The Copeland Memorial Chime of Third Presbyterian Church

The bells of the Copeland Chime have enriched the worship experience of Third Presbyterian Church for more than 80 years. As beautiful hymn tunes peal forth from the Bell Tower, there is a connection to all worshippers who over the years have stopped to listen.

The Message of the Bells

"The bells themselves are the best of preachers; Their brazen lips are learned teachers, From their pulpits of stone in the upper air, Sounding aloft without crack or flaw, Shriller than trumpets under the law, Now a sermon and now a prayer. The clangorous hammer is the tongue, This way, that way, beaten and swung, That from mouth of brass, as from mouth of gold, May be taught the Testaments, New and Old."

(From the Dedication Program, Sunday, October 9, 1927)

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Compiled from the Third Church Archives by Kay Ramsay
Recent photos by Kay Ramsay and Bob Parrett, 2008
The Copeland Memorial Chime

The History of the Chime

The following appeared in the *Democrat & Chronicle* on Monday, October 10, 1927, the day after the David Copeland Memorial Chimes were dedicated:

"Copeland Memorial Chimes Hung in Third Church Tower
Dedicated at Impressive Service"

"The church was taxed to capacity....and as the first clear notes from the mellow toned bells rang out on the quiet afternoon air, hundreds of passers-by stopped to listen from their cars and for a time traffic in East Ave was nearly blocked."
Early drawing of the chime as erected in the tower - note the oak frame

Following the dedication address by Rev Andrew Gilles, the Copeland Memorial tablet on the north wall in the church was unveiled by David Copeland Naramore Jr., a direct descendent of David & Martha Shepard Copeland in whose memory the chimes were given as a Centennial gift.
The Copeland Memorial Chime

Description of the Bells

The eleven bells of the chime, the only ones of their kind in Rochester at the time, were cast of purest bronze by Meneely & Co of Watervliet, NY.
The Great Bell
The smaller bells

The Great Bell weighs 2,100 lb and is 47 inches in diameter. The smallest bell weighs 225 lb and is 22 inches in diameter. All are suspended from a yellow pine frame and - with mountings - the total weight is 6 1/4 tons.

Chime Stand located in the tower one floor below the bells
The solonoids used for the electronic keyboard still remain in the bell tower

Originally, the chime could be played in two ways - from a chime stand below the bells in the tower, or from a small electronic keyboard near the organ console. The preferable way of playing was from the chime stand and, after several years, the console near the organ was no longer used.

Clappers and cables

With either way of playing the bells, the clapper inside the bell - attached to a cable and pulley - is moved to strike the bell and produce the sound.
Eight bells are in the key of F (F, G, A, B flat, C, D, E, and F). There are 3 extra bells - B (the augmented fourth), E flat (the diminished seventh), and G (an octave above the 2nd largest bell). This allows for playing tunes not only in the key of F, but also B flat and C. There are thousands of tunes within the compass of the chime.
The Copeland Memorial Chime

Carillonneurs

Cecil Buchinger plays the chime on a Sunday Morning

Throughout the years it was a tradition to play the chime daily at 5 PM, on Sundays, and during special occasions such as weddings. Students from the Eastman School of Music often played the chime, in addition to the church organist or assistant organist.

In the 1970s, David Caldwell, a student at the University of Rochester, began a long association with Third's Chime, serving as the official Carillonneur for 11 years. He continued the weekday afternoon tradition, but his favorite time to play was Christmas Eve.

Several members of the church have faithfully continued the tradition: Sandy Gianniny (for 18 years), and recently Linda Adams, Abbie Stevens, Anne Sievers, and Cecil Buchinger.
The Copeland Memorial Chime

Climbing the Belltower

Climbing the bell tower is not for the faint-of heart...

After climbing the 19 steps to the top of the rear balcony in the sanctuary, you enter the lowest level of the tower.

Climb the 16 steps to the middle level of the tower...
Actually, it's more ladder than stair...
Relax and notice that there are stained glass windows - even in the tower.
Don't look back. Most people say it's worse going down than up!
Next there are 20 more steps to climb to the chime stand level...
10 steps to the landing...
...and 10 more steps to reach the chime stand level.
Finally you've at the level where the Carillonneur plays the chime!
You can stop here (you've climbed 55 steps)...
...or climb 10 more steps which will take you (outside) to the bell level.
Finish the climb...
...and enjoy the view on the next page!
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Views from the Tower