

Edwards

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cafe location. O'Connell was also the proprietor of the Eddy Bar next door to the hotel.

In 1908, Eddy O'Connell and his brother Frank purchased a small bakery in Missoula. Helena's first Eddy's Bakery was in the basement of the Eddy Hotel. It moved over to Edwards Street in 1916 where it operated for some 50 years. The 1930 Sanborn fire insurance map of Helena shows the brick ovens of the bakery. About 1919, O'Connell began buying small bakeries, and he eventually ran a chain of more than 20 bakeries in Montana and the Northwest, making Eddy's Bread a household word.

Soon after Eddy established his bakery, Prohibition dispersed Helena's red light district, previously located on Wood (now Miller Street). Pearl Maxwell, a contemporary of Ida Levy and a predecessor of "Big Dorothy" Baker, for a short time operated what may have been a brothel under the guise of "furnished rooms." A change in address numbers makes the exact location difficult to pin down, but Pearl's place seems to have been either over the bakery or just next door. The address, 18 1/2 Edwards Street, was likely where Dillinger stayed and was later known as the Imperial Hotel.

By 1962, Eddy's Bakery building also housed the executive offices of the US Defense Department and two branches of the US Air Force, the Civil Air Patrol and the Air reserve Squadron. Sage Advertising Agency, owned by O'Connell, also had an office in this block. While Eddy's Bakery moved to 40 South Park Ave. later in the decade, O'Connell maintained an office in the former Edwards Street bakery until his death in 1972.

AS HELENA'S LIVERIES GAVE WAY to automotive interests, a garage had been established by 1927 on the northeast corner of Edwards Street and North Park Avenue (#6). First known as Meyers' Garage, it was called Porters' Garage for many years. Melvin Woods was operating Mel's Garage at this location in 1957, and by 1963, the garage had changed its name once again to the Service Center Garage. The gas pumps at the corner garage can be seen in artist Bob Morgan's painting

of the Marlow Theater.

Edwards Street continued across Park Avenue another block to the west where early maps show the Helena Skating Amphitheater during the 1880s (#8). Given the slope to the current area, it is difficult to imagine enough level ground for such a facility. The skating rink shared the block with a liquor warehouse, and later a beer bottling company operated at that location. All these enterprises were gone before the turn of the century. By the early 1970s, much of Edwards Street was vacant, parts were under construction, the Marlow Theater was gone and Eddy's Bakery building vacant.

Occasionally an out-of-towner or a newcomer to Helena will request directions to an Edwards Street address. A walk of the area is the best way to understand the changes that brought about the disappearance of this once-bustling street. A search for Edwards Street necessarily begins at the Livestock Building where the Montana Wool Growers Association and livestock companies still retain offices. Of the many substantial commercial buildings that once graced Edwards Street, only this building stands today. A small stone column from the original Merchants National Bank remains at the southeast corner. Glancing up the hill to the west, a single small building with antiquated arched windows may be seen to the left of the area where Edwards Street once ran. Parking lots on both sides make up the rest of what was once the first block. The second block where the skating rink somehow rested on the hillside slope is now taken up by apartments, condominiums and yards. Strolling through the parking lots to the west across Park Avenue brings you to a narrow sidewalk that runs up the hill to North Benton Avenue. The east/west street is now called Ming Place. One block farther west brings you to the corner of Ming and Olive where the name Edwards Street is embedded at the edge of the sidewalk, a reminder that Edwards Street once extended this far.

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