

Tower Hill a Historic Place in Capital City

September 12, 1920

On the point of Tower hill stands Lookout tower, in which hangs the bell that sounds the warning of fires in Helena. The hill is east of Main street a little above Broadway. The tower is a familiar landmark to the old-timers, but an object of curiosity to the more recent arrivals in the city. It has stood there since about 1874, watching the changes as civilization took a firmer grip on the place.

From the Days of Last Chance.

Away back in the time when Main street was Last Chance gulch and the buildings of today were not yet dreamed of, Charles D. Curtis organized a volunteer fire department of men who were willing to risk their lives that Helena might prosper, without receiving any more than a word of thanks or, occasionally, some refreshments after a long fight. After the fire of '71, when most of the business district was destroyed, the city decided that its assistance might be of some value. It was then that the old tower was

erected, a square framework tapering slightly towards the top with a platform and an octagonal room at the summit. A small bell hung beneath the platform.

In this little room the watchman spent the night. It was no "eight-hour job with all improved working conditions." From dark until daylight the man was "on the job," continually searching for the least sign of fire.

Meyers Tells of Early Days.

Eugene Meyers, a retired Helena druggist, was a member of the volunteer fire department for about 12 years. He told about the work of one spring when a monomaniac who enjoyed going to a fire set fire to a barn or saw mill every night.

"Every night about 8 or 9 o'clock," said Mr. Meyers, "one of us would say, 'Well, it's about time for the bell to start ringing'; and sure enough the alarm would come in from some part of the city that a barn or shed was on fire. We found out who the man was because he

would come to the station with his rubber coat and hat, all ready for the fire. Sometimes my things would be home and I'd have to go and get them. But that man was always ready. So in that way finally led to his own capture."

Mr. Meyers said that the engine they used was a steam engine, pulled by horses. A hose cart completed the equipment of Company No. 1. Company No. 2 was a hand engine stationed on Broadway near the present location of the court house.

After serving so long a time on the fire department, Mr. Meyers got the appointment of watchman in the tower.

"It was a political position," he said, "and when Sullivan was elected mayor, I asked for the position. I guess he knew I voted for him. Anyway, I got the place."

Hours Were Long.

"The hours were long, from 5 at night to 8 in the morning during the winter. My wife used to come up sometimes and I would sleep while she watched in my place. It was cold in the winter, too. If you let the fire go out for just a short time, your back would freeze, even though your face were still warm."

Mr. Meyers was partially crippled from the exposure to the cold in the tower.

At the next election, Sullivan was defeated by his rival of the preceding year. Mr. Meyers applied for a renewal of his position as soon as the new mayor was installed. This was refused and three months later one of the victor's followers took his place in the tower.

In '85 or '86, the little bell which had announced so many fires by its shrill tones was replaced by a new and larger one whose deeper tones would carry the alarm a greater distance. This bell still hangs in the old tower and, though it is rusty now, it is still able to ring out in clear, vibrant strokes the number of the box at which the alarm was turned in.

When the new bell was installed, the curfew law was passed. The law was greatly respected at that time and, at the first tap, all children scampered home as fast as possible.

But they don't do that now. How times have changed.

Gay, Woolly Sports Clothes for Fall.



By CORA MOORE.

New York, Sept. 11.—Not merely worsted, but woolly things, and the fuzzier looking the better are the newest and most interesting sports things for fall. Silk is quite in the discard.

Gay they are, too, these wool things, for if they do not comprise combinations of color, they are sure

to boast embroidery done in greens and blues, yellows, reds and purples.

Here is a saffron-toned Tuxedo sweater trimmed with white.

Then there is a hat of cream wool duvetyn with a crown of the same material in brown, sheafs of wheat back against it. The gown worn with this hat is of cream-colored duvetyn, trimmed with worsted embroidery.