

## CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

*"A Rich Tradition"*

The year was 1872. The Civil War was over, the city of Colorado Springs was one year old and gold had not yet been discovered near Pikes Peak.

Three miles southwest of Colorado Springs a few families farmed along Cheyenne Creek. They wanted to provide formal schooling for their children. Led by Daniel Kinsman, Carter Harlan and Marcus Foster, these families built a 12'x 12' one-room school house on the south side of Cheyenne Creek near today's Cresta Road. Mary Harlan was the first teacher and had nine students. The school term was three months.

In 1874 a larger building was erected on the north side of Cheyenne Creek and was officially designated as School District 12. This new building stood in the 1300 block between





*Cheyenne School, February 16, 1886.*

Cheyenne Road and Cheyenne Blvd. In 1883 the building was moved to 1000 Cheyenne Road.

In the 1880s classes started in mid October and continued for four months. The teacher (there was only one) was paid \$25 a month.

By the 1890s the school year was expanded to seven months and the enrollment was 22 students. In the '90s a street car line was built along Cheyenne Blvd. and a branch of it went through the Broadmoor section, known primarily for dairy farming. The trolley system allowed more people to live in the Cheyenne Cañon area. The two major institutions in the region were the Broadmoor Casino and the Cheyenne Mountain Country Club. (The Broadmoor Hotel did not open until 1918.)

A new brick school building was erected in 1899. Then in 1906 adjoining land was purchased on which the Cheyenne Mountain Junior High is now located. In 1910 a six-room



*Cheyenne School ca. 1899.*

school was built on this site. This building, with numerous changes and additions, remained until 1968, housing grades one through twelve. Nearby was the kindergarten, an appealing, one-room, Spanish-style building.

In 1915 Cheyenne School was designated as one of only two third-class school districts in the state to receive a rating of excellent. Miss Sheridan was the well-respected principal. In 1916 she left Cheyenne to take a position at the State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts in Fort Collins.

In the fall of 1916 a 25-year-old Colorado College graduate named Lloyd Shaw, with three years of teaching experience, was selected as principal/superintendent/teacher/coach at Cheyenne School. He guided the school in an unusual, creative and sometimes controversial way until 1951. He taught English, drama, biology, and gave weekly talks to the junior and senior high students on any topic he deemed important.

In addition to an emphasis on academic studies, Dr. Shaw



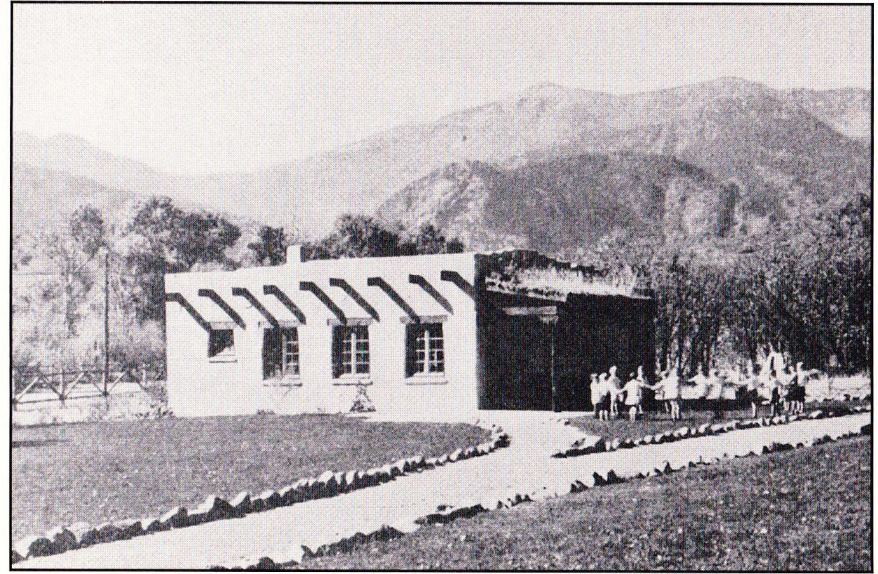
fostered an atmosphere which was conducive to learning. He developed a fine art collection housed in the school, wrote a series of plays for students to perform (the best known was the "Littlest Wiseman" which became a defining event at the school for 35 years), cultivated the Nature Preserve on the south side of the school where Cañon Elementary is now located, held rodeos, conducted camping and ski trips, led students on spontaneous nature walks, built an observatory with a telescope on top of the school, invited students to his home for classical music and purchased a cabin above Seven Falls for students and faculty to spend weekends in the mountains.

He structured all activities outside the classroom to complement academic studies within the classroom. He wanted boys and girls to be able to participate in all events. In the early 20s he eliminated interscholastic football, to the consternation of many.

Shaw was interested in European folk dancing, plus western square and round dancing. By the 30s the students had a dance team directed by Shaw. From the late 30s and through the 40s the team traveled around the United States giving performances. Shaw himself became the foremost square dance caller in the United States and authored several books on the subject.

Shaw was greatly assisted by his wife Dorothy, a poet and librarian at the school. They benefited from operating a small school (200 to 300 students in kindergarten through 12th grade), a community population which remained stable from 1916 to 1945, and they loved being close to mountains, streams, mesas and valleys which they incorporated into their educational approach.

But by the end of World War II in 1945, the influx of new



*Original Cheyenne Kindergarten ca. 1935.*

residents demanded an expansion in the school district. Shaw recognized the inevitable changes and in 1951 he and Dorothy resigned from the school. District 12 was no longer a quiet, country school on the outskirts of Colorado Springs.

In 1946 Cheyenne School had a total of 359 students. Twelve years later in 1958, 1501 students were enrolled in the school. In 1954 the Cañon Elementary School opened (which meant the loss of the Nature Preserve). In 1955 Skyway Park Elementary opened and in 1956 the eight-classroom Broadmoor Elementary was completed.

In September of 1962 the new Cheyenne Mountain High School opened at 1200 Cresta Road. The old high school at 1200 Cheyenne Road served as the Junior High until 1968 when it was torn down (although not with universal approval). The current Junior High opened on the site of the old high school in September of 1968.



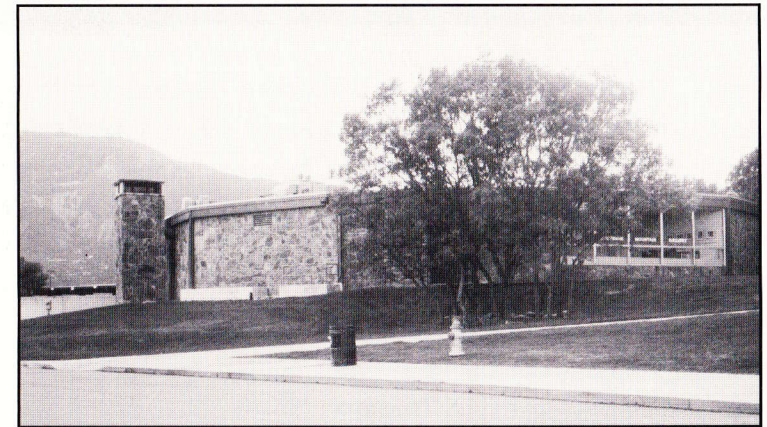
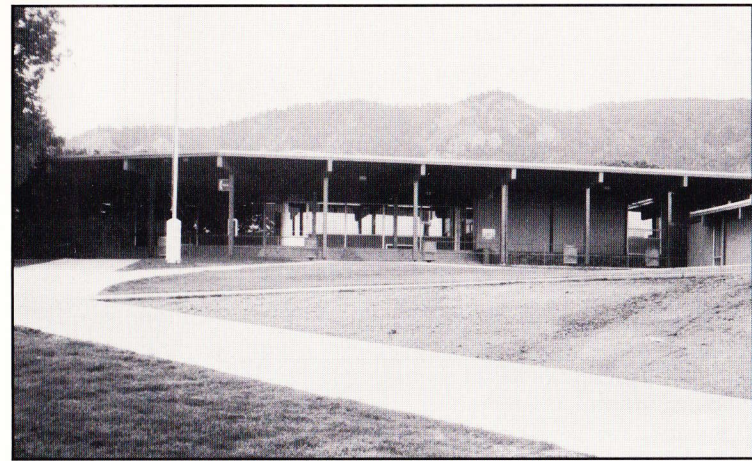


*Cheyenne Mountain School ca. 1940.*

For the entire second half of the 20th century, continual population growth has challenged Cheyenne School to meet the educational needs of an increasing number of students. Dr. Harlan Else, who became Superintendent of District 12 in 1990, guided the building of Gold Camp Elementary and Piñon Valley Elementary, plus additions to Cañon, Broadmoor and Skyway Park Elementary schools, a major expansion of the high school, and the opening of Cheyenne Mountain Charter Academy.

During the entire history of the school, the district has attracted well-prepared teachers, benefited from low teacher turnover and maintained a high proportion of graduates who attend college. Many Cheyenne graduates have maintained as strong a loyalty to their high school as most college graduates do to their alma mater.

**T**he history of Cheyenne Mountain School unfolds in two broad chapters: 1) the first chapter includes the latter part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, characterized

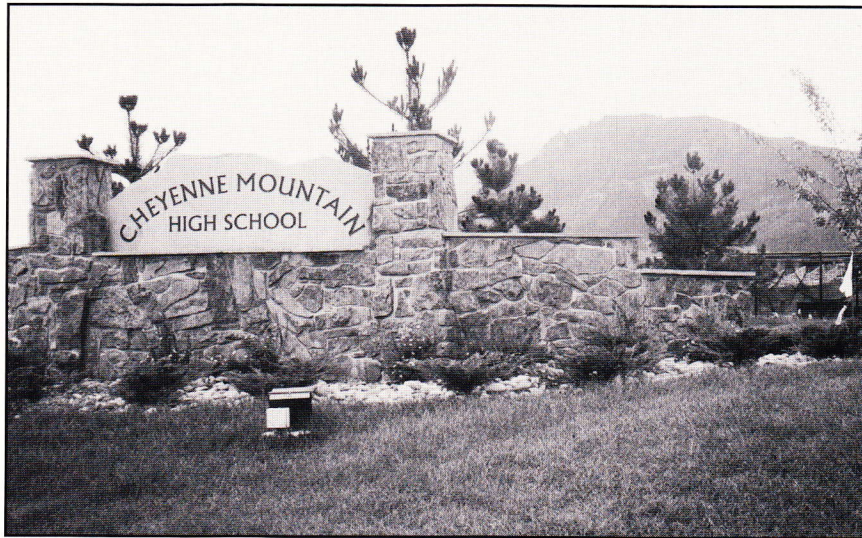


*Cheyenne Mountain High School, 1999.*

by a small community, low technology (ink wells, pens, horses), two world wars, and a charismatic leader in Lloyd Shaw; 2) the second chapter (the latter half of the 20th century) has been characterized by continual population growth (in 1900 the population of Colorado Springs was 20,000, and at the end of the century close to half a million live in the Pikes Peak region), high technology (computers, Internet, TV), the automobile, the Air Force Academy, military bases, and a more complex society.

From a time when horses and cattle grazed along Cheyenne





Creek, to the years when faculty and students rode a trolley car to the school doors, to the present when schools require as many parking places as desks, Cheyenne School has provided education for the community for over half of this country's history.

More than a century and a quarter ago Mary Harlan began teaching nine students in a small school house where drinking water was brought in buckets from Cheyenne Creek and candles provided extra light. Today over 3700 students attend Cheyenne Mountain schools with 265 faculty members, eight campuses, and learn in a tradition which emphasizes the arts and humanities together with the hard sciences, all in a fast changing, technological society.

*("Cheyenne Mountain School" was researched and written by Richard Marold and the staff of the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Center, preserving the art, history and culture of the Cheyenne Mountain region.)*