

## The Day Arsenal Hill Became Capitol Hill

by Faye Tholen from the Capitol Hill docent book

On a bitter cold day on the sixth of April in 1876, twelve years before the city gave the land to territorial officials, three devastating blasts on the hill rocked the city below and caused widespread destruction.

Eyewitness accounts described crowds either running toward the hill to gape at the disaster or away from the site in panic. Emergency workers at the scene found four large holes where the magazines had stood. The ground was strewn with small fragments of the buildings; and iron door was the only whole thing in the wreck. Reports claimed that 30 tons of flying missiles hurtled about as smoke and debris belched from the hill. Many citizens thought it was an earthquake or volcanic eruption. Some feared it was an invasion from the soldiers at Fort Douglas blowing up the city. The blast caused widespread destruction and was responsible for the deaths of at least four people. A large boulder went through the mayor's roof and two floors of his new home. Territorial Governor Brigham Young's flour mill, nearly a half-mile away on City Creek was destroyed. One of Young's daughters was sitting near a window and received a head wound from the shattering glass.

The day following the blast, city officials held an inquest at City Hall. Their preliminary verdict was that the explosion was caused by a burning paper wad shot from a gun, igniting loose powder strewn around on the site.

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Everyone is Invited:

### Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council Meeting

State Capitol Senate Building Copper Room  
September 19th 2012, 6:30 pm

Neighborhood Council Meeting:

- Welcome by Chair
  - Mobile Watch Report, Georg Stutzenberger
  - Police Report, Detective Tony Brereton, SLPD
  - Fireman's Report
  - Elected Officials' Reports
  - Mayor's Office Report, Joyce Valdez
  - CHNC Business
    - o CDBG Report
    - o Amendment Zoning Petition- Joel Paterson
    - o Wall Street Development- Maryann Pickering
    - o Other
  - Public Forum
  - Adjourn
- \* Next Meeting: October 17, 2012



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## Thoughts from the Chair: September 2012

By Katherine Gardner

The CDBG Grant Committee worked hard during the month off and turned in two applications for Federal Grant money. The two most desired projects were a mini park in front of the Capitol and sidewalk repairs in many locations. Thanks to all who worked to help fill out the forms and get them turned in before the strict deadline. Special thanks to LuAnn Clark, the City Economics Development Director; Lynn Jarman and Dell Cook for their assistance.

Hope you had a lovely summer and are looking forward to a fall full of accomplishments.

Back to our regular third Wednesday 6:30 meetings in the Copper Room at the Capitol. In October, we will nominate some 2013 officers (including trustees for three areas, West high, Washington and Ensign Downs).

As part of my fall accomplishments, you'll find me under the trees in the hills that are turning beautiful colors.

Colorfully, Katherine

## The Day Arsenal Hill Became Capitol Hill continued....

While there were no formal charges in the matter, the act appeared to be traceable to two teenage boys, Charles Richardson and Frank Hill, who had been grazing their small herd of cattle on the side of Ensign Peak and had been seen taking target practice near the magazines.

Both boys were killed in the blast. The loss on the powder and buildings was estimated at \$26,000.00 while the damage done to the buildings in the city could not be calculated. Officials felt that the severity of the damage was due to the site's commanding elevation above the city. It was decided to relocate explosives to a safer area.

City officials called a special meeting on April 7, 1876 to expedite the search. Arsenal Hill was moved and Salt Lake City gained a more enforceable explosives ordinance. It was not until February 28, 1888 that Mormon Church Wilford Woodruff proposed that Salt Lake City should donate the 20-acre plot of the former Arsenal Hill property for a future Capitol site.

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