

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Observe and analyze historical photographs
- Predict future events based on historical photographs
- Pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical photographs
- Compare and contrast life in the Grand Valley in the past with life today

**Connection to Colorado Social Studies Standards:**

- 2nd grade: 1.1.a, 1.1.b, 1.1.e, 1.2.b, 1.2.c, 1.2.e
- 3rd grade: 1.1.b, 1.2.a, 1.2.b
- 4th grade: 1.1.a, 1.2.d

**Materials:** Historic photographs, historical photograph observation tool, magnifying glass, excerpt from *An Early History of Public Education in the Grand Valley*

**Time:** 1 class period

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## Background

### Grand Junction in the 1880s

On Sept. 26, 1881 the Grand Junction town site was selected, and stockholders then established the Grand Junction Town and Improvement Company. They owned the land and were distinct from the town government. They surveyed streets and lots, promoted sales of the land they owned, and encouraged settlement. The town occupied a square mile, spanning from 1st to 12th Streets, and from North to South Avenues. George A. Crawford (1827-1891) headed the Town Company and is considered “the father of Grand Junction.” A skilled entrepreneur, he also founded two other cities, Ft. Scott, Kansas, and Delta, Colorado. Elected governor of Kansas in 1861 in an election invalidated on technicalities, he did not serve. However, he usually was known as “Governor” Crawford.

Literary societies, churches, lodges, bands and orchestras, and plays and musicals soon flourished. The frontier town began to be polished. Schools were a major factor as music, art and drama were taught in addition to the three R’s. Schooling for the children was an early priority. Nannie Blaine Underhill was the first teacher. The first school, a crude cabin of upright cotton wood logs, soon was replaced by a better building of local brick.

For more information Grand Junction or information about Fruita and Palisade, see *History of the Grand Valley* <https://museumofwesternco.com/learn/history-of-grand-valley/>

## Suggested Procedure:

1. Explain that the class is going to use photographs to “investigate” what life was like in the Grand Valley when it was a frontier.
2. Model how to examine the historic photographs using photos attached to this lesson historic photograph of school children from Palisade in a one room school house. (Note: you should hide the captions from students until they have finished thier analysis)
3. Ask the class to study the photograph and together they complete a simple inquiry process using the following key questions:
  - a. Are there any buildings in the photograph?
  - b. Are there people in the photograph?
  - c. Can you see the outdoors - If so, what do you notice about the landscape?
  - d. What else do you see in the photograph?
  - e. What does this scene tell us about the early settlement of the Grand Valley?
  - f. What questions do you have about Frontier Grand Valley?
4. Record the answers and then reveals the story of the image to whole class.
5. Have students form small groups of four or five. Each group receives a photograph with the caption hidden. Students can use small magnifying glasses to get a closer look.
6. Students record their observations and evidence on their worksheets and write a caption for their photograph.
7. After, each group shares their observations and conclusions with the larger class. Students should be encouraged to ask questions of each other.
8. Next, have the students predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in their photograph. What will happen one hour after? Have students explain the reasoning behind their predictions.
9. Ask students:
  - a. How was life different in the Grand Valley in the past compared to today?
  - b. What things are the same?
10. Pose the question: How do historic sites, photos, and artifacts tell us what was valuable to people of the past?
  - » Students should suggest ways that these photographs help them understand what people of western Colorado valued.

**Extension:** Share with the class the excerpt from *An Early History of Public Education in the Grand Valley*. Show the students the first school in the Grand Valley. Have students write a story about what they think going to school would have been like back then.



# A HARSH LANDSCAPE

Grand Valley  
homestead  
land before  
the  
construction of  
the Highline  
Canal. 1910





# HOMESTEADERS

B.B. Freeman  
homestead  
near Grand  
Junction.  
Freeman and  
his family  
began living  
on the claim in  
1908, waiting  
until 1915 for  
irrigation  
water from the  
Highline Canal.  
Photograph:  
August  
21, 1913



# IRRIGATION 100 YEARS AGO

First irrigation  
of land under  
Highline  
Canal, near  
Loma, planted  
in oats. June,  
1917





# FIRST SETTLERS

Top photo: 1<sup>st</sup>  
cabin built in  
Grand  
Junction, at  
2<sup>nd</sup> and  
White, 1881.



Bottom photo:  
teacher and  
students in  
front of school  
house located  
near 4<sup>th</sup> and  
Main St.,  
1882.



# EARLY GRAND JUNCTION

Main Street  
view east  
from 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Street, 1885.





# CLASSROOMS

Mixed age  
students at  
Palisade  
school, 1900.



# AGRICULTURAL WAY OF LIFE

Fruit stand near Palisade, 1900. Fruit growers flocked to the Grand Valley for its fertile soils near the rivers and the long growing season.





# RAMBO HOMESTEAD

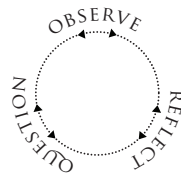
This cabin was built by William H. Rambo in 1903. His family homesteaded an area in current day Dominguez Canyon Wilderness Area. The homestead remains on the land today.





# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS



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Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

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### OBSERVE

#### Ask students to identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see. • What do you notice first? •  
What people and objects are shown? • How are they  
arranged? • What is the physical setting? • What, if  
any, words do you see? • What other details can you  
see?

### REFLECT

#### Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Why do you think this image was made? • What's  
happening in the image? • When do you think it  
was made? • Who do you think was the audience for  
this image? • What tools were used to create this? •  
What can you learn from examining this image? • If  
someone made this today, what would be different? •  
What would be the same?

### QUESTION

#### Invite students to ask questions that lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...  
who? • what? • when? • where? • why? • how?

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## FURTHER INVESTIGATION

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#### Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

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#### A few follow-up activity ideas:

##### Beginning

*Write a caption for the image.*

##### Intermediate

*Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after  
the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the  
reasoning behind your predictions.*

##### Advanced

*Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed  
explanations of history based on images they study.*

*For more tips on using primary  
sources, go to*

**<http://www.loc.gov.teachers>**

# **In the Beginning . . .**

## **A History of the Districts and Schools that became Mesa County Valley School District Number 51 1881-1951**



### **An Early History Of Public Education in the Grand Valley**

#### **Volume One, Reorganization**

**Researched, Written, and Compiled by  
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## **In the Beginning ...**

This volume holds a condensed history of the independent schools and districts that existed before 1951 when School District 51 was established, covering the 70 years that chronicle the foundation of the educational system that is now Mesa County Valley School District 51.

From the first one-room, stick and mud school house in Grand Junction to the reorganization that took place in 1951, you will see that educating the youngsters in our valley was a major force in the lives of the earliest pioneers, when times were harder and luxuries were few.

From that first one-room school house, the district has grown to 39 schools, nearly 20,000 students, 2,665 employees and is now the 10th largest in the state. We continue to offer a sound PreK-12 education for the students in our care and are moving forward with the credo of continuous improvement, which really isn't that different from what our forebears wanted for their children. Our valley continues to value quality education for its youth, just as it did 120 years ago when Governor Grant appointed Dr. H. E. Stroud as our first Superintendent of Schools.

Today, in August 2001, we celebrate the founding of School District 51. We invite you to revisit those early days and reflect upon the progress that has brought us to this day and to anticipate an even brighter future in the years to come.

Julie Heacock  
Communication Services Coordinator  
Mesa County Valley School District 51

## 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.

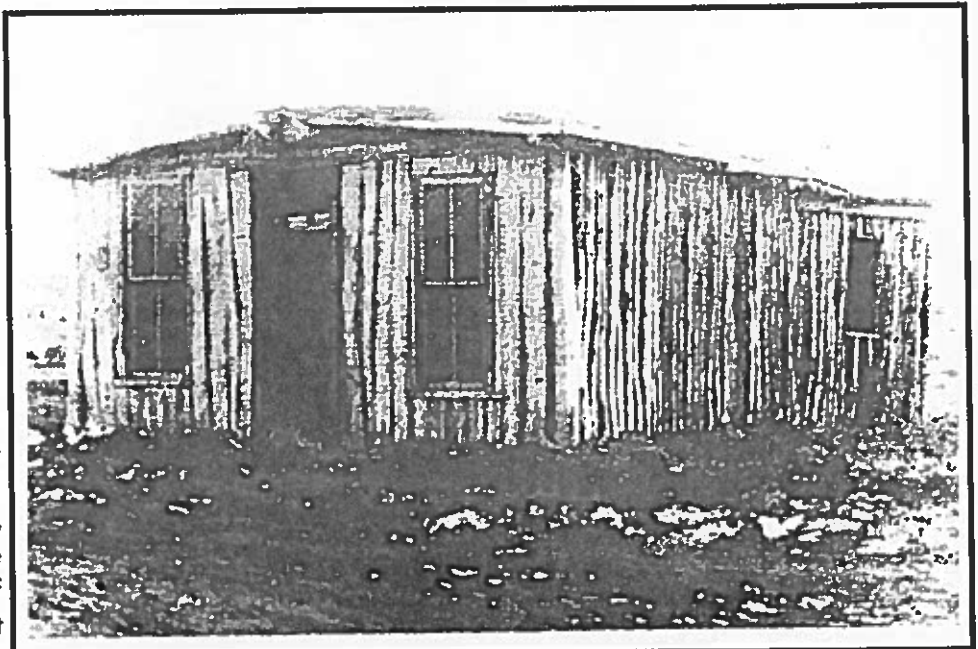
In 1882 the buildings along Colorado Avenue in Grand Junction were Dr. Stroud's office, the barber shop, meat market, a combination bakery and restaurant, two stores, seven saloons, and one hotel with two rooms.

### 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.

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 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)*

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.