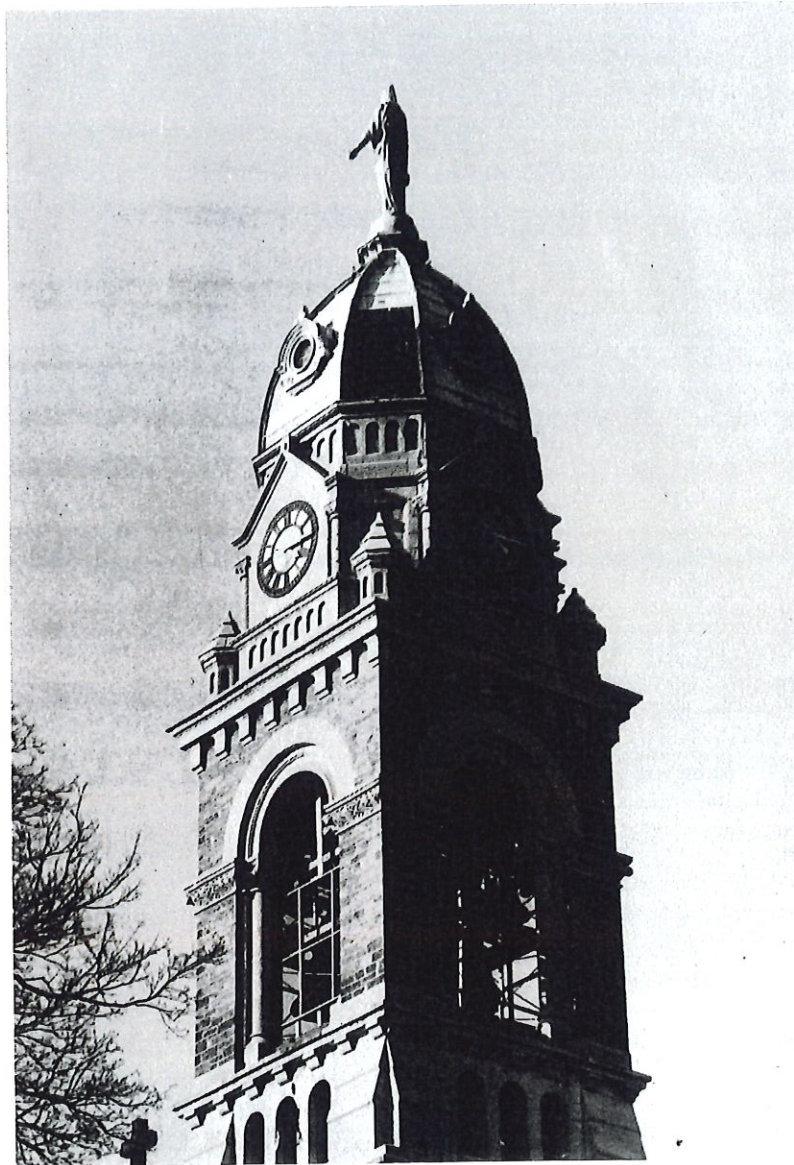


GERMANTOWN *CRIER*



*Bell Tower of the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal,
Chelton & Musgrave Streets, Germantown; formerly
St. Mary's Shrine, Vincentian Fathers*

JUL 23 1991

GERMANTOWN CRIER



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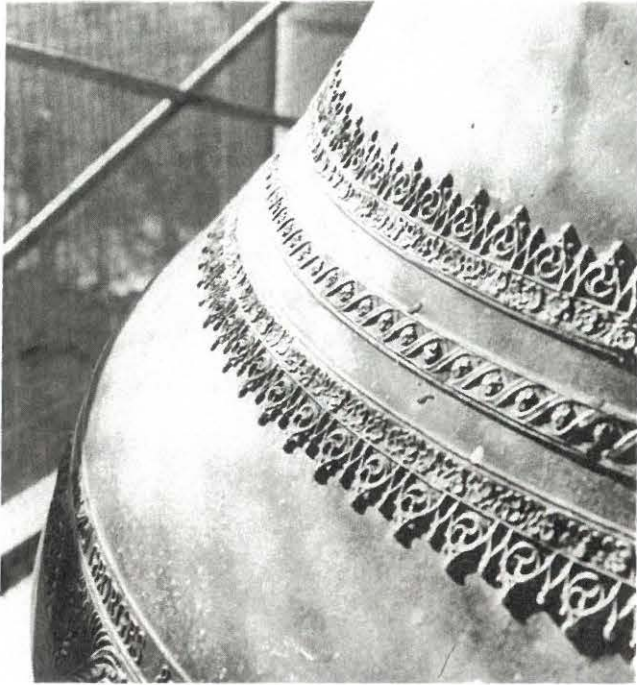
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THE CARILLON at THE SHRINE OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

by Janet S. Dundore*



Ornamentation around the waist of one of the larger bells.

In 1851 the Parish Church of St. Vincent's was built on Price Street in Germantown. Fifty years later, at its sesqui-centennial, its communicants numbered 10,000. In 1867, nearby on Chelton Avenue, was built St. Vincent's Seminary, and from 1875 to 1879 a Chapel (known as St. Mary's Shrine) was constructed on the same site. Twenty years later a tower was added to the Chapel. A photograph dated February 24, 1899, shows that the tower had ample openings for a carillon; and it appears safe to say that it was built to house bells. At that time, however, there were only three carillons in North America -- Notre Dame University in Indiana (1856), St. Joseph's Cathedral in Buffalo, N.Y. (1866), and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church on Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia (1882). Who suggested a carillon for Germantown? From 1970 to 1985 the writer sought the answer to this question.

Others had asked this question previously, with varying responses. In 1925 it had been stated that "the moving spirit

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in having the bells installed in 1901 was ... the Reverend, later Very Reverend, John W. Moore, C.M." who was stationed at St. Vincent's Seminary from 1893 to 1906, and later became President of St. John's Seminary and President of St. John's College. In 1946 it was said that the bells "came from the First World's Fair at Chicago. They took prizes not only at that exhibition but at previous exhibitions in France. They were purchased ... by the Very Rev. John Moore for about \$5,000...." But a search of the list of exhibitors at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition showed no bells made in France.

In fact, information sent in November, 1972 by Alfred Paccard of the Paccard Foundry, Annecy-le-Vieux, states that the "original bells [of the Germantown carillon] were cast from 7 June to 5 September, 1900," and were installed by M. Paccard's father, M. Louis Paccard. He added, "We do not have a complete history of the bells because our office was burned in 1914."

By March of 1899, the project had apparently advanced to the fund-raising stage. A "Grand Easter Banquet" on the evenings of April 3, 4, 5, and 6, was announced in the monthly parish magazine "in benefit of new tower and apparently to seek memorial gifts from various parishioners. One parishioner responded to the appeal.

She was Margaret Ellen Maguire (1863-1935), daughter of John Maguire and Ellen O'Donnell Maguire. The family had moved from Brownsville, Pa., to Germantown, where Mr. Maguire conducted a thriving liquor business at Main and Penn Streets. At the death of her father, Margaret gave \$5,000 to Father Moore for the carillon as a memorial. On August 29, 1901, she entered the Daughters of Charity, serving in hospitals in Bridgeport, Conn. and Washington, D.C. She died at the Provincial House, Emmetsburg, Md.

In 1900 a carillon of 26 bells was ordered from the Paccard Foundry in France, which had been established in 1796 by Antoine Paccard according to the old tradition -- ovens fired with wood, not coal or gas, bells cast with crowns, and inscriptions cut into the bells. On February 7, 1901, delivery of the bells began, and preparations began soon after to hang them. On Monday, March 25th, the Feast of the Annunciation, Bishop Pendergast conducted the ceremony of the blessing of the bells, taking nearly two hours, each bell having twelve crosses on it marked with oil and chrism.

In 1946, Arthur Lynds Bigelow (1909-1967), an American carillonneur trained in Belgium, wrote,

The bells of St. Vincent's represent the finest instrument cast in the 1800's. Furthermore they are the first tuned carillon to be installed in the New World, and are a perfect example of Old World craftsmanship.... In the bells of Germantown we see united the beauty of tone with the beauty of form and decoration. Beautiful to hear, the bells are also beautiful to look upon. The designs of the bells, the inscriptions, the filigree work, the festoons about their waists, and the decorations about their shoulders, the exquisitely molded and cast bas-reliefs and high reliefs of the crucifixes and figures of saints, complete to the finest detail, all bespeak the love of the founder for his bells. Every bell is complete with its crown by which the bells are attached to their wooden beams.

The Catholic Standard and Times, February 23, 1901, after praising the beauty of tone and design, continued:

The bells are twenty-six in number, running through three octaves; the largest weighs 3,300 pounds and the smallest is a wee tinkler of 30 pounds. Without doubt they rank with any in the world. The chimes of Trinity and Christ Churches, New York City, have nine or ten bells of excellent quality, but of one octave. On a chime of such small range all music for the most part must be transposed or especially written for it. This will not be the case with the new chime in Germantown. Its compass is such that any piece of music can be played upon it at will without any transposing whatever....

The fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers of the firm were all bell founders; it is evident that what the Paccards do not know about bellfounding is hardly worth knowing.... The composition of the metal is their secret, and the moulds for each bell are so perfect that no chipping off or adding to of metal for perfect tone after casting is necessary. The mouth

of each bell tapers to a thinness as fine as a coffee cup and one sweep of a file or of a piece of sand-paper around the rim would change its tone.... The first eleven bells bear the names of the saints, and the remaining fifteen are named in honor of the fifteen mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

The Catholic Standard goes on to give the name, tone, weight and inscription of each bell, as "St. John Evangelist, tone D, weight 3,300 pounds, and bears the following inscription: 'This chime of bells is dedicated to the glory of God and to the honor of Mary Immaculate, in loving and affectionate memory of my father and mother, brothers and sisters. In your charity, breathe a prayer for the donor, Margaret E. Maguire.' On the reverse: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.' The figures in relief are also listed: St. John Evangelist, Sacred Heart, Blessed Virgin Mary and the arms of the Congregation of the Mission.

The 22 smaller bells were rung by a machine invented by M. le Chanoine Maysonnave," the ringing case resembling in appearance an organ," according to the *Catholic Standard* article. "When a key in the manual is pressed, a rod is released, drawn downward by a heavy spring and, being connected by a rope to the clapper of the bell, the stroke is thus given. The mechanism is extremely simple, yet unerring and durable...." It was the organist of the Chapel, Rev. Frederick Maune, who played the bells for the first time.

According to a 1920 newspaper clipping, some difficulties developed during the early years which may have been connected with the electrification of the Maysonnave keyboard. Apparently these difficulties were sufficient to silence the bells entirely after about 1910. In 1920, two seminary students, John F. Mahoney and Francis J. Moehringer, succeeded where several experts, according to the newspaper, had failed. Father Mahoney said they discovered that ratchets had broken off several of the iron wheels which engaged



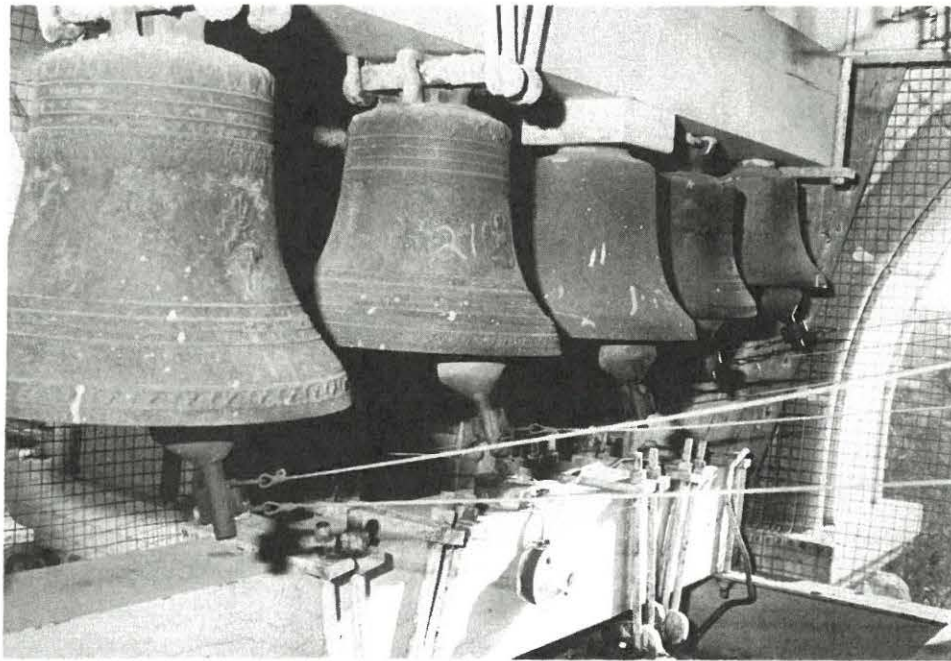
Plaster heads above the crown of one of the bells.

the wires connected to the clappers of the bells, resulting in an undue delay between depression of the key and the sounding of the bell. By replacing the defective wheels with newly cast replicas, the chime could be rung again. However, for whatever reasons, the bells again hung mute for much of the time.

In 1943, Arthur Lynds Bigelow came to visit the carillon in Germantown. A graduate in engineering from the University of Pittsburgh, he had cherished a love of bells from his teens, and while in Europe for postgraduate study he had also earned a diploma from the Carillon School in Mechelen, Belgium. He repaired the damaged bells of the Cathedral of Louvain, and was named Bellmaster of the city. The outbreak of war in 1940 sent him and his Belgian bride

On visiting St. Vincent's in 1943, and testing the bells, he was impressed by their purity of tone. However, in 1935, when it was found that the original wooden beams were rotting, they had been re-hung from a metal framework, in no particular order. And also, he found that the two electrical systems installed at different times had not worked satisfactorily and soon wore out. In January, 1945, he met with Father Joseph A. Skelly, then Director of the Shrine, to draw up plans to restore the bells, and increase the range of the carillon to four octaves. Work was begun in October of that year.

All the bells except the largest were lowered to the ground, and great beams of fir wood fitted to their crowns. The beams were then hoisted to the belfry and the bells were



A row of medium-sized bells hanging in the tower of the Shrine.

fleeing by bicycle from Louvain toward Marseilles, and on their journey they found refuge at the House of the Vincentian Fathers in Dax, in the far south of France, where they stayed for several months. While waiting for transport, Bigelow repaired the bells at the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin in Buglose, to which St. Vincent de Paul had made pilgrimage.

The Bigelows took up residence in Princeton, where Arthur was engaged to repair the University carillon, and where ultimately his papers, including information on St. Vincent's carillon, were deposited in the University Library. Bigelow made contact with the Vincentians at nearby St. Joseph's College, for whom he had messages from the fathers at Dax, and there he learned of the carillon in Germantown.

attached in the age-old fashion, with iron loops through their crowns. Provision was made to accommodate two new large bells (E and F#) and 19 additional small bells to be installed later.

A traditional carillon console was built by Bigelow in the basement of his home in Princeton. It is extremely sturdy and remains in use today. He wrote: "No longer operated by an inadequate mechanical contrivance, nor through the means of unexpressive electrical connections, the bells are now played by a true carillon clavier, developed by the old masters of the Low Countries. This clavier is attached directly to the clappers of the bells and transfers every shade of expression from the baton-type key to the bell." Rehanging of the old bells, and installation of new clappers

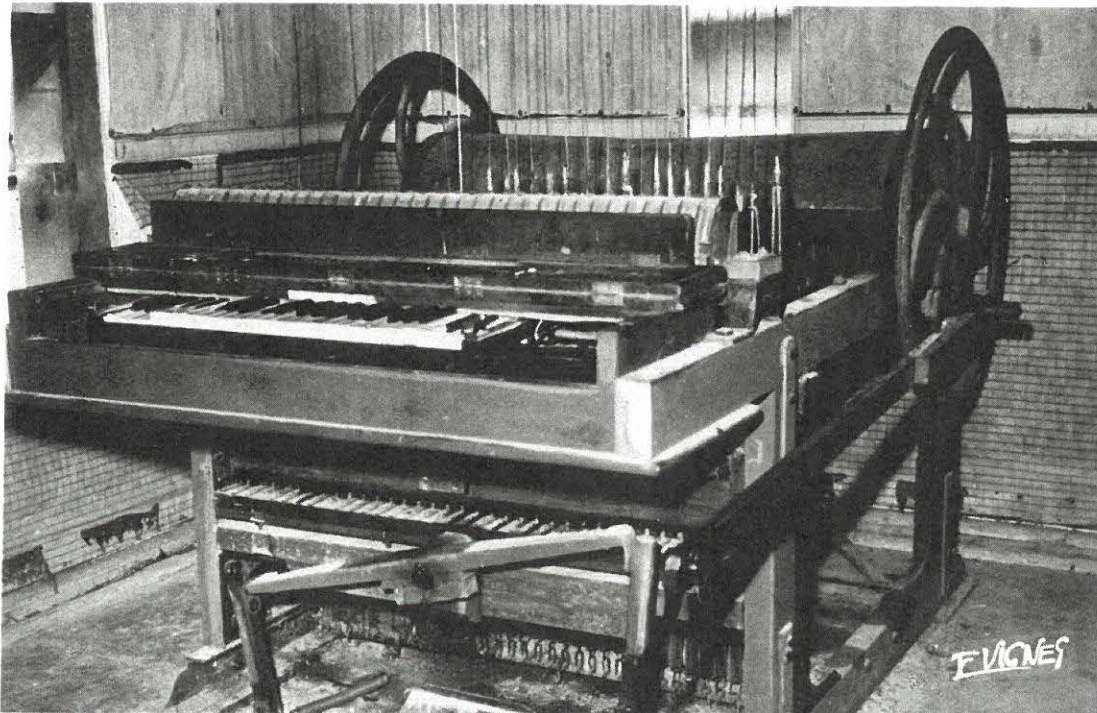
and new wiring, and of the new playing clavier, was completed and the restored carillon played for the first time at the end of August, 1946, when the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America visited St. Vincent's.

The new bells were ordered from a well-known firm in New York state; however, wartime restrictions on metal for civilian use were still in force, and extended delays eventually led to cancellation of the contract. The two big bells were ordered from Paccard, arriving in 1948, and the 21 new bells -- the two smallest old bells needed replacement -- were cast and tuned at a foundry in New Brunswick, N.J. The expanded carillon was formally "played in" on June 15, 1952. Arthur Bigelow could at last play his restored and enlarged chime. During the 1970's and 1980's, additional repairs and restorations were made to the bells, the tower, and the playing console.

Remy Muller, who had studied under Anton Brees at the Bok Singing Tower in Florida, and at Curtis Institute, was appointed carillonneur in 1946, playing segments between novena services on Monday evenings. The present writer succeeded Mr. Muller on his retirement in 1969, and has continued the novena recitals.

On a visit to France in 1985, the writer and her husband finally found themselves in Biarritz, about 30 miles from Dax, with a free day to indulge their curiosity about the original inspiration for St. Vincent's carillon. We had previously learned from Sister John Mary, archivist of the Daughters of Charity, that Margaret Maguire had never been abroad, as far as was known, but that American Vincentians were known to have made a point of visiting Dax on European tour, as for instance when celebrating anniversaries of ordination, or the like. She wondered whether some returned Vincentian might have suggested a carillon as an appropriate memorial to Margaret Maguire.

Armed with a letter of explanation in French, which we neither spoke nor understood, we drove first to Dax, where we found a church with a tower but no bells, then to the seminary nearby, and then to the birthplace of St. Vincent de Paul, and at last, to the church of Notre-Dame-de-Buglose. Here an English-speaking sister took us up the rickety stairs to see a carillon of 60 bells, and an extraordinary machine to play them just like the original installation described in Germantown in 1900. I attempted to play it, with the assistance of Sister Astrid and my husband, and found it made a noise like a train rumbling down a track at 50 m.p.h.



Playing clavier at Notre-Dame-des-Buglose; resembling the original clavier at the Germantown Shrine; later replaced.

-- again recalling the St. Vincent's account. The bells at Buglose came from Paccard's in 1895, with some from other foundries being added later. It was this carillon that was put in repair by Arthur Bigelow in 1940.

While we cannot name the person who suggested a ring of bells as appropriate for the Shrine at St. Vincent's, we now feel convinced that he must have been an American Vincen-tian on pilgrimage to the birthplace of St. Vincent de Paul between 1895 and 1899. Surely the beauty of the French bells inspired the Germantown carillon.

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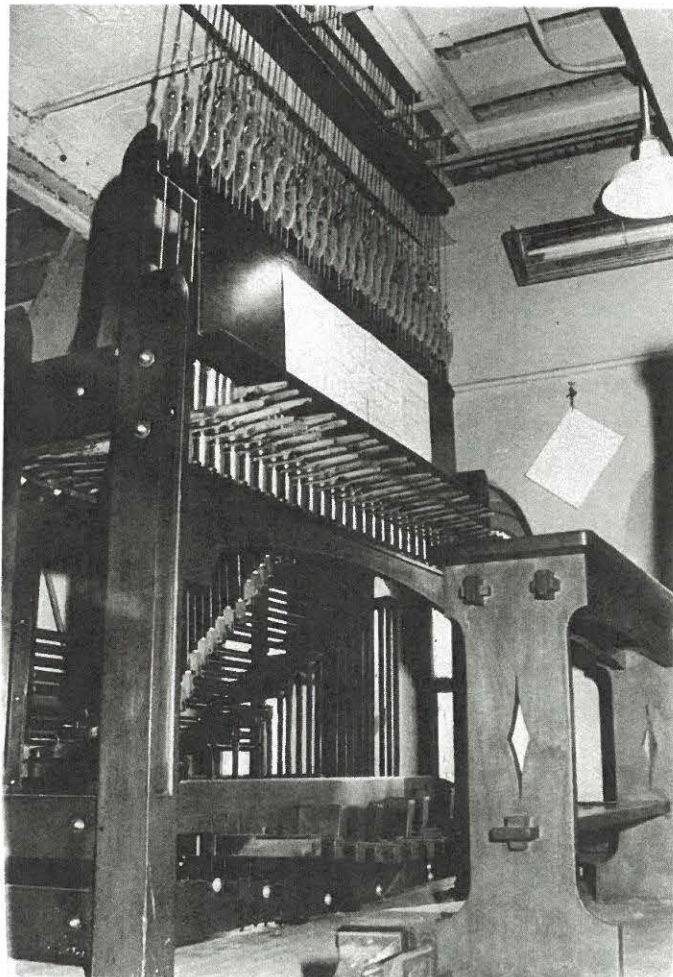
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Germantown is fortunate in having a second carillon, also of 47 bells, at the First Methodist Church of Germantown. The Shelmerdine Memorial carillon was installed in 1927. -Ed.



Standard playing clavier now in use at the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal.