a parked vehicle, curbing, a stop sign and a landscape boulder in the 400 block of Monument Road, the affidavit said.

The caller wrote down the license plate of the suspected vehicle, which matched the one Chavez was reportedly driving. It was later seen crashing into a wooden chicken coop and a metal varmint trap and was trav-

eling at excessive speeds, the affidavit said.

A Grand Junction Police Department officer observed the vehicle traveling north at a high rate of speed, weaving in and out of traffic.

When officers attempted to pull it over, the vehicle took off into oncoming traffic, forcing others on the road to reportedly pull over to avoid getting hit.

The vehicle eventually crashed into some trees and a fence near Rosevale and D Road after a pursuit of more than a mile.

Chavez was arrested at gunpoint and cited for five counts of failing to notify police of an accident, the affidavit said.

### More details in robbery

Terrance Chatman, 27, is accused of aggravated robbery, felony menacing and vehicular eluding, among other charges, and received a \$50,000 cash-only bond from Mesa County Court last week.

He was allegedly involved in a robbery that occurred in Mesa County on Monday morning.

According to the arrest affidavit, a man reported to police that he went to a Mesa County gas station about 1 a.m. Monday as a normal patron.

He started to talk with the person working at the register and thought something was wrong because she was crying and visibly shaking. The store employee told him he needed to leave. After he left the store, he saw a man wearing a mask and dark clothing inside the store who appeared to be holding a gun.

He reported all this to police who ultimately found the vehicle and arrested Chatman after he crashed and fled on foot, the affidavit said.

In a conversation with the gas station employee, she reported to police that Chatman approached her as she was having a cigarette outside that night.

He told her to get behind the store's register and then "cocked the shotgun" and told her not to call anybody before taking several cigarettes, lottery tickets and a bag of cash, the affidavit said.

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