

## *Lincoln Park campground drew auto travelers in '20s, '30s*



*Lincoln Park Tourist Camp office. The city campgrounds sponsored thousands of travelers a day. Loyd Files Research Library Museum of Western Colorado photo*

By Kathy Jordan

When I think of campgrounds, the idea of one being located in a city park had never popped into my head. So I was intrigued when Marie Tipping gave me a copy of a story about the campgrounds at Lincoln Park, which ran in *The Daily Sentinel* in November 1925.

From the newspaper account, the campground had been very popular with more than 7,000 people, representing every state in the union along with Canada and Mexico, between April 1 and Nov. 20, 1925. The city charged 25 cents a car per night and made more than \$700 during that time period.

In 1923, more than 3,000 tourists stayed at the campground, and in 1924 there were more than 4,000 visitors. The 7,000 visitors in 1925 made it clear that Western Colorado was a tourist draw.

June, July and August were busy months for the campgrounds, with a total of 2,157 registered vehicles in 1925.

These figures made it apparent that the campgrounds located in the southwest corner of Lincoln Park had outgrown that space. City leaders knew that if Grand Junction wanted to continue to be a tourist draw, a new park with better facilities must be built.

The new location was situated about where the first hole of the Lincoln Park Golf Course is. Plenty of shade trees were planted, and a new building with showers and toilets was built. The park also housed a clothes-washing room, a large kitchen, a rest and reading room.

The 25-cent-per-day fee took care of the costs for relocating the campground and constructing the new facilities, according to the City of Grand Junction's 1925 year-end review.

City officials' philosophy became that, with the best-equipped campground on the Western Slope, Grand Junction should continue to experience a large influx of tourists for years to come, and the money they brought with them would be welcome to the city coffers.

After all, Grand Junction had the ideal location to reap benefits of tourists travel. It was a great oasis for those traveling east or west across barren land in the 1920s and 1930s, when a day's automobile trip was from Denver or Salt Lake City to Grand Junction. By building larger campground facilities, people would not be able to pass through Grand Junction without stopping for a night or two at a cool shaded campground with a new swimming pool a short walk from the camp.

The Chamber of Commerce played a large role in getting the word out about Grand Junction's wonderful tourist campground with a wide-reaching advertising campaign which was said to be largely responsible for the big gain in visitors. The Chamber pledged to enlarge the advertising campaign in 1925, saying that that would assure the city of a heavy tourist business.

Another ace that the community had up its sleeve was the new Panoramic Highway over Grand Mesa. It was to open in summer 1925 and would no doubt attract visitors from all over the United States and border countries.

Business people in Grand Junction soon realized there was money to be made from tourists. .

Nicholas Genova told me that his great-aunt, Olive Blackburn, had told him of a tourist cottage camp located on North 16<sup>th</sup> Street between Gunnison and Chipeta Aves., almost directly across from the tourist camp owned by the city. This campground operated from the late 1920s until 1944, when it was closed as construction began on homes in Slocomb's addition, which lies between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets, North and Grand Avenues.

According to the Polk City Directory, the tourist cottage camp had several names.

In 1928 it was called the Claremont Tourist Cottages. By 1935 it was listed as the FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Administration) Family Camp, a program developed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the depression. In "The Hungry Years A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America", Author T.H. Watkins wrote that FERA officials were forced to move the Grand Junction camp when Fourth District Congressman Edward T. Taylor insisted that its occupants "a nuisance and flagrant lot had offered an awful spectacle of debauchery adjoining the homes of a great many respectable people and women and children." There was no mention where the people in the camp were moved.

By 1939 the camp was called the Mesa View Tourist Camp, and in 1941, Singing Hills Tourist Camp. By 1946 it was no longer listed.

No doubt the heyday of tourists camps and cottages came to an end when motels began sprouting up featuring a private bath with each room.