

Manitou Springs School History

The first school in Manitou Springs dates to 1872. In 2022, Manitou Springs School District (MSSD) celebrated its 150-year anniversary. When the school district first started, students were called to school using a hand bell. The history of MSSD is rich and has always been supported by the City of Manitou Springs with the three pillars of the community being knowledge, character, and brotherhood.

The following history records were made possible by the Manitou Springs Heritage Center archives, the 1946 to 1974 scrapbook that was maintained by the acting superintendent at that time (W.W. Bundy), and various publications related to Ute Pass Elementary School (UPES). UPES is not in chronological order as the historical origin is separate from the initial beginning of Manitou Springs School District, which was founded in 1872. We wanted to capture the unique starts and eventual significant union of the two areas.

Manitou Springs, Colorado.

In 1874, the first school building was a one-room frame building shipped from Chicago and was assembled on the present site of the Barker House Hotel, which was once known as The Navajo Hotel. The school was in session for only three months, and it was used for only one term for students in 1st to 6th Grade.

That same year, a new frame building was assembled on the west side of the Mansions Hotel grounds. The school building was approximately the same size as the first school building, and the 14 X 20 lean-to was not adequate and only used for one term.

In 1875, the school opened on the second floor of a store building located on the corner of Manitou and Pawnee Avenue, which is currently the southeast corner of the Carnegie Public Library grounds. That same year, the students were dismissed so the students and faculty could have a chance to greet President Ulysses S. Grant as he came to visit the City of Manitou Springs. This school location was used for 3 years.

In 1878, a new building was constructed of white stone and was Manitou's first school building that was built specifically for the purpose of educating children. The one-room building was located on Ute Avenue, the present-day site of Manitou Springs Elementary School's parking lot/playground, which is now Duclo Avenue.



In 1886, the school enrollment continued to grow. To accommodate the increased enrollment, a one-room framed addition was built. It was during this time period that a nine-month school term was introduced.

In 1888, the community erected a six-room red stone school building immediately below the white stone and wood structure that was located on the west end of the lower property at 701 Ute Avenue (currently Duclo Avenue). The plan was quite modern and complete, serving a combined grade school and three years of high school. The 1st floor had three classrooms with the large high school classroom upstairs. This building also included Emerald Hall, which had a seating capacity of 300. More room was needed for the next few years, so a two-room structure was added to the red stone building. Prior to that addition, the students who were not accommodated in the school building were taught in the old Buffalo Saloon on the corner of Manitou and Ruxton Avenue. The first Manitou Springs High School graduate (Birdie Thronton) graduated in 1893.

In 1900, Manitou Springs High School was accredited by the University of Colorado. High school coursework included Algebra 1 and 2, Plane and Solid Geometry, Latin 1, Caesar and Cicero, English 10th Year, Political Economy as a Social Welfare Subject, German, Physics, Zoology, Chemistry, Botany, and Physical Geography.

In 1922, a new school building was needed as the area continued to experience growth. Plans were completed for a pressed brick building to supplant the old red brick school building. The new school building had 19 rooms plus a cooking room, a library, two restrooms, a manual training room, and a science room—all with thermostatic temperature control. It also had an auditorium that could be used for gym and for basketball games and 600 opera seats with a sloping floor. Emerald Hall was torn down after the new school building was completed. The building was the home of 1st to 12th Grade and the administration offices. A Kindergarten class was added in 1950 and held in the Carnegie Library building. This school building experienced significant renovations in 1952 and 1988. It eventually became solely Manitou Springs Elementary School in 2002 after the Administration Offices moved to the newly built Shared Integrated Learning Center, which is later described in more detail.

In 1956, the opening of Manitou Spring High School (at 405 El Monte Place; Manitou Springs, Colorado; 80829) was truly an exciting moment in the history of Manitou Springs School District. This new school building allowed 9th-12th grade students to have their own campus with a dedicated high school gymnasium. The school was renovated in 1975 to include the addition of a locker room, stage addition at the original gym, and new, much needed, gymnasium). There was another renovation in 1988 that included a new locker room, weight room, wrestling room, art and library addition, wood shop addition, and other renovations to interior and exterior spaces.

As enrollment continued to increase, in 1976, Manitou Springs Middle School was built at its current location (415 El Monte Place, Manitou Springs, Colorado; 80829), which included a gymnasium. This allowed the 6th-8th grade students to move from the school at 110 Pawnee Avenue to this new middle school campus. In 1988, there was a south addition (included a wood shop and classroom) and an east addition (included an art room). There were minor renovations in 2002.

In 2000, a new chapter was written in the history of Manitou Springs School District with the passage of a \$8.5 million voter-approved bond initiative, which provided much needed funds for improvements district-wide and the building of the Shared Integrated Learning Center (SILC) at 401 El Monte Place, Manitou Springs, Colorado 80829). This was under the

leadership of Dr. Nancy Wright (Superintendent). The SILC was designed to integrate the Manitou Springs Middle School's campus with Manitou Springs High School's campus. During this new build, the administration offices moved from Manitou Springs Elementary School to the first floor of the SILC. The SILC was finalized in 2002. The SILC continues to provide shared 6th-12th grade space for the Visual and Performing Arts.

Cascade, Green Mountain Falls, The Ute Pass Area

The following was adapted from "A History of Ute Pass School Districts" by Mary Ann Davis. In 1881, Eliza Hewlitt built the first school, a log cabin, in Cascade, Colorado. This was also the first building in Cascade Canon. The first teacher was Mrs. Anna Marie Rudy who went on to become a well-known teacher and principal in Colorado Springs. By 1887, Mrs. Rudy was teaching 25 children in ten grades in Cascade. In 1891, the school had moved to the Midland Railroad Eating House which was built across from the depot as a dining room and hotel for railroad passengers. Following this, a primitive, wooden, one-room schoolhouse was built on land given to the district for this purpose. Sometime before 1893, School District #43, for Green Mountain Falls, was incorporated. In 1937, the original wooden, one-room building was torn down to make way for a larger, stucco building. An addition to this building was made in 1951, This building is now the current home of the Ute Pass Library.

There was also a school in Green Mountain Falls during this time. The following is from "It Has Been - A History of Green Mountain Falls," by Dorothy Hart Conn and Betty Morrow. In 1889, the Green Mountain Falls Town and Improvement Co. voted to construct a school. What followed was a one-room, wooden structure that could only be "approached...after an excessively steep climb of three blocks. Nobody seemed to consider how difficult this trip would be for little legs. After the school was reached, however, the view was worth the effort of getting there."

Primitive at best, the school had scant playground equipment but did have a belfry (without a bell). "In 1919, it was decided that the location of the school building was too inaccessible.... So, the furniture, books and fixtures were packed and moved down in the valley."

After this, school was held in what had become the Town Hall. "This was a very fortunate arrangement for the pupils, because whenever there was an election or some other town activity necessitating the use of the hall, school was recessed for the day."

In August 1959, School District #43 was dissolved and incorporated into Manitou Springs School District 14.

In December 1965, the land for the new Ute Pass Elementary School was purchased from the Chipita Park Co. Oral histories indicate that upwards of \$17,000 was raised by the residents of the area for the building of the new school. In the Spring of 1968, district residents voted to assume the expense for the new school and funded it via a voter-approved bond initiative (at \$625,000). \$358,000 of the total bond funds were allocated to the building of UPES. On September 2, 1969, Ute Pass Elementary School opened with 200 students in 1st through 6th grade.

At the time, close ties were maintained between the old country school in Cascade and the new UPE. Three of the teachers at UPE in 1969, Mrs. Elva Warner, Mrs. Mille Van Kirk, and Mrs. Ruby Lee Thomson had previously taught in Cascade. The Superintendent who oversaw the construction of UPE was W. W. Bundy as well as Cleone Martin Beedy who, at the time, was principal of both the Cascade School and Manitou Spring Elementary School.

The design of UPE was the product of the Architect Walter Burgess who worked closely with the school board, Superintendent Bundy, and the teachers of UPE to design a building that would be functional and complement the natural beauty of the mountain location. Poured concrete and native Colorado green stone are the exterior building materials. The interior was planned for maximum teaching flexibility. At the time, classrooms had moveable partitions allowing for varied groupings to aid teachers in structuring individual learning tasks.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the school developed a focus on hands-on learning with an emphasis on strong academics and connection to the mountain setting. The community contributed to the building of a treehouse and playground structures. Plays, music, Frontier Days, Game Night, The Pony Run, and many other traditions began, some of which endure today. In the 1980s, the school mascot became the "Pony." A time capsule created by the children attending in 1986 exists today. It is to be opened in 2086, a date on which many of our current students may be able to attend.

The UPEs physical plant remained the same until 2002 when the current Preschool Rooms and Art Room were added. This was made possible as a result of the bond election in 2000. The front office was also modified at this time to allow for more security. The moveable classroom partitions were removed during this renovation.

The next major renovation to the UPE site occurred in 2012 after the Waldo Canyon Fire and the subsequent July flood. This flood undermined the foundations of the playground built in 1981 and rendered it unsafe and uninsurable. A project led by Principal Chris Briggs-Hale, Assistant Superintendent Tim Miller, Buildings and Grounds Director Danny Gieck,

and Superintendent Ed Longfield raised the money required (that was not covered by insurance) to rebuild the playground. Students were engaged in the design and approval process for this new playground. The playground rebuild, along with the new “gulch wall” was completed in November 2012.

Source: https://www.mssd14.org/district_information/facilities_master_plan