

THE FRUIT  
BELT OF

MESA  
COUNTY

WESTERN  
COLORADO.





AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT

OF THE RESOURCES OF

# MESA COUNTY, COLORADO

And the Advantages and Opportunities it has  
to offer

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Issued under the Direction of  
and Approved by

The Board of County Commissioners for Mesa County,  
and the Board of Aldermen  
of the

CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

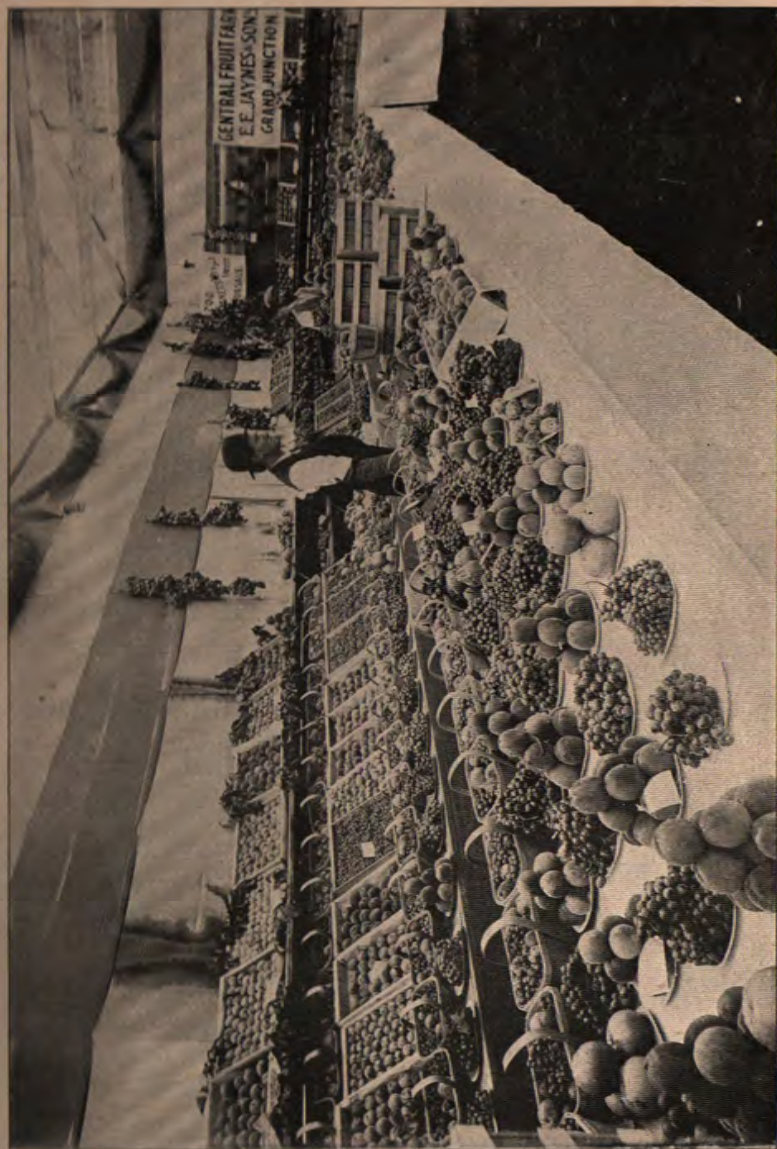
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Prepared by

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Commissioner of Immigration for Mesa County,  
Colorado





A SECTION IN PEACH DAY PAVILION—September 8, 1897.

# The Fruit Belt of Mesa County, Western Colorado.

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## HISTORICAL

In the autumn of 1881, when the Ute Indians were removed from Western Colorado to the reservation in Utah, all that vast territory hitherto occupied by them was a veritable unknown land to the people of the State at large, although Hayden had made his valuable and comprehensive report upon the district to the Government at Washington.

Excepting a few adventurous trappers and hunters and a handful of hardy prospectors in search of gold or silver, few white men had beheld the broad, warm, fertile valleys of the Western Slope, with their mighty rivers, myriad lesser streams and broad mesas, and there were few who dreamed of the inexhaustible riches of the adjacent mountains with their treasures of gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, coal, petroleum, asphaltum, marble and stone.

At the heels of the retreating column of Indians, with their attendant escort of soldiers, came the vanguard of an ever-increasing host of pioneers, to take possession, in the name of the people of this new Canaan, this Empire which had been added to the available wealth of the Nation.

Cities and towns were planted along the rivers; vast droves of cattle, horses and sheep were driven to the rich pasture lands of the upper mesas; farms were preempted and irrigation works begun, while on every hand, churches and school houses—always the first fruits of western endeavor—went up side by side and the broad foundations of a complex social fabric were firmly established in law and order.

At the time of the advent of the settlers, this whole region was a desert of deserts, locked in the sterile embraces of rocked-ribbed mountains.

Grand Valley, now a scene of prodigal fertility, was an arid, wind-swept, sun-baked, sage brush wilderness, but its deep, rich, fruitful soil held the germs which were to clothe its mesas with orchards and vineyards, embroider its hills with gardens and enamel its wide plains with fields of alfalfa and waving golden grain.

In 1882 the railroad penetrated the mountains from the East, reached Grand Valley and took its way across the still vaster desert on the West towards the shores of the Great Salt Lake.

With the increased accessibility afforded by railroad communication, the tide of immigration swelled higher, communities grew in wealth and numbers, improvements of all kinds took on a substantial character, larger and more comprehensive irrigation systems succeeded the earlier makeshifts, and in 1886, only five years after the first location in the valley, the Grand Valley Canal had reclaimed 40,000 acres of the desert, which, when watered, proved to be as fertile as the famous delta of the Nile.

Not only in the principal and immediate valley of the Grand which lies about Grand Junction was this work of reclamation, civilization and improvement going on, but in all the lesser valleys, tributary to the Grand, the same forces were operative, until now, throughout the entire extent of Mesa County, with its 1800 square miles of territory, hamlets and towns are scattered, each the center of rich irrigated sections and supporting schools, churches, stores and the various activities of rural life.

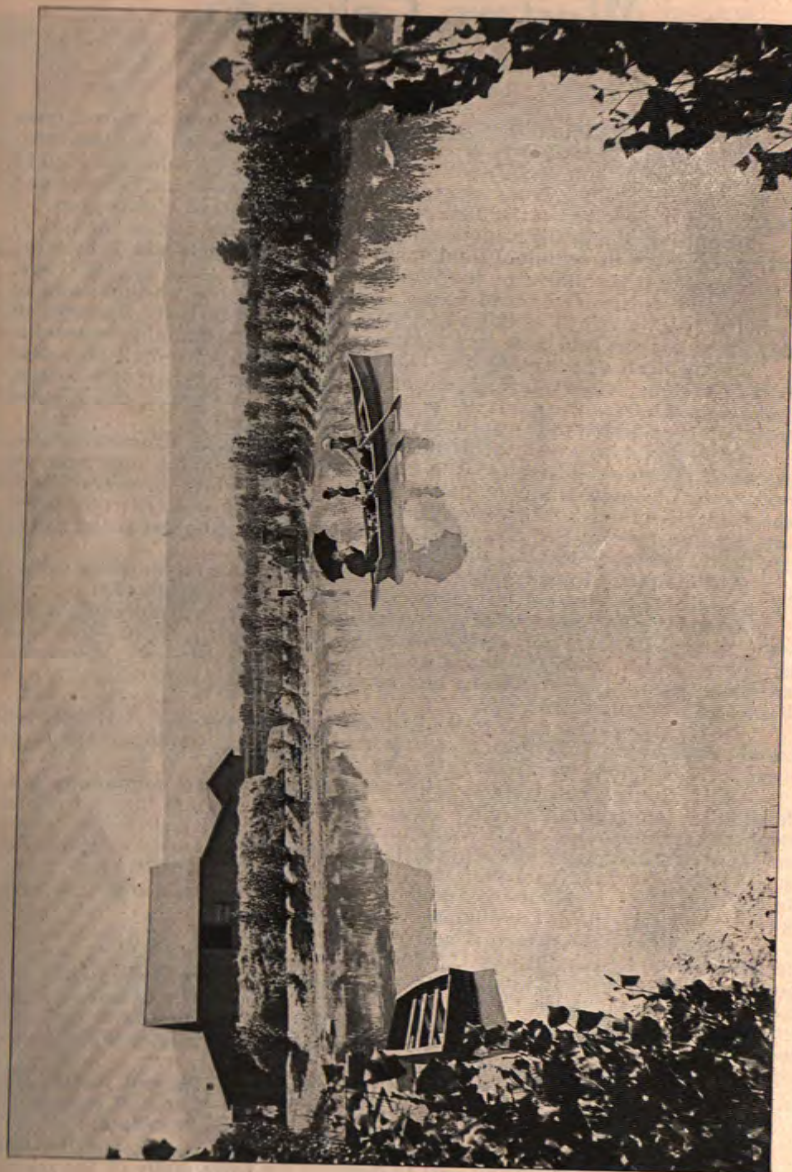
## TYPOGRAPHY OF GRAND VALLEY

Before telling our readers of the achievements and possibilities of Grand Valley; of its settlement, development and growth; its unrivalled climate, fertile fields and fruitful orchards; its rich pasture lands, forests, lakes, rivers, brooks and happy hunting grounds, it will be well to describe the topography of the region so that with the aid of the accompanying illustrations some conception can be formed by the stranger of the general characteristics of the region.

To begin with, the name "Grand Valley" is applied distinctively to that portion of the valleys of the Grand and Gunnison Rivers which is tribu-



EASTMAN PARK  
A Home near Fruita, Grand Valley



tary and adjacent to the city of Grand Junction. This territory stretches from Grand Junction 15 miles east, 20 miles south, 25 miles west and 10 miles north. Throughout its length of 40 miles from east to west, flows the Grand, the largest river in Colorado, which is joined from the south by the Gunnison river. At the confluence of these two rivers is built the city of Grand Junction.

The south bank of the Grand is a precipitous cliff 100 feet and more in height, while on the north side the country slopes down by a very gentle grade to the water's edge, from the line of high cliffs, which, throughout its entire length, bounds the valley on the north.

On the north side of the river, therefore, lies the great body of land in Grand Valley available for cultivation and irrigation, having a warm, sunny, southern exposure and containing about 140,000 acres.

At the upper or eastern end of the valley, 15 miles from Grand Junction, where the river issues from the mountains, the valley is very narrow, being only a half a mile or so wide, but from this point the cliffs which bound it on the north, called the Book Cliffs, begin to diverge from the river and the valley grows steadily wider towards the west. In fact, the valley is like a long, narrow wedge, with its point to the east.

The altitude of Grand Junction is 4500 feet above sea level. The Book Cliffs have an altitude of 7000 feet, rise very precipitously from the plain, are indented with rugged cañons and very picturesque. They form a veritable wall on the north and stretching away to the northwest they fade from the sight by imperceptible degrees, and are lost in the remote distance.

The dominant note in the whole landscape is the Grand Mesa. At the point of the wedge, on the south side of the river, it rears its magnificent walls well nigh perpendicularly to an altitude of 10500 feet, and extends from the east, thirty miles to the south-east.

Mesa is a Spanish word meaning table. The Grand Mesa then, is a table-land. Its lower slopes and shoulders are green with a forest of piñon and cedars, and its upper slopes are covered with luxuriant herbage and patches of oak brush. It is crowned by a perpendicular cliff 300 feet and more in height, which renders the top inaccessible throughout the entire extent of 30 miles, excepting at one point.

On top and under the rim rocks are hundreds of beautiful lakes filled with trout.

Down its steep sides, Plateau, Whitewater and Kannah Creeks come tumbling to the lower valleys and here, within a few hours drive of the city, is fine sport for the angler. On top, the surface is gently undulating, with great parks waist deep in grass and flowers. Within the cool, dark recesses of its forests of spruce, balsam and aspen, lurk cinnamon bears and mountain lions, while stately elk and graceful deer here seek refuge from the noon-day sun. This is a paradise for the devotees of rod and gun, and not the least of its attractions are the flocks of grouse which hide upon the hillsides.

One hundred miles to the south rise the snow-capped peaks of the Silver San Juan, while to the south-west of the valley rises Piñon Mesa, not unlike the Grand Mesa in general characteristics, but not so abrupt.

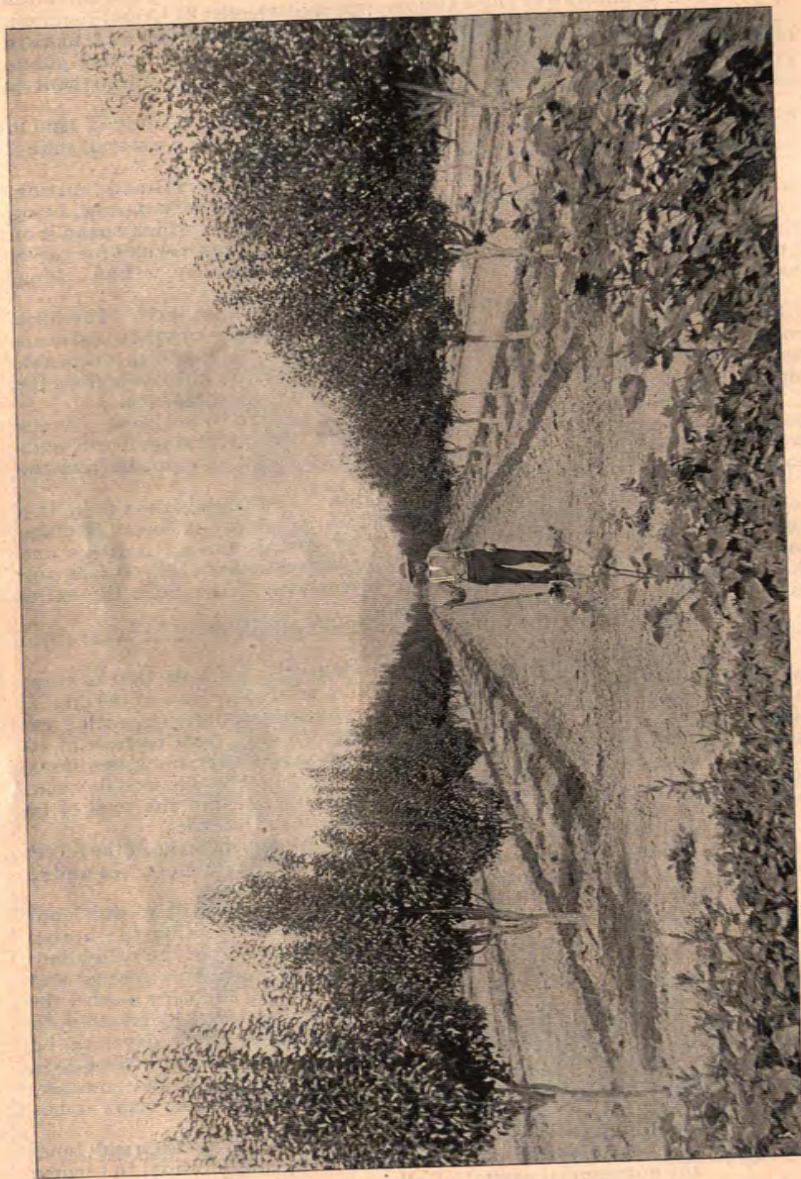
In the higher regions, resorts and camps have been built to which our people who can get away, go for change and recreation during the heated term, and only a few hours drive is required to take one from the valley into a seemingly different world, of forests and streams, mountain springs and grass and flowers, and where blankets and plenty of them are needed for comfort every summer night. Invalids here find renewed health and strength amid scenes of wild and picturesque beauty, for nearly every day may be passed out of doors in that exhilarating atmosphere for which Colorado is world-famous. Grand Valley is a natural sanitarium, winter and summer, besides possessing exceptional opportunities for those who wish to make homes and acquire a competence.

#### RAILROADS

The Metropolis of Grand Valley is the county seat, Grand Junction, which is destined from its advantageous location, to become the commercial capital of all western Colorado, the chief city between Denver and Salt Lake and the most important smelting point west of Pueblo, as well as the site of canning and beet sugar factories and pickling, preserving and bottling works of all kinds.

Until flying machines shall supercede railways and so long as travel and transportation are bound to the earth by rails of steel, so long must trans-





FOUR-YEAR-OLD ORCHARD, THREE MILES FROM GRAND JUNCTION  
The furrows for irrigation are shown on either side of the tree rows

continental lines of travel through mountain regions follow the watercourses which have hewn broad roads through mighty barriers, and great cities can be built only at the confluence of converging channels of communication, trade and travel. Scrutiny of the maps of Colorado discloses the fact that Grand Junction, situated at the confluence of the Grand and Gunnison rivers, in the midst of the most considerable, the most fertile and the best watered valley of the state, is also the junction and the terminus respectively of trans-continental and inter-mountain lines of railway. It is the western gateway of Colorado.

It will also be seen that the railroads can no more help coming to Grand Junction than water can help running down hill when given the opportunity. It is the topography of the country which compels them and the Grand and Gunnison rivers furnish the easiest and most direct routes between the East and West across the State of Colorado. This fact is so generally recognized that not only are the only through lines in Colorado built through Grand Valley, but over twenty other railway companies have filed their papers with the County Clerk of Mesa County. At present, three lines of railway from the East converge at Grand Junction, making through connections with the Rio Grande Western for Pacific coast points.

A local coal road, twelve miles in length, also has its terminus in the town.

### SMELTERS

The prospective importance of Grand Junction as a smelting point is recognized by all who have given the matter intelligent consideration. Up the Grand and Gunnison rivers, within 150 miles of Grand Junction, are numerous camps with a large and varied output of ore, which is hauled east across the mountains for treatment at great expense, when it could be sent to Grand Junction for reduction much more cheaply, while thousands of tons of ore, from far western points, pass yearly through Grand Junction, on the way to eastern smelters.

It is stated upon competent authority that Grand Junction is the best unoccupied point for smelting in the state, and it is believed that with the great revival of interest in mining and its allied industries now shown in all directions, a smelter of large capacity will be built at this point.

### SUGAR BEETS AND BEET SUGAR

During the two years that the sugar bounty law was in force, earnest and thorough investigation was made of the possibilities of beet sugar production in Grand Valley. Several car load lots of beets were shipped to the factory at Lehi, Utah, and the results of the tests were all that could have been hoped for, as the beets returned a very high percentage of saccharine with a high co-efficient of purity. This latter is as necessary as is the former.

With the adoption of protection methods in national affairs, it is believed that interest in beet culture and the manufacture of sugar from beets will be revived, and if it shall prove so, every effort should be made to secure a factory for Grand Valley.

There is no question of the suitability of the sugar beet to the soil and climate of Grand Valley. It is doubtful if the sugar beet can be produced to better advantage in any other locality of the United States. Beets grown by our farmers in car load lots, were paid for at the factory upon a basis of 14° to 16° saccharine with a co-efficient of purity of 82°, while lesser lots ran as high as 18° saccharine with a co-efficient of purity of 85°.

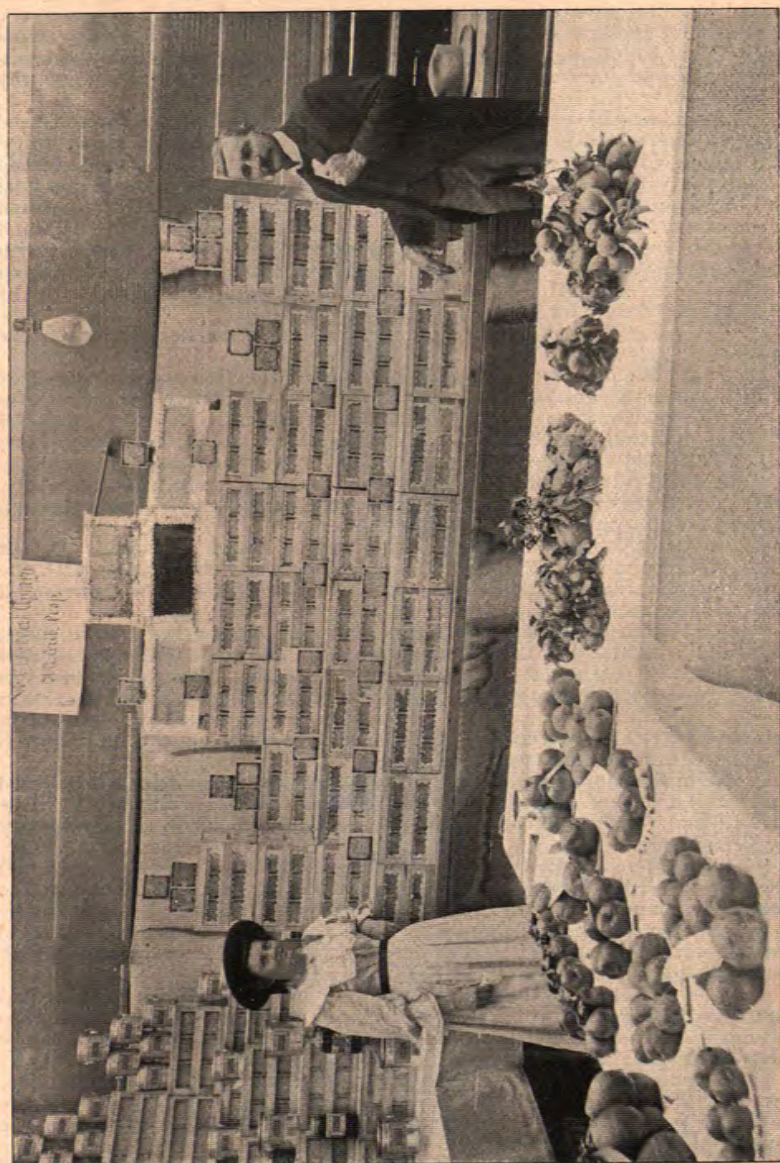
Grand Valley has thousands of acres of suitable soil with an unlimited and never failing supply of water for irrigation, precluding any possible crop failure, while the sub-division of the valley into small holdings insures the necessary population for intense farming.

If the people of Mesa County make no effort in any other direction, they should work incessantly to bring the exceptional opportunities for the profitable prosecution of this industry, which Grand Valley affords, to the immediate attention of capital.

### COAL

The mountains which bound Grand Valley on the north and east are underlaid with beds of superior bituminous coal. The veins out-crop in the sides of the cañons and are everywhere easily accessible to wagons. Coal is delivered in Grand Junction at prices ranging from two to three dollars a ton, while the farmers obtain their supply of coal at the pits for one dollar a ton.





AN EXHIBIT OF HONEY IN PEACH DAY PAVILION—September 8, 1897.

Farmers in the Dakotas, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Kansas will realize what dollar coal means.

There is no need of burning straw or corn in Grand Valley. Many farmers have located claims and engage in the industry of coal mining during the winter months. Any one who chooses to pay the government price may own a mine, for these veins out-crop for 150 miles. Here is a resource so vast that it is beyond the possible control of capital, and fuel must always be cheap in Grand Valley.

### IRRIGATION AND WATER POWER

In Grand Valley the principal water supply for irrigation comes from the Grand River, which has its rise among the mountains of the main range of the Rockies. In those high altitudes the snows of winter never fail and in summer the sun unlocks their crystal bounty and sends it whirling and dashing through dark cañons on its mission of life to the fruitful plains below. At the point where it issues from the cañons, fifteen miles above Grand Junction, the Grand River has a flow of 16,500 cubic feet of water per second, which is sufficient to irrigate more than one million acres of land.

The total body of land available for irrigation from Grand River does not exceed 160,000 acres. The water supply is thus seen to be more than six times greater than is necessary. No other section of the arid region has so nearly an unlimited supply of water for irrigation as this.

*Ample water means certain crops.*—This fact cannot be too constantly borne in mind by those unacquainted with irrigation. A failure of farm crops has never been known in Grand Valley and never can be. The principal ditch is the Grand Valley Canal, which is owned and operated by the farmers living under it. It covers 40,000 acres of land and furnishes, not only ample and certain water, but also the cheapest water in the state, the total yearly expense being about 60 cents an acre.

The lesser, outlying valleys, tributary to the Grand, are watered by the streams which respectively flow through them, and, in the aggregate, they cover a larger acreage than the Grand Valley proper. These valleys, in the order of their importance, are as follows: Plateau, Roan Creek, Blue Stone, Whitewater and Kannah Creek, and of these we shall have more to say further on.

On the south side of the Grand River are several pumping plants which are operated by water power taken from the Grand River, which satisfactorily irrigate considerable bodies of land which are planted to the finest orchards. The lands irrigated by pumping plants lie at elevations ranging from 50 to 150 feet above the river, and can be watered in no other way. The most important of these pumping plants is that of the Mt. Lincoln Land and Water Company, located at the mouth of the cañon, fifteen miles above Grand Junction. These pumps are driven by turbine wheels, and supply water for 8,000 acres of land. The power furnished at this and other stations is capable of almost unlimited extension and is more than sufficient to furnish light and power in excess of any possible demand.

### TOWNS OF MESA COUNTY

The towns of Mesa County are Grand Junction, De Beque, Fruita, Palisades and Whitewater. Grand Junction has a population of 4,500. De Beque, a thrifty town 35 miles east of Grand Junction, at the mouth of Roan Creek, has a population of 400. Fruita, which is 11 miles west of Grand Junction, contains 400 people. Palisades, located 12 miles east of Grand Junction, has a population of 200, while Whitewater, situated upon the Gunnison River 12 miles south from Grand Junction and surrounded by orchards, is the shipping and trading point for an extensive farming and cattle country.

### ORCHARDS AND VINEYARDS

The chief industry of Grand Valley to-day, and the one which will contribute most to the wealth of this section, is fruit growing. This valley has the lowest altitude of any in the State, being only 4,500 feet. Shielded as it is by mountains on all sides, it is protected from severe cold and frosts, and the fruit crop has so far proved more certain than in other localities.

The superior excellence of the fruit grown in this valley has been proven by competition with the rest of the State and with the adjacent States. Whenever exhibited or placed on the market for sale, admiration is universally expressed for its great beauty of color, its size and flavor. Grand Valley excels New Jersey for peaches, New York for apples and Ohio for grapes.





BARNYARD AT INDIAN SCHOOL—TELLER INSTITUTE

The growing importance of this industry is best illustrated by the enormous increase of the crop since 1892, when the total product was 20 car loads worth \$10,000, while the crop for 1897 will be fully 1,000 car loads worth \$400,000 net at the orchards. The crop for 1900 is estimated at 2,000 car loads. This seems to be a large amount of fruit, and over production is feared by some who have not carefully examined the matter; but when it is remembered that Colorado has not yet produced 15 per cent. of the fruit it consumes, and that the total orchard and vineyard product of California for 1895 amounted to 43,763 car loads and did not equal the demand, it may reasonably be questioned whether the few handfuls of earth in the valleys of Colorado which are adapted to fruit culture will ever be able to supply the growing needs of a constantly increasing population in this State alone.

It must never be forgotten that land that is adapted to the production of superior fruit is very limited in area throughout the whole country. The fruits principally grown are apples, peaches, pears, plums, prunes, apricots and cherries. The finest varieties of European grapes, such as the Black Hamburg, Flame Tokay, Zinfandel, Sultana, Muscat and Malaga grow to perfection in the open, and this is the only valley in the State where it is possible to grow them at all. Small fruits of all kinds, berries and vegetables, do exceedingly well, and the profits of fruit farming are from \$200 to \$500 an acre. Land which will return such profits, or even much smaller profits, is intrinsically valuable. The past six years have been years of experiment and demonstration. Experience has shown that this is perhaps the most certain locality in the whole country for fruit growing.

The record for Florida is nine disastrous freezes since 1870, an average of one in every three years, yet no one doubts that Florida is a great fruit section.

Every year from some district in California, and often from the entire state comes the report of loss of crop from frost, and when we compare the record of Grand Valley, with its eight years of full crops and only one year of failure, we feel warranted in the assertion that nowhere in the whole country can be found so sure a fruit section as Grand Valley. The prices of land in this valley, as compared with any similarly fortunate locality, are very low, because the experimental stage has only just been passed, but prices here will very rapidly reach those obtainable elsewhere, and land will sell freely at four times the present figures.

The climate of Grand Valley can hardly be improved upon. More than 300 days of perfect sunshine annually and the dryness of the atmosphere make it a natural sanitarium especially suited to those who suffer from weak lungs or asthmatic troubles.

Combined with its salubrity are opportunities for profitable employment. Many who are unable to undergo the fatigue and confinement incident upon other pursuits and who feel condemned against their inclination to a life of helplessness, find a channel for activity in fruit growing. The work of tending vines and trees is light, and, being a business followed wholly in the open air, it is especially adapted to many who are in poor health, and will furnish a comfortable living to those who would otherwise be dependent. On another page we give a few instances of what has been done on small tracts in Grand Valley, and could fill pages if space permitted. Any intelligent, industrious family can make a handsome living from ten acres in Grand Valley, while twenty acres means a college education for the boys and girls and an ample competence for old age.

#### FARMING EAST AND WEST

While Mesa County offers a greater opportunity to those who shall make fruit culture rather than general farming their specialty, yet it is recognized that there are many who have been farmers all their lives who look upon a dependence in horticulture as a departure from safe lines, and who will not be persuaded to abandon general farming.

A comparison of the facts and figures which follow with the facts and figures of the Missouri Valley States will convince any one of the superior advantages which Mesa County has to offer under irrigation over any of the states which depend upon rainfall for a harvest.

Wheat commonly yields 30 bushels, and often as high as 50 bushels to the acre, and sells at an average price of 70 cents a bushel, or from \$21.00 to \$35.00 per acre. It practically costs the same to produce it in Mesa County that it does in Iowa or Minnesota, excepting the two items of cost of water for irriga-