

MARBLE'S HISTORIC SCHOOL BUILDING AT RISK

The golden hues of the early Autumn sunshine stream through the large windows of the kindergarten through second-grade classroom at the Marble Charter School. The large classroom is a cacophony of colors, textures, and sounds. Large plants surround the reading nook, creating a miniature jungle to host young imaginations while a bright carpet resembling the world covers parts of a creaking and worn wood floor.

Time has polished the floor and the tall ceilings are a testament to the room's original purpose -- a gymnasium and basketball court. The echoes of children's voices are nothing new to the building that once hosted the burgeoning town's high school students.

SURVIVING THROUGH A CENTURY

Built in 1912, the heyday of Marble's past, the school once housed around 200 students and was a matter of pride and a sign of prosperity for the town. Separate from the elementary school across the street, the High School was built with a marble foundation and veneer and contained a modern, for the era, science room on the third story. Students studied engineering, science, and geology along with their general studies and the average graduating class was around 20 students.

Once a booming town of around 4,000 residents, Marble was home to grand hotels, theaters, saloons, emporiums, and even a bank. The William Brother's store stood where Slow Groovin' BBQ now stands and the empty lot of grass that's now a park was the heart of downtown with a city hall built of marble and businesses selling everything from shoes to haircuts to newspapers. Few of Marble's historic buildings remain, a jail tucked away in the corner of the park, crumbling walls and pillars of Marble, and the old bank building. The old high school is by far the largest and most complete remnant of Marble's unique history.

The town's prosperity of the '20s and '30s ended with the onset of World War II as the demand for marble dissipated. The town's population dwindled to only a handful of families. After the mudslides of the 1940s destroyed much of the town, the school closed in 1948. The few remaining students moved across the street to the sole remaining teacher's house, Theresa Herman.

By the 1950s even that school closed and any Marble children had to endure the long and treacherous bus ride down dirt roads to Carbondale. For the next three decades the building remained boarded up, the desks still lined in rows and the specimens and jars in the science rooms collecting dust.

The sleepy years of the '50s and '60s gave way to a renewed awakening in Marble during the 1970s. The town held elections and reformed the Town government — the originally incorporated Town never dissolved, they simply stopped meeting.

Soon after, Historian Oscar McCollum and other interested residents formed the Marble Historical Society to save and preserve Marble's rich and quickly disappearing history. Among the many projects,

and perhaps the greatest, undertaken by the Marble Historic Society was building up a museum collection and transforming the old school into a museum to house the collection.

BUILDING THE MUSEUM FROM SCRATCH

For a town so small, the museum is a truly remarkable achievement. On the main floor, beside the gymnasium transformed into a current classroom, one of the former classrooms houses information and artifacts from Marble's most famous industry, marble.

Here visitors and guests can learn about quarrying, milling, mining, and the infamous Colorado Yule Marble Company. The old principal's office now houses a research library complete with town records, newspapers, and file upon file of pictures and publications. Previously stored in past residence closets, garages, and basements — these priceless pieces

of Marble's history finally had a home.

Up the creaking stairs is an old classroom, arranged much the same as it had been 110 years ago, the initials of children etched in the wooden desks, ink gone dry in the old inkwells. Now, the walls are lined with information and pictures, all created by the progression of volunteers who have fallen in love with Marble's story and worked to preserve it.

The old chalkboards still stand at the front of the room, a visiting historian having drawn a history line of Marble upon their worn surface. History is accessible here, not yet locked behind ropes and glass cases. Students can sit at the desk where their peers sat a hundred years prior and run their fingers over the same surfaces those students did.

Also in the upper story lives the old science room — the specimens still floating in their jars. Today, this room also hosts artifacts and information on the social and economic life during Marble's historic era. It is here where the last echoes of past businesses can be found, the old barber stand, and the brightly painted drum the town's band had played a century ago. Even the pennant from the Marble's baseball team can be seen. The collection was made even more special by the painstaking efforts the Historic Society took in hunting down and gathering these pieces of the past.

A SCHOOL ONCE MORE

By the 1990s, Marble had grown to a population of around 200 and with the growing number of families, the need for a school of their own became obvious. In 1996, the Historic Society, parents, and educators worked together to once more bring the building to life as a school.

Volunteers worked to obtain funding and transform half of the building into a new school. The Historic Society leased half of the building to the Marble Charter School (MCS) while the museum remained in the other half. The result was a place of learning for both children and adults. Students helped create some displays for the museum and were allowed the unique opportunity to be surrounded by their community's collective history while they studied it.



Starting with a class of only 15 and ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade, early students of the MCS shared one classroom, making the former gymnasium a place of learning and growth. Pictures and drawings of that founding class now hang in the historic building, adding to the continuing history of the town.

Over the next three decades, the tiny school grew. It has gained a reputation for its nurturing atmosphere, a place where any student can find a sense of belonging. Eventually, they added a new adjacent building with a new community use kitchen and activity room that can host group functions.

Yet still, the heart of the school remained in the historic building. It is in the historic building's sunny classroom where children get their first learning experiences, the basement houses the school's music and additional kindergarten space as well as the school's library -- the only children's library in town. Today, MCS hosts 55 students, a record for attendance, and is expected to see more growth in coming years.

Already at full capacity, the historic building and the space it provides are even more critical. Yet time and the aging building have put the school and museum at risk of closure.

SAVING A BUILDING

Marble has always been a town that runs on volunteer power and a shoestring budget. It's no different for the Historical Society and school. The improvements of thirty years ago once more need serious attention.

The matter came to a head last year with the failing boiler system that heats the building. Rooms were heated with space heaters on the increasingly frequent times the boiler went down and kids attended classes bundled up in jackets.

Free Food Bags Available in Marble

For anyone needing help stretching their food budget, Gunnison County Officials currently have boxes of food available distributed through the Marble Community Church.

There is no charge to the recipient and no reservation is needed; boxes are available for an individual or up to a family of four and contain enough meals to last approximately three days.

Please call the Marble Community Church to arrange a pickup time, (970) 963-1464.



By Amber McMahill

SCHOOL BUILDING AT RISK CONTINUED...

As winter set in, the building was shuttered, and its students moved into temporary classrooms in the lunch room while the pipes were kept from freezing with space heaters. The beautiful decks and fire escapes surrounding the school have aged to the point where they need to be replaced and the showcase marble veneer on the outside of the school is starting to crumble.

Once more the Marble Historical Society and MCS have come together to save the well-loved building. The main source of grants for historical purposes was depleted in the original restoration of the building. So, the Historical Society recently transferred ownership of the building to the school to allow for more opportunities for desperately needed funding. They are now working together to raise awareness of the issues the building is facing, the importance of the school and museum, and the upcoming bond issue that might save them both.

The Marble Charter School has always worked closely with the Gunnison School District, operating for most intents and purposes as a public school. This year the school district has a bond issue before the voters of Gunnison County, including the Marble Charter School.

If the bond passes, it will provide the funds to update the heating system and assure the building stays open. It is one of just a few funding avenues left for the school. The issue will be on the November 8th ballot for Gunnison County Residents, of which Marble and surrounding areas is just a small portion.

The Marble Charter School and Marble Historic Society will be hosting an Open House on October 20th from 6 p.m. — 7:30 p.m. There, visitors and residents can visit this unique combination of school and museum and get a feel for this treasured town jewel.

For more information please contact the school at (970) 963-9550.

Authors Note: For those who know what it is like to fall in love with a building, the slow decay of the grand dame of Marble is heartbreaking. Not only is it one of the few remaining buildings from Marble's heyday, but it also houses the remnants of our history and the school that is often referred to as the heart of our community. Built upon the efforts and work of countless residents and volunteers over 110 years, there is now a chance to assure that work was not in vain and that the building and students it houses have a solid future.

Community Trick-or-Treat
with Pitkin County Library
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29,
9:30-11:30AM

A day of safe, friendly trick-or-treating around Aspen and other Halloween fun.
More info and map available at pitcolib.org

Costume Contest
AFTER TRICK-OR-TREAT, 11:30AM

Prepare for the contest with the Library Lab! Costume materials and sewing machines will be available October 17-30.

PITKIN COUNTY LIBRARY
120 N. MILL ST | 970-429-1900 | PITCOLIB.ORG

VOLUNTEER WITH ROARING FORK OUTDOOR VOLUNTEERS



Never has the need for trail and wetlands restoration and fire mitigation been more apparent than during the pandemic where usage of our region's most popular trails has doubled - or tripled - and climate change has ravaged our public lands. More people and pets using hiking and biking trails combined with wildfires and Colorado's 'summer monsoons' have accelerated the need for stewardship.



FIRE ADAPTATION AT WULFSOHN IN GLENWOOD SPRINGS

Sunday October 2, 2022, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

To help prevent another Coal Seam Fire, join with fire experts to learn about and then implement much needed fire mitigation tactics. This project is family friendly with **free, onsite childcare for kids ages 4-8**. There are both physically strenuous and physically moderate activities.

TRAILWORK AT THE PONDEROSA TRAIL

Sunday October 9, 2022, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Just steps from highway traffic is Basalt's expanding Ponderosa Trail. Following up on last year's project, we'll enhance new sections to make an enjoyable and accessible riparian trail for all ages and abilities. This project has both physically easy and physically moderate activities.

RESTORATION AT SILT RIVER PRESERVE

Saturday October 15, 2022, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Along the Colorado River are the pastures, fishing grounds, and organic farm of the Silt River Preserve. Come restore the landscape and improve access trails, making this a town park for everyone to enjoy. Opportunities to learn from and engage with Highwater Farm will also be provided. This project has both physically easy and physically moderate activities.

For more information:
www.rfov.org

THE MARBLE TIMES

A LOOK AT LIFE AT THE MARBLE CHARTER SCHOOL

MARBLE CHARTER SCHOOL OCTOBER EVENTS



SCHOOL BOND INFORMATION NIGHT AND OPEN HOUSE

October 20 • 6 p.m. at MCS

The school would like to inform the public on their plans should the bond funding (Issue 5A) for the Gunnison Watershed School District pass on November 8th.

7TH & 8TH GRADE TRIP FUNDRAISER

October 27 • Slow Groovin' BBQ
Time to be announce.

LEAD KING LOOP RACE

Last month, 143 participants crossed the finishline for another successful Lead King Loop 25k race benefiting Marble Charter School. Below are a few photos from the Kid's division, thanks to Shana Light, Amber McMahill, and Nicole Ludlow for providing photos. Light snapped pictures of almost everyone, so if you're interested in seeing photographs of your children, please send an email to gentryeh@hotmail.com.



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