

GOLDEN'S LIBERTY BELL

Golden's Liberty Bell---the giant bell which sits in front of City Hall, 911 10th Street in Golden, Colorado---has a special place in the history of Golden. It has a local significance akin to that of the original Liberty Bell at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Each bell was rung on an occasion of great joy---each bell was rung until it broke---each bell was rung by people who were expressing their jubilation over victory for the United States in an international struggle to establish and preserve the rights and principles which are basic to the American form of government. In both cases, the heartbreaking sacrifice of lives and fortunes was the price paid for the rights or opportunities which Americans now often take for granted---right or opportunities which have been defended and must be defended again and again.

The Golden Liberty Bell was cast in Pennsylvania in 1867---over 100 years ago, and was brought to Golden as the new fire-alarm bell in 1883. Weighing 13,000 pounds, the bell required a strong belfry tower for support. Articles in both of Golden's newspapers of that time indicated the first test ringing was Wednesday evening, August 29, 1883. The Transcript stated "This is some 500 pounds heavier than the one upon the Christian Church, and will serve an excellent purpose as a fire-alarm bell". The Globe included these statements: "Mayor Morris generously furnished the lumber and labor and the boys will get up a hoo-doo bye and bye to pay for it.....It is clear in tone and can be heard in all portions of the town". The wooden tower, later replaced by one of steel, was on Second Street, which is now Twelfth Street---West of Washington Avenue, in front of the old City Hall---which is now the parking lot area back of the Golden Mercantile Store.

If this bell had only been used as a town fire bell, it would not command the attention that it does today. It gained its fame on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918! When word of the Armistice ending World War I was received, citizens of Golden, like the citizens of every town and city throughout the United States, were overjoyed and looked for some tangible way to express their exultation. They found it in the big Bell! Golden Pioneers Mr. and Mrs. Albert Treffeisen lived in an apartment over the present Golden Mercantile Store (which is also the site of the first territorial capital of Colorado) and word was sent to "Treffeisen" to "ring the bell". At 1:00 A.M., November 11, 1918, Albert Treffeisen started to ring the big bell. Soon people were standing in line for the privilege of pulling one of the ropes which swung the great bell sending its joyous sound over the town. The bell-ringing continued for five hours without interruption until suddenly its voice broke, as a crack appeared in its overheated bowl. One of the people pulling the ropes when the bell cracked was Mrs. Lisa Jane Dennis, Grandmother of Mrs. Z. M. Pike of Golden. The bell had been sacrificed for an important proclamation---the ending of World War I, and it would spend the remainder of its days preserved as an emblem of this most historic occasion. A sealed box, containing newspapers, items, data from 1918, was placed in the base of the bell when it was mounted and designated as Golden's Liberty Bell in front of the old City Hall. Local dignitaries left instructions that the sealed box should be opened in 50 years---November 11, 1968. The Bell was moved from the old City Hall to the new City Hall in 1961 and for a few years rested in obscurity back of the Fire Station. Recalling its important place in local history, interested citizens decided that it should be given a permanent place of honor in front of City Hall. On November 11, 1967, to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the casting of the Bell, a ceremony was held in front of City Hall with members of the American Legion, V.F.W., D.A.R., Scouts, F.D., Chamber of Commerce, City Council, Golden High School spearheaded by the Golden Jaycees commemorating Armistice Day. The Golden Jaycees announced at that time that their project for the year would be the erection of a permanent base for the Liberty Bell to be dedicated on the 50th Anniversary of the Bell on November 11, 1968.

These plans are now a reality and at 2:30 P.M., on November 11, 1968, the 50th Anniversary Ceremony will be held. This will also be an Installation and Dedication Ceremony for the Liberty Bell's permanent marble base in front of City Hall. As instructed by the citizens in 1918, the box which was sealed in the base of the bell when it was originally mounted, will be opened and the contents revealed. A "Time Capsule" to be opened in the year of 2018 will be sealed in the Liberty Bell this year. A scroll, signed by Governor John Love and Golden's Mayor Charles L. Goudge, is being circulated to give patriotic citizens an opportunity to sign it before it is sealed in the Bell, along with items of the time. The Scroll will be at the D.A.R. Pioneer Museum, City Hall, from 10:00 A.M., to 5:00 P.M. week-days. A fee of 1¢ per year with a 50-year minimum is being collected for each signature. Golden School Children will sign free of charge. The Golden Jaycees and the Liberty Bell Committee invite all Goldenites and friends to attend the 50th Anniversary Ceremony of the Golden Liberty Bell at 2:30 P.M., November 11, 1968 at City Hall. An outstanding program has been arranged. The Liberty Bell Committee, under the leadership of the Look-out Mountain Chapter of the D.A.R. plans to make this ceremony an annual one to be observed on November 11 each year and to make the 100th Anniversary in the year 2018 a great Centennial Celebration!