

An Alpine History Mystery:

Where is the Town Hall Bell?

September, 2014

On your next visit to the Alpine History Museum, start your visit at the little white house that was owned by Alpine's first doctor, Sophronia Nichols, who lived there from 1896 to 1903. Ask the museum docent to point you to the school bell to begin your journey of discovery. The historic cast metal object that you will see is the original bell from the Alpine Center School. Built by Benjamin Arnold in 1890, this one-room school served our town until the Alpine Elementary School was built in 1953. In her book

Alpine, History of a Mountain Settlement, Bea La Force describes the school as "well built and attractive in the classic one-room school design, crowned by a bell tower and steeple, hung with a bell..."



Now in 1890, Highway 80 or Alpine Boulevard did not exist and this one-room school house was on the corner of Tavern Road and Arnold Way. Well a few years later (1899), just about a quarter mile east of



the school, Mr. Arnold was instrumental in building another civic building which was also adorned with a bell tower. In this case, he agreed to pay half the cost of a Town Hall to be constructed at the corner of Victoria Drive and Arnold Way. He figured that if the residents of Alpine paid the other half, they would take good care of their investment. And they did take good care of the building, which was the social center of the

town. Here the town held community meetings, church services, public & private parties and dances, and all the fun things you could do in public back in those days.

Then, in the early 1930's, The Alpine Woman's Club purchased the Town Hall and agreed to take care of its maintenance and upkeep. As you can see they've done a fantastic job – the crown jewel of Alpine is still sparkling thanks to the stewardship of the Woman's Club, which was founded in 1914 and celebrates its 100 year birthday party on October 4th.

Now there's just one more twist to our story. If you go to the Town Hall today, you will see that the bell tower is no longer there, but we know that it is still in Alpine. Do you know where to find the Town Hall Bell today? This is the mystery question we want you to solve this month: Where is the Town Hall Bell?