

An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

Where is the Town Hall Bell?

September 2014

The Town Hall was jointly funded by Alpine's earliest benefactors, Benjamin & Harriet Arnold along with Alpine citizens who purchased shares in the Hall Corporation at \$10 each. This lovely building still stands proudly today in the historic center of town and when you talk to folks passing by, they might just say that the Town Hall never looked better. Well who could argue with that, the Alpine Woman's Club, which celebrates their 100th anniversary with a spectacular event on October 4th, takes real good care this "jewel" in Alpine.

Now when the Town Hall was built, it was important that it have a bell, a very practical item in those days. You see the bell rang out to call the towns folk to meetings, or to church and Sunday school, it chimed for weddings and tolled for funerals and perhaps most importantly, it alerted the citizens in times of crisis, warning the community of wildfire or other perils. And in those days, without all the noise pollution from the freeway and air traffic overhead, that bell could be heard for quite some distance.

Today our lovely Town Hall no longer supports a bell tower, but the original bell is still here in Alpine. In fact, it has never been more than a few hundred yards away from its original site. The journey of the bell from the Town Hall to its current location presents us with an interesting story.



It was in 1932, when the country was deep into the Depression, that the 18-year old Alpine Woman's Club purchased all the shares of the Hall Corporation and assumed ownership of the Town Hall. For unknown reasons, they decided to remove the bell tower from the building and hang the bell high in one of the eucalyptus trees in front of the building. Some say that the wind would occasionally ring the bell creating a very spooky feeling in the town, almost as if Mr. Arnold's ghost was tolling the bell.

A year later, the Woman's Club donated the bell to the Alpine Community Church to hang in the belfry of its new wood framed chapel on Victoria Drive, just a bit east and north of the Town Hall. Here the bell stayed until the early 1950's, when the chapel was moved eastward to face Marshall Road making room for a new sanctuary facing Victoria Drive. And the bell? Well, that was moved to the top of the bell tower of the new church building, where it remains to this day, ringing out every Sunday morning to call town folk to worship and to commemorate special occasions.



Alpine History Mysteries are created by Tom & Judy Myers from stories, collections, and archives maintained by the Alpine Historical Society.