

Manachaban History

Manachaban School was built in 1972. Over the years, it has offered instruction to both Elementary and Jr. High School grades. It is now a “middle” school, offering French immersion and English instruction for Grades 5 – 8.

In 1899, Charles Wellington Fisher came from Ontario to Cochrane where he bought considerable property, including the Moraine Ranch. Upon the formation of the Province of Alberta, he ran as a candidate in the first election for the Banff-Cochrane constituency, and won. Premier Rutherford made him First Speaker of the Alberta Legislature.

In 1907 Mr. Fisher married Miss Marjorie Powell of Ottawa. He purchased all of the Big Hill acreage far up the creek, north and west of the present town of Cochrane. In 1908, he built a beautiful big house on the west side of the hill. It is currently the Mount of St. Francis Retreat.

Mrs. Fisher, commenting on the new house noted: “Charles wanted to build a lovely home for me. He had already picked the site on a shelf of land on the west side of the Big Hill. It’s Indian name is Manchaban Hill, meaning, where the Indians went for bows and arrows. It had three servants and the villagers began calling me the Duchess of Manachaban Hill.”

In this way, the name of this school reflects both the early history of the Cochrane Area and also the earlier history of the area’s original inhabitants who cut their bows and arrows for the tress of Manachaban Hill, long before white men came to Cochrane.