

Dave Fishell's Page

The mystery of the casket in the cave



of a little infant wrapped in layers of white cotton and linen. That's when they high-tailed it home."

After her three sons returned and told their tale, Barbara called the Mesa County Sheriff's Department. Eight cars and dozens of people responded to the call and accompanied Jay, Scott, Todd and Barbara back to the burial spot. The coffin and its contents were turned over to the county coroner, who later decided the tiny infant girl had probably died during birth. Experts at Martin's Mortuary said the coffin was of a style used between 1900 and 1920. Other than the words "Our Darling," there was no clue to who buried the baby, when or why.

Months passed. While the coffin remained at Martin's, local authorities and the Grandbouche family hoped someone would come forward with information about the baby.

No one did.

The Grandbouches eventually decided the baby needed another resting place. Barbara and her husband George, along with several friends, paid for a small burial plot in the Orchard Mesa Cemetery. Saylor Memorials donated an attractive stone inscribed with the words "Our Darling." The second burial took place in May, 1972.

Fifteen years have passed since the unusual discovery. The Grandbouche sons are adults now, some with children of their own. Yet Barbara still wonders why someone would bury and conceal their infant daughter in such an isolated spot.

"Maybe it was a pioneer family just passing through," said Barbara. "As a mother I think of how hard it would be to travel on and leave your baby behind. And I keep hoping that maybe someday we'll learn who the baby is, and what actually happened."

In the meantime, Barbara, and other Grand Junction residents who know the story of the casket from the cave, still leave flowers at the grave of "Our Darling."

(Dave Fishell is a well-known Grand Junction author and historian.)

This is the first in a series of Dave Fishell articles that will appear from time to time in *The Entertainer*. Fishell is a well-known authority on Western Colorado history whose stories and articles, as well as personal appearances and guided tours, have found a receptive audience.

When the three brothers left their Orchard Mesa home that chilly morning of Dec. 30, 1971, they hoped to uncover a few Indian arrowheads.

Instead, they uncovered a 60-year-old mystery still unsolved.

The 1971 elementary school Christmas vacation was coming to a close for Jay, Scott and Tod Grandbouche. And according to their mother Barbara "they were driving me crazy around the house. So I told them to go outside and go for a walk or something." The brothers took their mom's advice. They huddled up and grabbed some food. Then they started hiking across the barren desert towards the Gunnison River a short distance west of the Grandbouche home on 29th Road.

About noon, the boys walked over to a little cliffside opening (called a cave by some) to eat lunch. The opening was nothing more than a small hollowed out area carved into the cliff by wind and water. The boys had poked around in the opening before, but they had never found anything of note. This trip, however, would be different.

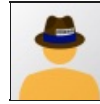
It was Jay, casually banging a rock on the bottom of the opening, who first heard the hollow echo. After scooping away a few inches of dirt off the floor, the boys discovered a large flat rock. After they lifted the rock out of the floor, they uncovered a wood box. With visions of buried treasure and missing outlaw loot dancing through their heads, six hands eagerly ripped open the stoutly-built container. Inside the plain wood box was an odd-shaped box pale white in color. A tiny silver pliers fastened to the top of the second box was inscribed with the words "Our Darling."

"They opened the lid," said Barbara. "And there was the mummified remains



Headstone of unknown baby found in a cave South-West of Whitewater in 1971.

unknown_infant_whitewater



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