



BELLS ON TRIAL, BELLS RESTORED

***The Story of the Bells
Of Saint Mark's Church
Philadelphia***

***By: A. Thomas Miller
March, 2000***

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Dorothy Kurtz, friend, parishioner of Saint Mark's, Philadelphia, and bell-ringer.

*A. Thomas Miller
March, 2000*

PART 1 – THE TRIAL



he afternoon of Monday, October 11, 1875 was cool and cloudy as the vestry members of Saint Mark's Church, Philadelphia, converged on Sixth and Locust Streets to meet at the office of Richard R. Montgomery, Rector's Warden. Seven of the twelve vestrymen were able to attend the 3:00 PM meeting together with Dr. Hoffman, rector of Saint Mark's.

The Reverend Eugene Augustus Hoffman had been rector of Saint Mark's for six years. Dr. Hoffman was an imposing man with a wide forehead, straight, broad nose and a salt-and-pepper beard. He was a man of broad interests and during his tenure many spiritual and material changes occurred at Saint Mark's. On Advent Sunday, 1869, Dr. Hoffman began the celebration of the Holy Eucharist every Sunday and on all Prayer Book Holy Days. He started the parish Employment Society in 1869 to give part-time work to unemployed women in the neighborhood. In 1870 he began the



The Reverend Eugene Augustus
Hoffman, DD

Workingmen's Club and Institute to help the working men of the neighborhood through intellectual, social and employment activities. In 1870 he started the Altar Society which, during his tenure, made altar hangings and vestments for the church. The Hospital Aid Association was formed in 1873 to provide aid to patients of the Episcopal Hospital. A parish school and Sunday school flourished during his tenure with about 275 children in the Sunday school. The fabric of the building had been added to by the addition of several stained glass windows including the large west window. The purchase and installation of bells for the bell tower were now a priority item for the energetic Dr. Hoffman.

The church building had been completed in 1849 and consecrated in 1850. At that time the tower had only been finished to the first story. In 1851 two members of the congregation had offered to pay for the completion of the tower and spire. The work was completed in 1852. For twenty-three years the completed tower had awaited the installation of the bells for which it had been built.

The object of the special vestry meeting on that cloudy October afternoon in 1875 was to consider the purchase of bells for the tower. A bell fund had been started in 1869, Dr. Hoffman's first year as rector. Mr. Montgomery reported that \$4,000 was in hand, enough to purchase four of the eight bells planned for the tower.

The vestry resolved to purchase the four bells. An order was placed with the bell foundry of Mears and Stainbank, the famous Whitechapel bell foundry, in London.

Whitechapel foundry had been (and still is) casting church bells on the same site since 1570. The bells of Westminster Abbey and countless churches throughout Britain were cast at Whitechapel. The "Liberty Bell" was ordered cast by Whitechapel in 1732 by the government of the Province of Pennsylvania to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the granting of the Charter by King Charles II to William Penn. The peal of eight bells of Christ Church, Philadelphia were cast by Whitechapel in 1754, as well as the peals of Saint Peter's, Philadelphia (1842); Trinity, New York (1797); Saint Michael's, Charleston (1764) and Saint Mary's, Burlington, New Jersey (1865 - this under the rectorship of Dr. Hoffman). The order to Mears not only included the casting of the four bells, but also four sets of change-ringing fittings, an oak bell frame and chime hammers. It was only appropriate that the tower of a church built in the gothic appearance of an early English parish church should have a peal of English bells which were set up for English change-ringing.

The English tradition of change-ringing church bells became fully developed in the 17th Century. Change ringing is a way of ringing bells whereby a team of ringers work together weaving the notes of the bells into a mathematical sequence of "changes". Each ringer controls one bell which is rung full circle and halted in its turn by the ringer catching the bell at its balance point, leaving the bell, mouth up, until the ringer pulls it around again. At each turn the bell is struck one blow by the clapper. This controlled method of ringing results in a cascade of sound ever changing as the ringers weave an intricate tapestry of tones. The ringing begins with "rounds"; each bell ringing from the highest pitched to the lowest, down the scale. At a signal, the ringers begin to change the order in which the bells are struck, without altering the steady rhythm of the striking. Each variation or "change" can occur only once. Ringers memorize various patterns or "methods" with names such as "Plain Bob", "Kent Treble Bob" or "Grandsire".

At the time there were a number of ringers living in and around Philadelphia who kept this ancient tradition alive by ringing changes in the area's church towers. Most

notably ringing was done at Saint Mary's, Burlington, New Jersey, Saint Peter's, Philadelphia and Christ Church, Philadelphia. At Christ Church a famous "ringing-match" as it was called at the time – actually a “Peal” – at least 5040 changes without repeating a pattern – was conducted on Sunday, June 9, 1850 and lasted three hours, fifteen minutes.

Saint Mark's vestry next gathered after the beginning of the New Year on Tuesday, January 4, 1876 at 8:00 PM. Following the usual business the subject of the bells was covered. A letter had been received addressed to the Rector, Wardens and Vestry of Saint Mark's and signed by twenty-one neighbors living in the vicinity of the church. This letter was put forward for consideration. The neighbors had heard that the bells for the tower had been ordered and requested that the plans for hanging the bells not go forward. They stated that the ringing of any bells would be a shock to the nervous systems of sick persons and young children, would reduce the property values of those living near the church and might cause the church tower and spire to collapse causing great loss of life.

The vestry authorized Mr. Montgomery, the Rector's Warden, to reply that the bells had been ordered and that the vestry had decided to install them in the church tower. This reply was duly composed and sent by Samuel Wagner, Jr., Secretary to the vestry, on Friday of that same week.

The block of Locust Street between 16th and 17th Streets was quiet and serene. Paved in cobblestones and flanked on either side by brick sidewalks laid in a herringbone pattern. The dominating feature of the block was the spire of Saint Mark's Church and the brownstone church itself. An iron fence separated the sidewalk from the church's garden and young trees spaced about ten feet apart lined the curbside.



Saint Mark's Church circa 1876

The block had been developed during the decade before the Civil War as an exclusive neighborhood. In the words of one of the residents the neighborhood,

...has always been considered a very attractive one for its beauty, for its general quiet and its freedom from places of traffic of every kind, and its attractiveness was enhanced by its nearness to Saint Mark's Church, whose fine architecture and tasteful grounds, and seclusion from all disturbing sights or sound, induced the hope that the desirability of this particular locality for a residence would be maintained.

This same neighbor stated that his residence, built in 1856, had cost him over \$50,000; a sum which will be brought into perspective when it is understood that a workingman of the time earned less than \$1,000 per year.

Wealthy professionals and businessmen who were used to getting their own way inhabited the neighborhood. To maintain the comparatively noiseless" quality of the street these rich and powerful people had mounted a "resolute opposition" to the running of "railway cars" on Locust Street, causing the laying of railway track on the sixteen hundred block of Locust Street to be abandoned. The streetcars, which would have passed down the street, were propelled not by electricity, but by horses. A "noiseless" street indeed!

The people of Saint Mark's were likewise wealthy, influential people who, like the opponents to the bells, were used to having their own way. The brownstone-lined block of Locust Street was about to become a battlefield for these refined Victorian ladies and gentlemen.

Meanwhile, in London, the casting of the bells was proceeding. The bell molds were formed of yellow London clay. Inscriptions to be placed on the bells were impressed into the molds and then the molds were coated in graphite and fired in a large oven. The bell metal, consisting of 77% copper and 23% tin, was then melted and poured into the molds. The finished bells were then removed from the molds when the metal had cooled. About the middle of May 1876 this process was completed. The four bells with a total weight of 5,563 pounds were crated for shipment along with the fittings and bell frame made of heavy oak beams. The bells were shipped from London to Liverpool and hoisted upon the steamship *Illinois* which departed on May 25, 1876 with its cargo and 274 passengers.

After an uneventful voyage of nine days and nineteen hours the *Illinois* nudged into the pier of Peter Wright and Sons on the Philadelphia waterfront. It was Sunday, Pentecost Sunday by the Church's calendar, June 4, 1876. The passengers debarked, clearing customs and going their various ways. The cargo was unloaded and claimed by its various owners after proper customs duties had been paid. The bells were probably warehoused with Wright and Sons until their installation in the tower during the week of June 19 - 23.

George Hewitt, an architect with offices at 310 Chestnut Street, was engaged by the church to oversee the installation of the bells. Adam A. Catanach, a carpenter and master builder, who lived at 1523 Christian Street, did the actual installation.

Timbers were installed in the tower and flooring laid. The bell-frame of English oak was hauled up into the tower in pieces and assembled. Finally, the four bronze bells were uncrated and carefully raised into the tower to be mounted in the frame. The neighbors must have looked on with dismay as the carter brought the bells and Catanach and his workmen unloaded them and manhandled them into the tower.

It was with a certain sense of urgency that the bells were hung. An important anniversary for the United States of America as well as for the City of Philadelphia was about to occur. July 4, 1876 was the rapidly approaching Centennial anniversary of the Republic, and the bells must be hung in time to celebrate that great anniversary.

The spring and summer of 1876 was an exciting time for the city of Philadelphia. The Centennial Exposition had opened in Fairmount Park on May 10. President Grant opened the exposition, which covered 236 acres. Over 200,000 people had crowded the exposition on its first day, and in the following five months almost 10 million visitors would have seen the fair. The city was crowded and bustling with tourists. Locust Street appeared to slumber on in its isolation, the two, three and four-story brownstone houses casting their shadows across the brick sidewalks into the cobblestone street.

The Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* for Saturday, June 24, 1876 contained a short article tucked in with the religious notices and church news:

During the past week four of a peal of eight bells have been placed in the tower of Saint Mark's Church. These bells have a

very rich musical tone, and were cast by the old English firm of Mears & Stainbank... These bells will be first tested this afternoon at half-past 6 o'clock, at which time the "changes" will be rung according to the old style, which has been preserved since the fifteenth century in the Church of England.

It was a clear warm day with the wind from the south and the temperature in the low 80's. William Brown, an English-born watchmaker had been the bell-ringer at Saint Stephen's Church, Philadelphia, for fifteen years. Brown had arrived at Saint Mark's that afternoon with three other bell-ringers to test ring the bells. Brown had been introduced to Dr. Hoffman, Saint Mark's rector, earlier in the week by Frederick Widdows also English-born who had the care of the chime of bells at the Centennial Exposition. According to Widdows, Brown's ringers were from Kensington, no doubt friends who had rung with Brown before and probably, like Brown, English-born.

Widdows walked up Locust Street on that pleasant evening and encountered Dr. Hoffman and a Mr. Wells, of the *Evening Bulletin*. Brown and his band of ringers proceeded to ring the bells, according to Widdows, "...the bells were very well rung, reminding me of English bell-ringing..."

The bells were first rung for Divine Service on the next day, Sunday June 25. Saint Mark's schedule of Sunday worship included services at 7:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 4:00 PM and 7:30 PM. The bells were rung for a half-hour before each of these services. As a side note, this day, June 25, 1876, is also known for a more spectacular event in American History, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, which was underway at the very moment Saint Mark's people were gathering for their 10:30 AM service.

The next day, MacGregor J. Mitcheson, Esq., attorney for the aggrieved neighbors, himself a resident of 1608 Locust Street and a pew-holder of Saint Mark's wrote from his office at 528 Walnut Street,

I have been requested to ascertain whether it is your purpose to continue the ringing of your church-bells between 6 and 7 A.M.? Upon Sunday last they startled some persons from sound sleep, bringing on violent headache, &c., utterly preventing religious observance of the day by them at least...Trusting that the

nuisance complained of was an inadvertence that will not be repeated, I am

Yours, resp'y

M. J. Mitcheson

The Centennial summer ended and the Exposition itself closed on October 10. Just one week earlier the vestry had met. At this October 3 meeting the rector reported on the arrival of the bells and informed the vestry that the cost for the first bells amounted to \$4,980.05 with the receipts and disbursements broken down as follows:

Receipts

<i>Sunday donations</i>	<i>329.00</i>
<i>Concert given by the Choir</i>	<i>116.83</i>
<i>Mrs. J. E. Thomson for memorial</i>	<i>1,000.00</i>
<i>Sunday School contributions</i>	<i>1,106.42</i>
<i>Saints Days offerings</i>	<i><u>2,427.80</u></i>
	<i>4,980.05</i>

Disbursements

<i>Printing Circulars</i>	<i>7.00</i>
<i>Peter Wright & Sons, freight</i>	<i>133.13</i>
<i>Duty</i>	<i>1,169.21</i>
<i>Mears & Stainbank</i>	<i>3,228.36</i>
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	<i>36.90</i>
<i>Adam Catanach for hanging bells</i>	<i><u>405.45</u></i>
	<i>4,980.05</i>

The Rector also reported that, "It is earnestly hoped that the \$2,000 still required to purchase four more bells and complete the peal, may be contributed before long."

Mr. Mitcheson's letter of June 26 was also laid on the table for consideration by the vestry.

In late October the son of George L. Harrison, one of the complaining neighbors, called on Dr. Hoffman, "...in reference to his father's alleged nervous condition, and

objected to the chiming of the bells for the seven o'clock morning service..." He said that even the expectation of the bells ringing kept his father awake all night.

On November 3, Harrison's physician, S. Weir Mitchell, who was also a popular author of the time, wrote to Thomas H. Kirtley, a member of Saint Mark's vestry, reporting that some of his patients were "driven wild" by the early bells. The next day this note was shown to Dr. Hoffman who directed the early ringing to be discontinued.

A special meeting of the vestry was scheduled for 4:00 PM November 6. John S. Newbold, a member of the vestry presented a petition signed by 48 neighbors. A letter signed by 14 physicians was also presented. The neighbors' petition asked that the bells be discontinued "excepting for a single service." The doctors' petition asked that the bells "early", "frequent" and "prolonged" ringing be discontinued because it was "...prejudicial to the health of some and to the discomfort of many of the residents..."

The Rector told the vestry about Dr. Mitchell's note and his decision to discontinue the early bells. Feeling that the early ringing was the problem and since it had been already discontinued, the vestry decided to state their rights as to the regulation of the bells but also to consider cases of special need. They resolved, "That while the vestry entirely denies the right of the residents...to regulate the...ringing of the bells...,they feel confident that the corporation (of Saint Mark's)...will always be ready...to hear and consider any special appeal that may be made for stopping the ringing of the bells in any specified case of illness."

The next day, November 7, Newbold, the presenter of the neighbors' petition, resigned from Saint Mark's vestry. The day following, Edward S. Buckley also resigned from the vestry.

Shortly thereafter the complaining neighbors printed a circular. It alleged to contain all correspondence in the matter, but failed to include the correspondence of Dr. Mitchell and Dr. Hoffman's reply discontinuing the early bells. Copies of the circular were leaked to the newspapers making it appear that Saint Mark's Church was ignoring the pleas of doctors on behalf of their delicate patients.

The press was outraged and Saint Mark's was severely criticized for still ringing the early bells, which in actual fact had been discontinued for several weeks.

It was then that the neighbors instituted proceedings to file suit to stop the ringing of the bells. A bill for injunction was filed with the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas on January 2, 1877 to restrain the ringing of the bells.

During January and February depositions were taken from residents near the church, medical and scientific experts, real estate experts, theological professors, clergy of other churches with bells, the sexton of Saint Mark's, professional bell ringers, and residents near other churches having bells.

Of the residents of houses in the vicinity of Saint Mark's it was ascertained that there were 98 houses in the area bounded by Walnut Street on the north, Spruce Street on the south, Sixteenth Street on the east, and Seventeenth Street on the west. A summary of affidavits was made as follows:

<i>Whole number of dwelling houses:</i>	98
<i>In this square there are complainants:</i>	9
<i>Of owners or tenants who swear that they are annoyed:</i>	20
 <i>Total</i>	 29
 <i>Of persons who say they are not annoyed (including those who are positively gratified):</i>	 47
<i>Of those making no affidavits on either side, but who are neutral:</i>	22

Six of the 47 supporters later made second affidavits on behalf of the complainants modifying their first testimony and if these were stricken from the list the final tally would be:

<i>For complainants</i>	29
<i>For defendants</i>	41
<i>Neutral</i>	22
<i>Stricken out</i>	6
	<hr/> 98

Medical and scientific experts testified for both sides about the harmful (or harmless) effects of sound waves upon the nervous system. Included in this array of experts was the prominent Philadelphia surgeon, Dr. D. Hayes Agnew who, four

years later, would attend to the sufferings of President James Garfield, felled by an assassin's bullet. (Dr. Agnew testified for the complainants.)

Real estate experts testified to the reduction of (or enhancement of) property values of residences in the vicinity of a church with bells.

Theologians testified that bells are not a necessary part of Christian worship (or have been used to call Christian people to worship from the earliest times.)

Professional bell-ringers testified to the loud, discordant sound (or to the sweet, soft sound) of Saint Mark's bells. Enough testimony was taken to fill a book 491 pages long. A map of the area around the church was drawn and color coded as to the location of the complainants. The attorneys for the church contested the color-coding as inaccurate. A scale model of the neighborhood five feet five inches by four feet one inch and a half was built of wood. The church's attorneys disparaged the measurements of the model.

Map, model and reams of testimony all converged on the courtroom of Presiding Judge Hare and Associate Judge Mitchell together with P. Pemberton Morris and George W. Biddle, lawyers for Saint Mark's, and William Henry Rawle and R. C. McMurtrie for the complainants.

The arguments were made by each of the attorneys in the best oratorical style of that day of great oratorical styles. Rawle began his argument by saying, "I will try to condense what I have to say within the smallest possible compass." He then proceeded with a speech that fills almost sixty pages of closely typeset text in the printed report.

Rawle's argument ended with the following statement:

As a member of the Church, I would be the last man on earth to interfere with any part of its beautiful service. I am even tolerant as to many things which some good people look upon as *anathema maranatha* - processions, and bowings, and candles, and incense, and vestments, and the like, which seem more appropriate on the stage than in the sanctuary. I am tolerant of these because I think it is better to worship God with a little nonsense, than to have more wisdom and not worship at all.

But this bell-ringing is no part of divine service. The bells are never rung while worship, and praise, and prayer are going on. Nor are they aids to the prosperity of the parish, because for nineteen years they have never had a bell of any kind. And thus, while I would not interfere with them in that which really pertains to their service, I humbly ask that they shall not interfere with us in the happiness and comfort of our homes.

George W. Biddle, attorney for Saint Mark's recalled the testimony of near-by neighbors, quoting them, "...the bells...do not annoy me in any way. I like to hear them ring...I would miss them if they were stopped", and " I like to hear church-bells ring", and "I do not notice their ringing unless my attention is called to it."

Biddle even used poetry in his argument to sway the Judges, quoting the poet, William Cowper,

*"There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
And as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave.
Some chord, in unison with what we hear,
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet, now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on!
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where memory slept."*

Concluding, he included a quote from Shakespeare,

I would say to these complainants, in the language of the greatest of all who have lived within the sound of church-going bells (the church at Stratford being very much like Saint Mark's in its general appearance), --

*If ever you have looked on better days;
If ever been where bells have knolled to church;
If ever sat at any good man's feast;*

*If ever from your eyelids wiped a tear,
And known what 'tis to pity and be pitied,--
Let gentleness your strong enforcement be,"--*

and not mingling in the wranglings and vexations of courts, which (take my word for it) will do more harm and injury to the over-wrought nervous system than all the bells on all the churches in this good city of Philadelphia.

The closing arguments completed, Judge Hare decreed as follows:

And now, this twenty-fourth day of February, A.D. 1877, this cause came on to be heard on a motion for a special injunction, and was argued by counsel. Whereupon, in consideration thereof, it is ordered and decreed that upon security being entered in the sum of one thousand dollars, an injunction issue, restricting the defendants from ringing the bells of Saint Mark's Church or otherwise using the same so as to cause nuisance or annoyance, by sound or noise, to the complainants, or any of them, within their respective houses.

The following day, Sunday, February 25, 1877, a satirical poem appeared in the Sunday Dispatch. The poem is called "In Statu Quo Ante Bellum",

Oh! glory to the Common Pleas, from whom all glories are!
And honor to their Honors, too, who face the wordy Bar!
And chiefest, high above the rest, we cry: "Huzza for Hare!"
Who molds the law for brownstone folks
Who live in St. Mark's square.

And glory to the lawyers, too, surcharged with common lore--
With cases, points, and precedents, and arguments a store;
Injunction now is just the thing to suit the people there
No nuisance now for brownstone folks
Who live in St. Mark's square.

No more the clanging sound of bells shall fright the quiet air;
No more the tolling "country chimes" will agitate the fair;

And drowsy Cit may sweetly doze upon his easy chair.
No chiming now for brownstone folks
Who live in St. Mark's square.

At midnight now the soldier "swell" from club may safely reel,
And pausing at his lofty door, for friendly latch-key feel;
His morning nap is all secure--his dream's his own affair
No matin-bell now for brownstone folks
Who live in St. Mark's square.

To Justice--sweet and noble maid, with balances so true,
Who blindly weighs the good and bad--our thanks are warmly due;
But loftier, greater, grander, still is Equity so rare,
Who guards the nerves of brownstone folks
Who live in St. Mark's square.

Three days after Judge Hare's decision, in a letter, Dr. Hoffman, rector of Saint Mark's wrote,

The injunction which was granted on Saturday last against the ringing of St. Mark's bells is the first time in the history of Christendom that a church has been enjoined for availing itself of its ancient and time-honored custom of announcing its services by the ringing of bells...The authorities of St. Mark's Church, believing that this injunction is an invasion of their legal rights, if not the beginning of a crusade against all church bells, have, under the advice of counsel, taken an appeal to the Supreme Court against it.

In June, 1877 the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania affirmed the lower court's decree, but modified it to allow the bells to be rung on Sundays for two minutes at thirty minutes before the beginning of divine worship and the smallest bell to be rung alone for five minutes before. This ringing was limited to the usual three divine services on Sunday, forenoon, afternoon and evening and did not include early morning services.

In January, 1878 a further modification was made to permit the bells to be rung under the same conditions as pertained to Sundays on the following days: Washington's Birthday, Fourth of July, first day of the year, sixth of January (Feast

of the Epiphany), Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Ascension Day, first of November (All Saints Day), Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and at weddings and funerals.

In spite of the injunction the church went ahead with plans to purchase and install four more bells to complete the set of eight. In April, 1878 Mears and Stainbank crated and shipped from their London foundry an additional four bells with a combined weight of 2,923 pounds.

When the bells arrived in Philadelphia a new timber structure was built higher in the tower at the base of the spire. The four bells already mounted in the English bell frame were remounted in this new structure and the four new bells were winched up the tower to join their counterparts. The bells were mounted with three bells hanging above five. This was probably done to elevate the bells further from the street to soften the sound. To this day the original English change-ringing bell frame remains in the tower with the marks upon it where the first four bells had been originally mounted.

It appears that traditional change ringing was done at Saint Mark's for a very short time in 1876 and then only with the four heavier bells which were first mounted in the English change ringing bell frame. When the four lighter bells joined their heavier mates the entire peal of bells was mounted in the new timber structure higher in the steeple. Under this arrangement the bells were able to be chimed, that is, swung back and forth so that the clappers strike the swinging bells, but they were not able to be rung full circle in the ancient English manner.

As the years passed, members of Saint Mark's occasionally chimed the bells for Sunday services and Church feast days, but even the chiming of the bells fell silent and for decades nothing was heard from Saint Mark's tower.

It was as if a flock of birds, meant to fly and circle and dive, were confined to a cage, their songs silenced.

PART 2 – THE RESTORATION



he neighborhood of Saint Mark's at the dawning of the 21st Century is far different than it was in 1876. A few of the brownstone houses in which the neighbors lived are still standing across the street from the church and are now no longer residences, but professional offices or shops. The spire of Saint Mark's, that dominated the 1876 skyline of the block is now dwarfed by office blocks and apartment towers. The quiet street that couldn't even bear the sound of a horse-drawn streetcar now carries automobiles, vans, and trucks, and in the caverns below, commuter trains rumble.

The spire of Saint Mark's continues to point expectantly heavenward as it has since it was first built. Inside, four tons of bells bear testimony to events over a century old. The principals of that long-ago controversy are all gone from the scene, but the bells remain.

From the early 1980s onward a faithful group of parishioners regularly chimed the bells, but time began to take its toll. The old wooden fittings began to crack and fail under use and one by one the bells began to fall silent. As the old cast in crown staples rusted with age they were in danger of expanding and cracking the bell metal that surrounded them. An inspection in the late 1990s revealed a dangerous degeneration of the old bell frame.

Under the leadership of a new Rector, the Reverend Richard C. Alton, the vestry of the church resolved in 1998 to begin restoration of the bells. A native of Connecticut, he was educated at Boston College, Yale Divinity School, and the General Theological Seminary. He served as curate and associate in two parishes in Connecticut before moving to New York City where he was the Senior Assistant Priest at Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue prior to being called to be Rector of Saint Mark's in 1997. "Father Rick" brought new energy to Saint Mark's. Like his predecessor of 125 years before he saw the bells as a way to invigorate the parish.



The Rev'd. Richard C. Alton

Audrey Evans, MD, a renowned pediatric oncologist with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, a native of



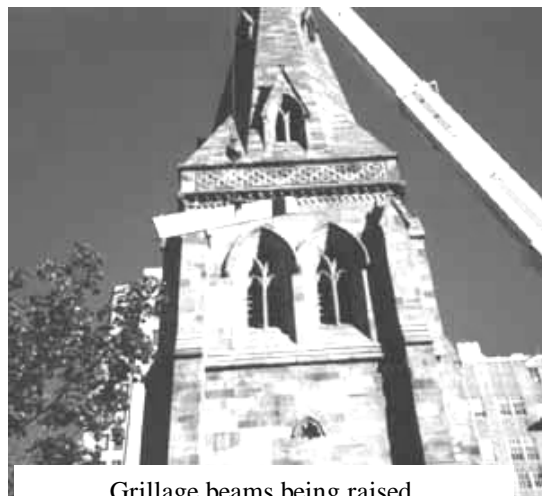
Dr. Audrey Evans

Yorkshire, England, and a long-time member of Saint Mark's also saw the bells as a project that needed to be done. They had lain too long neglected and were a great treasure of the church. As a girl in Yorkshire, the ringing of bells from the parish churches and the great tower of York Minster measured her days. Dr. Evans was a member of the vestry and made a convincing presentation to them to take on the restoration. The time was right. The parish was newly invigorated. The new Rector was in favor of the restoration. The vestry saw the restoration of the bells as an act of good stewardship – taking care of that which has been entrusted to them – to preserve the marvelous legacy that had been left by a generation long gone. The

restoration would save the bells from decay, stabilize them to eliminate a growing unsafe situation, and return them to a condition where they could be rung to changes as originally intended by Dr. Hoffman and the vestry of 1876.

The firm of Eayre and Smith of Melbourne, Derbyshire, England, expert in hanging bells, was contracted to restore the bells. A fund-raising drive was held, work started in the autumn of 1998, and a Bell Committee formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Evans. Assisting the committee were Bruce and Eileen Butler, experienced ringers and officers in the North American Guild of Change Ringers. Bruce and Eileen also took on the task of teaching members of Saint Mark's who wished to learn how to ring. Bruce, a native of Kent, England had been ringing since he was a youth. Bruce and Eileen were both administrators in the Philadelphia Public School system and were committed to good teaching of ringing.

The first phase of the restoration involved dismantling the bells from their old fittings. The cast canons were then cut from the tops of the bells and epoxy pads were cast on top of each bell to facilitate joining the bells to new steel headstocks. At the same time, Crescent Steel Works, located in Philadelphia, fabricated steel grillage beams



Grillage beams being raised.

according to Eayre and Smith's specifications. The beams were raised into the tower in October, 1998 just before Robert Servante, an expert bell hanger with Eayre and Smith, arrived to work on the bells.

The grillage beams were assembled in the new bell chamber, just below where the original four bells were mounted in 1876, and grouted into the walls of the tower. The grillage beams were to be the foundation on which the bell frame and fittings were to be mounted in the second phase, so it was very important for them to be anchored firmly into the tower walls.

In the period between the completion of the first phase of the restoration and the second phase scheduled to begin in May 1999, work was progressing on both sides of the Atlantic. Eayre and Smith let contracts for the manufacture of the custom made headstocks and fabrication of the bell wheels, frame and other fittings. At Saint Mark's, volunteers from the parish and fellow ringers from Saint Martin's in-the-Fields, Chestnut Hill, cleaned out the tower, removing debris and the old wheels, headstocks, rusted hardware and other remains of the Victorian fittings.

One of the eight bells had been fitted with an electric striker and timer to ring out the Angelus at the appointed times. The Angelus fell silent as the bells were dismantled in October. An anonymous donor made a generous contribution to purchase a new ninth bell to be dedicated solely to the ringing of the Angelus.

Brian Zook was a new member of Saint Mark's. An ophthalmic technician, working with a prominent eye surgeon in Philadelphia, Brian was passionately interested in the bells of Saint Mark's. He was a new ringer having learned under Bruce Butler in the tower of Saint Martin's in-the-Fields, Chestnut Hill which had a light weight ring of eight bells that had been hung in 1980.

Brian researched where bells and mechanisms could be had and the parish ordered a new bell and striker from the Dutch firm of Eisjbouts. Crescent Steel Works donated a steel deadstock from which the new Angelus bell would be hung.

Starting in November, 1998, a band of ringers, drawn from members and friends of Saint Mark's began learning to handle the bells and ring them in the English manner. Bruce Butler taught them at Saint Martin's.

Winter turned into spring and the fittings were ready in Melbourne, Derbyshire, England. They were crated and placed into a shipping container for the sea voyage

to America. The container vessel *Atlantic Carrier* departed from Liverpool on April 11, 1999 and arrived at the Port of New York on April 22. The materials were packed in four cases and one bundle weighing a total of 8,371 pounds. The shipment was trucked from New York to Philadelphia and put into storage pending payment of customs duties.

In the meantime the new Angelus bell from Holland was shipped via British Air arriving at Philadelphia International Airport.



Robert Servante

Alan Morrison, like Brian, was a new member of Saint Mark's, and one of those beginning to learn how to ring. He ran a landscape and contracting business, Starwood Design and Construction, and owned several heavy trucks. Alan arranged for the Angelus bell and the fittings from England to be picked up by workmen from his company and moved into the tower. Robert Servante returned from Britain to Philadelphia and began the work. He immediately discovered that the grouting to secure the grillage beams into the walls of the tower had been done incorrectly and so the project suffered about a one-week delay until the beams could be correctly re-grouted and the concrete properly cured. Alan Morrison and his crew worked together with Dugan and Company, masons, to fix the error. This delay put pressure on Servante in completing the job on time. Peter Trotman, a ringer and consultant working with Eayre and Smith was in Philadelphia at this time visiting his son Adrian. Peter worked tirelessly, on his own time, around the clock with Bob to make the deadline. In addition, also helping Bob during this critical time were many volunteers from the parish and especially from among the ringers, both of Saint Mark's and of Saint Martin's. Bob made rapid progress to complete the restoration on time.

Thursday evening, June 10, 1999 was hot and humid. The preceding week had been unseasonably hot making the work in the tower uncomfortable, at best. The fittings were all installed, bells mounted and ready to ring. Bruce Butler, patient teacher of all the new Saint Mark's ringers, rang each bell to the up position to test the handling of the bell and whether everything was installed correctly. Bob Servante stationed himself in the bell chamber above to observe the movements of the bells. There was trouble with the number three bell as well as with the tenor. The sliders

of each bell had to be adjusted. Consequently those bells could not be rung that evening. Bells 4, 5, 6, and 7 could be rung in order and were raised and rung in Rounds by Brian Zook on 4, A. Thomas Miller on 5, David Mills on 6, and Dean Houck on 7. This is the first time since 1876 that four bells had been rung in rounds in the tower.

On Friday, June 11 Bob Servante made the appropriate adjustments. Dean Houck, a member of Saint Mark's, and a ringer, and Brian Zook were at the church that day cleaning the tower for the maiden ringing of the bells on Sunday. They assisted Bob in ringing the bells to assure that all was right. That weekend saw a gathering of ringers from across the Northeastern United States to ring at Saint Martin's in celebration of that tower's 19th anniversary of their bells.

Sunday, June 13 dawned with an overcast sky, humid air and occasional showers. It was eleven days short of the day 123 years earlier when the four original bells had first been rung.

The 10:00 AM Mass concluded at about 11:15 AM and the ringers gathered in the tower. The appointed ringers stood by their ropes, as follows: Bruce N. Butler on Treble, Eileen Joy Butler 2, David C. B. Mills 3, A. Thomas Miller 4, James F. Ziegelbein 5, Brian Zook 6, Dean Houck 7, and Robert Servante 8. At 11:20am, on a signal from Bruce Butler, the ringers stood to their ropes and as the treble bell fell,



First Ring on Eight

Left to right. Front: David Mills, Brian Zook, Tom Miller, Eileen Butler, and Bruce Butler. Rear: Dean Houck, Jim Ziegelbein, and Robert Servante.

the others fell in behind, ringing that ancient cascade of sound, a sound never before heard, since all eight bells had never been rung together before that day. It was an exciting experience for everyone. The bells sounded marvelous.

The visiting ringers then joined in ringing. The first method rung was Grandsire Triples, later Plain Bob Major, Stedman, and

Cambridge were all expertly rung.

The excitement of the day extended from the ringers to the parish and to the community at large. Television vans were parked outside the church for most of the afternoon with reporters interviewing anyone who looked as if he or she had pulled a rope. The VCRs of many ringers were working overtime that evening to catch on tape the bits of news footage from the afternoon's activities.

The day concluded with Dr. Audrey Evans hosting the ringers at a Champagne snack later in the afternoon.

During the summer and into the autumn of 1999, work on the tower continued with the ringing room being cleaned and painted air conditioning installed and a new sub-floor and carpet tiles laid. The ringers also continued their work in learning bell handling and the rudiments of change ringing. Because of television and radio spots that appeared on local news, National Public Radio and the BBC, visitors from the US and England who had heard the broadcasts dropped by during the summer to ring.

On September 26, 1999 the first quarter peal was rung in Saint Mark's tower. It was a quarter peal of 1260 Plain Bob Triples with the following ringers: Jim Ziegelbein on Treble, Susan V. Clopper 2, Eileen Joy Butler 3, David C B Mills 4, Alex Meloscia 5, Peter



First Quarter Peal Band

Left to right: Bruce Butler, David Mills, Eileen Butler, Jim Ziegelbein, Susan Clopper, Brian Zook, Alex Meloscia, and Peter Trotman.

Trotman 6, Bruce N. Butler 7, and Brian Zook 8. The quarter peal was

dedicated to Dr. Audrey Evans of Saint Mark's and Robert E Coughlin of Saint Martin's both of whom were instrumental in restoring change ringing at their churches.

By October the ringing room was becoming a comfortable place. Tom Miller constructed benches and Alan Morrison had installed lighting.

The weekend of Friday, October 22 through Sunday October 24 saw the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first service of worship at Saint Mark's as well as the dedication of the newly restored bells.

Ringers from the eastern US and Canada gathered to participate in the celebration. Friday evening there was a champagne reception at the Church followed by a black-tie fund-raising dinner at the Acorn Club, just a block from the church. The dinner raised enough money to eliminate a shortfall in the bell restoration fund. Dr. Audrey Evans was honored at the dinner by being admitted to the North American Guild of Change Ringers Honor Roll. Bruce Butler made the presentation.

Saturday saw ringing by various bands of ringers and a dinner in Saint Mark's parish hall for all the visiting ringers. At the dinner, Bruce Butler and Brian Zook, tower captains of Saint Martin's and Saint Mark's respectively, announced that the Philadelphia ringers had made a decision to unite, pool their resources, and form one Philadelphia Guild of Change Ringers.

On Sunday October 24, the visiting ringers supported ringing at the church services of both Saint Martin's and Saint Mark's. In the afternoon two peals were rung, one on Saint Martin's bells and the first peal ever on Saint Mark's bells. The peal at Saint Mark's was also the first peal in Center City Philadelphia since the peal at Christ Church in 1850.



First Peal Band

Left to right: Bruce Butler, Meredith Morris, Christian Haller, Eileen Butler, Derek Wilsden, Brian Zook, Donald Morrison, and Derek Sawyer

The first peal at Saint Mark's was a peal of 5040 Plain Bob Triples, rung in 3 hours and 2 minutes by Bruce N Butler on Treble, Eileen Joy Butler 2, Derek Wilsden 3,

Christian Haller 4, Meredith A Morris 5, Derek A Sawyer 6, Donald F Morrison 7 and Brian Zook 8. Don Morrison conducted the peal.



The Rt. Rev'd. Charles Bennison blesses and commissions the ringers.

At 6:00pm the Rt. Rev'd. Charles Bennison, Bishop of Pennsylvania, officiated at a Choral Evensong, and Benediction. At the conclusion of the service the bishop proceeded into the church garden followed by the choir and congregation. The ringers of the Philadelphia Guild and other visiting ringers went into the tower. The bishop blessed the tower from the garden. Accompanied by the Rev'd. Richard Alton, Saint Mark's Rector, and the Rev'd. Michael Seiler, Saint Mark's Curate, the bishop, in purple cassock, carefully made his way up the narrow, spiral stone staircase to the ringing room. There he blessed the room and commissioned the ringers in their ministry of ringing. He then went up to the bells to bless the restored ring of eight and the new Angelus bell, Gabriel.

The bishop then came back to the ringing room and greeted each of the ringers personally and enjoyed an exhibition of call changes and method ringing.

Bruce Butler later commented that every one of the Philadelphia ringers who had demonstrated call changes for the bishop had been taught by Bruce.

Meanwhile, in the garden below the choir and congregation waited patiently for the bishop to return. They waited silently and began to wonder if bishop and priests would ever return again. Finally the clergy reappeared and the crowd broke into a cheer. At the same moment the bells began to be lowered in peal in a great cascade of sound.

Through the efforts, contributions and struggles of many dedicated and faithful people, the bells of Saint Mark's had finally awakened from their slumber to soar and fly like freed birds, and to sing forth with clear and joyful voices.

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APPENDIX I
The Bells of Saint Mark's

Bell 1 - Treble

Diameter 2' 5"

Weight: 5-2-7 (623 pounds)

Note: F

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

A.D. 1878

THE FESTIVAL BELL

MY MOUTH SHALL SPEAK THE PRAISE OF THE LORD

Bell 2

Diameter 2' 6"

Weight: 5-3-1 (645 pounds)

Note: E

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

A.D. 1878

THE MARRIAGE BELL

THOSE WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER LET NOT MAN
PUT ASUNDER

APPENDIX I
The Bells of Saint Mark's

Bell 3

Diameter 2' 7"

Weight: 7-0-4 (788 pounds)

Note: D

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

A.D. 1878

IN MEMORY OF

M^{RS} ELIZABETH BOWEN

WHO DIED 8TH JANUARY A.D. 1875 AGED 63 YEARS

O YE SPIRITS AND SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS BLESS YE THE
LORD

Bell 4

Diameter 2' 10"

Weight: 7-2-27 (867 pounds)

Note: C

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

A.D. 1878

IN MEMORY OF

MARIE LOUISE MOON

WHO DIED 20TH APRIL A.D. 1861 AGED 8 YEARS

WITHOUT FAULT BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD

APPENDIX I
The Bells of Saint Mark's

Bell 5

Diameter 3' 0"

Weight: 8-3-3 (983 pounds)

Note: Bb

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

THE CHILDREN'S BELL
THIS BELL WAS BOUGHT WITH THE OFFERINGS OF
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL
A.D. 1876

Bell 6

Diameter 3' 2"

Weight: 10-1-19 (1,167 pounds)

Note: A

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

A.D. 1878
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
JOHN EDGAR THOMSON,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
27TH MAY, A.D. 1874
AGED 66, YEARS

APPENDIX I
The Bells of Saint Mark's

Bell 7

Diameter 3' 6"

Weight: 12-2-7 (1,407 pounds)

Note: G

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

THE PEOPLE'S BELL

A.D. 1876

O YE SERVANTS OF THE LORD BLESS YE THE LORD

Bell 8 - Tenor

Diameter 3' 10"

Weight: 17-3-18 (2,006 pounds)

Note: F

Inscriptions

Shoulder:

MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON

Waist:

THE RECTOR'S BELL

THIS PEAL OF BELLS WAS CAST FOR
SAINT MARK'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

REV^D E. A. HOFFMAN D.D. RECTOR

A.D. 1876

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD OF HOSTS,
HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE FULL OF THY GLORY

Note: The bell weights are shown in the metal founders' notation of Hundredweights, Quarter hundredweights and Pounds. One hundredweight weighs 112 pounds.

Bells on Trial, Bells Restored

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Dr Patrick Allen	Mr & Mrs Bruce N Butler	Ms Rosalind Evans
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An anonymous donor for the purchase of a new Angelus bell, striker and control system.	Mr Barton Chase	Mr & Mrs Robert Fleming
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Bells on Trial, Bells Restored

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