Historical Structure Information

Mamie D. Eisenhower Park Picnic Shelter
4300 E. Dartmouth Ave. Denver, CO 80222
Prepared By: Zachary Gabehart
Prepared For: Councilwoman Kendra Black, District 4 Denver City Council
I. Property History
Mamie Doud Eisenhower Park can be found in the heart of Southeast Denver, the park occupies twenty acres in the southwestern portion of the University Hills neighborhood. It was built in honor of First Lady Mamie Doud Eisenhower, as the Doud and Eisenhower families had strong ties to the Denver community. First Lady Eisenhower granted permission for a park to be named in her honor to Mayor Will Nicholson on September 22, 1955.1 The Park is bound by the Highline Canal to the south, South Dahlia Street to the east, South Colorado Blvd. to the west, and East Dartmouth Ave. and East Highline Place to the north.2 Eisenhower Park, as it is known to many, was dedicated on August 1, 1957, which happened to be Colorado Day. First Lady Eisenhower arrived at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver on Monday July 29, 1957, aboard Columbine III, President Eisenhower's Lockheed VC-121 aircraft.3 Mamie stayed at the Brown Palace Hotel as her mother was entertaining other house guests at the Doud residence.4 The First Lady stayed in the eighth floor Presidential Suite at the Brown Palace; special care was given to the room before she arrived.4 Mamie attended the 1pm dedication ceremony at the park on Colorado Day, where many local politicians and figures were present.5 Gene Amole, KDEN radio co-owner was the master of ceremonies; other notable figures in attendance were Mayor and Mrs. Will Nicholson, Governor and Mrs. Stephen McNichols, Lt. Governor and Mrs. Frank Hays, Councilman Paul Hentzell, Mr. Jack Foster, and members of the Women's Committee that was instrumental in the park naming.5 At the ceremony, Mayor Nicholson addressed the crowd, his wife presented First Lady Eisenhower with a bouquet of flowers, and Mamie spoke a few brief words of gratitude.5 The original park included a recreation center, a swimming pool, a wading pool, tennis courts, multi-use athletic fields, playground area, multiple picnic areas, a bathhouse, and lots of open grassy space.6 Original designs called for a view of the front range when looking down the length of the park, which no doubt existed at the time of the park, but is now obstructed by tree growth and building infrastructure. The original brick recreation center can still be found on the property with some additions and changes to the original structure. The swimming and wading pool can still be found in

1 Will F. Nicholson Papers.
2 Denver Maps.
3 Denver Post, July 26, 1957.
4 Denver Post, July 28, 1957.
5 Will F. Nicholson Papers.
6 Eisenhower Park (Mamie) 1956-1894.
their original locations. Additional facilities have been added since the original construction of the park through several city project initiatives and bond initiatives.\textsuperscript{7} Pickle ball courts have been added next to the original tennis courts at the park, with upgrades made to the additional facilities. The playground area has gone through many upgrades since the original park to bring it up to modern playground codes. The most notable addition to the park is a picnic structure at the Northeast corner of the playground area. The structure was built in 1992 because of the 1989 bond initiative.\textsuperscript{8} The structure is a prefabricated metal shade structure that, according to structure markings, was sold by Gametime Playground Equipment, an equipment supplier out of Ft Payne, Alabama that has been in business since 1929.\textsuperscript{9} This company specializes in modern playground equipment, and produces various architectural styles of structures, nothing outstandingly notable was found in this company. The feature is a very minimalistic and modern metal structure. This structure is very recognizable to the residents of Southeast Denver and receives a lot of community use throughout the year. It provides a space for birthday parties, picnics, community gatherings, and several other community uses. It is so recognizable to the community a piece of public art was installed in the mid 2010’s in front of the recreation center, the artist took inspiration or the bench from the picnic structure. When you see the art you can see that the artist modeled the top edge of the piece after the roof line of the shade structure. The structure will immediately catch your eye when entering the park with its very modern, sharp sloping-angle roof. This structure attempts to preserve mid-twentieth century Denver history as South Denver had seen growth by this time and this facility is used by many southeast Denver families still to this day.

\section{Architectural Style}

The metal structure is prefabricated and was most likely built from a kit when it was put up in the early 1990s. The structure could be defined as mid-century modern with its sleek lines, minimalistic yet functional shape, and the use of simple materials.\textsuperscript{10} It has a sort of futuristic look, which allows it to stand out compared to the rest of the park.\textsuperscript{9} The structure is made from industrial materials, and the fact that it was built from a kit fits with the mass production mindset at the time of construction. This shade pavilion is rigid and strong, yet simple and sleek, and really adds a nice addition to the 1950s park.

\section{Eisenhower/Doud Family History}

The Doud family originated from Boone, Iowa, and daughter Mamie was born in 1896. Mamie was born with a rheumatic heart, and to assist with this, the Doud’s decided to

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} Eisenhower Park (Mamie) 1956-1894
\item \textsuperscript{8} Denver Parks & Rec.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Gametime Structures
\item \textsuperscript{10} Kelly Richman-Abnou
\end{itemize}
\end{flushleft}
move to Denver in 1905. Their first residence was at 101 Logan St., but they only occupied this residence for about a year. In 1906, they moved into the better-known residence at 750 Lafayette St. This structure still stands and is found on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as the Colorado Register of Historic Places. It has the namesake of Mamie’s parents and is known as the John and Elivera Doud House. Mamie grew up and attended school in Denver, and in 1915 she met, at the time, Second Lieutenant Dwight David Eisenhower at Ft. Sam Houston. Soon after, they were engaged and were married at the Doud Residence July 1, 1916, in the first-floor music room of the house. Mamie then moved many times as a military spouse to General Eisenhower; she claims to have moved nearly twenty-seven times, including to the Panama Control Zone, France, and the Philippines. However, one thing remained as she always kept strong ties to Denver. General Eisenhower was then elected President and Mamie became First Lady. During Ike’s tenure as President, he preferred to use Denver as the “Summer White House,” and the couple lived at the Doud Residence or at the Brown Palace. In the summers, Denver often became the official National Seat of Government. President Eisenhower loved to take trips to the mountains, specifically to the Byers Peak Ranch in Grand County owned by Aksel Nielson. Often accompanied by Mamie, Ike would rest and recuperate and fish the Fraser River. The Byers Peak Ranch is where President Eisenhower suffered his September 24, 1955, heart attack. His Secret Service Detail rushed him to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver, where he was hospitalized until November 11, 1955. Fitzsimmons Army Hospital became the White House for seven weeks, and President Eisenhower and his staff utilized his hospital room and the auditorium to run the country until he could return to Washington, D.C. The Eisenhowers did not return to Denver until 1957, two years after Ike’s heart attack, and this was when Mamie came for the park dedication. Even after the presidency, the Eisenhowers frequently made extended visits to Denver. Mamie Doud Eisenhower was inducted into the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame in 1985, a tremendous honor that demonstrates the importance the Doud and Eisenhower families had to Denver. This significance can still be seen today with Mamie D. Eisenhower Park in Southeast Denver, Mamie Eisenhower Library in Denver, and the John & Elivera Doud House.

IV. Significance Today

The metal picnic pavilion that stands in Eisenhower Park provides a symbol for the impact the Eisenhowers had on Denver. The structure is easily recognizable as the Eisenhower and Doud families were in Denver. The Park named in Mamie’s honor helps to preserve the history of the family’s presence in Denver and symbolizes the outdoor

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11 White House
12 History Colorado
13 White House
14 Empire Magazine, 1956
15 Kathy Naples
16 Keagan Harsha
17 CO Women’s Hall of Fame
activities that the Eisenhowers could often be found doing in Colorado. The Eisenhowers visited the park a few times during their times at the “Summer White House,” which makes this park a special symbol of Southeast Denver. The structure is accessible for all people to use and is a symbol of the Eisenhowers and the contributions they made to the Denver community.

V. Photo Appendix

*Figure 1: West Half Eisenhower Park Base Map Drawing. (Source: Denver Public Library)*

*Figure 2: East Half Eisenhower Park Base Map Drawing. (Source: Denver Public Library)*
Figure 3: Platt map that includes Eisenhower Park. (Source: Denver Public Library)
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 24, 1956

Dear Mrs. Thornton,

In looking over our "Mamie Doud Eisenhower Park" file, I find that the First Lady accepted the honor and gave permission for the use of her name in a letter to Mr. Hentzell, Councilman, on February 28, 1956. Another letter on the same subject was written to Mayor Nicholson on September 22, 1955.

I have discussed the matter with our Press Department. Unfortunately, we cannot do anything more at this time. A release was made in June 1956 (carried by AP in New York Times, June 3, 1956); also another story appeared in Rocky Mt. News September 25, 1955, about the Park.

The White House never originates stories of this type -- unless the First Lady announces her actual participation on a certain date. There is always the possibility, however, that when next Mrs. Eisenhower visits Denver, she will wish to set up an appointment for a formal visit to the Park, at which time the City may want to plan the dedication ceremonies.

It was wonderful seeing you again; our only regret was that our visit to Denver was so brief!

With kind regard,

Sincerely,

Mary Jane McCaffree
Secretary to Mrs. Eisenhower

Mrs. Dan Thornton
16 Random Road
Englewood, Colorado

Figure 4: Letter from First Lady Eisenhower’s Secretary discussing details of the park. (Source: Denver Public Library)
"the summer white house"

President and Mrs. Eisenhower at their home.

Figure 5: 1956 Empire Magazine detailing the "Summer White House." (Source: Denver Public Library)
Figure 6: July 28, 1957, Denver Post detailing the plans for Mamie to stay at the Brown Palace. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Figure 7: July 26, 1957, Denver Post detailing the final plans for the park dedication. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Figure 8: April 20, 1956, Rocky Mountain News introducing plans to name park for Mamie. (Source: Denver Public Library)

Figure 9: The John and Elivera Doud House, 750 Lafayette St. (Source: History Colorado)
My dear Mayor Nicholson,

Thank you for your letter telling me of the great honor the ladies of Denver have shown me by expressing a desire to name a new park "Marie Doud Eisenhower Park."

I will be most happy to see the committee, and if they will get in touch with Miss Parsons at the Summer White House, I am sure a convenient time can be worked out.

I was interested in seeing the map of the area where the park will be constructed, and I am indeed grateful to you, too, for your interest and offer of assistance while I am in Denver.

With very best wishes,

Marie Doud Eisenhower

Figure 10: Letter to Mayor Nicholson from First Lady Eisenhower. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Figure 11: Envelope the letter arrived in. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Mr. David Abbott  
Asst. Park Commissioner of  
the City and County of Denver

Dear Mr. Abbott:

Several groups of Denver women are anxious to have some public recognition given to the name Mamie Doud Eisenhower, as a daughter of Denver it would be very appropriate for Denver to honor our president's wife, Mamie Doud. We have in mind one of the parks somewhere in our beautiful city, a 'Mamie Doud Eisenhower Park'.

Will you please give this matter your consideration; and/or perhaps give us a better suggestion. Thank you.

Very truly yours

Ella D. Houghtelin  
Fredricka LaFever Bellamy  
Ileen Archibold

Figure 12: Letter in support of the park from the Colorado Coordinating Council of Women's Organizations.  
(Source: Denver Public Library)
Mr. A. Y. Batterson, Manager of Improvements & Parks

Mr. W. M. Greim, Ass’t. Manager of Improvements & Parks
For Parks and Recreation

Park at University Hills (Eisenhower)

This park is an irregularly shaped area south of Dartmouth Avenue and north of the High Line Canal, 20.9 acres, extending from South Colorado Boulevard to South Dahlia Street.

A tentative plan has been formulated which includes some playground facilities on the half of the area nearest South Colorado Boulevard. This plan includes:

- ¼ tennis courts
- 2 informal, non-lighted, softball fields
- 1 baseball field
- Portable water system
- Some area suitable for junior football
- Landscaping

The east half of the area includes a park area, possibly a small lake, children’s playground and picnic area.

It is probable that some alterations in the plan might be affected as we further study the area. For example, a shelter house with toilets is included in the area, but in order to better serve the area we might find it necessary to change its location.

At the present time we have installed a baseball backstop and a softball backstop in order that informal ballgames might be played on the area.

The information in the proposal concerning the development of this area indicates that we propose to build a shelter house, develop a playground, multiple use area, sand lot ball fields, picnic areas, walks and fences.

A total of $44,000. has been allotted to this area for its development. We propose to begin the work in this area next spring.

WNG:cb

DEPT. OF IMPROVEMENTS & PARKS

RECEIVED SEP 20 1955 by

Figure 13: City and County of Denver correspondence about park specifics. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Figure 14: Letter from Mayor Nicholson to Lady Butterfield explaining the delay of the dedication.  
(Source: Denver Public Library)
February 23, 1956

Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower
c/o The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mrs. Eisenhower:

Mayor Will F. Nicholson has requested me to contact you in an effort to secure your permission to name a new park here in Denver "The Mamie Doud Eisenhower Park" in your honor.

I have been checking through the file on this matter and find there was correspondence between your secretary and Mr. Nicholson in regard to the naming of this park, but I find at no place any correspondence which specifically gives us the permission to do so.

This park is located in the Southeast part of Denver in a new district and I believe that you and the President visited the area the day before he suffered his attack. It is the desire of all the Civic Associations in the area, as well as the entire City Council and Official Staff, to name the park in your honor. We would like to have you present at the time it is dedicated, if at all possible.

Would you be kind enough to send me a letter of authorization to go ahead and prepare a Resolution naming this park "The Mamie Doud Eisenhower Park", and also advise when you think you might be back in Denver long enough to attend a dedication? Your early reply would be gratefully appreciated.

Yours very truly

PAH:PLC

Paul A. Hentzell

Figure 15: Letter from Councilman Hentzell to the First Lady requesting her permission for a park to be named for her. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Figure 16: Letter to the First Lady from Mayor Nicholson giving her park details. (Source: Denver Public Library)
Honorable Wm. Nicholson,
Mayor City & County of Denver
Municipal Bldg.,
Denver, Colo.

Dear Mayor Nicholson:

The Women's Republican Club of Denver, wishes to express their gratitude for the privilege of having had a part in the dedication of the "Hemie Boud Eisenhower Park".

We also appreciated the many kind courtesies extended to us by you and Mr. Groin.

If at any time our Club can be of service to you, we would consider it a privilege to have you call upon us.

Very sincerely,

Edith G. Mattoon, President
(Mrs. Lee H.)
For use in Sunday newspapers

A tentative program in connection with the visit to Denver of Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower for the dedication Thursday, Colorado Day, of a new city park bearing her name was announced Saturday by Mayor Nicholson.

The mayor said the program was subject to the approval of Mrs. Eisenhower and her staff.

The half-hour dedication ceremony is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. at S. Colorado Boulevard and Dartmouth Avenue in the new park, to be known as Mamie Doud Eisenhower Park.

Gene Amala, co-owner of radio station KDEN, will act as master of ceremonies at the dedication.

The program will begin with the national anthem played by the Highlander Band. The soloist will be Michael Livingston.

The Rev. Stephen McRae of the Wellshire Presbyterian Church will deliver the invocation, followed by an address by Gov. Stephen L. R. McNichols.

The main dedicatory address will be given by Mayor W. F. Nicholson.

Mrs. Nicholson then will present a bouquet to Mrs. Eisenhower.

The special committee of Denver women who were instrumental in naming the park in honor of Mrs. Eisenhower will be introduced. They are Mrs. Guy Houghtelin, Mrs. Lee H. Mattoon, Mrs. Robert Archibald Jr., and Mrs. Harry Bellamy. Mrs. Mattoon will respond in behalf of the Denver Woman’s Club.

(more)
After presentation of the Special committee the following guests will be presented: Mrs. Stephen L. Nichols; Lt. Gov. Frank Hays and Mrs. Hays; Richard Y. Batterton, manager of public works and deputy mayor; Willard N. Groen, manager of parks and recreation; Councilman Paul A. Rentzoll, who represents the district in which the park is located and who will introduce other city councilmen; Dr. Earl Boyd, chairman of the parks and recreation board, who in turn will introduce other board members, and Denver Hogan’s Club representatives.

The program will conclude with the playing of “God Bless America” by the Highlander Band.
MAMIE DOUD EISENHOWER PARK

DEDICATION

50. COLORADO BLVD. & DARTMOUTH AVE.
AUGUST 1ST, 1957
1:00 P. M.

1. Master of Ceremonies ...................................... Gene Amole

2. Highlander Band
   (Highlander Band will furnish music prior to 1:00 P. M.
    for the National Anthem and closing number.)

3. National Anthem ...........................................
   (Soloist): Mr. M. Livingston
   (First verse and chorus)
   (Denver Sch. of Music)

4. Invocation ................................................
   (Rev. Stephen McShane
   (Wellshire Presbyterian)

5. Governor Stephen L. R. McNichols ..................
   Remarks

6. Mayor Will F. Nicholson ..............................
   Remarks & Dedictory Statement

7. Presentation of Flowers to Mrs. Eisenhower .......
   Mrs. Will F. Nicholson

8. Introduction of special Women's Committee
   Instrumental in naming the park ...
   Mrs. G. H. Houghtelin
   Mrs. Lee B. Mattson  .. (Presentation of park name sign)
   Mrs. Robert Archibald, Jr.
   Mrs. Harry Ballamy

9. Presentation of platform guests ...
   Responses will be made by:
   Paul A. Rentz, representing City Council, and
   Dr. Earl Boyd, representing Parks and Recreation Board.

10. Acknowledgments

11. God Bless America

Figure 20: Dedication ceremony program. (Source: Denver Public Library)
DEDICATION RESERVATIONS

Governor and Mrs. Stephen L. R. McNichols
Lt. Gov. and Mrs. Frank Hays
General and Mrs. Griffen, of Fitzsimmons
Mrs. Briggs
Mr. Jack Foster
Mrs. Alex Holland
Mr. and Mrs. William Flor
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mapel
Mr. and Mrs. Elvin Caldwell
Mr. and Mrs. Joe Ciancio (Mrs. Ciancio's reservation to be further confirmed.)
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hentzell
Mr. C. Paul Harrington
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Curragan

Definite regrets on Mr. and Mrs. George Cavender
Regrets to be confirmed on Mr. and Mrs. Roland Mapelli.

Figure 21: Confirmed reservations for the dedication ceremony. (Source: Denver Public Library)
July 26, 1957

The Honorable Frank H. Hays
1341 South Edison Way
Denver, Colorado

Dear Frank:

The City of Denver will be honored next week in playing host to Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower, wife of our President. She will be in Denver to participate in the dedication of the park being named in her honor.

I would like to extend to you a very cordial invitation to participate in the dedication program. It will be held at 1:00 pm, Thursday, August 1st, in the park which is located in the vicinity of East Dartmouth and South Colorado Boulevard. The program will last one-half hour.

I would also like to extend the same invitation to Lou. A seat on the platform will be reserved for her. As soon as the program arrangements are approved by Mrs. Eisenhower, I will see that complete details are made available to you. I am hopeful that we can firm up all arrangements, as far as the program is concerned, sometime Monday.

Cordially,

W. F. Nicholson
Mayor

WFM $b
RSVP

This letter prepared by: [Blank]  Title [Blank]
Figure 23: Columbine III aircraft at Lowry Air Force Base. (Source: Lowry Foundation)

Figure 24: Picnic structure looking towards playground. (Source: Personal Collection)
Figure 25: Picnic structure looking South. (Source: Personal Collection)

Figure 26: Sign along Colorado Blvd. (Source: Personal Collection)
Figure 27: Current rendering of the park. (Source: Denver Parks & Rec.)

Figure 28: 2019 aerial view of the park. (Source: Google Earth)
VI. Historical Accuracy Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this report, no guarantees are made about any historical claims made within. The data contained within this report is the resultant compilation of a multitude of research gathered from several sources, some of which may contain hearsay, conjecture, or embellishment which cannot be verified as absolute fact. Every effort has been made to cross-reference each data point with multiple sources, and any inaccuracies are purely unintentional.

VII. Additional Information

Bibliography


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