

STATE OF THE UNION DEPOT

EDITION #I

A PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF GJ UNION DEPOT

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GJ UNION DEPOT TO HOST ART EVENT

Preparations are underway for our annual celebration of National Train Day, which will take place on Saturday, May 11. This year, we're adding an artistic twist to the event. We are recruiting local artists to paint murals that encapsulate life in the Grand Valley. These artists will paint murals on plywood boards live during the event. Once completed, these murals will be placed in the windows of the depot. This will allow us to protect the depot while the windows are removed and restored, while simultaneously showcasing the creativity of our local artists.

We are excited to connect our art community with the depot's heritage. If you or someone you know would like to participate in the event, please visit us at friendsofgjuniondepot.org.

Additionally, if you are interested in volunteering the day of the event, please send us an email at friends@friendsofgjuniondepot.org

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FROM THE TICKET OFFICE

AN UPDATE FROM THE OWNERS

By Dustin Anzures and Veronica Sanchez

2023 was a pivotal year for the restoration effort of the GJ Union Depot. We are eternally grateful for our community's support and interest in this project. An unforeseen blessing of this project has been to meet and connect with so many other railroad families. The sharing of stories and photos has been emotional and very motivational at the same time. This past year also brought the formation of a nonprofit organization, the Friends of GJ Union Depot, which has nine volunteer board members and has grown its membership to nearly 200 supporters! Without all of you, we would not have the opportunities we have today. We have been able to form strong relationships with the Business Incubator, the Historic Preservation Board, the Museum of the West, Cross Orchards, Amtrak, History Colorado, the Grand Junction Economic Partnership, the Downtown Development Authority, CDOT, Visit Grand Junction, the Western Colorado Community Foundation, and our city council members and city staff. These municipal and community groups will be integral in reaching the finish line. Currently, we are targeting federal grants via the Federal Railroad Administration. These grants could provide significant funding, but will also take time to come to fruition. Your support as a member of the Friends plays a key role in these competitive grant applications. The FRA looks for projects that have a diverse cross section of support, especially for underserved rural communities such as ours. With you on board, we can't fail! From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for joining the cause during the Friends' first year of activity. If we didn't get to meet you at one of our events during the previous year, we certainly hope to chat with you at this year's celebration of National Train Day on May 11!

ANNUAL MEETING

The Friends of the Grand Junction Union Depot, Inc. will host its first annual meeting on June 15. At this meeting, voting members will have the opportunity to elect our board of directors and ratify amendments to our bylaws. After the meeting concludes, we hope to have a fun event of socializing and volunteering. More details about this meeting will follow.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Friends needs volunteers from all backgrounds, professions, and walks of life. If you have any interest in volunteering with the Friends, especially if you would like to help us with fundraising, grant writing, accounting, event planning, community engagement, social media, website management, photography, graphic design, business, artisanry, physical labor, or more, please send us an email at friends@friendsofgrandjunctiondepot.org.

SPREAD THE WORD

Community development projects, like the depot, cannot be completed without the support of members of the community like you. Please tell your friends about the Union Depot and let them know how they can become involved in restoring Grand Junction's most important building.

QUOTE

"There may have been a time when preservation was about saving an old building here or there, but those days are gone. Preservation is in the business of saving communities and the values they embody."

—Richard Moe



2023: A YEAR IN REVIEW

For years, a group of community members have met to discuss the future of Grand Junction's Union Depot and what it means for the Grand Valley. They considered themselves to be "friends of the depot," and all of them had the same dream of a revitalized train station that would be the center of Grand Junction's community. However, they knew that they would have to wait for the right time to see their dream come to fruition. It wasn't long before downtown's west end, an area once known as Little Italy, began to burgeon with new growth. They observed and eagerly anticipated what it could mean for their project. An exciting development came when the Colorado Department of Transportation announced its plans for a new mobility hub near the depot as part of its upgrades to the I-70 Business Loop. The Friends considered how CDOT's project would be compatible with an operational Union Depot.

In 2022, the Friends decided that the time was right to throw their weight behind the project. The world was coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the community was eager to begin anew. The aged building had languished for years, but the Grand Valley was finally ready to see what the Union Depot could become. In early 2023, the Friends incorporated themselves into a nonprofit, called the "Friends of the Grand Junction Union Depot," with five founding directors. They sought others who would support their aspirations and found steadfast allies in organizations across the valley.

With help from members of the Territorial Daughters of Colorado, National Railway Historical Society, and the Grand Valley Model Railroad Club, the Friends partnered with the depot's owners and hosted their first event celebrating National Train Day in May. It was a resounding success. Visitors were given the special opportunity to view parts of the depot's interior for the first time since 2015. Historic information displays allowed them to learn more about Grand Junction's history. On the patio, Peer 180 RCO, a local recovery

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2023: A YEAR IN REVIEW CONT'D

community organization, provided food and drinks. In the baggage wing, visitors had a chance to meet the depot's owners, speak with CDOT representatives about development plans for the city, see a model train layout from the Grand Valley Model Railroad Club, and learn about the importance of preserving Colorado's endangered structures from Colorado Preservation, Inc.'s Endangered Places Program director. Additionally, visitors and members of the Friends were given the opportunity to sponsor the restoration of a window at the depot in exchange for a personalized plaque that would be installed once construction was complete. By the end of the event, nearly 140 people had become members of the Friends and half a dozen windows had been sponsored.

Following National Train Day, support for the Friends continued to rise, and the board of directors and other volunteers continued working to build relationships and garner support and funding for the Union Depot. They soon began planning their next event.

With support from the Rio Grande Federal Credit Union, A Robin's Nest of Antiques & Treasures, and the Testicular Cancer Awareness Foundation, the Friends hosted its inaugural history talk at the depot in October. First, attendees were treated to a performance by the Canyon Grand Barbershop Quartet, followed by updates from depot co-owner Dustin Anzures and the Friends of GJ Union Depot board chair Bill Wade. Presenter Michael Nuttall then provided a detailed account of the history of railroads in the Grand Valley. He began with Grand Junction's founding in 1881 and traced the depot's history through the centuries to the present day. Afterwards, event attendees participated in a silent auction and placed their bids on railroad memorabilia, jewelry, guitars, and other items.

In December, a new mural depicting a history of the railroad companies that operated in the Grand Valley was unveiled at the depot. The mural welcomes rail passengers and advertises the Friends to passing travelers.

Throughout the year, the Friends enjoyed extensive coverage by the media. The depot was featured in various articles, news segments, and interviews produced by the Daily Sentinel, TV stations KKCO, KJCT, and KREX, Rocky Mountain PBS, KAFM Community Radio, and Spoke+Blossom Magazine. With each feature, awareness of the depot reached more members of the community.

The Friends of GJ Union Depot began as a small group of five people with a dream. Since then, the Friends has evolved into an organization with a nine-member volunteer board, over a dozen regular volunteers, and nearly two hundred members. None of what has been accomplished could have happened without your support. However, this is just beginning of our journey, and there is a lot more work to be done. Your continued support is integral to the success of our mission. Community development projects, such as the Avalon Theatre, Robinson Theatre, and the Lowell School cannot be completed without the support of the community. We thank you for your continued support as we enter another exciting new year.



Dustin Anzures introduces presenters at the history talk in October.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of the Grand Junction Union Depot, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation in Grand Junction, Colorado. Our mission is to support the preservation and rehabilitation of Grand Junction's historic Union Depot, built in 1906. We celebrate the history of the Union Depot through events, fundraisers and educational opportunities.

OUR BOARD

Bill Wade
Chair & Treasurer

Michael Nuttall
Vice-Chair

Samuel Baseler
Secretary

Bennett Boeschenstein

Rob von Gogh

Dave Woodward

Mary Brinton

JoAnn Sauvage

Julie Carlson



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Our beloved railroad families here in Grand Junction have produced another gem! John, Sharmin, Sara, and Mike Erskine shared this photo, dated July 13, 1973, of their dad/grandad Edgar Jerome “Jerry” Erskine working behind the ticket counter in the Union Depot. After serving during the Second World War, Jerry, also known as “EJ” or “Bus,” sought employment with the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in 1949. He worked for the D&RGW in Grand Junction for thirty years before finally retiring on December 31, 1979.

Over Jerry's right shoulder, you can catch a glimpse of the railroad's pneumatic tubes. Long before email or text messaging, these tubes were used to transport communications between the various offices and railroad buildings. We thank Jerry Erskine for his years of service, both to our country and our railroads.

Additionally, the Erskine's great uncle Charles Downing served with the Grand Junction Fire Department for over 30 years. On June 27, 1943, two railcars loaded with ammunition for the war effort caught fire and rained shells and debris over the west end of Grand Junction. Miraculously, no one was killed, but Fire Chief Charlie Downing was hit by flying shrapnel, resulting in an injury that required the amputation of his arm below the elbow. Despite his injury, he continued to serve as Grand Junction's Fire Chief for another decade before he finally retired in 1953.

We thank the Erskine family for meeting us at the depot and sharing their memories with us. If you are part of the railroad family tree here in Grand Junction, we would love to include your chapter in the story of railroads in the Grand Valley!

WINDOW RESTORATION BEGINS

The Union Depot has 54 windows in need of restorative work. To date, nine windows have been made available for sponsorship and all nine are spoken for!

Historic window restoration is an art and a science; it requires the right craftsman that possesses extreme attention to detail. GJ Union Depot has hired Dave Grossman, a local wood smith, who currently operates his shop at the Business Incubator Center in Orchard Mesa. Dave is a longtime resident of the Grand Valley and has invested decades into building up our community in meaningful ways. His company, Confluence Woodcraft, has begun the process of labeling, measuring, and documenting each window to ensure compliance with the standards for historic preservation set by the Secretary of the Interior.

Historic window restoration is labor intensive and has multiple steps which require wait times. Whether it be epoxy, glazing putty, or paint, we are often waiting for something to dry or cure before moving to the next step. Volunteers have also begun the tedious task of stripping centuries-old paint to reveal the original wood construction. The precision with which these windows were constructed 118 years ago is impressive. Window weights, pulleys, handles and other hardware have been removed and catalogued.

Quite often, historic windows are discarded in place of modern replacements. The current assessment is that all 54 windows can be saved, and that no replacements will be needed. The goal is to have two windows fully restored and reinstalled in time for National Train Day on May 11. Dave will be on site during the event and looks forward to answering your window restoration questions.





NEW MURAL UNVEILED AT DEPOT

We love the view as Amtrak and the Rocky Mountaineer come to a stop in front of our beloved train station, but we believed that visitors' introductions to Grand Junction could be just a little bit grander. Over the course of the summer and fall, the owners of the Union Depot secretly collaborated with GJ Creates and local spray paint artist Jeremy Velasquez to produce a mural depicting the California Zephyr and the history of railroads in Grand Junction. The brand new work of art was installed on the side of a shipping container at the depot and unveiled at an event in December. Event-goers enjoyed hot chocolate, tea, and coffee as they were treated to a first glimpse at the painting. Since then, rail passengers arriving in Grand Junction have been welcomed by a colorful mural proudly declaring that Grand Junction is a railroad town. We look forward to continuing the depot's artistic legacy through our art event for National Train Day on May 11.

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

Since Day One, the Friends has been blessed with an incredible group of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to bring this project to fruition. These individuals are essential to the completion of our mission. We cannot thank our volunteers enough for their service to our cause and our community.

SPONSORS

Thank you to our window sponsors who inspire us to keep going.

Lauren Heath

Suzannah Parker & Family

Vince & Leigh Felletter

John & Sharmin Erskine

Katherine Kylen

Christina & Bruce Woehl

John Ainslie

Territorial Daughters of Colorado

We couldn't do this without your support. Thank you! If you would also like to sponsor the Friends, please visit our website: friendsofgjuniondepot.org.

FRIENDS OF THE GRAND JUNCTION UNION DEPOT, INC.

PO Box 71, Grand Junction, CO 81502.

friendsofgjuniondepot.org

DONATE

Thank you for making a donation!

To donate to the Friends, please visit SaveThisDepot.org, or mail a donation. Please make checks payable to Friends of GJ Union Depot.

Additionally, you can sponsor the Friends by visiting our website: friendsofgjuniondepot.org

CONTACT US

Stay in touch by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Youtube](#) @friendsofgjuniondepot.

You can send us an email us at friends@friendsofgjuniondepot.org.

You can also contact the depot's co-owner Dustin Anzures by emailing dustin@gjuniondepot.com or calling (602) 509-9970.

MEMBERSHIP

Annual Membership is

- \$30 for Individuals, or
- \$50 for Households.

To renew your membership, please mail your dues to our mailing address, or visit our website: friendsofgjuniondepot.org

Please make checks payable to Friends of GJ Union Depot.