

The Memorial Tower now standing on Fox Hill was not the first to be erected there. In the days of the Indians this hill served as a lookout for the Podunk tribe. As the territory of three tribes, the Podunks, the Nipmucks and the Mohegans all met at Mischenipsit Lake, occupying this high point must have been a great advantage for the Podunks.

From the early days of the settlement of the town by white men, some talked of building a watch tower on Fox Hill for it commands such a broad view of the Connecticut River Valley and beyond. On a clear day Mount Tom, Mount Holyoke and Talcott Mountain can be seen without glasses. In those days the hills were quite free of trees and undergrowth. The Indians had, according to their custom, burned it over each year. The early inhabitants needed large amounts of wood to keep their homes warm during the long winter months. Any tree of appreciable size was cut down for firewood and the land from which trees were removed served as pasture for the farm animals. Early pictures of Fox Hill show only a few very small trees on its summit.

In the first issue of the Rockville High School Magazine, predecessor of the Banner, published in 1877, an editorial appeared in which the students expressed their hope that a tower would soon be built on Fox Hill. Their wish came true very shortly for in 1878 a Mr. Jeffrey of Meriden erected an observation tower there. It was a wooden structure twenty feet square at its base, extending sixty feet into the air tapering up to a ten foot square platform at its top. The walls of the first floor, where ice cream and refreshments were sold, was enclosed but the upper platforms were open. A four-foot telescope was placed on the top deck. For the admission price of 15¢ one could climb to the top of the tower and view the surrounding countryside through the "spy-glass".

According to all reports Jeffrey's Tower was very popular, serving a "steady stream of visitors". However, it was very short-lived, for on February 3, 1880 a severe blizzard blew off the superstructure. It lay a mass of broken timbers for many years, until Nature covered it with tangled vines and bushes.

The bottom story, which was enclosed, its window and door facing east, remained standing for many years. It was used as a studio by the artist Charles E. Porter, brother in-law of Jeffrey. Here he painted his still-lifes when weather was too cold or wet for him to paint in the fields directly from nature. With only the sun to warm it, during the winter it was a very cold place in which to work.

After the death of Mr. Porter this small structure fell into further disrepair and disappeared.

For almost 60 years Fox Hill was without a tower! Two homes were built near its top on the south side. Then in 1939 the present Memorial Tower was erected to the memory of all our soldiers and sailors in all of our Wars.