

Way We Were
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A New Bonanza for Park City

As Park City Mountain Resort concludes its 50th anniversary celebration, let us take a look back on the very first year of the resort, then named Treasure Mountains.

In May 1963, the *Park Record* described Treasure Mountains as the “New Bonanza,” an all-season recreation center in Park City being built by United Park City Mines. The project included a gondola lift over two miles long (the longest in North America), a base facility at the lower terminal of the gondola, a cafe at the upper terminal (the Summit House), a double chair lift (the Prospector Chair), two J-bar lifts, eighteen miles of ski trails, and a golf course.

The name Treasure Mountains was inspired by historic Treasure Hill above Park City and the site of the world famous Silver King Mine. A competition was established for the public to name the ski trails. Some of the winning names such as “Silver Queen, Silver King, Bonanza, Claim Jumper, and Hidden Splendor” are familiar to skiers today. Winners of the naming competition received lift passes and ski lessons.

Construction was completed in just seven months – an extraordinary accomplishment. The opening of the new winter recreation facility on December 21, 1963 attracted national attention. There were hundreds of journalists, politicians and VIP’s on hand for speeches, festivities, and gondola rides. The *Park Record* described the ride on the innovative gondola as an “out of this world” experience.

A full-day adult pass cost \$4.50 the first season. The ski school bell (in the center of the photo) rang every day at 10 am and 2pm. Classes were available for all skier abilities and a half day (2-hour) group lesson cost \$3.00. A private lesson from famous ski school director Jim McConkey cost \$10 an hour. The ski school staff included 7 full-time and 15 part-time instructors.

Treasure Mountains Ski Patrol included 7 full-time patrolmen and up to 25 volunteers. The *Park Record* reported that “the patrolmen will see to it that the trails and slopes are safe for all skiers, free of dangerous moguls, and ready with trained personnel in the event of accident.”

Snow coverage was very thin for the opening celebrations, but conditions improved in subsequent months and the resort reported a 76-inch base in March of 1964.

The popularity of skiing at Treasure Mountains created some unexpectedly long lift lines. A rush order for an additional 20 gondola cars was placed with the Salt Lake firm that built the cars. It was projected that the additional cars would increase uphill capacity by 112 skiers per hour.

In a letter to the editor of the *Park Record* in May of 1964, Ski School Director Owen Saunders wrote that he and his staff “would like to thank you and your community for the very fine way in which you have made visiting ski enthusiasts welcome.” It is nice to know that some things have not changed in Park City!



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum

Caption: Treasure Mountains center and lower terminal boarding station of the gondola.