

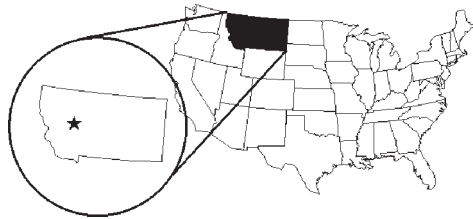
# HELENA, MONTANA ★



*Population Rank:* U.S. #1,500  
Montana..... # 6

*Proportions:* 5:9 (usage)

*Adopted:* Unknown (apparently unofficial)



**DESIGN:** The flag of Helena has a blue field with a large white disk in the center, bordered in gold. On a field of 5 by 9 units, the disk is 3 units in diameter. On the disk is the depiction of an old fire watchtower, in black, in the center, 2 units high, and 1.25 units wide at the base. Around the tower is a sparse green landscape, its upper edge slanting from about 9:30 o'clock to about 3:30 o'clock. Arched over the top of the disk in large gold letters is **GUARDIAN OF THE GULCH**. Centered below the disk, in gold numerals the same size, is **1881**.

**SYMBOLISM:** The symbolism is explained by the city:

*Helena is graced with one of the most significant historic structures in the west. This structure is a symbol of both devastation and pride. Before Helena was 10 years old, she experienced nine fires that ravaged the downtown area. Three of those*

*fires were considered 'great fires', the most destructive occurring on 9 January 1874. The community that night was experiencing a typical Montana winter. Temperatures were around 15 below [zero, Fahrenheit] and the winds were raging with hurricane force. History tells us that the disaster was started by a . . . cook who started a fire in the chimney pipe of his wood-fired stove. In an attempt to put out the fire, he picked up a bucket of what he thought was water, instead it turned out to be cooking oil. A large explosion occurred that night, every single business in the downtown area burnt to the ground and 150 homes were lost.*

*That next year citizens came together and erected a fire tower, completed with . . . a shiny new bell. To this day the fire tower graces the downtown area. In 1982 the Helena City Commission proclaimed the fire tower and the words 'Guardian of the Gulch' the official symbol and motto for the City of Helena.*

The city incorporated in 1881. The gulch in the motto is the "Last Chance Gulch", where four prospectors discovered gold in 1864, leading to the founding of Helena.

**HOW SELECTED:** Likely designed as a result of the city commission's 1982 proclamation.

**DESIGNER:** Unknown.

JP 